

Land at Perryfields Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire



Archaeological Evaluation Report Phase 2



January 2015

Client: EDP on behalf of Taylor Wimpey

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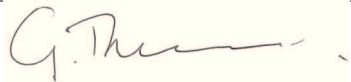
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Land at Perryfields Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. Phase 2 Evaluation

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Written by Gerry Thacker

with contributions from John Cotter, Lena Strid and Ruth Shaffrey and illustrated by Charles Rousseaux and Leanne Waring

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Summary

During December 2014 Oxford Archaeology undertook the second phase of evaluation at land off Perryfields Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. The work was undertaken to gain further information about the archaeology uncovered within the eastern part of the site during the phase 1 evaluation (OA 2014a). The evaluation revealed an undated pit containing large quantities of burnt stone. This pit, together with a ditch uncovered in the first phase of evaluation, may represent part of a segmented boundary of mid to late Iron Age date. A second identified ditch and associated plough furrows are likely to be of medieval or post-medieval date, and represent agricultural activity. An irregular feature corresponded with a linear anomaly from the geophysical survey, and proved to be of geological origin.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 During December 2014 Oxford Archaeology (OA) undertook a second phase of trial trench evaluation at land off Perryfields Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken to gain further information about the archaeology uncovered within the eastern part of the site during the phase 1 evaluation (OA 2014a). The work was undertaken to a Written Scheme of Investigation (OA 2014b), which was agreed with the Local Planning Authority Archaeological Advisor, prior to the commencement of the evaluation.
- 1.1.3 The evaluation site is part of a wider Proposed Development Area (PDA) and is located to the west of the town of Bromsgrove, to the south and south-east of the intersection of the M5 and M42 motorways (see Fig. 1). The site is bounded to the west by the M5, to the north by the M42. The southern boundary is formed by the A448 Perryfields Road, and the east by the suburb of Sidemoor.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The PDA is generally flat and currently consists mainly of pasture for the grazing of horses and turf production.
- 1.2.2 The geology of the PDA is the Bromsgrove Sandstone Formation. Alluvial deposits associated with the Battlefield Brook are present to the west of the PDA (www.mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the PDA has been described in detail in an Archaeological and Heritage Assessment (EDP 2012), the results of which are summarised below.

Prehistoric

- 1.3.2 Evidence for prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the site includes the find spot of a stone battle axe, a ring ditch recorded as a crop mark c. 250m to the west of the PDA, and possibly representing a ploughed out Bronze Age burial mound, and an irregular four sided enclosure c. 150m west of the PDA.

Romano-British

- 1.3.3 A single worn coin of Roman date was recovered to the north of the PDA by a metal detectorist.

Anglo Saxon

- 1.3.4 There is no evidence for activity of Anglo Saxon date within the PDA or in the immediate surrounds.

Medieval

- 1.3.5 The PDA is likely to have been used for agriculture in the medieval period, and from the map evidence, into the last quarter of the 19th century. The former village of Fockbury survives as a series of earthworks c. 800m to the west of the site.



- 1.3.6 Barnsley Hall is mentioned in records from the 13th century, and was located beneath a former mental hospital around 50m to the east of the PDA. The hall was demolished in 1711.

Post-medieval

- 1.3.7 Two fields, known as Potter's Field are recorded on the mid 19th century maps, and located to the west and south-east of the PDA. The field name may be indicative of an area of pottery production, or simply a reference to the name of the land owner.
- 1.3.8 The Worcestershire HER references several elements of the post-medieval landscape in the vicinity of the PDA. These include the base of a wayside stone cross to the south of the site and a well, a cave and a chapel located to the north-west of the PDA.
- 1.3.9 The HER also includes reference to post-medieval and later industry on the western edge of Bromsgrove. These records mainly relate to a former button manufactory and its associated water power system, and also to two glass working sites.

Undated

- 1.3.10 An apparent former entrenchment is located c 250m to the west of the PDA, and this is now thought to have been filled in.
- 1.3.11 Anecdotal evidence (including the name of Battlefield Brook), places a battlefield in the vicinity of the PDA, but the provenance is not clear, and the evidence both contradictory and fragmentary. If a battle had taken place in the vicinity, it would appear from place name evidence (i.e. Battlefield House) that it took place to the west of the M5 motorway, beyond the confines of the PDA. There are no registered battlefields within six kilometres of the PDA boundary.

Geophysical survey

- 1.3.12 During 2013 Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook a detailed magnetometry geophysical survey of the PDA (Figs 2 and 3). In addition to anomalies likely to represent former field boundaries, the survey also identified a trapezoidal shaped enclosure in the central part of the PDA, and a possible pit alignment or linear feature in the eastern part of the PDA. These anomalies were the focus of the phase 1 evaluation.

Phase 1 evaluation

- 1.3.13 During October 2014 Oxford Archaeology undertook a first phase of trial trench evaluation (OA 2014a). The evaluation trenches were targeted on anomalies from the geophysical survey. Three trenches were excavated over the trapezoidal enclosure in the centre of the site, and a further trench targeted a potential pit alignment to the east.
- 1.3.14 Within two of the trenches the trapezoidal enclosure was noted to have been re-cut. A fired clay object recovered from the infill of one of the ditches is likely to be of Iron Age date.
- 1.3.15 The fourth trench (Trench 4, Figs 2 and 3) identified that the potential pit alignment was in fact a ditch, which had a very compact fire cracked stone pebble upper fill. The stones could have been placed to consolidate the surface of a trackway, or eroded into the ditch from an adjacent positive feature. Pottery from the base of the stone layer is likely to be of middle to late Iron Age date.



1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 OA would like to acknowledge Matthew Morgan of EDP, who commissioned the work on behalf of Taylor Wimpey, and Aisling Nash, of Worcestershire County Council, who monitored the evaluation. The site work was conducted by Matt Fenn assisted by Gareth Dennis and Philip Wright. The OA Project Manager was Gerry Thacker.



2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aims of the evaluation were:

- (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 evaluation site to provide palaeoenvironmental 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.
- (ix) To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.
- (x) To further examine the possible Iron Age trackway, and to investigate the geophysical anomalies and blank areas within the eastern part of the PDA.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 All procedures were undertaken as outlined in the approved WSI (OA 2014b).
- 2.2.2 The trenches were located as indicated in the WSI by an OA Surveyor using a GPS system.
- 2.2.3 The trenches were opened using a JCB fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under close archaeological supervision.
- 2.2.4 Revealed archaeological features were hand cleaned and excavated.
- 2.2.5 The revealed features were drawn in scale plan and section, and photographed using black and white film and digital cameras.
- 2.2.6 All finds were bagged by context and environmental samples taken from suitably dated deposits.
- 2.2.7 Trench 7 was partially extended to reveal more of a pit that was only just within the confines of the original footprint (see Fig. 3).



3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The revealed features are described in the sections immediately below, followed by a review of the reliability of the evaluation and the discussion of the results. The dimensions and depths of all deposits, trenches and spot dates are tabulated in Appendix A. Finds reports are contained within Appendix B, and environmental samples are discussed in Appendix C.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 All trenches contained topsoil and subsoil (a buried plough soil), of probable post medieval date. The trenches remained dry throughout the course of the evaluation, and the revealed features were easily identifiable against the underlying natural mudstone.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 Archaeological features comprised two pits in Trench 7, a ditch and associated plough furrow in Trench 6, and a linear feature of geological origin in Trench 12.

3.4 Trench 6

3.4.1 A ditch, orientated north-west to south-east, was present at the north-eastern end of the trench (Figs 3 and 4; Plate 1). The ditch, 604, had a slightly irregular profile, with the side angled at around 45° on the north-east edge, becoming steeper towards the base, and the south-western side was more gently sloping. The lowest fill, 608, was a light greyish brown fine sand, and was probably derived from the gradual erosion of the feature's edges. This was overlain by a mid greyish-brown silty sand fill (607), which contained occasional rounded and sub-rounded pebbles, and infrequent charcoal flecks. The deposit appeared to have entered the ditch from the south-west, and may indicate that a bank was once present on this side of the feature. Fill 607 was in turn overlain by 606, a mid yellow-brown sandy silt containing frequent rounded and sub-rounded pebbles, and frequent charcoal flecks. Fill 606 was overlain by the upper fill 605, a mid reddish-brown silty sand which contained similar inclusions. No finds were recovered from any of the fills of ditch 604.

3.4.2 Around 7m to the south-west of ditch 604 were three extremely shallow parallel plough furrows, two of which no longer perceptible after the cleaning process. The remaining furrow (609, Fig. 3) contained a single dark reddish-brown silty sand fill and had a flat based profile. No finds were recovered from the feature.

3.5 Trench 7

3.5.1 A pit (705) was identified running beneath the north-eastern baulk of the trench. A NE-SW extension to the trench was opened to uncover more of this feature (see Fig. 3). Pit 705, (Figs 3 and 4; Plate 2), was revealed to be sub-circular in plan, and on excavation had sides which sloped at around 45° to the north-east, becoming more gradual and irregular sided to the south-west. The single fill, 704, was a dark reddish-brown sandy silt, containing large quantities of heat modified sub-rounded to sub-angular river cobbles (see Appendix B2), with diameters of between 0.06m and 0.2m. Small quantities of degraded burnt bone (see Appendix B) and charcoal were also present. A bulk sample of the deposit (sample 701, Appendix C) contained charcoal, a single charred grass seed, and a small amount of charred glume wheat chaff.



3.5.2 Around 2m to the north-east of pit 705, a similar pit (707) was partially uncovered by the extension to the trench. The pit, which was not excavated (as agreed with the Local Planning Authority Archaeological Advisor during the on-site meeting), had a similar dark reddish-brown fill (706), and appeared to contain a similar quantity of heat affected stones.

3.6 Trench 12

3.6.1 Trench 12 (Fig. 2) contained a single irregular sided linear feature, which on excavation proved to be of geological origin. The base of the feature was very irregular, and the fill was a sterile grey-brown sand.

3.7 Finds summary

3.7.1 Burnt animal bone fragments were recovered from the fill of pit 705 (Trench 7), and a pottery sherd of 17th-19th century date from subsoil layer 1002 (Trench 10)

3.7.2 A single environmental sample (701) was also taken from fill 704 of pit 705. The sample contained charcoal, a single charred grass seed and four fragments of charred glume wheat chaff.



4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The evaluation was undertaken during fair weather conditions, with no heavy rainfall. The revealed features were fairly easy to identify against the underlying natural deposits. The results of the evaluation are therefore considered to be reliable.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.1 The evaluation generally confirmed the presence of the anomalies plotted by the geophysical survey, although ditch 604, within trench 6 was absent from the survey plot. The extent and preservation of the remains was examined, and the potential for the survival of ecofacts within the feature fills was examined.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 The ditch present in Trench 6 (604) is certain to be an agricultural field boundary, perhaps with a bank on the southern side. Although no direct dating evidence was recovered, the presence of three parallel plough furrows suggests that this ditch is of medieval or later date. That only one of the furrows was deep enough to survive hand cleaning indicates, with the presence of a thick subsoil, that the site has been extensively ploughed, and that all features are likely to have been truncated during this process. The ditch does not appear on the earliest OS map, and so had probably gone out of use by 1883.

4.3.2 The two pits uncovered within Trench 7 (705 and 707), although undated, are likely to be part of the same potential boundary as the ditch excavated in Trench 4 of the previous phase of evaluation (see 402, Fig. 3). That ditch also contained large amounts of heat modified river cobbles, and was dated through the presence of over 50 pottery sherds, to the middle or late Iron Age. The boundary would have been segmented, and presumably comprised sections of ditch and large pits or postholes, although given the truncation through ploughing only the bases of these features survive.

4.3.3 The geophysical anomaly trending north-east to south-west, which was interpreted in the geophysical survey (Northamptonshire Archaeology 2013) as part of the pit alignment/segmented boundary, and excavated within Trench 12, was shown to be of geological origin. Therefore the middle to late Iron Age boundary may not extend this far to the west, and may be contained within the two most north-easterly fields. These results also suggest that of those geophysical anomalies interpreted as part of this boundary, only those with the strongest signals relate to archaeological remains, the remainder being the result of geological variation.



APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 5						
General description				Orientation	NW-SE	
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying a natural of reddish brown sandy clay, with occasional dark brown patches of degraded sandstone.				Avg. depth (m)	0.46	
				Width (m)	1.6	
				Length (m)	35	
Contexts						
Context no	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
501	Layer	-	0.21	Topsoil	-	-
502	Layer	-	0.25	Subsoil	-	-
503	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 6						
General description				Orientation	NE-SW	
Trench contained a single NW-SE orientated ditch and a parallel plough furrow. These were overlain by topsoil and subsoil and cut a natural of reddish brown sandy clay.				Avg. depth (m)	0.6	
				Width (m)	1.6	
				Length (m)	35	
Contexts						
Context no	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
601	Layer	-	0.24	Topsoil	-	-
602	Layer	-	0.36	Subsoil	-	-
603	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
604	Cut	1.4	0.51	Ditch cut	-	-
605	Fill	0.95	0.16	Fill of 604	-	-
606	Fill	1.08	0.19	Fill of 604	-	-
607	Fill	1.2	0.15	Fill of 604	-	-
608	Fill	0.75	0.09	Fill of 604	-	-
609	Furrow	0.35	0.09	Plough Furrow	-	-

Trench 7						
General description				Orientation	NW-SE	
Trench extended by addition of NE-SW trench to examine pits. Trench contained two stone filled pits, one of which was excavated. Pits sealed by topsoil and subsoil and cut a natural of reddish brown sandy clay.				Avg. depth (m)	0.58	
				Width (m)	1.6	
				Length (m)	41.5	
Contexts						
Context no	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date



701	Layer	-	0.28	Topsoil	-	-
702	Layer	-	0.3	Subsoil	-	-
703	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
704	Fill	1.7	0.43	Fill of 705	Bone, burnt stone	-
705	Cut	1.7	0.43	Cut of pit	-	-
706	Fill	1	0.6	Unexcavated fill of 707	-	-
707	Cut	1	0.6	Unexcavated pit cut	-	-

Trench 8						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying a natural of reddish brown sandy clay. A machine sondage identified sandstone bedrock at 1.3m below ground level.					Avg. depth (m)	0.38
					Width (m)	1.6
					Length (m)	35
Contexts						
Context no	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
801	Layer	-	0.1	Topsoil	-	-
802	Layer	-	0.28	Subsoil	-	-
803	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 9						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying a natural of reddish brown sandy clay.					Avg. depth (m)	0.64
					Width (m)	1.6
					Length (m)	35
Contexts						
Context no	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
901	Layer	-	0.32	Topsoil	-	-
902	Layer	-	0.32	Subsoil	-	-
903	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 10						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying a natural of reddish brown sandy clay.					Avg. depth (m)	0.47
					Width (m)	1.6
					Length (m)	35
Contexts						
Context	Type	Width	Depth	Comment	Finds	Date



no		(m)	(m)			
1001	Layer	-	0.22	Topsoil	-	-
1002	Layer	-	0.25	Subsoil	Pottery	18th-century
1003	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 11						
General description				Orientation		SW-NE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying a natural of reddish brown sandy clay.				Avg. depth (m)		0.62
				Width (m)		1.6
				Length (m)		35
Contexts						
Context no	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
1101	Layer	-	0.21	Topsoil	-	-
1102	Layer	-	0.41	Subsoil	-	-
1103	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 12						
General description				Orientation		NW-SE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying a natural of reddish brown sandy clay, with occasional patches of yellow sand. A possible linear feature was investigated and proved to be of geological origin.				Avg. depth (m)		0.35
				Width (m)		1.6
				Length (m)		35
Contexts						
Context no	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
1201	Layer	-	0.1	Topsoil	-	-
1202	Layer	-	0.25	Subsoil	-	-
1203	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-



APPENDIX B. FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Pottery

By John Cotter

- B.1.1 A single sherd of pottery weighing 40g was recovered from context (1002). This comprises a fresh sherd from the flat base of a fairly large vessel - probably a jar - in Midlands blackware. This has a hard light red fabric with a glossy internal black glaze. Midlands blackwares have a broad date-range from the 17th to the first half of the 19th-century but a broadly 18th-century dating is suggested for the piece here. No further work is recommended.

B.2 Burnt stone

By Ruth Shaffrey

- B.2.1 A large quantity of burnt stone was recovered from context 704, the fill of a pit. This material consists almost exclusively of heat shattered quartzite cobbles. The occasional fragment of quartzitic sandstone cobble is also present. None show any additional evidence of use (i.e. as hammerstones or rubbers), and all can now be discarded.

B.3 Animal bone

By Lena Strid

- B.3.1 16 indeterminate small fragments of burnt animal bone, weighing 6g in total, were recovered from context 704, the fill of pit 705. This includes 1 fragment recovered from environmental sample 701.



APPENDIX C. ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

C.1 Environmental samples

By Sharon Cook

- C.1.1 A single bulk sample of 40l was taken from the fill of an undated pit [705] to evaluate the environmental evidence contained, check for potential dating evidence and to ascertain any potential relationship with ditch [402] which was excavated in October 2014 during the first phase of work (OA 2014a).
- C.1.2 The sample was composed of moderately firm reddish brown (2.5YR 4/4) fine silty clay loam with large quantities of burnt stone present.

Methodology

- C.1.3 The sample was processed in its entirety by water flotation using a modified Siraf style flotation machine, with the flot collected on a 250µm mesh and the heavy residue sieved to 500µm. Both flot and residue were dried in a heated room, after which the residue was sorted by eye for artefacts and ecofactual remains. The flot was scanned for charred plant remains using a binocular microscope at approximately x10 magnification.

Results

- C.1.4 The 200ml flot contained a large quantity of modern roots, which formed the bulk of the recovered material. A moderate quantity of generally well preserved charcoal was present, with some fragments >2mm and potentially identifiable. A single charred grass seed and four fragments of charred glume wheat chaff were extracted.
- C.1.5 The heavy residues contained a number of burnt stones and a single fragment of calcined bone that was too small to identify further.

Discussion and Conclusion

- C.1.6 The charred chaff is too small to be used for radiocarbon dating, and no roundwood was observed during scanning. Due to the lack of material present, further investigation of environment and economy at the site is not possible from this sample.



APPENDIX D. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

EDP, 2012. Land at Perryfields Road, Bromsgrove. Archaeological and Heritage Assessment. The Environmental Dimension Partnership.

OA 2014a Land at Perryfields Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. Archaeological Evaluation Report. Unpublished Client Report. Oxford Archaeology.

OA 2014b Land off Perryfields Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. Phase 2. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation. Oxford Archaeology.



APPENDIX E. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Land at Perryfields Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. Phase 2 Evaluation

Site code: WSM 66251

Grid reference: SO 950 720

Type: Evaluation

Date and duration: December 2014

Area of site: 100 hectares

Summary of results: During December 2014 Oxford Archaeology undertook the second phase of evaluation at land off Perryfields Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. The work was undertaken to gain further information about the archaeology uncovered within the eastern part of the site during the phase 1 evaluation (OA 2014a). The evaluation revealed an undated pit containing large quantities of burnt stone. This pit, together with a ditch uncovered in the first phase of evaluation, may represent part of a segmented boundary of mid to late Iron Age date. A ditch and associated plough furrows are likely to be of medieval or post-medieval date, and represent agricultural activity. An irregular feature corresponded with a linear anomaly from the geophysical survey, and proved to be of geological origin.

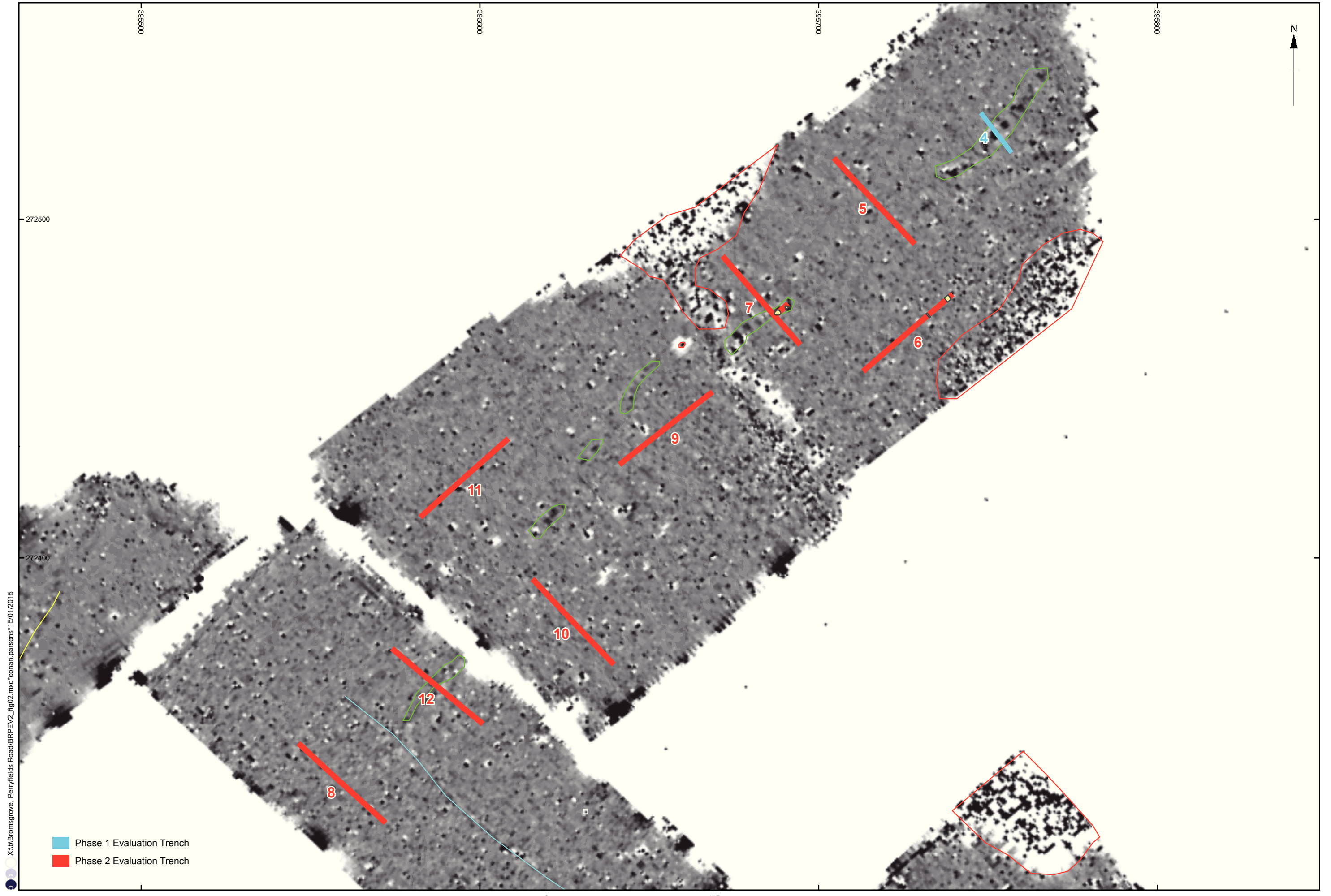
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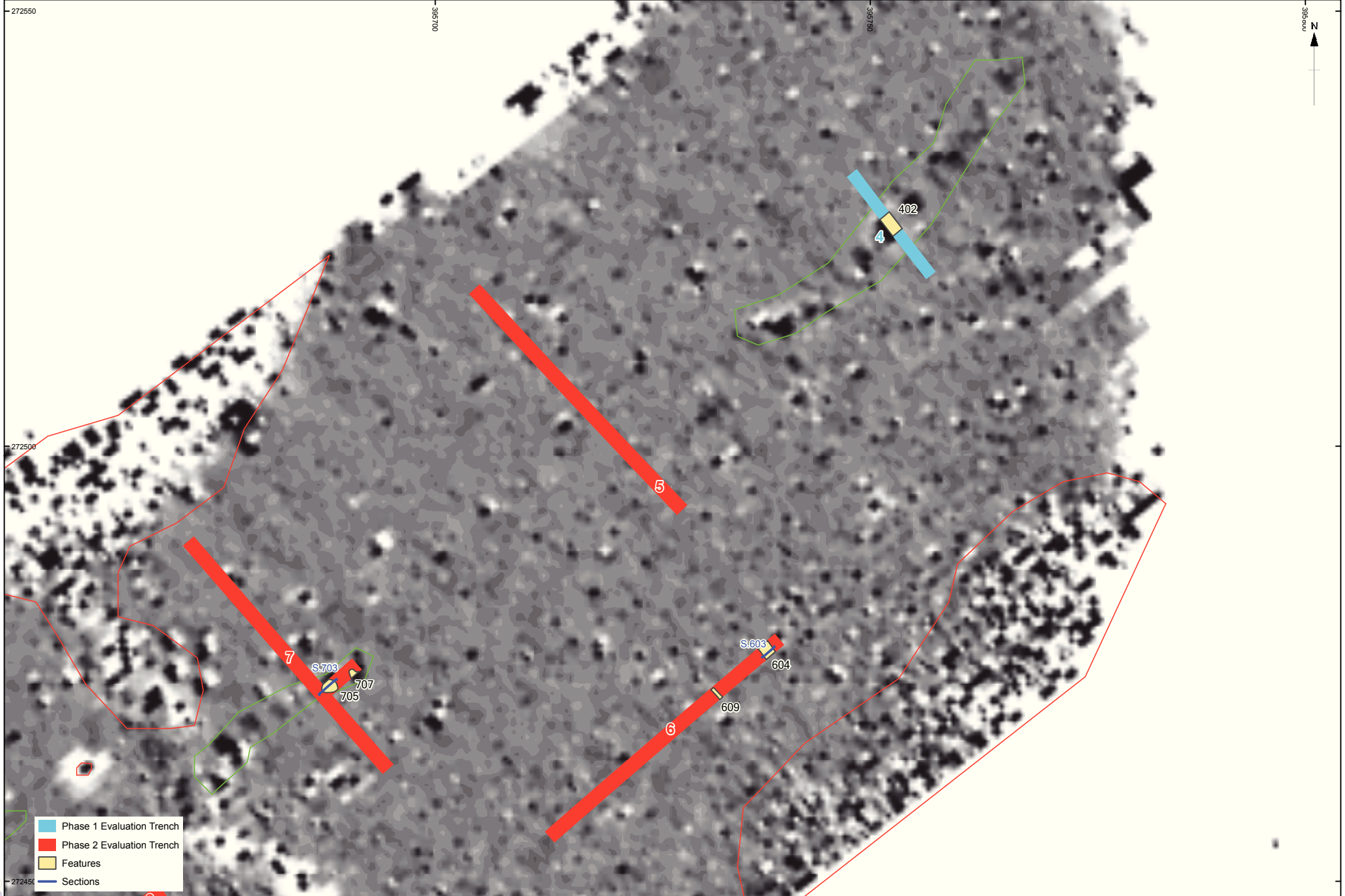
Figure 1: Site location



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1:1,000 @ A3

Figure 2: Trench locations with archaeology and geophysics



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- Phase 1 Evaluation Trench
- Phase 2 Evaluation Trench
- Features
- Sections

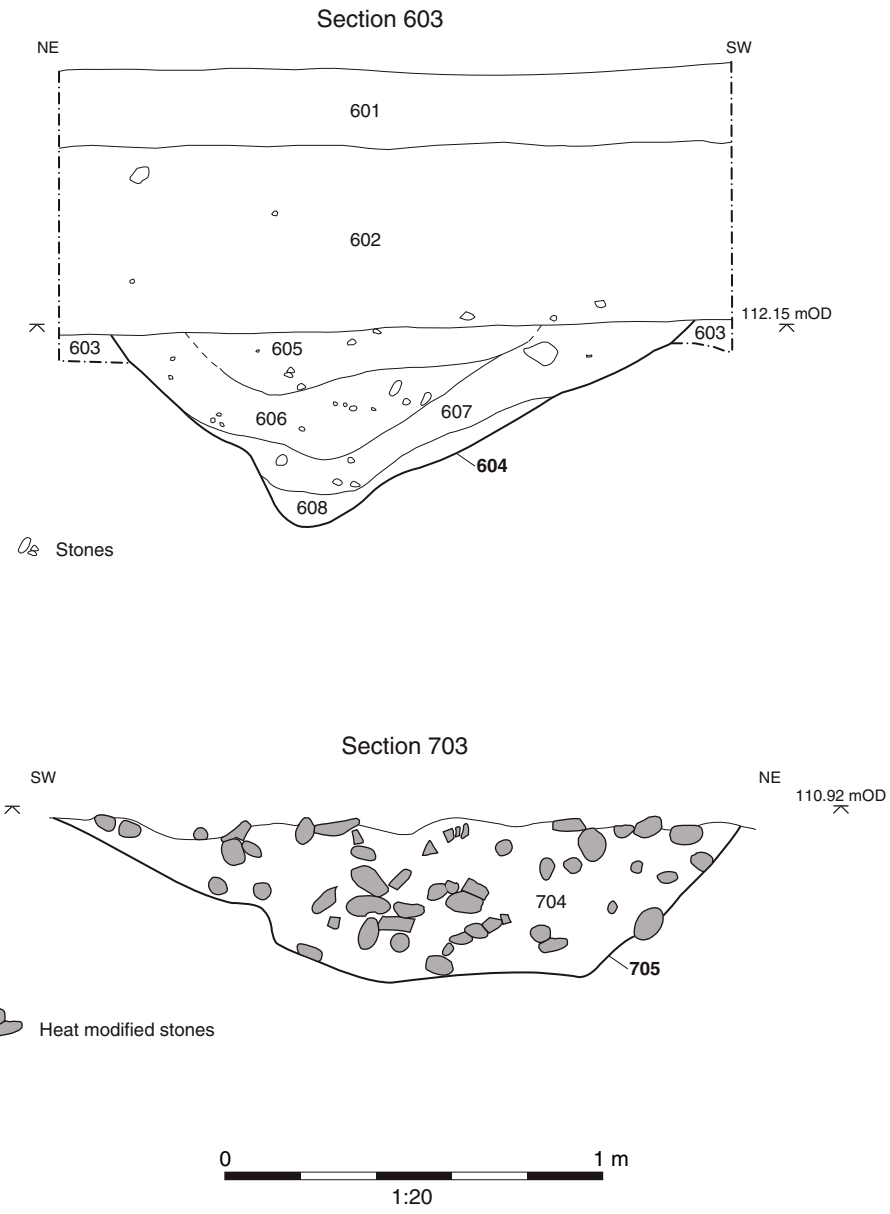


Figure 4: Sections 603 and 703



Plate 1: Ditch 604, view to SE



Plate 2: Pit 705, view to N



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