



# Earsham Quarry, Norfolk: Area 1

## Post-Excavation Assessment Statement

October 2021

**Client: Earsham Gravels**

Issue No: 1

OA Report No: 2528

NGR: TM 31862 89070

OASIS No: oxfordar3-404202



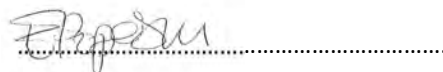


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Prepared by: Edmund Cole (Field Project Supervisor)  
Checked by: Patrick Moan (Senior Project Manager)  
Edited by: Tom Phillips (Senior Project Manager, Post-Excavation)  
Approved for Issue by: Elizabeth Popescu (Head of Post-Excavation & Publications)  
Signature:



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**OA South**

Janus House  
Osney Mead  
Oxford  
OX2 0ES

t. +44 (0)1865 263 800

**OA East**

15 Trafalgar Way  
Bar Hill  
Cambridge  
CB23 8SQ

t. +44 (0)1223 850 500

**OA North**

Mill 3  
Moor Lane Mills  
Moor Lane  
Lancaster  
LA1 1QD

t. +44 (0)1524 880 250

e. [info@oxfordarch.co.uk](mailto:info@oxfordarch.co.uk)  
w. [oxfordarchaeology.com](http://oxfordarchaeology.com)

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Director and Chief Executive  
Gill Hey, BA PhD FSA MCIAA  
Private Limited Company, No: 1618597  
Registered Charity, No: 285627  
Registered Office: Oxford Archaeology Ltd  
Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES

## Earsham Quarry, Norfolk: Area 1

### *Post-Excavation Assessment Statement*

*Written by Edmund Cole BSc PCIfA*

*With a contribution from Hayley Foster BA MA PhD and  
illustrations by David Brown BA*

### Contents

List of Figures.....	vi
Summary.....	vii
Acknowledgements.....	viii
<b>1 PROJECT BACKGROUND .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 STRATIGRAPHIC SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>1</b>
2.1 General .....	1
2.2 Phase 1: Early Bronze Age (2500 to 1600 BC).....	1
2.3 Phase 2: ?Bronze Age (2500 to 800 BC).....	2
2.4 Phase 3: Middle to Late Iron Age (350 BC to AD 43).....	2
2.5 Phase 4: Post-medieval (AD 1500 to 1750).....	3
<b>3 FACTUAL DATA .....</b>	<b>3</b>
3.1 Stratigraphy.....	3
3.2 Artefactual evidence.....	3
3.3 Environmental evidence.....	4
<b>4 RESEARCH ISSUES .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5 SCIENTIFIC DATING .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>6 METHODS STATEMENT .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7 DISSEMINATION/PUBLICATION .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>8 TASK LIST FOR ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>6</b>
8.1 Project team structure.....	6
8.2 Task list and programme .....	7
<b>9 BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>APPENDIX A OASIS REPORT FORM .....</b>	<b>9</b>

## List of Figures

- Fig. 1            Site location (outlined in red)  
Fig. 2            Site plan

## List of Plates

- Plate 1            Aerial view of the site, looking east  
Plate 2            Cremation **1397** (pre-excavation), looking south  
Plate 3            Pit cluster and beamslots **1042** and **1049**, looking north-west  
Plate 4            Pit **1017**, looking west

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## Summary

From the 17th of May to the 25th of June 2021, Oxford Archaeology East (OA East) undertook an archaeological excavation on land west of Earsham, Norfolk (TM 31862 89070). A single cremation burial containing fragments of Early Bronze Age pottery – probably the earliest feature encountered – was exposed in the southern half of the site. Part of a possible Bronze Age field system was also uncovered, along with features dated to the Iron Age. The Iron Age remains consisted of pits and postholes spread across much of the site, with more dense pit clusters, and beamslot and posthole structures towards the northwest. Finds from these features were dominated by pottery and fired clay (daub). The majority of pottery dates from the Middle to Late Iron Age. Overlying the possible Bronze Age field system were two post-medieval boundary ditches, which are also visible on 19th century mapping.

This report provides a brief statement on the character of the archaeological remains, updates the project's research aims and objectives and sets out a programme for further analysis and reporting.

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## Acknowledgements

OA East would like to thank Earsham Gravels for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Steve Hickling who monitored the work on behalf of Norfolk County Council.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Pat Moan. The fieldwork was directed by Edmund Cole, who was supported by Martha Carruthers, Max Jacobs, Lindsey Kemp, Ashley Pooley and Sarah Roebel. Survey and digitising was carried out by Valerio Pinna. Thanks are also extended to the teams of OA East staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the management of Natasha Dodwell.

## 1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1 From the 17th May to the 25th June 2021, OA East carried out an open-area excavation on land west of Earsham, Norfolk (TM 31862 89070). The work was commissioned by Earsham Gravels and the excavation covered an area of 1.97ha.
- 1.1.2 This stage of the project represented Area 1, the first of three areas at Earsham Quarry scheduled for mineral extraction. Previous evaluation works within the three areas west of Earsham identified archaeological remains which require preservation by record prior to mineral extraction taking place. The archaeological evaluation of Area 1 carried out by Archaeological Solutions identified a number of ditches and three Iron Age pits (Muir *et al.* 2017). The excavation was carried out in accordance with a brief issued by Steve Hickling of the Norfolk County Council Environmental Service (NCCES) and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Andrew Josephs Associates (Andrew Josephs Associates 2019).
- 1.1.3 The site is situated adjacent to a bend of the River Waveney, sitting just above wetter marshland areas at approximately 7m OD. The site has previously been arable farmland, but for the previous decade has been pasture. The field is bounded to the south and east by the A143 Old Railway Road, to the west by Five Acre Lane and to the north by Hall Road (Fig. 1; Plate 1). The underlying bedrock of Crag Group Sands is overlain by superficial deposits of River Terrace sands and gravels (British Geological Survey map viewer: <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>. Accessed: 11/10/21).
- 1.1.4 A detailed summary of the archaeological background is included in the overarching WSI for Areas 1, 2 and 3 (Andrew Josephs Associates 2019) and will also be included in the final report.

## 2 STRATIGRAPHIC SUMMARY

### 2.1 General

- 2.1.1 Archaeological features were exposed across the full extent of the excavation area but were concentrated in the northwestern quarter of the site (Fig. 2). At this stage of the post-excavation process, ceramic dating and the character of features suggest the remains can be separated into four main phases: Early Bronze Age, ?Bronze Age, Middle to Late Iron Age and post-medieval (alongside a number of demonstrably natural features). Figure 2 provides a plan of the excavation area, with features labelled with cut/feature numbers (rendered in **bold** in the text).

### 2.2 Phase 1: Early Bronze Age (2500 to 1600 BC)

- 2.2.1 The only feature belonging to Phase 1 was an isolated cremation burial (**1397**) located in the southeastern corner of the site, c.8m south of a ?Bronze Age field boundary ditch (**1362**). This feature contained a significant amount of decorated Early Bronze Age pottery alongside fragments of calcined human remains, some of which could be



seen on the surface (Plate 2). The cremation represents the only evidence for funerary activity in Area 1.

## 2.3 Phase 2: ?Bronze Age (2500 to 800 BC)

2.3.1 Exposed within the west and south of Area 1 were the remains of a ?Bronze Age field system (Fig. 2), thought to have been constructed prior to the swathe of Iron Age features, possibly in the Bronze Age. This field system comprised a series of insubstantial ditches forming plots or fields, the ditches aligned either west-northwest to east-southeast or north-northeast to south-southwest. The series of ditches aligned north-northeast to south-southwest (*e.g.* **1097**, **1101**, **1127**, **1387** and **1389**) may originally have formed a single boundary, which appeared to be segmented due to later truncation. The only datable material recovered from these ditches consisted of a few sherds of Middle to Late Iron Age pottery, found within ditches located close to the dense area of Iron Age pits and posthole features. Therefore, these finds may be intrusive; they indicate that the ditches may still have been extant in the Iron Age but are not sufficiently substantial evidence to provide an accurate date for the construction of the field system.

2.3.2 Further analysis of the soil samples taken from the ditches, as well as potential radiocarbon dates, should make the chronological relationship between the field system and the surrounding Iron Age archaeology clearer. This may also help to establish whether all the ditches making up the field system are contemporary or represent different phases or alterations (see Research Issues below).

## 2.4 Phase 3: Middle to Late Iron Age (350 BC to AD 43)

2.4.1 The principal finding of the excavation was a spread of Iron Age features, which was particularly dense in the northwestern quadrant (Fig. 2). The bulk of the features were pits and postholes, some of which formed the remains of structures. A number of beamslots also provided evidence for structures. The density of features was not apparent during the evaluation stage (Muir *et al.* 2017). Many of the discrete features produced Middle to Late Iron Age pottery; therefore all of the discrete features have, at this stage of the project, been grouped into Phase 3.

2.4.2 Amongst the discrete features notable posthole structures were revealed, including a possible fence line in the centre of the site (**1280**, **1284**, **1286**, **1288**) that seemed to respect the north-northeast to south-southwest aligned ?Bronze Age field boundary. To the east of this was a four-post structure (**1191**, **1193**, **1195**, **1197**). Close to the northwest excavation boundary, parallel beamslots **1042** and **1049** appeared to relate to a single structure, while clusters of pits varied in function from possible storage pits (*e.g.* **1121**, **1267**, and **1233**) to probable extraction (*e.g.* **1069**, **1067** and **1075**; Plate 3). The exact function of many of the discrete features was not clear, such as pit **1017** (Plate 4).

2.4.3 Further analysis of the soil samples and artefacts may provide greater insight as to the exact purpose of these features and whether the Iron Age remains uncovered across the site relate to nearby settlement activity.

## 2.5 Phase 4: Post-medieval (AD 1500 to 1750)

- 2.5.1 The latest features exposed included two northwest to southeast aligned boundary ditches running parallel to one another in the eastern half of Area 1. These ditches produced assemblages of post-medieval material, including ceramic building material (CBM), clay tobacco pipe, animal bone, iron objects and pottery. The westernmost boundary ditch (**1059, 1155, 1157, 1159**) overlay the prehistoric field system and both post-medieval ditches corresponded with the field layout viewed on historic mapping.
- 2.5.2 Roughly 150m to the southwest of the main excavation area, a 20m by 15m trench revealed a large feature interpreted as a pond (Fig. 1). The only dating evidence found during the excavation was post-medieval CBM and pottery recovered from the surface. This feature was first encountered in Trench 6 of the evaluation stage (Muir *et al.* 2017).

## 3 FACTUAL DATA

### 3.1 Stratigraphy

- 3.1.1 The following stratigraphic records were created:

Record type	Number
Context register (digital recording system)	1
Context numbers	410
Section registers	5
Sections	167
Plan registers	1
Plans	2
Sample registers (digital recording system)	1
Soil samples	32
Small finds registers	1
Digital photograph registers	13
Digital photographs	444

Table 1: Quantification of records

### 3.2 Artefactual evidence

- 3.2.1 All finds have been washed, quantified and bagged. The catalogue of all finds has been entered onto an MS Access database. Total quantities for each material type are listed below (Table 2).

Material	Number	Weight (kg)
Pottery	297	5.162kg
CBM	9	1.731kg
Fired Clay	64	3.880kg
Flint	117	4.673kg
Faunal Remains	11	0.349kg
Stone	22	4.321kg
HSR	-	0.401kg
Iron objects	2	-

Table 2: Quantification of artefacts

### *The pottery*

- 3.2.2 Pottery totalling 297 sherds (weighing 5.162kg) form the largest artefact assemblage recovered from Area 1. The bulk of the assemblage dates from the Middle to Late Iron Age and was mainly recovered from discrete features across the site, particularly abundant in the northwestern part of the site. Similarly dated pottery was found from three pits uncovered towards the east of Area 1 during the evaluation stage (Muir *et al.* 2017). A few fragments of Iron Age pottery were found in the surrounding ?Bronze Age field system: these could have been intrusive sherds from the later activity nearby. The pottery assemblage included vessels that were generally domestic in nature.
- 3.2.3 Decorated pottery sherds from the cremation burial (**1397**) have been dated to the Early Bronze Age and appear to belong to the same vessel. These may represent a cremation urn smashed prior to burial.
- 3.2.4 Sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the post-medieval field boundary ditches.

### *Fired clay*

- 3.2.5 A number of the Iron Age pits, such as **1294** and **1119**, towards the western area of the site, produced significant amounts of daub fragments. Many of these exhibit wattle impressions from being pressed against the wall of a building. The daub was generally found alongside Iron Age pottery sherds.

### *Flint*

- 3.2.6 The excavation produced a sizeable flint assemblage, largely consisting of roughly worked flint from the busier northwestern quarter of the site. Notable residual artefacts include a Neolithic polished hand axe from a geological feature (**1292**) in the northwest of the site, a similar, but reworked polished hand axe from enclosure ditch **1175**, and a flint blade from ditch **1187**. These artefacts reflect Neolithic activity recorded in the nearby vicinity of Area 1 during the evaluations of Areas 2 and 3 (Lambert 2019).

## **3.3 Environmental evidence**

### *Human skeletal remains*

- 3.3.1 A single cremation burial (**1397**) was encountered in the southeastern corner of the site. As well as decorated Early Bronze Age pottery, the burial contained 401g of calcined human bone. The average size of the fragments is around 30mm, with the largest fragment being a limb fragment measuring 111x17mm. Identifiable fragments from both fills of the cremation include iliac crest, acetabulum, metatarsal, thoracic facets, cranial fragments, hand and foot phalange fragments and molar and incisor roots. Most of the bone is a pale brown/off white, but some of the bone (especially in the larger fractions) is white. There is not a significant amount of charcoal, but it is present within the deposit.

### *Faunal remains, by Hayley Foster*

3.3.2 The faunal remains from the site consist of three identifiable fragments from the two post-medieval ditches, including a cattle scapula from ditch **1155**, and a cattle humerus and sheep/goat humerus from ditch **1199**. The cattle humerus showed heavy chop marks on the distal shaft and fine cut marks on the posterior distal, suggesting butchery for disarticulation and meat removal. All bones contained fused epiphyses, indicating remains did not belong to very young animals.

Context	Cut	Feature	Species	Element	Notes
1156	1155	Ditch	Cattle	Scapula	Fused distal, GLP=73.8mm
1200	1199	Ditch	Cattle	Humerus	Fused distal, Chopped through on lower shaft and fine cut marks on posterior distal. BD=80.8mm, BT=77.5mm
1200	1199	Ditch	Sheep/Goat	Radius	Fused distal, BD=28.8mm

Table 3: Quantification of faunal remains

### *Plant remains*

3.3.3 The environmental bulk soil samples are yet to be fully processed.

## 4 RESEARCH ISSUES

4.1.1 Following the completion of fieldwork and preliminary assessment of its results, some adjustments (in italics) can be made to the original research aims in the WSI (Andrew Josephs Associates 2019).

- To contribute to national and regional archaeological research priorities focusing on Neolithic/Bronze Age monuments and burial practices and Iron Age and Early Saxon settlement and material culture (Medlycott 2011: 13, 20-21, 29-32, 57 and 59).
  - *Characterise and compare the probable late prehistoric field system (not detected during evaluation) with prehistoric field systems across the wider region.*
  - *The form and nature of the Iron Age settlement remains will be determined and compared to other contemporary sites within Norfolk.*
  - *Excavation did not uncover any evidence for Early Saxon settlement or Neolithic features.*
- Large-scale excavation provides the opportunity to investigate questions of landscape organisation. Larger-scale investigations may provide evidence of a greater chronological depth than that identified in the evaluation.
  - *Further analysis will aim to provide a clearer chronological relationship between the prehistoric field system and the surrounding Iron Age features and posthole structures. This may clarify the development of land use and organisation at the site and perhaps across the local vicinity.*
- To integrate the results with those that have been obtained from within the currently operating quarry.

## 5 SCIENTIFIC DATING

- 5.1.1 Three or four radiocarbon dates will be required to secure more accurate and precise phasing for the site. A fragment of burnt human bone from the cremation burial (**1397**) has been sent off for dating to confirm its Early Bronze Age date, as suggested by the pottery.
- 5.1.4 If preservation allows, suitable charred plant remains (CPR) contained within the soil samples from the ?Bronze Age field system will also be radiocarbon dated to provide more precise phasing. This will also provide a better understanding of the relationship between the field system and the discrete Iron Age features across the site. A large fragment of charcoal from the four-post structure (**1193**) was also set aside for dating.

## 6 METHODS STATEMENT

- 6.1.1 Methods for post-excavation analysis are outlined in the WSI and remain unchanged.

## 7 DISSEMINATION/PUBLICATION

- 7.1.1 A post-excavation analysis report will be produced and delivered within 18 months from the completion of fieldwork. The scope, format and venue of any publication will be decided upon after further analysis of the results. This will be, as a minimum, a summary report prepared for Norfolk Archaeology, or if relevant, a fuller article in Norfolk Archaeology or other appropriate journal.

## 8 TASK LIST FOR ANALYSIS

### 8.1 Project team structure

- 8.1.1 The project team is set out in the table below:

Name	Organisation	Role
Pat Moan	OA East	Project management
Natasha Dodwell	OA East	Finds and enviro management
Edmund Cole	OA East	Supervisor/author
Dave Brown	OA East	Illustrator
Simon Timberlake	External	Stone
Phillip Mills	External	Fired clay/CBM
Carlotta Marchetto	OA East	Finds Assistant
Lawrence Billington	OA East	Flint
Zoe Ui Choileáin	OA East	Faunal remains/HSR
Denis Sami	OA East	Metalwork
Rachel Fosberry	OA East	Enviro
Mary Andrews	OA East	Enviro Supervisor
Liz Popescu	OA East	Head of Post-Excavation and Publication
Katherine Hamilton	OA East	Archiving
Tom Phillips	OA East	Editor

## 8.2 Task list and programme

8.2.1 The programme of analysis work will commence after approval of this document and will end with issue of the final report.

8.2.2 A task list for analysis is presented below.

Task no.	Description	Performed by	Days/cost
1	Project Management	PM	3
2	Finds and enviro management	ND	3
3	Stratigraphic analysis (phasing/grouping)	EC	2
4	Update database with phasing and group data and produce draft phase plans	EC	1
5	Disseminate updated phasing information to specialists	EC	0.5
6	Collate group text/write report including background research	EC	10
7	Select sections for digitising and plates for inclusion in report. Produce mockup figures	EC	1
8	Early Bronze Age pottery analysis and report	NG	0.5
9	Iron Age pottery analysis and report	CM	4
10	Medieval pottery analysis and report	CF	0.5
11	Process remaining soil samples	MA	1
12	CBM/fired clay reports	Phil M	2
13	Stone report	ST	1
14	Lithic report	LB	2
15	Faunal remains/HSR reports	ZC	2.5
16	Fe objects report	DS	0.5
17	Full analysis and report on environmental remains	RF	3
18	Read, comment, and integrate finds reports	EC	3
19	Radiocarbon dates (3-4 samples, c. £350 per sample)	SUERC	£1400
20	Phase plans and report figures, plates	TBC	5
21	Finds illustration	TBC	1.5
22	Geomatics	TBC	1
23	Check and initial edit of grey literature report	TP	2
24	Prepare archive	KH	6

Table 3: Analysis task list

## 9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Andrew Josephs Associates, 2019, *Areas 1, 2 and 3, Earsham Quarry Archaeological Mitigation Strategy and Written Scheme of Investigation*. Andrew Josephs Associates, unpublished.

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## APPENDIX A OASIS REPORT FORM

### Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-404202		
Project Name	Earsham Quarry, Norfolk: Area 1		
Start of Fieldwork	17/05/21	End of Fieldwork	02/07/21
Previous Work	Yes	Future Work	No

### Project Reference Codes

Site Code	ENF149913	Planning App. No.	CNF47218
HER Number	ENF149913	Related Numbers	XNFEAR20EX NWHCM:2020.116

Prompt	Planning condition
Development Type	Mineral extraction
Place in Planning Process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

### Techniques used (tick all that apply)

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography – interpretation | <input type="checkbox"/> Grab-sampling          | <input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new            | <input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-core           | <input type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning         | <input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording of Fabric/Structure   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Augering                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey          | <input type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors        | <input type="checkbox"/> Test Pits                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Phosphate Survey       | <input type="checkbox"/> Topographic Survey                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Sampling              | <input type="checkbox"/> Photogrammetric Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Vibro-core                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwalking                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey    | <input type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Rectified Photography  |   |

Monument	Period	Object	Period
Ditch	Post Medieval (1540 to 1901)	Animal remains	Post Medieval (1540 to 1901)
Field system	Late Prehistoric ( - 4000 to 43)	Fe objects	Post Medieval (1540 to 1901)
Beam slot	Iron Age ( - 800 to 43)	CBM	Post Medieval (1540 to 1901)
Pit	Iron Age ( - 800 to 43)	Pottery	Medieval (1066 to 1540)
Posthole	Iron Age ( - 800 to 43)	Flint	Late Prehistoric ( - 4000 to 43)
Cremation	Early Bronze Age ( - 2500 to -1500)	Pottery	Iron Age ( - 800 to 43)
		Fired clay	Iron Age ( - 800 to 43)
		Stone	Iron Age ( - 800 to 43)
		Pottery	Early Bronze Age ( - 2500 to -1500)
		Human remains	Early Bronze Age ( - 2500 to -1500)



Insert more lines as appropriate.

### Project Location

County	Norfolk	Address (including Postcode) Five Acre lane, Earsham, Norfolk, NR35 2AB
District	South Norfolk	
Parish	Earsham	
HER office	NCCES	
Size of Study Area	1.97ha	
National Grid Ref	TM 31862 89070	

### Project Originators

Organisation	OA East
Project Brief Originator	Steve Hickling (NCCES)
Project Design Originator	Pat Moan (OA East)
Project Manager	Pat Moan (OA East)
Project Supervisor	Edmund Cole (OA East)

### Project Archives

	Location	ID
Physical Archive (Finds)	Norwich Castle Museum	NWHCM:2020.116
Digital Archive	Norwich Castle Museum	NWHCM:2020.116
Paper Archive	Norwich Castle Museum	NWHCM:2020.116

Physical Contents	Present?	Digital files associated with Finds	Paperwork associated with Finds
Animal Bones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Remains	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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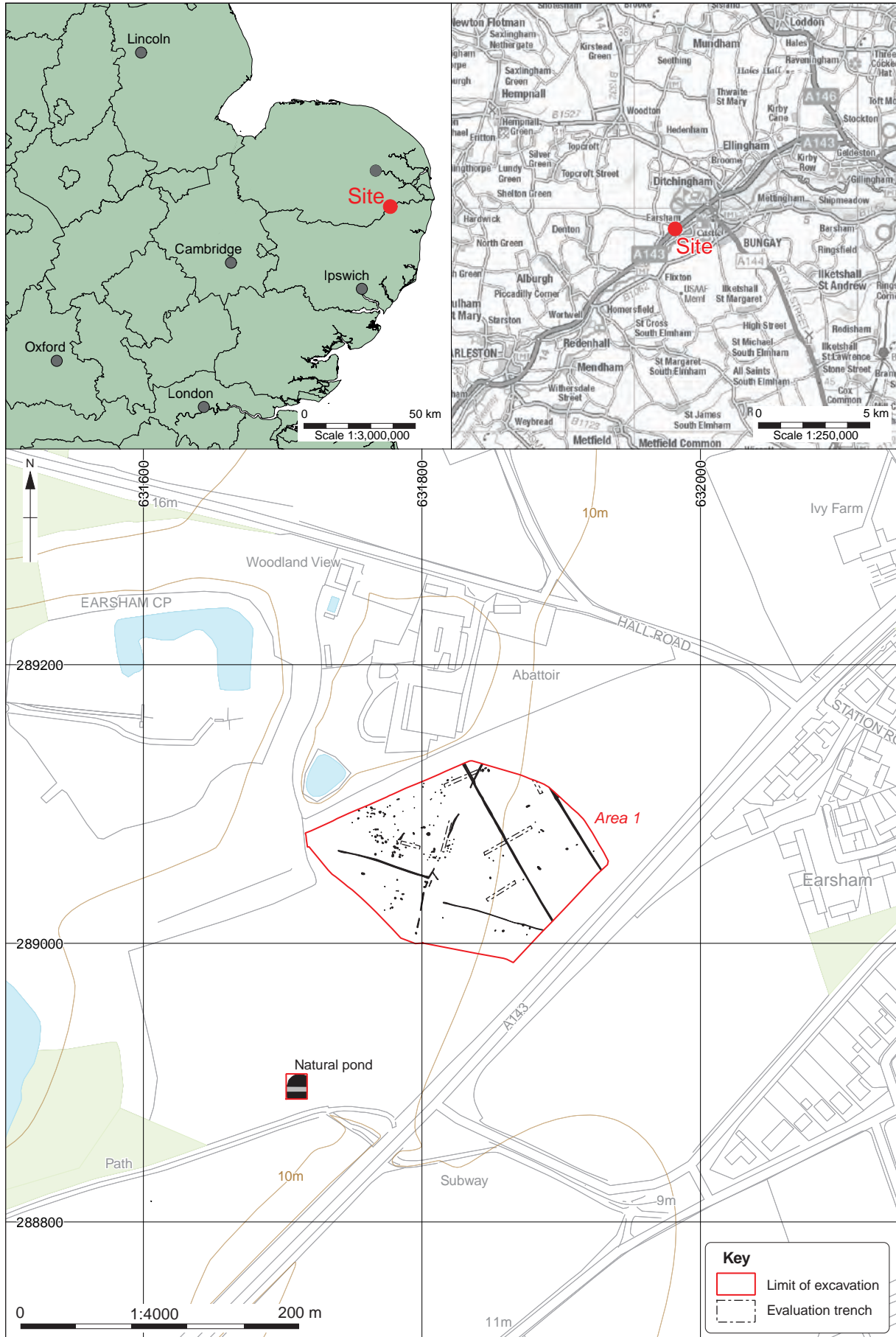
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GIS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Geophysics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Paper Media

Aerial Photos	<input type="checkbox"/>
Context Sheets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Correspondence	<input type="checkbox"/>

Images (Digital photos)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Diary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Illustrations (Figures/Plates)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Drawing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manuscript	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/>	Map	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Matrices	<input type="checkbox"/>
Text	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Microfiche	<input type="checkbox"/>
Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/>	Miscellaneous	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Research/Notes	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Photos (negatives/prints/slides)	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Plans	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Report	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Sections	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Survey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



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Figure 1: Site location (outlined in red)

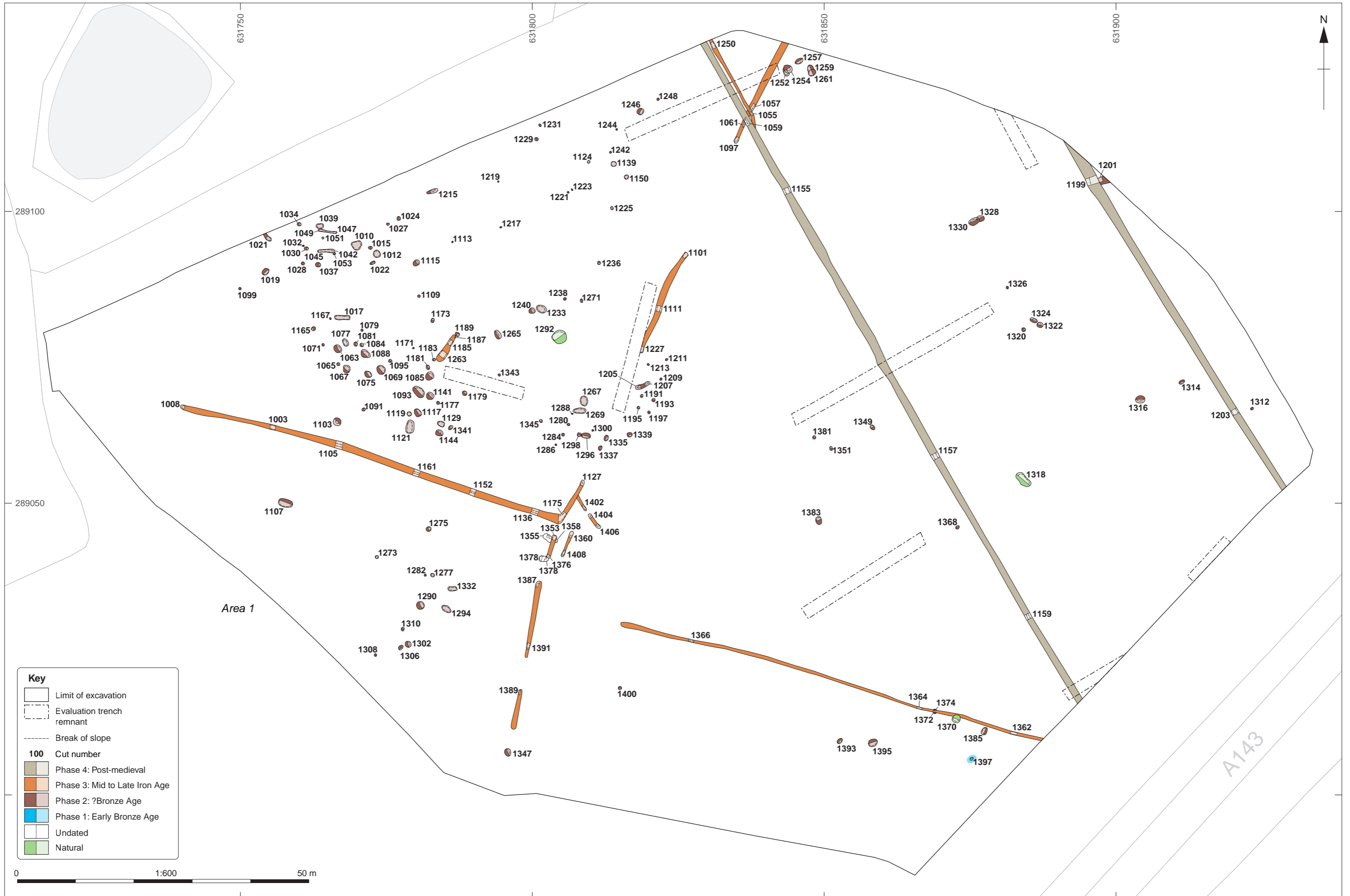


Figure 2: Site plan

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Plate 1: Aerial view of the site, looking east



Plate 2: Cremation 1397 (pre-excitation), looking south



Plate 3: Pit cluster and beamslots **1042** and **1049**, looking north-west



Plate 2: Pit **1017**, looking west



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

Janus House  
Osney Mead  
Oxford OX2 0ES

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

**OA North**

Mill 3  
Moor Lane  
Lancaster LA1 1QD

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

**OA East**

15 Trafalgar Way  
Bar Hill  
Cambridgeshire  
CB23 8SQ

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



**Director:** Gill Hey, BA PhD FSA MCifA  
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