



**Land at Sunhill Close & Saxon Way  
Fairford  
Gloucestershire**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

*for*  
**SF Planning Limited**

CA Project: 4749  
CA Report: 14102

March 2014

Land at Sunhill Close & Saxon Way  
Fairford  
Gloucestershire

Archaeological Evaluation

CA Project: 4749  
CA Report: 14102

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signed	
date	10 March 2014
issue	01

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## SUMMARY

<b>Project Name:</b>	Land at Sunhill Close & Saxon Way
<b>Location:</b>	Fairford, Gloucestershire
<b>NGR:</b>	SU 14390 01220
<b>Type:</b>	Evaluation
<b>Date:</b>	24-26 February 2014
<b>Planning Reference:</b>	13/05181/OUT
<b>Location of Archive:</b>	To be deposited with Corinium Museum
<b>Site Code:</b>	SCF 14

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in February 2014 at Land at Sunhill Close & Saxon Way, Fairford, Gloucestershire. Twelve trenches were excavated.

Geophysical anomalies of potential archaeological origin, which were targeted by the trenches, were found either not to be present in the case of a number of linear features (variations in the natural bedrock geology) or likely to be modern in date (services). A number of targeted potential pit features were found to be natural in origin.

A single sherd of pottery tentatively dated to the medieval period was recovered from ditch 203 in Trench 2. However this is most likely to be an undulation in the natural filled with subsoil.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In February 2014 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation at the request of SF Planning Limited of land at Sunhill Close & Saxon Way, Fairford, Gloucestershire (centred on NGR: SU 14390 01220; Fig. 1). The evaluation was undertaken following advice from Charles Parry (Archaeological Officer for Gloucestershire County Council, the archaeological advisor to Cotswold District Council (CDC)), that a programme of archaeological work would be required, prior to the determination of the planning application for residential development of the site (CDC, ref. 13/05181/OUT), due to the high archaeological potential.
- 1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a detailed *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) produced by CA (2014) and approved by Charles Parry. The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IfA 2009), the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991) and the *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (English Heritage 2006). It was monitored by Charles Parry, including a site visit on 25 February 2014.

### ***The site***

- 1.3 The site is located to the north-west of the centre of Fairford, between Sunhill Close to the north and Saxon Way to the east. It comprises two sub-rectangular fields measuring approximately 1.28ha used for grazing of horses. The site is bounded to the north and east by residential properties and by farmland to the west and south. The two fields within the site are separated by a public footpath. The site lies at an elevation of approximately 95m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at its northern extent and falls away gently to the south where ground level is c. 90m aOD.
- 1.4 The underlying bedrock geology of the area is mapped as Cornbrash Formation comprising limestone of the Jurassic Period, with a potential for Quaternary Head deposits, comprising clay, silt, sand and gravel, within the south-eastern corner of the site (BGS 2014).



### **Archaeological background**

- 1.5 There are no recorded archaeological sites within the proposed development area; however, the site is located within an area of high archaeological potential, especially with regard to prehistoric and early medieval remains. Although no previous archaeological investigations have been carried out within the site, a number of archaeological surveys have been undertaken within the surroundings of the site, including a desk-based assessment at Waiten Hill to the east (Cotswold Archaeology 2013) and a geophysical survey and subsequent investigations at Home Farm immediately to the south of the site (Archaeological Surveys Limited 2010 and Charles Parry *pers. comm.*).
- 1.6 Fairford is located within the upper Thames Valley, which was subject to human activity throughout prehistory, from the Palaeolithic to the Iron Age. However, the evidence of earlier prehistoric activity from Fairford and its surroundings is represented predominantly by isolated finds of objects, including a findspot of a Neolithic polished stone axe in London Road and a late Bronze Age socketed spearhead found near Fairford. In addition, a number of cropmarks identified in the valley of the River Coln have been interpreted as possible barrows of Bronze Age date.
- 1.7 Extensive Iron Age remains are recorded in close proximity to the site. A series of investigations carried out at Pips Field and Home Farm c. 50m to the south of the site revealed a number of features interpreted as part of an Iron Age co-axial field system, as well as a number of pits and post-holes. A crouched inhumation burial investigated at Home Farm is also considered to have been associated with the Iron Age activity. A number of features revealed in the geophysical survey at Home Farm may extend into the site. Consequently, there was considered to be a high potential for the presence of Iron Age remains within the site.
- 1.8 There is evidence for Romano-British activity within the surroundings of the site which indicates the potential for a settlement site located nearby. Romano-British finds, as well as cremated remains of an infant buried within a rubbish pit of Romano-British date, have been retrieved from the Anglo-Saxon cemetery Scheduled Monument, located approximately 50m to the north-west of the site. These remains indicate that prior to the Saxon activity, the area of the Scheduled

Monument may have been utilised for interments or other activity, suggesting the presence of a nearby settlement site.

- 1.9 Fairford is a settlement of early medieval origin and there is extensive evidence for Saxon activity within this area. The settlement is first mentioned in a 9th century charter produced by St Peter's Abbey in Gloucester. The Domesday Survey of AD 1086 records Fairford as a very large manor incorporating agricultural fields, three mills and a church. Evidence for early medieval settlement activity has been revealed during a number of archaeological investigations carried out in the environs of the site. An extensive complex of Saxon features has been identified at Coln House School, c. 200m to the south-east of the site indicating a large Saxon settlement within the western fringes of Fairford. Further features associated with Saxon settlement have been recently investigated at Home Farm, c. 50m to the south of the site, comprising sunken feature buildings, ditches and pits.
- 1.10 The early medieval settlement at Fairford was associated with an extensive pagan Anglo-Saxon cemetery, which is preserved as a Scheduled Monument c. 50m to the north of the site. The investigations revealed over 150 predominantly inhumation burials and grave goods included brooches, weaponry, bowls, buckets and fittings.
- 1.11 In addition, several field-names within the surroundings of the site are considered to have Saxon origins, including *Tanners Field* within the northern part of the site.
- 1.12 It is considered that, due to the presence of extensive Saxon remains within the surroundings of the site, there is a high potential for archaeological remains of early medieval date to be present within the site.
- 1.13 In the medieval period Fairford grew as a result of its location at the crossing of the main Cirencester to London road over the River Coln. It appears that there was a market at Fairford before 1100 AD and a borough was created around the market place by the late 12th century. The medieval settlement developed around High Street, situated over 250m to the east of the site. The site does not fall within the medieval settlement core, designated as a Conservation Area, and is considered likely to have been occupied throughout the medieval and post-medieval period by agricultural land.

- 1.14 The recent geophysical survey (AS 2014) identified a number of features that have the potential to be archaeological in origin (Fig 2). The survey determined that the site is very noisy, and this might be due to the fact that it was used as allotments for a period as well as containing site compounds during recent construction phases. In Area 1, the most noticeable anomalies were the long curving linear anomaly crossing the centre of the survey area; however it didn't appear to come through into Area 2. Other linears were parallel with extant field boundaries, so were thought to be agricultural in origin (or associated with the allotments). There was one substantial pit-like anomaly in the central northern part of the survey area which was considered to have some potential. Within Area 2 there was a negative linear anomaly which was thought might relate to a pipe (?), however there were a number of other positive and negative anomalies, the alignment of which ran almost parallel to one another, and although these could have been related to agricultural activity, they did not appear to run parallel with any extant or former land boundaries. Linears aligned almost north south were thought to be possibly associated with the former allotments.

### ***Archaeological objectives***

- 1.15 The objectives of the evaluation are to provide information about the archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality, in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IfA 2009). The evaluation aimed to test the results of the geophysical survey and comprised a series of trenches targeted on the anomalies identified by the geophysics.
- 1.16 Specific aims of the evaluation were:
- to identify whether any remains associated with the Iron Age activity recorded to the south of the site extend into the site;
  - to identify if there are any remains associated with early medieval activity within the site, including funerary and settlement features; and
  - to establish whether there are any remains within the site which may have been associated with a tannery, the presence of which has been indicated by the field name in the northern part of the site.



- 1.17 This information will enable CDC to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset, consider the impact of the proposed development upon it, and to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the development proposal, in line with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

### **Methodology**

- 1.18 The fieldwork comprised the excavation of 11 trenches; 7 no. x 15m x 1.6m; 3 no. x 10m x 1.6m and 1 no. x 5m x 1.6m, targeted on the identified geophysical anomalies. An additional 1 no. x 30m x 1.6m contingency trench was requested by Charles Parry and excavated in the south-eastern corner of the southern field within an area of magnetic disturbance identified in the geophysical survey. The location of the trenches are shown on the attached plan (Fig. 2). Trench 4 was moved to the north to avoid trees along the southern edge. Trenches were set out on OS National Grid (NGR) co-ordinates using Leica GPS and surveyed in accordance with CA Technical Manual 4 *Survey Manual* (2012).
- 1.19 All trenches were excavated by mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All machine excavation was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. Where archaeological deposits were encountered they were excavated by hand in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual* (2013).
- 1.20 Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with CA Technical Manual 2: *The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites* (2003) and, no deposits were identified that required sampling. All artefacts recovered were processed in accordance with Technical Manual 3 *Treatment of Finds Immediately after Excavation* (1995).
- 1.21 The archive and artefacts from the evaluation are currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner the artefacts will be deposited with Corinium Museum along with the site archive. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix C, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

## 2. RESULTS (FIGS 2 TO 10)

- 2.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts and finds are to be found in Appendices A and B respectively.
- 2.2 A broadly similar stratigraphic sequence was observed within the evaluation trenches. The natural geological substrate, comprising limestone brash with patches of a mid-reddish brown silty clay was revealed at an average depth of 0.35m below present ground level (bpgl). This was overlain by approximately 0.12m of subsoil, which was in turn sealed by approximately 0.22m of topsoil.
- 2.3 A small sherd (1g) pottery tentatively dated to the medieval period was recovered from shallow ditch 203 in Trench 2. However it is also likely that this feature is an undulation in the natural potentially filled with remnant subsoil and not a separate fill (204) (Fig. 4). No archaeological features were identified within Trenches 1 and 3-12.
- 2.4 Many of the geophysical anomalies recorded during the preceding geophysical survey correlated with natural silty patches and hollows within Trenches 1, 3, 6-8 and 10. Within Trenches 1, 3 and 7 silty patches 104, 107, 303 and 703 were excavated and recorded (Figs. 5 to 9). The (targeted) patches within the other Trenches 6, 8 and 10 were ground proofed and shown to be the same in nature as the excavated examples. A number of the linear geophysical anomalies targeted by Trenches 1, 2, 5-11 were not present, suggesting they may be features within the topsoil. The linear anomaly within the southern end of Trench 4 correlated with a modern vertical sided ditch most likely for a service.
- 2.5 An area of magnetic disturbance identified in the geophysical survey that was targeted by Trench 12 (contingency trench) (Fig 10) correlated with a thicker topsoil that contained fragments of modern brick, modern patterned edging bricks, plastic and metal. No archaeological features or deposits were present within the trench.

### ***The finds***

- 2.6 A single small bodysherd weighing less than 1g was recorded from deposit 204, which was interpreted as the fill of a natural hollow. The sherd is unfeathered and tentative dating to the medieval period is based on fabric and sherd thickness. The

fabric is an unglazed earthenware containing abundant oolithic limestone inclusions. Similar fabrics recorded from Cirencester date to the 11th to 13th centuries AD (Ireland 1998).

### **3. DISCUSSION**

- 3.1 Despite the archaeological potential of the application area indicated by its location (see archaeological background above) and by the geophysical survey, the evaluation identified no archaeological remains.
- 3.2 Geophysical anomalies of potential archaeological origin, which were targeted by the trenches, were found either not to be present in the case of a number of the linear features (variations in the natural bedrock geology) or likely to be modern in date (services). A number of targeted potential pit features were found to be natural in origin.
- 3.3 The absence of archaeological deposits indicates that remains associated with prehistoric and early medieval activity, most notably Iron Age remains and features associated with Saxon settlement at Pips Field and Home Farm c. 50m to the south of the site; an Anglo-Saxon cemetery, located approximately 50m to the north-west of the site; and an extensive complex of Saxon features identified at Coln House School, c. 200m to the south-east of the site, do not extend as far as the site.

### **4. CA PROJECT TEAM**

Fieldwork was undertaken by Sian Reynish, assisted by Anthony Beechey and Alex Thomson. The report was written by Sian Reynish, assisted by Alex Thomson. The illustrations were prepared by Aleksandra Osinska. The archive has been compiled by Sian Reynish, and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Damian De Rosa.



## 5. REFERENCES

Archaeological Surveys Limited 2014 *Land at Sunhill Close & Saxon Way, Fairford, Gloucestershire: Magnetometer Survey Report*, client report ref. 529

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2011 *Geology of Britain Viewer* [http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geology\\_viewer\\_google/googleviewer.html](http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geology_viewer_google/googleviewer.html) (accessed 5 February 2014)

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Wilkinson, D. and McWhirr, A. 1998 *Cirencester Anglo-Saxon Church and Medieval Abbey*, 98–140, Cirencester Excavations IV, Cirencester, Cotswold Archaeological Trust



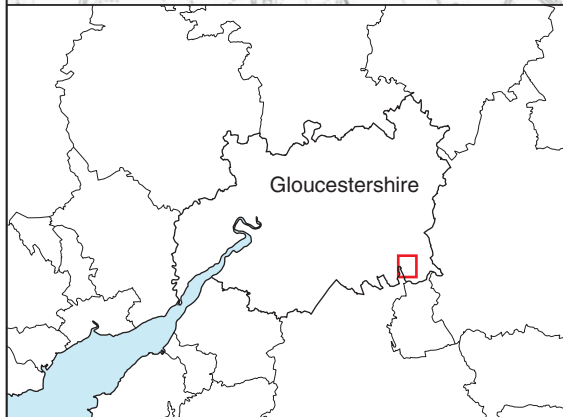
## APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Fill of	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	Depth /thickness (m)	Spot-date
1	100	layer		topsoil	mid blackish grey clayey silt	>10	>1.6	0.28	
1	101	layer		subsoil	mid greyish brown silty clay	>10	>1.6	0.2	
1	102	layer		natural substrate	limestone brash and mid yellowish brown silty clay matrix	>10	>1.6		
1	103	fill	104	fill of hollow	mid reddish brown silty clay	0.87	0.52	0.32	
1	104	cut		natural hollow	irregular natural hollow with concave base	0.87	0.52	0.32	
1	105	fill	107	1st fill of hollow	mid yellow brown sandy clay silt with limestone brash		0.45	0.26	
1	106	fill	107	2nd fill of hollow	mid reddish brown silty clay	1.7	0.75	0.49	
1	107	cut		natural hollow	irregular natural hollow with concave base	2.35	0.75	0.49	
2	200	layer		topsoil	dark greyish brown clayey silt	>10	>1.6	0.26	
2	201	layer		subsoil	yellowish brown silty clay	>10	>1.6	0.05	
2	202	layer		natural substrate	limestone brash and mid yellowish brown silty clay matrix	>10	>1.6		
2	203	cut		linear	very shallow linear with very gradual sides	>1.6	1.05	0.1	
2	204	fill	203	fill of linear	yellowish brown brashy clayey silt	>1.6	1.05	0.1	medieval
3	300	layer		topsoil	dark greyish brown clayey silt	>15	>1.6	0.24	
3	301	layer		subsoil	yellowish brown silty clay	>15	>1.6	0.11	
3	302	layer		natural substrate	limestone brash and mid yellow clay	>15	>1.6		
3	303	cut		pit/geological hollow	irregular subcircular pit/hollow with steep sides and flat base	>1.12	0.68	0.38	
3	304	fill	303	fill of pit/hollow	brownish red silty clay	>1.12	0.68	0.38	
4	400	layer		topsoil	dark greyish brown clayey silt	>15	>1.6	0.23	
4	401	layer		subsoil	yellowish greyish brown clayey silt	>15	>1.6	0.17	
4	402	layer		natural substrate	limestone brash and mid yellowish brown silty clay matrix	>15	>1.6		
4	403	cut		service trench	vertical sided cut of modern trench	>2.1	0.6	>0.41	
4	404	fill	403	1st fill of service	limestone brash	>2.1	0.6	>0.13	
4	405	fill	403	2nd fill of service	dark reddish greyish brown silty clay	>2.1	0.6	0.28	
5	500	layer		topsoil	dark greyish brown clayey silt	>15	>1.6	0.23	
5	501	layer		subsoil	mid yellowish greyish brown clayey silt	>15	>1.6	0.11	
5	502	layer		natural substrate	limestone brash with a mid yellowish brown silty clay matrix	>15	>1.6		
6	600	layer		topsoil	dark greyish brown clayey silt	>15	>1.6	0.18	
6	601	layer		subsoil	mid yellowish greyish brown clayey silt	>15	>1.6	0.1	
6	602	layer		natural substrate	limestone brash with a mid yellowish brown silty clay matrix and patches of mid reddish brown silty clay	>15	>1.6		
7	700	layer		topsoil	dark greyish brown clayey silt	>15	>1.6	0.19	
7	701	layer		subsoil	mid yellowish greyish brown clayey silt	>15	>1.6	0.16	
7	702	layer		natural substrate	limestone brash with a mid yellowish brown silty clay matrix	>15	>1.6		
7	703	cut		geological hollow	irregular subcircular pit/hollow with steep sides and flat base	>1.6	1.1	0.15	
7	704	fill	703	fill of hollow	brownish red silty clay	>1.6	1.1	0.15	
8	800	layer		topsoil	dark greyish brown clayey silt	>15	>1.6	0.19	
8	801	layer		subsoil	mid yellowish greyish brown clayey	>15	>1.6	0.13	

					silt				
8	802	layer		natural substrate	limestone brash with a mid yellowish brown silty clay matrix and patches of mid reddish brown silty clay	>15	>1.6		
9	900	layer		topsoil	dark greyish brown clayey silt	>10	>1.6	0.22	
9	901	layer		subsoil	mid yellowish greyish brown clayey silt	>10	>1.6	0.1	
9	902	layer		natural substrate	limestone brash with a mid yellowish brown silty clay matrix	>10	>1.6		
10	1000	layer		topsoil	dark greyish brown clayey silt	>10	>1.6	0.2	
10	1001	layer		subsoil	mid yellowish greyish brown clayey silt	>10	>1.6	0.15	
10	1002	layer		natural substrate	limestone brash with a mid yellowish brown silty clay matrix and patches of mid reddish brown silty clay	>10	>1.6		
11	1100	layer		topsoil	dark greyish brown clayey silt	>5	>1.6	0.19	
11	1101	layer		subsoil	mid yellowish greyish brown clayey silt	>5	>1.6	0.16	
11	1102	layer		natural substrate	limestone brash with a mid yellowish brown silty clay matrix	>5	>1.6		
12	1200	layer		topsoil	dark greyish brown clayey silt with modern brick rubble	>30	>1.6	0.42	
12	1201	layer		subsoil	mid yellowish greyish brown clayey silt	>30	>1.6	0.08	
12	1202	layer		natural substrate	limestone brash with a mid yellowish brown silty clay matrix	>30	>1.6		

## APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project Name	Land at Sunhill Close & Saxon Way, Fairford, Gloucestershire	
Short description	<p>An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in February 2014 at Land at Sunhill Close &amp; Saxon Way, Fairford, Gloucestershire. Twelve trenches were excavated.</p> <p>A single sherd of pottery tentatively dated to the medieval period was recovered from ditch 203 in Trench. However this is most likely to be an undulation in the natural filled with subsoil.</p>	
Project dates	24-26 February 2014	
Project type	Evaluation	
Previous work	Geophysical Survey (Archaeological Surveys Limited 2014)	
Future work	Unknown	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
Site Location	Land at Sunhill Close & Saxon Way, Fairford, Gloucestershire	
Study area (M <sup>2</sup> /ha)	1.28ha	
Site co-ordinates	SU 1439 0122	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	Cotswold District Council	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Damian De Rosa	
Project Supervisor	Sian Reynish	
<b>MONUMENT TYPE</b>	None	
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS</b>	None	
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVES</b>		
	Intended final location of archive	Content
Physical	Corinium Museum	Pottery
Paper	Corinium Museum	Trench sheets, context sheets, section drawings and digital photographic register
Digital	Corinium Museum	Digital photographs and digital plan
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
<p>CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2014 <i>Land at Sunhill Close &amp; Saxon Way, Fairford, Gloucestershire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation</i>. CA typescript report <b>14102</b></p>		



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**PROJECT TITLE**

Land at Sunhill Close and Saxon Way  
 Fairford, Gloucestershire

**FIGURE TITLE**

Site location plan



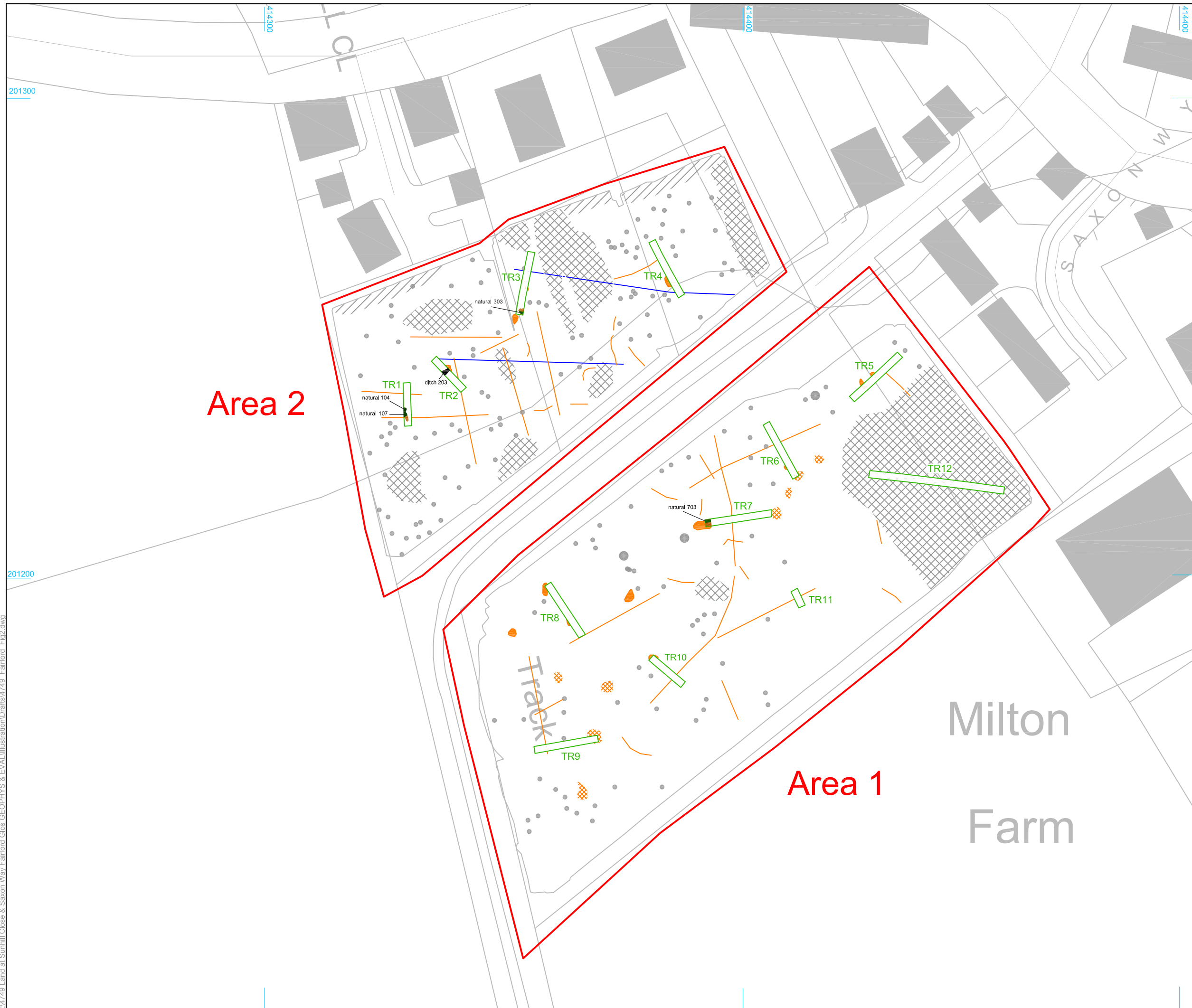
Reproduced from the 2009 Ordnance Survey Explorer map with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright Cotswold Archaeology Ltd 100002109

PROJECT NO. 4749 DATE 18-02-2014  
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FIGURE NO.

1





- site
- evaluation trench
- geological feature
- archaeological feature
- excavated slot in geological feature

- Archaeological Surveys Ltd.
- Positive linear anomaly - possible ditch-like feature
  - Negative linear anomaly - material of low magnetic susceptibility
  - Discrete positive response - possible pit-like feature
  - Weakly positive anomaly - magnetically enhanced material
  - Magnetic debris - spread of magnetically thermoremanent/ferrous material
  - Strong dipolar anomaly - ferrous object
  - Magnetic disturbance from ferrous material



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**PROJECT TITLE**  
 Land at Sunhill Close and Saxon Way,  
 Fairford, Gloucestershire

**FIGURE TITLE**  
**Trench location plan showing  
 geological features and geophysical  
 survey results**

PROJECT NO. 4749	DATE 25-02-2014	FIGURE NO.	
DRAWN BY RJR	REVISION 00		
APPROVED BY LM	SCALE@A3 1:750		<b>2</b>

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3



**3 Trench 2 looking south-east (1m scales)**



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PROJECT TITLE

Land at Sunhill Close and Saxon Way  
Fairford, Gloucestershire

FIGURE TITLE

**Photograph**

PROJECT NO. 4749 DATE 4/03/2014  
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FIGURE NO.

**3**



**4 North-east facing section of ditch 203 in trench 2 (1m scale)**



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*PROJECT TITLE*

Land at Sunhill Close and Saxon Way  
 Fairford, Gloucestershire

*FIGURE TITLE*

**Photograph**

PROJECT NO.	4749	DATE	4/03/2014	FIGURE NO.
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5

5 Trench 1 looking north (1m scales)



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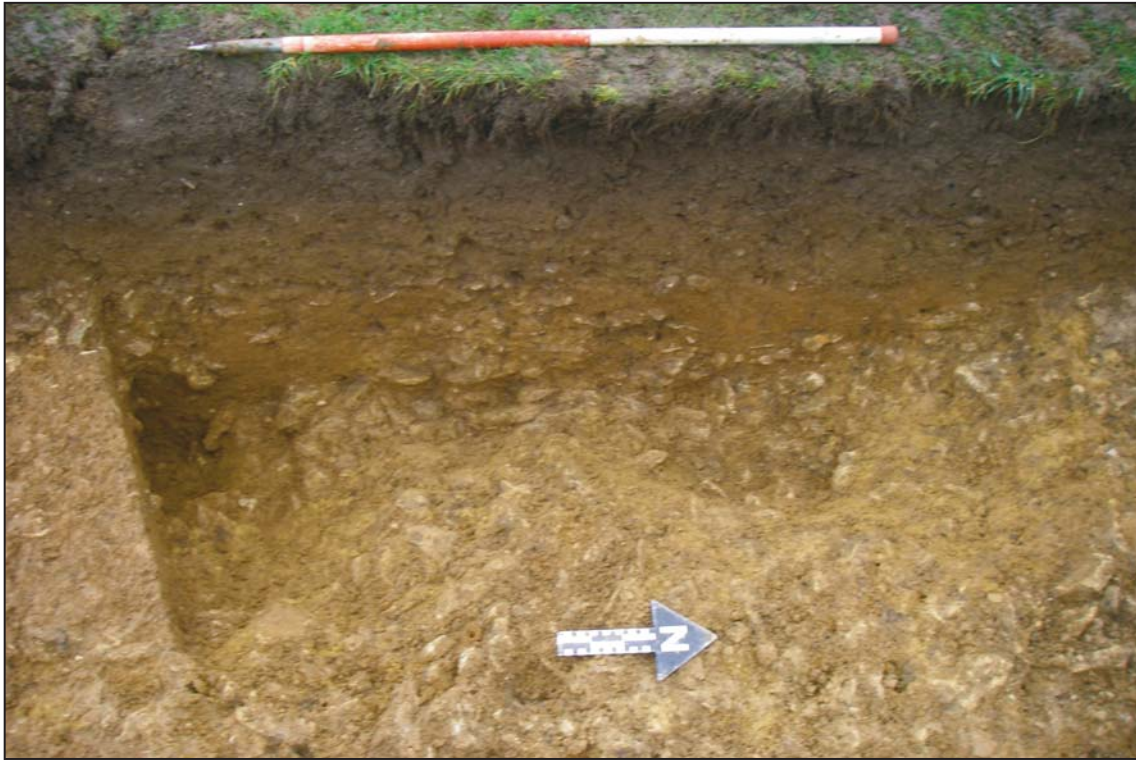
FIGURE TITLE

Photograph

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FIGURE NO.

5



6



7

6 East facing section of natural silty patches 104 and 107 in trench 1 (1m scale)

7 South-west facing section of natural silty patch 303 in trench 3 (1m scale)



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FIGURE NO.

6 & 7



8



9

8 Trench 7 looking west (1m scales)

9 North facing section of natural silty path 703 in trench 7 (1m scale)



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FIGURE TITLE

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FIGURE NO.

8 & 9



10

**10 Trench 12 looking east (1m scales)**



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PROJECT TITLE

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FIGURE TITLE

**Photograph**

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FIGURE NO.

**10**