

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION LAND ADJACENT TO POPLARS FARMHOUSE SIMPSON, MILTON KEYNES

on behalf of Ambergate Developments



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May 2004

ASC: 577/SPF/2

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Site Data

ASC site code:	SPF	Project no:	577
MK event number:	891		
County:	Buckinghamshire (historic county)		
District:	Milton Keynes Unitary Authority		
Village/Town:	Simpson		
NGR:	SP 8811 3627		
Extent of site:	c. 720 sq m		
Planning proposal:	Housing development		
Date of fieldwork	18 th May 2004		
Planning application ref/date:	03/01508/FUL		
Client:	Ambergate Developments Norfolk House 80 Saxon Gate West Milton Keynes MK9 2DL		
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Internal Quality Check

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CONTENTS

Summary	4
1. Introduction	4
2. Aims & Methods	7
3. Archaeological & Historical Background	8
4. Results.	9
5. Conclusions	14
6. Acknowledgements	14
7. Archive	14
8. References	15

Appendices:

1. Trench Summary Tables.....	16
2. Finds Concordance	19

Figures:

1. General location	3
2. Site plan showing the proposed development with indicative trench locations.....	6
3. Trench 4. South facing section. Feature [405]	12
4. Trench Location Plan	12

Plates:

Cover: Trench 4. View W

1. Trench 1. View NW.....	10
2. Trench 2.View E.....	10
3. Trench 3. View S	10
4. Trench 4. View W	11
5. Trench 4. South facing section. Feature [405]	11



Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

During May 2004 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) carried out a post-determination archaeological evaluation at a site on land adjacent to Poplars Farmhouse, Simpson, Milton Keynes (NGR SP 8811 3627). Four trenches were excavated. The main stratigraphic sequence was similar across the site: the natural orange clay was overlain by a silty clay subsoil that was sealed by a topsoil. In trenches 2-4 the original topsoil was buried by a modern redeposited clay layer and subsequent topsoil.

Within trench 4, a post-medieval north-south orientated ditch [405] cut the subsoil and was sealed by the original topsoil of the site. It may be a drainage ditch associated with the known post medieval settlement within the vicinity of the site. Alternatively, as [405] is aligned approximately parallel with Grand Union Canal that runs north-south beyond the western site boundary it may have been a drainage ditch along the eastern base of the canal bund.

1 Introduction

1.1 On the 18th May 2004 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) carried out an archaeological evaluation at a site on land adjacent to Poplars Farmhouse, Simpson (NGR SP 8811 3627; Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by *Ambergate Developments*, and was carried out according to a brief (Giggins 2004) prepared by the Archaeological Officer (AO) of *Milton Keynes Council* and a written scheme of investigation prepared by ASC (Fell, 2004).

1.2 Reason for Work

The developer applied to *Milton Keynes Council* for planning permission in support of the development (planning application no. 03/01508/FUL) and, in line with the guidance contained in the document PPG16 *Archaeology and Planning* the advised that the site may be archaeologically sensitive, required the developer to commission an archaeological evaluation of the site and issued a brief for the works.

1.3 Setting

1.3.1 Location and Extent

The site is situated in Simpson, in the unitary authority of Milton Keynes and is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (NGR) SP 8811 3627 (Fig. 1). It is situated close to the centre of the historic village of Simpson, adjacent to the east side of the *Grand Union Canal* and comprises a subrectangular plot of c. 720 sq m (Fig. 2).

1.3.2 Geology and Topography

The natural soils of the area comprise the *Oxpasture Association*, namely fine loamy soils over Jurassic and Cretaceous clay shale. The river Ouzel is situated c.400m east of the site and some river terrace drift may also be present (Soil Survey 1983 572h & 572t). The site is essentially flat and lies at an elevation of c. 70m OD.

1.3.3 Services, Buildings, Access

The site is open grassland, with access from Hanmer Road. The development comprises the construction of a new detached house with associated access route and services (Fig. 2).

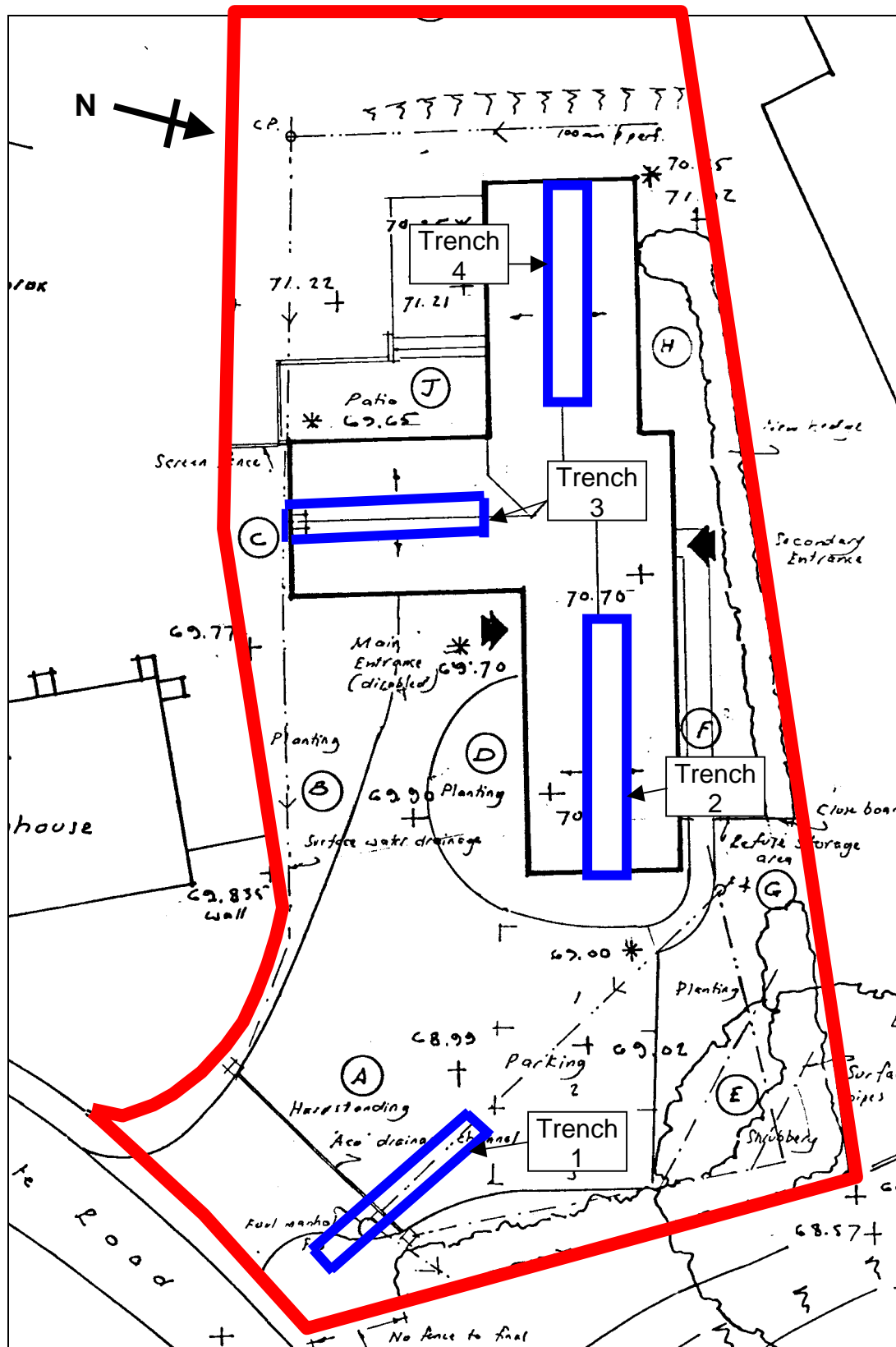


Figure 2: Site plan showing the proposed development with indicative trench locations (*scale 1:200 approx*)

2 Aims & Methods

2.1 Aims

As described in the brief (Section 5.1), the aims of the archaeological evaluation were:

- To obtain information on the extent and character of the potential archaeology of the development site, together with information on the estate of preservation and relative quality

2.2 Methods

The work was carried out according to the brief (Section 5.6-5.8), which required:

- To examine the development area for earthworks, hedgerows, boundaries and structures
- Excavation and recording of 30m of trial trench (es) not less than 1.4m wide, with an option for an additional 10m if required.
- The trench will target the footprint of the proposed building and the two buildings shown on the 1781 estate map.
- Four trenches were excavated, being 1.4m in width and in total measuring 33.6m in length.

2.3 Standards

The work conforms to the project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

3 Archaeological & Historical Background

Simpson is an area of considerable archaeological and historical importance (e.g. Croft and Mynard 1993, 145-152). The site has the potential to reveal evidence of a variety of periods but the focus of interest lies in the medieval and post-medieval periods.

3.1 Prehistoric - Roman (before 600BC - AD c.450)

The Ouzel valley was extensively settled during the prehistoric and Roman periods. Two Roman sites have been recorded in the valley, south of the village but no remains of these periods are known close to the site.

3.4 Saxon (c.450-1066)

The village probably developed during the Saxon period. Little is currently known of this period but the village was included in the Domesday survey (1086) where it is referred to as *Sevinestone*. The land was held by the *Bishop of Courtances* and *Leofwin of Nuneham* (Morris 1978).

3.5 Medieval (1066-1500)

The medieval village probably developed around the manor house, which was situated to the south of the present village centre, where the earthworks of the moat and manorial fishponds survive (Croft & Mynard 1993, fig. 57).

3.6 Post-Medieval (1500-1900)

The late 18th century layout of the village is shown on the estate plan of Sir Walden Hanmer, dated 1781. This shows that the site comprised part of a rectangular plot, on the west side of the village. Two rectangular buildings are shown at the northwest corner of the plot.

Poplars farmhouse was built for Sear Newman in 1792 and is situated to the south of the site (Woodfield 1986, Plate, L10). It is a Grade II listed building.

The Grand Junction Canal was constructed during the early 19th century, running from London to Braunston, and being completed in 1805. It is situated immediately adjacent to the site's western boundary, orientated north-south. The main canal was 5ft deep and 43ft wide (Markham, 1973, p.313).

Poplars Farm is shown, but not named, on the first edition Ordnance Survey map (c.1880). This indicates the location and shape of the house and the location of the site is shown as part of two separate land parcels. The two buildings shown on the 1781 estate plan are not shown, and may have been removed prior to the development of Poplars Farm.

3.7 Modern (1900-present)

The rectangular plot which forms the development site is a modern development and the site was probably formed from part of the land and gardens of the farmhouse during the late 20th century.

4 Results

Four trenches were excavated (Fig 4). The natural orange clay was revealed in all trenches (reached at 67.53 – 69.69m AOD). Archaeological features and deposits were investigated and recorded according to the project design.

- 4.1 Trench 1 (Plate 1) was 8.4m in length, 1.4m in width and orientated northeast-southwest.

Layer (102) overlay the natural orange clay. This was subsoil comprising mid orange silty clay with patches of grey clay 0.2m thick. Layer (101) overlaid (102) being a dark grey clayey silt topsoil 0.5m thick.

- 4.2 Trench 2 (Plate 2) was 9m in length, 1.4m in width and orientated east-west.

Layer (204) overlay the natural orange clay. This was subsoil comprising mid orange silty clay with patches of grey clay, becoming more mixed and gravely at the base of the trench, 0.1m thick. Layer (203) overlaid (204) being a former topsoil of dark grey clayey silt 0.4m thick. This was sealed by (202), a modern redeposited clay with rubble, 0.2m thick and in turn (201) the contemporary topsoil and turf 0.15m thick.

- 4.3 Trench 3 (Plate 3) was 8.4m in length, 1.4m in width and orientated north-south.

Layer (304) overlay the natural orange clay (408). (304) was orangy grey silty clay natural subsoil, 0.35m thick. Layer (303) overlaid (304) being a former topsoil of dark grey clayey silt 0.45m thick. This was sealed by (302), a modern redeposited clay, 0.2m thick and in turn (301) the contemporary topsoil and turf 0.1m thick.

- 4.4 Trench 4 (Plates 4 & 5, fig. 3) was 7.8m in length, 1.4m in width and orientated east-west.

Layer (404) overlay the natural orange clay. (404) was mid greyish brown silty clay natural subsoil, 0.4m thick. This subsoil was cut by [405], a north-south orientated linear feature, 0.6m in depth, 0.9m surviving in width, with moderately sloping sides and a concave base. (406) filled [405], a mid brown silty clay with frequent pebble inclusions and moderate brick and coal fragments and a modern glass shard. This represented the post-medieval silting of the ditch. Within [405] a later fill (407) was evident, comprising yellow brown sandy clay with occasional mortar inclusions, representing a late dumped deposit into the depression of the silted up ditch.

Feature [405] was sealed by (403) which overlay (404). (403) was a former topsoil of dark grey clayey silt 0.38m thick. This was sealed by (402), a modern redeposited clay, 0.2m thick and in turn (401) the contemporary topsoil and turf 0.15m thick.



Plate 1: Trench 1. View NW (Scales: 2 x 1m).



Plate 2: Trench 2. View E (Scales: 2 x 1m).



Plate 3: Trench 3. View S (Scales: 2 x 1m)



Plate 4: Trench 4. View W (Scales: 2 x 1m)



Plate 5: Trench 4. South facing section. Feature [405] (1m scale)

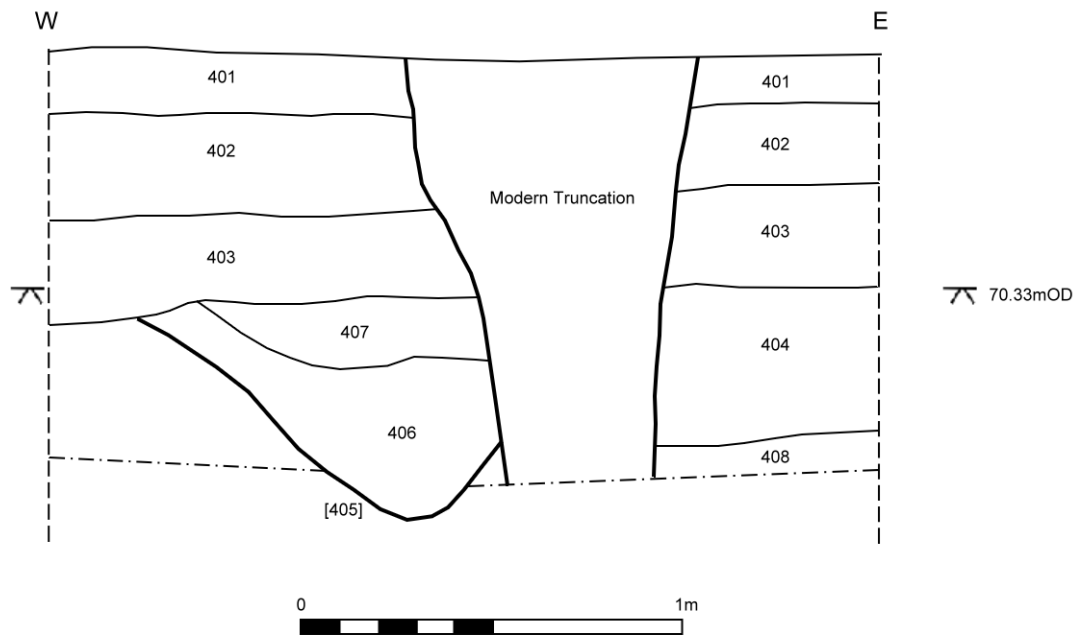


Figure 3. Trench 4. South facing section. Feature [405]

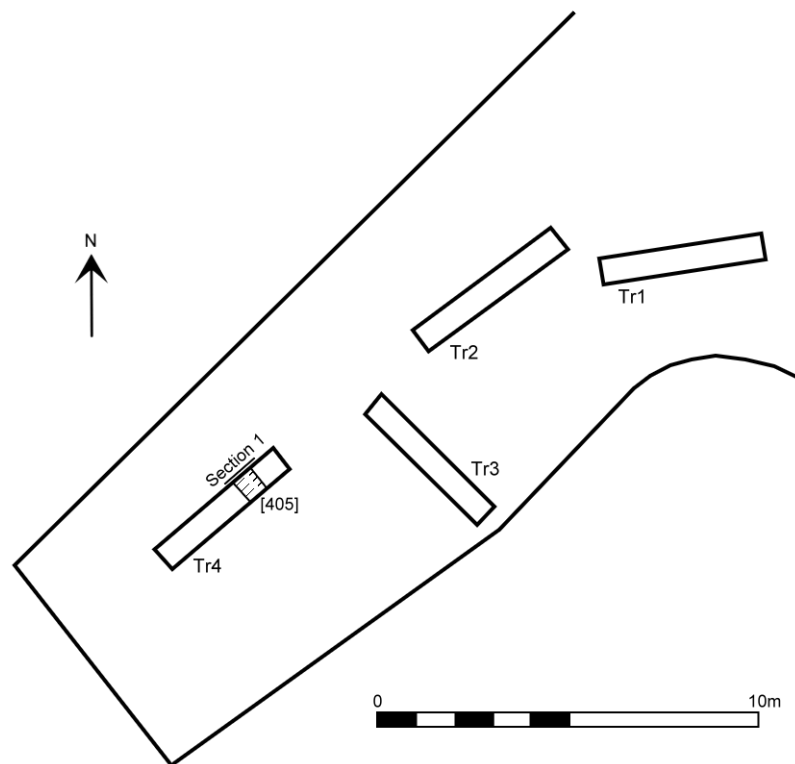


Figure 4. Trench Location Plan

5. Conclusions

The main stratigraphic sequence was similar across the site: the natural orange clay was overlain by a silty clay subsoil that was sealed by a topsoil. In trenches 2-4 the original topsoil was buried by a modern redeposited clay layer and subsequent topsoil.

No archaeological features pre-dating the post medieval period were present. One archaeological feature was revealed within trench 4, this being [405] a post-medieval north-south orientated ditch. This feature cut the subsoil and was sealed by the original topsoil of the site. It may be a drainage ditch associated with the known post medieval settlement within the vicinity of the site. Alternatively, as [405] is aligned approximately parallel with Grand Union Canal that runs north-south beyond the western site boundary it may have been a drainage ditch along the eastern base of the canal bund.

The site had probably been disturbed during the construction of the adjacent building development at Poplars Farm. These works are a likely source of the modern redeposited clay layer.

Confidence rating: The fieldwork was undertaken in warm sunny weather and conditions for the evaluation were good. Full co-operation was received from the client and machine contractor. Therefore a high confidence rating is attached to the results of the work.

6. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Ambergate Developments for commissioning ASC to undertake this evaluation. Thanks are also due to Brian Giggins, the Archaeological Officer of Milton Keynes Council for his assistance with this project.

The trial trenching was undertaken for ASC Ltd by David Fell and Katie Pack.

7. Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:


1. Brief
2. Project Design
3. Clients site plans
4. Site records
5. Finds
6. Site record drawings
7. List of photographs/slides
8. Colour slides
9. B/W prints & negatives
10. CDRom with copies of all digital files.


7.2 The archive will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum.


8. Bibliography


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Appendix 1: Trench Summary Tables

Trench 1							
	Max Dimensions						
	Length	8.4m	Width	1.4m	Depth	0.7m	
	Levels						
	Trench base northeast			67.53m OD			
	Trench top northeast			67.82m OD			
	Trench base southwest			68.45m OD			
	Trench top southwest			69.10m OD			
	Orientation			northeast-southwest			
	Reason for Trench			Test for building remains (recorded on early maps)			
NGR Co-ordinates			NE:		SW:		
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation			Max Width	Max Thckn	Depth BGL
(101)	Layer	Topsoil, dark grey clayey silt			1.4m	0.5m	0.0m
(102)	Layer	Subsoil, mid orange silty clay with grey patches			1.4m	0.2m	0.5m

Trench 2							
	Max Dimensions						
	Length	9m	Width	1.4m	Depth	0.8m	
	Levels						
	Trench base east			68.59m OD			
	Trench top east			69.31m OD			
	Trench base west			69.31m OD			
	Trench top west			70.12m OD			
	Orientation			east-west			
	Reason for Trench			Test for building remains (recorded on early maps)			
NGR Co-ordinates			E:		W:		
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation			Max Width	Max Thckn	Depth BGL
(201)	Layer	Contemporary topsoil and turf			1.4m	0.15m	0.0m
(202)	Layer	Modern redeposited clay with rubble			1.4m	0.2m	0.15m
(203)	Layer	Former topsoil, dark grey clayey silt			1.4m	0.4m	0.35m
(204)	Layer	Subsoil, mid orange silty clay with patches of grey clay			1.4m	0.1m	0.75m

Trench 3						
	Max Dimensions					
	Length	8.4m	Width	1.4m	Depth	1.1m
	Levels					
	Trench base north			69.31m OD		
	Trench top north			70.31m OD		
	Trench base south			69.29m OD		
	Trench top south			69.67m OD		
	Orientation			north-south		
	Reason for Trench			Test for building remains (recorded on early maps)		
	NGR Co-ordinates		N:		S:	
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation		Max Width	Max Thckn	Depth BGL
(301)	Layer	Contemporary topsoil and turf		1.4m	0.1m	0.0m
(302)	Layer	Redeposited greyish orange clay		1.4m	0.2m	0.1m
(303)	Layer	Buried topsoil, dark grey clayey silt		1.4m	0.45m	0.3m
(304)	Layer	Orangy grey natural subsoil		1.4m	0.35m	0.75m

Trench 4						
	Max Dimensions					
	Length	7.8m	Width	1.4m	Depth	1.1m
	Levels					
	Trench base east			69.69m OD		
	Trench top east			70.62m OD		
	Trench base west			70.62m OD		
	Trench top west			71.06m OD		
	Orientation			East-west		
	Reason for Trench			Test for building remains (recorded on early maps)		
	NGR Co-ordinates		E:		W:	
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation		Max Width	Max Thckn	Depth BGL
(401)	Layer	Contemporary topsoil and turf		1.4m	0.15m	0.0m
(402)	Layer	Modern redeposited clay		1.4m	0.2m	0.15m
(403)	Layer	Former topsoil of dark grey clayey silt		1.4m	0.38m	0.35m
(404)	Layer	Subsoil, mid greyish brown silty clay		1.4m	0.4m	0.73m
(405)	Cut	Linear feature, ditch		0.9m	0.6m	0.73m
(406)	Fill	Fill of [405] mid brown silty clay with frequent pebbles		0.9m	0.4m	0.73m
(407)	Fill	Fill of [405] yellow brown sandy clay with mortar		0.8m	0.2m	0.73m

Appendix 2: Finds Concordance

Context	Pottery		Bone		Flint (no)	Shell (g)	Stone (no)	Other Finds	
	(no)	(g)	(no)	(g)				Type	(no)
(406)								Brick frags	3 (120g)
								Glass shard	1(1g)
								Fe nail	1(25g)
								Coal	1(1g)