



Land off Windermere Drive, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Land off Windermere Drive, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Summary

In April 2019 Oxford Archaeology completed a six trench evaluation on land off Windermere Drive, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire. The evaluation demonstrated that parts of the site had been disturbed during the construction of a housing development in the 1990s. It also, however, revealed furrows from ridge and furrow cultivation preserved below a buried topsoil horizon, and depths of mixed redeposited soils reflecting the levelling of the topography in the 1990s. Two small ditches on differing alignments to the furrows were present, and a single small possible Iron Age sherd of pottery was recovered from the fill of one. The ditches may represent earlier field boundaries but they do not appear to be related to any significant levels of activity within the area covered by the evaluation.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank CgMs Heritage (part of the RPS Group) for commissioning this project on behalf of Galliford Try. Thanks are also extended to Liz Mordue from Northamptonshire County Council who monitored the work on behalf of the Local Planning Authority.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Steve Lawrence. The fieldwork was directed by James Mumford who was supported by Mike Simms. Survey and digitizing was carried out by Diana Chard. Thanks are also extended to the OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the management of Leigh Allen, and prepared the archive under the management of Nicky Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background and scope of work

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by CgMs Heritage (part of the RPS Group) to undertake a trial trench evaluation at the site of land off Windermere Drive, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire prior to residential development.

1.1.2 The evaluation was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref: WP/16/00806/FUL). Condition 18 of the permission states:

No construction works shall take place within the area indicated until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded, in accordance with policy 2 (d) of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and advice contained within paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

1.1.3 The Local Planning Authority did not set a brief for the work, although a scope of works to adequately evaluate the site was agreed between CgMs Heritage (part of the RPS Group) and Liz Mordue, Planning Archaeologist at Northamptonshire County Council. The evaluation scope comprised the excavation of 250m of linear trench measuring 1.8m wide. This was excavated as six trenches between 30-50m long to fit within the boundary and arranged to provide a good overall coverage of the site.

1.1.4 Prior to the start of the fieldwork OA produced and issued a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) outlining how OA would undertake the agreed scope of works and fulfil the requirements of this investigation (OA 2019). This document was specific to OA's methods and procedures and was approved by Liz Mordue.

1.1.5 All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

1.2.1 The site boundary encloses approximately 1.3ha and is located within the modern north-western urban expansion of Wellingborough off Hardwick Road (Fig. 1). The site is enclosed by Windermere Drive to the south and Penrith Drive to the north with car parking areas and buildings to the east and west. The site is centred on SP 8757 6844.

1.2.2 The topography of the site is generally level, at approximately 100m aOD, and currently comprises rough grassland and scrub that has recently been cleared.

1.2.3 The solid geology of the site is mapped as Blisworth Limestone Formation formed approximately 166 to 168 million years ago in the Jurassic Period. The superficial geology of the site is mapped as Oadby Member Diamicton. These deposits were formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period in environments dominated by ice age conditions.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The parish of Wellingborough contains several dispersed areas of prehistoric and Romano-British settlement. The identified settlements appear to be primarily situated upon the areas of ironstone and limestone (Foard et al. 2006) which outcrop along the streams across the parish, including beneath the site of the evaluation described here. The most significant of these areas of settlement are situated to the west of Wellingborough (British History Online 2019) within the vicinity of the site.
- 1.3.2 Among these settlements are a series of cropmarks comprising a double-ditched enclosure and two subrectangular enclosures recorded near to Stanwell Spinney to the north-west of the site (British History Online 2019) and an Iron Age settlement excavated at Park Farm Way, to the south of the site (OA 2015). Archaeological evidence indicates that the area continued to be densely populated within the Romano-British period, with several occupation sites of this period recorded across the parish (British History Online 2019).
- 1.3.3 The place name of Wellingborough has early medieval origins and derives from Old English, meaning 'stronghold of the family or followers of a man named Wændel' (Mills 2011). Other than Wellingborough itself, at least one isolated medieval settlement appears to have existed within the close vicinity of the township, as is indicated by quantities of Anglo-Saxon and later medieval pottery recovered during housing developments to the north-west of the site (Foard et al. 2006). Although this potential lost medieval settlement is thought to have been sited at Wilby Thorpe, c 1km to the south of the site, its exact location is uncertain. The medieval landscape surrounding the areas of settlement would have largely comprised open medieval fields and ridge and furrow earthworks such as have been recorded within the west of the parish, including the vicinity of the site (British History Online 2019). The common fields of the parish were enclosed by an act of Parliament in 1765.
- 1.3.4 Historic OS mapping of the site illustrates that the site was in agricultural use up until the end of the 20th century, and despite urban development encompassing much of the land surrounding the site, the site itself has remained largely undeveloped.

2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:

- i. establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains,
- ii. determine and confirm the character of any remains present, without compromising any deposits that may merit detailed investigation or preservation,
- iii. determine or estimate the date range of any remains from artefacts or otherwise,
- iv. characterize any underlying archaeological strata down to undisturbed geology without significantly impacting upon younger (overlying) deposits where possible,
- v. determine the geo-archaeological and palaeo-environmental potential of any archaeological deposits encountered where appropriate,
- vi. recover suitable materials for scientific dating where appropriate,
- vii. make available the results of the investigation to inform subsequent development designs, planning decisions or mitigation strategies,
- viii. produce a factual report, full archive and HER data submission, and
- ix. disseminate the results of the investigation at a level appropriate to their importance.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 All trenches were located using GPS survey immediately prior to excavation with minor amendments to the layout presented in the WSI to take into account the limitations of the site. Following survey, machine excavation was undertaken by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket under strict archaeological supervision. All overburden deposits were removed down to the level of the natural geology or archaeological deposits depending on which were encountered first. Trenches 1 and 3 were split to avoid a decommissioned buried service.

2.2.2 Following machine excavation, all trenches were assessed for the presence or absence of archaeological deposits. Any features were appropriately sample excavated and all trenches were fully recorded before the results were conveyed to CgMs Heritage (part of the RPS Group). Liz Mordue undertook a monitoring visit on the 24th of April after which all trenches were backfilled.

2.2.3 The evaluation was completed in a single attendance between the 23rd and the 24th of April 2019.

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 remains. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in Appendix A. Finds data and spot dates are tabulated in Appendix B. The excavated trench layout and recorded features are presented in Figure 2. Sections from Trenches 2, 3 and 4 are shown in Figures 3, 4 and 5. Views of Trenches 2, 3 and 6 are also included as plates at the end of this report.

3.1.2 Context numbers reflect the trench numbers unless otherwise stated (e.g. pit 102 is a feature within Trench 1, while ditch 304 is a feature within Trench 3).

3.2 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.2.1 Two small ditches were recorded in Trenches 2 and 3 on approximate ENE-WSW and NNW-SSE alignments. Furrows remaining from the former ridge and furrow cultivation were recorded Trenches 2 and 4-6.

3.2.2 No archaeological remains were present in Trenches 1 and 4-6.

3.3 Trench 2

3.3.1 A single ditch (204) was cut into the natural clayey geology (202; Fig. 3, Section 200). The ditch was 0.56m wide and 0.23m deep and was filled with a single clayey deposit (203) containing fragments of burnt stone and a small pottery sherd possibly dating from the Iron Age. The ditch was aligned ENE-WSW.

3.3.2 The ditch fill and a number of furrow fills (eg Fig. 3, Section 201) were sealed by a 0.25m thick subsoil layer and a 0.5m thick topsoil horizon that was mixed with modern building debris.

3.4 Trench 3

3.4.1 A single ditch (304) was cut into the natural clayey geology (302; Fig. 4, Section 300). This was slightly larger than that in Trench 2 being 0.75m wide and 0.35m deep, and was also filled with a single silty clayey deposit (303) that was otherwise sterile. The ditch was aligned NNW-SSE approximately at right angles to the ditch in Trench 2.

3.4.2 The ditch fill was sealed by a 0.35m thick layer of earlier plough/subsoil (301) and a 0.65 m thick topsoil (300) containing redeposited soils and clay reflecting the levelling of the site as part of the previous surrounding construction works (Fig. 4, Section 301).

3.5 Finds summary

3.5.1 A single pottery sherd was recovered from a ditch fill (203). This is tentatively dated to the Iron Age, although the very small and abraded sherd may have been residual.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Interpretation

- 4.1.1 The results from the evaluation showed that the site had been disturbed in the 1990s during the construction of the surrounding estate. However, this appears to be largely limited to the raising and levelling of the topography with evidence of the former ridge and furrow cultivation preserved beneath a subsoil layer in most trenches.
- 4.1.2 Archaeological remains, represented by two small ditches, were encountered only in Trenches 2 and 3. It is possible that these were contemporary with each other and form part of a field enclosure. The absence of any notable artefacts suggests that they were distant from any significant areas of activity. Certainly, the absence of any other features within the evaluation trenches point to this area being set apart from settlement. The single small abraded possibly Iron Age pottery sherd is not, by any means, a conclusive date for the putative field enclosure, although Iron Age settlement and activity has been recorded nearby at Park Farm Way.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	ESE-WNW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of disturbed topsoil and building debris topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of silty clay. Had a modern service trench in ESE end and a water pipe through eastern half.					Length (m)	40
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.60
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Layer	-	0.35	Topsoil	-	-
101	Layer	-	0.25	Subsoil	-	-
102	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	NNE-SSW
Trench consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying eight NW to SE furrows and a small ditch dating from late Iron Age cut into a natural geology of silty clay.					Length (m)	40
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.55
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
200	Layer	-	0.15	Topsoil	-	-
201	Layer	-	0.15	Subsoil	-	-
202	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
203	Fill	-	-	Fill of Ditch	-	-
204	Cut	0.56	0.23	Ditch	Pottery	IA
205	Fill	-	-	Fill of Furrow	-	-
206	Cut	0.95	0.10	Furrow	-	-

Trench 3						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench consists of thick layer of redeposited and mixed topsoil and subsoil overlying a NW to SE ditch cut into a natural geology of silty clay.					Length (m)	50
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.90
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
300	Layer	-	0.65	Topsoil	-	-
301	Layer	-	0.35	Subsoil	-	-
302	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
303	Fill	-	-	Fill of ditch	-	-
304	Cut	0.75	0.35	Ditch	-	-

Trench 4						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil over thick layer of made ground and subsoil overlying furrows cut into natural geology of silty clay.					Length (m)	50
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	1

Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
400	Layer	-	0.30	Topsoil	-	-
401	Layer	-	0.75	Made ground	-	-
402	Layer	-	0.16	Subsoil	-	-
403	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
404	Fill	-	-	Fill of Furrow	-	-
405	Cut	2.2	0.18	Furrow	-	-

Trench 5						
General description				Orientation	SE-NW	
Trench devoid of archaeology. Soil sequence comprises topsoil over thick layer of made ground and subsoil overlying furrows cut into natural geology of silty clay.				Length (m)	30	
				Width (m)	1.8	
				Avg. depth (m)	1.1	
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
500	Layer	-	0.25	Topsoil	-	-
501	Layer	-	0.85	Made ground	-	-
502	Layer	-	0.10	Subsoil	-	-
503	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
504	Cut	2.6	-	Furrow	-	-
505	Fill	-	-	Fill of Furrow	-	-

Trench 6						
General description				Orientation	N-S	
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil over thick layer of made ground and subsoil overlying furrows cut into natural geology of silty clay.				Length (m)	50	
				Width (m)	1.8	
				Avg. depth (m)	1.15	
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
600	Layer	-	0.15	Topsoil	-	-
601	Layer	-	0.85	Made ground	-	-
602	Layer	-	0.10	Subsoil	-	-
603	Cut	2.6	-	Furrow	-	-
604	Fill	-	-	Fill of Furrow		
605	Layer	-	-	Natural		

APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Pottery

By Edward Biddulph.

- B.1.1 Shell-tempered wares were produced in this area from the prehistoric period until the medieval period. The small size of this single sherd makes it difficult to give a precise date but a probable prehistoric, possibly Iron Age date is suggested.

Ctxt	Description	Date
203	2 very small refitting sherds of shell-tempered ware, 2g	?Prehistoric, possibly Iron age

APPENDIX C BIBLIOGRAPHY

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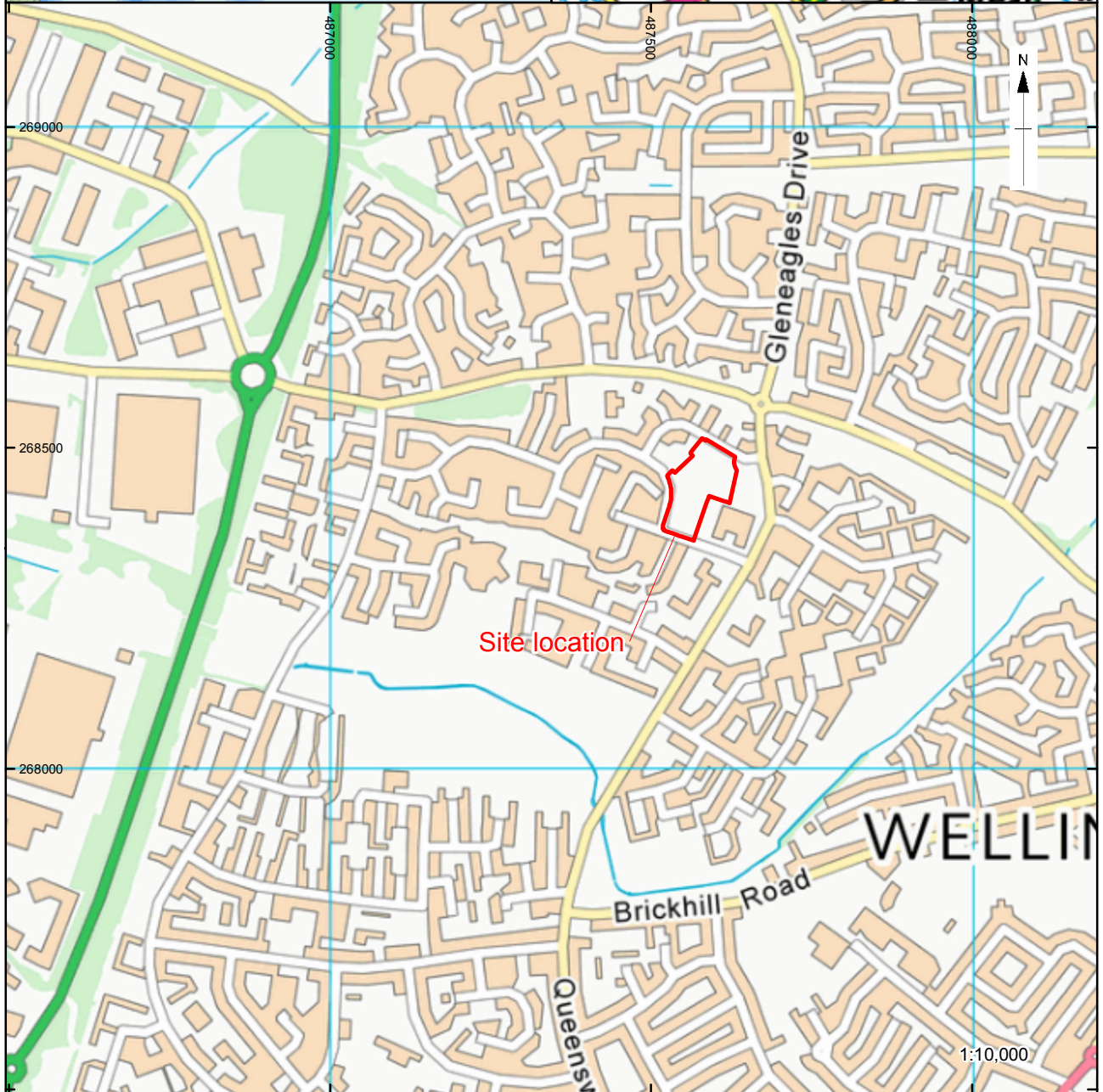
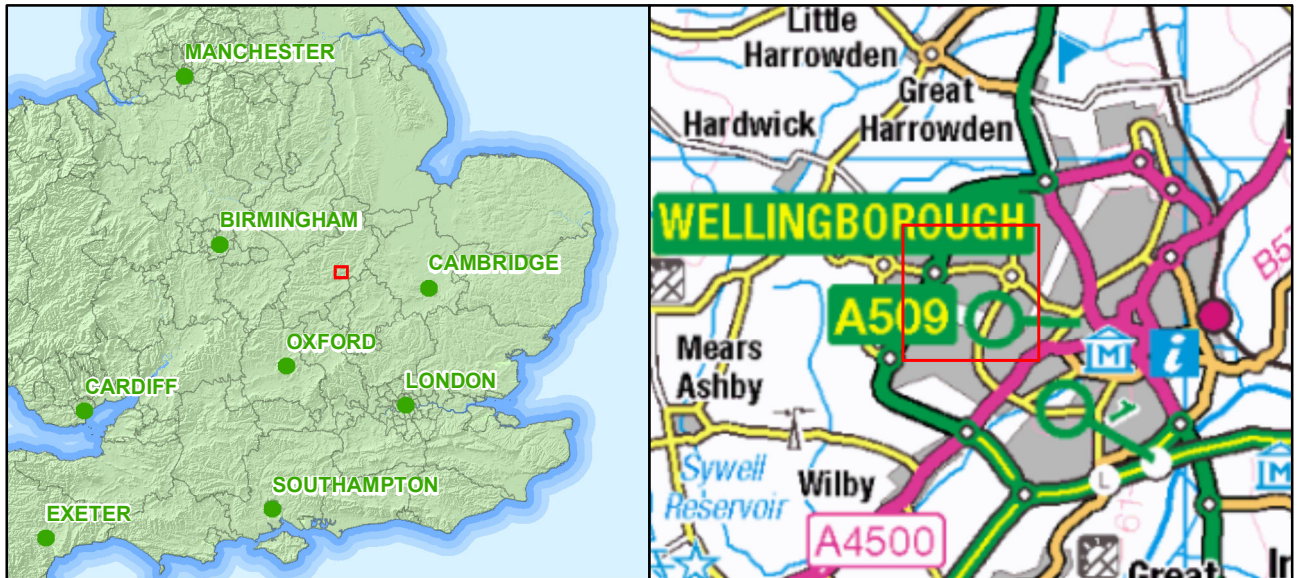
Oxford Archaeology 2015 A Late Iron Age settlement at Park Farm Way, Wellingborough, Archaeological Evaluation [unpublished report]

Oxford Archaeology 2019 Land off Windermere Drive, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, Written Scheme of Investigation April 2019

Foard, G, Ballinger, J, & Taylor, J, 2006 Extensive Urban Survey – Northamptonshire, Northamptonshire County Council

APPENDIX D**SITE SUMMARY DETAILS**

Site name:	Land of Windermere Drive, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire
Site code:	WEWD 19
Grid Reference	SP 8757 6844
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	Two days from the 23rd to 24th April 2019
Area of Site	1.3ha
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES. The intention is to deposit this with the Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre once this facility is available to receive archives. The archive will be identified by its unique code: ENN109458.
Summary of Results:	In April 2019 Oxford Archaeology completed a six trench evaluation on land off Windermere drive, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire. The evaluation demonstrated that parts of the site had been disturbed during the construction of the housing development in the 1990s. However, this also revealed furrows of the former ridge and furrow cultivation preserved below a buried topsoil horizon and depths of mixed redeposited soils reflecting the levelling of the topography in the 1990s. Two small ditches on differing alignments to the furrows were present and a single small possible Iron Age sherd of pottery was recovered from the fill of one. The ditches may represent earlier field boundaries but these do not appear to be related to any significant levels of activity within the evaluation boundary..



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Figure 1: Site location



- Development boundary
- Evaluation trench
- Archaeological feature
- Archaeological intervention
- Section line
- Furrow
- Modern feature

0 20m
Scale at A3 1:500

Figure 2: Trench locations and features

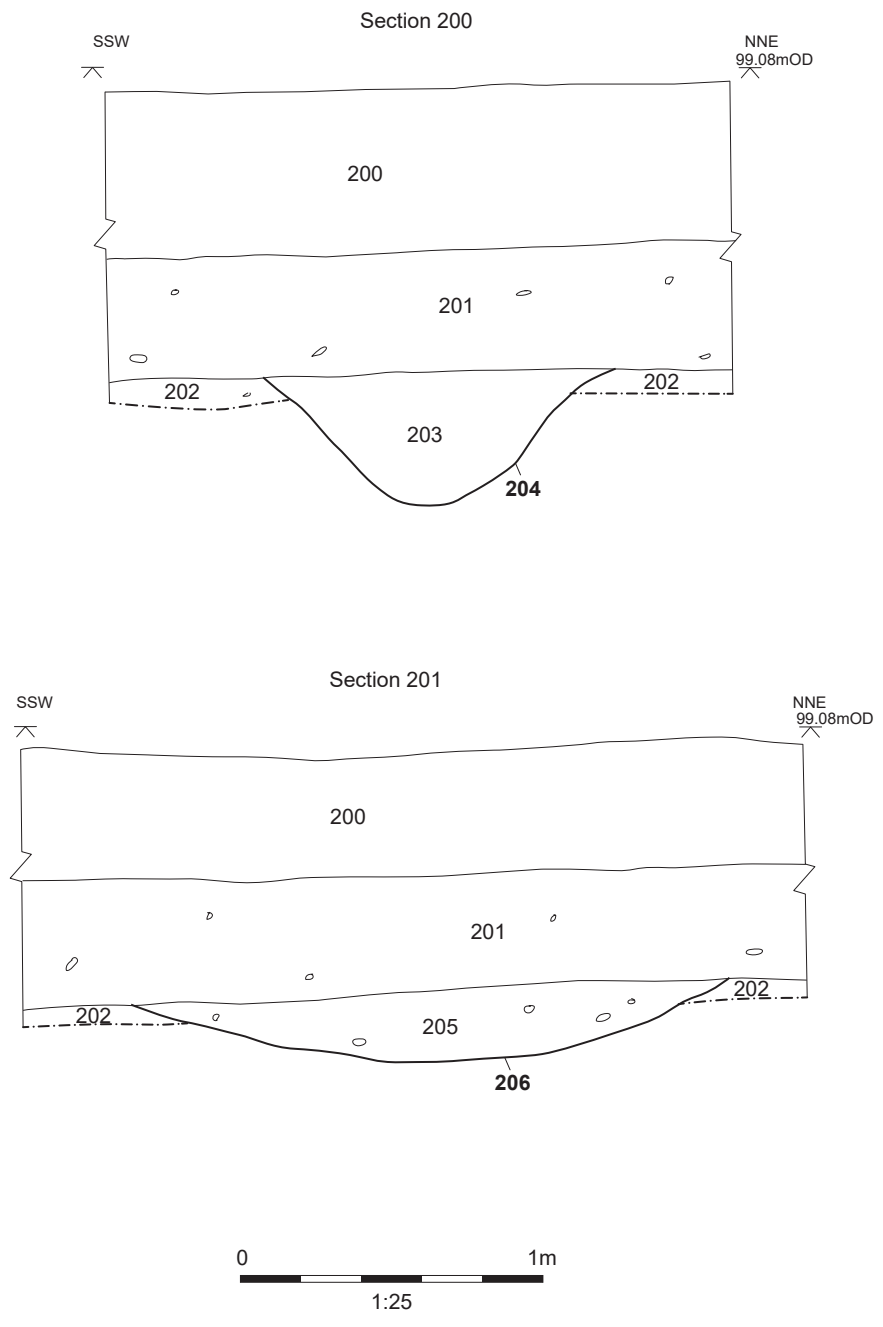
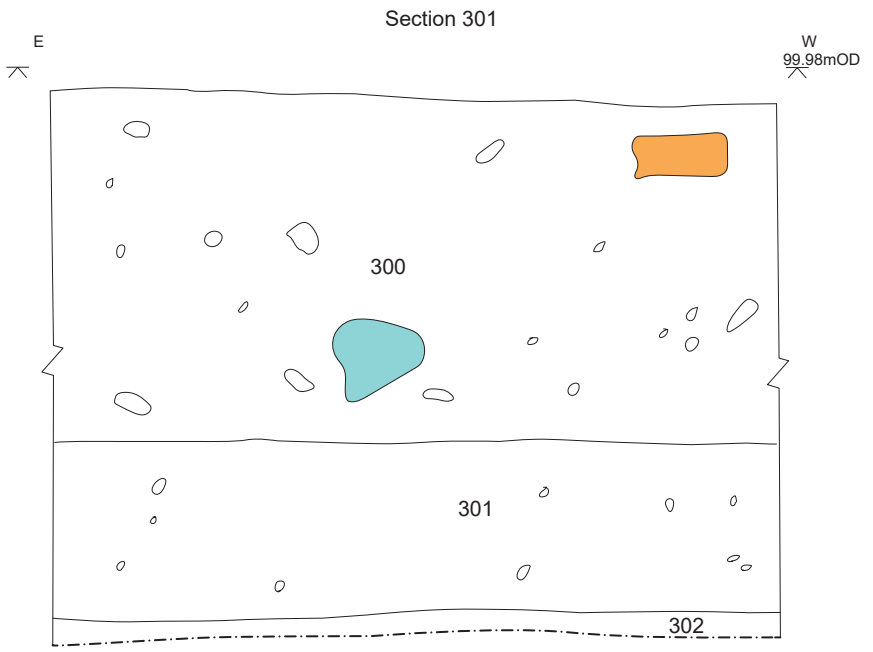
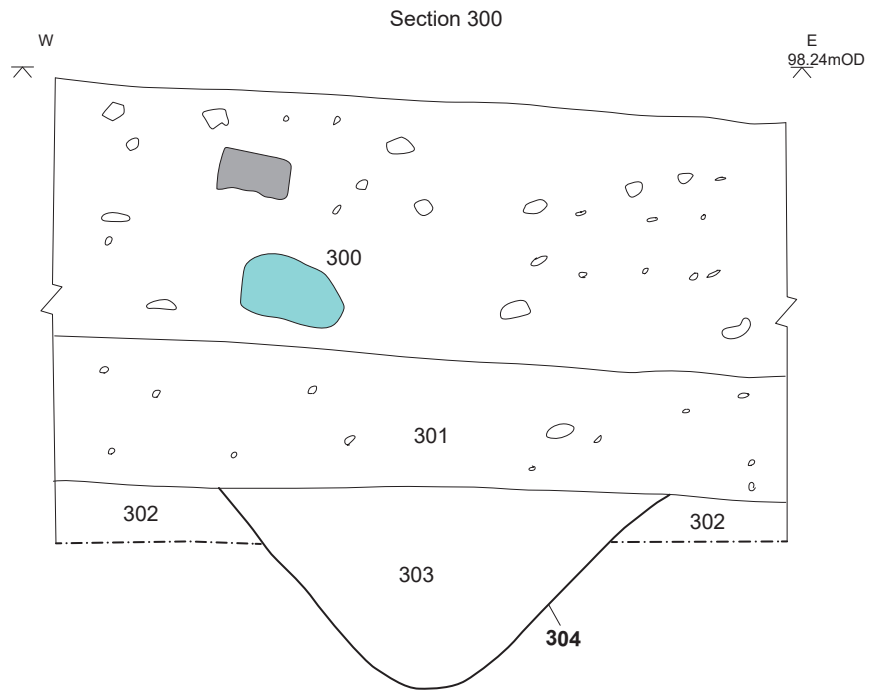


Figure 3: Sections 200 and 201



- Brick
- Concrete
- Redepoisted clay



Figure 4: Sections 300 and 301

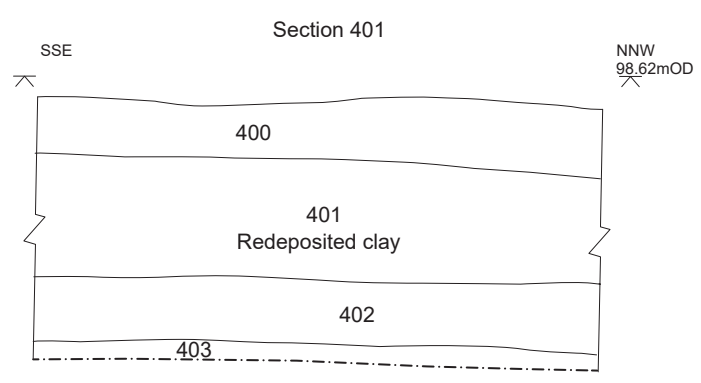
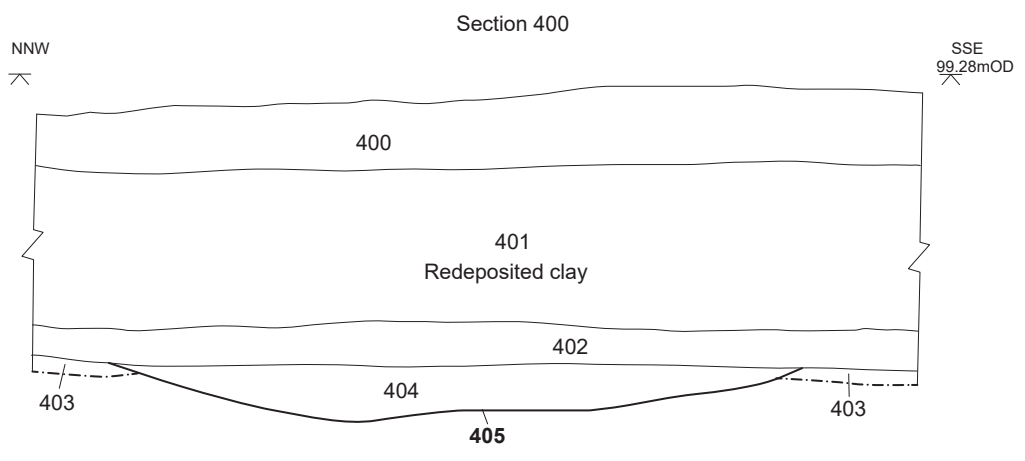


Figure 5: Sections 400 and 401



Plate 1: Trench 2 viewed from south showing furrows



Plate 2: Trench 2 section 200, ditch 204



Plate 3: Trench 3 showing ditch 304



Plate 4: Trench 6 showing made ground and furrows



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