

Arden Heath Farm Stratford-Upon-Avon



Archaeological Excavation Report



July 2016

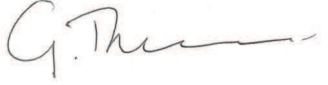
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Arden Heath Farm, Stratford-upon-Avon

Archaeological Excavation Report

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[Front cover plate: Overall shot of site, view to the north]



Summary

In May 2016 Oxford Archaeology carried out an archaeological excavation for the Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) on behalf of Gallagher Estates on the site of the redevelopment of Arden Heath Farm, Stratford-Upon-Avon, Warwickshire. The investigation uncovered three broadly parallel ditches and a number of tree throws forming a linear pattern on a similar north-south alignment to the ditches. The westernmost ditch contained a single sherd of Severn Valley ware, dating the ditch to the second century AD or later. All the other features were undated. The ditches appeared to be on a similar alignment to a Roman road recorded in the Warwickshire HER and seen on the geophysical survey carried out in the area in 2013. However, the shallow depth and homogeneous fills of the ditches indicates that the features uncovered in this excavation relate to a trackway forming part of a wider field system on a similar alignment to the Roman road, but are not characteristic of Roman roadside features themselves.

This document describes the results of the excavation.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 During May 2016 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological excavation for the Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) on behalf of Gallagher Estates on the site of the redevelopment of Arden Heath Farm, Stratford-Upon-Avon, Warwickshire.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken to address Condition 17 of planning permission in relation to an appeal decision (planning ref: APP/J3720/W/15/3004380). A Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological mitigation was issued by EDP in response to the appeal and detailed the local authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition.
- 1.1.3 This document describes the results of the excavation, presents the findings of the artefactual and environmental analyses, and makes recommendations for the dissemination of the report.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site lies on the southern edge of Stratford-Upon-Avon, Warwickshire, at c 43m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).
- 1.2.2 The excavation consisted of a 0.2 hectare area in the northern agricultural field to the west of Knights Lane in the development area (Fig. 1).
- 1.2.3 The geology of the area is Wasperton Sand and Gravel Member superficial deposits overlying Mercia Mudstone Group deposits (BGS website).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 An archaeological and heritage assessment (EDP 2013), geophysical survey (WYAS 2013), and trial trench evaluation (OA 2013), were carried out to inform the planning application in 2013. The Archaeological and Heritage Assessment (EDP 2013), consulted amongst other sources the Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (WHER). A summary of its results are summarised below (WHER record numbers referenced are prefixed by MWA).
- 1.3.2 A total of 21 undesignated Palaeolithic – Iron Age sites are located within 0.35-1.0km of the site, the majority of which are dated to the Iron Age. These include possible settlements located about 530m to the south (MWA1009) and about 900m to the north-west (MWA5552). The evaluation is situated about 675m north-west of a Roman settlement designated as a Scheduled Monument (NMR 1003741) that is located on the south-west edge of Tiddington. Within the settlement, timber and stone buildings, a road, post holes, pits, burials, corn drying kilns and field systems have been identified. The settlement has been interpreted as a village, rather than a small town, and has evidence for activity from the 1st-4th centuries AD. Another settlement (MWA1009) which may have origins in, or was at least occupied during, the Roman period is located about 530m south of the evaluation area and has been identified through aerial photography.
- 1.3.3 The WHER contains an entry for a Roman road (MWA4763) within the eastern half of the development area. The road is orientated roughly north-west/south-east and is thought to cross the modern Loxley Road, which is also listed as a Roman road (MWA4760), within the centre of the site. The WHER contains two further entries of interest. A find-spot of three silver Roman coins (MWA9963) is recorded within the



northernmost field and a possible post-medieval pillow mound (MWA8693) is recorded within the vicinity, although its exact location is not recorded.

- 1.3.4 The site's position within Arden Heath, and its distance from known areas of settlement, such as Tiddington, suggests that it most likely comprised farmland or woodland throughout the medieval and the early part of the post-medieval periods, possibly for grazing stock. From the 17th century it is known to have continued in use as heath or farmland.
- 1.3.5 A magnetometer survey within the area of the evaluation was carried out by Archaeological Services WYAS, commissioned by The Environmental Dimension Partnership LLP on behalf of Gallagher Estates (AS WYAS 2013). Generally, a low level of magnetic background variation was identified, possibly attributed to the minimal magnetic susceptibility of the mudstone bedrock. The most significant features identified were parallel linear anomalies within the north of the evaluation area (the current site) which were provisionally interpreted as roadside ditches flanking either side of a Roman road. In the south of the evaluation area, a cluster of high magnetic anomalies and ferrous spikes correspond with crop marks visible on Google Earth images that do not appear on any Ordnance Survey mapping. The geophysical survey team's communication with the farmer indicated that these anomalies were likely to represent a back-filled marl pit. A fragmentary rectilinear anomaly identified within the south-east of the development area could represent the remains of a Roman enclosure given the proximity to recorded remains of the period. However, the lack of definition of the magnetic response suggested that it could equally be the remains of an extraction pit.

Potential

- 1.3.6 The WHER suggested Roman activity possibly within and in close proximity to the development area.
- 1.3.7 The results of the magnetometer survey indicated a low density of archaeological remains, although these results were possibly skewed by the low level of magnetic background variation of the natural geology. Results suggested the archaeological potential of the eastern part of the site was moderate to high with a low to moderate potential elsewhere.
- 1.3.8 The Loxley Road, which is listed as a Roman road, and a possible north-west/south-east aligned Roman road within the north-eastern part of the evaluation area could provide a focus for additional Roman activity. However no current evidence for settlement is present within the evaluation area. A rectilinear feature identified by geophysical survey in the south-east corner of the site could tentatively be evidence for a Roman enclosure.
- 1.3.9 There is a low potential for identifying medieval remains within the evaluation area. Historic mapping and geophysical survey evidence suggest that the area has been used for the agricultural practice of ridge and furrow cultivation.



2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The primary objectives of the strip map and sample excavation strategy were:

- To mitigate the effect of the development of Arden Heath Farm on any surviving buried archaeological remains through archaeological investigation and recording, analysis of the excavated data, publication of the results, and deposition of an ordered project archive with a local museum (“preservation by record”).
- To enable the archaeological data from the site to be placed within its local, regional and national context.

2.1.2 The specific aims and objectives were:

- To determine the nature, date, extent and character of the linear features found in the geophysical survey.
- To determine the nature, date and duration of activity represented by any revealed remains.
- To examine any social, economic and cultural relationships evidenced by the surviving archaeological and palaeoenvironmental remains.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The site was stripped under close archaeological supervision using one mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The archaeological features thus revealed were mapped using a Global Positioning System. All features were hand cleaned and sample excavated. Ditches were sampled at a level of 10%; discrete features such as possible pits and tree throws were sampled at 50%. After hand excavation and site recording was complete, a further finds retrieval exercise was carried along the three ditches.

2.2.2 Plans and sections of the excavated features were drawn at a scale of either 1:20 or 1:50. All features were photographed in black and white print film and colour digital formats. Environmental samples were taken where datable deposits were identified as having potential for preservation of charred plant remains. All excavation and recording followed procedures laid down in the *OA Fieldwork Manual* (Wilkinson 1992).

3 SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1 General

- 3.1.1 The excavation uncovered a total of three shallow ditches and seven discrete features (Fig. 2). The ditches were typically very shallow. Their dimensions ranged from 0.6m to 0.8m wide, and 0.3m to 0.5m deep. The discrete features were irregular in plan and profile and suggested that they were likely to be tree throw holes. The shallow character of most of the features and the similarity of their fills, composed of brown sandy soil, and an absence of any anthropological material led to their interpretation as being naturally formed.
- 3.1.2 The ditches were all aligned north-south. Two toward the western edge of site were 1.5m apart. The third extended down the centre of the area from the north edge before it terminated; after 19m, it continued for a further 7.5m to the south. The tree throw features were to the west of the ditches on the west side of site. They had a linear distribution, being aligned north-south, and were fairly evenly spaced.
- 3.1.3 All the features were cut from the natural ground surface (3), consisted of a light reddish brown sand and stone brash. The upper fills of all the features were sealed by a mid reddish brown sandy silt subsoil (2), an old ploughsoil, which was 0.14- 0.17m thick. This in turn was sealed by the topsoil (1), the modern ploughsoil, which was 0.21- 0.28m thick. These were consistent across the whole site.

3.2 Roman

- 3.2.1 One ditch, 32, contained one sherd of pottery of Roman date.

Ditch 32

- 3.2.2 Ditch 32 (Fig. 3; Fig. 4 sections 3, 4, 6 and 12; Plates 4 and 5) extended north-south across the site on a straight alignment and continued beyond the limits of excavation. Four interventions through the ditch revealed it to be a moderately sloped feature with a concave base and varying depth of 0.08m- 0.28m along its length. It was filled by a mid brown sandy silt with occasional small sandstones. A single sherd of pottery was recovered from the fill (26). The rim sherd belonged to a fairly abraded wide-mouthed jar in organic-tempered Severn Valley ware, giving a second century date.

3.3 Undated

Ditch 31

- 3.3.1 Ditch 31 (Fig. 3; Fig. 4 sections 2, 5 and 7; Plates 2 and 3) lay on a parallel north-south alignment to, and 1.5m to the east of, Ditch 32. These interventions through the feature showed it had moderately sloped sides with a concave base and a varying depth of 0.16m- 0.30m along its length. It was filled by a mid brown sandy silt with occasional small sandstones. There were no finds recovered along its length.

Ditch 30

- 3.3.2 Ditch 30 (Fig. 3; Fig. 4 sections 9, 10 and 8; Plates 6, 7 and 8) lay on a parallel north-south alignment to, and 8m to the east of, Ditch 31. This ditch extended from the northern baulk for 29m before terminating and resumed again after 19m for a further 7.5m before petering out. These interventions through the ditch showed it had shallow sloped sides with a concave base. Where excavated at its terminus ends, the sides were moderately sloped but due to the shallow depth, 0.12m- 0.24m, it is not possible to characterise the ditch based on the construction of the terminus ends.

***Tree Throw features 4, 25 and 28***

- 3.3.3 Two of the tree throw features, 25 and 27, on the west side of the site were excavated (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4 section 13; Plate 9). The sections had irregular sloped sides and bases and were shallow in depth. The fills were mixed reddish brown sandy silts and greyish brown sandy silts with few inclusions. No other inclusions or finds were present in the fills.
- 3.3.4 The two tree throws were 13m apart and formed an approximate north-south line of features with four other unexcavated irregular discrete features.
- 3.3.5 Another tree throw feature was excavated on the east side of the site (Fig. 3 and Fig 4 section 1). The tree throw had irregular sloped sides and base and was shallow at a depth of 0.10m. The fill was mixed reddish brown sandy silt and greyish brown sandy silt with few inclusions. No other inclusions or finds were present in the fill.



4 FINDS REPORTS

4.1 Pottery

by Paul Booth

- 4.1.1 A single sherd of pottery was recovered from a trackway deposit. The sherd is not closely datable but the vesicular fabric and the form of the sherd suggest a second century date. The pottery sherd is unremarkable for the region.

Results

4.1.2 Results table

Context	Description	Date
26	A single, fairly abraded wide-mouthed jar rim sherd in organic-tempered Severn Valley ware, 23g	Second century AD



5 ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

5.1 Charred plant remains and wood charcoal

By Sharon Cook

Introduction

- 5.1.1 A single 40L sample, (1), was taken from the context 26, a fill of ditch 27. The ditch, which produced a sherd of Severn Valley Ware from the 2nd century AD, was one of a pair which bracketed a possible Roman trackway. The sample was a strong brown (7.5YR 5/6) sandy silt loam with approximately 5% sub-circular and sub-angular stones.

Methods

- 5.1.2 The sample was processed in its entirety by water flotation using a modified Siraf-style machine. The flot was collected on a 250µm mesh and the heavy residues sieved to 500µm and dried in a heated room prior to sorting, although in this case no bones or artefacts were present.

Results – Charred plant remains

- 5.1.3 Approximately 75ml of flot material was produced, of which 100% was scanned using a stereo microscope at approximately x10 magnification. As well as fine roots and intrusive modern seeds and insects, charred plant material was present, including a fragment of charred hazelnut shell and five ivy-leaved speedwell (*Veronica hederifolia*) seeds; these are a wild plant common to cultivated land, pathways and roadside verges.
- 5.1.4 The majority of charred material, however, consists of a large quantity (40+ fragments) of glume wheat chaff in varying condition together with ten fragments of grain, four of which are wheat (*Triticum* sp.), the rest being too fragmented to positively identify further.

Results – Charred wood remains

- 5.1.5 The charcoal present, while in good condition, is too small to be useful for a species identification of wood used.

Discussion and conclusions

- 5.1.6 All the results from the sample are consistent with a Roman date for the fill.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Discussion

- 6.1.1 Arden Heath Farm redevelopment lies to the south of Stratford-Upon-Avon and was subject to a widespread trial trenching and geophysical survey in 2013. The results from these led to the requirement of a 0.2ha excavation to determine the extent and preservation of linear features that had not been fully uncovered through the trial trenching exercise. The alignment of the ditches, in context with other sites of a Romano-British date in the local area, add to the understanding of the wider land use in this period.
- 6.1.2 To the north of the site, along the modern line of Tiddington Road, lies a Roman road and settlement along the south bank of the River Avon (WCC 2005). It is likely that a Roman fort was situated at the river crossing and this provided a focus for settlement along the river. The settlement grew substantially in the first and second centuries and was linked by a road network to the nearby Roman towns of Alcester and Chesterton-on-Fosse (WCC 2005). Excavations carried out by OA at 121 Tiddington Road between 2001 and 2003 found first and second century gullies and a ditch in the northeast area of the settlement and this added to the previous knowledge of the settlement from excavations carried out in the 1980s by Warwickshire Museum Field Service (OA, 2006). The main road from the Fosse Way to Alcester, however, crossed at another fording point further west along the Avon. This ford crossing was likely the origins of the Roman settlement at Stratford-upon-Avon, and became the more important crossing. This led to the settlement at Tiddington diminishing in importance throughout the later Roman period (WCC 2005).
- 6.1.3 The three ditches identified by this excavation, which were previously located on the alignment of the Roman road, as found in the Warwickshire HER (MWA4763) and seen in the geophysical survey (Fig. 5), are likely to relate to the field systems and trackways associated with the settlement at Tiddington. Even though the ditches are on a similar alignment, 1.25km to the south of the ditches on the plan based on Palmer 1983 (OA, 2006) in the 1982 excavations, the distances involved are too great for a direct association to be made. But the character and distance apart of these ditches supports that they could be a continuation of the three ditches found in the current excavations. All the ditches appear on a similar alignment to the road network of the area, originating with the Fosse Way. The pottery date of the second century is consistent with the growth of the settlement at Tiddington and the charred plant remain evidence supports that the ditches formed an agricultural track. However, the sherd was found at the top of the fill and so may be a residual find in a later ditch. The undated tree throw holes, while on a similar alignment, cannot with any confidence be associated with this period. However, they may indicate that field boundaries have changed little over the following centuries.

6.2 Recommendations for dissemination

- 6.2.1 The stratigraphic, artefactual and palaeo-environmental evidence has been fully analysed for the production of this report and no further analysis is required. A copy of the report will be deposited with the site archive and a copy will be submitted to Warwickshire Historic Environment Record in order to make the results of the excavation freely available. The full report will also be made available on OA's online library at <http://library.thehumanjourney.net>.



6.3 Acknowledgements

- 6.3.1 OA would like to thank Matthew Morgan of Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd, who commissioned the excavation, and Anna Stocks, Archaeological Officer of Warwickshire County Council Heritage Monitoring Team, who monitored the work. The excavation was supervised by Lee Sparks, who was assisted by Ashley Strutt and Mike Sims. The fieldwork was managed by Gerry Thacker and Rebecca Peacock and the post-excavation analysis was undertaken by Rebecca Peacock. Conan Parsons and Aidan Farnan digitised the site plan and Markus Dylewski prepared the illustrations.

APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

1.1 Context Table

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Comments	Date
1	Layer	-	-	Topsoil	-
2	Layer	-	-	Subsoil	-
3	Layer	-	-	Natural	-
4	Cut	0.10	0.4	Tree throw hole	
5	Fill	0.10	0.4	Tree throw fill	Undated
6	Cut	0.30	1.12	Ditch	
7	Fill	0.30	1.12	Ditch fill	Undated
8	Cut	0.28	1.16	Ditch	
9	Fill	0.28	1.16	Ditch fill	Undated
10	Cut	0.08	0.86	Ditch	
11	Fill	0.08	0.86	Ditch fill	Undated
12	Cut	0.28	1.0	Ditch	
13	Fill	0.28	1.0	Ditch fill	Undated
14	Cut	0.08	0.66	Ditch	
15	Fill	0.08	0.66	Ditch fill	Undated
16	Cut	0.16	1.12	Ditch	
17	Fill	0.16	1.12	Ditch fill	Undated
18	Cut	0.13	0.78	Ditch	
19	Fill	0.13	0.78	Ditch fill	Undated
20	Cut	0.24	0.72	Ditch terminus	
21	Fill	0.24	0.72	Ditch terminus fill	Undated
22	Cut	0.12	0.61	Ditch terminus	
23	Fill	0.12	0.61	Ditch terminus fill	Undated
24	Fill	0.4	0.7	Tree throw fill	Undated
25	Cut	0.4	0.7	Tree throw hole	
26	Fill	0.15	0.7	Ditch fill	2 nd Century AD
27	Cut	0.15	0.7	Ditch	
28	Cut	0.32	1.06	Tree throw hole	
29	Fill	0.32	1.06	Tree throw fill	Undated
30	Group			Ditch group	Undated
31	Group			Ditch group	Undated
32	Group			Ditch group	2 nd Century AD



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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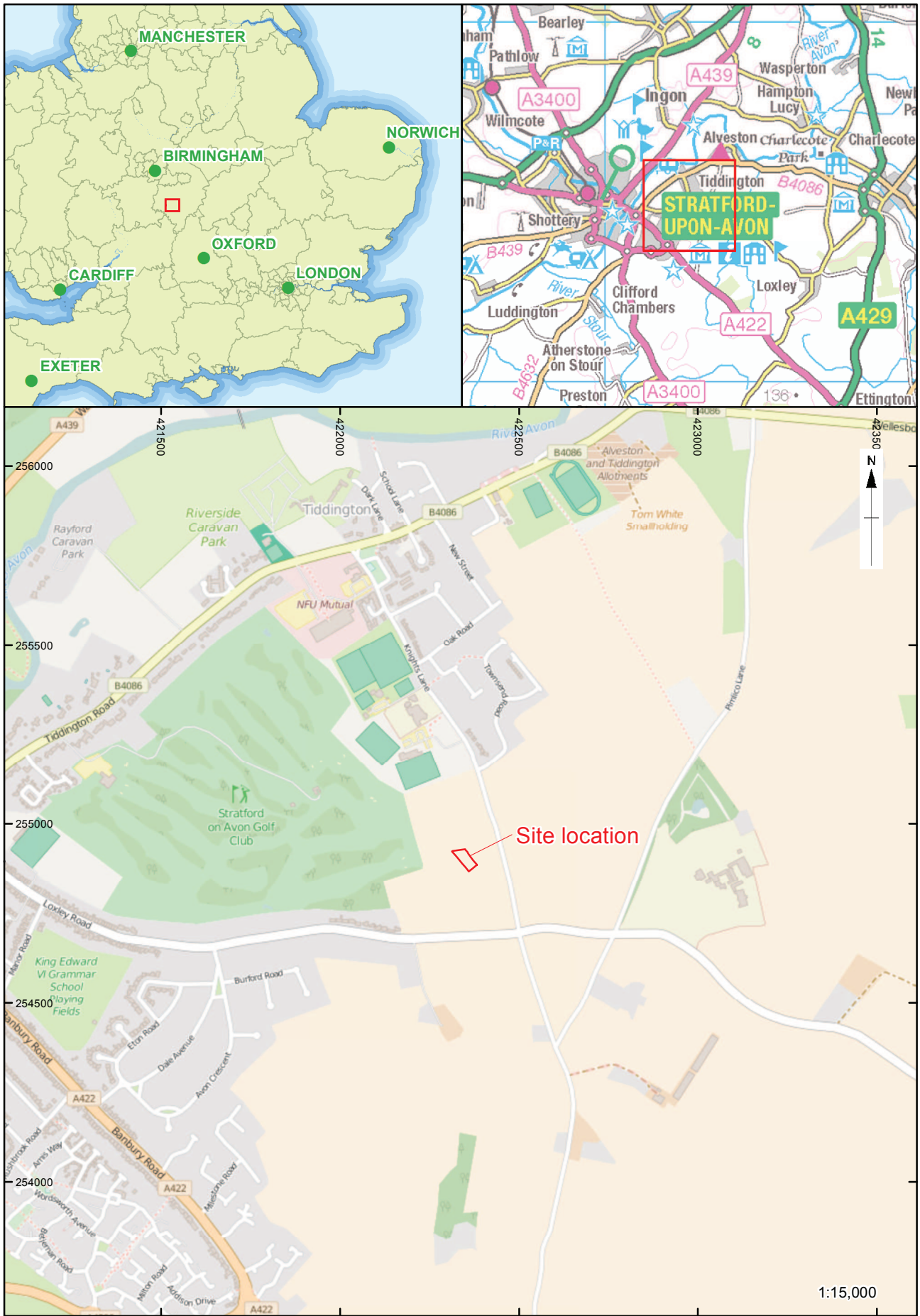


APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Arden Heath Farm, Stratford-Upon-Avon
Site code:	STARD 16
Grid reference:	NGR 422337 254895
Type:	Excavation
Date and duration:	16th - 27th May 2016
Area of site:	0.2ha

Summary of results: In May 2016 Oxford Archaeology carried out an archaeological excavation for the Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) on behalf of Gallagher Estates on the site of the redevelopment of Arden Heath Farm, Stratford-Upon-Avon, Warwickshire. The investigation uncovered three broadly parallel ditches and a number of tree throws forming a linear pattern on a similar north-south alignment to the ditches. The westernmost ditch contained a single sherd of Severn Valley ware, dating the ditch to the second century AD or later. All the other features were undated. The ditches appeared to be on a similar alignment to a Roman road recorded in the Warwickshire HER and seen on the geophysical survey carried out in the area in 2013. However, the shallow depth and homogeneous fills of the ditches indicates that the features uncovered in this excavation relate to a trackway forming part of a wider field system on a similar alignment to the Roman road, but are not characteristic of Roman roadside features themselves.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with an appropriate museum in due course.

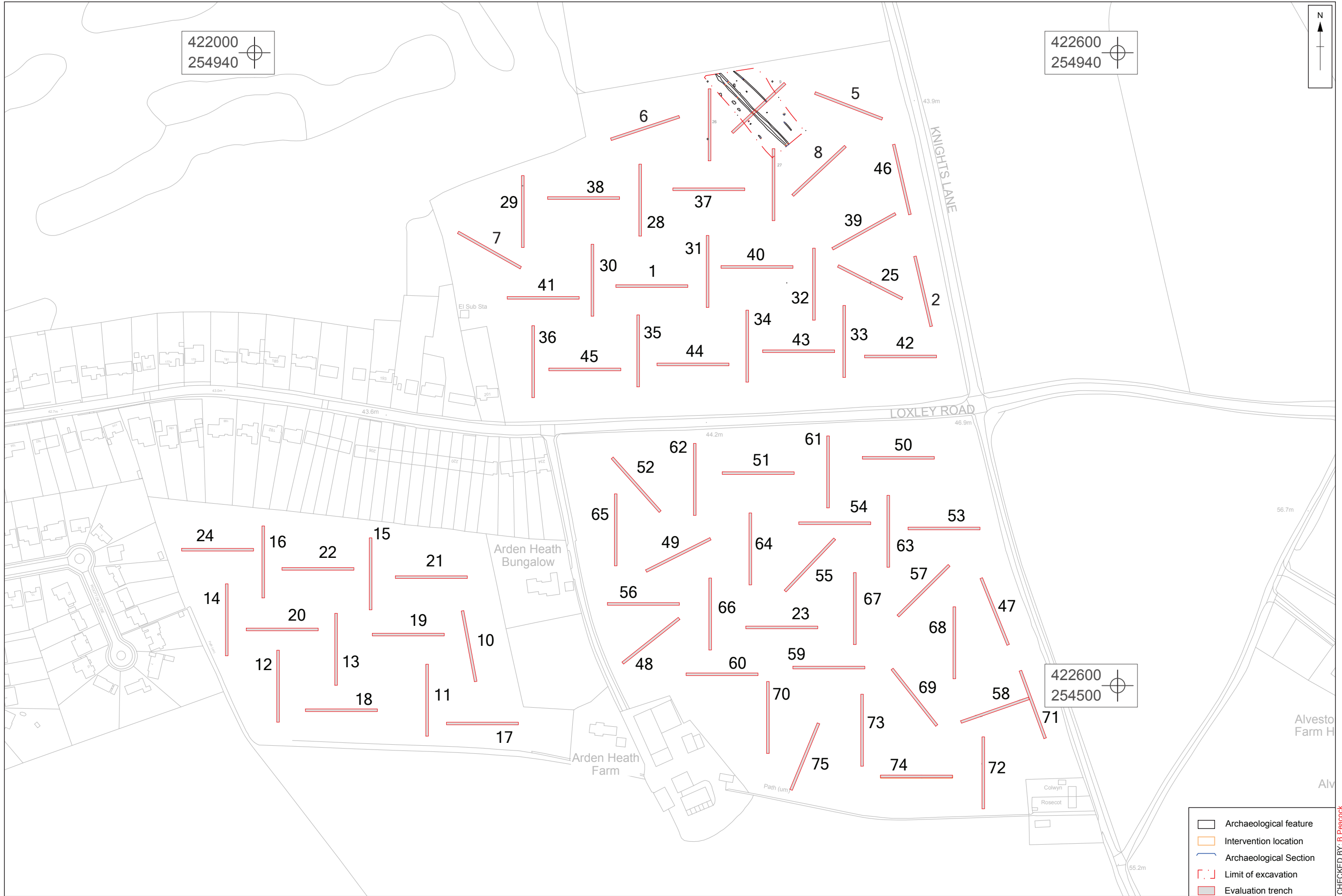


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Figure 1: Site location

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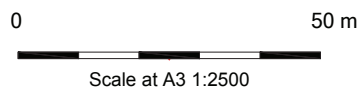
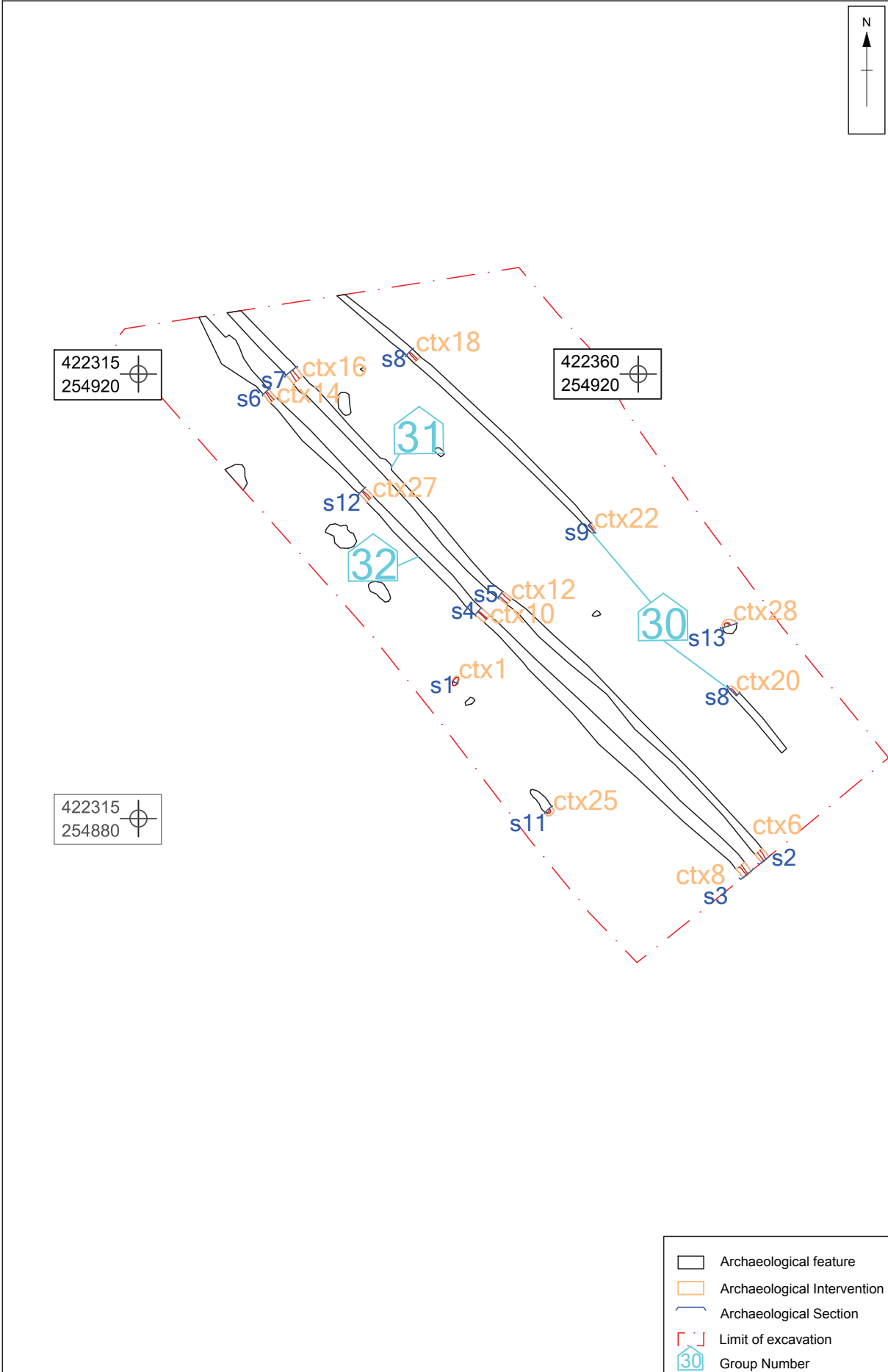


Figure 2 Site Layout

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CHECKED BY: B Peacock

Survey Data supplied by :
 Ashley Strutt

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 Scale at A4 1:500

Fig 3 plan of archaeological interventions

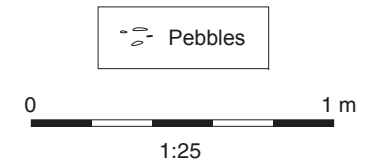
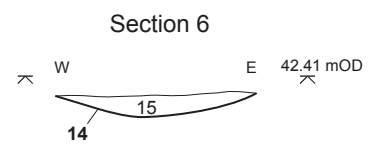
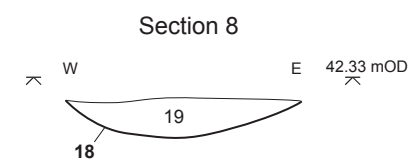
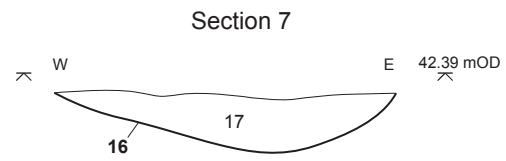
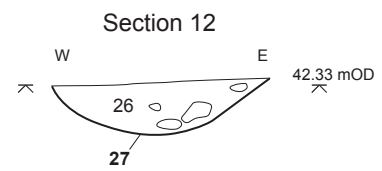
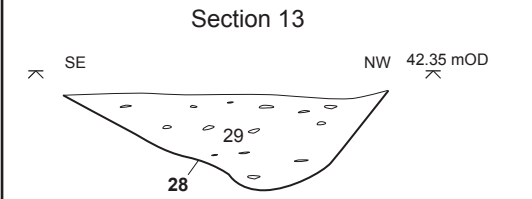
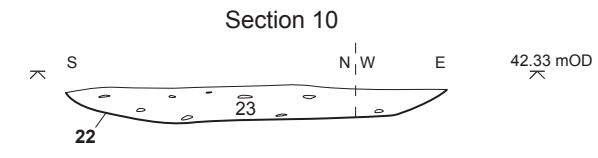
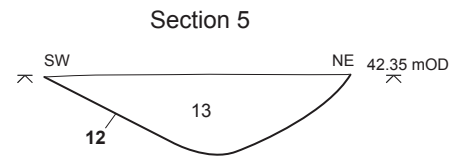
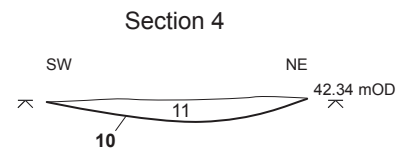
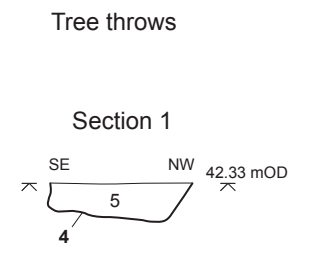
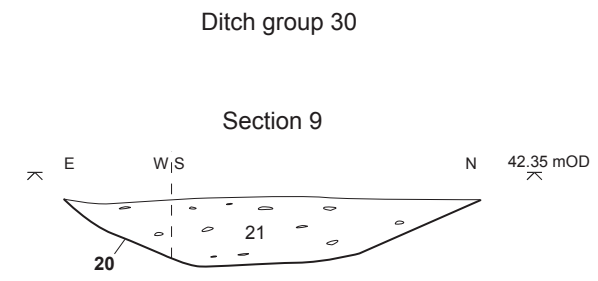
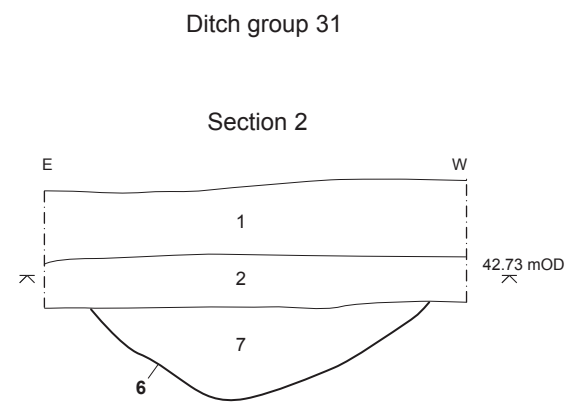
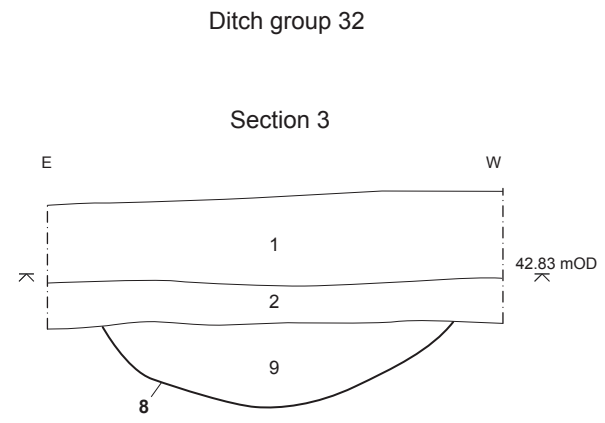
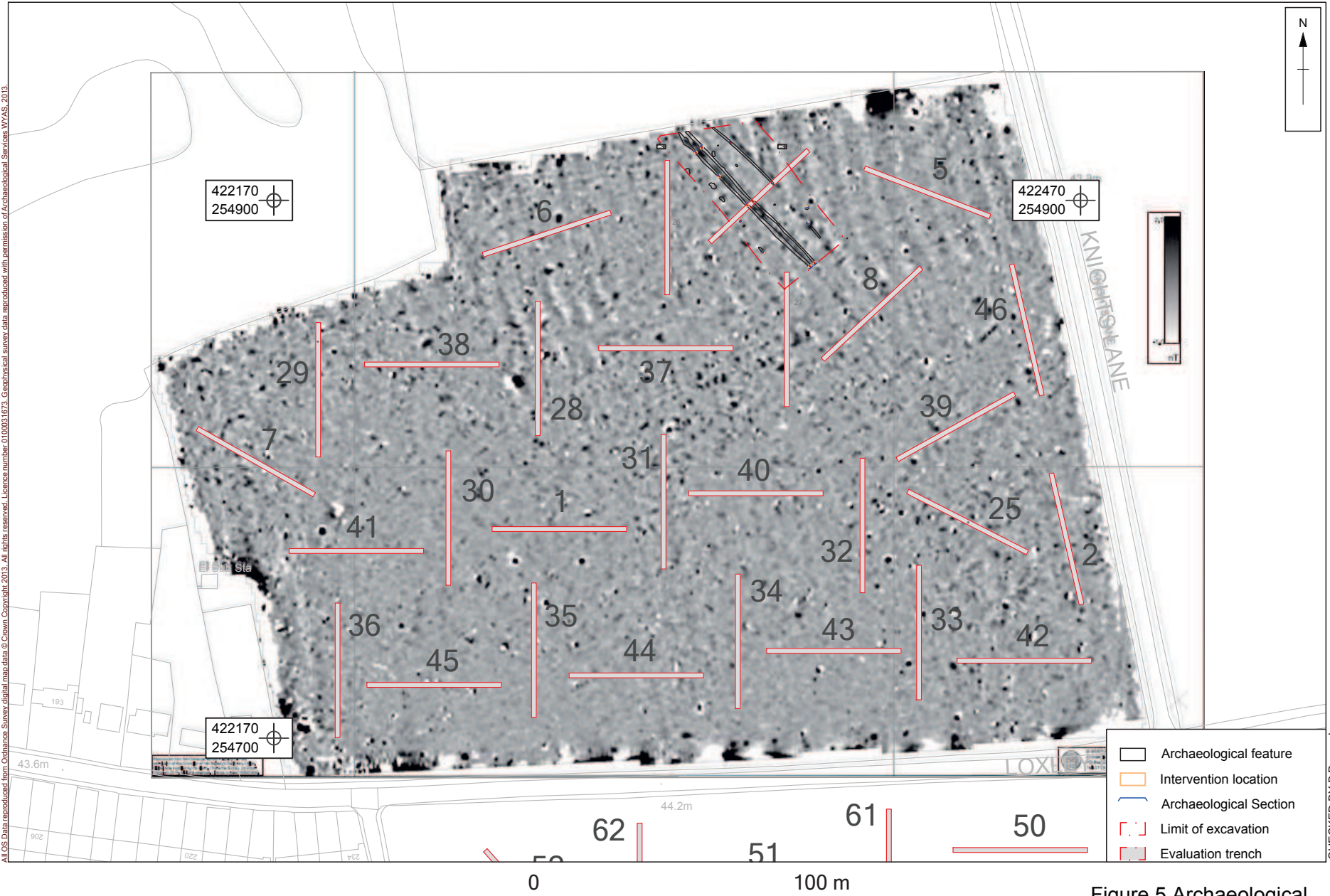


Fig. 4: Sections of selected features

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CHECKED BY: B. Peacock

Survey Data supplied by :
Ashley Strutt

Scale at A4 1:2000

Figure 5 Archaeological features with Geophysical survey



Plate 1: Overall shot of site, view to the east.



Plate 2: Excavated profile of ditch cut 6, section 2. View to the south.



Plate 3: Excavated profile of ditch cut 12, section 5. View to the north-west.



Plate 4: Excavated profile of ditch cut 8, section 3. View to the south.



Plate 5: Excavated profile of ditch cut 27, section 12. View to the north.



Plate 6: Excavated profile of ditch cut 18, section 8. View to the north.



Plate 7: Excavated profile of ditch terminus cut 22, section 10. View to the west.



Plate 8: Excavated profile of ditch terminus cut 20, section 9. View to the west.



Plate 9: Excavated profile of tree throw cut 25, section 11. View to the north.