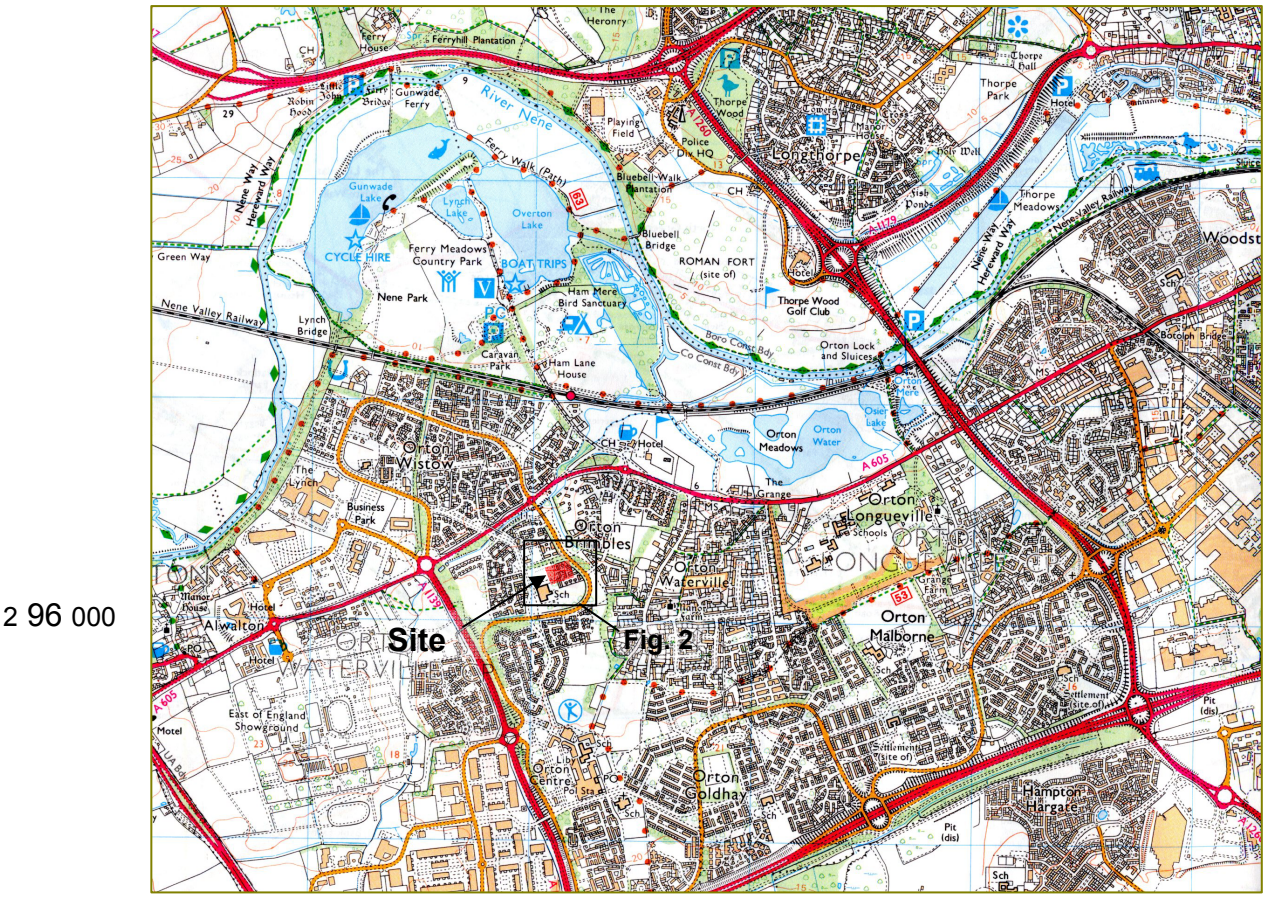
Summary

- *Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) was commissioned by Scott Wilson Ltd on behalf of Peterborough City Council to undertake an archaeological trial trench evaluation as part of the Capital Receipts Programme at Matley Primary School, Orton Brimbles. These works were commenced on the 14/8/07 and completed on the 15/8/07.*

- *The evaluation required the excavation and recording of two trial trenches in accordance with a written specification provided by Scott Wilson Ltd (2007a) and agreed with Peterborough City Council.*

- *Below a very deep modern over-burden, a buried land surface was revealed running through both trenches. A single archaeological feature, an isolated prehistoric east-west aligned ditch, was identified in Trench 1 containing a small finds assemblage comprised probable Bronze Age pottery, a worked flint and possible quern stone.*

5 15 000



2 96 000

Fig. 1: Site location at scale 1:25 000. The development area is shown in red and the area shown in Fig. 2 is outlined in black. (O.S. Copyright License No. A1 515 21 A0001)

1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) was commissioned by Scott Wilson Ltd on behalf of their client, Peterborough City Council to undertake an archaeological trench evaluation as part of the Capital Receipts Programme. This evaluation was undertaken on overgrown land north of Matley Primary School, Peterborough (MPSO07, PCA Ref 396). These works commenced on the 14/8/07 and were completed on the 15/8/07.

2.0 Site Location and description

Orton Brimbles is within the administrative district of Peterborough City Council, and lies to the southwest of the city centre. It is located south of the River Nene and between Orton Longueville and Orton Waterville.

The development site is located in the south of Orton Brimbles, to the north of Matley Primary School and is bounded on each side by hedgerow and trees. The site, roughly rectangular, covers an area of 1.6 hectares of scrub vegetation and trees surrounded on the north and east sides by a modern earthen bund which produces a raised platform area in the southern part of the site. The central NGR is TL 150962.

The underlying solid geology of the evaluation site is Oxford Clay with superficial geology comprising river terrace deposits (BGS, 1984). The site, within the bund, is relatively flat and lies at approximately 18m above Ordnance Datum.

3.0 Planning background

This work was commissioned to further evaluate the site following a desk-based assessment (Scott Wilson 2007b) and will inform the determination of subsequent planning applications. This approach complies with the requirements of Archaeology and Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (Dept. of Environment, 1990); Management of Archaeological Projects (EH, 1991) and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation (IFA, 1994, as revised).

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

Archaeological evidence from the prehistoric to the industrial periods have been revealed within the Orton areas of Peterborough, which is comprehensively covered within the specification produced by Scott Wilson (2007a). The information below summaries evidence relevant to the archaeology revealed on the evaluation site and which is located within 2km of the development site.

Recent excavations at the showground at Orton Waterville, which is located over 1km south-west of the Matley Primary School site, revealed a single prehistoric ring ditch (ADS, 2007). To the north of the site on the clays south of the Nene, prehistoric field boundaries have been encountered (Scott Wilson, 2007). To the north-east of the site at Orton Longueville, a barrow and urn dating to the Bronze Age have been excavated (ADS, 2007).

Moving closer to the evaluation site, approximately 280m to the west, is a scheduled Bronze Age barrow cemetery comprising five round barrows which are much reduced by ploughing, with the ditches surviving as buried features visible as crop marks (Scott Wilson, 2007b p2).

Within Orton Brimbles itself, approximately 600m north-east of the site, aerial photography has indicated the presence of a ring ditch enclosure. The cropmarks of two concentric ring ditches have been identified to the south-west of the evaluation site. (ibid).

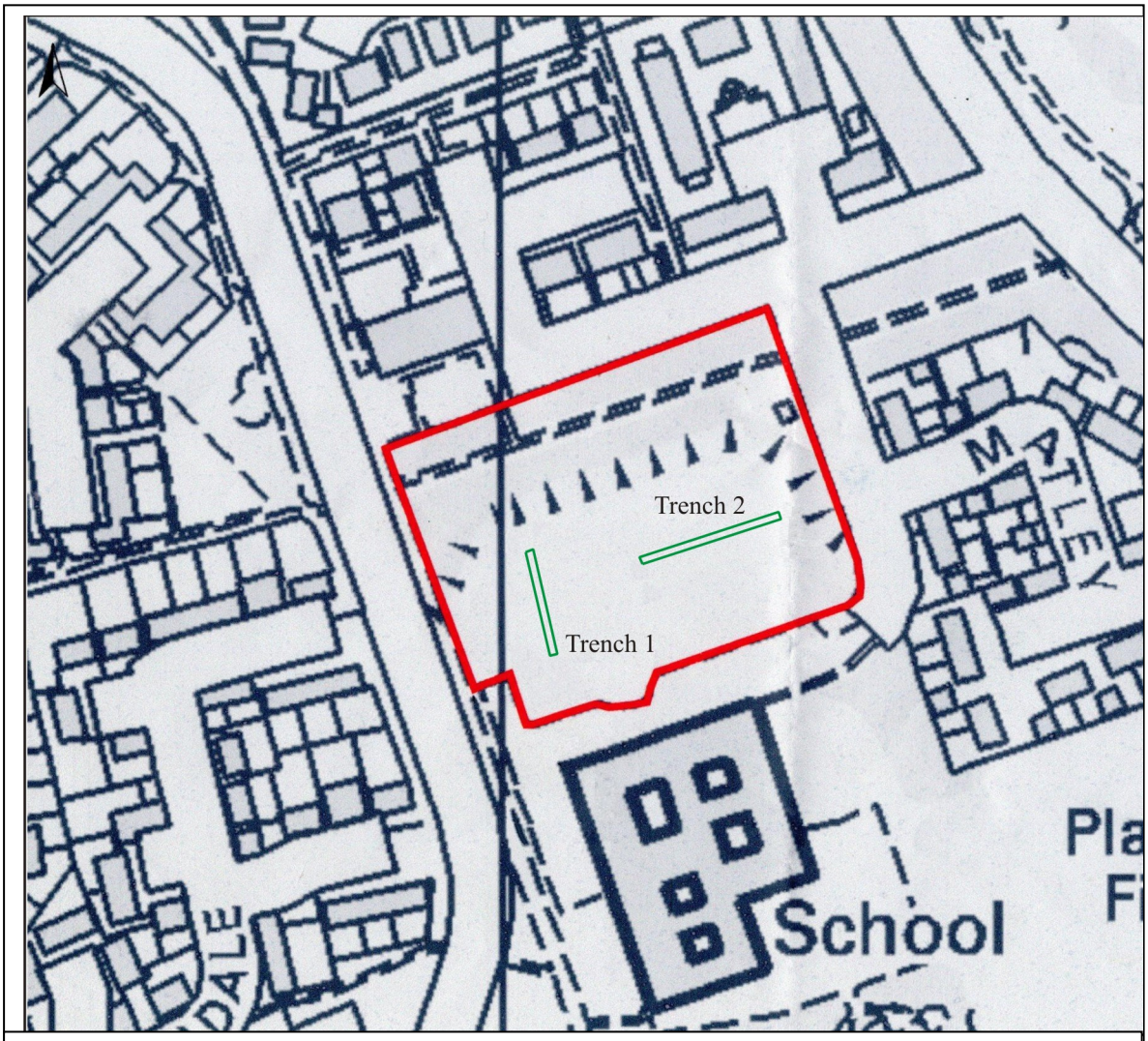


Figure 2: Trench Location Plan, 1:2000

5.0 Methodology

In accordance with a specification produced by Scott Wilson, in consultation with Peterborough City Council, two trenches were excavated on the southern 'platform' area of the Matley School site. These trenches were positioned in order to evaluate the deposit sequence for the site, as well as to establish the presence or absence of any archaeological remains (Scott Wilson, 2007a). One 30m x 2m trench, running north-south and one 40m x

2m trench running east-west were excavated using a wheeled 360˚ excavator with a 1.8m wide toothless bucket.

All machining was carried out under constant archaeological supervision, then each trench was cleaned and recorded. Comprehensive context sheets were completed for each feature and deposit encountered. Colour slides, black and white and digital photographs, a full section length and plan for each trench were drawn to complement these accounts. Due to the size of the trenches, these drawings were recorded at a scale of 1:50.

Only one archaeological feature was exposed within this evaluation (Ditch [105]). Fifty % of the feature's length visible within the trench was hand excavated. It was recorded as stated above, artefacts retrieved and a sample consisting of 30 litres of its fill was taken for analysis.

A 30 litre sample of a buried top soil (103) was also taken for finds retrieval and analysis of environmental remains. All spoil heaps were scanned with a metal detector after all digging was completed. After all excavation and manual site recording was completed an electronic survey was carried out using Lecia GS50 global positioning system to plot the trenches and surrounding boundaries in relation to the Matley Primary School building.

6.0 Aims and Objectives

The following information was summarised from the specification supplied by Scott Wilson Ltd (2007a).

Although the Matley Primary School site is not situated within a known area of potential archaeological significance, due to the close proximity of a scheduled Bronze Age round barrow cemetery to the west and other evidence for prehistoric settlement in the surrounding area an evaluation of the nature, depth, extent and date of any archaeological deposits or features, if any, was required.

The quantity, potential, and significance of any archaeological features or deposits encountered were to be identified and assessed, while further information on the type and extent of the modern disturbance on the site was to be investigated.

The overall aim of the evaluation was to help to establish an appropriate mitigation strategy for the Matley Primary School site.

7.0 Results

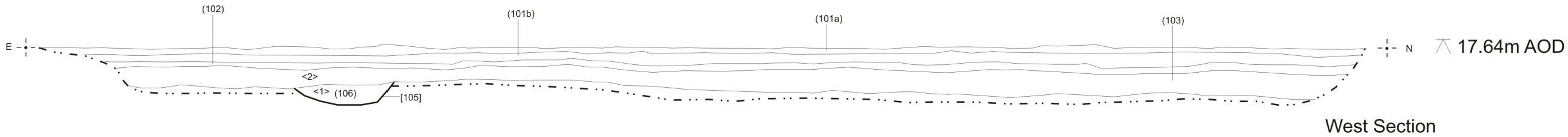
7.1 Trench 1 (Fig 3a and 3b)

The natural geological deposit at the base of this trench was a mid yellowish-brown clay with patches of mid orangey-brown gravel (104). It was truncated at the southern end by a shallow but broadly U-shaped ditch [105] measuring 2.25m wide with a depth of 0.50m.

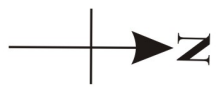
Ditch [105]This was filled with a single homogenous deposit of mid brownish-orange silty-clay (106). This yielded two sherds of prehistoric pottery, a possible quern stone or glacial erratic and a single flint flake. The pottery is considered (based on fabric, thickness and

colour) to be late Bronze Age, although there is no form or decoration to confirm this (Appendix 2).

A:



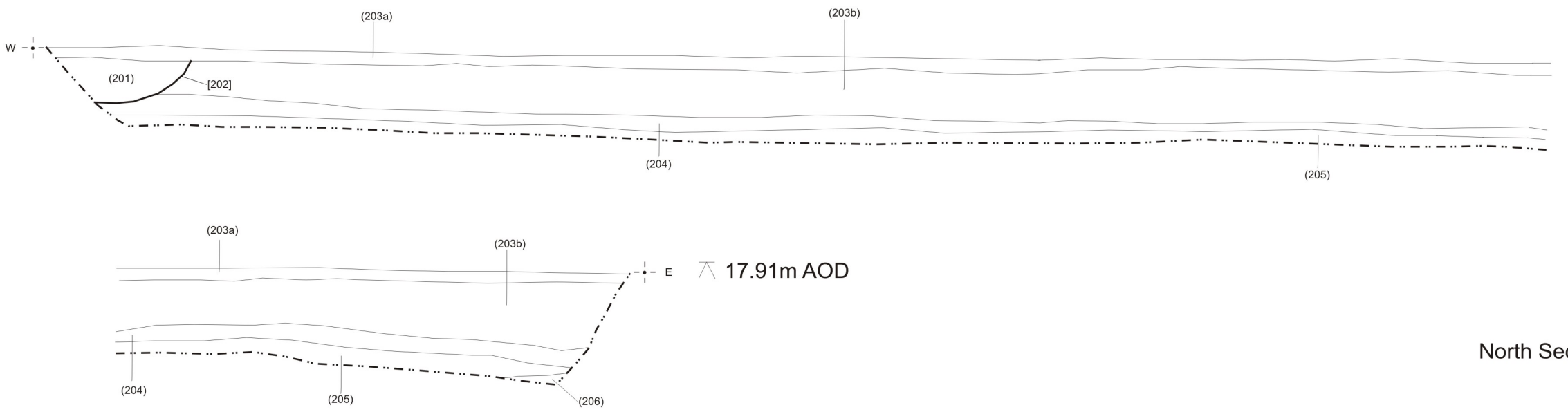
West Section



B:

TRENCH 1

C:



TRENCH 2

North Section

Figure 3: Plan & Sections of Trench 1 & 3, scale 1:100

Sealing ditch [105] this feature and running the entire width and length of the trench, was a recently buried dark blackish-brown silty-clay top soil (103) with a maximum depth of 0.65m. It contained fragments of modern land drain and two sherds of pottery. These sherds, identified as bowl fragments, have been dated to the post-medieval period (Appendix 4).

Sealing this was a recent made ground deposit of thin light yellowish-grey silty-clay mixed with limestone gravel (102), only 0.25m at its deepest. Modern metal and plastic was visible within this deposit but no finds were retained. This was in turn sealed by the current top soil deposit (101). This was poorly developed and comprised a mid greyish brown silty-clay (101a) with a more humic A-horizon (101b) supporting rough vegetation. It had a maximum depth of 0.25m and contained no finds.

7.2 Trench 2 (Fig 3c)

The basal natural deposit for this trench was the mid greyish-orange clay with patches of mid orangey-brown gravel (206) first identified in Trench 1. Directly overlying the natural, was mid yellowish-grey silty clay subsoil (205) which had a maximum depth of 0.35m. This appeared to be derived from the underlying natural as a consequence of weathering and natural soil processes.

Sealing the above and covering the entire trench was deposit (204), a dark blackish-grey silty clay with a maximum depth of 0.40m. Although it contained no finds, it was so similar to (103) that it was considered to be the same deposit and is thus also interpreted as a buried plough soil.

This was sealed by a layer of dark reddish-brown silty clay (203b) which had a significant depth of 1.35m. It contained modern metal but no finds were retained given their clearly modern date. This layer was considered to be modern made ground; and whilst it was clearly distinct from that identified in Trench 1, it is considered to be of the same phase.

Truncating layer (203b) was a large modern pit. It was only partially visible in the section, but appeared U-shaped and substantial in both depth an width -being at least 0.85m deep and 2.5m wide. This large pit was filled with a single fill of a mid orangey-brown silty clay (201). The deposit contained pieces of modern metal and plastic but no finds were retrieved. Above this feature was the poorly developed A-horizon (203a) supporting vegetation.

8.0 Discussion and conclusions

The only phase of archaeological activity for this site dates to the Bronze Age period and is found in the form of a ditch [105] within trench 1. The function of the ditch could not be ascertained due to its isolation on the site and nothing definitive can be inferred from its shape either. However, the type of finds present within its fill suggests an area of occupation close by. This is further supported by the condition of the pottery sherds; the

largest of which is unabraded and therefore will probably not have travelled far from to the ditch (Appendix 2).

The buried topsoil, recorded as (103) and (204), probably developed over a prolonged period given that it sealed a probable Bronze Age ditch and yet in Trench 1 (103) contained a small assemblage of pottery and tile with a terminus post quem of the eighteenth century.

The latest stratigraphic deposits, comprising made-ground layers (101) & (203) and the modern pit [202], are thought to have been the result of building and construction works in the area when the Orton Brimbles Village was constructed in the 1980's.

9.0 Statement of potential

The prehistoric ditch which survives on this site does so due to the fact that it was kept as green land during the development of Orton Brimbles and was protected by the modern bund that surrounds it and the platform that was formed over the top of it. However, as the site is surrounded on all sides by modern buildings its potential for good survival outside this area is not high.

As stated in the archaeological background above, the wider local context includes numerous features relating to Bronze Age activity and settlement in the area. Unfortunately this evaluation has simply confirmed this already accepted pattern, without really providing anything more substantial.

Not withstanding the forthcoming report on the soil samples that may result in further artefacts being recovered, the overall artefact assemblage is both small in quantity and varied in date. The find of a single worked flint within a known pre-historic landscape context is largely irrelevant.

Of greater interest, is the probable Bronze Age pottery, but its type and chronology cannot be stated with any certainty at present. If further archaeological works are considered necessary in due course to mitigate the effects of redevelopment, one key objective should be to attempt to refine the fabric type and date to fit it in to the regional pattern.

10.0 Acknowledgments

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) would like to thank Scott Wilson Ltd for the commission.

11.0 References

ADS Archaeological Data Service, 2007. *http://ahds.ac.uk*

BGS 1972. Peterborough Solid and Drift Geology. *1:50,000 map and guide. Vol 158* (Keyworth).

Scott Wilson 2007. *Matley Primary School, Orton Brimbles, Peterborough. Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation- Specification.*

12.0 Site Archive

The documentary, photographic and bulk archive for the site is currently in the possession of Pre-Construct Archaeology. This will be deposited with Peterborough Museum within six months of final reporting.