



# Post-medieval Ditches at Somers Road Wisbech

## Archaeological Evaluation Report



February 2012

**Client: Keir Eastern for  
Cambridgeshire County Council**

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## **Post-medieval ditches at Somers Road, Wisbech**

*Archaeological Investigation*

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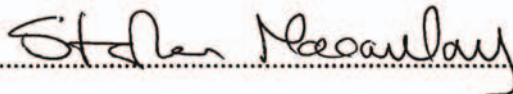
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## **Summary**

*Between the 16th and the 30th of February 2012 Oxford Archaeology East were commissioned to evaluate an area of land adjacent to Somers road, Wisbech. This evaluation comprised of three trenches strategically located across the development. The investigation revealed three small ditches and three postholes. Trench 2 was opened to allow investigation of a larger steep sided ditch, which was deliberately backfilled in the late 17<sup>th</sup>/early18<sup>th</sup> century and would appear to post-dates the other ditches on site.*

*Earlier activity is present on (or close to) the site, with later medieval pottery present, however this is residual in nature and is mixed with later post-medieval ceramics.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation and excavation was conducted by Oxford Archaeology East (OA East) on behalf of Kier Eastern (for Cambridgeshire County Council) at Somers Road, Wisbech (NF 4578 0946).
- 1.1.2 This archaeological evaluation and excavation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire County Council, supplemented by a Specification prepared by OA East.
- 1.1.3 The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010). The results will enable decisions to be made by CCC, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.
- 1.1.4 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

### 1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 Solid geology in the vicinity of Wisbech comprises Jurassic Ampthill clays, and pre-Flandrian gravels have been observed at below minus 15.0m OD. Settlement patterns, however, have been dictated by a complex and locally variable Flandrian sequence of marine transgressions, river channel (or roddon) formation, and reed swamp growth. These have led to the deposition of a thick accumulation of silts, clays, and peats overlying the solid geology.
- 1.2.2 The Flandrian deposits (deposits since the last Ice Age) covering the whole of Wisbech are Terrington Beds comprising marine clays, silts and sands (British Geological Society 1995), with most Roman and later activity occurring on an upper silt deposit. The silt area of northern fenland is associated with complex environmental change over the past two millennia. There is a relatively high band of silt running roughly west to east, from the estuary at Kings Lynn to the Lincolnshire border, that underlies the town of Wisbech. The entire island lies below 10m OD, and has been subject to repeated flooding episodes. To the south of this island lies the fresh water peat fen and to the north the salt waters of the Wash. The Nene estuary at Wisbech marks a salt water intrusion into the silt island.
- 1.2.3 The development site relatively flat, with an average height of around 5m OD, ranging up to 7m OD at the east end of Hill Street. The benchmark on the entrance of the church of St Peter and St Paul which lies to the east of the evaluation area is 5.10m OD, and is well over a metre above the floor level within the church itself. The church was built in the 12th century and therefore the floor is a good indicator of the ground level at that time. The ground level on site lies at 3.39m OD.



### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

Much of this section has been taken from the Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) carried out by Cambridgeshire County Council in 2002.

#### *Prehistoric*

- 1.3.1 Prehistoric remains are almost unknown in the parish, apart from generally unprovenanced stray finds.
- 1.3.2 Peat growth has been recently dated to the Late Bronze Age near Wisbech, and may have continued into the Romano-British period in some places (Waller 1994, 250). The area was almost entirely submerged during the Iron Age, and dry land only began to emerge in the Roman period.

#### *Roman*

- 1.3.3 Roman activity in the area is of two main types – salterns and agricultural settlements. The salterns lie on the roddons along the fen edge, and are fairly numerous. While the predominantly urban nature of the parish of Wisbech masks potential archaeological finds, occasional finds of coins and pottery from within the town suggest the possibility of a Roman predecessor to the Saxon and medieval town. Finds recorded in the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment record include a Roman coin hoard 600m to the south of the castle (CHER 03910), a single coin at the Reason Homes site on the South Brink, 500m to the west (CB 14764), a painted Roman pottery sherd 500m to the south-west (CHER 03891) and two other Roman coin findspots (CHER 03934, 08001). The main Roman communication route across the Fens, the Fen Causeway, lies approximately 12km to the south.

#### *Saxon*

- 1.3.4 There is very little evidence of Early Saxon activity which is limited to two brooches found at the Corn Exchange (CHER 04012). However, the island was likely to have been settled throughout the Middle and Late Saxon period - a series of Middle Saxon sites occupied similar sites to the northeast of Wisbech. At some point before the medieval period Wisbech became the primary settlement, probably due to its location at the confluence of the two principal rivers (the Nene or Wys Beck and the Great Ouse tributary known as the Well Stream). The recent discovery of a possibly Middle Saxon defensive site in the area of the later Norman and post-Medieval castle, allied to the Saxon brooches at the Corn Exchange, suggests that this area was a focus for occupation from as early as the 7th century. This point was also the outfall of the two rivers until the beginning of the 14th century when violent storms caused the diversion of the Ouse from Wisbech to its present course via King's Lynn (Hinman 2002).
- 1.3.5 Saxon activity is again little recorded. It is known that by the Norman Conquest the entire silt isle supported around 50 households under the overlordship of the Abbey of Ely. Again the issue of marginal land comes into play, and the construction of the two sea defences either side of the estuary to protect the landscape from water incursions demonstrates the determination of the church to hold onto these fertile lands, and also proves that the island was subject to centralised authority.
- 1.3.6 Again, it is most likely that Saxon settlement is to be found in the north and west of the current town, i.e. into the silt island itself. That this area was noted as the Old Market by

the end of the 12th century is suggestive of the antiquity of this area as a settlement centre, as is the establishment of the administrative centre of the manorial estates on this side. It should also be noted that the main access route from Ely to Wisbech would have been along the Old Croft River, through Upwell to the settlement. The best disembarkation point for such a journey would have been the location of the Old Market.

- 1.3.7 Nucleation of Anglo-Saxon settlement into the villages and towns that we see today tends to be a phenomenon associated with the reorganisation of the landscape that took place from the 10th to the 12th centuries. However other factors can take precedence, and it is likely that the island was a network of smaller hamlets and farms, with lands divided by drains and a central focus at the main point of water contact, where the market and manorial centres happened to be.
- 1.3.8 Whether a church existed in this later Saxon landscape is uncertain. Certainly a manor usually had an associated church, yet in Wisbech's case the church is across the river next to the castle. It has been shown above how the church could predate the castle, but this would place a later Saxon church effectively on a peninsula over the water from its manor. Whilst not unusual in itself for a Saxon development, it would require more evidence to prove this than is currently available.
- 1.3.9 Another possibility is that the late Saxon church was demolished and rebuilt next to the castle deliberately as a reaction to the support by Ely Abbey of Hereward the Wake. This would as yet undiscovered church to the north of the river, and again is not unknown in the area. A third option is that the scattered nature of the settlement did not justify the expenditure of resources on a church.

### ***Medieval***

- 1.3.10 Wisbech in Domesday Book was not a particularly large or important, yet throughout the mediaeval period the core of the modern town that we know evolved.
- 1.3.11 Wisbech is first referenced as a grant to the abbey at Ely c. AD1000 from the East Anglian Bishop Aelfwine. The scale and nature of Saxon occupation is unknown but a manor is currently thought to have been located on the west bank of the Wysbeck due to the siting there and presumed pre-Norman origins of the Old Market (VCH Vol. IV, 243).
- 1.3.12 The construction of the church, castle and new market moved the focus of settlement away from the north bank of the Nene, a process accentuated when the Nene outflow was finally blocked by silt in the earlier mediaeval period, leaving the Well Stream as the most important water course in the emerging town. The maintenance of two market places is indicative of a change in focus for activity on the Isle. The Old Market maintained its local connections, but it is likely that the new market became more associated with the commercial trade that was beginning to emerge during the 13th century.
- 1.3.13 The castle was first built by the orders of by William the Conqueror in 1086 (VCH Vol. II, 47). This castle was probably of Motte and Bailey type although whether it had a mound or not is not known. According to the Victoria County History it was of stone, and the buildings covered 2 acres, the whole area of the castle being 4 acres (ibid.). The earliest dated evidence of episcopal tenure of the castle is in the vacancy of 1215-19, when it was entrusted in turn to Ralph de Normanville and Robert de Cantia, and to

Richard (Poore), Bishop of Salisbury (VCH Vol. IV, 252). King John stopped at the castle on 12th October 1216 on his last journey.

- 1.3.14 Episodic flooding was a major problem in Wisbech and in 1236 a particularly devastating flood may have destroyed the castle and laid waste to the surrounding area. The *Flores Historiarum* described the 1236 flood: 'But on the morrow of the blessed Martin (November 12th)...the waves of the sea flooded in, transgressing their accustomed limits, so that in the confines of that same sea, and in the marsh, as at Wisbech and in similar small places, small boats, herds, and also a great multitude of men perished.' (FH, vol. 2, 219 as quoted in Hallam 1965, 127).
- 1.3.15 Given the problems afflicting the water flows out of the town, it is interesting to speculate as to why a port evolved here. It appears that the more reliable water flows lead through Lynn, and certainly Cambridge and Ely regarded Lynn as their main trading town. Wisbech and its environs must have possessed some attribute that focussed trade here, and although it did afford access to the western fens (in particular Holme and Yaxley) presumably there was a commodity here that was traded. This probably was the agricultural surplus generated by the fertile lands, especially when an ongoing programme of drainage created more of the same.
- 1.3.16 Agricultural surpluses have always been the main export from the town, in one form or another. First it was corn, then cole-seed and rape-seed, and in more recent times market gardening, especially fruit, although vegetables are also popular.
- 1.3.17 The town however, remained fairly small in size, compared to similar ones in the region. Only one church was built (compared to the 42 in Huntingdon during the mediaeval period). The population was centred on around the two cores, the Old Market and the castle areas, but the town did not stretch much beyond these areas. The marginality of the land may have had something to do with this, for despite the continuing existence of the sea defences, and the ongoing reclamation projects, the core area (around the castle) flooded on a regular and catastrophic basis. It is quite possible that the town existed as a focus for the area, but most of its population still inhabited the hinterlands in scattered settlements.
- 1.3.18 Most of these hinterlands fall outside the remit of this survey. However, the area to the immediate south-west of the town has revealed a form of agriculture known as darlands. These are drainage ditches roughly 2m wide used to delineate strips of agricultural land. These strips are around 12m wide and 160 long, which corresponds reasonably well to plots of land identified under the Midlands system of ridge and furrow.
- 1.3.19 The castle was rebuilt although in what form and with how many alterations is unknown. From the late 13th century the building was mainly used as a prison and as a place for holding the bishop's courts. In the 15th century the castle fell into ruin, and was rebuilt during the episcopate of Bishop Morton (1479-86) (VCH Vol. IV, 252), suggesting a further change in form of the castle.

### ***Post-Medieval – Wisbech Castle***

- 1.3.20 During the Civil War the town, generally on the side of Parliament, and the castle, were put into a state of defence. In 1643 £11 was spent on ironwork for the castle drawbridge. This is strong evidence that a moat was open in the mid 17th century and had presumably been there for a long time already. However, it is quite possible the moat, being part of the defences, was re-worked at this time. Following the Civil War,

John Thurloe (Secretary to the Commonwealth Government) purchased the manor and replaced Morton's palace with a mansion on the site in 1658 (ibid. 254).

- 1.3.21 The only plan of the castle comes from a sketch plan made in 1795 when the site was finally cleared (Figure 2). This clearly shows the near circular form of the castle and the moat around the north-east of the enclosure fronting the market place. The moat is said to have been 40ft (12m) wide (VCH Vol. II, 47). Excavations on the site of the Tesco store in the market place (now QD Stores) during the 1950s encountered evidence of the existence of the castle wall and the extensive moat, the gradual filling in of which seems to have extended into the 16th century (Annis 1977). This is suggested by the pottery found during these excavations which included Bourne and Grimston wares of the late 15th – early 16th century (Moorhouse 1974, 58).
- 1.3.22 In 1793 the castle and grounds were sold to Joseph Medworth who turned the site into a residential development of Georgian houses formed around The Crescent and Ely Place, most of which still survives today. He also demolished Thurloe's mansion and replaced it with the current Wisbech Castle in 1816 (VCH Vol. IV, 254).

### ***Post-Medieval Town***

- 1.3.23 The main growth of the town took place in the post-medieval period, when the population expanded rapidly. This could be down to several factors. Firstly, widespread drainage of the fens coupled with mechanical means of pumping water off the lands created wide swathes of very fertile agricultural land that could be used for crops or (in the case of marginal land) summer pasture. Secondly, there were deliberate attempts to free up the flow of the Nene through the town and improve access to the port facilities.
- 1.3.24 The impact of this was two-fold. The area could now generate larger agricultural products to export, and also the access to the port was improved to permit larger vessels to ship it. The use of mechanical pumps generated a need for certain products, in particular wood and coal. Most of the port facilities were located below the Town Bridge, especially out towards the Horseshoe sluice to the north. Sutton bridge still provided a mooring for large vessels.
- 1.3.25 As the trade grew, so the town prospered. The creation of extensive and elaborate Georgian and Regency properties are a reflection of that. However there was also a requirement for housing for the growing number of labourers that served the port and the town, and there are several references to a lack of such housing in the 18th and 19th centuries. The areas around Walsoken were always regarded as the poorer areas, so it is unsurprising that this is the direction in which the town expanded from the mid-19th century.
- 1.3.26 It also grew southwards, and the terraces around Victoria Road, Milner Road and such like were laid out at this time. The town expanded along Leverington Road and Lynn Road in a linear fashion, and in time Walsoken became totally absorbed. Expansion westwards was hindered by the fact that the wealthy families (especially the Peckovers) who owned the houses around here also owned the land, and would not permit much development in their vicinity.
- 1.3.27 As part of the development of The Crescent and Ely Place, a Baptist Chapel was built. This can be seen on the 1853 Board of Health map (Wisbech Museum; Figure 3). The building was expanded or replaced by the time of the First Edition Ordnance Survey (Figure 4).

1.3.28 The town probably reached its zenith by the end of the 19th and into the 20th century. At the opening of the 21st, Wisbech is still recovering from the decline of its port and trade, and still is trying to find a new purpose for itself. Its population is static, and the whole area is economically depressed.

#### **1.4 Acknowledgements**

1.4.1 The author would like to thank Kier Construction who funded and Commissioned the work, Paul Whistler the site manager on behalf of Kier Construction for all his help on site, Andy Thomas wrote the brief and monitored the excavations. The project was managed by Stephen Macaulay. The excavation was carried out by James Fairbairn with the help of Nick Cox, John Diffey and Elizabeth Jones.

## 2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The objective of this evaluation and excavation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The Brief required a sample of the development area to be investigated. A total of three trial trenches, each measuring 30m, were excavated across the site. As a result of the archaeology revealed in Trench 2, a small area was expanded around the eastern end.
- 2.2.2 Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a wheeled JCB-type (rubber duck) excavator using a toothless ditching bucket.
- 2.2.3 The site survey was carried out by Taleyna Fletcher using a Leica GPS unit.
- 2.2.4 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.
- 2.2.5 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
- 2.2.6 A total of thirteen samples were taken across the site and are discussed in appendix C
- 2.2.7 Site conditions were poor and started wet and slippery but improved as the excavation progressed.

### 3 RESULTS

#### 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Evaluation trenches are discussed first and in numerical order followed by the excavation carried out at the northern end of trench number two.

#### 3.2 Trench 1 (see fig 2)

3.2.1 Trench 1 was orientated NE-SW and was located to the north of the site it measured 20m x 2m and had an average depth of 1.2m. Trench one contained two small shallow ditches contexts **104** and **106**. These features had a similar depth and a similar orientation. Both contained small pieces of medieval pottery Dating to the 14<sup>th</sup> century in their single fills although these are thought to be residual.

3.2.2 The function of these ditches remain unclear, they showed no sign of ever being waterlogged and given the proximity to the River Nene this is peculiar. The surrounding area would have suffered regular, and severe, flooding in the past, however a specific purpose as drainage ditches can probably ruled out. These features are more likely to be associated with small enclosures running north toward the road. Both ditches were sealed by a large silt build up (108) this had an average depth in this area of 0.75m .this was capped by a dark brown silty subsoil and a thin layer of humongous dark grey topsoil. These had a combined depth of 0.25m.

3.2.3 The only other feature within trench one was a dark spread of subsoil located at the eastern end of the trench this dark area had no definable edges so a test pit **107** was dug to investigate this spread. Small amounts of Late medieval pottery were found within the top 0.20m of this pit, again thought to be residual in nature. It seems as if the darker soil in this area maybe due to a long gone tree line that ran down the eastern boundary of the site.

#### 3.3 Trench 2 (see fig 2)

3.3.1 Trench 2 was located centrally across the excavation area and ran in a south-east direction. It measured 30m x 2m and had an average depth of 1.2m. During the evaluation two features were located **206** and **209**. The nature of these features was not clear during the evaluation but during the excavation phase they were both found to be large ditches and so are discussed later in the excavation section of the report. A similar overburden of silts, subsoil and topsoil was recorded in trench two as in trench one.

#### 3.4 Trench 3 (see fig 2)

3.4.1 Trench 3 was located to the south of the development area. It had a NE-SW orientation, measured 30m x 2m and had an average depth of 1.25m. Features excavated consisted of a small ditch, context **310**, three post holes, contexts **304**, **308** and **314** along with a shallow pit **306** which was found to be modern and included small piece of plastic Modern truncation was encountered in trench three in the form of a concrete covered drain an iron pipe and redundant electricity cable. The three post holes may relate to a fence line that existed at this end of the site. All were shallow but well formed and contained a similar fill of mottled brown-grey silt.

3.4.2 Ditch **310** ran NW-SE, it contained a single brown-grey silty fill and contained three small residual medieval pottery sherds dating to the 15th century. Although of uncertain

usage, this ditch in common with those found in trench one, is likely to have been a small enclosure ditch. The overburden consisted of a silty subsoil capped by a dark silty topsoil.

### 3.5 Excavation phase

3.5.1 A small excavation area was opened to widen the eastern end of Trench 2, the purpose of which was to allow the investigation the two large features **206** and **209** which were discovered during the evaluation phase. These were impossible to fully understand without the larger area opened. Both were revealed to be post-medieval ditches with a similar NE-SW orientation.

### 3.6 Feature 206 (fig 3)

3.6.1 Ditch 206 was discovered during the evaluation phase of the project and an area was opened to characterise the feature. It was found to have an width of 6.75m and a maximum depth of 2.48m. The ditch had a been cut with steep sides and a flatish base into heavy blue clay. This ditch unlike ditch 209 seems to have been backfilled relatively quickly after it had gone out of use. The lower fills of the ditch were all similar especially 224, 205, and 223 which consisted of a dark orangey brown clay silt not unlike the natural silts that the ditch was dug into. This would suggest that the last material excavated was the first to go into the ditch when back filling. The pottery recovered from ditch **206** suggests that this back filling episode happened in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.

3.6.2 Evidence of a re-cut was visible **228** and the backfill of this consisted of a lighter brown clayey silt material. Further evidence of a deliberate backfilling episode exists in the fill of this cut. Fill 227 has an area of lighter clay encapsulated within this fill. It is hard to see how this could have occurred other than by an action of deliberate backfilling. The ditch was capped by a topsoil and subsoil mix with an average depth of 0.48m.

### 3.7 Feature 209 (See fig. 3)

3.7.1 Ditch 209 was orientated NW-SE and was relatively deep compared to the other ditches found during the investigation. It had a maximum depth of 0.75m with moderately sloping sides (see section 308) and contained four phases of silting. These fills had broadly the same characteristics, each consisted of an orangey brown silt not unlike the silt deposits found across the entire site although the uppermost fill (214) did contain numerous patches of charcoal. Just above the base of the ditch in fill 211 a layer of rotted plant material suggesting that the ditch was open for some time and contained standing or flowing water before silting took place.

## 3.8 Finds Summary

3.8.1 Artefactual evidence suggests that the ditches in trench 2 are of different phases, ditch 209 belongs stratigraphically to an earlier phase of activity on the site although no pottery was found within this ditch. The very shallow ditch **216** contained a small residual piece of pottery that has been dated between 1150-1350. This ditch has been truncated by the larger ditch **206** and the artefactual evidence here suggests that this was back filled by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Clay pipe stems and bowls dating to no later than the beginning 18<sup>th</sup> century were found in layer 205 and all other pottery found probably dated no later than the 18<sup>th</sup> century.



### **3.9 Environmental Summary**

- 3.9.1 The environmental evidence suggests that the evaluation and excavation area was on the periphery of any domestic setting and that the land surrounding the excavation area was probably cultivated with cereal crops.

## 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 4.1 Evaluation and excavation

- 4.1.1 Although only small area was excavated on land at Somers Road, the discovery that a large ditch existed within the development is intriguing. The profile of the ditch and its relatively fast backfilling suggests that it may be of a defensive nature.
- 4.1.2 In this part of Wisbech there is a natural plateau of more solid geology, piling for a single story building approximately 200m to the south of ditch **206** was sunk almost 18m before solid geology was encountered this suggests the area around the site was waterlogged and possibly inaccessible at some point in the not too distant past and so would be on the edge of any defended area
- 4.1.3 Coalwharf road which is located to the west of the development area runs north to the river and seems to continue in the form of Chapel lane to the north of the river. When viewed on a map combines to form an arc at this western side of the town. This would have been an important area with access into the town from the river and the road westwards. (See fig. 1).
- 4.1.4 Wisbech, and notably this part of the town, were strategically important locations during the English Civil War (1642-1651). The nature of the ditch (large, deep and steep sided), the artefacts found within (17<sup>th</sup> century) and the fact that Wisbech is known to have had defences constructed, but that have not yet been located, might lead us to hypothesise that the ditch at Somers Road may be part of the civil war defences.

### 4.2 Significance

- 4.2.1 The evaluation and excavation at Somers road gave a insight into the archaeology at this end of the town of Wisbech. The discovery of a large ditch with possible connections to the civil war period is a valuable contribution to the history of the town.

### 4.3 Recommendations

- 4.3.1 Recommendations for any future work based upon this report will be made by the County Archaeology Office.

## APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
<b>General description</b>					<b>Orientation</b>	NW-SE
Trench 1 was located to the north of the development area. It contained two small shallow ditches.					<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	1.1
					<b>Width (m)</b>	1.8
					<b>Length (m)</b>	20
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
101	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil	-	-
102	Layer	-	0.1	Subsoil	-	-
103	Fill	0.9	0.14	Sandy silt fill of ditch	-	-
104	Cut	0.9	0.41	Cut of ditch	-	-
105	Fill	1.5	0.18	Sandy silt fill of ditch	-	-
106	Cut	1.5	0.18	Cut of ditch		
107	Layer	1	0.3	Test pit into dark spread of soil	Pottery, Bone, Shell	16 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> Century
Trench						
<b>General description</b>					<b>Orientation</b>	E-W
Trench 2 was centrally located across the development area. It contained three ditches, one small pit and one post hole. Trench 2 was widened to investigate the ditches found during the evaluation.					<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	1.2
					<b>Width (m)</b>	2.5
					<b>Length (m)</b>	32
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
203	Fill	1.3	0.22	Mid orangey brown silt	Pottery	17 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> Century
204	Fill	4.1	1	Light to mid brown silt		
205	Fill	3.8	0.3	Light to mid brown silt	Pottery, Clay pipe	17 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> Century
206	Cut	5.2	2.4	Cut of ditch		
209	Cut	2.3	0.6	Cut of ditch		
210	Layer	0.3	0.08	Layer of plant material		
211	Fill	1.6	0.3	Reddish brown silt		
212	Fill	1.5	0.3	Reddish brown silt	Pottery	16 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup> Century
213	Fill	1.1	0.2	Mid brown silt		
214	Fill	0.9	0.2	Orangey brown silty fill	Pottery	16 <sup>th</sup> Century
215	Fill	0.75	0.1	Light to mid orangey brown silt		
216	Cut	0.75	0.1	Cut of ditch		

217	Fill	0.2	0.18	Dark brown silt		
218	Cut	0.2	0.18	Cut of post hole		
219	Fill	1	0.2	Orangey brown sandy silt	Pottery. Clay pipe	16 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup> Century
220	Cut	1	0.2	Cut of pit		
221	Fill	0.5	0.12	Orangey brown silt		
222	Cut	0.5	0.12	Cut of natural feature		
223	Fill	2.2	0.4	Mid brown orange silt		
224	Fill	3.7	0.9	Orangey grey clay, silt		
225	Fill	5.2	1.3	Light brown sandy silt	Pottery. Clay pipe	17 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> Century
226	Cut	5.2	1.3	Re cut of ditch		
227	Fill	1.5	0.7	Mid to light brown silt		
228	Cut	1.5	0.7	Re cut of ditch		
229	Later	-	0.4	Dark silty topsoil.		
<b>Trench</b>						
<b>General description</b>					<b>Orientation</b>	NE-SW
Trench three was located to the southern most end of the development area. It contained three post holes and a small linear ditch					<b>Avg. depth (m)</b>	0.6
					<b>Width (m)</b>	1.8
					<b>Length (m)</b>	0.3
<b>Contexts</b>						
<b>context no</b>	<b>type</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	<b>comment</b>	<b>finds</b>	<b>date</b>
301	Layer		0.6	Dark silty topsoil		
302	Layer		0.6	Mid to dark brown silty subsoil		
303	Fill	0.2	0.15	Mid brown silt		
304	Cut	0.2	0.15	Cut of post hole		
305	Fill	1	0.2	Reddish brown silt	Pottery	19 <sup>th</sup> Century
306	Cut	1	0.2	Cut of elongated pit		
307	Fill	0.25	0.15	Mid brown silt with occasional charcoal flecks		
308	Cut	0.25	0.15	Cut of post hole		
309	Fill	0.7	0.2	Reddish brown silt	Pottery	12 <sup>th</sup> -15 <sup>th</sup> Century
310	Cut	0.7	0.2	Cut of ditch		
313	Fill	0.25	0.3	Fill of post hole		
314	Cut	0.25	0.3	Cut of post hole		
315	Layer		0.3	Mid brown silt subsoil layer		

## APPENDIX B. FINDS REPORTS

### B.1 Pottery

B.1.1 Modern pottery was confined to the subsoils and upper topsoil. Feature **206** contained pottery dating to the same date range throughout its fills this again attests to a deliberate backfilling act rather than gradual silting which seems to have happened in ditch **209**.

Context	Sherd No.	Weight (g)	Comments	Pot Date	Spot Date
107					
203	23	160	Medieval pottery, Ely ware, post medieval red wares and Stafford shire slip wares	1600-1800	18 <sup>th</sup> Century
204	7	146	Medieval pottery , Bourne ware. Earthenware and tin glazed wares.	1600-1800	18 <sup>th</sup> Century
205	30	382	German stone ware, Grimstone ware, Bourne D wares and post medieval red wares.	1600-1800	18 <sup>th</sup> Century
212	2	20	Bi chrome red wares	1500-1700	18 <sup>th</sup> Century
219	4	7	Bourne D pottery	1500-1650	17 <sup>th</sup> Century
224	14	136	Grimstone ware, German stone ware , post medieval red wares and black glazed earthenware	1600- 1800	18 <sup>th</sup> Century
225	16	106	Grimstone ware, German stone ware , post medieval red wares and tin glazed earthen ware.	1600-1800	18 <sup>th</sup> Century
305	4	6	Unidentified medieval sherd	Post 1780	18 <sup>th</sup> Century

			and refined white earthen ware.		
309	4	8	Bourne D ware.	1200-1500	16 <sup>th</sup> Century

## APPENDIX C. ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

### C.1 Environmental samples

*By Rachel Fosberry*

#### ***Introduction and methodology***

- C.1.1 Thirteen bulk samples were taken from features within the excavated areas of the site at Somers Road, Wisbech in order to assess the quality of preservation of plant remains and their archaeobotanical potential. Features sampled include pits, ditches and post-holes dating to the medieval period.
- C.1.2 One bucket (up to ten litres) of each sample were processed by water flotation (using a modified Siraff three-tank system) for the recovery of charred plant remains, dating evidence and any other artefactual evidence that might be present. The flot was collected in a 0.3mm nylon mesh and the residue was washed through a 0.5mm sieve. Both flot and residue were allowed to air dry. The dried residue was passed through 5mm and 2mm sieves and a magnet was dragged through each resulting fraction prior to sorting for artefacts. Any artefacts present were noted and reintegrated with the hand-excavated finds. The flot was examined under a binocular microscope at x16 magnification and the presence of any plant remains or other artefacts are noted on Table x. Identification of plant remains is with reference to the Digital Seed Atlas of the Netherlands and the authors' own reference collection.

#### ***Quantification***

- C.1.3 For the purpose of this initial assessment, items such as seeds, cereal grains and small animal bones have been scanned and recorded qualitatively according to the following categories  
 # = 1-10, ## = 11-50, ### = 51+ specimens
- C.1.4 Items that cannot be easily quantified such as charcoal, magnetic residues and fragmented bone have been scored for abundance  
 + = rare, ++ = moderate, +++ = abundant

#### ***Results***

- C.1.5 The results are recorded on Table 1

Sample No.		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Context No.		204	210	105	107	210	212	219	215	224	311	303	307	313
Cut No.		206	209	106	TP1	209	209	220	216	206	310	304	308	314

Feature Type		ditch	pit	ditch	test pit	ditch	ditch	pit	ditch	ditch	ditch	Post hole	Post hole	post hole
Volume processed (L)		8	4	8	8	4	8	9	8	9	7	3	3	9
<b>Cereals</b>														
Avena sp. Grain	oat		#											
Hordeum sp. Grain	barley		##				#							
Triticum sp. Grain	wheat		#	#										
Cereal indet	unidentified cereal	#	#	#		#								
<b>Dry land herbs</b>														
<i>Anthemis cotula</i>	stinking mayweed		#			##	#							
<i>Aphanes arvensis</i>	Parsley-piert									#w				
<i>Atriplex sp.</i>	orache									#w				
<i>Brassica sp.</i>										#w				
Chenopodiaceae	goosefoot		##							###w				
Poaceae	grasses		#			#								
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	creeping buttercup					#								
<i>Solanum nigrum</i>	Black Nightshade									#w				
<i>Stachys arvensis</i>	field woundwort						#w			#w				
<i>Stellaria media</i>	chickweed									#w				
<i>Urtic dioica</i>	Stinging nettle									##w				
<b>Wetland/aquatic plants</b>														
<i>Carex sp.</i>	sedges									#w				
<i>Cladium mariscus</i> (nutlet)	saw sedge					#	#							
<i>Cladium mariscus</i> (leaf)	saw sedge		###											
<i>Lemna sp.</i>	duck weed						##w							
<i>Juncus sp.</i>	rushes						##w			#w				
<i>Ranunculus subgenus batrachium</i>	Water crowfoot						#w							
<b>Tree/shrub macrofossils</b>														
<i>Rubus sp.</i>	bramble									#w				
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	elderberry									#w				
<b>Other plant macrofossils</b>														
Charcoal <2mm		++	++	++	++	++	++	++	+	+	+			+++
Charcoal >2mm		++	+	+				+			+			++
Charcoal >10mm		+		+				+						++
<b>Other remains</b>														
ferrous globules											#			
molluscs		##	#	##	##	##	##	##	#	##	#			##
Ostracods							#							
vitrified material											##			
<b>Volume of flot (millilitres)</b>		20	5	10	2	2	5	40	2	35	40			30

Table 1. Results

- C.1.6 The majority of the samples are preserved by carbonisation with one exception; Sample 9 (fill 224 of ditch **206**) which contains plant remains preserved by waterlogging.
- C.1.7 Preservation of the charred plant remains is moderate to poor. Many of the cereal grains are abraded and/or fragmented and they have been identified by their characteristic morphology where possible. Barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) and wheat (*Triticum* sp.) predominate with occasional occurrences of oats (*Avena* sp.). Numbers of grains recovered were low, the highest density occurring in sample 2 (fill 201 of pit **209**) Chaff elements were not present.
- C.1.8 Weed seeds occur rarely and represent plants that are likely to have been growing in cultivated fields and would have been harvested along with the crop such as stinking mayweed (*Anthemis cotula*), goosefoot (*Chenopodium* sp.), grass seeds (Poaceae), field woundwort (*Stachys arvensis*) and creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*).
- C.1.9 Wetland plants are represented by charred nutlets and leaf fragments of saw-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*) and waterlogged seeds of rushes (*Juncus* sp), sedge (*Carex* sp.), water crowfoot (*Ranunculus* subgenus *batrachium*), stinging nettle and duck weed (*Lemna* sp.)

### **Discussion**

- C.1.10 The charred plant assemblage consists of food waste in the form of cereals with occasional weed seeds. The cereal grains would have been accidentally burnt whilst cooking over open fires or through the deliberate burning of spilt/spoilt grain being thrown on the hearth. The seed assemblage, although small, is consistent with what one would generally expect to find amongst cereal crops growing on cultivated land
- C.1.11 The most productive sample for charred plant remains is from pit **209** which would suggest that this feature was used for the disposal of domestic waste. In contrast pit **220** contained charcoal only. The three post holes sampled did not produce any plant remains other than a small volume of charcoal from post hole **314** (Sample 13).
- C.1.12 The ditch samples were generally unproductive except for ditch **209** which contains a small charred plant assemblage of barley grains and a seed of stinking mayweed mixed in with burnt saw-sedge. The presence of waterlogged seeds of rushes, sedges and obligate aquatics such as duckweed and water-crowfoot suggest that the ditch contained standing or slow flowing water.

### **Further Work and Methods Statement**

- C.1.13 The samples from Somers Road, Wisbech have demonstrated preservation of plant remains by both carbonisation and waterlogging. Density and diversity of plant remains is low probably suggesting that the site was peripheral to any main centre of domestic and/or agricultural activity. None of the samples contain sufficient density of remains for quantification (>100 specimens), and no further analysis is recommended.

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[www.seedatlas.nl](http://www.seedatlas.nl)

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## APPENDIX E. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

### Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-119684		
Project Name	Evaluation and Excavation at Somers road Wisbech		
Project Dates (fieldwork) Start	16-01-2012	Finish	30-01-2012
Previous Work (by OA East)	No	Future Work	Unknown

### Project Reference Codes

Site Code	WISSOR11	Planning App. No.	
HER No.	ECB 3697	Related HER/OASIS No.	

### Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Development Type	Urban Residential

### Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - interpretation	<input type="checkbox"/> Grab-Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-Core	<input type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch	<input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure
<input type="checkbox"/> Augering	<input type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Test Pits
<input type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search	<input type="checkbox"/> Phosphate Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Topographic Survey
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Photogrammetric Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Vibro-core
<input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwalking	<input type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit)
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Rectified Photography	

### Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
Ditches	Medieval 1066 to 1540	Pottery	Medieval 1066 to 1540
Ditches	Post Medieval 1540 to 1901	Pottery	Post Medieval 1540 to 1901
	Select period...		Select period...

### Project Location

County	Cambridgeshire	Site Address (including postcode if possible)	
District	Wisbech	Somers road, Wisbech. Cambridgeshire	
Parish	Wisbech		
HER	Cambs		
Study Area	200sqm	National Grid Reference	TF 4578 0946

## Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	Cambs County Council
Project Design Originator	Stephen Macaulay
Project Manager	Stephen Macaulay
Supervisor	James Fairbairn

## Project Archives

Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
OA East	OA EAST	OA EAST
WISSOR11	WISSOR11	WISSOR11

## Archive Contents/Media

	Physical Contents	Digital Contents	Paper Contents
Animal Bones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media	Paper Media
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<input type="checkbox"/> Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Matrices
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<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/> Misc.
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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photos
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Survey

### Notes:



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Figure 1: Site location and development area (red) with Chapel and Coalwharf Roads (red highlight)

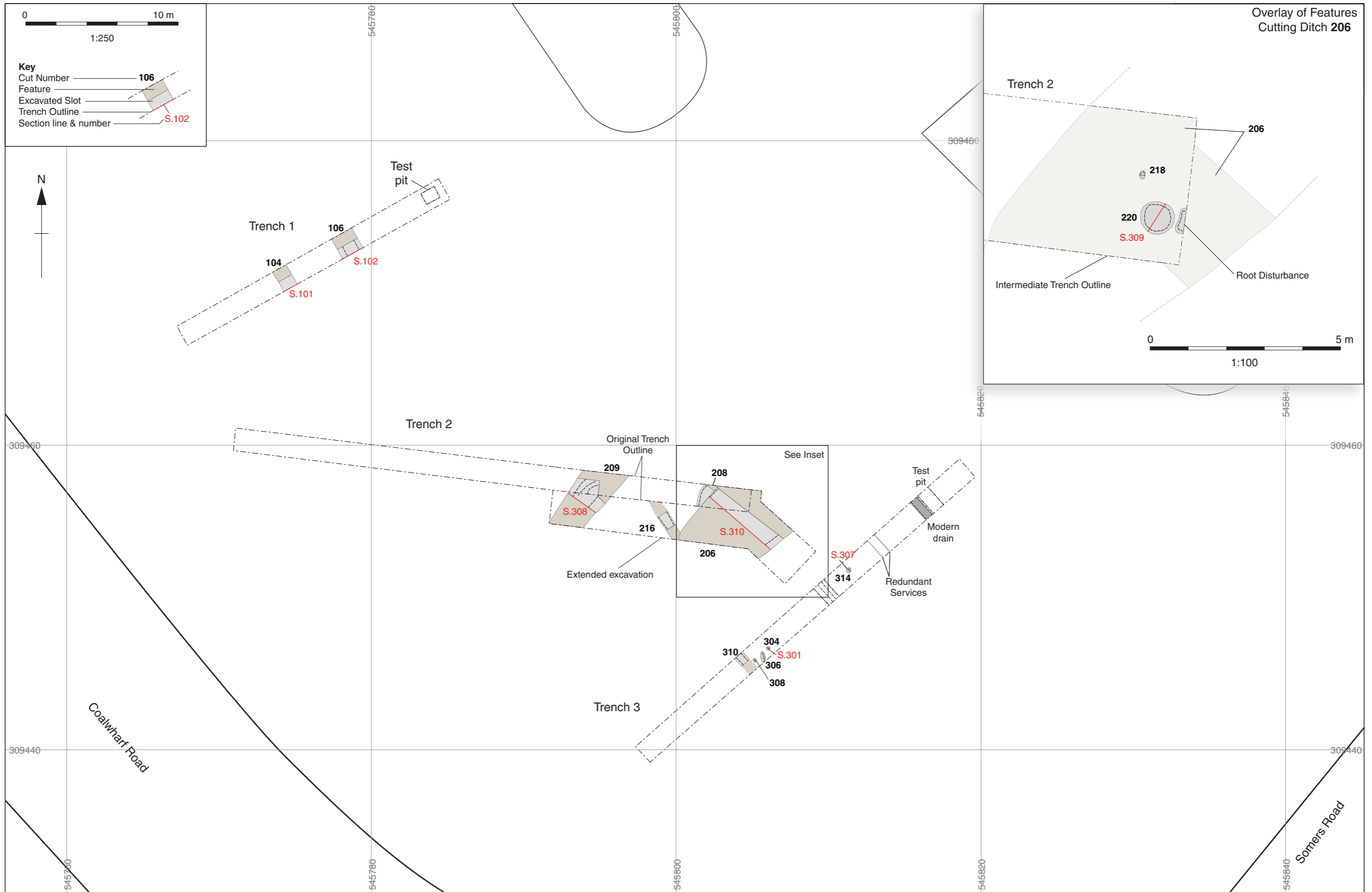


Figure 2: Trench plan

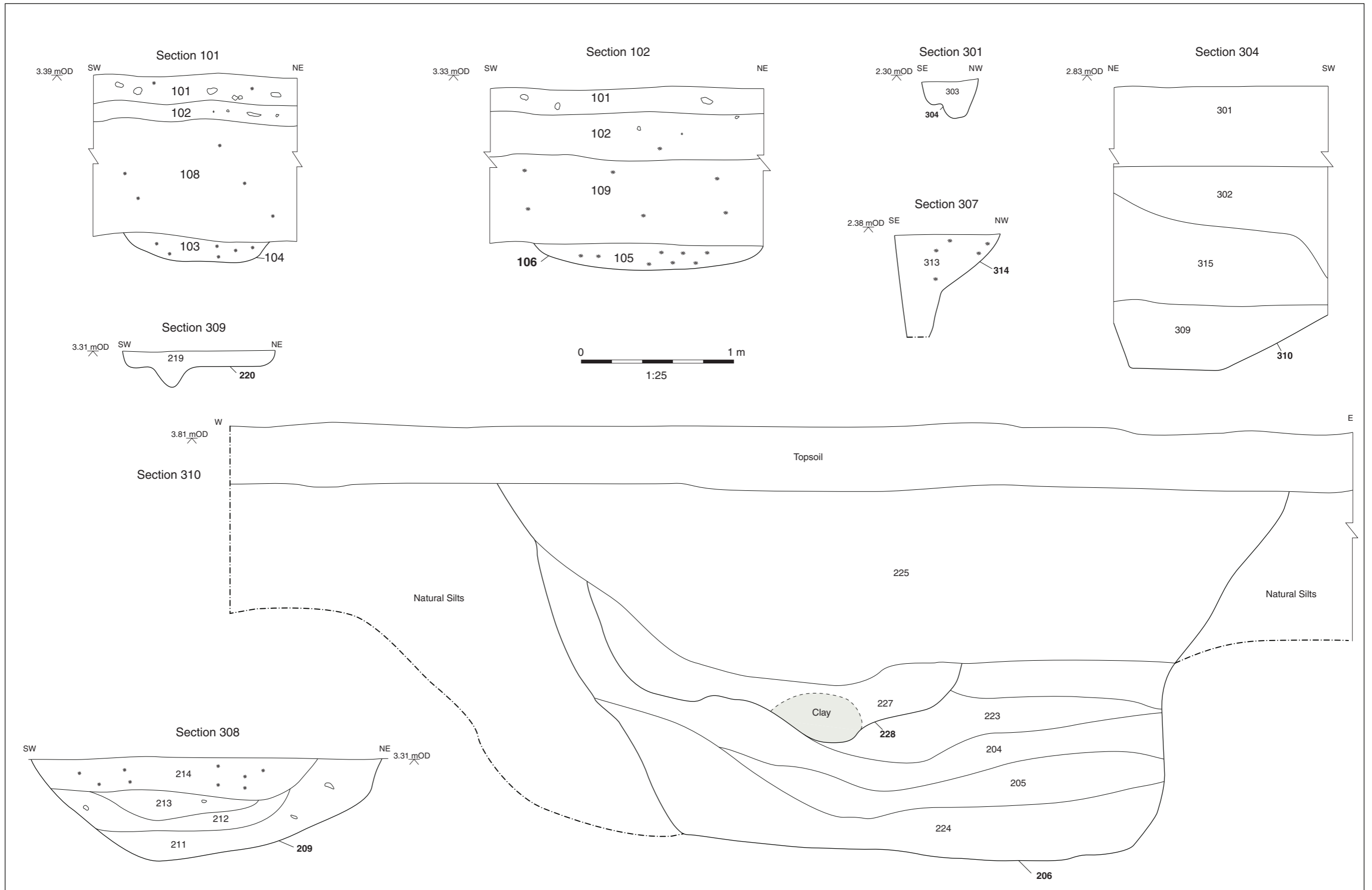


Figure 3: Sections





Plate 1: Trench 1, looking south



Plate 2: Trench 2, looking north-west



Plate 3: Trench 3, looking north-east



Plate 4: Ditch 209, looking south-west



Plate 5: Ditch 206, looking south-west



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