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Ploughley Road, Ambrosden, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Summary

In September 2022, Oxford Archaeology carried out a trial-trench evaluation on land to the north of Ploughley Road, to the north of Ambrosden. The evaluation comprised 28 trenches. The site sits on an area of higher limestone bedrock in the east, dropping down onto mudstone geology in the west. The majority of features were located on the limestone ridge, and represent a range of archaeological periods. A small number of residual flint tools of early Neolithic date suggest ephemeral activity perhaps related to hide processing, wood working and plant processing. A single ditch contained pottery of early Bronze Age date. Further ditches and a number of small pits contained Iron Age or Roman material. Larger, more amorphous, flat-based pits also of Iron Age and Roman date are interpreted as limestone quarries. It is likely that the Iron Age and Roman activity is peripheral to any settlement of these dates. Another flat-bottomed pit contained early Anglo-Saxon pottery and Roman reduced wares that may have been curated. This pit may be a sunken-featured building, and a similar feature in the same trench that was not investigated may represent a second example.

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The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Gerry Thacker. The fieldwork was directed by Dan Pond, who was supported by BJ Ware, Molly Eirlys Walker, Chloe Peterson, Callum Hendren and Hadley Sharman. Survey and digitising was carried out by Caroline Souday, Adam Rapiejko and Matt Bradley. Thanks are also extended to the teams of OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the supervision of Leigh Allen, processed the environmental remains under the supervision of Rebecca Nicholson, and prepared the archive under the supervision of Nicky Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by EDP Ltd on behalf of Archstone Ambrosden and Bellway Homes Ltd to undertake a trial-trench evaluation on the site of a proposed residential development.

1.1.2 The work was undertaken to inform the planning authority in advance of the submission of a planning application. Although the local planning authority had not set a brief for this work, discussions between EDP Ltd and Victoria Green (Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)) had established the scope of work required. This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.

1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2014a) and *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2014b), and local and national planning policies.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

1.2.1 The site lies to the north-east of Ploughley Road, north of the village of Ambrosden, c 3.2km south-east of the historic core of Bicester, and is centred at NGR SP 60383 19978 (Fig. 1).

1.2.2 The area of proposed development consists of two fields currently under pasture with the boundaries defined by hedgerows. To the east of the site is a recent residential development that adjoins Ambrosden village. Fields extend to the north and north-west. The south-western edge of the site is delimited by Ploughley Road and houses.

1.2.3 The bedrock geology of the area consists of several bands of limestone and mudstone of the Cornbrash Formation, Kellaways Formation and the Forest Marble Formation. No superficial deposits have been recorded on the site (BGS online).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been described in detail in a draft archaeological and heritage assessment (EDP 2022), which forms the basis of the summary provided below.

Prehistoric (500,000BC–AD43)

1.3.2 There are no known remains of the prehistoric period recorded within the site area although in the wider area there is evidence of remains from this broad period.

1.3.3 Mesolithic and Neolithic flints were uncovered during recent excavations at Graven Hill, some 1km to the west of the site (OA forthcoming). The site also contained a middle Bronze Age cremation burial.

1.3.4 There are several other records related to the possible locations of Bronze Age funerary monuments, many identified through aerial photography. One of these was a possible barrow, identified by geophysical survey c 790m to the south west of the site, and subsequently confirmed through evaluation trenching. Similarly, a barrow was recorded c

1.3km to the north of the site which was associated with possibly contemporary linear features.

1.3.5 It is notable that these features present well as cropmarks and that no such indication of similar remains are recorded within the site. However, aerial photographs and LiDAR suggest evidence of medieval ridge and furrow and post-medieval plough lines suggesting that the site was once in use for arable land.

1.3.6 During an evaluation near Little Wretchwick Farm, the remains of a middle Iron Age and Roman settlement and earlier activity were revealed c 1.18km to the north-west of the site. The earliest prehistoric activity included a flint and pottery assemblage dating from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age, and predominantly located within the south-west of the area assessed. Some undated features, including a pit containing burnt stone, may correspond with this period of activity. A middle Iron Age enclosure in the south-east of the area investigated was considered as potentially part of a developing enclosure system. A further enclosure and shallow ditches are dated to the late Iron Age or Roman period.

1.3.7 An additional evaluation at Wretchwick Farm revealed agricultural gullies and ditches interpreted as a limited continuation of the periphery of the Iron Age/Roman settlement mentioned above. A small quantity of late Iron Age–Roman pottery sherds was recovered that dated these features.

1.3.8 Both a middle Iron Age settlement and an enclosed late Iron Age settlement were present on the lower slope at Graven Hill.

1.3.9 A potential later prehistoric/early Roman settlement was also uncovered during a magnetometry survey c 1km to the north-east of the site. The large survey revealed rectangular enclosures and pit-like features. A possible trackway was also identified. Weaker anomalies included a double ditched enclosure and dipolar anomalies perhaps indicating kiln activities.

1.3.10 Excavations uncovered several ‘holes in the rock’ filled with Roman potsherds and Iron Age C ware, and bones were noted in quarries south of the 2nd milestone from Bicester on the Aylesbury Road (Akeman Street) c 900m to the north-east of the site (BBOAJ 1898).

Roman (AD43–410)

1.3.11 There are no known remains of Roman material recorded within the site, but several are known from in the study area. Several known or possible areas of Roman-period settlement are recorded, relating entirely to small farmsteads.

1.3.12 An archaeological evaluation revealed a Roman settlement c 715m to the south-east of the site. The settlement included a number of features including pits, ditches, linear features, quarries and an associated field system, although it was truncated by later ploughing. Additional limestone quarries and truncated settlement were found on the north-east side of the development area.

1.3.13 As discussed above, during an evaluation near Little Wretchwick Farm, the remains of a middle Iron Age and Roman settlement were revealed. This included an enclosure and several shallow ditches, which were dated to the late Iron Age or Roman period. Several ditches yielded a reasonable assemblage of Roman pottery indicating an enclosed settlement of 2nd- and early 3rd-century date. The remains of a cobbled surface were also revealed. It is

likely that this activity represents the remains of a small farmstead. A series of undated steep-sided ditches in regular parallel alignments were interpreted as being used for horticulture, possibly relating to viticulture.

1.3.14 A subsequent evaluation at Wretchwick Farm revealed agricultural gullies and ditches that were interpreted as a limited continuation of the periphery of the Iron Age and Roman settlements mentioned above.

1.3.15 A potential, although unconfirmed, later prehistoric/early Roman settlement was identified during a magnetometry survey c 1km to the north-east of the site. The large survey noted rectangular enclosures and pit-like features. A possible trackway was also identified. Weaker anomalies included a double ditched enclosure and dipolar anomalies perhaps indicating kiln activities.

1.3.16 Several ditches were found at Springfield Farm, c 615m to the south-west of the site, two of which contained Roman pottery. The general paucity of Roman material and the absence of other material indicates that these features are probable field boundaries, remote from a settlement.

1.3.17 Two possible Roman rectilinear ditch systems were revealed during an evaluation c 775m to the north-west of the site at Symmetry Park. Subsequent strip, map and sample excavation in the western area of the site identified Iron Age to Roman field systems and a probable vineyard.

1.3.18 Residual Roman pottery was recovered from a number of features during archaeological evaluation works, c 655m to the south-east of the site. All of the pottery recovered comprised small, abraded fragments, which suggests a great deal of bioturbation and perhaps redistribution from another site, but, in the absence of any other dating evidence, was nevertheless used to tentatively date the features.

1.3.19 A single pit was identified during a watching brief, which contained a single sherd of central Gaulish samian ware, c 790m to the south of the site at Park Farm. No other features were recorded.

1.3.20 Exposed in trenches during archaeological investigation works were a number of pits, located in pairs at a depth of 1m, and ditches which contained Roman pottery and animal bones. These were located c 270m to the south of the site.

1.3.21 A geophysical survey c 315m to the south-east of the site, at Five Acres School, revealed a ditch, which was subsequently excavated by local schoolchildren. A single sherd of Roman pottery was recovered from the fill.

1.3.22 This landscape of farmsteads and farmland was cut through by Akeman Street, which ran between Bicester and Aylesbury. It runs c 370m to the north of the site at its closest.

1.3.23 Several Roman findspots and chance finds are also recorded by the Oxfordshire HER within the study area, as follows:

- A Roman cornelian intaglio, found in the vicinity of Akeman Street, c 400m to the east of the site;
- Roman pottery and bones c 290m to the south of the site; and
- Pottery c 640m to the south-east of the site.

Medieval (AD 410–1485)

1.3.24 There are no known remains relating to the medieval period documented within the site. Whilst no early medieval remains are identified in the study area, several related to the later medieval period are present.

1.3.25 Bicester was established in the 6th century and expanded from the 12th century during which period many of the lands to the south of the town were administered from the town, likely including the current site.

1.3.26 An Anglo-Saxon burial and dress fittings were recovered from Graven Hill (OA forthcoming).

1.3.27 The village of Ambrosden is thought to have been established by during the Anglo-Saxon period, and there are several theories on the origins of the name, with some suggesting that it is derived from St Ambrose's name and others pointing to the medieval names 'Ambresdone', 'Ambresden', or 'Aumbresden' indicating that it means 'Ambre's hill'.

1.3.28 There is reputed to have been a battle between Saxons and Danes at Graven Hill in the 9th century.

1.3.29 Medieval/post-medieval ridge and furrow covering an area of evaluation trenches, c 615m to the south-west of the site at Springfield Farm, was found to cut Roman ditches.

1.3.30 Ambrosden village church, which is medieval in origin, is dedicated to St Mary and is located close to the broadly contemporary manor, c 630m to the south-west of the site. There are also two preaching crosses and several burials from this period recorded during intrusive works at the graveyard.

1.3.31 The location of a second medieval manor house was recorded c 760m to the south of the site. It was documented that the house was still standing on the site of the present Park Farm in 1673 and comprised a 'substantial building returning 13 hearths'.

1.3.32 Medieval findspots and chance finds are also recorded by the Oxfordshire HER within the study area as follows:

- Gold quarter noble coin c 470m to the south-west of the site; and
- Unstratified sherds of pottery are recorded within the study area south of the manor, located c 672m to the south of the site.

1.3.33 The site lies outside of the known extent of medieval Ambrosden and there is no indication in the evidence consulted to suggest that it was used as anything other than farmland.

Post-medieval (AD 1485–1837)

1.3.34 There are no post-medieval archaeological remains identified within the site by the HER, but several in the study area.

1.3.35 Possible medieval, or more likely post-medieval, features were revealed on Blackthorn Hill c 915m to the north-east of the site. This included pits and the remains of ridge and furrow. Finds included tile, mammal bones, tobacco pipes and an iron hook. Such finds are suggestive of post-medieval manuring of agricultural fields.

1.3.36 The site continued to be located within the agricultural hinterland of post-medieval Ambrosden, and formed part of the associated landholdings of a former farmstead known as 'The Gothic', as shown on the 1885 Ordnance Survey Oxfordshire Sheet XXIII.

1.3.37 Whilst the site remained as farmland, the post-medieval period saw the expansion of Ambrosden village north and north-eastward, and several new industries were established in the area. Evidence for this was recorded mostly from documentary sources and comprises:

- A brick kiln and tile works, located c 445m to the north-east of the site;
- A second brick kiln c 670m to the north-west of the site;
- A third brick kiln, tile works and stone quarry, located c 930m to the north-east of the site; and
- Two windmills c 640m and c 790m to the north-east of the site.

1.3.38 Evidence of post-medieval agricultural activity around the study area includes pits, possibly related to quarrying activities and an undated ditch c 830m to the south-west of the site, agricultural activity in form of ridge and furrow, field boundaries.

Modern (AD 1837–present)

1.3.39 There are no records of remains from the modern period within the site in the HER, and a small number in the study area.

1.3.40 During the second world war, Ambrosden became the focus of a variety of military buildings and military railways associated with the Ordnance Depot near Graven Hill to the west of the site.

1.3.41 The site continued in agricultural use in the modern period and, therefore, has the potential for low-value agricultural activity.

Geophysical Survey

1.3.42 A gradiometer survey was conducted across the site in June 2022. The survey revealed evidence for a possible lime kiln and associated limestone quarries along with a fragmentary field system of unknown date. Other responses detected included ridge and furrow, ceramic field drains, trends of uncertain origin and at least two modern services (Lefort Geophysics 2022).

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:

- i. To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive.
- ii. To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains.
- iii. To determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means.
- iv. To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
- v. To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy.
- vi. To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- vii. To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeo-environmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.
- viii. To determine the implications of any remains with reference to economy, status utility and social activity; and
- ix. To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.
- x. To assess the results and reliability of the geophysical survey.

2.2 Specific aims and objectives

2.2.1 The specific aims and objectives of the evaluation are:

- i. To ground-truth the results of the geophysical survey;
- ii. To establish the date and function of the possible lime kiln;
- iii. Confirm the presence of possible quarrying and if it is related to the supposed kiln or the other industrial activities recorded nearby.

2.2.2 The programme of archaeological investigation was conducted within the general research parameters and objectives defined by the Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment Resource Assessments and Research Agendas (Hey and Hind 2014).

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the WSI (OA 2021).

Trench excavation

2.3.2 The trenches were laid out as shown in Figure 2 using a GPS with sub-15mm accuracy in accordance with the locations proposed in the WSI. Trenches 1 and 22 were set out using a long tape from a single survey point as their second points were not set out.

2.3.3 The trenches were excavated using a 15t tracked 360° excavator with a toothless bucket under the direct supervision of an archaeologist. Spoil was stored adjacent to, but at a safe distance from the trench edges.

2.3.4 Machining continued in even spits down to the top of the undisturbed natural geology. Once archaeological deposits had been exposed, further investigation continued by hand.

2.3.5 The exposed surface was sufficiently cleaned to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains. Ditches that crossed multiple trenches were excavated in at least one trench with interventions a minimum 0.8m wide. Several interventions were placed into a selection of large homogeneous spreads of material to identify their profile and depth. Only a sample of these deposits were excavated, however, all were surveyed in plan with a GPS with sub-15mm accuracy and all surface finds were recovered.

2.3.6 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was in accordance with established best practice and the OA field manual. Bulk finds were collected by context.

2.3.7 Digital photos were taken of any archaeological features, deposits, trenches and the evaluation work in general, and plans were produced using a GPS with sub-15mm accuracy. Sections of features will be drawn at a scale of 1:20 or 1:10 where appropriate.

2.3.8 Upon completion of the works and in agreement with Victoria Green, Planning Archaeologist for OCC, the trenches will be backfilled with the arising in reverse order of excavation.

2.4 Environmental sampling

2.4.1 Environmental sampling was undertaken to characterise the modes of preservation and concentration of assemblages of biological material from different periods, areas and context types in order to inform the strategy during any further mitigation and achieve the aims and objects as outlined in Sections 2.1 and 2.2. The strategy for environmental sampling was discussed with Victoria Green, Planning Archaeologist for OCC.

2.4.2 Bulk samples were taken from three of the large homogenous deposits. The contexts targeted contained significant amounts of charcoal as well as mollusc shells.

2.5 Finds recovery

2.5.1 Artefact assemblages were recovered (by context) by hand to assist in dating the stratigraphic sequences and for obtaining ceramic assemblages for comparison with other sites. All artefacts were retained from excavated contexts.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches that contained archaeological deposits. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits are tabulated in Appendix A. Finds data and spot dates can be found in Appendix B, and environmental data in Appendix C. Plans, sections and plates can be found at the end of the document.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The soil sequence in the trenches was fairly uniform, although the natural geology varied considerably between the eastern and western fields. At the top of the hill in the eastern field at c 75m above Ordnance datum (aOD) and along its ridge was a limestone brash within a grey clay matrix, seen in Trenches 6, 10, 13–16 and 18. The limestone became more degraded further down the slope to the west before transitioning into the underlying yellow-grey and reddish-brown silty clay mudstone geology. The lower ground to the west of the site sat at around 64m aOD (Fig. 2). The natural geology was overlain by a brown clayey silt subsoil which was 0.10–0.30 thick and present in all trenches except 15. The subsoil was in turn overlain by a dark brown silty clay topsoil.

3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good and the site remained dry throughout. Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 Archaeological features were present in Trenches 1–4, 6–8, 16–17, 19–23 and 27–28. The archaeological features within these trenches are discussed in detail below. The trenches without archaeological features will not be discussed further.

3.3.2 The majority of the archaeological features were found in the southern corner of the eastern field on the limestone brash that occupied the higher ground. The two fields that make up the investigation area have been heavily ploughed in the past, with ridge and furrow earthworks still visible. Given both the extant ridge and furrow and the extent of surviving archaeological remains in some areas, the field seems to have remained as pasture for at least the past few generations.

3.3.3 In the western field, several large pits spread across nine trenches were recorded which matched features identified by the geophysical survey. Two parallel ditches located in the western field also matched linear features recorded by the geophysical survey. Elsewhere, various features recorded by the geophysical survey were tested and confirmed to be variations in the natural geology, as the brash in the east of the site gave way to mudstone in the west, with much intermixing at the interfaces between the two formations.

3.4 Western field (Trenches 17, 20–21 and 23)

Trenches 17 and 23

3.4.1 Trenches 17 and 23 targeted two parallel NE-SW aligned linear ditches recorded by the geophysical survey (Figs 2 and 7). In Trench 17, the easterly ditch (1703; Plate 1) was 0.58m wide and 0.15m deep. The westerly ditch (1705) was targeted in Trench 23 as 2303, where it measured 0.86m wide and 0.22m deep. Both ditch cuts had moderately sloping sides with concave bases and one greyish-brown silty clay fill. Fill 2304 contained a few tiny fragments of Romano-British pottery and fill 1704 contained one cattle bone.

Trench 20

3.4.2 Two potential NE-SW aligned linear ditches were recorded by geophysical survey and targeted by Trench 20 (Figs 2 and 7). Ditch 2003 was present towards the south-eastern end of the trench. It measured 1.0m wide and 0.22m deep with a single silty clay fill (2004). Approximately 2m to the north-west of 2003 was a deposit that proved to be a variation in the natural geology (2005) measuring 0.8m wide and 0.48m deep with undulating edges and a sterile clay fill (2006).

Trench 21

3.4.3 Trench 21 revealed a N-S-aligned linear ditch (2106) at the southern end of the trench (Figs 2 and 7). Ditch 2106 was 0.96m wide and 0.5m deep and contained two clay silt fills (2107 and 2108). A smaller possible ditch, 2103, was recorded further to the north. It was 0.42m wide and 0.13m deep and had one brown silty clay fill. It is probable that 2103 represents a variation in the natural geology rather than an archaeological feature.

3.5 Eastern field (Trenches 1–28)

3.5.1 Of the 21 trenches located in the eastern field Trenches 1–4, 6–8, 16, 19 and 27–28 contained archaeological features.

Trench 1

3.5.2 A small shallow pit, 103, measured 0.47m wide and 0.09m deep and was located at the western end the trench (Figs 3 and 4). The pit had moderately sloping sides and a flat base with a single greyish brown silty clay fill (104).

Trench 2

3.5.3 Trench 2 contained a large spread of material that covered approximately 25m of the trench (Fig. 3). In total, six features were identified that are likely to represent intercutting pits and possible ditches. Two interventions were excavated. Pit 206 was located towards the centre of the trench (Fig. 4; Plate 3). The pit measured 1.56m wide, 5m long and 0.4m deep with an uneven base and moderate sloping sides. The pit contained a black charcoal-rich fill, 207, which contained pottery of early Iron Age date and bones from cattle and pig. Fill 207 was overlain by a lighter grey fill (208).

3.5.4 At the north-eastern end of the trench, an intervention was placed through a similar homogenous deposit that was interpreted as three features 209, 211 and 214 (Figs 3 and 4). Possible ditch 209 was 1.1m wide and 0.18m deep and contained a grey silty clay fill (210). Large shallow pit 211 cut the northern edge of ditch 209. It was 2.4m wide and 0.4m deep with an uneven base and moderate sloping slides. It contained three silty clay fills (212, 213

and 217) with 213 forming the bulk of the deposits. Fill 213 contained three sherds of early Bronze Age pottery (see Appendix B.1). Pit 214 was the latest feature in the sequence cutting the southern edge of pit 211. The pit contained two silty clay fills of similar composition (215–216) and was 2m long, 0.2m wide, and 0.4m deep.

3.5.5 At the south-western end of Trench 2, three postholes were identified with one example investigated. Posthole 203 (Figs 3 and 4; Plate 2) was 0.36m in diameter and 0.16m deep with a concave base and steep straight sides. It had a lower greyish-brown silty clay fill (204), which was sealed by fill 205 which contained pottery of Iron Age date (Appendix B.1).

Trench 3

3.5.6 Trench 3 targeted a west-east aligned linear feature from the geophysical survey. It contained another spread of dark fills similar to those found in Trench 2 and a linear ditch (Figs 3 and 5). Ditch 303 was a fairly good match for the geophysical anomaly, and was located towards the eastern end of the trench with moderately sloping sides and a flat base. The ditch measured 1.0m wide and 0.28m deep and contained a single brown silty clay fill (304). Spread 306 was located further to the west and remained unexcavated. It was 7.5m long and 1.8m wide in plan with a dark greyish-black surface fill, 307, from which Iron Age pottery and bones from cattle and pig were recovered (Appendices B.1 and C.2).

Trench 4

3.5.7 Several anomalies recorded by the geophysical survey were targeted by Trench 4, although a NE–SW-aligned linear feature at the north-western end of the trench was not present. Pits 403 and 408 were recorded where a north–south-aligned linear anomaly was identified by the geophysical survey at the southern end of the trench (Figs 3 and 5). Only pit 403 was investigated and measured 3.8m wide and 0.28m deep with moderate sloping sides and a concave base. It contained a single grey, silty clay fill (404), which contained pottery of later Roman date (AD 240–410; see Appendix B.2). An environmental sample (Sample 2; Appendix C.1) contained fragments of wood charcoal, and modern crop debris and rootlets.

3.5.8 An unexcavated ditch, 405, on an E–W alignment was located towards the centre of the trench and was 1.68m wide. A sherd of Roman pottery was recovered from the surface of the ditch (fill 406). A possible pit, 402, was located towards the northern end of the trench, and had a shallow flat based profile. The fill, 407, was a grey silty clay which contained cattle and pig bones.

Trench 6

3.5.9 A series of anomalies from the geophysical survey were targeted by Trench 6 (Figs 3 and 6). The anomalies manifested within the trench as a single large pit that measured c 13m long. Interventions were placed along the western and eastern edges of this pit. The westerly intervention, 603 (Plate 4), was 0.52m deep with a moderate sloping edge and a flat base. It had two fills, 607 and 608, both silty clays with frequent redeposited limestone. Lower fill 607 contained pottery of both Iron Age and Roman date and bones from cattle, sheep/goat and horse, whilst 608 contained Iron Age pottery and cattle and sheep/goat bones (Appendices B.1 and B.2).

3.5.10 The easterly intervention, 604, was 2m long with the depth fairly consistent at 0.22m. It had a shallow sloping edge and a flat uneven base. Feature 604 also had two fills, 605 and 606, both of which were silty clay fills although 605 contained burnt limestone. Both fills contained pottery of Iron Age date (see Appendix B.1). Fill 605 also contained cattle bones. An environmental sample from fill 605 (Sample 1; Appendix C.1) contained mollusc shells, small fragments of charcoal and a piece of hazelnut shell.

Trench 7

3.5.11 A shallow west–east-aligned ditch, 703, was recorded in Trench 7 (Figs 3 and 6), which corresponded well with a linear geophysical anomaly. The ditch was 0.06m deep and 0.7m wide, with a brown silty clay fill (704).

Trench 8

3.5.12 Trench 8 was located over a series of three linear and curvilinear anomalies identified by the geophysical survey. Only one feature was present in the trench, corresponding with the westernmost anomaly (Figs 3 and 6). The pit, 803, was 1.08 wide and 0.54m deep with a moderately sloping sides and flat, slightly undulating base. Pit 803 contained a clay silt fill, 804, that had frequent limestone inclusions and contained pottery of both Iron Age and Roman date in addition to bones from sheep/goat. An iron sheet and iron tack were also recovered from the fill (see Appendix B.6).

Trench 16

3.5.13 A single feature was recorded in Trench 16, which was not identified by the geophysical survey (Fig. 3). It is possible that the feature, 1603, was a variation in the natural geology as it had an irregular shape in plan as well as an irregular base and side profile. The single fill, 1604, however, had a similar composition (a dark brown silty clay) to archaeological deposits located in Trenches 22 and 28.

Trench 19

3.5.14 Trench 19 targeted an amorphous curvilinear anomaly from the geophysical survey, which correlated with a pit at the southern end of the trench (Figs 3 and 7). Pit 1903 was 2.02m wide and 0.56m deep with steep sloping sides (Plate 5). It contained two silty clay fills, 1904 and 1905, with a third upper fill (1906) consisting of redeposited limestone indistinguishable from the natural geology. Fill 1904 contained pottery of Iron Age date and bones from sheep/goat.

Trench 22

3.5.15 A large feature, 2203, at the southern end of the trench corresponded with two features identified by the geophysical survey: a west–east-aligned linear anomaly and another anomaly that may represent a pit (Fig. 3). The feature, which was not further investigated, had a dark brown silty clay fill. Iron Age pottery and fired clay was recovered from the surface (fill 2204).

Trench 27

3.5.16 Within Trench 27, a large homogenous deposit 13m in length was located within the centre of the trench (Fig. 3). The feature was unexcavated but is likely another large pit similar to those excavated in Trenches 6, 19, and 28. Its surface fill (2704) was a greyish-brown silty clay.

Trench 28

3.5.17 A large pit, 2807, was a fairly good correlation for the location of curvilinear geophysical anomaly (Fig. 3). The pit was 8m long with a dark greyish-black, silty clay upper fill (2808) that was not further investigated, although fragmentary animal bone was recovered from the surface.

3.5.18 A second pit or possibly a sunken-featured building, 2803, was located towards the eastern end of the trench (Figs 3 and 7; Plate 6). The feature was 7m long and 0.6m deep with moderately sloping sides and a flat base. It contained three fills (2804–2806): the basal and central fills (2804 and 2805) were yellow-brown clay silts containing redeposited limestone fragments. The upper fill, 2806, was a dark grey-black clayey silt containing charcoal fragments. Fills 2804 and 2806 contained pottery of early Anglo-Saxon date in addition to residual Roman material (see Appendix B.3). Fill 2804 contained cattle and pig bones and 2806 cattle, pig and red deer bones. An Iron nail and iron fitting (see Appendix B.6) were also recovered from fill 2806. Environmental samples recovered from 2804 and 2806 (Samples 3 and 4 respectively; Appendix C.1) each contained fragments of wood charcoal, mollusc shells and goosefoot seeds. Sample 4 also contained hazelnut shell fragments and bean.

3.6 Finds and environmental summary

3.6.1 Finds were recovered from features across the site and included pottery sherds, animal bone, fired clay and struck flint. Tools comprised the majority of the struck flint assemblage, which is likely to be of early Neolithic date and is certainly residual. A single feature contained early Bronze Age pottery and several contained Iron Age pottery, dateable in one instance to the early Iron Age. Roman pottery was present in several features, generally in fragmentary condition, and pottery of Anglo-Saxon date was recovered from two fills within one feature. Animal bone, which was in general well preserved, was recovered from several features of Iron Age, Roman and Saxon date and included cattle, sheep/goat, pig, horse and red deer with smaller bones from shrew, vole, bird, snake and frog/toad recovered from the environmental sample flots. Metal finds were all of iron and mainly nails but also including a small sheet and a possible fitting.

3.6.2 Environmental samples tended to be dominated by the presence of intrusive material relating to relatively recent agricultural practices. Although there is potential for deposits within the site to contain charred material, the quantities were low and the general condition of the remains were poor.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The evaluation was undertaken during fair weather conditions and the mechanical excavator was powerful enough to create a clean finish in all trenches. The geology varied a great deal, even between adjacent trenches, but in general archaeological features were easy to identify, and several 'geological features' were tested in order to rule out any anthropogenic agency in their creation. The majority of the features excavated have been dated by pottery.

4.1.2 Several areas of fill, especially in trenches on the higher ground to the east of the site, occupied large swathes of the trench and were only identifiable as sequences of different features through excavation. For example, features 209, 211 and 214 in Trench 2 appeared to be a single feature in plan, but resolved into separate ditches and a pit of potential early Bronze Age and Iron Age dates.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.1 The evaluation successfully identified the presence of archaeological features, their form and location within the site. The veracity of the geophysical survey was tested and the site's potential to contain environmental remains assessed. The majority of the features revealed have been dated through artefacts recovered.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 The underlying geology of the site, especially on the higher ground to the east where limestone bedrock was interleaved with the underlying mudstone meant that several of the geophysical anomalies identified during the survey were actually geological in origin. Despite this, many of the anomalies identified as 'archaeology' or 'possible archaeology' did correlate with features revealed in the trenches (Figs 2 and 3).

4.3.2 The majority of features were located on a ridge predominantly of limestone bedrock geology and clustered in Trenches 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 16, 19, 22, 27 and 28 within the south-east of the site, although a pair of parallel ditches potentially forming a driveway, were located between Trenches 17 and 23 on the lower mudstone geology in the west of the site, with single ditches in Trenches 20 and 21.

Early prehistoric

4.3.3 Several struck flints recovered were residual within the fills of later features and are likely to be early Neolithic. Given that the majority of these were tools, rather than debitage, they may represent one or more ephemeral episodes of hide working, wood working and plant gathering and processing, rather than *in situ* flint knapping.

Early Bronze Age

4.3.4 Ditch 211 contained early Bronze Age pottery. The three sherds of pottery recovered belong to either a Food Vessel or Collared Urn and have been spot dated to 2150–1600 Cal BC. Ditch, 211, cut an earlier undated ditch, 209. The ditch was in turn cut by an undated pit. There was no evidence from the form of the ditch within the trench, or from the results of the geophysical survey, that suggested that the ditch represented part of a round barrow.

Early Iron Age

4.3.5 A probable pit, 206, contained ten sherds of early Iron Age pottery. Other Iron Age features contained less diagnostic pottery which could also be of early date, although the range of fabrics present may also suggest a middle Iron Age component.

Iron Age

4.3.6 Iron Age features were present within Trenches 2, 3, 6, 19 and 22 and comprised a west–east-aligned ditch (1903) a posthole (203) and a series of pits (206, 306, and 604). Unexcavated spread of fill 2203 (Trench 22) had Iron Age pottery on its surface. Several of the pits were very large with flat bases (eg 306, 604 and 2203) and may have been dug to quarry limestone.

Roman

4.3.7 Roman pottery was recovered from features within Trenches 4, 6, 8, 23 and 28. The pottery was generally very fragmentary with small sherd sizes, and was present in small quantities (mostly one to three sherds), with the exception of that recovered from Trench 28 (below). The majority of the pottery could only be broadly dated to the Roman period. West–east-aligned ditch 405 contained a sherd of late Iron Age or Roman date. An oval pit, 403 contained three sherds of later Roman date.

4.3.8 Trench 6 contained what is likely to be a large limestone quarry pit, 603, from which a sherd of Roman date was recovered. This feature may be the other side of 604, which contained Iron Age pottery. Pit 803 contained two small sherds of Roman pottery and a single residual sherd of Iron Age date.

4.3.9 Ditch 2302 (part of the potential driveway) contained two sherds of Roman pottery.

Anglo-Saxon

4.3.10 Pit 2803 may potentially be an early Anglo-Saxon sunken-featured building (SFB), although the gentle sloping sides are perhaps not typical, and there was an absence of related postholes within the limited area excavated. The lower fill (2804) contained 14 sherds of pottery including fragments of a carinated jar of early Anglo-Saxon date. The upper fill (2806) contained a further 29 sherds of similar date (5th–6th century AD). Roman pottery was also present within the fills, and this was in better condition and with a larger mean sherd size than that recovered from elsewhere on site. It is possible that the Roman material (all red or white oxidised wares dating from AD 240–410) was deliberately collected and curated. The second feature within Trench 28 (2807) could also be an SFB.

Undated

4.3.11 NW–SE-orientated ditches in Trenches 3 (303) and 7 (703) were sample excavated, but contained no datable material. A possible ditch or pit in Trench 2 (220) and feature 1603 (Trench 16) could also potentially be ditches on a similar alignment. Feature 2703 could represent another limestone quarry. Other potential ditches in Trench 20 and 21 may represent former field boundaries.

General

4.3.12 Whilst the lower ground to the west of the site may have been used for livestock grazing during the Roman period, as suggested by the possible droveway defined by the ditches in Trenches 17 and 23, the higher ground to the east has had a more varied history. There is some evidence from the residual flint tools recovered that the site was used in the early Neolithic to work hides, wood and perhaps to process plants. There is no evidence for occupation during the later prehistoric and Roman periods, and the site was probably peripheral to settlement of these dates (for example those at Graven Hill and Wretchwick Farm), and was subdivided by ditches marking agricultural boundaries and also used as a source of easily accessible limestone. The presence of the potential SFBs in Trench 28, when taken with the larger than average quantities of pottery and good condition of the animal bone recovered does suggest settlement during the early Anglo-Saxon period, potentially related to the foundation of Ambrosden.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

A.1.1 Dimensions of all features and soil descriptions are tabulated below by trench. Finds: Pot = pottery followed by the spot date: EBA = early Bronze Age, IA = Iron Age, EIA = early Iron Age, RB = Romano-British, Saxon = Anglo-Saxon FC = fired clay; AB = animal bone; Fe = iron object, Stone = worked stone; Flint = struck flint.

Trench 1							
General description					Orientation		E-W
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying natural clay geology. Possible pit located at the east end of trench.					Length (m)		30
					Width (m)		1.8
					Avg. depth (m)		0.34
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Layer		1.8	0.2	Topsoil. Mid greyish brown, silty clay		
101	Layer		1.8	0.12	Subsoil. Mid yellowish brown, silty clay		
102	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Mid yellowish brown, silty clay		
103	Cut		0.54	0.09	Pit. Potential oval pit		
104	Fill	103	0.54	0.09	Secondary Fill. Mid greyish brown, silty clay, occasional small inclusions of charcoal		
Trench 2							
General description					Orientation		NE-SW
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying natural silty clay geology. Several large shallow pits were located throughout the trench, two were excavated. Three postholes were located at the NE end of the trench.					Length (m)		30
					Width (m)		1.8
					Avg. depth (m)		0.44
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
200	Layer		1.8	0.24	Topsoil. Mid greyish-brown, silt clay		
201	Layer		1.8	0.22	Subsoil. Mid yellowish-brown, silt clay		
202	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Mid reddish-brown, silt clay, moderate mid stones		
203	Cut		0.36	0.16	Posthole		
204	Fill	203	0.06	0.16	Secondary Fill. edge fill of P/H, likely packing for the post.	Flint	
205	Fill	203	0.3	0.16	Secondary Fill. Post-pipe fill	Pot, AB	IA
206	Cut		1.36	0.4	Pit. Possible pit.		
207	Fill	206	1.36	0.4	Secondary Fill. deliberate backfill	Pot, AB	EIA
208	Fill	206	1	0.2	Secondary Fill. natural backfilling		
209	Cut		1.1	0.18	Ditch		

210	Fill	209	1.1	0.18	Secondary Fill. deliberate backfill		
211	Cut		2	0.4	Ditch		
212	Fill	211	1.48	0.18	Secondary Fill. natural infilling		
213	Fill	211	2	0.34	Secondary Fill. deliberate backfilling	Pot	EBA
214	Cut		0.2	0.4	Other Cut		
215	Fill		0.2	0.4	Primary Fill. clay lining		
216	Fill	214	0.2	0.24	Secondary Fill. mix of natural and human backfilling		
217	Fill	211	0.54	0.1	Secondary Fill. natural infilling		
218	Unexcavated feature		0.3	0.01	Posthole. Compact dark black-grey silty clay fill.		
219	Unexcavated feature		0.3	0.01	Posthole. Compact dark black-grey silty clay fill		
220	Unexcavated feature		3.5	0.01	Other Cut. Unclear as to what this may be, possibly a ditch. Compact dark black grey silty clay fill with a lot of stone inclusions.		
221	Unexcavated feature		2	0.01	Ditch. Compact, dark grey-brown silty clay fill.		

Trench 3

General description					Orientation		E-W
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying natural clay. Two large pits at both the east and west of trench, one excavated.					Length (m)		30
					Width (m)		1.8
					Avg. depth (m)		0.52
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
300	Layer		1.8	0.28	Topsoil. mid greyish-brown		
301	Layer		1.8	0.24	Subsoil. mid yellowish-brown		
302	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Natural changes from light yellowish grey with frequent stones to mid greyish-brown clay		
303	Cut				Ditch		
304	Fill	303			Secondary Fill	AB	
305	Fill	303			Secondary Fill		
306	Cut				Pit		
307	Fill	306			Secondary Fill	Pot, AB	IA

Trench 4

General description					Orientation		N-S
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying natural silty clay geology. 3 pits located at the south end of trench. A possible spread was investigated and determined to be natural.					Length (m)		30
					Width (m)		1.8
					Avg. depth (m)		0.36

Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
400	Layer		1.8	0.27	Topsoil. Mid greyish-brown, silt clay		
401	Layer		1.8	0.12	Subsoil. Mid greyish-brown, frequent stones, silt clay		
402	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Mixed natural, light yellowish-brown silt clay with frequent mid stones and mid brownish-orange, silt clay		
403	Cut		1.56	0.22	Pit. Oval		
404	Fill	403	1.56	0.22	Secondary Fill. Natural process	Pot	RB
405	Cut		1.68	0.01	Ditch. Unexcavated, pot from surface		
406	Fill	405	1.68	0.01	Secondary Fill. One piece of pot from surface, unexcavated	Pot	LIA-RB
407	Layer		1.05	0.09	Other Layer. Natural depression, contain bone	AB	
408	Unexcavated feature		1.8	0.01	Pit. Oval pit		

Trench 5

General description					Orientation	NE-SW	
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying natural silty clay. Trench devoid of archaeology.					Length (m)	30	
					Width (m)	1.8	
					Avg. depth (m)	0.42	
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
500	Layer		1.8	0.3	Topsoil. Mid greyish-brown, silt clay, moderate mid stones		
501	Layer		1.8	0.12	Subsoil. Mid greyish-brown, silt clay		
502	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Mid yellowish-brown, silt clay, moderate mid stones		

Trench 6

General description					Orientation	NW-SE	
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying natural limestone with clay matrix. A large spread of material with two interventions along the NW and SE edges.					Length (m)	30	
					Width (m)	1.8	
					Avg. depth (m)	0.28	
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
600	Layer		1.8	0.14	Topsoil. Mid greyish-brown, loose, silty clay, occasional mid stones		
601	Layer		1.8	0.13	Subsoil. Mid greyish-brown, frequent small mid stones, silty clay		

602	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Mid yellowish-brown, heavily compacted, clayey limestone.		
603	Cut		0.8	0.52	Pit		
604	Cut		2	0.22	Pit		
605	Fill	604	2	0.22	Secondary Fill. natural infilling	AB	
606	Fill	604	1.3	0.2	Primary Fill. natural infilling		
607	Fill	604	1.8	0.01	Secondary Fill. Surface (finds collection)	Pot, AB	IA / RB
608	Fill	603	0.8	0.18	Secondary Fill	Pot, AB, Fe	IA
609	Fill	603	0.8	0.36	Secondary Fill		

Trench 7

General description					Orientation		N-S
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying natural silty clay. Single ditch on E-W alignment towards the centre of trench.					Length (m)		30
					Width (m)		1.8
					Avg. depth (m)		0.41
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
700	Layer		1.8	0.24	Topsoil. Mid greyish-brown, friable, silt clay, moderate small stones.		
701	Layer		1.8	0.2	Subsoil. Mid reddish-brown, firm, silty clay.		
702	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Mid reddish-brown, compact, silty clay.		
703	Cut		0.7	0.06	Ditch. N-S running.		
704	Fill	703	0.7	0.06	Secondary Fill. natural infilling		

Trench 8

General description					Orientation		SE- NW
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying natural clay with limestone geology. One modern pit excavated towards NW end of trench.					Length (m)		30
					Width (m)		1.8
					Avg. depth (m)		0.26
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
800	Layer		1.8	0.12	Topsoil. Mid greyish-brown, silty clay, friable		
801	Layer		1.8	0.12	Subsoil. Mid greyish-brown, frequent small stones, silty clay		
802	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Mid yellowish-brown, moderately compacted, frequent limestone, silty clay		
803	Cut		1.45	0.35	Pit		

804	Fill	803	1.45	0.35	Secondary Fill	Pot, FC, AB, Fe	IA / RB
Trench 9							
General description					Orientation		N-S
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying clay with limestone natural. Trench devoid of archaeology.					Length (m)		30
					Width (m)		1.8
					Avg. depth (m)		0.52
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
900	Layer		1.8	0.29	Topsoil. Dark brownish-grey, friable, silty clay.		
901	Layer		1.8	0.27	Subsoil. Mid yellowish-brown, firm, silty clay.		
902	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Mid yellowish-brown, lightly compacted, silty clay.		
Trench 10							
General description					Orientation		NE-SW
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying limestone brash natural. Trench devoid of archaeology.					Length (m)		30
					Width (m)		1.8
					Avg. depth (m)		0.42
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1000	Layer		1.8	0.27	Topsoil. Dark greyish-brown, friable, silty clay.		
1001	Layer		1.8	0.16	Subsoil. Mid greyish-brown, firm, silty clay.		
1002	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Mid greyish-brown, heavily compacted, limestone brash with clay matrix.		
Trench 11							
General description					Orientation		NE-SW
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying natural silty clay. Trench devoid of archaeology.					Length (m)		30
					Width (m)		1.8
					Avg. depth (m)		0.48
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1100	Layer		1.8	0.32	Topsoil. Dark greyish-brown, loose, silty clay.		

1101	Layer		1.8	0.22	Subsoil. Mid yellowish-brown, firm, silty clay.		
1102	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Mid yellowish-brown, moderately compact, silty clay.		
Trench 12							
General description					Orientation		NE-SW
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying natural silty clay with limestone. Trench devoid of archaeology.					Length (m)		30
					Width (m)		1.8
					Avg. depth (m)		0.39
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1200	Layer		1.8	0.22	Topsoil. Dark greyish-brown, loose, silt clay, moderate limestone inclusions.		
1201	Layer		1.8	0.14	Subsoil. Mid greyish-brown, firm, silty clay.		
1202	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Mid yellowish-brown, silt clay, moderate mid stones		
Trench 13							
General description					Orientation		E-W
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying limestone brash natural.					Length (m)		30
					Width (m)		1.8
					Avg. depth (m)		0.36
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1300	Layer		1.8	0.24	Topsoil. Dark greyish-brown, loose, silty clay.		
1301	Layer		1.8	0.15	Subsoil. Mid yellowish-grey, firm, silty clay.		
1302	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Mid greyish-brown, heavily compacted, limestone brash with clay matrix.		
Trench 14							
General description					Orientation		SE-NW
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying natural clay. Trench devoid of archaeology.					Length (m)		30
					Width (m)		1.8
					Avg. depth (m)		0.44
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1400	Layer		1.8	0.27	Topsoil. Dark greyish-brown, friable, silty clay.		

1401	Layer		1.8	0.2	Subsoil. Mid yellowish-brown, firm, silty clay.		
1402	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Light yellowish-brown, heavily compacted clay.		
Trench 15							
General description					Orientation		N-S
Topsoil overlying natural clay and limestone brash geology. Trench devoid of archaeology.					Length (m)		30
					Width (m)		1.8
					Avg. depth (m)		0.19
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1500	Layer		1.8	0.19	Topsoil. Dark greyish-brown, firm, silt clay, moderate small stones		
1501	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Light yellowish-grey, moderately compacted, silty clay with pockets of limestone.		
Trench 16							
General description					Orientation		NW-SE
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying natural silty clay. Two possible features, one recorded. Probable natural variation.					Length (m)		30
					Width (m)		1.8
					Avg. depth (m)		0.36
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1600	Layer		1.8	0.18	Topsoil. Dark, greyish-brown, friable, silty clay.		
1601	Layer		1.8	0.14	Subsoil. Light greyish-brown, compact, silty clay		
1602	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Silt clay, mid brownish-grey, heavily compacted.		
1603	Cut		2.1	0.3	Natural Feature. Possible ditch?		
1604	Fill	1603	2.1	0.3	Secondary Fill. natural infilling		
1605	Unexcavated feature		1.8	0.01	Natural Feature. Could be an area of intercutting ditches like [1603] but unclear shape in plan. Contains a compact orange-brown silty clay fill.		
Trench 17							
General description					Orientation		E W
Topsoil overlying subsoil, over natural silty clay. Two ditches running on NW-SE alignment. Most easterly Ditch excavated.					Length (m)		30
					Width (m)		1.8
					Avg. depth (m)		0.5

Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1700	Layer		1.9	0.18	Topsoil. Compact, mid brown-grey, clay silt.		
1701	Layer		1.9	0.15	Subsoil. Friable/loose, mid greyish-brown, clay silt, frequent stone/chalk inclusions.		
1702	Layer		1.9	0.05	Natural. Compact, Light brownish-yellow silty clay		
1703	Cut		0.58	0.15	Ditch		
1704	Fill	1703	0.58	0.15	Secondary Fill	AB	
1705	Unexcavated feature		0.8	0.01	Ditch. NW-SE running ditch, same as [2303] compact mid orange-brown silty clay fill.		

Trench 18

General description	Orientation	N-S
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying limestone brash and silty clay natural. Trench devoid of archaeology.	Length (m)	30
	Width (m)	1.8
	Avg. depth (m)	0.27

Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1800	Layer		1.8	0.11	Topsoil. Dark greyish-brown, loose, silty clay		
1801	Layer		1.8	0.15	Subsoil. Mid greyish-brown, silty clay frequent small stones		
1802	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Mid yellowish-brown, heavily compacted, silty clay and limestone.		

Trench 19

General description	Orientation	N-S
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying natural silty clay. Single pit/spread located to the south end of trench.	Length (m)	30
	Width (m)	1.8
	Avg. depth (m)	0.32

Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1900	Layer		1.8	0.18	Topsoil. Dark greyish-brown, loose, silt clay, moderate mid stones		
1901	Layer		1.8	0.13	Subsoil. Mid greyish-brown, frequent mid stones, silty clay		
1902	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Mid orangish-brown, silty clay		
1903	Cut		2.02	0.56	Ditch. East West linear, not fully excavated as 1m against bulk		
1904	Fill	1903	2.02	0.24	Secondary Fill. Natural process mid greyish-brown, silty clay, firm	Pot, AB	IA

1905	Fill	1903	2.02	0.32	Secondary Fill. Redeposited natural, very firm, light greyish-yellow with mid brown inclusions, silty clay		
1906	Fill	1903	0.6	0.1	Secondary Fill. Redeposit natural, from surface looks exactly like natural but has fill underneath, powdery chalky clay, firm, light greyish-yellow		

Trench 20

General description					Orientation		SE NW
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying natural silty clay. Two features excavated and recorded, likely just natural variation.					Length (m)		30
					Width (m)		1.8
					Avg. depth (m)		0.56
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
2000	Layer		1.8	0.32	Topsoil. Dark greyish-brown, loose, silty clay		
2001	Layer		1.8	0.24	Subsoil. Mid yellowish-brown, firm, silty clay		
2002	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Mid reddish-brown, moderately compact, clay.		
2003	Cut		1	0.22	Ditch. linear ditch running on a E-W alignment		
2004	Fill	2003	1	0.22	Secondary Fill. natural process, firm, mid yellowish-brown, silty clay		
2005	Cut		3.1	0.48	Natural Feature. natural feature		
2006	Fill	2005	3.1	0.48	Secondary Fill. firm, mid yellowish-brown, silty clay		

Trench 21

General description					Orientation		NE- SW
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying natural silty clay. Two features excavated and recorded. Ditch on N-S alignment towards south end of trench. Probable natural variation towards north end.					Length (m)		30
					Width (m)		1.8
					Avg. depth (m)		0.49
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
2100	Layer		1.9	0.2	Topsoil. Compact, dark brownish-grey clay slit		
2101	Layer		1.9	0.2	Subsoil. Firm, mid orange-brown, silty clay. Lots of stone inclusions.		
2102	Layer		1.9	0.01	Natural. Compact, Light brownish-yellow, silty clay		

2103	Layer		1.9	0.01	Natural. Compact limestone with a mild light brownish-yellow silty clay between the stones.		
2104	Cut		0.42	0.13	Curving gully, in part runs NE-SW, potential terminus linked to field system		
2105	Fill	2104	0.42	0.13	Secondary Fill. compact, mid orange-brown, silty clay, natural process		
2106	Cut		0.96	0.5	Ditch. N-S running ditch, potentially related to ditch in tr17		
2107	Fill	2106	0.8	0.2	Secondary Fill. compact, dark mid brown-grey, silty clay, natural process		
2108	Fill	2106	0.96	0.34	Secondary Fill. natural process, compact, mid yellow-brown, silty clay	FC, Flint	

Trench 22

General description					Orientation	N-S	
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying natural silty clay. Large spread of material located towards centre of trench. Not excavated, pottery recovered.					Length (m)	30	
					Width (m)	1.8	
					Avg. depth (m)	0.45	
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
2200	Layer		1.8	0.28	Topsoil. Dark greyish-brown, friable, silty clay.		
2201	Layer		1.8	0.17	Subsoil. Mid yellowish-brown, firm, silty clay.		
2202	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Mid yellowish-brown, lightly compacted, silty clay with occasional limestone.		
2203	Cut		1.8	0.01	Unexcavated spread found towards centre of trench.		
2204	Fill		1.8	0.01	Secondary Fill. unexcavated fill, several fired clay and pottery fragments on surface.	Pot, FC	IA

Trench 23

General description					Orientation	NE SW	
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying natural silty clay. Two ditches on a NW-SE alignment. Westerly ditch excavated.					Length (m)	30	
					Width (m)	1.8	
					Avg. depth (m)	0.54	
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
2300	Layer		1.8	0.24	Topsoil. Dark greyish-brown, loose, silty clay		

2301	Layer		1.8	0.3	Subsoil. Mid yellowish-brown, firm, silty clay		
2302	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Brownish-yellow, moderately compacted silty clay		
2303	Cut		0.86	0.22	Ditch. NW-SE linear		
2304	Fill	2303	0.86	0.22	Secondary Fill.	Pot	RB
2305	Unexcavated feature		0.6	0.01	Ditch. Same as ditch 1703		

Trench 24

General description					Orientation		NE SW
Topsoil overlying subsoil overlying natural silty clay. Limestone brash towards SE end of trench. Trench devoid of archaeology.					Length (m)		30
					Width (m)		1.8
					Avg. depth (m)		0.42
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
2400	Layer		1.8	0.21	Topsoil. Dark greyish-brown, friable, silty clay		
2401	Layer		1.8	0.21	Subsoil. Mid yellowish-brown, firm, silty clay		
2402	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Dark yellowish-brown. Heavily compacted clay		

Trench 25

General description					Orientation		SE NW
Topsoil overlying subsoil overlying natural silty clay. Possible linear tested towards centre of trench that was natural geology. Trench devoid of archaeology.					Length (m)		30
					Width (m)		1.8
					Avg. depth (m)		0.5
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
2500	Layer		1.8	0.3	Topsoil. Dark greyish-brown, loose, silty clay		
2501	Layer		1.8	0.2	Subsoil. Mid greyish-brown, firm, silty clay		
2502	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Mid yellowish-brown, compacted clay.		

Trench 26

General description					Orientation		NE SW
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying natural clay. Trench devoid of archaeology.					Length (m)		30
					Width (m)		1.8
					Avg. depth (m)		0.51

Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
2600	Layer		1.8	0.24	Topsoil. Dark greyish-brown, friable, silty clay.		
2601	Layer		1.8	0.27	Subsoil. Mid yellowish-brown, firm, silty clay		
2602	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Yellowish-brown, moderately compact clay		

Trench 27

General description	Orientation	SE-NW
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying natural limestone brash and clay. Possible spread of material located in the centre of trench. Unexcavated with no surface finds.	Length (m)	30
	Width (m)	1.8
	Avg. depth (m)	0.46

Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
2700	Layer		1.8	0.32	Topsoil. Dark greyish-brown, friable, silty clay		
2701	Layer		1.8	0.22	Subsoil. Mid yellowish-brown, firm, silty clay		
2702	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Mid orangish-brown, compact limestone brash with clay matrix		
2703	Unexcavated feature		14	0.01	Pit. Large spread of material similar to those in trenches 2,6 and 28. Feature is unexcavated with no surface finds. Fill is mid-greyish brown, firm, clayey silt. Moderate limestone inclusions, poorly sorted.		

Trench 28

General description	Orientation	NW-SE
Topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying natural silty clay with degraded limestone. Two large spreads within trench. One excavated towards east of trench, surface finds recovered from unexcavated spread.	Length (m)	30
	Width (m)	1.8
	Avg. depth (m)	0.3

Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
2800	Layer		1.8	0.19	Topsoil. Mid greyish-brown, silty clay, loose		
2801	Layer		1.8	0.01	Subsoil. Light greyish brown, firm, silty clay		
2802	Layer		1.8	0.01	Natural. Light brownish-grey, moderately compacted, frequent mid stones, silty clay		

2803	Cut		0.8	0.8	Pit. spread of material estimated to be 7m in length, shape unclear		
2804	Fill	2803	0.8	0.3	Secondary Fill. firm, dark yellowish brown, silty clay, pot, animal bone and worked flint	Pot, AB, Flint	Saxon, RB
2805	Fill	2803	0.8	0.26	Secondary Fill. natural process, firm, mid greyish brown, silty clay		
2806	Fill	2803	0.8	0.24	Secondary Fill. frequent charcoal, firm silty clay, dark bluish-black, pot and animal bone	Pot, FC, AB, Flint, Fe	Saxon, RB
2807	Unexcavated feature		1.8	0.01	Pit. unexcavated spread of material, possibly a pit		
2808	Fill		1.8	0.01	Secondary Fill. Animal bone recovered from surface.	AB	

APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Prehistoric pottery

by Alex Davies

Introduction

B.1.1 Some 30 sherds (242g) of prehistoric pottery were found in 10 contexts across six trenches. Most of the material has been spot-dated to the Iron Age (c 800–50 cal BC), with one (207) datable to the early Iron Age (c 800–350 cal BC). Context 213 contained early Bronze Age pottery (c 2150–1600 cal BC).

Methodology

B.1.2 The pottery was assessed by context level, noting fabrics, spot-dates, and feature sherds. This is listed in the table below.

B.1.3 The following fabric codes were used, suffixed by a number relating to the grade of the fabric, ranging from 1 (fine) to 4 (very coarse):

Cg:	Calcareous grit
Fl:	Flint
Gr:	Grog
Li:	Limestone
Qs:	Quartz sand
Sh:	Shell

Early Bronze Age

B.1.4 A single context, 213, produced a small early Bronze Age assemblage. This totals three sherds (19g) from a flat-top rim with lines of horizontal twisted cord impressions below the rim. The fabric contains poorly-sorted grog with some very coarse inclusions. The rim is fragmentary making typological assignation uncertain but it could belong to a Food Vessel or Collared Urn. It has been spot-dated to c 2150–1600 cal BC.

Iron Age

B.1.5 Most of the assemblage is of Iron Age date and came from Trenches 2, 3, 6, 8, 19 and 22. A generic Iron Age date is given to the majority of the material due to the prevalence of formless body sherds, although context 207 is datable to the early Iron Age based on the presence of a small shouldered jar with an upright rim, in a grog and limestone fabric. The rest of the Iron Age material could be of this early date, although some middle Iron Age material is equally likely to be present. Early Iron Age pottery is not common in this part of Oxfordshire with the numerous excavation campaigns around Bicester in recent years instead identifying a number of middle and late Iron Age settlements (eg Graven Hill: Davies in prep.; 'Extramural Alchester': Evans and Booth 2002; North of Gallos Brook and Holts Farm Crossing: Booth 2018;

Slade Farm: Woodward and Marley 2000). Recent excavation at Middleton Stoney has, however, uncovered a relatively large early Iron Age assemblage (OA in prep.).

B.1.6 Despite the small size of the assemblage, fabrics are diverse. Fabrics were not quantified precisely, although quartz sand and material deriving from calcareous sources (shell, limestone, calcareous grit) are dominant. Other Iron Age assemblages in the Bicester region include fabrics with shell, limestone and calcareous grit that appear in an interchanging manner, with these all ultimately deriving from limestone (Davies in prep.). Although diverse, fabrics are in accordance with local Iron Age sites.

Retention or disposal

B.1.7 All the pottery has future research value and should be retained.

Summary of the prehistoric pottery

Context	Sherds	Weight (g)	Fabric	Spot-date	Comment
205	2	2	QsLi2	IA	
207	10	82	Qs2; Sh2; Fl2; GrLi1	EIA	Small shouldered jar with upright rim (grog and limestone)
213	3	19	Gr4	EBA	Lines of horizontal lines of twisted cord below rim. Flat-top rim
307	3	66	Qs2	IA	Small upright rim; rim sherd of uncertain angle
605/606	1	3	Li2	IA	
607	1	10	Qs2	IA	
608	1	9	Qs2	IA	
804	1	1	Sh/Cg2	IA	
1904	3	30	Sh/Cg2; CgQs2	IA	
2204	5	20	ShQs2	IA	
	30	242			

B.2 Late Iron Age and Roman pottery

By Edward Biddulph

Introduction

B.2.1 Thirty sherds of late Iron Age or Roman pottery were recovered from the evaluation. Context-groups were sorted into fabrics and each fabric group quantified by sherd count and weight in grammes. Any rims present were quantified by minimum number of vessels (MV) and estimated vessel equivalent (EVE), which measures the proportion of the surviving rim (thus, 0.3 EVE equals 30%). Vessel diameter in millimetres was additionally recorded. Forms and fabrics were assigned codes from Oxford Archaeology's standard recording system for later Iron Age and Roman pottery (Booth nd). Where possible, fabrics were cross-referenced to the National Roman Fabric Reference Collection (NRFRC; Tomber and Dore 1998). A spot-date giving the date

range of the context group based on the date of the latest pieces within the group was provided for all groups, the date of deposition being within or later than this range.

B.2.2 The data are presented in Table B.1.1. The following fabrics were recorded (NRFRC codes in brackets):

- E810 Grog and sand tempered fabric
- F51 Oxford red/brown colour-coated ware (OXF RS)
- M22 Oxford white ware mortaria (OXF WH)
- O Indeterminate oxidised wares
- O11 Oxford fine oxidised ware
- O81 Pink grogged ware (PNK GT)
- R30 Medium sandy reduced wares

B.2.3 The following forms were recorded:

- CN Storage jar
- HC Curving-sided bowl (Young 1977, type C51)
- JB Curving-sided dish (Young 1977, type C46)
- KE Mortarium with tall bead and flange (Young 1977, type M17)

Description

Context	Fabric	No. sherds	Weight (g)	MV	Form	Diam. (mm)	EVE	Context group spot-date	Comments
404	F51	3	1					AD 240-410	Chips and crumbs
406	E810	1	10					50 BC-AD 100	Body sherd
607	O11	1	4					AD 43-410	Body sherd
804	O11	1	1					AD 43-410	Chip
804	O	1	1					AD 43-410	Chip
2304	O	2	1					AD 43-410	Crumbs
2804	F51	12	193					AD 240-410 (residual)	Body and flange sherds from one or more flanged bowl. Young 1977, type C51
2804	F51	0	0	1	JB	210	0.07	AD 240-410 (residual)	Rim sherd. Young 1977, type C46
2804	M22	1	37	1	KE	200	0.1	AD 240-410 (residual)	Rim sherd with broken flange (diam. taken from rim). Young 1977, type M17
2804	O81	2	56	1	CN	210	0.11	AD 240-410 (residual)	Rim and body sherds
2804	O81	2	13	1	CN		0.07	AD 240-410 (residual)	Rim sherds; uncertain diameter
2804	R30	1	5					AD 240-410 (residual)	Body sherd
2806	F51	3	42	1	HC		0.03	AD 240-410 (residual)	Rim sherd, broken at top of flange
Total		30	364	5			0.38		

Table B.2: Quantification and description of the late Iron Age and Roman pottery

- B.2.4 A single sherd of pottery dated to the late Iron Age or early Roman period (c 50 BC–AD 100) was recovered from the surface of ditch 405 in Trench 4. The piece was identified as a body sherd from a vessel of unknown type in a grog-and-sand-tempered fabric (E810).
- B.2.5 No context-groups were spot-dated to the early or middle Roman periods, but late Roman pottery (AD 240/50–410) was recovered from contexts 404, a fill of pit 403 in Trench 4, and fills (2804 and 2806) of pit or putative sunken featured building (SFB) 2803 in Trench 28. The pottery from pit 2803 was found in association with Anglo-Saxon pottery and is therefore residual. Context 2804 contained a relatively large group of pottery comprising Oxford red colour-coated ware (F51), an Oxford white ware mortarium (M22), pink grogged ware (O81) from the region of Stowe near Buckingham, and unsourced reduced ware (R30). Forms included a flanged bowl (Young 1977, type C51) and bead-rimmed, curving-sided dish (Young 1977, type C46), both copying samian ware prototypes, in fabric F51. The mortarium was a bead-and-flanged type (Young 1977, type M17), and a storage jar was recorded in O81. Another storage jar in O81 and a bowl (also Young type C51) in F51 were recovered from context 2806. More sherds of fabric F51 were collected from pit 403.
- B.2.6 Pottery from contexts 607 (surface of pit 604, Trench 6), 804 (fill of pit 803, Trench 8) and 2304 (fill of ditch 2303, Trench 23) could not be dated closely within the Roman period (AD 43/50–410). Oxford oxidised ware (O11) was recovered from contexts 607 and 804. The pottery from 2304 was undiagnostic.

Discussion

- B.2.7 The assemblage is small and of mixed condition. Much of the assemblage is highly fragmented, consisting of small and abraded sherds. While the overall mean sherd weight (MSW; weight / number of sherds) of the assemblage is 12.1g, which reflects a fairly large sherd size, this is due solely to the pottery from Trench 28, which has a MSW value of 16.5g. The remaining trenches—trenches 4, 6, 8 and 23—have an average MSW of just 2.1g. Tellingly, this material consists of undiagnostic body sherds and chips; vessel types were only identified among the pottery of Trench 28. This suggests that the pottery from Trench 28 on the one hand and the remaining trenches on the other have had different depositional histories. The pottery from trenches other than Trench 28 is consistent with it having undergone multiple episodes of redeposition—for example through agricultural processes—and being recovered from features located away from areas of use and initial discard, while the pottery from Trench 28 appears to have been deposited after limited episodes of deposition and relocation, with its final location being close to areas of original use, possibly further to the south-west. Evidence of Roman settlement is attested some 716m to the south-east of the current site (OA 2022).
- B.2.8 A notable aspect of the pottery from Trench 28 is that it was found in association with early Saxon pottery. The Roman pottery could simply be residual and redeposited in the conventional sense (that is, being accidentally incorporated into a later deposit), but it is also a strong possibility that the pottery had been deliberately collected and curated as keepsakes, curios or amulets in the early Saxon period and ultimately deposited with the later material. Apart from it being in relatively good condition, the

Roman pottery was almost exclusively oxidised, being either white or red. The phenomenon of red or shiny Roman pottery in early Saxon contexts, predominantly SFBs, apparently having been deliberately selected, is well known, having been recognised at Mucking (Going 1993, 72), West Stow (Plouviez 1984), Northfleet (Biddulph 2011), among other sites. The site at Ploughley Road, Ambrosden, can be added to that list.

Recommendations regarding the conservation, discard and retention of material

- B.2.9 The pottery reported on here has the potential to inform future research through re-analysis and this it is recommended that all the pottery is retained. This follows the advice set out in the 'Standard for Pottery Studies in Archaeology' (PCRG, SGRP, MPRG 2016).

B.3 Post-Roman pottery

By John Cotter

Introduction and methodology

- B.3.1 A total of 43 sherds of pottery weighing 904g were recovered from two contexts. Given the small number of contexts and the relatively small amount of pottery involved, this has not been separately catalogued but is fully described and spot-dated below. As the pottery fabrics present here predate the late Saxon period (c AD 850–1066) they are not covered by the fabric codes of the Oxfordshire type series (Mellor 1994). Pottery of early/mid Saxon period in the county is usually assigned site-specific fabric codes based on the range and frequency of inclusions present (eg Blinkhorn 2007). Assigning such codes takes place at the full analysis stage, so therefore only common names and general fabric descriptions will be used here.

Description

- B.3.2 Context (2804) Spot-date: c AD 450–600? Description: 14 sherds (weight 274g). Large fresh sherds of handmade early Anglo-Saxon pottery in a range of (quartz) sand-tempered fabrics sometimes with other inclusions present—mainly calcareous (limestone) inclusions. Almost all the sherds here have a noticeably micaceous fabric suggesting a common (probably local) source. The firing colour is generally black or dark grey and the surfaces are wiped or roughly smoothed externally, but not burnished. One body sherd has traces of possible decoration—in the form of an incised horizontal line. Only one rim sherd is present—a short, plain, upright rim on a very globular jar of medium size. The latter has a coarse gritty quartz-tempered fabric with grits up to 2mm across including many sub-angular quartz grits. Probably the most significant sherd, in terms of dating, is a body sherd from smallish jar with a carinated (angled) shoulder. Carinated jars (and bowls) are typical of the early Anglo-Saxon period (c 5th–6th century AD). The latter also has a gritty quartz-tempered fabric with some sparse calcite inclusions. Some sherds have very coarse quartz grits up to 4mm across including angular grits and crystals. A couple of sherds also have moderate to common inclusions of limestone. Some sherds have rare to sparse organic inclusions

(or chaff) but not enough to be classified as 'organic-tempered'. The lack of true organic-tempered pottery in this assemblage also suggests an early dating as the latter is more typical of mid Saxon assemblages.

- B.3.3 Context (2806) Spot-date: c AD 450–600? Description: 29 sherds (weight 630g). Includes large fresh sherds and a similar range of quartz-tempered and quartz-gritted fabrics to context 2804 (above). There are six rims from five vessels, all jars. These include rims from two large globular jars with diameters of 190mm and 270mm, both with plain everted rims. The smallest rim diameter present is 100mm. One of the smaller vessels (3 joining sherds) comprises the near-complete profile of a small pear-shaped jar with a rim diameter of 120mm and part of a rounded base. Another small vessel is of deep cup-shaped or hemispherical form. Smoothing or weak burnishing occurs on the external surfaces of some sherds. No obvious decoration is present. Two featured sherds suggest an early (5-6C) dating for this context. One of these is a body sherd from a smallish globular vessel with a small, solid, boss-like feature pierced by a very narrow perforation. This is recognisable as a pierced lug 'handle', probably one of up to four such handles, with (horizontal) perforations, positioned around the vessel. The other sherd is from the flat base of a pedestal-footed vessel, probably a carinated bowl or jar?
- B.3.4 A few body sherds from 2806 have different fabrics, but otherwise have the same handmade character as the predominant quartz-tempered sandy/gritty fabrics. These include a few limestone-tempered sherds (one with Jurassic fossil bryozoan inclusions), and another with coarse brown mica inclusions suggesting a possible igneous/metamorphic source beyond Oxfordshire?

Conclusions

- B.3.5 The two contexts here (2804 and 2806) are described as the fills of Pit 2803 in Trench 28. The pottery assemblage from these, which is early Anglo-Saxon in character, suggests this pit may be a sunken featured building (SFB), or a pit related to such a building. The limited range of fabrics, forms and the featured sherds here are very similar to a recently published assemblage from Horcott Quarry in Gloucestershire (Cotter 2017).

Recommendations regarding the conservation, discard and retention of material

- B.3.6 The pottery has good potential for further analysis and should all be retained for proper cataloguing and publication at a later stage.

B.4 Fired Clay

By Kirsty Smith

Introduction

- B.4.1 A small amount of fired clay amounting to four fragments weighing 15g was recovered from Trenches 8, 21, 22 and 28.

Fabrics

B.4.2 The fired clay fragments were made from an orange sandy clay fabric with red oxidised clay inclusions (less than 1mm long) with fine white quartz inclusions (less than 0.1mm long). Two fragments also had cream clay inclusions.

Fired clay

B.4.3 The four fragments of fired clay were recovered from contexts 804, 2108, 2204 and 2806. These fragments originated from the fills of two ditches (2106, 2203) and two pits (803 and 2803).

B.4.4 The fragments weighed (8g, 4g, 2g, 1g) and were of indeterminate form with no distinguishing features. The largest fragment (8g) from context 2204 was dark grey on one side suggesting it was located close to a heat source.

Recommendations

B.4.5 The material limited potential for further research but should be retained and combined with any further work although it can be discarded if no further work is proposed.

B.5 Flint

By Michael Donnelly

Introduction

B.5.1 This evaluation brought to light a small assemblage of just three struck pieces of flint which was added to by a further four pieces from environmental samples. The flintwork was typically early in character and including two or three tool forms, an unusually high percentage for such a small assemblage.

The Assemblage

B.5.2 Posthole 203, fill 204 yielded one flint from sample <2>. This piece was probably a scraper face or scraper damage flake where the working face of the scraper fails under duress. However, such flakes are very similar to failed core tablets or levallois flakes and it is possible that the flake could also be one of these alternative forms. In any case the piece is likely to be early prehistoric through to the late Neolithic in date.

B.5.3 Ditch 2106, fill 2108 contained a fine microdenticulate on a snapped side trimming blade with very regular punched teeth along its concave left edge although these were not that regularly spaced out. Such pieces tend to be Neolithic in date and are more common in the early-middle Neolithic than in the later part of that period. They are also present in the Mesolithic period but there they tend to lack the well-defined teeth.

B.5.4 Pit 2803, fill 2804 also yielded another early form, an end truncated blade with a clear abrupt oblique truncation at its distal end as well as having clear use along its left edge, possibly as another less formal microdenticulate. Such pieces are found in early prehistory through from the late Upper Palaeolithic through to the earlier part of the Neolithic.

B.5.5 Contexts 804 (pit fill), 2804 <3> and 2806 <4> (both from pit 2803) all yielded flakes with the latter two coming from samples. These are undiagnostic. Context 2804 sample <3> also contained a sieved chip.

Discussion

B.5.6 This small assemblage has shown clear signs of activity during early prehistory. The high incidence of tools is problematic but given that there was not a significant flint component from sampled residues, the assemblage may have been more related to tool use than to flint knapping or tool production. The probable scraper face/damage, end truncation and microdenticulate all relate to different activities including hide working, wood working and plant processing/gathering. These tools may relate to different phases of activity, but all are readily accommodated by the earlier part of the Neolithic period. The scale of this activity must have been relatively small and perhaps involved a short term stopover by a mobile group passing through this locality.

B.5.7 The evaluation has shown clear evidence of flint use here during the Neolithic period. Features such as pits/pit clusters or buried layers dating to these periods are relatively rare and could easily be missed during evaluation. Therefore, it is possible that further work in this evaluation area should expect to encounter flint-rich features such as pit assemblages. Additionally, it is possible that flint-rich buried soil horizon could also be encountered.

Context	type	sub-type	notes	date
204	Other scraper	Scraper damage	Probable scraper damage but could also be a failed core tablet or levallois flake	EPH-Neo
804	Flake	Preparation	Decortical flake	
2108	Microdenticulate	Side trimming blade	Fine teeth unevenly spaced along concave left edge on plunging blade	EPH-Neo
2804	End truncation	Inner blade	Utilised left edge and minimal oblique truncation distal	EPH-E Neo
2804	Flake	Misc. trimming	From sample	
2804	Sieved chip	10-4mm	From sample	
2806	Flake	Misc. trimming	From sample	

Table B.4 Worked flint

Methodology

B.5.8 The artefacts were catalogued according to OA South's standard system of broad artefact/debitage type (Anderson-Whymark 2013; Bradley 1999), general condition noted and dating was attempted where possible. The assemblage was catalogued directly onto an Open Office spreadsheet. During the assessment additional information on condition (rolled, abraded, fresh and degree of cortication), and state of the artefact (burnt, broken, or visibly utilised) was also recorded. Retouched pieces were classified according to standard morphological descriptions (eg Bamford 1985, 72–7; Healy 1988, 48–9; Bradley 1999). Technological attribute analysis was initially undertaken and included the recording of butt

and termination type (Inizan *et al.* 1999), flake type (Harding 1990), hammer mode (Onhuma and Bergman 1982), and the presence of platform edge abrasion.

B.6 Metal

By Anni Byard

Introduction and methodology

B.6.1 Six items of iron were recovered from three contexts across three trenches during the evaluation.

B.6.2 All finds were scanned during the present assessment and where possible broad period dates were assigned. Objects were quantified by type count and weight by context and recorded in the table below.

Description

Context	Material	Count	Weight	Object	Date
608	Fe	1	9.4	Nail	Roman
804	Fe	1	39.4	Sheet	Roman
804	Fe	1	0.8	Tack	Roman
2806	Fe	2	18.8	Nail	Roman +
2806	Fe	1	3.8	Fitting	Roman +

Table 1. Description of metal finds by context

Discussion

B.6.3 A nail with a flat head was recovered from context 608, while a small tack, possibly a worn hobnail was recovered from context 804. Both are likely to be of Roman date.

B.6.4 A slightly curved, sub-rectangular fragment of an iron sheet was recovered from Context 804. No rivet holes or rivets are visible in the plate, but x-ray may reveal further detail. Its function is uncertain.

B.6.5 Two nails recovered from context 2806 are Roman or potentially Anglo-Saxon in date. A third item from the same context comprises a thin rod with flattened and pierced terminal. The opposing end starts to widen before terminating in an old break. This section may have mirrored the opposing terminal, indicating that this is a small brace or fitting possibly for a belt or small item of furniture. Alternatively, this may be a toilet implement.

Recommendations regarding the conservation, discard, and retention of material

B.6.6 The sheet and the fitting should be considered for x-ray, and these should be retained and considered alongside further finds. No further work is required on the remaining objects, and these can be discarded.

APPENDIX C ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

C.1 Environmental Samples

By Kayleigh Hamilton

Introduction

C.1.1 Four bulk flotation samples were taken as part of the archaeological evaluation primarily for the retrieval and assessment of charred plant remains (CPR) and the recovery of bones and artefacts. Specialist analyses of pottery indicate a residual background of Late Roman material incorporated into features associated with the Anglo-Saxon occupation of the site.

Method

C.1.2 The samples were collected from the field according to national guidelines, as outlined by Historic England (2011).

C.1.3 Once excavated, the samples were processed in their entirety at Oxford Archaeology using a modified Siraf-type water flotation machine. The flots (ie floated material) were collected in a 250µm mesh; residues (i.e. material which did not float) were collected in a 500µm mesh; both flots and residues were subsequently dried in a heated area. The residue fractions were sorted by eye and with the aid of a magnet, while the flot material was sorted using a low power (x10) binocular microscope to extract cereal grains and chaff, smaller seeds and other quantifiable remains.

C.1.4 Nomenclature for identified plant species follows Stace (2010); cereal grain and chaff and wild plant seed identifications were made with reference to Jacomet (2006) and the Digital Seed Atlas of the Netherlands (Cappers *et al.* 2006).

C.1.5 Snail species were identified with reference to Cameron (2008) and Kerney and Cameron (1979).

Results

C.1.6 Summaries of sample contents and flot abundance data is presented in Table C.1. Descriptions of soil colouration follow the Munsell Soil Colour Chart; soil texture descriptions follow published guidelines (Historic England 2015).

C.1.7 Sample 2 from fill 404 of pit cut 403 produced a moderately sized flot composed almost entirely of modern rootlets with occasional modern crop debris also present. An incomplete fragment of cereal grain was present but was unable to be identified due to its poor condition. Fragments of wood charcoal were common, although the majority of these were smaller than 2mm in greatest dimension and were therefore not considered to be identifiable. Molluscs were also common, most of the assemblage comprising *Vallonia* sp., *Cecilioides* sp., and hairy snails (*Trochulus hispidus*). The residues yielded bone fragments from mammals, micromammals, birds, and amphibians, along with flint debitage.

C.1.8 Sample 1 from fill 605 of pit cut 604 produced a moderate-to-large flot comprising fine rootlets and rare modern crop debris. Wood charcoal was abundant, although this was

fragmentary to the point of being unidentifiable, <4mm in size. A single fragment from an indeterminate cereal grain was recovered, along with a fragment of hazelnut shell (*Corylus avellana*); all other identifiable plant remains were modern in character. Mollusc shells from land snails were frequent; these included an indeterminate *Vallonia* (possibly *Vallonia pulchella*) and blind snails (*Ceciliodes acicula*). The flot also contained rare tiny fragments of mammal bone and single piece of woven fabric, although this is likely to be relatively modern.

C.1.9 The residues contained an abundant amount of fragmentary mammal bone and moderate amounts of micromammal bone. There was also a single sherd of late Roman pottery, probably residual in the backfill.

C.1.10 Sample 3 from fill 2804 of pit cut 2803 produced a small-to-moderately sized flot, the bulk of which was formed of fine rootlets. Unidentified fragments of wood charcoal were common, as were mollusc shells. Of these, hairy snails were the most common, although *Vallonia*-type and moss chrysalis snails (*Pupilla muscorum*) also occurred. Fragments of both mammal bone and micromammal bone were rare but present. Seeds, both complete and partial, of goosefoot (*Chenopodium* sp.) occurred in small quantities, but on examination these were established to be of modern provenance. The residues contained small quantities of mammal and micromammal bone as well as a tiny amount of flint debitage.

C.1.11 Sample 4 from fill 2806, also from pit cut 2803, produced a moderately-sized flot, again largely composed of fine rootlets. The charcoal components were mostly indeterminate and there were four fragments of hazelnut shell, along with a single bean half (Fabaceae, most probably broad/Celtic bean, *Vicia faba*). There were also four partial fragments of cereal grain, although their condition prevented more specific identification. The mollusc assemblage included hairy snails, moss chrysalis snails, and *Vertigo*-type land snails. Small quantities of mammal and micromammal bone were recovered from the residue fractions, together with a single sherd of late Roman pottery.

Discussion

C.1.12 Whilst there is potential for the survival of charred remains, the quantities and general condition of the material assessed here has generally been small in quantity and poor in character; while examples of grain were found in three of the four samples, none of these were in suitable condition to allow a species-specific identification. Charred nutshell fragments have been identified, which if combined may be sufficient for radiocarbon dating. A few wood charcoal pieces $\geq 10\text{mm}$ are present, and whilst these have not been identified to species level for the purpose of this evaluation, some of these may be suitable for radiocarbon dating or further consideration a later date. The molluscs are common-frequent but the large sample sizes need to be taken into account in this regard. All appear to be common mainland British land snails.

C.1.13 While the pottery from these environmental samples has been dated to the late Roman period (c AD 240–410), the fact that they were located in association with pottery dating from the early Anglo-Saxon period (AD 450–600) indicates that these form part of the residual material of the site. As there is no dating available for the charred remains examined during this evaluation, it is impossible at this stage to say whether this too forms part of the residual material, if it belongs to the Anglo-Saxon phase of the site, or whether it is more modern in character.

Recommendations for retention/dispersal

C.1.14 The flots warrant retention until all works on site are complete. The nutshell is possibly sufficient for radiocarbon dating, and as the wood charcoal may also be deemed suitable, storage in the archive is recommended until such a time as a decision is made.

Sample no.	Context no.	Trench	Feature/deposit	Date	Sample vol. (L)	Flot vol. (ml)	Charcoal >2mm	Grain	Chaff	Weeds	Molluscs	Other charred	Notes
1	605	6	604		40	150	+++	+			+++	+	10YR 3/3 silty clay
2	404	4	403		40	100	++	+			+++		10YR 4/4 silty clay
3	2804	28	2803		40	80	++				++++		10YR 4/3 silty clay
4	2806	28	2803		40	100	++	+			+++	+	10YR 3/3 silty clay

Key: +=present (up to 5 items), +=frequent (5-25), +++=common (25-100), ++++=abundant (100+).

Table C.1: Assessment of bulk samples.

C.2 Animal Bone

By Adrienne Powell

Introduction

C.2.1 The assemblage comprises a total of 211 fragments (2452g) recovered by hand excavation and a further 484 fragments (135g) retrieved from the >10mm, 10–4mm and 4–2mm residues fractions from the environmental samples.

C.2.2 Most of the material was recorded in full, with the aid of the Oxford Archaeology skeletal reference collection and standard identification guides, using a diagnostic zone system (Serjeantson 1996). The sole exception being the relatively rich 4–2mm residue from sample 4 (context 2806), for which identifiable remains were recorded as microvertebrate and particular taxa noted as present. Conjoining recent fragments were counted as one specimen. Taphonomic and demographic information has been recorded and measurements have been taken following Driesch (1976). The condition of the bone has been graded on a scale of 1 = excellent, to 5 = very poor, just identifiable as 'bone'.

Description

C.2.3 The bone is in predominantly good or even excellent condition, especially the material from the Saxon pit (2803), and the overall proportion of identifiable bone in the hand retrieved assemblage is 21.4% with little difference between the Saxon and earlier groups.

C.2.4 Cattle (*Bos taurus*) bones are the most common (Table C.2a), closely followed by pig (*Sus domesticus*) which is particularly common in the Saxon pit. Sheep/goat (*Ovis/Capra*) is relatively uncommon, and Equid (*Equus* sp.), dog (*Canis familiaris*) and

red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) are each represented by a single specimen in the hand retrieved assemblage. The samples produced a suite of small vertebrate taxa (Table 2) including water vole (*Arvicola terrestris*), field vole (*Microtis agrestis*), shrew (Soricidae), small and tiny birds (following Ayres *et al.* 2003) (Aves), snake (Serpentes), slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) and frog/toad (Anura).

C.2.5 Evidence of butchery was present on four specimens, including the sole equid specimen, a radius from the Iron Age/Roman context 607 which appeared to have been split lengthwise through the distal articular surface.

C.2.6 Ageable jaws and bones are present and include examples from juvenile animals. Measureable specimens are slightly more common in the Saxon assemblage.

C.2.7 The assemblage, though small, demonstrates the survival of bone in good condition on the site such that future excavation is likely to recover a useful assemblage. Further identification of the small vertebrates will inform on the local environment.

Recommendations regarding the conservation, discard and retention of material

C.2.8 The assemblage should be retained to allow further work on the small vertebrate fauna.

Spot date	Ctx	no.	Wgt (g)	Cattle	Sheep/goat	Pig	Equid	Dog	Red deer	Large mammal	Medium mammal	Total NISP
Early Iron Age	207	4	50	1		1						2
Iron Age	205	1	2									0
	307	39	96	1		2						3
	605	9	65	1								1
	608	7	49	1	1							2
	1904	5	77	2								2
Iron Age/Roman	804	6	18		2							2
	607	9	567	3	1		1					5
Saxon	2804	26	313	3		4				2		9
	2806	47	807	7		4			1		1	13
	2808	29	61									0
Undated	407	8	30	1		1						2
	1704	1	312	1								1
	304	20	5					1				1
Total		211	2452	21	4	12	1	1	1	2	1	43

Table C.2a: Hand retrieved animal bone

Spot date	Ctx	Sample	n	Wgt (g)	Cattle	Sheep/goat	Pig	Water vole	Field vole	Rodent	Shrew	Bird	Snake	Frog/toad	Microvertebrate	Total NISP
Iron Age	605	1	146	61	1		4			3						8
Late Roman	404	2	34	10				1		2		1	2			6
Saxon	2804	3	19	7						1		4		1		6
	2806	4	285	57		1	1		3	12	1	3		7	64	92
Total			484	135	1	1	5	1	3	18	1	8	2	8	64	112

Table C.2b: Animal bone from environmental samples

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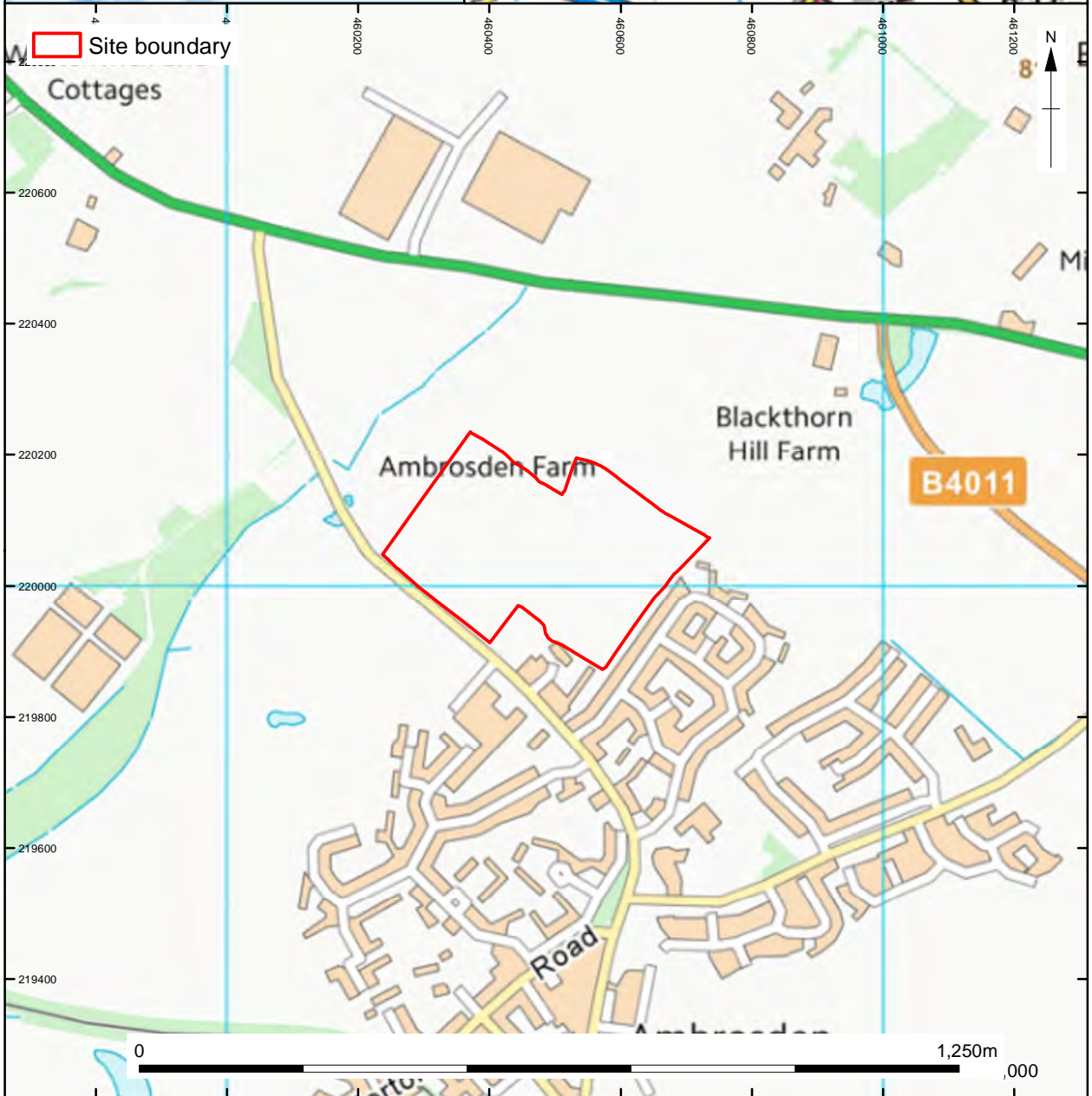
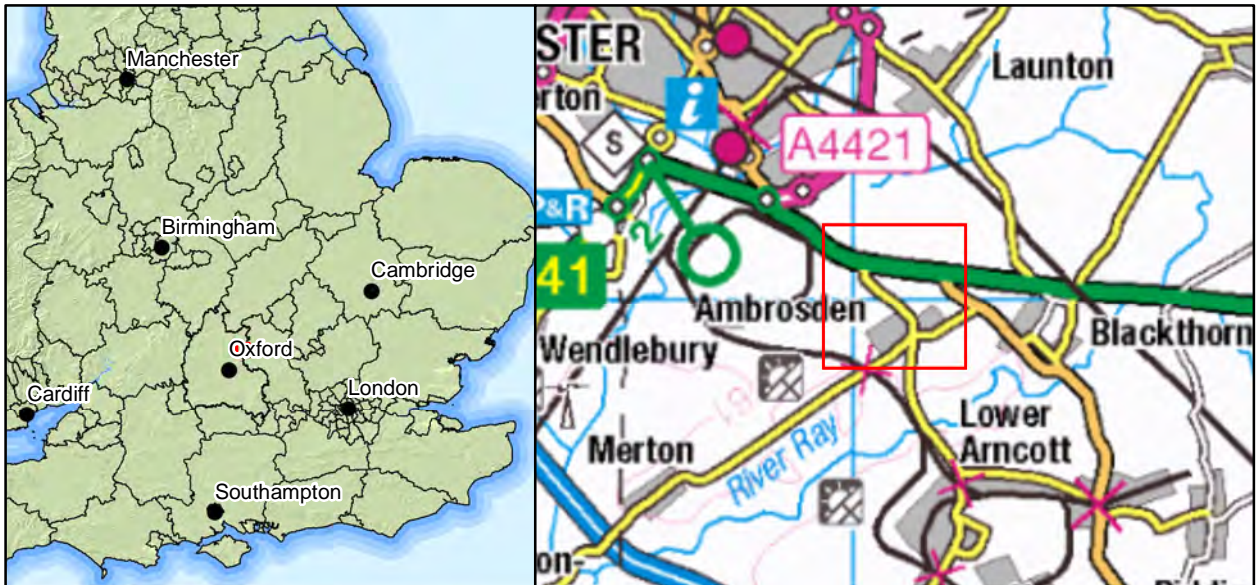
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APPENDIX E SITE SUMMARY DETAILS

Site name:	Land at Ploughey Road, Ambrosden
Site code:	AMPR22
Grid Reference	SP 60383 19978
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	September 2022
Area of Site	9.6 hectares
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead Oxford, and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS:2022.82.
Summary of Results:	<p>The site covered an area of higher ground on limestone bedrock in the east dropping down onto mudstone geology in the west. The majority of features were located on the limestone ridge and comprised features covering a range of periods. A small number of residual flint tools of early Neolithic date suggest ephemeral activity perhaps related to hide processing, wood working and plant processing. A single ditch contained pottery of early Bronze Age date. Further ditches contained Iron Age and Roman material as did a number of small pits. Larger, more-amorphous flat-based pits also of Iron Age and Roman date are interpreted as limestone quarries. A further flat-bottomed pit contained early Anglo-Saxon pottery and Roman reduced wares that may have been deliberately curated. This pit may be a sunken featured building, and a similar feature in the same trench that was not investigated may represent a second example.</p>



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Figure 1: Site location

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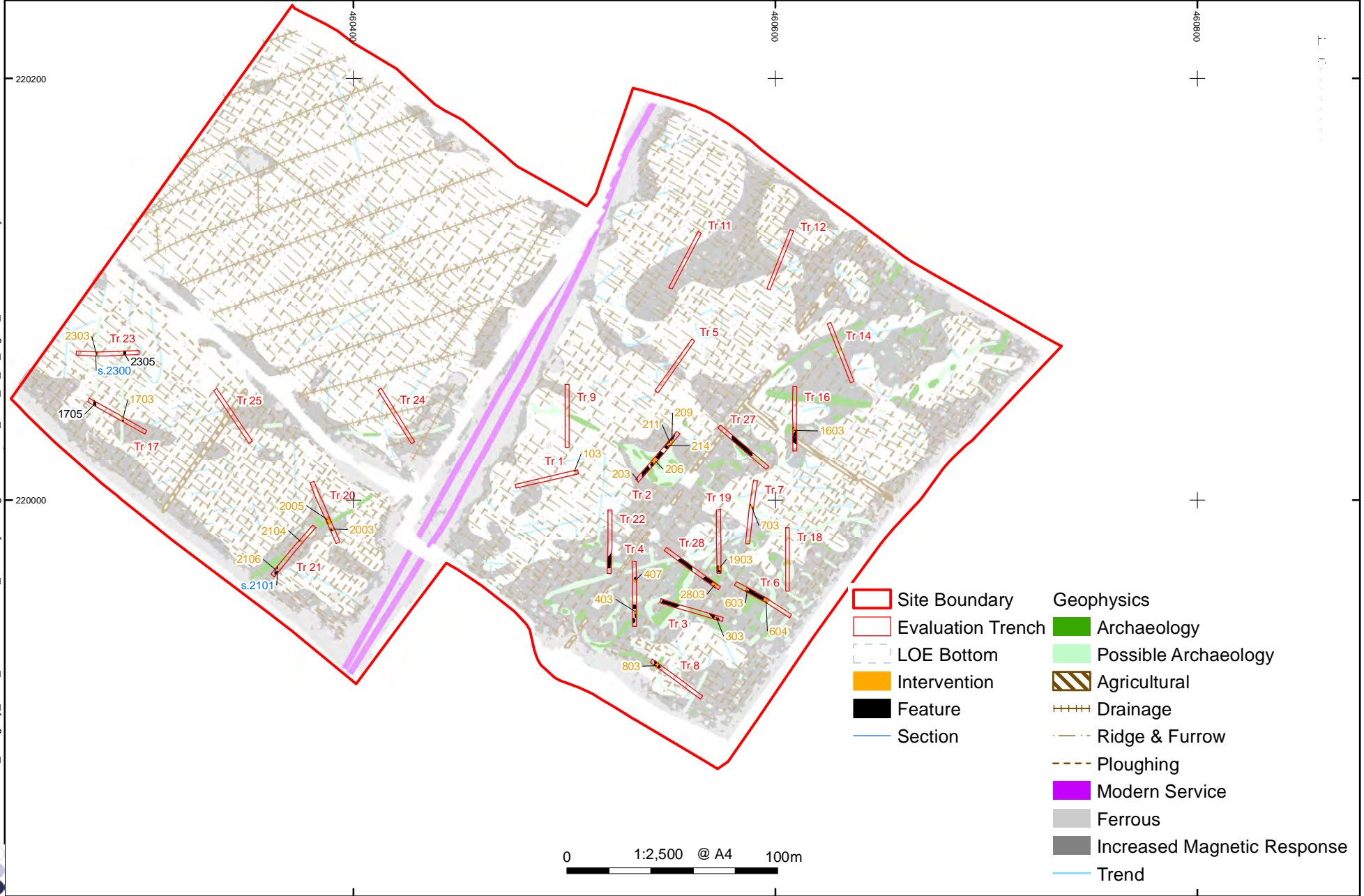


Figure 2: Trench plan

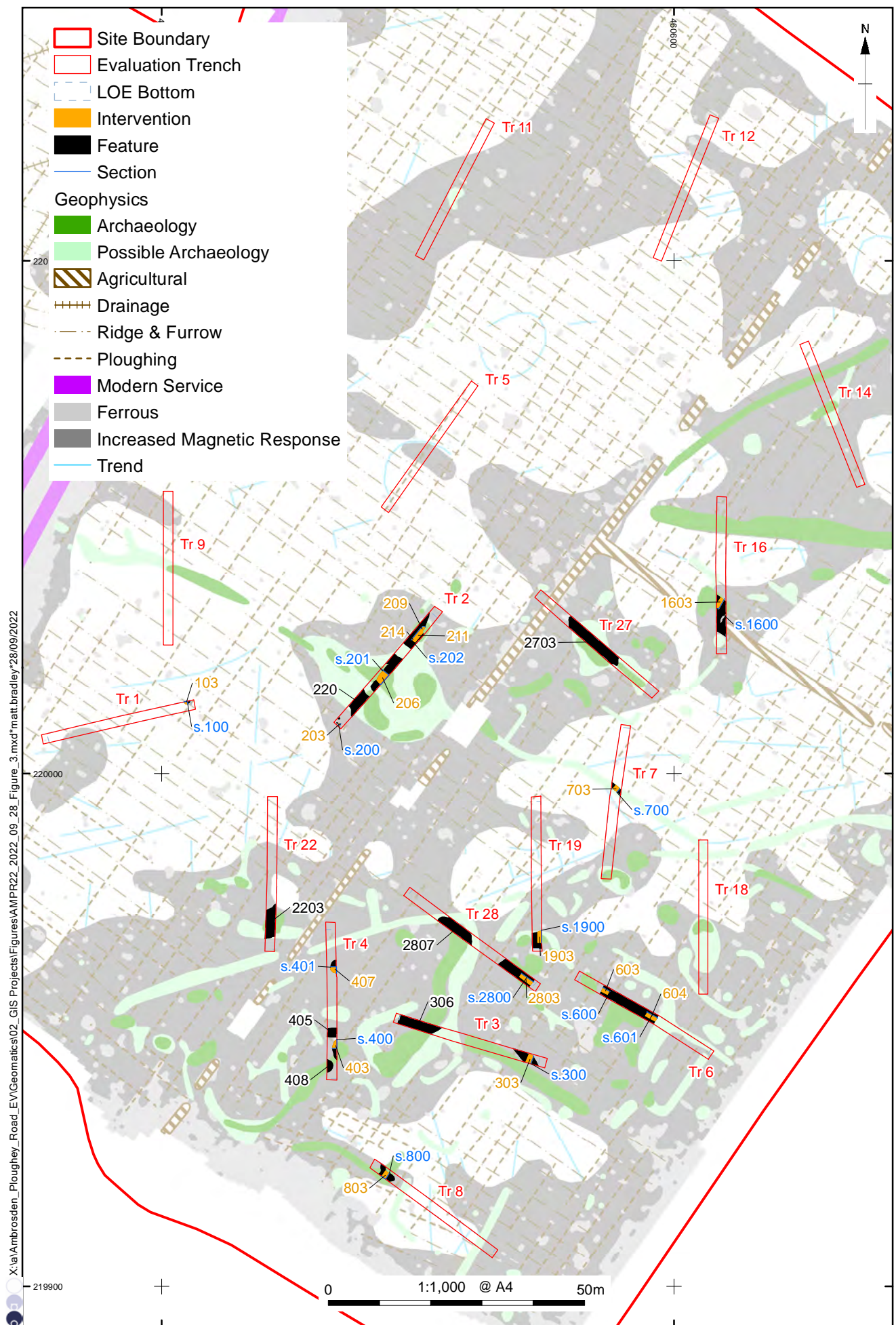


Figure 3: Trench plan - eastern area

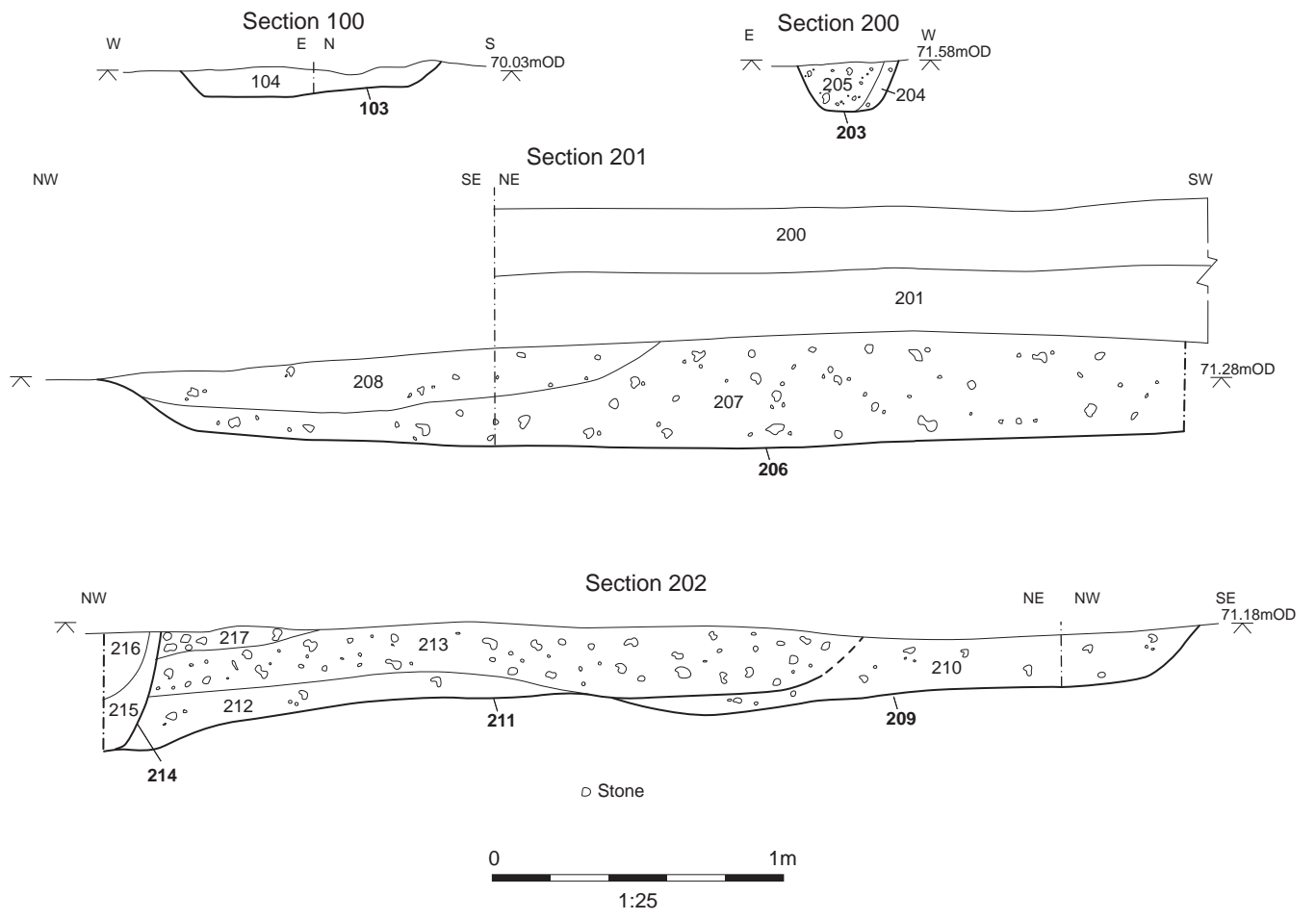


Figure 4: Selected sections (Trenches 1 and 2)

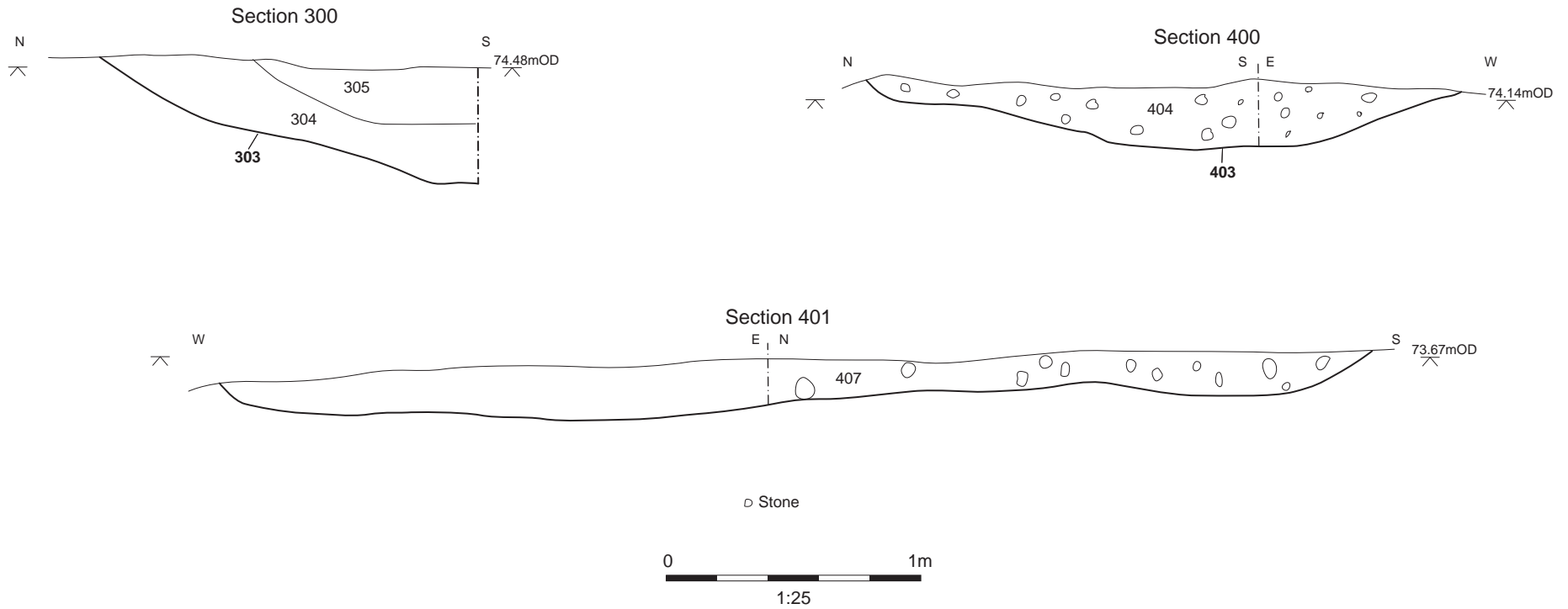


Figure 5: Selected sections (Trenches 3 and 4)

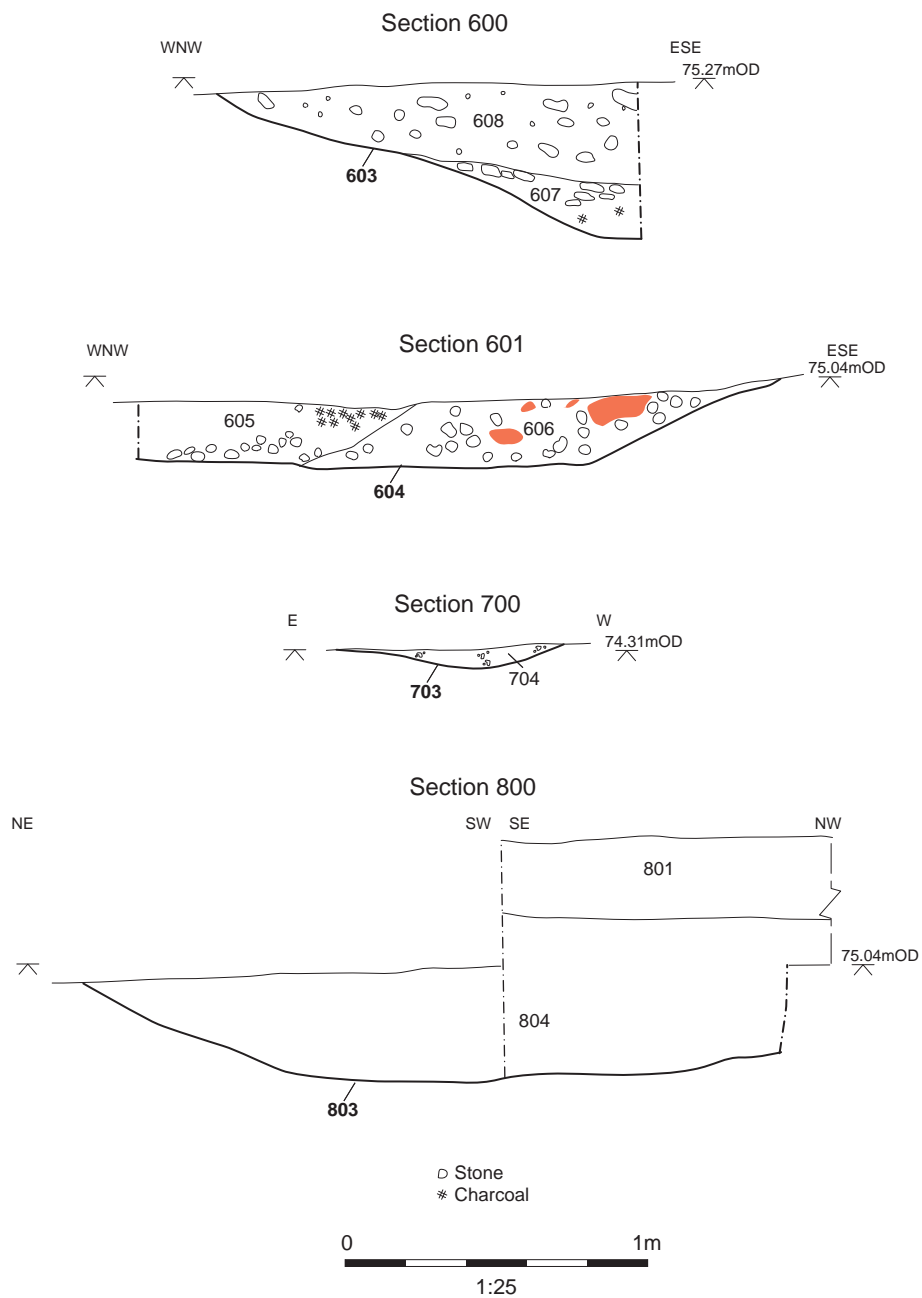


Figure 6: Selected sections (Trenches 6, 7 and 8)



Plate 1: Ditch 1703. Trench 17



Plate 2: Posthole 203. Trench 2



Plate 3: Pit 206. Trench 2

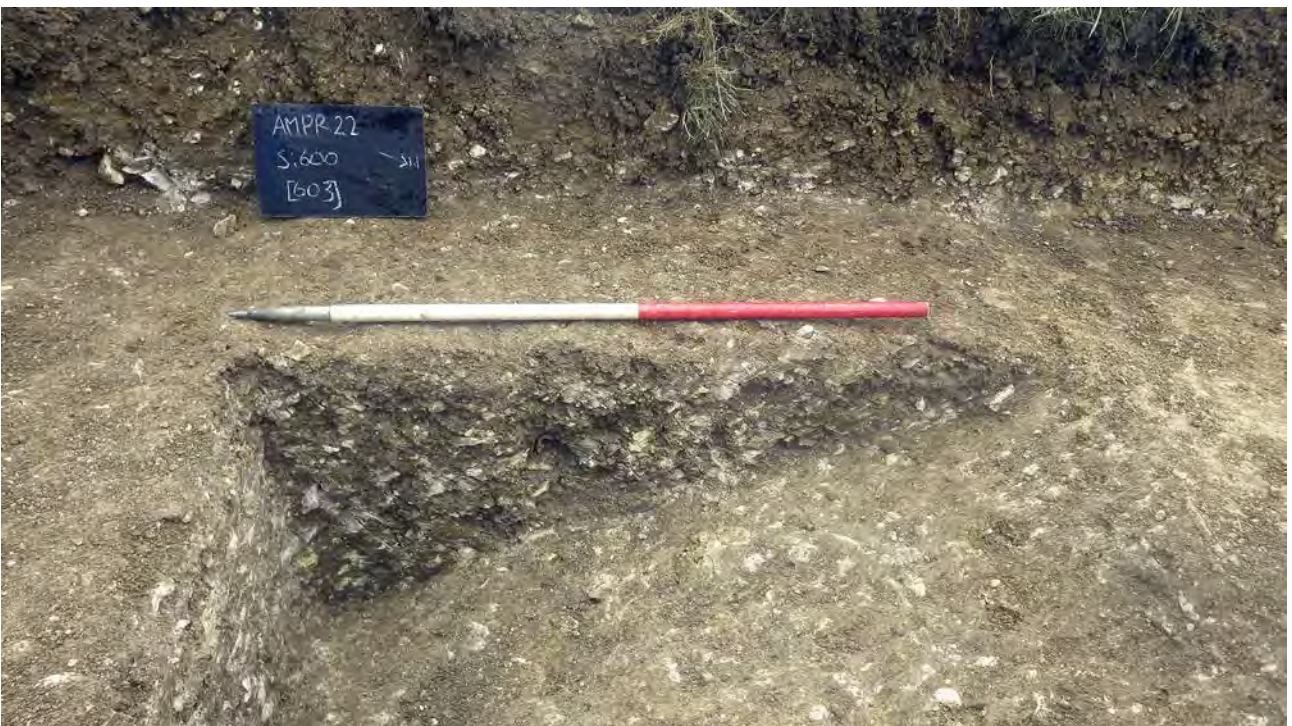


Plate 4: Pit 603. Trench 6



Plate 5: Pit 1903. Trench 19



Plate 6: Potential SFB 2803. Trench 28



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