Land to the West of Hale Road, Benson, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Land to the West of Hale Road, Benson, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Written by Rachael Daniel and John Boothroyd

With contributions from Edward Biddulph, Lee Broderick, Lisa Brown, Sharon Cook, Michael Donnelly and Ian Scott, and illustrations by Matt Bradley and Charles Rousseaux

Contents

List of Figures

List of Plates

Summary

In September 2017 Oxford Archaeology undertook a trial trench evaluation at land to the West of Hale Road, Benson, Oxfordshire, centred on SU 61680 92280. The trenches were targeted on the results of the geophysical survey which identified ferrous spreads and a potential linear feature of agricultural origin. The results of the geophysical survey are suspected to have been negatively affected by the spreading of 'green waste' across the site.

The trenching identified two pits, one of late Neolithic or early Bronze Age date and the second undated, though suspected to be of the same phase. The artefactual and ecofactual evidence recovered from the pits is indicative of domestic activity. Two undated linear features were also excavated. One relating to the anomaly identified by the geophysical survey and is suspected to be a medieval or post-medieval boundary ditch. The second contained an assemblage of burnt flint and is believed to be associated with the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age pits.

The results of the evaluation indicate the site has moderate archaeological potential for activity of late Neolithic or early Bronze Age and medieval / post-medieval periods. The late Neolithic or early Bronze Age features are likely to represent the continuation of the activity observed during previous archaeological works both to the west of the proposed development area.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Thomas Homes Ltd for commissioning this project. Thanks is also extended to Richard Oram who monitored the work on behalf of the Planning Authority for their advice and guidance.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by John Boothroyd. The fieldwork was directed by Rachael Daniel, who was supported by Diana Chard and Rachel Legge. Survey and digitizing was carried out by Diana Chard. Thanks are also extended to the teams of OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the management of Leigh Allen, processed the environmental remains under the management of Rebecca Nicholson, and prepared the archive under the management of Nicola Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Thomas Homes Ltd to undertake a trial trench evaluation at Land to the West of Hale Road, Benson, Oxfordshire, on the site of a proposed housing development.

1.1.2 The work was undertaken to inform the Planning Authority in advance of a submission of a planning application. Although the Local Planning Authority did not set a brief for the work, discussions with Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council, established the scope of works required. A written scheme of investigation was produced by OA detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to inform the planning process. This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.

1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' 'Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation' (CIfA 2014) and local and national planning policies, including the Oxfordshire County Council Evaluation Brief Annexes.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

1.2.1 The site lies to the north-west of the village of Benson. It is bounded to the east by Hale Road, to the south by Sunnyside and to the north by agricultural land. Former agricultural land to the west is currently being developed for housing (NGR: SU 61680 92280; Fig. 1).

1.2.2 The area of proposed development consists of single arable field of approximately 3.3ha. The site slopes gradually from the east to the west, with heights ranging between 53m and 50m above Ordnance Datum.

1.2.3 The geology of the area is mapped as Gault Formation Mudstone, a sedimentary bedrock that formed approximately 100 to 112 million years ago in the Cretaceous period. Superficial deposits of the Summertown-Radley Sand and Gravel Member, formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary period, have been recorded overlying the bedrock geology.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site is discussed in the desk-based assessment (OA 2016) and as such will not be reproduced here. A summary of the archaeological potential and the results of the geophysical survey are provided to place these results in context.

Archaeological Potential

1.3.2 No known heritage assets have been recorded within the site boundary. A LIDAR survey has shown medieval to post-medieval ridge and furrow ploughing. The site is located within an area of known prehistoric activity, and as such is considered to hold a high potential for prehistoric remains. Approximately 820m to the north-west of the

site lies a scheduled rural Roman settlement, suggesting a high potential for remains of this period. There is a low potential for Anglo-Saxon and medieval activity within the site. During these periods the site is likely to have formed part of the agricultural hinterland of the main village, located 450m to the south.

1.3.3 The site has been regularly ploughed since the 1940s and potentially earlier. This activity is likely to have adversely impacted upon any archaeological remains that were present within the development area.

Geophysical Survey

1.3.4 A geophysical survey undertaken in 2017 identified several anomalies within the development area, mainly interpreted as ferrous 'spikes' and linear features relating to agricultural activity (Fig. 2).

1.3.5 The results of the geophysical survey suggest the site is of limited archaeological potential. However, the success of the geophysical survey was negatively affected by the spreading of 'green waste' including magnetic debris across the site.

2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:

i. To determine or confirm the general nature of any remains present.
ii. To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.
iii. To determine or confirm the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
iv. To determine or confirm the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy.
v. To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
vi. To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.
vii. To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.
viii. To ground-truth the results of the geophysical survey, including testing areas shown as being devoid of archaeology.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 A total of 11 trenches, each measuring 30m by 1.6m, was excavated using a JCB 180˚ mechanical excavator (Plates 1-12). The trenches were set out at locations targeting the results of the geophysical survey, and to test 'blank areas' (Fig. 2). This represented a 2% sample of the *c* 3.3ha development site.

2.2.2 The trenches were machined under constant supervision by an experienced archaeologist to the top of the archaeological horizon or to the sterile natural geology, whichever was encountered first. All tranches were opened to their full length. The topsoil and any buried ploughsoil (subsoil) were removed in regular spits and spoil was stored at a safe distance from trench edges.

2.2.3 Where archaeological deposits were identified, a sample of the revealed features were hand excavated. Finds were retrieved and environmental samples taken as appropriate. Features were recorded in line with the standards outlined in the WSI.

2.2.4 Upon agreement with Richard Oram the Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council the trenches were backfilled with the arisings in reverse order of excavation, and compacted using the mechanical excavator.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below, and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches that contained archaeological remains. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in Appendix A. Finds data and spot dates are tabulated in Appendix B.

3.1.2 Context numbers reflect the trench numbers unless otherwise stated e.g. pit 102 is a feature within Trench 1, while ditch 304 is a feature within Trench 3.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The soil sequence between all trenches was fairly uniform. The natural geology, a mixed brownish orange sandy clay silt with frequent sub-angular flints, was overlain by a mid-brownish compact silt subsoil with occasional flint and chert inclusions, which in turn was overlain by the current ploughsoil.

3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good, and the trenches remained dry throughout.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 Archaeological features were present in Trenches 4, 5, 6 and 8. All features were observed to truncate the natural geology and were sealed by the subsoil.

3.4 Trench 4

3.4.1 A single linear feature, 403, was recorded running the length and extending across the entire base of Trench 4 (Fig. 2). A 2.25m extension was excavated perpendicular to the trench edges to ascertain the limits of the of the feature, which was interpreted as a medieval or post-medieval boundary ditch.

3.5 Trench 5 and 6

3.5.1 A linear feature, 504, and a circular discrete feature, 502, were excavated at the western end of Trench 5. Both features were initially interpreted as bioturbation, ie a tree throw hole and associated rooting. However, excavation of a similar feature in Trench 6 (pit 604) suggests that feature 502 is also likely to be a pit. No finds were recovered from the feature. The irregular nature of linear feature 504 is indicative of bioturbation and was observed to truncate pit 502 (Figs 3 and 5).

3.5.2 Sub-oval pit 604 in Trench 6 had steeply sloping straight sides and a flat base (Figs 3 and 5). The pit contained two fills. The lower fill, 603, was a mid orange-brown clayey silt with no finds, and the uppermost fill, 602, was a dark greyish brown clayey silt. Two sherds of late Neolithic or early Bronze Age beaker pottery were recovered from the upper fill. An environmental bulk sample (Appendix C.1, sample 1) was also taken from fill 602. An assemblage of 65 worked flints, 29 burnt unworked flints, an indeterminate fragment of animal bone and two fragments of amorphous fired clay which are probably fragments of hearth or oven lining were recovered from the sample. In

addition to the artefacts, a small assemblage of charcoal, hazelnut shells, seeds and a single cereal grain was also recovered from the sample.

3.5.3 The ditch recorded in Trench 4 was also observed to cross the northern end of Trench 5. Aligned NW-SE, ditch 506 and had straight sloping sides and measured 2.8m wide and was over 0.5m deep. The sole fill, 507, consisted of a compacted mid orange-brown sandy silt, from which an iron nail was recovered. The feature runs parallel to the current field boundary (Figs 3 and 5).

3.6 Trench 8

3.6.1 Aligned NE-SW, ditch 802 crossed the northern end of Trench 8 (Figs 4 and 5). The ditch contained three fills. The lower fill, 803, was a yellowish grey silty sand and the middle fill, 804, a mid orange-grey silty clay. No finds were recovered from either fill. The final observed fill, 805, was a dark orange-grey sandy clay and contained a heat-affected flint and 10 refitting fragments of a cattle femur which cannot be dated.

3.7 Finds summary

3.7.1 A relatively sparse assemblage of artefacts was recovered during the evaluation works. The largest assemblage was recovered from the upper fill, 602, of pit 604 in Trench 6. The assemblage comprised two sherds of late Neolithic or early Bronze Age pottery, along with 65 worked flint and 29 pieces of unworked burnt flint. While the majority of the assemblage comprised knapping shatter, 15 flakes and two fairly irregular blade forms were also present. Although it is not possible to date the worked flint securely, there was a lack of thick, squat hard-hammer flakes that are indicative of a middle-late Bronze Age date. This combined with the regular form of the flakes and their thinness suggest a late Neolithic to early Bronze Age date. A single indeterminate fragment of iron, believed to be intrusive, and two amorphous fragments of fired clay, probable hearth or oven lining, were also recovered.

3.7.2 An assemblage of six unburnt fragments of flint was recovered from fill 805 of ditch 802, along with 10 refitting fragments of cattle femur.

3.7.3 An incomplete nail of an unknown date was recovered from fill 507 of boundary ditch 506 in Trench 5. No other finds were recovered from the feature.

3.8 Environmental summary

3.8.1 A single environmental sample was taken from pit 604 in Trench 6 (Appendix C.1). The majority of material recovered from the sample consisted of modern roots, although charcoal, seeds, hazelnut shell and a single cereal grain were also present.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The evaluation was undertaken during fair weather conditions. Despite occasional heavy rainfall no flooding of the trenches occurred. The revealed features were generally easy to identify against the underlying natural deposits.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.1 The aims and objectives of the evaluation are detailed above within Section 2. In summary, the aims were to ground-truth the results of the geophysical survey and establish the presence or absence of any archaeological features or deposits and, if present, determine their character, date range and significance.

4.2.2 No features of an archaeological origin were identified within the site in the results of the geophysical survey. A linear anomaly interpreted as being of an agricultural origin ran NNW-SSE along the eastern edge of the site and correlated well with the ditch recorded within Trenches 4 and 5. Very weak agricultural anomalies and ferrous spreads identified by the geophysics were not observed within the trenches.

4.2.3 The pits recorded within Trenches 5 and 6, as well as the ditch in Trench 8, were not identified in the results of the survey.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 Where present, archaeological features were largely undated. Pit 604 in Trench 6 is the only securely dated feature within the site. The artefacts and ecofacts recovered from the feature are indicative of domestic activity dating to the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age. Although undated, pit 502 in Trench 5 was a comparable size and shape with a similar secondary fill and is likely to be contemporary with pit 604.

4.3.2 Although no datable evidence was recovered from ditch 802 in Trench 8, the quantity of burnt flint is indicative of the feature being in use during the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age and associated with the domestic activity recorded in Trenches 5 and 6.

4.3.3 The ditch crossing Trenches 4 and 5 is indicative of a former field boundary. Running parallel to the current field boundary, it likely represents an earlier medieval or post-medieval boundary, although it is not shown on any of the historic maps within the desk-based assessment.

4.4 Significance

4.4.1 Later Neolithic to early Bronze Age activity has been recorded during evaluations to the west of the proposed development area (TVAS 2010; 2016), including two ditches dated to this period by pottery. The evidence recovered from these works reflects the surrounding landscape and is indicative of low-level late Neolithic or early Bronze Age settlement in the area.

4.4.2 Geophysics is not always a reliable method for identifying discrete or clusters of discrete features. This combined with the spreading of ‘green waste’ across the site

suggest there is potential for the further, as yet unknown, archaeological features to present within the proposed development area.

4.4.3 Therefore, the site can be considered to have a moderate to high significance for archaeological remains of a late Neolithic or early Bronze Age date.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					**Orientation**	ENE-WSW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of silty clay.					**Length (m)**	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.35
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
100	Layer	-	0.20	Topsoil	-	-
101	Layer	-	0.15	Subsoil	-	-
102	Layer	-	-	Natural – compacted mid greyish yellow silty clay, occasional sub-rounded flint.	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					**Orientation**	NNW-SSE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of silty clay, with occasional bands of flint.					**Length (m)**	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.40
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
200	Layer	-	0.25	Topsoil	-	-
201	Layer	-	0.15	Subsoil	-	-
202	Layer	-	-	Natural – Mid greyish orange silty clay with occasional bands of densely packed large sub-rounded flint.	-	-

Trench 3						
General description					**Orientation**	ENE-WSW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of sandy silty .					**Length (m)**	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.28
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
300	Layer	-	0.25	Topsoil	-	-
301	Layer	-	0.05	Subsoil	-	-
302	Layer	-	-	Natural – compacted mid brownish orange silty clay with occasional sub-rounded flint.	-	-

Trench 4

General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench contained a large field boundary which covered the breadth of the trench. A sondage of 2.25m eastwards confirmed the extent of the feature. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of sandy silt.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.55
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
400	Layer	-	0.20	Topsoil	-	-
401	Layer	-	0.35	Subsoil	-	-
402	Layer	-	-	Natural – orange sandy silt with lenses of flint inclusion.	-	-
403	Fill	-	-	Field boundary ditch fill – firm mid brownish orange sandy silt with infrequent sub-angular stone inclusions.	-	-
404	Cut	-	-	Field boundary ditch cut, approx. N-S aligned.	-	-

Trench 5						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench contained one ditch, a linear feature (potentially a result of bioturbation) and a small pit. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of clayey sandy silt.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.40
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
500	Layer	-	0.25	Topsoil	-	-
501	Layer	-	0.15	Subsoil	-	-
502	Cut	0.8	0.26	Pit. Sub-circular with a flat base and steep sloping sides.	-	-
503	Fill	0.8	0.26	Moderately compacted mid – dark grey silty clay	-	-
504	Cut	0.3	0.21	Linear feature aligned NW-SE, which was later understood to be a result of tree rooting.	-	-
505	Fill	0.3	0.21	Moderately compacted mid orange-grey silty clay.	-	-
506	Cut	2.8	0.5	Field boundary ditch cut, approx. N-S aligned.	-	-
507	Fill	2.8	0.5	Compacted mid orange-brown sandy silt with frequent sub-angular stones.	Nail (Fe).	-
508	Layer	-	-	Natural – compacted coarse and gritty clayey sandy silt		

				with frequent sub-rounded flint.		

Trench 6						
General description					**Orientation**	SE-NW
Trench contained a late Neolithic to early Bronze Age pit. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of sandy silt.					**Length (m)**	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.45
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
600	Layer	-	0.34	Topsoil	-	-
601	Layer	-	0.11	Subsoil	-	-
602	Fill	1.42	0.31	Upper fill of 604. Soft mid-dark greyish brown clayey silt with occasional stones, flint and charcoal flecks. Environmental sample taken.	Pottery	Early Bronze Age
603	Fill	0.17	0.2	Lower fill of 604. Soft mid orange-brown clayey silt with occasional charcoal flecking.	-	-
604	Cut	1.66	0.31	Pit. Irregular shape in plan, steeply sloping sides and flat base.	-	-
605	Layer	-	-	Natural – mid-light brownish orange sandy silt with occasional flint inclusions and lenses.	-	-

Trench 7						
General description					**Orientation**	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of silty clay.					**Length (m)**	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.41
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
700	Layer	-	0.09	Topsoil	-	-
701	Layer	-	0.32	Subsoil	-	-
702	Layer	-	-	Natural – dark brown silty clay with very frequent large flint nodules, occasional lighter brown silty patches.	-	-

Trench 8						
General description					**Orientation**	SSE-NNW
Trench contained a linear ditch. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of silty clay.					**Length (m)**	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.65

Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
800	Layer	-	0.35	Topsoil	-	-
801	Layer	-	0.30	Subsoil	-	-
802	Cut	1.05	0.5	Linear ditch, aligned NE-SW. moderately sloping sides and concave base.	-	-
803	Fill	0.4	0.1	Lowermost fill of 802. Soft mid yellowish grey clayey sand.	-	-
804	Fill	0.8	0.25	Middle fill of 802. Soft mid orange-grey clayey sand with frequent sub-angular flint.	-	-
805	Fill	1.05	0.28	Uppermost fill of 802. Moderate dark orange-grey sandy clay with frequent sub-angular flint.	Animal bone and heat affected flint.	-
806	Layer	-	-	Natural – mid orange silty clay with bands of dense flint and light orangery clayey sand.	-	-

Trench 9

General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench contained a land drain observed in section at SW end, a further two land drains evident towards NE end. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of sandy silt.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.52
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
900	Layer	-	0.30	Topsoil	-	-
901	Layer	-	0.22	Subsoil	-	-
902	Layer	-	-	Natural – moderately loose light brownish orange sandy silt with frequent flint inclusions and lenses.	-	-

Trench 10

General description					Orientation	NNE-SSW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of sandy silt.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.73
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
1000	Layer	-	0.32	Topsoil	-	-
1001	Layer	-	0.41	Subsoil	-	-

1002	Layer	-	-	Natural – pale orange-yellow (some darker brown patches) sandy silt with frequent flint nodules.	-	-

Trench 11						
General description					**Orientation**	WSW-ENE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of clayey silt.					**Length (m)**	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.26
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
1100	Layer	-	0.28	Topsoil/ ploughsoil	-	-
1101	Layer	-	-	Natural – mid greyish brown clayey silt with frequent sub-angular flint of mixed size.	-	-

Trench 12						
General description					**Orientation**	NNW-SSE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of sandy silt.					**Length (m)**	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.45
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
1200	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil	-	-
1201	Layer	-	0.15	Subsoil	-	-
1202	Layer	-	-	Natural – very compacted mid orange fine sandy silt with frequent sub-rounded flint of mixed size.	-	-

APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Pottery

Identified by Lisa Brown

Context	Description	Date
602	Two sherds with lightly incised chevron decoration, beaker, 8g	Late Neolithic / early Bronze Age

B.2 Flint

By Mike Donnelly

Introduction

B.2.1 This evaluation yielded a moderate assemblage of 65 pieces of struck flint and 35 pieces of burnt unworked flint weighing 149g. However, all the struck flint and the majority of the burnt flint was recovered from pit fill 602, pit 604. This assemblage lacks diagnostic tool and core forms but probably dates from the late Neolithic to early Bronze Age based on the morphology of the recovered debitage.

B.2.2 Pit 602 contained 65 pieces of stuck flint and 29 pieces of burnt unworked flint weighing 125g. The flint assemblage was dominated by flakes (15) but did include two fairly irregular blade forms (low blade index of 11.67%). The bulk of the assemblage was made up of fine knapping shatter (48) and there was a single larger piece of irregular waste. Two of the flakes displayed signs of edge utilisation most likely as a cutting/serrating tool. There was debitage from at least four different corers/nodules present in the pit. The pit also contained 25 heavily calcined burnt unworked fragments, but most of these looked to have originated from the same large chunk.

B.2.3 Overall, the flakes are quite regular and thin but display a lack of platform preparation and quite varied platform types including cortical and thermal. While not strictly diagnostic, the combination of a low blade index with quite regular flakes from unprepared platforms suggests a date sometime after the early Neolithic period. The regular form of the flakes and their thinness suggests that a middle to late Bronze Age date would be unlikely and there are none of the thick, squat hard-hammer flakes that typify those periods. Therefore, the assemblage is believed to most probably date from the late Neolithic to early Bronze Age.

B.2.4 The recovery of a small pit assemblage of late Neolithic/early Bronze Age date is of note. Pit assemblages of this date are known from Oxfordshire but are not particularly common. While such pits can occur in isolation, they can often be part of larger pit clusters. The combination of utilised flakes, burnt unworked fragments related to water heating/hearths or cooking and debitage from at least four separate knapping events all suggest a domestic setting. Therefore, it is highly likely that further flint-rich features will be encountered here should further work be undertaken.

Methodology

B.2.5 The artefacts were catalogued according to OA South's standard system of broad artefact/debitage type (Anderson-Whymark 2013; Bradley 1999), general condition noted and dating was attempted where possible. The assemblage was catalogued directly onto an Open Office spreadsheet. During the assessment additional information on condition (rolled, abraded, fresh and degree of cortication), and state of the artefact (burnt, broken, or visibly utilised) was also recorded. Retouched pieces were classified according to standard morphological descriptions (e.g. Bamford 1985, 72-77; Healy 1988, 48-9; Bradley 1999). Technological attribute analysis was initially undertaken and included the recording of butt and termination type (Inizan *et al.* 1999), flake type (Harding 1990), hammer mode (Onhuma and Bergman 1982), and the presence of platform edge abrasion.

Context	Type	Sub-type	Notes	Date
602	Flake x 3	Distal trimming x 1 & misc trimming x 2		
602	Flake x 3	Side trimming x 2 and preparatory x1		
602	Flake x 2	Inner x 2	Two utilised inner flakes, both distal segments, probably snapped through use	? Late Neolithic / early Bronze Age
602	Flake x 7	Inner x 7	Collection of regular flakes with varied platform types	
602	Bladelet	Distal trimming	Bladelet dimensions but fortuitous?	
602	Blade	Side trimming	Quite irregular but with blade dimensions	
602	Irregular waste			
602	Burnt unworked		25 fragments 125g	
805	Burnt unworked		6 fragments 24g	

B.3 Iron

Identified by Ian Scott

Context	Description	Date
507	1 incomplete cut nail, 6g	Not closely datable
602	<1> 1 small unidentifiable fragment	-

B.4 Fired clay

Identified by Edward Biddulph

Context	Description	Date
602	<1> 2 amorphous fragments, fabric contains sand and clay pellets. Probably fragments of hearth or oven lining, 4g	-

APPENDIX C ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

C.1 Environmental Samples

By Sharon Cook

Introduction

C.1.1 A single 40L sample was taken, from the upper fill of late Neolithic-early Bronze Age pit 604 within Trench 6.

Method

C.1.2 The entire sample was processed 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 artefacts. Nomenclature for the plants follows Stace 2010.

Results

C.1.3 The sample produced a small flot of 25ml of which the volume largely consisted of modern roots. The charcoal present is in good condition but small and not suitable for wood species identification. A number of goosefoot (*Chenopodium* sp.) seeds are present; however, these appear to be of modern origin. Four pieces of hazelnut shell (*Corylus avellana*) and a single cereal grain are present within the flot. The hazelnut shell is robust and in good condition while the grain, which is most likely to be wheat (*Triticum* sp.), is in much poorer condition, with considerable exterior damage.

C.1.4 Worked/struck and burnt flint, fired clay, mammal bone and a small fragment of iron were retrieved from the residues and are reported upon elsewhere within the specialist reports.

Conclusions and recommendations

C.1.5 While charred plant remains evidently survive on this site it is impossible to reach firm conclusions with regard to site activity with such a small data-set. The hazelnut shell is a common find within Neolithic and Bronze Age contexts but the wheat grain is in too poor condition to be able to identify it further.

C.1.6 Any future excavations should incorporate a sampling policy in accordance with the most recent sampling guidelines (e.g. OA 2010 and EH 2011).

C.2 Animal Bone

Identified by Lee Broderick

Context	Description	Date
602	<1> I indeterminate fragment, 1g	-
805	10 refitting fragments of a cattle femur, 81g	-

APPENDIX D BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX E SITE SUMMARY DETAILS

Site name:	Land to the West of Hale Road, Benson, Oxfordshire
Site code:	BEHR17
Grid reference:	SU 61680 92280
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	25th to 28th September 2017, four days
Area of site:	3.3ha
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS:2017.143.
Summary of results:	In September 2017 Oxford Archaeology undertook a trial trench evaluation at land to the West of Hale Road, Benson, Oxfordshire, centred on SU 61680 92280. The trenches were targeted on the results of the geophysical survey which identified ferrous spreads and a potential linear feature of agricultural origin. The results of the geophysical survey are suspected to have been negatively affected by the spreading of 'green waste' across the site. The trenching identified two pits, one of late Neolithic or early Bronze Age date and the second undated, though suspected to be of the same phase. The artefactual and ecofactual evidence recovered from the pits is indicative of domestic activity. Two undated linear features were also excavated. One relating to the anomaly identified by the geophysical survey and is suspected to be a medieval or post-medieval boundary ditch. The second contained an assemblage of burnt flint and is believed to be associated with the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age pits. The results of the evaluation indicate the site has moderate archaeological potential for activity of late Neolithic or early Bronze Age and medieval / post-medieval periods. The late Neolithic or early Bronze Age features are likely to represent the continuation of the activity observed during previous archaeological works both to the west of the proposed development area.

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Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA,

Figure 1: Site location

X:\b\Benson Hale Road EV\010Geomatics\03 GIS Projects\BEHREV_Benson Hale Road_figure_1_2017-09-20.mxd*matt.bradley*20/09/2017

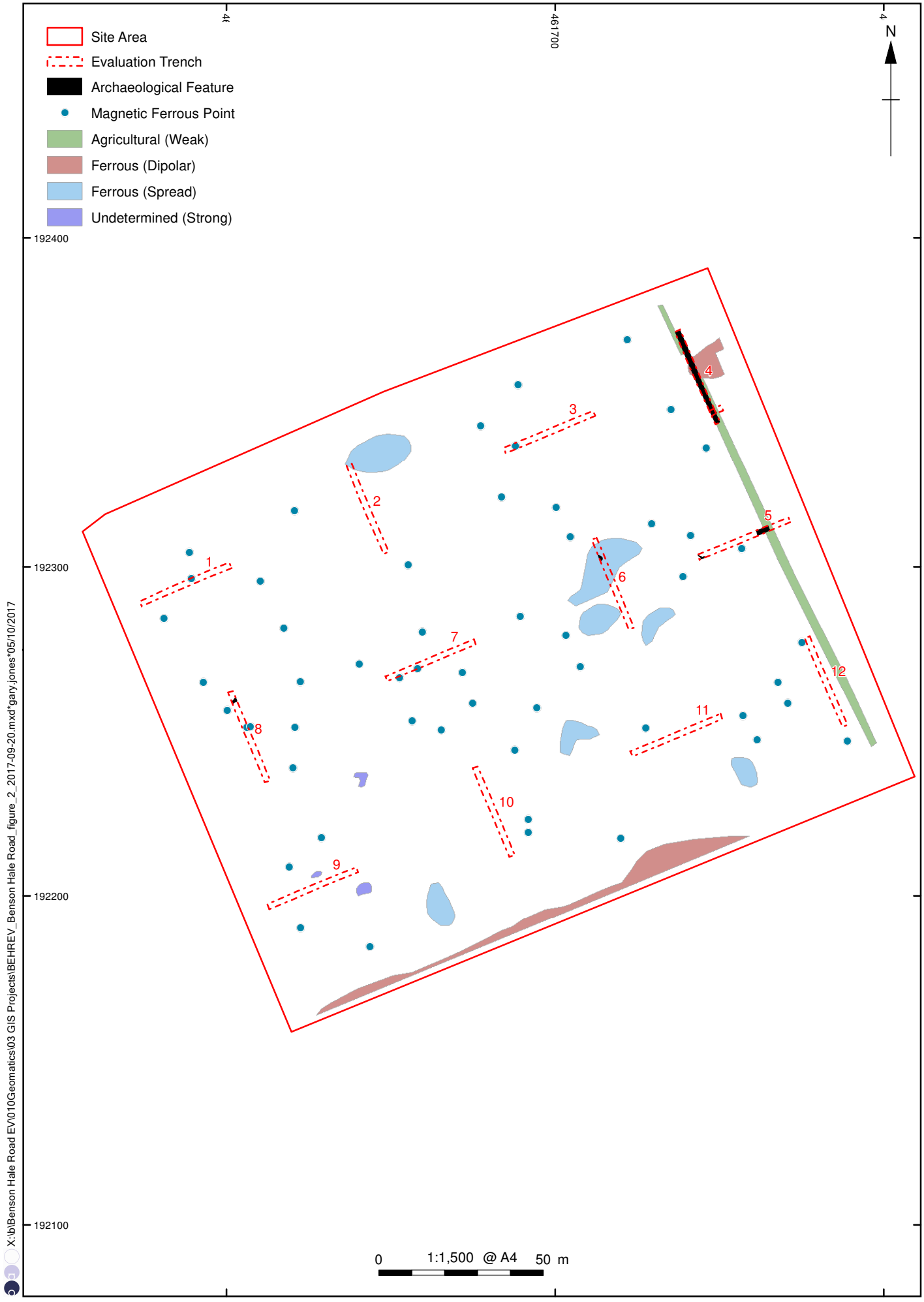

Figure 2: Trench layout with archaeological features and geophysical survey results

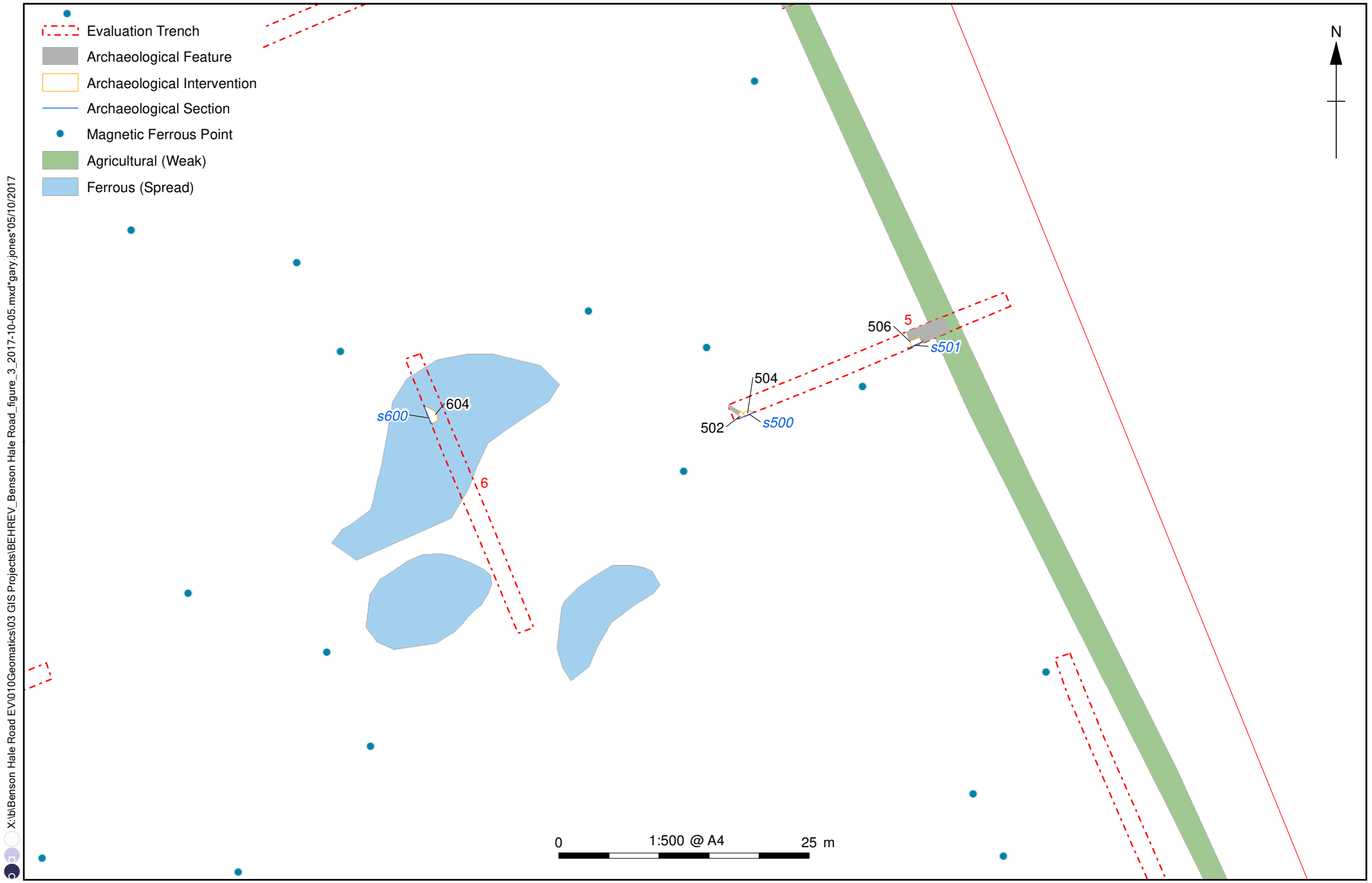

Figure 3: Trenches 5 and 6

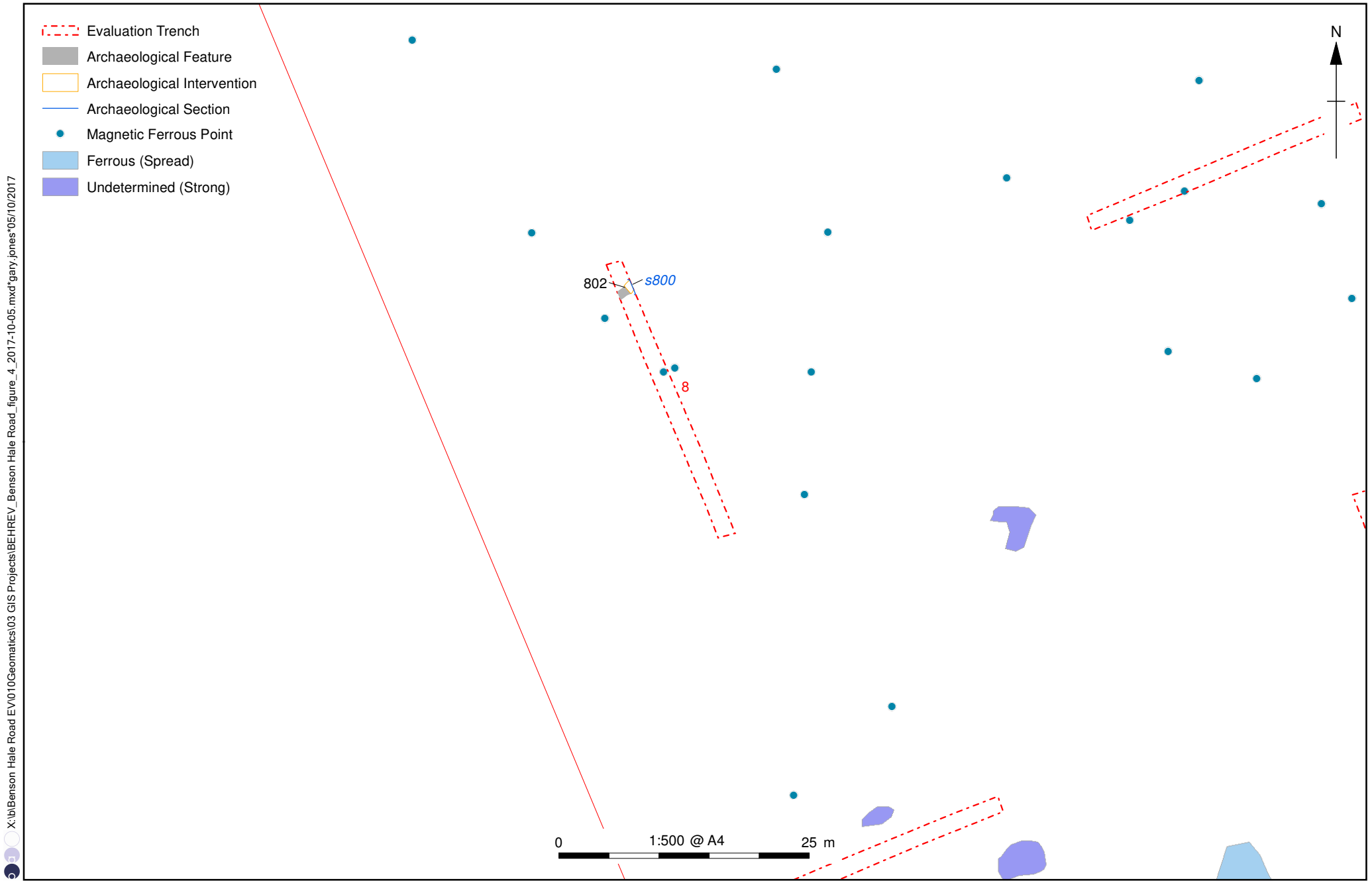

Figure 4: Trench 8

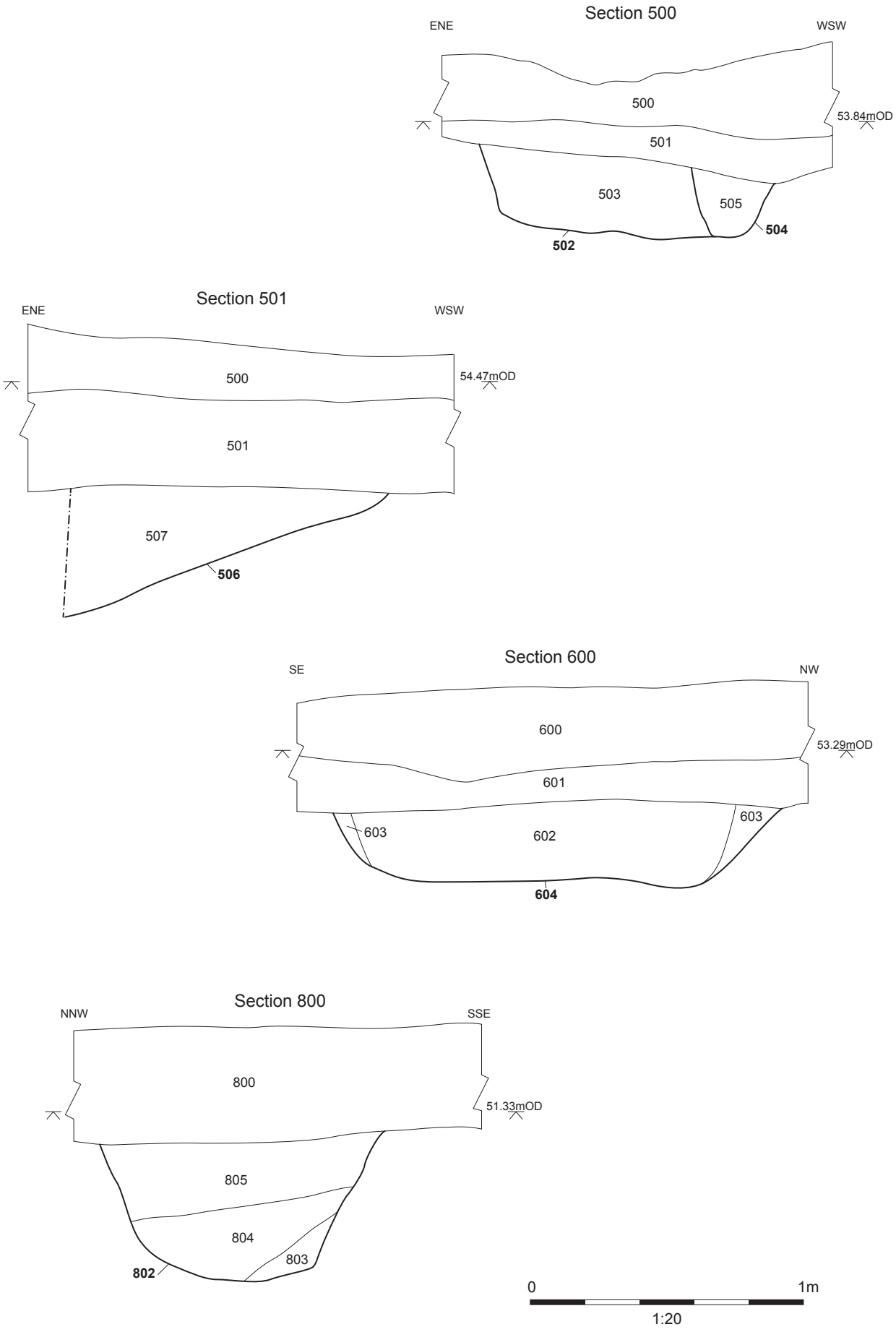

Figure 5: Section drawings from Trenches 5, 6 and 8

Plate 1: Trench 1, view to WSW

Plate 2: Trench 2, view to SSE

Plate 3: Trench 3, view to ENE

Plate 4: Trench 4, view to NNW

Plate 5: Trench 5, view to ENE

Plate 6: Trench 6, view WNW

Plate 7: Trench 7, view to ENE

Plate 8: Trench 8, view to SSE

Plate 9: Trench 9, view to ENE

Plate 10: Trench 10 view to SSE

Plate 11: Trench 11, view to ENE

Plate 12: Trench 12, view to NNW

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