

# Archaeological Evaluation at land off Moxley Road, Darlaston, Walsall

Worcestershire Archaeology  
*for Lanpro Services Ltd*

January 2019



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# LAND OFF MOXLEY ROAD DARLASTON WALSALL

## Archaeological Evaluation Report

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## SITE INFORMATION

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Site name: Land off Moxley Road  
Local planning authority: Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council  
Planning reference: 18/1233  
Central NGR: SO 96905 96266  
Commissioning client: Lanpro Services Ltd  
WA project number: P5520  
WA report number: 2656  
HER reference: TBA  
Oasis reference: fieldsec1-338528  
Museum accession: TBA

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### DOCUMENT CONTROL PANEL

Version	Date	Author	Details	Approved by
1	15/01/2019	Beth Williams Richard Bradley	Draft for comment	Tom Rogers

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## APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF PROJECT ARCHIVE

# Archaeological Evaluation of land off Moxley Road, Darlaston, Walsall

By Beth Williams and Richard Bradley

With contributions by Rob Hedge

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

## Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology in December 2018 at land off Moxley Road, Darlaston, Walsall (NGR SO 6905 6266). It was commissioned by Lanpro Services Ltd, in advance of a proposed mixed use development, for which a planning application has been submitted.

The site comprises one small part of a larger development area, the majority of which has been subject to significant ground disturbance. Ridge and furrow earthworks however survive, relatively undisturbed, in the north-eastern part of the area and it was considered that there was a potential for the survival of archaeological features in this area. Four trenches of varying lengths were opened, laid out in a random grid array across this part of the site. A photographic record of the extant ridge and furrow was also undertaken.

A limited number of archaeological features were identified within the trenches comprising drainage, modern intrusions, and the bases of furrows related to the earthworks. There was no indication of earlier occupation or other activity on the site, which appears to have been subject to mixed agricultural and industrial land use. The small assemblage of artefacts was typical of that found in post-medieval agricultural soils, although a single pottery sherd recovered from the subsoil in one trench was dated to the medieval period.

# Report

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) on the 19th and 20th December 2018 at Land of Moxley Road, Darlaston, Walsall (NGR SO 6905 6266; Figure 1). This comprised excavation of four evaluation trenches in the north-eastern part of a wider application area, as well as a photographic record of extant ridge and furrow earthworks. The project was commissioned by Lanpro Services Ltd, in advance of a proposed mixed use development, for which a planning application has been submitted (ref. 18/1233).

The majority of the development area has been subjected to significant ground disturbance, but the archaeological advisor to the local planning authority considered that the proposed development has the potential to impact upon previously identified ridge and furrow earthworks (HER15182) and other potential heritage assets in the north-eastern part.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2018) and approved by the archaeological advisor. The evaluation conforms to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in *Standard and guidance: for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014a).

### 1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The development area lies at the edge of Darlaston and Moxley Parishes. It is bounded by the Walsall Canal and towpath to the west, housing to the north and east and the A4038 Moxley Road to the south. The evaluation site (c 1.2ha) in the north-eastern corner of the development is currently rough pasture and scrub land. It is bounded to the north by the houses of Berry Avenue and to the east by the houses of Bradshaw Avenue, Sproat Avenue and Wiley Avenue South. To the south and west is further scrub land (formerly clay extraction and landfill), covering the wider development area.

The site is located at around 133m AOD, with a gentle slope from east to west. The underlying bedrock geology is of the Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation, with superficial deposits of Devensian-Diamicton Till (BGS 2019).

## 2 Archaeological and historical background

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) of the overall development area was undertaken by Waterman CPM Ltd in 2007 (Waterman CPM Ltd 2007). This details the history of land use and the archaeological potential within a 0.5km study area. The findings presented in the DBA are summarised below:

No designated heritage assets were recorded on the site or in the immediate vicinity. The DBA also noted that the Black Country Historic Environment Record has no records of sites or find-spots of prehistoric, Roman or medieval date within the study area. However, it is possible that the surviving ridge and furrow on the site, identified from recent aerial images and LiDAR data, is of medieval or post-medieval date (HER15182).

The age of Darlaston is uncertain, although the name suggests an early medieval origin. A Darlaston is mentioned in the Domesday survey, but this is believed to represent another settlement of the same name in Staffordshire. The settlement remained small until the industrial revolution, with the Walsall Canal built in the 1780s-90s influential in the growth of industry. Darlaston developed throughout the nineteenth century as a result of various foundries and glass making sites associated with extraction from the local coal seam.



A large quarry (the Moxley Sandbeds) is recorded in the south of the wider application area (HER6019), with associated lime kilns. An additional quarry (HER6018), windmill (HER2639), colliery (HER6022), fire engineering works, office block (HER5337) and glassworks (HER9462) are recorded within 0.7km – but none extend into the site or to the wider application area.

Although Moxley is recorded as a historic settlement on the Black Country Historic Environment Record there is no settlement or roads apparent on maps of the area until 1804. It appears that the area was largely undeveloped farmland until the late eighteenth century with the construction of factory buildings, workers accommodation, transport systems, coal mines and clay and sand pits. As such the DBA asserts that any surviving remains from medieval or earlier periods are likely to be highly fragmented and truncated by later activity.

There are no known previous archaeological investigations on the site or in the wider development area.

### 3 Project aims

The general 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.

### 4 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2018). Fieldwork was undertaken on the 19th and 20th December 2018.

Four trenches, amounting to 233m<sup>2</sup> in area, were excavated over the 1.2ha site, representing a sample of c 2%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

The trenches were set out in a non-gridded array and positioned to best evaluate the identified ridge and furrow earthworks. In addition to the trenching, a rapid photographic record of the visible earthworks was completed. Two sample topographic transects were also surveyed so as to record the profile of the extant earthworks using the differential GPS.

Although three trenches were originally planned, it became apparent on-site that one trench would need to be split into two (becoming Trench 3 and Trench 4) due to a hedge line interrupting the desired location. The presence of areas of standing groundwater, as well as tethered livestock, also required some minor adjustment of trench alignments.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant archaeological supervision using a wheeled excavator (JCB 3CX), employing a toothless bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material, 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 and artefactual 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 Wednesbury Museum and Art Gallery.

## 5 Archaeological results

### 5.1 Introduction

The trenches are shown on Figure 2 and Plates 1-2, with examples of the extant ridge and furrow earthworks shown on Plates 3-4. The trench and context inventory is presented in Appendix 1.

### 5.2 Phasing

#### 5.2.1 Natural deposits

The natural substrate was encountered in all of the trenches excavated. This comprised pinkish clay with bands of orange and yellow sands and gravels.

#### 5.2.2 Phase 1: Medieval and post medieval

Trench 1 contained four parallel linear features aligned roughly north-east to south-west. These corresponded to visible furrows on the surface and were found to be the very shallow remains of the bases, measuring approximately 0.70m to 1.30m in width, and positioned 7m to 8m apart. They were filled by light-greyish brown sandy clay containing occasional charcoal fragments and sub-rounded pebbles. Furrow [105] was truncated by modern feature [107] and furrow [111] contained a fragment of medieval or post-medieval roof tile.

In Trench 2 it is possible that feature [209] also represented the base of a furrow, but only a few centimetres of the fill survived. It was 0.4m wide and was aligned north-east to south-west.

In all trenches, the subsoil consisted of mid-orange-brown sandy-silt, (0.12m to 0.17m thick), which included medieval and post-medieval pottery and tile.

#### 5.2.3 Phase 2: Modern

A large modern intrusion was visible towards the middle of Trench 1 [107], as well as an early 19th century horse-shoe shaped land drain [113].

Trench 2 also contained multiple modern truncations: rectangular pits [203] and [207] had been cut from the surface and had been backfilled with topsoil and redeposited natural, a stake hole [211] (which was also visible from the surface) and a land drain [205].

Trench 3 contained two square post holes, both of which were visible from the surface – [303] and [305] – one contained modern china. The trench also contained a series of land drains.

The topsoil in each trench comprised of dark-blackish-brown clayey-silt (0.25-0.36m thick). This included post-medieval and modern pottery and tile, but also modern plastic and metal waste (not retained).

## 6 Artefactual evidence, by Rob Hedge

### 6.1 Artefact methodology

The finds work reported here conforms with the following guidance: for findswork by ClfA (2014b), for pottery analysis by PCRG/SGRP/MPRG (2016), for archive creation by AAF (2011), and for museum deposition by SMA (1993).

#### 6.1.1 Recovery policy

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

### 6.1.2 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 Microsoft Access database.

The pottery and ceramic building material was examined under x20 magnification and referenced as appropriate by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by Worcestershire Archaeology (Hurst and Rees 1992 and [www.worcestershireceramics.org](http://www.worcestershireceramics.org)).

### 6.1.3 Discard policy

Artefacts from topsoil and subsoil and unstratified contexts will normally be noted but not retained, unless they are of intrinsic interest (e.g. worked flint or flint debitage, featured pottery sherds, and other potential 'registered artefacts'). Discard of finds from post-medieval and earlier deposits will only be instituted with reference to museum collection policy and/or with agreement of the local museum.

## 6.2 Artefactual analysis

The artefactual assemblage recovered is summarised in Tables 1 and 2 below.

The assemblage came from eight stratified contexts and could be dated from the medieval period onwards (see Table 1). Artefact condition was generally fair, with the majority of sherds displaying moderate levels of abrasion, and the mean sherd size (12.4g) being about average.

period	material class	object specific type	count	weight(g)
medieval	ceramic	pot	1	10
medieval/post-medieval	ceramic	roof tile	2	128
post-medieval	ceramic	brick/tile	1	6
post-medieval	ceramic	clay pipe	1	2
post-medieval	ceramic	land drain	2	465
post-medieval	ceramic	pot	6	122
post-medieval	ceramic	roof tile	1	57
post-medieval/modern	ceramic	pot	5	17
Totals			19	807

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

broad period	fabric code	fabric common name	count	weight(g)
medieval	99	Local sandy medieval ware	1	10
post-medieval	78	Post-medieval red ware	3	91
post-medieval	84	Pearlware	1	10
post-medieval	100	Engine-turned dipped earthenware	1	6
post-medieval	100	Manganese mottled ware	2	21

post-medieval/Modern	85	Modern china	4	11
		Totals	12	149

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric

### 6.2.1 Summary artefactual evidence by period

For the finds from individual features, including specific types of pottery, consult Tables 3 and 2 in that order and in combination.

#### Medieval (AD 1066 – 1540)

One sherd of medieval pottery was present within subsoil (401) in Trench 4. It was an abraded body sherd in a relatively hard-fired orange fabric with a grey core. It contained abundant white, clear, and pink sub-rounded quartz (0.1 – 1mm), and occasional rounded red and black ironstone (0.1 – 1mm). No traces of a glaze were observed, although the condition of the surfaces was poor. It bears some resemblance to the later medieval orange wares — thought to be a product of Wednesbury — described by Hodder (1991, 80) from nearby Sandwell Priory. These are thought to be 14th–16th century, though on general appearance, an earlier date for this sherd is possible.

Several fragments of thick, sandy roof tile are thought to be medieval in date, although an early post-medieval date is also possible.

#### Post-medieval (AD 1540–1900)

The majority of the assemblage was post-medieval in date, and comprised a typical range of local and regional domestic pottery, including:

- manganese mottled ware of late 17th or early 18th century date;
- 18th century redware (fabric 78);
- hand-painted pearlware of late 18th or early 19th century date;
- a range of 19th and early 20th century transfer-printed wares and dipped earthenwares.

Land drain and roof tile fragments were also recovered, along with a single undiagnostic stem of clay tobacco pipe.

context	material class	object specific type	count	weight(g)	start date	end date	TPQ date range
100	ceramic	pot	2	21	1680	1780	AD 1700-1800
			1	10	1700	1800	
		roof tile	1	57	1600	1800	
101	ceramic	roof tile	1	121	1200	1700	AD 1600-1800
		pot	1	50	1600	1800	
112	ceramic	roof tile	1	7	1200	1700	AD 1200-1700
114	ceramic	land drain	2	465	1780	1850	AD 1780-1850
200	ceramic	pot	1	10	1775	1830	AD 1800-1950
			2	3	1800	1950	

context	material class	object specific type	count	weight(g)	start date	end date	TPQ date range
			1	31	1600	1800	
		clay pipe	1	2	1600	1910	
304	ceramic	pot	1	2	1800	1950	AD 1800-1950
400	ceramic	pot	1	6	1770	1930	AD 1800-1950
			1	6	1800	1950	
401	ceramic	brick/tile	1	6	1600	1900	AD 1600-1900
		pot	1	10	1200	1600	

Table 3: Summary of context dating based on artefacts

## 6.2.2 Synthesis

The artefacts are likely to have been introduced to the site by medieval and post-medieval agricultural activity.

## 6.3 Recommendations

### 6.3.1 Further analysis and reporting

No further work on the assemblage is required.

### 6.3.2 Discard and retention

Although the final decision rests with the receiving museum, the assemblage is not thought sufficiently significant to warrant museum accession. However, it may be suitable for use in a handling collection or educational materials.

## 7 Environmental evidence

Environmental sampling was approached using standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA2012). In the event, no deposits were excavated which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

## 8 Discussion and Conclusions

There were a limited number of archaeological features identified within the trenches, with only drainage, modern intrusions, and the base of furrows related to the visible earthworks. There was no indication of earlier occupation or other activity on the site, which appears to have been subject to mixed agricultural and industrial land use for a considerable period. The small quantity of medieval and post-medieval artefacts probably represents domestic material introduced to the site by agricultural activity, such as manuring. Modern materials including transferred printed wares and land drain fragments were also recovered.

The extant ridge and furrow earthworks photographically recorded on the surface, as well as being partially visible within Trench 1 and 2, are of local significance: these are rare in urban contexts. It is possible, based on the limited recovery of medieval finds across the site more generally, that the ridge and furrow in its current form was established during the late medieval or post-medieval period, although this is not certain. The other features are of negligible archaeological significance and the potential for further, as yet unidentified, archaeological features to survive at the site is deemed to be low.

Overall, it is considered that 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 provides an accurate characterisation of the development site as a whole.

## 9 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Richard Bradley, assisted by Jem Brewer and Gwyneth Thomas.

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

## 10 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their help during the project:

Paul Gajos (Lanpro Services Ltd) and Ellie Ramsey (Archaeology and Historic Environment Officer for Wolverhampton City Council).

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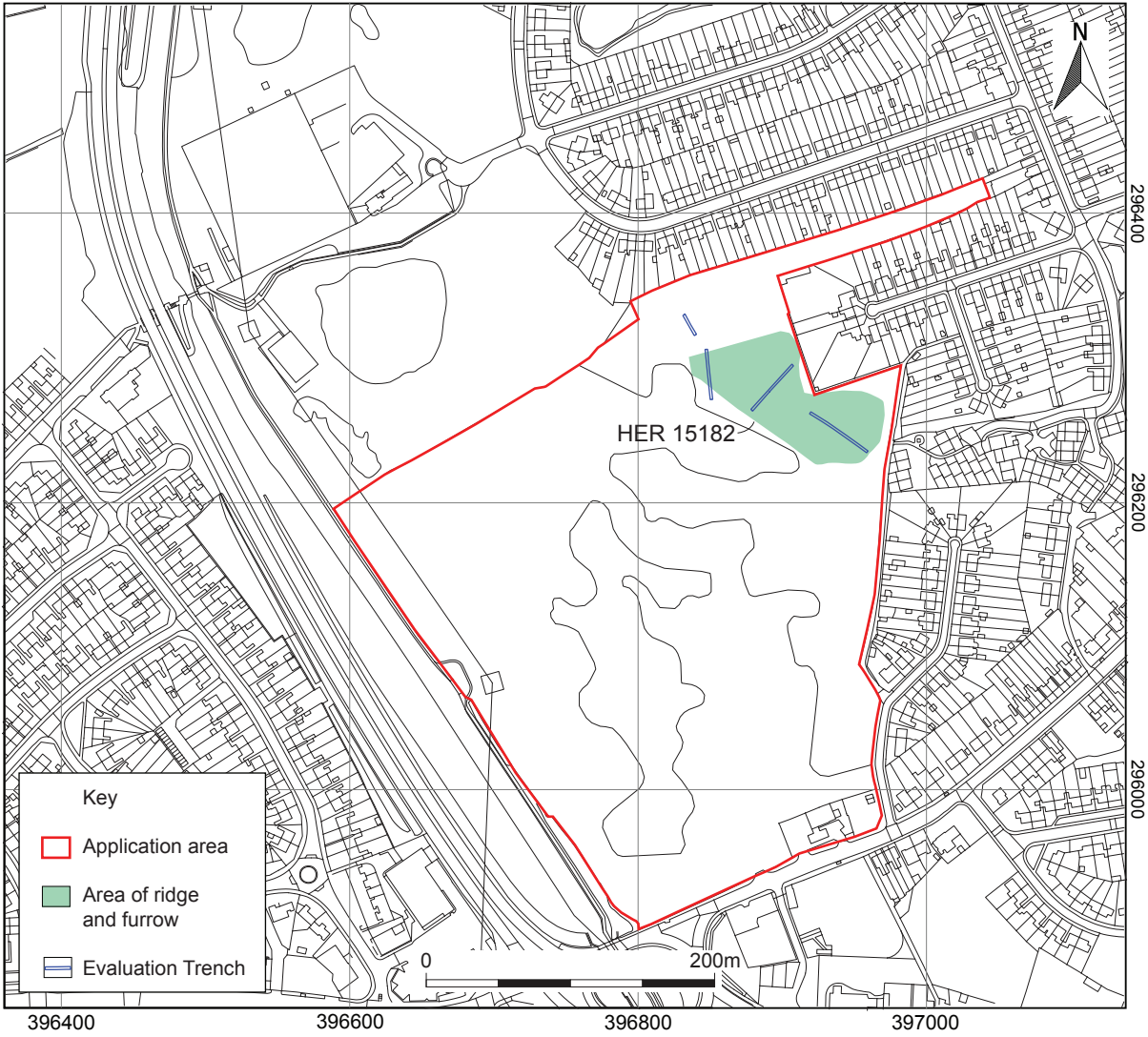
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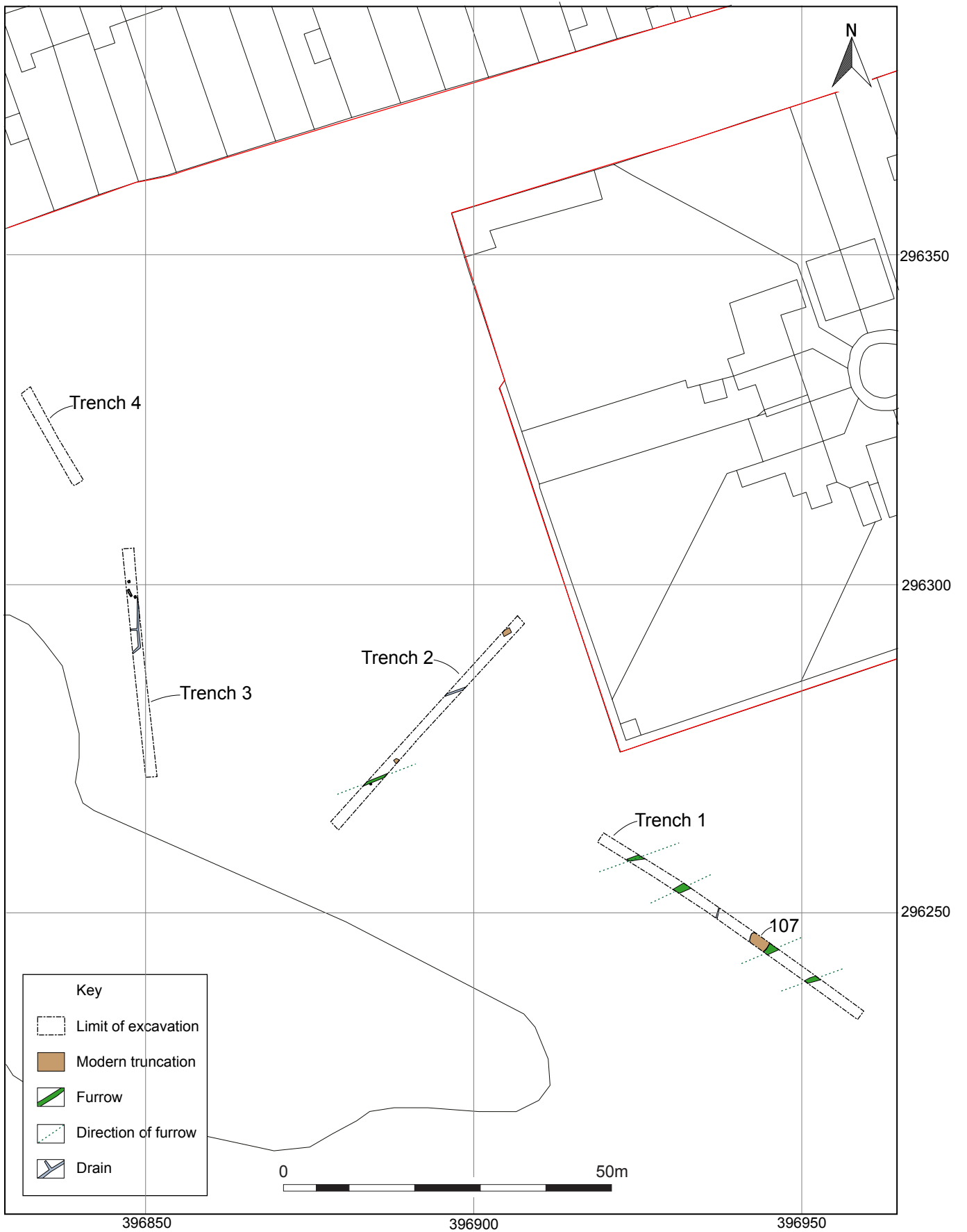


## Figures



Location of the site

Figure 1



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Trench location plan

Figure 2

## Plates



*Plate 1: General view of Trench 1, facing north-west*



*Plate 2: Trench 1 section, facing north-east (scales 1m and 0.4m)*





*Plate 3: View of extant ridge and furrow in proximity to Trench 1, facing south-east*



*Plate 4: View of extant ridge and furrow in proximity to Trench 3, facing north*

## Appendix 1: Trench descriptions

### Trench 1

Length: 50m

Width: 1.6m

Orientation: NW - SE

#### Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
100	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.27m	Soft and pliable, dark blackish brown clayey silt
101	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.17m	Soft, mid orange brown, sandy silt
102	Natural	Layer	Natural	0.04m+	Pink clay
103	Furrow	Cut	Furrow	Un-excavated	
104	Furrow	Fill	Furrow	Un-excavated	Soft and pliable, light greyish brown, sandy clay
105	Furrow	Cut	Furrow	Un-excavated	
106	Furrow	Fill	Furrow	Un-excavated	Soft and pliable, light greyish brown, sandy clay
107	Pit	Cut	Modern Pit	Un-excavated	
108	Pit	Fill	Modern Pit	Un-excavated	Sandy clay (re-deposited natural mixed with topsoil)
109	Furrow	Cut	Furrow	Un-excavated	
110	Furrow	Fill	Furrow	Un- excavated	Friable, light greyish brown, clayey sand
111	Furrow	Cut	Furrow	Un- excavated	
112	Furrow	Fill	Furrow	Un- excavated	Soft and pliable, light greyish brown, silty clay
113	Field drain	Cut	Field Drain		
114	Field drain	Fill	Field Drain		

## Trench 2

Length: 43.5m

Width: 1.6m

Orientation: NE - SW

### Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
200	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.30m	Soft and pliable, dark blackish brown, clayey silt
201	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.14m	Soft mid, orange brown, sandy silt
202	Natural	Layer	Natural	0.09m+	Pink clay
203	Pit	Cut	Modern Intrusion/Pit	Un- excavated	
204	Pit	Fill	Modern Intrusion/Pit	Un- excavated	Dark blackish brown, re-deposited topsoil and subsoil
205	Field drain	Cut	Field Drain	Un- excavated	
206	Field drain	Fill	Field Drain	Un- excavated	Mid grey brown silt
207	Pit	Cut	Modern Pit	Un- excavated	
208	Pit	Fill	Modern Pit	Un- excavated	Light reddish brown, silty clay
209	Furrow	Cut	Furrow	0.02m	
210	Furrow	Fill	Furrow	0.02m	Soft and pliable, light grey brown, silty clay
211	Stakehole	Cut	Modern Stake Hole	Un- excavated	
212	Stakehole	Fill	Modern Stake Hole	Un- excavated	

### Trench 3

Length: 54.4m

Width: 1.6m

Orientation: NNE - SSW

#### Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
300	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.25m	Soft and pliable, dark blackish brown, clayey silt
301	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.12m	Soft mid, orange brown, sandy silt
302	Natural	Layer	Natural	0.07m+	Pink clay
303	Posthole	Cut	Posthole	Un-excavated	
304	Posthole	Fill	Posthole	Un-excavated	Mid grey brown, clayey silt
305	Posthole	Cut	Posthole	Unexcavated	
306	Posthole	Fill	Posthole	Un-excavated	Mid grey brown
307	Field drain	Cut	Field Drain	Un-excavated	
308	Field drain	Fill	Field Drain	Un-excavated	Mid grey brown
309	Field drain	Cut	Field Drain	Un-excavated	
310	Field drain	Fill	Field Drain	Un-excavated	Soft and pliable, mid brownish grey, silty clay

### Trench 4

Length: 29.12m

Width: 1.6m

Orientation: NW - SE

#### Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
400	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.36m	Soft and pliable, dark blackish brown, clayey silt
401	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.16m	Soft mid orange brown, sandy silt
402	Natural	Layer	Natural	0.08m+	Pink clay



## Appendix 2: Summary of project archive

<b>TYPE</b>	<b>DETAILS*</b>
Artefacts and Environmental	Ceramics
Paper	Context sheet, Diary (Field progress form), Plan, Report
Digital	Database, GIS, Images digital photography, Spreadsheets, Survey, Text

*\*OASIS terminology*