

Fenny Compton Warwickshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report

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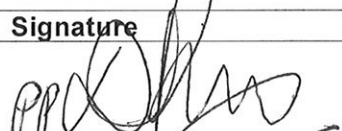
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Fenny Compton, Warwickshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Summary

On the 25th of June 2012 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation on land on the eastern edge of Fenny Compton in Warwickshire. The evaluation comprised machine excavation of four trenches measuring 20m by 1.6m. No trench exceeded 0.7m in maximum depth with 0.3m being the norm. In all the trenches, a thin layer of turf/topsoil came down directly onto the underlying natural clays.

Other than modern drains, no archaeological features were identified in any of the trenches. Eighteen sherds of early medieval pottery were recovered from three of the four trenches and two pieces of tile were also recovered. These probably relate to night soil deposits.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 The site is situated to the north east of the centre of the village of Fenny Compton, to the east of High Street and comprises approximately 0.5 hectares. The site is bordered to the north-east by the back gardens of properties along Station Road, to the north-west by the back gardens of properties along High Street, to the south-west by properties along Cotters Croft, and by open fields to the south-east (Fig. 1).

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site slopes down from south-east to north-west, from a height of around 115m above Ordnance Datum (OD) down to a height of around 111.5m OD.

1.2.2 The underlying geology of the site is recorded as Lias clay (British Geological Survey, Sheet 201).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site has been covered in detail in a Heritage Statement produced by RSK (RSK 2012). The results of this assessment are briefly summarised below.

1.3.2 No previous archaeological investigation has taken place within the limits of the site. A number of archaeological investigations including evaluations, watching briefs and excavations have taken place within the village of Fenny Compton itself. Five investigations recorded medieval remains including remains of buildings, surfaces and ditches, and two recorded post-medieval remains, including the foundations of a stone outhouse and boundaries. Undated remains were recorded in another investigation and a single investigation recovered no evidence for archaeological activity.

1.3.3 A topographic survey was conducted in the field during March 2012 (OA 2012a). The survey identified a slightly depression and corresponding raised area along the north-western boundary of the site (Fig. 2). This feature was visible during the site visit and may form a hollow-way with possible bank deposits on either side. The feature appeared to taper out at the north-eastern and south-western extremities. However, this may be a product of survey rather than representing actual terminal ends.

1.3.4 A geophysical survey was also conducted in the field during March 2012 (Bartlett-Clark 2012). The survey detected weak linear features consistent with the presence of ground disturbances which are visible in the field. These were believed to be too shallow for silted ditches but could have been earth-filled hollows, or variations in soil depth at the edge of a slight earthwork or a levelled platform. It concluded by stating that the possible presence of insubstantial traces of structural remains cannot be wholly excluded, but that the survey found no evidence for the presence of any concentration of archaeological features.

Prehistoric and Roman

1.3.5 Evidence for prehistoric activity in the area is very limited, comprising a single findspot of a Neolithic arrowhead recovered from the High Street area of the village

1.3.6 No sites or findspots of a later prehistoric or Roman date have been recorded.



Medieval

- 1.3.7 Eight sites of a medieval date or with period elements have been recorded. Five heritage assets rated of moderate value relate to medieval settlement evidence representing the origins of Fenny Compton.

Post-medieval

- 1.3.8 Nine sites of a post-medieval date have been recorded within the area and include sites relating to post-medieval settlement and industry, including two chapels.

Map regression

- 1.3.9 An assessment of successive Ordnance Survey maps dating from 1889-1994 demonstrate the site has changed little over the years, remaining as an open field.
- 1.3.10 The site originally formed part of a larger field bordering on High Street until at least 1905 and was surrounded by open fields on all sides. By 1955 land portions along the street frontage had been sold off for the construction of housing.

Historic landscape characterisation

- 1.3.11 Historic landscape character assessment was undertaken by Warwickshire County Council. It records some limited change in land-use. Overall, however, there is little recorded land loss or change in landscape morphology.
- 1.3.12 To the north-east of the village, a change from medieval open field systems to a planned enclosure in the post-medieval period prevailed and it appears that the area immediately to the east and south of the village limits (including the development site) formed the core of the medieval settlement. The extant wider agricultural landscape represents former medieval open fields enclosed in post-medieval times. Medieval agricultural practices are evidenced in places by surviving ridge-and-furrow.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The evaluation was commissioned by Brigitte Buss of RSK on behalf of Christ Church, Oxford.
- 1.4.2 The fieldwork was managed for OA by Katrina Anker and conducted by Mike Donnelly and Jane Smallridge. The machine driver was Brian Turner of Beecroft Plant Hire.



2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.2 General

2.2.1 The evaluation was to:

- (i) Seek to establish the extent, nature and date of any archaeological deposits encountered within the area of trial trenching.
- (ii) Preserve by record any archaeological deposits encountered during the course of the evaluation.
- (iii) Secure the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site.
- (iv) Disseminate results through the production of a grey literature report.

2.3 Specific aims and objectives

2.3.1 The specific objective of the evaluation was to gather sufficient information to generate a reliable predictive model of the extent, character, date, state of preservation and depth of burial of important archaeological remains (and associated palaeo-environmental deposits) within the area of study in order to inform the planning process.

2.3.2 In addition to the above objectives, the evaluation was intended to ascertain the character of the earthwork identified in both topographic and geophysical survey as a slight hollow with possible banks. Two trenches were placed across it in order to determine its character and significance.

2.4 Methodology

2.4.1 The trial trenching methodology adhered to the requirements set out in the written scheme of investigation (OA 2012b).

2.4.2 The excavation of all trenches and the movement of the machine were monitored for the presence of newts by an attending ecologist.

2.4.3 All four trenches were excavated to the depth of the underlying natural geology of Lias clays (Fig. 3). In one trench (4), a deeper sondage was excavated at one end of the trench to confirm the character of the underlying natural.

2.4.4 All trenches were laid out by a surveyor using a Leica RX1250XC Global Positioning System tied into the Ordnance Survey grid. All levels were related to Ordnance Survey datum level.

2.4.5 All trenches were scanned with a Cable Avoidance Tool prior to excavation.

2.4.6 Trenches were excavated using a toothless ditching bucket under close archaeological supervision. Topsoil and subsoil were stored separately and reinstated in reverse order of excavation.

2.4.7 A representative section was cleaned, photographed and recorded within each trench. All trenches were photographed with black and white 35 mm film and colour digital.

2.4.8 Finds of an archaeological age were recovered by context. Modern finds of glass, china and plastic were recorded but not retained.



3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 Four trenches were excavated across the site (1-4) with Trenches 1 and 4 targeted upon the anomaly identified in the topographic and geophysical survey (Plates 1-8). No archaeological features were identified in the course of the evaluation. Pottery and tile of medieval date was identified in three of the four trenches. These finds are described in more detail below.
- 3.1.2 Descriptions of all deposits and details of trenches are tabulated in Appendix 1.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 The sediment sequence in all trenches was uniform. A topsoil layer 0.2 - 0.3m thick sealed the natural Lias clays without any obvious subsoil layers. The clays were a blueish grey to greyish yellow colour.
- 3.2.2 The underlying ground conditions were wet. This was of no surprise given the predominantly heavy rainfall that has occurred this summer in an area of gently sloping land and underlying clay geology.

3.3 Finds summary

Pottery by John Cotter

- 3.3.1 A total of 18 sherds of pottery weighing 104g were recovered. This is all of medieval date. All the pottery was examined and spot-dated. For each context the total pottery sherd count and weight were recorded on an Excel spreadsheet, followed by the context spot-date which is the date-bracket during which the latest pottery types in the context are estimated to have been produced or were in general circulation. Comments on the presence of datable types were also recorded, usually with mention of vessel form (jugs, bowls etc.) and any other attributes worthy of note (eg. decoration etc.).
- 3.3.2 Overall the pottery assemblage is in a very fragmentary condition, although some sherds are quite fresh. Ordinary domestic pottery types are represented. Three topsoil contexts (201, 301 and 401) produced a similar range of pottery types. The commonest type is a wheel-thrown white sandy ware - probably in the form of thin-walled jars/cooking pots. These are unglazed but several sherds, including a typical medieval sagging base sherd, are sooted from use. This type is most probably identifiable as medieval Nuneaton-type ware - perhaps from the kilns at Chilvers Coton (late 12th to 15th century). There are a few sherds of rough orange-grey sandy ware including a cooking pot rim. These might be examples of Coventry ware (12th-13th century) or some similar Warwickshire industry. Lastly there are a few sherds of a soft brown shell-tempered ware (shell mostly dissolved) including a wheel-thrown jug handle. These appear to be a derivative of the late Saxon St Neot's-type industry and are probably to be identified as early medieval shelly wares from the south-east Midlands - most likely Northamptonshire or perhaps the Olney Hyde kilns in northern Buckinghamshire. Overall a 13th- to early 14th-century dating is likely for the pottery from these three contexts. No further work on the assemblage is recommended.

CBM by John Cotter

- 3.3.3 Two very worn pieces of orange-red tile weighing 113g. were recovered from topsoil context 401. One of these is curved and partly mortar-encrusted and possibly comes



from a thick medieval ridge tile. The other piece is a chip from the sanded underside of a tile. Both are probably of medieval date. No further work is recommended.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 Ground conditions were reasonable, despite the wet conditions and the trenches were clearly bereft of archaeological remains. The artefacts recovered were loose in the topsoil or sat in the surface of the underlying natural and were neither associated with features nor were they particularly concentrated.

4.1.2 The remains interpreted in the topographic survey as those of a hollow-way were clearly shown to relate to a modern field drain and its upcast in Trenches 1 and 4. It is possible that this may have utilised an existing hollow, but no evidence for this was found in either Trench 1 or 4, despite the presence of a dip on the land surface. No related feature was visible in section.

4.2 Interpretation

4.2.1 The area evaluated appeared to have had very limited land use in the past. The sole activity that can be estimated was some form of agricultural field or paddock that had 'night soils' scattered over it for manuring purposes. This led to the recovery of fragmentary and sooted pottery sherds and some tile of 13th -15th century date.



APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	N-S
No archaeological remains. Single modern drain identified. Only trench of the four that lacked Medieval pottery.					Avg. depth (m)	0.2
					Width (m)	1.6
					Length (m)	20
Contexts						
Context number	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
101	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil. Friable dark greyish brown organic clayey silt with charcoal flecking and coke/cinders.	-	-
102	Layer	-		Dark greyish yellow slightly silty clay. Very occasional pebbles.	-	geological
103	Fill	-		Dark brownish grey to yellowish brown mixed clayey silt.	China and tile	modern
104	Cut	1.2		Drain cut still containing existing red tile drain, china and other modern material present. Not bottomed.	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	E-W
No archaeological remains. Some medieval pottery recovered.					Avg. depth (m)	0.3
					Width (m)	1.6
					Length (m)	20
Contexts						
Context number	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
201	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil. Friable dark greyish brown organic clayey silt with charcoal flecking, burnt clay and coke/cinders.	Medieval pottery	-
202	Layer	-	-	Dark greyish yellow slightly silty clay.	-	geological

Trench 3						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
No archaeological remains. Some medieval pottery recovered.					Avg. depth (m)	0.3
					Width (m)	1.6
					Length (m)	20
Contexts						



Context number	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
301	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil. Friable dark greyish brown organic clayey silt.	Medieval pottery	-
302	Layer	-	-	Dark greyish yellow slightly silty clay.	-	geological

Trench 4						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
No archaeological remains. Two drains identified including a continuation of drain 103 from trench 1. Several medieval pot and tile sherds recovered.					Avg. depth (m)	0.25
					Width (m)	1.6
					Length (m)	20
Contexts						
Context number	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
401	Layer	-	0.22	Topsoil. Friable very dark greyish brown organic clayey silt with charcoal flecking, burnt clay and coke/cinders.	Medieval pottery and tile	-
402	Layer	-	0.18	Dark blueish grey clay.	-	-
403	Cut	0.8		Vertical sided drain/service cut. Not bottomed	-	-
404	Fill	-	-	Very mixed clay, topsoil and coarse pebbles.	Plastic, pottery and glass	modern
405	Cut	1.2		Continuation of drain 104 from trench 1, visible as upstanding feature in field	-	
406	Fill	-	-	Dark yellowish brown to grey silty clay.	-	modern



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Bartlett-Clark 2012, *Land at Fenny Compton, Warwickshire. Report of Archaeological Geophysical Survey 2012*

OA, 2012a *Fenny Compton, Warwickshire. Topographic Survey.* Oxford Archaeology

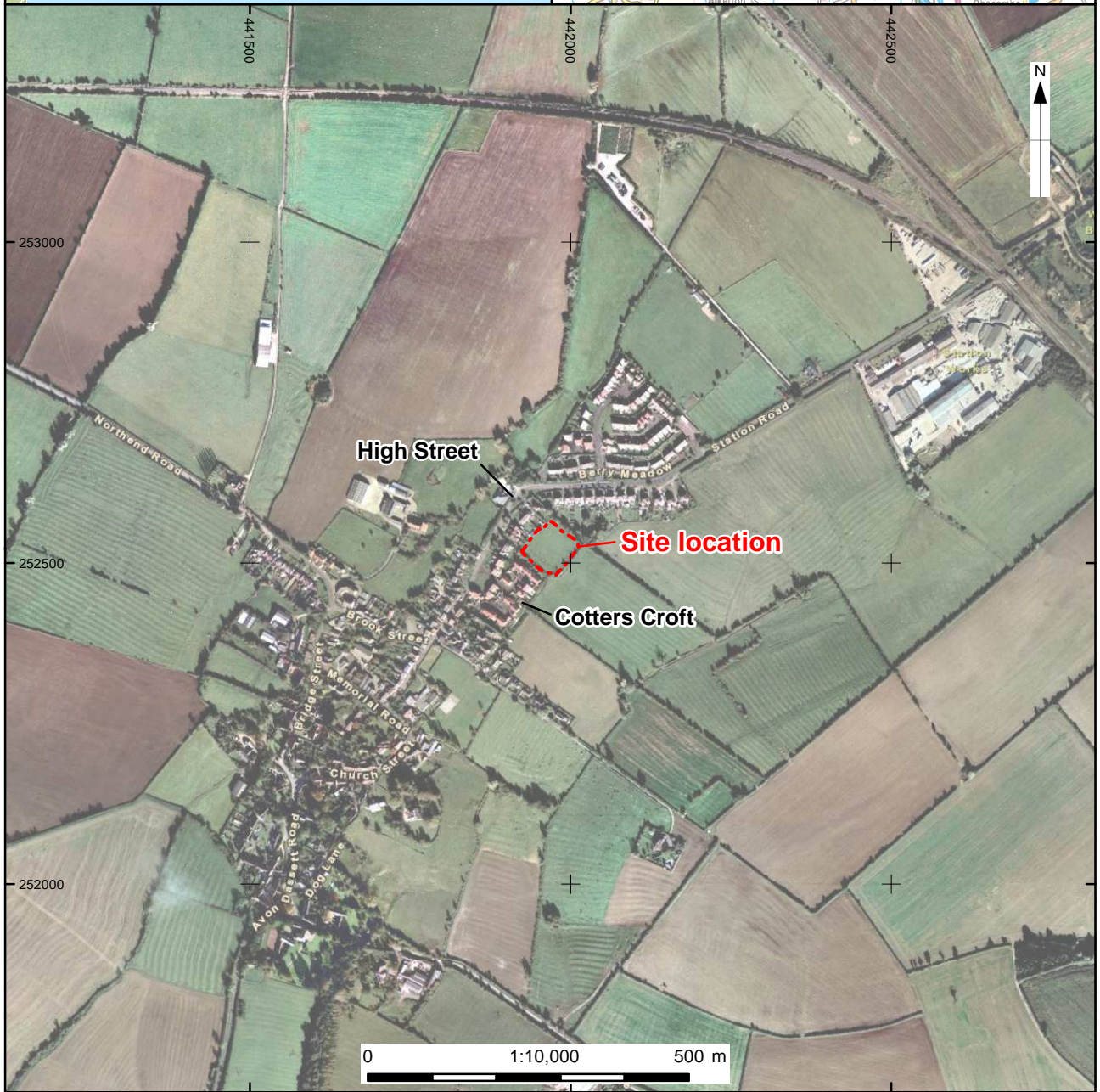
OA, 2012b *Fenny Compton, Warwickshire. Written scheme of investigation.* Oxford Archaeology

RSK 2012 *Christ Church, Fenny Compton: Heritage Statement*



APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Fenny Compton, Warwickshire
Site code:	FECO 12
Grid reference:	441972, 252521
Type:	4 trench evaluation
Date and duration:	25th June 2012
Area of site:	0.5 ha
Summary of results:	No archaeological features were encountered. Medieval pottery and tile was recovered.
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at Oxford Archaeology, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES.



Contains: Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2011; © ESRI Basemap layer 2012

Figure 1: Site location plan

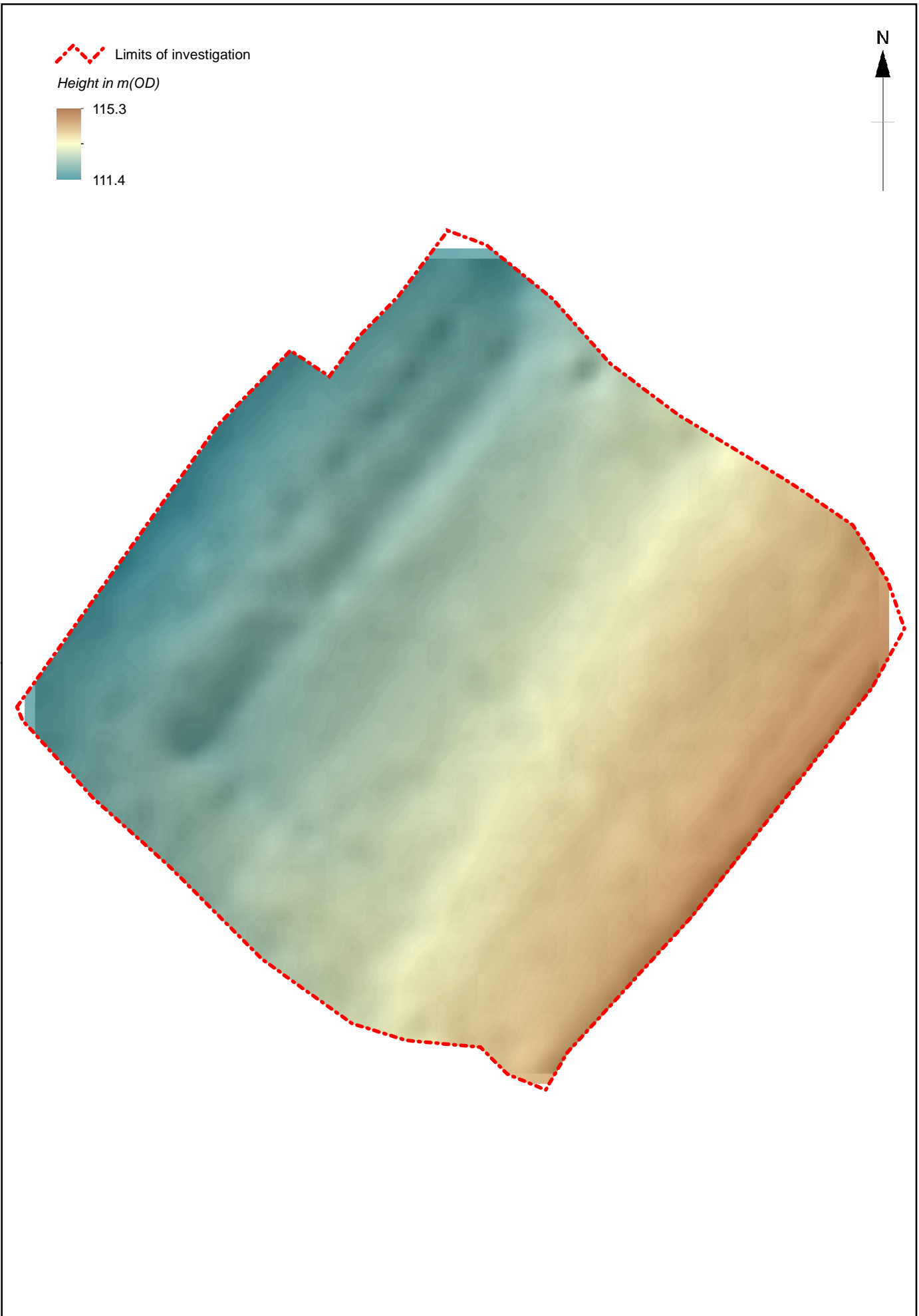
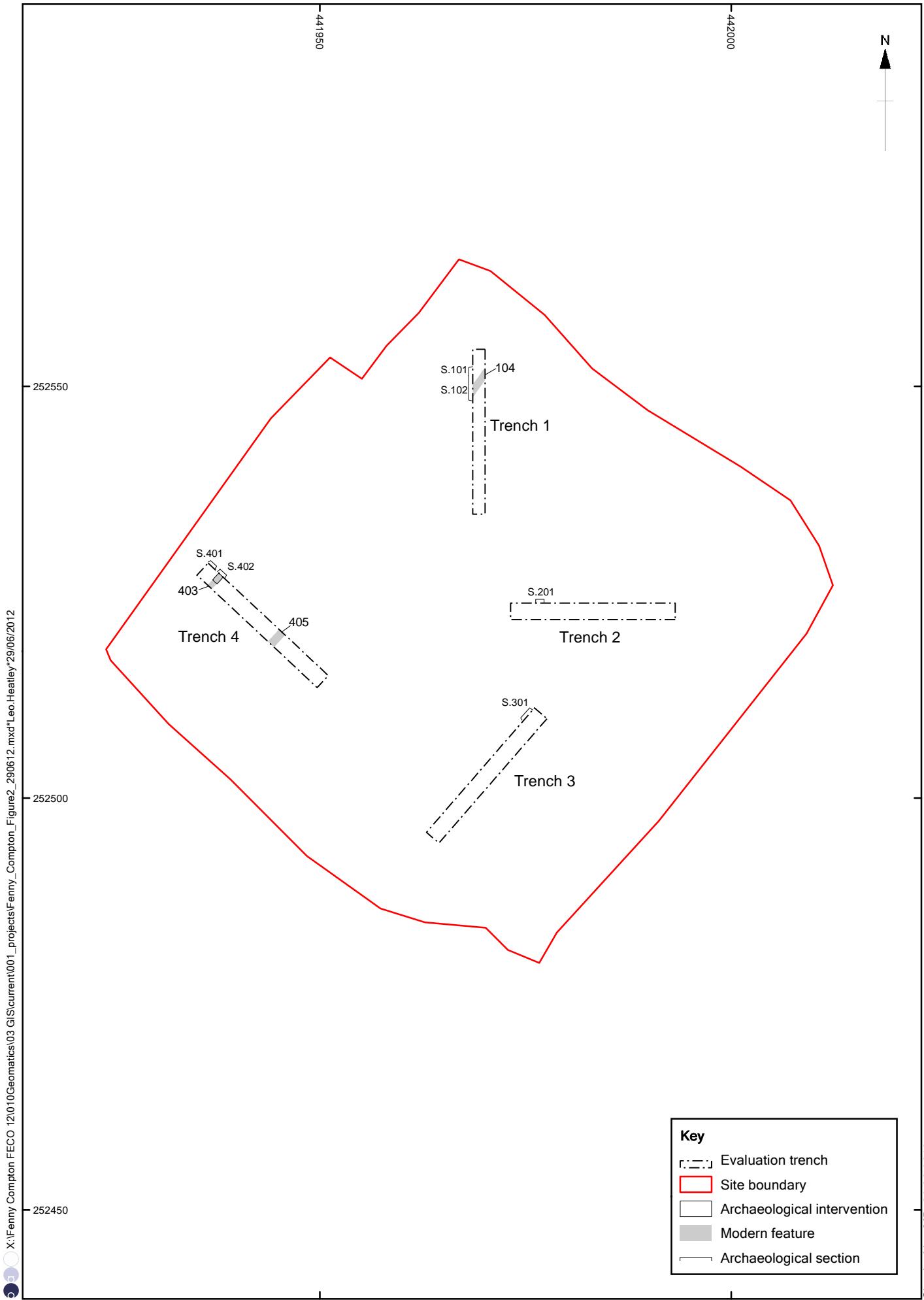


Figure 2: Results of topographic survey



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Checked by: MB 29.06.2012

Key	
	Evaluation trench
	Site boundary
	Archaeological intervention
	Modern feature
	Archaeological section

Figure 3: Trench location plan



Trench 1



Trench 2



Section 101



Section 201



Trench 3



Trench 4



Section 301



Section 401



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