Archaeological evaluation of land off A38 / Tewkesbury Road Coombe Hill, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire

Worcestershire Archaeology

for CgMs Consulting Ltd

April 2019

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Archaeological evaluation report

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SITE INFORMATION

Site name:	Land off A38/ Tewkesbury Road, Coombe Hill, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire
Local planning authority:	Tewkesbury Borough Council
Central NGR:	SO 8893 2723
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Archaeological evaluation of land off A38/Tewkesbury Road, Coombe Hill, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in February 2019 at land off A38/Tewkesbury Road, Coombe Hill, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire (NGR SO 8893 2723). This comprised the excavation of eleven evaluation trenches. The project was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Robert Hitchins Ltd, in advance of a proposed residential development.

Eleven trenches were excavated across the field, some of which were testing geophysical anomalies. Aside from a number of medieval and post-medieval furrows, evidence for Roman stone quarrying was identified on the south-western high ground. This took the form of large, vertical sided features that exploited seams of limestone, before being backfilled rapidly with upcast material. The geophysical survey correlated well with one of these features, though it is thought on the evidence of the evaluation that a number of anomalies that were interpreted as geological may be further quarry pits. Such quarries are often located close to the intended construction site, and the Roman road connecting Gloucester to Worcester and Droitwich which is projected to run past the site may have been the destination of the quarried stone.

Evidence for Roman quarrying activity is rare, as it is often removed by later exploitation of that same resource. Artefactual evidence recovered from the site demonstrated a 3rd to 4th century date for most of the activity, with a possible 1st to 2nd century phase of quarrying suggesting prolonged exploitation of the natural resource. A quantity of building material including roof tiles and possible tesserae may be indicative of a high status building in the immediate surroundings, whilst a possible curse tablet hints at a ritual element to the landscape.

The Roman activity is clearly confined to the southern part of the site, with further confirmation coming from the results of the previous phase of evaluation that took place in 2017.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in February 2019 at land off A38/Tewkesbury Road, Coombe Hill, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire (NGR SO 8893 2723). This comprised eleven evaluation trenches. The project was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Robert Hitchins Ltd, in advance of a proposed residential development.

The archaeological advisor to the local planning authority (Curator) considered that the proposed development has the potential to impact upon possible heritage assets. Previous geophysical survey and evaluation on other parts of the site has identified some small gullies and pits of prehistoric and Roman date, as well as low level medieval agricultural activity.

No brief has been prepared by the Curator but this proposal aims to conform to the standard Gloucestershire County Council *Brief for an archaeological field evaluation.* A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2019) and approved by Charles Parry (Gloucestershire County Council Archaeological Advisor). The evaluation conformed 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 site comprises a portion of a single agricultural field, currently in arable use. It is bounded on the west by the A38 and to the south by the A4019. To the north and east are further hedged agricultural fields. The survey area is 2.7ha within the 4.8ha field. The land slopes down from the north-west to the east and south-east, being *c.* 26m AOD at the top of the slope and *c.* 17.5m AOD in the south-east corner. The nearest watercourse is the Leigh Brook some 255m to the south.

The underlying geology of the study site is mixed. Running roughly north to south along the ridge on the western side of site is Wilmcote Limestone Member – Mudstone and Limestone, Interbedded. Further down the slope to the east is Saltford Shale Member - Mudstone, with occasional superficial deposits of Alluvium – Clay, Silt, Sand and Gravel (BGS 2019).

2 Archaeological and historical background

2.1 Introduction

An archaeological desk-based assessment of the site was undertaken by CgMs Consulting (CgMs 2017). This demonstrated that prior to the geophysical survey undertaken in anticipation of the previous evaluation of the site there had been no documented archaeological investigations of the site. No evidence for prehistoric or Roman activity had been identified within or close to the site and the area was thought to have been agricultural land since at least the early medieval period. Historic mapping demonstrates that the site was in agricultural use throughout the post-medieval and modern period.

A geophysical survey (Sumo 2019) was commissioned to inform this evaluation programme.

2.2 Previous archaeological work on the site

A geophysical survey (MS 2017) was undertaken to inform an evaluation of the other part of the field (Bradley and Arnold 2017). This evaluation identified a number of small gullies and pits, of prehistoric and Roman date, predominantly from trenches in the south-east of the site. Elsewhere, plough furrows dating to the medieval and post-medieval periods were identified. These aligned well with the geophysical survey, though the earlier features did not all correlate with geophysical anomalies.

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.

4 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2019). Fieldwork was undertaken between 11th and 14th February 2019.

Eleven trenches, amounting to 530m² in area, were excavated over the 2.7ha site, representing a sample of 2%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2. The trenches have been numbered to continue on from the previous phase of evaluation, and so run from 8 to 18.

The trenches were laid out partially on a grid and partly to interrogate a number of geophysical anomalies. Trenches 8-12 were situated to provide coverage whilst testing the probable furrows identified by the geophysical survey. Trenches 13-16 were located to test furrows and ferrous anomalies, whilst Trenches 17 and 18 were sited to test possible natural anomalies and one feature of uncertain origin.

During the evaluation Trench 15 was relocated further west to avoid an area of standing water.

Deposits considered to be insignificant were removed under constant archaeological supervision using a JCB 3CX type 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) 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 in approximate stratigraphic order.

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 Tewkesbury Museum.

5 Archaeological results

5.1 Introduction

The features recorded in the trenches are shown in Figures 2-7. The trench and context inventory is presented in Appendix 1.

5.2 Trench descriptions

5.2.1 Natural deposits across the site

The natural substrate varied across site. On the high ground in the western side of the site, a limestone brash in a light greenish grey silty clay was observed, interleaved with orange red silty clay. Further down the slope, the brash diminished and the orangey red clay became dominant.

5.2.2 Trench 8

A single furrow was identified running north-west to south-east along the length of Trench 8. It was filled by a light orangey brown silty clay. No finds were recovered from it. It aligned well with the results of the geophysical survey.

The mid orangey silty clay subsoil that overlay the furrow was 0.23m in depth. This in turn was sealed by 0.29m of dark grey brown silty clay topsoil.

5.2.3 Trench 9

Trench 9 contained no archaeological features. The geophysical survey identified a probable furrow at the eastern end of the trench, but this was not observed during excavation, though the eastern end of the trench did flood rapidly from rising groundwater, which hindered clarity.

The subsoil was similar to that present in Trench 8, and ranged from 0.1m to 0.4m thick, being greater at the eastern end. The topsoil was 0.33m thick.

5.2.4 Trench 10

No archaeological features were identified in Trench 10, although this trench flooded rapidly due to active land drains running through it (Plate 1). It was not located to test any specific anomalies identified in the geophysical survey. The subsoil was 0.4m thick, overlain by topsoil 0.32m thick.

5.2.5 Trench 11

No archaeological features were identified in Trench 11, and again it was not testing any geophysical anomalies. The subsoil was 0.12m thick under topsoil 0.21m thick.

5.2.6 Trench 12

Four furrows were identified within Trench 12, between 5m and 7m apart, and all aligned running down the slope north-west to south-east. Two of these furrows corresponded with anomalies recorded on the geophysical survey. The overlying subsoil was 0.08m thick and was sealed by topsoil 0.24m thick.

5.2.7 Trench 13

Trench 13 was situated close to the western edge of the field, and the geophysical survey had detected a large ferrous signal for most of this area (Plate 2; Fig 3). Two pits were identified; 1303 was a shallow sub-circular pit 0.28m deep (Fig 6). It was not fully revealed in the trench, with its visible extent 2.7m wide and 1.04m long. It contained a single homogenous fill, which yielded possible prehistoric pottery, along with later Roman fabrics, a possible whetstone and smithing slag.

A much larger feature was partially excavated to the north. This irregular pit (1305) had a shallow profile at its northern end, being 0.33m deep, before dropping sharply via a vertical face into a deeper hole. This was excavated to a depth of 0.6m but the base was not reached as it was concluded that this was likely a stone quarry as in Trench 18 described below. The feature was filled with a dark brown silty clay in the excavated section, but the deposits seen in plan beyond were a mixed material derived from redeposited natural. This feature yielded pottery with a terminus post quem of mid 1st to 2nd century AD.

The subsoil that overlay these features was 0.2m thick, with 0.11m of topsoil overlying.

5.2.8 Trench 14

No archaeological features were identified in Trench 14. The trench was located to test two geophysical anomalies of low potential; neither were identified. The subsoil was 0.1m thick under topsoil 0.28m thick.

5.2.9 Trench 15

This trench was relocated from its initial position to avoid a large body of surface water, with approval of the Gloucestershire County Council archaeological advisor. It was moved upslope to the north-west. Originally it was aligned to test two possible furrows based on the geophysical survey, and following its repositioning was still able to test one of these. The furrow was the only feature identified within the trench, at the south-eastern end. The subsoil was 0.09m thick, under topsoil 0.29m thick.

5.2.10 Trench 16

Four gullies were observed in Trench 16, though none were excavated due to rapidly rising ground water (Plate 3). All four features were aligned north-east to south-west, and were between 0.54m and 0.72m wide, and all were filled with light blue grey silty clay. More confidence can be assigned to the archaeological potential of gullies 1608 and 1610 than 1604 and 1606 (Plate 4).

A possible colluvial material (1611) of mid blue grey clay silt overlay these gullies. This was in turn overlaid by subsoil 0.12m thick, itself sealed by topsoil 0.23m thick.

5.2.11 Trench 17

This trench was located to test both furrows and geological anomalies. In the middle of the trench a number of possible linear and discrete features were present, defined by grey fills (Fig 4). They were all poorly defined, and when tested by excavation were larger than initially thought, due to the presence of redeposited natural fills below the upper grey sediments. In the middle of the trench was large pit 1706, which measured some 6m across. Slots were excavated through this, to a depth of up to 0.36m. Roman pottery was recovered from both. The northern of these two slots revealed a relationship between 1706 and another large pit 1708, though it was not clear from the section which feature truncated the other, as the cut was vertical.

At the northern end of the trench was possible ditch 1712, again with poorly defined edges. This was unexcavated due to waterlogging though it is thought likely to be a large pit rather than a linear feature. At the southern end of the trench was a possible linear feature 1704 (Plate 5) which lines up with the furrow identified on the geophysical survey, and had a shallow profile, being at most 0.31m deep. It was wider than other examples of furrows on site, being over 3m wide. It also returned a quantity of Roman pottery dating to the 3rd to 4th century. The features identified corresponded broadly with the geological anomalies as interpreted in the geophysical survey.

Two furrows were identified in the middle of the trench, which measured between 1.2m and 1.4m wide. They were aligned down the slope, roughly east to west, and one of them corresponded with the results of the geophysical survey.

The subsoil was 0.08m thick, and the topsoil was 0.18m thick.

5.2.12 Trench 18

Trench 18 was sited to test a number of geological anomalies and one possible linear feature, as recorded by the geophysical survey (Plate 6; Fig 5). A pit or ditch of Roman date (1803) was excavated in the southern end of the trench; it was not possible to determine which as the feature was not fully revealed within the trench (Plate 7; Fig 6). For this reason too it was not possible to excavate to the base of the feature. It was excavated to a depth of 0.57m. From it was recovered Roman pottery dating to 3rd to 4th century, along with building material and a possible tessera.

Further to the north a 7m wide feature was observed. This corresponded with the broad location of the geophysical anomaly described above, though it was much larger on the ground. A 3.5m long sondage was dug to a depth of 1.1m below the ground surface from the southern edge of the feature. This revealed a very mixed deposit of grey silty clay and redeposited natural clays and stones, along with a range of Roman pottery and animal bone. Following discussion with Neil Wright of CgMs Heritage and Charles Parry, permission was given to use the JCB to excavate the feature to depth. This revealed two features, running parallel and intercutting, but with an uncertain relationship (Fig 6).

The larger of the two, 1809 on the south-western side, was 4.3m wide and 1.2m deep (Plate 8). It had vertical sides, and a flat base, and had a large undercut on the south-western side. The base and sides were so straight due to the layers of bedrock that the feature was cut through. This stratum of bedrock consisted of stone that fractured to very straight sides. The smaller feature 1814 (Plate 9) was 3.2m wide and up to 0.9m deep, with a more irregular base. Both features were backfilled with very mixed material, consisting of upcast deposits (Plate 10). These suggested that the backfilling was intentional and rapid. The finds from this backfill included a quantity of late Roman pottery, animal bone, roof tile and a folded piece of lead alloy.

Two furrows were identified within the trench, aligning with previously identified features of this type, though none had been highlighted by the geophysical survey by this trench. The subsoil was 0.12m thick and the topsoil was 0.32m thick.

6 Artefactual evidence

6.1 Pottery by Laura Griffin

The finds work reported here conforms to the following guidance: for finds work by CIfA (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 *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.

6.1.3 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;
- generally where material has been specifically assessed as having no obvious grounds for retention.

6.1.4 Artefactual analysis

The assemblage totalled 226 finds weighing 2.510kg (see Table 1). Finds came from fifteen stratified contexts and could be dated from the Late Iron Age/early Roman period onwards. Using pottery as an index of artefact condition, this was generally poor, with sherds from most areas of the site displaying high levels of surface abrasion. This was reflected in a low average sherd size of 6.6g, indicating either post-depositional disturbance of features or that material was left on the site surface for some time before becoming incorporated into site deposits.

Material class	Material subtype	Object specific type	Count	Weight (g)
ceramic		pot	163	1075
ceramic		tile	9	434
ceramic		cbm	7	115
ceramic		oven	3	112
ceramic		pipe	2	2
ceramic	fired clay		5	5
glass		vessel	1	1
metal	lead	object	1	11
slag	slag(Fe)	smithing slag	2	5
stone		?whetstone	1	27
stone		pot-boiler	1	49
stone	blue lias	?tesserae	1	3
stone	red sandstone	building material	2	96
stone	slate		1	1

Table 1: Quantification of the finds assemblage

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.

?Prehistoric

A highly abraded sherd of a coarse, grog-tempered fabric was the only find from the site thought to be of this period.

Late Iron Age–early Roman

Material of this date consisted of sixteen sherds of pottery (contexts 1304, 1306, 1307 and 1806). These included fragments of Palaeozoic limestone-tempered ware, handmade Malvernian ware and oxidised Severn Valley ware. Diagnostic sherds from a nicely burnished Palaeozoic limestone-tempered ware jar and a Severn Valley ware wide-mouthed jar/bowl (cf. Webster 1976, type 19) indicated the fills of pit (1305) to be the earliest on the site with a terminus post quem date of mid-1st–2nd century.

Mid–later Roman

Twelve contexts could be dated to the later Roman period (see Table 2). Material included 152 sherds of pottery, fifteen fragments of ceramic building material, three fragments of oven material, a stone ?tessera and, most interestingly, a possible curse tablet.

The pottery assemblage was dominated by sherds of locally produced oxidised Severn Valley wares. Other identifiable fabric types present in smaller amounts included Oxfordshire colour-coated wares,

Oxfordshire white mortaria, Nene Valley colour-coated ware, Black-burnished ware 1 (BB1) and sandy grey wares. there were also two highly abraded fragments of Samian, both residual (contexts 800 and 1804). Diagnostic sherds were largely from jar forms, including a pulley-rim and wide-mouthed jar types in Severn Valley ware (context 1705 and 1806). Other forms included a tankard (context 1304) and a plain-rimmed curved bowl in Severn Valley ware (context 1807) and a drop-flanged bowl/mortarium in white-slipped Oxfordshire ware (context 1812). These forms alongside the range of fabric types identified indicated the assemblage to be of 3rd–4th century date.

All the ceramic building material came from the fills of ditch or quarry pit features in trench 18. Diagnostic fragments were identified as roof tile and included one imbrex fragment (context 1812) and one tegula flange (context 1811). All were of the same distinctive poorly mixed fabric as noted previously in trench 5 (pers observ). In addition, pieces of red sandstone thought to be building material and a ?tessera was also retrieved from a ditch fill in trench 18 (context 1804). The?tessera was small (approx. 15 x 12 x 10mm) and made from blue lias. The presence of both stone and ceramic building material would strongly suggest the remains of a sizeable building in the near vicinity.

A rolled and flattened sheet of lead bearing a strong resemblance to known examples of 'curse tablets' (see plate 12) was retrieved from a ditch/quarry pit fill (context 1806). The object was too tightly folded and corroded for an attempt to be made at unfolding within the limitations of this project and so unfortunately, this identification could not be confirmed. However, similar finds have been found on a number of sites across the Severn Estuary region where they are generally associated with associated with temple/shrine sites and/or sacred springs, including at Bath and at Uley in Gloucestershire (Woodward and Leach 1993, 112). These are normally considered to be votive objects or ‘curse tablets’, with a large number being inscribed with names of suspects in reported crimes, or invoking the gods to act and settle disputes. Although, for the reasons cited above, it has not been possible to identify any script on this object, it appears to be within the general size range for a curse tablet, and could measure c 65mm in length if rolled out to its full extent. Although not obviously a temple or ritual site, parts of this site are clearly heavily waterlogged, with the high water table preventing excavation of some trenches. The presence of large quantities of heat-cracked stones excavated during the previous evaluation of the site, were considered characteristic of a burnt mound, indicating the site to have generally been prone to water accumulation (Bradley et al 2017, 12). The presence of this water could have been a major factor in attracting ritual activity of some sort to the site.

Other finds of later Roman date, as in associated with the mid–later Roman pottery described above, included three pieces of handmade Malvernian portable oven material (context 1808) and a ?whetstone/hone fragment (context 1304). The latter was of a fine grained stone and looked to be the broken off tip/end of the object. In addition, two fragments of smithing slag (contexts 1304 and 1806) and two of fired clay (contexts 1304) were also thought to be of Roman date.

Post-medieval

Material of post-medieval date largely came from the topsoil (context 800), and consisted of two clay pipe stems and the handle of a red sandy ware vessel. A further tiny fragment of black-glazed pottery within ditch fill (1804) was clearly intrusive.

Modern

The latest material in the assemblage consisted of a fragment of dark green bottle glass (context 1801).

6.1.5 Significance

The presence of Roman material is consistent with finds excavated during previous stages of evaluation on the site (Bradley et al 2017). Finds of 3rd–4th century date were clustered towards the

southern end of the site in trenches 13, 17 and 18. The location of the majority of this material in the fill of quarry pits would indicate these features were deliberately created during the later Roman period. Furthermore, the presence of this domestic pottery and building material would suggest settlement occupation in the near vicinity.

The presence of a possible 'curse tablet' is particularly interesting, possibly indicating the site to have had some special purpose as a result of the very wet environment.

Context	Material class	Material subtype	Object specific type	Count	Weight (g)	Start date	End date	Finds tpq
800	ceramic		pipe	2	2			modern
800	ceramic		pot	3	56	L17C	18C	
1301	ceramic		pot	4	28	3C	4C	3-4C
1304	ceramic		pot	2	4	LIA	ERB	3-4C
1304	ceramic		pot	15	84	3C	4C	
1304	ceramic	fired clay		2	3			
1304	slag	slag(Fe)	smithing slag	1	1			
1304	stone		?whetstone	1	27			
1304	stone	slate		1	1			
1306	ceramic		pot	1	12	LIA	ERB	M1-2C
1306	ceramic		pot	8	67	M1C	2C	
1306	ceramic	fired clay		2	1			
1307	ceramic		pot	3	15	LIA	ERB	ERB
1307	ceramic		pot	1	4	M1C	4C	
1307	ceramic		cbm	1	3	M1C	4C	
1703	ceramic		pot	1	19	M1C	4C	Roman
1705	ceramic		cbm	2	45			3-4C
1705	ceramic		pot	6	63	3C	4C	
1707	ceramic		pot	7	54	3C	4C	3-4C
1801	ceramic		pot	2	2	M1C	4C	19-20C
1801	glass		vessel	1	1	19C	20C	
1804	ceramic		pot	29	135	3C	4C	3-4C (post-med pot is intrusive)
1804	ceramic		pot	1	1	L17C	18C	
1804	ceramic		tile	1	12	M1C	4C	

1804	ceramic	fired clay		1	1			
1804	stone	red sandstone	building material	2	96			
1804	stone	blue lias	?tessera	1	3	M1C	4C	
1806	ceramic		pot	1	4	LIA	ERB	2-4C
1806	ceramic		pot	37	240	2C	4C	
1806	ceramic		tile	2	45			
1806	metal	lead	object	1	11			
1806	slag	slag(Fe)	smithing slag	1	4			
1806	stone		pot-boiler	1	49			
1807	ceramic		cbm	2	30			3-4C
1807	ceramic		pot	1	1		?PRH	
1807	ceramic		pot	17	85	3C	4C	
1808	ceramic		cbm	2	37			3-4C
1808	ceramic		oven	3	112	3C	4C	
1808	ceramic		pot	19	174	3C	4C	
1811	ceramic		tile	3	287			M3-4C
1812	ceramic		pot	5	27	M3C	4C	
1812	ceramic		tile	2	58			
1813	ceramic		tile	1	32			

Table 2: Summary of context dating based on artefacts

7 Environmental evidence

Environmental 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.

7.1 Animal bone by Elizabeth Pearson

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

7.1.1 Recovery policy

Animal bone was hand-collected during fieldwork (Table 3).

7.1.2 Method of analysis

Animal bone was quantified by count and weight (g) and key fragments identified with the aid of modern bone reference collections housed at the Historic Environment and Archaeology Service and identification guides (Schmid 1972 and Hillson 1992).

7.1.3 Discard policy

It is recommended that animal bone is retained for archive. The material occupies a small volume and may have the potential to contribute to analysis should animal bone be recovered in larger quantities during excavation on the site, or in the near vicinity, in the future.

7.1.4 Ecofactual analysis

A small assemblage of well-preserved animal bone was hand-collected during fieldwork. A total of 88 fragments (1203g) was recovered, of Late iron to Roman date (Table 3). Sheep/goat teeth and various cattle and horse bones were identified. Cattle bones included metapodial, distal femur, lower mandible and phalange. Butcher marks and chopped bones were evident. Little interpretation could be made of this small assemblage. However, should excavation take place it is possible that sufficient animal bone could be recovered to justify analysis.

A single fossil vertebra was recorded from (1306) of either an Ichthyosaurus or Plesiosaurus of Late Triassic to early Jurassic, or early Jurassic date respectively. This is residual from geological deposits.

Context	Count	Weight(g)	Context description	Period
1306	4	24	Fill of possible quarry pit [1305].	
1307	12	309	Unexcavated fill of possible quarry pit [1305].	LIA - Roman
1804	2	4	Basal fill of ditch [1803].	Roman
1806	28	169	Fill of ditch/quarrying feature [1809]	LIA - Roman
1807	13	97	Fill of ditch/quarrying feature [1809]	?LIA - Roman
1811	7	313	Fill of ditch/quarrying feature [1814]	Roman
1812	1	32	Fill of ditch/quarrying feature [1814]	Roman
1808	21	255	Fill of ditch/quarrying feature [1809]	LIA - Roman
Totals	88	1203		

Table 3: List of hand-collected animal bone

7.1.5 Significance

A small assemblage of hand-collected animal bone suggests that should excavation take place, there is potential for sufficient animal bone to be recovered for analysis.

8 Discussion

The evaluation has established that archaeological features of Roman and medieval or post-medieval date are present on the site. The medieval and later activity is confined to plough furrows representing agricultural activity. The Roman presence is clearly confined to the southern half of the study site, and appears to take two forms. Firstly there are small ditches or gullies on the eastern side of the site. The function of these linear features is unknown, as they were generally not able to be excavated due to adverse site conditions, but drainage or land division are the most likely functions. The more significant aspect of the Roman activity is situated on the high ground on the western edge, where the large features cut through the limestone bedrock. It is likely that these are stone quarries; certainly the evidence from features 1809 and 1814 in Trench 18 demonstrates that a vein of easily quarried stone was reached, removed, and then the upcast material returned to the hole (Plate 11). If the

geophysical survey is representative, then this would be a linear quarry cut, chasing the seam of workable stone until it ran out. It probably continues through Trench 17 as 1706. The other large features, whilst not excavated to the same depth as those in Trench 18, have similar fills, and may well be derived from a similar process. If these features were all rapidly backfilled with upcast material, it is possible that the geological anomalies as interpreted by geophysical survey are actually all quarry pits.

The quarry pits were mainly of 3rd to 4th century date, with the exception of 1305 in Trench 13, which was 1st to 2nd century. If these finds are not residual then it suggests potentially two phases of exploitation of the stone resource. Late Iron Age to early Roman pottery was recovered as residual material in a number of other features from the 3rd to 4th century. The quantity of building material, including roofing tile and possible tesserae, alongside the range of domestic pottery wares that was recovered from the later quarry pits, indicates settlement of some status in the immediate surrounds.

The presence of a possible curse tablet in the fill of the late Roman quarry pit suggests a potential ritual element to the site. This could be by the presence of a sacred spring close by; the land at the base of the slope is waterlogged and is likely to have been so in the Roman period and earlier. The quarrying itself may have been for a ritual site, for example a temple, and may by association have been deemed to be an appropriate place to deploy such a curse. A more prosaic possibility is that the curse tablet was deposited along with some general domestic waste material from elsewhere.

The depth of overburden sealing the archaeological features varies depending on the topography; at the top of the slope, the archaeology is present around 0.3m below the current ground level, which increases to 0.9m at the bottom of the slope.

Evidence for Roman quarrying is sparse in the archaeological record, as later quarrying activity invariably exploits the same resources and destroys any evidence of earlier activity (Allen et al 2017). The route of the Roman road from Tewkesbury to Gloucester is provisionally projected to run along the route of the A38, and whilst the current A38 is not a straight line between two points, that stretch of hypothecated road does occupy the ridge of high ground, and is a logical place for the Roman road to have existed. Estimation for the quantity of stone needed for the construction of the road network in Roman Britain has put it at "40 million tonnes, mostly derived from resources close to the road" (Thomas 2016, 38), with the resurfacing of certain roads needed every 15 years (*ibid.*). A number of quarries have been identified along Ermin Street in Gloucestershire, presumably for use in their construction (Allen et al 2017, 208).

The results of the previous evaluation (Bradley and Arnold 2017) confirm the area of Roman activity is confined to the southern half. The two pits filled with fire-cracked stone and charcoal do not immediately relate to the features seen during this current phase, though the suggestion that the pits were indicative of ephemeral activity would not be at odds with a quarry operation, if they proved to be contemporary.

9 Significance

The significance of the site is varied; the furrows are of negligible significance, being products of post-medieval and modern agriculture. The presence of probable Roman quarrying in the form of limestone extraction is of potential regional significance. Such sites have rarely been identified in the archaeological record, either due to their removal by later exploitation of the resource, or because developer-led archaeology only infrequently impacts the location of such sites.

The site has the potential to inform the following research aims:

In *The Archaeology of South West England: South West Archaeological Research Framework Resource Assessment and Research Agenda* (Webster 2007)

- Research Aim 38: Widen our understanding of the extraction, processing and transportation of minerals, stone and aggregates.

In *The Archaeology of Mining and Quarrying in England A Research Framework Resource Assessment and Research Agenda (Newman 2016)*

- Research Aim 19: Increase the understanding of all types of mineral extraction and associated sites by making greater use of archaeological excavation.
- Research Aim 21: Take advantage of scientific dating and analytical techniques, to increase knowledge of prehistoric, Roman and medieval period mining and quarrying, but also develop techniques relevant to the analysis of later period mining, quarrying, dressing and smelting methods.

10 Conclusions

Eleven trenches were excavated across the field, some of which were testing geophysical anomalies. Aside from a number of medieval and post-medieval furrows, evidence for Roman stone quarrying was identified on the south-western high ground. This took the form of large, vertical sided features that exploited seams of limestone, before being backfilled rapidly with upcast material. The geophysical survey correlated well with one of these features, though a number of anomalies that were interpreted as geological may be further quarry pits. Such quarries are often located close to the intended construction site and the Roman road connecting Gloucester to Worcester and Droitwich is projected to run past the site. Evidence for Roman quarrying activity is rare, as it is often removed by later exploitation of that same resource. Artefactual evidence recovered from the site demonstrated a 3rd to 4th century date to most of the activity, with a possible 1st to 2nd century phase of quarrying suggesting prolonged exploitation of the natural resource. A quantity of building material including roof tiles and possible tesserae is indicative of a high status building in the immediate surroundings, whilst a possible curse tablet hints at a ritual element to the landscape.

The Roman activity is clearly confined to the southern part of the site, with further confirmation coming from the results of the previous phase of evaluation that took place in 2017.

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, though not always to investigate those features. It is considered that the nature, density and distribution of archaeological features provide an accurate characterisation of the development site as a whole.

11 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Peter Lovett, assisted by Elspeth Iliff and Gwyneth Thomas.

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

12 Acknowledgements

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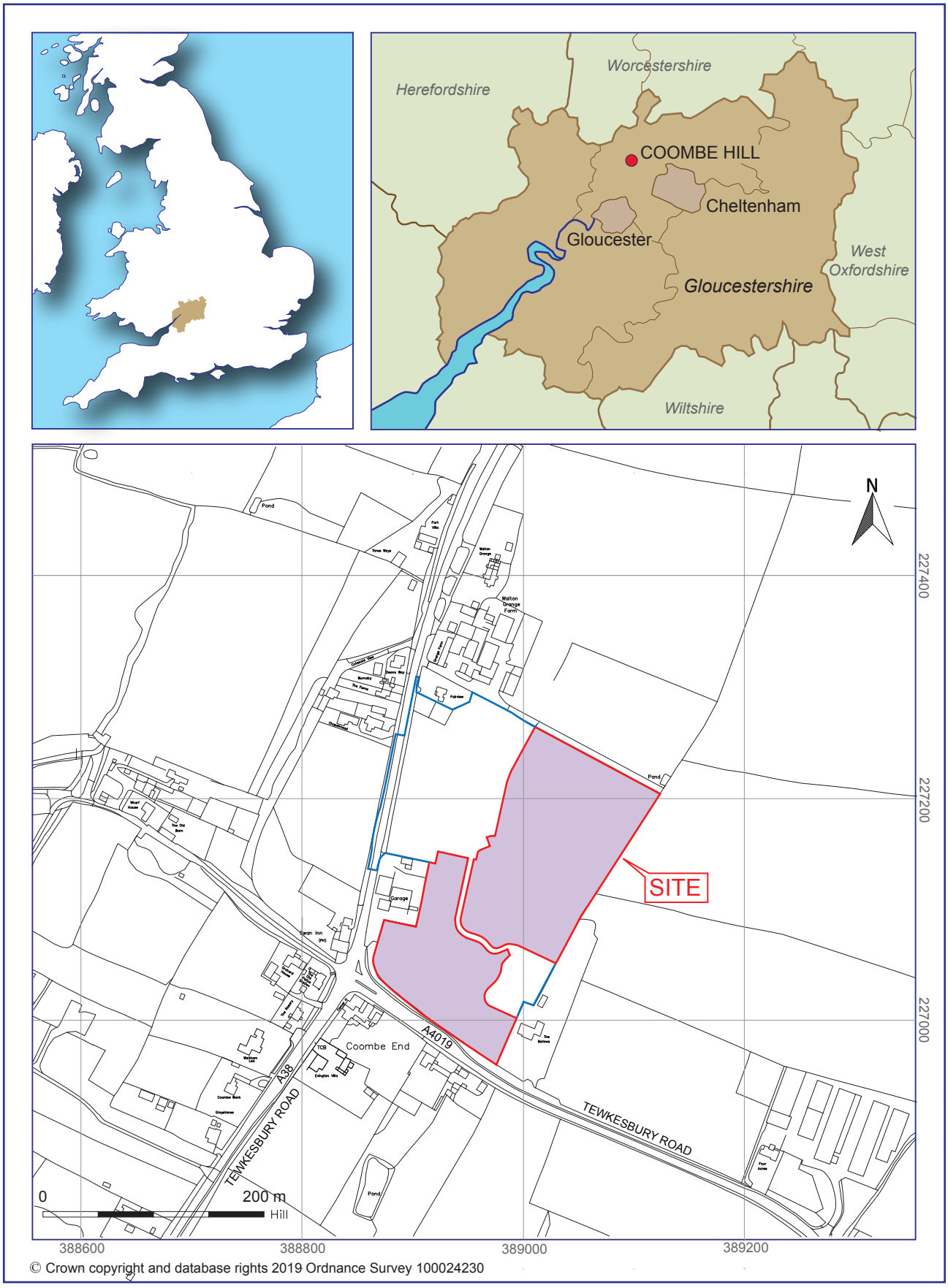
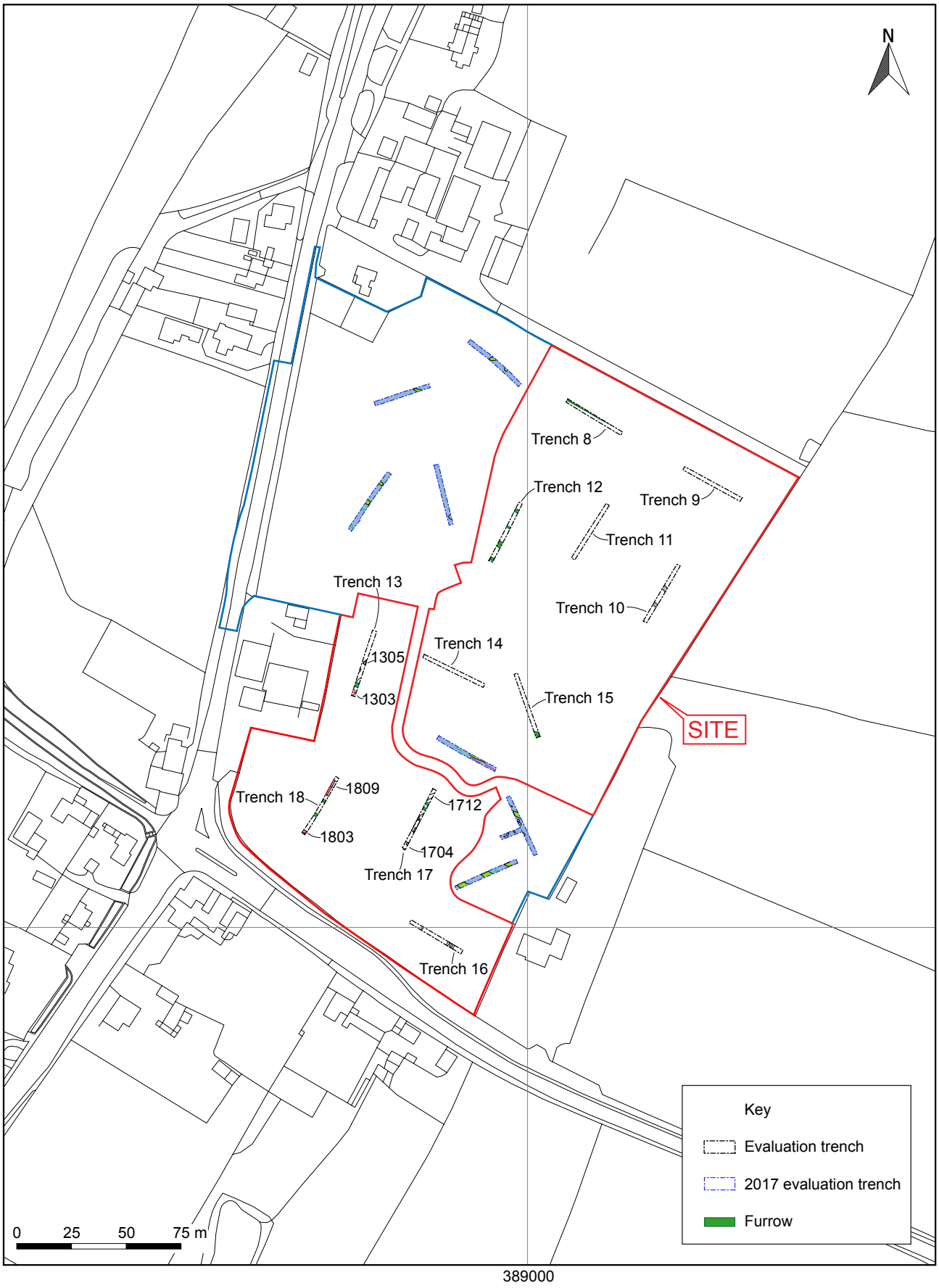
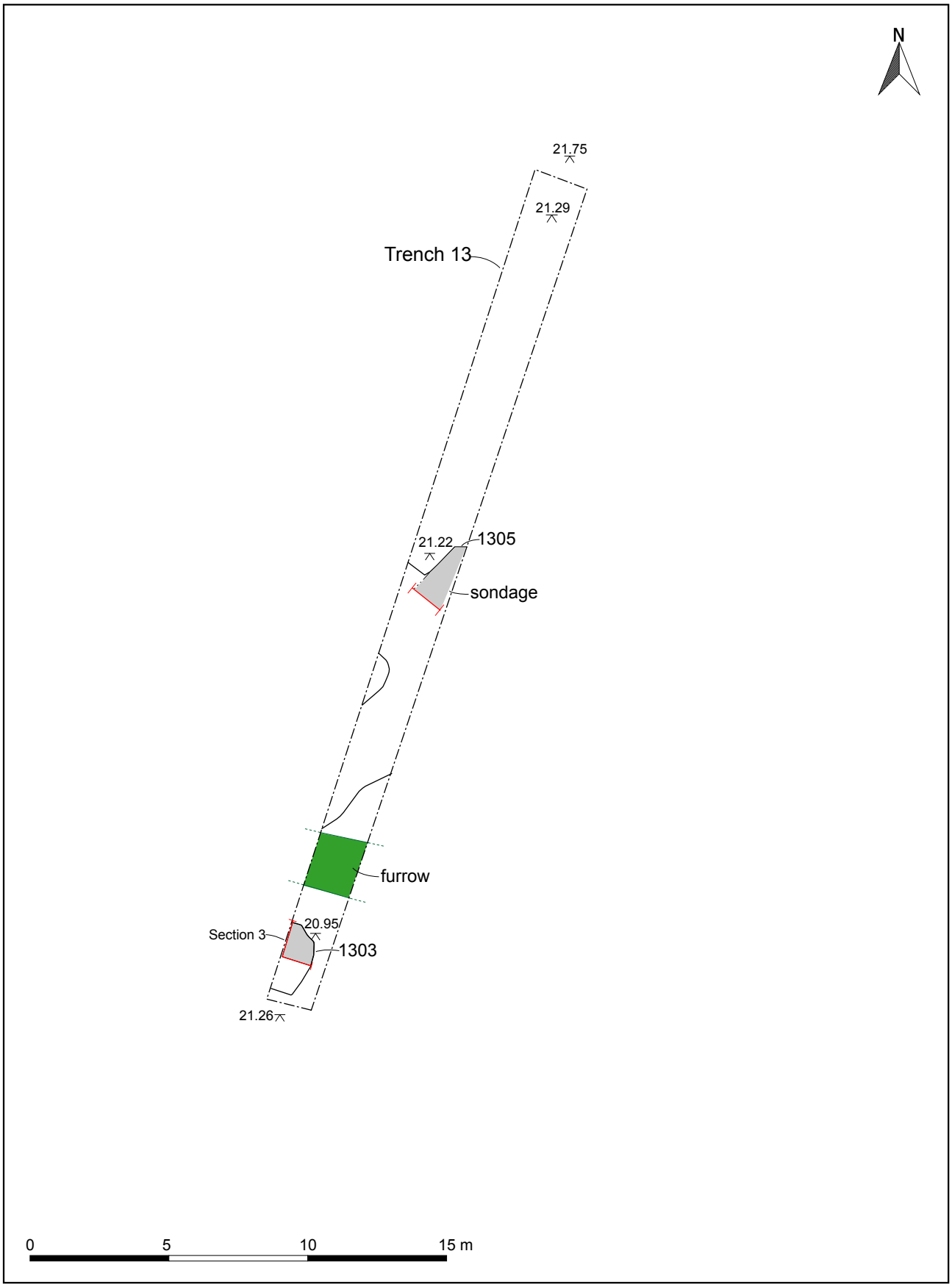
Figures



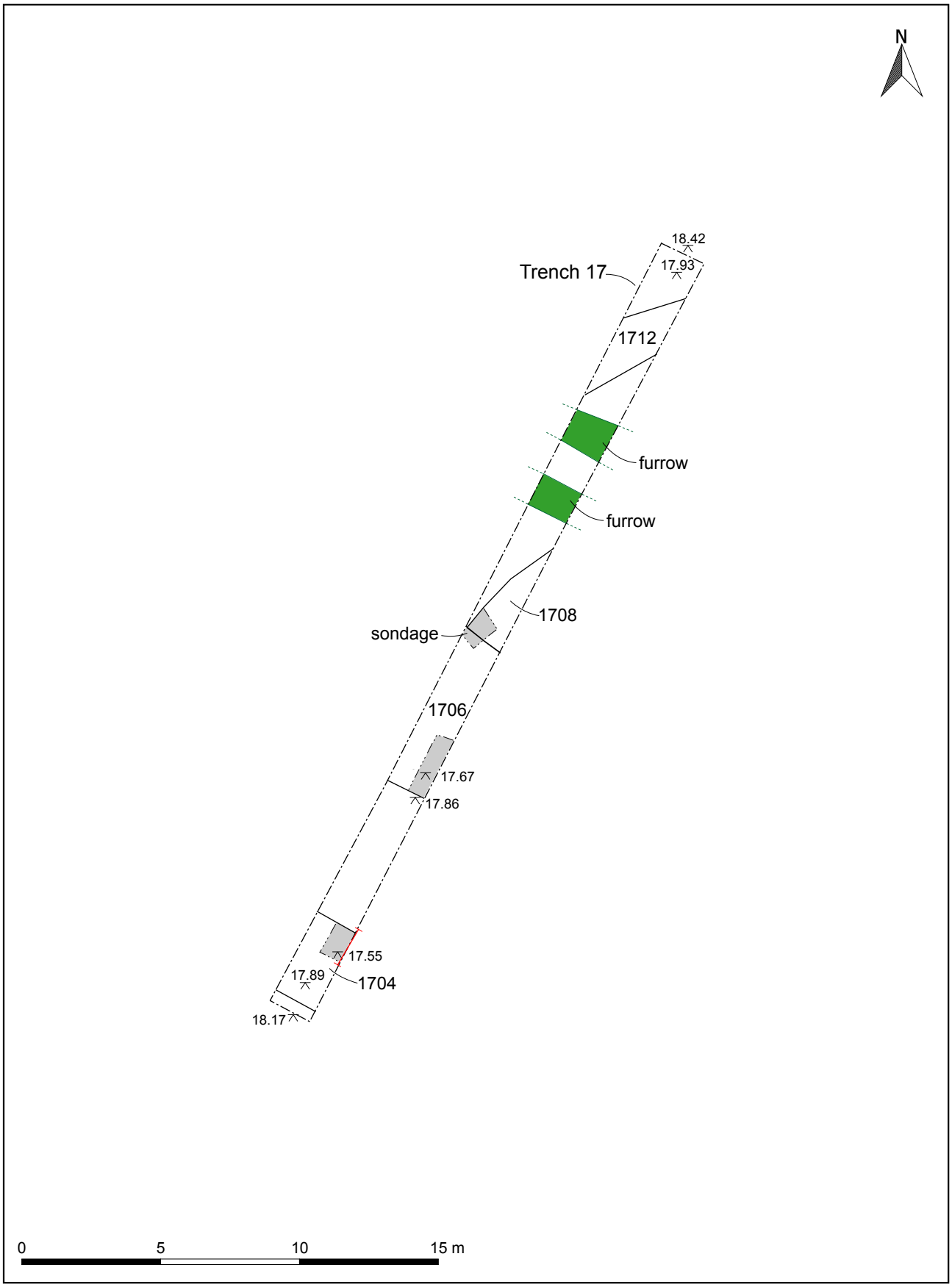
Location of the site *Figure 1*



Trench location plan *Figure 2*

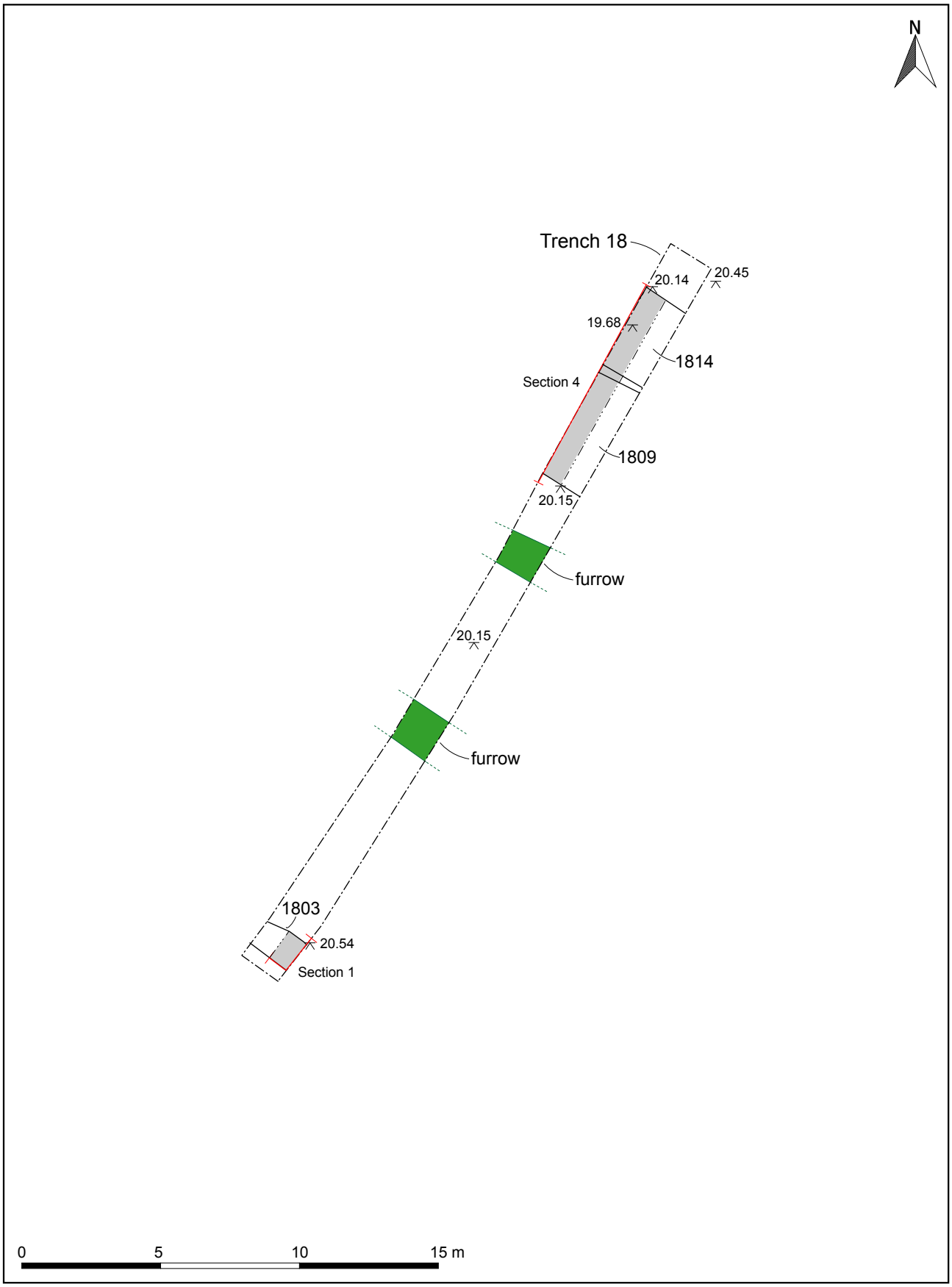


Plan of Trench 13 *Figure 3*



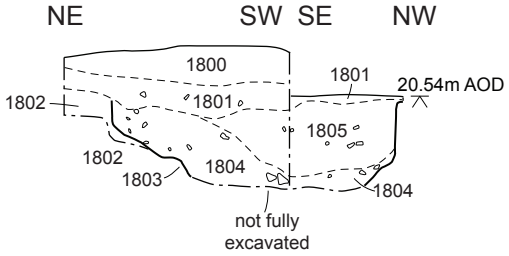
Plan of Trench 17

Figure 4

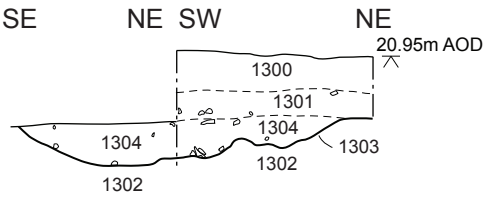


Plan of Trench 18 *Figure 5*

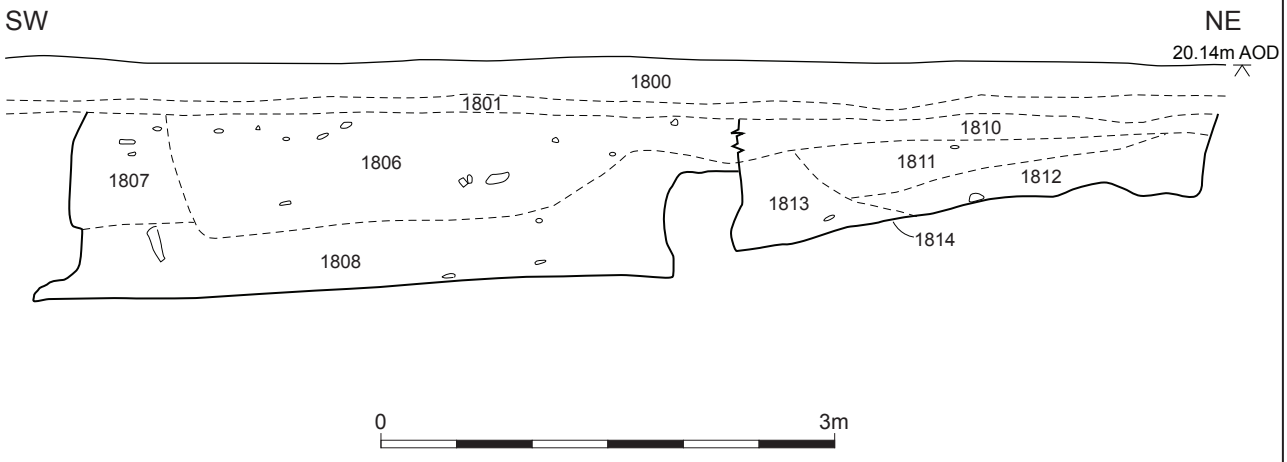
SECTION 1: DITCH 1803



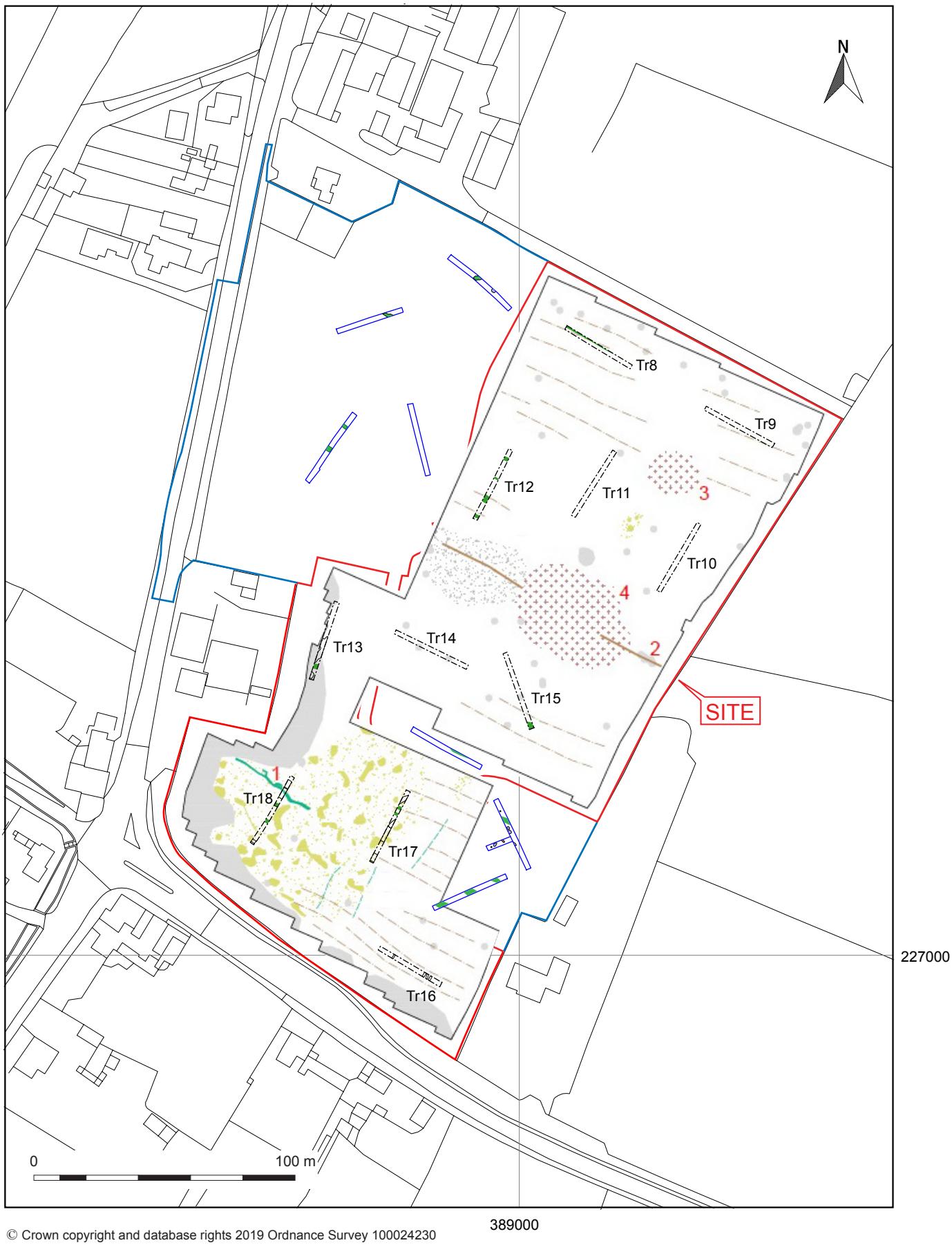
SECTION 3: PIT1303



SECTION 4: FEATURES 1809 AND 1814



Sections *Figure 6*



Geophysics (SUMO 2019) with trenches overlain *Figure 7*

Plates

Plate 1: Trench 10, showing high water table in trench. Looking south-west (1m scales)

Plate 2: Trench 13, looking north-east (1m scales)

Plate 3: Trench 16, showing rising water table. Looking south-east (1m scales)

Plate 4: Gullies 1604, 1606 and 1608, under water. Looking west (1m scales)

Plate 5: Ditch 1704, possible furrow in Trench 17, looking south-east (1m scales)

Plate 6: Trench 18, with quarry pits unexcavated in the foreground, looking south-west (1m scales)

Plate 7: Pit 1803, looking south-east (1m and 0.5m scales)

Plate 8: Roman quarry feature 1809, looking north-west (1m scales)

Plate 9: Roman quarry feature 1814, looking north-west (1m scales)

Plate 10: Oblique view of Roman quarry features 1809 and 1814, looking west (1m scales)

Plate 11: Detail of western edge of quarry feature 1809, showing seam of limestone near base. Looking west (1m scale)

Plate 12: Registered artefact no.1, folded lead possible 'curse tablet' (50mm scale)

Appendix 1: Trench descriptions

Trench 8

Length: 30 Width: 1.6 Orientation: NW-SE

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
800		Layer	Topsoil	0.29	Moderately compact Dark brownish grey Silty clay
801		Layer	Subsoil	0.23	Compact Mid orangey brown Silty clay
802		Layer	Natural		Compact Light yellowish green Silty clay
803		Fill	Fill of furrow [804]		Moderately compact Light orangey brown Silty clay
804		Cut	Cut of furrow		

Trench 9

Length: 30 Width: 1.6 Orientation: NW-SE

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
900		Layer	Topsoil	0.33	Moderately compact Dark brownish grey Silty clay
901		Layer	Subsoil		Compact Mid orangey brown Silty clay
902		Layer	Natural		Compact Mid orangey red with yellowy green patches Silty clay

Trench 10

Length: 30 Width: 1.6 Orientation: NE-SW

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
1000		Layer	Topsoil	0.32	Moderately compact Dark brownish grey Silty clay
1001		Layer	Subsoil	0.4	Compact Mid orangey brown Silty clay
1002		Layer	Natural		Compact Mid orangey red Silty clay

Trench 11

Length: 30 Width: 1.6 Orientation: NE-SW

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/	Deposit description

				depth	
1100		Layer	Topsoil	0.21	Moderately compact Dark brownish grey Silty clay
1101		Layer	Subsoil	0.12	Compact Mid orangey brown Silty clay
1102		Layer	Natural		Compact Mid orangey red with patches of whiteish yellow Silty clay

Trench 12

Length: 30 Width: 1.6 Orientation: NE-SW

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
1200		Layer	Topsoil	0.24	Moderately compact Dark brownish grey Silty clay
1201		Layer	Subsoil	0.08	Compact Mid orangey brown Silty clay
1202		Layer	Natural		Compact Mid orangey red with patches of whiteish yellow Silty clay
1203		Fill	Fill of furrow [1204]		Moderately compact Mid reddish brown Silty clay
1204		Cut	Cut of furrow		
1205		Fill	Fill of furrow [1206]		Mod compact Mid reddish brown Silty clay
1206		Cut	Cut of furrow		
1207		Fill	Fill of furrow [1208]		Moderately compact Mid reddish brown Silty clay
1208		Cut	Cut of furrow		
1209		Fill	Fill of furrow [1210]		Moderately compact Mid orangey brown Silty clay
1210		Cut	Cut of furrow		

Trench 13

Length: 30 Width: 1.6 Orientation: NE-SW

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
1300		Layer	Topsoil		Soft and pliable Mid grey brown Silty clay
1301		Layer	Subsoil		Firm and pliable Mid grey brown Silty clay
1302		Layer	Natural		Firm Light yellow grey
1303	Pit	Cut	Cut of shallow pit.		
1304	Pit	Fill	Single fill of pit [1303].		Firm and pliable Mid orange

					brown Clay
1305		Cut	Possible quarry pit.		
1306	Pit	Fill	Fill of possible quarry pit [1305].	0.56	Compact Dark brown Silty clay
1307		Fill	Unexcavated fill of possible quarry pit [1305].		Compact Dark brown Silty clay

Trench 14

Length: 30 Width: 1.6 Orientation: NW-SE

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
1400		Layer	Topsoil	0.28	Moderately compact Dark brownish grey Silty clay
1401		Layer	Subsoil	0.1	Compact Mid reddish brown Silty clay
1402		Layer	Natural		Compact Mixed orangey red and whiteish yellow Silty clay

Trench 15

Length: 30 Width: 1.6 Orientation: N-S

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
1500		Layer	Topsoil	0.29	Moderately compact Dark brownish grey Silty clay
1501		Layer	Subsoil	0.09	Compact Mid orangey brown Silty clay
1502		Layer	Natural		Compact Mixed light greyish green and orangey red Silty clay
1503		Fill	Fill of furrow [1504]		Moderately compact Mid orangey brown Silty clay
1504		Cut	Cut of furrow		

Trench 16

Length: 30 Width: 1.6 Orientation: NW-SE

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
1600		Layer	Topsoil	0.23	Firm Dark grey brown Silty clay
1601	Layer	Layer	Subsoil	0.12	Firm Mid brownish yellow Silty clay
1602		Layer	Natural		Firm Mid reddish brown Silty clay

1603	Fill	Fill of ditch 1604		Firm Mid blueish grey Silty clay
1604	Cut	Ditch		
1605	Fill	Fill of ditch 1606		Firm light blue grey silty clay
1606	Cut	Ditch		
1607	Fill	Fill of ditch 1608		Firm light blue grey silty clay
1608	Cut	Ditch		
1609	Fill	Fill of ditch 1610		Firm light blue grey silty clay
1610	Cut	Ditch		
1611	Layer	Colluvium?	0.36	firm mid blue grey clay silt

Trench 17

Length: 30 Width: 1.6 Orientation: NE-SW

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
1700		Layer	Topsoil		Mod compact Dark brownish grey Silty clay
1701		Layer	Subsoil		Conpact Mid orangey brown Silty clay
1702		Layer	Natural		Compact Mixed yellowy green and orangey red Silty clay
1703		Fill	Fill of ditch [1704]	0.31	Compact Mid brownish orange Silty clay
1704		Cut	Cut of ditch	0.31	
1705		Fill	Fill of quarrying feature		Compact Mixed yellowy green and orangey red Silty clay
1706		Cut	Cut of quarrying feature		
1707		Fill	Fill of quarry pit [1708]		Compact Dark greyish brown Silty clay
1708		Cut	Cut of quarry pit		
1709		Fill	Fill of furrow [1710]		Mod compact Mid reddish brown Silty clay
1710		Cut	Cut of furrow		
1711		Fill	Fill of ditch [1712]		Compact Mid orangey brown Silty clay
1712		Cut	Cut of ditch		
1713		Fill	Fill of furrow [1714]		Mod compact Mid reddish brown Silty clay
1714		Cut	Cut of furrow		

Trench 18

Length: 30 Width: 1.6 Orientation: NE-SW

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
1800		Layer	Topsoil		mod compact dark greyish brown silty clay
1801		Layer	Subsoil		Firm Mid orange brown silty clay
1802		Layer	Natural		Firm light greenish grey silty clay
1803	Ditch	Cut	Cut of probable ditch.	0.57	
1804	Ditch	Fill	Basal fill of ditch [1803].		Soft and pliable Mid greyish brown Silty clay
1805	Ditch	Fill	Upper fill of ditch [1803].		Soft and pliable Mid brownish red Silty clay
1806		Fill	Fill of ditch/quarrying feature [1809]	0.84	Compact Dark greyish brown Silty clay
1807		Fill	Fill of ditch/quarrying feature [1809]	0.74	Compact Mixed yellowy green and brownish red Silty clay
1808		Fill	Fill of ditch/quarrying feature [1809]	0.84	Compact Mostly brownish red with patches of yellowy green Silty clay
1809		Cut	Cut of ditch/quarrying	1.24	
1810		Fill	Filll of ditch/quarrying feature [1814]	0.3	Compact Dark reddish brown Silty clay
1811		Fill	Fill of ditch/quarrying feature [1814]	0.36	Compact Mixed yellowy green and reddish brown Silty clay
1812		Fill	Fill of ditch/quarrying feature [1814]	0.42	Compact Dark brownish red Silty clay
1813		Fill	Fill of ditch/quarrying feature [1814]	0.65	Firm Mixed yellowy green and brownish red Silty clay
1814		Cut	Cut of ditch/quarrying	0.87	

Trench 17

Length: 30 Width: 1.6 Orientation: NE-SW

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
1700		Layer	Topsoil		Mod compact Dark brownish grey Silty clay
1701		Layer	Subsoil		Conpact Mid orangey brown Silty clay
1702		Layer	Natural		Compact Mixed yellowy green and orangey red Silty clay
1703		Fill	Fill of ditch [1704]	0.31	Compact Mid brownish orange Silty clay
1704		Cut	Cut of ditch	0.31	
1705		Fill	Fill of quarrying feature		Compact Mixed yellowy green and orangey red Silty clay
1706		Cut	Cut of quarrying feature		
1707		Fill	Fill of quarry pit [1708]		Compact Dark greyish brown Silty clay
1708		Cut	Cut of quarry pit		
1709		Fill	Fill of furrow [1710]		Mod compact Mid reddish brown Silty clay
1710		Cut	Cut of furrow		
1711		Fill	Fill of ditch [1712]		Compact Mid orangey brown Silty clay
1712		Cut	Cut of ditch		
1713		Fill	Fill of furrow [1714]		Mod compact Mid reddish brown Silty clay
1714		Cut	Cut of furrow		

Trench 18

Length: 30 Width: 1.6 Orientation: NE-SW

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
1800		Layer	Topsoil		
1801		Layer	Subsoil		
1802		Layer	Natural		
1803	Ditch	Cut	Cut of probable ditch.		
1804	Ditch	Fill	Basal fill of ditch [1803].		Soft and pliable Mid greyish brown Silty clay
1805	Ditch	Fill	Upper fill of ditch [1803].		Soft and pliable Mid brownish red Silty clay
1806		Fill	Fill of ditch/quarrying feature [1809]	0.84	Compact Dark greyish brown Silty clay
1807		Fill	Fill of ditch/quarrying feature [1809]	0.74	Compact Mixed yellowy green and brownish red Silty clay
1808		Fill	Fill of ditch/quarrying feature [1809]	0.84	Compact Mostly brownish red with patches of yellowy green Silty clay
1809		Cut	Cut of ditch/quarrying	1.24	
1810		Fill	Filll of ditch/quarrying feature [1814]	0.3	Compact Dark reddish brown Silty clay
1811		Fill	Fill of ditch/quarrying feature [1814]	0.36	Compact Mixed yellowy green and reddish brown Silty clay
1812		Fill	Fill of ditch/quarrying feature [1814]	0.42	Compact Dark brownish red Silty clay
1813		Fill	Fill of ditch/quarrying feature [1814]	0.65	Firm Mixed yellowy green and brownish red Silty clay
1814		Cut	Cut of ditch/quarrying	0.87	

Appendix 2: Summary of project archive

TYPE	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	Animal bones, Ceramics, Metal, Worked bone, Worked stone/lithics, other
Paper	Drawing, Plan, Section
Digital	Database, GIS, Geophysics, Images raster/digital photography, Spreadsheets, Survey, Text

**OASIS terminology*