St Edmund Hall, Norham Gardens, Oxford

Archaeological Evaluation Report

June 2022

Client: St Edmund Hall Design & Build Ltd

Issue No: 1
OA Reference No: 8147
NGR: SP 51510 07516

oxfordarchaeology

Client Name:	St Edmund Hall Design & Build Ltd
Document Title:	St Edmund Hall, Norham Gardens, Oxford
Document Type:	Evaluation Report
Grid Reference:	SP 51510 07516
Planning Reference:	Pre-Planning
Site Code:	OXEH22
Invoice Code:	OXEHEV
Receiving Body:	Oxfordshire County Museum Service
Accession No.:	OXCMS:2022.51
OA Document File Location:	https://files.oxfordarchaeology.com/nextcloud/index.php/f/16911411
OA Graphics File Location:	https://files.oxfordarchaeology.com/nextcloud/index.php/f/16911411
Issue No:	1
Date:	8 June 2022
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St Edmund Hall, Norham Gardens, Oxford

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by Turnberry on behalf of St Edmund Hall Design and Build Ltd to undertake a trial trench evaluation at the site of a proposed development at St Edmund Hall, Norham Gardens, Oxford. The work comprised the excavation of five trenches targeted within the footprint of the proposed development. The fieldwork was undertaken over the course of five days, between 23 and 27 May 2022.

The earliest activity on the site was represented by three pieces of struck flint recovered from Trench 3. Although these were found as residual artefacts, they have been broadly identified as Neolithic to Bronze Age in date.

Several ditches apparently forming part of a rectilinear enclosure system were revealed in Trenches 1 and 3. Only a small quantity of early to mid-Roman pottery was recovered from one of these ditches but based on their appearance and alignment it is thought likely that they were broadly contemporary and Roman in date. The NE-SW and NW-SE alignments of these ditches fit well with the cropmark features recorded in University Parks to the south and they are likely to be related. Two larger features of uncertain extent were also revealed in the north-east of the site in Trench 4, but no dating evidence was recovered.

Varying levels of overburden across the site demonstrate that various landscaping and terracing work associated with the construction of the hall have had a reasonable impact on the topography and deposits. However, the archaeological remains appear unaffected by this landscaping. Although they are likely to have been truncated by medieval and post-medieval agricultural activity in the area.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Turnberry for commissioning this project on behalf of St Edmund Hall Design and Build Ltd. Thanks are also extended to David Radford, who monitored the work on behalf of Oxford County Council.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Ben Ford. The fieldwork was directed by Adam Fellingham, who was supported by Robin Bashford and Emma Winter. Survey was carried out by Caroline Souday and the figures were produced by Lucy Gane and Gary Nobles. Thanks are also extended to the teams of OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the supervision of Leigh Allen, processed the environmental remains under the supervision of Rebecca Nicholson 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 Turnberry on behalf of St Edmund Hall Design and Build Ltd to undertake a trial trench evaluation at the site of a proposed development at St Edmund Hall, Norham Gardens, Oxford.

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 David Radford (Archaeologist for Oxford City Council) established the scope of the work required 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 Code of Conduct (CIfA 2014a) and relevant Standards and Guidance (CIfA 2014b), as well as local and national planning policies.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

1.2.1 The site is situated on Norham Gardens, a residential road in central North Oxford, and lies approximately 1.3km to the north-north-east of central Oxford (Fig. 1). The site is bounded by Norham Gardens to the north-west, No. 15 Norham Gardens to the south-west, Lady Margaret Hall of the University of Oxford to the north-east and University Parks to the south-east.

1.2.2 The site is undulated as a result of landscaping within the gardens and lies at between 59m and 60m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The British Geological Survey maps the underlying bedrock geology of the area is mudstone of the Oxford Clay Formation and West Walton Formation, sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 157–66 million years ago in the Jurassic Period (BGS nd). The superficial geology is mapped as sand and gravel of the Northmoor Member, formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period (ibid.). The soil within the site is recorded as freely draining lime-rich loamy soils (Cranfield University nd).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been described in detail in desk-based assessment produced by OA (2021) and forms the basis of the following summary.

Previous archaeological work

1.3.2 No previous archaeological investigations have been carried out within the site. The Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record records 20 investigations within 250m of the site, comprising nine watching briefs, seven evaluations, two excavations and two geophysical surveys. Where relevant, the results of these investigations are discussed by period in the sections below.

Prehistoric period (500,000 BP – AD 43)

1.3.3 No prehistoric remains have been recorded within the site boundary, though significant remains have been recorded within the vicinity. A Palaeolithic handaxe was discovered in a possible pit in 1907 within University Parks, *c* 175m south of the site. More substantial prehistoric evidence dating to the Neolithic period and Bronze Age has been identified across University Parks. At least six round barrows have been identified in the area, five of which have been identified as cropmarks on aerial photographs (three complete and two incomplete ring ditches), while another ring ditch was excavated at the site of the Rex Richards Building of the University Science Area. A Neolithic–Bronze Age henge monument has also been identified just west of University Parks, south of Keble Road (Lambrick 2013). The density of barrows suggests that an extensive funerary complex dating from the Bronze Age was located below a large area of north and central Oxford, between the Rivers Thames and Cherwell.

1.3.4 A magnetometer survey was carried out in the north of University Parks as part of the 2008 Rainwater Attenuation Tanks project. It revealed several geophysical anomalies, some of which correspond with barrow ring ditches identified on aerial photographs, and other anomalies suggestive of Iron Age and perhaps Roman agricultural activity (MOLAS 2008). A further phase of magnetometer survey was undertaken in the north-west of University Parks in 2010. Interim results show geophysical anomalies suggestive of multiple enclosures and fields.

1.3.5 A probable Iron Age settlement site has been identified to the south of the site within University Parks. Analysis of aerial photographs has revealed a complex of cropmarks of enclosures and trackways, overlying the earlier funerary complex. Although undated, the cropmarks are characteristic of Iron Age features seen elsewhere, with evidence of Iron Age activity, in the form of ditches and pits containing Iron Age material, uncovered during excavations at the Rex Richards Building in 1982–95. This evidence suggests a settlement existed in the University Science Area throughout the Iron Age.

1.3.6 Further evidence of Iron Age activity within the vicinity of the site has been uncovered during archaeological investigations along Crick Road. In 2017 an archaeological evaluation was carried out at the rear of No. 12 Crick Road, *c* 100m north-west of the site. It revealed a middle Iron Age pit containing 19 sherds of pottery, as well as a pit of later post-medieval/modern date and a later dog burial (JMHS 2017). Remains of Iron Age activity was uncovered at No. 6 Crick Road in 1938 and comprised a pit containing Iron Age pottery and animal bones (including two modified red deer antlers).

1.3.7 Following geophysical survey undertaken in the north of University Parks (see above), a subsequent program of archaeological excavation and monitoring was carried out in 2009 in advance of the construction of rainwater tanks, *c* 300m to the south of the site. The investigations revealed numerous features indicative of agricultural land division, including field/enclosure boundaries and a possible droveway, dated to the later Iron Age, as well as the remains of medieval ridge-and-furrow cultivation (Thompson 2015).

Romano-British period (AD 43 – 410)

1.3.8 Analysis of aerial photographs of University Parks has identified cropmarks suggestive of Roman settlement activity, as well as preceding Iron Age occupation and late Neolithic/Bronze Age funerary activity (see above). It is difficult to distinguish between the later Iron Age and Roman periods from the cropmark evidence and geophysical survey results, though it is probable that phases of rural occupation spanned both periods. Evidence of Roman activity has been recorded close to the site and University Parks, including at the sites of the Radcliffe Science Area, Mansfield College and the Rex Richards Building, suggesting an extensive area of rural settlement within central-north Oxford during the Roman period.

1.3.9 An archaeological watching brief carried out at No. 12 Norham Gardens, *c* 175m west-south-west of the site, identified a ditch terminal from which a small quantity of Roman pottery was recovered (JMHS 2019). During the works, 19th- and 20th-century remains associated with the property on the site were also recorded. A residual pottery sherd of Roman date was recovered during a small-scale excavation in advance of the construction of a new Graduate Centre at Lady Margaret Hall, adjacent to the north-east site boundary. No features of Roman date were revealed by the excavation, though an undated gully was recorded underlying a buried soil that was cut by 19th-century pits and drains (OA 2013).

Early Medieval period (AD 410 – 1065)

1.3.10 Evidence of early medieval activity has been identified recently, *c* 800m to the south-west of the site, around the Radcliffe Infirmary site, where excavations recorded the remains of 6th-century occupation activity, including a possible sunken-featured building and a possible cemetery, in proximity to four Neolithic–Bronze Age barrows (Spenbrooke 2020). It is possible that the Bronze Age burial mounds discussed above remained visible in the landscape into the early medieval period and may have provided a focus for Anglo-Saxon activity (OCC 2017, 11).

1.3.11 The site lies to the north of the early medieval town of Oxford, which is considered to have its origins in the 8th century, when the early religious house of St Fridewide was founded and perhaps provided a focus for settlement (Crossley 1979; Dodd 2003, 16–17; Beckley and Radford 2012, 5).

1.3.12 A burial comprising a male individual buried with a knife, suggestive of a possible Anglo-Saxon date, is recorded to have been found in 1903 in the garden of No. 10 Crick Road, *c* 75m north-west of the site.

1.3.13 Located to the north beyond the focus of settlement in Oxford during the early medieval period, it is probable that the site was a mixture of arable land and meadow during this period, which is known to have been the case during the later medieval and post-medieval periods (see below).

Later medieval period (AD 1066 – 1550)

1.3.14 During the later medieval period, it is probable that the site and much of the study area was open fields constituting the agricultural hinterland of Walton Manor, though there is some evidence for small-scale suburban settlement in the 11th–13th centuries along Banbury Road and Woodstock Road to the north of the medieval town of Oxford

(Crossley 1979; Dodd 2003, 62; OCC 2017, 11). These roads were major routeways in the medieval period and probably have much earlier origins (ibid.). The roads connected to the wide northern approach road to Oxford (now known as St Giles) (Dodd 2003, 62). From the mid-13th century the land east of the Banbury Road was called Beaumont Field, but in the 14th and 15th centuries the whole of North Oxford was called Walton Field (Crossley 1979).

Post-medieval period (1550 – 1900)

1.3.15 The largely rural settlement character of the area continued from the medieval period into the early post-medieval period. Land north of the medieval town of Oxford, including the site, was first recorded as St Giles' Field in 1542 (Crossley 1979). Much of it was purchased by St John's College in 1573, but the land continued to be used for mixed farming.

1.3.16 The medieval routes that crossed the study area continued in use during the post-medieval period.

1.3.17 The earliest historic map to clearly show the site dates from 1769 and demonstrates the continued agricultural use of the landscape. Earlier maps of Oxford of any detail do not continue further to the north of the central part of University Parks, as this area was not developed. The 1769 map shows that the area to the north of University Parks was split into a large number of strip-fields, of which the site crossed at least five.

1.3.18 By 1832 the inclosure of St Giles' Field had regulated field boundaries and ownership (Crossley 1979; OCC 2017, 8). The 1832 inclosure map shows the reorganisation of the land into larger fields. The site is located on land that was owned by St John's College, surrounded by other agricultural fields. By the mid-19th century, however, the site and land to the north began to be developed formally as a residential suburb. The site forms part of the Norham Manor estate, which was developed in the mid-1860s as part of the wider development of the North Oxford suburb and constitutes the North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area (OCC 2017, 8–9). The estate comprised a number of very large detached and semi-detached Victorian villas set in generous gardens, designed to replicate the country house ethos on a smaller scale (OCC 2017, 23).

Modern

1.3.19 As indicated by historic mapping, the late 19th-century development of the site underwent a small number of changes during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with the 1876–81, 1899–1900 and 1921 Ordnance Survey (OS) maps indicating some extensions to the property at No. 17 Norham Gardens and the addition of the former chapel and connecting passageway at Gunfield, No. 19 Norham Gardens. Further extensions were added to south-west of No. 17 Norham Gardens, as indicated by the 1937–9 OS map.

Undated

1.3.20 Archaeological investigations undertaken at several locations within the vicinity of the site revealed archaeological remains of unknown date. An evaluation and watching

brief undertaken in 2007 in advance of development at Lady Margaret Hall, adjacent to the north-east site boundary, revealed an undated gully that was sealed by a probable 19th-century ploughsoil and other dumping/levelling deposits. Given the location of the gully, it is possible that it represented a continuation of cropmark features of possible late prehistoric date recorded in University Parks. An undated gully of potential prehistoric date and a number of 19th-/20th-century features were recorded during an evaluation at No. 15 Norham Gardens, located approximately 40m to the south south-west of the site (TVAS 2005). During a watching brief undertaken at No. 9 Fyfield Road, located *c* 150m to the north of the site, a palaeochannel and an undated ditch and pit were recorded (JMHS 2014).

1.4 Potential

1.4.1 The desk-based assessment of the site concluded that the site may contain archaeological deposits, with any remains of prehistoric, Roman or early medieval date being of particular significance. Whilst the potential for prehistoric remains is considered to be low to moderate due to impacts from medieval/post-medieval agricultural activity and later landscaping, the potential may be higher in less disturbed areas.

1.4.2 Evidence of Roman activity both from nearby investigations and the remains indicated in the University Park suggest that there is a moderate potential for Roman remains on the site.

1.4.3 Post-Roman activity is less well documented and generally agricultural in nature. However, the possible Anglo-Saxon burial recorded close to the site and the assertion that the numerous Bronze Age burial mounds in the area may have created a focus of Ango-Saxon activity means that similar remains should be considered as potentially present on the site.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 General

2.1.1 The archaeological evaluation aimed to gather sufficient information to generate a reliable predictive model of the extent, character, date, state of preservation and depth of archaeological remains within the area to be impacted by the proposal.

2.2 Specific aims and objectives

2.2.1 The specific aims and objectives of the evaluation were:

i. To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive.

ii. To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains.

iii. To determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means.

iv. To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.

v. To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy.

vi. To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.

vii. To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.

viii. To determine the implications of any remains with reference to economy, status utility and social activity; and

ix. To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.

2.2.2 The programme of archaeological investigation was conducted within the general research parameters and objectives defined by the Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment Resource Assessments and Research Agendas (Hey and Hind 2014) along with pertinent elements of the Oxford Archaeological Action Plan 2013-2018 (OCC 2018) and the Oxford Urban Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda (OCC 2012).

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 The investigation comprised the excavation of five trenches, each measuring 1.8m wide and between 5m and 15m in length (Fig. 2). The trenches were initially laid out using a GPS with sub-15mm accuracy. Due to the proximity to existing flower beds, Trench 1 was moved 0.5m to the north-east of its original position. Trench 4 was also amended following the exposure of numerous tree roots during excavation. Its final layout included an extension to the north-west, the position of which required the consideration of a mature hedge and a foul water service known to be in this location.

2.3.2 Due to access constraints, the trenches were excavated using a 1.8 ton mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket under the direct supervision of an archaeologist. The machine was tracked around the site on plastic ground protection boards to prevent unnecessary damage to the existing landscaping. Spoil was stored adjacent to, but at a safe distance from the trench edges. Turf and topsoil were stored separately on one side of the trench and subsoil on the other.

2.3.3 Machining continued in even spits down to the top of the undisturbed natural geology or the first archaeological horizon, depending upon which was encountered first. The exposed surface was sufficiently cleaned to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains. Once archaeological deposits had been exposed, further excavation proceeded by hand.

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. 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 presented in Appendix B.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The soil sequence across the site was relatively consistent, with the natural geology overlain by an interface layer or possible buried ploughsoil deposit and later deposits of subsoil and topsoil. Due to variations in the topography of the natural geology, as well as recent landscaping work, the depth of the sequences varied across the site. Further details on these and other variations are discussed below by trench.

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 revealed in Trenches 1, 3 and 4 (Fig. 3). These were predominantly ditches, although the two features in Trench 4 may have been large, shallow pits. Trenches 2 and 5 were devoid of archaeological features.

3.4 Trench 1

3.4.1 Trench 1 lay towards the south-west edge of the site on a NW-SE alignment. In total, four ditch-like features were revealed at the base of the trench, cutting into the natural geology which lay at a height of approximately 58.6m aOD. Ditch 109 was partially exposed at the north-west end of the trench, on a NE-SW alignment. It measured at least 0.7m wide and 0.2m deep with a gently sloped and undulated side (Fig. 4, section 103; Plate 1). It contained a sterile fill of brownish grey, silty clay (110). Ditch 107 was recorded on a parallel alignment, just over 2m to the south-west of ditch 109 (Fig. 4, section 100; Plate 2). It had a similar profile, measuring 0.6m wide and 0.18m deep and was also filled with a sterile, silty clay deposit (108).

3.4.2 Immediately to the south-east of ditch 107 were two further ditches, 103 and 105 (Fig. 4, section 101; Plate 3). Ditch 103 was orientated NNW-SSE and was only partially exposed within the boundaries of the trench. It measured in excess of 0.45m wide with a depth of 0.1m and was filled with a naturally silted sterile deposit of mid brownish grey, sandy clay (104; Fig. 4, section 102). The north-west end of the ditch was truncated on an almost perpendicular alignment by ditch 105. It had a broad concave profile, 1.55m wide and 0.2m deep. Its fill (106) was similar to deposit 104, comprising a sterile silty clay material. Given the profile of this feature, it is possible that this was the remains of a plough furrow rather than an enclosure ditch.

3.4.3 All four ditches were overlain by a shallow deposit of yellow brown, sandy clay (102). The origins of this material are unclear, but it may represent the remnants of a

ploughsoil, prior to more recent landscaping. It measured approximately 0.2m thick and was present along the length of the trench. It was overlain by a 0.2m thick layer of subsoil (101) and the topsoil and turf (100), which measured 0.22m thick. A small piece of glazed medieval roof tile and a fragment of post-medieval pottery were recovered from the subsoil.

3.5 Trench 2

3.5.1 Trench 2 lay to the north-east of Trench 1 on an elevated terrace, close to St Edmund Hall. The natural geology was exposed at a depth of 58.48m aOD and was devoid of archaeological features. Overlying the geology was a yellowish orange, silty clay layer (205) similar to deposit (102). It measured 0.4m thick and was sealed beneath a possible buried soil horizon represented by deposits 203 and 204. These were overlain by a 0.25m-thick layer of made ground (202) and the present topsoil horizon (200) (Fig. 4, section 200).

3.5.2 At the south-west end of the trench a large pit was observed truncating through layer 202 and into the natural geology below. A fragment of modern CBM was observed in the fill of this feature (not recovered), which was highly disturbed and evidently deliberately backfilled.

3.6 Trench 3

3.6.1 Trench 3 was positioned to the north-east of Trench 1, on a NE-SW orientation. It revealed a single ditch (301) at a depth of 58.33m AOD that was visible along much of the trench. It had a slightly curvilinear shape in plan, and a broadly NE-SW alignment that corresponded with that of ditch 109 to the south-west. Ditch 301 had moderately steep sides and a concave base and was 0.7m wide and 0.26m deep (Fig. 4, section 300; Plate 4). Its fill of brownish grey silty clay (302) was similar to those recorded in the adjacent ditches in Trench 1. Two pieces of Roman pottery dating from *c* AD 50–250 and two pieces of worked flint were recovered from the fill. An environmental sample from this deposit only produced a small amount of charcoal.

3.6.2 The ditch was sealed beneath a deposit of yellowish brown, sandy clay (303). This measured 0.24m thick and is likely to represent a continuation of the possible buried plough soil or interface horizon recorded in Trench 1. Layer 303 was overlain by the subsoil or made ground layer (302) and the topsoil (305).

3.7 Trench 4

3.7.1 Trench 4 was located at the north-east edge of the site on a NW-SE alignment. At the north-west end of the trench, two possible pits or ditches were revealed (408 and 410; Fig. 4, section 401). Both features were only partially exposed within the trench and due to their depth below ground level, it was only possible to safely excavate them with a machine slot to investigate the profile and depth. Feature 410 had a flat base and was approximately 0.5m deep, with a fill of yellow brown, sandy clay (409). It appeared to be truncated to the south by pit or ditch 408. This also had a flat base and measured 0.4m deep, with a very similar fill (407). Neither of these features produced any artefacts.

3.7.2 Sealing features 408 and 410 was a 0.65m-thick deposit of yellowish brown, sandy clay, (400). Although significantly thicker, this layer is interpreted as a continuation of the possible ploughsoil that overlay the features in the trenches to the south-west. The base of this layer was at 58.14m aOD, suggesting the natural topography was sloping downwards to the north-east and is perhaps the reason this deposit was notably deeper at this location. A small fragment of medieval peg tile was recovered from this deposit.

3.7.3 Layer 400 was truncated along the south-west edge of the trench by the construction cut for the foul water service.

3.8 Trench 5

3.8.1 This trench was positioned beyond the north-east end of Trench 2, on a perpendicular alignment that extended across the two levels of terraced lawn. The natural geology was revealed at a depth of 58.45m AOD, within a machine-excavated sondage. The overlying sequence was similar to that observed in Trench 2, although additional layers of made ground were recorded at the north-west end to construct the upper terrace (Fig. 4, section 500; Plate 5). No archaeological features were revealed in this trench.

3.9 Finds summary

3.9.1 Three sherds of pottery dating the Roman and post-medieval periods were recovered during the evaluation. In addition to these, two small fragments of medieval CBM and three pieces of prehistoric worked flint were also recovered. No animal bone was found during the evaluation.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 A combination of good weather and favourable ground conditions meant that the investigations were able to proceed without the results being compromised. Further to this, the archaeological features were easily identifiable, and any less distinct features were allowed sufficient time to weather-out before backfilling took place.

4.1.2 Overall, these factors have meant that the results of the evaluation can be considered as a reliable representation of the remains present. However, it should also be noted that evaluations tend to be better at identifying linear remains than discrete features such as pits and postholes, or even burials. This is particularly pertinent given the context of the site and the potential for prehistoric remains that might more typically be represented by discrete features of this nature.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.1 The evaluation successfully determined the presence of archaeological remains in Trenches 1, 3 and 4. Trenches 2 and 5 were both devoid of archaeological remains. The ditches are likely to represent enclosures or field boundaries extending across much of the site. Ditch 301 was the only feature to produce dating evidence, with two small sherds of early to middle Roman pottery. Although prehistoric flintwork and other medieval and post-medieval finds were also recovered, these were retrieved as residual finds in later deposits.

4.2.2 No complex or structural remains were revealed during the excavations and all the features revealed were recorded at the same horizon, representing a simple stratigraphic sequence. Due to the paucity of dating evidence only a single feature was sampled for paleoenvironmental remains. This produced only a small amount of charcoal and suggests the potential for further evidence may be low.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 The small quantity of flint recovered from Trench 3 represents the only identifiable prehistoric activity on the site. Whilst they are not from any *in situ* production activity, their relatively fresh appearance does suggest they have not travelled far from their primary point of deposition. It is therefore likely that further prehistoric activity is present on the site, although this may be limited to residual finds in later features. The tentative later Neolithic or Bronze Age date attributed to these flints is broadly contemporary with the barrow cemetery recorded in University Parks to the south. If further evidence from this period is present then this would provide valuable information on the broader landscape context of these monuments.

4.3.2 The two sherds of Roman pottery recovered from ditch 301 provide the only dating evidence for the features revealed in Trenches 1 and 3. Whilst these could be residual finds, they provide a reasonable *terminus post quem* for the feature which appears to be a continuation of ditch 109.

4.3.3 Given the rectilinear arrangement of ditches 109, 107, 103 and 301, combined with the fact they contained very similar deposits, it is reasonable to suggest they were

broadly contemporary in date and are likely to have formed part of a larger rectilinear enclosure system in the area. Immediately to the south of the site the cropmark features recorded in University Parks include a series of NE-SW and NW-SE aligned linear features (Fig. 5) which are very likely to be related to these ditches based on their proximity and orientation.

4.3.4 Whilst only limited excavation work has taken place in University Parks to date, a phase of Roman activity is thought to be represented by the various cropmarks and geophysical features recorded here. But more certain evidence for Roman activity is not unknown in the area. In 2013 a sherd of Roman amphora was recovered from the adjacent property to the north-east (OA 2013) and more significant roman activity is also known from the wider locale, based on 19th-century finds from St Anthony's College, *c* 525m to the west. However, due to the low quantity of artefactual and paleoenvironmental evidence, it is likely that any Roman activity on the site was peripheral to settlement or industrial foci in North Oxford.

4.3.5 Despite the proximity of feature 105 to the other ditches on site, its broader concave profile is more indicative of a furrow base than an enclosure or boundary ditch. Throughout the medieval period and up to the mid-19th century, this part of Oxford was used for agricultural purposes. The 1769 map of St Giles records at least five strip fields crossing the site on a NE-SW alignment. The alignment of these strip fields was therefore similar to that of feature 105 and further indicate it may have derived from agricultural activity during this period.

4.3.6 Overlying the archaeological horizon were varying depths of overburden, ranging from 0.65m deep in Trench 1, to in excess of 1m in trenches 2, 4 and 5. Generally, the undulation in these levels can be attributed to landscaping and terracing that have shaped the gardens since the construction of St Edmund Hall in the 19th century. This was particularly evident in Trenches 2 and 5, where buried soil horizons were recorded below later deposits of made ground. It is likely that much of the material for the terracing was generated as upcast during the construction of the building and its basement, rather than being removed from elsewhere in the gardens. Consequently, the archaeological features do not appear to have been truncated during the landscaping and terracing and are instead sealed beneath an indeterminate, yet ubiquitous deposit of possible ploughsoil. It is likely that the ditches were somewhat truncated by ploughing during the medieval and post-medieval periods.

4.3.7 The full extent of the features at the base of Trench 4 could not be revealed during this phase of works and their date and function could also not be determined. Although 19th-century pits and some quarrying activity have been recorded within the wider area and these may be further evidence of this activity, an earlier date cannot be ruled out.

4.4 Significance

4.4.1 The three flints of prehistoric date are by themselves of limited significance beyond confirming the presence of Neolithic and Bronze Age activity in the local area. Given the proximity to a substantial funerary complex of the same date in the adjacent University Parks, such a discovery is of local significance only. However, if more

artefacts and any features of this date were to be revealed during any subsequent work, they have the potential to make a more significant contribution to the understanding of the prehistoric landscape in Oxford and the wider Thames Valley. The undated, but potentially Roman enclosure system revealed in Trenches 1 and 3 is of limited and only local significance at this stage due to the paucity of artefactual and palaeoenvironmental evidence. However, the significance of these remains could again be elevated if further evidence came to light in any subsequent work at the site, particularly as the enclosures appear to form part of the rectilinear system plotted to the south in University Parks.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					**Orientation**	NW-SE
Trench revealed four undated linear features. They were overlain by a layer of probable buried ploughsoil, subsoil and topsoil. The natural geology comprised sandy clay.					**Length (m)**	10
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.65
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
100	Layer	-	0.22	Topsoil	-	-
101	Layer	-	0.22	Subsoil	Pot, CBM	P. Med
102	Layer	-	0.21	Interface/buried soil? Mid yellow brown, sandy clay	-	-
103	Cut	0.45	0.1	Ditch		
104	Fill	-	0.1	Fill of 103. Mid brown grey, sandy clay		
105	Cut	1.55	0.2	Ditch		
106	Fill	-	0.2	Fill of 105. Mid brownish grey, sandy clay		
107	Cut	0.6	0.18	Ditch		
108	Fill	-	0.18	Fill of 107. Mid brownish grey, sandy clay		
109	Ditch	<0.7	0.2	Ditch?		
110	Fill	-	0.2	Fill of 109. Mid brownish grey, sandy clay.		
111	Layer	-	-	Natural – Mid orange brown, sandy clay with gravel, overlaying blue grey clay.	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					**Orientation**	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of natural geology overlain by an interface deposit followed by a buried subsoil and ploughsoil and made ground beneath the present topsoil. An area of modern disturbance was also identified at the southwest end of the trench.					**Length (m)**	9.5
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	1
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
200	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil	-	-
201	Layer	-	-	Natural – Mid orange brown, sandy clay with gravel, overlaying blue grey clay.	-	-
202	Layer	-	0.25	Made ground. Dark reddish brown, sandy silt.	-	-
203	Layer		0.15	Buried soil? Dark brownish grey, clay silt.		
204	Layer	-	0.09	Buried soil? Brownish grey, sandy silt.		

205	Layer	-	0.04	Interface layer. Mid yellow orange, silty clay	-	-

Trench 3						
General description					**Orientation**	NE-SW
Trench revealed a single slightly curvilinear ditch. The natural geology was overlain by a possible ploughsoil horizon followed by subsoil and the present topsoil. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of silty sand.					**Length (m)**	15
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.85
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
300	Layer	-	-	Natural – Mid orange brown, sandy clay with gravel, overlaying blue grey clay.	-	-
301	Cut	0.7	0.26	Ditch	-	-
302	Fill	-	0.26	Fill of 301. Mid brownish grey, silty clay.	Pot, flint	*c* 50-250AD
303	Layer	-	0.24	Natural interface – Yellowish brown, sandy clay		
304	Layer	-	0.35	Subsoil		
305	Layer	-	0.28	Topsoil	Flint	-

Trench 4						
General description					**Orientation**	E-W
Trench revealed two possible pits or linear features. These were sealed beneath a thick layer of possible colluvial ploughsoil and topsoil. The cut for a known foul water service was also observed.					**Length (m)**	30
					Width (m)	2
					Avg. depth (m)	1.4
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
400	Layer	-	0.65	Colluvial ploughsoil? Mid yellow brown, sandy clay	CBM	C13th/14th
401	Fill	-	0.18	Fill of 405	-	-
402	Fill	-	0.18	Fill of 405	-	-
403	Fill	-	0.24	Fill of 405		
404	Layer	-	0.15	Topsoil		
405	Cut	-	>1.5	Cut for foul water pipe	-	-
406	Layer	-		Subsoil		
407	Fill	-	0.4	Fill of 408. Mid yellow brown, sandy clay		
408	Cut	>2.5	0.4	Ditch/Pit		
409	Fill	-	0.5	Fill of 410. Mid yellow brown, sandy clay.		
410	Cut	>1.8	0.5	Ditch/Pit		

Trench 5						
General description					**Orientation**	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. The natural geology was overlain by buried soil layers and made ground deposits related to terracing and landscaping.					**Length (m)**	30
					Width (m)	2
					Avg. depth (m)	0.30
Context No.	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Description**	**Finds**	**Date**
500	Layer	-	0.15	Topsoil	-	-
501	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
502	Layer	-	0.42	Subsoil	-	-
503	Layer	-	0.24	Made ground		
504	Layer	-	0.35	Made ground		
505	Layer	-	0.34	Made ground		
506	Layer	-	0.18	Buried soil		
507	Layer	-	0.33	Interface/buried ploughsoil? Mid yellow brown, sandy clay.	-	-

APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Roman and Post-Roman pottery

By John Cotter

Introduction

B.1.1 A total of 3 sherds (39g) of pottery were recovered from two contexts. A limited range of Roman and post-medieval pottery is present.

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 (Table 1). The pottery is in a fragmentary condition, but two of the three sherds present are fresh and unabraded.

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 (eg decoration etc). Roman fabric codes used here are those of the Oxfordshire type series (Booth 2019), whereas post-medieval fabric codes are those of the Museum of London (MOLA 2014). The range of pottery is described in some detail in the spreadsheet (Table 1) and therefore only summarised below.

Description

Context	Spot-date	No.	Wt (g)	Comments
101	*c* 1650-1900?	1	17	Fresh body sherd from globular jar/jug in post-medieval red earthenware (Fabric code: PMR, *c*1580-1900). Light orange sandy fabric with glossy orange-brown glaze int. Possibly 18-19C rather than earlier?
302	*c* 50-250	2	22	Roman. 1x very abraded scrap (1g) probably in miscellaneous Samian ware (Fabric S: *c*50-250AD), no trace of surface gloss surviving (worn off) but very fine pink-buff fabric looks like Samian. 1x fresh pad base from a jar in a Roman fine sand-tempered grey ware consistent with Oxford fine reduced ware (Fabric code R11). Not closely datable
Total		3	39	

Table 1. Description of pottery by context

Discussion

B.1.4 The single sherd of post-medieval pottery (PMR) is typical of Oxford sites and is otherwise unremarkable. The two sherds of Roman pottery from a single context (302) are rather more noteworthy. Stray sherds of Roman pottery are occasionally found on

Oxford sites, usually on sites of some size, but it is much less common to find more than one sherd of Roman pottery from the same context without later material being present. Roman settlements existed to the east and north-east of Oxford city centre – at South Park, Blackbird Leys, the Churchill Hospital and Headington. As the site here lies near South Park and University Parks, the sherds are probably derived from Roman activity in the area. Around 70 redeposited Roman sherds were recently recovered from within a late Saxon rampart at New College (site code OXNWC14).

Recommendations regarding the conservation, discard and retention of material

B.1.5 The pottery here has the potential to inform research through re-analysis – particularly when reviewed alongside further assemblages from any future excavations in the area of the present evaluation. It is recommended that it should all be retained.

B.2 Flint

By Michael Donnelly

Introduction

B.2.1 This evaluation brought to light a very small assemblage of just three struck flints, all of which were recovered from Trench 3. No piece could be accurately dated but the two shared characteristics indicative of later Neolithic or early Bronze Age flint working as opposed to very early prehistoric or the far cruder later prehistoric flint working. Activity dating to these periods is known from the University Parks area and it is likely that this flintwork relates to a broader but less intensive use of the landscape during that time. The third flint is wholly undiagnostic

Discussion

B.2.2 One flint flake was recovered from the topsoil in Trench 3 (305) and displayed a relatively fresh surface with parallel negative scars on its dorsal surface and a faceted platform. The second piece was more intriguing as it is unclear what it is a fragment of. It has bifacial working, heavier on its dorsal surface, and may have been snapped from a larger tool such as an axe or adze. However, it is equally probable that it might represent a fragment from a 18Levallois-style core commonly recovered from later Neolithic sites in England. Alternatively, if the piece was determined to be an axe/adze fragment, it could also be seen as being potentially later Neolithic in date, although earlier Neolithic or even Mesolithic flint knapping would also contain such material.

B.2.3 The site lay within an area that contains a relatively rich Neolithic to early Bronze Age landscape and these lithics should be seen as representing the spread of artefactual material around that focus. Given the relative freshness of the more typically Neolithic pieces, they are likely to have not moved far and very probably represent limited flint working or tool use as part of an interlinked taskscape associated with the more established monuments. The third cruder piece could relate to later prehistoric activity here or might just be a particularly badly fashioned Neolithic flake.

Methodology

B.2.4 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 (eg Bamford 1985, 72–7; 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
302	Other retouch	Bifacially worked fragment	Unclear if an axe/adze fragment or a broken levallois style core	Meso-EBA
302	Flake	inner	Quite squat and hard-hammer struck	?LPH
305	flake	inner	Proximal segment, thin with a faceted platform	?L Neo-EBA

Table 2. Summary of flint by context

B.3 Ceramic building material

By John Cotter

Description

B.3.1 Two pieces of ceramic building material (CBM) weighing 98g were recovered from two contexts. Given the small amount this has not been separately catalogued but is fully described below.

B.3.2 Medieval tile fabrics and CBM types from Oxford have been described in some detail in previous reports (Cotter 2006; 2008).

Context 101

B.3.3 Spot-date: 13/14th century? Description: 1 piece (90g). Corner fragment from a flat roof tile (probably a peg tile). Light orange-brown surfaces with specks of decayed greenish glaze on the upper (smoother) surface (Oxford Fabric IIIB). Fairly abraded. The piece is residual in a post-medieval context.

Context 400

B.3.4 Spot-date: 13/14th century? Description: 1 piece (8g). A very abraded scrap of medieval peg tile (Fabric IIIB) with a trace of a circular nail hole.

Recommendations regarding the conservation, discard and retention of material

The CBM here has very little potential for further research and may be discarded.

APPENDIX C ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES

By Richard Palmer

C.1.1 A single forty litre bulk sample, from fill 302 of ditch 301, was taken. The sediment is described as a yellowish brown (10YR 5/4) silty clay. Fill 302 also produced fragments of early to middle Roman pot.

Method

C.1.2 The sample was processed in its entirety at Oxford Archaeology using a modified Siraf-type water flotation machine with the flot was collected in a 250µm mesh and residue in a 500µm mesh. When dry, the residue fractions (ie the material which did not float) 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.

Results, discussion and recommendations

C.1.3 The recovered flot (Table 3) is poor, consisting mainly of modern roots, including only a couple of charcoal fragments and half a dozen terrestrial molluscs. A single piece of potentially worked flint was recovered from the residue.

C.1.4 The flot should be retained until all works on site are complete and then may be discarded.

Sample no.	Context no.	Feature/deposit	Trench	Date	Sample vol. (L)	Flot vol. (ml)	Charcoal >2mm	Grain	Chaff	Weeds	Other charred	Molluscs	Notes
1	302	301	3		40	20	+					++	10YR 5/4 silty clay

Key: +=present (up to 5 items) ++=frequent (5-25), +++=common (25-100), ++++=abundant (100+)
Table 3. Assessment of bulk sample.

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APPENDIX E SITE SUMMARY DETAILS

Site name:	St Edmund Hall, Norham Gardens, Oxford
Site code:	OXEH22
Grid Reference	SP 51510 07516
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	23 to 27 May 2022
Area of Site	0.15ha
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead Industrial Estate, and will be deposited with the Oxford Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS:2022.51.
Summary of Results:	The earliest activity on the site was represented by three pieces of struck flint recovered from Trench 3. Although these were found as residual artefacts, they have been broadly identified as Neolithic to Bronze Age in date. Several ditches apparently forming part of a rectilinear enclosure system were revealed in Trenches 1 and 3. Only a small quantity of early to mid-Roman pottery was recovered from one of these ditches but based on their appearance and alignment it is thought likely that they were broadly contemporary and Roman in date. The NE-SW and NW-SE alignments of these ditches fit well with the cropmark features recorded in University Parks to the south and are likely to be related. Two larger features of uncertain extent were also revealed in the north-east of the site in Trench 4, but no dating evidence was recovered. Varying levels of overburden across the site demonstrate that various landscaping and terracing work associated with the construction of the hall have had a reasonable impact on the topography and deposits. However, the archaeological remains appear unaffected by this landscaping. Although they are likely to have been truncated by medieval and post-medieval agricultural activity in the area.

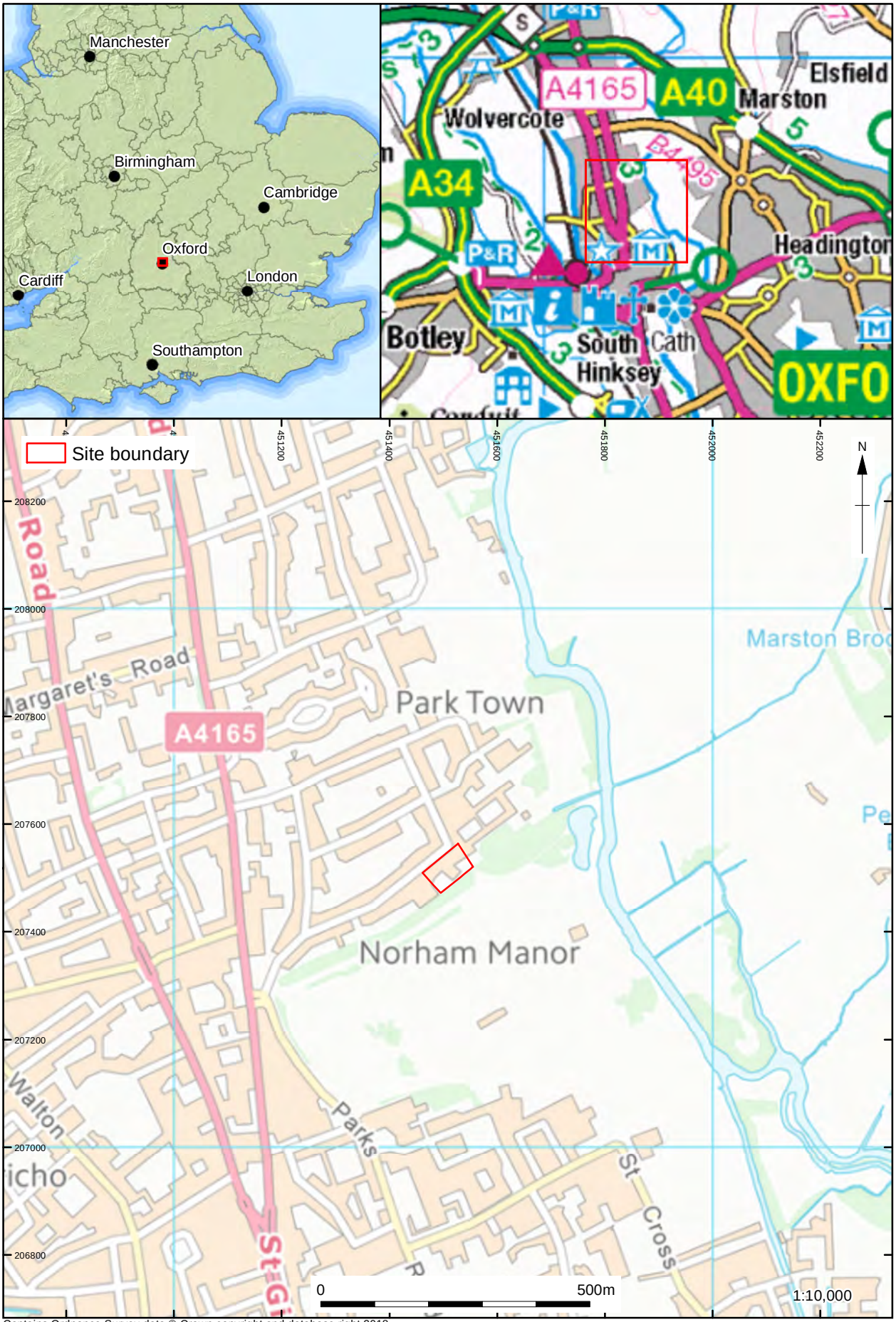

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Figure 1: Site location

Evaluation trench

Services

- Communications
- Gas
- High voltage
- Low voltage
- Water
- Sewer
- Unknown utility

N

TP 1
TP 2
TP 3
TP 4
TP 5
TP 6
SA 1
SA 2
BH 1
BH 2
BH 3
BH 4
BH 5
BH 6
Tr 1
Tr 2
Tr 3
Tr 4
Tr 5

KEY

Indicates extent of basement / retained ground

Indicates extent of proposed building over

Ex Existing building to remain

0 1:400 @ A3 25m

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Data from client

Figure 2: Trench layout

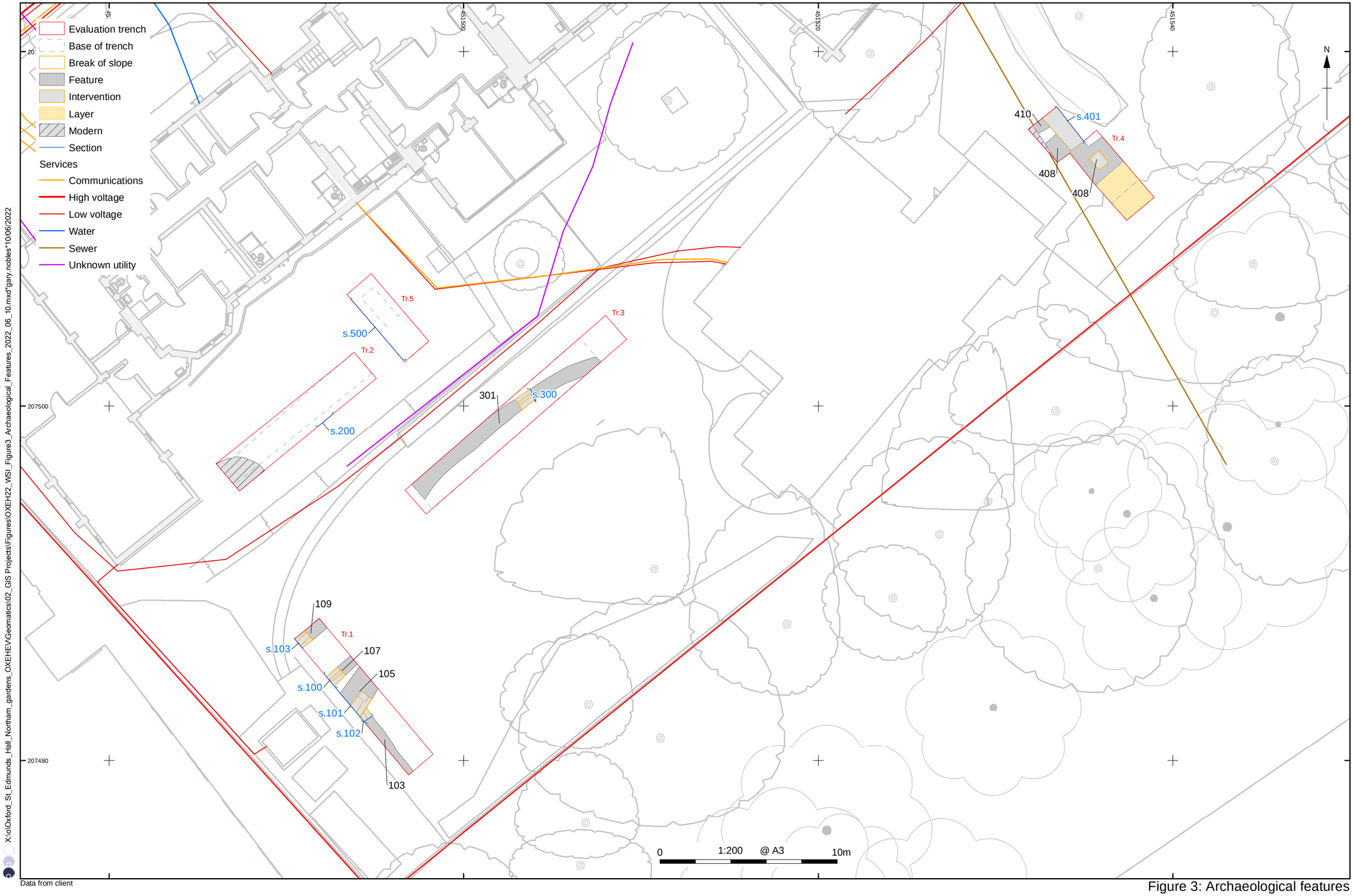

Figure 3: Archaeological features

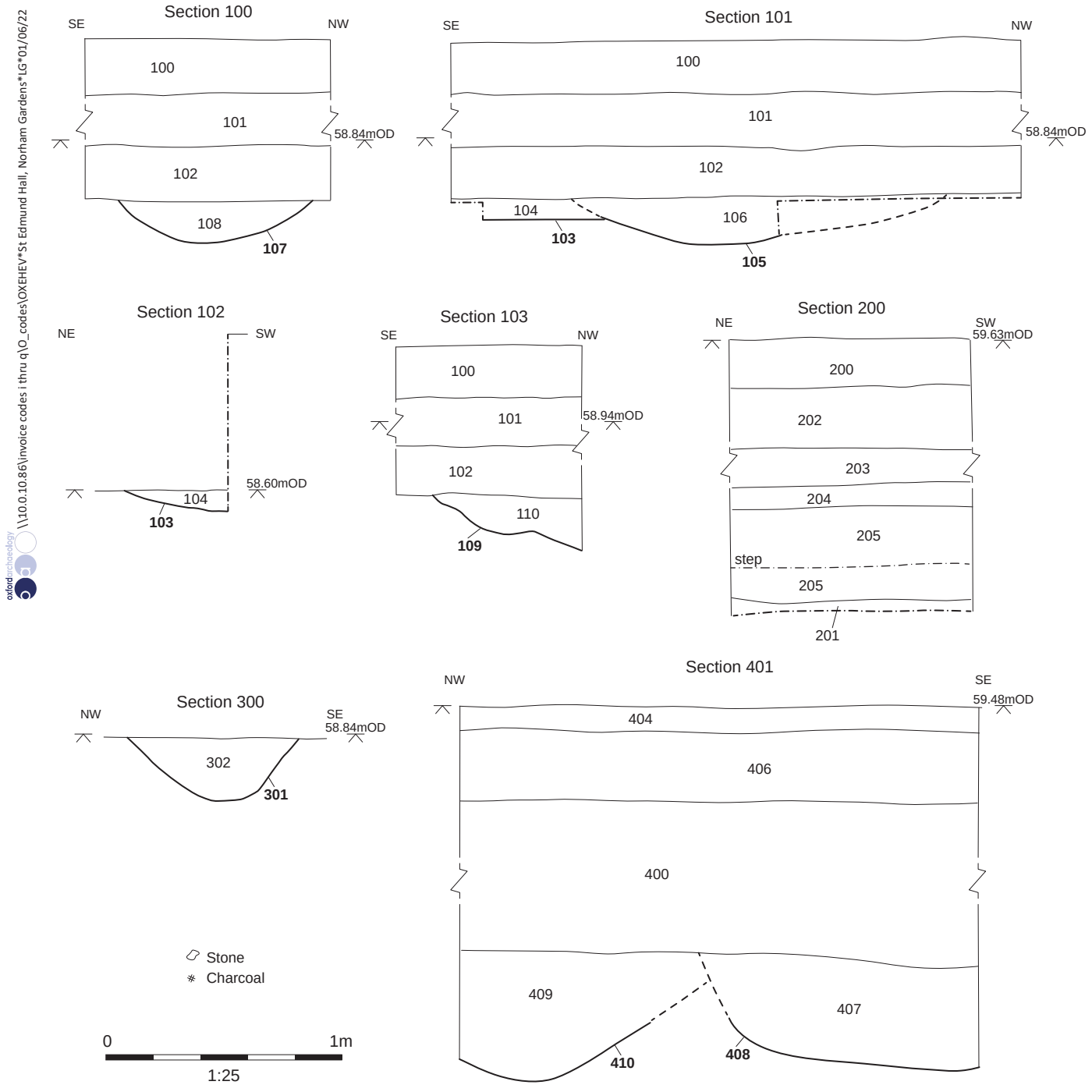

Figure 4: Sections

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Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri

Figure 5: Cropmarks recorded to the south of the site in University Parks

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Plate 1: Ditch 109 (looking south-west)

Plate 2: Ditch 107 (looking south-west)

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Plate 3: Ditches 103 and 106 (looking south-west)

Plate 4: Ditch 301 (looking north-east)

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Plate 5: Section 500 showing made ground deposits in Trench 5 (looking south-west)

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