

# Archaeological excavation at Land off Westwood Heath Road, Westwood Heath, Warwickshire

Worcestershire Archaeology  
*for CgMs Consulting*

January 2019



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# LAND OFF WESTWOOD HEATH ROAD, WESTWOOD HEATH, WARWICKSHIRE

Archaeological excavation report

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## SITE INFORMATION

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Site name:	Land off Westwood Heath Road, Westwood Heath, Warwickshire
Local planning authority:	Warwick District Council
Planning reference:	W/17/12357
Central NGR:	SP 27804 76668
Commissioning client:	CgMs Consulting
WA project number:	P5389
WA report number:	2641
Oasis reference:	fieldsec1-334884

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## Archaeological excavation at Land off Westwood Heath Road, Westwood Heath, Warwickshire

By Tim Cornah

With contributions by Liz Pearson and Rob Hedge

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

### Summary

An archaeological excavation was undertaken at Land off Westwood Heath Road, Westwood Heath, Warwickshire (NGR SP 27804 76668). It was commissioned by CgMs consulting on behalf of their client, in advance of proposed residential development.

Two excavation areas were investigated, centred upon two features identified in an earlier phase of trial trenching. Further to the features identified in the evaluation three further small features present including a small pit, a larger irregular pit (possibly a tree throw) and a shallow gully were identified in one area. One sherd of late Iron Age pottery was recovered from the irregular pit. Samples with abundant charcoal were recovered from the one fill of the irregular pit and the fill of the gully. These comprised incomplete roundwood fragments, dominated by lime and Oak. The uniformity of the material suggests that it may derive from kilns or hearths used for specific activity, rather than general domestic use.

# Report

## 1 Introduction

### Background to the project

An archaeological excavation was undertaken at Land off Westwood Heath Road, Westwood Heath, Warwickshire (NGR SP 27804 76668). The project was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of their client, in advance of residential development for which a planning application has been submitted (planning reference W/17/12357).

A desk based assessment of the site has been undertaken (CgMs 2016) and a geophysical survey of the site (Pre-Construct Geophysics 2017) identified a limited potential for archaeological features comprising sparsely distributed features such as several ditches and pits or sites containing burnt materials as well as a sub-circular enclosure. Subsequently an archaeological evaluation of the site (Oxford Archaeology 2017) identified archaeological features in 17 of 80 trenches opened. Late Iron Age/early Roman pottery was recovered from a posthole and an irregular pit.

Subsequent discussions between CgMs and John Robinson, Planning Archaeologist for Warwickshire County Council (the Curator) established that the excavation of two areas where Roman pits were identified was appropriate further mitigation with a contingency for extending these areas, should significant archaeology extend beyond their limits.

A Written Scheme of Investigation for the excavation was prepared (WA2018) and approved by the curator. The excavation conforms to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in *Standard and guidance: for archaeological excavation* (CIfA 2014).

### Site location, topography and geology

The bedrock geology of the site is recorded as Tile Hill Mudstone Formation of the Carboniferous period. No superficial geology is recorded (BGS 2018)

The site is located approximately 6km to the south-west of the centre of Coventry, next to the suburb of Westwood Heath and on the southern side of Westwood Heath Road. The site slopes downwards to a broadly east-west aligned shallow depression between the two trenches. A ridge is present to the south, from which the site slopes towards the south. The trenches are located at a height of approximately 114m above Ordnance Datum. The site remains in use as an arable field.

## 2 Archaeological and historical background

### Introduction

The archaeological background as presented in the evaluation report and derived from the desk-based assessment is given below.

### Prehistoric

In Warwickshire, there is limited evidence for prehistoric activity away from the gravel geologies of the major river valleys. A single prehistoric entry is recorded on the Warwickshire HER with the vicinity of the site, a Bronze Age flint scatter c 1.1km to the south-west. Immediately to the south and west of the site there are a series of undated cropmarks. Based on their form they are likely to be indicative of Bronze Age activity.

The nearest evidence for Iron Age occupation lies approximately 1.5km to the northeast of the site. Iron Age coins have been found in the vicinity of the site, including several gold coins found approximately 100m to the east.



The desk-based assessment concludes that there is moderate potential for late prehistoric features to survive within the site.

## Roman

The nearest known evidence for Roman occupation is 2.5km east of the development area at Tocil Woods and Cryfield House Farm, near the River Avon. Roman finds in the vicinity of the site are limited to objects recovered through metal detecting. A Roman strap-union and harness mount have been found within the site. Finds from the wider area include a Roman coin hoard and brooch fragment, c 600m to the south-east of the site, and a series of Roman artefacts at Burton Green, c 920m to the east.

## Saxon to Medieval

No Saxon sites or finds are recorded on the HER within the site or the surrounding area. The Domesday Survey of 1086 suggest the parish of Stoneleigh, within which the site lies, was extensively wooded at the time.

In the Domesday Survey, the manor of Stoneleigh is recorded as comprising woodland, 4 leagues long by 2 leagues broad and giving food for 2000 swine.

The Deserted Medieval Village of Hurst lies approximately 990m to the south of the site. The village is recorded as being formed of 19 houses by the start of Henry VII's reign in 1485. The site lies beyond the limits of the settlement of Hurst and within the manor of Bockendon.

It is probable that during the medieval period the site lay within a mix of woodland and wooded pasture with smaller areas of arable cultivation.

## Post-medieval to modern

Several finds spots of 16th–18th century objects have been recorded within the site by metal detectorists. These include a coin, several buckles and a furniture fitting.

The 1845 Stoneleigh Tithe Map and Award indicates the majority of the site occupied a single field called '30th Allotment'. The south-eastern part of the site is recorded as being divided in several smaller plots, possibly the remnants of an earlier medieval open field system.

By 1886 several of the small field boundaries in the south-east had been removed and at this time the development area consisted of six fields. Several further field boundary alterations and the construction of housing at the western limit of the site along Cromwell Lane in the 1930s lead to the present-day layout of the development area.

## 3 Project aims

The aims and scope of the project are to locate and sample archaeological deposits and record their nature, extent and date with the aim of preserving these assets by record to mitigate the effects of the proposed development.

## 4 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2018). Fieldwork was undertaken between 19th and 23rd November 2018.

Two excavation areas each measuring 20m by 20m were excavated centred on two features identified during a previous evaluation. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 1.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected 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 trench 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.

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

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

## 5 Archaeological results

### Introduction

The features recorded in the excavation areas are shown in Figures 2-3. The trench and context inventory is presented in Appendix 1.

### Phasing

#### 5.1.1 Natural deposits

Natural deposits consisted of firm mid pinkish red silty clay (1002 and 2001)

#### 5.1.2 Phase 1: Late Prehistoric to Early Romano-British deposits

Two features were identified within the evaluation (Oxford Archaeology 2017, context numbers OA 703 and OA 902) as dating to the later Iron Age to early Romano-British. These were identified within the centre of the current phase of works with feature (OA 703) within the centre of Trench 1. No further features of this date were present within Trench 1.

Within Trench 2, three further features were present though only one of these [2011] (Plate 3) retained any dating material in the form of a single sherd of pottery of a likely middle to later Iron Age date. This feature was irregular with a broadly oval plan in irregular sides, more consistent with a tree throw than an excavated pit.

A further east-west aligned gully [2007] (Plate 4) 2.60m in length and 0.31m in width was present. The fill of this (2006) also contained a relatively high content of charcoal as well as inclusions of redeposited red clay natural, suggesting that the feature was purposefully backfilled. No dating was recovered from the feature.

A small pit [2013] (Plate 5) of 0.51m in width was filled by (2012). This again contained no dating and a fill of relatively high redeposited natural content again suggesting that the feature was purposefully backfilled.

#### 5.1.3 Phase 2: Medieval to post-medieval deposits

Two broadly east-west aligned furrows were present in each trench [1004, 1008, 2003 and 2005] (Plate 5). These were filled with light yellowish brown silt deposits which contained no dating. These features are consistent with medieval and later agricultural practices.

#### 5.1.4 Phase 3: Modern deposits

Both trenches were covered by topsoil deposits (1000 and 2000) which consisted of dark grey brown silty clays.

## 6 Artefactual evidence

### Recovery policy

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

## Method of analysis

The pottery was examined under x20 magnification and referenced as appropriate by fabric type and form according to the Warwickshire prehistoric and Roman fabric reference series.

## Pottery by Rob Hedge

The only artefact recovered was a base sherd from a jar. It came from fill (2009) of feature [2011], and weighed 12g. It was heavily abraded, with pitted surfaces and rounded breaks. The fabric is soft, somewhat soapy, and has a dark grey core with grey-brown surfaces. Inclusions include moderate quantities of rounded brown ironstone, and sparse fine micaceous sand; voids attest to the presence of an organic temper. With just one abraded sherd, precise identification is difficult. It is, however, typical of middle to late Iron Age wares in the region, and is similar to Warwickshire fabric P31, recorded in large quantities at mid to late Iron Age contexts at Glebe Farm Area K and Wood Farm Quarry, Bubbenhall (Hancocks 2011, 49).

# 7 Environmental evidence

## By Elizabeth Pearson

### Project parameters

The environmental project conforms to guidance by ClfA (2014) on archaeological evaluation and guidance by English Heritage (2011) and Association for Environmental Archaeology (1995).

### Aims

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

### Methods

#### *Sampling policy*

Samples were taken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (2012). A total of two samples (each of 40 litres) were taken from the site (Table 1), potentially of late Iron Age date. Both samples were assessed, and one sample from fill (2009) of pit [2011] selected for analysis.

#### *Processing and analysis*

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

For assessment, 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 hammer scale. The flots were scanned using a low power MEIJI stereo light microscope. Both samples were rich in identifiable charcoal. In order to make the most of the available budget, the sample from fill (2009) of [2011] was selected for quantification and analysis. Counts are presented for a sample of 50 fragments from the available charcoal.

The cell structure of the fragments was examined in three planes under a MEIJI dark illumination microscope and identifications were carried out using reference texts (Schweingruber 1978 and Hather 2000) and reference charcoal housed at Worcestershire Archaeology.

### Discard policy

Remaining sample material and scanned residues will be discarded after a period of 6 months following submission of this report unless there is a specific request to retain them.

## Report

Results are summarised in tables 2 and 3.

Uncharred remains, consisting of mainly root fragments are assumed to be modern and intrusive as they are unlikely to have survived in the soils on site for long without charring or waterlogging.

Assessment showed that well preserved charcoal fragments of medium to large size were abundant in fills (2006 and 2009) of gully [2007] and pit [2011]. Similar quantities were present in both samples, although fill (2006) appeared to be more dominated by oak (*Quercus robur/petraea*), whereas fill (2009) was dominated by non-oak species. Despite the difference in species composition, the conditions, size of fragments and quantity all indicate material deposited during one phase of activity. It is suggested that (2006), although undated by artefacts is of late Iron Age date, like (2009) which is dated to this period.

### *Fill 2009 of pit [2011]*

Most of the fragments from this sample appear to be incomplete roundwood fragments, dominated by lime (*Tilia* sp). Oak (*Quercus robur/petraea*) was the second most common species, associated with small numbers of fragments of hazel (*Corylus avellana*), alder/hornbeam/hazel (*Alnus/Carpinus/Corylus* sp), and pear/apple/whitebeam/hawthorn (*Maloideae* sp). The uniformity of the material suggests that it may derive from kilns or hearths used for specific activity, rather than general domestic use.

## Discussion

The species composition of pit fill (2009) may imply that charcoal was sourced from principally lime woodland, but it is not clear whether the assemblage resulted from selective collection of timber, for example, focusing on the collection of lime (*Tilia*) wood. If the assemblage reflects local woodland composition, it is of interest as this phase of activity is thought to be of late Iron Age date, and hence would post-date the lime decline. In the British Isles, this is typically dated to the late Neolithic to early Bronze Age (Daffern 2016), a pattern that is also consistent in the midlands (Daffern 2014).

The date of the charcoal is, uncertain as it is based on a single pottery fragment and proximity to two features dated to the later Iron Age to Early Roman period, identified during evaluation (Oxford Archaeology 2017).

A total of seven pits were identified during the evaluation which were interpreted as cooking pits, although it was noted the more irregular shaped features may indicate land clearance (tree-throw pits). This suggests that some of the pits relate to a phase during which the land had been relatively recently wooded, and may be of earlier prehistoric date. The appearance of the charcoal, however, is more consistent with the cooking or specialist hearth activity rather than the results of burning tree stumps. Nevertheless, the date of the material is of interest.

Should further fieldwork be undertaken in the vicinity, radiocarbon dating may clarify the date range of prehistoric activity. There appear to be no charcoal assemblages of comparable date within the vicinity of Westwood Heath as prehistoric activity listed on the Warwickshire HER is limited a Bronze Age flint scatter and cropmarks potentially of Bronze Age date.

Context	Sample	Spit/Sub-sample	Feature type	Fill of	Position of fill	period	Phase	Sample volume (L)	Volume processed (L)	Residue assessed	Flot assessed
2006	1		Gully	2007	Primary	Late Iron Age?	0	40	40	Yes	Yes
2009	2		Pit	2011	Secondary	Late Iron Age?	0	40	40	Yes	Yes

Table 1: List of bulk samples

context	sample	large mammal	charcoal	Uncharred plant	artefacts
2006	1	occ*	abt	abt**	occ fired clay, Quartz pebble, pottery, chert, burnt stone
2009	2	occ*	abt	abt**	mod fired clay Occ burnt stone, chert

Table 2: Summary of environmental samples; occ = occasional, abt = abundant, \* = burnt, \*\* = probably modern and intrusive

Latin name	Family	Common name	Habitat	2009
Maloideae sp	Rosaceae	pear/apple/whitebeam/hawthorn	CF	1
<i>Quercus robur/petraea</i> wood	Fagaceae	oak	C	10
cf <i>Quercus robur/petraea</i> wood	Fagaceae	oak	C	4
<i>Tilia</i> sp wood	Tiliaceae	lime	C	23
<i>Corylus avellana</i> wood	Betulaceae	hazelnut	C	5
cf <i>Corylus avellana</i> wood	Betulaceae	hazelnut	C	1
<i>Alnus/Carpinus/Corylus</i> sp wood	Betulaceae	alder/hornbeam/hazel	C	6

Table 3: Charred plant remains from pit fill (2009)

**Key:**

habitat
A= cultivated ground
B= disturbed ground
C= woodlands, hedgerows, scrub etc
D = grasslands, meadows and heathland
E = aquatic/wet habitats
F = cultivar

## 8 Discussion

The archaeological background to the site suggested a limited potential for most periods, though this was increased to moderate when the later Iron Age was considered, partially based upon the presence gold coins of Iron Age date to the east of the site.

Previous geophysical survey of the site identified a limited potential for archaeological features sparsely distributed potential features such as several ditches and pits or sites containing burnt materials as well as a sub-circular enclosure in the south-eastern field, approximately 400m to the south of the areas excavated within this project. The subsequent evaluation identified the use of the area in the late Iron Age to early Roman period, as seen in the form of small pits and postholes as well as some tree and shrub clearance.

Two of the features identified within the evaluation were used as centre points for the two excavation areas within this project. No further features of late Iron Age or early Roman date were identified within Trench 1, only two east to west aligned furrows of likely medieval or later date. Within Trench 2, two further such furrows were present along with a possible tree throw which contained a piece of pottery of potentially middle to late Iron Age date along with a further small pit and a shallow gully, both of unclear function. The uniformity of the environmental material from these suggested that it may have derived from kilns or hearths used for a specific activity, rather than general domestic use. It is likely, though not certain, that the both of these were broadly contemporary with the probable tree throw. The high presence of lime within the charcoal is unusual as it post-dates the lime decline in the midlands, though the dating from the pit was based on a single small sherd.

## 9 Conclusions

The features identified within the two excavation areas tied in closely with the conclusions of previous archaeological work on the site, with three further small features present beyond those identified within the earlier evaluation. These represented a low level of activity within the later Iron Age or earlier Roman period.

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

## 10 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Tim Cornah, assisted by Elspeth Iliff.

The project was managed by Tom Rogers. The report was produced and collated by Tim Cornah. Specialist contributions and individual sections of the report are attributed to the relevant authors throughout the text.

## 11 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following: Client for commissioning the project was Richard Smalley of CgMs Consulting. The project was monitored by John Robinson of Warwickshire County Council and Worcestershire Archaeology would also like to thank them for their advice.

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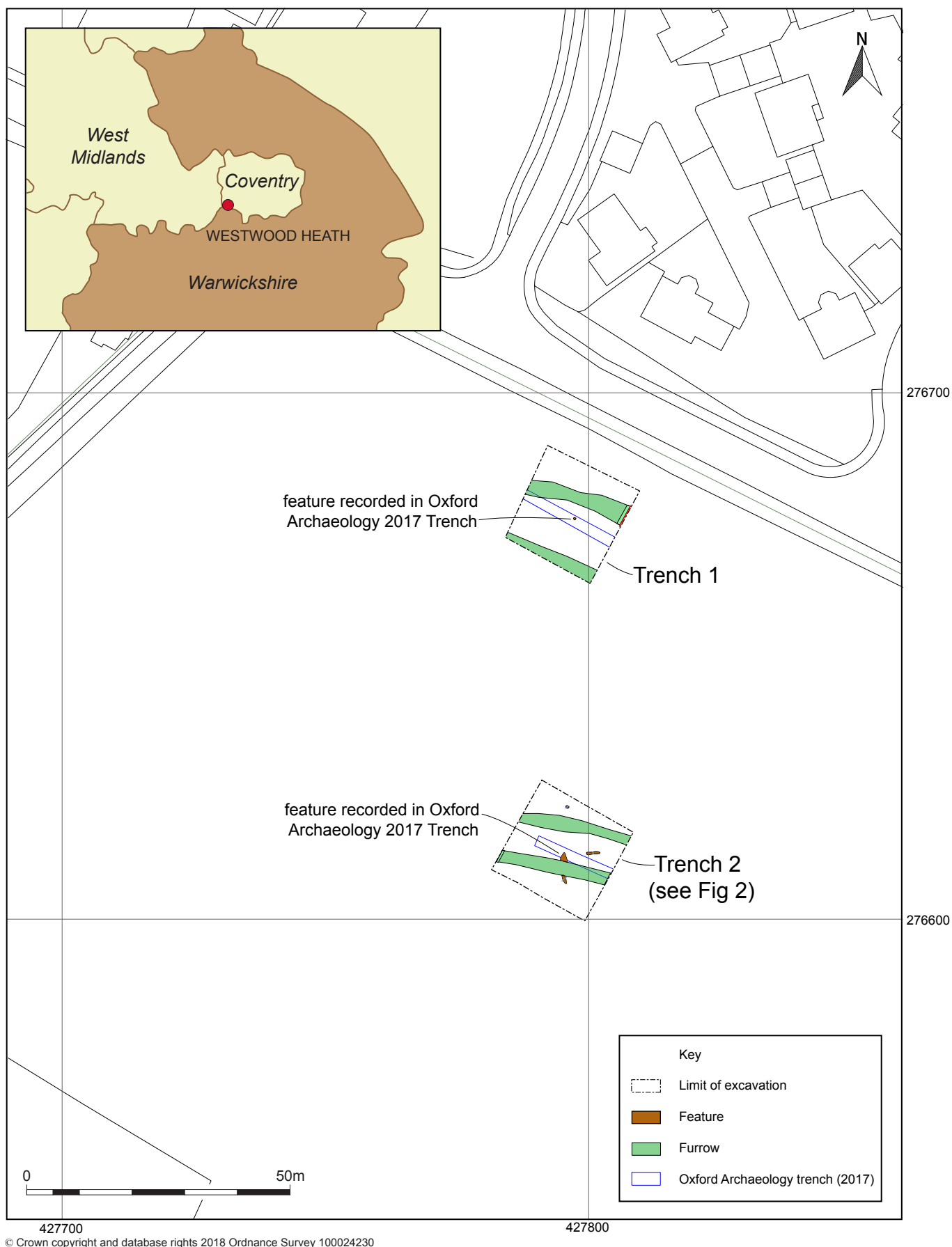
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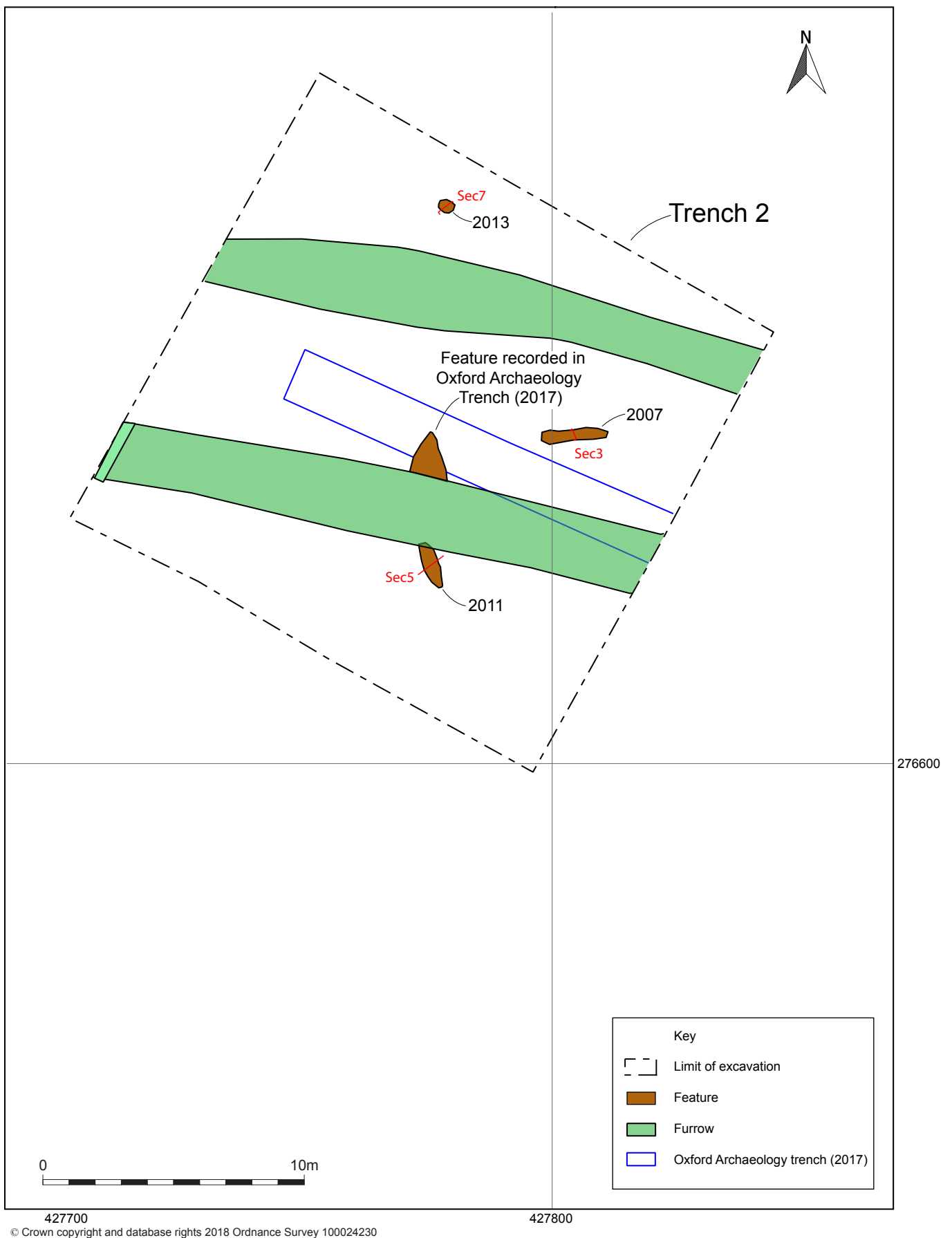


## Figures



Location of the site and trench locations

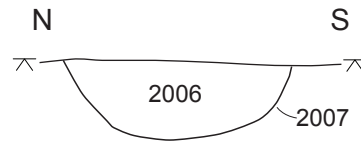
Figure 1



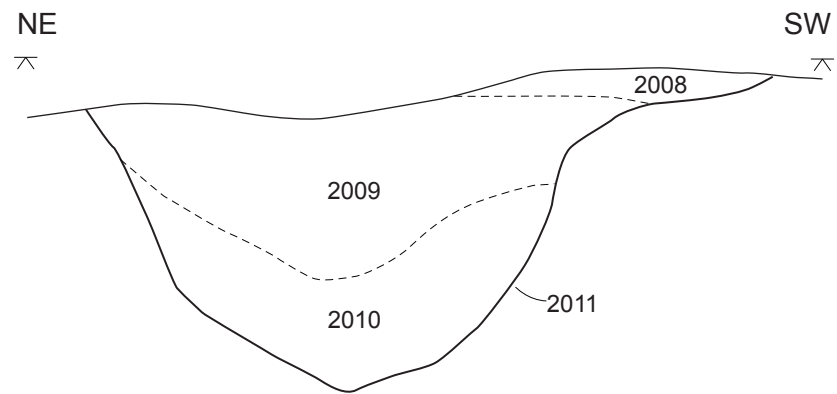
Plan of Trench 3

Figure 2

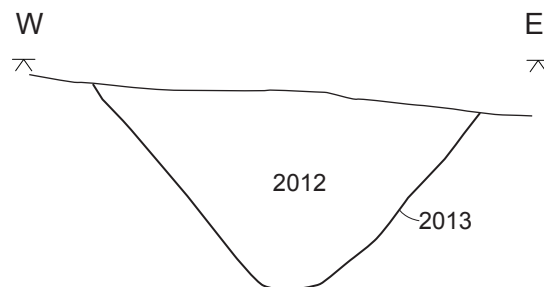
SECTION 3: GULLY 2007



SECTION 5: FEATURE 2011



SECTION 7: PIT 2013



Sections

Figure 3

## Plates



*Plate 1: Trench 1, looking south-east*



*Plate 2: Trench 2, looking north-west*





*Plate 3: Trench 2, feature 2011, 0.5m scale, looking south-east*



*Plate 3: Trench 2, feature 2007, 0.3m scale, looking east*





*Plate 4: Trench 2, feature 2013, 0.4m scale, looking north*



*Plate 5: Trench 1, furrow 1004, 2x 1m scale, looking north-east*



## Appendix 1: Trench descriptions

### Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 20m Width: 20m Depth: 0.39mm

Main deposit description

Context	Feature type	Description	Height/Depth
100	Topsoil	Friable greyish brown silty clay	0.26m
101	Subsoil	Friable reddish brown silty clay	0.09m
102	Natural	Compact pinky red silty clay	>0.14m
103	Furrow	Compact yellowish brown sandy clay, fill of furrow 1004	0.41
104	Furrow	Cut of furrow, aligned broadly E-W	0.41
105	Furrow	Compact brownish orange sandy clay	0.20m
106	Furrow	Fill of small possible gully in the base of furrow 1004, though probably part of the furrowing	0.20m
107	Furrow	fill of 1008	Not excavated
108	Furrow	Furrow cut	Not excavated

### Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 20m Width: 20m Depth: 0.40m

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth
2000	Topsoil	Friable greyish brown silty clay	0.25
2001	Natural	Compact pinky red clay	Not excavated
2002	Furrow	Compact yellowish brown clay, fill of 2003	Not excavated
2003	Furrow	Furrow cut, aligned broadly E-W	Not excavated
2004	Furrow	Fill of furrow 2005	Not excavated
2005	Furrow	Furrow cut, aligned broadly E-W	Not excavated
2006	Gully	Compact greyish silty clay, fill of 2007	0.10m
2007	Gully	Small E-W aligned gully cut	0.10m
2008	Pit	Moderately Compact grey silty clay, upper fill of pit/tree throw 2011	0.05m
2009	Pit	Compact blackish grey silty clay, secondary charcoal rich fill of pit/tree throw 2011	0.21m
2010	Pit	Compact orangey red silty clay, base fill of pit/tree throw 2011	0.17m
2011	Pit	possible small tree throw or pit of probable iron age date	0.36m
2012	Pit	Compact pinky brown silty clay, fill of small pit 2013	0.26m
2013	Pit	Cut of a small pit, undated	0.26m

## Appendix 2: Summary of project archive

TYPE	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	Ceramics, Environmental
Paper	Context sheet, Diary (Field progress form), Drawing, Plan, Report, Section
Digital	Database, GIS, Images raster/digital photography , Survey,

*\*OASIS terminology*