JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

OF THE

PROPOSED ROAD LINKING A379 TO OLD RYDON LANE, TOPSHAM, EXETER

SX 9584 9043 - SX 9556 9082

On behalf of

Davies Light Associates

MARCH 2006

REPORT FOR	Davies Light Associates The Old Bakehouse 21 The Street Lydiard Millicent Nr. Swindon SN5 3LU
PREPARED BY	David Gilbert & Ian Travers
EDITED BY	John Moore
FIELDWORK	20 - 22 February 2006
REPORT ISSUED	9 March 2006
ENQUIRES TO	John Moore Heritage Services Hill View Woodperry Road Beckley Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ *Telephone/Fax 01865 358300* *Email: info@jmheritageservices.co.uk*
Site Code;	HTLR 06
JMHS Project No:	1635
Archive Location	Exeter City Museums *Awaiting Accession number*

CONTENTS

Summary

An evaluation of the proposed route of a new road was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services from 20th - 22nd February 2006. Eleven trenches, totalling 227 metres in length, were excavated to reveal the underlying natural geology. In places this was cut by significant archaeological features.

The evaluation confirmed the results of the geophysical survey in that the several ditches were located and very few discrete features (post holes and pits) were present. The lack of finds from the features, within the exception of a flint flake, coupled with the presence of prehistoric flintwork and pottery from the topsoil suggests that the field boundaries are prehistoric. A rectangular enclosure may be of the same date. Where dateable, the finds seem to indicate an early Bronze Age date for the activity.

A chert blade core is of Mesolithic or Neolithic date. This may just be a casual loss. A single abraded sherd of Romano-British date was also found.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The proposed route will run from the RNSD Upper Site and Old Rydon Lane (NGR SX 9584 9043) in a north-west direction across land referred to as 'Land North of Old Rydon Lane, South of A379: Residential & Employment Areas' to join with the A379 at NGR SX 9556 9082.

1.2 Planning Background

A planning application has been submitted for the construction of a new road linking the A379 and Old Rydon Lane. The Archaeology Officer of Exeter City Council has advised that the scheme has archaeological implications and as such has requested information on the archaeological potential of the application area through a desk top study and geophysical survey. These showed the potential for remains of archaeological significance to be present on the site. Consequently an archaeological evaluation of the site has been deemed necessary prior to the determination of any planning application. This is in line with PPG 16 and Local Plan Policies.

1.3 Archaeological Background

A desk-based assessment of the site was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS 2006). This concluded that the area within which this application lies had a potential for containing significant remains of prehistoric date. The potential for late Iron Age and Roman remains in the area has been discussed at length (JMHS 2006). The report concluded that there should be some settlement in the area and it is possible that enclosures apparently showing on aerial photographs could belong to this period. The potential for remains of Saxon, Medieval or Post-medieval date, other than field boundaries, was determined as negligible.

An aerial photograph shows some cropmarks including an oval enclosure, a rectangular enclosure, and linear and curvilinear features, which are probable ditches (JMHS 2006, Fig 27). Further photographs show another rectangular enclosure to the SW close by the proposed route, which also shows on the gradiometer survey (Fig. 8; Stratascan. 2006).

A detailed gradiometer survey of the application area and areas to the east and west has been carried out. The results show at least two phases of activity (Stratascan 2006), one of which is dateable to the post-medieval period by map evidence. The earlier appears to consist of a well-defined rectangular enclosure immediately to the west of the application area, with an incomplete oval enclosure further north and curvilinear features to the west. A linear feature in the extreme north-west of the area surveyed appears to align on the west side of the rectangular enclosure. The ovoid enclosure along with other possible ones is identifiable on aerial photographs (Fig. 8; Devon HER: DAP/XY1-2). Several pit-like anomalies are shown in the general vicinity of the application area for the proposed road but none within it.

Overlying the above is a second phase of activity (at least post-medieval in date) consisting of a ditch cutting through both the ovoid and rectangular enclosures and another double ditch and associated bank in the field to the south.

It is possible that some of the features provisionally allotted to the first phase may be belong to another phase of activity although there is no evidence to suggest this from the geophysical survey.

The geophysical survey also identified a circular anomaly to the east of the application area. This is *c.* 7-8m in diameter with a possible causeway/entrance through the north side.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

In particular

- To attempt to date the apparent two phases of activity.
- To determine whether features other than ditches are present.
- To determine the impact of the proposed road on the archaeological remains

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

Following discussions with the Archaeology Officer of Exeter City Council a scheme of investigation was designed by JMHS and agreed with the Archaeology Officer and the applicant. The work was carried out by JMHS and involved the excavation of eleven trenches across the site (Figure 1).

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in a *Written Scheme of Investigation*. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

The aims of the evaluation were achieved by the excavation of eleven trenches (Figure 1). Two trenches were 30m long (Trenches 10 & 11), six 20m (Trenches 1, 2, 4, 6, 8 & 9) and three were 10m long (Trenches 3, 5 & 7). All trenches were 1.6m wide and were excavated by a JCB fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The resultant surfaces were cleaned by hand prior to limited hand excavation of any identified archaeological features.

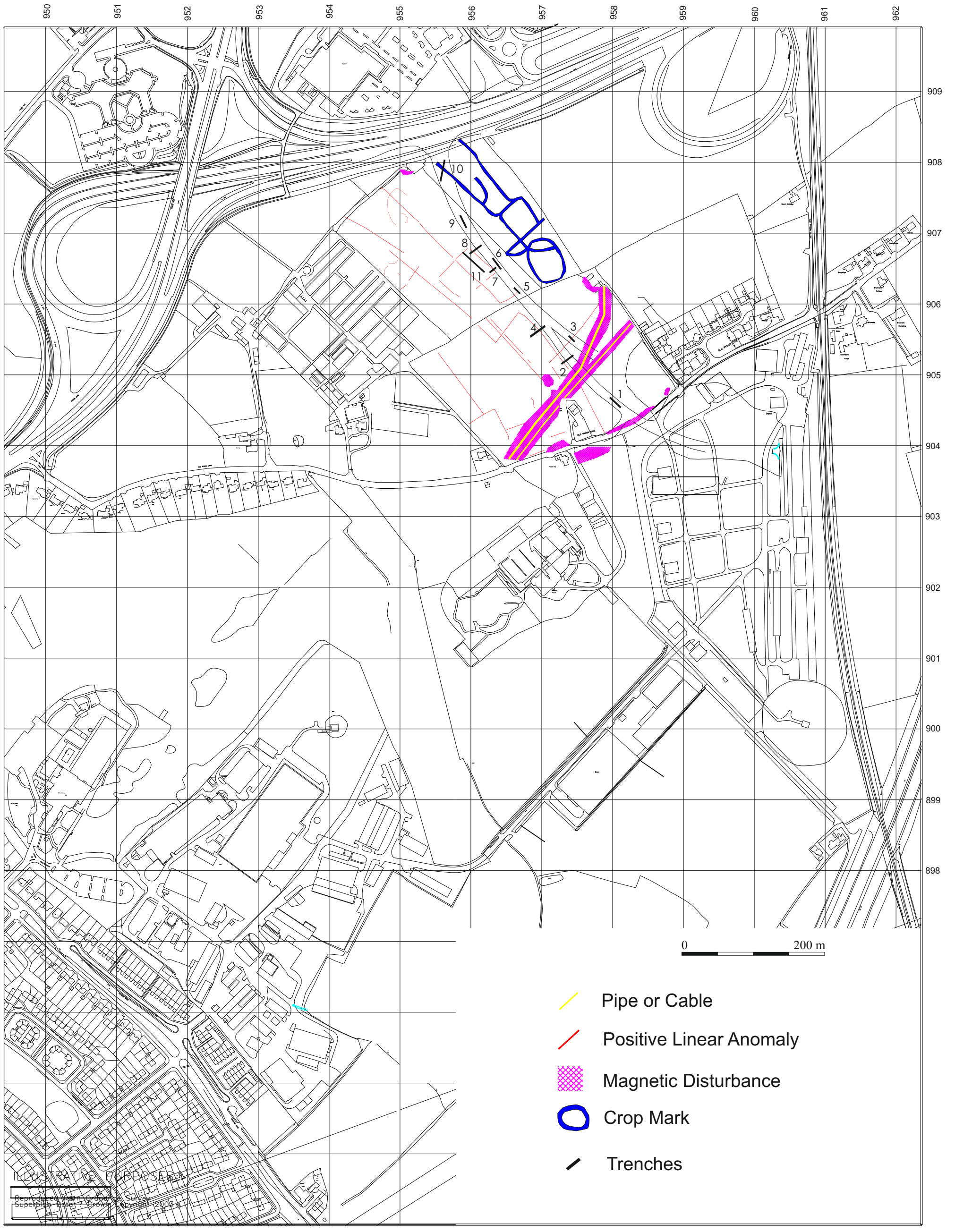
During excavation the decision was made to extend Trench 4 for 8 metres to the west (to a total of 27m), and to extend Trench 11 for 7 metres to the north (to a total of 37m). In both cases this was intended to better locate features identified by geophysics, and, in the case of Trench 11, the extension was successful.

Due to the quantity of colluvial material present across the site the majority of trenches were excavated beyond the actual surface of the natural, to ensure its correct identification. In all cases where colluvium could be suspected of concealing archaeological features it was removed. Excavation was carefully monitored to make certain that no archaeological material was removed without adequate recording.

The excavated spoil from a 1m length at the each end of each trench was hand sorted to recover artefacts. Following recording of the excavated sections of ditches the remaining lengths within the trenches were quickly excavated by mattock in an attempt to retrieve artefacts.

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.

The work was monitored by Mr A Pye – Archaeology Officer for Exeter City Council.


950
951
952
953
954
955
956
957
958
959
960
961
962
909
908
907
906
905
904
903
902
901
900
899
898
10
9
8
6
11
7
5
4
3
2
1
0
200 m
Pipe or Cable
Positive Linear Anomaly
Magnetic Disturbance
Crop Mark
Trenches
ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY
Reproduced from Ordnance Survey
Superplan data © Crown Copyright 2003

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in [ ] indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material.

The uppermost layer in all trenches was a dark brown sandy or silty loam (1/01) – (11/01) that varied in depth from 0.21m to 0.50m across the site, being, on the whole, shallower at the top of the landform; the prevailing down slope being from NW to SE across the site, with the exception of Trenches 7 to 11 atop the landform. Below this in all trenches was an orange-brown sand or sandy loam (1/02) – (11/02) that was on average 0.2m thick. Below this lay the natural dark orange sand and gravel (1/03), (2/04), (3/03), (4/04), (5/03) – (9/03), (10/04) & (11/03), interspersed in some areas by bands of natural colluvial sand (2/03), (4/03) & (10/03).

Along with these deposits archaeological features were present in Trenches 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 11.

Trench 1 (Figs. 2 & 3)

Trench 1 was orientated roughly NW-SE at the bottom of the slope, and was fairly uniform in depth and in the thickness of its strata; exhibiting topsoil to a depth of 0.34m then subsoil to c.0.52m and the surface of the natural. The machining of this trench in particular was continued to beyond the top of the natural to enable its characterisation.

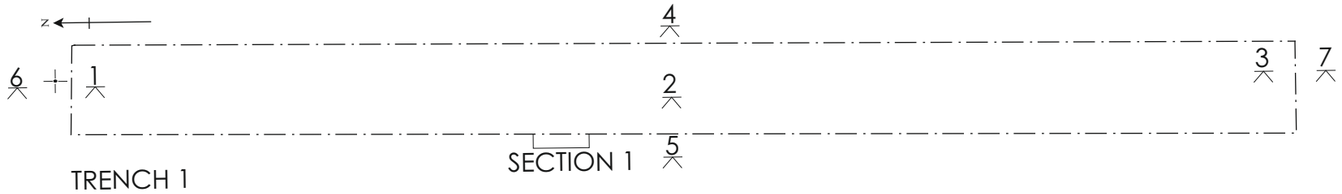
No archaeological features were identified in Trench 1.

Trench 2 (Figs. 2 & 3)

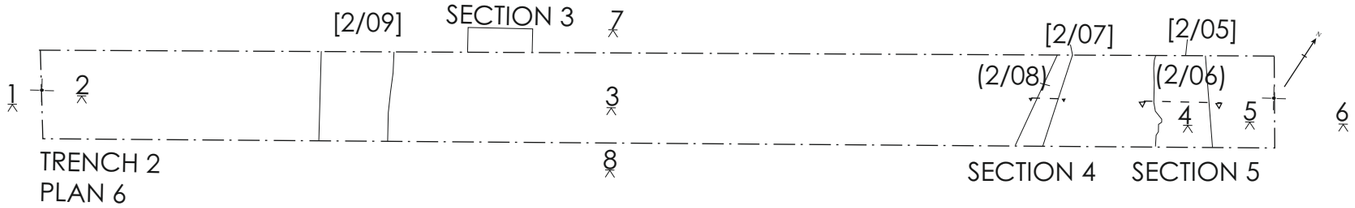
Trench 2 was placed across the slope and demonstrated uniform stratigraphy throughout; topsoil to 0.50m then subsoil to a depth of 0.56m. The natural gravel was overlain by colluvial sand (2/03) up to 0.70m in thickness in the western portion of the trench.

Three linear features were identified in Trench 2, each running across the trench in perpendicular fashion (with the slope) in the case of [2/05] and [2/09] and in a more oblique manner (N-S) in the case of [2/07]. Linear [2/05], in the extreme eastern portion of the trench, was consistent in width (c.0.96m) but less regular in cross-section possessing an almost vertical step on its SW side as opposed to a flat c. 35-degree incline on the NE side to a depth of 0.24m. This probable ditch contained a single light brown sandy gravel fill (2/06). Linear [2/09], towards the western end of the trench, was not excavated but, given a similar width of c.1.15m and a similar fill, may represent a continuation of ditch [4/05] down the slope, although on a slightly different orientation. The third linear [2/07] was irregular in section, c.0.20m deep and possessed a mixed brown sandy gravel fill (2/08). This feature did not extend beyond the trench in either direction, and so probably represents animal burrowing.

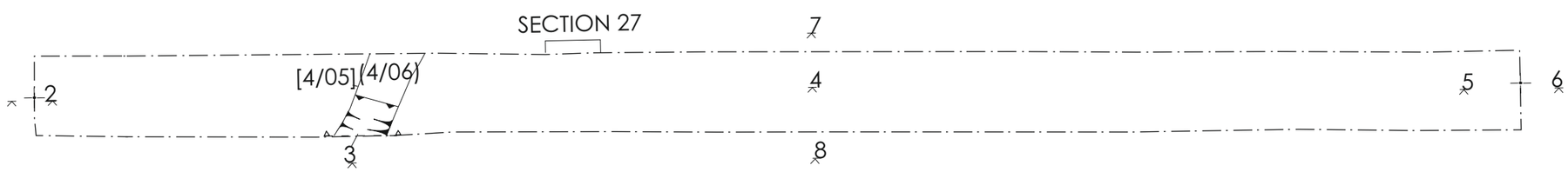
Ditch [2/09] appeared on the geophysical survey.



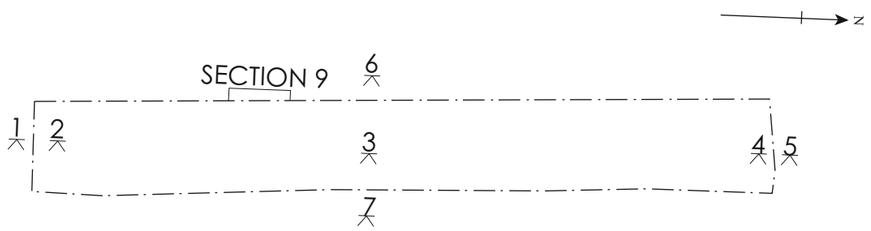
TRENCH 1
PLAN 1



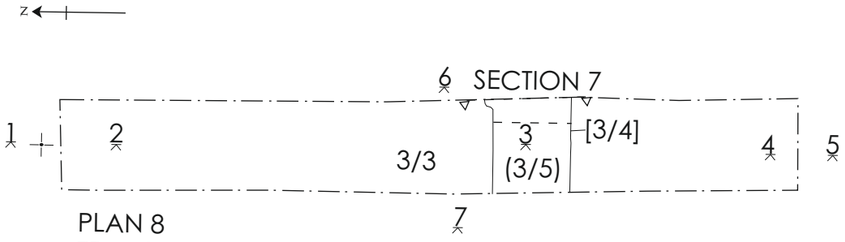
TRENCH 2
PLAN 6



TRENCH 4
PLAN 26



TRENCH 5
PLAN 10



PLAN 8
TRENCH 3

TRENCH 3
LEVELS TBM: 22.69

TRENCH 1
LEVELS IH: 24.15 I H: 28.46

1: 21.57
2: 21.28
3: 21.07
4: 21.94
5: 21.81
6: 22.28
7: 21.54

1: 27.03
2: 26.45
3: 26.17
4: 25.98
5: 26.38
6: 26.77
7: 27.68

TRENCH 4
LEVELS TBM: 22.69
IH: 32.16

1: 28.70
2: 28.07
3: 19.87
4: 28.11
5: 28.17
6: 29.00
7: 28.96
8: 28.93

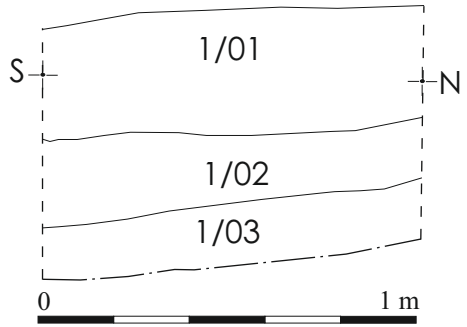
TRENCH 2

LEVELS IH: 28.46

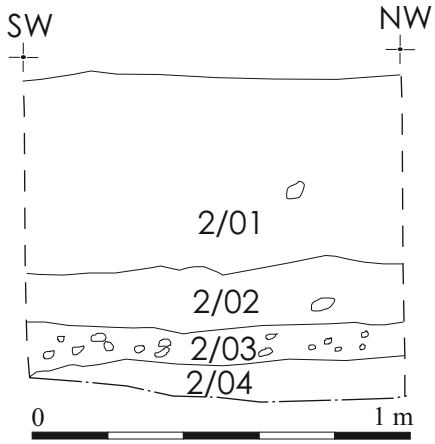
1: 25.49
2: 25.21
3: 24.91
4: 25.00
5: 25.14
6: 25.79
7: 25.70
8: 25.98

TRENCH 5
LEVELS
TBM: 33.60 I
H: 34.12

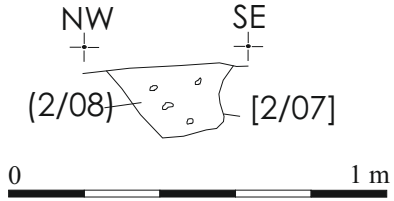
1: 31.45
2: 30.69
3: 30.67
4: 30.46
5: 30.95
6: 31.15
7: 31.19



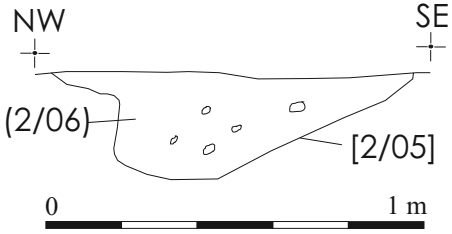
TRENCH 1
SECTION 1



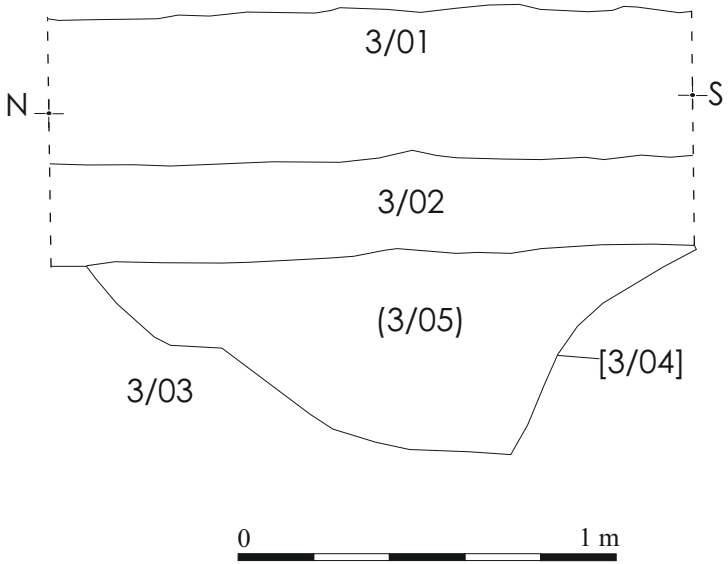
TRENCH 2
SECTION 3



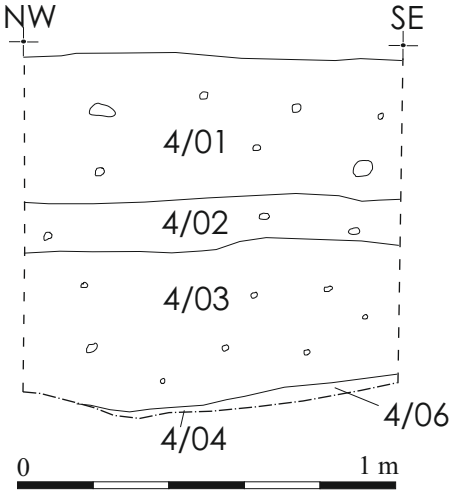
TRENCH 2
SECTION 4



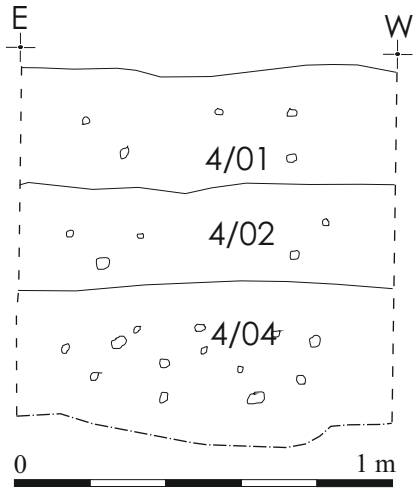
TRENCH 2
SECTION 5



TRENCH 3
SECTION 7



TRENCH 4
SECTION 27



TRENCH 4
SECTION 26

Trench 3 (Figs. 2 & 3)

Although aligned NW-SW, with the slope, Trench 3 also possessed fairly consistent strata. The topsoil in this trench was to a depth of 0.40m overlying subsoil to c.0.62m and the natural sand.

A single linear was seen to cross the trench (SW-NE) approximately at its centre. Ditch [3/04] was irregular in section, being slightly stepped on its NW side, and was 1.64m in maximum width and 0.60m deep. The fill of this ditch (3/05) was an orangey-brown sandy loam which was observed to exhibit charcoal flecking. The ditch appeared on the geophysical survey.

Trench 4 (Figs. 2 & 3)

Trench 4 was located across the prevailing slope, approximately halfway up the landform. Originally 20 metres in length it was then extended a further 8 metres in an effort to reveal a potential feature identified in the geophysical survey. It transpired that this extension revealed nothing of archaeological interest.

The topsoil and subsoil of this trench were relatively standard in thickness across the trench (at c.0.33m & c.0.24m respectively). The natural was confirmed at c.0.92m throughout the majority of the trench except in its most westerly portion and in the area of the extension in which the natural gravel (4/04) was seen to drop down and was overlain by natural colluvial sands (4/03). This sand was removed down to the underlying gravel under close supervision and no archaeological material was observed in this area.

A single archaeological feature was revealed in Trench 4. Possible ditch [4/05] ran roughly N-S across the trench, towards the western end of the original extent of the trench, and was represented by a very shallow cut consistently 0.90m wide and of 0.08m in depth. Although this cut was concave in section too little survived from which to gauge its profile. The feature was filled with medium brown sandy silt (4/06). This is probably the continuation of ditch [2/09] seen further south and must be the ditch the ditch identified in the geophysical survey.

Trench 5 (Figs. 2 & 5)

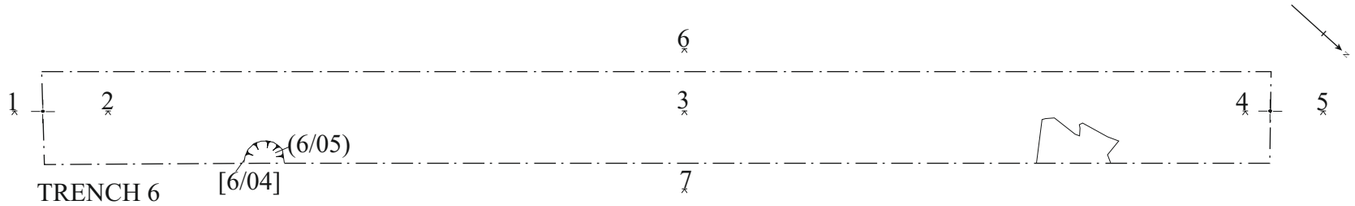
This trench was aligned NW-SE immediately NW of the extant hedgerow and across the break of slope towards the top of the landform.

Trench 5 exhibited uniform stratigraphy throughout having a topsoil of c.0.32m in depth and a subsoil of c.0.14m over the natural at c.0.46m below ground level.

No archaeological features were identified in Trench 5.

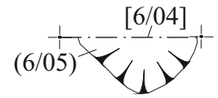
Trench 6 (Figs. 4 & 5)

Trench 6 was also oriented NW-SE, at the top of the landform, and displayed topsoil and subsoil of constant depth along the trench (c.0.30m & c.0.14m respectively).

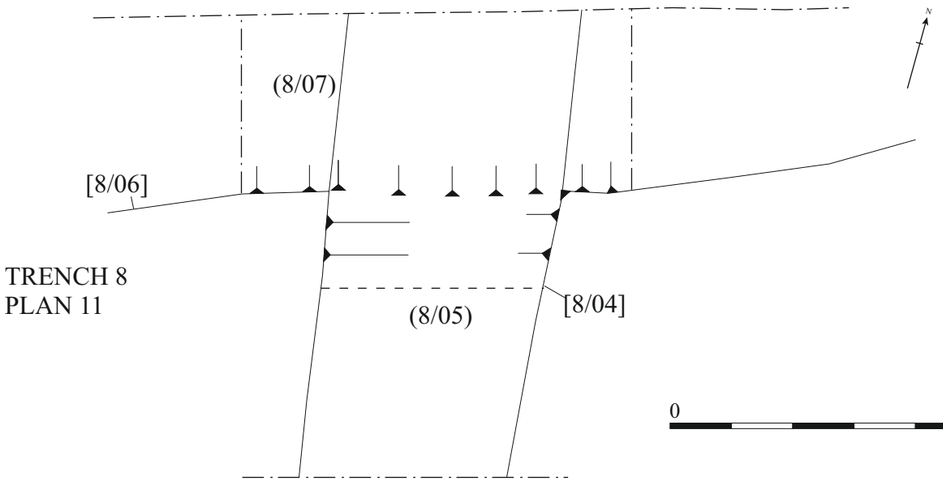


TRENCH 6
PLAN 18

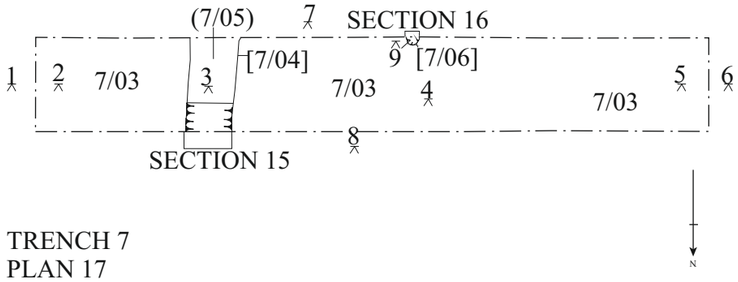
SECTION 20



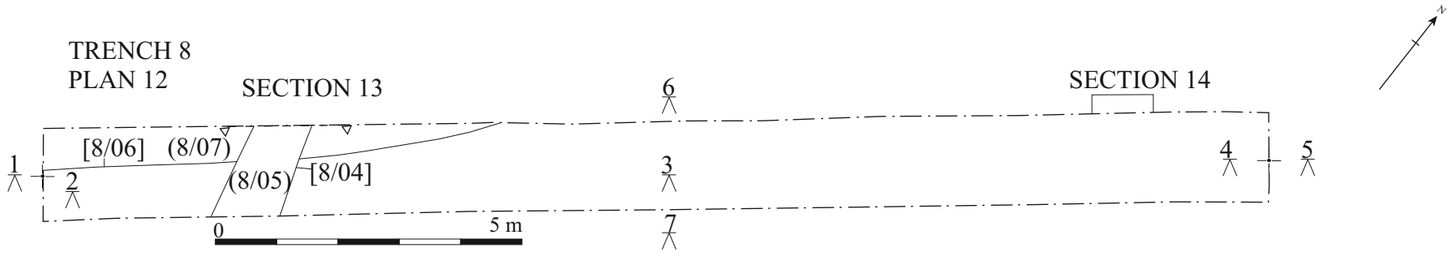
TRENCH 6
PLAN 19



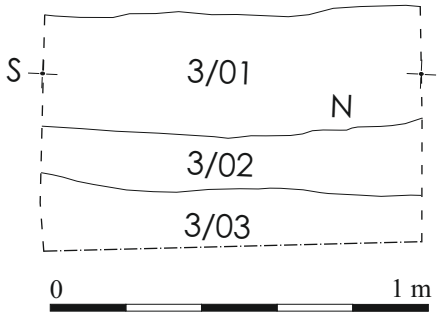
TRENCH 8
PLAN 11



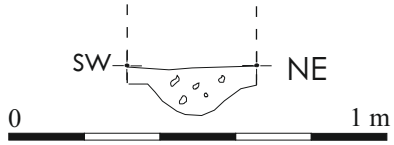
TRENCH 7
PLAN 17



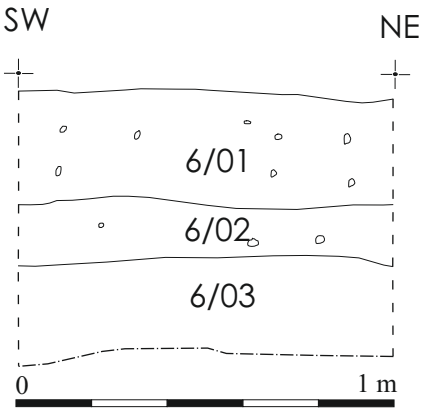
TRENCH 8 LEVELS	TRENCH 6 LEVELS	TRENCH 7 LEVELS
TBM: 33.60	TBM: 33.60	TBM: 33.60
IH: 36.04	IH: 34.12	IH: 34.12
1: 34.98	1: 33.46	1: 33.28
2: 34.60	2: 32.68	2: 32.70
3: 34.04	3: 32.67	3: 32.63
4: 33.65	4: 32.28	4: 32.05
5: 34.55	5: 32.76	5: 32.50
6: 34.84	6: 33.06	6: 33.04
7: 34.78	7: 33.21	7: 33.19
		8: 33.13
		9: 32.34



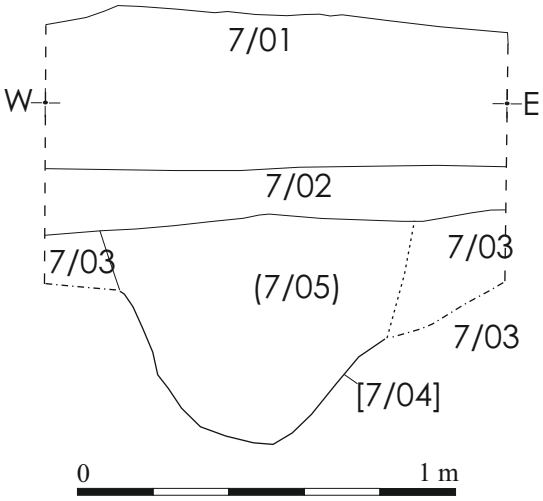
TRENCH 5
SECTION 9



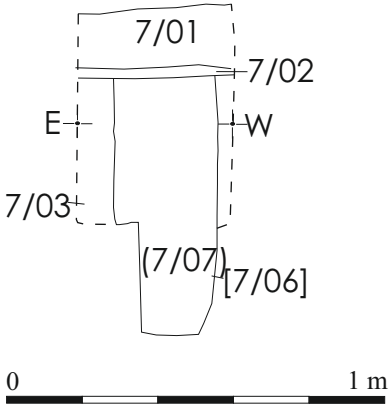
TRENCH 6
SECTION 20



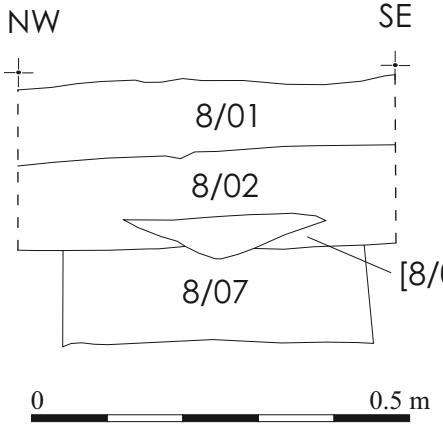
TRENCH 6
SECTION 21



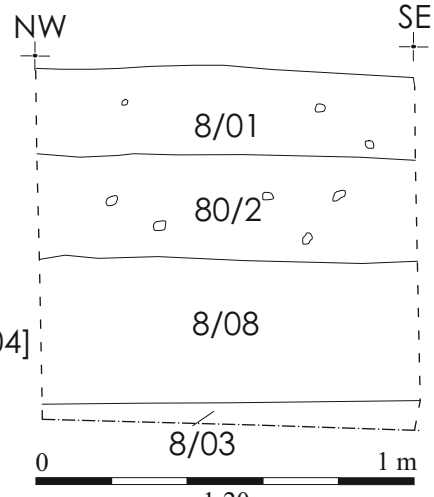
TRENCH 7
SECTION 15



TRENCH 7
SECTION 16

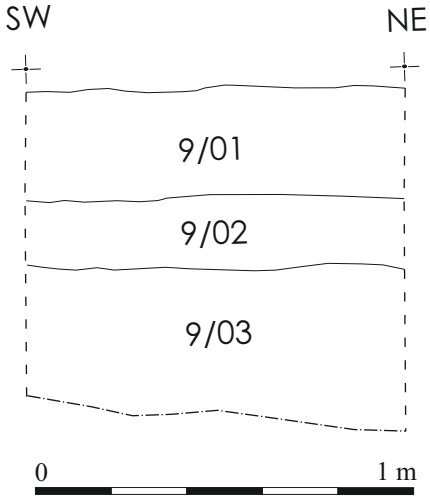


TRENCH 8
SECTION 13



1:20

TRENCH 8
SECTION 14



TRENCH 9
SECTION 22

A single feature was revealed within Trench 6. Small pit [6/04], located towards the southern end of the trench, was sub-circular, 0.36m in diameter, and very shallow at 0.12m (Fig. 5, Section 20). It was regular in section and filled with a dark brown silty sand (6/05) which contained no finds.

Trench 7 (Figs. 4 & 5)

Trench 7 was aligned SW-NE, immediately perpendicular to Trench 6. Along this trench the topsoil extended to a depth of c.0.53m and was underlain by subsoil to a depth of c.0.80m making this a relatively deep trench.

Two archaeological features were identified in this trench. To the southwest of the mid-point of the trench ditch [7/04] crossed the trench NW-SE, while to the northeast of this mid-point post-hole [7/06] was observed lying in the SE section of the trench.

Ditch [7/05] had a regular 'U' shaped profile, 0.60m deep and 0.82m wide, and was filled with a light brown sandy loam (7/06). Post-hole [7/06] was very regular in section, 0.50m deep, almost circular in plan and extended 0.20m into the trench. The post-hole contained a light brown sandy loam fill (7/07).

Trench 8 (Figs. 4 & 5)

This trench was aligned SW-NE approximately 40m to the NW of, and parallel to, Trench 7. While Trench 8 exhibited relatively shallow topsoil and subsoil at its northwest end (0.22m & 0.23m respectively) the natural dropped quite significantly to the east at which extremity the natural gravel was encountered at c.0.90m, the gravel there being overlain by a series of bands of colluvial sand (8/08). Once more these were removed to ensure no archaeological features had been obscured by their deposition, again under careful supervision.

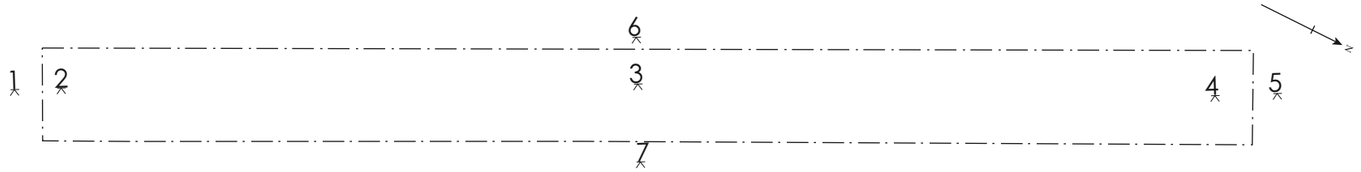
Trench 8 revealed two linear features ([8/04] & [8/06]) that intersected towards the southwest end of the trench. Ditch [8/06] (filled at this point by (8/07)) extended 0.75m into the trench, at the latter's eastern extremity, and, running NNE, converged with the section 7.5m into the trench. This ditch was also observed in Trench 11, under which heading it is fully described.

Ditch [8/06] was cut by ditch [8/04] c.3m into the trench. Ditch [8/04] was observed to run roughly N-S, be c.0.76m in width and 0.25m deep. The shallow extant portion visible in section seemed to exhibit a 'V' shaped profile, although this is unclear. The ditch was filled with a yellow brown sand (8/05) and was cut into the subsoil rather than the natural gravel.

Trench 9 (Figs. 5 & 6)

Aligned NNW-SSE Trench 9 was positioned at the top of the landform and exhibited a constant depth of topsoil from the surface to a depth of 0.28m and overlying a likewise uniform 0.20m of subsoil. The natural gravel in this trench was interspersed with layers of sand, which were removed to a depth of 0.86m.

No archaeological features were identified in Trench 9.



TRENCH 9
SECTION 23

TRENCH 9
LEVELS
TBM: 33.60
IH: 40.65

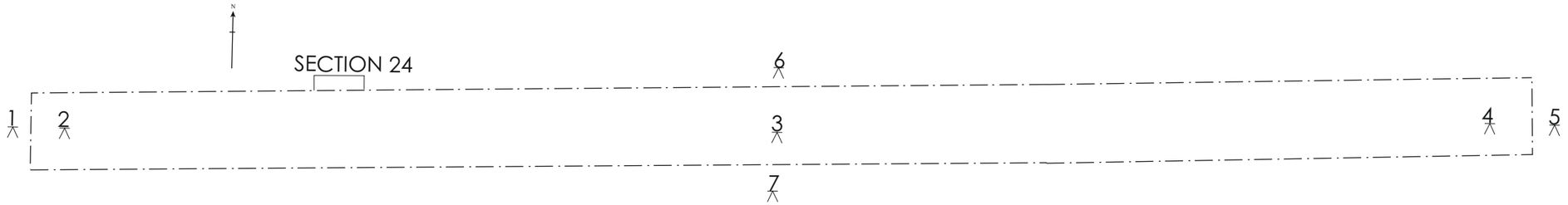
1: 36.89
2: 36.02
3: 35.67
4: 35.25
5: 35. 97
6: 3634
7: 36.51

TRENCH 10
LEVELS
TBM: 40.65
IH: 40.65

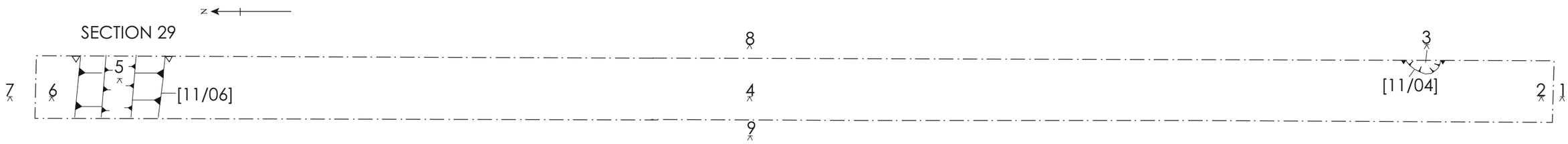
1: 39.41
2: 38.89
3: 38.76
4: 38.65
5: 39.19
6: 39.23
7: 39.33

TRENCH 11
LEVELS
TBM: 33.60
IH: 36.04

1: 33.43
2: 33.15
3: 32.18
4: 34.02
5: 34.12
6: 34.74
7: 35.15
8: 34.25
9: 34.39

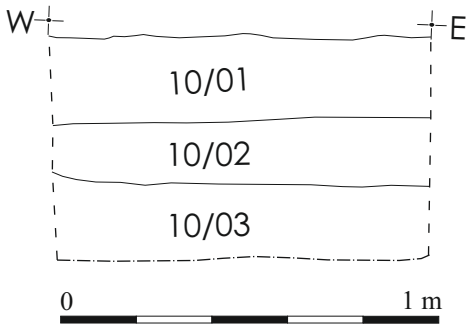


TRENCH 10
PLAN 25

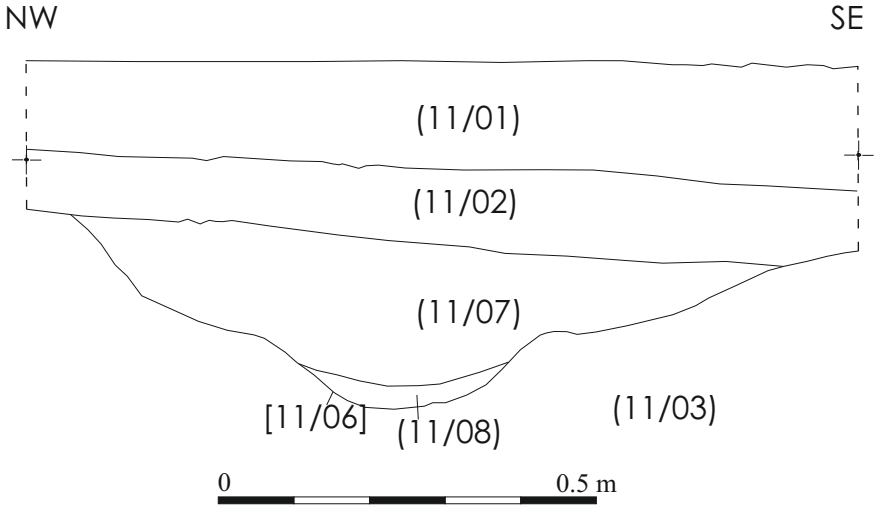


TRENCH 11
PLAN 31

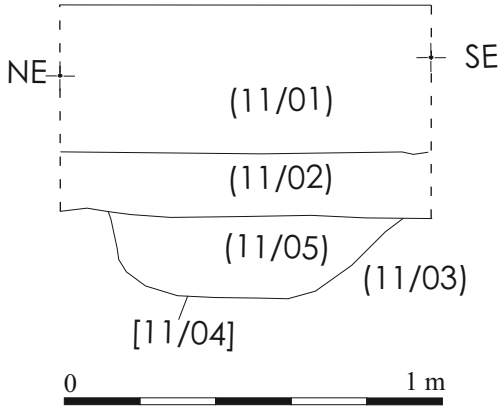
0 5 m



TRENCH 10
SECTION 24



TRENCH 11
SECTION 29



TRENCH 11
SECTION 30

Trench 10 (Figs. 6 & 7)

Trench 10 ran roughly N-S and was located just to the south of the A379. Similar to Trench 9 this trench displayed a constant depth of material over the natural sandy gravel, although in this case a 0.21m thick band of natural sand was observed over, and removed from, the entire area of the trench beneath a subsoil of c.0.16m and the c.0.23m thick topsoil.

No archaeological features were identified in Trench 10.

Trench 11 (Figs. 6 & 7)

This trench ran NW-SE perpendicular to Trench 8 and immediately to the latter's southwest. Trench 11 was extended a further 7m to the NW beyond its original 30m. The natural (11/03) was encountered at a depth of 0.40m at the trench NW extreme (beneath c.0.25m of topsoil and c. 0.15m of subsoil) and at the slightly greater depth of 0.57m at the SE end of the trench where the topsoil extended to 0.40m and the subsoil to 0.17m.

Two features were observed in Trench 11. At the SE end of the trench pit [11/04] was recorded in its NE section. Sub-circular in plan the pit was 0.80m wide and extended 0.35m into the trench. Being 0.22m deep it possessed moderate-to-steep slightly concave sides and a flat base. The single fill of the pit (11/05) was a light brown slightly silty sandy loam. The fill contained an imported fluvial or beach sourced pebble.

Revealed successfully in the NW extension of the trench was ditch [11/06], an obvious continuation of ditch [8/06] uncovered in Trench 8. The full width of the ditch was shown to be c.1.90m, while its depth was 0.45m. In section the ditch has a 'U' shape profile with moderately steep sides with an apparent 'ankle-breaker' feature. While the profile indicates a re-cut the fills seem to indicate otherwise; the lower, primary, fill (11/08) being overlain within the 'ankle-breaker' by the upper fill (11/07) which also fills the remainder of the ditch. It may be that the fill of a recut was the same as the later fill of an original cut. The excavation of the entirety of the ditch (as revealed in the trench) showed a somewhat different profile in the SW section (not drawn). In this instance the 'ankle-breaker' profile is absent – probably obscured by an apparent re-cut of the ditch along its SE side. This may represent a pit cut into the ditch and back-filled with the same material, thus obscuring the cut at this point. However it could be a re-cut of the ditch on a fractionally different orientation giving the differing profiles. This can only be clarified by excavation of a wider area. The very small sherd of 19th century pottery within ditch fill11/07 is considered to be residual.

5 FINDS

5.1 Prehistoric Pottery *by Frances Raymond*

Two sherds of prehistoric pottery (weighing 14 grams), both in fresh condition, were recovered from the topsoil (8/1). Both are wall fragments and there is no surviving evidence for vessel style.

The largest (weighing 11 grams) is of early Bronze Age date and is decorated with two very faint impressions marking the ends of two parallel lines of twisted cord. The sherd is thick walled (10 mm. wall thickness) suggesting that it is derived from the Food Urn series (Food Vessels, Collared Urns or the earlier Trevisker styles). It is made from an unevenly fired sandy fabric with a black core and a reddish brown exterior. The fabric contains very common quantities of very fine to medium sized sub-angular quartz grains (0.1 to 0.5 mm.). Sparse fragments of much larger very angular quartz (2.0 to 4.0 mm.) and sub-angular grog (0.5 to 5.0 mm.) are also present.

The second sherd (weighing three grams) is undecorated, but broad similarities in the fabric may indicate that it is a contemporary product of the early Bronze Age although this is by no means certain. The sherd has a black core and interior with a dark reddish brown exterior. The ware contains common amounts of very fine to fine angular quartz (0.06 to 0.25 mm.); along with sparse mica (<0.06 mm.), angular quartzite (1.0 to 4.0 mm.) and grog (1.0 to 2.5 mm.).

5.2 Medieval and Post-medieval Pottery *by Paul Blinkhorn*

The pottery assemblage comprised 19 sherds with a total weight of 164g. It was all post-medieval, apart from a single and extremely abraded sherd of probable Romano-British type.

The following fabrics were noted:

RE: *Red Earthenwares*: Fine sandy earthenware, usually with a brown or green glaze, occurring in a range of utilitarian forms. Such 'country pottery' was first made in the 16th century, and in some areas continued in use until the 19th century. 4 sherds, 65g.

RSE: *Slipped Earthenwares:* As red earthenware, although decorated with geometric designs in a cream-coloured slip. 17th – 18th century. 2 sherds, 11g.

MANG: *Manganese Mottled Ware*: late 17th – 18th century (Barker 1999). Fine, buff fabric, with vessels usually covered with a mottled purple and brown glaze, which is generally lighter on the more modern examples. A wide range of domestic vessel forms, but mugs and chamber pots are particularly common. 1 sherd, 7g.

BB: *Black Basalt ware*. c. 1750-1850. Dry-bodied black stoneware used mainly for coffee and tea pots. It was produced in Staffordshire from c. 1750 until the mid 19th-century (Barker 1999). 1 sherd, 3g

ES: *English Stoneware*: White/grey stoneware with a white salt glaze. Made at numerous centres, such as Staffordshire, London and Nottingham, from the later 17th century onwards, in a wide range of utilitarian forms (Crossley 1990). 2 sherds, 44g.

MISC: *Miscellaneous 19th and 20th century wares*. Mass-produced white earthenwares, flowerpots, etc. 8 sherds, 33g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

		RB		RE		RSE		ES		MANG		BB		MISC		
Tr	Context	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	Date
	U/S			2	36			1	20	1	7			3	17	U/S
1	1													1	4	19thC
2	1			1	5	1	3							1	7	19thC
3	1							1	24							L17thC
5	1													1	2	19thC
6	1			1	24							1	3			M18thC
8	1					1	8							1	2	19thC
11	1	1	1													RB??
11	7													1	1	19thC
	Total	1	1	4	65	2	11	2	44	1	7	1	3	8	33	

5.3 Flint and Stone *by Roy Entwistle*

The Assemblage

The assemblage comprises 26 items of flint, a single chert blade core fragment and a pebble. Taken together these pieces weigh 187 grams and are made up of the following:

Context	Type	Number	Weight in grams
unstratified	flakes	4	35
unstratified	broken flakes	9	56
unstratified	burnt flakes	2	10
unstratified	broken retouched flakes	3	16
unstratified	chert blade core fragment	1	44
unstratified	scraper	1	6
unstratified	?side scraper	1	9
unstratified	?broken end scraper	1	11
2/1	flake	1	7
3/1	unsystematic core	1	70
3/5	broken flake	1	9
6/1	broken flake	1	5
11/5	pebble	1	59

Table 1. A summary of the worked flint and stone

The small number of diagnostic elements was recovered from unstratified contexts. They include a complete thumbnail scraper and a possible broken end-scraper, both of which are likely to be of Neolithic or early Bronze Age date. The chert blade core fragment is also from an unstratified context and may be earlier in date, possibly early Neolithic or Mesolithic. The remaining retouched pieces are too fragmentary for more detailed comment.

The pebble recovered from context 5/11 appears to be entirely natural, and lacks any sign of abrasion or polishing that might interpreted as use-wear.

Raw Material

Aside from the pebble, which is likely to be from a fluvial or beach source, the remaining items are made from imported raw material. Where traces of the cortex survive, it does not appear to be water-worn and for the most part seems more typical of nodular flint. Sources of this material occur in Cretaceous deposits to the east at Beer Head and to the northeast of Topsham, while chert deposits are found in the Upper Greensand beds in the Haldon Hills (Blackmore 2004).

Conclusion

Although the assemblage is too small and has too few diagnostic elements, the technological elements, particularly the predominance of short, broad flakes suggests a predominantly late Neolithic to early Bronze Age date range. However, a Mesolithic component is indicated by the narrow, parallel blade scars on the chert core and the narrow blade technology characterising a small number of the broken flakes.

6 DISCUSSION

Across the 11 trenches archaeological features were encountered in a total of 11 instances. It is likely that some of these instances represent multiple samples of the same feature, and in one case; that of ditch [8/06]/[11/06], this is almost certain. This is discussed further below. Four trenches were devoid of archaeological features, most notably those at the very top of the landform (Trenches 9 & 10).

The excavation of the evaluation trenches seems to have confirmed the projection of the geophysical survey in a number of cases. It should though be noted that while both surveys were based on the OS National grid the locating of the geophysics transects and evaluation trenches are likely to have been carried out with slightly differing degrees of accuracy; with a hand-held GPS unit having been used in the case of the geophysical survey and the trenches being positioned with the aid of differential GPS from a base-station. This may explain the slight difference between the projected location of features and their actual position in relation to the evaluation trenches.

Trench 1 at the SE extreme of the site revealed no archaeological features.

Moving NW up the slope to Trench 2, feature [2/07] can be discounted as a likely animal burrow and possibly assume a similar origin for feature [2/05] which, while appearing more regular than [2/07], does not appear in Trench 4 further up the slope. In contrast, ditch [2/09] appears to correlate with cut [4/05], which shares a similar fill, and together these would seem to represent the linear feature identified by the gradiometer survey as running NW with the slope on this line. The likelihood is that this is a field boundary although further consultation of the results of the geophysical survey indicates that this feature extends up the slope and appears to dog-leg to the SW before resuming its original course, perhaps with respect to the enclosure towards the top of the landform, and it may therefore be of a contemporary date.

Ditch [3/04] runs across the slope and, according to the gradiometer survey, crosses ditch [2/09]/[4/05] between Trenches 2 and 4. This relatively substantial ditch may

represent an earlier field boundary and the relatively thick topsoil and subsoil throughout Trench 4 may be indicative of terracing along the landform. However, given that ditch [3/04] runs roughly parallel to Old Rydon Lane (itself the modern parish boundary between Topsham and Heavitree), approximately 150m to the southeast, a more significant role cannot be discounted. Although the geophysical survey indicates a termination of ditch [3/05] a little to the southwest of ditch [2/09]/[[4/05] it is possible that the former is related to an earlier boundary, perhaps that of the Saxon Manor of Topsham thought to run north of the road [JMHS, 2006]. The approximate line of the ditch is maintained by a further ditch shown on the geophysical survey to the south-west. However a flint recovered from the fill of the excavated ditch contained a flint flake that could be contemporary or residual.

No archaeological features were identified in the central portion of the site. Trench 5, positioned according to the line of the proposed road, was located too far to the northeast to substantiate the results of the geophysics by revealing the dog-leg feature identified in this portion of the site. The results of the geophysical survey appear to be substantiated in that the ditch does not continue further to the east.

Towards the top of the landform trenches 6, 7, 8 and 11 were positioned to uncover the apparent enclosure indicated by the gradiometer survey and visible in aerial photographs (Fig. 8) of the area.

The ditch revealed in Trench 7 [7/06], running NW-SE, would seem to represent the northeast boundary of the enclosure, while ditch [8/06] uncovered in the southwest portion of Trench 8, and fully sectioned in the extension of Trench 11, would appear to represent its northwest extent. The majority of Trench 8 can therefore be judged to have fallen within the probable entrance as indicated on the aerial photographs in the north corner of the enclosure. The relatively sudden drop of the natural in this region of Trench 8 could be interpreted as representing a hollow way through this entrance which was subsequently filled by colluvial deposits. A similar entrance appears to exists in the south corner.

Ditch [8/04], cutting [8/06] in Trench 8 is most likely a relatively recent development given that it has been cut into the subsoil rather than the natural gravel. This feature was not registered by the geophysical survey.

The pit [11/05] and post hole [7/06] are testament to activity and possible structures within this enclosure, while pit [6//04] indicates activity immediately beyond its confines.

The cropmark ditch seen on the aerial photograph (Fig. 8) and the geophysical survey running NW-SE through the centre of the enclose investigated by Trenches 7-8 & 11 is clearly of at least post-medieval date being parallel to modern boundaries. It is also identifiable on the Map of Tithing of East Wonford of 1813 (JMHS 2006, Fig 16) as is the double linear boundary in the field to the south, slightly further to the west (Stratascan 2006).

The prehistoric pottery and flintwork shows prehistoric activity in the area. The ovoid and sub-circular features revealed by the geophysical survey and apparent on the aerial photographs to the west of the rectangular enclosures may well be prehistoric enclosures. Alternatively they may be geological in origin. Rectangular enclosures

are not common in the prehistoric period although a late prehistoric date can not be ruled out. While such enclosures normally would be thought to be of Romano-British date only one abraded sherd was found during the evaluation and this was recovered from the topsoil albeit from within the rectangular enclosure. If of Romano-British date then more artefacts of this period would be expected, even if only from topsoil and subsoil contexts. Whether the rectilinear field system is of prehistoric, Roman or medieval date is not clear as dating evidence was not forthcoming from these features.

The apparent cropmarks/soilmarks on an aerial photograph (JMHS 2006, Fig. 27) are thought not to be of archaeological origin as they were not found in Trench 10, did not continue intro Trench 6 and were not picked up by the geophysical survey.

The consistent lack of artefacts within the features, with the exception of a flint flake in one ditch, coupled with the prehistoric finds within the topsoil suggests a prehistoric date for the at least the field boundaries.

The unstratified flint was casual finds picked by the team as they walked between the trenches. While the majority came from the area between the groups of Trenches 2-4 and Trenches 5-7 this was due to more movement between these groups of trenches than elsewhere.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barker, D, 1999 *Information sheets for the English Heritage post-medieval pottery training days, March 1999*

Blackmore, O., 2004, "The Lithics", in A. J. Sage, and J. Allan, *The early Roman military defences, late Roman cemetery and later features at the Topsham School, Topsham*, Proceedings of the Devon Archaeological Society, **62**, 23-26

Crossley, D, 1990 *Post-Medieval Archaeology in Britain* Leicester University Press

Institute of Field Archaeologists. 1994: *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations.*

JMHS 2006 *An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment of The Newcourt Area Lower RNSD Site and Land Alongside Old Rydon Lane and the A379, Topsham*. Unpublished client report. January 2006.

Stratascan Ltd 2006. *Geophysical Survey – Royal Naval Stores Depot, Topsham, Devon* February 2006. Unpublished client report

APPENDIX – ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
Trench 1			0.67	1.6	20		
1/01	Layer	Mid brown silty loam	0.34	Tr.	Tr.	Pot	Post-med
1/02	Layer	Orange-brown sand	0.18	Tr.	Tr.	-	
1/03	Natural	Orange sand	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	
Trench 2			0.85	1.6	20		
2/01	Layer	Medium brown sandy loam	0.50	Tr.	Tr.	Pot, flint	Post-med
2/02	Layer	Grey-brown clay loam	0.16	Tr.	Tr.	-	
2/03	Natural layer	Dark orange sand	0.07	Tr.	Tr.	-	
2/04	Natural	Dark orange gravel	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	
2/05	Cut	Linear cut	0.24	0.96	Tr.	-	
2/06	Fill	Light brown sandy gravel	0.24	0.96	Tr.	-	
2/07	Cut	Irregular linear cut	0.20	0.40	1.50	-	
2/08 2/09	Fill Cut	Medium brown sandy gravel Linear cut Unexcavated	0.20 -	0.40 1.15	1.50. Tr.	- -	
Trench 3			0.64	1.6	12		
3/01	Layer	Mid brown silty loam	0.40	Tr.	Tr.	Pot, flint	Post-med
3/02	Layer	Mid orangey-brown sand	0.30	Tr.	Tr.	-	
3/03	Natural	Orange sand with stones	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	
3/04	Cut	Linear cut	0.54	1.64	Tr.	-	
3/05	Fill	Mid orangey-brown sandy loam with charcoal	0.54	1.64	Tr.	flint	?prehistoric

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
Trench 4			0.94	1.6	20 (+ 8 ext.)		
4/01	Layer	Dark brown sandy loam	0.33	Tr.	Tr.	-	
4/02	Layer	Light brown clay sand	0.24	Tr.	Tr.	-	
4/03	Natural layer	Medium grey clay sand	0.40	Tr.	Tr.	-	
4/04	Natural	Med orange sand	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	
4/05	Cut	Linear cut	0.08	0.90	Tr.	-	
4/06	Fill	Medium brown sandy silt	0.08	0.90	Tr.	-	
Trench 5			0.64	1.6	12		
5/01	Layer	Dark brown silty loam	0.32	Tr.	Tr.	Pot	Post-med
5/02	Layer	Orangey-brown sandy loam	0.14	Tr.	Tr.	-	
5/03	Natural	Orange sandy gravel	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	
Trench 6			0.69	1.60	20		
6/01	Layer	Dark brown Clay sand	0.30	Tr.	Tr.	Pot, flint	Post-med
6/02	Layer	Medium brown sandy loam	0.14	Tr.	Tr.	-	
6/03	Natural	Dark orange sandy gravel	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	
6/04	Cut	Small pit	0.12	0.36	0.20	-	
6/05	Fill	Dark brown silty sand	0.12	0.36	0.20	-	

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
Trench 7			0.75	1.60	11		
7/01	Layer	Dark brown silty loam	0.45	Tr.	Tr.	-	
7/02	Layer	Orange brown sandy loam	0.18	Tr.	Tr.	-	
7/03	Natural	Orange sandy gravel	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	
7/04	Cut	Linear cut	0.60	0.82	Tr.	-	
7/05	Fill	Light orangey-brown sandy loam	0.60	0.82	Tr.	-	
7/06	Cut	Cut of post hole	0.50	0.24	(0.20)	-	
7/07	Fill	Light brown sandy loam	0.50	0.24	(0.20)	-	
Trench 8			0.23 (W) - 0.95 (E)	1.60	20		
8/01	Layer	Dark brown sandy loam	0.21	Tr.	Tr.	Pot	Post-med and residual EBA
8/02	Layer	Medium brown clay sand	0.24	Tr.	Tr.	-	
8/03	Natural	Dark orange sand	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	
8/04	Cut	Linear cut	0.12	0.76	Tr.	-	
8/05	Fill	Yellow-brown sand	0.12	0.76	Tr.	-	
8/06	Cut	Linear cut	0.25	(0.58)	(7.40)	-	
8/07	Fill	Medium brown clay sand	0.25	(0.58)	(7.40)	-	
8/08	Natural layer	Orange sand	0.40	Tr.	7.5		

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
Trench 9			0.86	1.60	20		
9/01	Layer	Dark brown silty loam	0.28	Tr.	Tr.	-	
9/02	Layer	Light orangey-brown sandy loam	0.20	Tr.	Tr.	-	
9/03	Natural	Orangey-red gravel	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	

Trench 10			0.60	1.60	30		
10/01	Layer	Dark brown sandy loam	0.23	Tr.	Tr.	-	
10/02	Layer	Medium brown sandy loam	0.16	Tr.	Tr.	-	
10/03	Natural layer	Dark yellow sand	0.21	Tr.	Tr.	-	
10/04	Natural	Dark orange sand with gravel	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	
Trench 11			0.55	1.60	30 (+ 7 ext.)		
11/01	Layer	Slightly reddish-brown silty sand	0.39	Tr.	Tr.	Pot	Residual Roman
11/02	Layer	Orangey-brown sandy clay loam	0.15	Tr.	Tr.	-	
11/03	Natural	Yellow-brown sand and gravel	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	
11/04	Cut	Cut of pit	0.22	0.80	(0.35)	-	
11/05	Fill	Light brown silty sandy loam	0.12	0.80	(0.35)	pebble	
11/06	Cut	Linear cut	0.45	1.90	Tr.	-	
11/07	Fill	Strong brown sand	0.38	1.90	Tr.	Pot	Intrusive post-med
11/08	Fill	Very reddish-brown sand with gravel	0.07	0.58	Tr.	-	