

Archaeological evaluation at Rock Farm, Lea, Herefordshire

Worcestershire Archaeology
for RPS CONSULTING

February 2020



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ROCK FARM LEA HEREFORDSHIRE

Archaeological evaluation report



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The Butts
Worcester
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SITE INFORMATION

Site name: Rock Farm
Site code: P5771
Local planning authority: Herefordshire Council
Planning reference: 193892
Central NGR: SO 6583 2210
Commissioning client: RPS Consulting
Client project reference: -
WA project number: P5571
WA report number: 2784
HER reference: EHE 2363
Oasis reference: fieldsec1-381938
Museum accession number: -

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An archaeological evaluation at Rock Farm, Lea, Herefordshire

By Andrew Walsh

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in January 2020 at Rock Farm, Lea, Herefordshire (NGR SO 6583 2210). This comprised of the excavation of four evaluation trenches. The project was commissioned by RPS Consulting on behalf of their client, in advance of groundworks associated with the erection of 3.85 hectares of polytunnels. A planning application had been submitted and the archaeological advisor to the local planning authority considered that the proposed development had the potential to impact upon heritage assets.

The site was located approximately 400m north-west of the centre of the village of Lea, and 6.5km south-east of Ross-on-Wye. The site was in an arable field which measures approximately six hectares, although the evaluation was focussed on the south-western corner of the field on the site of a proposed balancing pond and associated drainage swale.

The Herefordshire HER records that a Neolithic flint scraper, a Roman coin and a scatter of pottery dating from the 13th to 18th centuries had all been identified on the site, and that the route of a possible medieval trackway crossed the northern part of the site. The HER also noted that the quality and type of Neolithic flint found at this and other nearby sites may suggest Neolithic occupation in the vicinity.

Four trenches measuring 30m by 1.5m were excavated. No archaeological features, deposits or finds were identified. A defined topsoil and subsoil profile was revealed overlying the natural substrate, indicating that there has been no disturbance of the site previously. The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project were achieved. Conditions were suitable in all of the trenches to identify the presence or absence of archaeological features and finds such as pottery or flint. It was considered that the absence of archaeological features provided an accurate characterisation of the site of the proposed retention pond.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in January 2020 at Rock Farm, Lea, Herefordshire. This comprised the excavation of four evaluation trenches. The project was commissioned by RPS Consulting on behalf of their client, in advance of groundworks associated with the erection of 3.85 hectares of polytunnels. A planning application has been submitted to Herefordshire Council and the archaeological advisor to the planning authority, considered that the proposed development had the potential to impact upon heritage assets.

No brief was provided but the project conforms to the generality of briefs which have previously been issued. A written scheme of investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2020) and approved by the archaeological advisor to the planning authority. The evaluation also conforms to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in *Standard and guidance: for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014) and the *Standards for archaeological projects in Herefordshire* (Herefordshire Archaeology 2004).

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The site is located approximately 400m north-west of the centre of the village of Lea, and 6.5km south-east of Ross-on-Wye (NGR SO 6583 2210; Figure 1). The site is in an arable field which measures approximately six hectares, although the evaluation was focussed on the south-western corner of the field on the site of a proposed balancing pond and associated drainage swale (NGR SO 6594 2200; Figure 1). The site is located at a height of around 113m AOD and slopes down towards the south-west. The underlying geology is mapped as micaceous sandstone of the Brownstones Formation (BGS 2020). No superficial deposits are mapped.

2 Archaeological and historical background

A search of Herefordshire HER was undertaken covering an area of 1km around the site. The HER records that a Neolithic flint scraper (SMR 53253), a Roman coin (SMR 55995) and a scatter of pottery dating from the 13th to 18th centuries (SMR 53253) have all been identified at the proposed development site. The route of a possible medieval trackway also crosses the northern part of the site (SMR 53257).

The HER entry for SMR 53253 also notes that the quality and types of the flint recovered from this site and monuments 53254 (200m south of the site), 53255 and 53256 (both outside the 1km search area), may suggest Neolithic occupation in the vicinity.

3 Project aims

The aims archaeological evaluation, as outlined in the WSI, were 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 2020). Fieldwork was undertaken on the 20 January 2020. Four trenches, amounting to 180m² in area, were excavated across the site of a proposed balancing pond and associated drainage swale, in the south-western part of the site. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected, and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012) and trench and feature locations were surveyed using a GNSS device 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 at Herefordshire Museum.

5 Archaeological results

5.1 Introduction

The trenches are illustrated in Figure 2 and Plates 1 to 2. The trench and context inventory is presented in Appendix 1. The location of Trench 4 was altered from that originally planned to avoid a live service identified by the landowner.

5.2 Natural deposits

The earliest deposits identified were mid reddish brown natural layers formed of clayey sand, sand or weathered sandstone. No features were identified cutting the natural substrate.

5.3 Modern deposits

The natural deposits were overlaid by a thin layer of clayey sand subsoil, measuring 0.08m to 0.18m in depth. The trenches were sealed by a dark reddish silty clayey sand topsoil. No other deposits were identified, and no finds were noted in any of the trenches.

6 Artefactual evidence

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

7 Environmental evidence

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.

8 Discussion and conclusions

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Rock Farm, Lea, Herefordshire. Four trenches were excavated at the site. No archaeological features, deposits or finds were identified during the evaluation. A defined topsoil and subsoil profile was revealed overlying the natural substrate, indicating that there has been no disturbance of the site previously.

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 and finds such as pottery or flint. It is considered that the absence of archaeological features provides an accurate characterisation of the site of the proposed retention pond.

9 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Andrew Walsh ACIfA, assisted by Hazel Whitefoot.

The project was managed by Tom Vaughan MCIfA. The report was produced and collated by Andrew Walsh, and the illustrations were produced by Carolyn Hunt, MCIfA.

10 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for the successful conclusion of the project: Nick Cooke (Director – Archaeology, RPS Consulting), Mark Savidge (BH Savidge and Son), and Julian Cotton (Planning Archaeologist, Herefordshire Council).

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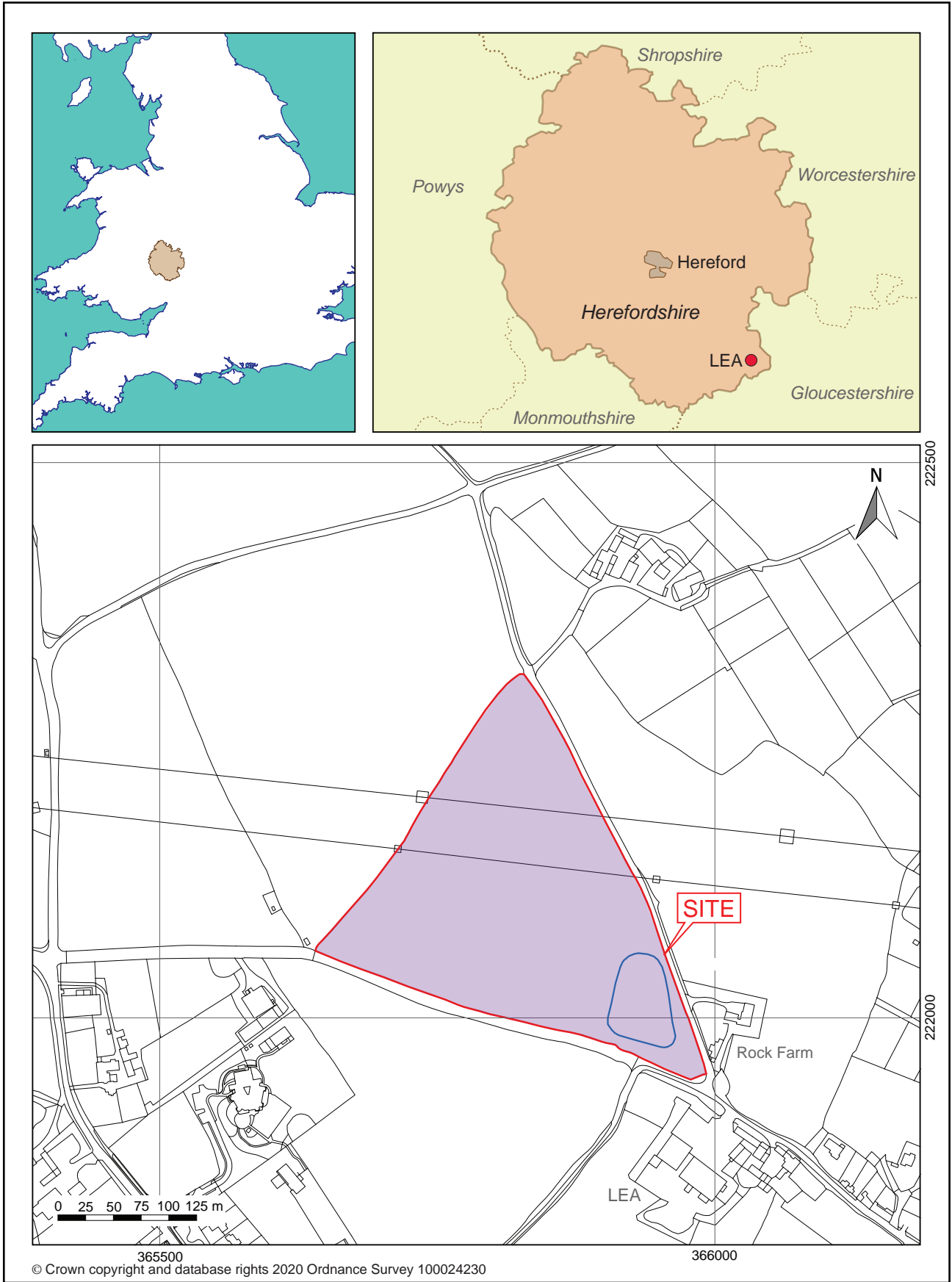
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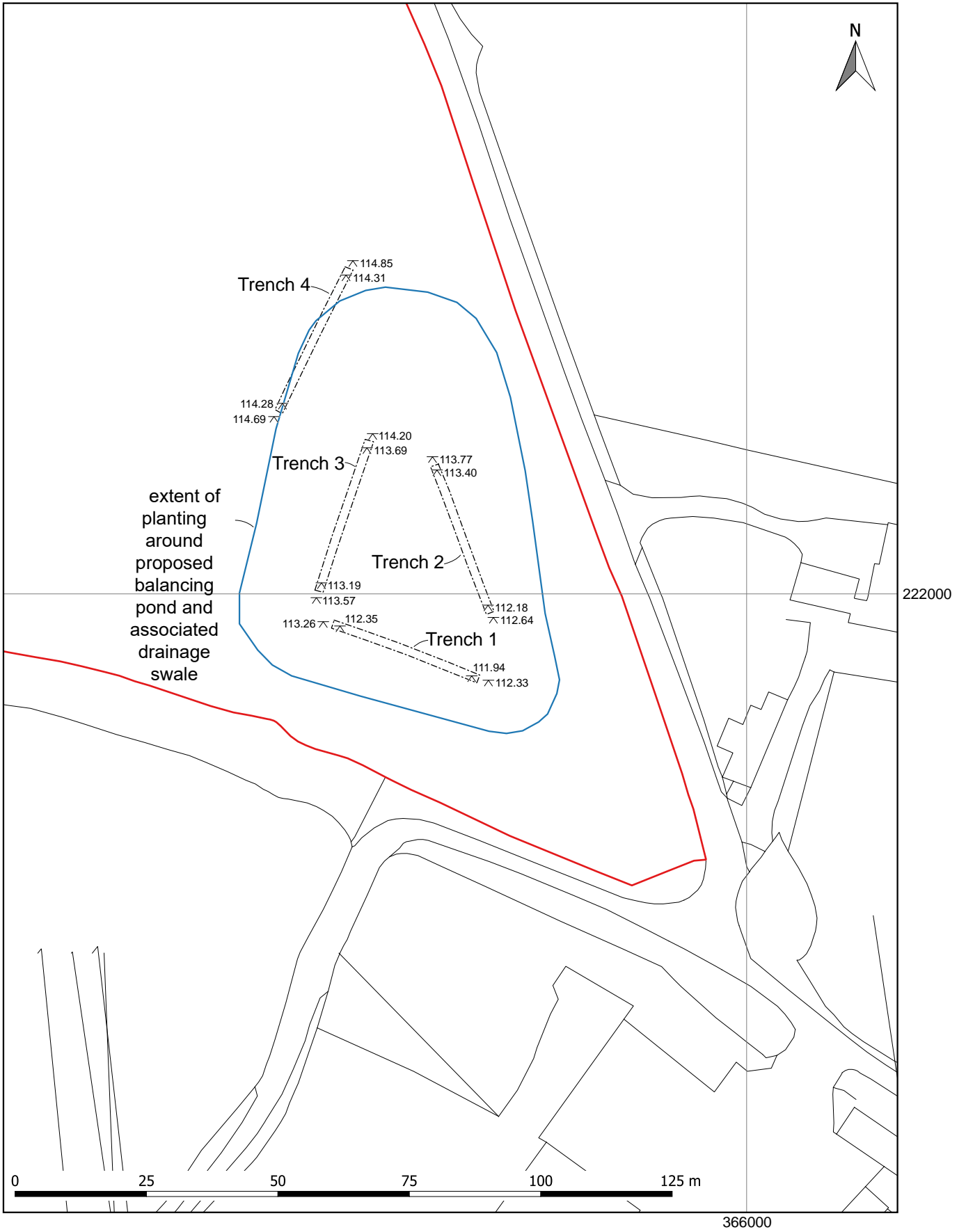
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Figures



Location of the site

Figure 1



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Trench location plan

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1: Trench 1 looking south-west; 2x 1m scales



Plate 2: Trench 2, looking south-east; note the bands in the natural sandstone bedrock; 2x 1m scales

Appendix 1: Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Length: 30 Width: 1.5 Orientation: NW-SE

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
100		Layer	Topsoil	0.36	Friable dark reddish brown silty clayey sand
101		Layer	Subsoil	0.08	Moderately compact dark reddish brown clayey silt
102		Layer	Natural		Moderately compact mid reddish brown clayey sand

Trench 2

Length: 30 Width: 1.5 Orientation: N-S

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
200		Layer	Topsoil	0.38	Friable dark reddish brown silty clayey sand
201		Layer	Subsoil	0.18	Moderately compact mid reddish brown clayey sand
202		Layer	Natural		Compact mid reddish brown Sandstone

Trench 3

Length: 30 Width: 1.5 Orientation: N-S

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
300		Layer	Topsoil	0.42	Friable dark reddish brown silty clayey sand
301		Layer	Subsoil	0.12	Moderately compact mid reddish brown clayey sand
302		Layer	Natural		Compact mid reddish brown clayey sand/clay mix

Trench 4

Length: 30 Width: 1.5 Orientation: NE-SW

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
400		Layer	Topsoil	0.37	Friable dark reddish brown silty clayey sand
401		Layer	Subsoil	0.18	Moderately compact mid reddish brown clayey sand
402		Layer	Natural		Compact mid reddish brown clay sand mix

Appendix 2: Summary of project archive

TYPE	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	None
Paper	Context sheet, Diary (Field progress form)
Digital	Database, GIS, Images raster/digital photography, Survey, Text

*OASIS terminology