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Prepared by: Kirsty Smith (Project Officer)
Checked by: Stuart Foreman (Senior Project Manager)
Edited by: Stuart Foreman (Senior Project Manager)
Approved for Issue by: Dave Score (Head of Fieldwork)

Signature:



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OA South

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford
OX2 0ES

t. +44 (0)1865 263 800

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridge
CB23 8SQ

t. +44 (0)1223 850 500

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane Mills
Moor Lane
Lancaster
LA1 1QD

t. +44 (0)1524 880 250

e. info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w. oxfordarchaeology.com

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Chief Executive Officer
Ken Welsh, BSc, MCIFA
Private Limited Company, No: 1618597
Registered Charity, No: 285627
Registered Office: Oxford Archaeology Ltd
Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES

Aston Children's Home, Aston, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Written by Kirsty Smith

With contributions from Anni Byard, Geraldine Crann, John Cotter, Richard Palmer, Adrienne Powell, Ruth Shaffrey and illustrations by Lucy Gane and Gary Nobles

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by Beard to undertake an archaeological evaluation of the site of a proposed children's home development. The site is located to the south of Back Lane in the village of Aston. This work was undertaken to inform the planning authority in advance of submission of a planning application.

Archaeological features were present in both trenches. Trench 1 contained two SW-NE aligned ditches and Trench 2 contained one SW-NE aligned ditch and two pits. The two ditches in Trench 1, and two pits in Trench 2 contained pottery dating to the mid-11th century to the mid-13th century. Residual Roman pottery was also recorded in several features, in all cases from contexts otherwise firmly dated to the medieval period.

During the preceding desk-based assessment, two SW-NE aligned raised linear features (possible boundary banks) were recorded within the site on the LiDAR survey. One bank was suggested in the centre of the site, and another was centred along the northern edge of the site. The features were very slight and uncertain, and not visible on the ground. Extant earthworks have been observed further south-west along Back Lane. Trenches 1 and 2 were placed to target the central SW-NE aligned bank, which was located within the area of proposed development. No evidence was recorded of the bank, but a large ditch was located in Trench 1 just north of the possible earthwork. It is possible that the bank and ditch may be related. A smaller ditch on the east side of the bank in Trench 1 may also be related.

All three ditches within the site were parallel to Back Lane. It is possible that they represent a settlement boundary or sub-division relating to the medieval village of Aston. The two pits contained pottery, animal bone and plant remains and may have been rubbish pits associated with a medieval property.

The environmental remains from the ditches and pits were well preserved and indicate a mixed medieval rural economy including arable production of wheat and legumes. Evidence for animal husbandry comprised cattle, sheep/goat, goose, pig and horse. The presence of goose bones, particularly ones which have been butchered, may be indicative of a high-status medieval settlement.

It is clear that the site contains previously unknown archaeological features dating from the medieval period and this contributes to understanding of the origins and development of Aston. The settlement evidence discovered, together with associated artefacts and palaeoenvironmental evidence, is likely to be of moderate significance.

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The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Stuart Foreman. The fieldwork was directed by Timothy Sperring, who was supported by Berna Rzadek and James Cross. Survey and digitising was carried out by Gary Nobles and Lucy Gane. Thanks are also extended to the teams of OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the supervision of Leigh Allen and Geraldine Crann, processed the environmental remains under the supervision of Rebecca Nicolson, and prepared the archive under the supervision of Nicola Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Beard to undertake a trial trench evaluation at the site of a proposed children's home development.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken to inform the planning authority in advance of submission of a planning application. A brief was set by Richard Oram and a written scheme of investigation was produced by OA detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to inform the planning process (Oxford Archaeology 2021b: Appendix J). This report outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.
- 1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies and Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Guidance (CIfA 2014 revised 2020).

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site is located on the northern edge of Aston, a village located 2km east of Bampton and 16km west of Oxford. Until the later 19th century, Aston was part of the parish of Bampton. In 1866, Aston and Cote formed their own parish, and the village is now part of the parish of Aston, Cote, Shifford and Chimney, within West Oxfordshire District.
- 1.2.2 The site comprises c 0.3 hectares (ha) of land currently under pasture. It is bounded to the north-west by Back Lane, to the west by several houses and to the south and north-east by fields.
- 1.2.3 The site is situated on a plateau of higher ground to the west of Aston at c 70m aOD. The northern part of the site slopes gently down towards the north-east, reaching a height of c 68m aOD in the north-east corner.
- 1.2.4 The underlying bedrock geology is recorded as Oxford Clay Formation and West Walton Formation (mudstone), a sedimentary bedrock formed c 157–166 million years ago in the Jurassic Period. The bedrock of the southern part of the site is overlain by Summertown-Radley sand and gravel (British Geological Survey 2021). The modern village of Aston is mostly built on the gravel.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been described in detail in the Desk-Based Assessment, and this information is summarised below (Oxford Archaeology 2021a).
- 1.3.2 There is limited evidence of prehistoric activity within the DBA study area, the only recorded finds being a small group of Neolithic and Bronze Age worked flints which were recorded 250m south of the site. A number of cropmark sites on the outskirts of the village could represent later prehistoric or Roman settlement activity. There is low potential for prehistoric remains to be encountered within the site.
- 1.3.3 In 2002, part of a Roman settlement was recorded during a watching brief 150m south-west of the site. Several features were recorded including a NW–SE aligned ditch and several pits and postholes that contained pottery dating from the late 1st/early 2nd

century to the early 3rd century (JMHS 2002). Another watching brief, undertaken 75m west of the site in 2007, recorded further signs of Romano-British activity. This included a series of rectilinear ditches that were thought to represent a Romano-British field system. Few of the ditches were excavated and they were thus undated, although two pits were dated to the Roman period (JMHS 2007). There is moderate potential for remains of Roman date to be encountered within the site.

- 1.3.4 The walkover and the LiDAR analysis have suggested that two NE–SW-aligned earthworks may be located within the site, although they are very slight and uncertain and not visible on the ground. The northerly bank and associated ditch are located at the northern end of the site where there has been modern disturbance from livestock pens. A surface find of medieval pottery was located in an area of modern disturbance and may be residual. This earthwork, which is located just north of the proposed development, may define a former course of Back Lane. Further earthworks have been observed further south-west of the site.
- 1.3.5 Another possible earthwork bank, this one aligned NE-SW, was observed on the LiDAR plot in the central part of the site. This feature, if real, is c 10m wide and located 15m south-east and parallel to the other boundary bank. This earthwork was not recorded during the walkover, but a number of undulations were observed across the site. This bank may represent an earlier boundary of the village, a property boundary, or may be an isolated plough ridge, relict from an earlier field system. It is possible that some or all of these earthworks were contemporary with the origins of the village in the 10th–11th century.
- 1.3.6 Aston was founded by the 10th century and during the late Saxon and later medieval period it formed part of the principal manor of Bampton (Baggs 1996, 62-66). The extent of the late Saxon and medieval village was probably concentrated around the triangular green formed by the High Street, Back Lane and North Street. It is possible that the site contains evidence of late Saxon/late medieval settlement activity given its position just south of Back Lane. The two earthwork features mentioned above, if real, are likely to be of late Saxon/late medieval date and predate the later medieval ridge and furrow found across the area. In the DBA, prior to excavation of the trenches, the site was deemed to have a low–moderate potential to contain medieval settlement remains and a high potential for medieval agricultural remains. Any surviving settlement evidence or remains of estate boundary earthworks would be of medium significance, whereas surviving ridge and furrow would be of low (local) significance.

During the post-medieval period, the site was under pasture and the fields were part of Aston manor. The site was bounded by a hedgerow on the southern side and was bisected by a hedgerow on the eastern side. These hedgerows were removed by the later 19th-century and the site became part of a larger pasture field associated with White House Farm (the latter located to the south-east of the site). The site has high potential to contain the surviving remnants of the former hedgerows, though these are of low archaeological significance. In the later 20th/early 21st century, a shed was constructed within the northern part of the site and a dump of spoil was situated in this area.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 General Aims

- 2.1.1 The proposed scheme will result in significant groundworks that have the potential to have an adverse impact upon any archaeological remains that might be present within the site. This evaluation is designed to test the possible earthwork features that were recorded during the walkover survey and the LiDAR analysis. The evaluation will also establish whether the site contains evidence for Roman, late Saxon/late medieval settlement activity or agricultural activity of later medieval/post-medieval date. The evaluation will clarify the presence (or absence) and significance of any archaeological deposits that might be damaged or removed by the proposed scheme and would inform a suitable mitigation strategy if required.
- 2.1.2 The programme of archaeological investigation will be conducted within the general research parameters and objectives defined by Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment Resource Assessments and Research Agendas. In particular the later medieval agendas 16.4 (landscape and land use) and 16.6 (settlement) may be relevant to this site (Hey and Hind 2014, 256-7).

2.2 Specific aims and objectives

- 2.2.1 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 establish the depth and profile of the identified earthwork features and recover dating evidence for their construction and period of use.

2.3 Methodology

- 2.3.1 Two trenches (30m by 1.8m) were excavated within the site as stipulated by the OCC brief in the WSI (Oxford Archaeology 2021, Appendix J). These trenches targeted the footprint of the proposed building and associated car park. The trenches also targeted a possible NE-SW earthwork observed on the LiDAR in the centre of the site. The other earthwork at the northern part of the site is outside the footprint of the proposed works. The trenches represented a 2% sample of the approximately 3000m² site area.
- 2.3.2 The two trenches were laid out across the site at the positions shown in the WSI using GPS survey equipment. The trenches were then excavated using a JCB 3CX wheeled excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket, in maximum 0.2m-thick spits, under constant supervision by an experienced archaeologist. The size of the trenches varied depending on location within the field and their excavated positions are shown on Figure 2.
- 2.3.3 All topsoil, subsoil or colluvial deposits were removed in spits under the supervision of a trained archaeologist down to the first significant archaeological horizon or to the top of the natural geology depending on which was encountered first.

- 2.3.4 All archaeological features and/or deposits encountered were hand excavated to establish their nature, extent, date, complexity, state of preservation and horizontal and vertical limits within the trench.
- 2.3.5 The stratigraphy of each trench was recorded, with at least one representative section of the sediment sequence recorded for each trench.
- 2.3.6 All archaeological features and deposits were planned and recorded to standards in line with current best practice. The work included the recording of individual contexts in plan using GPS survey equipment; section drawings of appropriate single contexts and features (at 1:20, 1:10 scales as deemed appropriate). A photographic record was made for each trench and excavated feature.
- 2.3.7 A range of 40L bulk samples were also collected from archaeological features, primarily for the recovery of charred plant remains and charcoal.
- 2.3.8 Recovered artefacts were recorded and bagged by individual context.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

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

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The natural geology and subsoil varied between the trenches. In Trench 1 the natural (102) was a soft dark yellow orange sandy silt with pebbles (10-60mm). In Trench 2 the natural (202) was a yellow/ red soft clayey sand with a patch of mudstone at the north-west end. The natural geology was overlain by a 0.13-0.16m thick subsoil layer comprising clay silt with pebbles (201). The subsoil was in turn overlain by a sandy silt topsoil (200).

3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good, and the site remained dry throughout. Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 Archaeological features were present in both trenches. Trench 1 contained two ditches (104, 105) and Trench 2 contained one ditch and two pits.

3.3.2 The archaeological features are shown on Figure 2 in relation to the LiDAR plot and Figure 3 shows the features in detail along with the section lines. Sections through the features are included on Figure 4.

3.4 Trench 1

3.4.1 Trench 1 contained a dark yellow orange sandy silt natural (102) with pebble inclusions (10-60mm). The natural was overlain by a light-yellow brown sandy silt subsoil (101).

3.4.2 The natural was cut by ditch 104 at the southern end of the trench. This ditch was aligned NE-SW and was 1.54m wide and 0.38m deep with a concave profile and a flat base (Figure 3; Figure 4: Section 100; Plate 3). The fill of this ditch (103) was a grey, brown sandy silt with pebbles which contained one sherd of pottery and animal bone. The pottery sherd was tentatively dated to the 11th to 13th century.

The subsoil was cut by a large NE-SW aligned ditch (105) at the northern end of the trench. This ditch was 3.63m wide and 0.83m deep with moderately steep sides and a concave base (Figure 3; Figure 4: Section 101; Plate 4). The lower fill (107) was a brown, yellow gravelly sand 0.23m thick. The upper fill (106) was a grey brown sandy clay 0.6m thick. A copper alloy ring (SF1), eight sherds of pottery and animal bone fragments were recovered from the upper fill (106). Five pottery sherds dated from the 12th to 13th century and three sherds were residual Roman. The simple copper alloy ring is hard to date or ascribe a specific function; either a harness ring or brooch are equally possible identifications. It is consistent with the medieval pottery from the same context. The environmental sample from fill 106 (Sample 3) produced wheat grains, charred dock seeds, animal bone and pottery.

3.5 Trench 2

- 3.5.1 Trench 2 contained a red soft clay sand (202) with a patch of mudstone at the north-western end of the trench. This was overlain by a yellow brown soft clayey silt subsoil (201). Three features were located in the centre of the trench including ditch 203 and pits 204 and 205.
- 3.5.2 The southerly feature within the trench was ditch 203 which was aligned NE-SW. This ditch cut the subsoil and the natural and was 0.72m wide and 0.42m deep with concave sides and an uneven base (Figure 3; Figure 4: Section 200; Plate 5). Ditch 203 was filled by a grey, brown sandy clay (206) which contained no datable evidence.
- 3.5.3 Pit 204 was located just north of ditch 203. It was sub-oval in plan and had a near vertical eastern side and a moderately sloped western side (Figure 3; Figure 4: Section 201; Plate 6). This pit had a single fill (207), a greyish black clayey silt which contained ten sherds of pottery, animal bone and a piece of slag. Nine sherds of pottery dated to the mid-12th to mid-13th century and one residual sherd was of Roman date. The environmental sample from fill 207 (Sample 1) produced wheat grains and a charred legume along with small fragments of pottery and animal bone.
- 3.5.4 Pit 205 was the most northerly of the three features. This pit was 1.3m wide and 0.72m deep with steep sides and a concave base (Figure 3; Figure 4: Section 202; Plate 7). The pit had one fill (208) a grey brown clayey silt which contained 13 fragments of pottery, one fragment of fired clay and animal bone. The pottery dated from the mid-11th to mid-13th century. The environmental sample from fill 208 (Sample 2) produced wheat grains, pottery and animal bone.

3.6 Finds summary

- 3.6.1 Finds were recovered from ditches 104 and 105 and from pits 204 and 205. This included 34 sherds (334g) of pottery. The majority of pottery (30 sherds) from these four features was dated to the mid-11th century to the mid-13th century apart from four sherds of residual Roman pottery from contexts 106, 207 (ditch 105, pit 204).
- 3.6.2 The evaluation produced a handful of other finds. A copper alloy ring dated to AD 1250-1400 was recorded in fill 106 of ditch 105. A fragment of undated fired clay weighing 5g was recovered from context 208 (pit 205) and a single piece of slag, 268g was recovered from context 207 (pit 204).
- 3.6.3 One fragment of sandstone from context 208 had been reddened by burning and is slightly dished and worn on one side suggesting possible use as a mixing stone. This may date from the Roman period or earlier.

3.1 Environmental summary

- 3.1.1 Three bulk samples were of 38 and 40 litres from three medieval features including ditch 105 and pits 204 and 205. Fill 106 of ditch 105 (Sample 3) contained wheat, charred dock seeds, animal bone and pottery. Fill 207 of pit 204 (Sample 1) produced wheat grains and a charred legume. Bone and pottery were recovered from the residue. Fill 208 of pit 205 (Sample 2) produced wheat grains, animal bone and pottery.

- 3.1.2 The results indicate that there is good potential for the recovery of charred material from this site and that the predominant cereal grown in the medieval period appears to be wheat.
- 3.1.3 A total of 53 animal bone fragments, weighing 785g, were recovered from the site via hand excavation, a further 30 fragments (37g) were recovered from the environmental sample residues. Six fragments of animal bone were recovered from context 103, 35 fragments from context 106, nine from context 206, 12 from context 207 and 21 from context 208. Cattle bones were the most frequent, followed by sheep/goat, goose, pig and horse. The animal bones were in excellent condition and ten fragments showed evidence of carnivore gnawing.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The two trenches provide a sufficient sample of the area that will be affected by the proposed development and have successfully characterised the archaeological potential of the site. The stratigraphic sequences were relatively simple. The results have shown that the archaeological features present have remained largely undisturbed by post-medieval and modern agriculture.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.1 The evaluation identified five archaeological features including three ditches and two pits. The date of four of the excavated features has been established by recovering artefacts from the fills. The two SW-NE aligned ditches in Trench 1 were found to contain pottery dating from the mid-11th century to the mid-13th century. The two pits in Trench 2 also contained pottery of the same period. The SW-NE aligned ditch in Trench 2 contained no datable material.

4.2.2 The full extent of these features was not recorded but it is probable that the three boundary ditches may extend the full length or some way across the development site. The extent of settlement features such as pits is less easy to assess. No evidence for buildings or other structures was encountered.

4.2.3 The trenches were laid out to investigate a very slight and uncertain SW-NE aligned bank feature, which was first identified by the LiDAR analysis undertaken for the desk-based assessment. The remains of the bank were not distinguishable as an upstanding earthwork in the trench sections. However, it was flanked by two ditches in Trench 1 (104 and 105). Ditch 105 was a substantial feature that appeared to be cut through the subsoil and is thus likely to have been part of an upstanding earthwork until relatively recently. The earthwork on the LiDAR plot is thus probably a real medieval feature although it barely survives as an upstanding bank.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 The evaluation has shown that the site has some potential for archaeological remains of medieval date, including linear boundary features and discrete settlement features (probable rubbish pits).

Prehistoric and Roman

4.3.2 No evidence for prehistoric activity was found.

4.3.3 Three sherds of residual Roman pottery were recorded in the upper fill of ditch 105 and one sherd of Roman pottery was recovered from Pit 204. These finds indicate Roman activity in the general vicinity of the site. Previous investigations have recorded Roman features to the west and south-west of the site.

Medieval

- 4.3.4 Documentary evidence indicates that settlement had been founded by the 10th century. However, no Anglo-Saxon features or artefacts were identified in the trenches.
- 4.3.5 Four features within the site contained medieval pottery dating from the mid-11th to mid-13th century. These included ditches 104 and 105 in Trench 1 and pits 204 and 205 in Trench 2. Fill 106 of ditch 105 also contained a copper alloy ring which is not closely datable but is compatible with a medieval date.
- 4.3.6 The two medieval ditches in Trench 1 were both aligned SW-NE. The northerly ditch (105) was quite substantial at 3.63m wide and 0.83m deep. As discussed in para 4.2.3 above it is possible that this was associated with a slight bank observed on the LiDAR plot just south of ditch 105. Alternatively, it may have been the isolated remains of part of a ridge and furrow field system. The LiDAR analysis undertaken for the DBA did detect remains of ridge and furrow around the village and two further SW-NE aligned features were recorded just south of the site. The other medieval ditch in Trench 1 (104) was 1.54m wide and 0.38m deep. This more modest feature may have been part of the same large earthwork feature or a property boundary or drainage ditch.
- 4.3.7 The two medieval pits in Trench 2 (204 and 205) may have been rubbish pits as they contained a mixture of pottery, animal bone and remains of wheat grains and a charred legume. These pits suggest that the site may have been associated with a medieval property located close to Back Lane. They also suggest that the site was not in solely agricultural use when the features were infilled during the mid-11th to mid-13th century.
- 4.3.8 The environmental evidence suggests that wheat was grown locally during the medieval period along with legumes. The environmental plant remains were relatively well preserved, indicating that the site may have further potential for palaeoenvironmental analysis. A substantial amount of animal bone (53 fragments weighing 785g) was also recovered from ditches 104, 105 and 203 and pits 204 and 205. Cattle bones were the most frequent, followed by sheep/goat, goose, pig and horse. The animal bones were in excellent condition and ten fragments showed evidence of carnivore gnawing. The goose bones showed signs of butchery and could potentially indicate a higher status medieval settlement. Although goose was the second most common bird after domestic fowl in the medieval period, they were more common in high status and ecclesiastical sites than in rural or urban sites (Holmes 2017). Herding geese was an intensive process and required pens, good quality pasture and one gander for every four geese (Medieval Histories 2015, The Medieval Goose).

Undated

- 4.3.9 One NE-SW aligned ditch in Trench 2 was undated and this was located just south of the two medieval ditches. This feature was subject to sample hand excavation and did not yield any datable artefacts. It is likely that this feature is also medieval in date.

4.4 Significance

- 4.4.1 Four out of the five features recorded contained pottery dating to the mid-11th to mid-13th century. This suggests that the ditches and pits were infilled during this period. The ditches may have been part of a property boundary which lay parallel with Back Lane to the north. The pits may have been rubbish pits associated with the rear gardens associated with a medieval property.
- 4.4.2 The character of the features, artefacts and environmental assemblages suggests a relatively short-lived and peripheral phase of settlement activity in this part of Aston. The presence of settlement evidence is unsurprising given the location of the site in the centre of a triangular green formed by the High Street, Back Lane and North Street. This area has probably formed part of the main focus of the village since its foundation in the 10th century. It is clear that the site contains previously unknown archaeological features dating from the medieval period and could be considered to be of moderate significance. The plant and faunal environmental evidence are noteworthy. The environmental remains indicate a mixed medieval rural economy of arable production of wheat and legumes with husbandry of cattle, sheep/goat, goose, pig and horse.
- 4.4.3 The absence of later medieval material suggests that this part of Aston was no longer occupied by the 14th century. The evidence, slight though it is, is consistent with the interpretation of Aston as a medieval settlement which shrank in size and population as a result of the Black Death in the mid-14th century. The village is built on a patch of river terrace sand and gravel (Summertown Radley Formation). The northern edge of the sand and gravel runs through the development area. It is possible that this field was abandoned as a settlement area because it was partly on Mudstone geology (Oxford Clay and West Walton Formation) which historically was less favoured for habitation than gravel.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

| Trench 1 | | | | | | |
|---|-------|-----------|-----------|--|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| General description | | | | | Orientation | NW-SE |
| The trench contained two linear ditches (104 and 105) The topsoil and subsoil overlay a natural geology of sandy silt. | | | | | Length (m) | 30 |
| | | | | | Width (m) | 1.5 |
| | | | | | Avg. depth (m) | 0.34 |
| Context No. | Type | Width (m) | Depth (m) | Description | Finds | Date |
| 100 | Layer | - | 0.16 | Topsoil. Fine grained sediment, soft greyish brown sandy silt | - | - |
| 101 | Layer | - | 0.18 | Subsoil. Fine grained sediment, soft light-yellow brown sandy silt with pebbles (3-20mm), poorly sorted | - | - |
| 102 | Layer | - | - | Natural geology. Fine grained sediment, soft dark yellow orange sandy silt with pebbles (10-60mm), poorly sorted | - | - |
| 103 | Fill | 1.54 | 0.38 | Fill of ditch 104. Fine grained sediment, soft dark greyish brown sandy silt with pebbles (20-40mm) | Pottery | Medieval c1050-1250? |
| 104 | Cut | 1.54 | 0.38 | Ditch aligned NE-SW. Concave profile, moderately steep sides, flat base. Truncates 102. | | |
| 105 | Cut | 3.63 | 0.83 | Large ditch aligned E-W. Lower fill 107 and upper fill 106. Cuts the subsoil. | | |
| 106 | Fill | 3.63 | 0.6 | Upper fill of ditch 105. Grey brown friable sandy clay with common sandstone inclusions >0.15m. Sample 3 | SF1- copper alloy ring, pottery | Medieval and res Roman |
| 107 | Fill | 2.2 | 0.23 | Lower fill of ditch 105. Light brown yellow friable gravelly sand with occasional mudstone >0.15m. | | |

| Trench 2 | | | | | | | |
|--|-------|-----------|-----------|--|----------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| General description | | | | | Orientation | NE-SW | |
| The trench contained one ditch aligned N-S and two pits in the centre of the trench. The topsoil and subsoil overlay a natural geology of soft clayey sand. | | | | | Length (m) | 30 | |
| | | | | | Width (m) | 1.5 | |
| | | | | | Avg. depth (m) | 0.43 | |
| Context No. | Type | Width (m) | Depth (m) | Description | Finds | Date | |
| 200 | Layer | - | 0.30 | Topsoil. Dark grey brown friable silt | - | - | |
| 201 | Layer | - | 0.13 | Subsoil. Yellow brown soft clayey silt with sandstone >20mm | - | - | |
| 202 | Layer | - | - | Natural. Yellow red soft clay sand with a patch of mudstone at the NW end >0.2m. | - | - | |
| 203 | Cut | 0.72 | 0.42 | Ditch aligned NE-SW. Concave sides and uneven base. Filled by 206. | | | |
| 204 | Cut | 1.38 | 0.61 | Pit. Sub oval in plan. Moderate slope on the west side and near vertical eastern side, concave base. Single fill 207. | | | |
| 205 | Cut | 1.3 | 0.72 | Pit. Steep sides and concave base. Filled by 208. | | | |
| 206 | Fill | 0.72 | 0.42 | Fill of ditch 203. Mid grey brown sandy clay soft | | | |
| 207 | Fill | 1.38 | 0.61 | Fill of pit 204. Firm mid greyish black clayey silt fill. Secondary fill of pit. Probably medieval/post medieval. Sample 1. | Pottery, animal bone | Medieval c1150-1250? Res Roman | |
| 208 | Fill | 1.3 | 0.72 | Fill of pit 205. Light grey brown clayey silt. Sample 2. | Pottery, animal bone | Medieval c1050-1250 | |

APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Pottery

By John Cotter

Introduction and methodology

- B.1.1 A total of 34 sherds (334g) of pottery were recovered from four contexts. This includes a small amount of pottery from sieved environmental samples which has been recorded as separate rows of data in the spreadsheet below. Most of the pottery is medieval (11th to 13th century) but 4 sherds (26g) of residual Roman pottery were also recovered.
- B.1.2 All the pottery was scanned during the present assessment and spot-dates were provided for each context. Each context group was quantified by sherd count and weight and recorded on a spot-dating spreadsheet. The pottery is fragmentary, but some fairly large and fresh sherds are present.
- B.1.3 The context spot-date is the date-bracket during which the latest pottery types or fabrics are estimated to have been produced or were in general circulation. Comments on the range of fabrics were recorded, usually with mention of vessel form (jugs, bowls etc.) and any other attributes worthy of note (e.g. decoration etc.). Fabric codes referred to for the medieval wares are those of the Oxfordshire type series (Mellor 1994) while standard Oxford Archaeology codes have been used for the Roman pottery (Booth nd). The range of pottery is described in some detail in the spreadsheet (Table 1) and is therefore only summarised below.

Description

| Context | Spot-date | No. | Weight | Comments |
|---------|-------------|-----|--------|---|
| 103 | c1050-1250? | 1 | 8 | Abraded bo (body sherd) in coarse black sandy fabric with a single flint inclusion. Coarse rounded quartz. Ext surface appears to have slight burnish or smoothness. Possibly early Ashampstead-type ware (OXAG) cooking pot fabric? Less likely a coarse Roman greyware? |
| 106 | c1150-1250 | 8 | 66 | 3x Cotswold-type ware (OXAC) incl jar/bowl with steep wall and sub-squared rim with thumbled decoration on the lip (2 fresh joining sherds). 2x fresh bos (body sherds) Kennet Valley B ware (OXAQ) probably from one vessel. 3x residual Roman sherds (20g) incl abraded dish rim with downturned beaded/rolled rim in fine orange-buff fabric with traces of brownish slip under rim - probably Oxfordshire colour coated ware (Roman Fabric code F59, 2ndC+); 1x bo fine grey Roman sandy ware (R10) and 1x small v abraded rim Roman grog-tempered ware (E80) |
| 106 | c1150-1250 | 2 | 5 | Sieved Sample <3>. Small bos OXAC |

| Context | Spot-date | No. | Weight | Comments |
|--------------|-------------|-----------|------------|--|
| 207 | c1150-1250? | 4 | 20 | All smallish bos. Incl 2x OXAG incl a jug/pitcher sherd with dark greenish-brown glaze all-over ext & specks of glaze int, oxidised fabric; the other OXAG bo is from a sooted cooking pot. 1x OXAC. 1x bo (6g) fairly fine sandy Roman greyware in light grey fabric (R10) |
| 207 | c1150-1250? | 6 | 16 | Sieved Sample <1>. 3x OXAC incl cooking pot rim (simple thickened/flat-topped). 3x small bos OXAQ (or OXBF? = Kennet Valley A ware) |
| 208 | c1050-1250 | 12 | 218 | All fresh sherds Kennet Valley A ware (OXBF). Very coarse angular flint and rounded quartz inclusions, also some limestone (hybrid OXBF/OXAQ). Includes large sherds from the sagging base and wall of a single large cooking pot with ext sooting on base/lower wall. Brownish weakly oxidised fabric |
| 208 | c1050-1250 | 1 | 1 | Sieved Sample <2>. Small bo OXAC |
| TOTAL | | 34 | 334 | |

Table 1: Description of pottery by context

Discussion

- B.1.4 The four sherds (26g) of Roman pottery are in residual in two medieval contexts (contexts 106 and 207). These include a very abraded rim in grog-tempered ware (Fabric E80, late Iron Age/early Roman), two sherds of fine sandy greyware (R10), and an abraded dish rim in Oxfordshire colour coated ware (F59, 2ndC+).
- B.1.5 The medieval assemblage (30 sherds, 308g) comprises ordinary domestic pottery typical of the Oxford area and dating from around the mid-11th century to the mid-13th century. Context (208) comprises large fresh sherds from cooking pots in Kennet Valley A ware (OXBF, c 1050-1250). Other contexts produced a few sherds of Kennet Valley B ware (OXAQ, c 1150-1350, but probably no later than c 1250 here). Cotswold-type ware (OXAC, c 1050-1250) is also fairly common. There are also two sherds of Ashampstead-type ware (OXAG, c 1050-1400) including a sherd from a glazed jug/pitcher – but nothing that need date much later than c 1250.

Recommendations regarding the conservation, discard and retention of material

- B.1.6 The pottery here has some potential to inform research through re-analysis - particularly when reviewed alongside further assemblages from any future excavations in the area. It is therefore recommended that it be retained.

B.2 Metal

By Anni Byard

Introduction and methodology

B.2.1 A single copper alloy object weighing 16g was recovered during the evaluation.

Results

B.2.2 Context 106 produced a plain ring of sub-circular section with brown patina and pitting to the surface metal. Such rings are hard to date and ascribe a specific function, and either a harness ring or brooch are equally possible. Due to the context this was recovered from it is suggested that it is an annular buckle frame, missing the pin. Such a buckle would date to the medieval period, c. AD 1250-1400.

| Context | Material | Count | Weight (g) | Internal diameter | Use | Date |
|---------|----------|-------|------------|-------------------|--------|----------|
| 106 | Cu alloy | 1 | 16 | 27mm | Buckle | Medieval |

Table 2: Metalwork assemblage

Recommendations and retention

B.2.3 The buckle ring should be retained and studied alongside any other material resulting from future works.

B.3 Fired Clay

By John Cotter

B.3.1 A single piece of fired clay weighing 5g was recovered from context 208. Given the small amount this has not been separately catalogued but is fully described below.

B.3.2 Description: A shapeless scrap of FC in a soft, fine-grained, orange-brown fabric which contains moderate inclusions of coarse soft white limestone/chalk. The latter includes weathered tubular structures of fossil (algal) origin up to 3mm long. Some coarse rounded inclusions of soft iron-rich clay, and occasional quartz grains, are also present. The same context produced pottery of c 1050-1250.

B.3.3 The FC has little potential for further analysis. As it has been adequately recorded it could be discarded if so desired.

B.4 Slag

By Geraldine Crann

B.4.1 A single piece of slag, 268g was recovered from context 207.

B.4.2 The slag should be retained for specialist analysis when incorporated with any additional slag that may be recovered during future archaeological works on the site.

B.5 Stone

By Ruth Shaffrey

- B.5.1 A total of three pieces of stone were retained and submitted for analysis. These were examined with a x10 magnification hand lens for signs of use. Two small fragments are unworked and show no signs of use. One fragment of naturally slabby and laminated sandstone measuring 100 x 74 x 16mm was found in context 208 (227g). It has been reddened by burning and is slightly dished and worn on one side suggesting possible use as a mixing stone. It is not intrinsically dateable but is likely to be Roman or earlier.
- B.5.2 The unworked stone can be discarded.

APPENDIX C ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

C.1 Environmental Samples

By Richard Palmer

Introduction

C.1.1 Three bulk samples of 38 and 40 litres from ditch 105 and pits 204 and 205, were taken during the evaluation. The samples were for the retrieval and assessment of ecofacts (e.g. charred grain, seeds, charcoal and molluscs) and the recovery of artefacts. All of the samples are from medieval features.

Method

C.1.2 The samples were processed in their entirety at Oxford Archaeology using a modified Siraf-type water flotation machine. The flots were collected in a 250µm mesh and residues in a 500µm mesh and dried. The residue fractions were sorted by eye and with the aid of a magnet while the flot material was sorted using a low power (x10) binocular microscope to extract cereal grains and chaff, smaller seeds and other quantifiable remains.

C.1.3 Nomenclature for identified species follows (Stace 2010) and cereal and chaff identifications are made with reference to Jacomet (2006).

Results

C.1.4 Sample and flot abundance data is presented in Table 3. The mollusc *Cecilioides acicula* is present in several of the flots but has not been quantified in Table 3 due to its burrowing nature.

Trench 1

C.1.5 Sample 3 from fill 106 of ditch 105 produced a modest flot. The recovered grain is wheat (*Triticum* sp.) with many of the grains fragmented or damaged. Charred dock seeds (*Rumex* sp.) are also present. Bone and pottery were recovered from the residue.

Trench 2

C.1.6 Sample 1 from fill 207 of pit 204 produced a modest flot. Recovered grain includes wheat, with many grains damaged or fragmented and a charred legume, 3mm in size, is also present. Bone and pottery were recovered from the residue.

C.1.7 Sample 2 from fill 208 of pit 205 produced a modest flot. Recovered grain is again wheat and as with the other samples, many of the grains are fragmented or damaged. A charred grass seed (*Poaceae*) was also recovered. Bone and pottery were extracted from the residue.

Discussion

C.1.8 The results indicate that there is good potential for the recovery of charred material on site and that the predominant cereal grown appears to be wheat, which is likely to be a free-threshing type at this date although no identifiable cereal chaff was recovered in these samples. The fragmentary nature of the grain is not necessarily representative of material preservation across the site, although the fact that the grain from both trenches is in similar condition may be indicative. The damage to the grains does mean that there is an element of uncertainty to some of the grain morphologies.

Recommendations for retention/disposal

C.1.9 The flots warrant retention until all works on site are complete. While the flots have no further research value at this time long term retention in the archive is merited to provide an opportunity for future research, as DNA and isotopic studies using charred cereals are developing research areas.

| Sample no. | Context no. | Feature/Deposit | Trench | Date | Sample vol. (L) | Flot vol. (ml) | Charcoal >2mm | Grain | Chaff | Weeds | Other Charred | Molluscs | Notes |
|------------|-------------|-----------------|--------|-------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|-------|-------|-------|---------------|----------|--------------------------|
| 1 | 207 | 204 | 2 | c1150-1250? | 40 | 30 | ++ | +++ | | + | + | + | 10YR 3/3 sandy silt loam |
| 2 | 208 | 205 | 2 | c1050-1250 | 38 | 50 | ++ | +++ | | + | | ++ | 10YR 5/6 silt loam |
| 3 | 106 | 105 | 1 | c1150-1250 | 40 | 25 | +++ | +++ | | + | | ++ | 10YR 4/3 sandy silt loam |

Key: +=present (up to 5 items), ++=frequent (5-25), +++=common (25-100), ++++=abundant (100+)

Table 3: Assessment of environmental bulk samples

C.2 Faunal Remains

By Adrienne Powell

Introduction

C.2.1 A total of 53 animal bone fragments, weighing 785g, were recovered from the site via hand excavation. A further 30 fragments (37g) were recovered from the >10mm and 10-4mm environmental sample residues. Features have been dated on the basis of associated ceramic finds as medieval (11th-13th century).

C.2.2 The hand-collected material was recorded in full, with the aid of the Oxford Archaeology skeletal reference collection and standard identification guides, using a diagnostic zone system (Serjeantson 1996). Conjoining recent fragments were counted as one specimen. Measurements have been taken following Driesch (1976). The condition of the bone has been graded on a scale of 1 = excellent, to 5 = very poor, just identifiable as 'bone'.

Description

- C.2.3 The bone was in good to excellent condition throughout with little evidence of post-depositional alteration to the bone surfaces, although there was some recent breakage. Ten specimens show evidence of carnivore gnawing; only one instance of burning was noted.
- C.2.4 Cattle (*Bos taurus*) bones were the most frequent (Table 4), followed by sheep/goat (*Ovis/Capra*), goose (*Anser sp.*), pig (*Sus domesticus*) and equid (*Equus sp.*). The sheep/goat sample includes a partial goat (*Capra hircus*) horn core. No ageable tooththrows were present, but specimens retaining evidence of epiphyseal fusion indicate immature animals as well as sub-adult/adults in cattle and sheep/goats; Only adult geese were present. Two butchered specimens were present: a goose ulna with disarticulation cuts proximally and a cattle metacarpal with cuts down the dorsal surface. The latter also shows a lesion characteristic of osteochondrosis on the proximal surface. Four specimens could be measured, details are in the archive.

Recommendations regarding the conservation, discard and retention of material

- C.2.5 The assemblage is small and has been fully recorded. It should be retained until any further work is complete.

| Context | Sample | Cattle | Sheep/goat | Pig | Equid | Large mammal | Medium mammal | Bird | Unident | Total |
|---------|--------|--------|------------|-----|-------|--------------|---------------|------|---------|-------|
| 103 | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | 4 | 6 |
| 106 | | 4 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 16 | 25 |
| | 3 | | 1 | | | | | | 9 | 10 |
| 206 | | | 1 | | | | | | 8 | 9 |
| 207 | | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 |
| | 1 | | 2 | | | | | 1 | 8 | 11 |
| 208 | | 2 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | 6 | 12 |
| | 2 | | | 1 | | | | | 8 | 9 |
| Total | | 8 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 59 | 83 |

Table 4: Number of identified specimens by context

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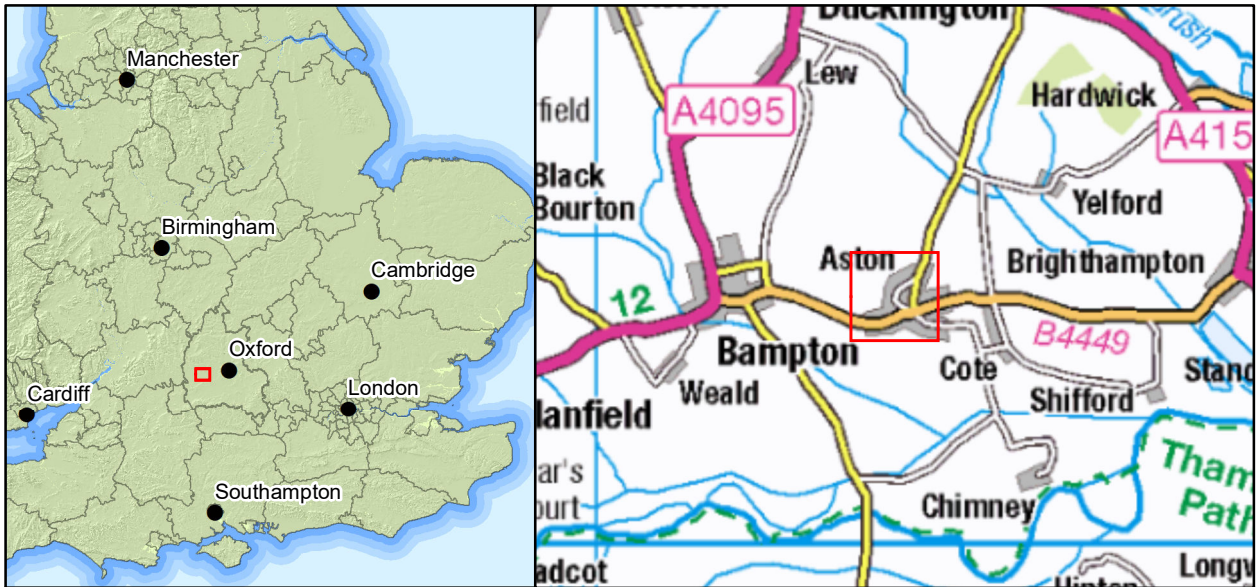
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APPENDIX E**SITE SUMMARY DETAILS / OASIS REPORT FORM**

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Site name: | Aston Children's Home, Aston, Oxfordshire |
| Site code: | ASWFC21 |
| Grid Reference | SP 33938 03281 |
| Type: | Evaluation trenching |
| Date and duration: | 08/11/21 to 09/11/21 (2 days) |
| Area of Site | 3000m ² |
| Location of archive: | The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: TBC. |
| Summary of Results: | <p>Archaeological features were present in both trenches. Trench 1 contained two SW-NE aligned ditches and Trench 2 contained one ditch SW-NE aligned ditch and two pits. The two ditches in Trench 1, and two pits in Trench 2 contained pottery dating to the mid-11th century to the mid-13th century. Residual Roman pottery was also recorded in several features.</p> <p>All three ditches within the site were parallel to Back Lane. It is possible they represent boundary ditches relating to medieval settlement. The two pits contained pottery, animal bone and plant remains and may have been rubbish pits associated with a medieval property.</p> <p>The environmental remains were well preserved and indicate a mixed medieval rural economy of arable production of wheat and legumes with husbandry of cattle, sheep/goat, goose, pig and horse.</p> <p>It is clear that that the site contains previously unknown archaeological features dating from the medieval period and this contributes to the understanding of the development of Aston.</p> |



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Source: Esri, Maxar, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Figure 1: Site location

- Site boundary
- Evaluation trench
- Feature

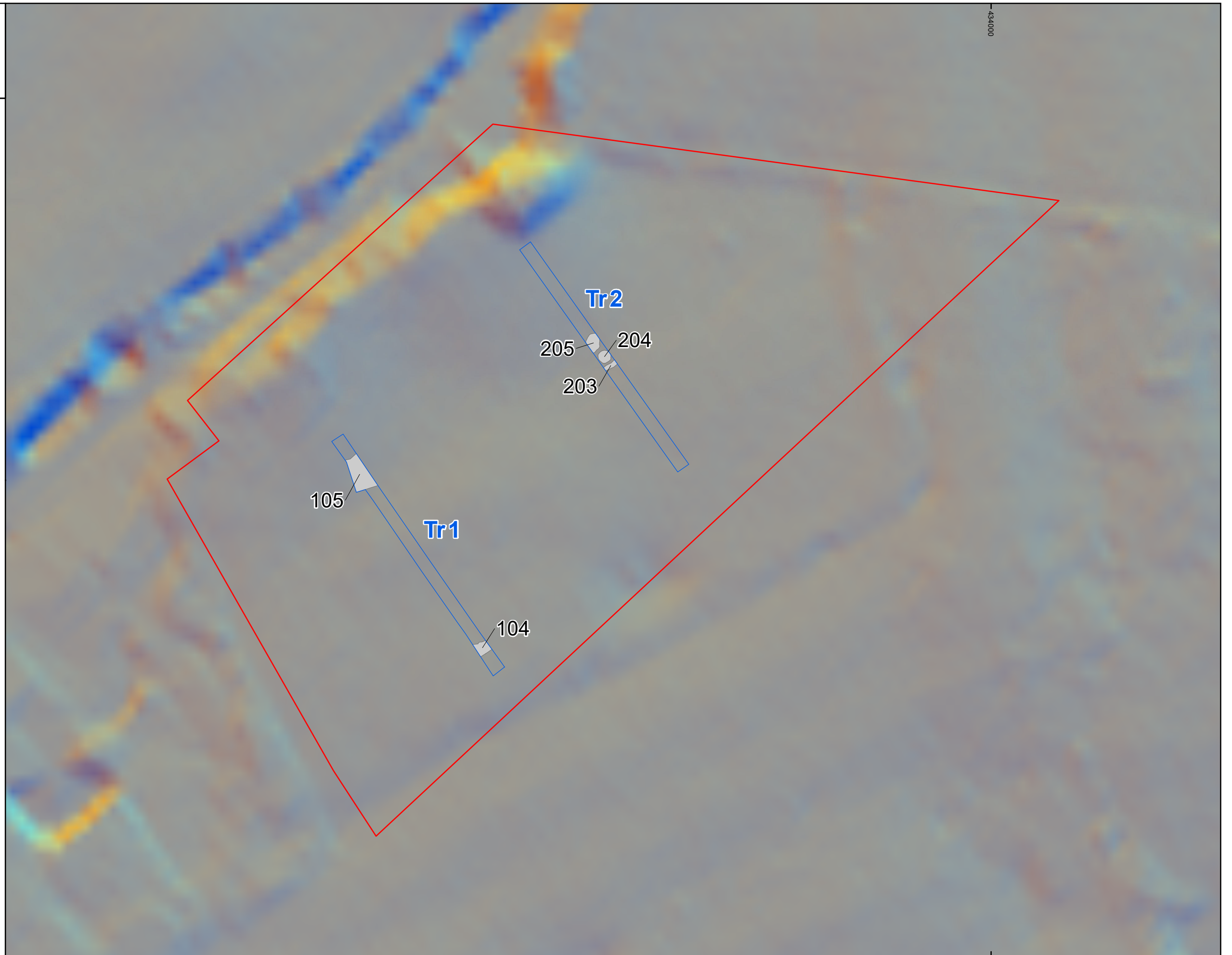
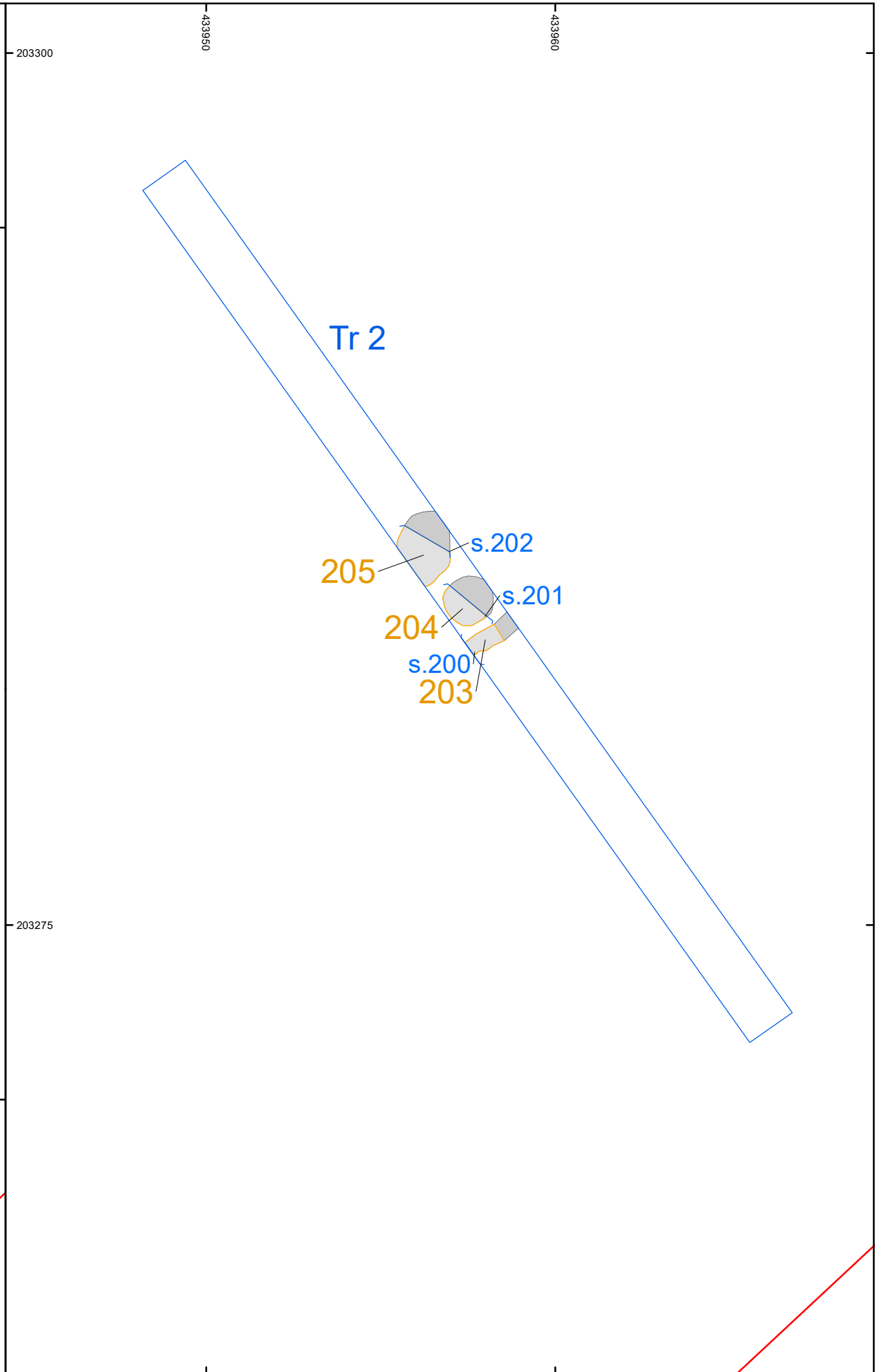
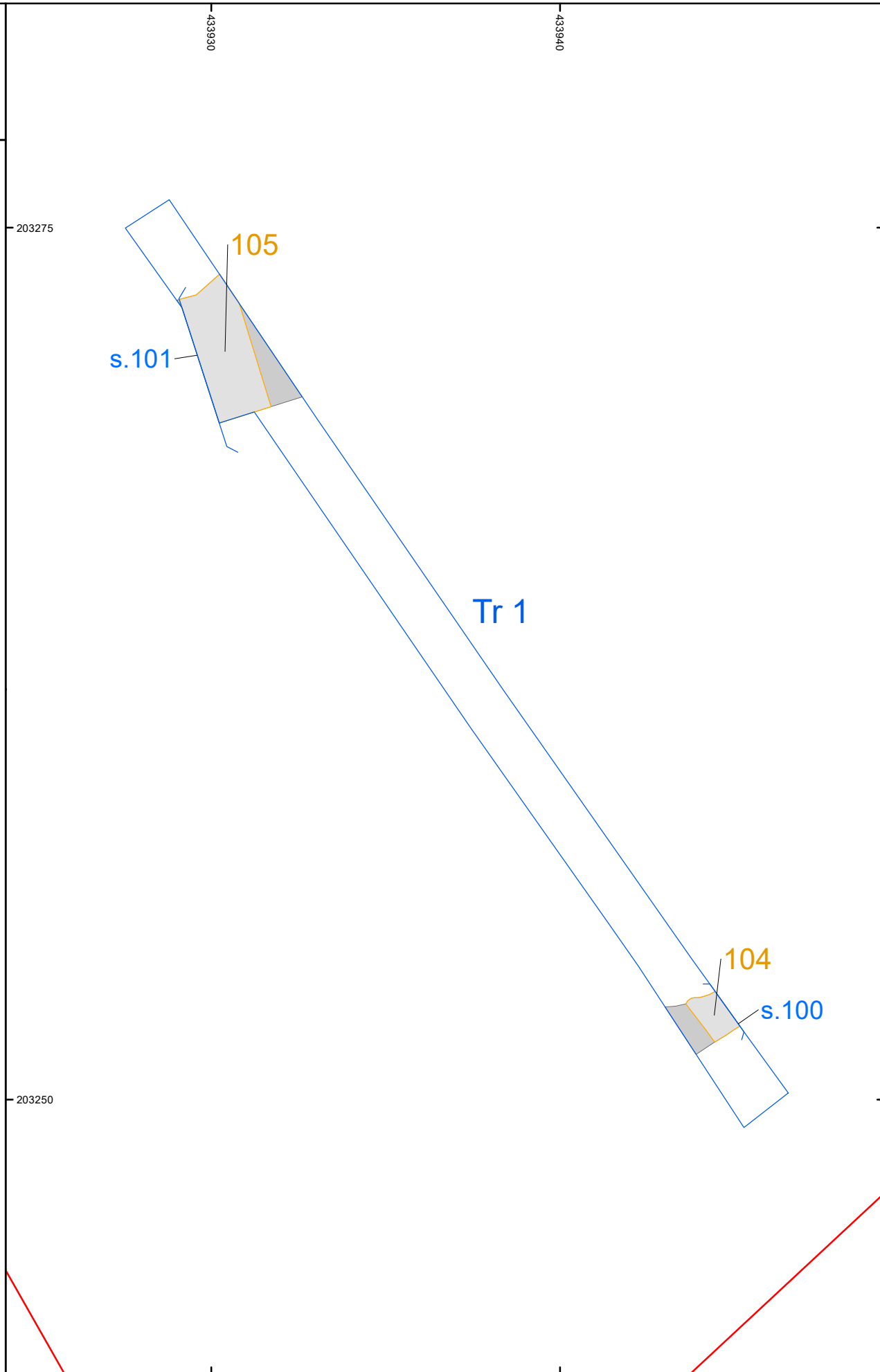


Figure 2. Trench plan showing archaeological features overlaid on EA Lidar plot

- Section
- Site boundary
- Evaluation trench
- Intervention
- Feature



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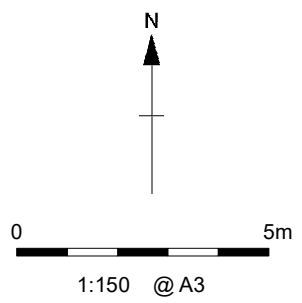


Figure 3. Trench 1 (left) and Trench 2 (right)

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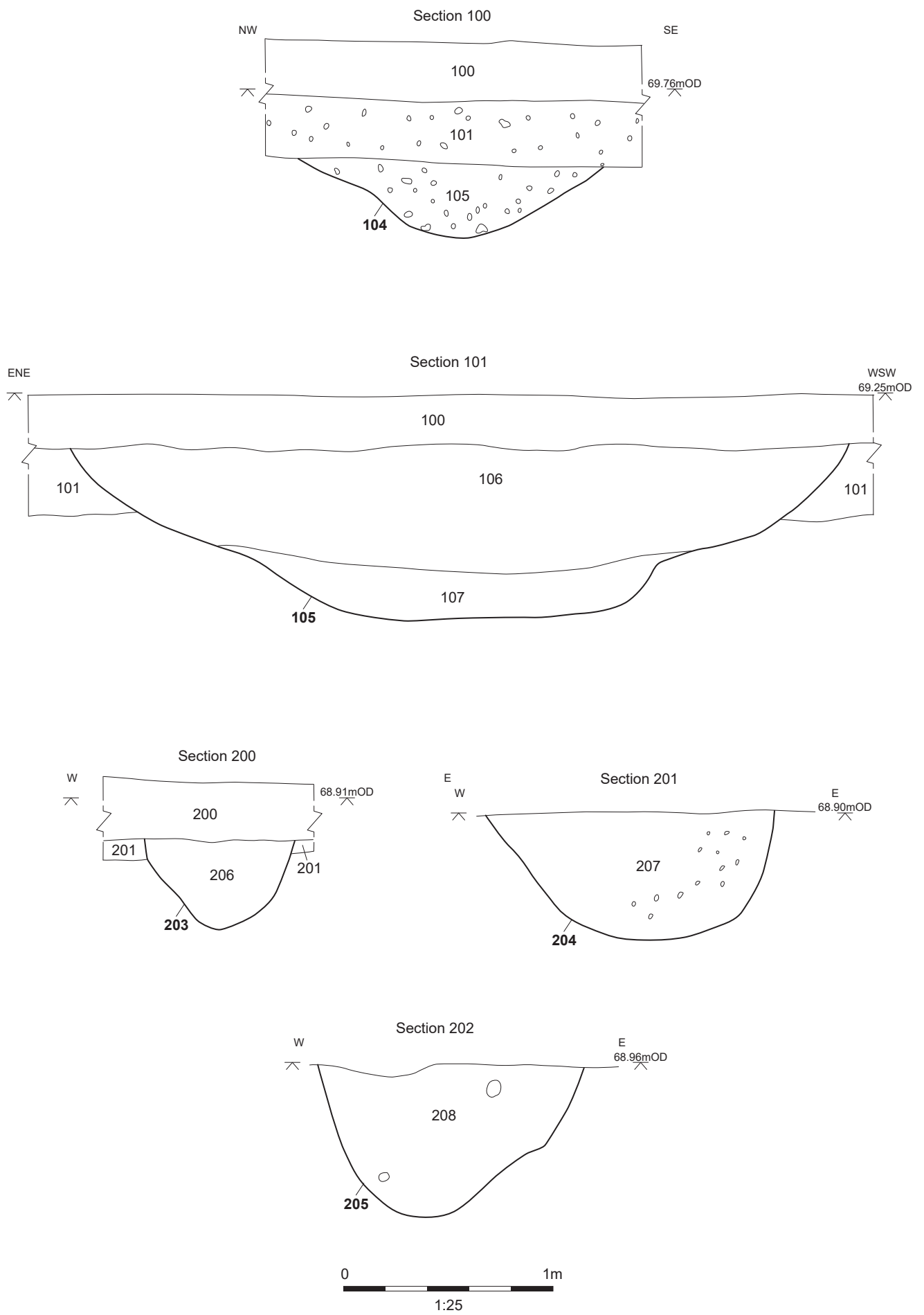


Figure 4: Selected Sections



Plate 1: Trench 1, facing south-east



Plate 2: Trench 2, facing north-west

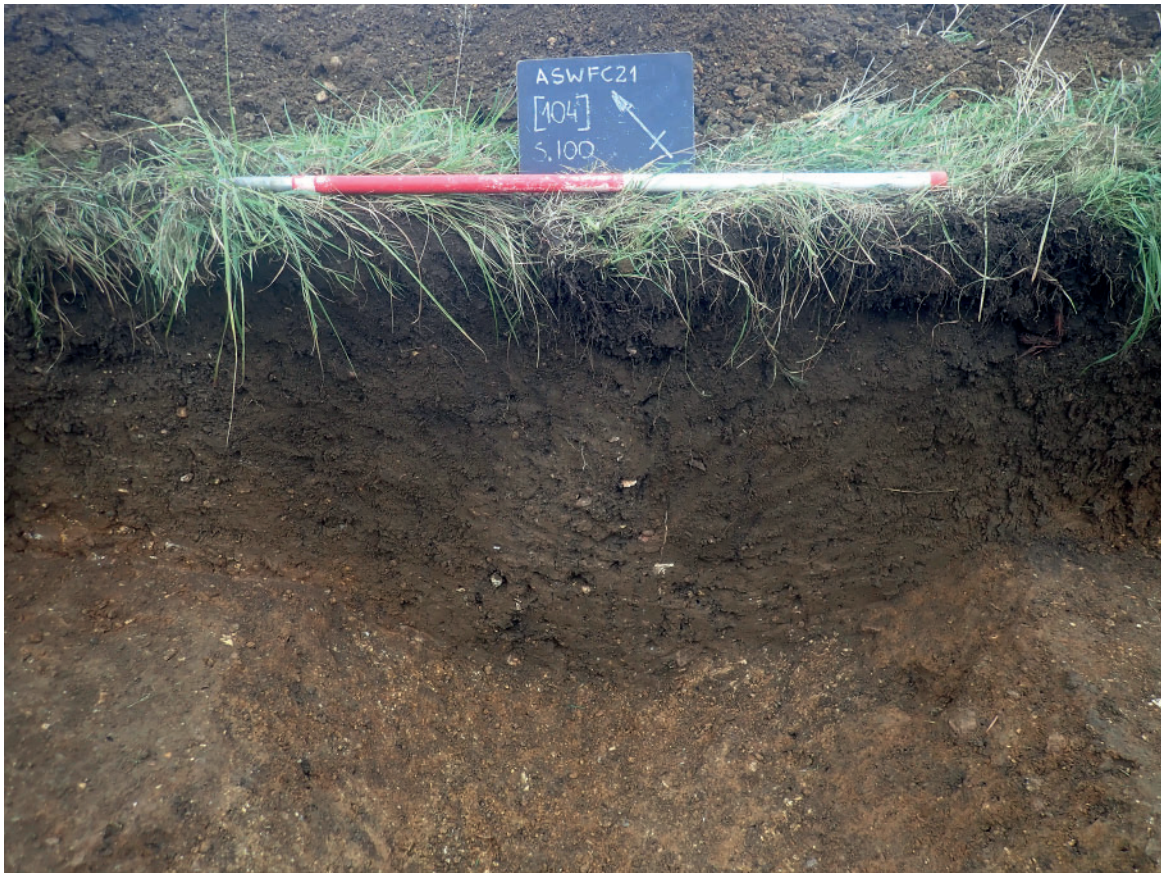


Plate 3: Ditch 104 (s.100), facing north-east

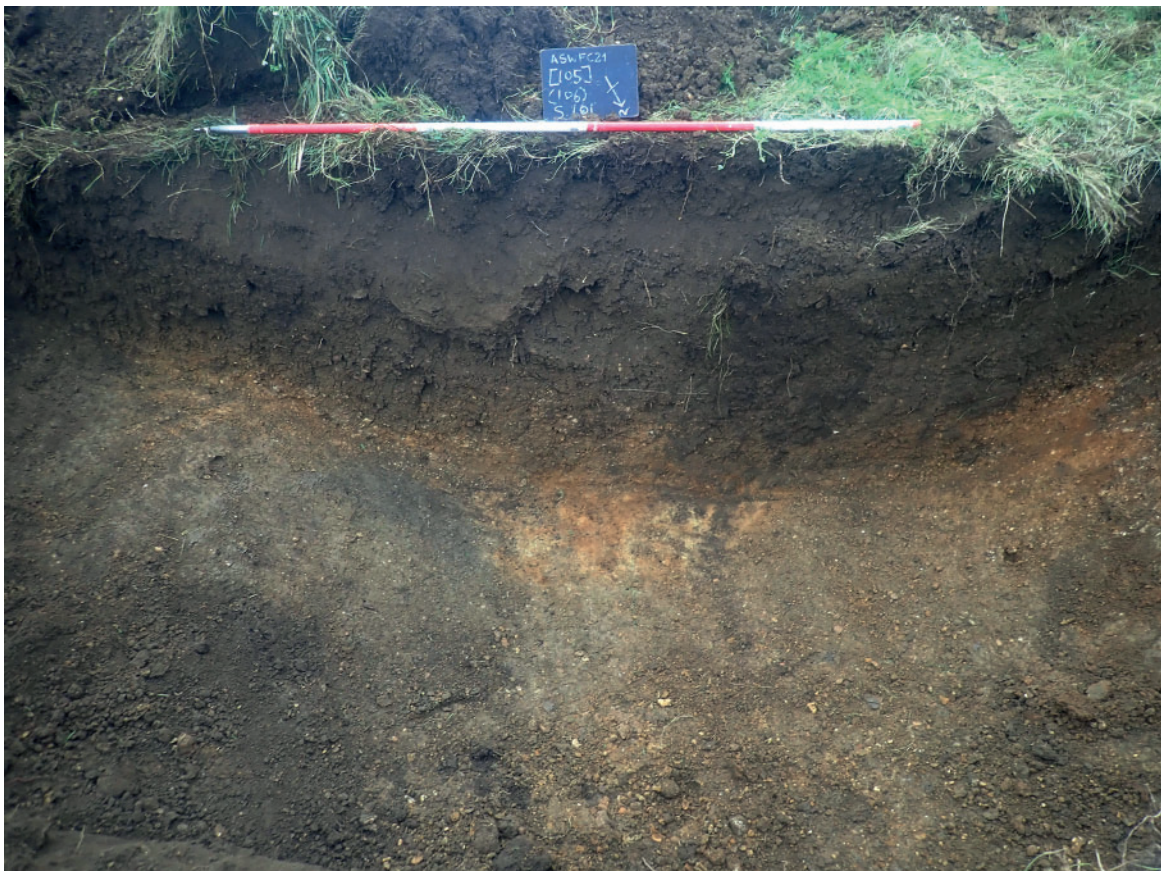


Plate 4: Ditch 105 (s.101), facing south-west



Plate 5: Ditch 203 (s.200), facing south-west



Plate 6: Pit 204 (s.201), facing north-east



Plate 7: Pit 205 (s.202), facing north-east



**Head Office/Registered Office/
OA South**

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496
e: info@oxfordarchaeology.com
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane
Lancaster LA1 1QD

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606
e: [oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridgeshire
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500
e: [oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>



Chief Executive Officer
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