

An archaeological evaluation of land off Oakhurst Rise, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham



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Peter Lovett

With a contribution by Robert Hedge

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at land off Oakhurst Rise, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham (NGR 396519 221604). It was undertaken on behalf of CgMs Consulting Ltd, whose client William Morris (Cheltenham) Ltd proposes a residential development of the site, for which a planning application is in preparation. The site lies on the eastern side of Cheltenham and comprises two fields on the south western slope of Battledown Hill to the north of St Edward's Preparatory School. Battledown Camp, a Scheduled Monument (NHLE 1002083), is situated 420m north of the site. Five trenches, amounting to just over 375m² in area were opened targeting anomalies identified in a prior geophysical survey and a possible earthwork.

Three shallow furrows were identified, which correlated with the results of a geophysical survey though other anomalies did not represent archaeological features. A brick-lined borehole probably associated with a late 19th century ice house was revealed. No further archaeological features were identified.

The finds assemblage comprised a small quantity of residual post-medieval and modern pottery.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at land off Oakhurst Rise, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham (NGR 396519 221604). It was undertaken on behalf of Richard Smalley, Associate Director at CgMs Consulting Ltd, whose client William Morris (Cheltenham) Ltd proposes a residential development of the site, for which a planning application will be submitted to Cheltenham Borough Council.

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

The project conforms to the generality of briefs prepared by Gloucestershire County Council and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (WA 2017).

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014a).

2 Aims

The aims and scope of the project were to undertake sufficient fieldwork to:

- 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.

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was led by Peter Lovett (BSc (hons.)) who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2012 and has been practicing archaeology since 2004, assisted by Jamie Wilkins (BA (hons.)). The project managers responsible for the quality of the project were Tom Rogers (BA (hons.); MSc) and Tom Vaughan (BA, MA, ACIfA). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MClfA). Robert Hedge (MA Cantab) contributed the finds report.

3.2 Documentary research

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) was undertaken by CgMs Consulting Ltd (CgMs 2016).

3.3 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2017).

Fieldwork was undertaken on 20 and 21 September 2017.

Five trenches, amounting to just over 375m² in area, were excavated over the site area of 4.1ha, representing a sample of 2% when site restraints are taken into account; these include badger setts, utilities, and trees. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2, and was informed by the results of a geophysical survey (Sumo 2017). Trenches 1, 2, and 5 were targeted over geophysical anomalies, whilst Trench 3 was located to test the survival of possible furrows, as well as a potential earthwork identified on a site visit.

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 Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). 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

3.5.1 Artefact recovery policy

Recovery of artefacts was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012).

3.6 Environmental archaeology methodology

3.6.1 Sampling policy

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

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.

4 The application site

4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

For a full discussion on the archaeological context of the site, the DBA by CgMs (2016) should be consulted.

In brief, the site lies on the south-west slope of Battledown Hill, and slopes down to the south, from 122m to 107m AOD. It is bounded on the west, north, and east by houses and by St Edward's Preparatory School to the south. The solid geology comprises Mudstone of the Charmouth Mudstone Formation (BGS 2017).

Battledown Camp is a Scheduled Monument (NHLE 1002083), and is situated 420m north of the site. There have been no previous archaeological investigations within the study site itself, and those that have been undertaken within the wider area are at a sufficient distance as to preclude themselves from substantively aiding understanding of this site. Cropmarks apparent on aerial photographs of the site have been interpreted as a result of the remains of ridge and furrow.

The conclusions of the DBA suggest that there is a low potential for archaeological remains within the site.

4.2 Current land-use

The field is laid to grass, and has been used by the neighbouring school for cross-country running and bonfire nights.

5 Results

5.1 Structural analysis

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

5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

The natural ground consisted of a compact mid orange yellow clay, of the Charmouth Mudstone series.

A possible colluvial material was present in Trenches 2 and 3, running down the slope in an irregular shallow channel (Plate 2). There were no artefacts recovered from the material, which was heavily mottled with iron panning, and it was concluded to be the result of a natural process.

5.1.2 Phase 2: Medieval/post-medieval deposits

Three furrows were identified within Trench 3, and correspond to the results of the geophysical survey (Plate 3). These were aligned roughly north to south, but were very shallow, at 0.05m deep.

5.1.3 Phase 3: Undated deposits

At the eastern end of Trench 3 was a shallow earthwork, gently sloping down to the west (Plate 4). It was constructed of topsoil, and no dating material was recovered from it. It is thought that it may represent a small positive lynchet, possibly created by the movement of material downslope through the action of ploughing.

5.1.4 Phase 4: Modern deposits

A brick lined borehole (Plate 5) at the northern end of Trench 1 was identified and was likely associated with the ice house, built in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century.

In the southern half of Trench 5, a modern dump of made ground some 0.38m thick was deposited (Plate 6). This consisted of plastic, glass, concrete and other rubble, and was situated between the top and sub soils. It corresponds to the anomalies identified on the geophysical survey.

The subsoil was present in all five trenches, and ranged in thickness for 0.11m to 0.3m thick. It was a moderately compact mid yellowish brown silty clay. This was covered by a topsoil of mid greyish brown silty clay, between 0.2m and 0.26m thick.

5.2 Artefact analysis, by Robert Hedge

A small quantity of post-medieval and modern pottery was recovered from topsoil within trenches 1, 3, and 4. The eight sherds, weighing 95g, showed signs of moderate abrasion; the mean weight, at 11.9g, is around average but lower than might be expected given the robust nature of the post-medieval earthenwares. They represent a background scatter pertaining to 18th/19th century agricultural use of the site and later 19th to early 20th century domestic activity nearby.

Context (100) yielded two body sherds from large 16th – 19th century unglazed earthenware vessels, and a small rim sherd of late 18th to early 19th century creamware.

Context (300) contained two sherds from unglazed earthenware vessels — possibly flowerpots — of 19th or 20th century date; a body sherd from a internally black-glazed 18th century bowl or pancheon; and a sherd from a 19th or 20th century red-slipped buff earthenware flowerpot, with a relief-moulded neoclassical design around the rim.

The single sherd from (400) was an unglazed orange earthenware of 18th to 20th century date.

6 Synthesis

The evaluation has confirmed the presence of furrows in the south-east of the site, as indicated by the geophysical survey. These represent the below-ground remains of medieval and post medieval ridge and furrow earthworks which have been subsequently levelled. The possible discreet features identified by that survey did not translate into actual features in the ground, however. The site in general showed no evidence for anything other than low level agricultural activity, at least up until the latter half of the 19th century when the ice house was constructed.

The finds assemblage comprised a small quantity of residual post-medieval and modern pottery. No further work on the assemblage is required.

7 Significance

The archaeological remains comprise three furrows, 0.05m deep, and located in one corner of the site. The results of the evaluation would suggest that there is little potential for the survival of archaeological features within the site. This reflects the findings of both the DBA and the geophysical survey.

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 behalf of CgMs Consulting Ltd, for William Morris (Cheltenham) Ltd at land off Oakhurst Rise, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham (NGR ref 396519 221604).

Three shallow furrows were identified, which correlated with the results of a geophysical survey. Further potential features from that survey were not present in the trenches when excavated. A brick-lined borehole probably associated with a late 19th century ice house was revealed. No further archaeological features were identified. The finds assemblage comprised a small quantity of residual post-medieval and modern pottery.

9 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Richard Smalley of CgMs Consulting Ltd, Adam Carr of William Morris (Cheltenham) Ltd, and Charles Parry, Archaeological Planning Officer for Gloucestershire County Council.

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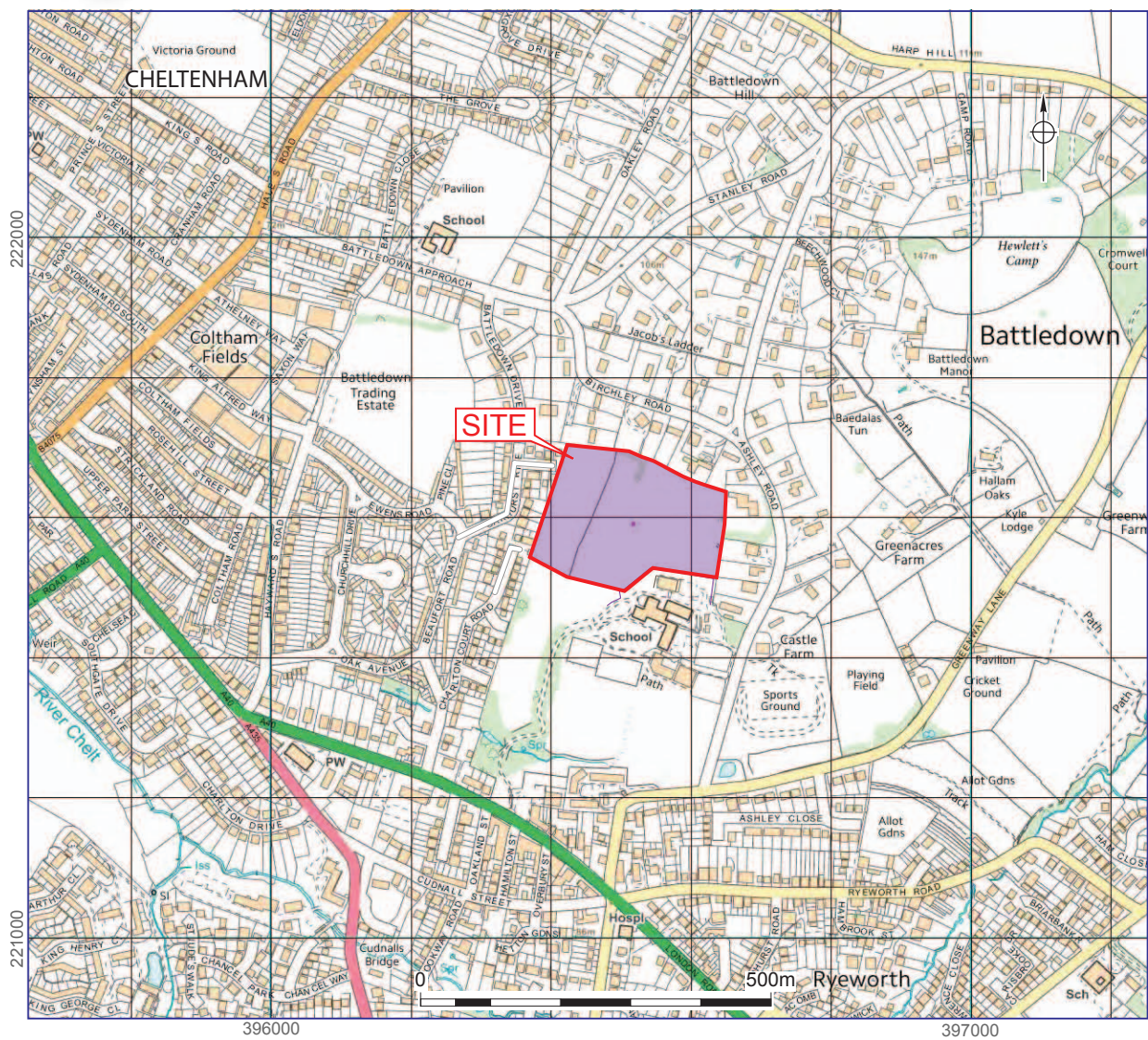
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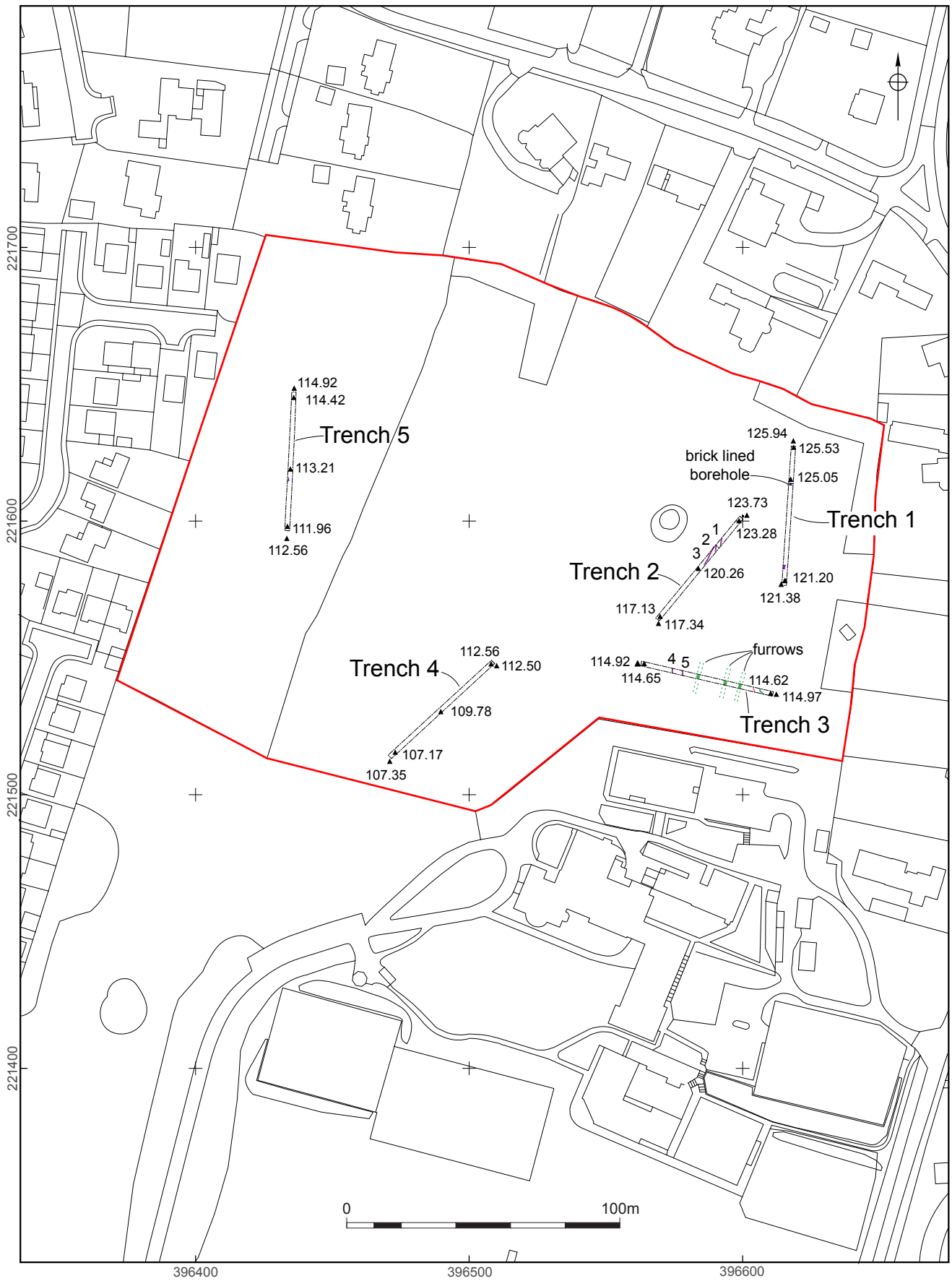
Figures



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Location of the site

Figure 1



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Trench locations

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1 A view of site, looking south



Plate 2 Colluvium in Trench 2, looking north-east (1m scales)



Plate 3 Furrow 308 in Trench 3, looking north-east (1m scale)



Plate 4 Small earthwork in foreground, Trench 3, looking north-west (1m scales)



Plate 5 Brick-lined borehole in Trench 1 (0.3m scale)



Plate 6 Made ground in Trench 5 (1m scale)



Plate 7 Trench 1, looking south (1m scales)



Plate 8 Trench 4, looking north-east (1m scales)

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50m Width: 1.5m Depth: 0.52m

Orientation: N-S

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil	Friable mid greyish brown silty clay, frequent pebbles and charcoal flecks.	0-0.24m
101	Subsoil	Moderately compact mid yellowish brown silty clay, moderate charcoal flecks and pebbles.	0.24-0.37m
102	Natural	Compact mid orange yellow clay with mudstone	0.37m+

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50m Width: 1.5m Depth: 0.56m

Orientation: NE-SW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
200	Topsoil	Friable mid greyish brown silty clay, frequent pebbles and charcoal flecks.	0-0.25m
201	Subsoil	Moderately compact mid yellowish brown silty clay, moderate charcoal flecks and pebbles.	0.25-0.43m
202	Natural	Compact mid orange yellow clay with mudstone	0.43m+
203	Colluvium	Moderately compact light yellow brown silty clay with frequent iron panning	0.43m

Trench 3

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50m Width: 1.5m Depth: 0.44m

Orientation: WNW-ESE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
300	Topsoil	Friable mid greyish brown silty clay, frequent pebbles and charcoal flecks.	0-0.2m
301	Subsoil	Moderately compact mid yellowish brown silty clay, moderate charcoal flecks and pebbles.	0.2-0.33m
302	Natural	Compact mid orange yellow clay with mudstone	0.33m+
303	Fill of furrow 304	Moderately compact mid yellow brown silty clay	0.33m
304	Furrow	N-S furrow	
305	Fill of furrow 306	Moderately compact mid yellow brown silty clay	0.33m
306	Furrow	N-S furrow	
307	Fill of furrow 308	Moderately compact mid yellow brown silty clay	0.33m
308	Furrow	N-S furrow	
309	Colluvium	Moderately compact light yellow brown silty clay with frequent iron panning	0.33m

Trench 4

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50m Width: 1.5m Depth: 0.48m

Orientation: NE-SW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
400	Topsoil	Friable mid greyish brown silty clay, frequent pebbles and charcoal flecks.	0-0.26m
401	Subsoil	Moderately compact mid yellowish brown silty clay, moderate charcoal flecks and pebbles.	0.26-0.37m
402	Natural	Compact mid orange yellow clay with mudstone	0.37m+

Trench 5

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50m Width: 1.5m Depth: 1.04m

Orientation: NE-SW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
500	Topsoil	Friable mid greyish brown silty clay, frequent pebbles and charcoal flecks.	0-0.26m
501	Made ground	Compact cohesive mid blue yellow silty clay. Frequent rubble and building material: plastics, glass, concrete, bricks, waste pipes etc	0.26-0.64m
502	Subsoil	Moderately compact mid yellowish brown silty clay, moderate charcoal flecks and pebbles.	0.64-0.94m
503	Natural	Compact mid orange yellow clay with mudstone	0.94m+

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

- 2 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 43 Digital photographs
- 5 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:

The Wilson
Clarence Street
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Tel: 01242 237 431