Land at Perryfields Road Bromsgrove Worcestershire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Client: EDP on behalf of Taylor Wimpey

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Archaeological Evaluation Report

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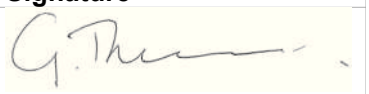
1	Gerry Thacker Senior Project Manager	Paul Booth Senior Project Manager	Gerry Thacker Senior Project Manager	

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Perryfields Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Written by Gerry Thacker

with contributions from Paul Booth, Geraldine Crann ,Cynthia Poole and Rebecca Nicholson and illustrated by Matt Bradley and Markus Dylewski

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Summary

During October 2014 Oxford Archaeology undertook a trial trench evaluation on land off Perryfields Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. The evaluation trenches were targeted on anomalies from a geophysical survey. Three trenches were excavated over a ditched enclosure in the centre of the site, and a further trench targeted a potential pit alignment to the east.

The ditched enclosure was noted to have been re-cut within two of the trenches. A fired clay object recovered from the infill of one of the ditches is likely to be of Iron Age date.

The fourth trench identified that the potential pit alignment was in fact a ditch, which had a very compact fire cracked stone pebble upper fill. The stones could have been placed to consolidate the surface of a trackway, or eroded into the ditch from an adjacent positive feature. Pottery from the base of the stone layer is likely to be of middle to late Iron Age date.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 During October 2014 Oxford Archaeology conducted a trial trench evaluation on land off Perryfields Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire (Fig. 1). The site is centred on NGR SO 950 720. The evaluation was commissioned by EDP on behalf of Taylor Wimpey.

1.1.2 The work was undertaken in advance of submission of a Planning Application, and at the request of the Local Authority Archaeologist. A specification detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to inform the planning process has been agreed between EDP and the Local Authority Archaeologist, and a Written Scheme of Investigation for the work was produced by OA (2014).

1.1.3 The evaluation consisted of three trial trenches within the centre of the site, and a further trench in the eastern part of the site (Fig. 2). The trenches were targeted on anomalies identified during a previous geophysical survey (see 1.3.12 below).

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site is located to the west of the town of Bromsgrove, to the south and south-east of the intersection of the M5 and M42 motorways. The site is bounded to the west by the M5, to the north by the M42. The southern boundary is formed by the A448, and the east by the suburb of Sidemoor (Fig. 1).

1.2.2 The area of proposed development currently consists mainly of pasture for the grazing of horses and turf production. A fruit farm is located within the west of the area.

1.2.3 The geology of the area is the Bromsgrove Sandstone Formation. Alluvial deposits associated with the Battlefield Brook are present to the west of the site (www.mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

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

Prehistoric

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

Romano-British

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

Anglo Saxon

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

Medieval

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

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

Post-medieval

1.3.7 Two fields, known as Potter's Field are recorded on the mid 19th century maps, and located to the west and south-east of the site. The field name may be indicative of an area of pottery production, or simply a reference to the name of the land owner.

1.3.8 The Worcestershire HER references several elements of the post-medieval landscape in the vicinity of the site. These include the base of a wayside stone cross to the south of the site and a well, a cave and a chapel located to the north-west of the site.

1.3.9 The HER also includes reference to post-medieval and later industry on the western edge of Bromsgrove. These records mainly relate to a former button manufactory and its associated water power system, and also two glass working sites.

Undated

1.3.10 An apparent former entrenchment is located c 250m to the west of the site, and this is now thought to have been filled in.

1.3.11 Anecdotal evidence (including the name of Battlefield Brook), places a battlefield in the vicinity of the site, but the provenance is not clear, and the evidence both contradictory and fragmentary. If a battle had taken place in the vicinity, it would appear from place name evidence (i.e. Battlefield House) that it took place to the west of the M5 motorway, beyond the confines of the proposed development area. There are no registered battlefields within six kilometres of the site boundary.

Geophysical Survey

1.3.12 During 2013 Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook a detailed magnetometry geophysical survey of the site (Figs 2, 3 and 4). In addition to anomalies likely to represent former field boundaries, the survey also identified a trapezoidal shaped enclosure in the western part of the site, and a possible pit alignment or linear feature in the eastern part of the site.

1.4 Acknowledgements

1.4.1 OA would like to acknowledge Matthew Morgan of EDP, who commissioned the work, and Aisling Nash, of Worcestershire County Council, who monitored the evaluation. The site work was conducted by Mark Gibson assisted by Chris Hambleton and Leanne Waring. The OA Project manager was Gerry Thacker.

2 Evaluation Aims and Methodology

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aims of the evaluation were:

(i) To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive.

(ii) To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains

(iii) To determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means.

(iv) To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.

(v) To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy.

(vi) To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.

(vii) To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.

(viii) To determine the implications of any remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity.

(ix) To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artifactual evidence present.

(x) To examine the anomalies identified during the geophysical survey, specifically the trapezoidal enclosure and possible pit alignment.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 All procedures were undertaken as outlined in the approved WSI (OA 2014).

2.2.2 The trenches were located as indicated in the WSI by an OA Surveyor using a GPS system.

2.2.3 The trenches were opened by a JCB using a toothless ditching bucket under close archaeological supervision.

2.2.4 Revealed archaeological features were hand cleaned and excavated.

2.2.5 The revealed features were drawn in scale plan and section, and photographed using black and white film and digital cameras.

2.2.6 All finds were bagged by context and environmental samples taken from suitably dated deposits.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

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

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 Topsoil and subsoil (buried plough soil) were present in all of the trenches, and had an average combined depth of 685mm. The natural geology varied slightly between trenches, but generally was a reddish brown clay rich sand with occasional sandstone fragments present. The trenches generally remained dry throughout the course of the evaluation.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 Ditches were present in all four trenches. Trench 1 contained a ditch and a re-cut ditch, Trench 2 contained a ditch and a ditch terminal, which also intercut. Trench 3 contained a single ditch, and Trench 4 contained a ditch that had been in-filled with a thick layer of stone cobbles.

3.4 Trenches 1, 2 and 3

3.4.1 All three trenches were targeted on a geophysical anomaly that manifested as an enclosure measuring around 75m across (Fig 2).

3.4.2 Within Trench 1, ditch 102 had a generally concave profile (Figs 2, 3 and 5; Plate 1), and the single fill (103) was a mid reddish brown silty clay. Ditch 102 appeared to cut ditch 105 to the west, although this relationship remains tenuous. Ditch 105 was shallower than 102, and the fill (106) was near identical to 103. No finds were recovered from either fill.

3.4.3 Trench 2 also contained two parallel ditches (Figs 2, 3 and 5; Plate 2), one of which (202) terminated within the confines of the trench. Ditch 204 had a slightly flared sided concave profile, and the single fill, 205, was a mid reddish brown silty clay, containing occasional flecks of charcoal. A fragment of triangular perforated brick of likely Iron Age date, was recovered from the fill (see Appendix B2). A scrap of pottery was also recovered, but proved too small to provide a date (see Appendix B1). The adjacent ditch (202), which terminated within the confines of the trench, was steep sided and had a fairly flat base. The single fill, (203), was a mid reddish brown silty clay, containing very occasional flecks of charcoal. The relationship between the two ditches could not be established, although the section was cut back several times.

3.4.4 Trench 3 contained a single ditch, 302 (Figs 2, 3 and 5; Plate 3). The ditch had sides at around 45°, and a slightly undulating flat base. The single fill (303) was a reddish brown sandy clay, from which no finds were recovered.

3.5 Trench 4

3.5.1 Trench 4 contained a ditch (402) which was broadly orientated in a north-east to south-west direction (Figs 2, 4 and 5; Plate 4). The ditch had a concave profile, and the lower

fill (403) was a reddish brown silty clay containing occasional flecks of charcoal and rounded cobbles. An environmental sample contained charcoal and fragments of hazel nut shell (Appendix C). A single struck flint was recovered from the sample (see Appendix B3), but was not diagnostic, and may be residual to the deposit.

3.5.2 Overlying fill 403 was a thick compact layer of fire cracked rounded cobbles, (404), potentially originally derived from the adjacent brook. These appeared to protrude slightly from the top of the ditch cut, in the form of a linear convex surface. However this could be a function of the differential survival of the stones compared with the ditch fills, through the action of ploughing for example. The stone layer was far thicker on the southern side of the ditch, and may have entered the ditch from this side, potentially through the erosion of a bank or similar positive feature. At the base of the stone layer, within the centre of the excavated segment of the ditch, were a large quantity of pottery sherds, representing at least two vessels. The pottery dates to the middle or later Iron Age (see Appendix B1).

4 Discussion

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The evaluation was undertaken during slightly unsettled weather conditions. However the revealed features were fairly easy to identify against the underlying natural deposits. The results of the evaluation are therefore considered as reliable.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.1 The evaluation confirmed the presence of the anomalies plotted by the geophysical survey. The extent and preservation of the remains was examined, and the date range identified through the finds recovered. The potential for the survival of ecofacts within the feature fills was evaluated.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 Trenches 1-3 identified the ditches associated with the trapezoidal enclosure from the geophysical survey. From the limited dating evidence, the enclosure would appear to date from the Iron Age. The re-cutting of the ditch, as noted within Trenches 1 and 2, would suggest that the enclosure had a certain longevity. No features were identified from the areas of trenching inside the enclosure, and this, in combination with the general low levels of finds recovered, may indicate that the enclosure was not the site of settlement, but was perhaps used to contain livestock. The presence of the fragment of fired clay oven furniture may indicate that an oven, kiln or corn drier was formerly in the vicinity, although no indication of such a structure was shown on the results of the geophysical survey.

4.3.2 The ditch within Trench 4 appeared from the geophysical anomalies to be a group of isolated responses, initially interpreted as a pit alignment. The ditch could represent a trackway, and may be contemporary with the enclosure identified in Trenches 1-3. The thick layer of fire cracked stones could be an episode of consolidation, when the ditch had partially silted, in effect re-using the stones to metal the trackway surface. Alternatively the stones could have derived from a nearby positive feature, and eroded into the ditch.

Appendix A. Trench Descriptions and Context Inventory

Trench 1						
General description					**Orientation**	W-E
Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying a natural of mid reddish brown sand with occasional limestone fragments. A ditch and its recut cut the natural, and were sealed by subsoil.					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.8
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	35
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
100	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil	-	-
101	Layer	-	0.5	Subsoil	-	-
102	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
103	Fill	0.96	0.48	Fill of 104	-	-
104	Cut	0.96	0.48	Ditch	-	-
105	Cut	0.24	0.3	Ditch	-	-
106	Fill	0.24	0.3	Fill of 105	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					**Orientation**	N-S
Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying a natural of mid reddish brown sand with occasional limestone fragments. A ditch and adjacent ditch terminal both cut the natural, and were sealed by subsoil.					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.5
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	35
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
200	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil	-	-
201	Layer	-	0.42	Subsoil	-	-
202	Cut	1.15	0.36	Ditch	-	-
203	Fill	1.15	0.36	Fill of 202	-	-
204	Cut	1.32	0.54	Ditch	-	-
205	Fill	1.32	0.54	Fill of 204	Pottery, Fired clay	Iron Age-Roman
206	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 3						
General description					**Orientation**	NW-SE
Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying a natural of mid reddish brown sandy clay. A single ditch cut the natural, and was sealed by subsoil.					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.72
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	35

Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
300	Layer	-	0.37	Topsoil	-	-
301	Layer	-	0.35	Subsoil	-	-
302	Cut	1.3	0.3	Ditch	-	-
303	Fill	1.3	0.3	Fill of 302	-	-
304	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 4						
General description					**Orientation**	NW-SE
Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying a natural of mid reddish brown sandy clay with occasional limestone fragments. A ditch cut the natural and had been sealed by a protruding a compact layer of river cobbles. The feature was sealed by subsoil.					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.67
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	15
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
400	Layer	-	0.28	Topsoil	-	-
401	Layer	-	0.22	Subsoil	-	-
402	Cut	2.4	0.83	Ditch	-	-
403	Fill	2	0.6	Fill of 402	-	-
404	Fill	2.4	0.5	Fill of 402	Pottery	Middle -late Iron Age
405	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

APPENDIX B. FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Pottery

By Paul Booth

B.1.1 The evaluation produced a total of *c* 80 sherds (570g) of later prehistoric pottery, all but 1 sherd (2g) recovered from a single context (404). The pottery was scanned quite rapidly and quantified by fabric for each context group. The fabrics of the prehistoric pottery were recorded in terms of the principal inclusions present using current OA later prehistoric and Roman pottery recording system terminology (Booth 2011).

B.1.2 The condition of the material was variable. Only three vessels were represented. The single sherd from context 205 weighed 2g and had abraded surfaces. The pottery from context 404 was from two vessels, one represented by four sherds (50g) and the other by some 75 fragments with a total weight of 518g. The fabric of this vessel is friable and the sherd count is clearly exaggerated – no attempt was made to refit freshly broken fragments at this stage. Surfaces were, however, reasonably well-preserved on both the vessels in this context.

B.1.3 Three fabrics were present, none of which could be matched readily with examples in the Worcestershire ceramics online database. Letter codes used to identify inclusion types are: A (quartz sand); G (grog); P (clay pellet); Q (quartzite?); V (organic) and Z (uncertain, but probably organic, voids). Coarseness is indicated on a sliding scale from 1 (very fine) to 5 (very coarse).

B.1.4 Fabric VAP3/4 (context 205, 1 sherd, 2g). This moderately coarse fabric is tempered principally with organic material, with additional inclusions of quartz sand and clay pellets, in a highly micaceous clay matrix. There were no diagnostic characteristics other than fabric.

B.1.5 Fabric QV4/5 (context 404, 4 sherds 50g). A fairly hard fired fabric with quartzite inclusions up to 5mm and sparse-moderate organic inclusions. The four joining sherds are from a barrel-shaped jar with a slightly expanded and internally stepped incurving rim. The form can be paralleled in the Malvernian repertoire.

B.1.6 Fabric ZG4 (context 404, *c* 75 sherds, 518g). A fairly soft, friable fabric with abundant organic inclusions and voids and sparse rounded ?grog inclusions. The sherd count includes many very small fragments, including fresh breaks. Four rim sherds all join to suggest a large jar with a diameter of roughly 320mm. The gently incurving rim is slightly expanded on the outer and upper side, Again the form can be paralleled in the Malvernian range, but is a generic simple later prehistoric type. The rim sherds appear somewhat battered at the top on the interior face. It is not clear if this relates to the use of the vessel or reflects post-depositional damage, but the former is possible.

B.1.7 Although the fabrics do not appear to be closely matched (further work may alter this) the character of the two vessels suggests a later prehistoric date, most likely in the middle-middle/late Iron Age (approximately 400-1 BC in ceramic terms). This might be clarified further in the event of additional work.

B.2 Fired clay

By Cynthia Pool

B.2.1 Two fragments of fired clay were recovered from context 205.

B.2.2 The larger piece weighing 57g appears to be the edge of a triangular perforated brick: it has a smooth flat moulded surface at right angles to a slightly curved edge with convex profile, and which is starting to curve to the surface of the opposite face. The side surface is pierced at an angle by a perforation with '8' – shaped cross-section being made in two attempts. The individual perforations measure 5 and 6mm diameter and the whole 8 mm wide. The object measures 39mm wide and over 50mm long. It is made in a micaceous clay containing a high density of poorly sorted medium and coarse sand and grit and is fired to a yellowish brown at the surface and red below with a small area of central black reduced core. The angle of the perforation suggests this is a fragment of triangular perforated brick, generally of Iron Age date, though their use can continue into the Roman period. Judging by the thickness this example lies at the smaller end of the size range of this object type. Although these bricks are are commonly regarded as loomweights, there is strong evidence to suggest that they in fact functioned as oven furniture.

B.2.3 The second piece weighing 16g is a fragment of a flat plate or slab 15mm thick with two fairly smooth flat or slightly curved surfaces. The slightly rougher surface has been burnt or fired greyish ochre but the remainder of the slab is fired to reddish orange. It is made in a fine sandy micaceous clay with some suggestion of organic inclusions and rare coarser sand grits. This fragment is non-diagnostic though possibly part of a small oven plate or possibly thin oven wall. It does not contradict an Iron Age date for the context.

B.3 Flint

By Geraldine Crann

B.3.1 The assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work. The worked flint from the sample (Appendix C) should be integrated into any further analysis arising from future archaeological work on the site.

Context	Description	Date
403	<1> Single distal end of snapped flint flake with hinge termination, 3g	Undatable

APPENDIX C. ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

C.1 Environmental samples

By Rebecca Nicholson

Introduction

C.1.1 A single bulk sample, of 37L volume, was taken from the fill of an Iron Age ditch [402] to evaluate the survival and diversity of environmental remains (seeds, snails etc) and the recovery of any small bones and artefacts. The sample was composed of moderately firm red (2.5Y 4/6) fine sandy clay with mica inclusions.

Methodology

C.1.2 The sample was processed in its entirety by water flotation using a modified Siraf style flotation machine, with the flot collected on a 250µm mesh and the heavy residue sieved to 500µm. Both flot and residue were dried in a heated room, after which the residue was sorted by eye for artefacts and ecofactual remains. The flot was scanned for charred plant remains using a binocular microscope at approximately x10 magnification.

Results

C.1.3 The 20ml flot includes a moderate quantity of charcoal, some of which is >2mm in cross section and potentially identifiable, together with two fragments of hazelnut shell and some modern roots.

C.1.4 The heavy residues contained several burnt stones ('pot-boilers') and a single small flint fragment, possibly debitage.

Discussion and Conclusions

C.1.5 While the presence of identifiable charcoal and nutshell indicates that this kind of material survives well at the site, with only a single sample, further investigation of environment and economy at the site is not possible. Any future excavation should incorporate standard sampling following best practice (eg English Heritage 2011).

APPENDIX D. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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EDP 2012. Land at Perryfields Road, Bromsgrove. Archaeological and Heritage Assessment.

English Heritage, 2011. *Environmental Archaeology. A* guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation (2nd edition). Centre for Archaeology Guidelines.

OA 2014. Land at Perryfields Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation. Oxford Archaeology

Appendix E. Summary of Site Details

Site name: Perryfields Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire

Site code: WSM58025

Grid reference: SO 950 720

Type: Evaluation

Date and duration: 20th-23rd October 2014

Area of site: 100 hectares

Summary of results: During October 2014 Oxford Archaeology undertook a trial trench evaluation on land off Perryfields Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. The evaluation trenches were targeted on anomalies from a geophysical survey. Three trenches were excavated over a ditched enclosure in the centre of the site, and a further trench targeted a potential pit alignment to the east.

The ditched enclosure was noted to have been re-cut within two of the trenches. A fired clay object recovered from the infill of one of the ditches is likely to be of Iron Age date.

The fourth trench identified that the potential pit alignment was in fact a ditch, which had a very compact burnt fire cracked stone pebble upper fill. The stones could have been placed to consolidate the surface of a trackway, or eroded into the ditch from an adjacent positive feature. Pottery from the base of the stone layer is likely to be of middle to late Iron Age date.

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

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Figure 1: Site location

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Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, i-cubed, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS

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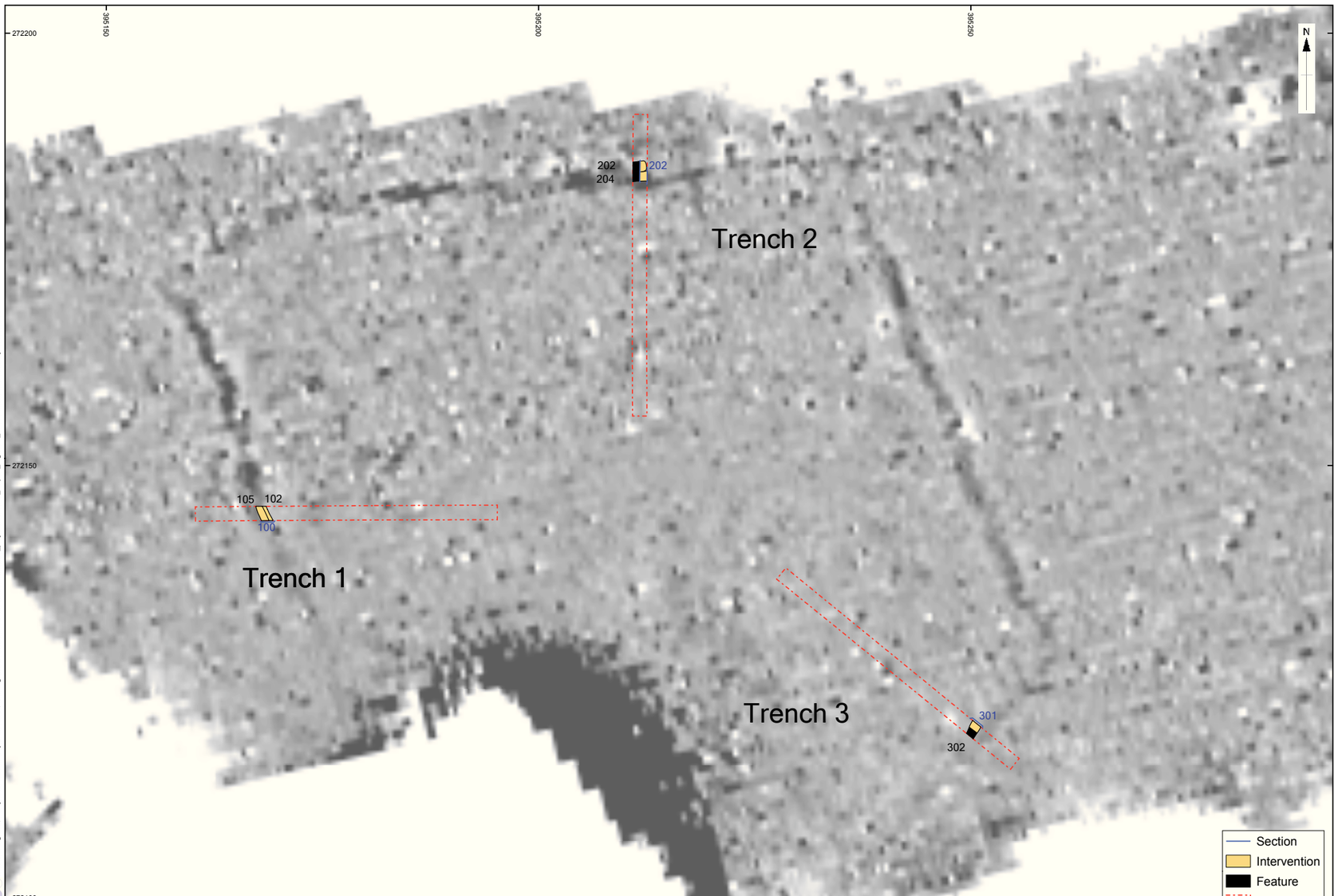
Figure 2: Trench Locations and Geophysics



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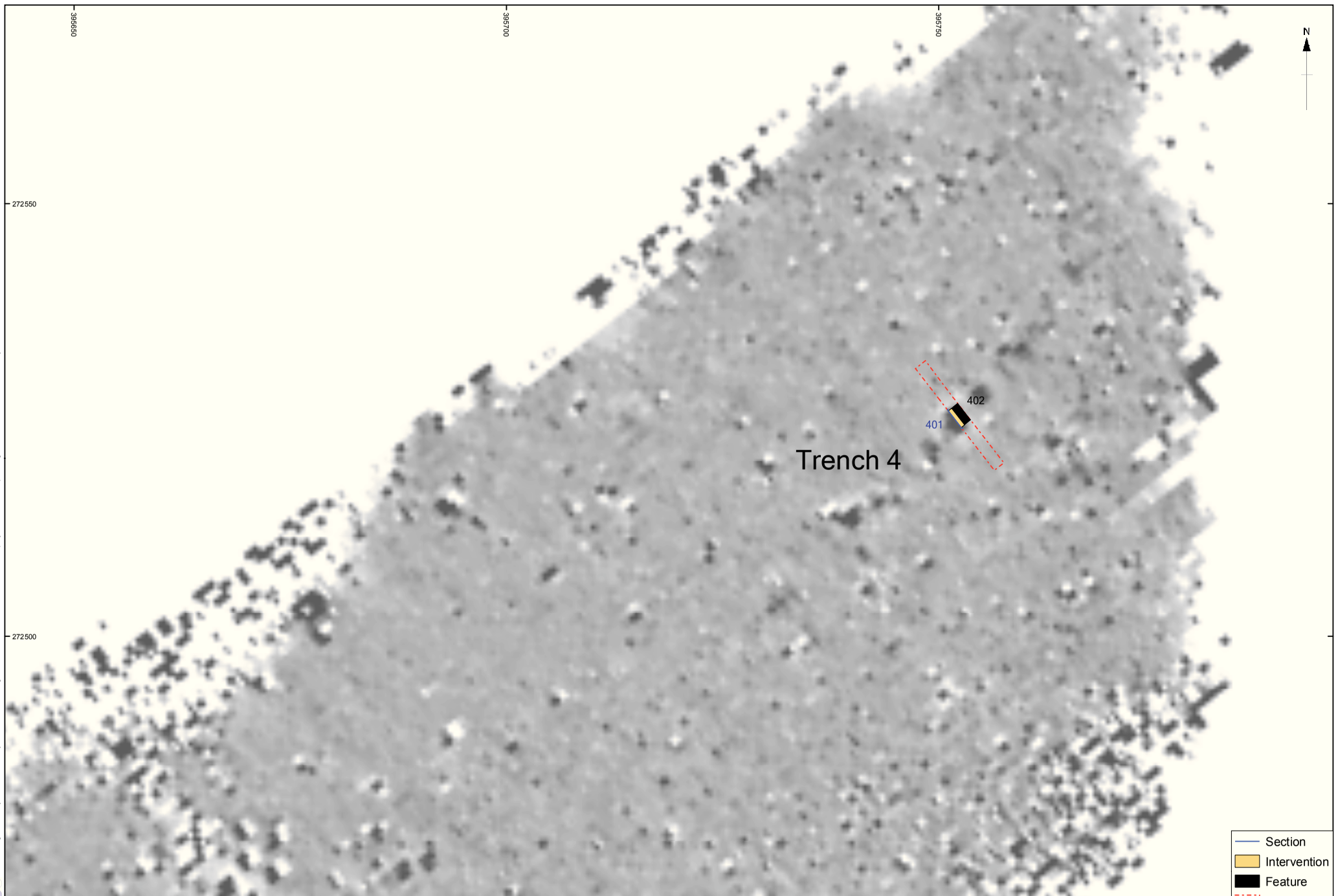
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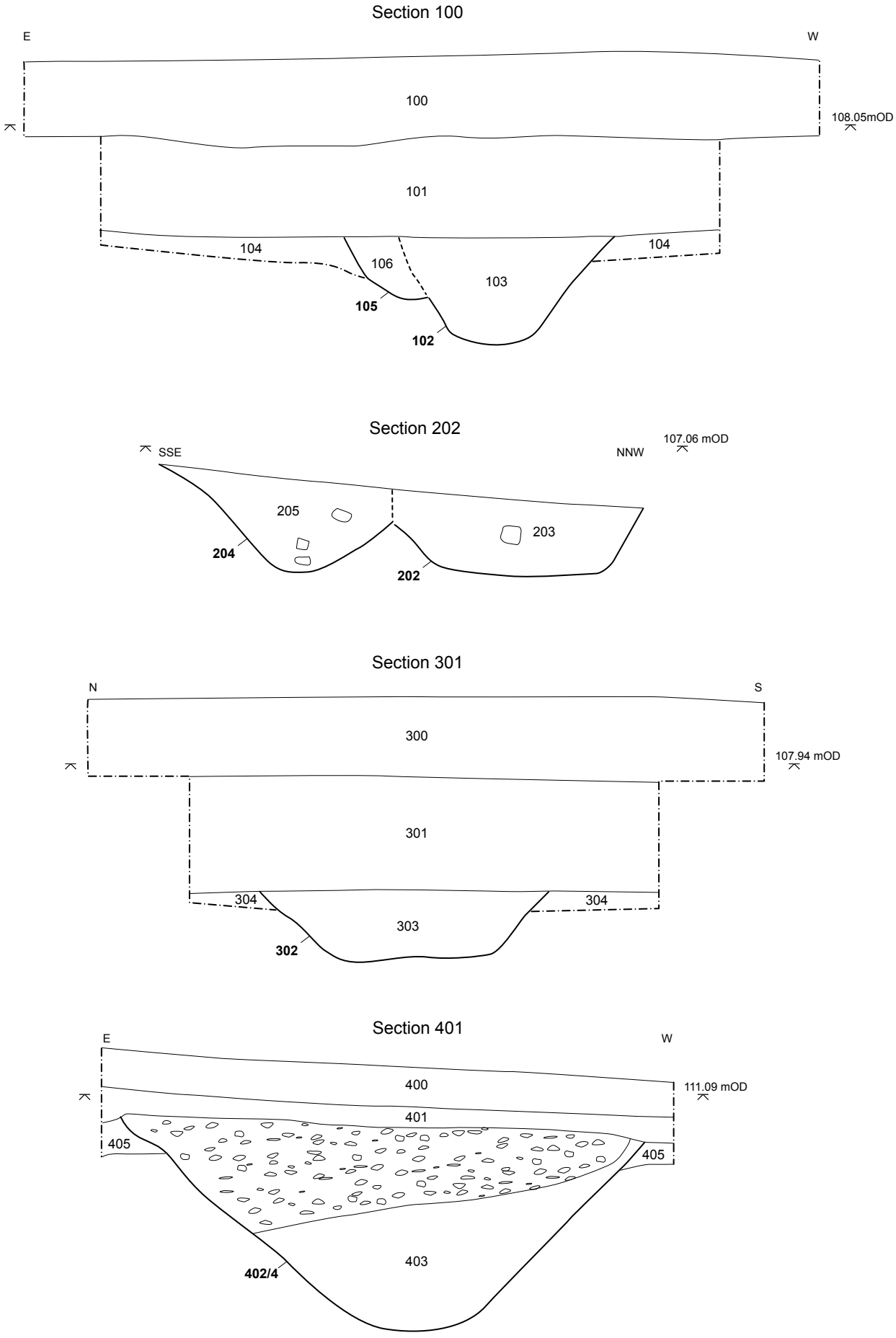

Figure 5: Sections 100, 202, 301 and 401

Plate 1: Section 100, ditches 102 and 105, view to south

Plate 2: Section 202, ditches 202 and 204, view to NE

Plate 3: Section 300, ditch 302, view to NE

Plate 4: Section 400, ditch 402, view to SW

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