

Archaeological excavation at Hill Moor, Manor Road, Lower Moor, Worcestershire

Worcestershire Archaeology
for Wayne Andrews

August 2020



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HILL MOOR, MANOR ROAD, LOWER MOOR, WORCESTERSHIRE

Archaeological excavation report



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SITE INFORMATION

Site name: Hill Moor, Manor Road, Lower Moor, Wyre Piddle, Worcestershire

Local planning authority: Wychavon District Council

Planning reference: 18/00477/FUL and ENF/20/0118

Central NGR: SO 98114 47206

Commissioning client: Wayne Andrews

WA project number: P5492

WA report number: 2840

HER reference: WSM73120

Oasis reference: fieldsec1-400984

DOCUMENT CONTROL PANEL

Version	Date	Author	Details	Approved by
1	11/08/2020	Andrew Walsh	Draft for comment	Tom Vaughan
2	12/08/2020	Andrew Walsh	Approved by Curator	Tom Vaughan

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Archaeological excavation at Hill Moor, Manor Road, Lower Moor, Worcestershire

By Andrew Walsh

With a contribution by Rob Hedge

Illustrations by Laura Templeton

Summary

An archaeological excavation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) at Hill Moor, Manor Road, Lower Moor, Worcestershire (NGR SO 98114 47206). The excavation was a consequence of a breach of a conditioned approval of a planning application to Wychavon District Council, thus requiring compensatory mitigation excavation. An archaeological evaluation had identified undated archaeological remains and the archaeological advisor to the local planning authority considered that the development had the potential to impact upon heritage assets.

Two areas were excavated within the constraints of the development site. Two ditches, a gully, a tree throw and two modern features were identified. One of the ditches was undated but may be related to prehistoric or Roman activity. The second ditch represented the continuation of a post-medieval ditch identified during the evaluation. The gully was also undated and could date to either the prehistoric/Roman or post-medieval periods.

The tree throw contained modern pottery but within its fill was a redeposited Palaeolithic flint end-scraper which represents a rare and significant addition to the record of Palaeolithic Worcestershire. It weighs 7g and is wholly re-corticated with a deep orange patina. The edges are slightly dulled, suggesting some (though not extensive) fluvial transport. It is considered to date to the Marine Isotope Stage 3 (57-29kya), either during the late Middle (circa 59-36kya) or early Upper (circa 36-29kya) Palaeolithic.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological excavation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) at Hill Moor, Manor Road, Lower Moor, Worcestershire (NGR SO 98114 47206). The excavation was a consequence of a breach of a conditioned approval of a planning application to Wychavon District Council (reference number 18/00477/FUL; condition number 9), thus requiring compensatory mitigation excavation (planning enforcement number ENF/20/0118). An archaeological evaluation had identified undated archaeological remains and the archaeological advisor to the local planning authority considered that the development had the potential to impact upon heritage assets. However, the development was largely completed without archaeological works being undertaken.

No brief was prepared by the archaeological advisor but this investigation conformed to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in *Standard and guidance: for archaeological excavation* (CIfA 2014) and the *Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2019).

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The site was located within the village of Lower Moor, and was formerly part of a garden. The village is located on the northern side of the River Avon, which is approximately 1km to its south-west. The site was broadly flat and located at a height of 26m AOD. The underlying geology was mapped as being Charmouth Mudstone Formation, overlain by superficial deposits of Wasperton Sand and Gravel Member (BGS 2019).

The development, which comprised two detached residential properties, was largely complete when the excavation was undertaken, but two areas of the site were still available for investigation.

2 Archaeological and historical background

A detailed archaeological and historical background is presented in the archaeological evaluation report (Cornah 2019) and shall not be repeated here. In summary the site is located in a historic landscape which includes extensive evidence for Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman activity. There is less evidence of early medieval activity, although the village was certainly extant during the medieval period, and the Old Chestnut Tree pub in the centre of the village dates to the 16th century.

The evaluation of the site did not identify any datable features, although undated ditches and a gully were excavated and it was suggested these were likely to be part of the field systems relating to the extensive prehistoric and Roman settlement and activity which surrounds the village. A single fire cracked stone and a small quantity of unidentified charred cereal grains were recovered from the features. A further ditch was present which aligned with the historic and extant plot boundaries, as well as tree bowls, probably orchard features which are related to post-medieval and modern agricultural activity.

3 Project aims

The aims and scope of the project were to investigate those remaining available areas of the site, and preserve by record any archaeological deposits, structures, layers and horizons revealed (WA 2020, 2).

4 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2020). Fieldwork was undertaken between 22 and 23 June 2020.

Two trenches, amounting to approximately 70m² in area, were excavated. They were numbered as Trenches 4 and 5, to follow the three trenches excavated within the evaluation stage (Figure 2). The trenches were positioned within the remaining undeveloped areas of site. These areas were the gardens of the two new properties. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant archaeological supervision using a 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 with an accuracy limit set at <0.04m.

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was undertaken through a combination of structural and environmental evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources. A list of trenches and contexts is presented in Appendix 1.

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology (Appendix 2). 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 2-3 and Plates 1-4.

5.2 Phases

5.2.1 Natural deposits

Natural deposits across both trenches consisted of light orange sands and gravels (403 and 503), at a depth of c 0.80-0.90m from the present ground surface.

5.2.2 Post-medieval deposits

At the southern end of Trench 5 was a grey brown sandy silt deposit (509). Only one edge of this feature (508) was visible (Plate 1), but it was on the same alignment as Ditch 305 which was excavated 3m to the east during the evaluation. Ditch 305 dated to the post-medieval.

5.2.3 Undated

Two undated features were identified. Ditch 406, which was located in Trench 4, measured approximately 0.3m in depth and 1.25m in width (Plate 2). It was orientated broadly north-east to south-west and contained a single mid greyish brown sandy clay fill (407). Gully 507, which was identified in Trench 5, measured 0.15m in depth and 0.36m in width (Plate 3). It was orientated east to west and contained a single mid orange brown sandy silt (506).

5.2.4 Modern

Tree throw 404 (Plate 4) contained a sherd of modern pottery as well as a Palaeolithic flint. Two machine cut modern pits (408 and 505) were also noted.

Both trenches were sealed by a mid brownish orange clayey sand (402 and 502) which was covered by a dark grey brown silty sand garden soil (401 and 501). This was overlain by modern overburden (400 and 500) from the development.

6 Artefactual evidence by Rob Hedge

Recovery of artefacts was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). Two artefacts were recovered. Both were within fill 405 of tree-throw 404. One (25g) sherd of late stoneware (fabric 81.4) gives a TPQ (*terminus post quem*) date of AD 1850-1950 for the deposit.

The other artefact was a 7g flint end-scaper (Plates 5 and 6). Wholly re-corticated with a deep orange patina, the edges are slightly dulled, suggesting some (though not extensive) fluvial transport. There is a small amount of more recent edge-damage, cutting through the re-cortication. The scraper is small: just 30mm long, 22.3mm wide, and 9.8mm thick, and fashioned on a crude flake. The condition and appearance is typical of artefacts of Palaeolithic date in this region.

The Wasperton sand and gravel member deposits on the site are Devensian in date (Marine Isotope stage 5a to 2, 82 – 14kya) and belong to the second Avon terrace (Maddy *et al* 1991). They have yielded numerous Palaeolithic flint implements, largely thanks to the work of Paul Whitehead (e.g. Whitehead 1989) in the gravel quarries of Beckford and Aston Mill. The one other piece known from Lower Moor was extensively rolled and probably re-worked from earlier deposits (Shaw 2014, 36). Further to the south, in the vicinity of Beckford and Aston Mill, the Wasperton member has been shown to contain numerous mid-Devensian deposits containing late Middle and early Upper Palaeolithic artefacts (Shaw 2014, 11-29; Shaw *et al* 2015).

In size and the slight concavity of the retouched distal margin, this scraper bears similarities to Aurignacian shouldered scrapers such as that found at nearby Aston Mill (Jacobi and Higham 2011, 201), though as Dinnis (2011, 9-10) notes, that definition encompasses a wide range of technological variability. Shouldered scrapers appear typically to have been made on — or at least associated with — blades, whereas this example was fashioned on a somewhat scrappy flake from a multi-directional core. However, several examples from Kents Cavern (Jacobi and Higham 2011, fig 11.14) are on similar flakes, so an Aurignacian date cannot be excluded. Aurignacian finds in Britain are extremely rare: Aston Mills is among only eight sites to yield finds of this date listed by Pettitt and White (2012, fig 7.9).

Further research is needed, which falls beyond the scope of this report, but it is considered most likely that this artefact is a scraper produced during the sporadic occupation of Britain during Marine Isotope Stage 3 (57 – 29kya), either during the late Middle (circa 57 – 36kya) or early Upper (circa 36 -29kya) Palaeolithic.

The pottery is not considered significant, and (subject to the approval of Museums Worcestershire) does not warrant retention. The flint, however, is significant and should be retained for further study.

7 Environmental evidence

7.1 Project parameters

Environmental sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no deposits or ecofacts were identified which were considered to be suitable for analysis.

8 Discussion with Rob Hedge

The flint scraper represents a rare and significant addition to the record of Palaeolithic Worcestershire. Hitherto, the westerly occurrences of the Wasperton member around the south side of Bredon Hill have yielded the most artefactual evidence, partly due to the presence of gravel quarries to which researchers have gained access. This find suggests that the potential for Mid-Devensian artefacts may be mirrored in other elements of the Wasperton member along the Avon.

Ditch 508 represents the continuation of Ditch 305, which was identified during the evaluation. During the evaluation it yielded brick fragments and Cornah (2019, 6) suggested it may represent the remains of a boundary illustrated on the 1833 enclosure map. Although there is an element of uncertainty around the accuracy of this map, the feature is on the same alignment.

Ditch 406 was undated but broadly on the same alignment as evaluation features 204 and 208. These features were suggested as belonging to either the prehistoric or Roman period, and it appears likely that Ditch 406 is contemporaneous. However, it is noted that these features are broadly on the same alignment as the post-medieval plot boundaries and could be of this date.

Gully 507 was orientated broadly east to west. It was also undated and could be prehistoric or Roman in date, although given its location and orientation, it could also represent the remains of the post-medieval boundary noted above on the 1833 enclosure map.

The northern continuation of Gully 204 was not identified in Trench 4 and presumably this feature turned or terminated, prior to reaching this trench, or it was truncated, being only 0.2m in depth.

The 1886 Ordnance Survey map records the plot as an orchard and feature 404, which yielded the only finds recovered from the excavation, was a tree throw dating to this period.

9 Conclusion

Two areas were excavated within the constraints of the development site. Two ditches, a gully, a tree throw and two modern features were identified. One of the ditches was undated but may be related to prehistoric or Roman activity. The second ditch represented the continuation of a post-medieval ditch identified during the evaluation. The gully was also undated and could date to either the prehistoric/Roman or post-medieval periods.

The tree throw contained modern pottery but within its fill was a redeposited Palaeolithic flint end-scraper which represents a rare and significant addition to the record of Palaeolithic Worcestershire. It weighs 7g and is wholly re-corticated with a deep orange patina. The edges are slightly dulled, suggesting some fluvial transport. It is considered to date to the Marine Isotope Stage 3 (57-29kya), either during the late Middle (circa 59-36kya) or early Upper (circa 36-29kya) Palaeolithic.

10 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Andrew Walsh (ACIfA FSA Scot) who also produced and collated the report. He was assisted on site by Chris Crump. The project was managed by Tom Vaughan (MCIfA). The finds were analysed by Rob Hedge (MCIfA) and illustrations were prepared by Laura Templeton (MCIfA).

11 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for the successful completion of the project: Wayne Andrews (the developer), and Aidan Smyth (Archaeology and Planning Advisor, Wychavon District Council).

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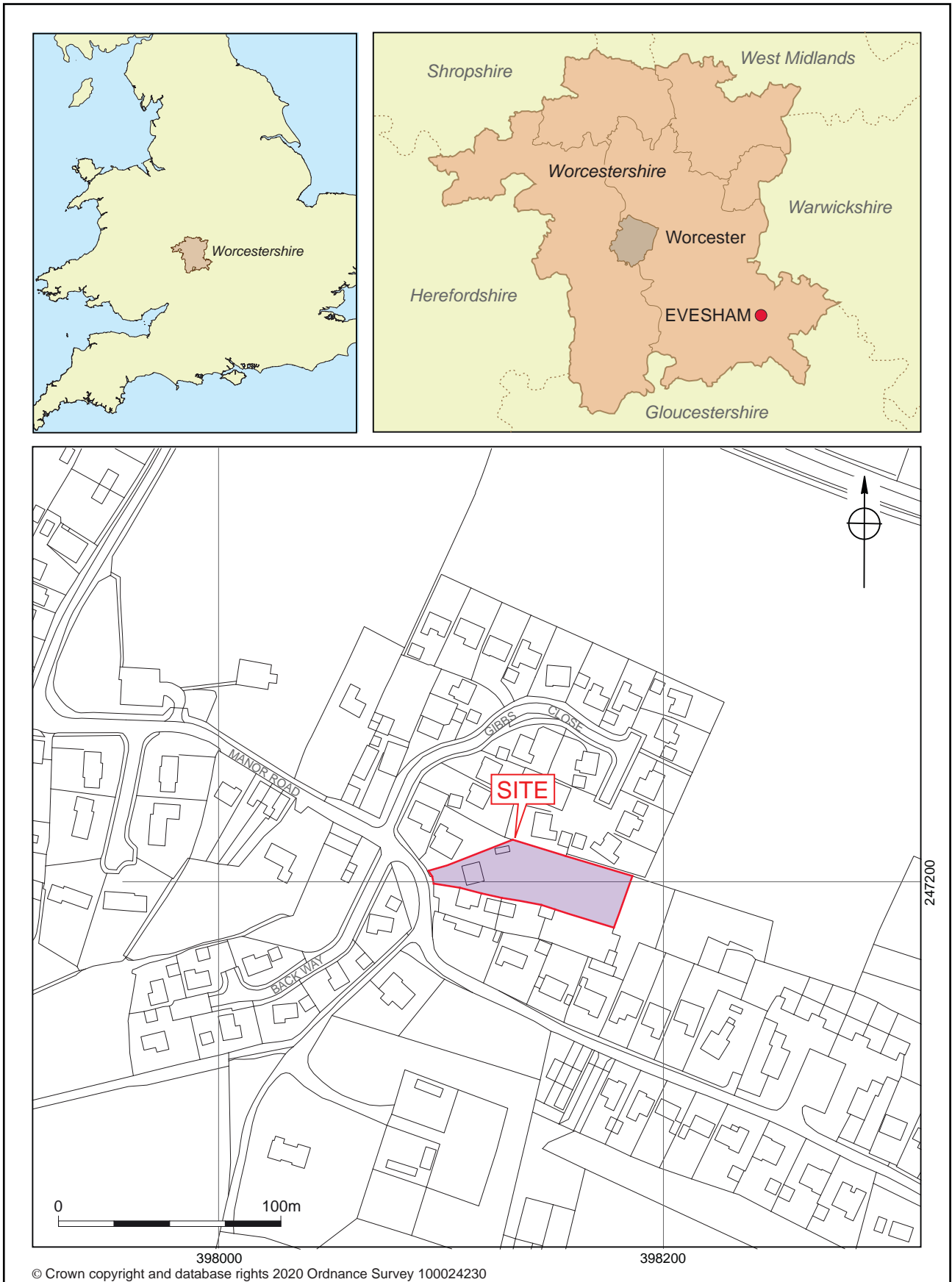
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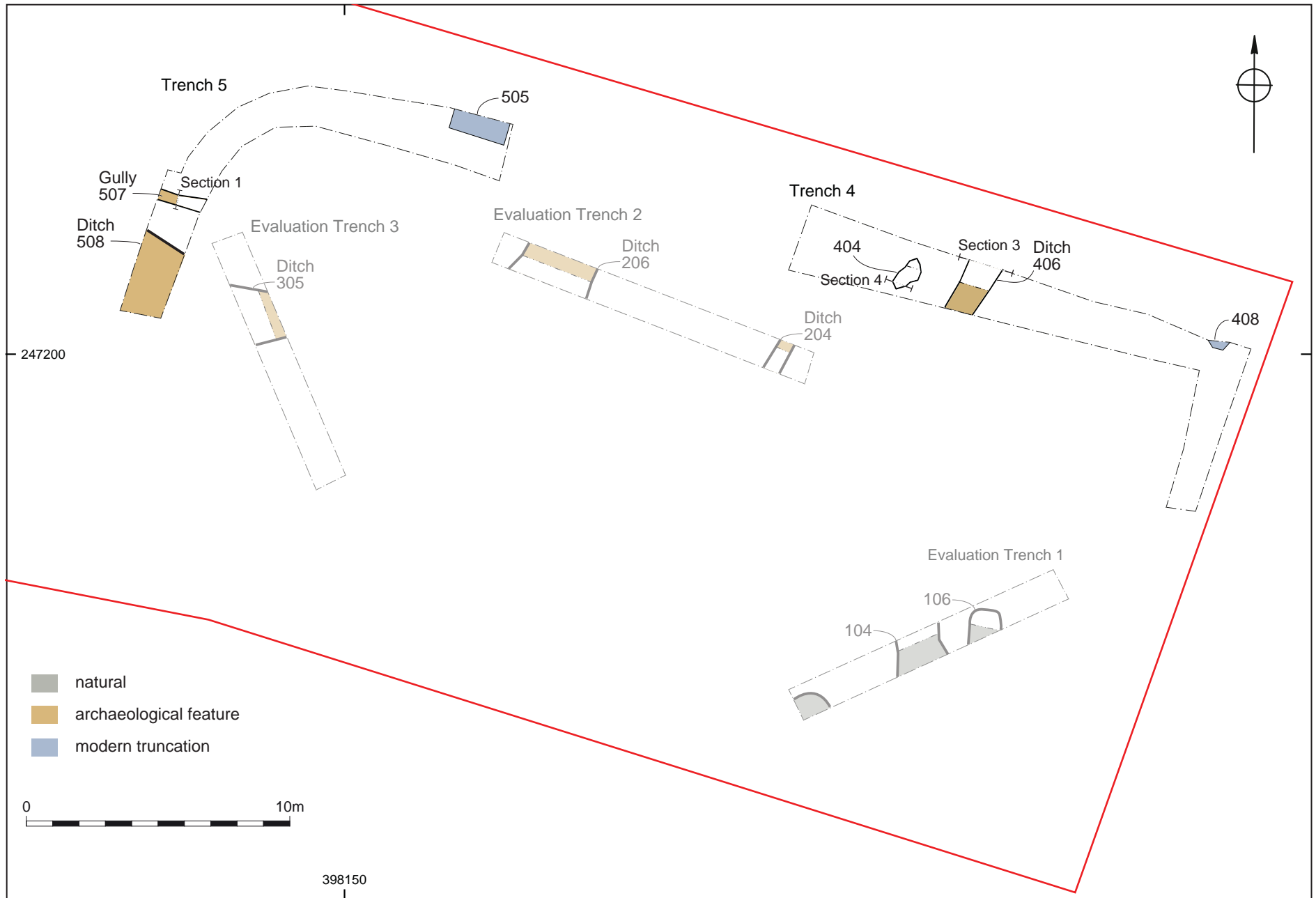
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Figures



Location of the site

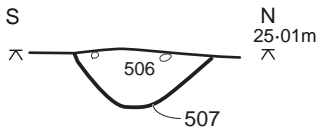
Figure 1



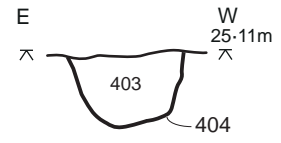
Trench plan

Figure 2

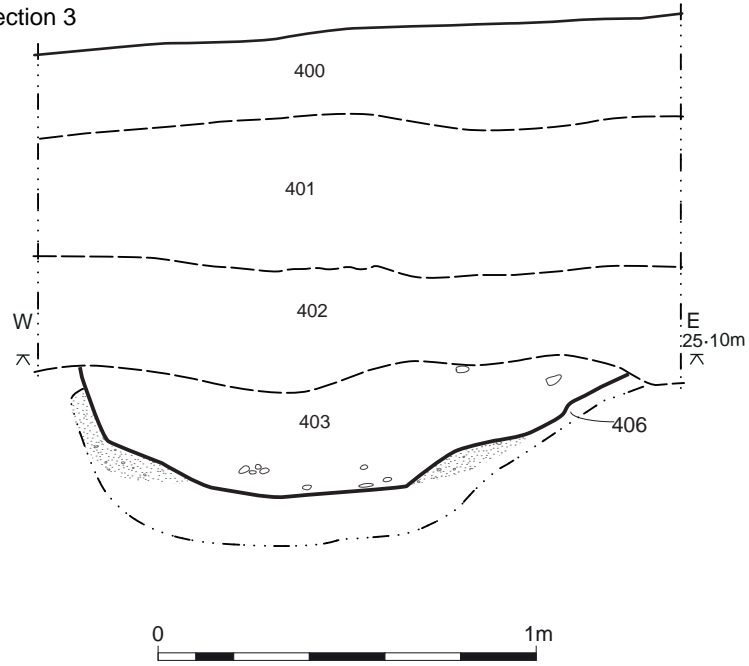
Section 1



Section 4



Section 3



Sections

Figure 3

Plates



Plate 1: Ditch 508 is just visible in the foreground running right to left, see the lighter orange natural in the distance, view north



Plate 2: Ditch 406 in Trench 4, scale 1m, view north-east



Plate 3: Gully 507 in Trench 5, scale 0.3m, view east



Plate 4: Tree throw 404, scale 0.3m, view north



Plate 5: The Palaeolithic flint end-scraper, residual within fill 405 of tree-throw 404

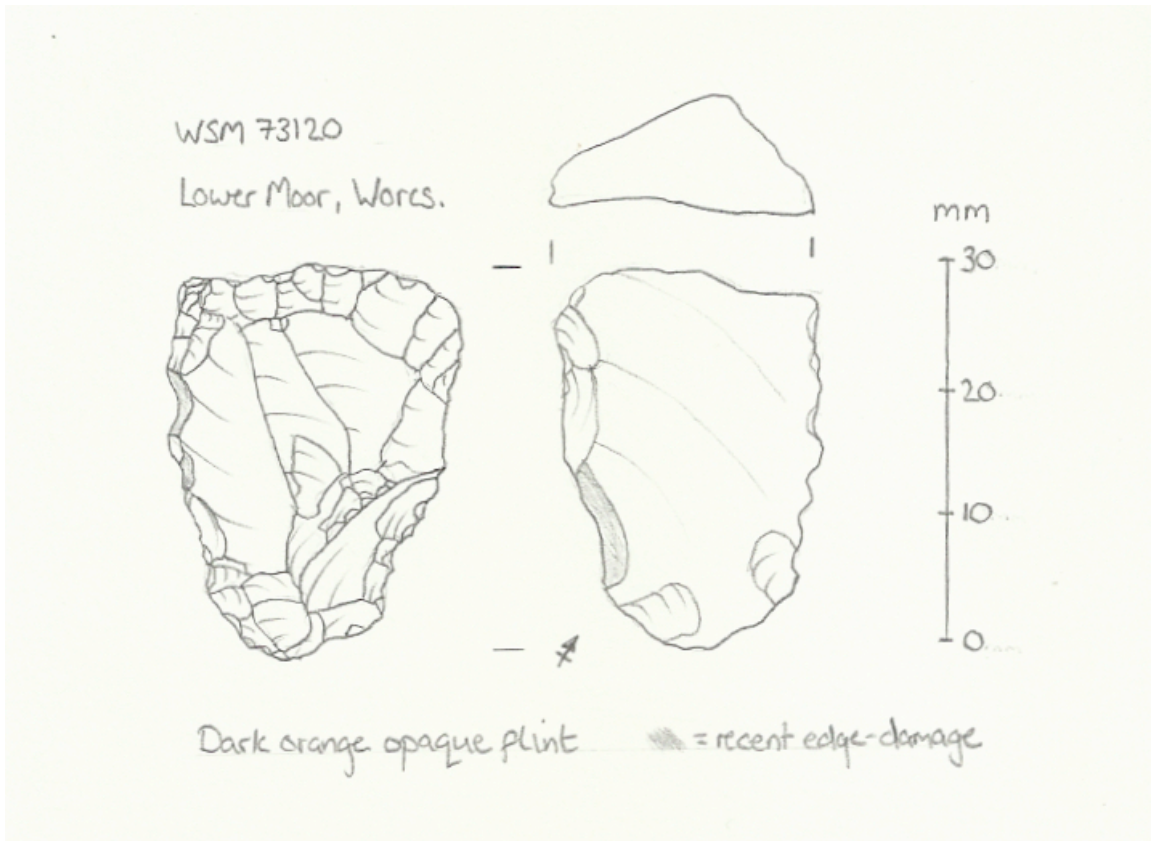


Plate 6: The Palaeolithic flint end-scraper, residual within fill 405 of tree-throw 404 (initial drawing)

Appendix 1: Context information

(Trenches 1-3 were undertaken during the evaluation stage; Cornah 2019)

Trench 4

Length: 25m Width: 2.2m (max) Depth 1.1m (max)

Orientation: E-W/N-S

Context	Feature Type	Context type	Interpretation	Depth	Description/notes
400	Modern overburden	Layer	Overburden from construction work	0.21m	Mid orangey brown clayey sand
401	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.20m	Dark brown clayey sand with sub-rounded pebbles
402	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.37m	Light greyish brown clayey sand with small rounded pebbles
403	Natural	Layer	Natural substrate	>0.3m	Orange and brown sand and gravels
404	Tree throw	Cut	Post-medieval orchard feature, filled by 405	0.3m	Irregular feature with variable sides and base
405	Tree throw	Fill	Fill of tree throw 404	0.3m	Dark greyish brown clayish sand with small and medium pebbles
406	Ditch	Cut	Undated ditch, filled by 407	0.31m	Shallow U-shaped profile
407	Ditch	Fill	Fill of ditch 406	0.31	
408	Pit	Cut	Modern pit	-	Not excavated. Cut subsoil 402
409	Pit	Fill	Fill of pit 408	-	Not excavated. Modern detritus visible

Trench 5

Length: 19m Width: 2.3m (max) Depth: 1.1m (max)

Orientation: E-W/N-S

Context	Feature Type	Context type	Interpretation	Depth	Deposit description
500	Modern overburden	Layer	Overburden from construction work	0.33m	Light grey brown silty sand with frequent building waste and rubble
501	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.25m	Dark grey brown sand silt with sub-rounded pebbles
502	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.30m	Mid brownish orange clayey sand with frequent small rounded pebbles and cobbles

Context	Feature Type	Context type	Interpretation	Depth	Deposit description
503	Natural	Layer	Natural substrate	>0.04m	Bright orange and yellow sand and gravels
504	Pit	Fill	Fill of pit 505	-	Not excavated. Dark grey brown sandy silt.
505	Pit	Cut	Modern pit	-	Not excavated. Cuts subsoil 502
506	Gully	Fill	Fill of gully 507	0.15m	Mid orangey brown sandy silt with frequent pebbles
507	Gully	Cut	Undated gully	0.15m	Shallow U-shaped profile
508	Ditch	Cut	Large post-medieval ditch, same as evaluation ditch 305	-	Not excavated
509	Ditch	Fill	Fill of 508	-	Not excavated. Dark grey brown silty sand with frequent small rounded stones. Same as 303

Appendix 2: Summary of project archive (WSM 73120)

TYPE	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	Ceramic, Lithics
Paper	Context sheet, Drawing, Plan, Report, Section
Digital	GIS, Images raster/digital photography, Survey, Text

*OASIS terminology

Appendix 3: Summary of data for HER

HER event no. WSM 73120

Finds:

Two finds, bot within fill 405 of tree-throw 404:

Pottery

One (25g) sherd of late stoneware (fabric 81.4) with a TPQ date of AD 1850-1950 for the deposit.

Worked flint

One (7g) flint end-scraper. Wholly re-corticated with a deep orange patina, the edges are slightly dulled, suggesting some (though not extensive) fluvial transport. There is a small amount of more recent edge-damage, cutting through the re-cortication. The scraper is small: just 30mm long, 22.3mm wide, and 9.8mm thick, and fashioned on a crude flake. The condition and appearance is typical of artefacts of Palaeolithic date in this region.

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Environmental remains:

None.