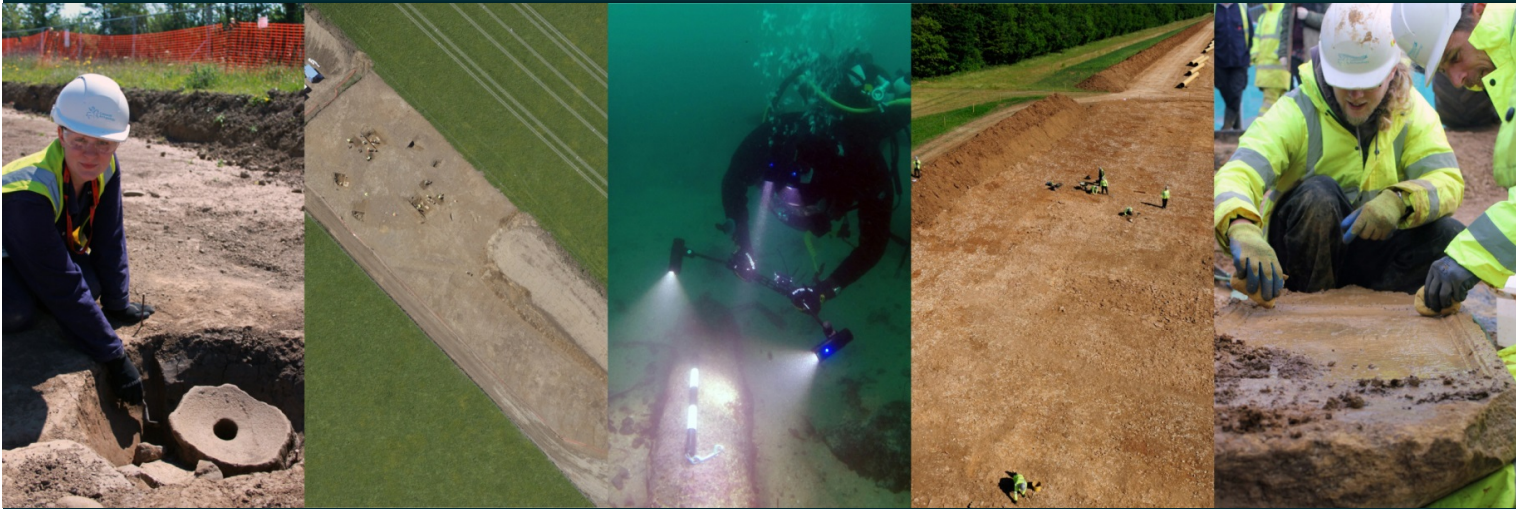




Land west of Hook Norton Road
Sibford Ferris, Cherwell
Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation



for
Land and Partners (South East) Ltd

CA Project: MK0053

CA Report MK0053_1

Accession Number: OXCMS: 2019.57

May 2019



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Sibford Ferris, Cherwell
Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation

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B	15/05/2019		CP	External Review	Consultant Comment	SRJ

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SUMMARY

Project Name:	Land west of Hook Norton Road
Location:	Sibford Ferris, Cherwell, Oxfordshire
NGR:	435437 237069
Type:	Trial trench evaluation
Date:	9 to 12 April 2019
Planning Reference:	Cherwell District Council 18/01894/OUT
Location of Archive:	The County Museum Resource Centre
Accession Number:	OXCMS: 2019.57
Site Code:	SIBF 19

In April 2019, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation of land west of Hook Norton Road, Sibford Ferris, Cherwell, Oxfordshire. The evaluation was undertaken to inform an outline planning application for the residential development of the site. The fieldwork comprised the excavation of fifteen trenches.

Archaeological interest in the site is derived from its location to the south-west of the village of Sibford Ferris, which has its origins in the Saxon. A previous geophysical survey of the site identified a number of anomalies indicative of prehistoric settlement features.

The evaluation identified a concentration of archaeological remains within the eastern part of the site, with a lower density of archaeological remains within the southern part of the site. Where archaeological features were encountered during the current trenching there was a good correlation with the results of the geophysical survey, although a few anomalies could not be located within the evaluation trenches.

The earliest identified features comprised ditches forming elements of an enclosure (Enclosure 1) and a large boundary ditch, along with further isolated pits and a ditch, which contained pottery of broadly Middle to Late Iron Age date. The evidence indicates domestic settlement within the Iron Age, concentrated in the eastern part of the site. Further limited evidence for Roman occupation associated with a second enclosure (Enclosure 2) was also identified.

A further large, undated, possible enclosure (Enclosure 3) was identified in the eastern part of site, along with pits and ditches further indicating settlement activity. The relationship between

intercutting Enclosures 2 and 3 was not established during the evaluation, however, their positioning suggests they were not contemporary. Excluding Enclosure 3, the varying alignments of the prehistoric features depicted on the geophysical survey, appear to respect one another spatially and appear to indicate an organic development to the site, taking place over a period of time, although no complexity or apparent longevity was identified within the fills of the features themselves.

Plough furrows, the remains of the open field system that once surrounded the village of Sibford Ferris, although indicated on the geophysical survey, were not identified during the evaluation.

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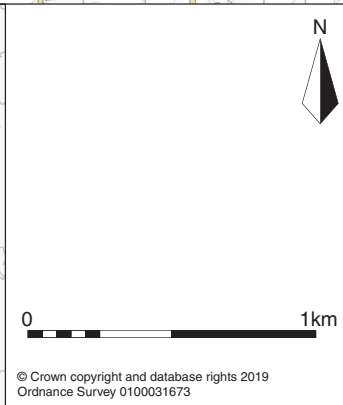
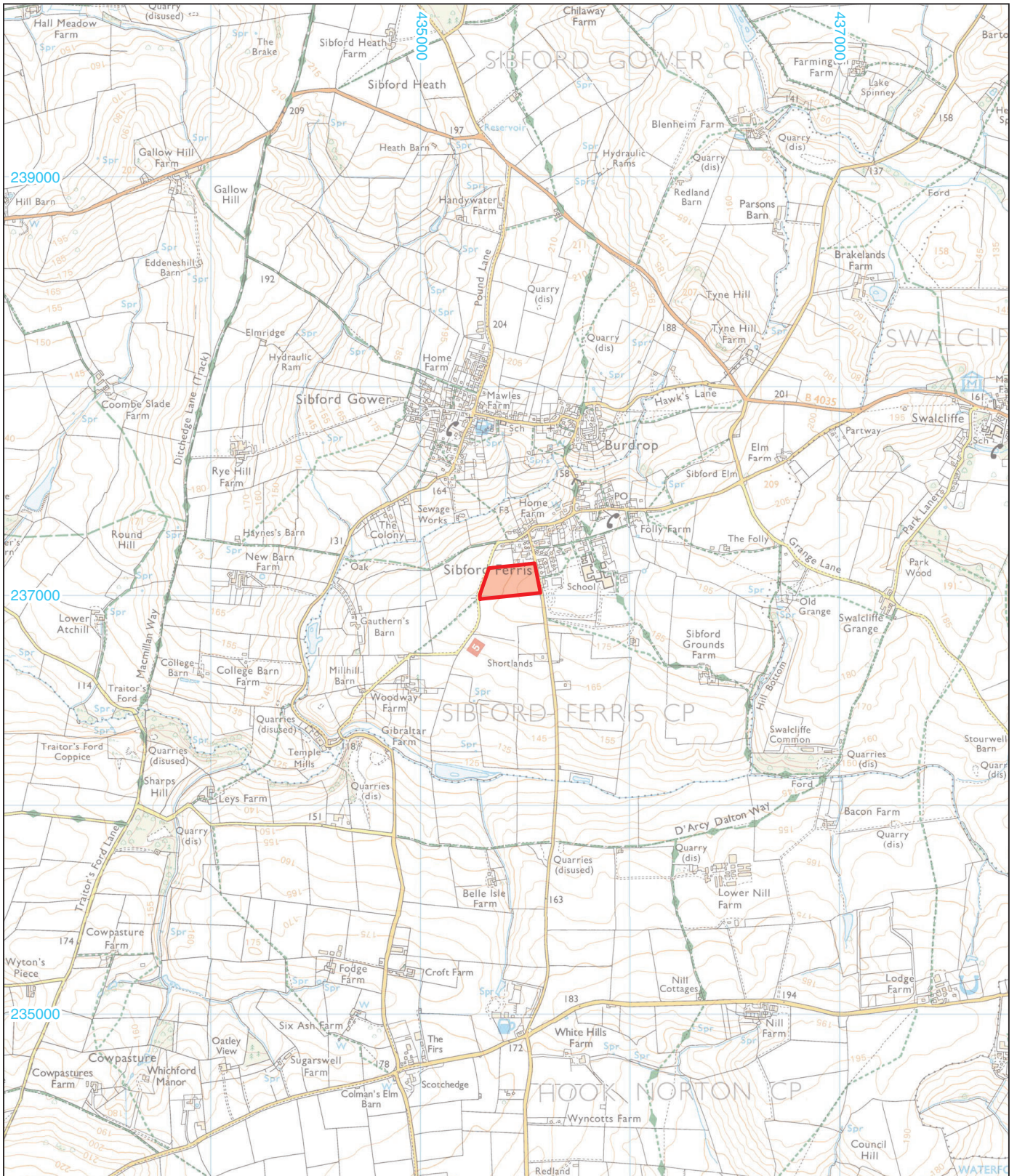



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In April 2019, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation at land west of Hook Norton Road, Sibford Ferris, Oxfordshire (centred at NGR: 435437 237069; Fig. 1). The evaluation was commissioned by Land and Partners (South East) Limited.
- 1.2 The evaluation was undertaken to inform a planning application (ref: 18/01894/OUT) to Cherwell District Council (CDC; the local planning authority) for the residential development of the site, with associated access, infrastructure and landscaping.
- 1.3 The scope of the archaeological work, which comprised the excavation of fifteen trial trenches, was defined during discussions between Cathy Patrick, Technical Director, Orion Heritage and Richard Oram, Oxfordshire County Council's Planning Archaeologist (OCCPA; the archaeological advisor to CDC). The discussion was informed by a Heritage desk-based assessment (DBA) prepared by Orion Heritage (2018) and a geophysical survey prepared by Magnitude Surveys (2019).
- 1.4 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with detailed *Written Schemes of Investigation* (WSI) produced by Orion Heritage (2019) and CA (2019) and approved by Richard Oram, OCCPA. The fieldwork also followed *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014).

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PROJECT TITLE
 Land West of Hook Norton Road
 Sibford Ferris, Cherwell, Oxfordshire

FIGURE TITLE
 Site location plan

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The site

- 1.5 The proposed development area is approximately 3.7ha in area and comprises approximately half of a large agricultural field (Plates 1 & 2). The development area is bounded to the north by residential housing and agricultural land, to the east by Hook Norton Road, to the south by agricultural land, and to the west by Woodway Road, with further arable fields beyond. The River Stour lies approximately 640m to the south. The site lies at approximately 173m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at its eastern boundary, sloping upwards to 183m aOD at the western boundary.
- 1.6 The underlying bedrock geology across the majority of the site is mapped as Northampton Sand Formation, sandstone, limestone and ironstone of the Jurassic Period, with a band of Whitby Mudstone Formation located along the southern site boundary (BGS 2019).

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Plate 1 Site, looking north



Plate 2 Site, looking south-east



2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been detailed within a Desk Based Assessment produced by Orion Heritage (2018), with subsequent geophysical surveys carried out by Magnitude Surveys (2019). The following section is summarised from these sources.

2.2 The Desk Based Assessment produced by Orion (2018), found limited evidence indicating significant archaeological activity of any period either within the site or in the immediate surrounding area. With the exception of a watching brief at the Manor House, Sibford Ferris, no other archaeological work has been undertaken within 1km of this site. No find spots have been recorded from within the site and there are no Scheduled Monuments within 1km of the site.

Prehistoric (Pre-AD43)

2.3 Several arrowheads and scrapers have been recorded across the wider landscape surrounding the site. These find spots consisted of a later prehistoric flint arrowhead recorded c. 565m to the north-west of the site (SMR 9750); a Neolithic or Bronze Age flint scraper (SMR 9754) recorded approximately 605m to the east; a Neolithic flint arrowhead (SMR 9752) identified 550m to the west, a Bronze Age flint arrowhead (SMR 9753) located 70m to the north-west; a Bronze Age, barbed and tanged, arrowhead (SMR 9755) recorded c. 705m to the south-east, and a Bronze Age arrowhead (SMR 13607) recorded c. 725m to the north.

2.4 While no recorded prehistoric settlements are known to be located near the project area, rectilinear anomalies with internal pit alignment features identified during geophysical survey may indicate the presence of some level of settlement activity within the site vicinity. This is further supported by the presence of a potentially contemporaneous D-shaped enclosure system on a similar alignment in the north-eastern corner of the site.

Roman (AD43-410)

2.5 There is no evidence of Roman activity within the site, however, Roman artefacts have been recovered in association with an early medieval ridgeway (SMR 8660; Great Cotswold Ridgeway), located c. 1.2km to the north of the site.

- 2.6 Geophysical survey results suggest the presence of rectilinear enclosures in the eastern portion of the site. These are interpreted as potentially being of late prehistoric or Roman origin.

Saxon/early medieval (AD410-1066)

- 2.7 The Great Cotswold Ridgeway (SMR 8660), located 1.2km to the north of the site, represents the only known Saxon activity in close proximity site.

Medieval (1066-1485)

- 2.8 The name Sibford is thought to derive from Sibba's Ford and Ferris from the Ferrers (de Ferrières) family, earls of Derby, the medieval lords of the manor. The village is recorded in the Domesday Book and as such is likely to have pre-Norman origins. There are several earthworks of medieval date to the north of the site; a possible holloway (SMR 28043), a windmill of medieval or post-medieval date (SM 28045) and a probable croft boundary bank (SM 28064). Gower's Close, a Grade II listed building, is located to the north of site on Brudrop Road (SM 18881) and has its origins in the medieval period. A possible well and chapel of similar date are located c. 535m north-east of site. It is likely the site formed part of the agricultural hinterland surrounding the medieval settlement of Sibford Ferris and as such has low potential for activity of this period.

Post-medieval to modern (1540-present)

- 2.9 The fields around Sibford Ferris were largely enclosed by the time of the 1789 Enclosure map, and most have remained in agricultural use while the village has expanded southwards during this period. The process of enclosing land likely started from 1540 continuing until 1810.



3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The objectives of the evaluation, as detailed in the WSI (Orion Heritage 2019 & CA 2019), were to provide information about the archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality. In accordance with *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014), the evaluation was designed to be minimally intrusive and minimally destructive to archaeological remains. The information gathered will enable Cherwell District Council to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset, consider the impact of the proposed development upon it, and to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the development proposal, in line with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2019).

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4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork comprised the excavation of 15 trenches, each measuring 30m long and 1.8m wide, in the locations shown on the attached plan (Figs 2 to 4). The location of Trench 15 was revised from that shown in the WSI due to on-site constraints with the agreement of Richard Oram, OCCPA. Trenches were set out on OS National Grid (NGR) co-ordinates using Leica GPS and surveyed in accordance with CA Technical Manual 4 *Survey Manual*.
- 4.2 All trenches were excavated by mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All machine excavation was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. Where archaeological deposits were encountered they were excavated by hand in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.3 Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with CA Technical Manual 2: *The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites* and, were sampled and processed (Appendix C). All artefacts recovered were processed in accordance with Technical Manual 3 *Treatment of Finds Immediately after Excavation*.
- 4.4 The archive and artefacts from the evaluation are currently held by CA at their offices in Milton Keynes. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner the artefacts will be deposited with the County Museum Resource Centre under accession number OXCMS: 2019.57, along with the site archive. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix D, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.





- Site boundary
- Evaluation trench
- Archaeological feature
- 30m buffer around SZTT
- Geophysical survey (Magnitude Surveys, 2019)
 - Archaeology probable (strong)
 - Archaeology probable (weak)
 - Archaeology probable (spread)
 - Archaeology possible (strong)
 - Archaeology possible (weak)
- Agricultural (weak)
- Agricultural (strong)
- Natural (strong)
- Natural (weak)
- Magnetic disturbance
- Ferrous/debris (spread)
- Ferrous (spike)
- Agricultural (trend)
- Service



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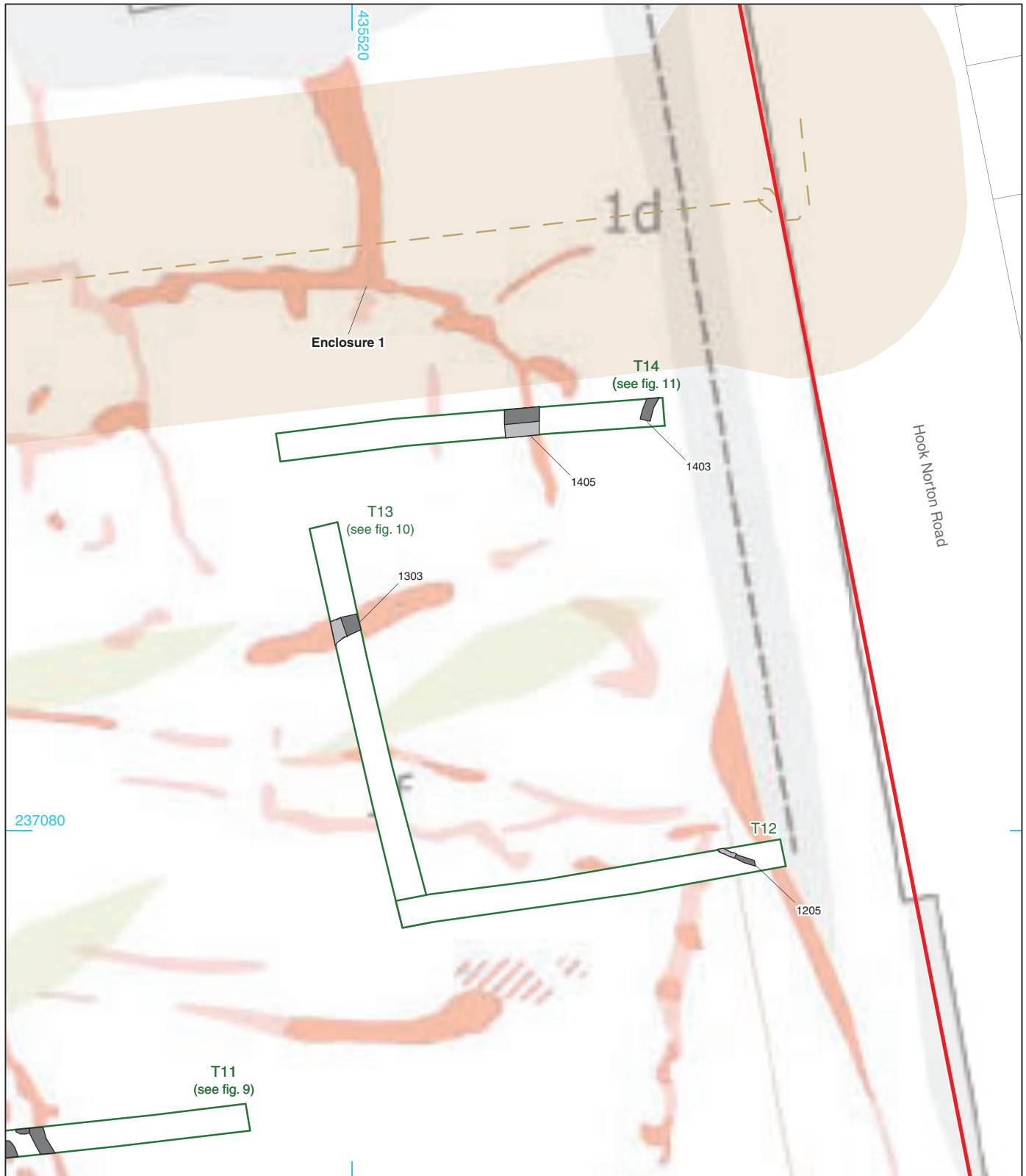
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PROJECT TITLE
 Land West of Hook Norton Road
 Sibford Ferris, Cherwell, Oxfordshire

FIGURE TITLE
 Trench location plan showing
 archaeological features

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- Site boundary
- Evaluation trench
- Archaeological feature (excavated/unexcavated)
- 30m buffer around SZTT

Geophysical survey (Magnitude Surveys, 2019)

- Archaeology probable (strong)
- Archaeology probable (weak)
- Archaeology probable (spread)
- Natural (weak)
- Magnetic disturbance
- Agricultural (trend)
- Service



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FIGURE TITLE

Trenches 12, 13 and 14, showing
 Enclosure 1

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FIGURE NO.

3

0 1:400 20m

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation trench Archaeological feature (excavated/unexcavated) 30m buffer around SZTT 	<p>Geophysical survey (Magnitude Surveys, 2019)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Archaeology probable (strong) Archaeology probable (weak) Archaeology possible (weak) Natural (weak) Ferrous (spike) Agricultural (trend) 		<p> Cotswold Archaeology</p> <p>Andover 01264 347630 Cirencester 01285 771022 Exeter 01392 573970 Milton Keynes 01908 564660 Suffolk 01449 900120 www.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk enquiries@cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk</p>
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PROJECT TITLE
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FIGURE TITLE
Trenches 7, 8 and 11, showing Enclosure 2

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5. RESULTS (FIGS 2 TO 12)

5.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts, finds and environmental samples (palaeoenvironmental evidence) are to be found in Appendices A, B and C respectively.

General stratigraphy

5.2 A broadly similar stratigraphic sequence was identified across the site. The natural geological substrate, which comprised mid yellowish brown; sandy silt, with rare small stone inclusions, was encountered at an average depth of between 0.4m and 0.6m below present ground level (bpgl). This was overlain by mid brownish-red; sandy silt subsoil, which measured between 0.15m and 0.36m thick. This was sealed by ploughsoil with an average depth of between 0.25m and 0.34m.



Plate 3 General stratigraphy (1m scale)

5.3 The evaluation identified a concentration of archaeological remains within the eastern part of the site, with a lower density of archaeological remains within the southern part of the site. With the exception of the continuation of a large, east/west orientated boundary ditch, archaeological remains did not extend into the western part of the site. The results of the fieldwork showed a good correlation with the preceding

geophysical survey. The geophysical survey identified a series of curvilinear and rectilinear enclosures, trackways, linear and discrete features; the presence of which were confirmed by the evaluation.

- 5.4 No archaeological features or deposits were identified within Trenches 2, 4, 5, 9, 10 and 15. Where variations in natural geology were observed, these were tested to confirm their natural geological origin.

Trench 1 (Figs 2 and 5)

- 5.5 Broadly east/west orientated ditch 103 was identified within the centre of Trench 1. It measured 3m wide and 0.56m deep, with moderately steeply sloping sides and a concave to slightly irregular base (Figure 5; section AA). The ditch contained two fills; the basal fill (104) consisted of friable light yellowish-brown silty sand with occasional small sub-rounded stone inclusions. Fill 104 was overlain by friable mid greyish brown silty clay fill 105, from which one sherd of Iron Age pottery was recovered. Both fills are interpreted as the result of natural infilling processes. The location of ditch 103 corresponded to a large linear anomaly identified by geophysical survey.

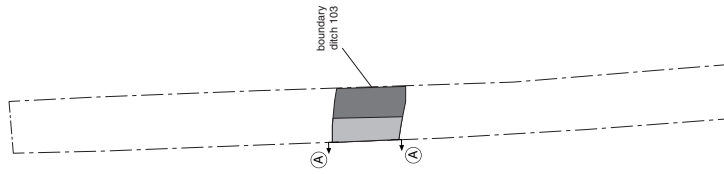
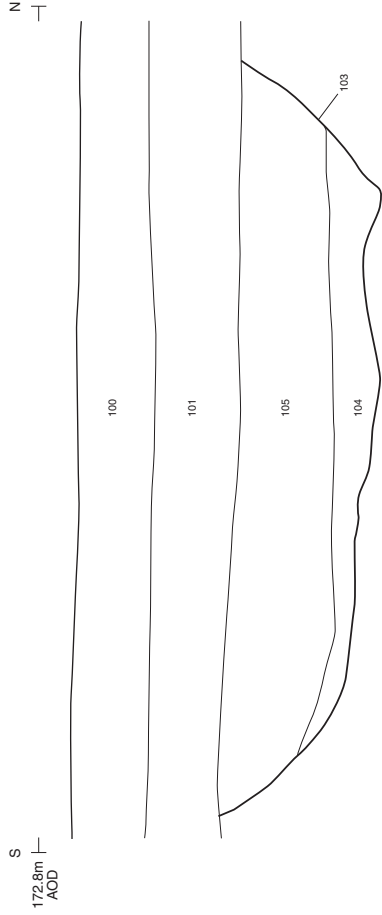
Trench 3 (Fig 2)

- 5.6 Located towards the southern end of Trench 2 was east/west orientated Ditch 303. It measured in excess of 2m long and 3.35m wide but remained unexcavated. No finds were recovered from the surface of its friable mid yellowish-brown sandy silt fill (304), which did not contain any inclusions. Ditch 303 corresponds with a linear anomaly depicted on the geophysical survey.

Trench 6 (Figs 2, 4 and 6)

- 5.7 Located towards the southern end of Trench 6 was east/west orientated ditch 603. It measured 1.73m wide and 0.6m deep, with moderately sloping concave sides and a rounded concave base. It contained two fills, the lower fill (620) comprised a compact mid brownish yellow clay silt with small stone inclusions. This was overlain by fill 604, which consisted of friable light brownish grey clay silt with manganese inclusions. No finds were recovered from the respective fills of this feature which are interpreted as the result of natural silting following disuse.
- 5.8 Located approximately 3m to the north was broadly east/west orientated ditch 605. It measured 1m wide and in excess of 1.8m long, extending beyond the eastern and western baulks of the trench.

Section AA



Plan of Trench 1

- Evaluation trench
- Archaeological feature (excavated/unexcavated)
- Section location

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FIGURE TITLE

Trench 1: Plan, section, and photograph

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Section of boundary ditch 103, looking west (1m scales)



Plate 4 Ditch 603, looking north-east (1m scale)

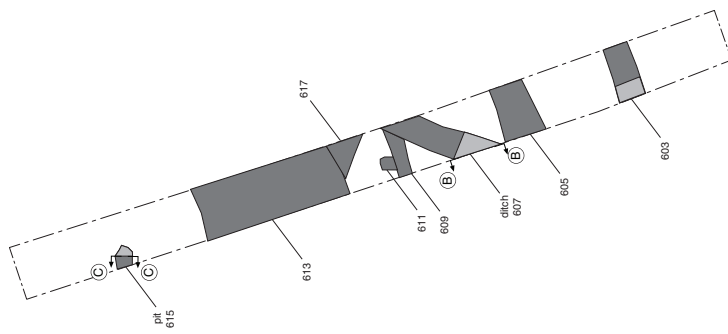
- 5.9 Located to the immediate north was south-west/north-east orientated ditch 607. It measured 1.35m wide and 0.46m deep with moderately sloping concave sides and a concave base (Fig. 6; section BB). Lower fill 619 consisted of compact mid-red brown clayey silt. This was overlain by fill 608, which comprised friable mid-brown yellow sandy silt. No finds were recovered from fills 619 and 608, which are interpreted as the result of natural infilling.
- 5.10 Ditch 607 cut the uppermost mid brownish yellow; sandy silt fill 610 of ditch 609. Ditch 609 measured in excess of 1.8m long and was 3m wide, but was not further investigated.
- 5.11 Located to the immediate north was unexcavated pit 611, which measured 0.4m in diameter. Its uppermost fill (612), comprised mid brownish yellow sandy silt which was cut by ditch 609.
- 5.12 Located towards the centre of the trench was north-west/south-east orientated ditch 617. Its brownish-yellow, sandy silt fill (618) was cut by east/west orientated boundary ditch 613.



Section of ditch 607, looking south west (1m scale)



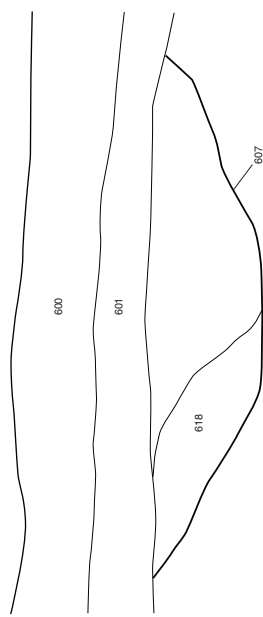
Section of boundary pit 615, looking west (1m scale)



Plan of Trench 6

Section BB

SE
176.9m
AOD



Section CC

S
176.1m
AOD



- Evaluation trench
- Archaeological feature (excavated/unexcavated)
- Section location

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FIGURE TITLE
 Trench 6: Plan, sections, and photographs

DRAWN BY AW PROJECT NO. MK0053 FIGURE NO. 6
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- 5.13 Ditch 613 measured 1.8m long and 3m wide. No finds were recovered from its friable mid brownish yellow sandy silt fill (614).
- 5.14 Located towards the north-western end of Trench 6 was pit 615 (Fig. 6; section CC). It measured 0.84m long, 0.97m wide and 0.41m deep, with steeply sloping sides and a rounded base. Its basal fill (622) consisted of friable dark greyish brown clayey silt resulting from natural infilling processes. This was partially overlain by fill 621, which comprised of friable dark brownish-yellow sandy silt with frequent medium to large sub-angular mudstone fragments. It is interpreted as representing edge collapse/slump entering the feature from the south and may further indicate that the feature was left open to naturally infill following its initial excavation. Upper fill 616 consisted of friable dark brownish yellow clayey silt and is interpreted as a final phase of natural infilling. No artefacts were recovered from the respective fills of pit 615.
- 5.15 Archaeological features 607 and 613 corresponded to anomalies identified of geophysical survey. The presence of the remaining archaeological features was not predicted by the geophysical survey.

Trench 7 (Figs 2, 4, and 7)

- 5.16 Located centrally within Trench 7 was north-east/south-west orientated ditch 703. It measured 2.38m wide and 0.73m deep, with moderately sloping irregular sides and a concave base (Fig. 7; section DD). The ditch contained two fills, the lower fill (704) consisted of a moderately compact mid greyish brown silty clay resulting from an initial phase of natural infilling entering the ditch from the south, internal to the enclosure. Its upper fill (705) represents the final phase of natural infilling and is comprised of moderately compact mid greyish brown silty clay and contained a single sherd of pottery broadly dateable to the Roman period. Ditch 703 corresponds with an anomaly depicted on the geophysical survey.

Trench 8 (Figs 2, 4, and 8)

- 5.17 Partially revealed east/west orientated ditch 803 was recorded in plan extending from the southern baulk of Trench 8. It measured in excess of 1m wide and extended beyond the eastern and western edges of the trench. Ditch 803 remained unexcavated and no finds were recovered from the surface of its uppermost fill (804), which comprised mid reddish-brown sandy silt. Feature 803 appears to correspond with a crescent-shaped anomaly depicted on the geophysical survey.