



Land Between Nos 5 and 7 March Road, Wimblington, Cambridgeshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

Steve Hickling

October 2005

Commissioned by Alan Melton



Cover Images

Machine stripping, Soham	On-site surveying
Roman corn dryer, Duxford	Guided walk along Devil's Dyke
Bronze Age shaft, Fordham Bypass	Medieval well, Soham
Human burial, Barrington Anglo-Saxon Cemetery	Timbers from a medieval well, Soham
Blue enamelled bead, Barrington	Bed burial reconstruction, Barrington Anglo-Saxon Cemetery
Aethusa cynapium 'Fool's parsley'	Medieval tanning pits, Huntington Town Centre
Digging in the snow, Huntingdon Town Centre	Beaker vessel
Face painting at Hinchingsbrooke Iron Age Farm	Environmental analysis
Research and publication	Monument Management, Bartlow Hills

CCC AFU Report Number 832

**Land Between Nos 5 and 7
March Road, Wimblington,
Cambridgeshire**

An Archaeological Evaluation

Steve Hickling BA MA

Site Code: WIM MRD 05
CHER Event Number: ECB 2056
Date of works: 6th-7th October 2005
Grid Ref: TL 4122 9233

Editor: Elizabeth Shepherd Popescu BA MIFA
Illustrator: Séverine Bézie MA

Summary











An Archaeological evaluation at Nos 5-7 March Road, Wimblington, only produced few features; two furrows and a roadside ditch, along with a layer of subsoil covering the whole site. The furrows and the subsoil layer were associated with medieval ridge and furrow agriculture, while the roadside ditch may have been pre-medieval in date. Two chance finds in the subsoil and a furrow were Roman, but were probably residual.

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Drawing Conventions

Sections

Limit of Excavation	
Cut	
Cut - Conjectured	
Soil Horizon	
Soil Horizon - Conjectured	
Intrusion/Truncation	
Top of Natural	
Top Surface	
Break in Section	
Cut Number	
Deposit Number	117
Ordnance Datum	$\frac{18.45m}{\wedge}$ ODN

Plans

Limit of Excavation	
Illustrated Section	
Deposit	
Excavated Slot	
Furrow	
Cable	
Cut Number	118

1 Introduction

This archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Kasia Gdaniec of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice team (CAPCA; Planning Application F/YR04/3695/O), supplemented by a Specification prepared by Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (CCC AFU).

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 and Policy Guidance 16 - Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by CAPCA, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by CCC AFU and will be deposited at the appropriate county stores.

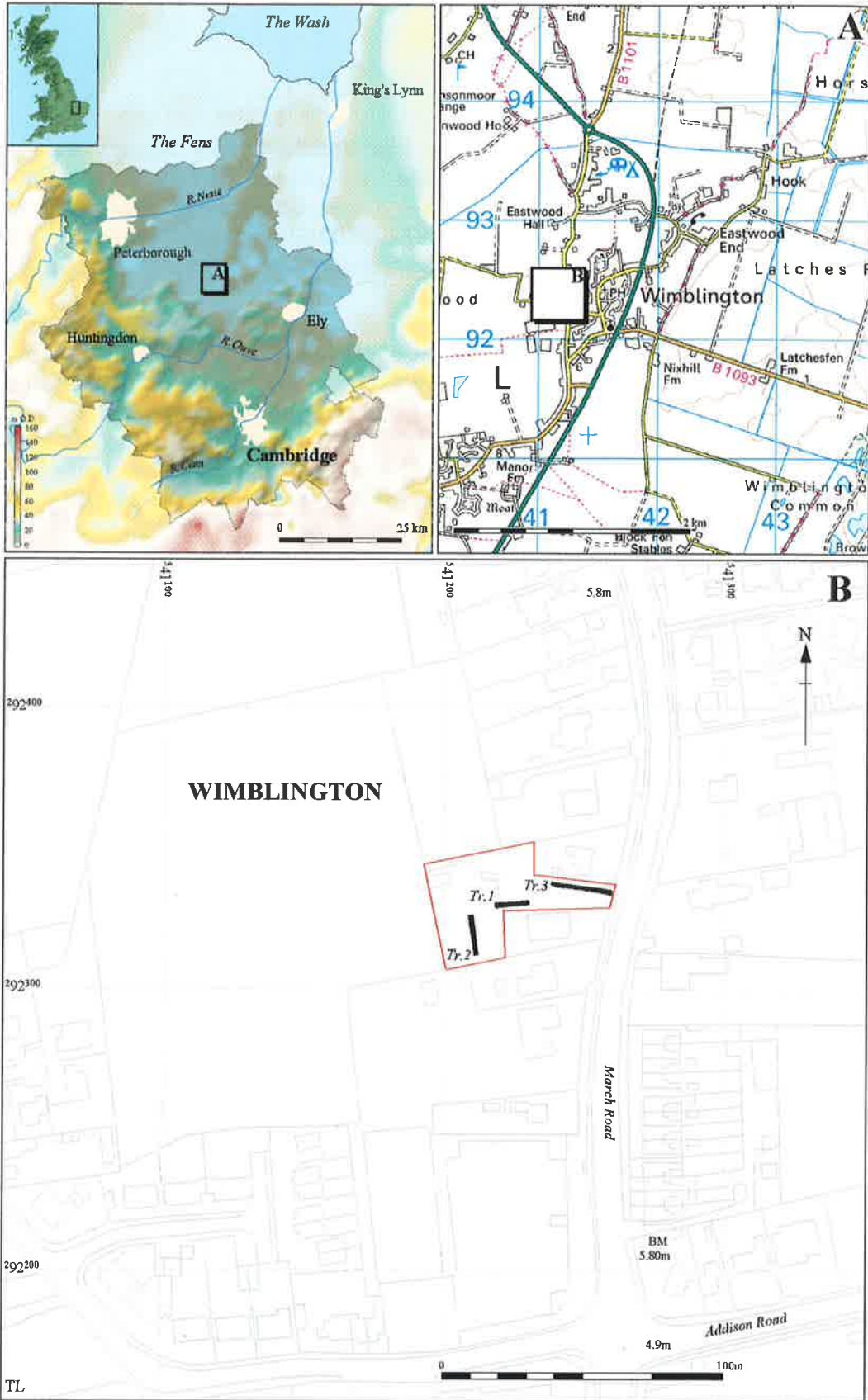
2 Geology and Topography

The site lies on the border between Ampthill Clays to the west and March gravels to the east (British Geological Survey 1980). It is situated towards the southern end of March Island, at a height of c.5m OD (Fig. 1).

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 Prehistoric

As can be anticipated on a Fen island, this area is rich in Iron Age sites and finds. Lying 400m to the south-west of the development site an Iron Age coin hoard and a quern stone have been found (CHER 02574 and 07380), a similar hoard being found 4km to the east at Stonea Camp (CHER 07379). Stonea Camp hill fort (CHER 07337) is situated on a separate small island, but only appears to have been used for a short period in the Late Iron Age (Malim 1992). Malim identifies numerous Iron Age sites on the islands of Chatteris, Manea, Stonea and March (Malim 1992, fig. 1). Iron Age pottery has been found 1.5km to the north-west of the development site (CHER 07181),



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Figure 1: Location of trenches (black) with the development area outlined (red)

while a dark occupation area 1.2km to the north-east has produced Iron Age pottery (CHER 11868).

3.2 Roman

The density of settlement appears to continue into the Roman period. Roman coin hoards dating to the late 3rd century have been found at Stonea Camp (CHER 07231) and 1.5km to the north-west of the development site (CHER 07310). Roman pottery has also been found 2km to the south-east (CHER 07215). A Roman brooch was found 1.5km to the south (CHER 01824) and 3km to the east, several bronze objects, may have formed part of a hoard (CHER 07229). Two kilometres to the north-west a Hadrianic coin was found (CHER 02704). To the north-east, at a distance of 1200m, lay a dark occupation area yielding Roman pottery (CHER 11867). Two kilometres to the north-east lay a linear soil mark of a silted canal, believed to link the Roman site at Stonea Grange with March island (CHER 12973). Four hundred metres to the north an almost complete Roman flagon was discovered by workmen (CHER 15647).

Stonea Camp was superseded by Stonea Grange, a massive structure of stone with heating and decorated plaster walls, with a tower, temple and a host of wooden buildings and roads and canals linking it to the other islands (Hall 1992, 67-71).

3.3 Saxon and Medieval

Early Saxon settlement continued at Stonea Grange, but the island appears to have been abandoned thereafter (Hall 1992, 72). Medieval settlement at Wimblington had two foci, Eastwood and Wimblington village (Hall 1992, fig. 42). The development site is on the edge of the Wimblington settlement. Medieval structures and ditches were discovered at Bridge Lane in the hamlet of Eastwood End (Robinson 1994).

3.4 Historic Buildings

The earliest surviving buildings in the parish are late 17th to early 18th century in date. Buildings later than the 18th century are not included in the following summary.

- The Manor House, Doddington Road. Large red brick house of late 17th to early 18th century date.

- Stonea Farmhouse, Stonea. Large farmhouse with kitchen/bakehouse wing. Late 17th to 18th century house of red brick with reused limestone fragments.
- 6-8 Norfolk Street. Two cottages built of brick, of late 17th to early 18th century date.
- 2 Church Street. Late 17th to early 18th century house built of brick.
- Barn to the south-east of Stonea Farmhouse. Red brick of late 17th to early 18th century date.
- 13-15 Bridge Lane, Eastwood End. Two red brick cottages of late 17th to early 18th century date

3.5 Recent Archaeological Work

- Bridge Lane, Wimblington, 1994. An Iron Age ditch was discovered, together with possible medieval structures and ditches (Robinson 1994).
- Stonea Camp, Wimblington, 1992. Several trenches were dug through the defences of the fort, which was found to be Late Iron Age, with little evidence of occupation (Malim 1992).
- 23-33 Wimblington Road, March, 2003. A large number of ditches and rubbish pits were excavated, perhaps linked to a villa or farmstead shown immediately to the west in aerial photographs (Cooper 2003).
- Honey Farm, Chatteris 1999. No archaeological features were found, suggesting that this area was fen from an early date (Kemp 1999a)
- Mount Pleasant Farm, Chatteris, 1999. As 4 above (Kemp 1999b)
- Newgate Street, Doddington, 1999. An earthwork survey recorded ridge and furrow earthwork suggesting medieval openfield agriculture (Macaulay 1999).

4 Methodology

The objective of this evaluation 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.

The Brief required that 5% of the development area be evaluated, a total of 50m of trenching.

Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a minidigger-type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket.

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.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using CCC AFU'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.

No environmental samples were taken.

All conditions were fine, but the water table was hit at the base of the trenches.

5 Results

All three trenches had identical stratigraphy, 25-30cm of dark brown silty clay topsoil (3) overlying 20-50cm of mid brown silty clay subsoil (4). The natural geology was a pale creamy yellow clay.

5.1 Trench 1

This trench was aligned north to south and was 14.5m long and 1.5m wide. It contained two furrows aligned east to west (Figs 2-3). One was excavated (5) and was found to be shallow and filled with material identical to the subsoil. A fragment of fired clay was found within the furrow and a fragment of pottery was found within the subsoil. Both are likely to be Roman.

5.2 Trench 2

This trench was aligned east to west and was 12.1m long and 1.6m wide. It contained no features.

5.3 Trench 3

This trench was aligned east to west and was 22m long and 1.5m wide (Figs 2-3). It contained one feature towards its eastern end, a north to south orientated ditch (1), 0.57m wide and 0.18m deep with steep sides and a flat base. Its fill (2) was a pale greyish brown silty clay which was sealed beneath the subsoil.

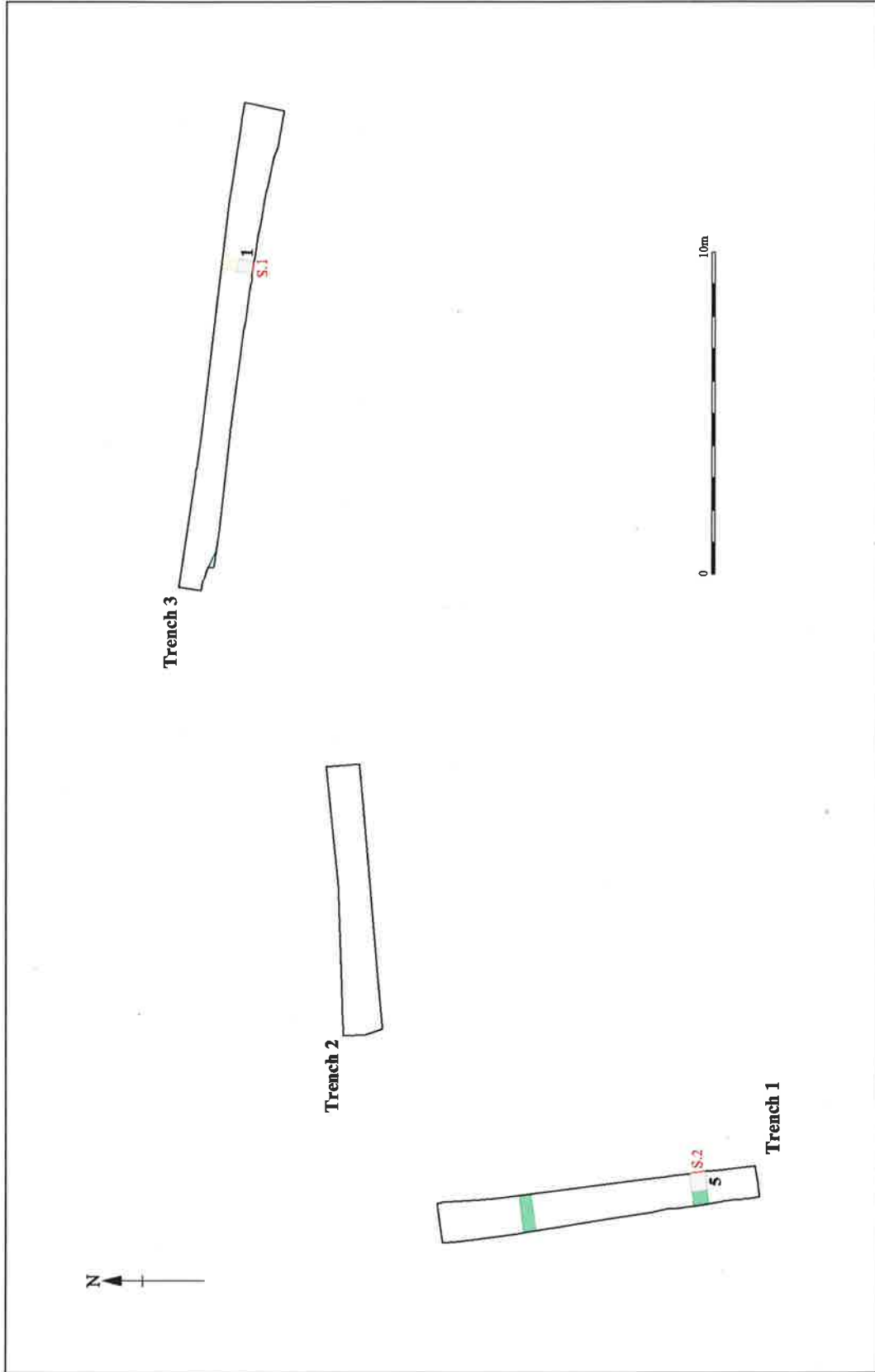


Figure 2: Trench plans

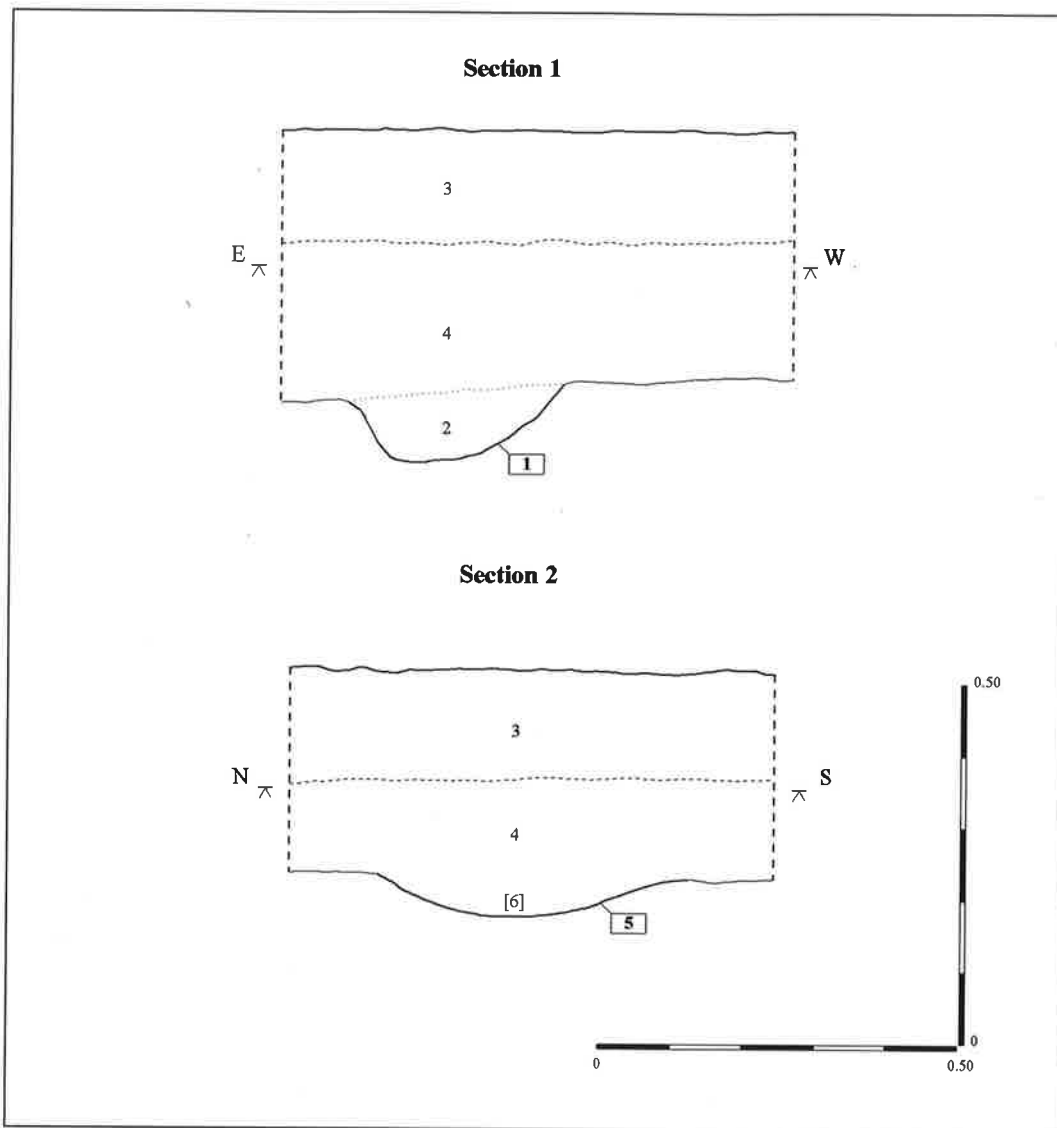


Figure 3: Section drawings

6 Discussion

The Roman finds from the subsoil and furrow 5 indicate Roman activity in this area. The fragment of fired clay may be part of a briquetage vessel used in salt-making, a common activity on March island in Roman times, for example at Longhill Road, March (Atkins 2003) and Cedar Close, March (Hickling 2003). The roadside ditch (1) was sealed by the subsoil, thought to be medieval in origin, and may therefore be Roman or Saxon in date.

The furrows in Trench 1 and the subsoil in all three trenches have their origins in medieval ridge and furrow type arable agriculture. Earthworks from this activity are still visible in the field immediately to the west. The Roman finds found in this deposit were probably residual.

7 Conclusions

The evaluation only produced three features; two furrows and a roadside ditch, and a layer of subsoil covering the whole site. The furrows and the subsoil layer were associated with medieval ridge and furrow agriculture, while the roadside ditch may be pre-medieval in date. Two chance finds in the subsoil and a furrow were Roman, but were probably residual.

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

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Alan Melton who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Stephen Macaulay. Séverine Bézie completed the illustrations while Paul Sperry commented on the finds.

The brief for archaeological works was written by Kasia Gdaniec, who visited the site and monitored the evaluation.

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