

# Archaeological evaluation of land off the A38, Coombe Hill, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire



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# Contents

## Summary

1

## Report

<b>1 Background</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 Reasons for the project	2
<b>2 Aims</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3 Methods</b>	<b>2</b>
3.1 Personnel	2
3.2 Documentary research	3
3.3 Fieldwork strategy	3
3.4 Structural analysis	3
3.5 Artefact methodology, by Laura Griffin	3
3.5.1 Artefact recovery policy	3
3.5.2 Method of analysis	3
3.5.3 Discard policy	4
3.6 Environmental archaeology methodology, by Elizabeth Pearson	4
3.6.1 Sampling policy	4
3.6.2 Processing and analysis	4
3.6.3 Discard policy	4
3.7 Statement of confidence in the methods and results	5
<b>4 The application site</b>	<b>5</b>
4.1 Topography, geology and current land use	5
4.2 Archaeological context	5
<b>5 Results</b>	<b>5</b>
5.1 Structural analysis	5
5.2 Trench descriptions	5
5.2.1 Natural deposits across the site	5
5.2.2 Trench 1	6
5.2.3 Trench 2	6
5.2.4 Trench 3	6
5.2.5 Trench 4	6
5.2.6 Trench 5	6
5.2.7 Trench 6	7
5.2.8 Trench 7	7
5.2.9 Trench 8	7
5.3 Artefact analysis, by Laura Griffin	7
5.3.1 Summary artefactual evidence by period	8
5.4 Environmental analysis, by Elizabeth Pearson	10
<b>6 Synthesis</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>7 Significance</b>	<b>13</b>
7.1 Nature of the archaeological interest in the site	13
7.2 Relative importance of the archaeological interest in the site	13
7.3 Physical extent of the archaeological interest in the site	13
<b>8 Publication summary</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>9 Acknowledgements</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>10 Bibliography</b>	<b>14</b>



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## **Archaeological evaluation of land off the A38, Coombe Hill, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire**

By Richard Bradley and Graham Arnold

With contributions by Laura Griffin and Elizabeth Pearson

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt and Laura Templeton

### **Summary**

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land to the east of the A38, at Coombe Hill, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire (NGR 388931, 227231). It was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, for Robert Hitchins Limited and Bovis Homes Limited who intend that the land be developed for residential purposes, for which an outline planning permission will be to Tewkesbury Borough Council.

Eight trenches, seven of which were 30m in length, the other 9.50m in length, were excavated across a single field. The trenches were arranged in a non-gridded array in order to interrogate and characterise known geophysical anomalies and to test the quality of capture from the survey in blank areas.

Archaeological remains of varying significance were identified. Where geophysical anomalies had been highlighted there was a good correlation with features observed, particularly plough furrows. There was also an archaeological component to the site beyond that located through geophysical survey, namely a number of small gullies or small pit and posthole features of at least two phases of activity. Roman (probably early Roman) and post-medieval artefacts were recovered, although a number of the features actually appeared more characteristic of prehistoric activity. The majority of these appeared to be restricted to the south-east part of the site, in an area of lower-lying and boggy ground, and it may be that they are reflective of more ephemeral activity rather than direct settlement.

## Report

### 1 Background

#### 1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land to the east of the A38, at Coombe Hill, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire (NGR SO 388931, 227231; Figure 1). This comprised the excavation of eight trenches in a broad array across a single field (Plate 1). It was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, for Robert Hitchins Limited and Bovis Homes Limited who intend that the land be developed for residential purposes, for which an outline planning permission will be submitted to Tewkesbury Borough Council

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA; CgMs 2017) and a geophysical survey (undertaken by Magnitude Surveys in 2017; pers comm Neil Wright, CgMs) were undertaken prior to the evaluation. The DBA reported an absence of designated heritage assets on the site, although ridge and furrow had previously been identified (as part of the Severn Vale National Mapping Project). There were also no designated or non-designated assets within the immediate vicinity. It was concluded that there was a low potential for the site to contain archaeological remains of significance. The geophysical survey located the suspected ridge and furrow cultivation orientated broadly east to west across the site, as well as a small number of possible anomalies, some of which were thought to represent infilled boundary ditches.

It was therefore considered that the proposed development had the potential to affect the survival of below ground archaeological remains. As a result, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) required a programme of archaeological evaluation to determine the potential significance of the archaeological resource.

No specific brief was provided but a trench plan was produced by CgMs and agreed with Charles Parry (Gloucestershire County Council Archaeologist), as a result of which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2017). The evaluation was carried out following this trench arrangement and the generic brief previously issued by the planning authority (Gloucestershire County Council 2016), as well as industry guidelines and standards set out in *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014a).

### 2 Aims

The archaeological evaluation aimed, in general terms, to investigate the archaeological potential of the site and, where present, to characterise and date it. This was broken down into a series of aims set out in the WSI (WA 2017) as the following:

- determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits beyond reasonable doubt;
- identify their location, nature, date and preservation;
- assess their significance;
- assess the likely impact of the proposed development.

Based on the DBA and the geophysical survey, it was anticipated that any potential archaeological remains on the site were likely to be of medieval date and related to agricultural activities.

### 3 Methods

#### 3.1 Personnel

The project was led by Richard Bradley (BA (hons.), MA; ACIfA), who has been practicing archaeology since 2005, assisted by Morgan Murphy (BA (hons.); MA). Graham Arnold (BA (hons.); MSc) assisted with the preparation of the report. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan (BA (hons.); MA; ACIfA). Illustrations were prepared by

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Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MCIfA) and Laura Templeton (BA; PG Cert; MCIfA). Elizabeth Pearson (MSc; ACIfA) contributed the environmental report and Laura Griffin (BA (hons.); PG Cert; ACIfA) contributed the finds report.

### 3.2 Documentary research

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) of the site was prepared by CgMs Consulting (CgMs 2017). This document, alongside the WSI, provides detailed research and background information on the project and is therefore not repeated in this report. Only a brief summary on the historical and archaeological background is presented below (Section 4.2).

The DBA consulted the Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) and the National Heritage List (NHL), analysing a search area with a 1km radius from the centre of the site. This provided access to records of archaeological sites, monuments and findspots within the search area. Gloucestershire Archives were also visited in order to examine historic maps relating to the site and a site walkover was conducted.

### 3.3 Fieldwork strategy

The detailed methodology was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2017). The fieldwork was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology between 15 and 17 August 2017. The project reference number used by Worcestershire Archaeology is P5116.

Eight trenches, seven of which were 30m in length and 1.80m in width, the other 9.50m in length (totalling just over 395m<sup>2</sup>), were excavated across the site area of 1.86ha, representing a sample of 2.15%. The trenches were arranged in a non-gridded array in order to interrogate and characterise known geophysical anomalies and to test the quality of capture from the geophysical survey in blank areas. One trench (Trench 1) was shifted from its intended alignment due to the proximity of an overhead service. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

It was initially intended that only seven trenches be opened, but due to the potential prehistoric or Roman features revealed in Trench 6 an extension perpendicular to this was opened following discussion with the consultant and curator (Trench 8).

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked 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 Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012) and feature locations were surveyed using a differential GPS with an accuracy limit set at <0.04m. On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

### 3.4 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.

### 3.5 Artefact methodology, by Laura Griffin

The finds work reported on here conforms with the following guidance: for finds work by ClfA (2014b), for archive creation by AAF (2011) and for museum deposition by SMA (1993).

#### 3.5.1 Artefact recovery policy

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

#### 3.5.2 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 *pro forma* sheets.

For the purposes of this assessment, pottery sherds have not been quantified by specific fabric or form type but general composition of the group has been noted and is discussed below.

### 3.5.3 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;
- where material has been specifically assessed as having no obvious grounds for retention.

### 3.6 Environmental archaeology methodology, by Elizabeth Pearson

The environmental project conforms to relevant sections of *Environmental Archaeology: a guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation* (English Heritage 2011), and *Environmental archaeology and archaeological evaluations* (AEA 1995).

#### 3.6.1 Sampling policy

Samples were taken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). A total of two samples (each of 20 litres) from pits thought to be of prehistoric to Roman date were taken from the site (Environmental Table 1).

Context	Sample	Feature type	Fill of	Period	Sample volume (L)	Volume processed (L)	Residue assessed	Flot assessed
605	1	Pit	606	?Early Roman	20	10	Yes	Yes
607	2	Pit	608	?Early Roman	20	10	Yes	Yes

*Environmental Table 1: List of bulk samples*

#### 3.6.2 Processing and analysis

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

The residues were scanned by eye and the abundance of each category of environmental remains estimated. A magnet was also used to test for the presence of hammerstone. 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*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Stace 2010).

Animal bone hand-collected from six contexts was catalogued according to number of fragments and weight (g) by context.

#### 3.6.3 Discard policy

Remaining sample material and scanned residues will be discarded after a period of 3 months following submission of this report unless there is a specific request to retain them.



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### 3.7 Statement of confidence in the methods and results

There were practical difficulties in some of the trenches due to ground water, so it was only possible for investigation of the most obvious features before the trenches became unworkable. Overall however, the methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

## 4 The application site

### 4.1 Topography, geology and current land use

The site comprises a portion of a single agricultural field in arable use adjacent to the A38 road, which bounds the site to the west. To the south is the A4019 road and to the east and north are hedged fields. It slopes from a plateau c 28m AOD in the west to c 24m AOD in the east, with a noticeable dip into the south-eastern corner of the site (Plate 1). The nearest watercourse, the Leigh Brook, is located c 500m east of the site.

The underlying solid geology is varied; in the north-west, the main part of the site, it comprises Interbedded Mudstone and Limestone of the Wilmcote Limestone Member with no superficial deposits, but the south-east corner is mapped as mudstones of the Salford Shale Member overlain by clay, silt and sand alluvium (BGS 2017).

### 4.2 Archaeological context

As detailed in the desk-based assessment (CgMs 2017) and briefly mentioned above, there are no designated heritage assets on the site. However, ridge and furrow cultivation had been previously mapped (HEA 1581657). Prior to the geophysical survey being undertaken, there were no documented earlier archaeological investigations of the site.

No evidence for prehistoric or Roman activity has been identified within or in close proximity to the site and the area is thought to have been agricultural land since at least the early medieval period. Historic mapping demonstrates that the site was used for agricultural purposes throughout the post-medieval and modern period.

## 5 Results

### 5.1 Structural analysis

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

There were a number of archaeological features and deposits encountered, of varying significance, and some of these remained unexcavated at this stage. Only limited secure dating evidence was recovered and the phasing remains unclear, so the features are described on a trench by trench basis in the following section, rather than by phase, for ease of location.

### 5.2 Trench descriptions

#### 5.2.1 Natural deposits across the site

Natural deposits were encountered in all eight of the trenches excavated and differed between the north-west and south-east parts of the site, in line with the mapped geological variation.

In the north-west, Trenches 1 to 4 were located on a compact natural substrate of mixed light blue-grey clay with interbedded plated limestone (Plate 2), encountered between 0.40-0.45m below the current ground surface. Trench 5 was located across the change between this limestone substrate and a firm mid-reddish-yellow brown sandy clay found in Trenches 6 to 8 in the south-east of the site (Plates 5 and 6). The natural substrate in this area was identified at between 0.74-0.78m below the current ground surface.

### 5.2.2 Trench 1

In Trench 1, 0.26m of dark grey-brown clay silt topsoil and 0.15m of firm light yellow-grey brown clay silt subsoil overlay the archaeological features.

Towards the north-eastern end of the trench was a 1.5m wide linear cut [104] filled with material similar to the subsoil, identified as a furrow, and aligned roughly north-west to south-east. This correlated with the pattern of furrows located on the geophysical survey in this area of the site.

### 5.2.3 Trench 2

Similar deposits of topsoil (0.24m thick) and subsoil (0.20m thick) were present in Trench 2. In the centre of the trench was a slightly irregular linear feature [204], on an east to west alignment. This was a maximum of 0.20m in depth and contained a sterile fill similar to the subsoil, with a small, relatively un-corroded square-headed nail. It was not securely dated but was potentially of medieval or post-medieval date.

South-east of this was a probable pit feature, oval in shape and located at the edge of the trench [206] (Plate 3). This was up to 0.31m in depth and contained a single highly compacted fill with a few pieces of tile, ceramic building material (CBM) and coal within, suggesting a late medieval to post-medieval date.

### 5.2.4 Trench 3

Trench 3 contained 0.26m thick topsoil and 0.14m thick subsoil. In the north-eastern half of the trench were two parallel features, [304] and [306], that both correlated with the alignment of furrows on the geophysical survey. One of these contained two pieces of 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century pottery and the other a number of brick and tile fragments of general post-medieval date.

South-west of the furrows, and on the same alignment, were two small and very shallow parallel gully features, partly visible in the subsoil but mostly ploughed away and hence difficult to define in plan. One was excavated and found to be 0.50m in width and 0.10m in maximum depth [310]. Small fragments of abraded Roman pottery recovered from the compact fill are likely to be residual, as the gully appears to correlate with a geophysical anomaly in the location of a former field boundary visible on historic mapping until at least 1971 (see CgMs 2017, figures 3-7).

### 5.2.5 Trench 4

A single possible pit feature was identified in Trench 4, sealed by topsoil (0.26m thick) and subsoil (0.19m thick). The pit [404] was slightly irregular in plan and had an unusual profile (Plate 4), undercutting natural limestone plating in places, which may indicate that it was actually a naturally weathered depression within the geology. It did, however, contain a small piece of animal bone and tiny fragments of CBM and pot which could be Roman in date, although these were so small that they may be residual.

### 5.2.6 Trench 5

There were a variety of features located in Trench 5, which was positioned across a change in geology and suffered from water ingress in the south-east half of the trench.

Two rectangular features [504] and [506] were immediately visible below 0.25m of topsoil and both contained a mix of redeposited natural siltstone and clay, appearing to be the result of modern intrusion with a machine bucket. These partially truncated what was identified as a north-west to south-east aligned furrow [508], although this was only visible along the edge of the trench so this is uncertain, and a possible ditch [510], both of which became filled with water so could not be fully investigated.

In the centre of the trench was a 2m wide ditch [513], aligned north-east to south-west, which correlated with the location of a geophysical anomaly. This marked the boundary between the differing geologies in the field. The ditch was sealed by banded layers of redeposited natural

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slumping down the sloping ground, suggestive of modern landscaping, although the ditch fill itself contained small fragments of abraded Roman pottery which may indicate an earlier origin.

### 5.2.7 Trench 6

Trench 6, located in the lower south-eastern corner of the site, contained archaeological features sealed by 0.34m of topsoil, 0.21m of subsoil and a secondary subsoil layer, 0.19m in depth, probably formed through colluvial erosion downslope.

There was groundwater ingress throughout but it was possible to sample two adjacent and comparable oval pit features in the centre of the trench (Fig 4; Plate 5). The southernmost of the pair, [606], was slightly larger, being 1.42m in width and 0.30m in depth, containing a single compact dark greyish black silty fill with abundant fire-cracked stones and charcoal. There were numerous pieces of animal bone and fired clay in the fill, as well as pottery of probable early Roman date, although this is not certain. The smaller pit, [608], 1.18m wide and 0.28m in depth, had a similar infill with numerous pieces of animal bone but no ceramic material.

South of the pits was a small irregular spread of burnt stone [604] extending from the edge of the trench. This was comparable to a cluster of similar features observed in Trench 8. To the north there was a furrow, [610], and a small possible posthole feature [612] that remained under water and was therefore unexcavated.

### 5.2.8 Trench 7

The same deeper sequence of topsoil (0.39m), subsoil (0.26m) and lower subsoil (0.19m) was present in Trench 7. This sealed a small gully feature [712], 0.45m in width and 0.41m in depth, that contained animal bone and a piece of Roman pottery (Fig 5; Plate 6). The gully was in the centre of the trench and ran downslope and parallel to a series of evenly spaced furrows that were aligned with anomalies identified on the geophysical survey. These remained covered by groundwater throughout the trench but animal bone and a piece of Roman pottery was recovered from the surface of one of these features.

### 5.2.9 Trench 8

Trench 8 was opened as a small extension perpendicular to Trench 6, at the request of the curator Charles Parry, and was aligned parallel with Trench 7 (Figs 2 and 3). A cluster of similar features to those observed in Trench 6 were located and recorded in plan, all containing dark fills with fire-cracked stone (Plate 7). There were two irregular spreads, [805] and [807], and a possible posthole [809]. Unfortunately, due to groundwater ingress, they were only accessible for a short time. No finds were recovered.

## 5.3 Artefact analysis, by Laura Griffin

The assemblage totalled 116 finds weighing 2015g (see Finds Table 1). Finds came from 17 stratified contexts and could be dated from the early Roman period onwards. Using pottery as an index of artefact condition, this was mixed, with sherds from most areas of the site displaying low to moderate levels of abrasion, whilst those from Trench 6 in particular were highly abraded and appeared to have been affected by waterlogging. The average sherd size was above average at 13.6g, although once more, this varied depending on which part of the site the sherds were retrieved from.

A small amount of animal bone was also retrieved from the site and is summarised in the tables below.

material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight (g)
ceramic		pot	25	340
ceramic		brick	2	19
ceramic		roof tile	5	152
ceramic		tile	5	169
ceramic		cbm	8	6
ceramic		?cbm	1	1
ceramic		clay pipe	1	3
ceramic	fired clay		15	45
metal	iron	horseshoe	1	529
metal	iron	nail	1	6
coal			3	3
stone			4	2
bone	animal bone		45	740

*Finds Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage*

### 5.3.1 Summary artefactual evidence by period

The discussion below is a summary of the finds and of their associated location or contexts by period. Where possible, dates have been allocated, and the importance of individual finds commented upon as necessary.

#### *Roman*

Five contexts could be dated to the Roman period (see Finds Table 2). Material of this date consisted of 21 sherds of pottery and three pieces of ceramic tile. In addition, there were five very small fragments of undiagnostic ceramic building material that could not be dated independently but were found in contexts alongside other finds of Roman date.

The majority of the pottery comprised sherds of locally produced oxidised wares. The finest of these were identified as Seven Valley ware. In addition, a fragment of samian ware (context 507) and two very small, abraded fragments of a black quartz-tempered fabric (contexts 309 and 512) were also retrieved.

Diagnostic sherds recovered from the topsoil of Trench 7 (context 700) included the rim from a narrow-necked Severn Valley ware jar of late 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century date and a further jar rim in a coarser oxidised fabric which could be dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century.

All tile was undiagnostic but the larger fragments in the group were of a distinctive poorly mixed fabric with streaks of white clay and white clay pellets (contexts 505 and 507).

In addition to the above, 15 fragments of undiagnostic fired clay from Trench 6 were considered likely to be of Roman date, although this is not conclusive. All came from the charcoal-rich fills containing fire-cracked stone of two adjacent pits (fills 605 and 607). The largest group came from pit [606] and was friable and dark grey/black in colour. The friable fabric and amorphous form of this clay would suggest it to have been accidentally, rather than deliberately, fired. Associated pottery from this feature was highly abraded but appeared to come from a thick-walled vessel of a fine, organically tempered oxidised fabric which may be of early Roman date.

In contrast, the ceramic fragments from pit [608] were oxidised with distinctive crazed surfaces, reminiscent of those seen when wet, unfired clay dries out. Therefore, even though the largest

fragment appears to have a definite surface, these cracks may indicate that this clay was accidentally fired.

#### *Late medieval–early post-medieval*

Material of late medieval/post-medieval date consisted of six fragments of roof tile (contexts 205, 305 and 700), four fragments of undiagnostic ceramic building material (CBM; context 205) and one fragment of pottery (context 305).

#### *Post-medieval*

Material of post-medieval date came from the topsoil and a furrow, and consisted of a clay pipe stem (context 200), a flat roof tile (context 700) and three sherds of pottery (contexts 303 and 700). All could be dated late 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century.

#### *Modern*

The latest material in the assemblage consisted of a well-fired brick (context 305) and a large horse-shoe (context 300).

context	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight (g)	start date	end date	finds tpq
200	ceramic		clay pipe	1	3			post-medieval
203	metal	iron	nail	1	6			medieval/post-medieval
205	ceramic		roof tile	4	43	L15C	16C	L15-16C
205	ceramic		cbm	4	1			
205	organic		coal	2	1			
300	metal	iron	horseshoe	1	529			L18-20C
303	ceramic		pot	2	26	L16C	18C	L16-18C
305	ceramic		brick	2	19	18C	19C	18th–19C
305	ceramic		tile	1	3	L15C	16C	
305	ceramic		pot	1	1	15C	16C	
305	ceramic		pot	1	2	M1C	4C	
309	ceramic		pot	1	1	M1C	4C	
309	ceramic		pot	1	1	M1C	4C	Roman (but probably residual)
309	ceramic		cbm	1	1			
403	ceramic		pot	1	1	M1C	4C	Roman (but probably residual)
403	ceramic		cbm	1	2			
403	bone	animal bone	tooth	1	5			
500	ceramic		pot	1	14	M1C	4C	Roman

505	ceramic		tile	1	26	M1C	4C	Roman (but residual)
507	ceramic		tile	2	95	M1C	4C	Roman (but residual)
507	ceramic		pot	1	1	M1C	4C	
507			coal	1	2			
512	ceramic		pot	9	6	M1C	4C	Roman
512	ceramic		cbm	3	3			
512	bone	animal bone		1	1			
605	bone	animal bone		17	175			?early Roman
605	ceramic		pot	2	99	?M1C	2C	
605	ceramic	fired clay		13	38			
607	bone	animal bone		9	16			?Roman
607	stone		burnt	4	2			
607	ceramic	fired clay		2	7			
700	ceramic		pot	1	13	L1C	2C	18C
700	ceramic		pot	1	98	2C	4C	
700	ceramic		roof tile(flat)	1	109	18C		
700	ceramic		pot	1	48	16C	18C	
700	ceramic		tile	1	45			
703	bone	animal bone		12	515			Roman
703	ceramic		pot	1	12	M1C	4C	
709	ceramic		pot	1	17	M1C	4C	Roman
709	bone	animal bone		5	28			

*Finds Table 2: Summary of context dating based on artefacts; some Roman material has been judged residual based on condition or where it is known to come from a feature considered to be of later date*

#### 5.4 Environmental analysis, by Elizabeth Pearson

The results are summarised in Environmental Tables 2, 3 and 4.

Uncharred remains, consisting of mainly grass or cereal culm node (stem) fragments could be contemporary with the deposits, as some waterlogging was noticeable during fieldwork. However, they may equally be modern and intrusive as they are commonly present in samples from dry sites where uncharred debris is unlikely to have survived in the soils on site for long without charring or waterlogging.

Preservation of environmental remains was poor in both samples. Only small unidentifiable charcoal fragments were recovered, alongside abraded unidentifiable fragments of large mammal

bone. Little interpretation could be made of these remains, although the charcoal may be suitable for scientific dating should this be required.

context	material class	material subtype	count	weight(g)	Feature type	Period
403	bone	animal bone	1	5	Pit	?Roman
512	bone	animal bone	1	1	Ditch	?Roman
605	bone	animal bone	17	175	Pit	?Early Roman
607	bone	animal bone	9	16	Pit	?Early Roman
703	bone	animal bone	12	515	Furrow	Post-medieval
709	bone	animal bone	5	28	Gully	Roman

Environmental Table 2: Hand-collected animal bone

context	sample	large mammal	mollusc	charcoal	uncharred plant	artefacts
605	1	occ		occ	occ*	abt heat-affected stones.
607	2	occ	occ	occ	occ*	occ Fe slag?, abt heat-affected stones.

Environmental Table 3: Summary of environmental remains; occ = occasional, abt = abundant, \* = probably modern and intrusive

context	sample	preservation type	species detail	category remains	quantity/diversity	comment
605	1	ch	unidentified wood fragments	misc	+/low	small fragments
605	1	?wa	Poaceae sp indet stem frags	misc	+/low	probably modern and intrusive
607	2	ch	unidentified wood fragments	misc	+/low	small fragments
607	2	?wa	Cereal sp indet culm node	misc	+/low	probably modern and intrusive

Environmental Table 4: Plant remains from bulk samples

**Key:**

preservation	quantity
ch = charred	+ = 1 - 10
min = mineralised	++ = 11- 50
wa = waterlogged	+++ = 51 - 100
?wa = waterlogged or uncharred	++++ = 101+

## 6 Synthesis

The evaluation has established that the site contains a number of archaeological features, of varying date range and significance. There were at least two phases of activity; Roman (probably early Roman) and post-medieval artefacts were recovered, although a number of the features actually appeared more morphologically characteristic of prehistoric activity. Even though the features were, in general, widely dispersed across all of the trenches, a clear focus of more significant activity was identified in the lower-lying south-east part of the site (Trenches 6, 7 and 8).

Where geophysical anomalies had been highlighted there was a good correlation with features observed in the trenches, particularly the furrows. There was also an archaeological component to the site beyond that located through geophysical survey, namely a number of small gullies or small pit and posthole features that were probably not large enough to show up on the survey. Given this variation, it is not certain if the lack of geophysical anomalies may demonstrate a real absence of archaeology, although a lack of substantial features or a sizeable artefact assemblage would potentially support the absence of significant or large-scale settlement-related activity from the geophysical results across much of the site area.

### *Prehistoric to Roman*

There was clearly a Roman presence on the site based on the recovery of artefacts, possibly early Roman, although a number of pieces were very small and abraded suggesting that they were residual and disturbed by later activity. The majority came from the trenches in the south-east part of the site (Trenches 5 - 8), but not exclusively, and the most diagnostic pieces were from the topsoil of Trench 7. Within this trench was a small gully, possibly used for downslope drainage, which contained Roman pottery, as well as a series of furrows.

The concentration of features identified in Trench 6 and Trench 8 are currently dated as early Roman but this is largely based on an abraded fragment of organically tempered vessel fragment from one of the pits in Trench 6. However, the deposits within the pits, which were similar to the spreads of material seen in Trench 8, contained fire-cracked stones, charcoal and fired clay fragments, appearing more characteristic of prehistoric activity such as that associated with a burnt mound. Additionally, all of the features in this area were buried below much deeper soil deposits than elsewhere on site, being situated in a lower-lying boggy depression suffering from waterlogging. Although it is uncertain as to how long this area has been in this condition, it may suggest that it was not ideal for earlier occupation, particularly in winter. Whilst the material clearly demonstrates the presence of waste from burning, the nature of the features and the ground conditions may indicate that permanent habitation of this area was not possible and that the archaeology could be reflective of more ephemeral activity.

Elsewhere, there was a shallow ditch located in Trench 5 that was potentially Roman in date, although the pottery was very small and fragmentary. It was probably a boundary ditch. This appeared to mark the change in nature of the landscape within the field (and reflect the change in geology). Similarly, the irregular pit feature in Trench 4 is provisionally dated as Roman, based on a tiny piece of abraded pottery, but this was isolated and more akin to the late-medieval/post-medieval pit found in Trench 2.

### *Later activity*

Plough furrows were identified in Trenches 1, 3, 6 and 7, and were all regularly spaced and aligned broadly north-west to south-east, corresponding with the geophysical survey and corroborating the previously recorded evidence for ridge and furrow in the field. These were probably part of an open field system surrounding Coombe Hill in the medieval and post-medieval periods, with the artefacts recovered suggesting a 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date.

The shallow ditch and the pit identified in Trench 2 are likely to be associated with this later agricultural landscape, but had no obvious function. In Trench 5, the boundary ditch of potential



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Roman date was overlain by a series of redeposited natural deposits that appeared to reflect an attempt to build up the ground in this area towards the bottom of the slope.

## **7 Significance**

### **7.1 Nature of the archaeological interest in the site**

The archaeological features observed on this site were varied, but appear to demonstrate a focus of prehistoric or early Roman activity within a low-lying area, as well as the remains of a late-medieval or post-medieval agricultural landscape. Features identified included pits, spreads of fire-cracked stone, a small gully, shallow ditches and a number of plough furrows.

The artefactual assemblage contained a number of pieces of Roman pottery, both stratified and residual, and is indicative of at least some Roman activity on site, probably small-scale but potentially related to nearby settlement. Later artefacts were representative of agricultural land-use in the 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Environmental remains of low significance were recovered from two samples and have a low potential to contribute towards the interpretation of the site.

### **7.2 Relative importance of the archaeological interest in the site**

The remains observed during the evaluation demonstrate an archaeological site of variable importance, with some features of limited significance and others that demonstrate a site of higher potential.

The late-medieval or post-medieval furrows and shallow ditches suggest a site important at a local level for improving understanding of agricultural land use in the immediate area of Coombe Hill.

The presence of pits containing heat-cracked stone and other features in a group that are possibly prehistoric or early Roman date have the potential to be of local or regional significance.

### **7.3 Physical extent of the archaeological interest in the site**

The archaeological remains relating to later agricultural activity were observed across the majority of the site.

The main archaeological interest appears to be restricted to the south-east part of the site, where there was a concentration of more significant features (Trenches 6 - 8). Some continued beyond the trench limits and were of a reasonable size. Whilst it is uncertain exactly how far beyond the trenches the archaeological remains will survive, they appeared to be restricted to the lower-lying part of the site. In this area, the topsoil and subsoil was extensive and the archaeology was therefore more deeply buried. The features are, however, still likely to be vulnerable to any intrusive groundworks.

## **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. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land to the east of the A38, at Coombe Hill, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire (NGR 388931, 227231). It was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, for Robert Hitchins Limited and Bovis Homes Limited, who intend that the land be developed for residential purposes.*

*Eight trenches, seven of which were 30m in length, the other 9.50m in length, were excavated across a single field. The trenches were arranged in a non-gridded array in order to interrogate and characterise known geophysical anomalies and to test the quality of capture from the survey in blank areas.*

*Archaeological remains of varying significance were identified. Where geophysical anomalies had been highlighted there was a good correlation with features observed, particularly plough furrows. There was also an archaeological component to the site beyond that located through geophysical survey, namely a number of small gullies or small pit and posthole features of at least two phases of activity; Roman (probably early Roman) and post-medieval artefacts were recovered, although a number of the features appeared more characteristic of prehistoric activity. The majority of these appeared to be restricted to the south-east part of the site, in an area of lower-lying and boggy ground, and it may be that they are reflective of more ephemeral activity rather than direct settlement.*

## 9 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project:

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project: Sarah Jago and Neil Wright (CgMs Consulting), Edward Argent and Phil Hardwick (Robert Hitchins Ltd), Andrew Walters (Boddington Estates Ltd) and Charles Parry (Gloucestershire County Council Archaeologist).

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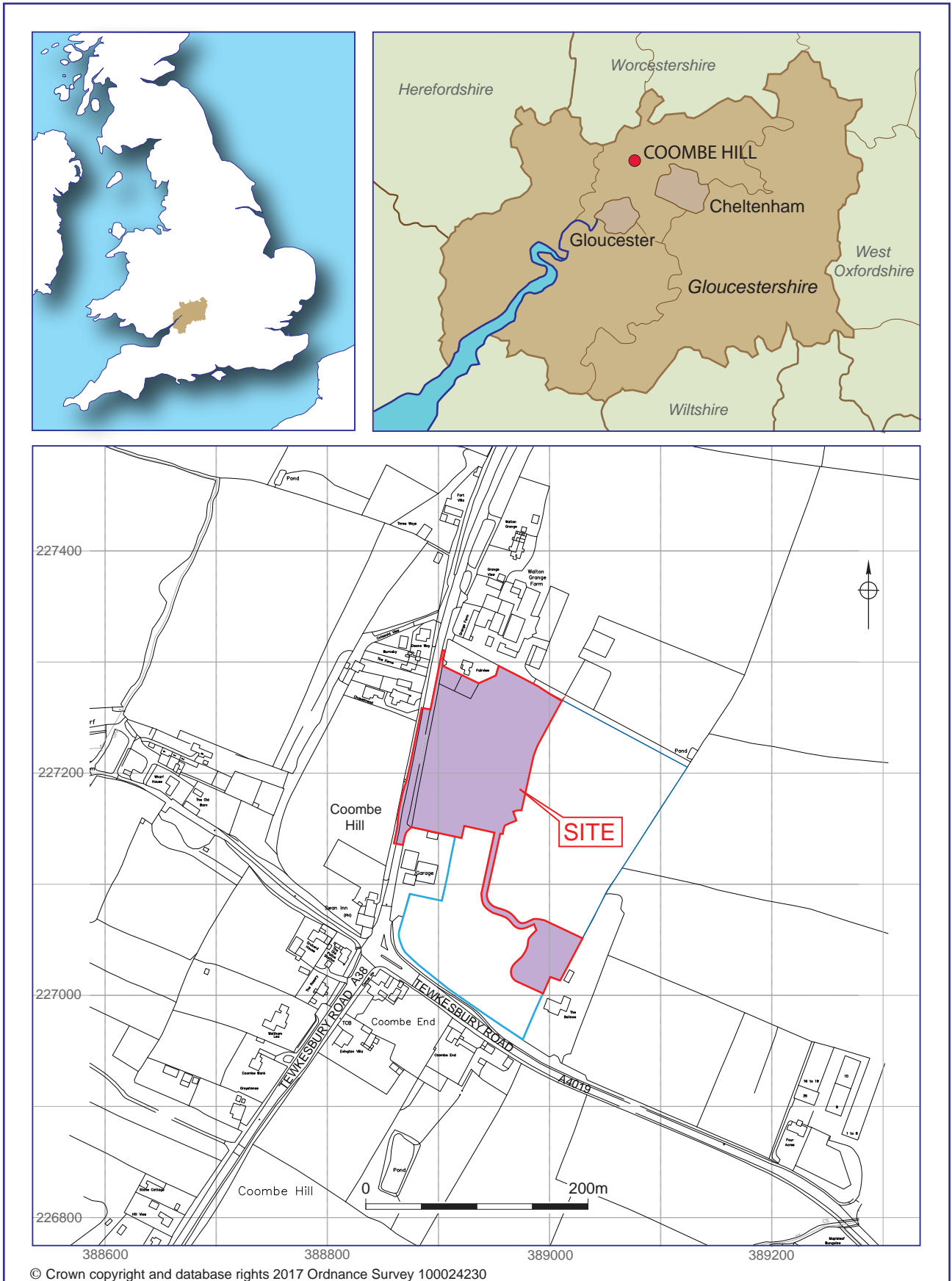
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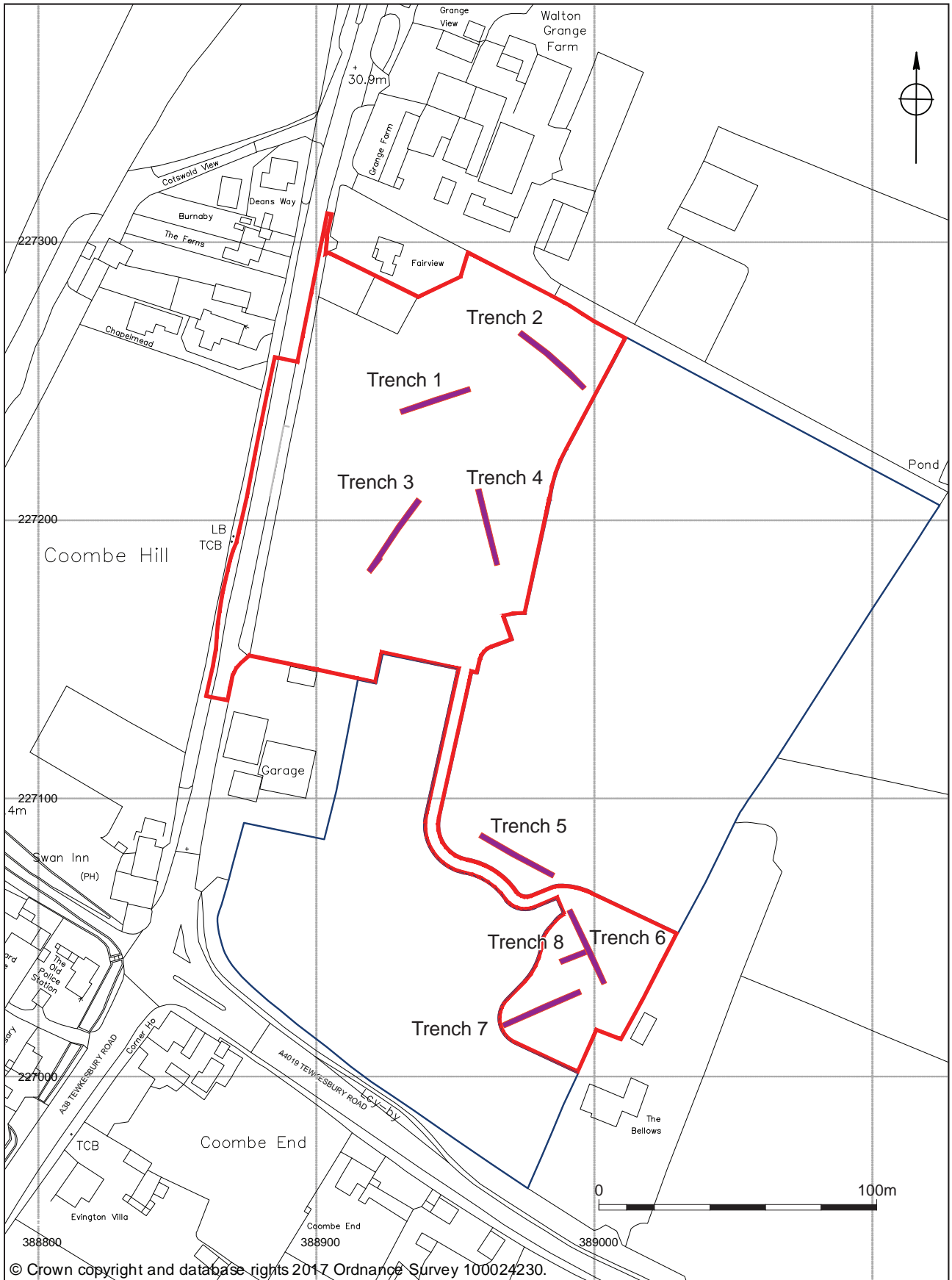
## Figures

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Location of the site

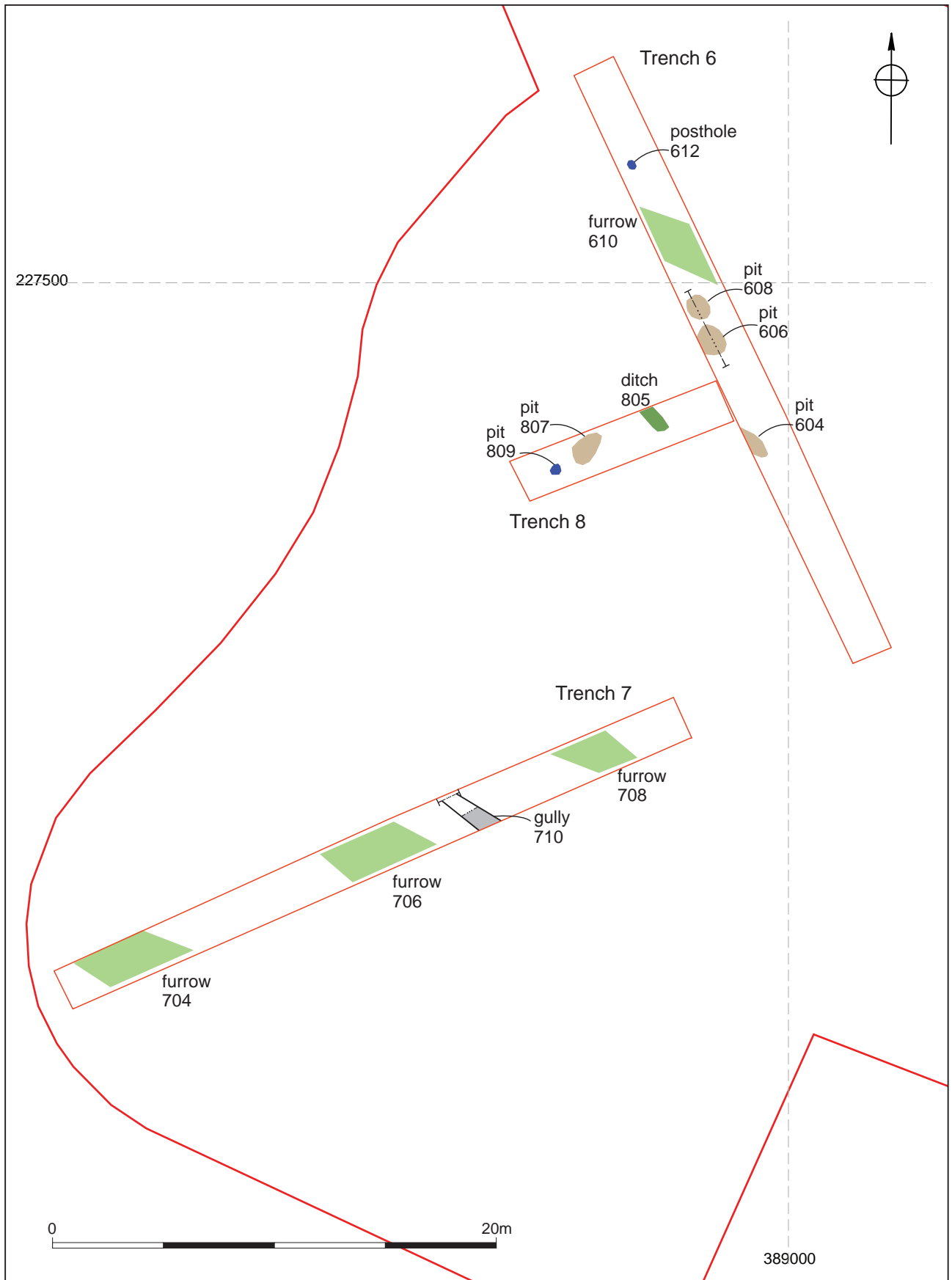
Figure 1



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Trench locations

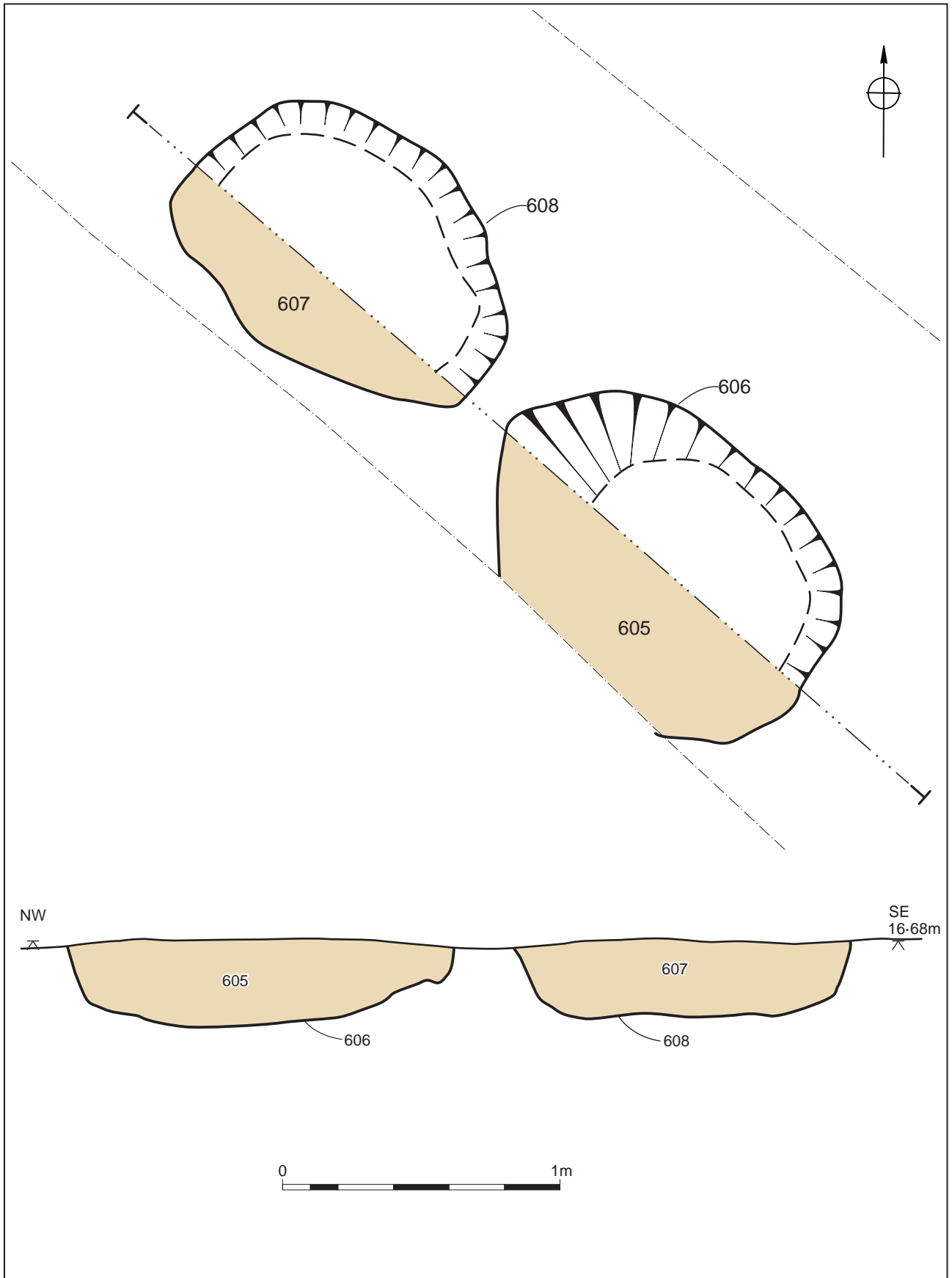
Figure 2



Trenches 6,7 and 8

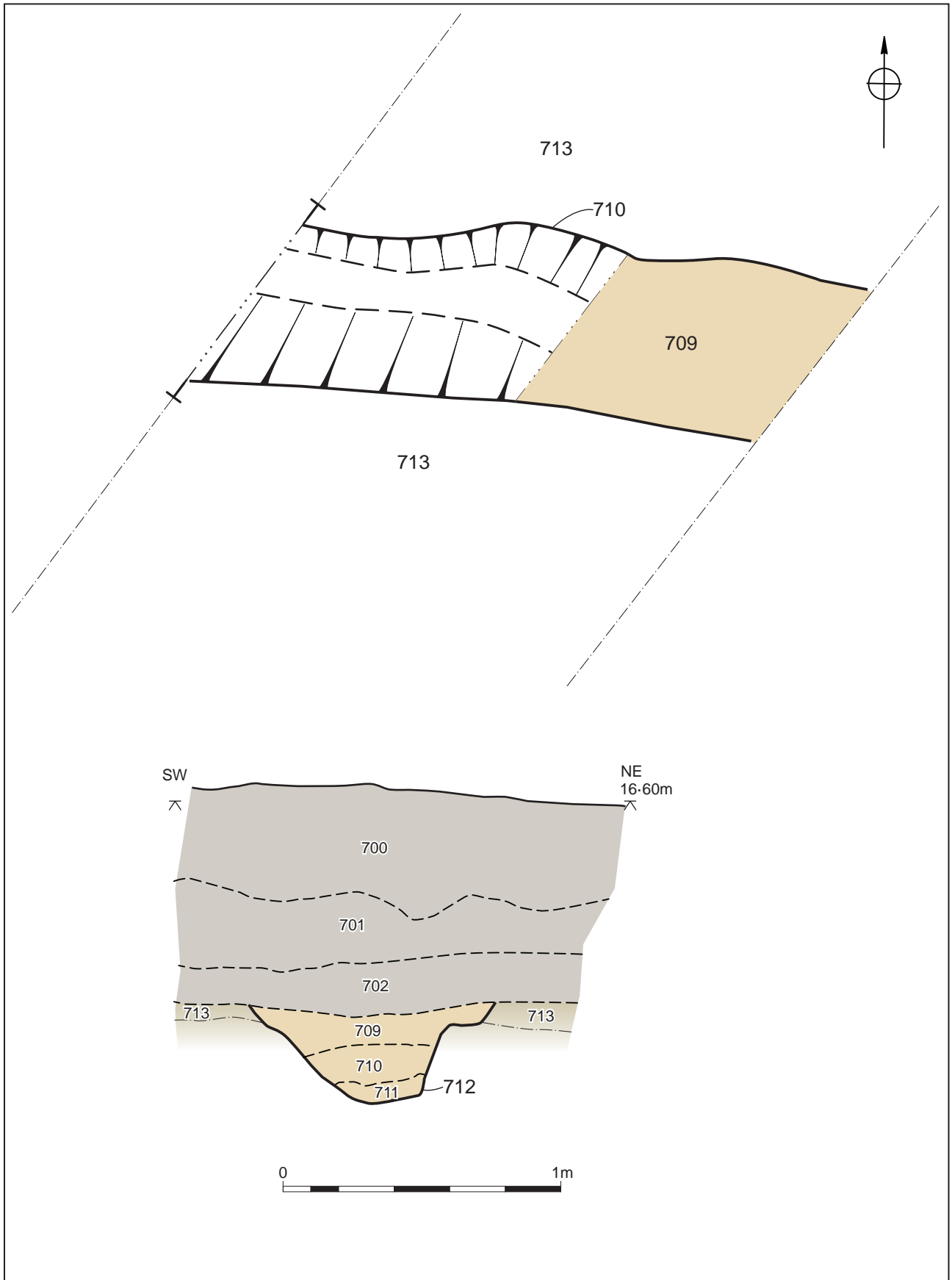
Figure 3





Trench 6: Plan and section of pits 606 and 608

Figure 4



Trench 7: Plan and section of gully 710

Figure 5

## Plates



*Plate 1: The site during trenching, viewed from the northern corner*



*Plate 2: Trench 1 general view, facing north-east, 2x 1m scales*

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*Plate 3: Feature [206] in Trench 2, possible pit, 50cm and 20cm scales*



*Plate 4: Feature [404] in Trench 4, possible pit (rather than by phase), 1m scale*

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*Plate 5: Pits [606] (left) and [608] (right) in Trench 6, 2x 1m scales*



*Plate 6: Gully [712] in Trench 7, 1m scale*





*Plate 7: Features observed in Trench 8 before ground-water inundation, 1m scale*

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## Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

### Trench 1

Length: 30m      Width: 1.80m      Orientation: north-east to south-west

#### Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
100	Topsoil	Layer	Moderately compact dark greyish brown clay loam	0.26m	Topsoil
101	Subsoil	Layer	Firm light yellowish brown clay loam	0.15m	Subsoil
102	Natural	Layer	Compact limestone plating with clay patches	0.10m +	Natural limestone and clay
103	Furrow	Fill	Firm light yellowish brown clay loam	unexc.	Fill of furrow. Yellow clay and stones
104	Furrow	Cut		unexc.	Cut of E-W (ish) aligned furrow

### Trench 2

Length: 30m      Width: 1.80m      Orientation: north-west to south-east

#### Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
200	Topsoil	Layer	Moderately compact dark greyish brown clay loam	0.24m	Topsoil
201	Subsoil	Layer	Firm light yellowish brown clay loam	0.20m	Subsoil
202	Natural	Layer	Compact limestone plating	0.10m +	Natural limestone and clay
203	Linear	Fill	Compact mid yellowish brown sandy clay	0.20m	Fill of irregular linear containing nail; post-med agricultural ditch or furrow?
204	Linear	Cut		0.20m	Possible ditch
205	Pit	Fill	Compact mid yellowish brown sandy clay	0.31m	Compact fill of pit or ditch terminus with CBM.
206	Pit	Cut		0.31m	Irregular oval pit with flat base, or possible ditch terminus.

### Trench 3

Length: 30m      Width: 1.80m      Orientation: north-east to south-west

#### Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
300	Topsoil	Layer	Moderately compact dark greyish brown clay loam	0.26m	Topsoil
301	Subsoil	Layer	Firm light yellowish brown clay loam	0.14m	Subsoil
302	Natural	Layer	Compact clay and limestone	0.05m +	Natural limestone and clay geology
303	Furrow	Fill	Firm light yellowish brown clay loam	unexc.	Fill of furrow. Yellow clay and stones
304	Furrow	Cut		unexc.	Cut of E-W aligned furrow
305	Furrow	Fill	Firm light yellowish brown clay loam	unexc.	Fill of furrow. Yellow clay and stones
306	Furrow	Cut		unexc.	Cut of E-W aligned furrow
307	Gully	Fill	Firm light yellowish brown clay loam	0.04m	Subsoil-like fill of linear. Ploughed out
308	Gully	Cut		0.04m	Possible ploughed out linear visible in subsoil
309	Gully	Fill	Compact mid reddish brown sandy clay	0.10m	Fill of boundary gully, very compact maybe deliberately backfilled.
310	Gully	Cut		0.10m	Cut of gully with concave edges and a flat base

### Trench 4

Length: 30m      Width: 1.80m      Orientation: north-west to south-east

#### Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
400	Topsoil	Layer	Moderately compact dark greyish brown clay loam	0.26m	Topsoil
401	Subsoil	Layer	Firm light yellowish brown clay loam	0.19m	Subsoil
402	Natural	Layer	Compact clay and limestone	0.05m +	Natural limestone and clay geology
403	Pit	Fill	Friable mid brownish brown silty clay	0.36m	Fill of irregular pit or tree bole or similar natural anomaly. Included cultural material
404	Pit	Cut		0.36m	Irregular oval pit or possible tree bole

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**Trench 5**

Length: 30m

Width: 1.80m

Orientation: north-west to south-east

**Context summary:**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Feature</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Height/ depth</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
500	Topsoil	Layer	Moderately compact mid greyish brown silt clay	0.26m	Topsoil
501	Subsoil	Layer	Firm mid brown clay silt	0.19m	Subsoil
502	Natural	Layer	Compact siltstone and red clay	0.05m +	Natural blue grey siltstone and pinkish red clay geology
503	Trench	Fill	Compact mid greyish yellow clay	0.25m	Redeposited natural in possible geotech pit
504	Trench	Cut		0.25m	Modern intrusion – geotech pit?
505	Trench	Fill	Compact mid greyish yellow clay	unexc.	Redeposited natural in possible geotech pit
506	Trench	Cut		unexc.	Modern intrusion – geotech pit?
507	Furrow	Fill	Firm light yellowish brown clay loam	unexc.	Fill of furrow
508	Furrow	Cut		unexc.	E-W aligned furrow cut
509	Ditch	Fill	Compact mid reddish brown silty clay	unexc.	Compact reddish brown silty clay fill of ditch
510	Ditch	Cut	Compact mid	unexc.	Possible ditch feature
511	Natural	Layer	Compact mid reddish orange silty clay	0.28m	Redeposited natural overlying ditch 513
512	Ditch	Fill	Compact mid greyish brown silty clay	0.46m	Fill of ditch with pottery
513	Ditch	Cut		0.46m	NE-SW aligned boundary or drainage ditch
514	Natural	Layer	Compact mid greyish yellow clay	0.64m	Patch of redeposited natural illustrating modern landscaping in the area
515	Natural	Layer	Compact mid greyish yellow clay	0.64m	Patch of redeposited natural illustrating modern landscaping in the area
516	Natural	Layer	Compact mid greyish yellow clay	0.64m	Patch of redeposited natural illustrating modern landscaping in the area

## Trench 6

Length: 30m

Width: 1.80m

Orientation: north-west to south-east

### Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
600	Topsoil	Layer	Friable dark greyish brown clay silt	0.34m	Topsoil
601	Subsoil	Layer	Moderately compact mid yellowish brown sandy clay	0.21m	Subsoil
602	Layer	Layer	Moderately compact dark blueish brown silty clay	0.19m	Lower subsoil or colluvium
603	Pit	Fill	Loose dark greyish black silty clay loam	unexc.	Burnt stone and charcoal rich fill of pit
604	Pit	Cut		unexc.	Irregular pit or end of charcoal and stone spread
605	Pit	Fill	Loose dark greyish black sandy silt loam	0.30m	Black charcoal rich fill of pit filled with fire-cracked stone, bone, pot and CBM
606	Pit	Cut		0.30m	?prehistoric? Fire-cracked stone pit
607	Pit	Fill	Loose dark greyish black sandy silt loam	0.28m	Black charcoal rich fill of pit filled with fire-cracked stone, bone and pot
608	Pit	Cut		0.28m	?prehistoric? Fire-cracked stone pit
609	Furrow	Fill	Firm light yellowish brown clay loam	unexc.	Subsoil fill of furrow
610	Furrow	Cut		unexc.	E-W aligned furrow
611	Posthole	Fill	Compact mid grey silty clay	unexc.	Grey silty clay fill of 612
612	Posthole	Cut		unexc.	Possible posthole in NW end of trench
613	Natural	Layer	Compact brownish red clay sand	0.05m +	Natural substrate

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**Trench 7**

Length: 30m

Width: 1.80m

Orientation: north-east to south-west

**Context summary:**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Feature</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Height/ depth</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
700	Topsoil	Layer	Friable mid greyish brown clay loam	0.39m	Topsoil
701	Subsoil	Layer	Moderately compact mid orange brown sandy clay	0.26m	Subsoil
702	Layer	Layer	Moderately compact dark blueish brown silty clay	0.19m	Lower subsoil or colluvium
703	Furrow	Fill	Loose mid brownish grey sandy silt loam	unexc.	Fill of furrow with rare charcoal flecks
704	Furrow	Cut		unexc.	E-W aligned furrow
705	Furrow	Fill	Loose mid brownish grey sandy silt loam	unexc.	Fill of furrow with rare charcoal flecks
706	Furrow	Cut		unexc.	E-W aligned furrow
707	Furrow	Fill	Loose mid brownish grey sandy silt loam	unexc.	Fill of furrow with rare charcoal flecks
708	Furrow	Cut		unexc.	E-W aligned furrow
709	Gully	Fill	Moderately compact mid greyish brown sandy clay	0.18m	Upper soily fill of drainage gully containing pot
710	Gully	Fill	Moderately compact mid blueish grey sandy clay	0.15m	Middle fill of gully
711	Gully	Fill	Compact dark orangey red clayey sand	0.08m	Natural slippage at base of gully or redeposited / overcut
712	Gully	Cut		0.41m	Sharp sided ditch with flat base. 0.87m wide drainage gully. Parallel to ridge and furrow system. Roman or med/post-med date?
713	Natural	Layer	Compact brownish red clay	0.00m	Natural brownish red sandy clay geology

## Trench 8

Length: 9.50m

Width: 1.80m

Orientation: north-east to south-west

### Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
800	Topsoil	Layer	Moderately compact dark greyish brown clay loam	0.34m	Topsoil
801	Subsoil	Layer	Moderately compact light yellowish brown clay loam	0.21m	Subsoil
802	Layer	Layer	Moderately compact dark blueish brown silty clay	0.19m	Lower subsoil or colluvium
803	Natural	Layer	Compact greyish red clay	0.05m +	Natural blue grey siltstone and pinkish red clay geology
804	Pit	Fill	Moderately compact dark greyish black sandy silt	unexc.	Charcoal and burnt stone fill of pit
805	Pit	Cut		unexc.	Layer of burnt stone / pit - unexcavated
806	Pit	Fill	Moderately compact dark blackish grey silty clay	unexc.	Dark grey silty clay and charcoal fill
807	Pit	Cut		unexc.	Cut of oval pit
808	Posthole	Fill	Moderately compact dark blackish grey silty clay	unexc.	Dark grey silty clay and charcoal fill
809	Posthole	Cut		unexc.	Circular area of charcoal - possible posthole

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## Appendix 2 Technical information

### The archive (Worcestershire Archaeology site code: P5116)

The archive consists of:

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 14 | Context records AS1                           |
| 2  | Field progress reports AS2                    |
| 1  | Photographic records AS3                      |
| 54 | Digital photographs                           |
| 1  | Drawing number catalogues AS4                 |
| 10 | Scale drawings                                |
| 1  | Sample number catalogues AS18                 |
| 8  | Trench record sheets AS41                     |
| 1  | Box of finds                                  |
| 1  | Bag of flots and sorted remains from residues |
| 1  | Bag of hand-collected animal bone             |
| 1  | CD-Rom/DVDs                                   |
| 1  | Copy of this report (bound hard copy)         |

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Tewkesbury Museum,  
64 Barton Street,  
Tewkesbury,  
Gloucestershire, GL20 5PX

Tel. 01684 292901

A copy of the report will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER)

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