

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION OF LAND OFF
MAIN STREET,
OFFENHAM,
WORCESTERSHIRE

Andrew Mann and Tom Vaughan

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

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Worcestershire Archaeology,
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Project 3950
Report 1949
WSM 47399

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Archaeological evaluation at land of Main Street, Offenham, Worcestershire

Andrew Mann and Tom Vaughan

Part 1 Project summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken of land off Main Street, Offenham, Worcestershire (centred on NGR SP 054 458). It was undertaken on behalf of Barratt / David Wilson Mercia, who propose to develop the site with thirty new houses, together with associated roads, sewers, drainage, planting and paving, for which a planning application will be submitted to Wychavon District Council.

This report on an archaeological evaluation describes and assesses the significance of a heritage asset with archaeological interest potentially affected by the application. The impact of the application on the significance is assessed.

A number of field boundary ditches and postholes were observed and investigated. possible Due to the very loose nature of their fills, it is considered that they are of post-medieval or modern origin, probably relating to agricultural or market-garden activity. A curvilinear feature, possibly an eaves drip gully, was recorded toward the centre of the site. However it appears to be of late date, similar to the aforementioned features.

There was no evidence of Roman activity related to Icknield Street Roman road to the east, nor for the medieval village to have extended into this site. Similarly there was no indication for the existence of a trackway across the site between the Roman road and the fording point over the River Avon to the west. The topsoil and subsoil sequence appeared to be well developed without any indication of widespread disturbance.

No significant archaeological features, structures, layers or horizons were identified, nor artefacts recovered.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. **Planning background**

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken of land off Main Street, Offenham, Worcestershire (centred on NGR SP 054 458; Fig 1). It was undertaken on behalf of Barratt / David Wilson Mercia, who propose to develop the site with thirty new houses, together with associated roads, sewers, drainage, planting and paving, for which a planning application will be submitted to Wychavon District Council.

The proposed development site is considered to include potential heritage assets with archaeological interest, the significance of which may be affected by the proposed development.

The project conforms to the project proposal including detailed specification, prepared by the Service (Worcestershire Archaeology 2012a). The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological evaluation* (IfA 2008), and the *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (HEAS 2010).

2. **Aims**

The aims of this archaeological evaluation are:

- to describe and assess the significance of the heritage asset with archaeological interest;
- to establish the nature, importance and extent of the archaeological site;
- to assess the impact of the application on the archaeological site.

3. **Methods**

3.1 **Documentary search**

Prior to fieldwork commencing a desk-based assessment was undertaken by the Service, during which a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER; Keith-Lucas 2012).

3.2 **Fieldwork methodology**

3.2.1 **Fieldwork strategy**

A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service (Worcestershire Archaeology 2012a). Fieldwork was undertaken between 17 and 19 September 2012. The site reference number and site code is WSM 47399.

Nine trenches, amounting to just over 483m² in area, were excavated over the site area of 1.15ha, representing a sample of 4.2%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 1. The initial trench location plan proposed within the specification (Worcestershire Archaeology 2012a) was amended on site due to dense scrub and trees within the western corner of the site. Trenches were reduced in size and relocated after discussion with the Curator, Mike Glyde (Historic Environment Planning Officer, Worcestershire County Council).

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under archaeological supervision using a wheeled excavator, employing a toothless bucket. 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 Service practice (Worcestershire Archaeology 2012b). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

3.2.2 **Structural analysis**

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

3.3 **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.

4. **Topographical and archaeological context**

The background to the site has previously been presented in the desk-based assessment prepared by the Service (Keith-Lucas 2012). The following is a summary from that report.

The site comprises a sub-triangular portion of land along the south-west frontage of Main Street, Offenham. It is bounded by the rear of properties off Ferry Lane to the north and Boat Lane to the south (centred on NGR SP 054 458; Fig 1). The site lies on the floodplain to the east of the River Avon and north of the Broadway Brook tributary. It comprises an area of generally flat ground, at a height of 29m AOD.

The site currently lies largely empty and has run to meadow. A single dwelling and barn both stand derelict. The westernmost portion of the proposed development area is totally overgrown, with mature fruit trees from a previous orchard lost amongst the foliage. There are no hedgerows present on the site.

The bedrock geology is of the carbonate-rich Blue Lias and Charmouth Mudstone Foundations (British Geological Society 2012). The soils of the area belong to the Wick 1 Soil Association (541r). The Soil Survey of England and Wales (1983) notes that these comprise 'deep well-drained coarse loamy soils and sandy soils, locally over gravel, some similar soils affected by groundwater, with a slight risk of water erosion, over parent material of glaciofluvial or river terrace drift'. Soils of the Wick series are classified with typical brown earths. They are extensive on low terraces along the Rivers Avon, Severn and Arrow and are very good arable soils supporting a wide range of crops including cereals, oilseed rape, root crops, hops and vegetables (Beard *et al* 1986).

The triangular parcel of land lies at a strategic location between roads that converge west towards a historic river crossing of the River Avon. Lying on fertile and well-drained soils, the surrounding area has widespread evidence of prehistoric settlement and activity, from excavation, find spots and cropmarks. Within 400m of the proposed development lies the site of a Roman cemetery within which 20 skeletons were excavated in 1887. With further evidence of Roman activity in the area, and the alignment within the site of a possible Roman road from the ford to Icknield Street, Roman archaeology may well be expected here. The site lies just to the south of the medieval village of Offenham, which is known to have Saxon origins. The built area of the village does not seem to have extended this far south, but the site would have been involved in the agricultural life of the medieval village and its hinterland. During the post-medieval period the area has depended heavily on market gardening, and the

site is known to have supported an apple orchard. It was otherwise undeveloped. It now stands as meadow, and has the potential to contain archaeological deposits from any or all of the aforementioned periods.

5. Results

5.1 Artefactual analysis

No artefactual remains were recovered from the site and only very occasional modern glass and porcelain was observed within the topsoil (none of which was collected).

5.2 Environmental analysis

No deposits were observed that were thought suitable for palaeoenvironmental sampling and analysis.

5.3 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figs 2-5. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

5.3.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

The natural deposits observed conform to the Wick series and were fairly consistent across the extent of the site area, at a depth of between 0.50-0.72m below the current ground surface. These consisted of moderately compact and cohesive mid reddish-orange sands and gravels. The topsoil and subsoil appeared to comprise a well developed sequence, without any indication of deep ploughing, landscaping or disturbance.

5.3.2 Phase 2: Post-medieval / modern

Eleven linear features and three postholes were identified across the site (Plates 2-3). The former were mostly aligned on an east to west or north to south alignment. The fills in the majority of the features were silty sands or loams which were soft and loose. Most fills were sterile and contained only inclusions of small to medium sub-rounded stones and pea grit. Four of the ditches (404, 406, 408 and 504) were observed to cut through the subsoil (Plate 1) and two others (304 and 904) are similar in appearance to agricultural furrows, although they are aligned in opposite directions (Plate 2).

No finds were recovered from any of the features, although their character and the stratigraphy indicate that they are of late date, probably post-medieval or modern.

The only feature of potential interest is ditch [910] within Trench 9 towards the middle of the site. This appeared to be curvilinear in plan, similar to an eves drip gully of a round house or ring ditch, which are commonly of Iron Age date (Plates 4 and 5). However fill (909) was sterile and of similar character to the aforementioned features, which indicates that this curvilinear ditch is of a similar late date. It was only partially visible in the base of the trench, so it may represent the convergence of three separate ditches, rather than one single curving feature (Plate 5).

6. Synthesis

There is no evidence that any significant archaeological remains, predating the post-medieval or modern periods, exist on the site. A single possible eves drip gully was recorded toward the

centre of the site, although the fill had the same characteristics as the later features aforementioned and it may represent the convergence of three discrete linear features at this point.

The majority of the other ditches are considered likely to be field boundary features or the remains of other agricultural activity. The fills of these features indicate that they are of no significant age. This is supported by the fact that three of them had cut through the subsoil. The loose posthole fills also suggest they are not of any great age, and may relate to the orchard that was present on the site until the 1940s.

6.1 **Research frameworks**

6.2 **Significance of a heritage asset with archaeological interest**

The aim of an archaeological evaluation is to provide the client and the planning authority (and its advisors) with sufficient information to assess the significance of a heritage asset with archaeological interest, in line with *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012, para 128). Detailed guidance on assessing the significance of a heritage asset with archaeological interest is set out in the *Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide*, which advises that an on-site evaluation should establish the nature, importance and extent of the archaeological interest in order to provide sufficient evidence for confident prediction of the impact of the proposal (DCLG/DCMS/EH 2010: Section 5, Development Management).

6.3 **Assessment of significance**

The on-site evaluation has provided new evidence on a site with archaeological interest. As a result, an assessment of the significance of this site can be made in terms of the nature, importance and extent of the archaeological interest.

Nature of the archaeological interest in the site

The only potential archaeological interest on the site falls around Trench 9 and the possible curvilinear ditch [910]. However this appears to be of late date, and is of similar character to the remainder of the features which are thought to be field boundary ditches or of agricultural origin.

Relative importance of the archaeological interest in the site

The remains on the site are of low archaeological importance due to their probable later date.

Physical extent of the archaeological interest in the site

The remains exist from 0.50-0.70m below the current ground surface, and are scattered over the south-eastern half of the site.

6.4 **Assessment of the impact of the proposal**

The on-site evaluation, and the information provided by the Client, allows an assessment to be made of the potential impact of the proposed development on the archaeological interest in the site. The development is considered unlikely to effect or impact negatively upon any heritage assets with archaeological interest.

7. **Recommendations**

8. **Publication summary**

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on behalf of Barratt / David Wilson Mercia, of land off Main Street, Offenham, Worcestershire (centred on NGR SP 054 458; HER ref. WSM 47399). A number of field boundary ditches and postholes were observed and investigated. possible Due to the very loose nature of their fills, it is considered that they are of post-medieval or modern origin, probably relating to agricultural or market-garden activity. A curvilinear feature, possibly an eves drip gully, was recorded toward the centre of the site. However it appears to be of late date, similar to the aforementioned features.

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9. **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Bruce Whittingham (Barratt / David Wilson Mercia) and Mike Glyde (Historic Environment Planning Officer, Worcestershire County Council).

10. **Personnel**

The fieldwork and report preparation was led by Andrew Mann. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan. Fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Mann and Mike Nicholson, and illustration by Carolyn Hunt.

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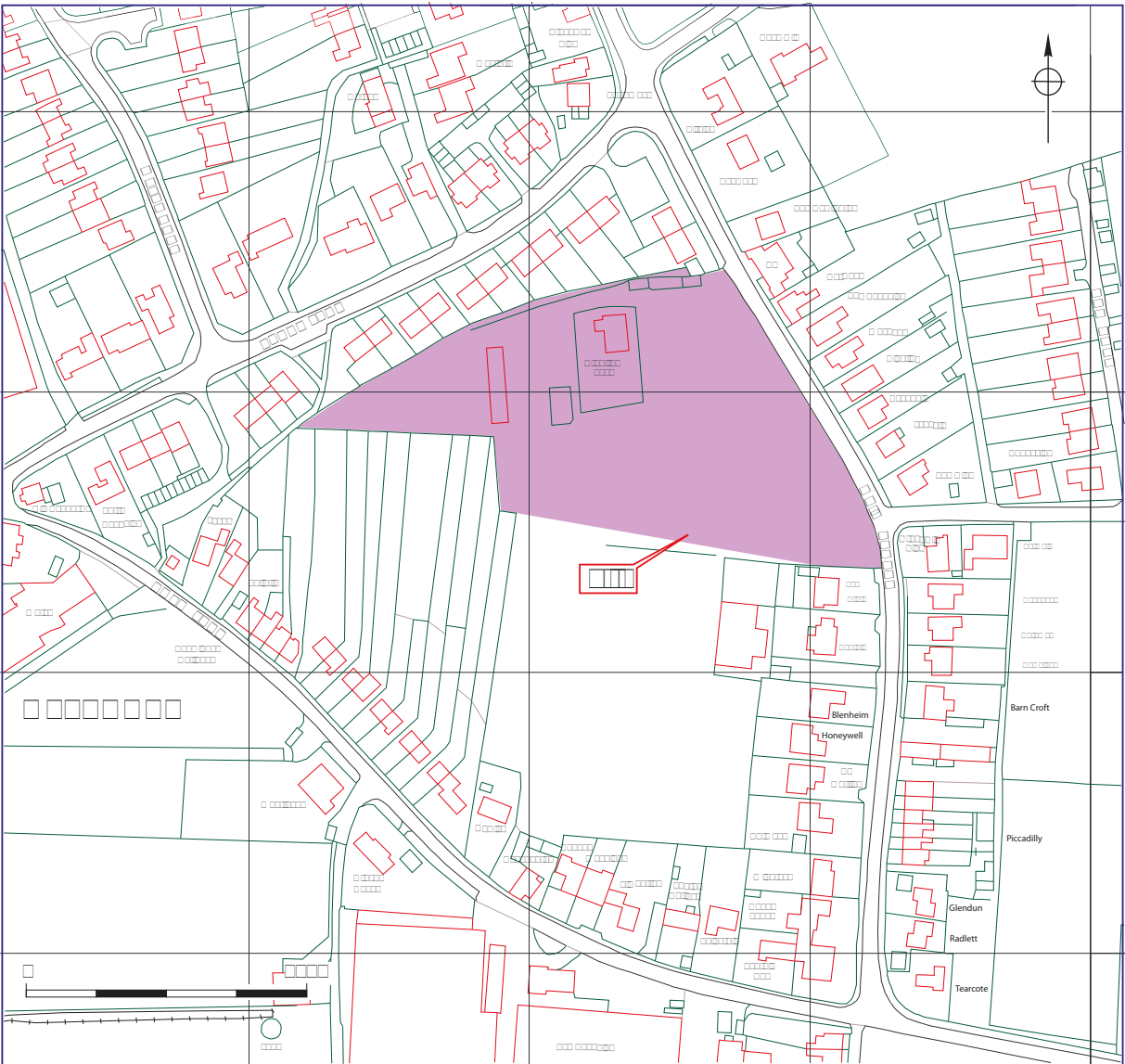
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Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983 Midland and Western England, sheet 3, scale 1:250,000 + *Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales (A brief explanation of the constituent soil associations)*

Worcestershire Archaeology 2012a *Proposal for an archaeological evaluation at land off Main Street, Offenham, Worcestershire*, Archive and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 14 September 2012, **P3950**

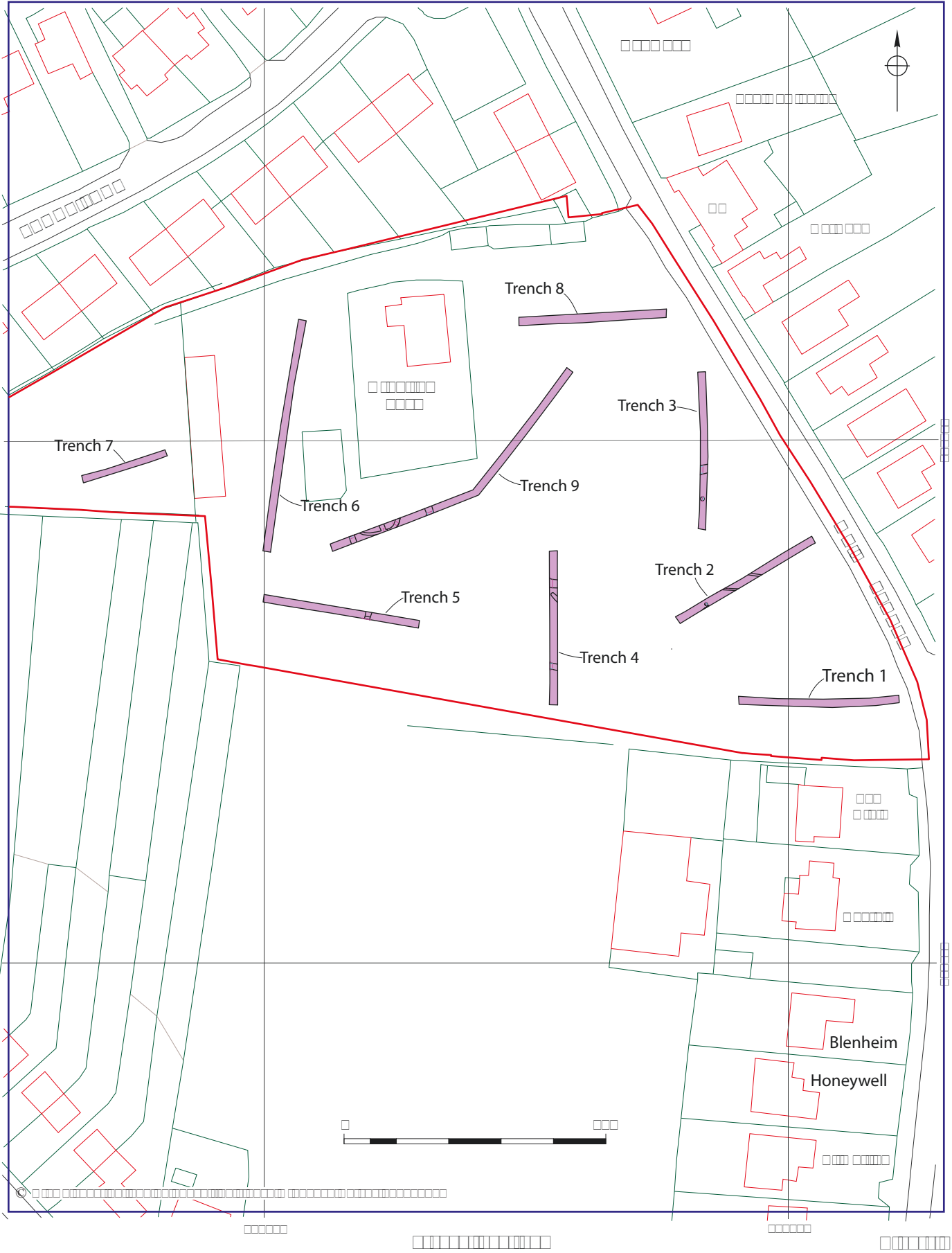
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Figures

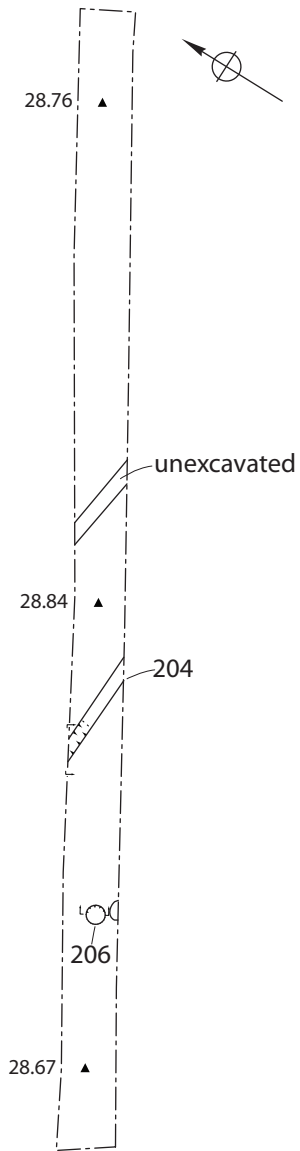


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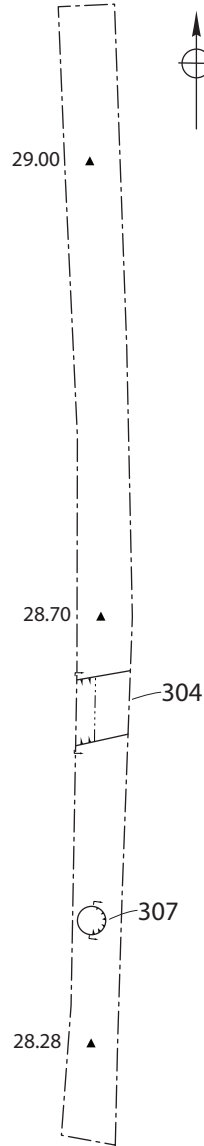




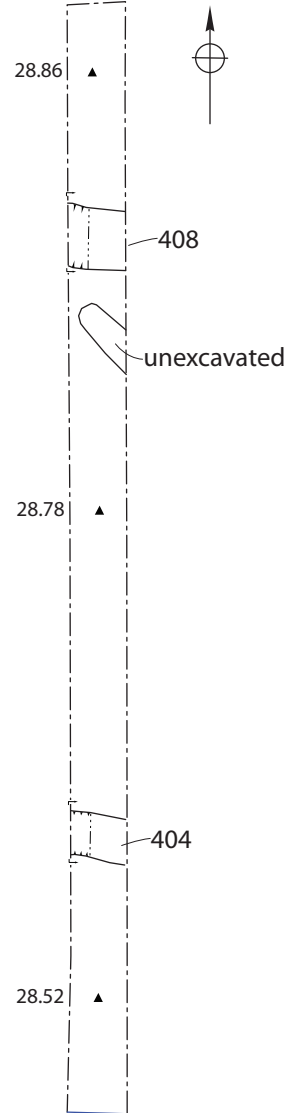
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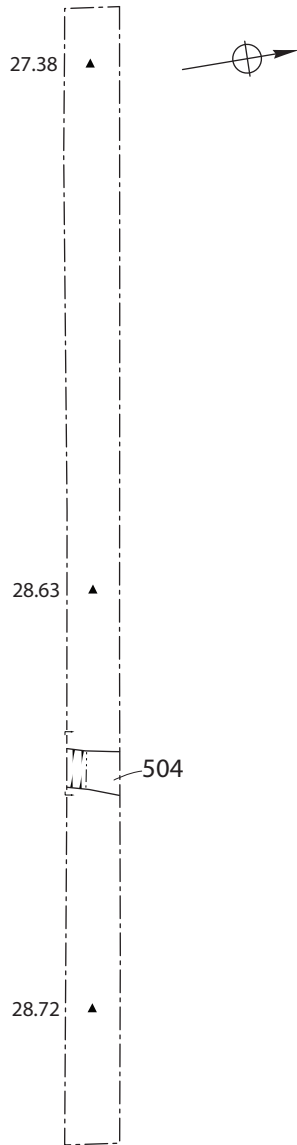
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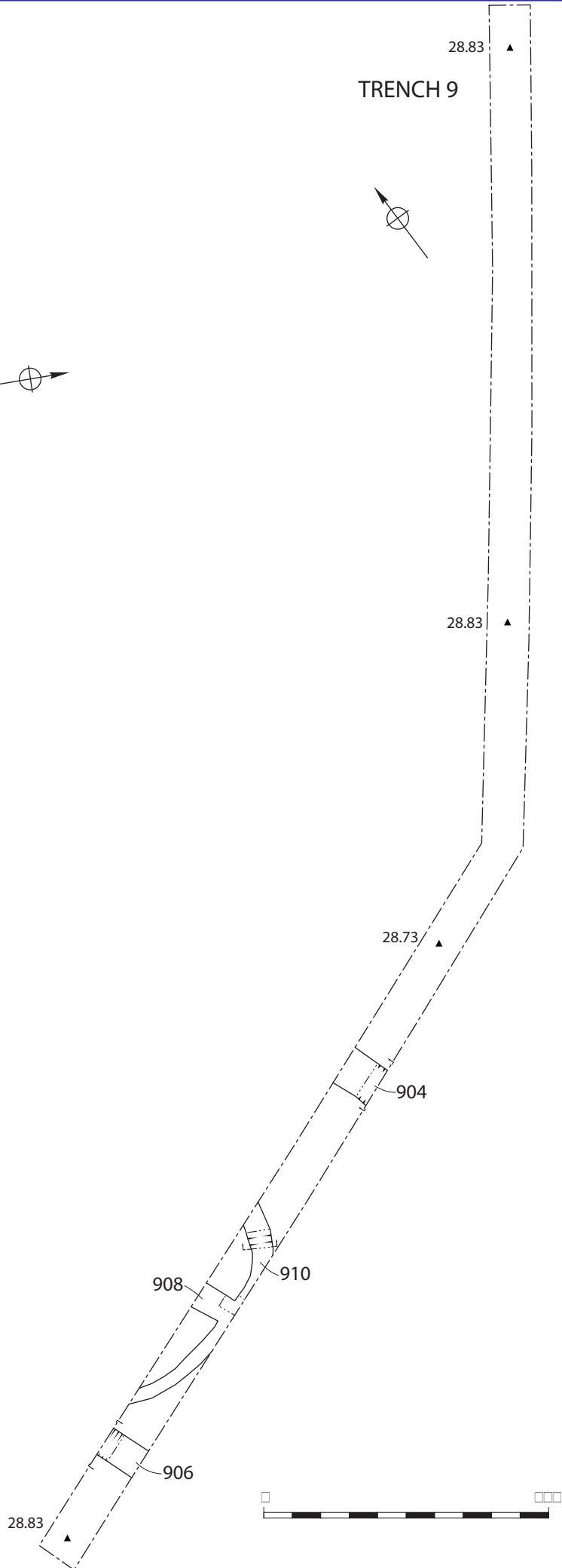
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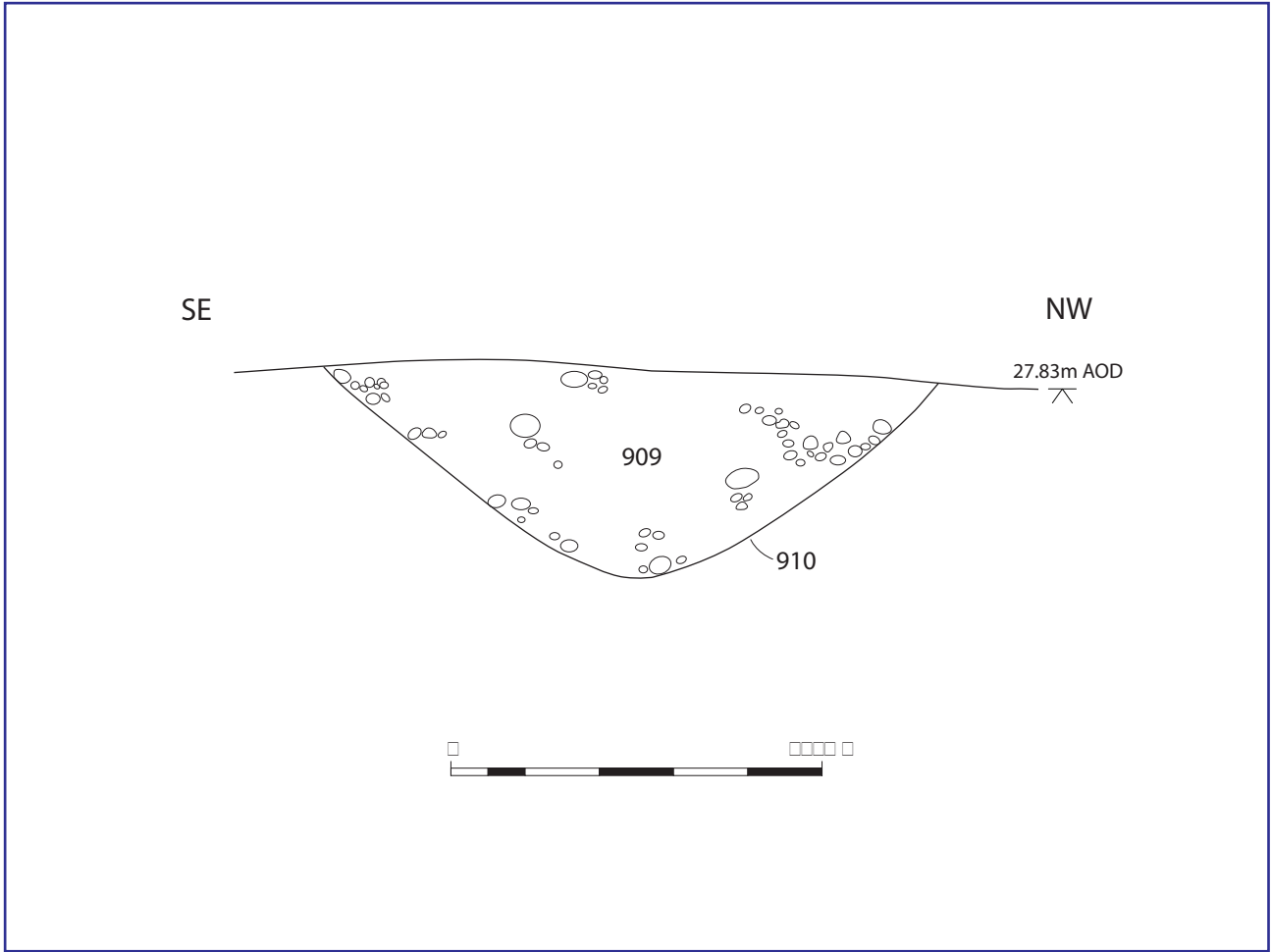


TRENCH 5



TRENCH 9





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Plates



Plate 1: Ditch [406] facing west, 1m scale



Plate 2: Possible furrow [304] facing west, 1m scale



Plate 3: Posthole [206] facing west, 0.30m scale



Plate 4: Possible curvilinear ditch [910], facing south-west, 0.50m scale



Plate 5: Trench 9 facing north-east, showing possible curvilinear [910], 2x1m scale

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30.00m Width: 1.55m Depth: 0.50-0.66m

Orientation: E-W

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil	Mid-dark greyish brown sandy loam. Moderately compacted but friable. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded stones and roots.	0.00-0.33m
101	Subsoil	Light-mid brown silty sand. Moderately compact and cohesive. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded and rounded stones. Very sterile and similar to the natural.	0.33-0.50m
102	Natural	Mid reddish-orange sands and gravels. Moderately compact and cohesive.	0.50m

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 29.50m Width: 1.55m Depth: 0.69m

Orientation: NE-SW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
200	Topsoil	Mid-dark greyish brown sandy loam. Moderately compacted but friable. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded stones and roots.	0.00-0.39m
201	Subsoil	Light-mid brown silty sand. Moderately compact and cohesive. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded and rounded stones. Very sterile and similar to the natural.	0.39-0.69m
202	Natural	Mid reddish-orange sands and gravels. Moderately compact and cohesive.	0.69m +
203	Fill	Fill of linear gully [204]. Soft and uncohesive light brown silty sand. Contains medium-large sub-rounded stones. Very sterile.	0.69-0.77m
204	Gully	Linear gully aligned east to west with a concave profile. Very shallow with diffuse edges, possibly a plough scare. 0.28m wide and 0.08m deep. Runs in parallel to a similar unexcavated feature to the north.	0.69-0.77m
205	Fill	Fill of posthole [206]. Light greyish brown, silty sand. Very loose and friable, contains frequent small-medium rounded stones.	0.69-0.88m
206	Posthole	Sub-circular posthole. Has vertical sides and flat base. Is to the north of a possible second unexcavated posthole on the trenches southern baulk.	0.69-0.87m

Trench 3

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30.00m Width: 1.55m Depth: 0.77m

Orientation: N-S

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
300	Topsoil	Mid-dark greyish brown sandy loam. Moderately compacted but friable. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded stones and roots.	0.00-0.36m
301	Subsoil	Light-mid brown silty sand. Moderately compact and cohesive. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded and rounded stones. Very sterile and similar to the natural.	0.36-0.77m
302	Natural	Mid reddish-orange sands and gravels. Moderately compact and cohesive.	0.77m+
303	Fill	Fill of east-west aligned ditch [304]. Moderately compact and cohesive light yellowish brown silty sand. Contains frequent medium-large sub-rounded stones.	0.77-0.95m
304	Ditch	East to west aligned ditch with moderate concave sides, gradually breaking to a flat base.	0.77-0.95m
305	Fill	Upper fill of posthole [307]. Light grey brown silty loam. Loose and friable, very sterile.	0.77-0.92m
306	Fill	Primary fill of posthole [307]. Soft and uncohesive, pinkish yellow sand. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded stones. Very sterile.	0.92-1.02m
307	Posthole	Sub-rounded posthole with near vertical sides and a flat base.	0.77-1.02m

Trench 4

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30.00m Width: 1.55m Depth: 0.50-0.66m

Orientation: N-S

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
400	Topsoil	Mid-dark greyish brown sandy loam. Moderately compacted but friable. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded stones and roots.	0.00-0.33m
401	Subsoil	Light-mid brown silty sand. Moderately compact and cohesive. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded and rounded stones. Very sterile and similar to the natural.	0.33-0.50m
402	Natural	Mid reddish-orange sands and gravels. Moderately compact and cohesive.	0.50+m
403	Fill	Fill of ditch [404]. Loose and friable mid brown silty sand. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded stones.	0.33-0.97m
404	Ditch	East to west aligned ditch. Has steep, slightly concave sides breaking sharply to a concave base. Cuts through the subsoil (401).0.54m wide and 0.64m deep.	0.33-0.97m
405	Fill	Fill of linear gully [406]. Soft and friable mid-dark greyish brown silty loam. Contains frequent small sub-rounded stones.	0.52-0.86m
406	Ditch	East to west aligned ditch/gully. With flat vertical sides and a flat base. Cuts subsoil (401) and ditch [408]. 0.24m wide and 0.34m deep.	0.52-0.86m
407	Fill	Fill of ditch [408]. Very loose and friable light greyish brown sandy silt. Contains small-medium sub rounded stones. Very sterile.	0.50-0.66m
408	Ditch	East to west aligned linear with a shallow concave profile. Filled by (407), 0.74m wide and 0.16m deep.	0.50-0.66m

Trench 5

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30.00m Width: 1.55m Depth: 0.70m

Orientation: E-W

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
500	Topsoil	Mid-dark greyish brown sandy loam. Moderately compacted but friable. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded stones and roots.	0.00-0.44m
501	Subsoil	Light-mid brown silty sand. Moderately compact and cohesive. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded and rounded stones. Very sterile and similar to the natural.	0.44-0.70m
502	Natural	Mid reddish-orange sands and gravels. Moderately compact and cohesive.	0.70m
503	Fill	Fill of ditch [504]. Soft and moderately cohesive. Mid to dark brown silty loam. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded stones and occasional pea grit.	0.44-0.96m
504	Ditch	North to south aligned ditch with moderate 45° flat sides breaking to a slightly concave base. 1.25m wide and 0.51m deep.	0.44-0.96m

Trench 6

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30.00m Width: 1.55m Depth: 0.76m

Orientation: N-S

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
600	Topsoil	Mid-dark greyish brown sandy loam. Moderately compacted but friable. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded stones and roots.	0.00-0.38m
601	Subsoil	Light-mid brown silty sand. Moderately compact and cohesive. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded and rounded stones. Very sterile and similar to the natural.	0.38-0.70m
602	Natural	Mid reddish-orange sands and gravels. Moderately compact and cohesive.	0.70m+

Trench 7

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30.00m Width: 1.55m Depth: 0.70m

Orientation: N-S

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
700	Topsoil	Mid-dark greyish brown sandy loam. Moderately compacted but friable. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded stones and roots.	0.00-0.30m
701	Subsoil	Light-mid brown silty sand. Moderately compact and cohesive. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded and rounded stones. Very sterile and similar to the natural.	0.30-0.62m
702	Natural	Mid reddish-orange sands and gravels. Moderately compact and cohesive.	0.62m+

Trench 8

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30.00m Width: 1.55m Depth: 0.60m

Orientation: E-W

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
800	Topsoil	Mid-dark greyish brown sandy loam. Moderately compacted but friable. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded stones and roots.	0.00-0.32m
801	Subsoil	Light-mid brown silty sand. Moderately compact and cohesive. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded and rounded stones. Very sterile and similar to the natural.	0.32-0.55m
802	Natural	Mid reddish-orange sands and gravels. Moderately compact and cohesive.	0.55m+

Trench 9

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30.00m Width: 1.55m Depth: 0.72m

Orientation: NE-SW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
900	Topsoil	Mid-dark greyish brown sandy loam. Moderately compacted but friable. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded stones and roots.	0.00-0.34m
901	Subsoil	Light-mid brown silty sand. Moderately compact and cohesive. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded and rounded stones. Very sterile and similar to the natural.	0.34-0.72m
902	Natural	Mid reddish-orange sands and gravels. Moderately compact and cohesive.	0.72m+
903	Fill	Fill of ditch [904]. Soft and loose light greyish brown sands and gravels. Contains occasional pea grit.	0.72-0.94m
904	Ditch	North south aligned ditch with moderate 45° flat sides gradually breaking to a flattish base. 1.20m wide and 0.22m deep.	0.72-0.94m
905	Fill	Fill of ditch [906]. Soft and friable light-mid yellowish brown sandy silt. Contains frequent medium-large sub-rounded stones.	0.72-0.89m
906	Ditch	North to south aligned linear with moderate slightly concave sides and a concave base. 0.82m wide and 0.17m deep.	0.72-0.89m
907	Fill	Fill of linear [908]. Soft and friable light-mid yellowish brown sandy silt. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded stones.	0.72-0.93m
908	Ditch	North to south aligned linear with moderate slightly concave sides and a flat base. 1.20m wide and 0.21m deep.	0.72-0.93m
909	Fill	Fill of linear [910]. Soft and loose mid-dark greyish brown sandy silt. Contains frequent small-medium sub-rounded stones.	0.72-1.01m
910	Ditch	Possible curvilinear ditch. With moderate 45° flattish sides, gradually breaking to a flattish base. 0.81m wide and 0.29m deep.	0.72-1.01m

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive (site code: WSM 47399)

The archive consists of:

- 15 Context records AS1
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 93 Digital photographs
- 1 Drawing number catalogues AS4
- 11 Scale drawings
- 9 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum
Museums Worcestershire
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416
