

# Scott's House, Salisbury Road, Downton, Wiltshire.

## An Archaeological Field Evaluation



**Scott's House, Salisbury Road, Downton, Wiltshire.**

**An Archaeological Field Evaluation**

for

**Ayleswood Developments Ltd.**

by



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## Non-technical summary

*Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) carried out an Archaeological Field Evaluation through trial trenching on Land to the rear of Scott's House, Salisbury Road, Downton, Wiltshire (the 'Site') on 8 October 2015. The project was commissioned by Ayleswood Developments Ltd.*

*The evaluation was advised by Wiltshire County Archaeology Service (WCAS) in support of an outline planning application for residential development of the Site (Wiltshire Council planning reference: 14/07898/OUT), which lies within an area of archaeological interest. Romano-British settlement features have previously been identified to the north of the Site, although a geophysical survey undertaken by COAS in June 2015 did not identify any corresponding anomalies within the survey area. However, the results were obscured by obstructions and bonfire debris on the surface. Consequently, evaluation trenching was recommended to further investigate the potential presence of archaeological remains.*

*Despite the potential for discovering evidence for Roman occupation on the Site, the evaluation did not reveal any evidence for structural remains or other occupation activity. Three features were identified, but these were limited to modern pits and natural features within Trenches 1 and 3. The remaining two trenches were archaeologically sterile.*

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) carried out an Archaeological Field Evaluation through trial trenching on Land to the rear of Scott's House, Salisbury Road, Downton, Wiltshire (the 'Site'), on 8 October 2015. The project was commissioned by Ayleswood Developments Ltd.
- 1.2 The Field Evaluation was advised by Wiltshire County Archaeology Service (WCAS) in support of a planning application relating to a residential development proposal for up to 25 dwellings on the Site (Wiltshire Council planning application ref. 15/08510/OUT). In a consultation response letter from Ms Clare King (Assistant County Archaeologist, Wiltshire Council) to Mr Tim Pizzey (Senior Planning Officer, Wiltshire Council) on 4 September 2014, Ms King stated:

*"This site is of archaeological interest. Part of the site falls within an area of Romano-British settlement, part of which has been previously evaluated. The evaluation took place to the north of the proposed development site in 1990 in advance of a proposed bypass. Although the works undertaken were very small, they identified very significant settlement remains, including possible houses, pits and a clay lined oven. The evaluation did not include the proposed development site, but aerial photography suggests that the settlement continues into the site. In addition, burial grounds for sites of this period are usually located just outside the edges of the settlement."*

- 1.3 The initial stage of the evaluation comprised a geophysical survey undertaken by COAS (in partnership with GeoFlo) with the aim of identifying the presence of any potential archaeological features. Areas to the west and north of the Site could not be surveyed due to the presence of buried services and vegetation. The report concluded (Prestidge 2015, i):

*"No features of archaeological interest were identified during the geophysical survey. A single possible modern feature is present to the south-west of the house itself, and areas of magnetic disturbance caused by bonfire debris and service inspection chambers have also been identified. Due to the presence of below-ground services to the south and east, it is unlikely that any potential archaeological features will remain extant in these areas. However, the presence of the spread of bonfire debris has masked the data in the north-west of the Site, the area closest to the Romano-British settlement, and there is a possibility of any archaeological features present being obscured by this."*

- 1.4 The programme of archaeological works comprised six elements: the initial geophysical survey; the geophysical survey report (Prestidge 2015); the production of a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which set out the project strategy for the evaluation trenching; an archaeological evaluation through trial trenching; post-excavation and report production; and archive deposition. The WSI was approved by Ms King on 19 August 2015 prior to the commencement of the trial trenching works.
- 1.5 The requirement followed advice by Central Government as set out in paragraph 128 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012) and the *Salisbury District Local Plan* (Wiltshire Council 2011).

## 2. Site location and topography

- 2.1 The Site (centred on NGR SU 16971 21903) covers approximately 0.76ha. Consisting of gardens and rough pasture surrounding Scott's House, the Site is located to the north of the village of Downton and immediately west of the Downton Business Centre industrial estate (**Figure 1**). The A338 Salisbury Road forms the eastern boundary of the Site, and it is bounded on all other sides by pasture. The Site slopes gradually from east to west, with the western extent being located at c. 40m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) and the eastern extent at c. 37m aOD.
- 2.2 The Site is set on solid geology comprising Newhaven Chalk Formation - Chalk. The superficial (drift) geology is recorded as River Terrace Deposits - Sand and Gravel (British Geological Survey 2015). The Site is characterized by freely draining, slightly acidic, loamy soils. (<http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes>).

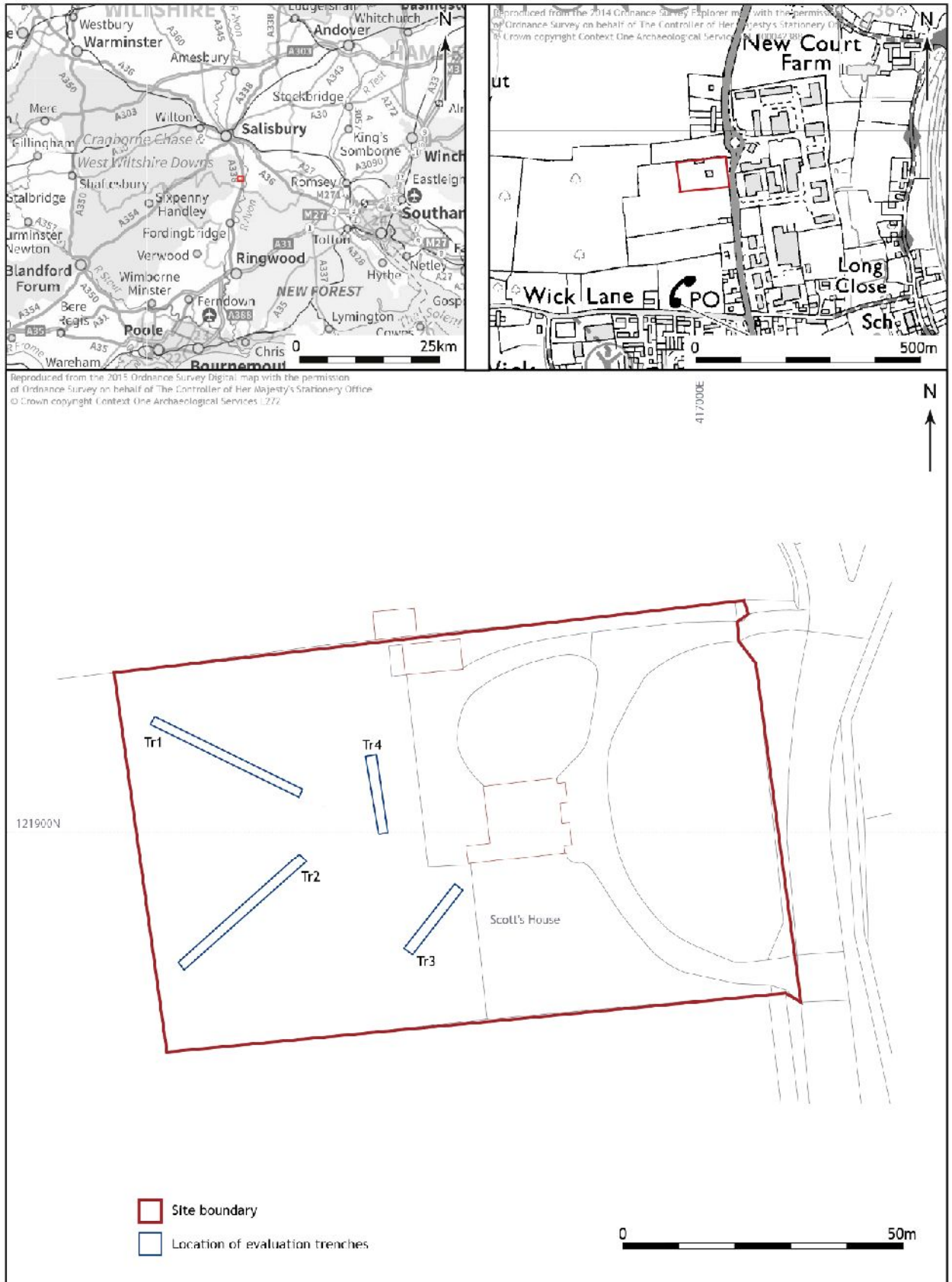


Figure 1. Site setting and trench location

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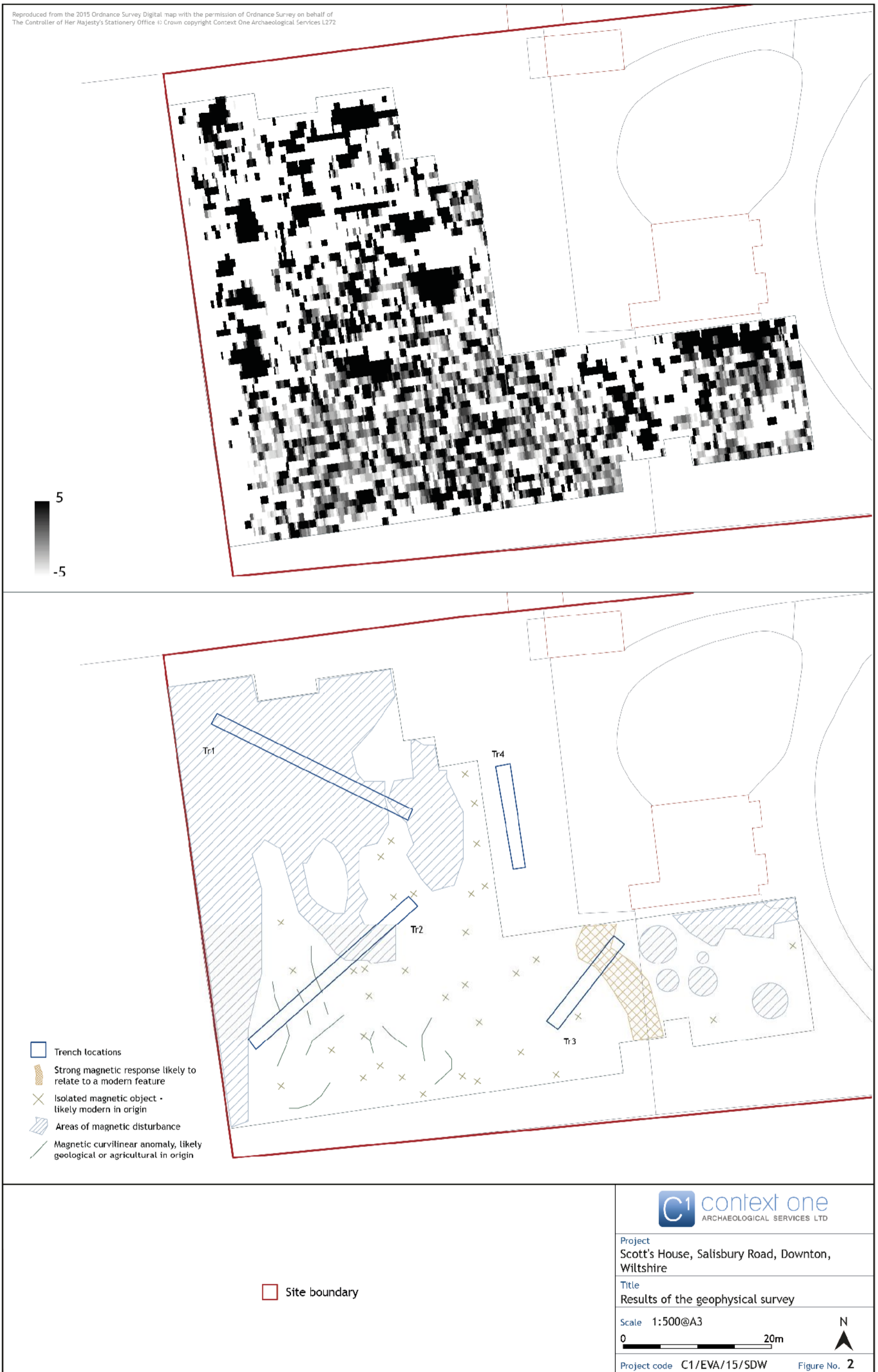


Figure 2. Results of the geophysical survey  
 Scott's House, Salisbury Road, Downton, Wiltshire.

### 3. Methodology

- 3.1 The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the *Standards for Archaeological Assessment and Field Evaluation in Wiltshire* issued by Wiltshire County Council in 1995, and the codes, standards and guidelines set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), formerly the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) (2014). Current Health and Safety legislation and guidelines were followed on site.
- 3.2 The archaeological evaluation comprised a total of 90m of trial trenching equating to 2% of the proposal development site. This was divided down into 4 trenches; two trenches measuring 30m x 1.6m, and two trenches measuring 15m x 1.6m. The trenches were positioned over the areas obscured by bonfire debris on the geophysical survey, as well as over the unknown anomalies identified during the survey (**Figure 2**). The Location of the Trenches was mapped relative to the National Grid and Ordinance Datum using a TopCon GRS-1 Global Positioning System, producing an accuracy of 1-2cm.
- 3.3 A tracked machine fitted with a 1.2m wide toothless grading bucket was used to remove topsoil and continued in horizontal spits until potential archaeological features or natural geology were encountered, whichever was first. Once machine work had been completed, all faces of each trench were examined and, where necessary, cleaned using hand tools. A section of one long face of each trench was cleaned by hand to allow an understanding of the Site stratigraphy. Manual excavation then commenced to further investigate any possible archaeological features.
- 3.4 In the absence of archaeological features and deposits, representative sections of each trench was recorded to define the sequence of deposits using COAS *pro forma* evaluation trench sheets. A digital photograph was also taken of each section as well as the long axis of each trench. All photographs included an appropriate scale.
- 3.5 Any potential archaeological remains encountered were sampled by manual excavation to establish stratigraphic relationships, recover sufficient artefacts to establish 'absolute' dates, and to determine feature/deposit morphology and character. All features/deposits were recorded using standard COAS *pro-forma* recording sheets in digital format. Stratigraphic relationships were recorded using a "Harris-Winchester matrix" diagram. Soil colours were logged using a Munsell soil colour chart. The location, extent and altitude of archaeological features and deposits were mapped relative to the National Grid and Ordinance Datum using a TopCon GRS-1 Global Positioning System, producing an accuracy of 1-2cm. A digital photographic record was made of each trench, each profile section, individual features as well as working shots to illustrate the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.
- 3.6 Upon completion of the evaluation, all trenches were backfilled by machine and compacted.

### 4. Results

- 4.1 The deposits and features encountered during fieldwork are described. In the text, context numbers for cuts appear in square brackets, e.g. [1004]; layer and fill numbers appear in standard brackets, e.g. (1002).

#### Soil Sequence and geology

- 4.2 The topsoil comprised a mid-brown silty clay layer ((101), (201), (301), (401)) with roots throughout, measuring c. 0.15m deep. This overlay a dark brown silty clay subsoil ((102), (202), (302), (402)) measuring c. 0.20m deep containing sub-angular gravels and some roots. The subsoil covered the orange clay and gravel natural ((103), (203), (303), (403)) at a depth of c. 0.35m below the ground surface.

#### Archaeological features and deposits

- 4.3 No archaeological features were identified during the evaluation although modern/natural features were present within Trenches 1 and 3 (**Plates 1, 2, 3 & 6**), while Trenches 2 and 4 were



found to be archaeologically sterile (**Plates 4 & 7**). Feature [104] within Trench 1 and [304] within Trench 3, were visible within the topsoil layer ((101) & (301)). Feature [107] within Trench 1 was sealed beneath the topsoil (101) and cut the underlying subsoil (102) together with the underlying natural deposits (103).

- 4.4 Feature [104] was located in the centre of Trench 1 (**Plate 1**) and comprised a pit measuring 1.60m diameter and 1.50m deep, spanning the entire width of the trench (**Plate 2**). It was sub-circular in plan and was filled with modern bonfire debris. A second feature [107] was identified towards the south-eastern end of Trench 1. Comprising a sub-circular pit with a very compacted silt fill (108), it measured 1.30m by 0.46m and was 0.50m deep. A sondage was excavated through the feature and revealed it to be sterile of finds (**Plate 3**).
- 4.5 Feature [304] was located at the north-eastern end of Trench 3 and comprised a deep (1.40m) pit filled with modern demolition rubble, domestic refuse and tree debris (305) (**Plate 6**).



Plate 1. Trench 1 (from NW; 2 x 1m scales)



Plate 2. Profile of feature [104], TR 1 (from SW; 2 x 1m scales)

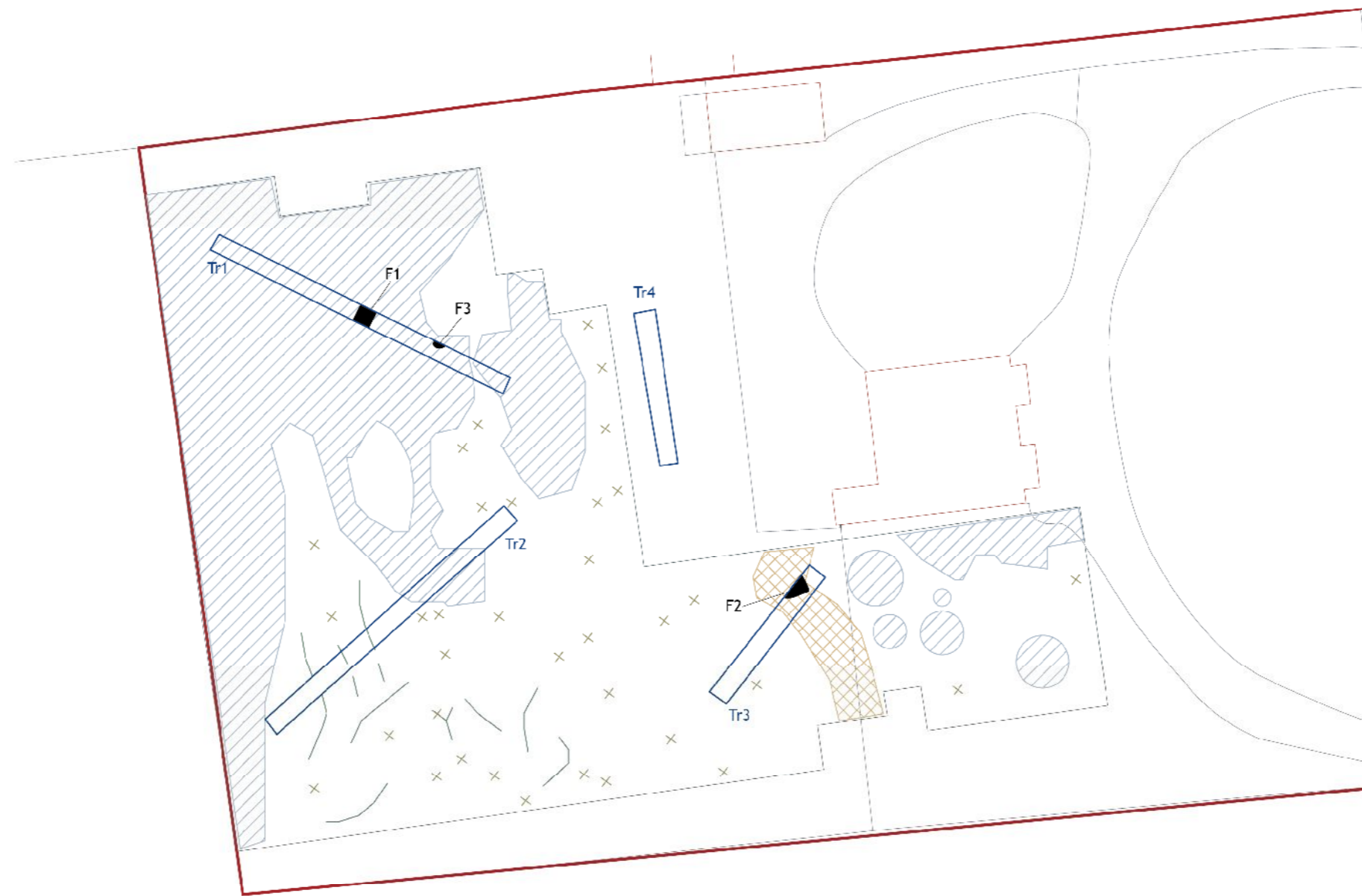


Plate 3. Section through feature [107], TR 1 (from SW; 2 x 1m scales)



Plate 4. Trench 2 (from SW; 2 x 1m scales)

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- Site boundary
- Tr Evaluation trench locations and archaeology
- Strong magnetic response likely to relate to a modern feature
- x Isolated magnetic object - likely modern in origin
- Areas of magnetic disturbance
- ~ Magnetic curvilinear anomaly, likely geological or agricultural in origin



Project  
 Scott's House, Salisbury Road, Downton,  
 Wiltshire

Title  
 Trench plan and location of archaeology

Scale 1:500@A3  
 N  
▲

Project code C1/EVA/15/SDW Figure No. 3

Figure 3. Trench plan and location of potential features

Scott's House, Salisbury Road, Downton, Wiltshire.



Plate 5. Trench 3, showing feature [304] (from SW; 2 x 1m scales)



Plate 6. Profile of feature [304], TR 3 (from SW; 2 x 1m scales)



Plate 7. Trench 4 (from S; 2 x 1m scales)

## 5. The finds

- 5.1 No finds were collected during the trial trenching works, although modern bonfire debris was observed in pit [104] within Trench 1 and a large amount of late 20<sup>th</sup> century rubbish was observed within the fill (305) of the large pit [304] within Trench 3.

## 6. Discussion

- 6.1 Despite the potential for discovering evidence for Roman occupation on the Site, the evaluation did not reveal any structural remains or other occupation activity. Three features were identified, but these were limited to modern pits and natural features within Trenches 1 and 3. Within Trench 1, a large pit filled with burnt debris likely represented the burial of bonfire rubbish, which corresponds with the masking of the geophysical survey responses within the vicinity. A smaller sediment-filled pit in Trench 1 was sealed by the topsoil layer, and was probably natural in origin perhaps resulting from water pooling in a natural hollow or tree throw. A modern rubble-filled pit was present at the northern end of Trench 3, and this feature was identified as the source of the strong curvilinear response identified to the south-west of the house during the initial geophysical survey. As well as demolition rubble and domestic refuse, the fill of this pit contained a number of large tree stumps. The pit may therefore be the result of the felling of these trees, which may have been contemporary with the other mature trees visible around the borders of the Scott's House garden.

## 7. Archive

7.1 An ordered and integrated site archive has been prepared to comply with guidelines set out in *First Aid for Finds* (Watkinson and Neal 2001) and *Standards in the Museums Care of Archaeological Collections* (Museum and Galleries Commission 1992) / *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (English Heritage 1991).

7.2 The project archive is currently held by COAS and consists of the following:

Item	Number	Format
Evaluation trench sheets	4	.PDF
Feature sheets	3	.PDF
Digital images	31	.JPG

7.3 The archive has been compiled in .PDF format and will form part of the physical Site archive to be deposited with Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum.

7.4 Copies of this report will be deposited with the client/agent and included as part of the Wiltshire Historic Environment Record. A digital copy of the report will also be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service, via OASIS (On-line Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations - <http://oasis.ac.uk/england/>). The OASIS entry will also be completed to include details of the archive contents.

## 8. COAS acknowledgements

8.1 We would like to thank the following for their contribution to the successful completion of this project:

Rob Hewlett, Ayleswood Developments Ltd  
Clare King, Assistant County Archaeologist, Wiltshire County Council

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