

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION ON LAND OFF
DRAYTON ROAD, ABINGDON, OXFORDSHIRE**

On behalf of

CgMs Consulting Ltd

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PREPARED BY	Paul Riccoboni AIFA
EDITED BY	John Moore MIFA
ILLUSTRATION BY	Andrej Čelovský
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ENQUIRES TO	John Moore Heritage Services Hill View Woodperry Road Beckley Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ Tel/Fax 01865 358300 Email: info@jmheritageservices.co.uk
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services conducted an archaeological evaluation in advance of new planning proposals on land off Drayton Rd, Abingdon, Oxfordshire (centred SU 4855 9572). Twenty-two trenches were excavated to the underlying natural geology or uppermost surface of the archaeology. The archaeological evaluation followed a geophysical survey (Stratascan 2012) of the site and confirmed suspected archaeological anomalies in four of the trenches. Other anomalies across the site were tested in the field and considered to be natural. Near the centre of the field, trenches 18 & 22 contained features which comprised most commonly ditches, pits and postholes, which would fit the character of a prehistoric farmstead. The only dating evidence recovered from the evaluation was mid to late Iron Age pottery leading to the suggestion that a small farmstead with simple outlying fields, marked by ditched boundaries, once occupied this site during the mid to late 1st Millennium BC. The site was probably abandoned during the 1st century BC.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location and Geology (Figure 1)

The site is located on land to the east of Drayton Road, Abingdon (SU 4855 9572 centred). The underlying geology is Kimmeridge Clay that borders both the First and Second Gravel Terraces with Head and younger Coombe Deposits to the east (BGS sheet 253). The site is located in an area of archaeological potential and therefore the results of a geophysical survey and this archaeological field evaluation report will need to be submitted with any future planning application as set out in the NPPF.

1.2 Planning Background

Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) has been consulted for this stage of the programme of archaeological work, namely a field evaluation. This was followed by a *Written Scheme of Investigation* which outlined the method by which the work would be carried out in order to achieve the aims of the evaluation.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The general archaeological background of Abingdon has already been explored in a number of individual publications (e.g. Barclay & Halpin 1999 & Allen & Kamush 2008) and should be consulted for a more detailed background to the archaeology of the Abingdon area.

In general, the site lies outside of the centre of the historic town of Abingdon, an area of significant archaeological interest. It is known from previous archaeological investigations that the centre of Abingdon was densely occupied during the Iron Age and later became an important Romano-British settlement with continuous occupation through the medieval period until the present day.

The development site is situated just to the east of the Sutton Wick Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM), an area of complex cropmarks. There is also a double ditched curvilinear enclosure, thought to be a Bronze Age round barrow. Other, possibly associated, cropmarks are also evident to the northeast and east of the site, many of which represent barrow cemeteries and enclosures of unknown prehistoric date.

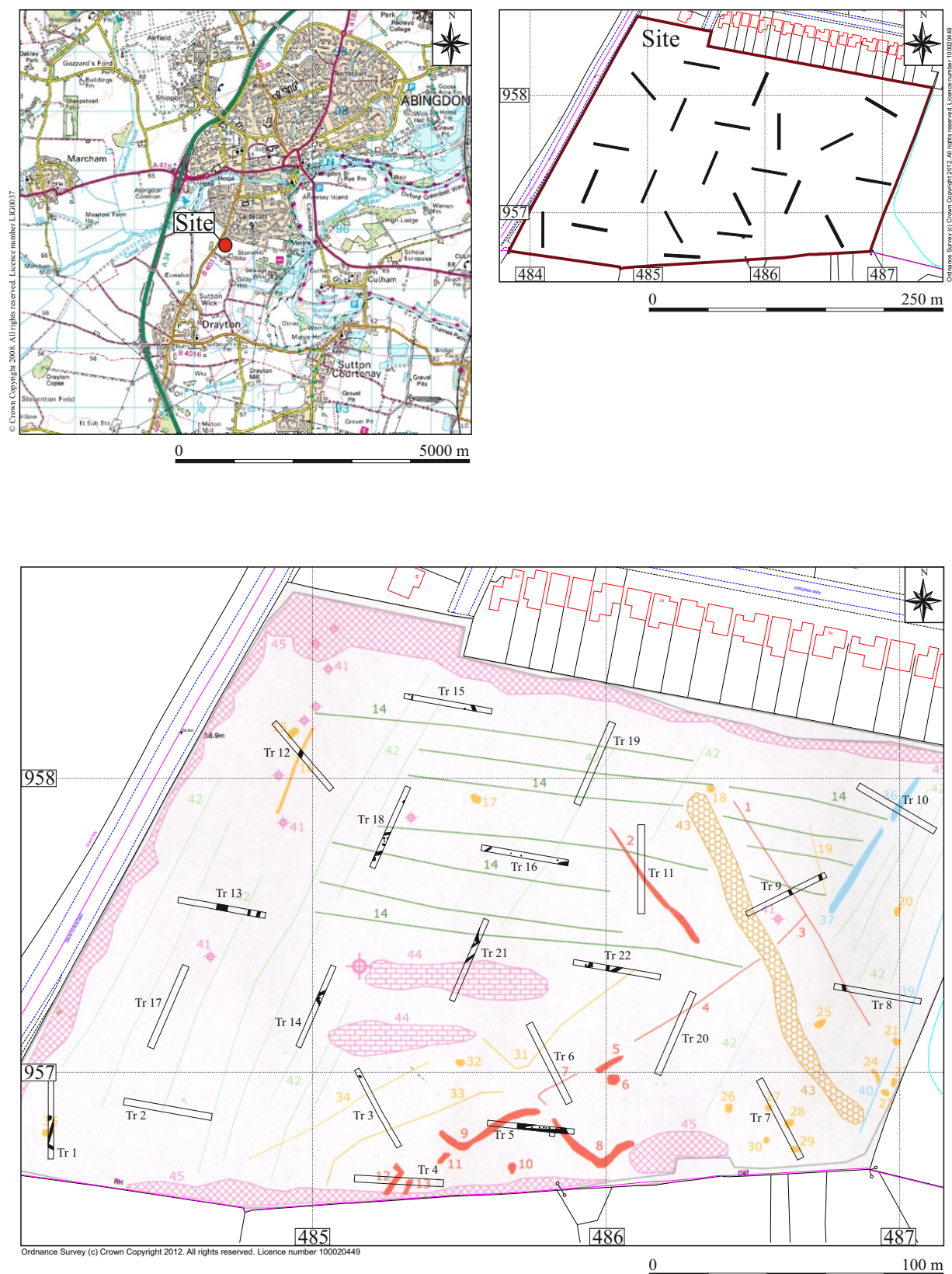


Figure 1. Site location and trench locations showing geophysical anomalies

A geophysical survey has been conducted across the site (Stratascan 2012). This recorded the potential for limited archaeological features particularly in the east of the development area.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

- 2.1 To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
- 2.2 To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- 2.3 To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological features and deposits.
- 2.4 In particular:
 - To establish whether geophysical survey anomalies relate to archaeological features.
 - To establish if features related to the nearby cropmarks extend into the area.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the *Institute for Archaeologists* (2008) and the procedures laid down in MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

3.2 Methodology

The trenching sample required was achieved through the excavation of twenty-two trenches measuring 30m long, locations shown on Figure 1.

The trenches were excavated by a 360° type tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The resultant surfaces were cleaned by hand (where necessary) prior to hand excavation of the archaeological deposits and features.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was produced using colour transparency, black and white and digital cameras. The trenches were backfilled after recording.

No deposits were considered suitable for environmental sampling.

The work was monitored by the archaeological advisor to the Local Planning Authority Hugh Coddington.

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers without brackets indicate features i.e. pit cuts or walls; while numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material.

4.1 Excavation Results (Fig's 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6)

The trenches were set out across the general area of the proposed new development designed to test anomalies indicated by the geophysical survey.

Blank trenches

Trenches 2, 4, 7, 10, 11, 17 19 & 20 did not contain any archaeological features. The lowest deposit noted within the blank trenches consisted of natural gravels and clays, which was reached between varying heights across the proposed development site 51.18mAOD to 57.01mAOD. The natural was overlain by subsoil which varied in thickness from 0.20 in Trench 19 to 0.80m thick in Trench 10. Typically the subsoil was 0.25 or 0.30m thick. The topsoil was generally a consistent 0.30m thick.

4.1.1 Trench 1 (Figure 2)

Trench 1 was excavated to a length of 30m (1.8m wide) and to varying depths of between 0.50m at the northern end and 0.45m at the southern end. Machine excavation ceased at the top of archaeology or the natural.

The stratigraphy within the trench consisted of the following layers (earliest to latest). The natural mottled clay was at the base of the trench (1/09). Overlying this was 0.20m thick mid greyish brown silty clay subsoil (1/02) and dark greyish brown topsoil (1/01) (Fig. 2; S. 1.1).

Ditches; cut into natural (1/09)

Ditch 1/04 (Fig. 2; S. 1.2) was orientated on an approximate east-west direction and was 1m wide and 0.12m deep with shallow concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by dark greyish brown silty clay (1/03) with few sherds of prehistoric pottery and three fragments of animal bone (including sheep teeth). This ditch was sealed by subsoil (1/02).

Ditch 1/06 (Fig. 2; S. 1.3) was orientated on an approximate north-south direction and was 0.80m wide and 0.10m deep with shallow concave sides. It was filled by mid greyish brown silty clay (1/05) with no finds. This ditch was sealed by subsoil (1/02).

Other features; cut into natural (1/09)

An irregular shaped feature 1/08 considered a tree hole was also recorded within the trench. It had sharp irregular sides and was filled by red brown silty clay with frequent charcoal flecks (1/07) but no finds.

4.1.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was excavated to a length of 30m (1.8m wide) and to varying depths of between 0.58m (56.00m AOD) at the south-eastern end and 0.50m (56.08m AOD) at the north-western end. Machine excavation ceased at the top of archaeology or the natural clay.

The stratigraphy within the trench consisted of the following layers (earliest to latest). The natural yellow orange sand and gravels was at the base of the trench (3/03). Overlying this was 0.25-0.40m thick mid orange brown silty clay subsoil (3/02). The latest deposit was dark grey brown silty clay topsoil (3/01) (Fig. 2; S. 3.2).

Cut into natural (3/03)

Pit 3/05 (Fig. 2; S. 3.1) was sub circular in shape, 1.2m wide and 0.16m deep with concave sides and gently rounded base. It was filled by soft mid grey silty clay loam with rare gravels. The pit was sealed by subsoil (3/02).

4.1.5 Trench 5

Trench 5 was excavated to a length of 30m (1.8m wide) and to varying depths of between 0.40m at the eastern end and 0.36m at the western end. Machine excavation ceased at the top of the archaeology or natural clay.

The stratigraphy within the trench consisted of the following layers (earliest to latest). The natural light to mid brown orange fine gravel was at the base of the trench (5/03). Overlying this was 0.15m thick mid greyish brown silty clay subsoil (5/02). The latest deposit was mid brown grey silty clay topsoil (5/01).

Ditches; cut into natural (5/03)

Ditch 5/04 (Fig. 2; S. 5.1) was orientated on an approximate north-west south-east direction and was 1.80m wide and 0.38m deep with concave sides and rounded base. It was filled by mid reddish brown silty clay (5/05) with no finds. It was later than ditch 5/18.

Possible ditch 5/18 (Fig. 2; S. 5.2) was 1m wide and 0.11m deep orientated on an approximate east-west direction. The trench was extended to fully uncover the width of the ditch. It had shallow concave sides and was 0.11m deep. It was filled by mid brown sandy silt (5/19) with no finds. It was not seen either side of ditches 5/20 and 5/04.

Possible ditch 5/22 (Fig. 2; S. 5.4) was 0.66m wide and 0.22m deep orientated on a south-west north-east direction and had fairly steep concave sides with a rounded base. It was filled by mid brown sandy silt with rare gravel inclusions (5/23) and no finds. It was not seen either side of ditches 5/20 and 5/04.

Ditch 5/20 (Fig. 2; S. 5.3) was 1.80m wide and 0.08m deep orientated on a north-south alignment and had very shallow sides and an almost flat base. It was filled by mid brown sandy silt with no finds (5/21). The ditches were all sealed by subsoil (5/02). It was later than Ditches 5/18 and 5/22.

Postholes; cut into natural (5/03)

Posthole 5/06 (Fig. 2; S. 5.5) was sub circular in shape 0.17m wide and 0.11m deep with shallow concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by grey brown sandy silt with no finds (5/07).

Posthole 5/08 (Fig. 2; S. 5.6) was sub circular in shape 0.27m wide and 0.06m deep with shallow concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by grey brown sandy silt with no finds (5/09).

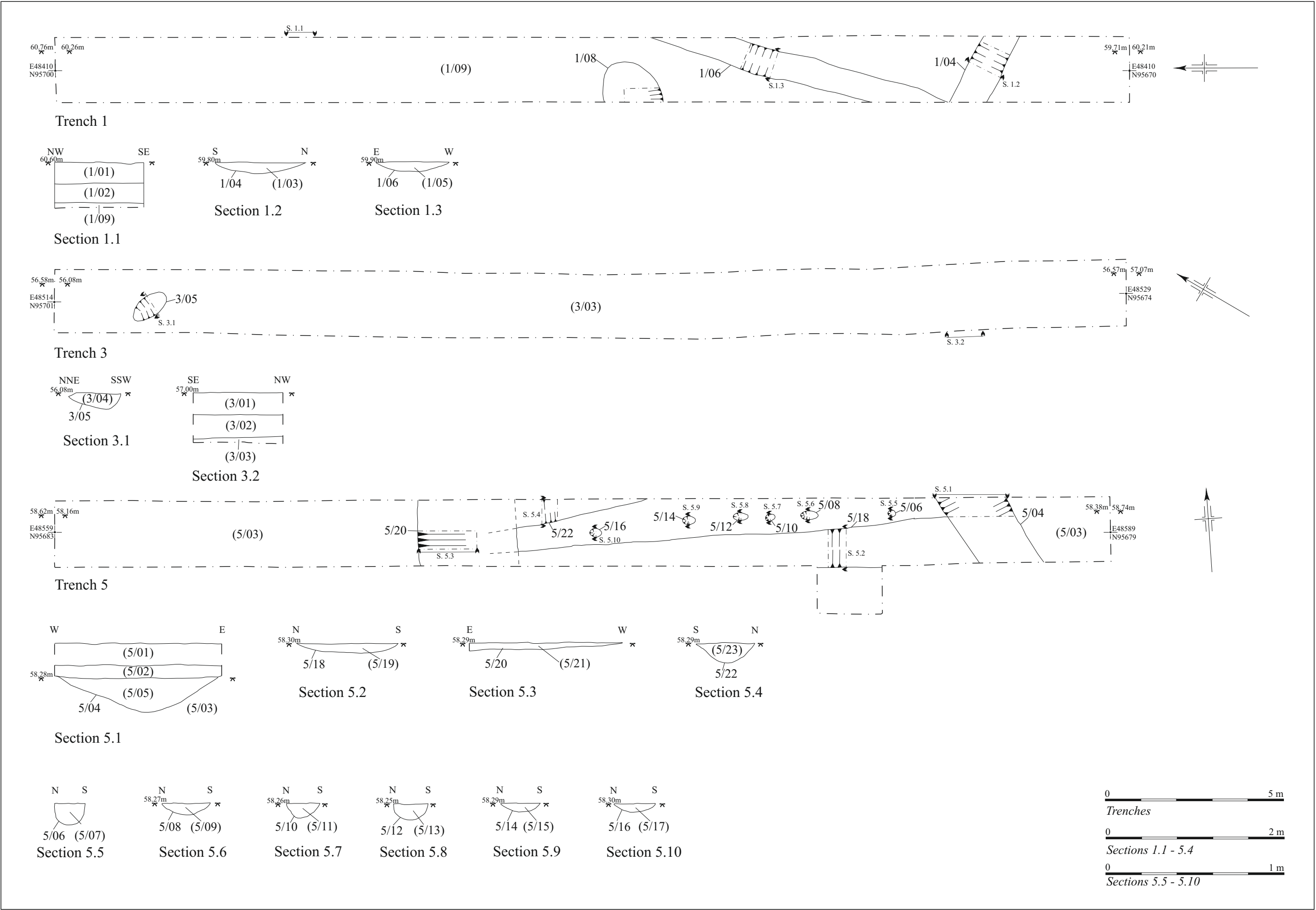


Figure 2. Trenches 1, 3 and 5 and Sections 1.1 - 5.10

Posthole 5/10 (Fig. 2; S. 5.7) was sub circular in shape 0.25m wide and 0.08m deep with shallow concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by grey brown sandy silt with no finds (5/11).

Posthole 5/12 (Fig. 2; S. 5.8) was sub circular in shape 0.19m wide and 0.08m deep with shallow concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by grey brown sandy silt with no finds (5/13).

Posthole 5/14 (Fig. 2; S. 5.9) was sub circular in shape 0.22m wide and 0.05m deep with shallow concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by grey brown sandy silt with no finds (5/15).

Posthole 5/16 (Fig. 2; S. 5.10) was sub circular in shape 0.23m wide and 0.04m deep with shallow concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by grey brown sandy silt with no finds (5/17).

All of the postholes were sealed by subsoil (5/02).

4.1.8 Trench 8 (Figure 3)

Trench 8 was excavated to a length of 30m (1.8m wide) and to varying depths of between 0.90m at the eastern end and 0.80m at the western end. Machine excavation ceased at the top of the natural clay.

The stratigraphy within the trench consisted of the following layers (earliest to latest). The natural light orange sandy gravel was seen at the base of the trench (8/03). Overlying this was 0.40m thick orange brown silty loam subsoil (8/02). The latest deposit was 0.30m thick dark brown clay loam topsoil (8/01).

Ditches; cut into natural (8/03)

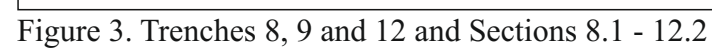
Ditch 8/06 (Fig. 3; S. 8.1) was orientated on an approximate north-east south-west direction and was 0.60m wide by 0.50m deep. It had sharp concave sides forming a roughly flat base. The ditch was filled by mid grey brown sandy loam (8/05) with charcoal, gravel and two struck flint inclusions and one sherd of late prehistoric pottery. This ditch matched a positive anomaly identified on the geophysical survey and was sealed by subsoil (8/02).

A post-medieval field drain 8/08 was also identified within the trench, filled by dark brown sandy silt (8/07) with tile and brick inclusions spot dated to the medieval period onwards.

4.1.9 Trench 9

Trench 9 was excavated to a length of 30m (1.8m wide) and to varying depths of between 0.70m at the north-eastern end and 0.90m at the south-western end. Machine excavation ceased at the top of archaeology or natural clay.

The stratigraphy within the trench consisted of the following layers (earliest to latest). The natural mid brown orange sandy silt was seen at the base of the trench (9/03). Overlying this was 0.50-0.60m thick mid grey brown silty loam subsoil (9/02). The latest deposit was 0.25m thick dark brown clay loam topsoil (9/01).



Ditches; cut into natural (9/03)

Ditch 9/04 (Fig. 3; S. 9.1) was orientated on a north-west south-east alignment and was 0.94m wide and 0.32m deep. The ditch had concave sides and a rounded base and was filled by mid grey brown sandy silt (9/05) with occasional charcoal fragment and pottery sherds dated to the late prehistoric period.

Ditch 9/06 (Fig. 3; S. 9.2) was orientated on a similar north-west south-east alignment and was 0.94m wide and 0.48m deep with sharp concave sides forming a rounded base. The ditch was filled by mid grey sandy silt and occasional charcoal flecks (9/07). This ditch proved the anomaly on the geophysical survey to be real archaeology. Both ditches were sealed by subsoil (9/02).

4.1.12 Trench 12

Trench 12 was excavated to a length of 30m (1.8m wide) and to varying depths of between 0.45m at the northern end and 0.40m at the southern end. Machine excavation ceased at the top of archaeology or natural clay.

The stratigraphy within the trench consisted of the following layers (earliest to latest). The natural mid brown orange sandy silt was seen at the base of the trench (12/03). Overlying this was 0.25m thick orange brown sandy loam subsoil (12/02). The latest deposit was 0.25m thick dark brown silty clay topsoil (12/01) (Fig. 3; S. 12.1).

Ditch; cut into natural (12/03)

Ditch 12/05 (Fig. 3; S. 12.2) was orientated on an approximate north-south direction 1.3m wide and 0.40m deep and had steep concave sides and a rounded base. It was filled by dark grey brown silty clay with no finds. The profile suggests that this was recut but no difference in the fill was apparent. This ditch matched a positive anomaly identified on the geophysical survey and was sealed by subsoil (12/02).

4.1.13 Trench 13 (Figure 4)

Trench 13 was excavated to a length of 30m (1.8m wide) and to varying depths of between 0.45m at the eastern end and 0.40m at the western end. Machine excavation ceased at the top of archaeology or natural clay.

The stratigraphy within the trench consisted of the following layers (earliest to latest). The natural mid brown orange sandy silt was seen at the base of the trench (13/05). Overlying this was 0.25m thick orange brown sandy loam subsoil (13/02). The latest deposit was 0.20m thick dark brown silty clay topsoil (13/01).

Ditches; cut into natural (13/05)

Ditch 13/04 (Fig. 4; S. 13.1) was orientated on an approximate north-south direction and was 1m wide and 0.20m deep with gently sloping concave sides. It was filled by compact dark brownish grey silty clay (13/03). This ditch was sealed by subsoil (13/02).

Ditch 13/07 (Fig. 4; S. 13.2) was orientated on a similar alignment to 13/04 and was 0.71m wide and 0.40m deep with steep concave sides and a v-shaped base. The ditch was filled by compact grey brown silty clay (13/06). This ditch was sealed by subsoil (13/02).

A pebble surface (13/08) was recorded within the trench 3.7m wide and 0.10m thick. It was orientated on an approximate north-east south-west direction, but was not seen in Trenches 17 & 2. Gully 13/10 was seen on the edge of the pebble surface and was c. 0.50m wide and 0.20m deep with concave sides. It was filled by grey silty clay (13/09) with no finds. The gully was covered by the pebble spread (13/08). This pebble surface was sealed by subsoil (13/02).

4.1.13 Trench 14

Trench 14 was excavated to a length of 30m (1.8m wide) and to varying depths of between 0.40m at the northern end and 0.45m at the southern end. Machine excavation ceased at the top of archaeology or natural clay.

The stratigraphy within the trench consisted of the following layers (earliest to latest). The natural mid brown orange sandy silt was seen at the base of the trench (14/09). Overlying this was 0.12m thick orange brown sandy loam subsoil (14/02). The latest deposit was 0.30m thick dark brown silty clay topsoil (14/01) (Fig. 4; S. 14.1).

Ditch; cut into natural (14/09)

Ditch 14/04 (Fig. 4; Section 14.2) was orientated on a north-east south-west direction 0.95m wide and 0.20m deep with concave sides and a gently rounded base. The ditch was filled by dark blackish grey silty clay (14/03) with rare gravel inclusions but no finds.

Ditch 14/08 (Fig. 4; Section 14.4) was orientated on a north-west south-east direction 0.80m wide and 0.10m deep with concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by friable dark brownish grey silty clay (14/07) with no finds. The ditches were sealed by subsoil (14/02).

Postholes; cut into natural (14/09)

Posthole 14/11 (Fig. 4; Section 14.3) was sub circular in shape 0.25m wide and 0.10m deep with gradually curving concave sides and a rounded base. It was filled by light-mid brownish grey silty clay with frequent gravels (14/10) and no finds.

Posthole 14/06 (Fig. 4; Section 14.3) was cut through (14/10) and was sub circular in shape 0.50m wide and 0.22m deep and had sharp concave sides and a rounded base. It was filled by dark blackish grey silty clay (14/05) with no finds. The postholes were sealed by subsoil (14/02).

4.1.15 Trench 15

Trench 15 was excavated to a length of 30m (1.8m wide) and to varying depths of between 0.45m at the eastern end and 0.45m at the western end. Machine excavation ceased at the top of archaeology or natural clay.

The stratigraphy within the trench consisted of the following layers (earliest to latest). The natural mid brown orange sandy silt was seen at the base of the trench (15/03). Overlying this was 0.24m thick orange brown sandy loam subsoil (15/02). The latest deposit was 0.21m thick dark brown silty clay topsoil (15/01) (Fig 4; S. 15.1).

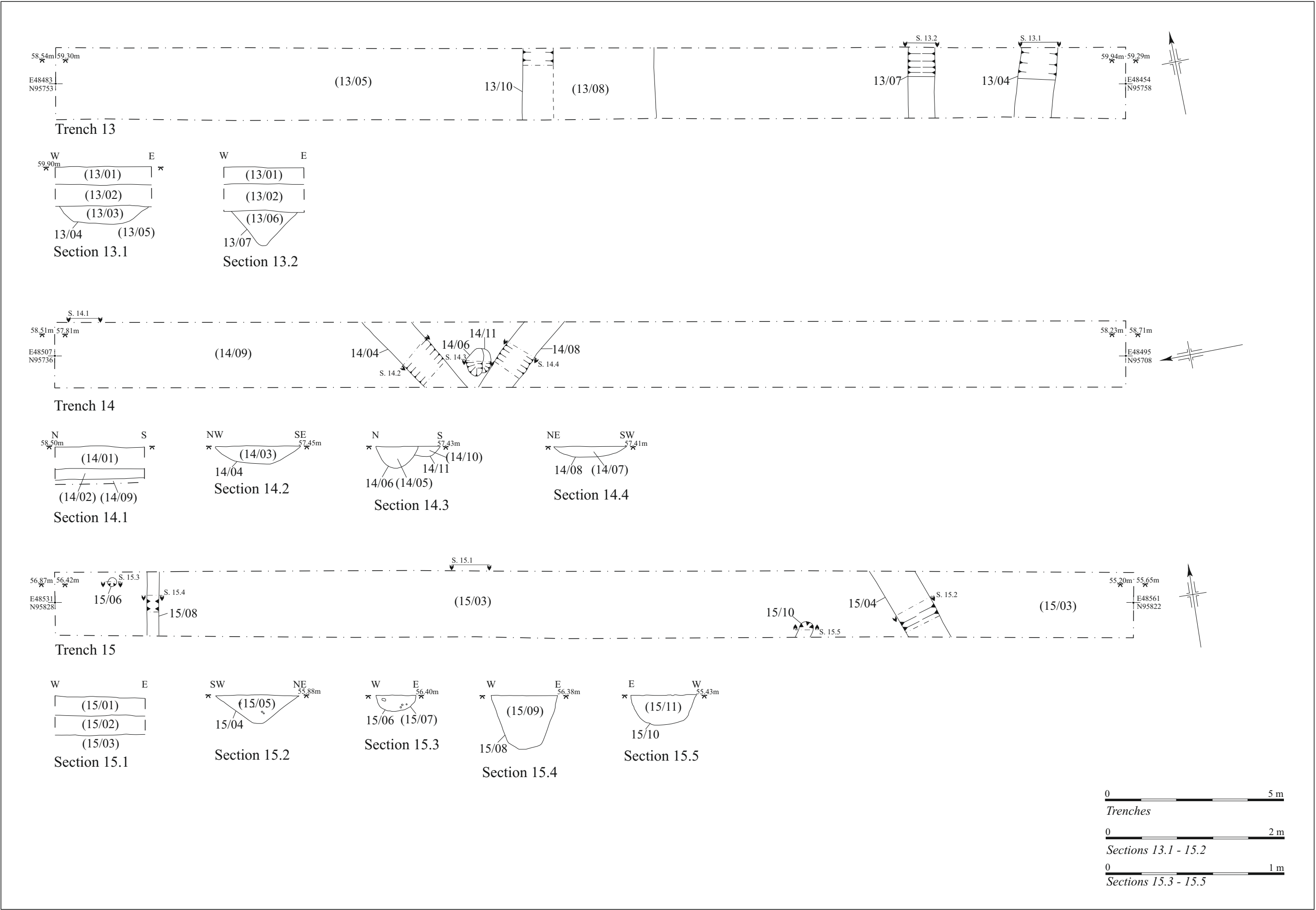


Figure 4. Trenches 13, 14 and 15 and Sections 13.1 - 15.15

Ditches; cut into natural (15/03)

Ditch 15/04 (Fig 4; S. 15.2) was orientated on a north-west south-east direction 0.93m wide and 0.32m deep with sharp concave sides and a rounded base, forming an almost V-shape. It was filled by light yellow brown silty clay with rare gravels (15/05) with no finds.

Gully 15/08 (Fig 4; S. 15.4) was orientated on a north south direction 0.37m wide and 0.30m deep with sharp almost vertical sides with a u-shaped profile. It was filled by firm mid grey sandy silt (15/09) with no finds. The ditch and gully were sealed by subsoil (15/02).

Postholes; cut into natural (15/03)

Posthole 15/06 (Fig. 4; S. 15.3) was sub circular in shape 0.22m wide and 0.09m deep with gradually curving concave sides and a rounded base. It was filled by mid grey silty clay with frequent gravels (15/07) and no finds.

Posthole 15/10 (Fig. 4; S. 15.5) was sub circular in shape 0.37m wide and 0.17m deep with gradually curving concave sides and a rounded base. It was filled by mid grey silty clay with frequent gravels (15/11) and no finds.

The postholes were sealed by subsoil (15/02).

4.1.16 Trench 16 (Figure 5)

Trench 16 was excavated to a length of 30m (1.8m wide) and to varying depths of between 0.50m at the eastern end and 0.45m at the western end. Machine excavation ceased at the top of archaeology or natural clay.

The stratigraphy within the trench consisted of the following layers (earliest to latest). The natural mid orange clay with grey lenses was seen at the base of the trench (16/13). Overlying this was 0.18m thick orange brown sandy loam subsoil (16/02). The latest deposit was 0.38m thick dark brown silty clay topsoil (16/01) (Fig. 5; S. 16.1).

Ditches; cut into natural (16/13)

Ditch 16/04 (Fig. 5; S. 16.2) was orientated on a north-east south-west direction 0.84m wide and 0.20m deep with concave sides and gently rounded base. It was filled by light grey orange silty clay (16/04) with no finds. It appeared to be slightly curving and was probably a terminal.

Ditch section 16/12 (Fig. 5; S. 16.6) was a terminal orientated on a north-east south-west direction 0.60m wide and 0.11m deep with sharp concave sides and a flat base. It was filled by dark brown grey silty clay (16/11) with no finds.

The ditches were covered by subsoil (16/02).

Postholes; cut into natural (16/13)

Postholes 16/06 (Fig. 5; S. 16.3) was oval in shape 0.30m wide and 0.05m deep with concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by compact grey black silty clay (16/05) with no finds.

Posthole 16/08 (Fig. 5; S. 16.4) was oval in shape 0.38m wide and 0.11m deep with concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by compact blackish grey silty clay with shale

fragments (16/07) and no finds.

Posthole 16/10 (Fig. 5; S. 16.5) was oval in shape 0.25m wide and 0.02m deep with very shallow concave sides and a flattish base. It was filled by compact black grey silty clay (16/09) with no finds.

The postholes may have formed a fence line and were all sealed by subsoil (16/02).

4.1.18 Trench 18

Trench 18 was excavated to a length of 30m (1.8m wide) and to varying depths of between 0.45m at the northern end and 0.45m at the southern end. Machine excavation ceased at the top of archaeology or natural clay.

The stratigraphy within the trench consisted of the following layers (earliest to latest). The natural light yellow orange sand and gravel with patches of grey clay (18/03) was seen at the base of the trench. Overlying this was 0.18-0.20m thick mid brown sandy loam subsoil (18/02). The latest deposit was 0.23-0.25m thick dark brown silty clay topsoil (18/01).

Ditches; cut into natural (18/03)

Ditch 18/07 (Fig. 5; S. 18.2) was orientated on an east west alignment and had an almost vertical north-eastern side and convex south-western side with rounded base. It was filled by dark grey silty clay loam (18/06) with no finds.

Ditch 18/16 (Fig 5; S. 18.7) was orientated on an east west alignment 0.70m wide and 0.18m deep with concave sides and a rounded base. It was filled by mid grey brown silty clay (18/17) with no finds.

All the ditches were sealed by subsoil (18/02).

Pits; cut into natural (18/03)

Pit 18/04 (Fig. 5; S. 18.1) was sub circular in shape 1.21m wide and 0.34m deep with sharp concave sides and a rounded base. It was filled by dark grey silty clay (18/05) with no finds.

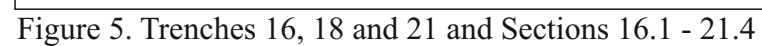
Pit 18/08 (Fig. 5; S. 18.3) was sub oval in shape 1.05m wide and 0.09m deep with shallow gradually curving concave sides forming a flattish base. It was filled by dark grey silty clay (18/09) with no finds.

Pit 18/12 (Fig. 5; S. 18.5) was sub circular in shape 0.61m wide and 0.12m deep with shallow concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by dark grey silty clay (18/13) with no finds.

Pit 18/14 (Fig. 5; S. 18.6) was sub circular in shape 0.60m wide and 0.22m deep with concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by dark grey silty clay (18/15) with no finds.

Pit 18/18 (Fig. 5; S. 18.8) was sub circular in shape 0.85m wide and 0.40m deep with concave sides and rounded base. It was filled by dark grey silty clay (18/19) with no finds.

All the pits were sealed by subsoil (18/02).



Posthole; cut into natural (18/03)

Posthole 18/10 (Fig. 5; S. 18.4) was sub-circular in shape 0.31m wide and 0.07m deep with concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by dark grey silty clay with no finds (18/11). This feature was sealed by (18/02).

4.1.21 Trench 21

Trench 21 was excavated to a length of 30m (1.8m wide) and to varying depths of between 0.55m at the north-eastern end and 0.50m at the south-western end. Machine excavation ceased at the top of archaeology or natural clay.

The stratigraphy within the trench consisted of the following layers (earliest to latest). The natural light orange gravels with patches of grey clay (21/03) was seen at the base of the trench. Overlying this was 0.30m thick mid brown sandy loam subsoil (21/02). The latest deposit was 0.25m thick dark brown silty clay topsoil (21/01).

Gullies/ditch; cut into natural (21/03)

Gully 21/05 (Fig. 5; S. 21.4) was orientated north-east south-west 0.40m wide and 0.25m deep with concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by soft brown grey silty clay with no finds (21/04).

Gully 21/07 (Fig. 5; S. 21.3) was orientated north-east south-west 0.40m wide and 0.10m deep with concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by soft brown grey silty clay with no finds (21/06).

Ditch 21/09 (Fig. 5; S. 21.2) was orientated north-west south-east 0.70m wide and 0.20m deep with concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by soft mid grey silty clay with two sherds of mid to late Iron Age pottery (21/10).

All of the features were sealed by subsoil (21/02).

4.1.22 Trench 22 (Figure 6)

Trench 22 was excavated to a length of 30m (1.8m wide) and to varying depths of between 0.30m at the eastern end and 0.30m at the western end. Machine excavation ceased at the top of archaeology or natural clay.

The stratigraphy within the trench consisted of the following layers (earliest to latest). The natural light brownish yellow gravels (22/02) were seen at the base of the trench. Overlying this was 0.30m thick dark brown silty clay topsoil (21/01).

Ditches; cut into natural (22/02)

Ditch 22/14 (Fig. 6; S. 22.5) was orientated north-east south-west 1.15m wide and 0.30m deep with sharp concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by firm dark brownish grey silty clay (22/13) with three sherds of mid-late Iron Age pottery and two animal bones from unidentifiable mammal.

Ditch 22/12 (Fig. 6; S. 22.4) was orientated north-south 0.80m wide and 0.20m deep with sharp concave sides and a rounded base. It was filled by firm dark brownish grey silty clay with no finds (22/11).

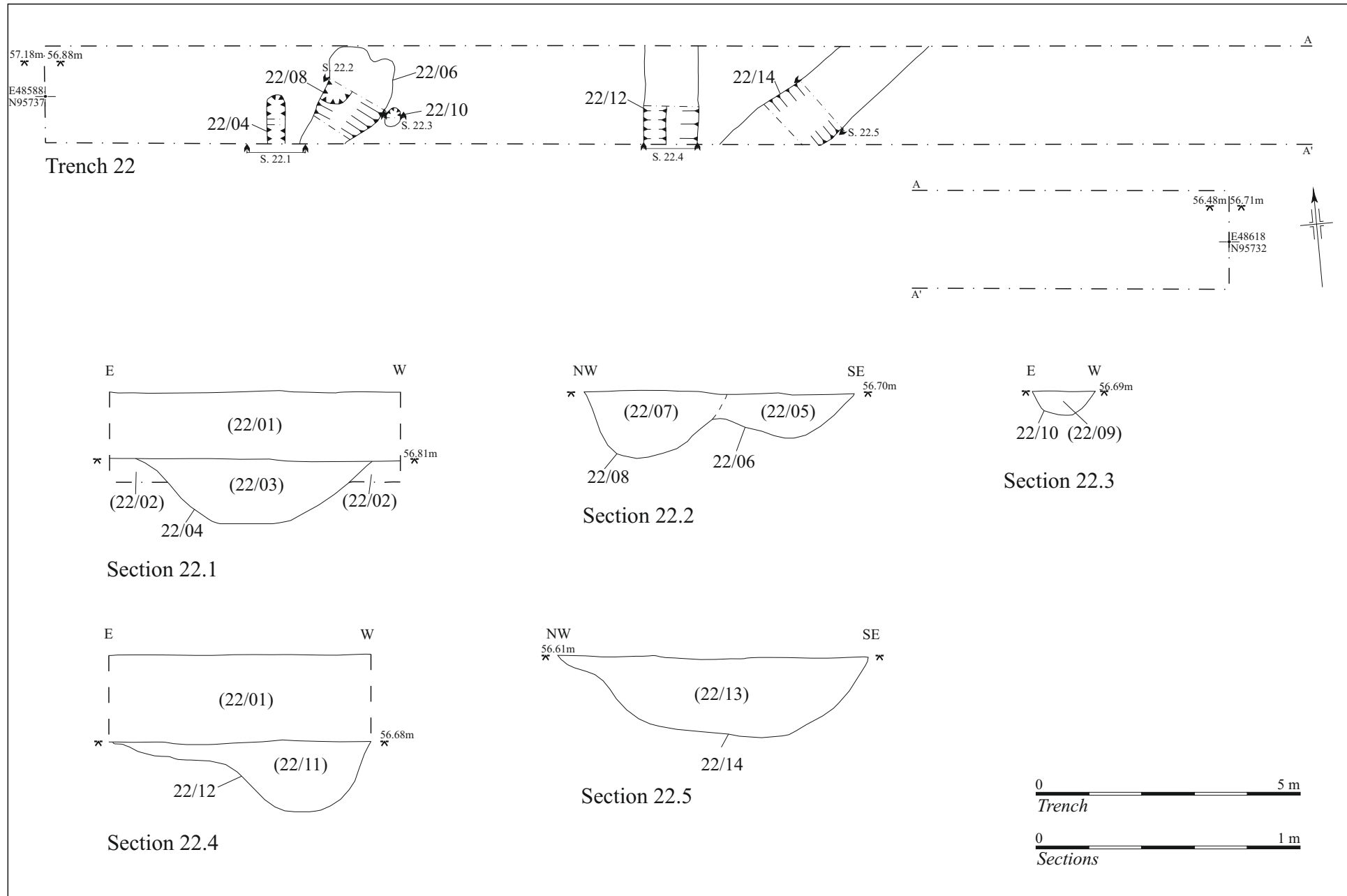


Figure 6. Trench 22 and Sections 22.1 - 22.5

Gully section 22/04 (Fig. 6; S. 22.1) was a terminal and was 0.64m wide and 0.20m deep with sharp concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by firm mid greyish brown silty clay with no finds.

Postholes; cut into natural (22/02)

Posthole 22/08 (Fig. 6; S. 22.2) was sub circular in shape 0.55m wide and 0.24m deep with concave sides and a rounded base. It was filled by dark blue grey silty clay with no finds (22/07).

Posthole/pit 22/06 (Fig. 6; S. 22.2) was irregular in shape 0.70m wide and 0.28m deep with sharp concave sides and rounded base. It was filled by dark blue grey silty clay (22/05) with no finds. It was cut by posthole 22/08.

Posthole 22/10 (Fig. 6; S. 22.3) was sub circular in shape 0.22m wide and 0.08m deep with concave sides and a rounded base. It was filled by dark grey brown silty clay with occasional gravels but no finds (22/09).

All of the above features were sealed by topsoil (22/01).

4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The excavation of the trenches took place during late summer, but in generally favourable weather conditions. A confidence rating is high that the best possible results were achieved.

5. THE FINDS

5.1 The Pottery by Francis Raymond

Introduction

A small assemblage of late prehistoric pottery likely to be of middle to late Iron Age date came from six of the trenches (Table 1). The ditch in Trench 8 additionally produced a single rim sherd from a post-medieval red earthenware dish with an all-over clear internal glaze (Table 1, 8/07). The assessment has been confined to a rapid appraisal of the pottery, which has been quantified by context and scanned to gain an impression of its date and character.

Context	Shd. No.	Shd. Wt. (g.)	EVE	Date	Condition
1/03	7	48	4	Middle to late Iron Age	Moderate to light abrasion
7/02	1	23	1	Middle to late Iron Age	Moderate abrasion
8/05	1	1	1	Late prehistoric	Fresh
8/07	1	19	1	Post-medieval	Light abrasion
9/05	1	12	1	Middle to late Iron Age	Moderate abrasion
21/10	2	27	1	Middle to late Iron Age	Heavily abraded
22/13	3	11	3	Middle to late Iron Age	Fresh to light abrasion
TOTALS	16	141	12		

Table 1: Pottery catalogue

The Prehistoric Pottery

The assemblage is composed of undecorated wall or base fragments, which provide no evidence of vessel form. Ten of the sherds have oxidised exteriors, while the rest are unoxidised. All but one are made from relatively hard and predominantly sandy fabrics, one

of which is glauconitic. Some additionally have sparse voids characteristic of shell, calcareous and organic material, others include sparse iron rich clay pellets, iron ore and/or quartzite. The one exception from Trench 8 has been tempered with moderate quantities of mostly fine burnt flint. All of the inclusions would have been available locally, and there is no evidence that any of the sherds are from wheel thrown or wheel finished vessels.

It is only possible to tentatively date the group since the fabrics were used throughout the Iron Age. More certain phasing is contingent on the recovery of larger assemblages allowing for an assessment of the relative proportions of the principal wares.

A date during the middle to late Iron Age, when sandy fabrics were predominant is most likely. The case for this is strengthened by the absence of the shelly wares favoured in the area during the early Iron Age. Occasional flint tempered vessels were produced during the middle to late Iron Age and it is possible that the sherd from Trench 8 is also of this period, although a late Bronze Age to early Iron Age date is conceivable. The absence of Belgic wares from the assemblage indicates a cessation of activity by the end of the first century BC.

5.2 The Animal Bone *by Paul Riccoboni*

A small assemblage of animal bone was collected from the excavations (Table 2) which was consistent with the types identified from previously excavated examples across the town (Wilson & Wheeler 1975). The most common identified animals were cow and sheep. All animal bones have been retained at this stage for possible inclusion in the site archive.

Context Number	Number of fragments	Weight (g)
1/03	3	1.7
22/13	2	3.1
13/08	21	16

Table 2; Quantification of retrieved animal bone

6 DISCUSSION

The archaeological evaluation was successful in determining the archaeological potential of the site and the character of any below ground features and deposits. The excavations enabled an assessment of the depth, quality and nature of the features encountered. Furrows and land drains were often not recorded within the trenches, although they were clearly visible. The furrows were shown on the geophysical survey and they matched well with the furrows seen in the trenches, especially Trenches 19 and 21. Other anomalies shown on the geophysical survey in Trenches 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11 & 20 once investigated and tested were considered to be natural. Within trench 4 the positive anomalies were probably large tree roots.

Within Trenches 1, 12, 9 & 8 the possible and probable geophysical anomalies were proven to be positive archaeological features. In Trenches 13, 14, 18, 15, 16, 21, & 22 the discovered archaeological features were not apparent on the geophysical survey.

The archaeological features were most dense near the centre of the field around Trenches 22, 21, 18 & 16. The dating evidence was sparse but had a consistent mid to late Iron Age date across the site. The field was probably occupied during the 1st millennium BC and if a dwelling existed it would have been probably sited within this general area. The features such as pits, postholes, gullies and ditches fit the typical type expected at a prehistoric settlement.

The pits although undated were probably used for storage and general waste from the farm. The postholes would have formed fence lines and other structures common on prehistoric farmstead sites of this period. The line of postholes between the two east-west possible ditches within Trench 5 are of interest perhaps forming a fence line.

The bone evidence is insufficient to show anything definite, though it is likely the area was a pastoral economy based mostly on cattle. An environmental sampling strategy would be important to address during any further archaeological investigations across the site. This would help to establish whether the farmstead was used predominately for pasture or practiced a mixed economy. The ditches seen in Trenches 9, 8, 12 & 13 were deep enough to enclose grazing cattle. The ditches would have likely had a bank on one side, perhaps with a hedgerow or fence line on the top of the bank to further enclose the cattle and keep them safe. There was no evidence for banks adjacent to the ditches at the site, as they have been ploughed away.

The ditches did not display any evidence of being re-cut (although a re-cut is suggested by the profile), but often two ditches were found close together within a trench. This would indicate that the boundaries may have been re-established on at least one occasion, perhaps by a returning community who used the site on a seasonal basis, but for a only a relatively short time period, possibly over one or two generations.

The length of life of the settlement and its permanency are uncertain, although its position on a slightly higher part of the relatively dry gravel terrace may reflect a deliberate attempt to be clear of winter flooding. Today the site lies outside of the area at risk even from extreme flooding (maps.environment.agency.gov.uk), but water levels may have been higher during prehistory. If the site was not on a regular flood plain it may mean that the site was permanently occupied. On permanently occupied prehistoric sites we would expect to see re-cut ditches, but perhaps if the ditches were cleaned out regularly and carefully, such activity would leave little archaeological trace. The Scheduled Ancient earthworks to the west of the site seem to indicate a permanent settlement due to the density of the cropmarks. It may be possible that due to worsening flooding the settlement was moved to the slightly higher ground to the west, but this site has never been excavated to prove this theory.

The possible farmstead at this site may be comparable to the farmsteads seen from previous excavations around Abingdon such as at the Ashville Trading Estate (Parington 1978) and Corporation Farm to the east (Barclay *et al* 2003), but further archaeological excavation would be needed at the site to make any such comparisons.

The varying depths of subsoil across the site is worthy of note as this perhaps indicates alluvial flooding and silting of low lying areas, in particular at across the north-east and south-west of the site. However, the ground slopes from 57.29m OD to 52.42m OD and the depth of subsoil within trenches 8, 9 & 10 may have been from a result of silting from colluvial rather than alluvial processes.

Many of the archaeological features did not contain any dating evidence and most pits especially from trench 18 were empty. The fills of the pits were however, dark and consisted of an organic rich silty clay indicating they may have been used to contain perishable materials which decayed leaving an organic soil. The sparsity of datable finds on prehistoric sites of this type is common and may simply reflect a small community with few possessions and effective rubbish removal during the occupation of the farm.

A confidence rating is high that the best possible results were achieved.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper Record

The project brief	The project report
Written Scheme of Investigation	The primary site records
The drawn records	

Physical record

The pottery
The flint
The animal bone

The archive is currently maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service under accession number 2012.115

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Plate 1; Trench 22 looking east (1m scales)



Plate 2; Trench 18 looking north



Plate 4; Feature 18/18 (1m scale)



Plate 3; Trench 14 looking south (1m scales)



APPENDIX 1; Evaluation Trench Results Summary.

Trench		Easting/Northing		Easting/Northing	Features	Depth of topsoil (m)	Top of trench height m AOD	Base of Trench height m AOD
1	1N	448410.5728 195700.9348	1S	448410.4847 195670.6318	DITCH X2	0.30	60.7692 60.2177	60.26 59.71
2	2E	448465.6223 195684.6703	2W	448435.7634 195690.0801	NONE	0.30	57.7016 57.8969	56.90 57.04
3	3NW	448514.5166 195701.1109	3SE	448529.1426 195674.5295	PIT X1	0.30	56.5854 57.0721	56.08 56.57
4	4E	448544.6130 195662.0327	4W	448514.3084 195663.9104	NONE	0.30	59.1320 59.1552	58.69 58.62
5	5E	448589.1740 195679.4083	5W	448559.0835 195683.2188	DITCH X3 POSTHOLE X6	0.26	58.7444 58.6296	58.38 58.16
6	6NW	448573.8660 195716.6261	6SE	448587.4340 195689.4824	NONE	0.31	57.8816 58.3791	57.48 57.97
7	7NW	448652.2196 195697.5371	7SE	448666.3501 195670.6944	NONE	0.28	57.2961 57.8550	56.95 56.89
8	8E	448706.5760 195723.3525	8W	448677.1807 195728.9731	DITCH X1	0.28	54.1844 55.6525	53.28 54.80
9	9NE	448674.7467 195767.1216	9SW	448647.5930 195753.5927	DITCH X2	0.35	53.0925 53.7798	52.55 52.07
10	NW	448685.8928 195797.4780	SE	448712.0299 195782.0955	NONE	0.30	52.8213 52.4221	52.01 51.55
11	N	448612.0134 195784.2871	S	448612.0378 195753.9485	NONE	0.28	54.0481 54.4644	53.55 54.04
12	12NW	448486.7437 195818.9999	12SE	448506.6281 195796.0327	DITCH X1	0.33	58.0290 57.2522	56.80 57.57
13	13E	448483.9675 195753.2072	13W	448454.1092 195758.7102	DITCH X2	0.29	59.1098	58.54

Trench		Easting/Northing		Easting/Northing	Features	Depth of topsoil (m)	Top of trench height m AOD	Base of Trench height m AOD
							59.9409	59.29
14	14N	448507.1729 195736.4540	14S	448495.2176 195708.5818	DITCH X2 POSTHOLE X2	0.37-0.53	58.5198 58.7146	57.81 58.23
15	15E	448561.0007 195822.7439	15W	448531.1407 195828.1397	DITCH X1 GULLY X1 POSTHOLE X2	0.52-0.68	55.6516 56.8723	55.20 56.42
16	16E	448587.1320 195771.0968	16W	448557.2790 195776.4387	GULLY X 2 STAKEHOLE X3	0.40	54.6082 55.1975	54.26 54.73
17	17NE	448456.9021 195736.2323	17SW	448444.8000 195708.3817	NONE	0.40	59.5630 60.1985	58.97 59.12
18	18NE	448532.2746 195797.3181	18SW	448520.2456 195769.4812	DITCH X 2 PIT X 5 POSTHOLE X1	0.22-0.36	56.1454 56.1920	55.69 55.71
19	19NE	448602.2264 195819.0901	19SW	448590.0842 195791.2942	NONE	0.36	54.2331 54.3771	53.82 53.95
20	20NE	448629.6348 195727.1335	20SW	448617.4827 195699.3534	NONE	0.26	54.4990 55.7500	55.25 54.12
21	21N	448559.3211 195752.2982	21S	448547.1446 195724.4853	DITCH X1 GULLY X2	0.30	57.2886 58.0796	56.62 57.34
22	22E	448618.3833 195732.1335	22W	448588.5009 195737.5280	DITCH X2	0.34	56.7169	56.88

Trench		Easting/Northing		Easting/Northing	Features	Depth of topsoil (m)	Top of trench height m AOD	Base of Trench height m AOD
					GULLY X1 POSTHOLE X3		57.1804	56.41