

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**12/02967/FUL - AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT  
PARKING AREA & PART SPORTS FIELD,  
WILLIAM MORRIS CLOSE, OXFORD**

**(SP 5475 0474)**

*On behalf of*

*Cantay Estates Ltd*

**JANUARY 2013**

**REPORT FOR**

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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services undertook an archaeological evaluation in advance of the construction of a new development. Six trenches, totalling approximately 80 metres in length were excavated to the underlying natural geology or uppermost surface of the archaeology. Four ditches considered to be post-medieval field boundaries and one post-medieval posthole were revealed. The geophysical anomalies which were considered to represent pits were examined within Trenches 3, 4 and 5 and were proved to be natural hollows/pockets within the natural gravels and sands. The ditches were sealed by the subsoil and topsoil.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location and Geology (Fig. 1)**

The site is located at south of Barracks Lane (NGR SP 5475 0474 centred). The site is currently a sports field and parking.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

A planning application for construction of two all-weather playing pitches, plus a new residential development consisting of 6 x 1 bed flats, 15 x 2 bed flats, 6 x 3 bed flats, 13 x 3 bed houses and 3 x 4 bed houses, together with access road, parking and landscaping etc. accessed off Barracks Lane has been submitted to Oxford City Council (12/02967/FUL). The Archaeological Officer of Oxford City Council requested a pre-determination archaeological evaluation. A geophysical survey of the existing Sports Field has been undertaken. A series of evaluation trenches were required to be targeted on the results. A *Written Scheme of Investigation* was prepared and submitted for approval by John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS 2012), which proposed a method to establish the presence or absence of significant archaeological remains on the site.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The site is located close to a Roman burial (100m to the north-east – County HER No 3818) and adjacent to an unusual site that produced evidence for Iron Age and medieval quarrying (County HER Event No 2231; Tannahill and Diez 2008).

The geophysical survey found two linear anomalies (presumed ditches) and several discrete anomalies.

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

It was stated within the WSI (JMHS 2013) that the aims of the archaeological evaluation were to:

- to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the site;

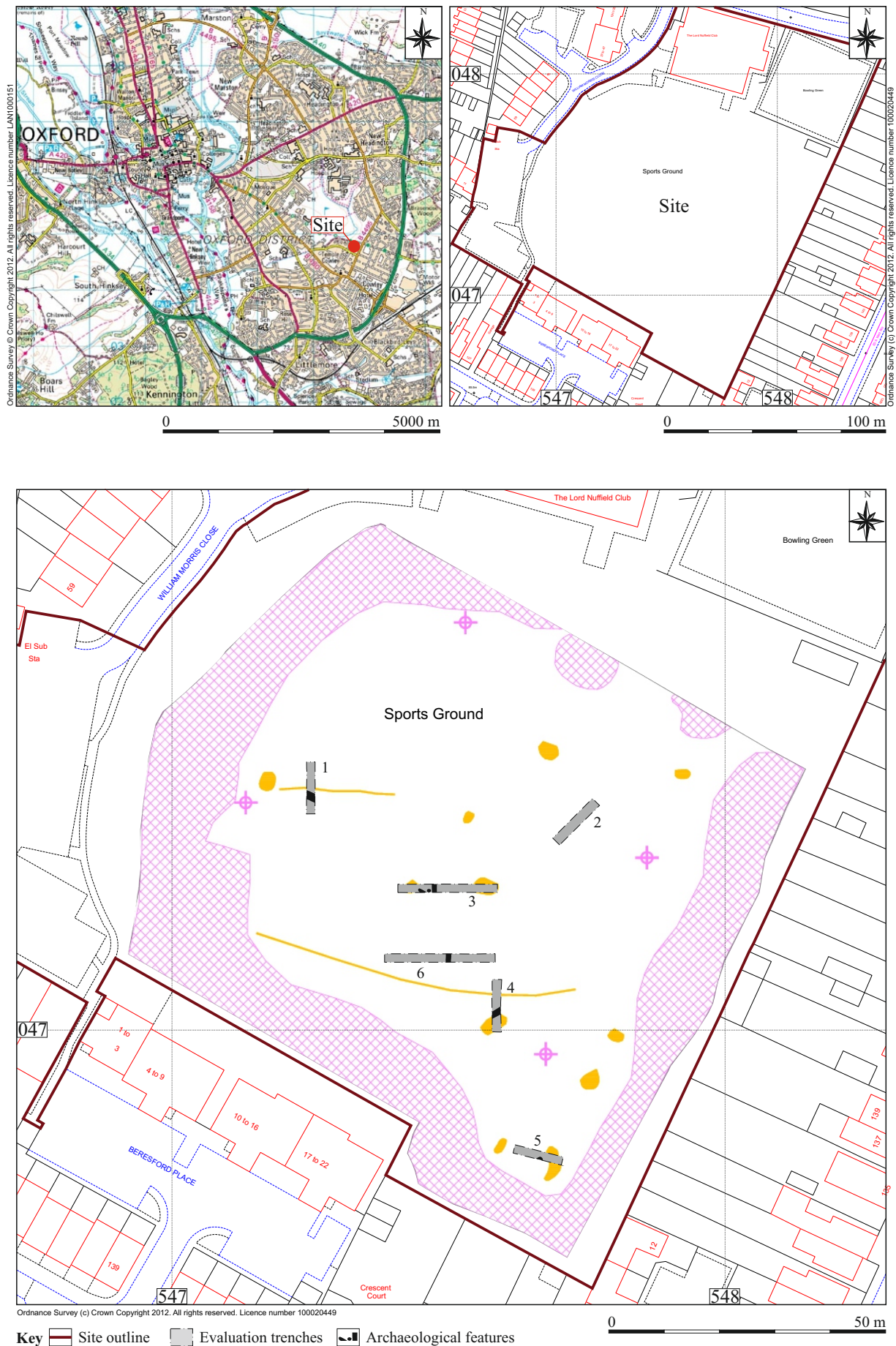


Figure 1. Site location

- to determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered;
- to assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological features and deposits; and
- to determine the impact of the proposed development on any remains present.

In particular to establish the presence or absence of any activity connected to the adjacent Iron Age and medieval quarrying, and the Roman burial in the vicinity.

- to inform a decision regarding the need and extent for a further stage of archaeological work; and
- to address some of the key issues highlighted in the Solent Thames Research Framework and city resource assessments.

### **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 of Field Archaeologists (1999) and the procedures laid down in MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

#### **3.2 Methodology**

The trenching sample required was achieved through the excavation of six trenches measuring a cumulative length of 80m.

Each trench was 1.6m in width and was excavated by a JCB type tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The resultant surfaces were cleaned by hand where necessary prior to hand excavation of the potential 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. The trenches were backfilled after recording.

David Radford, City Archaeological Officer for Oxford City Council monitored the work.

## 4 RESULTS

The trenches were positioned in a pattern providing good coverage of the site over the area of the proposed development impact. All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers without brackets indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material.

### 4.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 2, Plate 3)

Trench 1 was excavated to a length of 9.5m (1.6m wide) and to varying depths of between 0.35m (86.50m AOD) at the northern end and 0.33m (86.60m AOD) at the southern end. Machine excavation ceased at the top of archaeology or the natural sand with gravels.

The stratigraphy within the trench consisted of the following layers (earliest to latest) (Fig 2; S: 1.1). The natural yellow-orange sand with gravels was seen at the base of the trench (1/03). Overlying this was *c.* 0.20m thick dark blackish brown silty clay subsoil (1/02). The latest deposit was 0.15m thick recent topsoil (1/01).

#### *Ditch; cut into natural (1/03)*

Ditch 1/05 was orientated on a NW-SE direction and was 1.50m wide and 0.14m deep with shallow concave sides and a gently concave base. It was filled by friable mid grey brown silty sand with some lighter yellow sand mottling and gravels (1/04) and one fragment of tile dated to the post-medieval period. The ditch was sealed by subsoil (1/02).

### 4.2 Trench 2 (Fig. 1)

Trench 2 was excavated to a length of 10m (1.6m wide) and to varying depths of between 0.26m (86.77m AOD) at the southern end and 0.32m (86.75m AOD) at the northern end.

The stratigraphy within the trench consisted of the following layers (earliest to latest) (Fig 2; S: 2.1). The natural yellow-orange sand with gravels was seen at the base of the trench (2/02). Overlying this was *c.* 0.20m thick dark blackish brown silty clay topsoil (2/01).

There were no archaeological features or finds within this trench

### 4.3 Trench 3 (Figs. 1-2, Plate 2)

Trench 3 was excavated to a length of 18m (1.6m wide) and to varying depths of between 0.34m (86.74m AOD) at the eastern end and 0.35m (86.65m AOD) at the western end. Machine excavation ceased at the top of archaeology or the natural sand with gravels.

The stratigraphy within the trench consisted of the following layers (earliest to latest) (Fig 2; S: 3.1). The natural yellow-orange sand with gravels was seen at the base of

the trench (3/03). Overlying this was *c.* 0.20m thick dark blackish brown silty clay subsoil (3/02). The latest deposit was 0.10m thick recent topsoil (3/01).

*Ditch; cut into natural (3/03)*

Ditch 3/04 (Fig. 2; S. 3.1) was orientated on a north-south direction and was 1.0m wide with shallow concave sides, which was difficult to define in plan. It was filled by mottled grey with yellow silty sand with no finds (3/05). The ditch was sealed by subsoil (3/02).

*Discrete features; Cut into natural (3/03)*

Posthole 3/06 (Fig. 2; S. 3.3) was circular in shape with sharp concave sides and a gently rounded base 0.50m wide and 0.12m deep. It was filled by dark greyish brown silty clay (3/07) with one sherd of post-medieval pottery.

Pit/posthole 3/08 (Fig. 2; S. 3.3) was sub circular in shape and had concave sides and a gently rounded base 0.60m wide and 0.12m deep. It was filled by dark greyish black silty clay with no finds (3/09). Both features were sealed by subsoil (3/02).

#### **4.4 Trench 4 (Figs. 1-2)**

Trench 4 was excavated to a length of 9.5m (1.6m wide) and to varying depths of between 0.26m (86.80m AOD) at the northern end and 0.28m (86.78m AOD) at the southern end. Machine excavation ceased at the top of archaeology or the natural sand with gravels.

The stratigraphy within the trench consisted of the following layers (earliest to latest) (Fig 2; S: 4.1). The natural yellow-orange sand with gravels was seen at the base of the trench (4/02). Overlying this was *c.* 0.22m thick dark blackish brown silty clay subsoil (4/01).

*Ditch; cut into (4/02) Plate 1*

Ditch 4/04 (Fig. 2; S. 4.2) was orientated on an approximate east-west direction 1.20m wide with gradual sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by light yellow brown silty sand with frequent gravel inclusions (4/03) but no finds. The ditch was sealed by (4/01).

#### **4.5 Trench 5 (Fig. 1; Fig. 3)**

Trench 5 was excavated to a length of 10m (1.6m wide) and to varying depths of between 0.35m (86.54m AOD) at the western end and 0.31m (86.70m AOD) at the eastern end. Machine excavation ceased at the top of archaeology or the natural sand with gravels.

The stratigraphy within the trench consisted of the following layers (earliest to latest) (Fig 3; S: 5.1). The natural yellow-orange sand with gravels was seen at the base of the trench (5/02). Overlying this was *c.* 0.22m thick dark blackish brown silty clay topsoil (5/01).

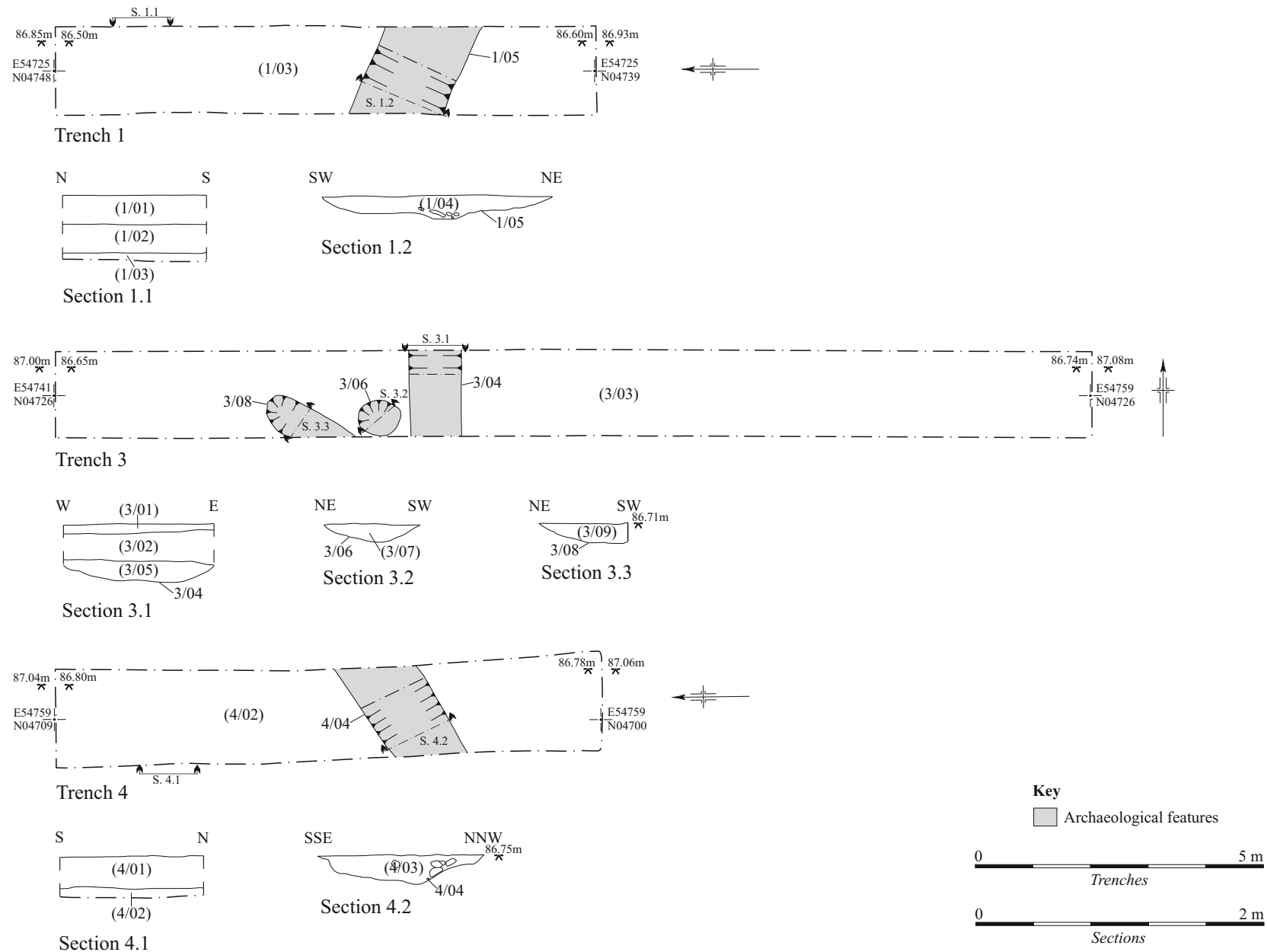


Figure 2. Plans and sections of trenches 1, 3 and 4

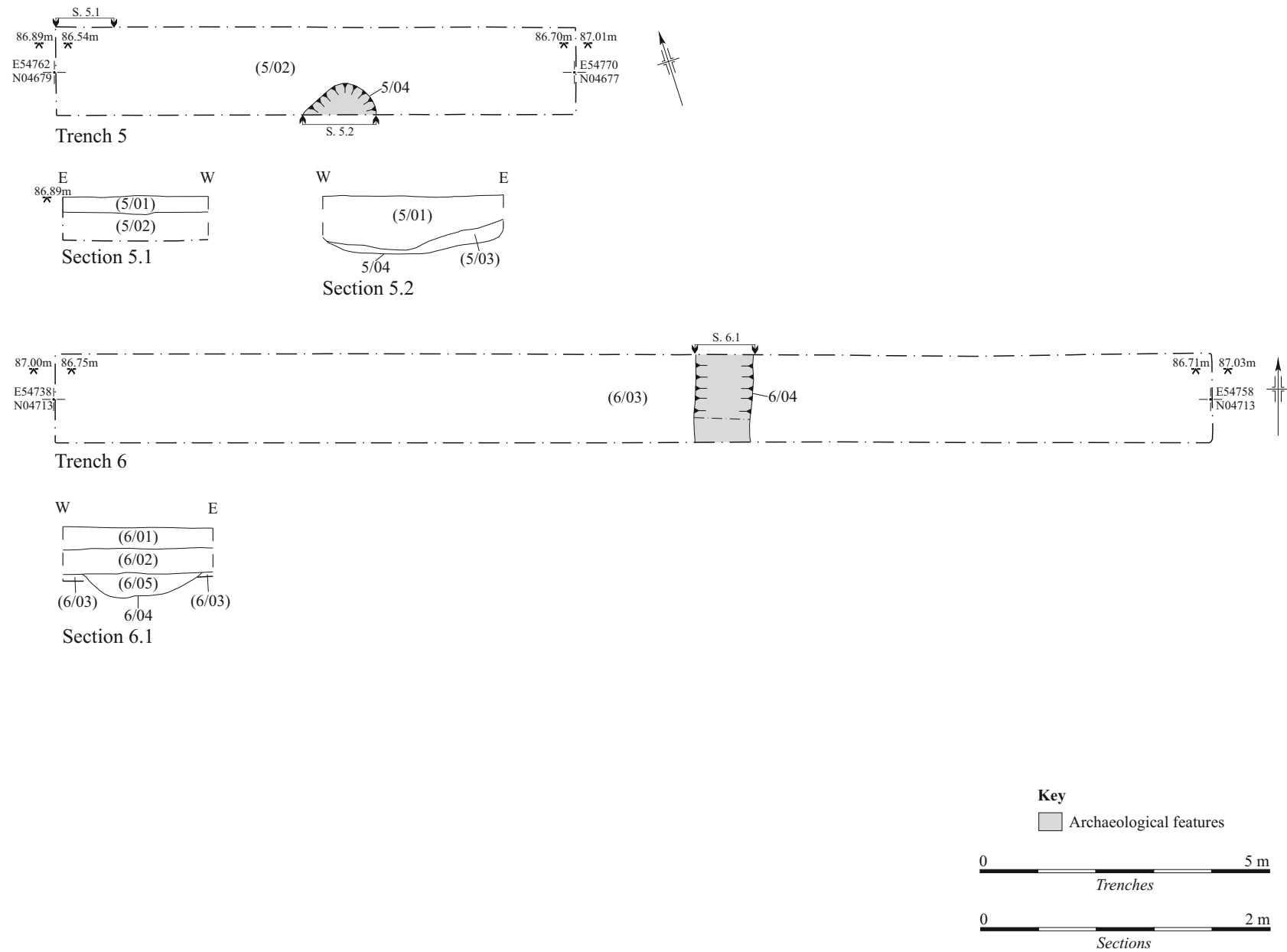


Figure 3. Plans and sections of trenches 5 and 6

*Discrete feature; cut into (5/02)*

Feature 5/04 (Fig. 3; S. 5.2) was 1.3m wide with gradual sides and a gently rounded base and was interpreted as a probable tree hole. It was filled by dark grey brown silty sand with frequent gravel inclusions (5/03) but no finds. The feature was sealed by (5/01).

**4.6 Trench 6** (Fig. 1; Fig. 3)

Trench 6 was excavated to a length of 20m (1.6m wide) and to varying depths of between 0.25m (86.75m AOD) at the western end and 0.32m (86.71m AOD) at the eastern end. Machine excavation ceased at the top of archaeology or the natural sand with gravels.

The stratigraphy within the trench consisted of the following layers (earliest to latest) (Fig 3; S: 6.1). The natural yellow-orange sand with gravels was seen at the base of the trench (6/03). Overlying this was *c.* 0.10m thick dark blackish brown silty clay subsoil (6/02). The latest deposit was a thin deposit of recent topsoil (6/01).

*Ditch; cut into natural (6/03)*

Ditch 6/04 (Fig. 3; S. 6.1) was 0.90m wide and 0.30m deep with gradual sides and a gently rounded base orientated on a north-south direction. It was filled by dark grey brown silty sand with frequent gravel inclusions (6/05) but no finds. The feature did not appear in trench 3 and must have terminated or turned before it reached trench 3. There was a ditch in Trench 3 but was considered to probably be a different ditch.

**4.7 Reliability of Techniques and Results**

The reliability of results is considered to be good. The excavation of the trenches took place in favourable weather conditions.

**5 FINDS****5.1 The Pottery**

A single sherd of post medieval pottery weighing 2g was recovered from posthole fill (3/07). The pottery was recorded utilising the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1989, 1994) and was not retained. The fabric was: OXDR: *Red Earthenwares*. AD 1550+

**5.2 The Tile**

One fragment of post-medieval tile weighing 44g was recovered from the ditch fill (1/04). It was slightly abraded on one edge and had a red colour on both sides. It was not retained for the archive.

## 6 DISCUSSION

The archaeological evaluation was successful in gathering sufficient information to understand the extent, character, date, state of preservation and depth of burial of archaeological remains within the area of study as set out in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (JMHS 2013).

The linear geophysical anomalies were proven to be ditches in Trenches 1 and 4 although on slightly different alignments to those indicated on the geophysical results. This may be explained as the margin of surveying error on the two phases of work for the ditch within Trench 1. This ditch 1/05 contained a fragment of tile which has been tentatively dated to the post-medieval period.

The ditch in Trench 4 was on a very different alignment to that shown on the geophysical survey, indicating a different ditch entirely. The ditch shown on the geophysical survey, which was thought to cross this area, was not apparent at all within the trench.

Two further ditches were discovered orientated north-south within Trenches 3 and 6, which were not shown on the geophysical results. Although there was no dating evidence within the fills of the ditches within Trenches 3, 4 and 6; they are also considered to probably represent the remains of post-medieval field boundaries. Other tested discrete anomalies shown on the geophysical survey were proven to be geological hollows on the surface of the natural gravels. A posthole was discovered which contained one sherd of post-medieval pottery. The adjacent pit/posthole 3/08 may indicate that the post was replaced. It is likely that these postholes were once part of a fence line, perhaps associated with the post-medieval field boundaries, although a wooden structure such as a building cannot be definitely ruled out.

No trace of any quarry pits were discovered like those to the immediate west of the sports field now beneath new housing (Tannahill & Diez 2008). However, given the proximity of this site, the undated features we have encountered could be associated. The features on the adjacent site were dated to the Iron Age and medieval periods.

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

## 7 ARCHIVE

The archive consists of the following:

### Paper Record

The project brief  
Written Scheme of Investigation  
The drawn records

The project report  
The primary site records

### The Finds

No finds were retained for the archive

## 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Tannahil, R, & Diez, V, 2009 Iron Age and Medieval Quarrying at Barracks Lane, Cowley, Oxford. *Oxoniensia* **73** (2008)



Plate 1; Section of Ditch 4/04 (1m scale) looking south west



Plate 2; Trench 3 looking west (1m scale x2)



Plate 3; Trench 1 looking north  
(1m scales x 2)

**Appendix 1. Summary Context list: All contexts**

Trench	Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
1	1/01	Deposit	Dark grey brown silty clay topsoil	0.15	Tr.	Tr.	None	/
1	1/02	Deposit	Dark grey brown silty clay subsoil	0.20	Tr.	Tr.	None	/
1	1/03	Deposit	Orange yellow sand and gravels	n/a	Tr.	Tr.	n/a	/
1	1/04	Deposit	Fill of 1/05	0.14	1.5	Tr.	Tile	Post-med
1	1/05	Cut	Ditch E-W	0.14	1.5	Tr.	/	/
2	2/01	Deposit	Mid grey brown silty clay loam topsoil	0.20	Tr.	Tr.	/	/
2	2/02	Deposit	Light brownish yellow silty sand with gravels	n/a	Tr.	Tr.	/	/
3	3/01	Deposit	Dark greyish brown silty clay topsoil	0.10	Tr.	Tr.	None	/
3	3/02	Deposit	Mid brown black silty clay subsoil (buried topsoil)	0.20	Tr.	Tr.	None	/
3	3/03	Deposit	Natural sand and gravels	/	Tr.	Tr.	None	/
3	3/04	Cut	Ditch N-S	0.15	1.0	Tr.	/	/
3	3/05	Deposit	Fill of 3/04	0.15	1.0	Tr.	None	/
3	3/06	Cut	Posthole	0.12	0.50	Tr.	/	/
3	3/07	Deposit	Fill of 3/06	0.12	0.50	Tr.	Pottery	Post-med
3	3/08	Cut	Posthole	0.12	0.50	Tr.	/	/
3	3/09	Deposit	Fill of 3/08	0.12	0.50	Tr.	None	/
4	4/01	Deposit	Dark greyish brown silty clay topsoil	0.22	Tr.	Tr.	None	/
4	4/02	Deposit	Light brown yellow sandy silt with frequent gravel natural	/	Tr.	Tr.	/	/
4	4/03	Deposit	Fill of 4/04	0.17	1.2	Tr.	None	/
4	4/04	Cut	Ditch E-W	0.17	1.2	Tr.	None	/
5	5/01	Deposit	Dark greyish brown silty clay topsoil	0.30	Tr.	Tr.	None	/
5	5/02	Deposit	Natural	/	Tr.	Tr.	/	/
5	5/03	Deposit	Fill of 5/04	0.20	0.30 (min)	1.0	None	/
5	5/04	Cut	Tree hole?	0.20	0.30 (min)	1.0	/	/

<b>Trench</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>	<b>Length (m)</b>	<b>Finds</b>	<b>Date</b>
6	6/01	Deposit	Dark greyish brown silty clay topsoil	0.20	Tr.	Tr.	None	/
6	6/02	Deposit	Subsoil	0.10	Tr.	Tr.	None	/
6	6/03	Deposit	Natural	/	Tr.	Tr.	/	/
6	6/04	Cut	Ditch	0.30	0.90	Tr.	/	/
6	6/05	Deposit	Fill of 6/04	0.30	0.90	Tr.	None	/