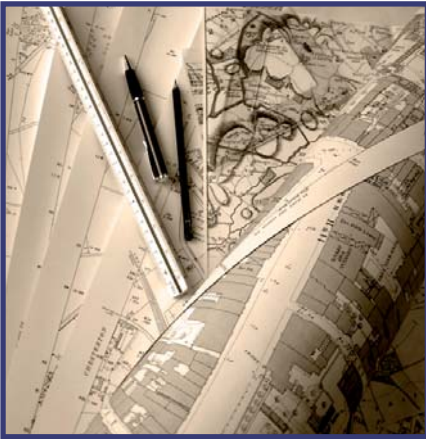


Construction of Park and Ride Facility Land to the North-West of the A41 Bicester Oxfordshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report

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**Construction of Park and Ride Facility,
Land to the North-West of the A41, Bicester, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Written by Steve Leech and Stuart Foreman

*with contributions from Geraldine Crann, Ian Scott and Rebecca Nicholson and
illustrated by Markus Dylewski and Rupert Lothington*

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Summary

Between the 9th and the 20th of August 2013 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out evaluation trenching on the site of a proposed Park and Ride site to the south of Bicester. The development area is c 2.04 hectares in extent, situated on the western side of the A41 (SP 5714 2112). Atkins commissioned the work on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council. The site lies on the north-western periphery of the extra-mural settlement of Alchester Roman town, just north of Akeman Street Roman Road. Part of Alchester is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM OX 18) but Iron Age and Roman settlement is also known to extend beyond the scheduled area. The Park and Ride development lies outside the scheduled area to the north-west.

The evaluation was generally successful in establishing the presence/ absence, extent, conditions, nature, character and quality of archaeological and palaeoenvironmental remains encountered. However the date of many of the features remains uncertain as they had no associated artefacts and could not be dated on stratigraphic or morphological grounds. The scarcity of artefacts and settlement features indicates that the Park and Ride site lies outside the Iron Age and Roman settlement area. Various undated possible pits or postholes were identified. These include two possible hearth pits, found in trenches 8 and 16, which are consistent with outlying settlement features. Within the narrow confines of the trenches it was not possible to determine whether these pits and postholes formed parts of buildings. In the absence of dating evidence they appear to be of limited interest.

Significant features include a single human cremation burial in trench 9, which contained hobnails and tacks (the latter probably from a box) but no other artefacts. It is almost certainly of Roman date. The scarcity of human burials from this site, in comparison with a cremation and inhumation cemetery discovered during construction of the adjacent road junction c 50m to the south in 1992 (Booth et al. 2001) suggests that the site lies on the edge of the burial zone associated with the Roman town. Roman custom and law required human burials to be made outside settlements and they are commonly found lined along approach roads. The location of the site on the outskirts of Alchester Roman town, next to a Roman road junction and 50m north of a previously recorded cemetery, suggests that the site has high potential for the discovery of further human burials.

The most common features encountered were ditches and gullies. These contained very few artefacts, indicating that the site lay within an area used predominantly as agricultural fields or enclosures since at least the Roman period. One of these (in trench 6) contained sufficient Roman pottery to be reasonably confident that it is of Roman date. Many of the ditches and gullies investigated are probably field drains of modern date as some features (in trenches 6, 9 and 12) contained ceramic drains or other 19th or 20th century artefacts. Two of the linear features (in trenches 7 and 11) were stone-filled gullies, which had the appearance of masonry wall footings when initially revealed but proved on excavation to be modern land drains. Field boundaries and drainage features are generally of low archaeological significance, although mapping the Iron Age and Roman features would help to define the extents of Alchester and add significantly to understanding the agricultural hinterland of the settlement.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA), was commissioned by Atkins on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council to undertake evaluation trenching on the site of a proposed Park and Ride site. The proposed Park and Ride is c 2.04 hectares in extent, situated to the south of Bicester, on the western side of the A41 (SP 5714 2112).

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies at c 66m OD. The bedrock geology comprises Kellaway Clay, a sedimentary Mudstone formed c 161 - 165 million years ago. Superficial River Terrace gravels and alluvial deposits are present overlying the bedrock in the vicinity, mainly to the south-east of the A41. The Kellaway Clay overlies bioclastic limestone of the Cornbrash Formation. (British Geological Survey online viewer, <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain>).

1.2.2 The natural geology encountered in most trenches was the weathered surface of the Kellaway Clay although limestone gravel deposits were encountered in trenches 8 and 9, possibly the edge of the overlying River Terrace gravel.

1.2.3 At the time of the evaluation the site was disused farmland, covered with long grass and weeds.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The site is located in an area of considerable archaeological interest, immediately north of the Roman town of Alchester, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM OX 18). The settlement area of the Roman town extends beyond the area protected by the SAM and evidence of this has been recorded during the widening of the A41 in the 1990s (Booth *et al.* 2001). The site is also located to the north of the crossroads of two Roman Roads.

1.3.2 A number of archaeological features, relating to the extra-mural settlement of the Roman town and the earlier Iron Age settlement, were recorded along the line of the road 100m north-east of this proposal area (PRN 16215) (SP 5735 2129). This area (see Booth *et al.* 27-34, Area D) included a series of late Iron Age and Roman enclosure ditches and probable house gullies along with a number of pits. The complexity of the features, recorded in a small area, suggests that occupation in this area was fairly intensive.

1.3.3 Two larger areas of archaeological features associated with the Iron Age and Roman settlement north of the Roman town were excavated immediately south-west of the proposed site, within the area of the current road junction (see Booth *et al.* 37-210, Areas B and C). These included part of a Roman cemetery associated with the town as well as extensive settlement evidence dating from the middle Iron Age through to the late Roman period (PRN 14292; SP 5708 2101). Settlement features included various stone footings and yard surfaces as well as a series of enclosure ditches which also dated to the late Iron Age and Roman period.

1.3.4 Further archaeological features were recorded during a staged programme of investigation carried out by Wessex Archaeology in advance of the South-West Bicester development to the north-east of the proposal site. A Beaker burial was discovered, which may be associated with prehistoric round barrows identified from aerial photographs of the site. Late Iron Age and Romano-British settlement evidence was also recorded along with evidence for quarrying (PRN 26347; SP 5733 2211). Areas 8,



9 and 10 of the Wessex Archaeology investigation lie close to the proposed Park and Ride site. Of these Area 8 was abandoned due to flooding, Area 9 contained 'relatively low densities of mostly undated features including quarry pits, ditches and small hearths'. Area 10 contained no archaeological features (Martin 2011).

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The evaluation was undertaken by Stephen Leech, Nick Swift, Mike Mclean, Richard Kevill and Emily Plunkett of Oxford Archaeology. Andrew Holmes (Archaeological Consultant, Atkins) commissioned the work on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council. We would like to thank Richard Oram of Oxfordshire County Council for enabling the archaeological work.



2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The aims of the investigation, as stated in the brief (Oram 2010) and WSI (OA 2013), were as follows:
- (i) Investigate the presence/ absence, extent, conditions, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological and palaeoenvironmental remains encountered.
 - (ii) Present a digest of information on the character and significance of the deposits under review in order to inform the basis of any proposals for appropriate further action.
 - (iii) Define any research priorities that may be relevant should further field investigation be required.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The trenching programme consisted of 17 trenches, all of which were 30m x 1.6m in plan, as shown on Figure 2. The trench plan was designed to provide even coverage of the field (4% sample of 2.04ha).
- 2.2.2 Plough-disturbed soil horizons were removed by mechanical excavator fitted with a wide toothless bucket to expose archaeologically significant horizons or the surface of the solid geology, whichever was encountered first. The trenches were excavated to a typical depth of c 0.5m).
- 2.2.3 A summary of OA's general approach to excavation and recording is included in Appendix A of the WSI. Standard methodologies for Geomatics and Survey, Environmental evidence, Artefactual evidence and Burials can also be found in Appendices B, C, D and E of the WSI respectively.
- 2.2.4 Site specific methodologies were as follows:
- (iv) The trench layout was agreed with Andrew Holmes (Atkins) and Richard Oram (OCC Archaeological Services) prior to evaluation commencing. Provision was made for taking environmental/ organic samples where deemed appropriate.
 - (i) The trenching was carried out under the supervision of a competent archaeologist. Excavation was taken down to the top of the natural geology. The surface of the exposed archaeological horizon was cleaned as required to clarify the remains. Archaeological features were sampled sufficiently to characterise and date them. Suspected cremation burials were subject to 100% sampling and the residues were wet-sieved for the recovery of charred human remains and plant remains. Full excavation of features was not undertaken at this stage. Care was taken not to damage archaeological deposits through excessive use of mechanical excavation.



3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 The following section summarises the results of the evaluation. The location of the trenches is shown on Figure 2, and more detailed plans of trenches containing potentially significant archaeology are included as Figures 3 and 4. Archaeological descriptions are presented in the context inventory (Appendix A), and within the descriptive text where they are integral to the interpretation of the context in question. Artefacts and animal bone recovered are noted in the trench descriptions below where they occur.
- 3.1.2 Various undated, irregular pit-like features were interpreted in the field as possible root hollows or similar naturally occurring features. The interpretation of these features in most cases is very uncertain and some may result from human activity or animal burrowing. These features are outlined in green on the trench plans (Figs. 3 and 4) and listed in the context inventory as 'root hollows' (Appendix A) but are not described in detail in the following text. In general they were filled with inorganic orange-brown silty clay and were found to be irregular in profile when investigated, containing no artefacts. Illustrated sample sections include S.801 and 802 (Fig.6) and S.1700 (Fig.7).

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 Overall the evaluation was undertaken in good weather conditions with occasional heavy rain. Ground conditions were good and fairly dry.
- 3.2.2 The soil sequence consisted of a 0.3m thick layer of topsoil overlying a plough-disturbed subsoil of variable thickness (0.1m – 0.3m), resting on top of weathered orange-brown sandy clay (Kellaway Clay) in the majority of trenches. There were patches of limestone gravel which were particularly extensive in trenches 3, 8 and 9.
- 3.2.3 Unless otherwise stated in the trench descriptions, the archaeological features were cut into the natural geology and covered by the ploughsoil.
- 3.2.4 In the area adjacent to the new road junction near the south edge of the site, trench 17 contained evidence for previous construction-related ground disturbance, in the form of wheel ruts.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

- 3.3.1 All trenches contained at least one archaeological feature, although most of these are undated as very few artefacts were found.
- 3.3.2 The most significant individual feature is a human cremation burial (cut 907, deposit 908) in trench 9.
- 3.3.3 Ditch 607 in trench 6 contained sufficient Roman pottery to suggest a Roman date. An adjacent ditch 603 is on a parallel alignment and may be contemporary. Ditch 1209 in trench 12 and various features containing ceramic and stone-filled land rains are of modern date (19th or 20th century).
- 3.3.4 Two pits with signs of burning (803, 1603) were found in trenches 8 and 16 and may be hearths. However both were undated and therefore of limited significance.
- 3.3.5 Otherwise the majority of features identified comprise ditches, gullies, possible pits and postholes on a wide variety of alignments, which produced no artefacts and are therefore of uncertain date. Narrow gullies in some cases proved to be field drains when investigated.

3.4 Trench 1 (Figs 3 and 5)

- 3.4.1 Trench 1 contained two ditches (102), and three root hollows (110, 104, 116).



3.4.2 Ditch 102 was aligned E-W and was 0.55m wide and 0.12m deep. It contained a grey silty clay fill (103).

3.4.3 Ditch 112 was aligned NW-SE and was 0.75m wide. It contained a grey silty clay fill (113).

3.5 Trench 2 (Figs 3 and 5)

3.5.1 Trench 2 contained a single undated possible posthole (204), which was circular in plan, 0.3m in diameter and 0.16m deep. It contained an orange brown silty clay fill (203).

3.6 Trench 3 (Figs 3 and 5)

3.6.1 Trench 3 contained three ditches cut into the natural clay and limestone gravel (303, 305, 307).

3.6.2 Ditch 303 was aligned N-S and was 1m wide and 0.06m deep. It contained a brown silty clay fill (304).

3.6.3 Ditch 305 appeared to form a right angle corner aligned E-W and N-S and was 0.6m wide and 0.1m deep. It contained a brown silty clay fill (306).

3.6.4 Ditch 307 was aligned NW-SE and was 1m wide. It contained a brown silty clay fill (308).

3.7 Trench 4 (Figs 3 and 5)

3.7.1 Trench 4 contained a single ditch (307), which was aligned NW-SE and was 0.86m wide and 0.24m deep. It contained a brown silty clay fill (308).

3.8 Trench 5 (Figs 3 and 5)

3.8.1 Trench 5 contained a single ditch (503) which was aligned NW-SE, and was 2.2m wide and 0.31m deep. It was filled with an orange brown silty clay (504) which contained one sherd of Roman pottery (2nd century AD) and one residual Mesolithic? or Neolithic flint blade.

3.9 Trench 6 (Figs 3 and 5)

3.9.1 Trench 6 contained four ditches (603, 605, 607, 609) two pits (617, 619) and two natural hollows (611, 613).

3.9.2 Ditch 603 was aligned NE-SW and was 1.4m wide and 0.2m deep, containing a brown silty clay fill (604). It was recut along its length by a modern ditch (605) which was cut through the ploughsoil and contained a ceramic field drain.

3.9.3 Ditch 607 was aligned NE-SW and was 2.3m wide. It was filled with a grey silty clay (608) which contained three joining sherds of Roman pottery (2nd – 3rd century AD).

3.9.4 Ditch 609 was aligned NW-SE and was 0.75m wide and 0.2m deep. It contained a grey brown silty clay fill (610).

3.9.5 Pit or posthole 617 was circular in plan, 0.35m in diameter and contained a grey silty clay fill (618).

3.9.6 Pit 619 was sub-oval in shape, 0.3m wide and contained a grey silty clay fill (620).

3.10 Trench 7 (Figs 3 and 6)

3.10.1 Trench 7 contained two ditches (705, 707) and one modern stone-filled field drain (703).

3.10.2 Ditch 705 was aligned NE-SW and was 0.7m wide and 0.16m deep and contained a grey brown silty clay fill (706).

3.10.3 Ditch 707 was aligned NE-SW and was 1.8m wide and 0.58m deep. It contained two fills, a grey brown silty clay (708) and a grey silty clay (709).



3.10.4 Field drain 703 formed a 0.45m wide band of limestone rubble, aligned NE – SW and surviving to a depth of 0.22m. It was at first thought to be a partly robbed out wall foundation. However stone-filled field drains are common in this area and on investigation the feature appears to be one of those. The drain was filled with unmortared limestone rubble in a matrix of grey silty clay (704).

3.11 Trench 8 (Figs 3 and 6)

3.11.1 Trench 8 contained one possible pit (803) and eight root hollows (805, 807, 809, 811, 813, 815, 817, 819).

3.11.2 Pit 803 was sub-oval in shape, 0.99m wide and 0.12m deep. It contained a single fill (804) a reddish brown silty clay that appeared to have been heat affected and could be a hearth.

3.12 Trench 9 (Figs 4 and 6)

3.12.1 Trench 9 contained one pit (907) containing a human cremation burial (908), two ditches (905, 909) and one root hollow (903).

3.12.2 Pit 907 was sub-circular in plan, 0.45m in diameter and 0.1m deep and contained a brownish yellow silty clay fill with charcoal and burnt bone inclusions (908), all of which was recovered and wet-sieved (sample 2). The fill contained 31 fragments of cremated human bone, 5 nails, 4 hobnails and 10 nail fragments. The hobnails indicate that the cremation is of Roman date.

3.12.3 Ditch 909 was aligned NE-SW and was 1m wide and 0.4m deep. It contained two fills, the lower a grey silty clay (910), and the upper a brown grey silty clay (911).

3.12.4 Ditch 905 was aligned NE-SW and was 0.9m wide. It was filled with a brown grey silty clay (911).

3.13 Trench 10 (Figs 4 and 6)

3.13.1 Trench 10 contained two ditches (1003, 1007) and one pit (1005).

3.13.2 Ditch 1003 was aligned NW-SE and was 0.8m wide. It contained a grey brown silty clay fill (1004).

3.13.3 Ditch 1007 was aligned NW-SE and was 0.8m wide. It contained a grey brown silty clay fill (1008).

3.13.4 Pit 1005 was sub-circular in plan, 0.3m wide and 0.1m deep. It contained a grey silty clay fill (1006).

3.14 Trench 11 (Figs 4 and 7)

3.14.1 Trench 11 contained one ditch (1103), a stone-filled field drain (1107) and one pit (1105).

3.14.2 Ditch 1103 was aligned NE-SW and was 0.8m wide and 0.3m deep. It was filled with a grey silty clay fill (1104) that contained 40 fragments of animal bone.

3.14.3 Pit 1105 was sub-circular in plan, 0.4m wide and contained a grey brown silty clay fill (1106).

3.14.4 A modern stone-filled field drain (1107) was initially interpreted as a masonry wall footing but was recognised as a field drain when excavated. Stone-filled field drains are characteristic of the fields in the vicinity and have been recorded in previous large scale open area excavations in the vicinity (eg Booth *et al.* 2001).

3.15 Trench 12 (Figs 4 and 7)

3.15.1 Trench 12 contained three possible ditch cuts (1205 recut by 1207, 1209) and three possible pits (1211, 1213, 1215).



- 3.15.2 Ditch 1205 was aligned N-S and appears to turn a corner to the NW-SE. It was substantial at 2.2m deep and 0.4m deep and was filled with an orange brown silty clay (1206) that contained six fragments of animal bone. The ditch was re-cut along its length by ditch 1207, which was 1.8m wide and 0.48m deep and contained a brown silty clay fill (1208).
- 3.15.3 Ditch 1209 was aligned NW-SE and was 0.8m wide. It was filled with a grey brown silty clay (1210) which contained three fragments of ceramic building material (16th – 19th century date) and one iron bolt of 19th century date).
- 3.15.4 Pit 1211 was sub-circular in plan, 1.2m in diameter and was filled with an orange brown silty clay (1212). This feature was reasonably distinct in plan but was not investigated and could be a root hollow or similar natural feature.
- 3.15.5 A possible pit (1213) was 0.6m wide and contained a grey brown silty clay fill (1214). It was not investigated. As it was somewhat irregular in plan this could be a root hollow or similar natural feature.
- 3.15.6 Another possible pit (1215) was 0.6m wide and contained a grey brown silty clay fill (1216). It was irregular in plan and could be a root hollow or similar natural feature.

3.16 Trench 13 (Figs 4 and 7)

- 3.16.1 Trench 13 contained five ditches (1303, 105, 1307, 1309, 1311) of which 1305, 1307 and 1311 are similar in width and appearance to land drains. One pit was also identified (1313).
- 3.16.2 Ditch 1303 was aligned NW-SE and was 0.85m wide. It contained a grey brown silty clay fill (1304).
- 3.16.3 Gully 1305 (land drain?) was aligned NE-SW and was 0.5m wide. It was filled with a grey silty clay (1306).
- 3.16.4 Gully 1307 (land drain?) was aligned NE-SW and was 0.5m wide. It was filled with a grey silty clay (1308).
- 3.16.5 Ditch 1309 was aligned NE-SW and was 0.5m wide and 0.47m deep. It was filled with a grey silty clay (1310).
- 3.16.6 Gully 1311 (land drain?) was aligned NW-SE and was 0.4m wide. It was filled with a grey silty clay (1312).
- 3.16.7 Pit 1313 was sub-circular in shape and 1.4m wide. It contained a grey brown silty clay fill (1212).

3.17 Trench 14 (Figs 4 and 7)

- 3.17.1 Trench 14 contained three gullies (1403, 1405, 1407) which are similar in appearance to other narrow gullies interpreted as land drains. A single possible pit (1409) was also identified.
- 3.17.2 Gully 1403 (land drain?) was aligned NW-SE and was 0.4m wide. It contained a light grey silty clay fill (1404).
- 3.17.3 Gully 1405 (land drain?) was aligned NW-SE and was 0.6m wide and 0.10m deep. It contained a single fill (1406) a light grey silty clay. No drain or other artefacts were found in the excavated section.
- 3.17.4 Gully 1407 (land drain?) was aligned NW-SE and was 0.5m wide and 0.1m deep. It contained a light grey silty clay fill (1408). No drain or other artefacts were found in the excavated section.
- 3.17.5 Pit 1409 was sub-circular in plan, 0.55m wide and contained a single fill (1410), a grey silty clay.



3.18 Trench 15 (Figs 4 and 7)

- 3.18.1 Trench 15 contained a pair of small parallel gullies (1505, 1507, possibly land drains), three ditches (1503, 1509, 1515) and two possible root hollows (1511, 1513).
- 3.18.2 Ditch 1503 was aligned NE-SW and was 0.6m wide and 0.14m deep. It contained an orange brown silty clay fill (1504).
- 3.18.3 Gully 1505 (land drain?) was aligned NE-SW and was 0.3m wide. It contained a brown silty clay fill (1506).
- 3.18.4 Gully 1507 (land drain?) was aligned NE-SW and was 0.3m wide. It contained a brown silty clay fill (1508).
- 3.18.5 Ditch 1509 was aligned NE-SW and was 0.8m wide. It contained a grey brown silty clay fill (1510).
- 3.18.6 Ditch 1514 was aligned NE-SW and was 0.9m wide. It contained a grey brown silty clay fill (1515).

3.19 Trench 16 (Figs 4 and 7)

- 3.19.1 Trench 16 contained a single pit (1603) which was sub-oval in plan, 0.6m wide and 0.29m deep and contained a reddish orange silty clay fill (1410), which appeared to have been heat-affected.

3.20 Trench 17 (Figs 4 and 7)

- 3.20.1 Trench 17 contained one ditch (1703) and one root hollow (1705). There was evidence for modern ground disturbance in the form of wheel ruts across the trench, presumably associated with construction of the adjacent road junction in 1991.
- 3.20.2 Ditch 1703 was aligned NW-SE and was 0.5m wide and 0.26m deep. It contained an orange brown silty clay fill (1704). This cut through root hollow 1705, which had an irregular shape, was 0.6m wide and contained a brown silty clay fill (1706).

3.21 Finds summary

- 3.21.1 Very few artefacts were recovered from the features investigated. A single residual flint blade from a Roman ditch in trench 5 was the only prehistoric find recovered. Roman pottery recovered included single sherds from ditch fills in trenches 5 and 6 and two further sherds from the ploughsoil in trench 6. Post-medieval ceramic building material was recovered from trench 12. The quantity of finds in all cases is too small to be considered reliable dating evidence for their context.

3.22 Environmental summary

- A.1.1 Three samples were taken during the evaluation. Sample 1 (1204) and sample 2 (908) were possible cremation burials which were 100% sampled in the field. Sample 1 was a yellowish brown (10YR 5/4) silty clay with no burned or calcined bone evident. Sample 2 was a brownish yellow (10YR 6/6) silty clay loam with 10% sub-rounded limestone inclusions and occasional calcined bone fragments as well as iron tacks and nails, possibly from a box. Sample 3, which has not been processed, was taken from a fill associated with a small undated stone-filled land-drain which was thought initially to be a possible wall footing, but now confirmed to be modern in date.



4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The work was undertaken in good weather conditions, and the archaeological features were clearly apparent as soil marks contrasting with the natural geology. All planned trenches were excavated, which represents a 4% sample of the development area, a relatively high percentage sample which gives a high level of confidence that significant sites and features will have been detected. Given the proximity of the site to Alchester, the main archaeological potential lies in the Iron Age and Roman periods. Archaeological sites of this period tend to be artefact rich and are usually detectable using trial trenches at this density (Hey and Lacey 2001).

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.1 The evaluation was generally successful in establishing the presence/ absence, extent, conditions, nature, character and quality of archaeological and palaeoenvironmental remains encountered, as discussed below. The date of many of the features remains uncertain as they had no associated artefacts and could not be dated on stratigraphic or morphological grounds.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 The site lies on the north-western periphery of the extra-mural settlement of Alchester Roman town, just north of Akeman Street. The scarcity of artefacts and settlement features indicates that the site lies outside the Iron Age and Roman settlement area.

4.3.2 The date of many of the features remains uncertain as they had no associated artefacts and could not be dated on stratigraphic or morphological grounds. Various undated possible pits or postholes were identified. These include two possible hearth pits, found in trenches 8 and 16, which are consistent with outlying settlement features. Within the narrow confines of the trenches it is not possible to determine whether the pits and postholes formed parts of buildings or other structures. In the absence of dating evidence they appear to be of limited interest.

4.3.3 Significant features include a single human cremation burial (Fig. 3, deposit 908; cut 907) which contained tacks (probably from a box) and hobnails, but no other artefacts. It is almost certainly of Roman date. The burial was found in trench 9, immediately below the subsoil, cut into the natural geology. It was poorly preserved, probably as a result of plough erosion. The scarcity of human burials from this site, in comparison with the cremation and inhumation burial groups discovered during construction of the adjacent road junction c 50m to the south in 1992 (Booth *et al.* 2001) suggests that the site lies on the edge of the burial zone associated with the Roman town. Roman custom and law required burials to be made outside settlements and they are commonly found lined along approach roads. The location of the site on the outskirts of Alchester Roman town, next to a Roman road junction and 50m north of a previously recorded Roman cemetery, suggests that the site has high potential for the recovery of further human burials. Taken at face value the evaluation results suggest that any human burials present are likely to be sparsely distributed outliers from the cemetery to the south. However discrete features such as burials are notoriously difficult to detect in evaluation trenches, and the trenching results may under-estimate the number present.

4.3.4 The most common features encountered were ditches and gullies. These contained very few artefacts, indicating that the site lay within an area used predominantly as agricultural fields or enclosures since at least the Roman period. As these have very



variable profiles and fills they probably represent agricultural field boundaries and drains of multiple periods. Ditch 607 contained sufficient Roman pottery to be reasonably confident that it is of Roman date, including three joining base sherds of 2nd - 3rd century AD date. In contrast field drains 605, 909 and 1209 are certainly of modern date as they contained ceramic drains or other 19th or 20th century artefacts.

- 4.3.5 Two of the linear features (703, 1107) were stone-filled gullies which had the appearance of masonry wall footings when initially revealed but proved on excavation to be land drains. Previous open area excavations (see section 1.3) have shown that modern stone-filled land drains of this type are common in the vicinity.
- 4.3.6 Various undated irregular pit-like features were recorded, which are interpreted as root hollows or other naturally occurring features. A cluster of the latter occurred in trench 8.

4.4 Conclusion

- 4.4.1 The evaluation has proved that archaeological remains are present within the site, which have the potential for further developing our understanding of land use immediately outside a major Roman town, although the individual features are of generally low to moderate significance. Furthermore, there is potential to recover additional funerary remains that could add to our understanding of demography and burial practice during this period in Britain.



APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description				Orientation	NE-SW	
Trench containing two ditches, two root hollows, one natural hollow and one small pit cut into the natural clay and limestone gravel, and overlain by ploughsoil.				Avg. depth (m)	0.45	
				Width (m)	1.8	
				Length (m)	30	
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
100	Layer	-	0.4	Topsoil	-	-
101	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
102	Cut	0.55	0.12	Ditch		
103	Fill	0.55	0.12	Ditch fill		
104	Cut	1.3	0.32	Natural hollow		
105	Fill	1.3	0.32	Natural hollow fill		
106	Cut	0.35	0.22	Root hollow		
107	Fill	0.35	0.22	Root hollow fill		
108	Cut	0.55	0.22	Root hollow		
109	Fill	0.55	0.22	Root hollow fill		
110	Cut	0.2	-	Pit		
111	Fill	0.2	-	Pit fill		
112	Cut	0.75	-	Ditch		
113	Fill	0.75	-	Ditch fill		

Trench 2						
General description				Orientation	NW-SE	
Trench containing a single posthole cut into the natural clay and limestone and overlain by subsoil and ploughsoil.				Avg. depth (m)	0.62	
				Width (m)	1.8	
				Length (m)	30	
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
200	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil	-	-
201	Layer	-	0.32	Subsoil	-	-
202	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
203	Fill	0.3	0.16	Posthole fill		
204	Cut	0.3	0.16	Posthole		



Trench 3						
General description				Orientation	NE-SW	
Trench containing three ditches cut into the natural clay and limestone and overlain by subsoil and ploughsoil.				Avg. depth (m)	0.6	
				Width (m)	1.8	
				Length (m)	30	
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
300	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil	-	-
301	Layer	-	0.3	Subsoil	-	-
302	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
303	Cut	1	0.06	Ditch		
304	Fill	1	0.06	Ditch fill		
305	Cut	0.6	0.1	Ditch		
306	Fill	0.6	0.1	Ditch fill		
307	Cut	1	-	Ditch		
308	Fill	1	-	Ditch fill		

Trench 4						
General description				Orientation	NW-SE	
Trench containing a single ditch cut into the natural clay and limestone and overlain by subsoil and ploughsoil.				Avg. depth (m)	0.6	
				Width (m)	1.8	
				Length (m)	30	
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
400	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil	-	-
401	Layer	-	0.3	Subsoil	-	-
402	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
403	Cut	0.86	0.24	Ditch		
404	Fill	0.86	0.24	Ditch fill		



Trench 5						
General description				Orientation		NW-SE
Trench containing a single ditch cut into the natural clay and limestone and overlain by subsoil and ploughsoil.				Avg. depth (m)		0.77
				Width (m)		1.8
				Length (m)		30
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
500	Layer	-	0.37	Topsoil	-	-
501	Layer	-	0.40	Subsoil	-	-
502	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
503	Cut	2.2	0.31	Ditch		
504	Fill	2.2	0.31	Ditch fill	1 flint 1 sherd Roman pot	Residual Mesolithic/ Neolithic Roman

Trench 6						
General description				Orientation		NE-SW
Trench containing four ditches, two natural hollows and two pits cut into the natural clay and limestone and overlain by subsoil and ploughsoil.				Avg. depth (m)		0.7
				Width (m)		1.8
				Length (m)		34.6
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
600	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil	1 potsherd	Roman (unstratified)
601	Layer	-	0.4	Subsoil	1 potsherd	Roman (unstratified)
602	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
603	Cut	1.4	0.2	Ditch		
604	Fill	1.4	0.2	Ditch fill		
605	Cut	0.9	-	Modern ditch		
606	Fill	0.9	-	Ditch fill		
607	Cut	2.3	-	Ditch		
608	Fill	2.3	-	Ditch fill	1 potsherd	Roman
609	Cut	0.75	0.2	Ditch		
610	Fill	0.75	0.2	Ditch fill		
611	Cut	3	0.34	Natural hollow		
612	Fill	3	0.34	Natural hollow fill		
613	Cut	3.3	-	Natural hollow		
614	Fill	3.3	-	Natural hollow fill		
615	Void					



Trench 6						
616	Void					
617	Cut	0.35	-	Pit		
618	Fill	0.35		Pit fill		
619	Cut	0.3	-	Pit ?		
620	Fill	0.3	-	Pit fill		

Trench 7						
General description				Orientation		NW-SE
Trench containing two ditches and one field drain? cut into the natural clay and limestone gravel, and overlain by ploughsoil.				Avg. depth (m)		0.4
				Width (m)		1.8
				Length (m)		30
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
700	Layer	-	0.28	Topsoil	-	-
701	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
702	Fill	0.5	0.12	Stone layer		
703	Cut	0.5	0.22	Land drain		
704	Fill	0.5	0.1	Land drain fill		
705	Cut	0.7	0.16	Ditch		
706	Fill	0.7	0.16	Ditch fill		
707	Cut	1.8	0.58	Ditch		
708	Fill	1.8	0.18	Ditch fill		
709	Fill	1.8	0.22	Ditch fill		

Trench 8						
General description				Orientation		NW-SE
Trench containing one pit and eight root hollows cut into the natural clay and limestone and overlain by subsoil and ploughsoil.				Avg. depth (m)		0.3
				Width (m)		1.8
				Length (m)		30
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
800	Layer	-	0.26	Topsoil	-	-
801	Layer	-	0.04	Subsoil	-	-
802	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
803	Cut	0.99	0.12	Pit		
804	Fill	0.99	0.12	Pit fill		
805	Cut	0.5	-	Root hollow		



Trench 8						
806	Fill	0.5	-	Root hollow fill		
807	Cut	0.75	0.35	Root hollow		
808	Fill	0.75	0.35	Root hollow fill		
809	Cut	1	-	Root hollow		
810	Fill	1	-	Root hollow fill		
811	Cut	0.5	-	Root hollow		
812	Fill	0.5	-	Root hollow fill		
813	Cut	3.5	-	Root hollow		
814	Fill	3.5	-	Root hollow fill		
815	Cut	1	-	Root hollow		
816	Fill	1	-	Root hollow fill		
817	Cut	0.6	-	Root hollow		
818	Fill	0.6	-	Root hollow fill		
819	Cut	0.9	-	Root hollow		
820	Fill	0.9	-	Root hollow fill		

Trench 9						
General description				Orientation	NE-SW	
Trench containing one pit, one Root hollow and two ditches cut into the natural clay and limestone and overlain by subsoil and ploughsoil.				Avg. depth (m)	0.3	
				Width (m)	1.8	
				Length (m)	30	
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
900	Layer	-	0.26	Topsoil	-	-
901	Layer	-	0.04	Subsoil	-	-
902	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
903	Cut	0.6	-	Root hollow		
904	Fill	0.6	-	Root hollow fill		
905	Cut	1	-	Ditch		
906	Fill	1	-	Ditch fill		
907	Cut	0.45	0.1	Pit		
908	Fill	0.45	0.1	Pit fill - Cremation	Cremated human bone. Iron tacks and nails	Romano-British
909	Cut	1.6	0.4	Ditch		
910	Fill	1.3	0.2	Ditch fill		
911	Fill	1.6	0.2	Ditch fill		



Trench 10						
General description				Orientation	NE-SW	
Trench containing one pit and two ditches cut into the natural clay and limestone and overlain by subsoil and ploughsoil.				Avg. depth (m)	0.43	
				Width (m)	1.8	
				Length (m)	30	
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1000	Layer	-	0.38	Topsoil	-	-
1001	Layer	-	0.05	Subsoil	-	-
1002	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
1003	Cut	0.8	0.23	Ditch		
1004	Fill	0.8	0.23	Ditch fill		
1005	Cut	0.3	-	Pit		
1006	Fill	0.3	-	Pit fill		
1007	Cut	0.6	-	Ditch		
1008	Fill	0.6	-	Ditch fill		

Trench 11						
General description				Orientation	NW-SE	
Trench containing one pit, one ditch and one land drain cut into the natural clay and limestone and overlain by subsoil and ploughsoil.				Avg. depth (m)	0.5	
				Width (m)	1.8	
				Length (m)	30	
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1100	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil	-	-
1101	Layer	-	0.2	Subsoil	-	-
1102	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
1103	Cut	0.8	0.3	Ditch		
1104	Fill	0.8	0.3	Ditch fill		
1105	Cut	0.4	-	Pit		
1106	Fill	0.4	-	Pit fill		
1107	Cut			Field drain cut		
1108	Fill			Limestone rubble fill of field drain		



Trench 12						
General description				Orientation		NE-SW
Trench containing one pit, three ditches, a further ditch and re-cut, cut into the natural clay and limestone and overlain by subsoil and ploughsoil.				Avg. depth (m)		0.72
				Width (m)		1.8
				Length (m)		30
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1200	Layer	-	0.62	Topsoil	-	-
1201	Layer	-	0.1	Subsoil	-	-
1202	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
1203	Void			Charcoal patch in ditch fill initially interpreted as possible cremation, but no cremated bone present in Soil Sample1.		
1204	Void			See 1203		
1205	Cut	2.2	0.4	Ditch		
1206	Fill	2.2	0.4	Ditch fill		
1207	Cut	1.8	0.48	Ditch re-cut		
1208	Fill	1.8	0.48	Ditch re-cut fill		
1209	Cut	0.8	-	Ditch		
1210	Fill	0.8	-	Ditch fill	3 unfrogged brick fragments and peg tile. 19th century iron bolt	16 th - 19 th century
1211	Cut	1.2	-	Pit		
1212	Fill	1.2	-	Pit fill		
1213	Cut	0.6	-	Pit		
1214	Fill	0.6	-	Pit fill		
1215	Cut	0.6	-	Pit		
1216	Fill	0.6	-	Pit fill		

Trench 13				
General description		Orientation	NW-SE	
Trench containing one pit and five ditches cut into the natural clay and limestone and overlain by subsoil and ploughsoil.		Avg. depth (m)		0.64
		Width (m)		1.8
		Length (m)		30



Trench 13						
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1300	Layer	-	0.24	Topsoil	-	-
1301	Layer	-	0.4	Subsoil	-	-
1302	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
1303	Cut	0.85	-	Ditch		
1304	Fill	0.85	-	Ditch fill		
1305	Cut	0.5	-	Ditch		
1306	Fill	0.5	-	Ditch fill		
1307	Cut	0.5	-	Ditch		
1308	Fill	0.5	-	Ditch fill		
1309	Cut	0.85	0.47	Ditch		
1310	Fill	0.85	0.47	Ditch fill		
1311	Cut	0.4	-	Ditch		
1312	Fill	0.4	-	Ditch fill		
1313	Cut	1.4	-	Pit		
1314	Fill	1.4	-	Pit fill		

Trench 14						
General description				Orientation		NE-SW
Trench containing one pit and three gullies cut into the natural clay and limestone and overlain by subsoil and ploughsoil.				Avg. depth (m)		0.55
				Width (m)		1.8
				Length (m)		30
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1400	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil	-	-
1401	Layer	-	0.25	Subsoil	-	-
1402	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
1403	Cut	0.4	-	Gully		
1404	Fill	0.4	-	Gully fill		
1405	Cut	0.6	0.1	Gully		
1406	Fill	0.6	0.1	Gully fill		
1407	Cut	0.5	0.1	Gully		
1408	Fill	0.5	0.1	Gully fill		
1409	Cut	0.55	-	Pit		
1410	Fill	0.55	-	Pit fill		



Trench 15						
General description				Orientation		NE-SW
Trench containing two root hollows, three ditches and two gullies cut into the natural clay and limestone and overlain by subsoil and ploughsoil.				Avg. depth (m)		0.35
				Width (m)		1.8
				Length (m)		30
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1500	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil	-	-
1501	Layer	-	0.15	Subsoil	-	-
1502	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
1503	Cut	0.6	0.14	Ditch		
1504	Fill	0.6	0.14	Ditch fill		
1505	Cut	0.3	-	Gully		
1506	Fill	0.3	-	Gully fill		
1507	Cut	0.3	-	Gully		
1508	Fill	0.3	-	Gully fill		
1509	Cut	0.8	-	Ditch		
1510	Fill	0.8	-	Ditch fill		
1511	Cut	1.1	-	Root hollow		
1512	Fill	1.1	-	Root hollow fill		
1513	Cut	1.1	-	Root hollow		
1514	Fill	1.2	-	Root hollow fill		
1515	Cut	0.9	-	Ditch		
1516	Fill	0.9	-	Ditch fill		

Trench 16						
General description				Orientation		NW-SE
Trench containing a single pit cut into the natural clay and limestone and overlain by subsoil and ploughsoil.				Avg. depth (m)		0.35
				Width (m)		1.8
				Length (m)		30
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1600	Layer	-	0.23	Topsoil	-	-
1601	Layer	-	0.06	Subsoil	-	-
1602	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
1603	Cut	0.6	0.29	Pit		
1604	Fill	0.6	0.29	Pit fill		



Trench 17						
General description				Orientation	NE-SW	
Trench containing a single ditch and root hollow cut into the natural clay and limestone and overlain by subsoil and ploughsoil. Modern disturbance within the trench consisted of wheel ruts.				Avg. depth (m)	0.45	
				Width (m)	1.8	
				Length (m)	30	
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1700	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil	-	-
1701	Layer	-	0.25	Subsoil	-	-
1702	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
1703	Cut	0.5	0.26	Ditch		
1704	Fill	0.5	0.26	Ditch fill		
1705	Cut	0.6	0.16	Root hollow		
1706	Fill	0.6	0.16	root hollow fill		



APPENDIX B. FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Finds

Identified by John Cotter, collated by Geraldine Crann

The flint

- B.1.1 The single flint retains few diagnostic features. The battered platform at the proximal end could result from either a poor or inexperienced knapping technique. The sub-parallel dorsal scars combined with the use of platform preparation may indicate an earlier prehistoric date. The assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work.

Context	Description	Date
504	A single worn snapped blade with battered proximal end, 3 sub-parallel dorsal scars, 7g	?Mesolithic – Neolithic.

The ceramic building material

- B.1.2 The very small assemblage of ceramic building material suggests a post-medieval date for the context in which the fragments were found, but otherwise has no potential for further work.

Context	Description	Date
1210	2 fragments of a single unfrogged, orange-red brick, 55mm thick (no width or length dimensions remain). Single fragment peg tile. 571g.	?16 th /17 th century 16 th -19 th century

The pottery

Identified by Paul Booth

- B.1.3 The very small pottery assemblage potentially suggests a Roman date for the deposits in which the sherds were found, although the quantities are so small that they cannot be considered reliable dating evidence. The assemblage has no potential for further analysis.

Context	Description	Date
504	Fabric R30 grey ware sherd, 21g	2 nd century onwards
600	Fabric R30 lid rim, 14g	? 2 nd century
601	Fabric R30 base sherd, W20 off-white ware sherd, 16g	? 2 nd century
608	Fabric O.10 3 sherds fine oxidised coarse ware beaker base	2 nd – 3 rd century



The Metalwork

Ian R Scott

- B.1.4 Iron finds were recovered from two contexts:
- B.1.5 Deposit 908 (human cremation burial in pit 907) produced 5 small nails or tacks and 4 hobnails together with 10 nail stem fragments. Three of the tacks were complete (L: 23mm; 22mm; 18mm). There also a number of very small undiagnostic fragments (n = c 40).
- B.1.6 The small tacks and hobnails from context 908 support the interpretation of this deposit as a Romano-British cremation or pyre deposit. The tacks are of the size that might be expected in small box or casket such as might found in a burial.
- B.1.7 The only other metal find is an iron bolt with domed head from context 1210. This bolt is 110mm long. The stem is square in section from the head for about 2/3 of its length. The tip is circular in section with a flat end and may have been cut thread. The object is encrusted and eroded so it is not possible to be certain when it was made, but the bolt is probably 19th-century or later in date.



APPENDIX C. ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

C.1 Environmental samples

By Rebecca Nicholson

Introduction

C.1.1 Three samples were taken from the evaluation at Bicester Park and Ride. Sample <1> (1204) and sample <2> (908) were possible cremations which were 100% sampled in the field. Sample <1> was a yellowish brown (10YR 5/4) silty clay with no burned or calcined bone evident. Sample <2> was a brownish yellow (10YR 6/6) silty clay loam with c. 10% sub-rounded limestone inclusions and occasional calcined bone fragments. Sample <3>, which has not been processed, was taken from a fill associated with a small undated stone-filled land-drain which was thought initially to be a possible wall footing.

Aims

C.1.2 Sampling was undertaken to:

- Determine whether human bone was present, and if so to recover all the bone fragments and any associated material
- Determine the quality, range, state and method of preservation of any organic remains.
- Recover any small artefacts.

Methodology

C.1.3 Sample <1> was a 7L sample and sample <2> a 15L sample. Both were processed in their entirety by water flotation using a modified Siraf style flotation machine. The flot was collected on a 250µm mesh and the heavy residue sieved to 500µm; both were dried in a heated room, after which the residue was sorted by eye for bone, artefacts and ecofactual remains. The flots were scanned using a binocular microscope at approximately x10 magnification.

C.1.4 Seed identifications were made with reference to Oxford Archaeology's reference collection. Nomenclature for the plant remains follows Stace (2010).

Results

C.1.5 Sample <1> produced 20ml of flot, most of which comprises charred stems (probably straw) and charcoal, including roundwood. Several uncharred seeds and land snails are also present, the former likely to represent modern intrusive material. Fine uncharred roots are also present. No charred or calcined bone was recovered either from the residue or the flot.

C.1.6 Sample <2> produced a larger flot of 80ml. Again modern roots and seeds are present, but charcoal is the main flot component with both heartwood and roundwood present, although the former is more frequent. Very occasional charred grain include wheat (*Triticum* sp.), one grain is probably a free-threshing variety. Calcined bone (25g) was extracted from the residues and a small quantity of pottery and iron nails were also recovered; all are reported elsewhere.

Discussion and Conclusions

C.1.7 The lack of calcined bone in sample <1> makes it unlikely that this is a cremation, while sample <2> certainly contains burnt bone, probably human. A proportion of the charcoal and charred plant remains in sample <2> are potentially identifiable, and would be worth further consideration if the calcined bone is confirmed as human and if excavation takes place at the site in the future. Charred remains clearly survive at the site, as do molluscs.



C.1.8 Any future excavation should include a systematic sampling strategy in accordance with the most recent sampling guidelines (e.g. Oxford Archaeology 2005 and English Heritage 2011).

C.2 The animal bone

Identified by Lena Strid

C.2.1 The very small animal bone assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work.

Context	Description
1104	1 cattle radius, 39 unidentifiable fragments, 50g
1206	1 cattle pelvis, 1 horse femur, 4 unidentifiable fragments, 116g



APPENDIX D. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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APPENDIX E. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Construction of Park and Ride Facility, Land to the North-West of the A41, Bicester, Oxfordshire
Site code:	BIVPR13
Grid reference:	SP 5714 2112
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	9 th - 20 th August 2013
Area of site:	2.04 Hectares

Summary of results: Atkins commissioned a 17 trench evaluation on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council. The site lies on the north-western periphery of the extra-mural settlement of Alchester Roman town, just north of Akeman Street Roman road. Part of Alchester is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM OX 18) but Iron Age and Roman settlement is known to extend beyond the scheduled area. The Park and Ride development lies outside the scheduled area to the north-west.

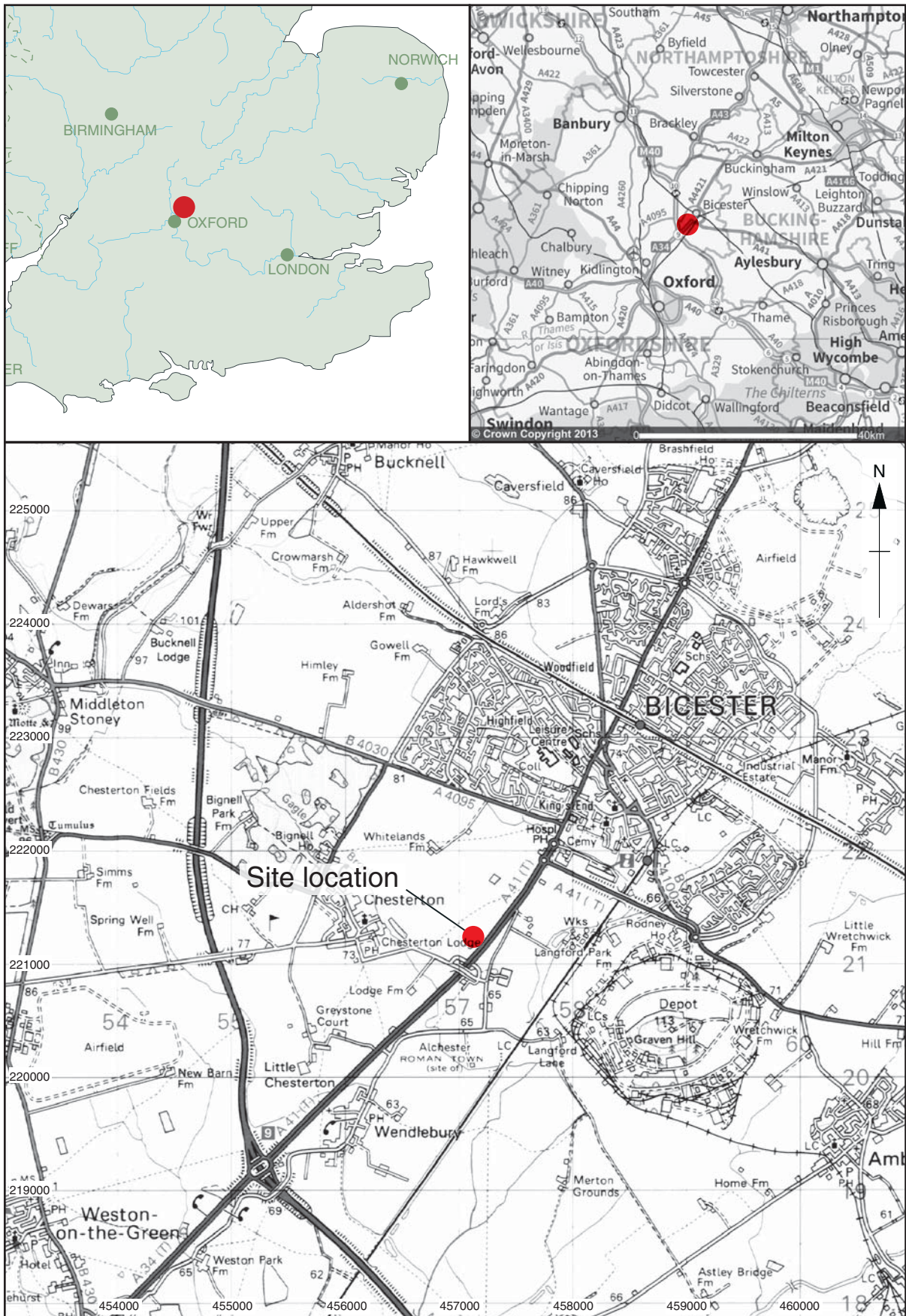
The evaluation was generally successful in establishing the presence/ absence, extent, conditions, nature, character and quality of archaeological and palaeoenvironmental remains encountered. However the date of many of the features remains uncertain as they had no associated artefacts and could not be dated on stratigraphic or morphological grounds. The scarcity of artefacts and settlement features indicates that the Park and Ride site lies outside the Iron Age and Roman settlement area. Various undated possible pits or postholes were identified. These include two possible hearth pits, found in trenches 8 and 16, which are consistent with outlying settlement features. Within the narrow confines of the trenches it was not possible to determine whether these pits and postholes formed parts of buildings. In the absence of dating evidence they appear to be of limited interest.

Significant features include a single human cremation burial in trench 9, which contained hobnails and tacks (the latter probably from a box) but no other artefacts. It is almost certainly of Roman date. The scarcity of human burials from this site, in comparison with a cremation and inhumation cemetery discovered during construction of the adjacent road junction c 50m to the south in 1992 (Booth *et al.* 2001) suggests that the site lies on the edge of the burial zone associated with the Roman town. Roman custom and law required human burials to be made outside settlements and they are commonly found lined along approach roads. The location of the site on the outskirts of Alchester Roman town, next to a Roman road junction and 50m north of a previously recorded cemetery, suggests that the site has high potential for the discovery of further human burials.

The most common features encountered were ditches and gullies. These contained very few artefacts, indicating that the site lay within an area used predominantly as agricultural fields or enclosures since at least the Roman period. One of these (in trench 6) contained sufficient Roman pottery to be reasonably confident that it is of Roman date. Many of the ditches and gullies investigated are probably field drains of modern date as some features (in trenches 6, 9 and 12) contained ceramic drains or other 19th or 20th century artefacts. Two of the linear features (in trenches 7 and 11) were stone-filled gullies, which had the appearance of masonry wall footings when initially revealed but proved on excavation to be modern land drains. Field boundaries and drainage features are generally of low archaeological significance, although mapping the Iron Age and Roman features would help to define the extents of Alchester and add significantly to understanding the agricultural hinterland of the settlement.

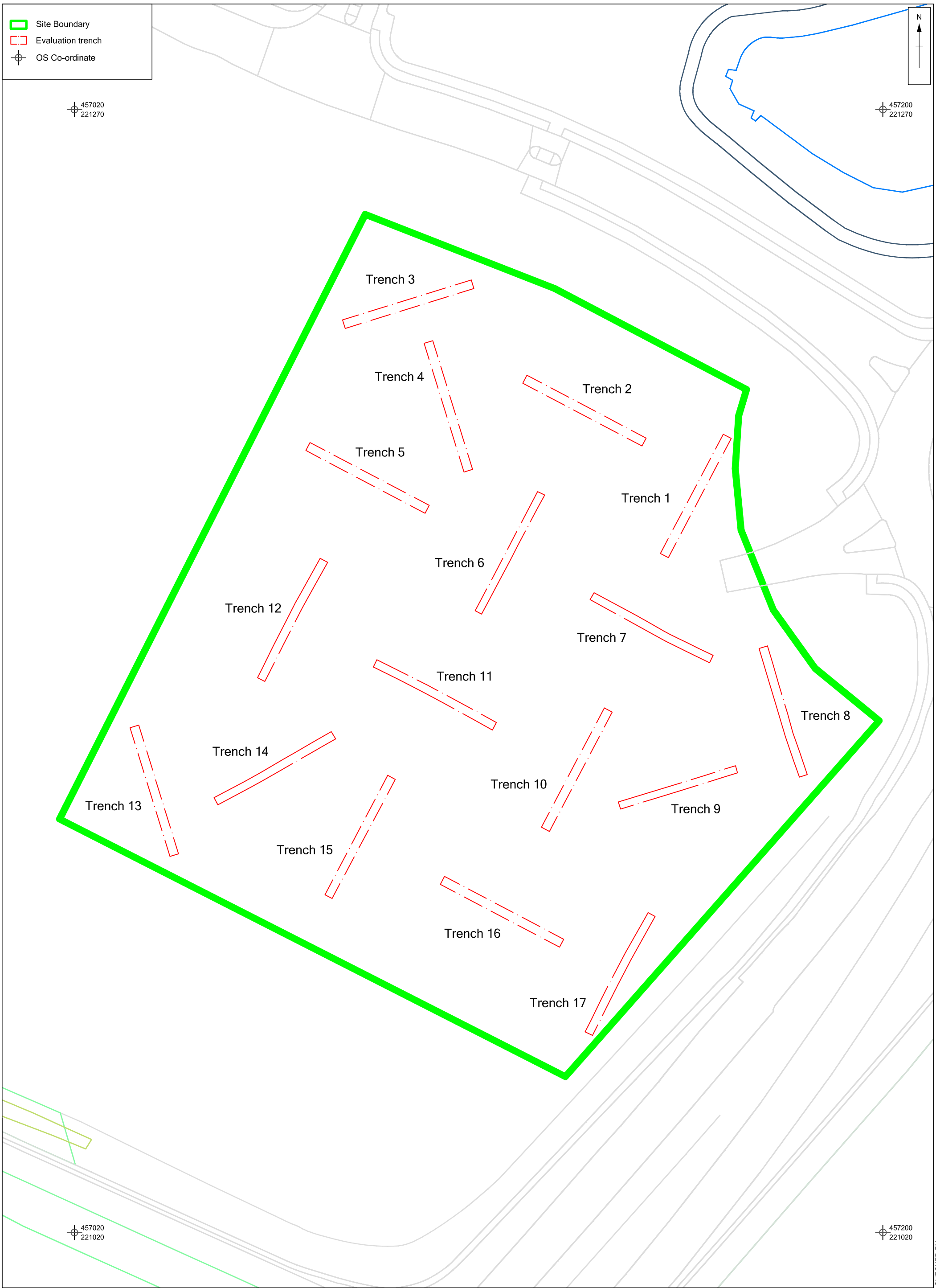


Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the .Oxfordshire County Museum in due course.



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Figure 1: Site location



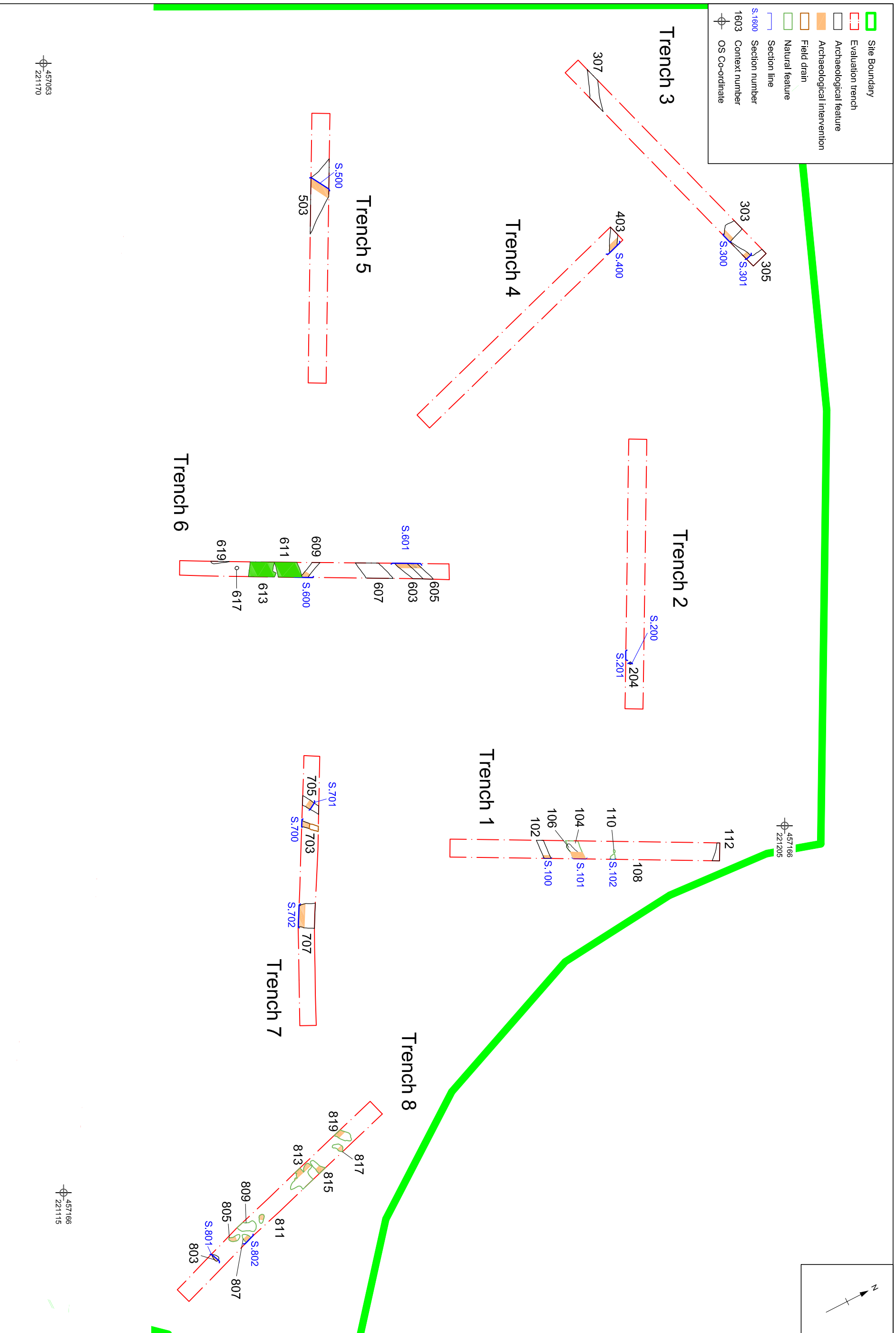
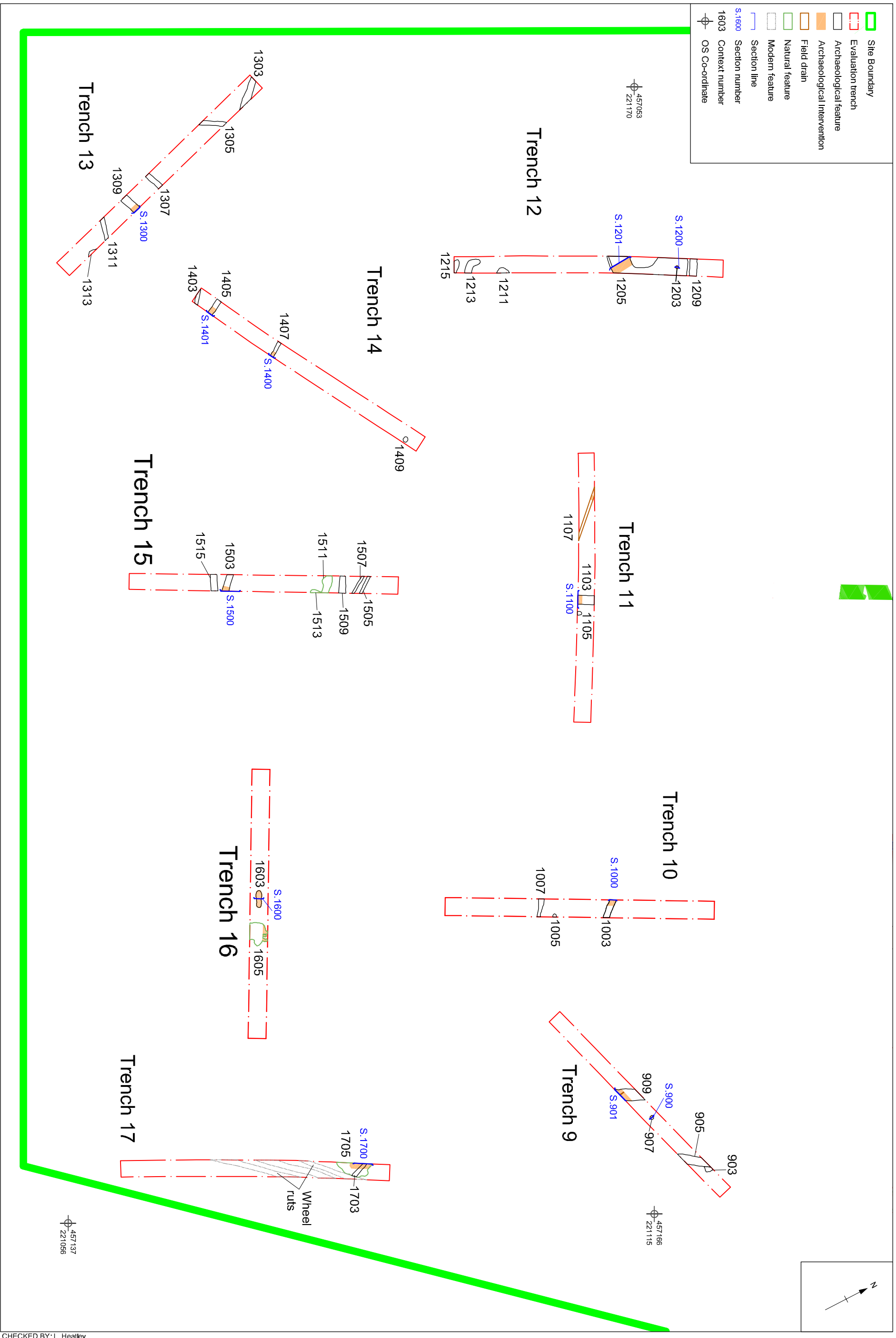


Figure 3: Trenches 1-8 cut features (Northern area)



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Figure 4: Trenches 9-17 cut features (Southern area)

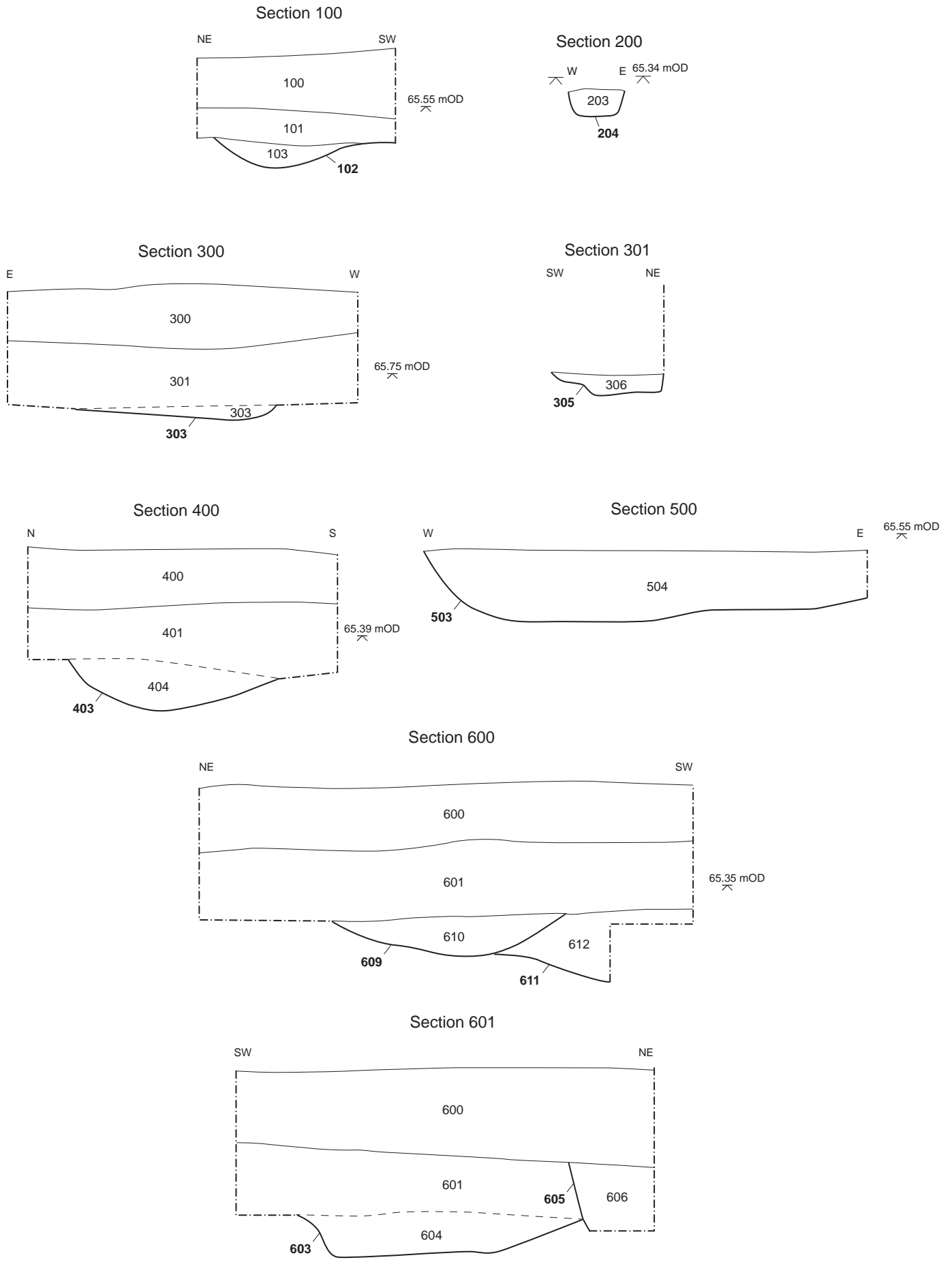


Figure 5: Trenches 1-6 section drawings

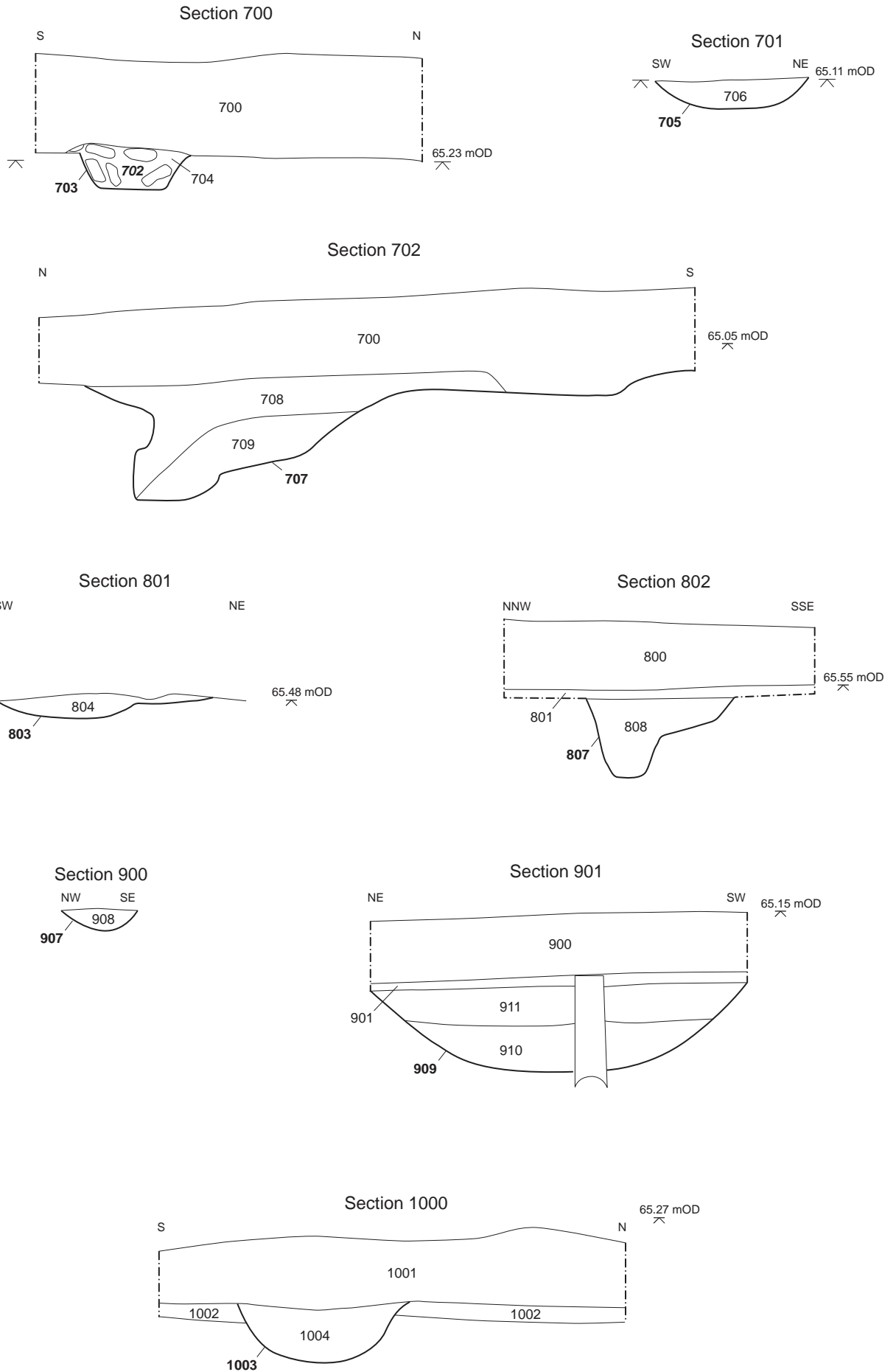


Figure 6: Trenches 7-10 section drawings

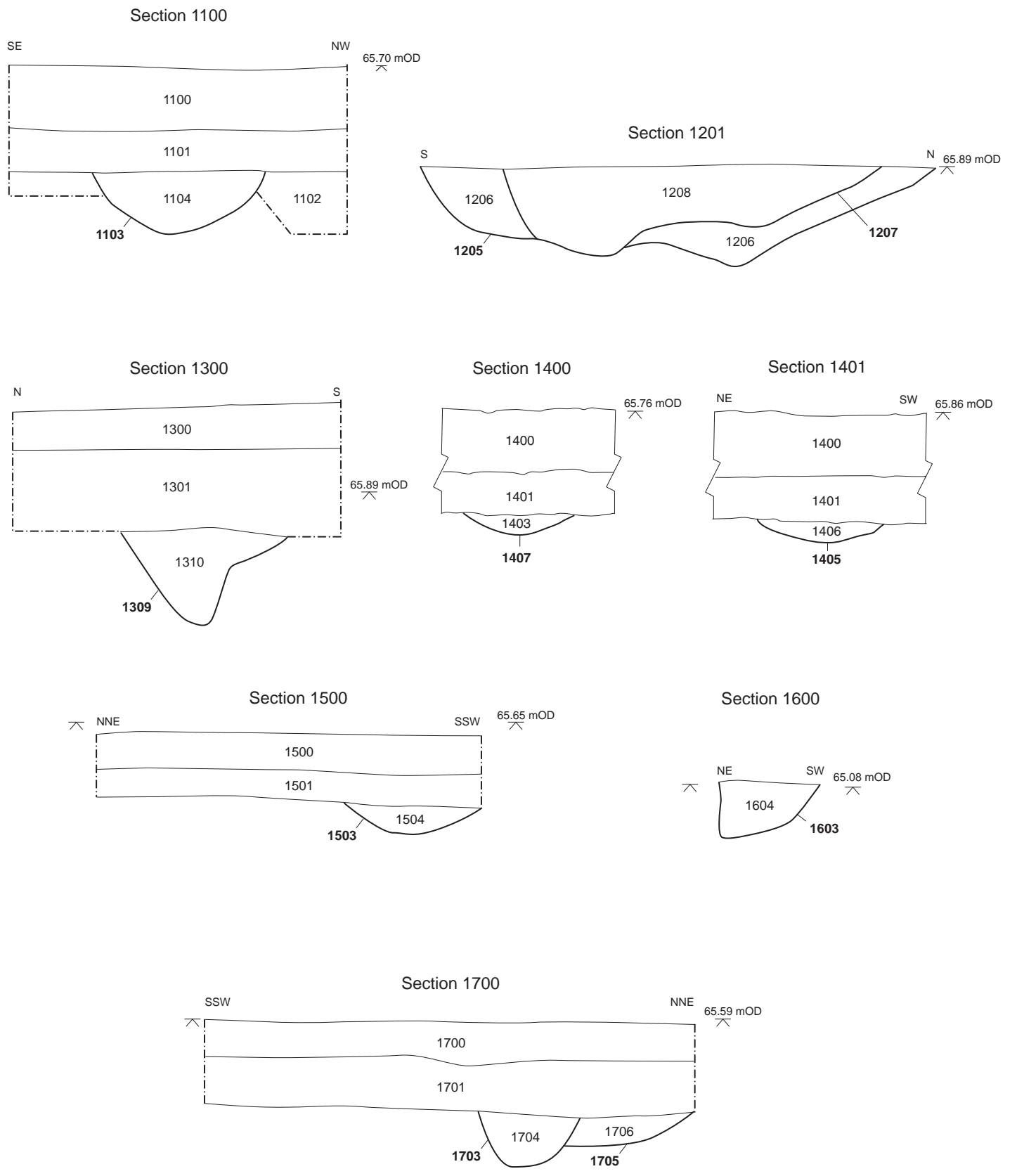


Figure 7: Trenches 11-17 section drawings



Plate 1: Trench 4 – Section 400, ditch 403



Plate 2: Trench 5 – Section 500, ditch 503



Plate 3: Trench 6 – Section 600, ditches 609, 611



Plate 4: Trench 6 – Section 601, ditch 603



Plate 5: Trench 7 – Stone filled land drain 702



Plate 6: Trench 9 – Example general view pre-excitation



Plate 7: Trench 9 – Cremation 908 in Pit 907



Plate 8: Trench 14 – Example pre-excitation view looking north-east



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