Area 1 and Area 6, Phase 2, Stockmoor Village, Bridgwater, Somerset

Centred on NGR ST30373486

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

Somerset County Museum Accession Number TTNCM 65/2010 Somerset County Council Historic Environment Service PRN 28345

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On behalf of: Persimmon Homes (South West) Ltd

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AREA 1 AND AREA 6, PHASE 2, STOCKMOOR VILLAGE, BRIDGWATER, SOMERSET (ST30373486): RESULTS OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRENCH EVALUATION

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation on land forming Area 1 and Area 6 Phase 2 residential development, Stockmoor Village, Bridgwater, Somerset (ST30373486), was undertaken by AC archaeology during September 2010. The site is located within two agricultural fields to the south of Bridgwater and to the west of Taunton Road (A38), in an area where a number of Romano-British finds, including coins, have been found by metal detectorists. Part of the site is positioned on raised ground above a low-lying wetland area, with therefore good potential for early settlement remains to be present.

The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of 16 trenches, totalling 569m in length, with each trench 2.1m wide. Archaeological features and deposits were identified mainly on the elevated ground to the east, with these dating to the late Iron Age and medieval periods. The Iron Age features principally comprised ditches and gullies and appear to represent evidence for settlement and perhaps early field division. The medieval features were linear ditches and are likely to be former boundaries of this date. In the lower-lying areas to the west, two probable 19th century agricultural ditches were present, but this area would not have been a favourable location for early settlement.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation on land forming Area 1 and Area 6 Phase 2, Stockmoor Village, Bridgwater, Somerset, was undertaken by AC archaeology during September 2010. The work was commissioned by Persimmon Homes (South West) Ltd and was required by Sedgemoor District Council in support of a forthcoming reserved matters application for residential development, as advised by Somerset County Historic Environment Service.
- 1.2 The site is located within two agricultural fields to the south of Bridgwater and to the west of Taunton Road (Fig. 1 and Plate 1). It lies between 12m and 5m OD, with higher ground on the east side and the land then sloping moderately to gently down to the west onto flat low-lying marginal ground. The underlying solid geology comprises permo-triassic mudstone.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The principal archaeological interest is that the site is located in an area where a number of Romano-British finds, including coins, have been found by metal detectorists (Somerset HER PRN 17891). There are probable prehistoric or Romano-British enclosures recorded as cropmarks to the south of the site (11890 and 12732). Part of the site is located on raised ground above the low-lying wetlands area, with therefore good potential for settlement remains of these dates to be present.
- 2.2 An archaeological trench evaluation immediately to the west of the site on the lower-lying ground (Hughes 2010) identified largely negative results, although a small number of post-medieval linear ditches were present. Three small sherds of late Iron Age pottery were recovered from an agricultural subsoil layer.

3. AIMS

3.1 The aim of the evaluation was to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character and date of any archaeological features, deposits or finds within the site. The results of the work as set out in this document will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent archaeological mitigation.

4. METHODOLOGY

- **4.1** The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a method statement prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2010), submitted to and approved by the Historic Environment Officer, Somerset County Council prior to commencement.
- 4.2 The work comprised the machine-excavation of 16 trenches totalling 569m in length and with each trench 2.1m wide. This represented an approximate 3% sample excavation of the higher potential southeast side of the site, with a small number of control trenches positioned elsewhere. Overburden removal ceased at the level at which natural subsoil or archaeological deposits were exposed.
- 4.3 All deposits revealed were recorded using the standard AC archaeology pro-forma recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 1.* Detailed sections or plans were produced at a scale of 1:20 or 1:50. All site levels relate to Ordnance Datum.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Trenches 1 and 2

These trenches were each 40m long and excavated onto natural subsoil (102 in Trench 1 and 202, Trench 2), which comprised a mid red firm clay with patches of gravels, present at a depth of 0.46m below ground level. This was below topsoil (100/200) and subsoil layers (101/201). There were no archaeological features or deposits present in either of these trenches, although two sherds of Iron Age pottery were recovered from the subsoil layer in Trench 1 and two medieval sherds from the same layer in Trench 2.

5.2 Trench 3 (Plan Fig. 2a, sections 2b-g; Plate 2)

This trench was 40m long and excavated onto natural subsoil (310), which comprised mid reddish-brown clay with gravels present at a depth of 0.4m. This was below topsoil (300) and subsoil (301) layers. A total of four linear features (F303, F304, F307 and F309) was present towards the centre of the trench.

Broadly parallel and slightly curvilinear north to south aligned linear features F303 and F304 were 0.8m and 0.75m wide and 0.3m and 0.25m deep respectively, with moderately steep sloping sides and concave bases. These each contained light to mid reddish-brown clayey loam fills (302 and 305), which had abundant small sub-angular stone inclusions. Medieval pottery was recovered from both, and each was cut by east to west aligned linear feature F309.

Linear feature F309 was 0.75m wide and 0.3m deep, with moderately steep sloping sides and a concave base. This contained a mid reddish-brown clay loam fill (308) containing common small sub-angular stone inclusions. Pottery recovered from this dates to the Romano-British, medieval and post-medieval periods.

Linear feature F307, which cut through fill 302 of F303, was 0.8m wide and 0.25m deep, with moderately steep sloping side and a concave base. It contained a mid reddish-brown clay loam fill (306) with frequent small sub-angular stone inclusions. Medieval pottery was recovered.

5.3 Trench 4 (Plan Fig. 2h, section 2i)

This trench was 40m long and excavated through topsoil (400) and subsoil (401) onto natural subsoil (402), which comprised a mixed red clay and light reddish-grey clay with patches of dense gravels, present at a depth of 0.4m. The trench contained a single east to west aligned linear feature (F403). This was 0.42m wide and 0.06m deep, with a shallow concave profile and containing a light yellowish-brown silty clay fill (404). No finds were recovered.

5.4 Trench 5 (Plan Fig. 3a)

This trench was 25m long and excavated onto natural subsoil (502), present at a depth of 0.66m beneath topsoil (500) and subsoil layers (501). There were three possible pit features (503, 504 and 505) and a further pit or ditch terminal (506), all of which contained similar mid reddish-brown silty clays. These features were not excavated and no finds were recovered.

5.5 Trench 6 (Plan Fig. 3b, sections 3c-h; Plate 3)

This trench was 40m long and was excavated onto natural subsoil (602), which was present at a depth of 0.61m under topsoil (600) and subsoil layers (601). There were five linear features present (F607, F608, F610, F614 and F612).

F607 was approximately NE-SW aligned and was located towards the north end of the trench. It was 1.35m wide with a rounded terminal. Two slots (603 and 605) were excavated across the feature, which established that it was 0.3m deep, had moderately steep sloping sides, a shallow concave base and a gradually sloping terminal. The feature contained a mid reddish-brown silty clay fill (604/606), with occasional sub-angular gravel and charcoal inclusions. Late Iron Age pottery, slag and worked flint were recovered.

F608 was also approximately NE-SW aligned and located immediately to the south of F607. This was 1.4m wide, 0.15m deep and had diffused gradually sloping sides and a flat base. The feature contained a mid reddish-brown silty clay fill (609), with a single piece of prehistoric worked flint recovered.

F610 was NNE-SSW aligned and was 0.42m wide and 0.07m deep, with a shallow concave profile. The feature contained a mid reddish-brown fill (611) containing a small quantity of late Iron Age pottery. This probable gully was truncated to the south by linear feature F612.

F612 was approximately NW-SE aligned, 2.7m wide and cut through subsoil layer 501. The ditch contained a dark brown clayey silt fill (613) and was not excavated. A small quantity of late Iron Age pottery and a fragment of post-medieval ridge tile were recovered from the exposed surface.

At the far south end of the trench was NW-SE aligned linear feature F614, which was 1.18m wide and 0.15m deep, with gradual sloping sides and a shallow concave base. The feature contained a mid brown silty clay fill (615), with occasional small sub-angular stone inclusions. A small quantity of medieval pottery was recovered.

5.6 Trench 7 (Plan Fig. 4a)

This trench was 40m long and was excavated through topsoil (700) and subsoil (701) onto natural subsoil, which was present at a depth of 0.5m. The trench contained a single NE-SW linear feature (703) that measured 1.4m wide and was not excavated. The exposed fill was composed of a dark brown clayey silt and no finds were recovered.

5.7 Trench 8 (Plan Fig. 4b, sections 4c-d; Plate 4)

This trench was 40m long and excavated onto natural subsoil (800) which comprised red clay with patches of reddish brown clay with gravels, present at a depth of 0.53m. This was below topsoil (801) and subsoil (802) layers. The trench contained two linear features (F803 and F805).

F803 was N-S aligned and was 3.32m wide and 0.44m deep, with moderate sloping sides and a flat base. It contained a light grey clay fill (804) with occasional manganese flecks, small gravel and rare charcoal inclusions. Two small fragments of fired clay were recovered.

F805 was NE-SW aligned and was 0.4m wide and 0.05m deep, with a shallow concave profile. The feature contained a mid brown clayey-silt fill (806) and no finds were recovered.

5.8 Trench 9

This trench was 40m long and was excavated through topsoil (900) and subsoil (901) layers onto natural subsoil (902), which was present at a depth of 0.5m below current levels. No evidence for archaeological activity was present.

5.9 Trench 10 (Plan Fig. 5a)

This trench was 40m long and was excavated onto natural subsoil, which was present at a depth of 0.5m under topsoil (1000) and subsoil layers (1001). The trench contained four linear features (1003, 1004, 1005 and 1006) that were either on NE-SW or NW-SE alignments and ranged in width from 0.15m to 0.68m wide. These features were not excavated and no finds were recovered.

5.10 Trench **11** (Plan Fig. 5b)

This trench was 40m long and excavated onto natural subsoil (1102) which comprised a red clay with patches of gravels, present at a depth of 0.33m below topsoil (1100) and subsoil (1101). The trench contained three probable linear features (F1103, F1105 and F1106) and a likely pit (F1104), none of which were excavated. F1103 was E-W aligned, 0.4m wide and contained a dark brown silty clay deposit containing common medium sub-angular stone and occasional charcoal inclusions. Adjacent circular pit feature F1104 contained a similar fill and produced one sherd of late Iron Age pottery.

To the northeast of F1104 were parallel NW-SE aligned linear features F1105 and F1106, each of which contained similar homogenous mid brown silty clay fills. No finds were recovered.

5.11 Trench 12 (Plan Fig. 5c, section 5d)

This trench was 30m long and excavated through recently imported topsoil (1200), buried topsoil (1201) and subsoil (1202) layers onto natural subsoil (1203), present at a depth of 0.5m. A single N-S aligned linear feature (F1204) was recorded towards the south end of the trench, which was 0.43m wide and 0.07m deep, with a shallow concave profile. It contained a mid reddish-brown silty clay fill (1205) and no finds were recovered. The feature was cut by a modern service trench on its north side.

5.12 Trench 13 (Plan Fig. 5e, sections 5f-h; Plates 5 & 6)

This trench was 30m long and excavated onto natural subsoil (1302), which was present at a depth below ground level ranging from 0.5m towards the east and 0.9m towards the west. The natural subsoil was below a colluvial subsoil (1301) and then topsoil (1300). The trench contained a linear feature (F1303) and a possible oven feature (F1305/F1308).

F1303 was NW-SE aligned, 0.79m wide and 0.16m deep, with moderately sloping sides and a concave base. It contained a dark brown silty clay fill (1304), which had occasional large stone inclusions and was cut by possible oven feature F1305/F1308.

Possible oven feature F1305/F1308 was set within the fill of F1303, was on the same alignment and extended beyond the trench limit. It comprised two conjoined oval pits (F1305 and F1308) that had a total length of 1m, was 0.52m wide and 0.07m deep with gradually sloping sides and flat bases.

The oven feature contained a fill sequence that comprised an equivalent basal deposit of dark grey silty clay (1306 and 1309) with abundant charcoal inclusions, which lined the base of both pit elements and was thickest towards the northwest. This was overlain within F1305 by a mid reddish-brown burnt silty clay deposit (1307). Within pit F1308, deposit 1309 was overlain by a light brownish-red burnt clay (1311), which was present around the southeast side of the feature. Deposit 1311 was overlain by an upper fill of dark reddish-brown silty clay (1310), containing abundant charcoal and burnt clay fleck inclusions.

5.13 Trench **14** (Plan Fig. 6a, section 6b)

This trench was 30m long and excavated to a maximum depth of 1.85m within a machine-dug sondage, into a mid bluish-grey alluvial clay layer (1404). Layer 1404 was overlain by a further mid grey alluvial clay (1403), then a light yellowish-grey alluvial/colluvial layer (1402) and final subsoil (1401) and topsoil layers (1400).

Cutting through subsoil layer (1401) was a NW-SE aligned linear feature (F1405). The probable ditch was unexcavated, but was 2.75m wide and contained a mid red silty clay fill (1406). A single piece of ceramic building material was recovered.

5.14 Trench **15** (Plan Fig. 6c, section 6d)

This trench was 30m long and excavated to a depth of 0.52m onto a mid grey alluvial clay (1502). This was below subsoil (1501) and topsoil (1500) layers. The trench contained a NE-SW aligned linear feature (1503) which was not excavated, but was 4.2m wide and had a dark brown silty clay fill (1504), containing abundant industrial brick and tile fragments (not retained).

5.15 Trench 16

Trench 16 was 24m long and excavated through recently imported mixed clay (1600), buried topsoil (1601) and subsoil (1602) layers onto a mid grey alluvial clay (1603) that was present at a depth of 0.84m below current level. The trench contained no archaeological features, deposits or finds.

6. THE FINDS

By Emma Firth

6.1 Introduction

All finds recovered on site have been retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. Finds were then quantified according to material type within each context, then scanned by context to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented. This information is briefly discussed below. Finds totals by material type are given in Table 1, Appendix 1.

6.2 Slag

A total of 14 fragments of iron slag was recovered and all are small, vesicular and undiagnostic. Three small fragments were recovered from the subsoil in Trench 4. A further 11 fragments (137g) were recovered from Trench 6, of which ten (127g) were from the subsoil and one (10g) was recovered from ditch fill context 604.

6.3 Flaked stone

A total of three pieces of prehistoric flaked stone was recovered from Trench 6. These comprise a possible worked flint pebble from topsoil has retouch along one edge, a small flake fragment from context 604 and possible piece of worked chert from F608 (fill 609)

6.4 Glass

These comprise two pieces (5g) of clear bottle glass from the subsoil layer in Trench 4.

6.5 Ceramic building material

A total of two pieces of ceramic building material was recovered from Trench 6. The first piece was recovered from ditch F612 (fill 613) and is a fragment from a post-medieval ridge tile. A second fragment, in a soft micaceous fabric, was recovered from ditch F1405 (context 1406) and, though featureless, is possibly Romano-British in date.

6.6 Fired clay

A total of six pieces of fired clay was recovered from subsoil in Trench 6, ditch F803 in Trench 8 and oven F1305/F1308 in Trench 13. The only pieces which are dateable, on the basis of their association with other finds, are the fragments from Trench 8, which were recovered from a feature that contained a single sherd of Iron Age pottery.

6.7 The pottery

A total of 118 sherds (450g) of pottery was recovered and includes material of late Iron Age, Romano-British, medieval and post-medieval date.

Iron Age

A total of 36 sherds (244g) of Iron Age pottery was recovered, most of which is from features within Trench 6. The majority of these (26 sherds, 205g) were recovered from ditch F603 (604) while the remainder were found in very small quantities in other features. The pottery from context 604 comprises at least eight different vessels, all in a fine, sandy fabric and with burnished surfaces. Several sherds are decorated with simple linear grooves and there are a number of conjoining sherds. The vessel forms include bead-rimmed, shouldered jars/bowls and a possible straight sided "Durotrigian" type vessel with a date range from the Late Iron Age.

A total of two sherds (29g) of pottery of uncertain, but probably late Iron Age date, was recovered from the subsoil in Trench 1. They comprise conjoining sherds of a thick-walled vessel in a fine silty fabric with clay pellets and possible rare calcareous inclusions. A possible Iron Age sherd is in a quartzitic fabric, very coarse and very hard, with dark pinky hue inclusions including quartz, was recovered from pit F1104 in Trench 11. This is similar to some of the sherds in context 604 fabrics, but much coarser.

Romano-British

A single possible sherd (1g) of Romano-British pottery was recovered from Trench 3 (context 308). This sherd is very small and undiagnostic and the dating is therefore tentative.

Medieval

A total of 48 sherds (196g) of medieval pottery was recovered, predominately from Trench 3 which yielded 32 sherds weighing 145g. Lesser quantities were recovered from Trenches 2, 4, 5 and 6. The medieval pottery has a potential date range from the 12th to mid 13th centuries, though there are few diagnostic forms, with the exception of a simple everted rim and an upright rim with groove running along its edge. Many of the sherds are small and abraded and in coarse sandy fabrics, with poorly sorted milky quartz, iron ore and chert. Some have voids from burnt out limestone inclusions. The coarseware fabrics are locally sourced and are comparable with others found in Somerset, such as fabric U1 from Shapwick (Gutiérrez, 2007).

7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1 The evaluation has established the presence of a number of archaeological features mainly dating to the later Iron Age, with these located on the higher ground in the eastern part of the site. These features comprised mainly linear ditches and gullies, although a small quantity of pits and post holes were also present. It is likely that these features relate to settlement and perhaps early field division, on the higher ground above the more marginal wet and low-lying western part of the site.
- 7.2 Trenches 3 and 6, also on the higher ground, contained linear features dating to the medieval period, with these likely to represent former boundaries and drainage ditches, with the pottery recovered indicating a 12th to 13th-century date.
- 7.3 On the sloping ground immediately to the east, Trench 13 contained a linear feature extending downslope, within which was a possible oven. Both features were undated and the function of the oven, particularly as it was located on sloping ground, is unknown. An undated linear feature extending downslope was also present in Trench 12 to the north.
- 7.4 Trenches 14-16 were located in the wet and lower-lying northwest part of the site and, as per the earlier evaluation (Hughes 2010), this area is not considered a favourable location for early settlement. Linear ditches dating to the 19th century were present in Trenches 14 and 15, with these likely to represent field boundaries of this date.
- 7.5 Based on the results of the work it is possible to define an area more closely where late Iron Age remains are likely to be present, which is outlined in blue on Fig. 1. This represents the more elevated ground, with this continuing to the south and outside the present site, where the Romano-British artefacts, as recorded in the Somerset Historic Environment Record, have been found by metal detectorists. The only anomaly to this is the possible oven identified on the sloping ground down to the west in Trench 13.
- 7.6 A detailed design drawing showing the location of proposed development for this area has not been seen as part of this report, but based on densities elsewhere and the shallow soil cover, then it is likely that there will be an impact on buried archaeological remains.

8. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

8.1 The paper and digital archive and finds are currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ. They will be deposited at The Somerset Heritage Centre under the accession number TTNCM 65/2010, along with any archive generated by subsequent work on the site.

8.2 The OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS) number for this project is 85856.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

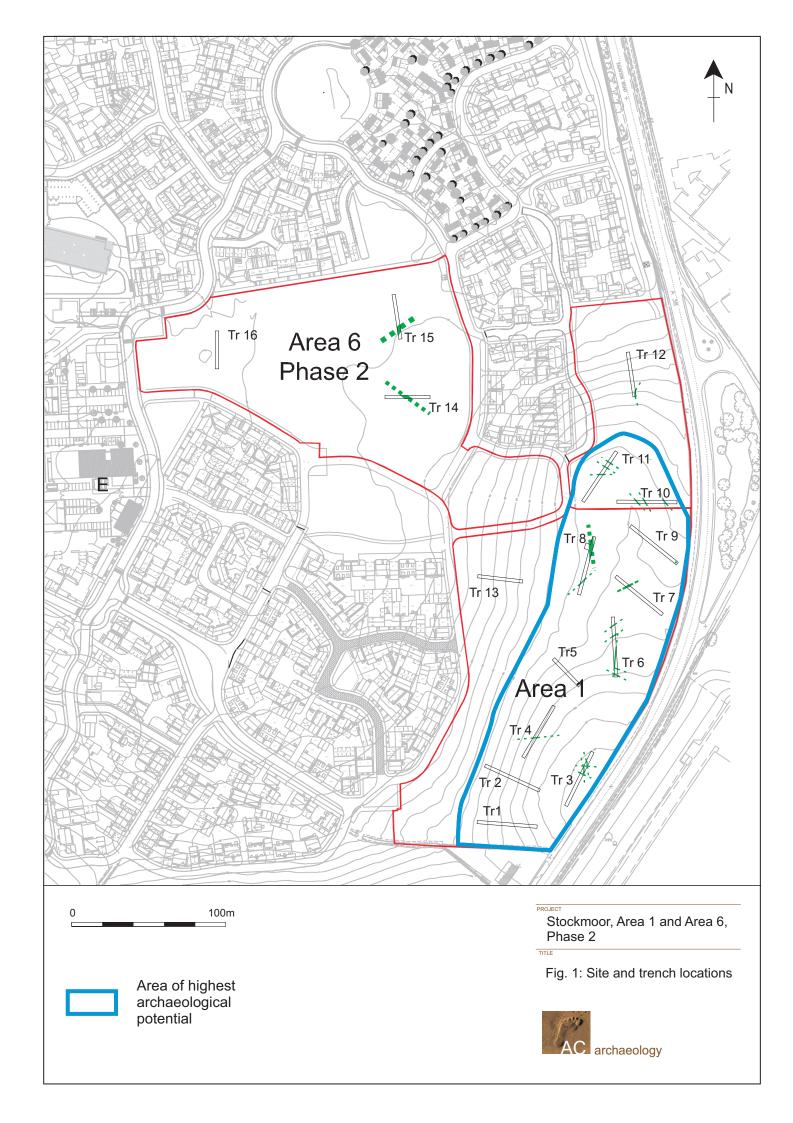
9.1 The evaluation was commissioned by Richard Williams on behalf of Persimmon Homes (South West) Ltd. The site trial trenching was carried out by Simon Hughes, Naomi Hughes, Marc Cox and Kerry Tyler and the illustrations for this report were prepared by Sarah Cottam and Cain Hegarty. The advice and collaboration of Naomi Payne, Somerset Historic Environment Officer, is duly acknowledged.

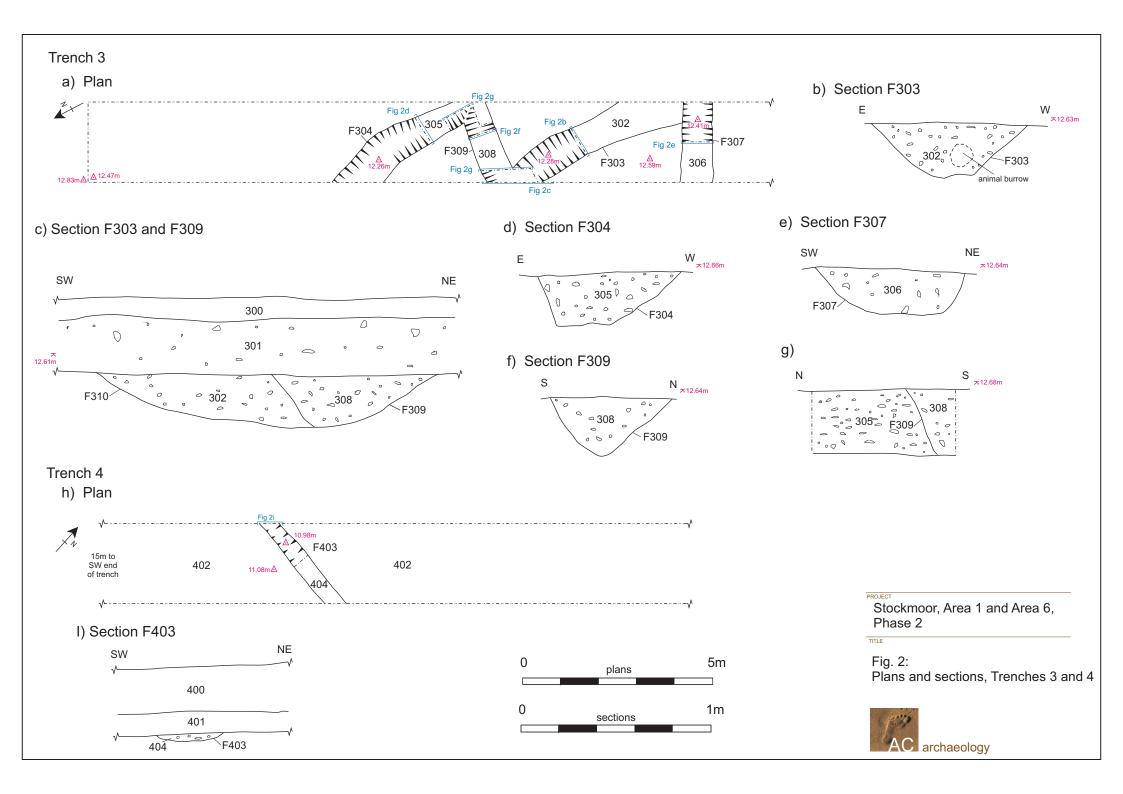
10. REFERENCES

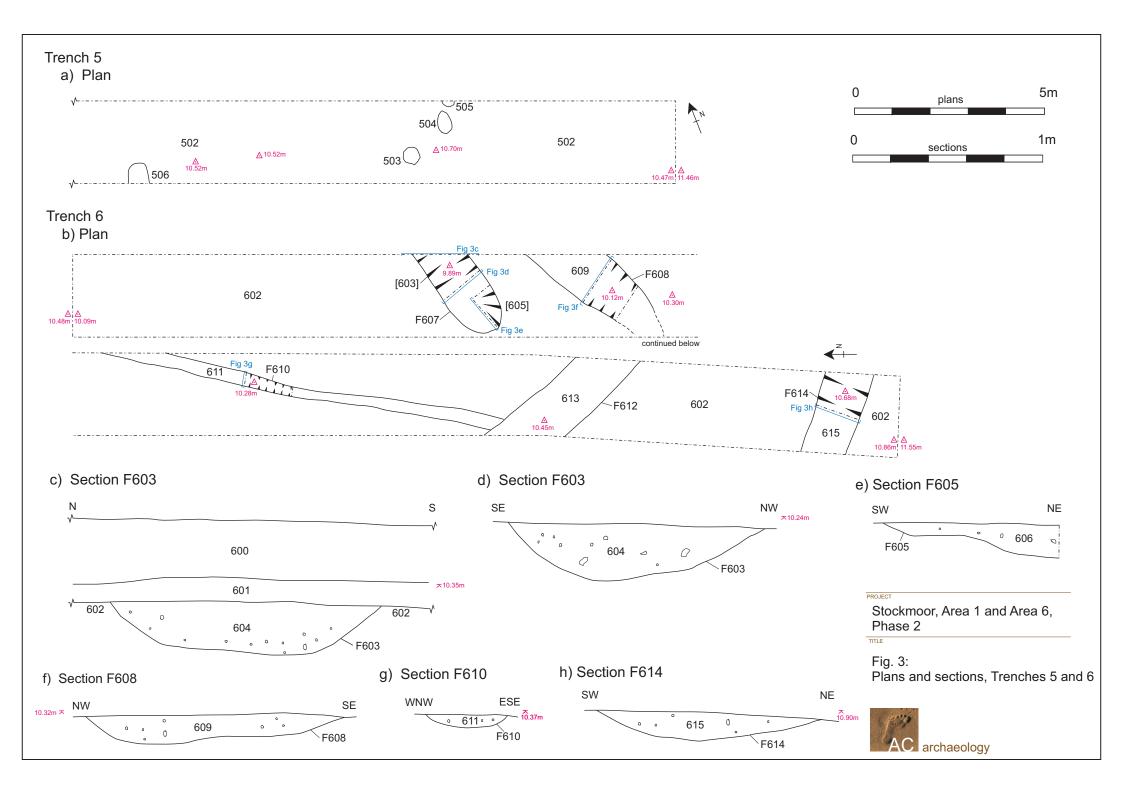
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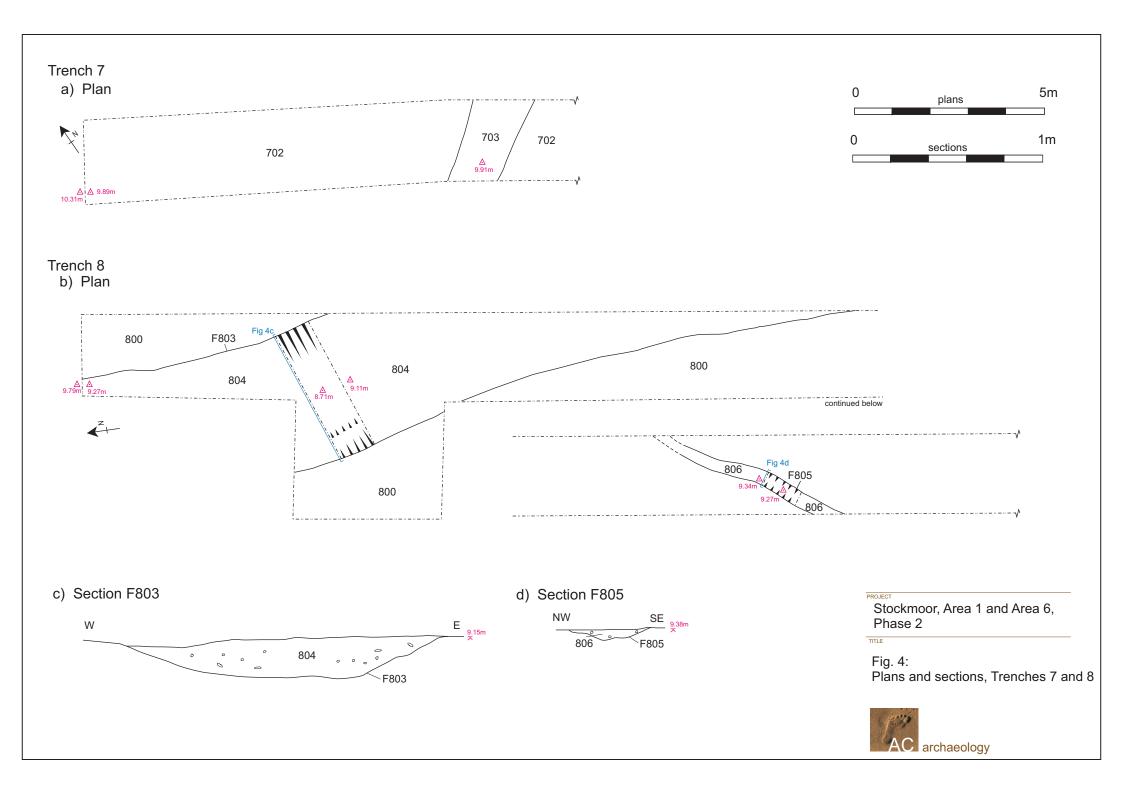
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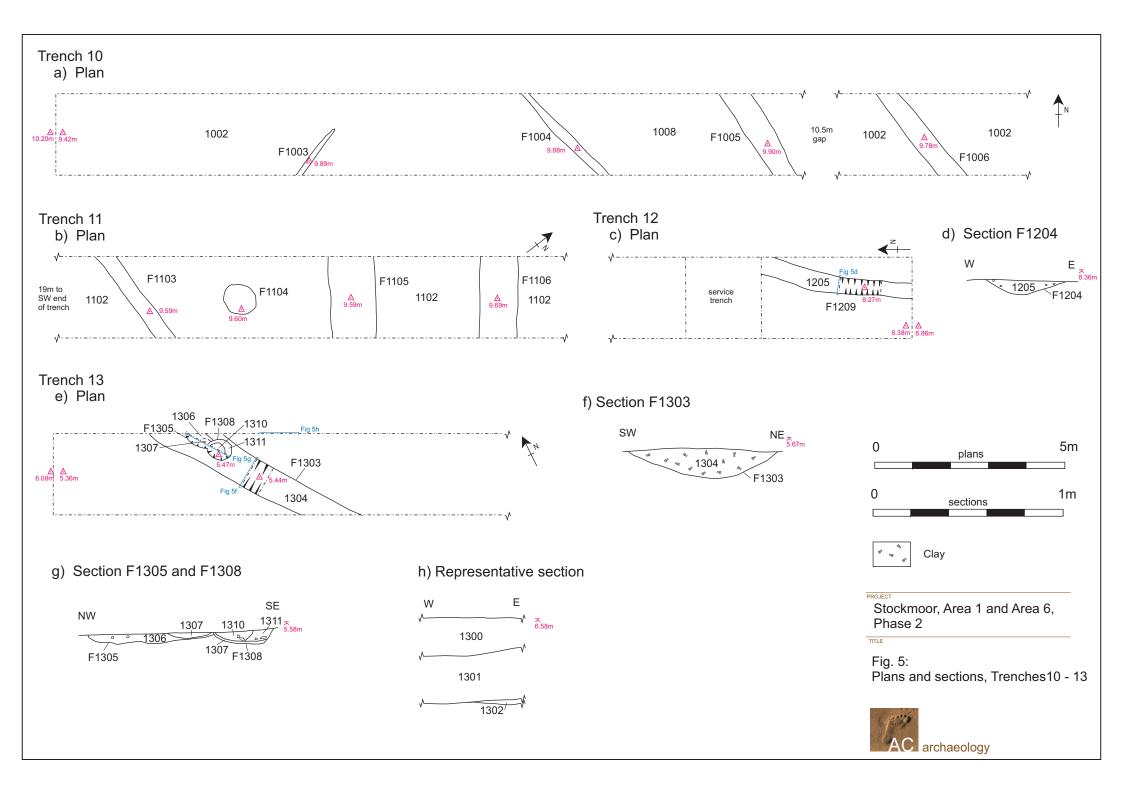
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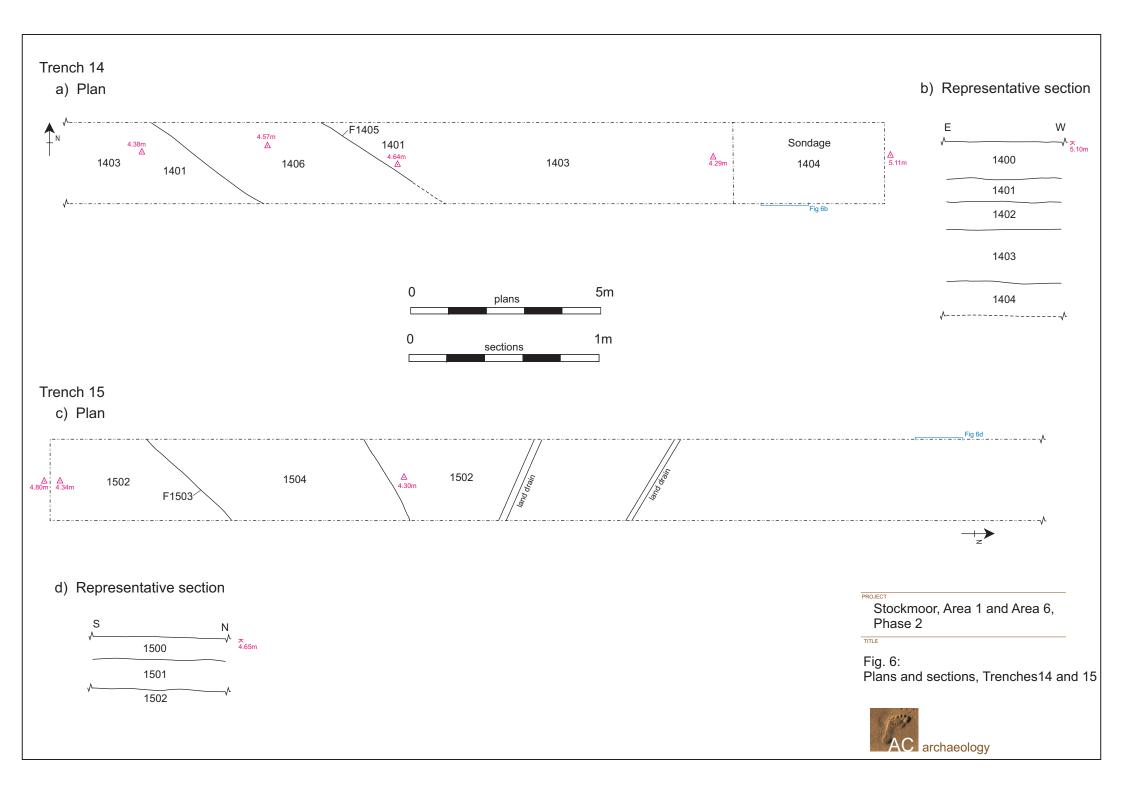




Plate 1. General view of site with Trench 11 in the foreground, looking to southeast



Plate 3. Trench 6, ditch F607. View to north (scale 1m)



Plate 2. General view of Trench 3. Looking southeast



Plate 4. Trench 8, ditch F803. View to south (scale 1m)





Plate 5. General view of Trench 13. Looking northeast (scale 1m)



Plate 6. Trench 13, view of ditch F1303 and oven F1305. Looking to northwest (scale 1m)



Appendix 1 Finds quantifications

Appendix 1: Finds quantifications

Table 1. Quantification of Finds by Material Type and by Context (Weight is in grams)

Trench	Context	Context Type	Slag		Flint/chert		Glass		Ceramic Building Material		Fired Clay		POTTERY							
													Iron Age		Romano British		Medieval		Post Medieval	
			no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt	no	wt
1	101	Subsoil											2	21						
2	201	Subsoil															2	6		
3	300	Topsoil																	1	5
	301	Subsoil															5	23		
	302	Ditch fill															1	2		
	305	Ditch fill															4	2		
	306	Ditch fill															3	7		
	308	Ditch fill													1	1	19	111	2	4
4	401	Subsoil	3	5			2	5									4	31		
5	501	Subsoil															6	9		
6	600	Topsoil			1	3														
	601	Subsoil	10	127							1	2								
	604	Ditch fill	1	10	1	1							24	205						
	609	Ditch fill			1	1														
	611	Ditch fill											5	1						
	613	Ditch fill							1	78			3	8						
	615	Ditch fill															4	5		
8	804	Ditch fill									3	7	1	1						
11	1104	Pit fill											1	8						
13	1307	Possible oven fill									2	4			_					
14	1406	Ditch fill							1	5										
Total			14	142	3	5	2	5	2	83	6	13	36	244	1	1	48	196	3	9

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