

Archaeological evaluation at land south of Morningside, Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire

Worcestershire Archaeology
for RPS Consulting

June 2020



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LAND SOUTH OF MORNINGSIDE TENBURY WORCESTERSHIRE

Archaeological evaluation report



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SITE INFORMATION

Site name: Land south of Morningside, Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire

Local planning authority: Malvern Hills District Council

Planning reference: 16/00502/FUL and ref APP/J1860/W/17/3177254

Central NGR: SO 59144 67735

Commissioning client: RPS Consulting

WA project number: P5467

WA report number: 2818

HER reference: WSM72795

Oasis reference: fieldsec1-396159

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY	1
REPORT	2
1 INTRODUCTION	2
1.1 Background to the project	2
1.2 Site location, topography and geology.....	2
2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	2
2.1 Introduction	2
2.2 Archaeological background.....	2
2.3 Previous archaeological work on the site	3
3 PROJECT AIMS	3
4 PROJECT METHODOLOGY	3
5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS	4
5.1 Introduction	4
5.2 Phasing/Trench descriptions.....	4
5.2.1 Natural deposits across the site.....	4
5.2.2 Trench 2	4
5.2.3 Trench 3	4
5.2.4 Trench 8	4
5.2.5 Modern deposits.....	4
6 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE	4
7 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE	4
8 DISCUSSION	4
9 SIGNIFICANCE	5
10 CONCLUSIONS	5
11 PROJECT PERSONNEL	5
12 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	5
13 BIBLIOGRAPHY	5

FIGURES

PLATES

APPENDIX 1: TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF PROJECT ARCHIVE

APPENDIX 3: SUMMARY OF DATA FOR HER

Archaeological evaluation report at land south of Morningside, Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire

By Peter Lovett

Illustrations by Peter Lovett

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at land south of Morningside, Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire (NGR SO 59144 67735). It was commissioned by RPS Consulting in advance of a proposed residential development of the site. A planning application for the development was submitted and initially refused but an appeal was granted subject to conditions including Condition 8 which requires a programme of archaeological works.

Nine trenches were excavated across the 2.4ha site to gain a good coverage of the site and targeting anomalies identified on a prior geophysical survey. The results of the survey were generally confirmed by the evaluation, with an area of magnetic disturbance correlating to modern made ground and one of the two small post-medieval ditches aligning with a linear feature. The archaeological features are of negligible significance, representing low level agricultural activity.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in May 2020 at land south of Morningside, Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire (NGR SO 59144 67735). This comprised nine evaluation trenches. The project was commissioned by RPS Consulting, in advance of proposed residential development of the site. A planning application for the development was submitted (16/00502/FUL) and initially refused but an appeal (ref APP/J1860/W/17/3177254) was granted subject to conditions including Condition 8 which requires a programme of archaeological works.

The archaeological advisor to the local planning authority considered that the proposed development has the potential to impact upon possible heritage assets. Previous geophysical survey of the site has identified linear anomalies as well as the position of a 20th century military observation post.

No brief was provided but the project conforms to the generality of briefs. A WSI was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2018) and approved by Aidan Smyth, archaeological planning advisor to Malvern Hills District Council.

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) and to *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010).

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The site is located circa 800m to the south-west of the centre of Tenbury and 280m to the south-east of the River Teme. The site is approximately 2.4 hectares in size and located on a hilltop promontory at a maximum height of 84m AOD, sloping down towards the north and east to a height of 62m AOD (CgMs 2014).

The underlying geology comprises bedrock of Raglan Mudstone Formation with no superficial deposits recorded (BGS 2020).

2 Archaeological and historical background

2.1 Introduction

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) of the site was undertaken by CgMs Consulting (2014). The findings presented in the DBA are summarised below.

2.2 Archaeological background

Despite the site's position being favourable for prehistoric settlement, no such archaeological deposits have been recognised within the site or vicinity. The same is true of the Romano-British period as the site lies isolated from known settlement and trading routes of that period.

The town of Tenbury is suggested to have been founded within the Saxon period and the settlement potentially centred around the church of St Mary, 570m to the north-east of the study site. It is therefore unlikely that any features of this date exist within the site itself.

The town had a manor, church and market by 1086 and the settlement was projected as extending to around 250m to the north of the site. As in the Saxon period, the site is therefore likely to have been part of the agricultural hinterland of the town, though with a suggested pond of this date to the south of the site.

The historic mapping of the site from 1839 onwards shows the site as a single field throughout up until 1969, though with a public footpath through the west of the site in 1885. By 1969, the area surrounding the site forms part of the residential expansion of the Tenbury.

One feature which the 20th century mapping did not show was a former Royal Observer Corp Post constructed from 1957 and decommissioned in 1968 within the north of the site (CgMs 2014).

The field to the southeast of the study site has recently been subject to geophysical survey and trial trenching. No significant archaeological remains were revealed. The only features found were 18th century land drains, a filled natural depression, an undated plough scar and tree bowls (CgMs 2014).

2.3 Previous archaeological work on the site

A geophysical survey has been carried out across the study site (Stratascan 2014). The survey confirmed the location of a former Royal Observer Corp Post. The geophysical survey identified possible anomalies that are more likely to be agricultural than archaeological in origin, such as former field boundaries.

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.

The evaluation will only assess heritage assets which are of archaeological interest. This project will not include consideration of Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, historic hedgerows.

4 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2020). Fieldwork was undertaken between the 26th and 28th of May 2020.

Nine trenches, amounting to 486m² in area, were excavated over the 2.4ha site, representing a sample of 3% of the development footprint. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

The trenches were in non-gridded layout and positioned to interrogate the anomalies identified within the geophysical survey of the site, as well as testing suggested blank areas.

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 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 using 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 Worcestershire County Museum.

5 Archaeological results

5.1 Introduction

The features recorded in the trenches are shown in Figures 2-4 and Plates 1-6. The trench and context inventory is presented in Appendix 1.

5.2 Phasing/Trench descriptions

5.2.1 Natural deposits across the site

The natural ground across the site was consistent, and was formed from a mid brownish red silty clay, with blue banding throughout.

5.2.2 Trench 2

A modern made ground layer lay beneath the topsoil at the western end of the trench. This was probably laid down to level out the brow of the hill in this part of the field. It was 0.4m thick and sealed a buried topsoil. It corresponds well with the geophysical anomaly from the survey. No other archaeological features were identified.

5.2.3 Trench 3

A shallow ditch 303 with a concave base ran north-west to south-east. It was 0.71m wide and 0.41m deep, cutting the subsoil. It contained small fragments of porcelain and ceramic roof tile (not retained). The ditch aligned well with an anomaly identified in the geophysical survey. The ditch was approximately 0.22m below the current ground surface, with the natural ground at 0.42m below current ground level.

5.2.4 Trench 8

A small ditch 803 was excavated, being 0.24m deep and 0.48m wide, following the strike of the slope, though not aligning with the mapped geophysical anomaly, which lay some 8m to the north though on the same alignment. It sits about 2m downslope of a ridge on the same alignment, suggestive of a possible earthwork, though no clear evidence could be seen in section for a bank. The ditch cut the subsoil, indicating a post-medieval date, though no finds were recovered from the ditch itself. It was 0.25m below the ground level.

5.2.5 Modern deposits

A consistent topsoil lay across the site, being between 0.22 and 0.35m thick.

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

The results of the archaeological evaluation demonstrate that there is no evidence for activity predating the post-medieval period. The two features that were recorded both cut the subsoil and are likely associated with low level agricultural practices. One of the features aligned with geophysical anomalies, whilst the other was approximately 8m away from the projected feature. The made ground identified in Trench 2 correlated with the area of magnetic disturbance from the geophysical survey,

though the anomaly at the eastern end of that trench was not observed. The possible feature that Trench 7 was located to test was not present.

9 Significance

The features are of negligible significance, being products of post-medieval and modern agriculture. The artefacts recovered reflect this activity.

10 Conclusions

Nine trenches were excavated across the 2.4ha site, following a geophysical survey. The results of the survey were generally confirmed by the trial trenching, with an area of magnetic disturbance correlating to modern made ground and one of the two small post-medieval ditches aligning with a linear feature. The archaeological features are of negligible significance, representing low level agricultural activity.

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Conditions were suitable in all of the trenches to identify the presence or absence of archaeological features. It is considered that the nature, density and distribution of archaeological features provides an accurate characterisation of the development site as a whole.

11 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Peter Lovett ACIfA, assisted by Beth Williams PCIfA.

The project was managed by Tom Rogers MCIfA. 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

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following: Nick Cooke of RPS Consulting. The project was monitored by Aidan Smyth of Malvern Hills District Council and Worcestershire Archaeology would also like to thank them for their advice.

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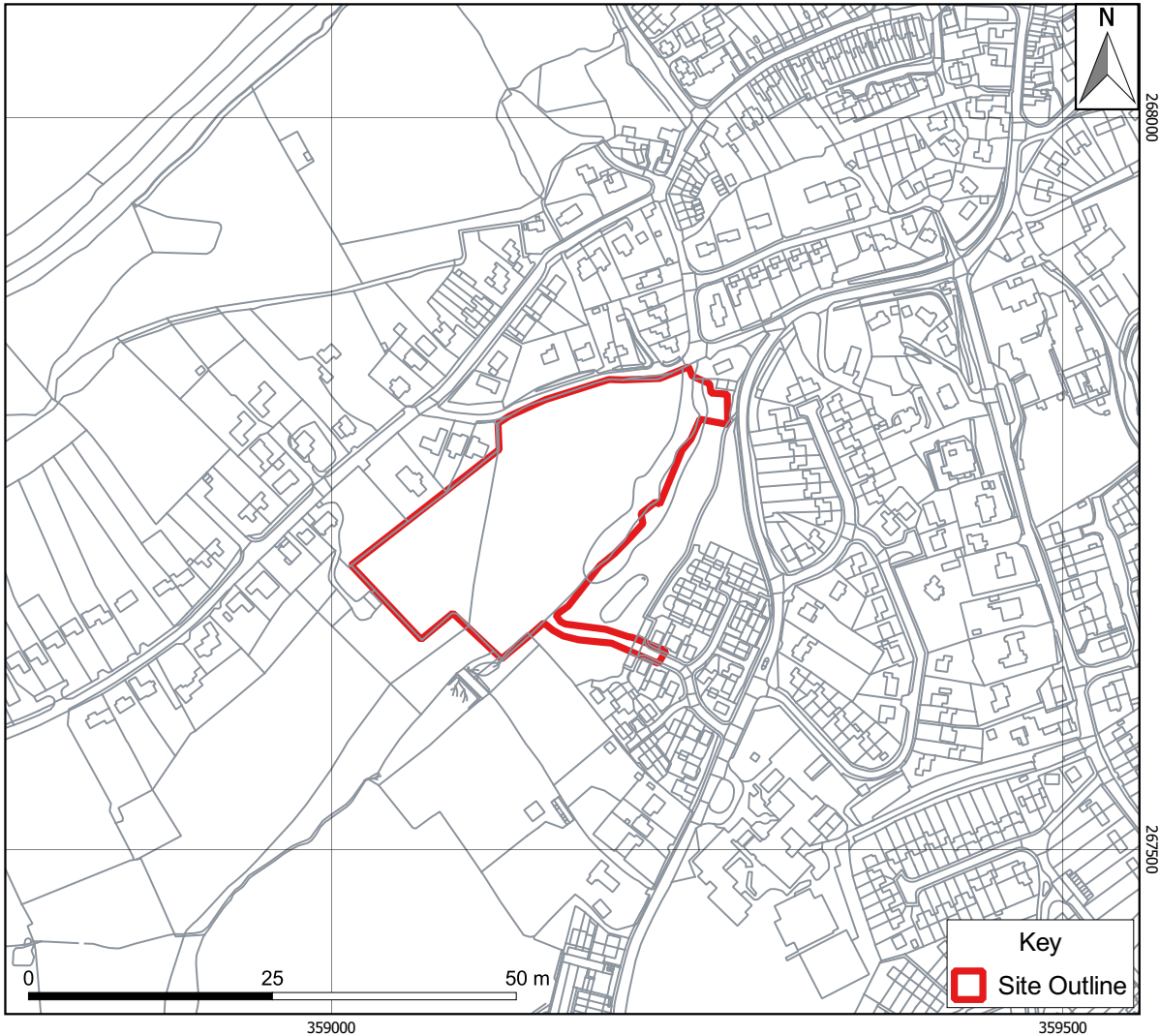
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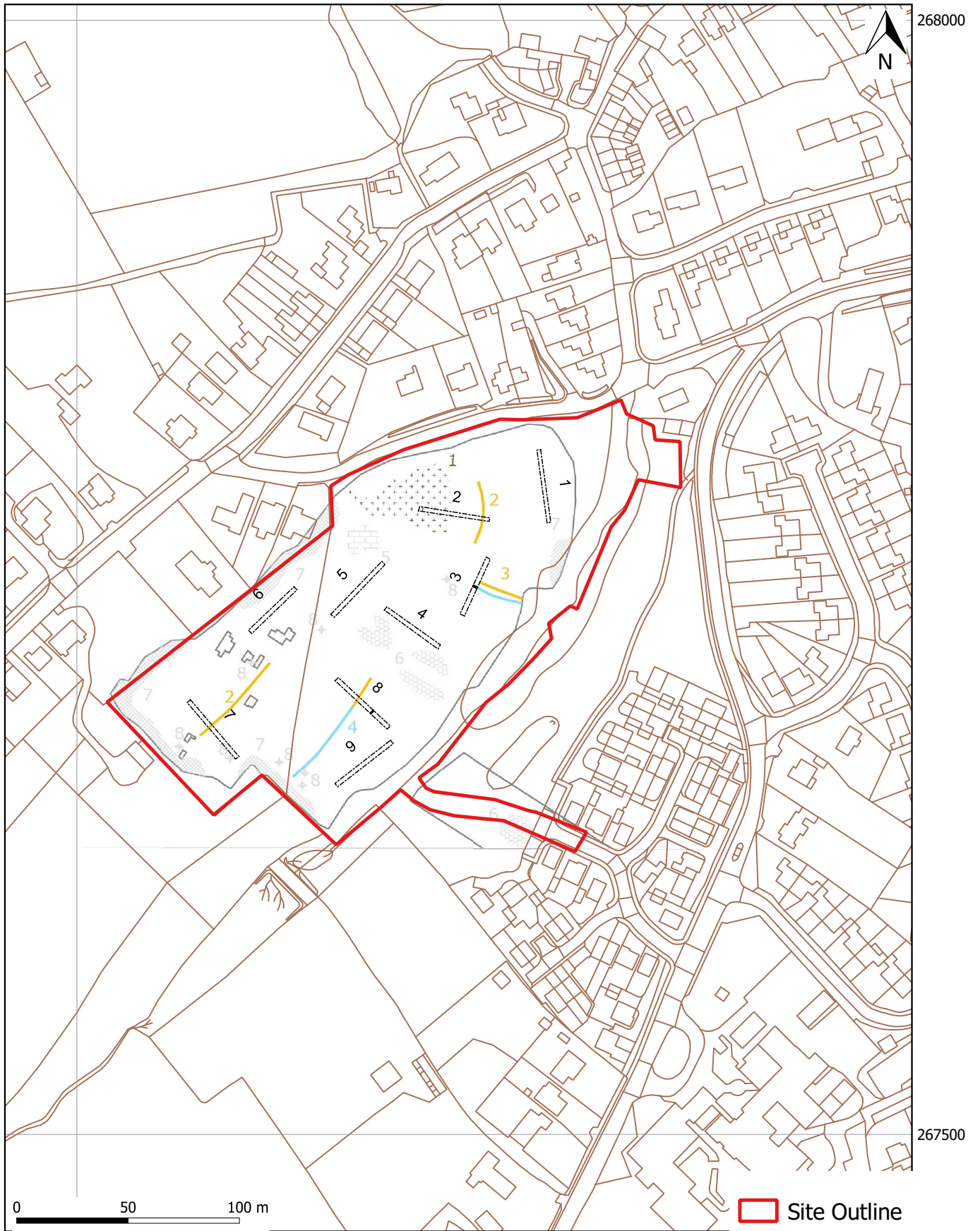
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Figures



Location of the site

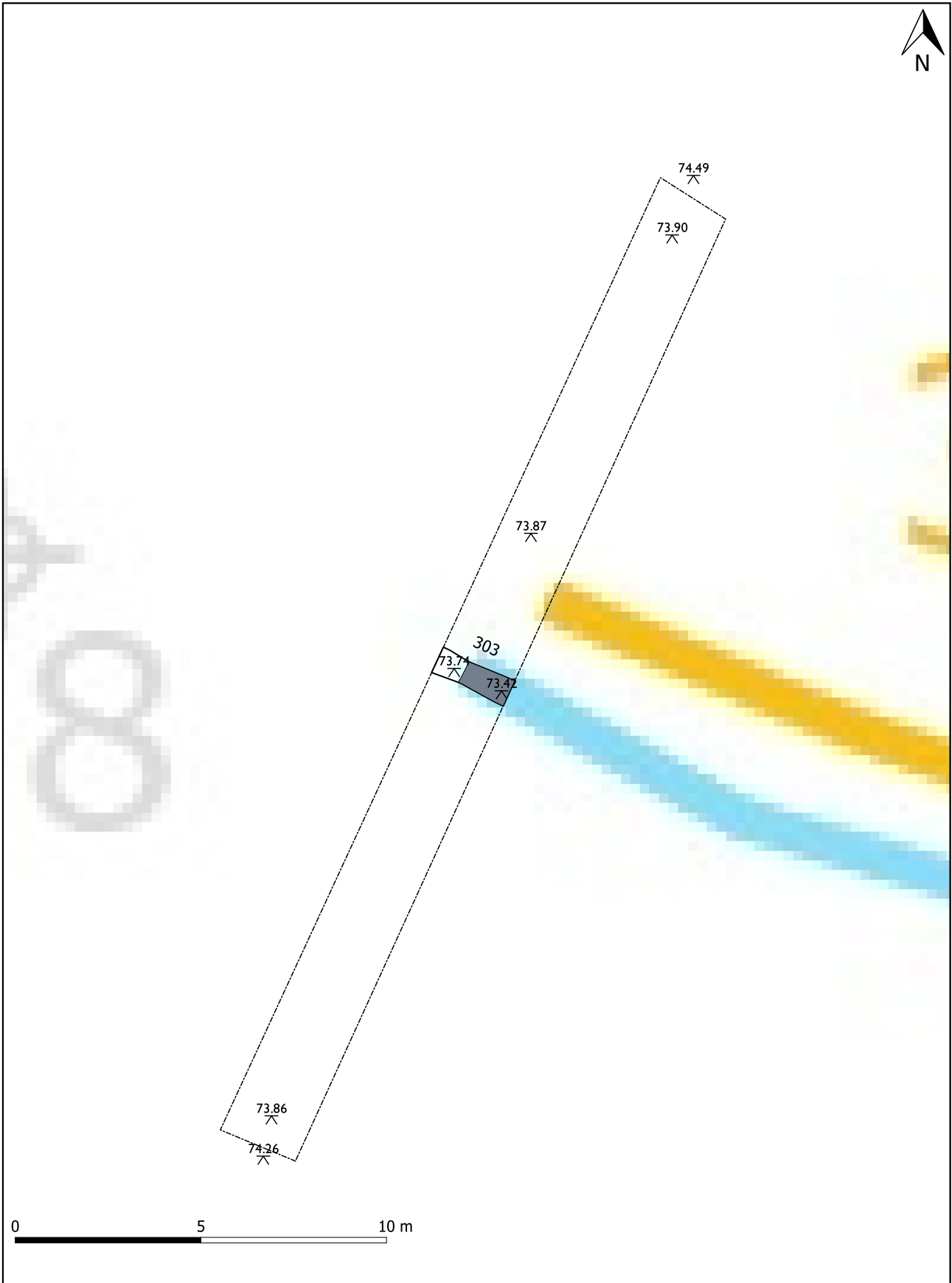
Figure 1



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Trench locations with geophysical anomalies (after Stratascan 2014)

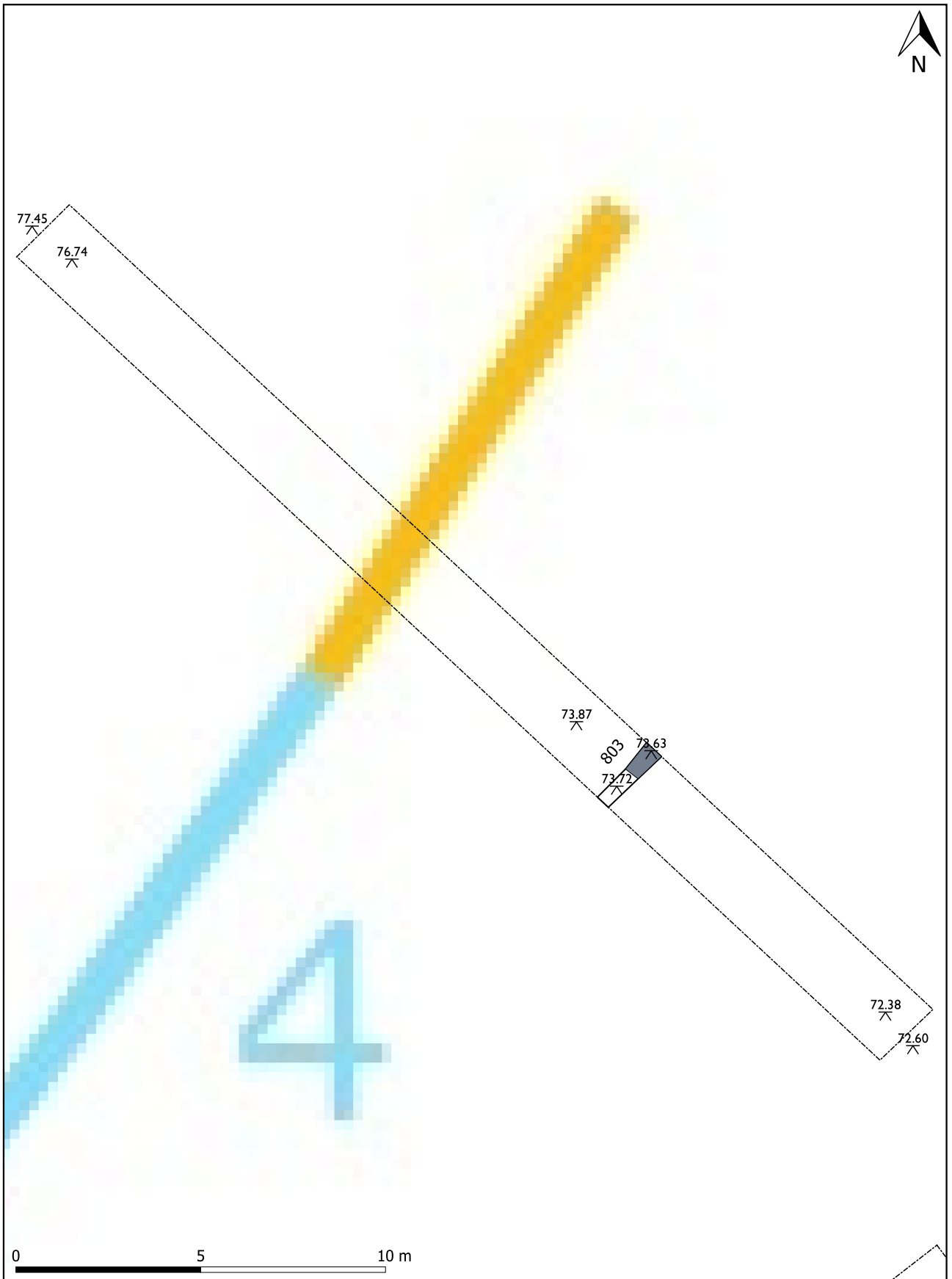
Figure 2



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Trench 3 with geophysical survey (after Stratascan 2014)

Figure 3



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Trench 8 with geophysical survey (after Stratascan 2014)

Figure 4

Plates



Plate 1 General view across site, looking north



Plate 2 Trench 5, looking south-west (1m scales)



Plate 3 Made ground in Trench 2, looking north (1m scales)



Plate 4 Ditch 303, looking north-east (1m scale)



Plate 5 Trench 8, looking north-west (1m scales)



Plate 6 Ditch 803, looking north-east (1m scale)

Appendix 1: Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Length: 30 Width: 1.8 Orientation: N-S

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
100	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.23	Mid loose Mid greyish red Silty clay
101	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.18	Moderately compact Mid brownish red with blue speckling Silty clay
102	Natural	Layer	Natural		Moderately compact Mid brownish red with blue speckling and banding Silty clay

Trench 2

Length: 30 Width: 1.8 Orientation: E-W

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
200	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.32	Mid loose Mid greyish red Silty clay
201	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.28	Moderately compact Mid brownish red with blue speckling Silty clay
202	Natural	Layer	Natural		Moderately compact Mid brownish red with blue speckling and banding Silty clay
203	Made ground	Layer	Made ground	0.4	Moderately compact Mid brownish grey Silty clay
204	Topsoil	Layer	Buried topsoil	0.24	Moderately compact to mid loose Mid brownish red Silty clay

Trench 3

Length: 30 Width: 1.8 Orientation: NE-SW

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
300	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.3	Mid loose Mid greyish red Silty clay
301	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.2	Moderately compact Mid brownish red with blue speckling Silty clay
302	Natural	Layer	Natural		Moderately compact Mid brownish red with blue

					speckling and banding Silty clay
303	Ditch	Cut	Cut of ditch	0.28	
304	Ditch	Fill	Fill of ditch [303]	0.28	Moderately compact Mid greyish red Silty clay

Trench 4

Length: 30 Width: 1.8 Orientation: NW-SE

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/depth	Deposit description
400	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.22	Mid loose Mid greyish red Silty clay
401	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.28	Moderately compact Mid brownish red with blue speckling Silty clay
402	Natural	Layer	Natural		Moderately compact Mid brownish red with blue speckling and banding Silty clay

Trench 5

Length: 30 Width: 1.8 Orientation: NE-SW

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/depth	Deposit description
500	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.32	Mid loose Mid greyish red Silty clay
501	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.12	Moderately compact Mid brownish red with blue speckling Silty clay
502	Natural	Layer	Natural		Moderately compact Mid brownish red with blue speckling and banding Silty clay

Trench 6

Length: 30 Width: 1.8 Orientation: NE-SW

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/depth	Deposit description
600	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.28	Mid loose Mid greyish red Silty clay
601	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.32	Moderately compact Mid brownish red with blue speckling Silty clay
602	Natural	Layer	Natural		Moderately compact Mid brownish red with blue

speckling Silty clay

Trench 7

Length: 30 Width: 1.8 Orientation: NW-SE

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
700	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.38	Mid loose Mid greyish red Silty clay
701	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.48	Moderately compact Mid brownish red with blue speckling Silty clay
702	Natural	Layer	Natural		Moderately compact Mid brownish red with blue speckling and banding Silty clay

Trench 8

Length: 30 Width: 1.8 Orientation: NW-SE

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
800	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.33	Mid loose Mid greyish red Silty clay
801	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.54	Moderately compact Mid brownish red with blue speckling Silty clay
802	Natural	Layer	Natural		Moderately compact Mid brownish red with blue speckling and banding Silty clay
803	Ditch	Cut	Cut of ditch	0.41	
804	Ditch	Fill	Fill of ditch	0.41	Moderately compact Mid greyish red Silty clay

Trench 9

Length: 30 Width: 1.8 Orientation: NE-SW

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Interpretation	Height/ depth	Deposit description
900	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.25	Mid loose Mid greyish red Silty clay
901	Natural	Layer	Subsoil	0.31	Moderately compact Mid brownish red with blue speckling Silty clay
902	Natural	Layer	Natural		Moderately compact Mid brownish red with blue speckling and banding

Appendix 2: Summary of project archive (WSM 72795)

TYPE	DETAILS*
Paper	Context sheet, Report
Digital	Database, GIS, Images raster/digital photography, Survey, Text

*OASIS terminology