KNOBBS FARM, SOMERSHAM, CAMBRIDGESHIRE: PHASE 5

An Archaeological Evaluation

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CAMBRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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CAMBRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

University of Cambridge
January 2007
Report No. 756

ECB 2536

Contents

Summary

Evaluation trenches at Knobbs Farm in late 2006 revealed evidence for the westward continuation of archaeological features excavated early in 2004 during Phase four. As well as features revealed during an earlier series of evaluation trenches immediately to the south (Phase five). The continuation of a possible late Iron Age/early Romano-British droveway was recorded, which was initially identified during the earlier phase of evaluation. Late Iron Age and Romano-British field systems, which appeared to be contemporary with formally laid out field boundary ditches that could be seen continuing west from those previously excavated. Whilst possible Bronze Age activity and several features of post-medieval and undefined date were also identified at the site.

Introduction

Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation on behalf of Lafarge Aggregates Ltd between the 4th and 22nd of December 2006. The evaluation at Knobbs Farm, Somersham Quarry, Cambridgeshire was in advance of proposed gravel extraction and formed part of Phase five of an ongoing programme of archaeological investigations. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a specification of works and was monitored by the Cambridgeshire Planning Control Archaeologists of Cambridgeshire County Council (CAPCA).

Location and Topography

Phase five comprises 4ha of arable farmland *c*. 2km northeast of the village of Somersham (Figure 1). The quarry lies to the north and east of the Somersham River, also referred to as the Old West Water (TL 365 790). The Colne Ditch, which is believed to be part of the Roman Car Dyke system, runs southwards from Somersham River to the River Great Ouse. Both the Somersham River and the Colne Ditch are referred to as the Cranbrook Drain. The site was at a height of *c*. 5-7m OD with an underlying geology of First and Second Terrace River Gravels.

Archaeological Background

Previous archaeological excavations and cropmarks, provide evidence for archaeological activity at, and in the vicinity of Knobbs Farm. Gravel extraction within the quarry has led to the recovery of Palaeolithic hand axes (Masser 2000), a substantial Mesolithic flint scatter was discovered to the northwest of Knobbs Farm by the Fenland Survey (Hall 1992), whilst a smaller Neolithic flint scatter was identified nearby at TL 359 808 (Masser 2000).

Evidence of Bronze Age activity from around the evaluated area includes five possible Bronze Age ring ditches to the east of the quarry (Palmer and Cox 1996) and

Figure 1. Location map

several Bronze Age pits have been observed in the course of the quarrying activities (Lisboa 2000). Furthermore, fieldwalking on and in the vicinity of the area of assessment recovered a large density of early Bronze Age worked flint, which has been interpreted as a single period assemblage (Conneller 2000).

Several late Iron Age/Romano British sites are known from the immediate vicinity of the investigation area. The gravel island/fen edge interface was densely settled during these periods. Settlement was often concentrated on the lower lying fen edge, where both wetland and dryland resources could be efficiently exploited. A single Iron Age pit was excavated during the Phases two and three evaluation (Hatherley 2001). To the north and east of the Phases four and five area, cropmarks associated with a large Romano-British settlement have been identified. These show ditched enclosures, drove ways and field systems. The core of the settlement, to the immediate east of the phase four area, was removed by quarrying following minimal archaeological excavation in the 1960s and concluded that a possible Roman villa may have occupied this area (Lisboa 2000). Phase one of the current investigations recovered insubstantial ditches on a northeast-southwest alignment, comparable to those identified on the aerial photographs. These have been interpreted as lying on the periphery of the settlement and were probably used for little more than marking out plots of land (Masser 2000).

The results of the Phase four excavation, carried out early in 2004, revealed evidence for three phases of activity during the late Iron Age and Romano-British periods (Wills 2004b). Evidence for late Iron Age/early Romano-British activity was provided by an informally laid out field system, from which the recovery of early Romano-British wares suggested that this was a transitional phase. Mid to late 1st century Romano-British activity was represented by the establishment of a formally laid out field system which the environmental analysis suggested was in the vicinity of a settlement. The internment of cremations, both urned and unurned occurred during this period. The latest phase of activity appeared to follow a period of less activity or decline. The only features represented were dated mid to late 2nd to 4th century and consisted of a formally laid out cemetery, bounded on three sides by earlier ditches and gullies. The cemetery may have continued to the north of the 2004 Phase four excavation area, in an area already extracted. An associated area of evaluation involving 12 trenches was dug to the south-west of this excavated area and immediately south of the present area of evaluation in 2004 (Wills 2004c). The 2004 evaluation revealed a continuation of identified field systems, a potential late Iron Age drove way, as well as ephemeral remains of Neolithic activity.

A number of sites are known from the surrounding area. The remains of a late Bronze Age/early Iron Age and late Iron Age settlement, with an intervening period when the settlement did not appear to have been exploited, was excavated at Parkhall Road, Somersham in May 2000 (Roberts 2002). Extensive evidence for domestic activity at the site was recovered from a number of ditches and structures. There was no evidence recovered for the continuation of this settlement into the early Roman period. Evidence for substantial Iron Age and Roman settlement has been recovered from ongoing archaeological investigations to the immediate south of the Somersham River. A middle to late Iron Age settlement of at least 20 roundhouses and a possible square barrow were excavated at Colne Fen, Earith (*c*. 2km southeast; Regan and Evans 2000), whilst a later field system relating to the Romano-British farm was

excavated at Langdale Hale even further to the south (Regan 2003). To the immediate south of the Somersham River the most recent investigations at Earith quarry, the Camp Ground, revealed evidence for what may have been a localised centre and/or market place (Evans and Webley 2004).

To the south and west of the Phase four area, aerial photographs have also revealed the remains of medieval ridge and furrow within what were the Somersham common fields. The phase one evaluation exposed the remains of several of these furrows (Masser 2000). The east-west alignment corresponds to that of the known medieval remains. The excavations at Parkhall Road found evidence for possible medieval gravel quarrying that may have been used to surface an early route across the Fen to Chatteris (Roberts 2002).

The course of a disused railway line runs approximately north-south along the western boundary of the investigation area. Post medieval quarrying, probably associated with the railway construction, was discovered during the earlier Phase five evaluations.

Methodology

A fieldwalking survey was carried out in the area of Phase five in Spring 2004 (Wills 2004a). The results of this survey helped determine the location of the evaluation trenches of phase five. 12 trenches were initially excavated in 2004, but the presence of badgers to the north of this area restricted the evaluation area by a half and required the final 10 trenches to be excavated in December 2006.

A total of 10 trenches were mechanically excavated to a total length of 450.75m, by a 360° tracked excavator, under the supervision of an archaeologist, using a 2m wide trenching bucket (Figure 2). The topsoil and subsoil were stripped in order to expose the underlying archaeology. Excavation involved half sectioning the discrete features by hand (pits and postholes), whilst one metre slots were excavated by hand through linear features. All trenches were planned at a scale of 1:50 and sections at 1:10. Recording was conducted using the CAU modified Museum of London system. Feature numbers are referred to in the text by the prefix **F.**; context numbers are referred to in bracketed type, e.g. [001] for cuts and fills. All work was carried out in strict accordance with statutory Health and Safety legislation and with the recommendations of SCAUM (Allen and Holt 2002). The site code was SOM 06.

Results

Within the 10 excavated trenches, a layer of topsoil, between 0.4 and 0.65mm deep and generally dark brown silty clay was recorded across the site. A thin layer of light brown sandy-clay subsoil was present in all but the two westernmost trenches, being no deeper than 0.15m. The natural subsoil within trenches 9 and 10 was light reddish brown sandy clay with occasional loose gravels whilst the subsoil. Throughout the remaining trenches the natural subsoil consisted of light brown sandy clay with

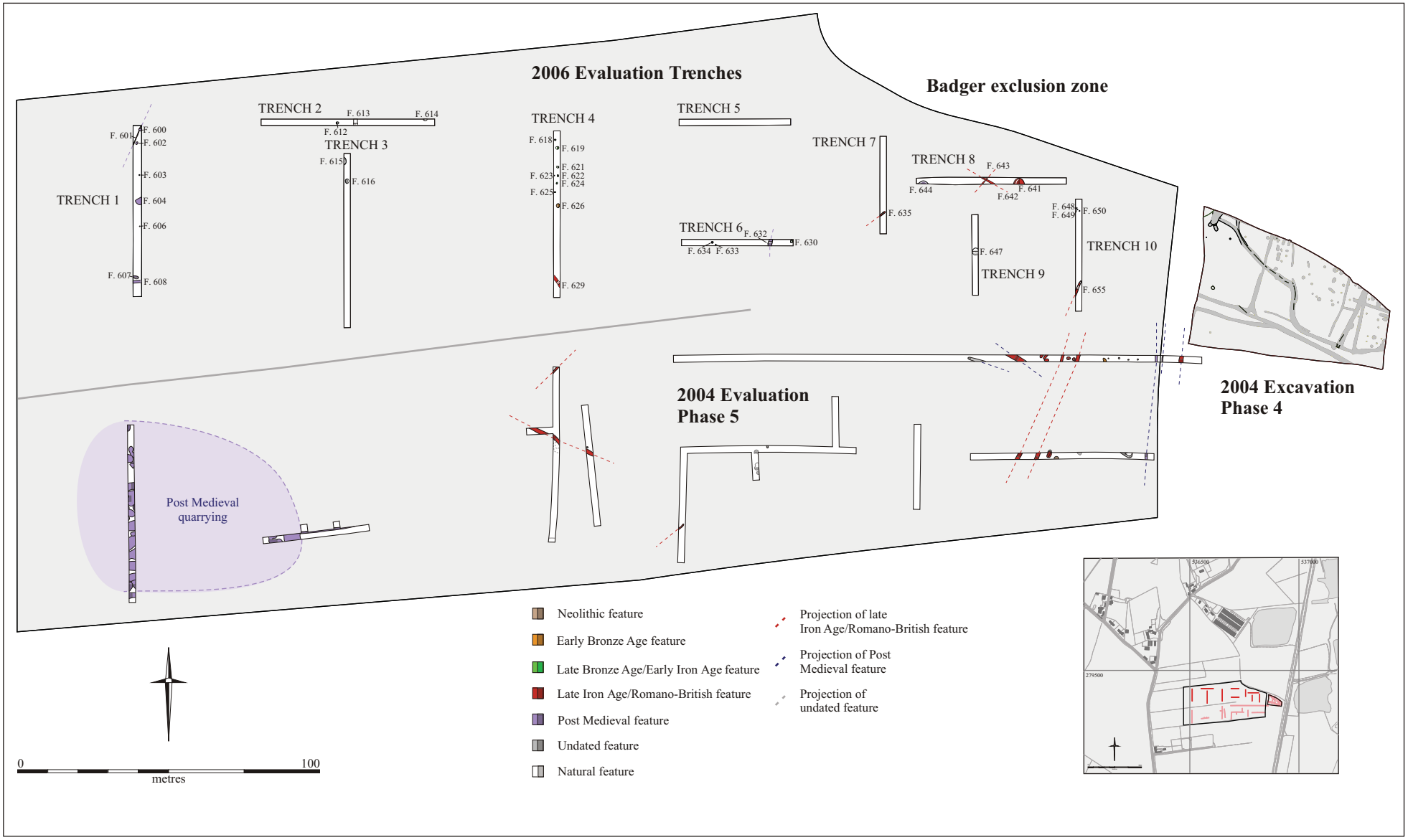

Figure 2. Location of evaluation trenches 1-10 with earlier Phase 5 evaluation trenches and the Phase 4 excavation area

large quantities of loose gravels. The subsoil of Trench 1 was severely truncated and was mixed with redeposited material, indicating a large amount of post-medieval disturbance. Due to the shallow depth of the topsoil, plough scarring was visible in many of the trenches. A large amount of animal disturbance was encountered in trenches 7 and 8, within the area of a previously identified and abandoned Badger Sett.

Archaeological features were identified in 9 of the 10 trenches, dating from the Bronze Age to the Victorian period. No features were recorded in Trench 5. Evidence for Post-Medieval quarrying was found in Trench 1 at the western end of the site.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was 57m long, oriented north-south. Seven features were exposed within the trench, three of which were investigated prior to a severe inundation of ground water. The flooding restricted the investigation and recording within Trench 1 to three features, all of which date to the later post-medieval period, probably associated with activity following the abandonment of post-medieval quarrying. Furthermore the quarrying potentially explains the inundation of groundwater; as the void cutting into the natural clays was backfilled with redeposited gravels, and therefore held the water. These features are comparable with similar features excavated during earlier testing immediately to the south (Trench 6, Wills 2004c).

F606: [602], was a small sub circular pit or possible posthole a maximum of 0.25m in diameter and 0.18m in depth with irregular rounded sides and base. It was filled with [603], a moderately compacted very dark grey to black, charcoal rich silty clay with several small pieces of late post-medieval ceramics (18-19th century). F606 seems to have been cut into what appears to be redeposited or backfilled gravels, probably associated with the levelling of the land following abandonment of post-medieval quarrying in the area.

F607: [600], was a sub-rounded pit, 1.3m in maximum length (north-south) and 1.22m in maximum width (east-west) with a maximum depth of 0.3m. Rounded base and sides, it was filled with [601], a moderately compacted mid grey-brown silty sand with frequent gravel inclusions. Several pieces of late post-medieval ceramic were recovered from [601]. Several instances of apparent undercutting into a mixture of loose sandy gravel and grey, compacted silty clay again suggest that like F606, F607 was cutting redeposited post-medieval material.

F608: [604], was a narrow north-east to south-west running linear ditch, with a maximum width of 0.28m and irregular, rounded sides and base to a maximum depth of 0.13m. It was filled with [605], a moderately compacted dark grey brown sandy silty clay with occasional loose gravels and several small fragments of late post-medieval ceramics and a large fragment of post-medieval floor-tile. Similar to F606 and F607, F608 showed evidence of being cut into post-medieval backfilling deposits.

The four features within Trench 1 that were not excavated due to the influx of groundwater were **F600,** a sub-rounded pit 0.8m in diameter and filled with dark grey sandy silt. Visible relatively high in the plough-soil within the side of the trench, F600 potentially postdated the other post-medieval features in Trench 1. **F602** was a small, sub-rounded pit 0.5m in diameter, filled with dark grey silty clay and contained several sherds of late post medieval pottery. Whilst **F603** was a small, rounded possible posthole 0.2m in diameter, filled with very dark grey to black, sandy silt and possibly associated with F606. **F604** was a large, sub-rounded pit, 0.85m in diameter and filled with a mixture of dark silty clay and light sandy clay.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was 56m in length and, orientated east-west and contained three features of archaeological significance, several patches of lighter clay were investigated along with a band of silty sand. These represented natural, localised features within the geology.

F612: [616], was shallow sub-circular pit, with a maximum diameter of 1.3m and a maximum depth of 0.15m, with irregular, rounded sides and a flat-base. A basal fill [618], of loosely compacted, mid brown sandy clay with small quantities of loose angular gravel and occasional charcoal flecking, was (with the exception of the charcoal inclusions) similar in form to the surrounding subsoil. The secondary, upper fill [617], was a friable, mid to dark grey-brown silty clay with occasional charcoal flecking.

F613: [608], was a shallow, north-south running linear ditch with an uneven, rounded base and irregular, sloping sides; steeper on the western side and relatively gentle to the east. The fill of this ditch [609] was a loosely compacted, mid to light brown sandy clay with frequent loose gravels and occasional charcoal flecking. The irregular nature of the ditch and its proximity and perpendicular orientation to a field boundary suggests probable use as a field drain or similar post-medieval agricultural feature.

F614: [612], was an oval pit 1.1m in maximum diameter and 0.36m in maximum depth. It had regular rounded sides, steeper towards to west, and a rounded base. The basal fill [615] was compacted light brown sandy clay with frequent gravels and occasional charcoal inclusions. An intermediate fill [614] was a moderately compacted light to mid brown sandy clay with occasional loose gravels and charcoal flecking. The upper fill [613] was moderately compacted light grey-brown sandy clay with occasional charcoal flecking.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was 58.25m long orientated north-south and contained two archaeological features:

F615:[610], was a large oval feature, only partially revealed alongside the baulk, 3.3m in maximum diameter it had moderate to steep rounded sides with occasional areas of undercutting and a sometimes irregular concave base, a maximum of 0.55m in depth. F615 was filled by a single deposit [611] of moderately compacted mid grey-brown silty clay with small angular and sub-angular gravel inclusions and very occasional charcoal. Small fragments of unidentifiable animal bone were recovered from the top of this fill, which, along with the charcoal flecking supports an archaeological origin for this feature but the irregular and undercut nature of the cut [610] may suggest a possible origin as a tree-bowl or throw.

F616:[606] was a rounded pit, with a maximum diameter of 1.8m and generally straight, moderately sloping sides with a flat base. The feature was filled with a single deposit, [607], a loosely compacted mid to light grey-brown sandy clay with infrequent angular gravels and occasional charcoal flecking.

Trench 4 (figure 4)

Trench 4 was 56m long, orientated north-south and contained nine archaeological features, several of which dated to the Late Bronze age or early Iron Age; and may be related to an area of habitation; especially F621, F622, F624 and F625 which could be interpreted as a curvilinear line of postholes, associated with a structure.

F618: [622] was a small circular feature with a maximum diameter of 0.26m, gradual sloping sides and flat base with a maximum depth of 0.11m. A single fill [621] was loosely compacted dark brown-grey, sandy silt with occasional loose angular gravels and frequent charcoal inclusions. Fragments of late Bronze Age or early Iron Age ceramic (Appendix 1) and one fragment of

undatable worked flint (Appendix 4) were recovered from this feature, which was interpreted as a probable posthole.

F619: [625], was a circular feature, 0.76m in maximum diameter, with moderate to steep, straight sides and a concave base a maximum of 0.19m in depth. Two deposits filled this feature; the basal fill [624] was a loosely compacted dark brown clayey-silt with several lenses of charcoal. The upper fill [623] was moderately compacted red-brown silty clay with occasional loose gravel inclusions and frequent charcoal flecking. This fill appears to be heat affected, although it is doubtful that the burning was carried out *in-situ*, it does suggest a hearth or localised fire in the vicinity.

F621: [619], was a sub-circular feature, probably a shallow posthole, with concave sides and a maximum diameter of 0.55m, and rounded base a maximum of 0.13m in depth. One deposit [620] filled the cut; a friable mid to dark grey silty clay with a high level of charcoal and occasional small angular gravels.

F622: [632], was a shallow, oval feature, interpreted as a posthole, with a maximum diameter of 0.36m (north-south) by 0.2m (east-west), it had gently sloping sides and concave base a maximum of 0.05m in depth. It was filled with [631], a soft, dark grey-brown sandy silt with occasional mottling by orange clay, and small quantities of loose angular gravel.

F623: [635] was a small, circular posthole 0.23m in diameter, with almost vertical sides (slight concavity to western side) and narrowing significantly to a rounded base a maximum of 0.24m in depth. Two fills were identified within the post-hole, the lower, [637] was a moderately compacted mid to dark grey-brown, sandy, silty clay with frequent angular stones and very occasional charcoal flecking. The upper fill [636] was loosely compacted, dark grey-brown silty clay with high levels of in-situ charcoal. Proximity to F621, F622 and F624 suggests probable association, representing a possible structural element.

F624: [638], was an irregular, sub-rounded feature, a maximum of 0.55m in diameter with concave sides, sharper to the south, and concave base, a maximum of 0.18m in depth. The fill [639] was moderately compacted, dark grey-brown silty clay with a high frequency of in-situ charcoal flecking and occasional small angular gravel inclusions.

F625:[634], was a small, sub circular post-hole a maximum of 0.3m in diameter with near vertical sides and a rounded base a maximum of 0.32m in depth. Single fill, [633] of loosely compacted sandy silt with occasional loose gravel and small amounts of orange clay mottling.

F626: [628] was a large, rounded pit 1.1m in maximum diameter with steep, gently curving sides and a concaved base. Two deposits filled the pit; the lower fill [627] was a loosely compacted dark-grey to black silty clay with a high quantity of charcoal and occasional orange clay mottling. No datable finds were recovered from the lower fill. The upper fill [626], was a moderately compacted mid brown silty sand with moderate quantities of charcoal, Cereal and Hazelnut shell fragments (Appendix 5), along with occasional orange clay mottling and loose angular gravel inclusions. Possible Early bronze age, but definite Bronze age pottery was recovered from this fill (Appendix 1). The location of F626 suggests a connection with F618 and the other probably structural features of F621, F622, F624, F625 and F623. F626 probably represented a storage or refuse pit associated with an area of habitation.

F629: [629] was a straight linear gully or ditch running north-west to south-east, with a maximum width of 0.92m, gently sloping, rounded sides and a generally flat, slightly rounded base, a maximum of 0.18m in depth. The ditch had one fill, [630], a friable, mid to light brown sandy clay with occasional charcoal flecking and frequent loose angular gravels. No datable artefacts were recovered from this feature, but its morphology and alignment perpendicular to Late Iron Age ditches identified to the south during earlier testing (Wills 2004, F507, F515), therefore F629 can be dated by association to this period and can be interpreted as forming part of a late Iron Age field system.

Trench 5

Trench 5 was 39.5m long and orientated east-west, and exposed no features of archaeological significance, several east-west running post-medieval deep plough-furrows and small disturbances associated with animal activity or tree throws/ bowls were to be dispersed throughout the trench.

Trench 6

Trench 6 was 37m long orientated east-west and contained four features of archaeological significance, dating to the Bronze Age and post-medieval periods:

F630: [645], was a circular pit with a maximum diameter of 0.85m, steep, straight sides and a narrow, flat base a maximum of 0.32m in depth. Main fill [644] was moderately compacted mid to dark grey silty clay with high levels of charcoal and occasional angular gravels. Several fragments of probable Late Bronze age of Early Iron Age pottery (Appendix 1) were recovered from within this deposit. A thin lens of a light to mid brown sandy clay [646], angled down from the southern side of the pit, indicated that the pit was open for a considerable period of time allowing redeposited 'natural' to slump into the pit. The pottery recovered from the primary fill suggested use as a refuse pit.

F632: [643] was a north-south running linear ditch, a maximum width of 1.1m, with very steep straight sides (western side almost vertical) and a concave base a maximum of 0.57m in depth. Three distinct fills were recorded from within this ditch; the lowest [642] was a compacted, dark grey-brown clayey-silt with occasional gravel inclusions. A secondary fill [641] was a soft, mid brown slightly clayey silt with occasional gravel inclusions. The upper fill [640] was moderately compacted silty clay with occasional gravel flecking and infrequent loose gravel inclusions. Fragments of late post-medieval brick and floor tile were recovered from this deposit, suggesting a 17-19th date. The lower two deposits were indicative of the ditch being open for a considerable length of time, as does its alignment perpendicular to existing field boundaries; the final, upper fill was indicative of a phase of deliberate backfilling.

F633:[648] was a small oval posthole, a maximum of 0.18m in diameter, with steep straight sides and a rounded base a maximum of 0.14m in depth. The single fill [647] was soft, dark grey silty sand with occasional charcoal flecking and occasional angular gravels.

F634: [650] a small, shallow, circular feature, possibly a posthole associated with F633, was a maximum of 0.48m in diameter and had moderately sloping, curved sides and a flat base; it was filled by [649], a moderately compacted mid brown-grey silty sand with infrequent gravel inclusions. No datable cultural material was recovered from this or F633.

Trench 7

Trench 7 was 32.5m long, orientated north south and only contained one feature of archaeological significance. The northernmost 10m of the trench was heavily truncated by a combination of modern deep-ploughing ruts and a large number of animal burrows (probably Badger setts): It is likely that this single feature relates through its orientation to the Late-Iron Age field system ditches identified in trenches 4, 8, 9 and 10 as well as in several trenches from an earlier phase of testing to the south (Willis 2004, Trenches 4, 12, 11, 1 and 7).

F635: [651] was the north eastern terminus of a south-west to north-east running, narrow, straight linear gully or shallow ditch. It had a maximum width of 0.6m with uneven, generally straight moderately sloping sides and an irregular base a maximum of 0.3m in total depth. The terminus had founded sides leading to a flat, irregular base. Two fills were recorded from within F635; the lower, [652], was a moderately compacted mid grey silty clay with frequent loose gravel inclusions and occasional charcoal flecking. The upper fill, [653] was a moderately compacted, mid to light brown-grey silty-sandy-clay with occasional loose angular gravels and occasional charcoal flecking. No datable artefacts were recovered from either fill but its correspondence with

previously identified late Iron Age/ Romano-British field systems within earlier phases of evaluation, as well as ditches lying within Trenches 4, 8 and 10 suggests this as a probable date (Figure 5).

Trench 8

Trench 8 was 50m long, orientated east-west, and contained four features of archaeological significance dating from the late Iron Age to post-medieval periods.

F641: [663] was a large, sub-rounded pit, a maximum of 1.6m in diameter, with steep, generally straight sides and a flat base a maximum o.55m in maximum depth. Two deposits were revealed within this pit; the lower [662] was moderately compact dark grey silty clay with occasional patches of orange mottling and occasional loose angular gravels. This deposit was visible at the surface as a darker ring and seems to form a lining to the pit, possibly in an attempt to waterproof it. A fragment of undatable burned clay was recovered from this fill. The upper fill [661] was moderately compacted mid-grey brown silty clay with occasional orange clay mottling and infrequent loose gravel. No datable material culture was recovered from this feature, but its proximity to F642 suggests a late Iron Age or Romano-British date.

F642: [658] was a north-west to south-east running ditch, with a maximum width of 0.53m, with straight, angled sides sloping down to a narrow, flat 'V' shaped base a maximum of 0.33m in depth. Two fills were recorded from F642; the lower [660] was a compacted, mid to dark grey sandy silt with occasional charcoal flecking. The upper fill, [659] was a friable, dark grey sandy silt with very high concentrations of charcoal and several Glume Wheat grains (Appendix 5), and occasional small angular gravels. Two small fragments of abraided Late Bronze age or early Iron age pottery (Appendix 1) were recovered from this deposit, the condition of which suggested a presence within the pre-existing topsoil prior to the ditch becoming filled. Four unworn fragments of Romano-British fine burnished greyware (Appendix 2) were also recovered from this fill, suggesting a 2-3rd century date for the filling of this feature, (Figure 5). A fragment of coarse jar of a 1-3rd century date was identified within the topsoil adjacent to F642, and although it could not be directly associated with it, suggests Roman agricultural activity in the vicinity.

F643: [656] was a south-west to north-east running, very narrow, straight, linear gully, a maximum of 0.26m in width, with steeply sloping slightly rounded sides and a rounded base, a maximum of 0.08m in depth. The fill of this [657] was compacted, light grey brown silty clay with very infrequent charcoal inclusions and occasional small angular gravels. The morphology of F643 was similar to that of modern deep plough furrows, but it was cut by the Romano-British ditch [642] and is probably therefore a remnant of an earlier phase of agricultural activity.

F644: [655] was a large shallow, oval pit, a maximum of 2.55m in diameter (east-west) with moderately sloping, slightly curved sides and a flat base a maximum of 0.23m in depth. One fill [654] was recorded, as a moderately compacted, mid reddish brown silty-clay with frequent loose gravel inclusions. No datable artefacts were recovered from this feature although traces of what was interpreted as decomposed yellow mortar or brick was noted within the fill, suggesting a post-medieval date for F644.

Trench 9

Trench 9 was 27m in length, orientated north-south and contained one feature of archaeological significance.

F647: [664], was a large irregular, sub-rounded, shallow pit, 0.65m maximum diameter, with uneven moderately sloping curved sides and an irregular, generally flat base with a maximum depth of 0.2m. One fill [665] was a moderately compacted, mid to light brown silty clay with infrequent inclusions of angular gravels and occasional charcoal flecking. No datable artefacts were recovered from this feature.

Trench 10

Trench 10 was 37.5m long, orientated north-south and contained four features of archaeological significance: a group of postholes representing a possible structural form, and a linear ditch associated with the late Iron Age or Romano-British field systems.

A line of three small sub circular pits, probably representing postholes, running from the north-west to the south-east were revealed in the northernmost extent at Trench 10: the north-western most being **F648**; a small circular posthole [667] a maximum of 0.3m in diameter with straight moderate to steep sides and flat base a maximum of 0.1m in depth. Fill of F648 was [666] a moderately compacted mid greenish-grey clay with occasional gravel inclusions. The central feature, **F649** was a small, circular posthole [669] a maximum of 0.2m in diameter with steep, straight sides and a flat base a maximum of 0.15m in depth. A single fill [668] was a moderately compacted mid grey-brown silty sand with occasional charcoal flecking. The south eastern most feature **F650** [672] was a rounded posthole a maximum of 0.3m in diameter, with moderately steep sloping sides and a flat base a maximum of 0.08m in depth. Two fills were recorded within this feature, the lower, [671] was a soft, mid brown sandy silt with occasional charcoal flecking and infrequent gravel inclusion. The upper fill [670] was soft, dark grey clayey silt with occasional orange clay mottling.

F655: [673] was a south-west to north-east running ditch, with a rounded terminus at the north-eastern end. It had a maximum width of 0.68m with steep, slightly rounded sides and narrow, rounded base a maximum of 0.26m in depth. The terminus was rounded and had gently sloping sides leading to the base. The lower of two fills [675] was friable light grey silty clay with very occasional charcoal inclusions. The upper fill [674] was friable, mid to dark grey sandy clay with high levels of charcoal and occasional loose gravels. No datable artefacts were recovered from either of the fills. The orientation of this ditch was in line with the north-east to south-west running ditch revealed in the earlier phase of testing (Wills 2004c, F 503 Trenches 1 and 7). This feature was interpreted as forming part of a late Iron Age droveway and both the morphology and the fills suggest that F655 is a continuation of this feature (Figure 5).

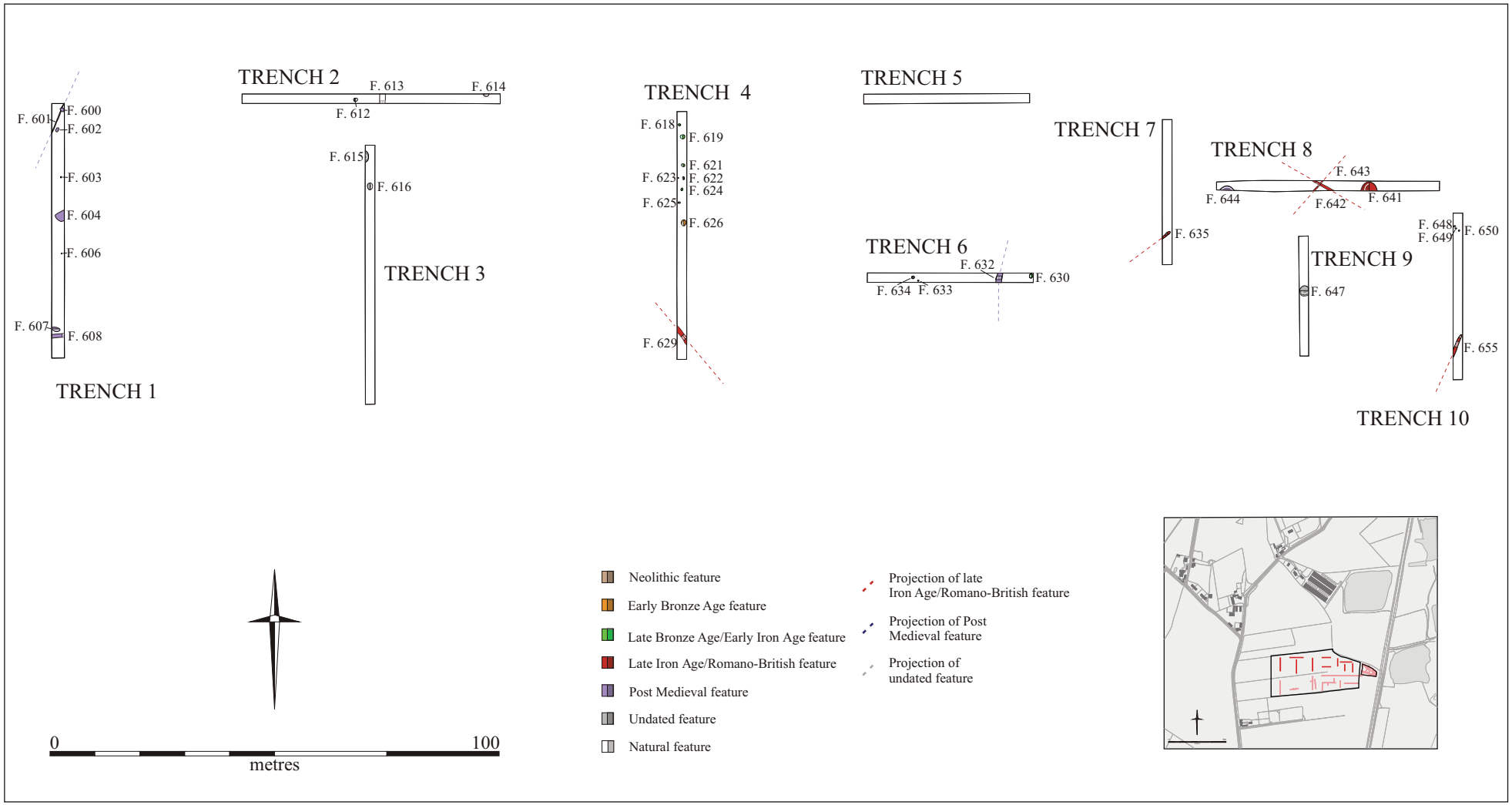

Figure 3. Plan of the 2006 evaluation trenches

Discussion

The current evaluation confirmed the continuation of archaeology from the area excavated early in 2004 (Wills 2004b Phase four) to the west and northwards from the area evaluated later in the same year (Wills 2004c Phase five), showing the setting out of field systems and a droveway from the Late Iron Age/Early Roman period into the 2nd to 4th century AD.

The results of the current evaluation revealed evidence for multi-period activity within this area of the quarry. The archaeological activity was less significant towards the western and north-western end of the proposed extraction area, where the only features were of a post-medieval date. A concentration of Bronze Age pits and postholes, potentially representing an area of occupation appeared to be focussed centrally within the evaluated area, whilst the features associated with late Iron Age or Romano-British agricultural practices were mostly concentrated from the centre of the evaluation area to the eastern limit of the evaluated area.

Bronze Age/ early Iron Age: (Figure 4).
Eight small, pits and postholes were identified within Trench 4 at the centre of the evaluated area. A series of four shallow postholes (F625, F624, F622 and F621), with one smaller post or stake-hole (F623) within the postulated arc, was interpreted as the easternmost side of a possible circular structure. Associated with this structure were two pits that produced fragments of Bronze Age or early Iron age pottery, and a fragment of worked flint (F619, F626). Another pit, which could not be directly associated with those within Trench 4, lay 80m to the east, (F630, within trench 6) and produced prehistoric material and probably represents the easternmost limit of Bronze Age activity on the site. Its position may also provide a limit to Bronze Age activity. This interpretation is supported when it is considered that no features of a Bronze Age date were identified during the Phase four, 2004 excavations to the east of this point (Wills 2004b). Bronze Age pits have been noticed elsewhere in the quarrying area (Lisboa 2000) and an early Bronze Age ditch was identified within the easternmost area of the earlier Phase five evaluation immediately to the south (Wills 2004c).

Late Iron Age/Romano-British (Figure 5)
The evidence recovered for late Iron Age/Romano-British activity indicates that the field system identified during the Phase four excavation, and also the Phase five evaluation continues to both the west and north. The coaxial nature of these ditches is evident throughout the immediate landscape in the form of cropmarks (Palmer and Cox 1996) and from features excavated to the east (Wills 2004c:9). Although no definite diagnostic Iron Age pottery was recovered from any feature during this phase of evaluation. However ditches F629; F635 and F655 are comparable with the grid-like field system identified during the previous evaluation and excavation phases. F629, a north-west to south-east ditch lies at right-angles to the projected continuation of a ditch with similar morphology and fill (2004 Trench 4, F507, *ibid*:5) is also coaxial with the ditch F635 within Trench 7 of the 2006 phase of evaluation. F655 is potentially a continuation of the westernmost ditch forming a possible droveway, (*ibid*:9) demonstrating a slight curve to the east.

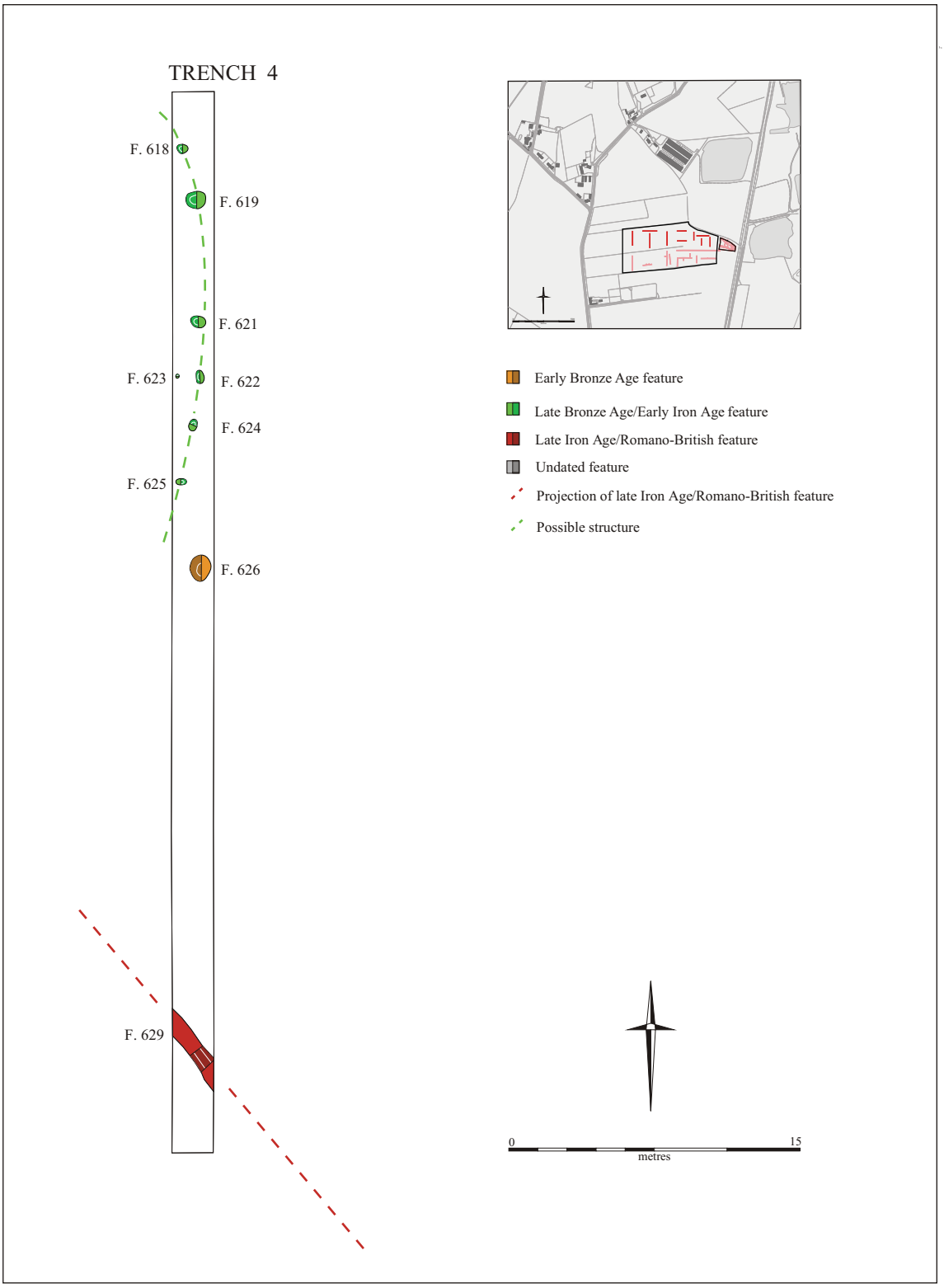

Figure 4. Trench 4 showing probable habitation area

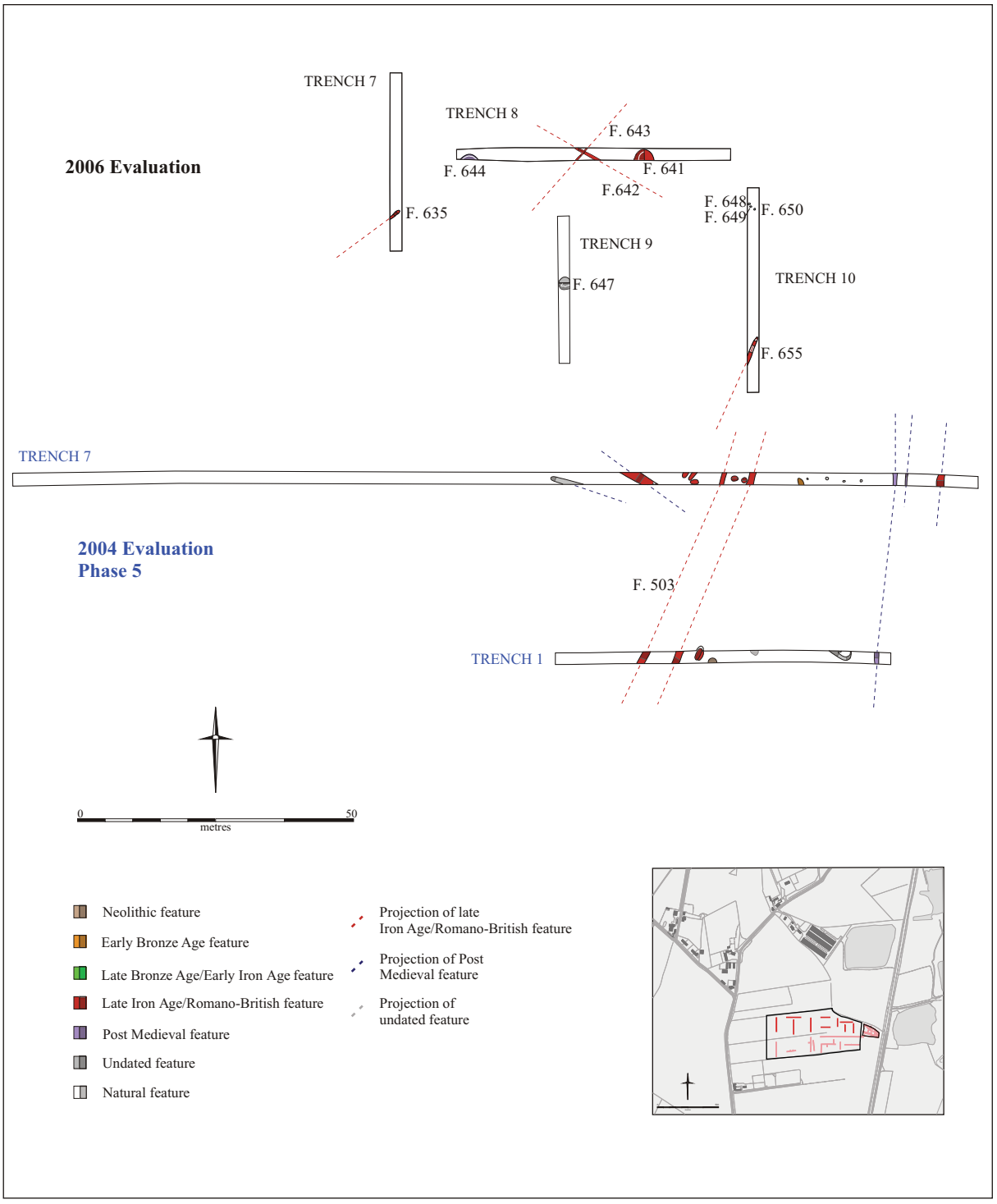

Figure 5. Trenches 7-10, 2006 and trenches 1 and 7, 2004 with projection of ditches

One north-west to south-east aligned ditch, F642 (Trench 8), was perpendicular to both F655 and F635 and was the only directly datable ditch, producing four fragments of finely burnished 2-3rd century AD Greyware. The morphology of the ditch was typically Romano-British and cut through a narrow linear gully interpreted as a potentially earlier plough-mark (F643). The ditch may therefore be a newly dug Romano-British ditch that formed part of a phase of Romano-British adaptation of the pre-existing field system, with other late Iron Age boundary ditches continuing to be used along with Roman-British ditches.

F655, was on a similar alignment to the north-east to south-west late Iron Age ditch identified during the 2004 evaluation (Wills 2004c), and potentially forms a continuation of the possible Iron Age drove-way seemingly extending towards the NE as indicated by cropmarks. The presence of a terminus marking the north-eastern end of the uncovered feature suggested possible break in the droveway ditch.

Post-medieval

Post-medieval activities at Knobbs Farm were dominated by quarrying at the west end of the site (Trench 1). The features correspond with an area of post-medieval quarrying identified immediately to the south during previous testing and was associated with a visible depression further to the west (Wills 2004c:10). It is likely that a large proportion of the site to the west of Trench 1 is severely truncated by the quarrying. Furthermore the quarrying activity seen within Trench 1 is likely to be part of the same disturbance as that recorded in the previous evaluation, associated with gravel quarrying to provide material for the construction of the nearby Great Northern Railway in the middle of the 19th century.

Several other features that produced post-medieval artefacts are probably associated with farming from this period: A north-south running ditch F632 which appears to run perpendicular to modern field boundaries to the north and south of the evaluated area and was immediately underlying a modern farm track. The ditch could be a modern field sub-division recently decommissioned to enlarge the fields into their current state. Similarly, F613 was a shallow, gravel filled ditch running perpendicular to the northernmost boundary of the site which appeared to be a modern field drain. A shallow, irregular pit, F644, of undefined origin was located within an area of considerable animal disturbance, and whilst it is unlikely that the feature was created by animal activity it is possible that it is a tree-bowl.

Undated

Seven features could not to be dated by either cultural material or association and morphology: F612 and F614 (Trench 2) and F616 (Trench 3), were definite features of unknown date and function. Whilst F633 and F634 (Trench 6) F648, F649 and F650 (Trench 10) were probable postholes that yielded no diagnostic dating material, F615 (Trench 3) and F647 (Trench 9) were irregular and often undercut features which may have been tree-bowls or were related to agricultural practices.

Conclusion

The current evaluation has enhanced our understanding of past activities at Knobbs Farm. The discovery of a continuation of the late Iron Age/Romano-British field system excavated during Phase four in 2004, has provided a greater understanding of the layout and development of the land management of the area. An area of Bronze Age habitation was also located. No features of this date were identified during either the Phase 4 excavation or the earlier Phase five evaluation, which indicated the localised nature of the settlement.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks are due to Isabel Lisboa, Archaeologica, who commissioned this project, and Lafarge Aggregates Ltd who financed it. The author was assisted by Catherine Ranson, Surveying was carried out by Donald Horne. Kasia Gdaniec (CAPCA) monitored the site. Graphics were prepared by Vicki Herring and Iain Forbes. David Gibson was the project manager.

Appendix 1: *Prehistoric Pottery* – *Matt Brudenell*

Seven sherds of Prehistoric pottery weighing 40g were recovered from the excavations (Table). The sherds were recovered from four separate features, with a low mean sherd weight of 5.7g. All the sherds were small to medium in size (under 8cm in diameter), most of which displayed weathered and abraded edges.

Feature	Context	No. sherds	Weight (g)	Temper	Suggested date
626	626	1	13	Grog	EBA?
642	659	2	7	Shell (voids)	LBA-IA
630	644	1	6	Shell & quartz-sand	LBA-IA
618	621	2	14	Shell (voids)	LBA-IA

Quantification of Prehistoric pottery

Without the presence of feature sherds, such as diagnostic rims and shoulders, dating is based on the type and hardness of fabric. This can be problematic as different tempers and clay mixtures were in use for long periods in prehistory. The date ranges given are deliberately broad. However, the earliest sherd is likely to be From F.626, which is grog tempered and could belong to the Early Bronze Age. The other sherds were all shell-tempered, though the shell has been leached out leaving small plate-like voids. These sherds are likely to be of Later Prehistoric date, with a range spanning the Late Bronze Age through to the end of the Iron Age (c. 1100BC – 50AD).

Appendix 2: *Roman Pottery* – *Katie Anderson*

Five sherds of Roman pottery, weighing 78g were recovered from the evaluation. Four of the sherds came from F642, all of which are non-diagnostic, but from the same vessel, a fine sandy greyware with exterior burnishing. This vessel dates 2nd-3rd century AD and was found alongside two abraded prehistoric sherds. One further sherd, a sandy, oxidised ware, was recovered from the topsoil. This sherd had combing decoration on the exterior and is likely to have come from a storage jar, dating 1st-3rd century AD.

The relative lack of Roman material is likely to be because the evaluation was centred away from the main area of Roman occupation.

Appendix 3: *Post-Medieval Pottery* (*Craig Cressford*)

A very small quantity of Post Medieval and Modern pottery consisting of a dozen sherds was recovered. The sherds are generally either small or heavily abraded, which means that they may well be residual.

Topsoil: One sherd of 18th to 20th century red coarse ware plant pot.
F.606 [603]: One very small sherd of tin glazed earthenware, 16th or 17th century.
F.607 [601]: Five small sherds of refined white earthenware, 19th or 20th century. One sherd with yellow and blue decoration is likely to be 20th century. One sherd of Glazed Red Earthenware, quite large but heavily abraded, 16th to early 19th century.
F.608 [605]: One sherd of refined white earthenware, 19th or 20th century.
F.632 [640]: One sherd of Glazed Red Earthenware, Quite large but heavily abraded, 16th to early 19th century.

Appendix 4:*Worked Flint (Andy Mclaren).*

Only one fragment of worked flint was recovered from evaluation trenches at Knobbs Farm; from F618 [621]. It was a chronologically undiagnostic, hard hammer struck, waste flake.

Appendix 5*:*
Assessment of Bulk Environmental Samples from SOM06
Anne de Vareilles

Methodology

The seven bulk soil samples taken on site were examined using an Ankara-type flotation machine. The flots were collected in a 300µm mesh and the remaining heavy residues washed over a 1mm mesh. The flots were dried indoors and scanned for the presence of charred plant remains and other ecofacts.

Preservation

All archaeological plant remains were preserved through carbonisation.

Results

All samples contained intrusive modern rootlets and wild plant seeds, indicating some bioturbation with the possible mixing of contexts and loss of plant remains.
Plant macro remains were noted in five of the seven samples:

- Sample 3 (8 Litres), F.621 Context (619) was quite rich in charcoal but appeared to have no cereal grains or large wild plant seeds;
- Sample 4 (7.5 Litres), F.626 Context (627) contained large quantities of cereal grains (more than 100), which appear to be mainly glume wheat. Charcoal and a few Hazel-nut shell fragments were also noted;
- Sample 5 (10 Litres), F.630 Context (644) only had a little charcoal;
- Sample 6 (12.5 Litres), F.642 Context (659) had 12 cereal grains, seemingly all glume wheat, and a little charcoal;
- Sample 7 (9 Litres), F.655 Context (674) only had a little charcoal.

No charred remains were seen in samples 1 (8L) F.613 (609), and 2 (15L) F.619 (623) and (624).

Discussion and Recommendations

F.626 and F.642 suggest that human cooking and eating activities took place in the vicinity. Further analyses may reveal the presence of cereal chaff which could provide information on cereal processing locales. Samples 3 to 7 should be properly examined under a low power microscope for a more detailed understanding of the site's economics and spatial distribution. Depending on the archaeology, it may be productive to continue sampling features similar to or related with features 626 and 642.

Appendix 6:
Oasis Data Collection Record:

Project Details.

Oasis ID:	Cambridge 3-23713
Project Name:	Knobs Farm, Somersham (SOM06)
Project Description:	In December 2006 evaluation trenches at Knobbs Farm, Somersham revealed evidence for the westward continuation of archaeological features excavated during Phase 4 of work in 2004. This included a possible late Iron Age/early Romano-British droveway and field systems with formally laid out boundary ditches, plus some probable Bronze Age features including late Bronze Age/ early Iron Age pits and post holes, some earlier Bronze Age pits, plus several post medieval and u-dated features.
Project Dates:	Start 04-12-06. End 22-12-06.
Previous/Future Work:	Yes/Yes
Project Reference:	SOM06
Type of Project:	Field Evaluation
Site Status:	None
Current Land Use:	Cultivated Land 4. Character Undetermined.
Monument Type:	Droveway, late Iron Age
Monument Type:	Field System, Late Iron Age
Monument Type:	Pits, late Bronze Age
Monument Type:	Postholes, late Bronze Age
Monument Type:	Pits, Bronze Age
Monument Type:	Ditches, Post Medieval
Monument Type:	Droveway, Roman
Significant Finds:	Pottery, late Iron Age
Significant Finds:	Pottery, Roman
Methods:	Evaluation Trenches
Development Type:	Mineral extraction.
Prompt:	Direction from Local Planning Authority

Project Location:

Site Location:	CAMBRIDGESHIRE, HUNTINGDONSHIRE: Somersham, Knobbs Farm.
Postcode:	PE28
Study Area:	4 Hectares
Site Coordinates:	NGR- TL 365 790 LL- 52.3913888889 0.006111111111111 (Decimal) LL- 52 23 29N 000 00 22E (Degrees)
Height OD	Min: 5m Max 7m

Project Creators:

Name of Organisation:	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project Brief Originator:	Local Authority Archaeologist
Project Design Originator:	David Gibson
Project Director/ Manager:	David Gibson

Project Supervisor:	Adam Slater
Type of Funding Body:	Landowner
Name of Funding Body:	Lafarge Redland Aggregates Ltd

Project Archives

Physical Archive Recipient:	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Physical Archive ID:	SOM06
Physical Contents:	Ceramics, Lithics
Digital Archive Recipient:	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Archive ID:	SOM06
Digital Contents:	Ceramics, Stratigraphy, Survey
Digital Media Available:	GIS, Images, Digital Photography, Survey
Paper Archive Recipient:	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Paper Archive ID:	SOM06
Paper Contents:	Ceramics, Stratigraphy, Survey
Paper Media Available:	Aerial Photography, Context Sheets, Notebook, Photograph, Plan, Report, Sections, Survey.

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