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## Braybrooke Substation, Northamptonshire

### *Archaeological Excavation Report*

By Ian Scott and Charlotte Howsam, with contributions by Martyn Allen, John Cotter, Geraldine Crann and Julia Meen, and illustrations by Matt Bradley and Kate Brady

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## Summary

In September 2019 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by National Grid to undertake an archaeological excavation on the site of a proposed new substation and access road within the parish of Braybrooke, Northamptonshire (NGR: SP 75835 85804). The excavation revealed a substantial ditch on a north-south alignment, and an adjacent complex of slighter boundary ditches and enclosures extending over an area of at least 275m. The dating evidence from the ditches is unfortunately very ambiguous, being limited to a few sherds of late Iron Age or early Roman pottery, and at least one sherd of Ipswich ware dated to AD 720-850. While there are stratigraphic relationships between some ditches, these do not provide a clear sequence of development of the ditch complex as a whole. It is possible that the earliest elements of the ditch complex were laid out in the late Iron Age or early Roman period, and that there was a separate subsequent phase of enclosure in the Saxon period. However, given that the late Iron Age/Roman sherds are typically small and abraded, in contrast to the larger size of the sherd of Ipswich ware, it can tentatively be suggested that the ditch complex as a whole dates to the Anglo-Saxon period or later, and that the earlier pottery is residual. The ditches are likely to have defined fields or paddocks of agricultural use, or possibly outlying plots associated with a nearby settlement. The very low quantities of artefacts and animal bone recovered, and the absence of charred plant remains other than a small amount of charcoal, imply that any settlement focus was not directly adjacent to the excavated area. Evidence for later activity was limited to a post-medieval pit, and furrows of medieval or post-medieval date.

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The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Carl Champness. The fieldwork was directed by Rebecca Peacock, who was supported by Christopher Clark, Elizabeth Connelly, Rachael Daniel, Adam Fellingham, George Gurney, Adam Moffat, Jana Smirnova and Ashley Strutt. 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 Nicola Scott.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by National Grid to undertake an archaeological excavation on the site of a proposed new substation within the parish of Braybrooke, Northamptonshire (NGR: SP 75835 85804; Fig. 1). The work was undertaken in fulfilment of an archaeological condition of planning permission (planning ref: KET/2017/0791). A brief was set by Lesley-Ann Mather (Archaeological Advisor to Northamptonshire County Council) detailing the work necessary to discharge the planning condition. The archaeological work was undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI; OA 2019), which detailed how OA would implement those requirements. The work followed an earlier evaluation, which had identified archaeological remains on the site (OA 2018).
- 1.1.2 All work was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CifA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation* (CifA 2014) and local and national planning policies (DCLG 2019).

### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The substation site comprises a rectangular field measuring c 4ha, and is entirely located within the Kettering District of Northamptonshire, although the associated access road (which runs to the west and north of the substation to join Kettering Road and the A6 for c 1.5km) runs partially along the Northamptonshire and Leicestershire County boundary to end on the eastern edge of the parish of Market Harborough in Leicestershire.
- 1.2.2 According to the British Geological Survey (BGS 2019), the site lies on a mixed bedrock, partly of the Whitby Mudstone Formation and partly of the Dyrham Formation siltstone and mudstone. Over part of the site, there is a superficial geological deposit of Till (Mid Pleistocene), which runs across the slope of the ridge and down towards Desborough to the south-east.
- 1.2.3 The site lies on the north slope of a valley running NW-SE between the village of Braybrooke and Market Harborough, along the bottom of which runs the River Jordan, a minor watercourse that empties into the River Welland in Market Harborough to the north-west. The site lies on very gently sloping ground at approximately 100m OD. To the north, the incline becomes steeper, rising to the top of the ridge at 150m OD over a distance of little more than 600m. The valley bottom to the south lies at 87m OD.
- 1.2.4 The A6 runs along the top of the ridge to north of the site, whilst at the bottom of the slope the railway line between Market Harborough and Desborough runs directly adjacent to the southern edge of the site and part of the access route.

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

The following archaeological and historical background of the site has been drawn from the desk-based assessment (DBA) completed for the site (OA 2017), based on evidence held in the Leicestershire and Northamptonshire Historic Environment

Records (HER) and other sources. The results of the preceding evaluation (OA 2018) carried out on site are also summarised.

### ***Prehistoric (500,000 BP - AD 43)***

- 1.3.1 Stray finds of broadly prehistoric flint tools have been identified within the wider area. Prehistoric evidence in the vicinity is substantial and potentially includes evidence from the Neolithic through to the end of the Iron Age. The evidence comes from both the top of the River Jordan valley (Braybrooke) and the bottom (Little Bowden), and the site lies directly between these zones.

### ***Romano-British (AD 43-410)***

- 1.3.2 Finds and features relating to the Roman period are mainly found at Little Bowden and Braybrooke. At Braybrooke, about 1.3km to the south-east of the site, pottery scatters of Roman date have been documented, suggesting two settlement sites. Excavations in Little Bowden, c 1km to the north-west, have uncovered sites representative of rural settlement with adjacent burials. The evidence from The Heights (Allen Archaeology 2011) and Clack Hill (NA 2012a) comprised only unstratified pottery and insecurely dated linear features respectively. At Overstone Park (AS 2016) and Glebe Road (NA 2012b; 2012c), however, the remains included two sizeable enclosures with their boundary ditches and numerous other ditches, enclosures and driveways. There were also a number of associated human burials and pits. The dating evidence suggested an origin in the late Iron Age, with firm evidence indicating continued use up until at least the 4th century, with some Anglo-Saxon evidence even indicating a period of use beyond this date.

### ***Early medieval (AD 410-1066)***

- 1.3.3 The only definitive evidence for the early medieval period again comes from the village of Braybrooke, 1.3km to the south-east, in the form of three isolated pits and unstratified sherds of late Anglo-Saxon pottery (NA 2012c), suggestive of a limited presence in the Braybrooke area during the early medieval period.
- 1.3.4 The site comprises a part of the north-western extent of a wooded area that after the Norman Conquest became known as Rockingham Forest.

### ***Late medieval (AD 1066-1550)***

- 1.3.5 The medieval history and archaeology of the area is dominated by Braybrooke Castle, which is found at some distance from the site to the south-east in the village of Braybrooke. The castle has early 13th-century origins when Henry de Braibroc redirected water from dams to fill his fishponds and received timber to build 'a fair chamber'. The moated castle seems to have existed by the early 14th century when it also received a stone wall. By the mid 16th century, the castle was in a poor condition and it was pulled down in 1633 (Paley Baildon 1923). Following this, the castle became a farmhouse that was finally demolished in 1960. Today, a number of substantial earthworks survive, the castle itself being a simple square moated structure with a number of associated fishponds, later utilised for ridge and furrow agriculture. The remains of Braybrooke Castle constitute a scheduled monument (list no. 1016318) and lie more than 1.2km to the south-east of the site.

- 1.3.6 All Saints Church in the village of Braybrooke also has medieval origins, probably in the 13th century, though it has many later additions and alterations, including the substantial Grade II\* listed Griffin Chapel of early 16th-century date (list no. 1289123).
- 1.3.7 While all of these remains are essentially limited to the conservation area of Braybrooke village and its immediate environs (all more than 1km to the south-east of the site), there are other substantial likely medieval earthworks 1.2km to the north of the site near Dingley, suggestive of a former medieval or possibly post-medieval water mill.

#### ***Post-medieval (AD 1550-1900)***

- 1.3.8 The post-medieval remains in the area are dominated by preserved signs of ridge and furrow agriculture. The Braybrooke Estate map of 1767 map shows the site with pre-enclosure divisions where the individual ridges and furrows can be seen and even counted. The 1767 map also depicts hedges between fields, one of which marks the border between Leicestershire and Northamptonshire to the west of the site.
- 1.3.9 The post-medieval landscape also bears signs of industrial activity, namely the quarrying of stone of the valley sides. These former quarry pits have been observed largely from cropmarks in aerial photographs and are found to the east, west and north of the site, the closest of which lies at a distance of just over 1km.
- 1.3.10 Braybrooke contains several Grade II listed buildings of 17th-century origins, and the former Braybrooke Lodge is situated about 400m to the south of the site. The Market Harborough to Kettering turnpike road, now the A6, runs along the ridge to the north of the site. Running adjacent to the site is the Midland Railway's line between Leicester and Hitchin, which opened in 1857. Further to the south-east is the former line of the Market Harborough to Northampton railway line, closed to traffic since 1981.

#### ***Previous work on site***

- 1.3.11 The results of the preceding evaluation (OA 2018) established the presence of archaeological remains within the evaluation area, all of which were linear ditches. The small amount of dateable material recovered, however, meant that many of these ditches were undated, hampering interpretation of the remains.
- 1.3.12 Although the dated artefactual evidence exclusively dates to the Roman period, the many undated features may represent activities from other time periods. The general scattering of flint tools and features dating to the Neolithic and early Bronze Age periods in the valley might suggest that the undated features uncovered during the evaluation are of similar date, though a late Iron Age or Roman date may be more likely.

## **1.4 Aims and objectives**

- 1.4.1 The general aims of the investigation, as specified in the WSI (OA 2019), were as follows:
- i. To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains.
  - ii. To determine the date range and character of any surviving remains by artefactual or other remains.

- iii. To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
- iv. To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy.
- v. To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- vi. To determine the potential for the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.
- vii. To determine the implications of any remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity.
- viii. To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.

#### 1.4.2 Site-specific aims and objectives were:

- ix. To determine whether earlier prehistoric activity of Neolithic or Bronze Age date is present, and if so, to establish its extent, date and duration, and its character.
- x. To determine the extent, character, date and duration of the Roman remains.
- xi. To relate the Roman remains to the wider settlement area uncovered in the River Jordan valley, and, if possible, explore the spatial and social organisation of the landscape during the late Iron Age and the Roman period.
- xii. To disseminate the results through the production of a site archive for deposition with an appropriate museum and to provide information for accession to the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record.

1.4.3 The programme of archaeological excavation was also conducted within the general research parameters and objectives defined by *East Midlands Heritage: An updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands* (Knight *et al.* 2012).

## 1.5 Fieldwork methodology

1.5.1 As specified in the WSI (OA 2019), two areas were excavated in order to investigate evidence of late Iron Age/Roman activity found during the 2018 evaluation (OA 2018). A north-eastern area targeted the features identified in Trenches 14, 18 and 19, and covered an area measuring c 2920m<sup>2</sup>. A south-western area targeted the features within Trenches 1 and 5, and covered an area measuring c 3900m<sup>2</sup>.

1.5.2 The two excavation areas were set out by an OA surveyor using a GPS system with a sub-20mm accuracy. They were then machine stripped by a mechanical excavator with a toothless bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Overlying topsoil and subsoil were removed, exposing the archaeological horizon or the surface of the natural geology, whichever was uppermost. The resultant surfaces were then hand cleaned, as necessary, and digital pre-excavation plans prepared using GPS by OA surveyors. The pre-excavation plans were made available for on-site use.

1.5.3 A sufficient sample of the revealed features was investigated by hand to establish their character and date, where possible. An initial 10-20% of linear features (ditches and gullies) were sampled, excavated by means of 1m-long slots generally at 10m intervals. Where required, a minimum 50% sample of all discrete features was excavated.

- 1.5.4 All work was carried out in accordance with the WSI (OA 2019) and in compliance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation* (CIfA 2014) and local and national planning policies (DCLG 2019).

## 2 STRATIGRAPHY

### 2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 In both excavation areas, a series of ditches were uncovered that form one or more systems of enclosures or paddocks (Figs 2–4). Some stratigraphic relationships between ditches suggest that not all of these features were in use at the same time. Unfortunately, datable finds from the ditches were extremely sparse, comprising a mere six sherds of pottery of late Iron Age/early Roman and Anglo-Saxon date, many of which were small and abraded and hence may be residual. Given the ambiguities of the evidence, no attempt has been made to subdivide the ditches into distinct phases in the stratigraphic narrative below. Fills of the ditches typically consisted of brown, silty or sandy clays.
- 2.1.2 Other features comprised a post-medieval pit, an undated charcoal-rich pit, and a series of furrows of medieval or post-medieval date that cut the ditch complexes.

### 2.2 Ditches

#### *North-eastern excavation area*

- 2.2.1 The most substantial ditch in the north-eastern excavation area was 1189, a N-S aligned feature close to the eastern limit of excavation. This was 4m wide and 1.2m deep with an irregular cut (Fig. 5). The ditch was filled with layers of firm silty clays. The only datable find was a small sherd of late Iron Age or early Roman pottery from a middle fill (1119). The ditch cut a possible earlier pit or ditch (1115), which was 1.2m deep (Plate 2).
- 2.2.2 A slighter ditch (1186) ran off from ditch 1189 in a north-westerly direction, before turning to the south-west and terminating. Ditch 1186 was up to 1m wide and 0.28m deep. The ditch was not continuous, with a gap of c 5m present at one point, but it is not clear whether this was an entranceway or simply the result of truncation. At its south-west terminus, an earlier cut of the ditch was present (1187; Plate 1); this was only 0.45m and 0.12m deep, and may have been truncated away by later cut 1186 elsewhere along the length of the ditch. The only dating evidence from either feature was a pottery sherd from the eastern end of ditch 1186, which may date to either the Roman or Anglo-Saxon period. Ditch 1188 adjoined ditch 1186 and ran in a north-easterly direction beyond the limit of excavation. This ditch was 0.85m wide and 0.2m deep.

#### *South-western excavation area*

- 2.2.3 The alignment of ditch 1186 may have been continued by ditches 1177 and 1178, a pair of adjacent features that ran on an approximate NE-SW alignment along the eastern edge of the south-western excavation area. Ditch 1177 was up to 1.5m wide and 0.42m deep, and ran the full length of the excavation area, a distance of c 110m, turning slightly to a more E-W alignment at its southern end. Towards its southern end, a recut of the ditch could be observed (cut 1005 truncating cut 1003). Immediately to the east, ditch 1178 was c 85m long, running roughly parallel to 1177 for much of its length, but at its northern end it turned to the south-east and terminated. The ditch was up to 1.42m wide and 0.42m deep. A recut was again observed in one intervention

(cut 1110 truncating cut 1112; Fig. 5). Unfortunately, the stratigraphic relationship between ditches 1177 and 1178 is ambiguous. Cut 1108 of ditch 1177 was recorded as truncating cut 1110 of ditch 1178 (Fig. 5; Plate 3). However, a short distance to the north, ditch 1178 was recorded as cutting ditch 1177. This discrepancy cannot be resolved. The only datable find was an abraded sherd of late Iron Age or early Roman pottery from the northern terminus of ditch 1178 (context 1203).

- 2.2.4 Ditches 1177 and 1178 appear to have formed the eastern boundary of a complex of enclosures. Some of the ditches in this area appeared to cut ditch 1177 (ditches 1181, 1182 and 1191). This may imply that they were aligned on ditch 1178, and that the latter therefore post-dates ditch 1177.
- 2.2.5 The most substantial ditches in this area were 1182 and 1175, which may have formed the north-eastern and north-western sides respectively of a trapezoidal enclosure attached to ditch 1178 that measured at least 40m long and 25m wide. Ditch 1175 was up to 1.4m wide and 0.36m deep (Plate 4), while ditch 1182 was up to 2.2m wide and 0.54m deep. Ditch 1175 produced a single, fairly large sherd of Ipswich ware pottery dated to AD 720-850.
- 2.2.6 Within this enclosure were a series of ditches of linear and curvilinear form that may have formed subdivisions (ditches 1024, 1176, 1179, 1180, 1181, 1185, 1190 and 1191). These ditches were on varying alignments, and need not have all been contemporary with each other. The ditches were typically less than 1m wide, and ranged from 0.04 to 0.37m deep. Ditch 1181 cut ditch 1179, but otherwise there were no useful stratigraphic relationships. The only datable find was a fairly abraded sherd of early Roman pottery (AD 43-100) from ditch 1180.
- 2.2.7 Ditch 1184 may have defined a further enclosure, measuring c 20m by 14m, attached to the north-eastern side of ditch 1182. The ditch was aligned NE-SW, and appeared to turn towards the south-west at its north-west end, but its continuation in this direction had been removed by a later furrow. This ditch was 0.84m wide and only 0.14m deep, and produced no datable finds.

## 2.3 Pits

- 2.3.1 Pit 1010 was an oval feature, 1.34m long and 0.12m deep, in the southern part of the south-western excavation area. It contained a sherd of Midlands purple ware pottery dated to c 1550-1750 and a piece of post-medieval ceramic building material.
- 2.3.2 Undated pit 1050 lay in the central part of the south-western excavation area. It was an oval feature, 0.9m long and 0.4m deep, with a charcoal-rich fill.

## 2.4 Furrows

- 2.4.1 A series of furrows on a NW-SE alignment were present in both the north-eastern and south-western excavation areas. These consistently cut the ditches described above, but were cut by modern field drains. One of the furrows produced three sherds of pottery dated to c 1225-1400. The ridge-and-furrow agriculture represented by these features may have begun in the medieval period but is likely to have continued into the post-medieval period; the alignment of the furrows corresponds with the layout of furlongs shown on the 1767 estate map.

### 3 ARTEFACTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

#### 3.1 Pottery by John Cotter

##### *Introduction and methodology*

- 3.1.1 The excavations produced a total of 10 sherds (161g) of pottery of mixed date ranging from late Iron Age/early Roman to post-medieval. These came from a total of eight contexts. The condition of the material is mostly poor and fragmentary with only a few fairly large sherds present.
- 3.1.2 An intermediate level catalogue of pottery types was constructed (in Excel), following standard procedure, for the whole assemblage and spot-dates produced for each context. The catalogue includes, per context and per pottery fabric, quantification by sherd count and weight only. Additional details, including vessel form, part, decoration, condition etc., were recorded in a comments field. Full details remain in archive. None of the pottery requires illustration. Roman fabric codes referred to are those of Oxford Archaeology (Booth 2017). Some medieval fabric codes used are those of the Oxfordshire type series (Mellor 1994) while other medieval and post-medieval fabric codes used are those of the Museum of London (MoLA 2014). The source of the codes is given in for each catalogue entry. The late Iron Age and Roman pottery was identified by Edward Biddulph. The catalogue and spot-dates are presented in Table 1 below and so are only briefly summarized in the remaining part of this report.

##### *Chronological overview*

- 3.1.3 As usual, the most important aspect of the pottery is the dating it provides for the stratigraphic development of the site. Given the size and condition of the material here this is probably the only real potential it has. It does, however, shed some light (albeit very limited) on aspects of regional trade and perhaps the nature of late Iron Age/Roman and later occupation or use of the site. Any items of moderate interest have been adequately described in the catalogue.
- 3.1.4 Four smallish sherds (39g) were identified as local/regional pottery types of the late Iron Age/early Roman period and of the early Roman period. Six sherds (122g) were identified as post-Roman types common to Northamptonshire and the east Midlands. These however include a greyware jar rim (context 1205) which is possibly (or probably?) mid Saxon Ipswich fine ware (Fabric IPSF), or possibly a Roman greyware (Plate 6). Unfortunately, the sherd is not diagnostic enough to be sure either way. A large fresh jar sherd from (1033; Plate 5) is undoubtedly in Ipswich intermediate ware (IPSM). Ipswich ware was produced in the town of that name in Suffolk during the period c 720-850 and is one of the most recognizable and widely traded middle Saxon pottery types in England (Blinkhorn 2012).
- 3.1.5 Later post-Roman pottery includes a decorated jug sherd in Lyveden/Stanion B ware (OXCI, c 1225-1400) from the area of that name in Northamptonshire (Steane and Bryant 1975), and a cooking pot rim of similar date in local shelly ware (OXBK) from the same context as the decorated jug sherd (context 1208). A single sherd from a Midlands purple ware bowl (MPUR) probable dates between the later 16th and the 18th century and is the latest pottery type present.

Table 1: Catalogue of the pottery assemblage

| Context | Spot-date            | Fabric | Sherds | Weight (g) | Comments   |
|---------|----------------------|--------|--------|------------|--|
| 1011    | c 1550-1750?         | MPUR   | 1      | 24         | Midlands purple ware (full range c 1400-1750). Fresh body sherd probably from a wide bowl with steeply flaring wall, slightly concave externally. Very hard dark reddish-brown fabric with a reduced dark grey int surface/margin covered with a lustrous black glaze. (MPUR = London area code)   |
| 1055    | c AD43-100           | E30    | 1      | 10         | Fabric E30 (sand-tempered with occasional grog. Oxford area code). Rim sherd (0.05 EVE). Jar with lid-seated or reeded rim. Early Roman. Fairly abraded. Sooted/scorched ext   |
| 1077    | c 50 BC-AD 50        | E80    | 1      | 20         | Fabric E80 (grog-tempered. Oxford area code). Reduced body sherd with combed decoration. Fairly abraded. Late Iron Age/early Roman   |
| 1033    | c 720-850            | IPSM   | 1      | 50         | Ipswich intermediate ware (IPSM = London area code). Fresh thick-walled body sherd from a globular jar/cooking pot. The lower wall ext smoothed or knife-trimmed; the upper wall/shoulder showing distinctive shallow rilling from wheel-finishing. Hard mid grey fabric with a lighter grey core. Moderate coarse rounded quartz inclusions. Rare angular coarse white and grey flint. A rare very coarse inclusion of shell/chalk has caused a defect or blow-out in the section                               |
| 1119    | c 50 BC-AD 50        | E40    | 1      | 2          | Fabric E40 (shell-tempered. Oxford area code) Abraded body sherd. Iron Age/early Roman   |
| 1203    | c 50 BC-AD 50        | E80    | 1      | 7          | Fabric E80 (grog-tempered. Oxford area code). Oxidised. Abraded body sherd. Late Iron Age/early Roman.   |
| 1205    | c 720-850? Or Roman? | IPSF   | 1      | 10         | Uncertain Ipswich fine ware (IPS, c 720-850) or a Roman greyware (seen by Edward Bidduph & JC, both uncertain whether Roman or Mid Saxon). Simple everted thickened or beaded rim on a fairly straight steeply flaring neck. Probably a jar/cooking pot? Diameter 180mm (0.07 EVE). Slightly abraded. Hard, fine-medium sandy fabric. Grey surfaces/margins with a broad red-brown core. (IPSF = London area code)   |
| 1208    | c 1225-1400          | OXCI   | 1      | 20         | Lyveden/Stanion B ware. Slightly abraded body sherd from shoulder of a jug. Fairly soft sand-free light grey fabric with an oxidised inner surface/margin. Fairly abundant fine rounded voids caused by dissolved limestone inclusions. Some coarse reddish-brown and grey clay pellets, External surface glazed and decorated. Parts of three vertical strips in white clay slip surviving and an incised vertical line, all covered ext with a reduced light grey-green glaze (Fabric OXCI = Oxford Area code) |
| 1208    | c 1225-1400          | OXBK   | 2      | 18         | Northamptonshire-type shelly ware (c 1100-1400). Joining rim and shoulder sherd from a cooking pot. Fairly fresh. Everted triangular rim with a curved neck. Dark grey fabric with dull brown ext surfaces. Platy shell  |

|              |  |  |           |            |   |
|--------------|--|--|-----------|------------|---|
|              |  |  |           |            | inclusions - mostly dissolved. Some coarse red clay pellets. Rare sandy quartz grains. (Oxford Area code) |
| <b>TOTAL</b> |  |  | <b>10</b> | <b>161</b> |   |

### 3.2 Ceramic building material *by John Cotter*

3.2.1 A single shapeless fragment of hard red brick/tile (weight 53g, max length 65mm) was recovered from context 1011. This has a very hard, smooth, light orange-red fabric containing very little quartz sand. It does however contain some very coarse hard red-brown clay inclusions which may be derived from Coal Measures-type clays. The piece is very battered and has lost all its original surfaces. The hardness and Coal-Measures-type inclusions suggest it could come from a post-medieval object such as a land drain base, or some type of very hard brick/tile. A late 18th-century to 20th-century dating is tentatively suggested, although there is a slight possibility it could be from a Roman brick. A single piece of 16th- to 18th-century pottery from the same context suggests that the post-medieval dating is rather more likely.

### 3.3 Burnt unworked flint and stone *by Geraldine Crann*

Table 2: Burnt flint and stone

| Context | Sample | Description                    |
|---------|--------|--------------------------------|
| 1124    | 4      | 10 fragments burnt stone, 146g |
| 1124    | 4      | 5 fragments burnt flint, 14g   |
| 1170    | 5      | 2 fragments burnt flint, 2g    |

### 3.4 Animal bone *by Martyn Allen*

3.4.1 A total of 64 animal bone fragments were recovered from eight contexts. Only cattle and horse specimens were identified. The assemblage was very poorly preserved and provides little, if any information on livestock exploitation at the site.

3.4.2 The assemblage was analysed using the standard Oxford Archaeology recording protocol. Fragments with modern breaks were refitted. All specimens were identified to taxon where possible with the aid of a modern reference collection.

3.4.3 Cattle bones were identified from contexts 1129 and 1131 (Table 1). Context 1129 contained a cattle mandible from an elderly animal, signified by heavy wear on all the molars. A small fragment from a cattle metapodial was from a younger animal (less than four years old) as the distal end of the bone had not undergone epiphyseal fusion. Context 1129 also contained numerous long-bone fragments. These could not be identified to species, though their size suggests that they were from cattle.

3.4.4 Context 1131 contained several small fragments from a cattle mandible, though no teeth were present, and a shaft fragment from a metacarpal. The remaining specimens from this context could not be identified.

3.4.5 Context 1160 contained part of a distal epiphysis from the humerus of an adult horse, though this was very poorly preserved.

3.4.6 The remaining specimens from all other contexts were fragments that could not be identified to species.

Table 3: Number of specimens recorded by context

| Taxon         | 1068     | 1124     | 1129      | 1131     | 1143     | 1152     | 1158     | 1160     | Total     |
|---------------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Cattle        |          |          | 2         | 5        |          |          |          |          | 3         |
| Horse         |          |          |           |          |          |          |          | 1        | 1         |
| Large mammal  | 4        |          | 37        |          | 3        | 3        | 2        |          | 49        |
| Medium mammal |          | 2        | 1         |          |          |          |          |          | 3         |
| Unidentified  |          |          |           | 4        |          |          |          |          | 4         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>4</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>40</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>64</b> |

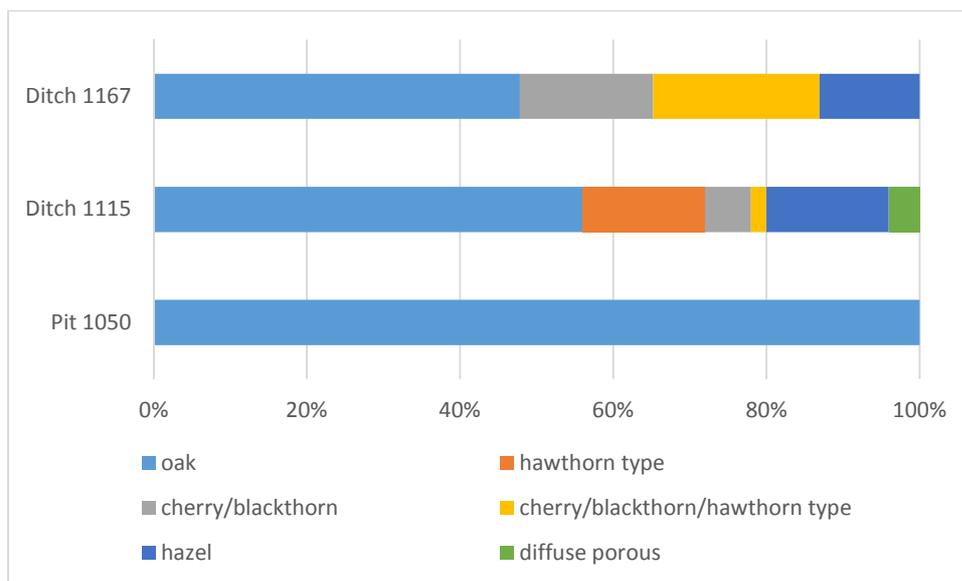
### 3.5 Wood charcoal by Julia Meen

- 3.5.1 Five samples were collected during archaeological excavations at Braybrooke Substation, Northamptonshire. Two samples were taken from pits, 1050 (sample 1) and 1115 (sample 4) and a further three samples from ditches 1076, 1058 and 1167 (samples 2, 3 and 5, respectively). Datable artefacts were scarce from the site and so phasing is poorly understood, but the sampled contexts are suggested to be medieval field boundaries and contemporary features. Each sample was processed by the team at Oxford Archaeology South (OAS) using a modified Siraf style flotation machine. Flots were collected onto 250µm meshes and the heavy residues were sieved to 500µm, after which both flots and residues were dried in a heated room. The residues were sorted by eye for artefacts and ecofactual remains.
- 3.5.2 Each flot was scanned using a binocular microscope at x40 magnification. This showed that none of the samples contained charred plant macrofossils, and that charcoal of potentially identifiable size was present only in samples 1, 4 and 5. Further examination of the charcoal from these three samples was undertaken to characterise the range of wood taxa present. From samples 4 and 5, fifty pieces were identified. As it was apparent that sample 1 consisted of only one taxon, identification was halted after 25 items. Each selected charcoal fragment was examined on the transverse, radial and tangential sections, as required, at up to x400 magnification using a Brunel Metallurgical SP-400BD microscope. Identifications were made on the basis of diagnostic anatomical characteristics and with the aid of keys in Hather (2016) and Schweingruber (1990). Nomenclature follows Stace (2010).
- 3.5.3 The charcoal identified from each sample is shown in Table 4, and the relative proportions of wood taxa illustrated in Graph 1. All of the identified charcoal in sample 1 is oak (*Quercus* sp.), and a scan of the remaining charcoal suggests it is all the same. The charcoal is generally abraded and encrusted with a mineral precipitate, however tyloses are clearly visible in the vessels, showing the charcoal was derived from heartwood. In contrast, the two examined ditch samples are more mixed: both contain oak, hazel (*Corylus avellana*), cherry/blackthorn (*Prunus* sp.), and hawthorn type (Maloideae, a group of closely related woods that also includes apple and whitebeam). While the wood from sample 1 would have been taken from mature oak trees, as tyloses do not form in young wood, the range of species in the ditch samples include those that may have been collected from secondary woodland or from hedgerows.

Table 4: Wood charcoal identified from samples 1, 4 and 5

| Sample no                     | 1                               | 4         | 5         |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Context no                    | 1051                            | 1124      | 1170      |
| Cut no                        | 1050                            | 1115      | 1167      |
| Feature type                  | Pit                             | Pit       | Ditch     |
| Sample Volume                 | 35L                             | 40L       | 35L       |
| Flot Volume                   | 300ml                           | 100ml     | 150ml     |
| Charcoal >4mm                 | 107                             | 100       | 123       |
| Maloideae                     | hawthorn/apple/whitebeam        |           | 8         |
| <i>Prunus spinosa</i> L.      | blackthorn                      |           | 1         |
| <i>Prunus</i> sp.             | cherry/blackthorn               |           | 3         |
| <i>Prunus</i> /Maloideae      | cherry/blackthorn/hawthorn type |           | 5         |
| <i>Quercus</i> sp.            | 25 h                            | 26 (h)    | 11        |
| cf <i>Quercus</i> sp.         | cf oak                          |           | 2         |
| <i>Corylus avellana</i> L.    | hazel                           |           | 3         |
| cf <i>Corylus avellana</i> L. | cf hazel                        |           | 1         |
| diffuse porous                |                                 |           | 2         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                  | <b>25</b>                       | <b>50</b> | <b>50</b> |

*h* = heartwood, *r* = roundwood



Graph 1: Relative proportions of wood taxa identified from samples 1, 4 and 5

## 4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1.1 The excavation uncovered part of a substantial ditch on a north-south alignment (1189), and an adjacent complex of slighter boundary ditches and enclosures extending over an area of at least 275m. The dating evidence from the ditches is unfortunately very ambiguous, being limited to six sherds of pottery: four of late Iron Age or early Roman date, one of either Roman or Saxon date, and one of Ipswich ware dated to AD 720-850. While there are stratigraphic relationships between some ditches, these do not provide a clear sequence of development of the ditch complex as a whole. It is possible that the earliest elements of the ditch complex were laid out in the late Iron Age or early Roman period, and that there was a separate subsequent phase of enclosure in the Saxon period. However, given that the late Iron Age/Roman sherds are typically small and abraded, in contrast to the larger sherd of Ipswich ware recovered from ditch 1175, it can tentatively be suggested that the ditch complex as a whole dates to the Anglo-Saxon period or later, and that the earlier pottery is residual.
- 4.1.2 The ditches are likely to have defined fields or paddocks of agricultural use, or possibly outlying plots associated with a nearby settlement. The very low quantities of artefacts and animal bone recovered, and the absence of charred plant remains other than a small amount of charcoal, imply that any settlement focus was not directly adjacent to the excavated area. The only finds worthy of note are the one certain and one possible sherd of Ipswich ware pottery. Ipswich ware typically forms a minority element of Saxon pottery assemblages from rural sites in the region, so the fact that it forms the only Saxon ware represented from this site is notable. However, little more can be said about such a small assemblage.

## **5 PUBLICATION AND ARCHIVING**

### **5.1 Publication**

5.1.1 A summary of this report will be submitted to *South Midlands Archaeology*.

### **5.2 Archiving, retention and disposal**

5.2.1 The archive will be offered to the Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (NARC) when this opens in 2020. The accession code is yet to be determined.

5.2.2 A final decision on retention and disposal of finds will be made at the time of deposition, in accordance with the policies of NARC. It is however recommended that the pottery be retained, while the other assemblages should be a lower priority for retention.

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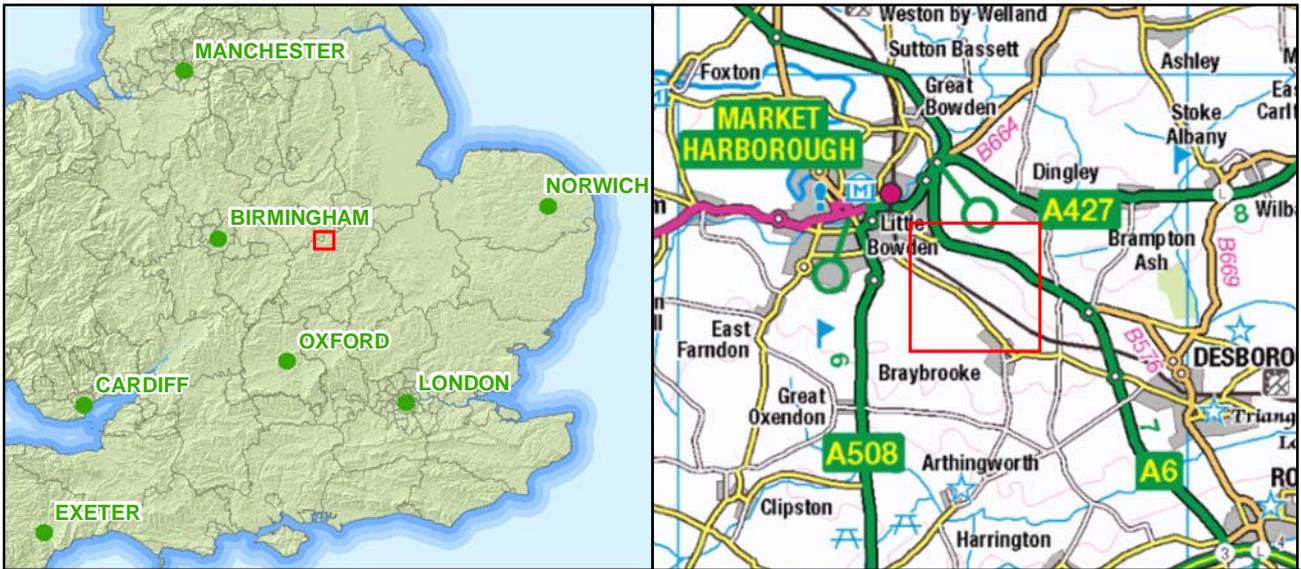
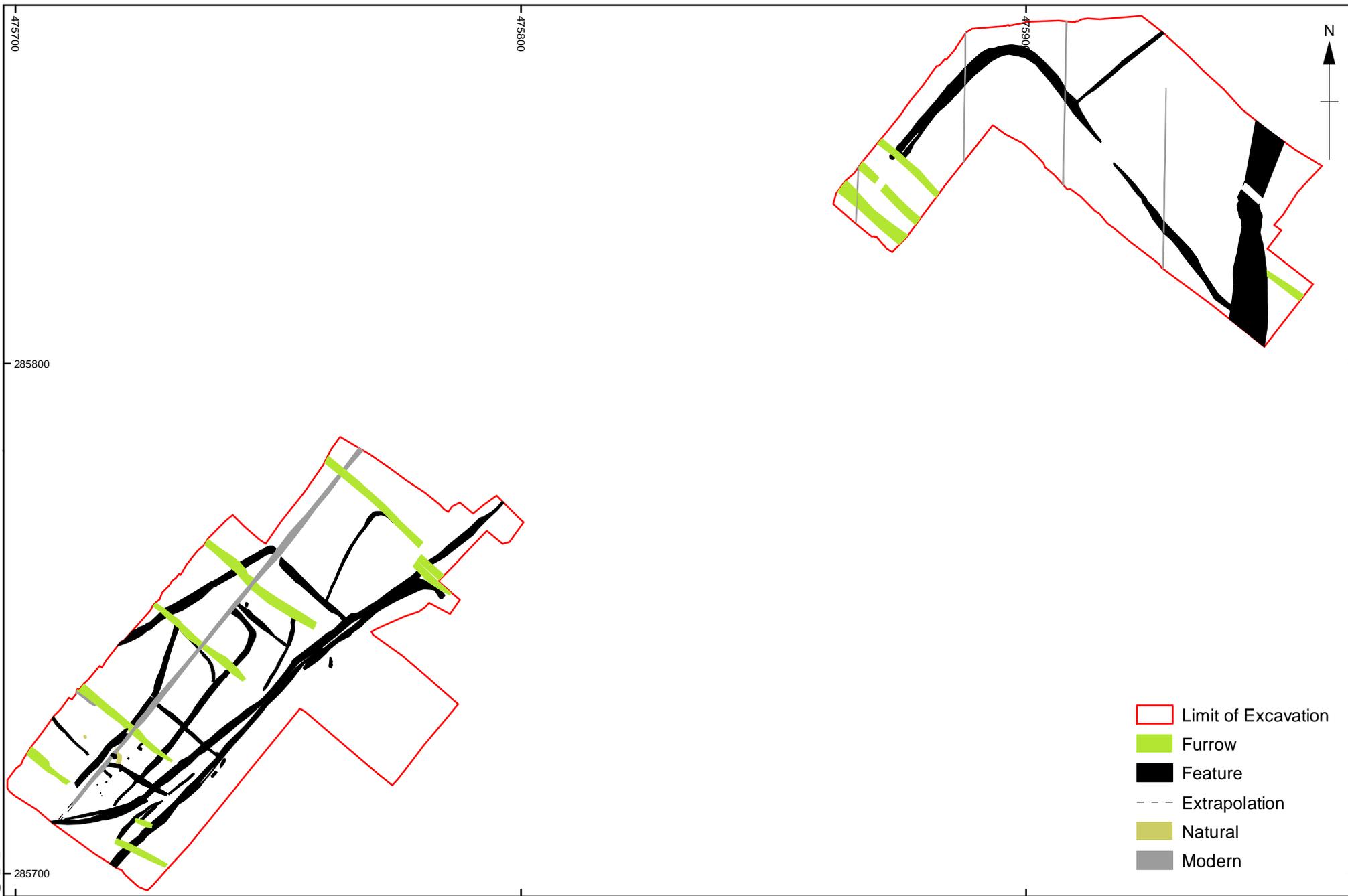


Figure 1: Site location



- Limit of Excavation
- Furrow
- Feature
- Extrapolation
- Natural
- Modern

0 1:1,000 @ A4 50 m

Figure 2: Excavation

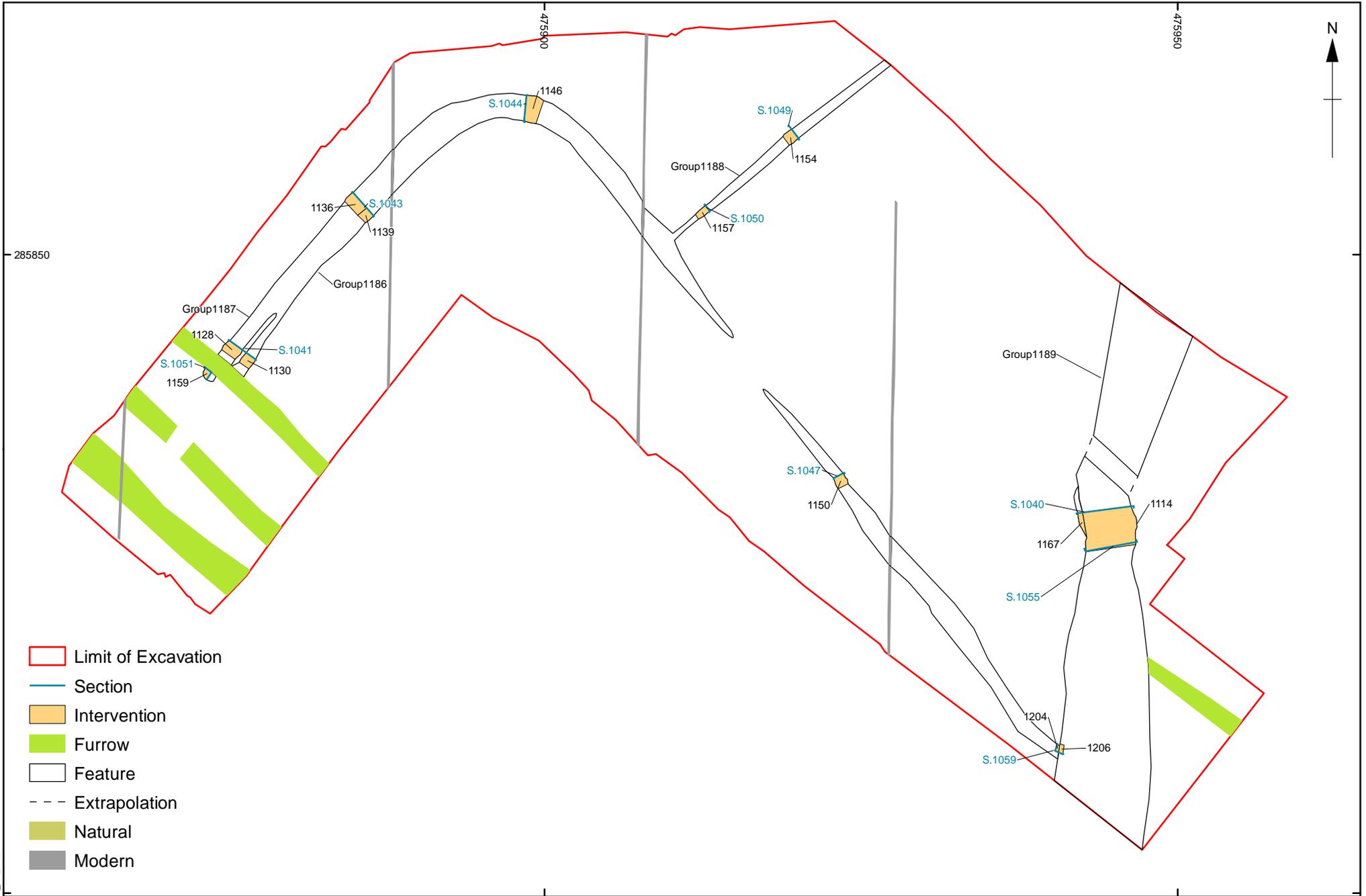


Figure 3: NE Area

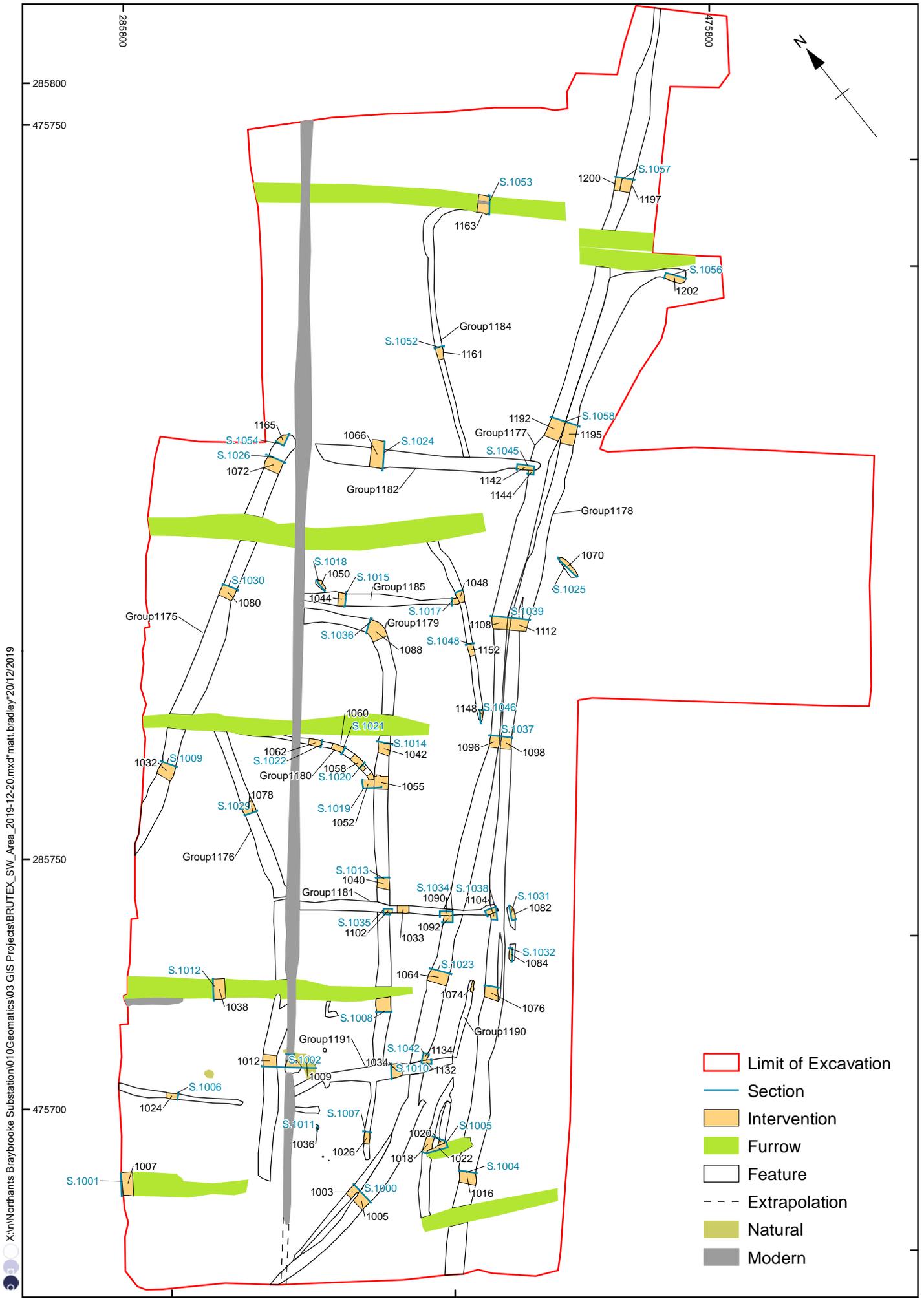


Figure 4: SW Area

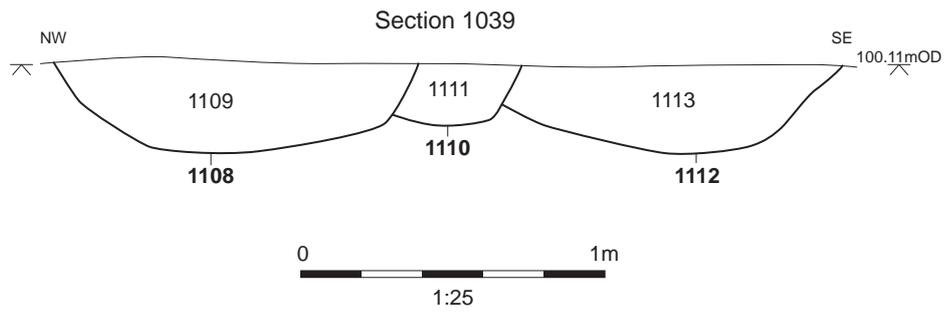
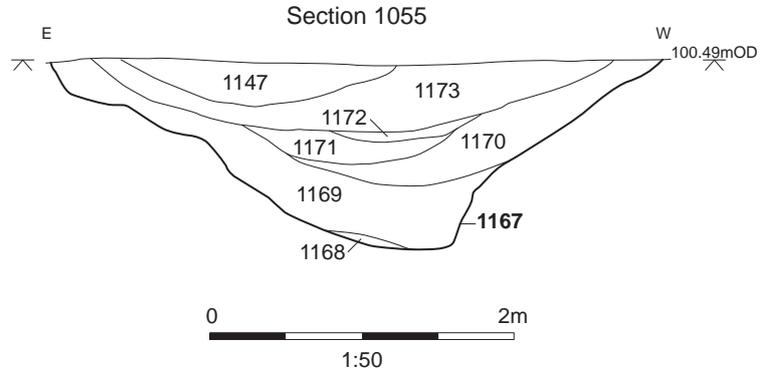


Figure 5: Sections of ditches



Plate 1: Ditches 1128 and 1130, looking north-north-east



Plate 2: Ditch 1114 and pit 1115, looking north-north-west



Plate 3: Ditches 1108, 1110 and 1112, looking north-east



Plate 4: Ditch 1032, looking north-east



Plate 5: Ipswich ware sherd from context 1033



Plate 6: Roman or Anglo-Saxon rim sherd from context 1205





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