Archaeological evaluation at BAE Filton, Plot B Application (West End), South Gloucestershire

Worcestershire Archaeology

for RPS Group

December 2019

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BAE FILTON, PLOT B APPLICATION (WEST END), SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Archaeological evaluation report

Worcestershire Archaeology
Worcestershire Archive & Archaeology Service
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SITE INFORMATION

Site name:	BAE Filton, Plot B Application (West End), South Gloucestershire
Site code:	P5678
Local planning authority:	South Gloucestershire Council
Central NGR:	ST 58809 79967
Commissioning client:	RPS Group
Client project reference:	JAC25761
WA project number:	P5678
WA report number:	2767
Oasis reference:	Fieldsec1-375048

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1	03/12/2019	Jem Brewer/Beth Williams	Draft for comment	Tom Rogers

CONTENTS

Archaeological evaluation of land at BAE Filton, Plot B Application (West End), South Gloucestershire

By Jem Brewer and Beth Williams

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at land at BAE Filton, Plot B Application (West End), South Gloucestershire (NGR ST58809 79967). It was commissioned by RPS Group on behalf of BAE, in association with a proposed application for development.

The site comprises two fields to the east of Charlton Common, approximately 5 miles north of Bristol. Field 1 had previously been used as hardstanding for caravans, and Field 2 comprised a small grass paddock. Five trenches were excavated across the site.

Three ditches were identified within trenches in Field 1, in addition to modern land drains. No dating evidence was recovered from these features and their function is not known, although it is thought that they may relate to agricultural activity.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in November 2019 of land at BAE Filton, Plot B Application (West End), South Gloucestershire (NGR ST 58809 79967). The project was commissioned by RPS Group on behalf of BAE. The evaluation was required in association with a planning application at BAE Filton, Plot B Application (West End).

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by RPS Group (2019) and approved by Paul Driscoll, the archaeological advisor to the Local Planning Authority.

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 2014)

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The site, an area of approximately 0.73 hectares, lies on the southern edge of Filton Airfield, near Filton, South Gloucestershire, approximately 1.4km south of the M5 motorway. The central and southern parts of the site (Field 1) previously comprised areas of concrete hardstanding and gravel parking. The hardstanding areas were removed before the evaluation works began. A grassed lawn and area of overgrown vegetation occupy the northern and western areas (Field 2).

The site is flat at a height of approximately 69m AOD.

The underlying geology comprises bedrock of interbedded Mudstone and Limestone of the Wilmcote Limestone Member with no superficial deposits recorded in the southern parts of the site, and interbedded Mudstone and Limestone of the Westbury Formation and Cotham Member with no superficial deposits in the northern area (BGS 2019).

2 Archaeological and historical background

The archaeological and historical background to the site is summarised below from the WSI prepared by RPS Group Plc.

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBS) was undertaken in 2017 (CgMs 2017), followed by an updated HER search in July 2019. This confirmed that there were no designated archaeological assets, such as Scheduled Monuments, located on the site, and identified low potential for significant Prehistoric, Roman, Saxon and Medieval remains on the site.

The northern part of the site had the possibility of finding the remains of buildings associated with Charlton Farm (HER 19899), which was removed sometime in the 20th century.

3 Project aims

The specific aims of the evaluation were as follows:

- to determine the presence or absence, extent, nature, date, character, condition and significance of any archaeological remains encountered and
- to identify any artefacts relating to the occupation or use of the site.

4 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by RPS Group Plc (RPS 2019). Fieldwork was undertaken between 19th and 21st November 2019.

Five trenches, amounting to 224m² in area, were excavated over the 0.73ha site, representing a sample of approximately 3.1 %. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

The trenches were non-gridded and positioned to interrogate the presence of archaeological remains which might have been truncated or disturbed by the presence of the 19th century buildings of Charlton Farm.

Trench 3 was truncated to avoid the presence of a live power cable running north-west to south east which was not indicated on the service search plans received in advance of the evaluation works and was subsequently located by scanning as the trenches were being laid out.

The southern area (field 1) was tested by trenches 1 to 4 inclusive, and the northernmost area (field 2) was tested by trench 5.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant archaeological supervision using a JCB 3CX wheeled excavator, employing a toothless bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected, and selected deposits were excavated with the intention of retrieving 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 structural 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 Bristol Museum, Galleries and Archives.

5 Archaeological results

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

The trenches were covered by a mixture of topsoil's and modern rubble, debris and gravel. This consisted generally of reddish brown and greyish brown silty clay with small to large sub angular stones, modern brick and general rubble and had a depth of up to 0.5m. Subsoils varied from mid yellowish brown clayey silt to mid reddish brown silty clay. The subsoils in Trenches 3 and 4 were soft and cohesive, mid brown silty clays.

All features truncated the natural substrate, which was a compact, light brownish grey clay with brashy limestone outcrops and occasional banding of yellowish brown sandy clay.

Trenches 1, 2 and 5 contained only modern field drains. Trench 4 contained two ditches and Trench 3 contained a ditch/gully and a field drain. All three ditches ran roughly north to south.

Ditch terminus [407] measured 0.92m wide, 0.44m deep and had a length of 0.8m (although it extended beyond the trench boundary). It contained three fills. The lowest fill (410) is most likely natural substrate disturbed by bioturbation, resulting in its darker colour. The two subsequent fills were mid yellowish- brown silty clay (408) and clayey sand (409).

Ditch [403] was the largest of the ditches, measuring 2.74m wide and 0.7m deep. It contained three fills, the lower two (405) and (406) being of similar material to (408) and (409). The upper fill (404) was darker than the lower fills and contained lenses of old topsoil, suggesting that it represents pushed in bank material as the ditch was closed. Ditches [403] and [407] are most likely post-medieval/pre-1800 field boundary ditches.

Ditch or gully [303] had a concave base and measured 0.84m wide and 0.17m deep. It contained only one fill (304), that was also yellowish brown silty clay. Due to its proximity to the derelict farm buildings to the east it is believed that [303] was related to drainage.

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 Conclusions

The evaluation results reflect the low archaeological potential identified by the DBA. No finds of non-modern date were identified and the three ditches that were discovered are likely to relate to agricultural activity or drainage.

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Conditions were suitable in all 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.

8 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Peter Lovett, assisted by Jem Brewer. The project was managed by Tom Rogers. The report was produced and collated by Jem Brewer and Beth Williams.

9 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following: Richard Smalley of RPS Group for commissioning the project.

10 Bibliography

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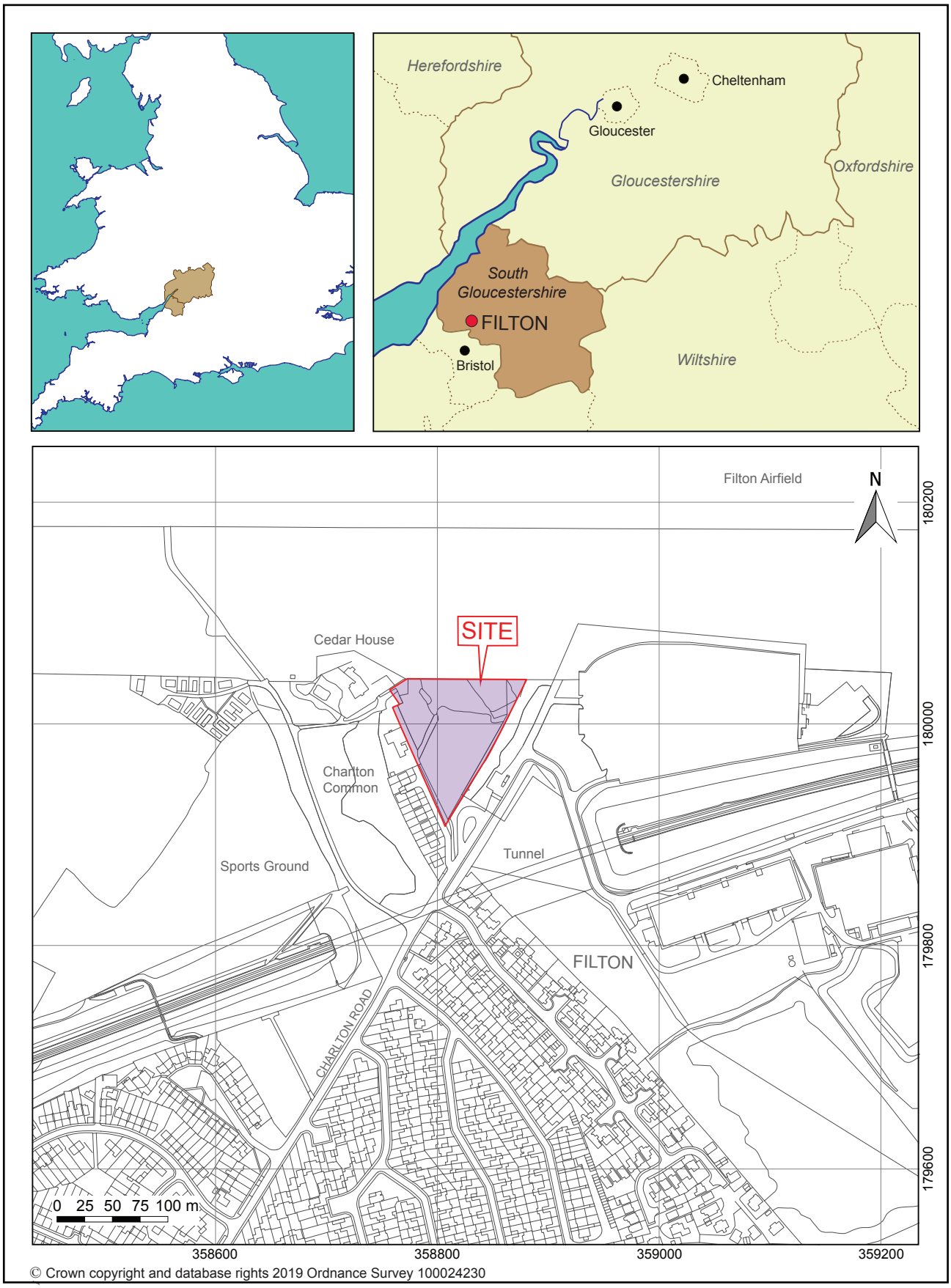
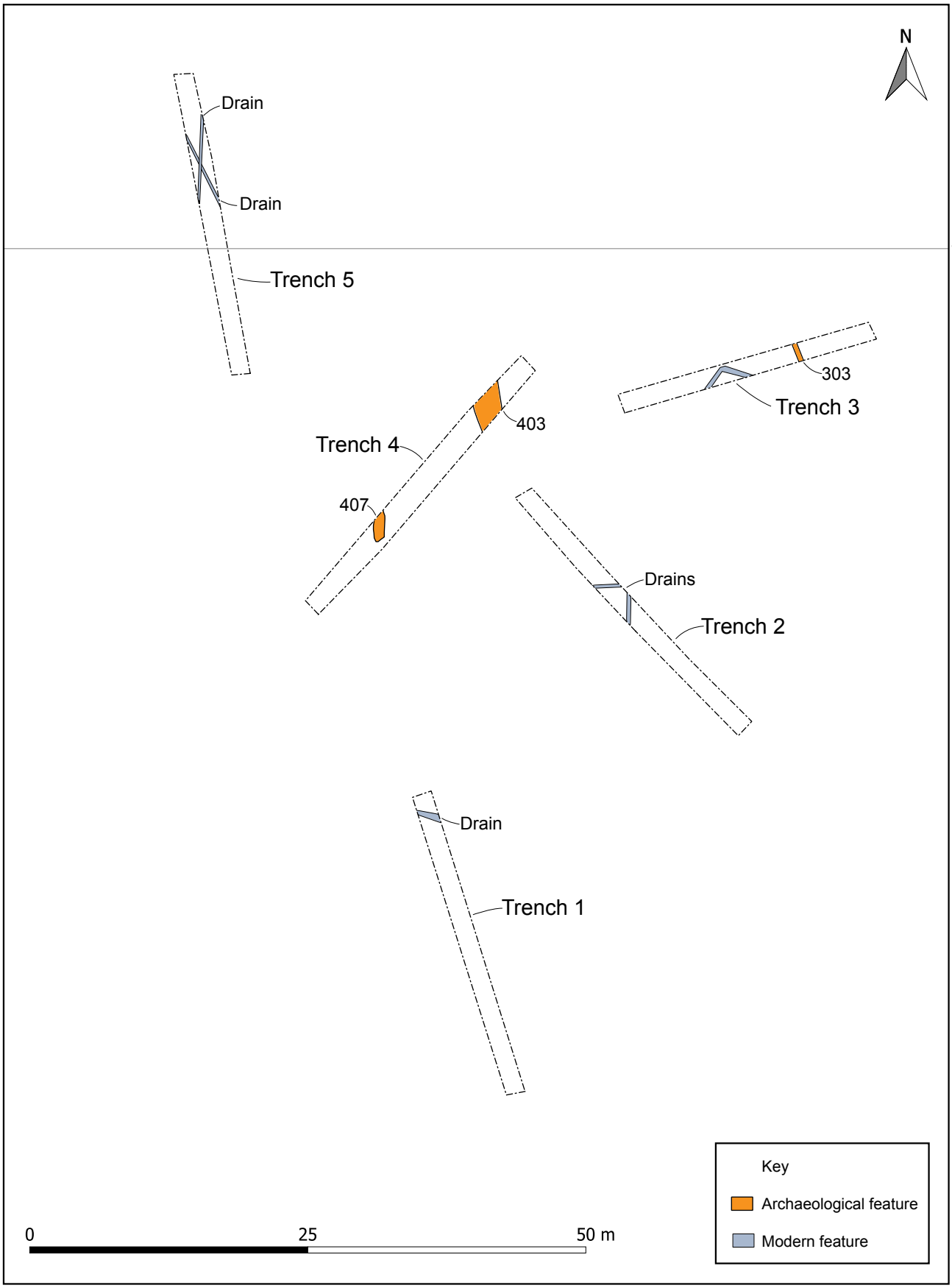
Figures



Location of the site *Figure 1*



Trench locations showing archaeological and modern features *Figure 2*

Plates

Plate 1: South West facing section of ditch terminus [407], 1x1m scale

Plate 2: North facing section of ditch [403], 1x1m scale

Plate 3: North west facing section of ditch [303], 1x1m scale

Appendix 1: Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Length: 28 Width: 1.6 Orientation: NNW-SSE

Context summary:

Context	Feature Type	Context Type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
100	Layer	Layer	Surface layer	0.5	Compact Light reddish brown Clay silt, with mix of small to very large (0.31m) sub angular limestone stones.
101	Natural	Layer	Natural		Compact Light yellowish grey Clay
102	Field drain	Cut	Cut of land drain		
103	Field drain	Fill	Fill of land drain 102		Compact Mid greyish brown Silty clay with abundant sub angular limestone

Trench 2

Length: 30 Width: 1.6 Orientation: N-S

Context summary:

Context	Feature Type	Context Type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
200	Layer	Layer	Surface layer	0.44	Hard Mix of reddish brown and greyish brown Clay silt with abundant crushed stone and gravels
201	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.05	Soft and friable Mid reddish brown Silty clay
202	Natural	Layer	Natural		Hard Light brownish grey Clay with abundant brashy limestone outcrops

Trench 3

Length: 24 Width: 1.6 Orientation: NW-SE

Context summary:

Context	Feature Type	Context Type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
300	Layer	Layer	Surface layer	0.44	Moderately compact Mixed blackish brown and orangey brown Abundant medium to v large (0.32m) sub angular stones to NW, abundant modern brick rubble to S E in clay silt matrix
301	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil		Soft and cohesive Mid brown Silty clay
302	Natural	Layer	Natural		Firm Light greyish brown Clay with bands of yellowish brown sandy clay and brashy limestone
303		Cut	Cut of ditch	0.17	
304		Fill	Fill of ditch 303	0.17	Soft and cohesive Mid yellowish brown Silty clay

Trench 4

Length: 30 Width: 1.6 Orientation: E-W

Context summary:

Context	Feature Type	Context Type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
400	Layer	Layer	Surface layer	0.31	Moderately compact Mixed mid greyish brown and pinkish brown Small to v large sub angular stones (0.35m) in clay silt matrix
401	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil		Soft and cohesive Mid brown Silty clay
402	Natural	Layer	Natural		Moderately compact Light greyish brown Clay with abundant brashy limestone plaques
403	Ditch	Cut	Cut of ditch	0.7	
404	Ditch	Fill	Fill of ditch 403	0.34	Firm Dark brown grey Silty clay
405	Ditch	Fill	Fill of ditch 403	0.24	Firm Mid yellowish brown Silty clay
406	Ditch	Fill	Fill of ditch 403	0.2	Soft Mid yellowish brown Sandy silt
407	Ditch	Cut	Ditch terminus	0.44	
408	Ditch	Fill	Fill of ditch terminus 407	0.29	Firm Mid yellow brown Silty clay
409	Ditch	Fill	Fill of ditch terminus 407	0.17	Soft Mid yellow brown clay sand
410	Ditch	Fill	Fill of ditch terminus 407	0.34	Firm Light blue grey Silty clay

Trench 5

Length: 28 Width: 1.6 Orientation: NE-SW

Context summary:

Context	Feature Type	Context Type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
500	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.15	Moderately compact Dark blackish brown Clay silt
501	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.13	Soft and cohesive Mid yellowish brown Clay silt
502	Natural	Layer	Natural		Firm Light yellowish brown Clay

Appendix 2: Summary of project archive (P5678)

TYPE	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	None
Paper	Drawing
Digital	Database, GIS, Images raster/digital photography, Survey, Text

**OASIS terminology*