Archaeological Evaluation at land off Haughton Road, Shifnal, Shropshire

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Status	Revision 1
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Project reference:	P4573
Report reference:	**2248**

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With contributions by Rob Hedge, Robin Jackson and Elizabeth Pearson

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in late July 2015 across approximately 7.48ha of land off Haughton Road on the northern edge of Shifnal in Shropshire (NGR SJ 747 088). It was commissioned by Paul Clark of CgMs Consulting, acting on behalf of Bovis Homes Limited, who intend to undertake residential development with associated access roads and utilities on the site.

Thirty trenches, each 50m long, were excavated and were arranged in a grid array to provide equal coverage of the site area. In the majority of these trenches, particularly in the northern and central part of the site, very few archaeological features were recorded, all of which appeared to relate to post-medieval and modern agricultural activity. However, more extensive remains were identified in the southernmost group of trenches which are believed to be early prehistoric in date. These are of archaeological importance and offer good potential for further features of similar form and period to survive in this part of the site.

Seven pits were identified in three trenches across an area approximately 90m by 60m in size. Of these, five were excavated and sampled and nearly all included charcoal and heat-cracked stones, whilst one contained clearly identifiable charred hazelnut shells, another some burnt bone and a fragment of fired clay. These features were identified in association with a large sherd of middle to late Neolithic Peterborough ware pottery. As such, the accumulated evidence suggests that the archaeological remains in this part of the site are representative of a dispersed group of Neolithic pit features. This find provides an important addition to the small but growing number of examples of this type of pottery in the region, and the potential for the features at Shifnal to further inform understanding of early prehistoric Shropshire is significant.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation, as part of strategy to discharge planning condition on planning permission 12/04646/OUT, was undertaken across approximately 7.48ha of land off Haughton Road, comprising the western half of a single field on the northern edge of Shifnal in Shropshire (NGR SJ 747 088). It was commissioned by Paul Clark of CgMs Consulting Ltd (the Client), acting on behalf of Bovis Homes Limited who intend to undertake residential development with associated access roads and utilities on the site. A planning application for this development has been submitted to Shropshire County Council.

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) prepared by The Environmental Design Partnership (EDP 2012) highlighted that there are no previously identified designated or undesignated heritage assets present within the site boundary and there is very limited evidence for either prehistoric or Romano-British activity in the immediate vicinity; therefore it was considered that there was low potential for the survival of archaeological remains of significance. However, it was also noted that in the wider surrounds of the site, the major Roman road of Watling Street and substantial remains of a Roman fort and settlement of *Uxacona* are located approximately 2.5km to the north and north-west (NHLE 2015 1006272), and that a small Roman fort existed 1.8km to the north-east (NHLE 2015 1020283). The medieval and post-medieval settlement of Shifnal also lies immediately to the south (HER 05359), the historic core of which is designated as the Shifnal Conservation Area. Accordingly, the possibility remained that outlying activity related to this area of occupation may exist on the site and that this could be affected by the development application.

The project conforms to an outline scope of works provided by the Client before the commencement of the project, for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2015).

The project also conforms to the national professional standards and guidance for archaeological evaluation detailed by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014).

The event reference for this project has not yet been provided by Shropshire HER.

2 Aims

The aims and scope of the evaluation are:

- determine, as far as reasonably practicable, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains within the areas of the site subject to development;
- to establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits and features encountered; and
- where relevant, to make comparison of the site with other known parallel sites within the County and beyond.

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was undertaken by Richard Bradley (BA (hons.); MA; ACIfA) who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2008 and has been practicing archaeology since 2005, with fieldwork assistance provided by Adrian Robins, James Spry and Jessica Wheeler. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Robin Jackson (BA (hons.); ACIfA). Elizabeth Pearson (MSc; ACIfA; MAEA) contributed the environmental assessment, and Robert Hedge (MA Cantab) and Robin Jackson the artefact information. Illustrations were prepared by Laura Templeton (BA; PG Cert; MCIfA).

3.2 Documentary research

As mentioned above, an archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) of the site had been previously prepared by EDP, originally on behalf of Lioncourt Homes Limited (EDP 2012). This document provides the detailed background research information for the project and therefore only a brief summary of the results are presented here (Section 4.2).

Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER) and Shropshire Archives were consulted during preparation of the DBA to access records of archaeological sites, monuments and findspots within the vicinity, as well as readily available archaeological and historical information from documentary and cartographic sources relating to the site and the surrounding area. Aerial photographs held by the National Monuments Record (NMR) were also examined and a site walkover survey was conducted.

3.3 Fieldwork strategy

Fieldwork was undertaken between 20th July and 30th July 2015 following the detailed specification prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2015).

Thirty trenches, approximately 50m by 2m in size and amounting to around 3000m² in total, were excavated across the site area of 7.48ha (74825m²), representing a sample of 4%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 1. The trenches were not targeted on any cropmark or geophysical anomaly but were positioned in a grid array to provide equal coverage of the site area, as agreed by CgMs and the Curator, Charlotte Orchard (Archaeological Advisor, Shropshire Council). This arrangement was partly restricted by the presence of an 11kv overhead electricity cable crossing the southern part of the site. One trench was moved from its intended location, but only by a limited amount (Trench 11); this was due to restriction of space at the boundary of the site and the presence of a disused water pipe in this area which followed the alignment of the trench. Additionally, following consultation with the Curator, two trenches (Trench 28 and Trench 30) had small extensions added so as to further clarify the size of features identified within the original trenches.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using an 8 tonne 360º tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under constant archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). On completion of the evaluation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

3.4 Structural analysis

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced during the course of fieldwork. Post-excavation analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

3.5 Artefact methodology, by Rob Hedge

3.5.1 Project parameters

The finds work reported here conforms to the relevant sections of *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2014; http://www.archaeologists.net/codes/ifa), with archive creation informed by *Archaeological archives: a guide to the best practice in the creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (AAF 2011; http://www.archaeologyuk.org/archives/), and museum deposition by *Selection, retention and dispersal of archaeological collections* (SMA 1993; http://www.socmusarch.org.uk/publica.htm).

3.5.2 Site recovery policy

The artefact recovery policy on site conformed to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012; appendix 2).

3.5.3 Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date was produced for each stratified context. The date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on a *pro forma* Microsoft Access 2000 database.

3.5.4 Discard policy

The following categories/types of material will be discarded after a period of 6 months following the submission of this report, unless there is a specific request to retain them (and subject to the collection policy of the relevant depository):

- where unstratified
- post-medieval material in general, and;
- generally where material has been specifically assessed by an appropriate specialist as having no obvious grounds for retention.

See the environmental section for other discard policy where appropriate.

3.6 Environmental archaeology methodology, by Elizabeth Pearson

3.6.1 Project parameters

The environmental methodology conformed to the relevant sections of *Environmental Archaeology: a guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation* (English Heritage 2010) and *Environmental archaeology and archaeological evaluations* (AEA 1995).

3.6.2 Aims

The aims of the assessment were to determine the state of preservation, type, and quantity of environmental remains recovered, from the samples and information provided. This information was used to assess the importance of the environmental remains.

3.6.3 Sampling policy

Samples were taken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (2012). A total of 8 samples (each of up to 20 litres) were taken from the site (Table 3), of which 5 samples were selected for assessment.

3.6.4 Processing and analysis

The samples were processed by flotation using a Siraf tank. The flots were collected on a 300μm sieve and the residue retained on a 1mm mesh. This allows for the recovery of items such as small animal bones, molluscs and seeds.

A total of 1 litre of residue was scanned by eye for each of the selected samples and the abundance of each category of environmental remains estimated. A magnet was also used to test for the presence of hammerscale. The flots were scanned using a low power MEIJI stereo light microscope and plant remains identified using modern reference collections maintained by Worcestershire Archaeology, and a seed identification manual (Cappers *et al* 2012). Nomenclature for the plant remains follows the *New Flora of the British Isles*, 3rd edition (Stace 2010).

3.6.5 Discard policy

With the exception of samples from contexts 3003 and 3004, remaining sample material and processed residue will be discarded after a period of 6 months following submission of this report unless there is a specific request to retain them.

3.7 Statement of confidence in the methods and results

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved and that the character and archaeological potential of the site has been established.

4 The development site

4.1 Topography, geology and current land-use

The site was, until recently, under arable cultivation, existing as rural space at the northern edge of the small urban area of Shifnal. The field in which it is located is mainly bounded and defined by roads; the M54 forms the northern boundary, the B4379 Newport Road is to the east, Haughton Road to the south and a small wooded track to the west. The ground gradually slopes downwards from north to south, from around 100m AOD to 92m AOD, towards the shallow valley formed by the Wesley Brook which is located to the south of Haughton Road.

Geologically, the site is situated on bedrock geology of the Bridgnorth Sandstone Formation, overlain by mixed superficial geology of glaciofluvial sands and gravels in the southern half of the site and glacial till in the northern part (BGS 2015). The soils across the area are defined as the stagnogleyic argillic brown earths of the Salwick Association (Ragg *et al.* 1984, 290).

4.2 Archaeological context

As detailed in the desk-based assessment (EDP 2012), there are no designated heritage assets on the site or in the immediate vicinity, although a scheduled monument identified through aerial photography as a small Roman fort exists 1.8km to the north-east (NHLE 2015 1020283). A series of listed buildings are also located in the wider surrounds of the site, particularly focused in the centre of Shifnal to the south.

The site is positioned on well-drained land close to a water source, a classic location for prehistoric activity, but there are no records of previously identified undesignated heritage assets on the site or in the surrounds on the Shropshire HER. The closest prehistoric find appears to be a polished stone axe recovered around 2km to the south by Manor Farm (HER 00754) and there was a possible Iron Age enclosure excavated in 1980 at Castle Farm 2.5km to the west (Roe 1991; HER 00281). Indeed, outside of the wider landscape evidence for Roman activity some distance from the site, and prior to the medieval period and the development of Shifnal as a market town (HER 05359; HER 05360), there is no evidence for the discovery of any archaeological remains within the immediate locale. It is probable that the site was part of an open agricultural landscape from at least the medieval period onwards.

Furthermore, numerous historic aerial photographs that cover the site were examined during the preparation of the DBA, but these did not reveal any evidence for previously unrecorded archaeological remains in the site area. Likewise, the site walkover survey did not identify any earthworks of archaeological significance; former field boundaries that are visible on historic mapping can be traced across part of the field but these are not considered to be of more antiquity than the post-medieval period. As such, the DBA concluded that there was limited potential for the survival of archaeological remains of significance in the site area.

There are no records of previous archaeological investigation on the site itself or its immediate environs.

5 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figures 2-3. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

The natural substrate was encountered in all thirty of the trenches excavated. This was variable across the area and noticeably changed between the northern and southern parts of the site, in line with the British Geological Survey mapping information (BGS 2015). To the north, this comprised firm mid brownish pink clays with mixed pinkish-orange brown sand and gravel pockets, and further to the south was represented by softer mid yellow-orange brown sand with gravel patches. Overall however, the natural substrate was consistently identifiable throughout the development area. This was an encountered at variable depths, between 0.30-0.85m below the current ground level, with the depth of deposits above the natural in the central part of the site being far greater than in the north and south.

5.1.2 Phase 2: Prehistoric deposits

Although there was limited stratified artefactual dating evidence, a series of pit features identified in Trenches 25, 28 and 30 in the southernmost part of the site are considered to be of prehistoric origin, mainly through association with each other (Fig 2).

In the centre of Trench 25 an isolated 1.37m by 1m sub-oval pit was identified [2505], with a depth of 0.36m, containing two fills (Plate 9). The lower fill (2504) was slightly darker and included rare charcoal flecking, while the upper fill (2503) contained occasional heat-cracked stones but was otherwise very sterile and homogenous, probably representing a short infilling event.

At the western end of Trench 28, two small pits were identified in close proximity to each other and one of these was excavated [2804] (Plate 10). This was 0.86m wide and 0.34m deep, sub-circular in plan with steeply sloping sides, containing a charcoal-rich sandy fill representing a deposit of burnt waste (2803).

A grouping of four pits was present in Trench 30, and three of these were excavated. Two were closely associated, [3005] and [3007], and although no artefacts were found in the pits themselves, were located in an area of the trench from which a large fragment of mid to late-Neolithic Peterborough ware in the Mortlake sub-style was retrieved from the subsoil (Fig 3). Pit [3005] was a slightly irregular 1m by 0.86m sub-oval shape, 0.19m in depth, which contained two distinct fills (Plate 6). The lower of these (3004) was dark sandy silt, rich in charcoal flecks and charred hazelnut shells, as well as including occasional heat-cracked stones, but did not have any evidence of *in situ* burning. It was sealed by sterile and homogenous brown sandy silt (3003), a deposit that appeared to represent a short-lived, deliberate infilling event, covering over the lower burnt remains. Just over 2m to the north-west of this was small pit [3007], a shallow sub-circular feature 0.56m in diameter, with a single homogenous sandy fill containing occasional charcoal flecks and heat-cracked stones (Plate 7).

The largest feature in Trench 30, a 2.5m diameter sub-circular pit 0.86m deep [3008], was located in the centre of the trench (Plate 8). This was found to contain a series of five fills that appeared to demonstrate initial natural slumping followed by a sequence of charcoal-rich organic waste interspersed with deposits of sandy material. A small piece of burnt bone was recovered from lower fill (3013), and a fragment of undated fired clay was found in sealing deposit (3011). Unfortunately this could not provide a secure date, but it is likely to be of prehistoric origin.

5.1.3 Phase 3: Medieval and post-Medieval deposits

All expect one trench (Trench 1) contained a soft clayey sand subsoil deposit of variable depth (0.11-0.40m) that represented a former ploughsoil; this contained pottery fragments that suggested it formed during the medieval period onwards, consistent with the location of the site as agricultural land at the edge of the medieval development of Shifnal. Towards the middle part of the site, in Trenches 16, 18 and 19, multiple, deeper soil deposits were in evidence that appeared to have infilled a slight natural depression over more recent centuries. This was particularly evident in Trench 16, where up to 1m of soil was present in lower areas of the trench at the north and south ends. A hand-dug sondage was excavated through these deposits (Plate 4), where medieval and post-medieval pottery was recovered, but further machine investigations demonstrated that they were at least 19m in width and extended beyond the trench limits.

A shallow linear ditch feature was identified in Trench 28 [2806], 1.30m in width and 0.10m in depth. This did not contain any finds or dating evidence, but the fill was barely distinguishable from the subsoil which suggested that it was part of the field system and of similar medieval and post-medieval date.

5.1.4 Phase 4: Modern deposits

A number of features across the site were of modern origin, including land drains of varying orientation seen in Trenches 7, 11, 13, 21 and 24. There were also clearly recent machine excavated trial holes visible in Trenches 11, 13 and 23 that were obviously cut from the current ground surface.

Additionally, three trenches (Trench 13, 16 and 22) contained similar linear features that could be seen to cut through the subsoil in each trench. These were all very shallow, with a sterile fill comprised of fine grade building sand including occasional coal inclusions. Other than general CBM fragments, there were no artefacts to provide a firm date, but it is possible that these represent the remains of former service trenches, perhaps for a water system in the field.

A small posthole feature [2106] was also identified in Trench 21 that contained some clay packing and an infill of modern topsoil. It is considered likely that this was related to a recently removed modern fence line.

The organic topsoil present across the site had been subject to both deep ploughing for potatoes in the recent past, as well as discing or drilling for the current cereal crop present on the field. This was of variable depth between trenches, within the range 0.22-0.38m deep.

5.2 Artefactual analysis, by Rob Hedge and Robin Jackson

The artefactual assemblage recovered is summarised in Table 1.

The assemblage came from 11 stratified contexts and could be dated from the Neolithic period onwards (see Table 1). Excepting a single large Neolithic sherd the pottery condition was generally poor, with the majority of sherds displaying high levels of abrasion, and the average sherd size of the medieval and later material, at 8g, was below average.

period	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight(g)
Neolithic	ceramic		pot	1	121
medieval	ceramic		pot	13	50

period	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight(g)
medieval/post-medieval	ceramic		roof tile	5	102
medieval/post-medieval	ceramic		tile	5	119
post-medieval	ceramic		pot	1	40
modern	ceramic		pot	2	18
undated	bone	animal bone		3	19
undated	ceramic		unident	3	17
			Totals	33	486

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

5.2.1 Summary artefactual evidence by period

For the finds from individual features, consult Table 2.

Neolithic (by R Jackson)

A single large rim sherd of pottery weighing 121g was found in Trench 30 (context 3001; Fig 3). This was recovered from subsoil deposits and was clearly not *in situ* having almost certainly been disturbed by cultivation; however, the large size and fresh unabraded condition of the sherd strongly indicate recent disturbance and that it has not been moved far from the original point of deposition. Two pits identified in the immediate vicinity within the trench are considered the most likely source of the pottery, although no pottery was recovered from these and the possibility should not be excluded that the sherd derived from another feature lying immediately beyond the evaluation trench confines.

The fabric was black throughout and tempered with occasional, medium to large white angular quartz, some quartz sand and sparse large fragments of stone (?limestone). The vessel has a wall thickness of up to 10mm. The rim form was heavy, slightly in-turned and rounded on the outside with a pronounced neck (cavetto) below.

The rim was heavily decorated with impressed decoration comprising numerous finger nail impressions occupying a broad band on and below the rim both internally and externally. Internally a row of closely spaced, diagonal impressions formed a defined narrow band along the top of the decorated zone while below this overlapping, diagonally applied long finger or thumbnail impressions filled triangular zones. Externally shorter more deeply applied fingernail impressions covered the rounded rim in rough diagonal rows as far as the sharp break into the neck of the vessel. The latter was undecorated but the small area of surviving rounded body below this featured twisted cord impressions also arranged in a diagonal pattern.

The form, decoration and fabric all indicate that this pottery is Middle Neolithic impressed ware of the Peterborough Ware tradition. Although the three stage progression of Peterborough Ware through Ebbsfleet-Mortlake-Fengate styles as identified by Smith (1956) has now been recognised as inadequate for Britain as a whole, the terminology remains widely in use though in a modified form (Gibson 1995). Probably the most relevant regional work on Peterborough Wares is that undertaken in Wales (Gibson 1995), with further more recent work by Jackson and Ray (2012) having examined the distribution and context of Neolithic pottery recovered from pits across the Severn-Wye region, which encompasses the current site. Locally the nearest examples of Peterborough Wares have been recovered from Morville Quarry (Jackson 1999) and Meole Brace (Hughes and Woodward 1995) and regionally the Mortlake style material (highly decorated vessels; Gibson 1995) appears to be the most common. This is typically characterised by large angular quartz tempering and profuse decoration and generally heavy rounded or moulded rims, as is the case here. Radiocarbon dates associated with the Welsh Peterborough Wares cluster between 3500 and 2500 BC (Gibson 1995) and it is likely that dating of the Shifnal material can be similarly bracketed.

Medieval

A total of 13 abraded sherds of medieval pottery, weighing 50g, were present within subsoil deposits across the site. Of the diagnostic pieces, rim sherds of a lid-seated cooking pot, probably in a Local Sandy Ware (Bryant 2002, 95) were identified. Further sherds of unglazed, reduced quartz-tempered wares with oxidised and buff margins were present, along with sherds of a quartz-tempered ware with reduced core, pinkish-buff margins and traces of olive-green exterior glaze.

The medieval material was all residual in subsoil layers and post-medieval deposits.

Medieval/post-medieval

Fragments of undiagnostic abraded tile and quartz-tempered roof tile were present within subsoil deposits. The latter bears traces of an unusual firing pattern, having an oxidised core and surfaces but narrow reduced bands below both surfaces, presumably due to variations in airflow during the firing process.

In the absence of diagnostic features they are ascribed a broad medieval to post-medieval date.

Post-medieval/modern

A small quantity of domestic post-medieval buff ware and modern whitewares were present within the subsoil and modern deposits.

Undated

Several abraded fragments of fired clay from pit fill (3011), with an oxidised surface, reduced core and missing inner margin, were tempered with sparse 0.1mm rounded quartz grains and irregular voids from burnt-out organic temper. A prehistoric date is possible, although a later date cannot be excluded. Fill (3013) of the same pit contained small fragments of animal bone.

context	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight(g)	start date	end date	TPQ date range
1101	ceramic		pot	1	1	1066	1540	1066 - 1540
1103	ceramic		pot	1	17	1800	2000	1800 - 2000
1201	ceramic		pot	3	13	1330	1540	1600 - 1800
	ceramic		pot	1	40	1600	1800	
	bone	animal bone		1	18			
	ceramic		pot	1	4	1075	1500	
	ceramic		pot	3	11	1150	1540	
1304	ceramic		unident	1	1			undated
1401	ceramic		roof tile	5	102	1200	1800	1200 - 1800
1501	ceramic		pot	4	20	1066	1540	1066 - 1540
1601	ceramic		tile	5	119	1200	1800	1200 - 1800
1603	ceramic		pot	1	1	1066	1540	1800 - 2000
	ceramic		pot	1	1	1800	2000	
3001	ceramic		pot	1	121	-3500	-2700	-3500 - -2700
3011	ceramic		unident	2	16			undated
3013	bone	animal bone		2	1			undated

Table 2: Summary of context dating based on artefacts

Summary

The recovery of a substantial fragment of a rim of a Middle Neolithic impressed ware bowl provides an important addition to the small but growing number of examples of this type of pottery in the region. The vessel is identified as being of the Peterborough Ware tradition (Mortlake style) with the sherd size and condition being strongly indicative of activity of such date in the immediate vicinity.

The small quantity of abraded residual medieval pottery within subsoil deposits is consistent with the incorporation of domestic rubbish into the site area during agricultural activity.

5.3 Environmental analysis, by Elizabeth Pearson

Charred plant remains were abundant in context 3004 of probable Neolithic date, consisting of abundant charred hazelnut shell, occasional charred weed seeds (presumably deriving from cereal crop waste) and low levels of charcoal fragments, of which a small proportion are likely to be identifiable.

Charcoal was abundant in context 3013 but finely fragmented and unidentifiable. It is most likely to have been associated with heat-cracked stone and possible burnt clay recorded in the sample residue.

Environmental remains were sparsely distributed in the remaining samples, consisting of low levels of fragmented charcoal (a small proportion of which may be identifiable), occasional charred weed seeds and cereal grain. Charred emmer or spelt wheat (Triticum dicoccum/spelta) and hulled barley (Hordeum vulgare) grain was recorded in context 3013.

The composition of these samples is consistent with samples of early prehistoric date, in which charcoal and charred cereal crop remains are commonly found in small quantities, but hazelnut shell can occasionally be particularly abundant.

The charred hazelnut remains are significant in context 3004 but environmental evidence in the remaining samples has limited potential to contribute towards interpretation of past diet and farming economy. However, the small quantity of material shows potential for recovering material suitable for radiocarbon dating in the form of identifiable charcoal fragments, charred weed seeds and cereal grain.

context	sample	feature type	fill of	period	sample volume (L)	volume processed (L)	residue assessed	flot assessed
2803	8	Pit	2804	Prehistoric?	20	20	Yes	Yes
3003	1	Pit	3005	Neolithic?	20	20	Yes	Yes
3004	2	Pit	3005	Neolithic?	20	20	Yes	Yes
3006	3	Pit	3007	Neolithic?	10	0	No	No
3009	4	Pit	3008	Prehistoric?	20	0	No	No
3010	5	Pit	3008	Prehistoric?	20	10	Yes	Yes
3011	6	Pit	3008	Prehistoric?	20	10	No	No
3013	7	Pit	3008	Prehistoric?	10	10	Yes	Yes

Table 3: List of environmental samples

context	sample	large mammal	charcoal	charred plant	waterlogged plant	comment
2803	8		occ	occ	abt*	*mostly unidentified herbaceous fragments
3003	1		occ	occ	abt*	occ ?burnt stone, *mostly unidentified, probably intrusive
3004	2		occ	abt	abt*	abt hazelnut shell, * mostly unidentified and probably intrusive
3010	5		mod	occ	occ*	*mostly unidentified root fragments, probably intrusive

3013	7	occ?	abt	occ - mod	occ*	occ CBM, ?burnt clay, heat-cracked stone, * unidentified root fragments

Table 4: Summary of environmental remains from bulk samples occ = occasional, mod – moderate, abt = abundant

context	sample	category remains	preservation type	quantity/diversity	comment
2803	8	seed	?wa	+/low	
2803	8	misc	?wa	+++/low	Unidentified herbaceous fragments, fine roots
2803	8	seed	ch	+/low	*Galium aparine*, *Chenopodium album*
3003	1	seed	?wa	+/low	
3003	1	misc	?wa	+++/low	Unidentified herbaceous root fragments
3003	1	grain	ch	+/low	*Triticum* sp grain
3003	1	misc	ch	+/low	charred hazelnut shell
3004	2	seed	?wa	+/low	
3004	2	misc	?wa	+++/low	Unidentified herbaceous root fragments
3004	2	seed	ch	+++/low	abundant hazelnut fragments
3010	5	seed	?wa	+/medium	
3010	5	grain	ch	+/low	*Lolium/Festuca* sp
3013	7	misc	?wa	+/low	Unidentified herbaceous root fragments
3013	7	seed	ch	+/low	
3013	7	grain	ch	+ - ++/low	*Triticum dicoccum/spelta* grain, *Hordeum vulgare* grain (hulled)

Table 5: Plant remains from bulk samples

Key:

Preservation	Quantity
wa? = waterlogged	+ = 1 - 10
ch = charred	++ = 11- 50
	+++ = 51 - 100

6 Synthesis

The low archaeological potential for the site previously identified in the DBA is, in broad terms, supported by the features observed during the excavation of the evaluation trenches. For much of the site area, in particular the northern and central part, there were very few features and all appear to relate to post-medieval and modern activity. However, the archaeological remains identified as prehistoric in origin in the southernmost group of trenches are of far greater significance and offer high potential for further features of similar form and period to survive in this part of the site.

Seven pits were identified in three trenches across an area approximately 90m by 60m in size. Of these, five were excavated and sampled, but none contained securely dateable artefactual evidence. However, nearly all included charcoal and heat-cracked stones, whilst one contained clearly identifiable charred hazelnut shells, another some burnt bone and a fragment of fired clay. These latter two features were both identified in Trench 30, at the far south of the site area closest to the watercourse of the Wesley Brook, in the vicinity of a piece of middle to late Neolithic Peterborough ware pottery. The pottery came from the subsoil in Trench 30 but was relatively

unabraded and of substantial size. This suggests that it had only recently been disturbed, perhaps demonstrating that is had originally been deposited in one of these nearby features. As such, the accumulated evidence has led to the interpretation that the archaeological remains in this part of the site form part of a dispersed group of Neolithic pit features.

In recent archaeological literature, and perhaps in many ways a direct result of an increase in archaeological knowledge brought about by an large scale and extensive development-led projects across the country, but also due to a wider change in theoretical ideas relating to what types of archaeological feature are reflective of the cultural coherence of the early prehistoric populace, pits have become recognised as a class of evidence integral to any understanding of society and culture during the 4th and 3rd millennia BC (see, for example, Thomas 1999 chapter 4; Lamdin-Whymark 2008; Anderson-Whymark and Thomas 2012). Certainly numerically, but also in terms of survival of evidence of Neolithic cultural material, pits are now shown to be the dominant indicator of Neolithic activity across Britain (Garrow 2012, 218). With regard to these features, it has been noted that Neolithic pits are generally small and bowl-shaped, demonstrably unsuitable for storage of plant foods in a damp climate and rarely exhibit signs of weathering or natural silting (Thomas 1999, 64-66; Thomas 2012, 2). Rather, they appear to have been infilled rapidly, either with a single homogenous fill or successively deposited layers, suggesting that their primary use was to be excavated and then filled in, possibly being created so as to facilitate specific depositional acts (Thomas 2012, 2). This deposition often involves the infilling of pits with burnt material, be that charcoal or other organics, and artefacts that appear unrepresentative of used tools or everyday household waste (Thomas 1999, 64-66). This has led to the inference that these features represent more than just ordinary waste receptacles, perhaps being used as explicit acts of an organised, ritualised digging process so to demonstrate ownership or control over an area of land through collective, remembered, social activity, or even as a deliberate marker to represent the formalised beginning or end of a specific life cycle for individuals, buildings or settlements (Thomas 2012, 3-9).

It is amongst this developing discourse that the current discovery of a series of pits of probable Neolithic date can be interpreted, and a number of the characteristic features identified in recent comparative studies are present in this context. For example, the presence of burnt material, as evidenced by the charcoal inclusions and the ubiquitous heat-cracked stones, but a lack of indicators for *in situ* burning, is recognised as typical of pits dating to the Neolithic, suggesting that they are unlikely to have served as hearths (Thomas 1999, 64). Also, here, as with many sites elsewhere, at least four of the pits were small and shallow (two additional unexcavated examples appeared similar), and of these, two contained single homogenous fills, appearing to be single dumping events, while the two others had two clearly layered fills of differing consistency. In a study of depositional practices in the middle Thames Valley, Lamdin-Whymark illustrated that pit features associated with Peterborough ware had an average diameter of 0.91m and an average depth of 0.29m, containing between one and three fills (2008, 101-102). This size broadly correlates with range of pit features in Trenches 25, 28 and 30. However, slightly incongruous with this pattern here was the far more substantial larger, deeper pit in the centre of Trench 30 that contained some slumped natural sand as an initial fill, although this again exhibited burnt material containing charcoal and heat-cracked stones with rapidly deposited layers above this. There were no specifically placed artefacts in evidence, but the presence of Peterborough ware pottery could suggest that this had once been the case with either the features revealed in the trenches or in others outside of the evaluation trench limits before later truncation. In consideration of this possibility, that the pottery may have come from other features beyond the extent of the trenches, there is the potential for the pits to actually represent ancillary activity associated with more intensive nearby prehistoric occupation; however, the reality is often that evidence for Neolithic settlement consists solely of pits and pit clusters rather than the remains of definite buildings (Garrow 2012, 217-218).

Regionally, the pits identified here form part of a growing body of evidence that demonstrates that the Midlands area was a landscape of Neolithic activity comparable in amount to other areas of the

country, but that is so far largely devoid of evidence for the classic funerary monuments seen elsewhere (Ray 2007, 51-53; Jackson and Ray 2012, 144-145). Pits are the most prominent Neolithic feature of the area, which is characterised by the riverine terrace systems and associated floodplains of the Rivers Severn and Wye, and it is often the case that Neolithic activity is concentrated at or near river confluences or along the courses of minor streams (Jackson and Ray 2012, 144). It would appear that the pit features here fit comfortably into this model, being situated in proximity to the Wesley Brook; it is perhaps also of significance that the reported discovery in 1934 of a Neolithic polished stone axe 2km to the south of the site was also in the vicinity of the same brook. In Shropshire itself, a recent regional study by Jackson and Ray (2012) incorporating the south of the county found evidence for only two Neolithic pits, at Bromfield near Ludlow (Stanford 1982), although further to the north, pits containing middle Neolithic Peterborough ware have also been discovered associated with later Bronze Age funerary activity at Meole Brace and at Sharpstones Hill, both near Shrewsbury (Hughes and Woodward 1995; Barker *et al* 1991). Similarly, at Morville Quarry, close to Bridgnorth, a possible pit was recorded during trenching that included a small collection of middle to late Neolithic pottery sherds of the Peterborough ware tradition (Hurst and Bretherton 1999). It is thus evident that whilst Neolithic pits are known within Shropshire, they are a relatively rare occurrence, and that the potential for the features here at Shifnal to further inform understanding of early prehistoric Shropshire is significant.

Given the area of the site that has been covered by the trial trenching, it is apparent that beyond the evidence of prehistoric activity the site here is one that remained an undeveloped agricultural landscape from at least the medieval period until the present day.

7 Archaeological interest

7.1 Nature of the archaeological interest in the site

There were limited archaeological remains on this site, considering the size of the area and the number of trenches excavated, but the majority are identified as significant examples of pit features potentially dating to the mid to late-Neolithic. There may be similar features existing outside of the trench limits in the south-west corner of the site, where this activity appeared to be focused, and it is possible that these will reveal significant information on past land-use and occupational or ritual activity during the early prehistoric period. In addition, the recovery of a substantial fragment of Peterborough ware pottery provides an important addition to the small but growing number of examples of this type of pottery in the region.

Environmental remains of significance (charred hazelnut shell) were recovered from one feature, but were of low significance for aiding interpretation of diet and farming economy in the remaining samples. However, the assessment demonstrates potential for recovering material suitable for radiocarbon dating.

Other features across the site area were representative of medieval, post-medieval and modern agricultural activity and are of lesser archaeological interest.

7.2 Relative importance of the archaeological interest in the site

The features observed across the trenches appear to illustrate an archaeological site of variable importance, with a number of features of limited significance, whilst the cluster of possible Neolithic pits are of much greater potential. The presence of Neolithic pottery associated with a series of features is a rare and important discovery for the area that is of clear local and regional significance and could, if similar features and finds exist in this area of the site, be of even higher importance.

7.3 Physical extent of the archaeological interest in the site

The archaeological remains interpreted to be of early prehistoric date were restricted to the south-western part of the site area, clustered across three trenches (Trenches 25, 28 and 30). The survival of the pit features was variable, with considerable truncation in evidence in some cases, and they were not protected by a significant amount of plough soil in the southernmost trenches.

8 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals.

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in late July 2015 across approximately 7.48ha of land off Haughton Road on the northern edge of Shifnal in Shropshire (NGR SJ 747 088). It was commissioned by Paul Clark of CgMs Consulting, acting on behalf of Bovis Homes Limited, who intend to undertake residential development with associated access roads and utilities on the site.

Thirty 50m long trenches were excavated and were arranged in a grid array. In the majority of these trenches, particularly in the northern and central part of the site, there were very few features and all appeared to relate to post-medieval and modern agricultural activity. However, archaeological remains were identified in the southernmost group of trenches and are believed to be early prehistoric in date.

Seven pits were identified in three trenches across an area approximately 90m by 60m in size. Of these, five were excavated and sampled and nearly all included charcoal and heat-cracked stones, whilst one contained clearly identifiable charred hazelnut shells, another some burnt bone and a fragment of fired clay. These features were identified in association with a large sherd of middle to late Neolithic Peterborough ware pottery. As such, the accumulated evidence suggests that the archaeological remains in this part of the site are representative of a dispersed group of Neolithic pit features. This find provides an important addition to the small but growing number of examples of this type of pottery in the region, and the potential for the features at Shifnal to further inform understanding of early prehistoric Shropshire is significant.

9 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project: Paul Clark and Paul Chadwick (CgMs Consulting) and Charlotte Orchard (Archaeological Advisor, Shropshire Council).

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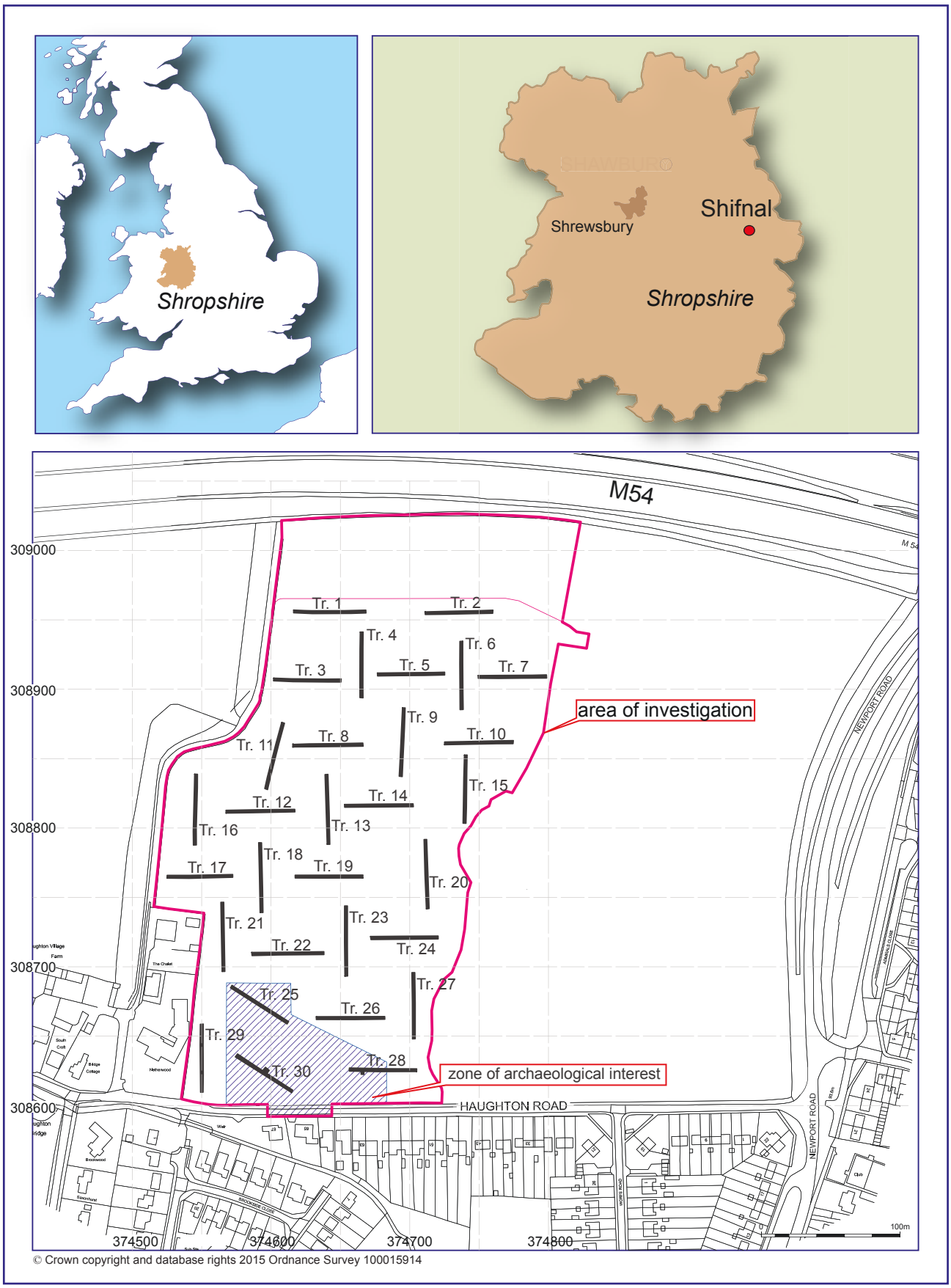
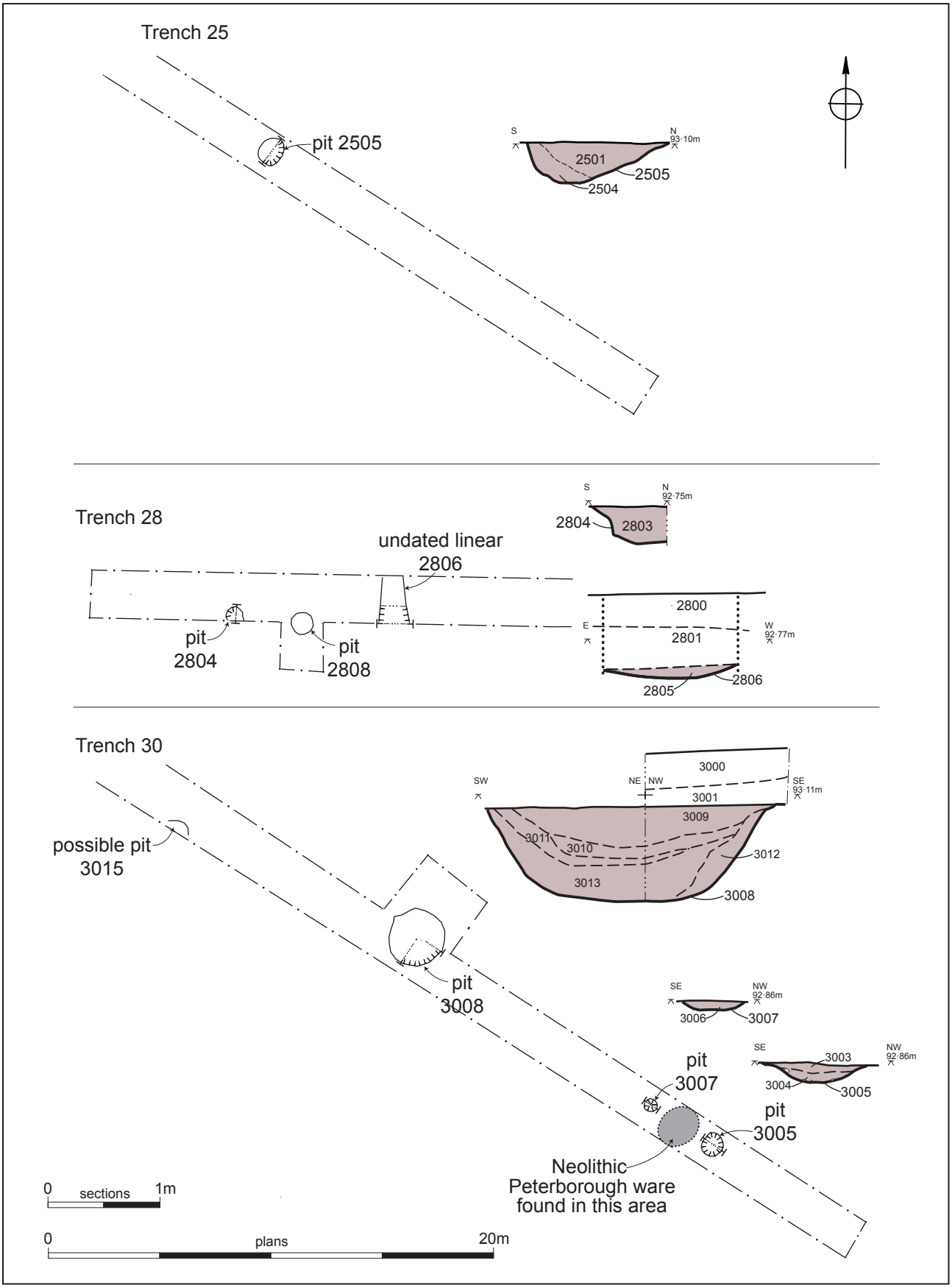
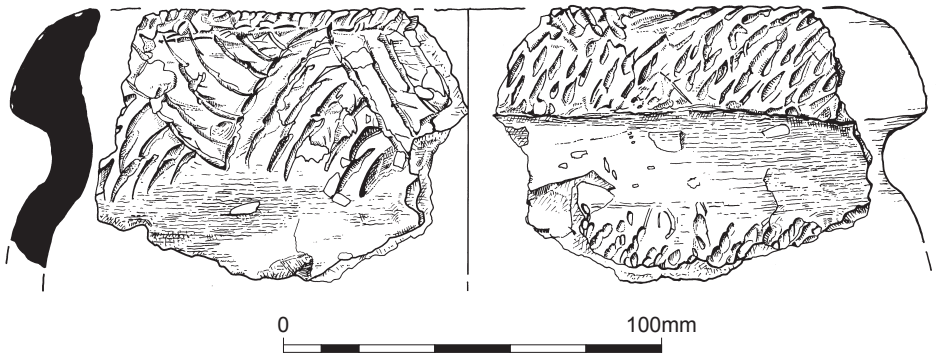
Figures



The site location, excavated trenches and zone of archaeological interest *Figure 1*



Archaeological features in trenches 25, 28 and 30 *Figure 2*



Neolithic Peterborough ware *Figure 3*

Plates

Plate 1: General view of the site during machine excavation, facing south-east

Plate 2: Section of topsoil and subsoil deposits above natural substrate in Trench 7

Plate 3: Section of topsoil and subsoil deposits above natural substrate in Trench 8

Plate 4: Deeper deposits in depression [1604], Trench 16 facing east

Plate 5: General view of Trench 30

Plate 6: Section of pit [3005] in Trench 30

Plate 7: Section of pit [3007] in Trench 30

Plate 8: Section of pit [3008] in Trench 30

Plate 9: Section of pit [2505] in Trench 25

Plate 10: Section of pit [2804] in Trench 28

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
100	Topsoil	Layer	Loose dark greyish brown sandy loam	0.30m	Topsoil layer
101	Natural	Layer	Moderately Compact mid brownish pink clayey sand	0.12m+	Natural substrate

Trench 2

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
200	Topsoil	Layer	Loose dark greyish brown sandy loam	0.36m	Topsoil layer
201	Subsoil	Layer	Soft dark orangey pink clayey sand	0.26m	Subsoil layer
202	Natural	Layer	Moderately Compact mid brownish pink sandy clay	Unexc.	Natural substrate
203	Modern Layer	Layer	Soft dark greyish brown silty sand	0.02m	Modern disturbance at edge of trench. Very shallow.

Trench 3

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
300	Topsoil	Layer	Loose dark greyish brown sandy loam	0.38m	Topsoil layer
301	Subsoil	Layer	Soft dark orangey pink clayey sand	0.20m	Subsoil layer
302	Natural	Layer	Moderately Compact mid brownish pink sandy clay	Unexc.	Natural substrate

Trench 4

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: North to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
400	Topsoil	Layer	Loose dark greyish brown sandy loam	0.26m	Topsoil layer
401	Subsoil	Layer	Soft dark orangey pink clayey sand	0.22m	Subsoil layer
402	Natural	Layer	Moderately Compact mid brownish pink clayey sand	Unexc.	Natural substrate

Trench 5

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
500	Topsoil	Layer	Loose dark greyish brown sandy loam	0.33m	Topsoil layer
501	Subsoil	Layer	Soft dark orangey pink clayey sand	0.15m	Subsoil layer
502	Natural	Layer	Moderately Compact mid brownish pink clayey sand	0.06m+	Natural substrate

Trench 6

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: North to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
600	Topsoil	Layer	Loose dark greyish brown sandy loam	0.28m	Topsoil layer
601	Subsoil	Layer	Moderately Compact mid brownish orange sand	0.16m	Subsoil layer
602	Natural	Layer	Soft mid orangey red sand	Unexc.	Natural substrate

Trench 7

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
700	Topsoil	Layer	Loose dark greyish brown sandy loam	0.34m	Topsoil layer
701	Subsoil	Layer	Moderately Compact mid brownish orange sand	0.30m	Subsoil layer
702	Natural	Layer	Soft mid pinkish orange clayey sand	Unexc.	Natural substrate

Trench 8

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
800	Topsoil	Layer	Loose dark greyish brown sandy loam	0.37m	Topsoil layer
801	Subsoil	Layer	Moderately Compact mid reddish brown clayey sand	0.32m	Subsoil layer
802	Natural	Layer	Loose mid brownish orange clayey sand	0.06m+	Natural substrate

Trench 9

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: North to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
900	Topsoil	Layer	Loose dark greyish brown sandy loam	0.28m	Topsoil layer
901	Subsoil	Layer	Soft dark orangey brown silty sand	0.40m	Subsoil layer
902	Natural	Layer	Soft mid orangey brown	Unexc.	Natural substrate

Trench 10

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
1000	Topsoil	Layer	Loose dark greyish brown sandy loam	0.27m	Topsoil layer
1001	Subsoil	Layer	Moderately Compact mid brownish orange sand	0.14m	Subsoil layer
1002	Natural	Layer	Firm mid brownish red sandy clay	0.06m+	Natural substrate

Trench 11

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: North-east to south-west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
1100	Topsoil	Layer	Loose dark greyish brown sandy loam	0.36m	Topsoil layer
1101	Subsoil	Layer	Moderately Compact mid reddish brown clayey sand	0.32m	Subsoil layer
1102	Natural	Layer	Soft mid brownish pink clayey sand	0.11m+	Natural substrate
1103	Modern truncation	Cut		Unexc.	Modern truncation - square trial hole backfilled with natural/subsoil/topsoil mix. Included decaying plant matter and modern

Trench 12

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
1200	Topsoil	Layer	Soft mid greyish brown sandy silt	0.28m	Topsoil layer
1201	Subsoil	Layer	Moderately Compact mid reddish orange silty clay	0.37m	Subsoil layer - finds recovered included pottery and animal bone
1202	Natural	Layer	Firm mid reddish brown clay	Unexc.	Natural substrate

Trench 13

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: North to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
1300	Topsoil	Layer	Loose mid greyish brown sandy silt	0.35m	Topsoil layer
1301	Subsoil	Layer	Moderately Compact light orangey brown sandy silt	0.38m	Subsoil layer
1302	Natural	Layer	Firm mid brownish red clay	Unexc.	Natural substrate
1303	Linear	Cut		0.09m	Linear feature running N-S - no clear date or purpose but CBM was recovered and it clearly cuts through the subsoil. Supposed modern drainage ditch.
1304	Linear	Fill	Loose mid orangey yellow sand	0.09m	Sandy fill of linear 1303. Appears to be modern builders sand.

Trench 14

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
1400	Topsoil	Layer	Soft mid greyish brown sandy silt	0.30m	Topsoil layer
1401	Subsoil	Layer	Moderately Compact mid orangey brown sandy silt	0.28m	Subsoil layer
1402	Natural	Layer	Loose mid reddish orange clayey sand	Unexc.	Natural substrate

Trench 15

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: North to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
1500	Topsoil	Layer	Loose dark greyish brown sandy loam	0.22m	Topsoil layer
1501	Subsoil	Layer	Loose mid orangey brown sand	0.24m	Subsoil layer
1502	Natural	Layer	Moderately Compact mid reddish pink sandy clay	0.12m+	Natural substrate

Trench 16

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: North to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
1600	Topsoil	Layer	Loose dark greyish brown sandy loam	0.24m	Topsoil layer
1601	Subsoil	Layer	Moderately Compact mid reddish brown clayey sand	0.40m	Subsoil layer
1602	Natural	Layer	Moderately Compact mid pinky orange clayey sand	Unexc.	Natural substrate
1603	Natural	Fill	Moderately Compact dark brownish grey silty sand	0.80m	Fill of depression 1604, with post-med pottery within. Continues to north beyond trench limits.
1604	Natural	Cut		0.80m	Cut denoting large deep depression that continues beyond trench limits. Over 19m wide, possibly infilled over time to level out field for agriculture.
1605	Linear	Fill	Soft light yellowish orange sand	0.17m	Fill of linear 1606. Very sterile sand, akin to building sand. No finds but probably modern.
1606	Linear	Cut		0.17m	Cut of linear ditch of unclear function. Steep sided and filled with clean sand. Could be former service trench. Cuts into feature 1604.
1607	Natural	Cut		1m	Deep depression similar to 1604 but in southern part of trench. Machine exploration showed it to continue beyond trench limits as deep deposit of mixed soil.
1608	Natural	Cut		1m	Deep depression similar to 1604 but in southern part of trench, same feature as 1607. Machine exploration showed it to continue beyond trench limits as deep deposit of mixed soil.

Trench 17

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
1700	Topsoil	Layer	Loose dark greyish brown sandy loam	0.30m	Topsoil layer
1701	Subsoil	Layer	Compact mid reddish brown silty clay	0.20m	Subsoil layer
1702	Natural	Layer	Firm mid brownish pink sandy clay	0.05m+	Natural substrate

Trench 18

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: North to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
1800	Topsoil	Layer	Loose mid greyish brown sandy silt	0.35m	Topsoil layer
1801	Subsoil	Layer	Moderately Compact mid brownish orange sandy silt	0.10m	Subsoil layer
1802	Subsoil	Layer	Firm light orangey brown sandy silt	0.44m	Subsoil layer
1803	Subsoil	Layer	Moderately Compact light orangey brown clay silt	0.12m	Subsoil layer
1804	Natural	Layer	Moderately Compact light reddish brown sandy clay	Unexc.	Natural substrate

Trench 19

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
1900	Topsoil	Layer	Loose mid greyish brown sandy silt	0.35m	Topsoil layer
1901	Subsoil	Layer	Moderately Compact mid brownish orange sandy silt	0.16m	Subsoil layer
1902	Subsoil	Layer	Moderately Compact mid brownish orange sandy silt	0.18m	Lower subsoil - interface between 1901 and 1903
1903	Natural	Layer	Firm mid reddish brown clay	Unexc.	Natural substrate

Trench 20

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: North to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
2000	Topsoil	Layer	Soft dark greyish brown sandy silt	0.35m	Topsoil layer
2001	Subsoil	Layer	Soft dark orangey brown sand	0.11m	Subsoil layer
2002	Natural	Layer	Moderately Compact light yellowish orange sand	0.03m+	Natural substrate

Trench 21

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: North to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
2100	Topsoil	Layer	Firm mid greyish brown silty clay	0.27m	Topsoil layer
2101	Subsoil	Layer	Firm mid yellowish brown sandy silt	0.30m	Subsoil layer
2102	Natural	Layer	Moderately Compact light orangey brown sand	0.05m+	Natural substrate - becomes firm pink clay marl at northern end of trench.
2103	Field drain	Cut		Unexc.	Modern land drain at north end of trench.
2104	Posthole	Fill	Loose mid greyish brown silty sand	0.11m	Silty fill around edge of posthole 2106 - probably fell in when posthole initially dug out. Similar to topsoil so probably a modern post for a fence.
2105	Posthole	Fill	Firm mid pinky grey silty clay	0.11m	Clay packing for support of post in 2106. Probably redeposited natural.
2106	Posthole	Cut		0.11m	Posthole feature - isolated and of no clear purpose. Likely to be part of modern fence line however.
2107	Posthole	Fill	Loose mid greyish brown silty sand	0.11m	Topsoil-like fill of posthole 2106. Main fill in centre of 2106, probably the post-pipe.

Trench 22

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
2200	Topsoil	Layer	Soft mid greyish brown silt loam	0.34m	Topsoil layer
2201	Subsoil	Layer	Soft mid reddish brown sandy silt	0.26m	Subsoil layer
2202	Natural	Layer	Soft mid reddish brown clayey sand	0.03m+	Natural substrate
2203	Linear	Cut		0.60m	N-S linear feature. Presumed to be modern as it cuts subsoil and is filled with clean building sand. May be the same feature as 1303.
2204	Linear	Fill	Loose mid orangey yellow sand	0.60m	Fill of linear 2203. Appears to be modern graded building sand.

Trench 23

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: North to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
2300	Topsoil	Layer	Moderately Compact mid greyish brown silt loam	0.22m	Topsoil layer
2301	Subsoil	Layer	Moderately Compact mid orangey brown sandy silt	0.38m	Subsoil layer
2302	Natural	Layer	Moderately Compact mid orangey brown clayey sand	Unexc.	Natural substrate

Trench 24

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
2400	Topsoil	Layer	Firm mid greyish brown clayey sand	0.34m	Topsoil layer
2401	Subsoil	Layer	Soft light orangey brown	0.27m	Subsoil layer
2402	Natural	Layer	Firm dark reddish brown clay	0.10m+	Natural substrate

Trench 25

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: North-west to south-east

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
2500	Topsoil	Layer	Soft dark greyish brown silty sand	0.28m	Topsoil layer
2501	Subsoil	Layer	Soft mid orangey brown	0.32m	Subsoil layer
2502	Natural	Layer	Moderately Compact mid orangey brown sand	0.05m+	Natural substrate
2503	Pit	Fill	Soft light brown sandy silt	0.32m	Upper fill in pit 2505. Homogenous throughout, with a few heat-cracked stones.
2504	Pit	Fill	Soft mid greyish brown sandy silt	0.37m	Lower fill in pit 2505. Lacks dating evidence.
2505	Pit	Cut		0.36m	Moderately sized pit feature. Undated but included heat-cracked stones. Could be part of wider grouping including pits in Trench 28 and Trench 30.

Trench 26

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
2600	Topsoil	Layer	Soft dark greyish brown	0.33m	Topsoil layer
2601	Subsoil	Layer	Soft mid orangey brown	0.25m	Subsoil layer
2602	Natural	Layer	Moderately Compact light orangey brown sand	0.04m+	Natural substrate

Trench 27

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: North to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
2700	Topsoil	Layer	Soft dark greyish brown sandy silt	0.36m	Topsoil layer
2701	Subsoil	Layer	Soft mid orangey brown silty sand	0.25m	Subsoil layer
2702	Subsoil	Layer	Soft mid reddish brown silty sand	0.24m	Lower subsoil
2703	Natural	Layer	Firm mid pinky brown clayey sand	0.03m+	Natural substrate

Trench 28

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
2800	Topsoil	Layer	Soft dark greyish brown sandy silt	0.26m	Topsoil layer
2801	Subsoil	Layer	Soft mid orangey brown	0.16m	Subsoil layer
2802	Natural	Layer	Soft light yellowish orange sand	0.04m+	Natural substrate
2803	Pit	Fill	Loose mid orangey black silty sand	0.34m	Very charcoal rich fill of pit 2804. No finds in this deposit of burnt waste.
2804	Pit	Cut		0.34m	Cut of pit, containing charcoal-rich deposit. No dating evidence but associated with other pits in the area.
2805	Linear	Fill	Moderately Compact dark orangey brown silty sand	0.10m	Single fill of linear 2806. Cannot be differentiated from the subsoil above, so possibly not actually a cultural feature more a depression in the natural.
2806	Linear	Cut		0.10m	Linear feature. Visible in pre-ex but not visible as any different to the subsoil in section.
2807	Pit	Fill	Soft mid greyish brown sandy silt	Unexc.	Fill of pit feature 2808. unexcavated.
2808	Pit	Cut		Unexc.	Circular pit feature, unexcavated.

Trench 29

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: North to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
2900	Topsoil	Layer	Moderately Compact mid greyish brown sandy silt	0.25m	Topsoil layer
2901	Subsoil	Layer	Moderately Compact mid orangey brown sandy silt	0.29m	Subsoil layer
2902	Natural	Layer	Moderately Compact mod orangey brown sand	0.06m+	Natural substrate

Trench 30

Length: 50m Width: 2m Orientation: North-west to south-east

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
3000	Topsoil	Layer	Moderately Compact mid greyish brown sandy silt	0.27m	Topsoil layer
3001	Subsoil	Layer	Moderately Compact mid orangey brown sandy silt	0.29m	Subsoil layer - Neolithic pottery identified in this deposit at SE end of trench
3002	Natural	Layer	Compact mid orangey brown silty sand	Unexc.	Natural substrate
3003	Pit	Fill	Moderately Compact mid orangey brown sandy silt	0.07m	Upper fill of pit 3005. Possibly a deliberate sealing deposit above charcoal-rich fire waste 3004.
3004	Pit	Fill	Moderately Compact dark brown sandy silt	0.11m	Lower, primary fill of pit 3005, containing flecks of charcoal and hazelnut shells as well as heat-cracked stones. Possibly a small fire pit.
3005	Pit	Cut		0.19m	Shallow sub-circular pit, probably part of a grouping of Neolithic pits.
3006	Pit	Fill	Soft light greyish brown silty sand	0.10m	Single homogenous fill of cut 2007. No finds, but possibly associated with nearby Neolithic pottery.
3007	Pit	Cut		0.10m	Pit cut. Undated, other than by association with nearby pits and Neolithic pottery found in subsoil.
3008	Pit	Cut		0.86m	Cut of pit, likely to be Neolithic in date, with frequent charcoal inclusions and heat-cracked stones.
3009	Pit	Fill	Loose light orangey brown sand	0.35m	Upper fill of pit 3008
3010	Pit	Fill	Loose dark greyish brown sand	0.16m	Fill of pit 3008. Charcoal rich.
3011	Pit	Fill	Loose light orangey brown sand		Fill of pit 3008, probably sealing earlier organic deposits.
3012	Pit	Fill	Loose mid brownish orange silty sand	0.35m	Fill of pit 3008, slumped down the side of the pit.
3013	Pit	Fill	Loose dark greyish brown silty sand	0.45m	Fill of pit 3008, with frequent charcoal and fire-cracked stones.

3014	Pit	Fill	Soft mid orangey brown sandy silt	Unexc.	Fill of possible pit 3015, unexcavated
3015	Pit	Cut		Unexc.	Possible pit cut identified at the edge of the trench.

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

30	Context records AS1
5	Field progress reports AS2
4	Photographic records AS3
1	Black and white photographic films
203	Digital photographs
1	Drawing number catalogues AS4
20	Scale drawings
5	Sample records AS17
1	Sample number catalogues AS18
5	Flot records AS21
30	Trench record sheets AS41
1	Box of finds
1	CD-Rom/DVDs
1	Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed with Shropshire Museums Service.