

Archaeological evaluation at Hawthorn House, Minsterworth Gloucestershire

Worcestershire Archaeology
for Orion Heritage

February 2023



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HAWTHORN HOUSE MINSTERWORTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Archaeological evaluation report



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SITE INFORMATION

Site name: Hawthorn House
Site code: P6441
Local planning authority: Tewkesbury Borough Council
Planning reference: 22/01264/FUL
Central NGR: SO 78598 17507
Commissioning client: Orion Heritage
WA project number: P6441
WA report number: 3094
Oasis reference: fieldsec1-512828

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Archaeological Evaluation at Hawthorn House, Minsterworth, Gloucestershire

Report and illustrations by Elspeth Iliff

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Hawthorn House, Minsterworth, Gloucestershire (NGR SO 78598 17507) during late January 2023. The project was commissioned by Orion Heritage on behalf of RES Design and Build Ltd, in advance of a proposed residential development. The archaeological evaluation was undertaken in order to inform a planning application which had been submitted to Tewkesbury Borough Council during late 2022.

The proposed development area is located within the village of Minsterworth, 4.8km south-west of Gloucester and 1km north of the River Severn. Four trenches were excavated across a single field, with the trenches aligned to best sample the available area. No archaeological finds, features or deposits were identified within the trenches. While a probable high status Roman building was previously identified just 50m across the road to the east, no evidence was found to indicate that Roman activity extends into the Hawthorn House development area.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) during January 2023 at Hawthorn House, Minsterworth, Gloucestershire (NGR SO 78598 17507). The project comprised the excavation of four trenches and was commissioned by Orion Heritage on behalf of RES Design and Build Ltd, in advance of a proposed residential development. The archaeological evaluation was undertaken in order to inform a planning application which had been submitted to Tewkesbury Borough Council during late 2022 (planning ref: 22/01264/FUL).

The archaeological advisor to the local planning authority considered that the proposed development has the potential to impact upon buried heritage assets situated within the site boundary.

No brief was provided but the project confirms to the generality of briefs previously issued. A WSI was prepared by Orion Heritage (Orion Heritage 2023) and approved by Toby Catchpole, Archaeological Advisor to Tewkesbury Borough Council. The evaluation also conforms to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in *Standard and guidance: for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014).

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The site is located within the village of Minsterworth, 4.8km south-west of the centre of Gloucester. The site encloses a 0.2ha area, and is bounded to the south-east by the A48, to the north and south by existing residential properties, and to the west by agricultural land. The development is situated just under 1km north of the River Severn and comprises a single grassed area, that is currently in use as part of a building site for works on the adjacent property to the north. The ground slopes gently towards the east, from 21.4m AOD at the western end to 10.4m AOD at the eastern end. The underlying geology comprises bedrock of Blue Lias Formation and Charmouth Mudstone Formation (BGS 2023).

2 Archaeological and historical background

2.1 Introduction

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) of the site was undertaken by Orion Heritage, on behalf of RES Design and Build Ltd (Orion Heritage 2022). The findings presented in the DBA are summarised below.

2.2 Prehistoric

Few prehistoric remains have been identified in the surrounding area. The only known prehistoric remains are Iron Age in date, consisting of cropmarks suggestive of an enclosure identified to the north-west of the site (6675). A find spot of a cast copper alloy roundel has been recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) approximately 1km to the west of the site (404456).

2.3 Roman

Evidence of Roman occupation has been recorded close to the site. Human remains and Samian ware pottery were found very close to the site to the east, just across the A48 (5282). A 2m wide track of Blue Lias stone was also found near the burials. An evaluation conducted in 2016 identified the truncated remains of a probably high status building (48861). Deposits including stone walls, stone with wall plaster roof tiles and box flue tiles were identified, along with a ditch and a large amount of Iron slag. Further to the east evaluation trenching identified quarry pits and field system remains, along with a Roman relict soil (49645, 52954). An area of land reclamation approximately 1km to the

south has been recorded with banks thought to date to the later Roman period (16693). Also to the south is the course of a Roman road (5274). The remaining Roman evidence within the vicinity of the site consists of a number of find spots including coins (7220) and a silver toiletry set (42948).

2.4 Medieval

There is no evidence of Saxon or early medieval archaeological remains near the site, however, there is evidence of later medieval activity. Minsterworth itself is listed as part of the Hundred of Westbury, although only appears in the Domesday Book as an unnamed settlement. It is thought that Minsterworth was initially known as 'Mortune', reflecting its position along the River Severn. The name 'Minsterworth' refers to an enclosure belonging to a monastery, and represents the ownership of the area by the Abbey of St Peter in Gloucester.

Areas of ridge and furrow cultivation are recorded near the site (50242, 50240, 50564). A possible moated mound was recorded nearby, along with a possible building platform earthwork (7217, 15081). Medieval activity is also indicated in areas of land reclamation along the River Severn to the south (36408, 36409). A number of find spots have also been recorded near the site, including coins, buckles and a scabbard (920051, 836794, 802993).

2.5 Post-medieval to Modern

The majority of post-medieval and modern archaeological records in the vicinity are features observed on historic mapping such as buildings and field names. A settlement is indicated at Minsterworth on mapping dating to 1669, with a depiction of a church. On the 1811 and 1839 maps the site itself is shown as a parcel of land adjacent to the road. Little change is shown on the 1884 OS map although the site is shown as part of an orchard. Part of the turnpike road between Hereford and Gloucester runs broadly along the route of the current A48, just to the south of the site (5905). Two Grade II listed buildings are located along the route of this road (14979, 14980).

A possible Second World War military hospital has been suggested from aerial photographs to the north showing two blocks of ten buildings (30083). No change is seen to the site itself on the 1936 OS map, while the 1972 OS map shows it having been split from the northern part and no longer identified as an orchard.

2.6 Previous archaeological work on the site

No previous archaeological work has been conducted within the site.

3 Project aims

The principal aims of the archaeological investigation are to:

- Determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains;
- Determine the character, extent, date, complexity, integrity, state of preservation, and quality of any archaeological remains present, therefore ensuring their preservation by record;
- To provide robust baseline information to inform the scoping of the mitigation strategy, should this be required.

The general objectives are to ensure:

- The protection and recording of archaeological assets discovered during the archaeological works;
- That any below-ground archaeological deposits exposed are promptly identified; and
- The recording of archaeological remains, to place this record in its local context and to make this record available.

Further, more detailed research aims may be generated from the results of the evaluation and specifically in relation to the South West England Archaeological Research Framework, including:

- Research Aim 29: Improve our understanding of non-villa Roman rural settlement.

4 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Orion Heritage (Orion Heritage 2023). Fieldwork was undertaken on 30 January 2023.

Four trenches, extending across an 86.2m² area, were excavated over the 0.2ha site, representing a sample of 3.5%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

The initial trench plan comprised two 20m trenches positioned in the north-eastern and eastern part of the site, but after consultation with the Archaeological Advisor, the trench plan was modified to include four 10m trenches sited in order to examine a wider area of the site and provide greater coverage.

While the majority of the topsoil deposits had already been stripped by the developer, the subsoil deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012) and trench and feature locations were surveyed using a GNSS device with an accuracy limit set at <0.04m. On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material. All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced.

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology. Subject to the agreement of the landowner it is anticipated that it will be deposited at Gloucester City Museum.

5 Archaeological results

5.1 Introduction

The trenches are shown in Figure 2 and Plates 1-4. The trench and context inventory is presented in Appendix 1.

5.2 Phasing

5.2.1 Natural deposits

The natural substrate was encountered in all four trenches and was identified at an average depth of 0.4m below ground level. The natural superficial deposits varied across the site, consisting primarily of a brownish-yellow, silty-clay, with occasional areas of plated limestone bedrock. This in concordance with the substrate recorded on geological mapping.

5.2.2 Phase 1: Modern

Subsoil deposits were present in all of the trenches, directly overlying the natural strata and sealed by the topsoil layer, where visible. The subsoil was characterised by a yellowish-brown, silty-clay and contained some modern waste inclusions. The topsoil consisted of a blackish-brown, silty-clay and contained some modern waste inclusions and had been partially truncated prior to trenching. No finds, features or deposits of archaeological significance were revealed in any of the trenches.

6 Artefactual evidence

Recovery of artefacts was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no artefacts were identified which were considered to be suitable for analysis.

7 Environmental evidence

Environmental sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

8 Discussion and conclusions

An evaluation was conducted comprising the excavation of four trenches. No archaeological features or deposits were identified within the trenches, and no finds were observed in any of the overburden deposits. While a probable high status Roman building was previously identified just 50m across the road to the east, no evidence was found to indicate that the activity extends into the Hawthorne House development site (Cornah, 2016).

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Conditions were suitable in all of the trenches to identify the presence or absence of archaeological features. It is considered that the nature, density and distribution of archaeological features provides an accurate characterisation of the development site as a whole.

9 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Elspeth Iliff, ACIfA, assisted by Beth Williams, PCIfA.

The project was managed by Rupert Lothington, MCIfA. The report was produced and collated by Elspeth Iliff. Specialist contributions and individual sections of the report are attributed to the relevant authors throughout the text.

10 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for the successful conclusion of the project: Rebecca Ryan, Orion Heritage, for commissioning the project, Nick Gwilliam, RES Design and Build, for providing access and their help during the fieldwork. The project was monitored by Toby Catchpole, Archaeological Advisor to Gloucestershire County Council, and Worcestershire Archaeology would also like to thank them for their advice.

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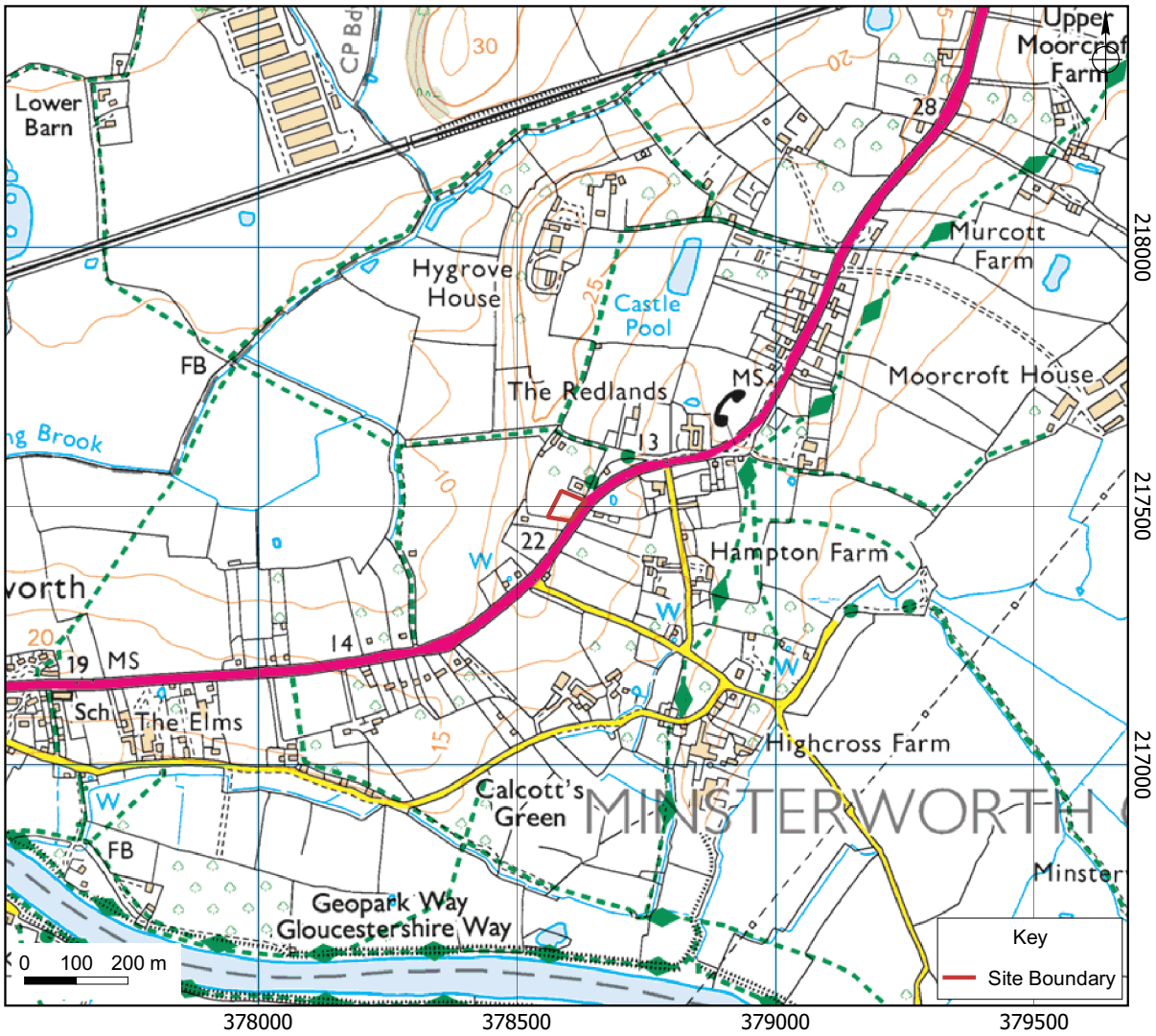
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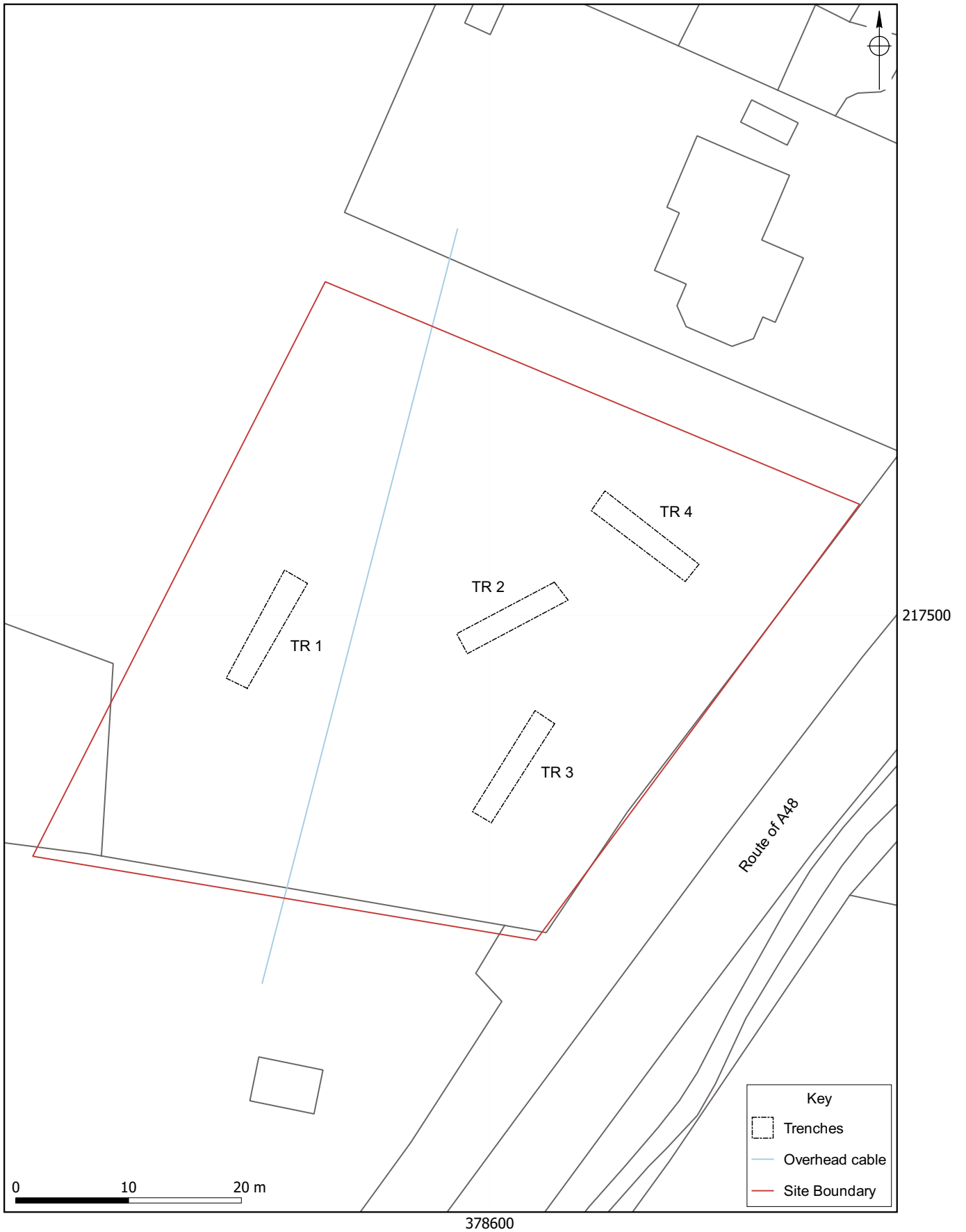
Figures



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Location of the site

Figure 1



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Trench locations

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1: Trench 1, facing north-east (scales 1m)



Plate 2: Trench 2, facing south-west (scales 1m)



Plate 3: Trench 3, facing north (scales 1m)



Plate 4: Trench 4, facing north-west (scales 1m)

Appendix 1: Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Length: 10m Width: 1.9m Orientation: NE-SW

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
100	Layer	Topsoil of trench 1	0.08 (avg.)	Compaction: moist, malleable Colour: mid greyish brown Composition: silty clay
101	Layer	Subsoil of trench 1	0.29 (avg.)	Compaction: moist, firm Colour: mid yellowish brown Composition: silty clay
102	Layer	Natural of trench 1		Compaction: moist, firm Colour: light brownish yellow Composition: silty clay

Trench 2

Length: 10m Width: 1.9m Orientation: NE-SW

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
200	Layer	Topsoil of trench 2	0.05 (avg.)	Compaction: moist, malleable Colour: mid blackish brown Composition: silty clay
201	Layer	Subsoil of trench 2	0.35 (avg.)	Compaction: moist, firm Colour: mid yellowish brown Composition: silty clay
202	Layer	Natural of trench 2		Compaction: moist, firm Colour: mid brownish yellow Composition: clay

Trench 3

Length: 10m Width: 1.9m Orientation: NW-SE

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
300	Layer	Topsoil of trench 3	0.05 (avg.)	Compaction: moist, malleable Colour: mid blackish brown Composition: silty clay
301	Layer	Subsoil of trench 3	0.37 (avg.)	Compaction: moist, firm Colour: mid yellowish brown Composition: silty clay
302	Layer	Natural of trench 3		Compaction: moist, firm Colour: mid brownish yellow Composition: clay

Trench 4

Length: 10m

Width: 1.9m

Orientation: NW-SE

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
400	Layer	Topsoil of trench 4	0.05 (avg.)	Compaction: moist, malleable Colour: mid blackish brown Composition: silty clay
401	Layer	Subsoil of trench 4	0.36 (avg.)	Compaction: moist, firm Colour: mid yellowish brown Composition: silty clay
402	Layer	Natural of trench 4		Compaction: moist, firm Colour: mid brownish yellow Composition: clay

Appendix 2: Summary of project archive

TYPE	DETAILS*
Paper	Diary (Field progress form), Photograph, Report, Survey
Digital	Database, GIS, Images raster/digital photography, Spreadsheets, Survey, Text

**OASIS terminology*

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology. Subject to the agreement of the landowner it is anticipated that it will be deposited at Gloucester City Museum.