Archaeological evaluation at Allesborough Farm, Pershore Worcestershire

Worcestershire Archaeology

for Clive Petch Architects

February 2020

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ALLESBOROUGH FARM
PERSHORE
WORCESTERSHIRE

Archaeological evaluation report

Worcestershire Archaeology
Worcestershire Archive & Archaeology Service
The Hive
Sawmill Walk
The Butts
Worcester
WR1 3PD

SITE INFORMATION

Site name:	Allesborough Farm
Site code:	-
Local planning authority:	Wychavon District Council
Planning reference:	APP/H1840/W/17/3188250
Central NGR:	SO 9383 4629
Commissioning client:	Clive Petch Architects
Client project reference	21540
WA project number:	P5657
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Archaeological evaluation at Allesborough Farm, Pershore, Worcestershire

By Elspeth Iliff and Richard Bradley

With contributions by C Jane Evans and Elizabeth Pearson

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Allesborough Farm, Pershore, Worcestershire (NGR SO 9383 4629). It was commissioned by Clive Petch of Clive Petch Architects, in advance of a proposed residential development for which planning permission has been granted (subject to a programme of archaeological works).

The site comprises a former farmyard with extant farm outbuildings and is located around 1km north-west of Pershore. Six trenches were excavated in a random grid array to provide a representative sample of the site.

No features were recorded in the majority of trenches apart from an undated possible field boundary ditch and other features related to demolished post-medieval and modern farm buildings and drainage. In the northernmost trench, however, to the west of the farmhouse a post medieval oven was recorded. The oven was keyhole shaped and lined with reused late medieval to post-medieval roof tiles, with a large stone slab forming the base of the flue.

While there is no direct evidence to confirm the function of the oven, it is considered likely that it was used for baking, due to the lack of industrial waste present and the use of a high-heat within the oven.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in January 2020 at Allesborough Farm, Pershore, Worcestershire (NGR SO 9383 4629; Figure 1). This comprised the excavation of six evaluation trenches located around demolished agricultural buildings within the former farmyard. The project was commissioned by Clive Petch of Clive Petch Architects, in advance of residential development. Planning permission has been granted subject to a programme of archaeological works (planning reference APP/H1840/W/17/3188250).

The archaeological advisor to the local planning authority (Wychavon District Council) considered that the proposed development has the potential to impact upon possible heritage assets, being in close proximity to Allesborough farmhouse (thought to date from the 15th century and possibly linked to deserted medieval settlement in the vicinity; WSM48878; WSM02672), as well as a 17th century barn (WSM32476) and other post-medieval outbuildings. A separate application for the conversion of historic farm buildings at Allesborough Farm has been approved and is in progress (W/16/01966/PN). The buildings were subject to a building record undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology in August 2019 (Cornah 2019).

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared for the project by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2019) and approved by the archaeological advisor (Aidan Smyth; Wychavon District Council). The evaluation was undertaken in line with the WSI and 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 approximately 1km to the north-west of Pershore town centre on the plateau of a ridge forming the highest of the River Avon terraces (5th Avon terrace). The ground slopes gently towards the east from a height of about 55m AOD. It is bounded by roads to the north and the south, and by farmland to the west, with much of the farm currently subject to ongoing demolition and landscaping in advance of redevelopment.

The underlying geology comprises bedrock of Charmouth Mudstone formation overlain by superficial deposits of Pershore Sand and Gravel (BGS 2020).

2 Archaeological and historical background

The following summary is derived from the recent building recording project undertaken on the site by Worcestershire Archaeology (Cornah 2019), using information provided by the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER), searched within a 500m radius of the site.

Nearby significant archaeological remains include an Iron Age and Romano-British settlement complex 350m west of the site (WSM36155), identified through extensive investigation involving field walking, metal detecting and evaluation trenches This was originally located following discovery by metal detectorists of a large hoard (or hoards) of Iron Age coinage (WSM20060), eventually comprising 1494 gold and silver coins as well as a possible fragment of twisted wire gold torc. At the time of discovery in 1993, this was one of the largest caches of Iron Age coins ever found in Britain (see Hurst and Leins 2013). The objects are now in the British Museum.

In addition, around 220m to the north of the farm is a conjectured area of a deserted medieval settlement (WSM02672) that may have formed part of the manor of Pershore. Allesborough was first

mentioned as a manor in mid-13th century, when Abbot Roger (1234-50) gave 10/- rent of demesnes there to monks at Pershore, and was held by the Abbots until the dissolution of Pershore Abbey in the 16th century. There is known to have been a chapel dedicated to St Giles associated with the settlement (WSM02674) though the location is speculative. The farm is surrounded to the north, west and south-east by remnants of ridge and furrow (WSM29121, WSM29116, WSM02680, WSM29117 and WSM08463) which are the result of medieval and post-medieval agricultural practice, and the wider landscape is dominated by piecemeal and parliamentary enclosure broadly typical of the post 1800 period.

It is possible that the Allesborough farmhouse itself (WSM48878) was contemporary with the latter end of the deserted medieval settlement, as it has been suggested to have 15th century elements, though this is not certain. It is clear, however, that it was a successor to Abbot's demesne farm and part of abbey estates from a 1620 survey. The building underwent various phases of significant change with the largest major addition in circa 1800.

2.1 Previous archaeological work on the site

As noted above, building recording was recently completed on the site (Cornah 2019). A threshing barn (WSM32476) and stables (WSM52695) were recorded, dating from the later 17th century onwards. The barn was considered to be the earlier building, with the stables likely constructed around 1800. The stables may have originally been a granary, before being remodelled in the 19th or 20th century.

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

As described above, a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2019). Fieldwork was undertaken between 6th and 8th January 2020. The Worcestershire Archaeology project number is P5657.

Six trenches, amounting to just over 315m² in area, were excavated across the 0.96ha development area, representing a sample of 3%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

The trenches were laid out in a random grid array and were of varying lengths. Although the overall site coverage was accomplished, some of the trenches had to be adjusted from their intended location due to numerous on-site logistical issues: this included space/access for the machine, the location of services and spoil heaps, and the proximity of existing buildings, trees and fencing (Plate 1). For example, Trench 2 was altered in alignment from the intended position in order to avoid two large spoil heaps, and Trench 6 was moved and rotated away from the proposed position as the area was in use as the site compound. In addition, a 9m long extension was added to the south side of Trench 1 to account for lost coverage in other trenches.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant archaeological supervision using a 360º 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. Pre-modern deposits were also checked using a metal detector. Deposits were recorded according to

standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012) and trench and feature locations were surveyed using a differential GPS with an accuracy limit set at <0.04m. On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

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

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

5 Archaeological results

5.1 Introduction

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figures 2-4 and Plates 1-8. The trench and context inventory is presented in Appendix 1.

5.2 Phasing descriptions

5.2.1 Natural deposits

The natural substrate was identified in all trenches, comprising mixed patches of yellowish orange sand and gravel and blue grey clay (Plates 2-3), consistent with the mapped geology (BGS 2020). This was encountered at depths varying between 53.65m AOD and 54.71m AOD.

5.2.2 Phase 1: late medieval to post-medieval

An oven was identified in Trench 1 (Figures 3-4; Plates 3-6), clearly visible as a keyhole shaped cut [103], 1.82m long by 1.36m wide, lined with reused roof tiles around the edge (121). The tiles date from the late 15th or 16th century but may have been present on a building for a long period before being reused in the oven, so the oven was probably constructed after the 16th century. They were heat affected and badly damaged, only surviving on the north-east edge of the feature due to prior truncation. The surrounding natural substrate was also heat affected, suggesting high intensity use, although there was no clear indication of function within the oven itself.

The oven was 100% excavated, revealing a large stone slab used as a base for a flue entrance on the south-west side. This linked to the base of the main part of the oven, which consisted of a degraded white lime mortar layer (120). The mortar was damaged throughout from use, with heavy burning and concentrated charcoal patches of oak and hazel wood. Directly above this was a layer of compacted black charcoal, likely resultant from the last firing of the oven (119). Environmental sampling suggests that the charcoal is largely derived from elm wood. This deposit was completely covered by a backfill or demolition layer, resulting from the collapse of the structure and the surrounding packing, and contained post-medieval brick and clinker-like material (104).

Nearby, also in Trench 1, a large pit was partly visible at the edge of the trench [107]. This was unexcavated, but the redeposited natural clay fill contained post-medieval brick and roof tile.

5.2.3 Phase 2: Modern

All six of the trenches contained a layer of modern demolition rubble made ground (Plates 1-2). This layer varied in thickness between 0.20m and 0.65m and made up the current ground surface across the majority of the site.

While this layer sat directly above the natural substrate in Trenches 1 and 2, the rest of the trenches contained further modern layers. Contaminated clayey soils were encountered in Trenches 3 and 4, measuring up to 0.34m deep, indicating a localised dump of contaminated material. This contained 20th century artefacts.

A further made ground layer was found in Trench 5, consisting of a thin, black silt measuring 0.22m deep, sitting between the demolition layer and the subsoil. Trench 6 also had a second layer of demolition material, consisting of a thick, dark deposit measuring up to 0.80m in depth and containing a large quantity of roof tile (Plate 8).

A number of modern features were also found across the site. Modern drains were present in Trenches 1, 2, 3 and 4, services were encountered in Trenches 1 and 2, and the top of a brick culvert was identified within two linear trenches at the western end of Trench 1 [115] [117]. A number of modern footing trenches were observed in Trenches 3 and 5. Trench 1 included a stone-lined foundation trench with adjacent postholes containing modern brick [109]; these correlate relatively well with mapped farm outbuildings shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey mapping. Trench 6 had an L-shaped concrete foundation at its south-west end (604), possibly part of an entrance into a modern (recently demolished) farm building.

Topsoil was only present in the northern half of Trench 3, comprising greyish brown sandy clay 0.43m in depth. This covered a thin subsoil, also only present at the northern end of the trench. This brownish orange sandy clay measured 0.18m in depth. Subsoil deposits were also seen in Trenches 4 and 5, 0.49m and 0.22m in depth respectively.

5.2.4 Undated

A ditch was encountered in Trench 5, aligned north-east to south-west and measuring 1.8m wide and 0.60m deep [504]. This contained a single dark grey clayey sand fill, but no dating evidence. It is considered likely to be a medieval or post-medieval former field boundary, although no accurate date can be given.

6 Artefactual evidence by C Jane Evans

6.1 Methodology

The artefact report conforms to standards and guidance issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014a), as well as further guidance on archive creation and museum deposition created by the Archaeological Archives Forum (AAF 2011), and the Society of Museum Archaeologists (SMA 1993).

6.1.1 Aims

Analysis of the finds was guided by the overall aims of the project (see above). However, more specifically, this aspect of the project aimed to identify, sort, spot date, and quantify all artefacts, and to describe the range and significance of artefacts present.

6.1.2 Recovery policy

Recovery of artefacts was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). The majority of artefacts recovered in the field were hand collected but a quantity of further material was retrieved from environmental samples taken from an oven (see below).

6.1.3 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 (Table 4). This date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on a Microsoft Access 2007 database, with tables generated using Microsoft Excel.

Detailed fabric analysis was not undertaken on the ceramic building material, but fabrics were scanned with reference to other published type assemblages (Fagin 2004; Griffin 2004).

Artefacts from environmental samples were scanned and are quantified in the tables below. This mainly comprised fragments of burnt material from the structure of an oven, including burnt stone, ceramic building material and mortar.

Where possible, the results from analysis of this assemblage have been compared to assemblages from other local and regional sites.

6.1.4 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'). Large assemblages of post-medieval or modern material, unless there is some special reason to retain (such as local production), may be noted and not retained, or, if appropriate, a representative sample will be retained. 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 Results

The finds are summarised in Table 1. A significant proportion of these, by count at least, came from environmental samples taken from the fills in oven [103] (Table 2). These mainly comprised fragments of burnt stone, ceramic building material and mortar from the structure of oven which do not justify more detailed discussion.

The assemblage was dominated by post-medieval and modern building material, some incorporated into the structure of the oven itself. No pottery or other more diagnostically datable finds were recovered. The majority of finds came from Trench 1; most, as already noted, from oven [103], with small quantities coming from nearby linear features, a pit and post-holes (Table 3). The finds were largely fragmentary, mainly comprising broken fragments of brick and tile, excepting the roof tile used in the oven. These appeared to represent fragments from near-complete roof tiles re-purposed for use in this structure.

period	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight(g)
late medieval/ post-medieval	ceramic	fired clay	roof tile nibbed	3	1454
	ceramic	fired clay	roof tile	3	809
post-medieval	ceramic	fired clay	brick	6	584
	ceramic	fired clay	brick/tile	2	14
	ceramic	fired clay	roof tile	16	749
post-medieval/ modern	ceramic	fired clay	brick	3	598
	ceramic	fired clay	tile	2	95
modern	ceramic	fired clay	brick	4	302
	ceramic	fired clay	sewer pipe	2	244
	ceramic	fired clay	tile	6	344
undated	ceramic	fired clay	brick/tile	1	8
	ceramic	fired clay	fragment	2	0.5
	mortar	mortar	fragment	112	320

	organic	fuel ash slag	fragment	30	20
	stone	-	fragment	63	798

Table 1: Quantification of site assemblage

period	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight(g)
post-medieval	ceramic	fired clay	brick/tile	2	14
undated	ceramic	fired clay	brick/tile?	1	8
undated	ceramic	fired clay	fragment	2	0.5
undated	mortar	-	fragment	112	320
undated	fuel ash slag	-	fragment	30	20
undated	stone	-	fragment	63	798

Table 2: Quantification of finds from environmental samples (oven 103)

trench	feature type	Fill of	material class	object specific type	period	count	weight(g)
1	linear	115	ceramic	roof tile	post-medieval	6	278
	linear	117	ceramic	roof tile	post-medieval	7	364
	linear	117	ceramic	sewer pipe	modern	1	80
	oven	103	ceramic	brick/tile	post-medieval	2	14
	oven	103	ceramic	brick/tile	undated	1	8
	oven	103	ceramic	fragment	undated	2	0.5
	oven	103	ceramic	roof tile	late medieval/ post-medieval	3	809
	oven	103	ceramic	roof tile nibbed	late medieval/ post-medieval	3	1454
	oven	103	mortar	fragment	undated	112	320
	oven	103	organic	fragment	undated	30	20
	oven	103	stone	fragment	undated	63	798
	pit	107	ceramic	brick	post-medieval	6	584
	pit	107	ceramic	roof tile	post-medieval	3	107
	posthole	111	ceramic	brick	modern	3	128

trench	feature type	Fill of	material class	object specific type	period	count	weight(g)
	posthole	111	ceramic	tile	modern	1	23
	posthole	113	ceramic	sewer pipe	modern	1	164
	posthole	113	ceramic	tile	modern	3	89
	unknown	105	ceramic	brick	post-medieval/ modern	3	598
	unknown	105	ceramic	tile	modern	1	189
	unknown	105	ceramic	tile	post-medieval/ modern	1	25
4	layer		ceramic	brick	modern	1	174
	layer		ceramic	tile	modern	1	43
	layer		ceramic	tile	post-medieval/ modern	1	70

Table 3: Quantification of site assemblage arranged by trench and feature type

context	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight(g)	period	start date	end date	contxt *tpq*
104	ceramic	fired clay	brick/tile	1	9	post-medieval	1540	1899	1540-1899
	ceramic	fired clay	brick/tile	1	8	undated			
	ceramic	fired clay	fragment	2	0.5	undated			
	mortar	-	fragment	14	23	undated			
	stone	-	fragment	31	317	undated			
106	ceramic	fired clay	brick	3	598	post-medieval/ modern	1540	2000	1900-2000
	ceramic	fired clay	tile	1	189	modern	1900	2000	
	ceramic	fired clay	tile	1	25	post-medieval/ modern	1540	2000	
108	ceramic	fired clay	brick	6	584	post-medieval	1540	1899	1540-1899

context	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight(g)	period	start date	end date	contxt *tpq*
	ceramic	fired clay	roof tile	3	107	post-medieval	1540	1899	
112	ceramic	fired clay	brick	3	128	modern	1900	2000	1900-2000
	ceramic	fired clay	tile	1	23	modern	1900	2000	
114	ceramic	fired clay	sewer pipe	1	164	modern	1900	2000	1900-2000
	ceramic	fired clay	tile	3	89	modern	1900	2000	
116	ceramic	fired clay	roof tile	6	278	post-medieval	1540	1899	1540-1899
118	ceramic	fired clay	roof tile	7	364	post-medieval	1540	1899	1900-2000
	ceramic	fired clay	sewer pipe	1	80	modern	1900	2000	
119	mortar	mortar	fragment	22	41	undated			undated
	stone		fragment	23	417	undated			
120	ceramic	fired clay	brick/tile	1	5	post-medieval	1540	1899	1540-1899
	mortar	mortar	fragment	76	256	undated			
	organic	fuel ash slag	fragment	30	20	undated			
	stone		fragment	9	64	undated			
121	ceramic	fired clay	roof tile	3	809	late medieval/ post-medieval	1467	1599?	1467-1599?
	ceramic	fired clay	roof tile nibbed	3	1454	late medieval/ post-medieval	1467	1599?	
402	ceramic	fired clay	brick	1	174	modern	1900	2000	1900-2000
	ceramic	fired clay	tile	1	43	modern	1900	2000	
	ceramic	fired clay	tile	1	70	post-medieval/ modern	1540	2000	

Table 4: Finds dating by context

6.2.1 Summary of artefacts by period

Post-medieval to modern

The most significant finds are late medieval to post-medieval roof tile fragments reused to line the oven found in Trench 1 (103, fill 121; Plates 5-6). These were relatively complete, suggesting that they came from a nearby structure. Three of the tiles are nibbed; there were no peg tiles. The tiles are all unglazed and have sand on the base. They are in a fabric comparable to Worcester fabric 2c (Fagin 2004, 354-5; Griffin 2004, 11-12), a moderately sandy fabric with occasional grog and clay pellets. All were burnt as a result of use in the oven, so 'firing colour' could not be determined. None of the tile fragments provided a complete length, but the full width of one tile did survive, 174mm. The tiles were between 17-20mm thick.

The presence of possible tile-makers' stamps on two of the tiles is of particular interest. Both are on the smooth surfaces of the tiles. They cannot be identified as stamps with absolute certainty; part of one possible stamp is right at the broken edge, the other is more complete but faintly impressed. Both are annular, perhaps similar to stamps published from Worcester, Deansway (Fagin 2004, fig 207.13). The presence of these stamps is significant in terms of dating. At Worcester, a city ordinance of 1467 ruled that tile makers should mark their tiles with a stamp (Fagan 2004 357-60). It is not certain how long this practice continued but, as a result, the tiles are likely to date from the late 15th to 16th century. It is impossible to know how long they in use, or indeed if they had been in use, before they were incorporated in the oven structure. Nor is it certain where these tiles were made. Stamped Worcester tiles have been found at Droitwich and Evesham, and it is possible that these could have been distributed across the surrounding area by Worcester potters.

There is little diagnostic about the remainder of the ceramic building material, which was more fragmentary and probably derives from the nearby post-medieval and modern farm buildings.

6.2.2 Recommendations

Further analysis

The roof tiles from the oven would be of interest to anyone researching the late medieval to post-medieval tile industry; research could be undertaken on the fabrics and stamps. This should be done if further fieldwork is undertaken on the site.

Discard/retention

The ?stamped tiles from the oven may well be worthy of being retained but other finds could be considered for discard, in discussion with the receiving museum.

7 Environmental evidence by Elizabeth Pearson

7.1 Methodology

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

7.1.1 Sampling policy

Environmental sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). A total of three bulk samples (each of up to 40 litres) were taken from fills in the oven [103] in Trench 1, thought to be of late medieval to post-medieval date, from which sub-samples of 10L were processed (Table 5).

context	sample	fill of	context description	position of fill	provisional date	volume (L)	volume processed	residue assessed	flot assessed
104	1	103	Upper fill in oven	Mixture with overburden	post-medieval	40	10	No	No
119	2	103	Charcoal layer in base of oven	No Contamination	post-medieval	40	10	No	No
120	3	103	Burnt mortar base in oven	No Contamination	post-medieval	30	10	No	No

Table 5: List of bulk samples

7.1.2 Processing and analysis

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

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 hammerscale. The flots were scanned using a low power MEIJI stereo light microscope but no plant remains were identified.

Charcoal was examined under a low power MEIJI stereo light microscope in order to determine the presence of oak and non-oak charcoal. Subsequently, the cell structure of a selection of non-oak charcoal fragments was examined in three planes under a MEIJI dark illumination microscope and identifications were carried out using standard reference texts (Schweingruber 1978 and Hather 2000) and a series of reference slides housed at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology.

7.1.3 Discard policy

Remaining soil samples and residues (post scanning) will be discarded after a period of three months following submission of this report, unless there is a specific request to retain them.

7.2 Results

The results are summarised in Tables 6 and 7 below.

7.2.1 Charred plant macrofossils and charcoal

Post-medieval

A large amount of charcoal was recovered from fill (119) in the base of oven [103]. This appeared to be exclusively made up of large fragments (of relatively consistent size) of elm (*Ulmus sp*) charcoal. The charcoal in the mortar base of the oven (120), however, was made up of mainly oak (*Quercus robur/petraea*), with one fragment of hazel (*Corylus avellana*) identified.

A sample from the overlying demolition layer (104) was wholly made up of clinker-like material. Similar material was also found in fills (119) and (120) below.

context	sample	large mammal	small mammal	charcoal	artefacts

context	sample	large mammal	small mammal	charcoal	artefacts
104	1	occ	occ	abt	occ fired clay, lime mortar, stone, burnt stone, oven lining, chert
119	2	-	-	abt	occ coal, lime mortar, stone, burnt stone
120	3	-	-	mod	abt lime mortar, mod fuel ash, occ stone, burnt stone

*Table 6: Summary of environmental remains; occ = occasional, mod = moderate, abt = abundant, * = probably modern and intrusive*

context	sample	preservation type	species detail	category remains	quantity/diversity	comment
104	1	ch	-	misc		mostly ?clinker
119	2	ch	*Ulmus* sp wood	misc	++++/low	large well-preserved fragments - also ?clinker
120	3	ch	*Quercus robur/petraea* wood, *Corylus avellana* wood	misc	+++/low	mostly oak, also abundant vitrified material/clinker

Table 7: Plant remains from bulk samples

Key:

preservation	quantity
ch = charred	+ = 1 - 10
	++ = 11- 50
	+++ = 51 - 100
	++++ = 101+

7.2.2 Summary

The elm-dominated charcoal from the fill (119) in the oven [103] is of interest. This is likely to be the remains of fuel, possibly from charcoal produced in a charcoal clamp, produced specifically for firing an oven which needed high heat. However, the use of elm is unusual, in that it is more renowned for use in environments where there is a requirement for wood that does not rot or split easily. This is because of a high-water content that makes it relatively resistant to decay in wet environments. For example, historically, it has been used in shipbuilding and bridges and to make water pipes, (Taylor 1981). Nevertheless, it can apparently make good firewood if well-seasoned to provide lasting heat: standing elm deadwood can also produce good firewood (Firewood for Life 2020).

7.2.3 Recommendations

Further analysis

Should further fieldwork be undertaken on the site, inclusion of the charcoal assemblages from the oven would provide significant information on post-medieval activity. The charcoal may also be suitable for radiocarbon dating to refine the date of the oven.

Discard/retention

It is recommended that the flots and sorted material from contexts (119 and 120) are retained. Processed material from context (104) can be discarded.

8 Discussion

The archaeological remains identified during this evaluation were mainly of post-medieval and modern origin. Despite the presence of important and extensive prehistoric and Romano-British occupation in the wider vicinity, settlement and associated activity of this date did not appear extend into this area. In addition, the absence of pottery, or other occupation-related material, would also suggest that the conjectured deserted medieval settlement did not occupy this site, even accounting for the extensive disturbance of post-medieval and modern farm buildings.

The most significant feature present on site was the oven found in Trench 1, likely dating to the post-medieval period. This feature consisted of a keyhole shaped cut lined with reused late medieval to post-medieval nibbed roof tile fragments and a stone slab, all relatively well preserved despite later truncation. The level to which the surrounding natural is heat-affected suggests more intensive use, as does the environmental evidence for possible selection of charcoal. The site has been agricultural land, forming part of a farm complex since at least the post-medieval period (possibly the 15th century), and the oven was situated in close proximity to a number of former farm buildings. Although there was no clear indication of function within the oven itself, other than that high-heat was required, it is therefore possible that this oven was contemporary with an earlier phase of the farm and used within the farmyard space or an outbuilding. The high-heat nature of the oven along with the lack of industrial waste may suggest that the oven was used for baking, perhaps to produce food for agricultural workers on the farm.

Ordnance Survey maps depict a range of farm buildings here, which survived into the mid to late 20th century. The oven was approximately 0.5m below the current ground surface, and lay directly below a layer which is likely to derived from the demolition of the buildings. It is unclear to what extent the natural substrate had already been truncated from previous farm buildings when the demolition layer was deposited, although it is likely that this modern activity has also contributed to the truncation of the oven. Nearby post-medieval and modern features, such as a stone-lined foundation trench with adjacent postholes, as well as a pit, were also badly truncated.

Other evidence of archaeological activity included a small ditch located in Trench 5. This has been interpreted as a possible post-medieval field boundary, although it produced no dating evidence. The rest of the features comprised land drains, footing trenches and a brick culvert. These features are all related to outbuildings and drainage within the farmyard, dating to the post-medieval and modern period.

9 Significance

The main interest in the site relates to the post-medieval oven, which is considered to be of local significance. The undated possible field boundary ditch is likely to be of negligible significance, probably related to general agricultural activity.

The charcoal deposits from the fills in the oven are well-preserved, and of local significance, as they provide information on the woodland resources used in specific firing activity. The oven could be agricultural or industrial and shows the potential for well-preserved charcoal to survive on the site.

The finds provide no evidence for Iron Age or Roman activity in the area investigated, all probably derived from the nearby post-medieval farm buildings. The earliest dating comes from the nibbed roof tiles reused in the oven. These post-date 1467 but could have been produced later: examples are known from 15th to 17th century contexts but the end date for their production and use is uncertain. From this perspective, the finds are also of local significance.

10 Conclusions

The excavation of six trenches in a random grid array revealed a post-medieval oven and an undated probable field boundary ditch. The oven was situated at the northern end of the site, close to surviving historic farm buildings, and likely relates to an earlier phase of the agricultural activity on the site. Other features relate to post-medieval to modern former farm buildings, in the form of drains and footing trenches.

Overall, the methods adopted allow for a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Although conditions were difficult throughout the site, with some extensive water inundation, it was possible 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 proposed development site as a whole.

The features present are at risk from any further groundworks on site, such as foundations and service trenches, due to the shallowness of the preserved remains. It is also possible that there are other features associated with post-medieval agricultural activity that were not found in this evaluation: these would also be potentially at risk.

11 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Richard Bradley, MCIfA, assisted by Elspeth Iliff, PCIfA.

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

12 Acknowledgements

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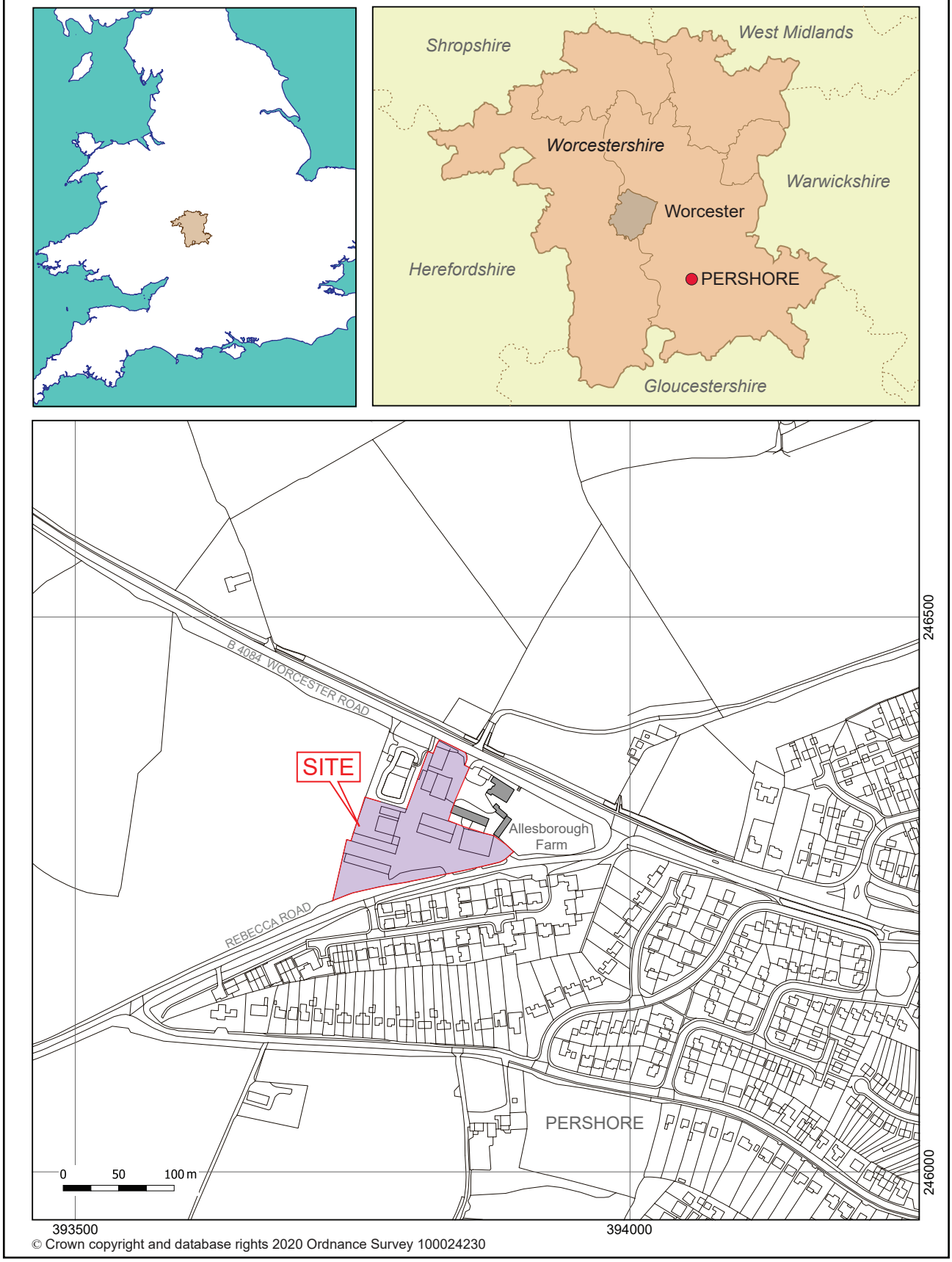
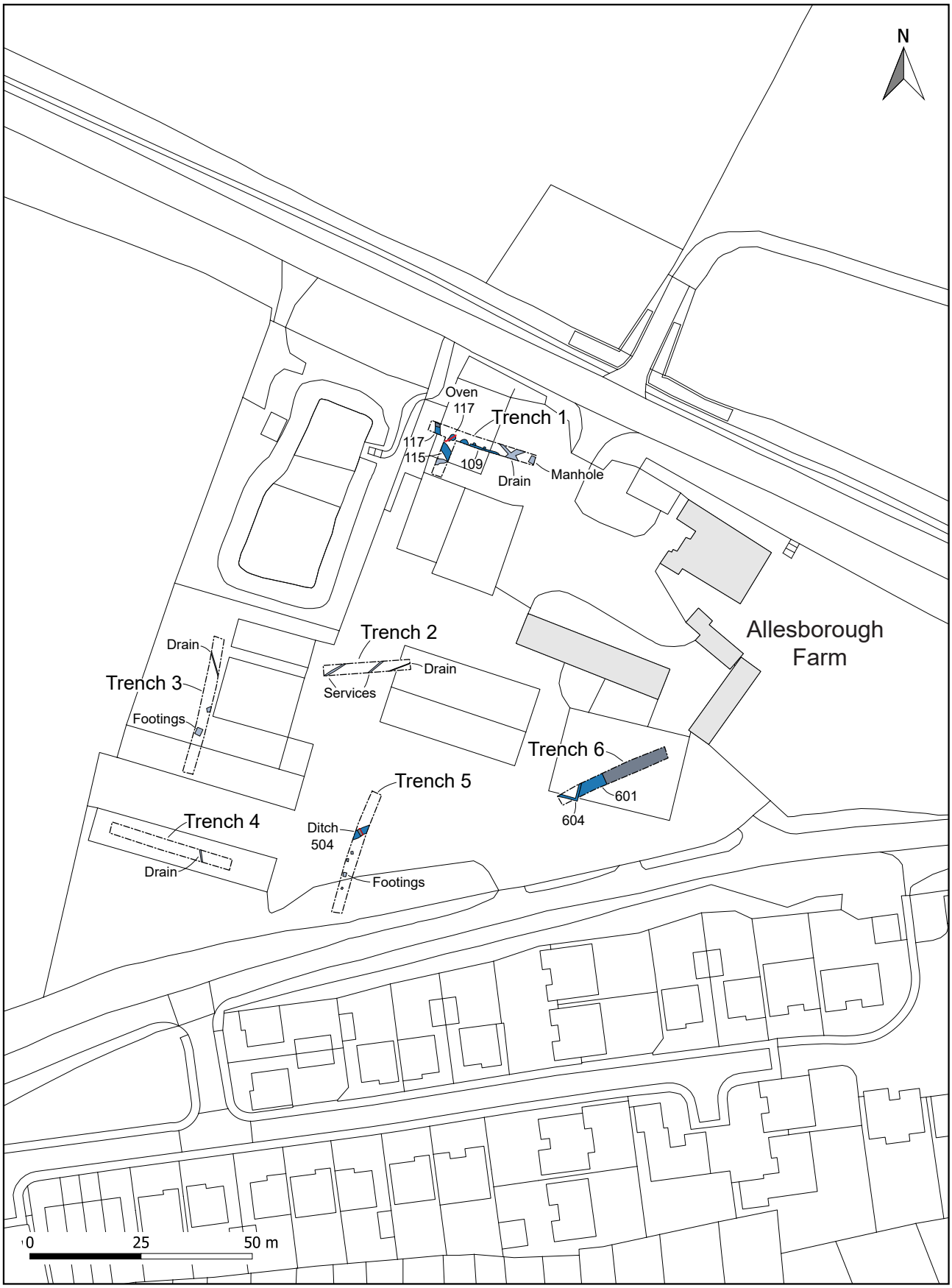
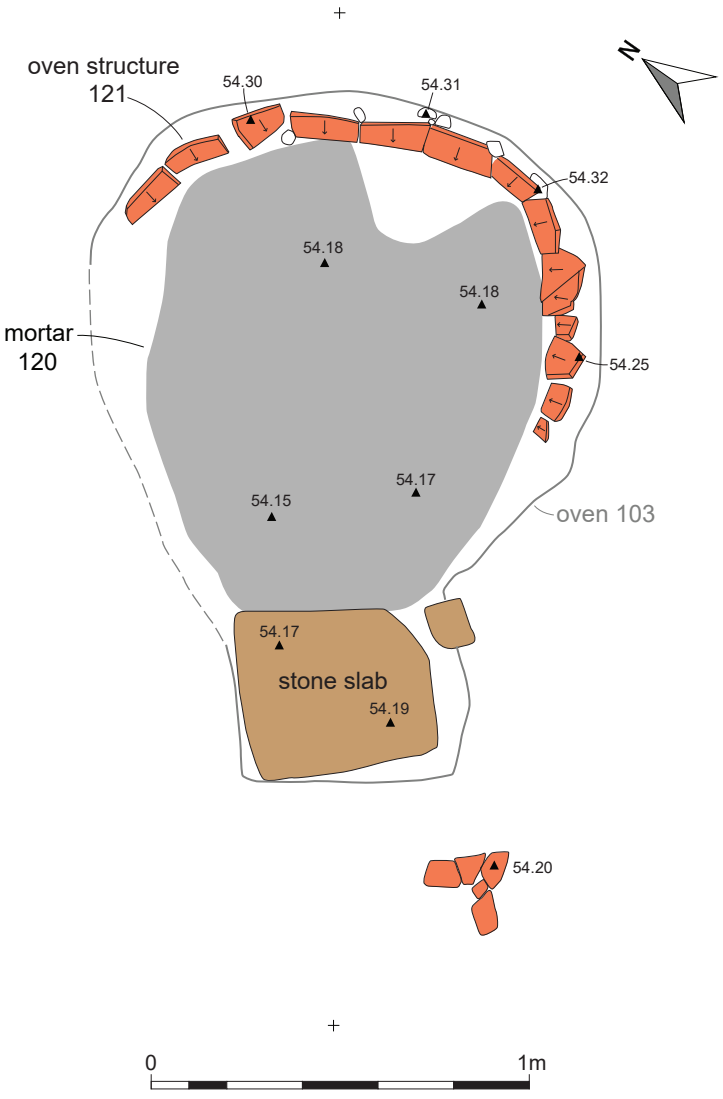
Figures



Location of the site (based upon Clive Petch Architects Dwg No.27) *Figure 1*

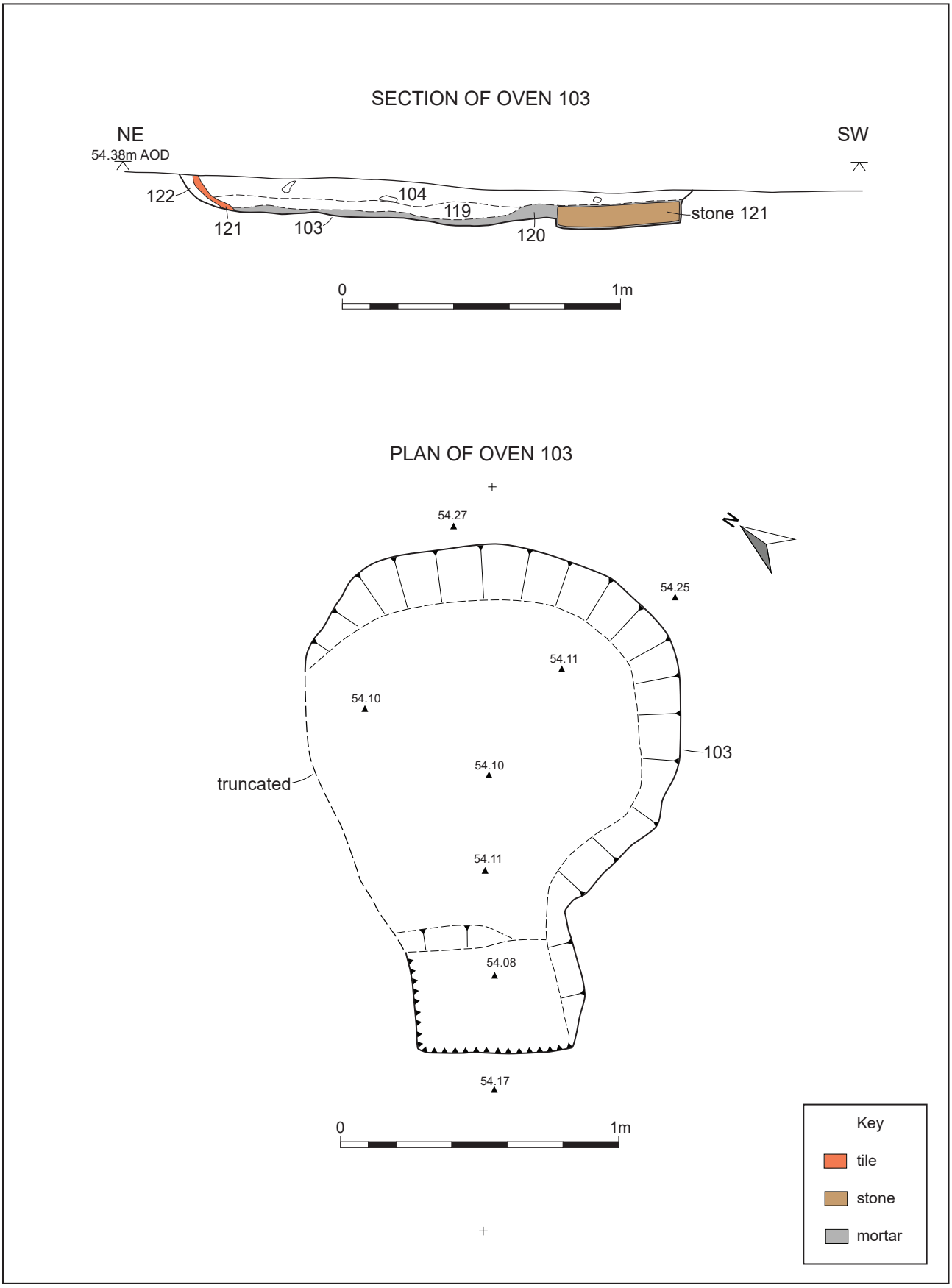


Trench location plan *Figure 2*



Plan of mortar layer 120 and oven structure 121

Figure 3



Plan and section of oven 103 *Figure 4*

Plates

Plate 1: General view of site conditions, looking north, with 17th century barn in background

Plate 2: Trench 3 general view, facing south (scales 1m)

Plate 3: Trench 1, facing east; oven 103 is visible just beyond the scale bars (scales 1m)

Plate 4: Oven 103 during excavation, with charcoal layer 119 visible, facing south-east (scale 1m)

Plate 5: Oven 103 with stone and tile structure 121, facing south-east (scale 1m)

Plate 6: Detail of tile structure 121 within oven, facing east (scale 0.5m)

Plate 7: Undated ditch 504, facing north-east (scale 1m)

Plate 8: Trench 6, concrete wall foundation and modern rubble, facing north-east (scales 1m)

Appendix 1: Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Length: 24.70m and 9m Width: 2.2m Orientation: E-W + N-S

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
100	Layer	Layer	Demo rubble/made ground	0.50m max	Loose mid greyish brown clay silt
101	Natural	Layer	Natural sandy gravel	0.10m+	Mod compact light orangey yellow and blue grey sandy gravel with blue grey clay patches
102	Wall	Structure	Brick manhole		
103	Oven	Cut	Oven cut		
104	Oven	Fill	Upper dark charcoal fill in oven 103	0.10m max	Moderately compact dark brownish black clay sand
105	Unknown	Cut	Service trench		
106	Unknown	Fill	Fill in trench 105		Firm light blue grey silty clay
107	Pit	Cut	Possible pit		
108	Pit	Fill	Fill in 107		Firm light blue grey clay
109	Foundation Trench	Cut	Foundation trench		
110	Foundation Trench	Fill	Sandstone rubble fill in 109		Firm mid brown sandstone blocks and rubble
111	Posthole	Cut	Post pad		
112	Posthole	Fill	Brick rubble fill in 111		Indurated reddish black brick rubble
113	Posthole	Cut	Post pad		
114	Posthole	Fill	Brick rubble fill in 113		Indurated reddish black brick rubble
115		Cut	Linear cut with culvert		
116		Fill	Fill in 115 above culvert		Firm mid yellowish brown silty clay
117		Cut	Linear cut with culvert		
118		Fill	Fill in 117 above culvert		
119	Oven	Layer	Black charcoal layer in oven, below 104	0.05m	Firm dark black sandy charcoal
120	Oven	Layer	Mortar base in oven 103	0.04m max	Firm mid blackish white sandy mortar
121	Oven	Structure	Tile and stone structure of oven	0.20m max	

122	Oven	Fill	Silty sand packing behind tiles 121	Soft dark black brown silty sand

Trench 2

Length: 20m Width: 1.8m Orientation: E-W

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
200	Layer	Layer	Modern demo layer	0.48m	Mod compact modern rubble
201	Natural	Layer	Natural		Mod compact mid orange sand and gravel

Trench 3

Length: 30m Width: 1.8m Orientation: N-S

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
300	Layer	Layer	Modern demo layer	0.42m	Mod compact rubble
301	Layer	Layer	Topsoil	0.43m	Mod compact mid greyish brown sandy clay
302	Layer	Layer	Subsoil	0.18m	Mod compact mid brownish orange sandy
303	Layer	Layer	Modern contaminated soils	0.30m	Compact dark greenish grey sandy clay
304	Natural	Layer	Natural		Mod compact light brownish orange clayey sand and gravels

Trench 4

Length: 28m Width: 1.8m Orientation: E-W

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
400	Layer	Layer	Modern demo layer	0.44m	Mod compact mid greyish red rubble
401	Layer	Layer	Subsoil	0.49m	Mod compact mid reddish brown sandy clay
402	Layer	Layer	Modern contaminated soils	0.34m	Compact dark greenish grey sandy clay
403	Natural	Layer	Natural		Mod compact light reddish orange with green grey patches clayey sand

Trench 5

Length: 29m Width: 1.8m Orientation: N-S

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
500	Layer	Layer	Modern rubble ground surface	0.2m	Mod compact dark greyish black mixed modern rubble with some topsoil.
501	Layer	Layer	Made ground	0.22m	Compact black clayey silt/clinker
502	Layer	Layer	Subsoil	0.22m	Mod compact dark orangey greyish green clayey sand
503	Natural	Layer	Natural		Loose mixed orange and greyish green sand and gravel
504	Ditch	Cut	Linear cut, possible boundary ditch	0.34m	
505	Ditch	Fill	Fill in linear 504	0.34m	Friable dark blackish grey clayey sand

Trench 6

Length: 27m Width: 1.8m Orientation: E-W

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
600	Layer	Layer	Modern demo layer - surface	0.65m	Mod compact light yellow sandy rubble
601	Layer	Layer	Modern black demo layer	0.8m	Mod compact black
602	Natural	Layer	Top natural		Mod compact light orange sand and gravel
603	Natural	Layer	Lower natural		Mod compact mid orange clayey sand
604	Wall	Structure	Barn wall foundation		

Appendix 2: Summary of project archive

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

**OASIS terminology*

Appendix 3: Summary of data for HER

P5657

Artefacts

period	material class	object specific type	start date	end date	count	weight(g)	Specialist report done	key assemblage
late medieval/ post-medieval	ceramic	roof tile	1467	1599?	3	809	y	y
late medieval/post-medieval	ceramic	roof tile nibbed	1467	1599?	3	1454	y	y
modern	ceramic	brick	1900	2000	4	302	y	N
modern	ceramic	sewer pipe	1900	2000	2	244	y	N
modern	ceramic	tile	1900	2000	6	344	y	N
post-medieval	ceramic	brick	1540	1899	6	584	y	N
post-medieval	ceramic	brick/tile	1540	1899	2	14	y	N
post-medieval	ceramic	roof tile	1540	1899	16	749	y	N
post-medieval/ modern	ceramic	brick	1540	2000	3	598	y	N
post-medieval/ modern	ceramic	tile	1540	2000	2	95	y	N
undated	ceramic	brick/tile			1	8	y	N
undated	ceramic	fragment			2	0.5	y	N
undated	mortar	fragment			112	320	y	N
undated	organic	fragment			30	20	y	N
undated	stone	fragment			63	798	y	N