

Archaeological evaluation at Hill Moor, Manor Road, Lower Moor, Worcestershire

Worcestershire Archaeology
for Peartree Construction

July 2019



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Archaeological evaluation report



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SITE INFORMATION

Site name: Hill Moor, Manor Road, Lower Moor, Worcestershire
Local planning authority: Wychavon District Council
Planning reference: 18/00477/FUL
Central NGR: SO 98114 47206
Commissioning client: Peartree Construction
WA project number: P5492
WA report number: 2716
HER reference: WSM 71394
Oasis reference: Fieldsec1-343782

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Archaeological evaluation at Hill Moor, Manor Road, Lower Moor, Worcestershire

By Tim Cornah

With contributions by Elizabeth Pearson

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken Hill Moor, Manor Road, Lower Moor, Worcestershire (NGR SO 98114 47206). It was commissioned by Peartree Construction in advance of a proposed residential development. A planning application has been submitted to Wychavon District Council.

Three evaluation trenches were excavated, revealing ditches and a gully which were likely to be part of the field systems relating to the extensive prehistoric and Roman settlement and activity which surrounds the village. A single fire cracked stone and a small quantity of unidentified charred cereal grains were recovered from the features. A further ditch was present which aligned with the historic and extant plot boundaries, as well tree bowls, probably orchard features which are related to post-medieval and modern agricultural activity.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) at Hill Moor, Manor Road, Lower Moor, Worcestershire (NGR SO 98114 47206). This comprised three evaluation trenches. The project was commissioned by Peartree Construction, in advance of a proposed residential development. A planning application has been submitted to Wychavon District Council.

The archaeological advisor to the local planning authority considered that the proposed development has/had the potential to impact upon potential heritage assets (a scheduled monument LEN 1005352; WSM 30176 is located to the east).

No brief has been prepared by the Curator but this proposal 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) and the *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010)

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The site is located within the village of Lower Moor, within the former garden plot of a modern house. The village is located on the northern side of the River Avon, which is approximately 1km to its south-west. The site is broadly flat and located at a height of 26m AOD. The plot is surrounded on all sides by residential development.

The underlying geology is mapped as being Charmouth Mudstone Formation, overlain by superficial deposits of Wasperton Sand and Gravel Member (BGS 2019).

2 Archaeological and historical background

Prior to fieldwork commencing, a search of the Worcestershire HER was completed, covering a search area of 1000m around the site. Historic mapping was also consulted. A summary of the results of this research is presented below.

The current village is surrounded on its northern, south-eastern and southern side by a significant amount of known and further potential archaeological features which date from the early Neolithic period onwards through the prehistoric era. Approximately 1km to the south east of the site is an earthwork of likely early Neolithic date comparable with a cursus (WSM33720), with a double ring ditch (WSM37406) and enclosure (WSM57617) within close proximity. A further Neolithic cursus monument existed to the south-east of the site (WSM30492). A settlement certainly existed to the south and south-east of the village by the early Bronze Age as shown by Beaker burials 500m to the south of the site (WSM03255), likely associated with the settlement to its east (WSM01390).

This settlement continued into the Iron Age and Roman period in the area which is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument (No. 1005352) (WSM10392 and WSM24024). The settlement extended to the north-east of the site in the Iron Age (WSM72107) and expanded within the Roman period to include an area of possible Roman settlement located only 200m to the north of the site (WSM32353), with a later Roman settlement 600m to the north-west of the site (WSM34317), likely associated with some burials.

No clear suggestion of a Saxon settlement is known though the road to the north of the village (WSM30402), now the A44, is considered to have been laid out by this point. The settlement certainly expanded again in the medieval era, as shown by a number of areas of ridge and furrow, particularly to the north.

The earliest surviving building is the Old Chestnut (WSM30377) which dates to the 16th century. The village also had a manor house, (WSM 53136). The settlement appears to have been mostly to the west of the Old Chestnut, as shown by the survival of a number of 17th century timber framed buildings there. The village economy was clearly still agricultural and centred around farmsteads such as Manor Farm (WSM53135). The first mapping of the village and site was in 1833 (WRO s143/63) which showed the village surrounded by field systems. The east west aligned plot in which the site is located was shown with no buildings, but is shown with a line along its centre broadly again east-west splitting it in two. The northern and southern boundaries of the plot remain as the extant site boundaries. At the western end of the plot on the roadside, an area coloured blue is visible and presumably a pond. Buildings are shown on the plots to the immediate south of the site.

On the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1883, the plot is shown without its earlier central division and illustrated as an orchard. No buildings or the pond are shown within the plot. A north-east to south-west aligned building is visible in the western end of the plot in 1903, and the remaining eastern site boundary is shown for the first time. The same features are shown up until 1938. The remaining house at the western end of the plot is of later 20th century date.

3 Project aims

The aims and scope of the project are 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.

Significant deposits may be defined as those most likely to be of prehistoric and Roman date.

4 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2019). Fieldwork was undertaken between 1 and 3 July 2019.

Three trenches, amounting to 45m² in area, were excavated over the 1,120m² site, representing a sample of 4%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

The trenches were laid out within the footing of the proposed development in order to gain a representative sample of the site. The trenches were moved slightly to avoid tree stumps. The excavator bucket available for the works was slightly thinner than required than the 1.5m at 1.2m. The effect of this was mitigated by the extension of the trenches to gain the required percentage sample of the site.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant archaeological supervision using a 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 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 Worcestershire County Museum.

5 Archaeological results

5.1 Introduction

The features recorded in the trenches are shown in Figures 2-4 and Plates 1-5. The trench and context inventory is presented in Appendix 1.

5.2 Phasing descriptions

5.2.1 Natural deposits

Natural deposits across the trenches (102, 202 and 302) consisted of light orange sands and gravels.

5.2.2 Phase 1: Prehistoric to Roman

Within Trench 2, a group of three ditches [206, 208 and 210] (Plate 2; Figs 2 and 4) was present at the western end of the trench, with a further small gully [204] (Plate 3; Figs 2 and 3) at the eastern end. All of these ditches were aligned broadly north to south.

Ditch [208] was 1.06m wide and 0.56m deep and filled by (207), a light orangey grey clayey silt, which contained a single piece of fire cracked stone. The ditch was then partially truncated by re-cut [206] which was 1.62m wide and 0.35m deep and filled with a grey silty clay (205), which may be indicative of an alluvial soil formation process. No finds were present within this re-cut. The relationship between [208] and [206] was not clear, but the latter was of 1m width and up to 0.22m in depth. It is possible that this was actually two small gullies on the same alignment, although they would have had an identical fill (209), compact silty clay with frequent rounded pebbles. Again no finds were present. Gully [204] was 0.67m wide and 0.20m deep, filled by (203), a mid grey silty clay, which contained no dating evidence

These ditches were sealed by a light silty sand subsoil deposit (201). The same deposit was also present in the other two trenches (101 and 301). These deposits were between 0.30m and 0.39m in depth.

5.2.3 Phase 2: Post-medieval deposits

A broadly east to west aligned ditch was present in Trench 3 [305], filled by a dark grey brown sandy silt (303) with some grey sand and gravel at its base. The ditch was up to 3.20m in width and 0.66m in depth. The fill contained two small fragments of brick which were undiagnostic and therefore not retained. The ditch truncated the subsoil deposits within this trench.

Within Trench 1, two features [104 and 106] were present that were shallow and irregular and in section truncated the subsoil. These were consistent with tree throws.

5.2.4 Phase 3: Modern

All trenches were covered by a mid dark grey brown silty sand topsoil deposit (100, 200 and 300) which was between 0.21m and 0.43m in depth.

6 Artefactual evidence

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

7 Environmental evidence, by Elizabeth Pearson

7.1 Project parameters

Environmental sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012), conforms to guidance by ClfA (2014a) on archaeological evaluation, guidance by English Heritage (2011) and Association for Environmental Archaeology (1995).

7.2 Aims

The aims of the type of project 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.

7.3 Methods

7.3.1 Sampling policy

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

7.3.2 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 hammer scale. 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, 3rd edition (Stace 2010).

7.4 Discard policy

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

7.5 Results and Significance

Only unidentified charred cereal grains were recorded in these samples. Otherwise, other material consisted of uncharred remains. These were 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.

The environmental remains, being poorly preserved and present only in very low levels, were considered to be of low significance.

Context	Sample	Feature type	Fill of	Position of fill	Period	Sample volume (L)	Volume processed (L)	Residue assessed	Flot assessed
205	1	Ditch	206			20	10	No	No
207	2	Ditch	208	Primary		20	10	No	No

Env Table 1: List of bulk samples

context	sample	charcoal	charred plant	unch*	artefacts
205	1	occ	occ	occ	occ coal
207	2	occ		occ	

Env Table 2: Summary of environmental samples; occ = occasional, mod = moderate, abt = abundant, * = probably modern and intrusive

context	sample	preservation type	species detail	category remains	quantity/diversity	comment
205	1	unch*	unidentified root fragments (herbaceous)	misc	+++/low	
205	1	ch	Cereal sp indet grain	grain	+/low	Popped and warped
207	2	unch*	<i>Chenopodium album</i>	seed	+/low	
207	2	unch*	unidentified root fragments (herbaceous)	misc	+++/low	

Env Table 3: Plant remains from bulk samples

Key:

preservation	quantity
ch = charred	+ = 1 - 10
unch* = uncharred	++ = 11- 50
	+++ = 51 - 100
	++++ = 101+
	* = probably modern and intrusive

8 Discussion

The ditches and gully within Trench 2 were stratigraphically the earliest features on the site, and although they contained no direct dating evidence, only unidentified charred cereal grains, they were likely to relate to one of the numerous phases of either prehistoric or Roman phases of settlement which surround the village. This interpretation was supported by a single piece of fire cracked stone within an early fill of the ditches, as well as their position below the subsoil deposits. Their north to south alignment also supported an earlier date than the main plot boundaries which ran in an east to west direction and were potentially medieval in origin. The function of the ditches was not clear although the alluvial type clay fill was suggestive of drainage. It is likely that, given the lack of finds within them, they were part of the field systems surrounding settlement.

Within Trench 3, an east to west aligned ditch was present that truncated the subsoil deposits. Two small undiagnostic pieces of brick were present within the fill, and the feature was parallel with the plot boundaries noted on the historic mapping. It is possible that this ditch is shown on the Enclosure map of 1833 as the ditch and a potential boundary on the map share the same position and alignment, although the map evidence is far from clear. What it does clearly show is a pond at the western end of the plot, which this ditch may have drained into.

The 1880s Ordnance Survey map shows the plot as an orchard. Within Trench 1, three irregular and shallow features were present that were consistent with tree roots, and are therefore likely to relate to the site's use as an orchard. As with the ditch in Trench 3, these features clearly truncated the subsoil.

9 Conclusion

The three evaluation trenches revealed the undated ditches and a gully which are considered likely to relate to the prehistoric or Roman settlement and activity in the vicinity. The ditches are likely to be part of field systems surrounding the settlements. In isolation the significance of these may be seen as only local, although within the context of the scheduled ancient monument to the east and the wider extensive prehistoric and Roman landscape around the village, they may contribute to regional, or perhaps even national, research objectives, although that contribution would be small.

The east to west aligned ditch and orchard features relate to features illustrated on the historic mapping and are therefore of negligible significance, all being products of post-medieval and modern agriculture.

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.

10 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Tim Cornah (ACIfA) who also produced and collated the report. The project was managed by Tom Vaughan (MCIfA). The illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (MCIfA) and the environmental analysis was by Elizabeth Pearson (ACIfA).

11 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for the successful completion of the project: Natasha Whitehouse and Ian Mooney (Peartree Construction), and Aidan Smyth (Archaeological and Planning Advisor, Wychavon District Council).

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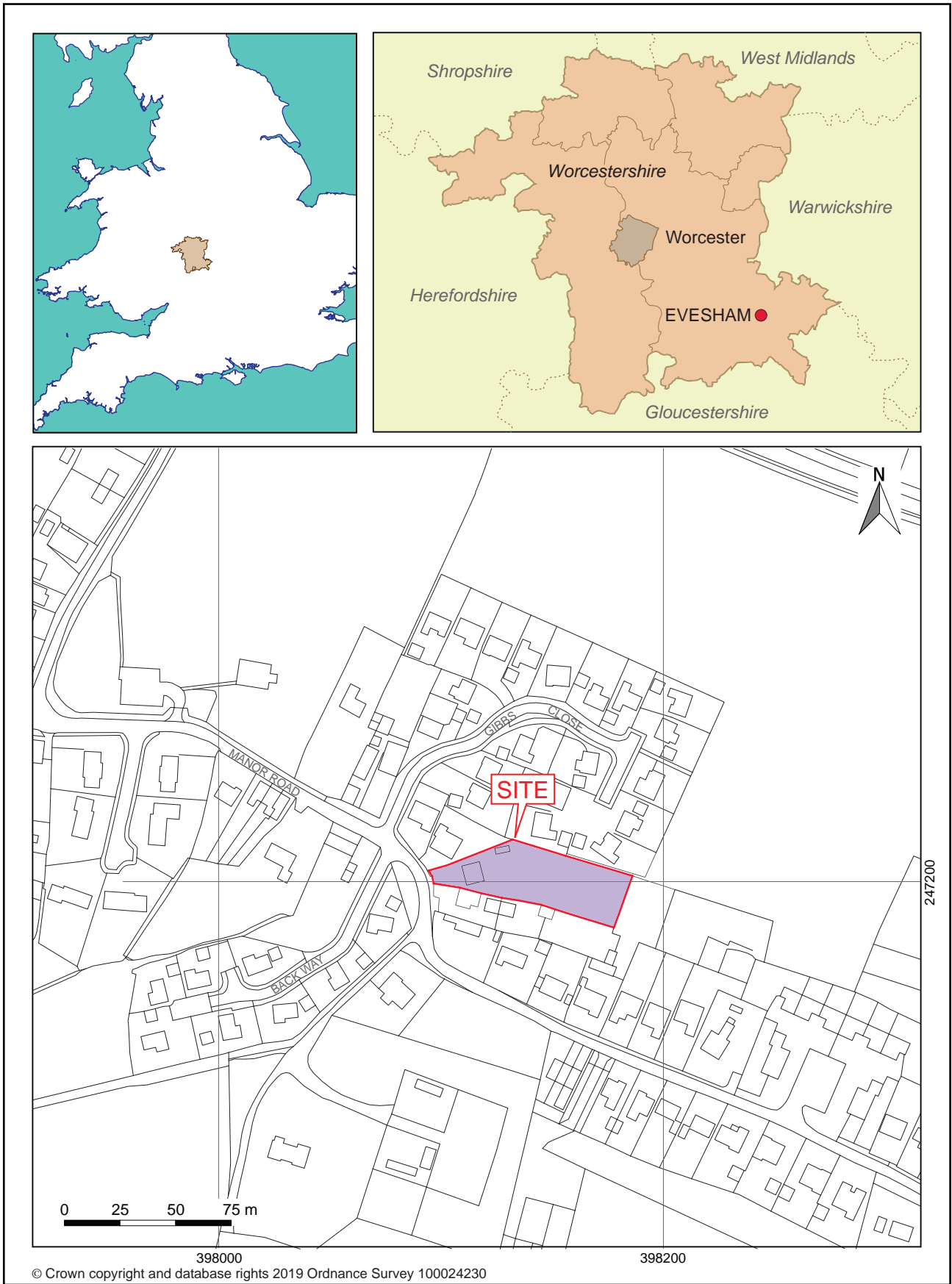
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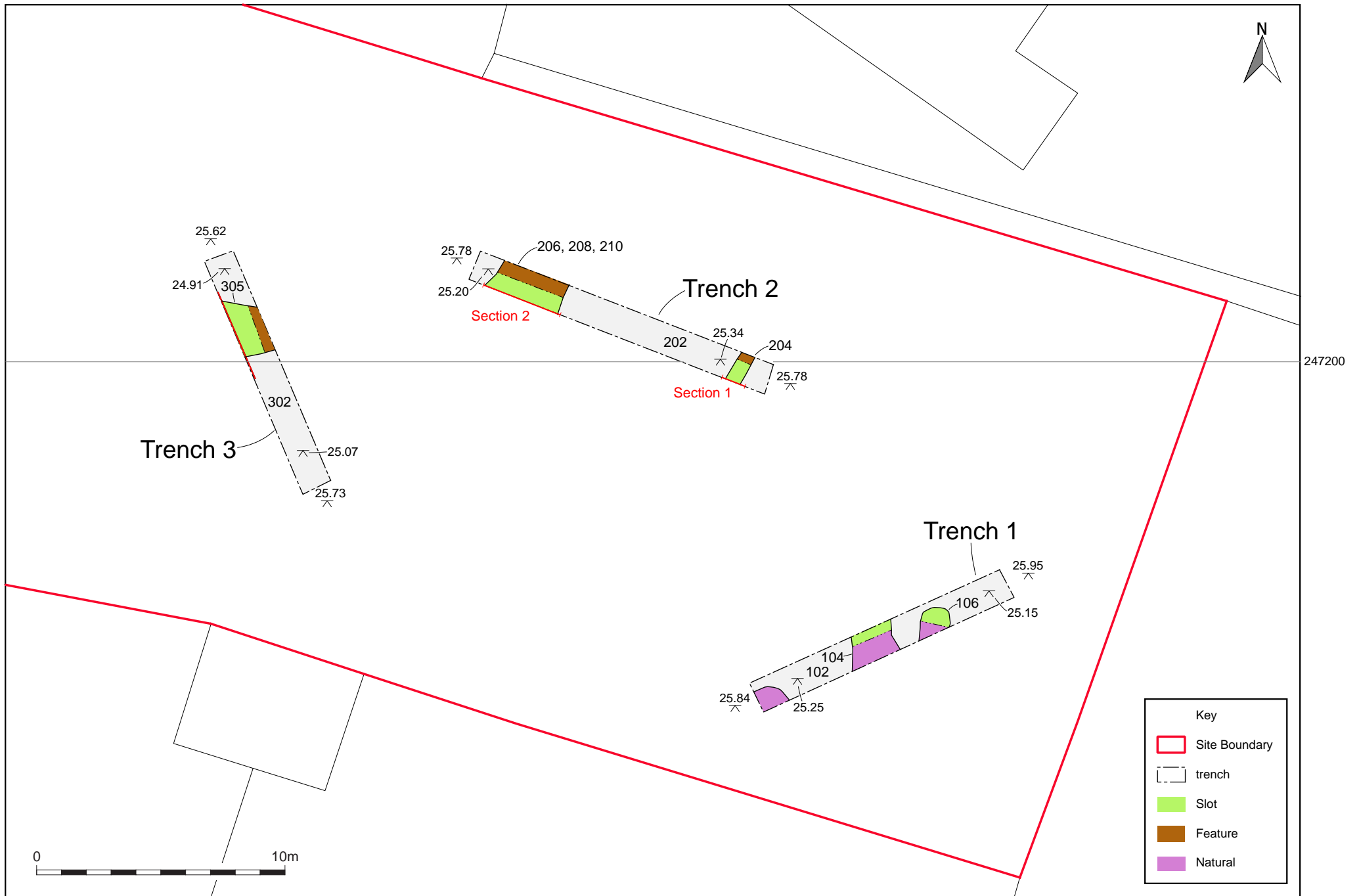
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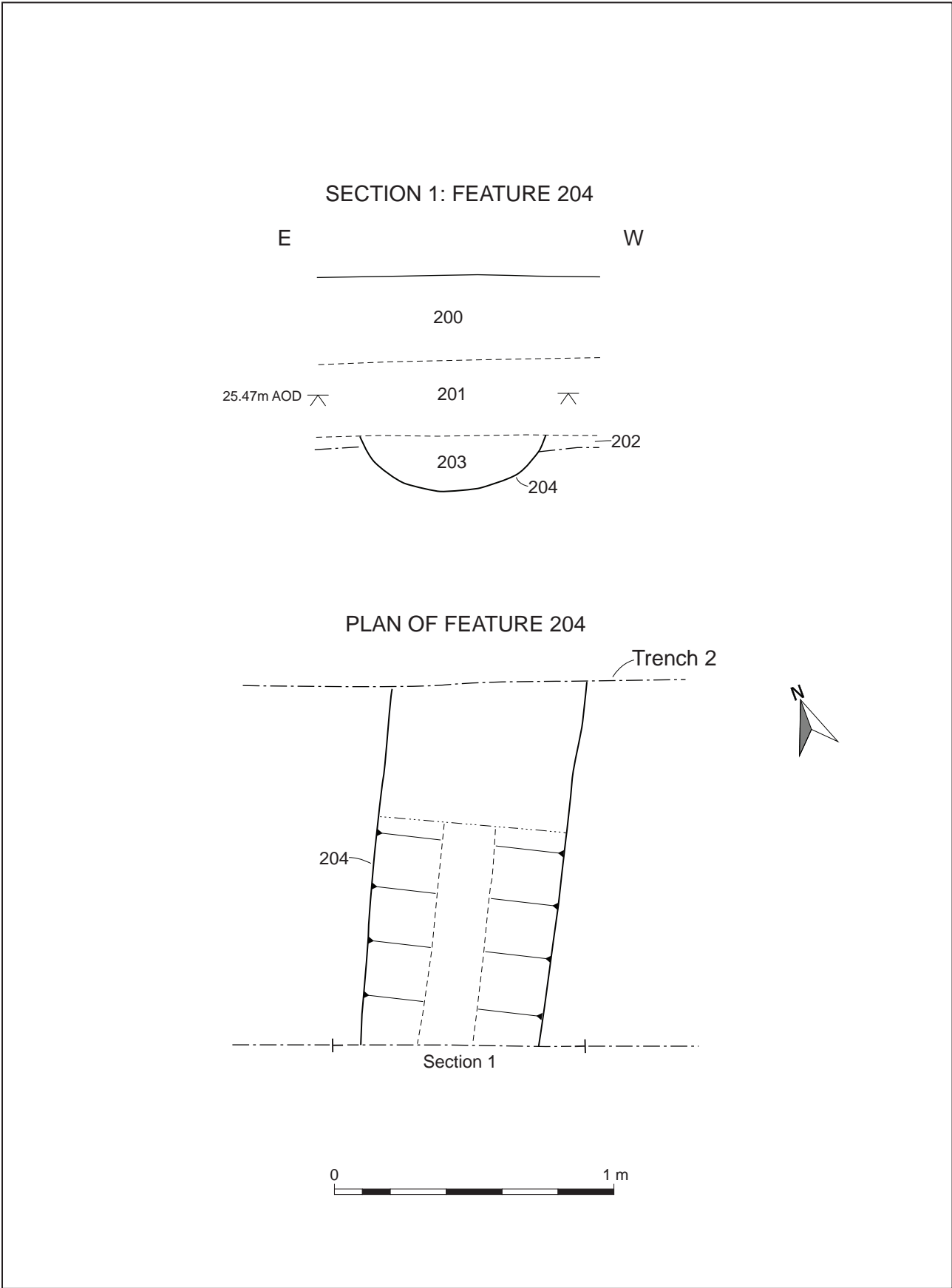
Figures



Location of the site

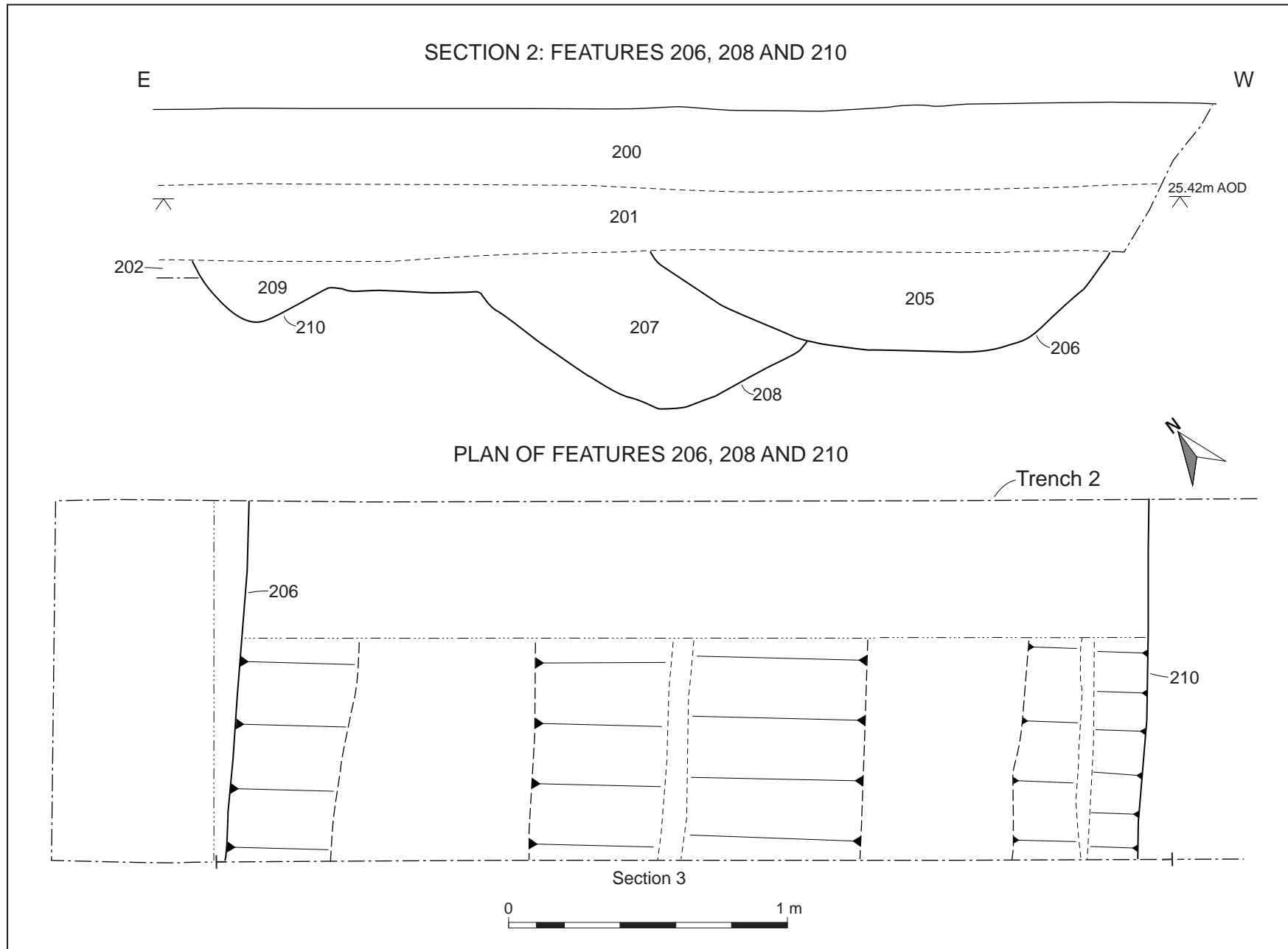
Figure 1





Plan and section of feature 204

Figure 3



Plan and section of features 206, 208 and 210

Figure 4

Plates



Plate 1 Trench 1, looking north-east, scale 1m



Plate 2 Trench 2 ditches [206, 208 and 210], looking south-west, scale 2x1m



Plate 3 Trench 2 ditch [204], looking south-west, scale 1m



Plate 4 Trench 3 ditch [305], looking west, scale 2x1m



Plate 5 Trench 1 feature [106], looking north-west, scale 1m

Appendix 1: Trench descriptions

Context summary

Trench 1

Length: 11.20m Width: 1.3m Depth 0.68m Orientation: NE-SW

Context	Feature Type	Context type	Interpretation	Depth	Deposit description
100	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.26m	Mid-dark grey brown silty sand with sub-rounded pebbles and very frequent rooting
101	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.39m	Mid-light silty sand with frequent small rounded pebbles
102	Natural	Layer	Natural substrate	>0.03m	Yellow orange sand and gravels
103	Tree Bole	Fill	Postmediaeval orchard feature, fill of [104]		Variable mixed grey brown silty sand
104	Tree Bole	Cut	Postmediaeval orchard feature, filled by (103)		Shallow irregular feature with variable sides and base, aligned broadly E-W
105	Tree Bole	Fill	Postmediaeval orchard feature, fill of [106]		Variable mixed grey brown silty sand
106	Tree Bole	Cut	Postmediaeval orchard feature, filled by (105)		Shallow irregular feature with variable sides and base, aligned broadly E-W

Trench 2

Length: 13m Width: 1.3m Depth 0.55m Orientation: NW-SE

Context	Feature Type	Context type	Interpretation	Depth	Deposit description
200	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.21m	Mid-dark grey brown silty sand with sub-rounded pebbles and very frequent rooting
201	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.30m	Mid-light silty sand with frequent small rounded pebbles
202	Natural	Layer	Natural substrate	>0.04m	Yellow orange sand and gravels
203	Gully	Fill	Slightly alluvial fill of gully [204]	0.65m (0.51m BGS)	Mid grey silty clay with occasional small rounded stones
204	Gully	Cut	Drainage gully cut of prehistoric or Roman origin?	0.65m (0.51m BGS)	Broadly north south aligned gully
205	Ditch	Fill	Slightly alluvial fill of ditch re-cut [206]	0.37m (0.51m BGS)	Mid-light grey silty clay with occasional small rounded stones
206	Ditch	Cut	Drainage/field boundary ditch re-cut of prehistoric or Roman origin?	0.37m (0.51m BGS)	Broadly north south aligned ditch, cuts (207) and [208]
207	Ditch	Fill	Slightly alluvial fill of	0.55m	Light orangey grey silty clay with rare

			ditch cut [208]	(0.51m BGS)	small rounded stones and one small piece of fire cracked stones
208	Ditch	Cut	Drainage/field boundary ditch cut of prehistoric or Roman origin?	0.55m (0.51m BGS)	Broadly north south aligned ditch
209	Ditch	Fill	fill of ditch/gully cut [210]	0.23m (0.51m BGS)	Grey compact silty clay with frequent rounded stones
210	Ditch	Cut	Drainage/field boundary ditch/gully cut of prehistoric or Roman origin?	0.23m (0.51m BGS)	Broadly north south aligned ditch

Trench 3

Length: 10.50m Width: 1.3m Depth 0.80m Orientation: N-S

Context	Feature Type	Context type	Interpretation	Depth	Deposit description
300	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.43m	Mid-dark grey brown silty sand with sub-rounded pebbles and very frequent rooting
301	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.32m	Mid-light silty sand with frequent small rounded pebbles
302	Natural	Layer	Natural substrate	>0.05m	Yellow orange sand and gravels
303	Ditch	Fill	Fill of ditch 305	0.54m(0.42m BGS)	Dark grey brown silty sand with frequent small rounded stones
304	Ditch	Fill	Lower fill of ditch 305	0.12m	Mid grey blue sandy gravels
305	Ditch	Cut	Post-medieval boundary/drainage ditch	0.64m	NW-SE aligned ditch cut

Appendix 2: Summary of project archive (WSM 71394)

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

**OASIS terminology*

Appendix 3: Summary of data for HER: WSM 71394

Context	Sample	Feature type	Fill of	Position of fill	Period	Sample volume (L)	Volume processed (L)	Residue assessed	Flot assessed
205	1	Ditch	206			20	10	No	No
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205	1	unch*	unidentified root fragments (herbaceous)	misc	+++/low	
205	1	ch	Cereal sp indet grain	grain	+/low	Popped and warped
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unch* = uncharred	++ = 11- 50
	+++ = 51 - 100
	++++ = 101+
	* = probably modern and intrusive