Love's Lane, Dunton Bassett, Leicestershire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Love's Lane, Dunton Bassett, Leicestershire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology Ltd undertook an archaeological evaluation of the site of a proposed housing development in the village of Dunton Bassett, Leicestershire, between 24th October and 2nd November 2016. The evaluation comprised 20 trenches, some placed to investigate features identified by a previous geophysical survey or otherwise distributed throughout the remainder of the application site. The trenches were placed at greater density in the southern part of the site where any archaeological features were obscured on the geophysical survey plot by traces of ridge-and-furrow and magnetic debris.

No features or in situ deposits were dated earlier than the middle to late Iron Age, but the presence of a very small amount of residual worked flint suggests that Mesolithic and earlier Neolithic activity is likely to have taken place in the vicinity of the site.

A D-shaped enclosure ditch, identified by the geophysical survey in the north-eastern part of the site, was investigated in three trenches and is thought most likely to date from the late Iron Age, on the basis of pottery finds. The most closely datable artefact recovered is a fine flagon handle of the 1st century AD, recovered from the latest fill of the enclosure ditch. The absence of any definite Roman pottery suggests that the enclosure is most likely to have been abandoned prior to, or during, the Roman conquest period.

As few internal features were found, the function of the enclosure is not certain, although its form is closely comparable with numerous late Iron Age farmsteads known in Leicestershire. In contrast to more extensively excavated examples there was clear no trace of roundhouses, which are usually indicated in this region by pennannular eavesdrip and/or foundation ditches. A possible rectilinear arrangement of pits on the geophysical survey plot, inside the enclosure, may indicate lines of storage pits rather than posthole structures. The trenching revealed two probable storage pits just outside the enclosure ditch to the north and a third inside the enclosure.

The evaluation proved the existence of a pair of parallel ditches, forming a possible trackway, which crossed the site on a NW-SE alignment, apparently cutting through the D-shaped enclosure. Pottery dating evidence was limited but also suggests a late Iron Age date for this feature.

Charred plant remains from the late Iron Age features indicate that arable agriculture and cereal processing took place in the vicinity, supported by the discovery of a beehive quernstone fragment. Animal bone was very scarce, possibly because the local soil conditions are not conducive to bone preservation.

In conclusion, the Dunton Bassett site appears to be of local significance, but further study of it would contribute to important regional research objectives, as detailed in the West Midlands Regional Research Framework.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by CgMs consulting (CgMs) on behalf Davidson's Developments Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation of the site of a proposed housing development, in a field immediately south of the village of Dunton Bassett, Leicestershire (NGR SP 5450 9030; Planning reference 16/01401/OUT).

1.1.2 Following discussions between Mike Dawson (CgMs) and Theresa Hawtin, Senior Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council (LCC), it was determined that 20 archaeological evaluation trenches would be excavated within the 2.9ha area, one of which (Trench 16) could not be excavated as it was located under an overhead power cable.

1.1.3 The trenching was informed by the results of a previous desk-based assessment (CgMs 2016) and a geophysical survey (Stratascan 2016).

1.1.4 All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies (NPPF Section 12, paragraphs 128, 129 & 135). The methods complied with the requirements of a generic brief for archaeological evaluation supplied by the LCC Planning Archaeologist (LCC 2015), and with a site specific Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Oxford Archaeology (OA 2016), which refer to the relevant standards and Guidelines of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CifA).

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site is a single field of open pasture which lies at 127m OD. It is bounded to the east and south by mature hedgerows, forming the boundary with Love's Lane, and to the west and north by residential development (Fig. 1).

1.2.2 The topography undulates between 127m and 135m aOD, with two dry valleys leading downwards to the west and north west, out of the proposed development. Less substantial undulations relate to extant ridge-and-furrow earthworks, which are particularly apparent in the southern half of the site.

1.2.3 The geology of the area is Blue Lias and Charmouth Mudstone Formation bedrock overlain by a superficial deposit of Till (mid-Pleistocene - diamicton (BGS, 2016).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site has been described in detail in a desk based assessment (CgMs 2016), the results of which are summarised below.

Prehistoric

1.3.2 No Palaeolithic finds have been found within the proposed development area but an Upper Palaeolithic flint burin was found to the north-west of Dunton Bassett Primary School.

1.3.3 A Mesolithic flint scatter was also found to the north-west of the school, and included eleven bladelets and four cores (Leicester HER no. MLE15800 and MLE15801). A Mesolithic pebble hammer was found to the north-east of the site at Church Close.

1.3.4 Evidence for a human presence during the Neolithic exists in the form of a burnt mound and associated pits to the north-west of the primary school. The features produced flint scrapers and flakes as well as a diagnostic polished axe fragment and a transverse arrowhead (Leicestershire HER no. MLE15802).

1.3.5 Late Bronze Age/early Iron Age activity was found to the north-west of the school, and comprised a curved enclosure boundary ditch, with associated pits that produced pottery sherds (Leicestershire HER no. MLE15803).

Late Iron Age/Roman

1.3.6 Late Iron Age and Roman artefacts have been found at various locations near the proposed development site, and to the west of the site at Lutterworth Road. Finds of this period have included a late Iron Age/early Roman quernstone, found to the west of the site near Little Lunnon (Leicestershire HER no. MLE6575). Three sherds of Roman pottery were found to the north of All Saints Church, as well as forty-eight sherds of residual Roman pottery, recovered from the north-west of the primary school (Leicestershire HER no. MLE6575, MLE7830, MLE15804).

1.3.7 No evidence for Roman activity has been found within the proposed development site.

Anglo-Saxon and medieval

1.3.8 The village of Dunton Bassett is Anglo-Saxon in origin and was listed in the Domesday Book (1086) as *Dunitone.* In the medieval period the settlement occupied the area close to All Saint's church, 130m to the north-west of the site. A moated site occupies high ground 100m north of the church and can still be seen in the form of building platforms. A square fish pond is situated to the east of the moated area and is connected to the moat by a channel. There are building foundations on the eastern side of the moated site.

1.3.9 Medieval pottery has been found to the north of All Saint's Church and is dated to the 12th/13th Century (Leicestershire HER no. MLE7830). The church itself is the earliest extant standing building within the village and mostly dates from the late 13th to early 14th century, having been restored in c.1880. The other listed buildings within the historic core of the village range in date broadly from the early 17th to the 19th century.

Geophysical survey

1.3.10 A detailed magnetometer survey was conducted over the site and produced the following results (Stratascan 2016; Fig. 2).

1.3.11 A large D-shaped enclosure measuring 60m x 50m, with an apparent break in the southern edge, was observed at the north-east end of the site. The survey plot suggests the presence of pairs of pits, possibly forming a post-built structure in the northern half of the enclosure. Prior to the trenching the enclosure was considered most likely to be either of Iron Age or medieval date on morphological grounds (Stratascan 2016, 3).

1.3.12 A pair of parallel linear anomalies, indicating the presence of ditches, can be seen in the northern part of the site on a north-west to south-east alignment. They appear to continue across the enclosure, apparently forming a track. The survey plot suggests that the track may be stratigraphically earlier than the D-shaped enclosure (Stratascan 2016, 3).

1.3.13 Parallel linear responses were recorded, aligned both east-west in the southern part of the site and south-north in the northern part. These clearly indicate the presence of ridge-and-furrow, the characteristic traces of long-term medieval/post-medieval open field cultivation. A clear change in direction indicates that the field was once divided between two different furlongs (cropping units within the open fields). There is no indication of associated field boundary ditches (Stratascan 2016, 4).

1.3.14 Clusters of magnetic response were also detected which includes several ferrous components/metal objects. These have been interpreted as modern in origin (Stratascan 2016, 4).

1.4 Acknowledgements

1.4.1 Oxford Archaeology was appointed to undertake the evaluation by Mike Dawson of CgMs Consulting on behalf of Davidson Developments Ltd. Theresa Hawtin, Senior Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council, monitored the work. The fieldwork was conducted by Mark Dodd, assisted by Diana Chard and Sophie Boyadjieva. The report was written by Mark Dodd. The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Stuart Foreman.

2 Evaluation Aims and Methodology

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The general aims of the evaluation were to:

- determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive;
- determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains;
- determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means;
- determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains;
- determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy;
- assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape;
- determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive;
- determine the implications of any remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity;
- determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.

2.1.2 The specific aims and objectives of the evaluation were to:

- identify and record any significant archaeological remains that might help identify the extent of prehistoric, Roman or later activity within the village of Dunton Bassett;
- examine and characterise the anomalies revealed during the geophysical survey;
- determine where possible the nature of prehistoric and later land use and whether any settlement activity took place on the area of the proposed development.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The trenching programme comprised a total of 19 trenches, each 30m x 2m in plan, as shown on Figure 2. The excavation and recording of archaeological features was undertaken as outlined in the WSI, which is compliant with both CIfA and LCC standards.

2.2.2 The trench plan was determined in discussion with the LCC Senior Planning Archaeolgist, and was designed to investigate specific geophysical anomalies and provide coverage across the whole site. The site was divided into two areas, as shown on Figure 2. In the northern area a 3% sample coverage was implemented to investigate the possible enclosure, and various linear features and less distinct anomalies. The trenches were placed at greater density in the southern part of the site, where a 5% sample was used, as any archaeological features in this part of the site were obscured on the geophysical survey plot by magnetic disturbance.

2.2.3 Prior to excavation, each trench location was set out by an OA surveyor using GPS equipment following the approved trench plan. The trenches were numbered in a continuous sequence from 1-20. Trench 16 was not excavated as it was located directly

beneath an overhead power line. The location of Trench 6 was altered slightly from the original trench plan to maintain a safe working distance from the adjacent power line. Trench 18 was relocated to avoid an area of disturbance arising from a large rabbit warren.

2.2.4 Plough-disturbed soil horizons were removed by mechanical excavator fitted with a wide toothless bucket to expose archaeologically significant horizons, or the surface of the superficial geology, whichever was encountered first. Once archaeological deposits were exposed, further excavation proceeded by hand. Where necessary, additional machine excavation was undertaken following discussion with the LCC Planning Archaeologist, to confirm the horizon from which archaeological features were cut.

2.2.5 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers relating to the individual trench (e.g. Trench 18, context 1801, 1802 etc.).

2.2.6 Site meetings were arranged between LCC, CgMs and OA to review the ongoing results, confirm that the fieldwork was meeting the aims of the investigation and approve the backfilling of completed trenches. Once the trenches had been excavated and recorded, they were backfilled using the mechanical excavator.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the evaluation and a stratigraphic description of the archaeological remains are presented below. Trenches which did not contain archaeology are not described in this section. Similarly, general soil sequences such as topsoil, subsoil and geological variations are not described by trench unless pertinent to the archaeological feature or deposit descriptions. The full details of all trenches, including the dimensions and depths of all deposits, form the content of Appendix A.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 As the site is located on a superficial deposit of glacial till, the geology varied across the site. In the southern portion of the site it comprised predominantly reddish brown clays, with pebbles and patches of sandy gravel. Further to the north, sandy gravel was predominant.

3.2.2 The topsoil and plough-disturbed subsoil had a typical combined thickness of c.0.5m. There were local variations in thickness owing to surviving ridge-and-furrow earthworks. More extensive thickened soil sequences were found in Trenches 2, 5, 6 and 8, which were probably colluvial in origin, as the topography sloped down to the west and north-west. No waterlogged deposits were encountered.

3.2.3 The 1885 Ordnance Survey map shows ponds in the north-east corner of the site (north-east of Trench 6), and just outside the site boundary to the west.

3.2.4 The weather was dry and mild throughout the fieldwork, and ground conditions were dry.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 The most significant archaeological deposits were discovered in the northern part of the site. The main features, as mapped by the geophysical survey, comprised a pair of parallel ditches, investigated in Trenches 1, 3, 4, 7 and 9, and a small D-shaped enclosure, investigated in Trenches 6, 7 and 9. Three pits, one or two of which may have been detected by the survey, were found in Trench 6, one within the D-shaped enclosure and two outside. A posthole in Trench 1 was probably of recent origin.

3.3.2 Trenches 5, 14 and 19 each revealed small ditches that had not been detected by the geophysical survey.

3.3.3 No archaeological features were revealed within Trenches 2, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18 and 20, other than the traces of plough furrows in Trenches 10 and 18.

3.4 Trenches 1, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 9: Parallel ditches and enclosure

Trench 1 (Figs. 3 and 5, Plates 1 and 2)

3.4.1 At the southern end of Trench 1 was a NW-SE aligned ditch (102), with moderately steep, straight sides and a narrow concave base, measuring 1.1m wide and 0.42m deep. It was filled with a single homogeneous deposit of gradually accumulated mid reddish brown, clay silt, from which no artefacts were recovered.

3.4.2 A single posthole (105), near the centre of the trench, was sub-rectangular in plan (0.6m x 0.4m) with vertical sides and an irregular base, and up to 0.4m deep. It contained a dark grey silty sand, overlain by a loose, mixed backfill of grey brown, silty sand and gravel. The form of this feature suggests that it was originally a posthole.

Although no artefacts were recovered from its fills, the loose nature of the upper fill suggested that it is probably of fairly recent origin.

Trench 3 (Figs. 4 and 5, Plates 3 and 4)

3.4.3 Trench 3 investigated two NW-SE aligned parallel anomalies, interpreted as a trackway, which correspond with ditches 302 and 305. Ditch 302 was located to the north-east of 305 and was 1.56m wide and 0.5m deep. Its sides were moderately sloped, with a flat base, and it was filled with a primary deposit of orange brown sand, overlain by a secondary fill of stoney silt, from which no finds were recovered.

3.4.4 Ditch 305 had a different profile, with a broad and shallow upper section, tapering with steep sides to a narrow base (1.92m wide and 0.98m deep). It was filled with a natural accumulation of stoney sand deposits, derived from the gravel through which it had been cut. The final upper fill (308) was a silty deposit which contained fragments of animal bone, and 15 small sherds of pottery. All but one of the sherds are of middle to late Iron Age type, while one sherd dates from the late Iron Age or early Roman period. On balance the context is most likely to date from the late Iron Age.

Trench 4 (Fig. 4)

3.4.5 Trench 4 was located to investigate a small area of the site that had not been covered by the geophysical survey, but was on the projected line of the parallel trackway ditches described in Trench 3. Initial observations following mechanical excavation of the trench failed to identify any features. However, after a week of weathering, it was realised that the possible line of the ditch was faintly visible in the south-east facing section of the trench. The ditch (402) was 1.2m wide and survived to c.0.3m deep, with moderately sloped sides and a flat base. It was defined by a single fill of mid greyish brown, sandy silt. It is likely that this is the plough-truncated remnant of one of the NW-SE aligned trackway ditches, recorded in Trench 3 as Ditch 302. There was no trace of the second ditch in plan or section.

Trench 6 (Figs. 4, 6 and 7, Plates 5 and 6)

3.4.6 Trench 6 proved the existence of a boundary ditch defining the north-eastern side of the D-shaped enclosure, along with three pits, one located within and two outside the enclosure.

3.4.7 The enclosure ditch (607) was on a NW-SE alignment and was broad and flat-based with moderately sloped sides (3.7m wide and 1.2m deep). It was filled with a blueish grey, sandy clay (606) indicative of partial gleying (evidence for formerly waterlogged conditions). This was sealed by a secondary deposit of sandy clay silt (609). The primary fill (606) contained a single sherd of late Iron Age or early Roman pottery.

3.4.8 The north-eastern side of ditch 607 was truncated by ditch 602, on a perpendicular NE-SW alignment. The later ditch was 1.75m wide and 0.82m deep and contained a primary fill of reddish grey, sandy silt (605), which produced several sherds of pottery and a fragment of beehive quern (Fig. 6, section 600). This deposit was subsequently sealed beneath a dark brownish grey, sandy silt (603), which was notably humic and also contained several sherds of pottery, including a fine flagon handle dating from the 1st century AD. The final upper fill (604) was a naturally silted deposit of dark brownish grey, silty sand. This was identical to deposit 608, the upper fill of ditch 607, indicating that the earlier ditch was only partially filled when the later ditch was cut, and that they ultimately filled with the same material.

3.4.9 Pit 612, which corresponded quite closely with a discrete anomaly on the geophysical survey, was the only feature identified that lies inside the enclosure. It was only partially

exposed but was at least 1.2m in diameter and probably circular in plan. Excavation of the pit revealed near-vertical sides, and a flat base, 0.44m deep. It was filled by a relatively inorganic, single deposit of brownish grey, silty sand. Just two small fragments of fired clay were recovered from the fill.

3.4.10 Outside the enclosure, two pits were revealed at the NE end of the trench (610 and 615). Pit 610 was located c.3m north of a discrete anomaly on the geophysical survey plot, which could be the same feature slightly misplaced, or another pit. It was only partially exposed within the trench, but appeared to be circular in plan, with a diameter of 1.25m. The pit had a bell-shaped profile, typical of an Iron Age storage pit, with vertical sides at the opening and slightly undercut towards the base. Due to the restricted access at the side of the trench, and the depth of the feature, it was not possible to expose the full profile. It was hand excavated to a depth of 1m, and a hand auger was used to measure the full depth (1.5m). The earliest fills comprised a sequence of laminated deposits, alternating charcoal lenses with redeposited natural (611). These were overlain by a more homogeneous deposit of greyish brown, silty sand containing fragments of animal bone, flint and pottery of mixed date, ranging from the middle Iron Age to Roman period or possible later. The laminated earlier fills appear to relate to use of the feature as a storage pit, whereas the final fill appears to be a gradually accumulated secondary deposit.

3.4.11 Pit 615 was identical in appearance to pit 610. However, because less than half of the feature was exposed, underlying 0.8m of overburden, the decision was taken to not attempt its excavation. Due to its similarity and proximity to pit 610 it seems likely that it was also a large storage pit.

Trench 7 (Figs. 4 and 7, Plates 7-9)

3.4.12 Trench 7 revealed both the western side of the enclosure, and the north-western ditch of the trackway identified by the geophsyical survey. The enclosure ditch (702) was recorded on a NNE-SSW orientation, and it was 3.16m wide. Hand excavation of its fills stopped at a depth of 0.9m, owing to the loose, sandy nature of its fills and the risk of collapse. The base of the ditch was probed using a hand auger, which established the maximum depth as 1.3m. The lower fill (704) comprised reddish brown, clay sand and appeared to be a gradually accumulated deposit. This was overlain by an upper fill of yellow brown, sandy silt which contained both pottery and flint, also gradually accumulated.

3.4.13 Approximately 1.7m to the south-east was the probable trackway ditch (705). The ditch appeared much wider than ditch 302 in Trench 3, but was on a matching alignment, and was aligned NW-SE, and measured 2.4m wide. Its sides were very steep and slightly irregular, leading to a slightly concave base, 1m deep. The base was filled with reddish brown, silty sand (708). This was overlain by slightly siltier deposits (707 and 706). All three fills were inorganic and homogeneous in appearance, without any artefactual material.

3.4.14 The eastern end of the trench, the interior of the D-shaped enclosure, was hand cleaned and left for several days to allow more subtle features to weather out, but no further archaeology was identified.

Trench 9 (Figs. 4 and 8, Plates 10 and 11)

3.4.15 Located on the southern side of the enclosure, Trench 9 confirmed the presence of the enclosure ditch and the south-western side of the parallel trackway ditches.

3.4.16 The enclosure ditch (902) was 3.8m wide and 1.28m deep, with steep, slightly irregular sides and a narrow, flat base. Initial erosion of the edges had led to the accumulation of clay-rich deposits 904 and 905 in the base of the ditch. Deposit 906 was an inorganic silty sand deposit, formed by material slumping from the sides of the ditch. The main fill (907) consisted of an inorganic, mottled brown grey clay silt with evidence for partial gleying, which appeared to have formed gradually. It contained two pieces of worked flint, almost certainly residual. The final upper fill (908) was a homogeneous deposit of orange brown sandy silt. None of the ditch fills produced any finds.

3.4.17 Ditch 903 was located a little over 5m to the north-east, and within 1m of the predicted line of the south-western trackway ditch. The ditch profile in this trench was 1.8m wide and 1.2m deep, with a distinctly U-shaped profile. In the base of the ditch was a light brown, silty sand fill with occasional charcoal flecks. This was overlain by a deposit of brown grey, silty sand. No artefacts were recovered from either fill.

3.5 Trenches 14, 19, 5 and 2

Trench 14 (Figs. 3 and 8)

3.5.1 Trench 14 contained a single NW-SE aligned ditch (1402) with moderately sloped sides and a V-shape base (0.43m wide and 0.2m deep). It was filled by a single, inorganic deposit of light brown, silty sand which probably accumulated gradually. No artefacts were recovered from the fills, but it was truncated by east-west aligned plough furrows that were clearly visible in the southern part of the site.

Trench 19 (Figs. 3 and 8)

3.5.2 A diffuse and slightly irregular possible ditch (1902) was exposed near the centre of Trench 19. It was 0.43m wide and 0.17m deep, with a concave profile and a single fill of light brown silty sand. No finds were recovered, although a single piece of worked flint was recovered from the overlying topsoil. Due to the irregular and indistinct nature of this feature, it is uncertain whether it is a ditch or a cultivation feature.

Trench 5 (Fig. 3 and 6, Plate 12)

3.5.3 Trench 5 was located on a moderate slope, and revealed a significant build-up of colluvium at the lower-lying north-east end of the trench. The extent of the slope was such that between the NE and SW end of the trench, there was a 2m difference in the depth at which the natural gravel was encountered. At the base of the colluvial sequence there was a 0.2m thick deposit of dark brownish grey, slightly clay sand, which appeared to have been partially gleyed. This was sealed by a colluvial layer of grey brown, silty sand c.0.45m deep, overlain by a similar deposit of colluvium, 0.6m thick (Fig 6, Section 500).

3.5.4 A possible ditch (505) was located at the northern end of the trench. Although not fully exposed, the ditch appeared to be on a NE-SW alignment, with a minimum width of 1.2m. Excavation revealed moderately steeply sloped sides and a broad flat base, 0.24m deep. It contained a single deposit of sterile, orange brown, silty sand. This feature did not obviously relate to any specific geophysical anomaly, and it did not produce any datable artefacts.

Trench 2 (Figs. 3 and 5, Plate 13)

3.5.5 Trench 2 also revealed a deep colluvial sequence, similar to that in Trench 5. However, in this instance, the trench was aligned parallel to the contours, and the colluvium was at a consistent thickness throughout the length of the trench. During initial excavation, the trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 1m below ground level. A test pit was

later machine-excavated to reveal the natural sand, c.2m below ground level. It was sealed beneath a 1m thick deposit of dark brown grey, sandy silt (201), overlain by a 0.8m thick layer of slightly lighter sandy silt (Fig. 5, Section 200).

3.5.6 Due to the depth of the colluvial sequence in this trench, it was not possible to fully expose the natural geology, and no archaeological features were observed.

3.6 Finds summary

3.6.1 Small quantities of artefacts were recovered during the evaluation. The finds are summarised by context in the trench descriptions, and in Appendix A. Detailed finds reports for each material type form the content of Appendix B.

3.6.2 The majority of the finds comprised pottery and fired clay, with very small amounts of worked stone (including a beehive quern fragment) and a few pieces of animal bone. The vast majority of the artefacts were recovered from Iron Age archaeological features in the northern part of the site.

3.6.3 The most closely datable artefact from the site is a fine flagon handle of the 1st century AD, recovered from the latest fill of the D-shaped enclosure ditch (fill 603 of ditch 607). While most of the other finds are only broadly datable to the middle to late Iron Age, or the late Iron Age to early Roman periods, all could in fact belong within the late Iron Age. While some of the pottery forms present on this site continued in use in the early Roman period (as did beehive querns), the absence of any definite Roman material, on present evidence, suggests that it is most likely to have fallen out of use before or during the Roman conquest period.

4 Discussion

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The trenching results, in combination with the previous desk-based assessment and geophysical survey, provide a robust assessment of the site's archaeological potential, with some caveats, as discussed blow.

4.1.2 The trenching revealed a high level of correlation between features in the trenches and the geophysical survey. This is in spite of the significant levels of disturbance created by the ridge-and-furrow. Most of the archaeological features identified were ditches, which are much more likely to be detected by both geophysical survey and trenching than discrete features such as postholes, pits or burials (Hey and Lacey 2001). In this case one or two discrete storage pits in Trench 6 may have been detected by the geophysical survey, although these correlations could be coincidental. At least one storage pit in the same trench was not detected, so the survey almost certainly under-estimates the density of discrete feature present in the vicinity of Trench 6.

4.1.3 The absence of postholes or other obvious structural elements such as eavesdrip or foundation ditches, does not necessarily mean that the enclosure lacked buildings. Insubstantial and localised structures are difficult to detect using evaluation techniques, and may have been lost entirely to plough erosion.

4.1.4 In the instances where archaeological features were revealed, these were all sample excavated, with the exception of a probable pit within Trench 6. In addition, a number of environmental samples were also taken from a range of features.

4.1.5 The fieldwork was undertaken in fine weather conditions over a period of one and a half weeks, allowing the archaeological horizon time to weather for a few days. The nature of the geological deposits encountered was sometimes difficult to differentiate between natural geology and feature fills. However, following discussion with the Senior Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council, any ambiguous areas were investigated either by hand or mechanical excavation to establish a confident understanding of the geology. Thick colluvial soil sequences prevented the archaeological horizon from being fully exposed in localised lower lying areas in the north and north-west of the site (Trenches 2 and 5, and the northern end of Trench 6).

4.1.6 Various apparent gaps in linear features on the geophysical survey plot probably result from the ridge-and-furrow obscuring the magnetic response of the underlying features.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.1 Section 2.1 outlined both the general and specific aims and objectives of the evaluation. The evaluation has shown that the main areas of archaeological potential are as suggested by the geophysical survey. There is no indication of complex archaeological sequences, all features identified being plough-truncated features cut into the natural geology. The cut features appear relatively well-preserved and may be better preserved in the localised areas covered by colluvium.

4.2.2 The quantity of artefacts recovered was small, but sufficient to provide a reasonably confident assessment of the date range of the main features.

4.2.3 Charred plant remains appear to survive reasonably well, but no waterlogged deposits were encountered. Preservation of artefacts and environmental remains is unlikely to be exceptionally good, except in discrete, deep features such as very deep pits or wells.

The enclosure and associated features

4.2.4 The three trenches that targeted the probable enclosure successfully confirmed the presence of a substantial ditch on the predicted line. The D-shaped enclosure appears to be c.57m x 58m in plan and typically survives to a depth of c.1.3m. The palaeoenvironmental samples from the enclosure ditch contained only sparse charred plant remains, including only a few cereal grains.

4.2.5 As few internal features were found, the function of the enclosure is not certain, although its form is closely comparable with numerous late Iron Age farmsteads known in Leicestershire (see section 4.4 below). In contrast to more extensively excavated examples there was no clear trace of roundhouses, which are most commonly indicated in this region by pennannular eavesdrip and/or foundation ditches.

4.2.6 A possible rectilinear arrangement of possible pits on the geophysical survey plot, inside the enclosure, may indicate lines of storage pits or perhaps a rectangular aisled building. Pit 612 coincided with one of the pit anomalies, and was also the only excavated feature identified in the interior of the enclosure. It could plausibly be a large posthole, although the fill showed no evidence for a post-pipe.

4.2.7 Trench 6 revealed two deep probable storage pits just outside the enclosure ditch to the north, although no indication survived of the contents.

4.2.8 Pit 610 was located outside the enclosure ditch on the north-east side and was well-preserved due to the thick layer of colluvium beneath which it was buried. The, deep undercut profile is typical of Iron Age grain storage pits. Associated artefacts and charred plant remains suggest that it was broadly contemporary with the late Iron Age enclosure ditch 607. A similar pit (615) located a few metres to the north, suggests that there is a concentration of storage pits in the area surrounding Trench 6.

The parallel trackway ditches

4.2.9 The pair of NW-SE aligned ditches identified by the geophysical survey were particularly well characterised, having been recorded in Trenches 1, 3, 4, 7 and 9. Although relatively indistinct, both ditches were clearly present in most of those trenches and quite substantial. The only area where the ditches were not readily identified (Trench 4) coincides with a gap in the ditches on the geophysical survey plot. The area around Trench 4 lay at the highest point in the field, with relatively thin soil cover, and is likely to have suffered most extensively from plough truncation.

4.2.10 Despite the number of interventions into these features, the only datable artefacts recovered were 15 small pot sherds, recovered from the south-western ditch (context 305).

4.2.11 The fills contained very little visible charred plant remains and charcoal material. This was confirmed through bulk sampling of ditch 903 (sample 3) which produced a very low quantity of charred cereal grains.

The south of the site

4.2.12 The southern half of the site was dominated by the remains of extant ridge-and-furrow which also dominated the results of the geophysical survey. It was initially uncertain whether these had concealed any earlier features, or whether earlier activity was absent from this portion of site. However, the results of this investigation suggest the latter is more likely as just two features were revealed, in trenches 14 and 19. Both ditches were sterile in appearance and no artefacts were recovered in association with them. Consequently they remain undated and their relationship to the northern features is unclear. It is most likely that these are the truncated remains of outlying field

systems. With only a single piece of worked flint being recovered from the topsoil of Trench 19 there is little indication that any significant domestic activity had previously taken place within this southern portion of the site.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 Although none of the features were dated earlier than the middle to late Iron Age, a small assemblage of residual worked flint suggests that both Mesolithic and earlier Neolithic phases of activity occurred in the general vicinity of the site.

4.3.2 The most significant archaeological evidence appears to date from the late Iron Age, with the possibility of activity in the preceding middle Iron Age. The most closely datable artefact recovered is a fine flagon handle of the 1st century AD, recovered from the latest fill of the D-shaped enclosure ditch, but there is no conclusive evidence for Roman activity and the settlement may have been abandoned during the conquest period.

4.3.3 The function of the enclosure remains unclear at this stage, although the weight of evidence indicates that it represents a small farmstead of a type well-known in the region (see 4.4 below). The small quantity of artefacts recovered and few internal features could suggest that the settlement was relatively short-lived, or perhaps that the site was a specialist grain processing and storage site at some distance from the nearest focus of domestic settlement. The scarcity of finds could alternatively suggest that the occupants were of low status, although the fine flagon sherd from Trench 6 suggests that they had access to at least some fine pottery. The enclosure ditch fills are relatively inorganic. However the range of finds and features present, including moderate quantities of Iron Age pottery, storage pits and charred crop processing waste, are all indicative of domestic and agricultural activity in the immediate vicinity.

4.3.4 The parallel ditches which cross the northern part of the site are most likely to represent the remains of a track or droveway that would have been active during the late Iron Age. It appears on the geophysical survey to cut across the interior of the D-shaped enclosure, suggesting that the two features were probably not contemporary, even though the pottery dating suggests that both were probably in use in the late Iron Age.

4.3.5 Soil samples were taken from four contexts, three of which were spot-dated to the middle to late Iron Age date and one to the late Iron Age/ early Roman period. All four contained fairly low quantities of charred plant remains, although sufficient to suggest that arable agriculture and cereal processing took place in the vicinity. This conclusion is supported by the recovery of a beehive quernstone fragment from The relatively large number of wild plant species probably represent crop contaminants. The charred plant remains from the middle and late Iron Age contexts are very similar in composition, suggesting either that they derive from broadly contemporary late Iron Age contexts, or that there was continuity in the agricultural economy of the site between the middle and late Iron Age.

4.4 Significance

4.4.1 The East Midlands Region contains a wide variety and scale of late Iron settlement forms, of which late Iron Age D-shaped and trapezoidal settlement enclosures are a well-recognised type. The Leicestershire and Rutland HER includes over 220 locations with evidence for late Iron Age occupation (Clay 2002, 81). Clay suggests a settlement density of one late Iron Age site per 1.8–2 sq km, although this was calculated from the best-documented areas and settlement is unlikely to have been evenly distributed

throughout the region. Most of these sites are known only from aerial photographs and have not been extensively excavated (Clay 2000).

4.4.2 The excavated late Iron Age farmstead at Huncote, Leicestershire, located c.7.3km to the north-west of Dunton Bassett, appears closely comparable (Meek ***et al;*** 2004). The enclosure ditches are of very similar size and scale (Huncote - 55m x 47m; Dunton Bassett - 57m x 58m). The excavated area at Huncote contained evidence for two partially surviving roundhouse eavesdrip gullies, internal ditches possibly forming a droveway, and a rather sparse array of pits and postholes. Another contemporary settlement, Enderby II, located c.8km to the north, also had an enclosure of comparable size, but in that case has much more substantial evidence for roundhouse foundation and eavesdrip gullies.

4.4.3 The Dunton Bassett settlement on present evidence appears rather small in comparison with certain other contemporary farmsteads, such as Enderby I, located c.8km to the north (Meek ***et al;*** 2004) and Elms Farm, Humberstone, c.10km to the north-east (Charles *et al* 2000). However the Iron Age settlement could potentially extend further to the north-east, underneath the built-up area of the village. Some of these sites may have originated as open settlements to which an enclosure was added later, whereas Elms Farm Humberstone appears to have been unenclosed throughout (Charles *et al.* 2000).

4.4.4 The slight evidence for continuity from the middle to late Iron Age at Dunton Bassett follows a fairly strong regional trend (Willis 2006). The site is also typical of the major expansion in settlement seen in the region in the late Iron Age. A particular point of interest relates to the apparent latest phase of occupation in the 1st century AD. Clay (2000) has suggested that studying sites which appear to end abruptly in c. AD 50, in contrast to those that continue into the 1st/2nd century AD, could help to explain the factors which enabled some settlements to thrive in the post-conquest period while others were abandoned. The proximity of the Dunton Bassett site to Watling Street suggests that the apparent early abandonment in this case might be connected with conquest period military activity. Dunton Bassett lies c.500m west of the line of Watling Street, in the section between the Roman towns of *Ratae* (Leicester) and *Tripontium* (north-east of Rugby). *Ratae* was the civitas capital of the *Corieltauvi* tribe and has ample evidence for pre-Roman settlement. The Roman towns that later developed at *Ratae* and *Tripontium* are often assumed have been established initially in the mid-1st century AD as military frontier stations, located at key road junctions and river crossings, although the assumption is not strongly supported by archaeological evidence at present (Taylor 2006). Slight evidence for an early military establishment has been found in Leicester (Clay and Mellor,1985).

4.4.5 In conclusion, the Dunton Bassett site appears to be of local significance, but further study of it would contribute to important regional research objectives, as detailed in the East Midlands Regional Research Framework (Willis 2006).

Appendix A. Trench Descriptions and Context Inventory

Trench 1						
General description					**Orientation**	N-S
One trackway ditch and a post hole. No dating evidence, nature of posthole appears to be fairly late.					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.4
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
100	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil:	-	-
101	Layer	-	0.2	Subsoil:	-	-
102	Cut	1.1	0.42	Ditch, NNW-SSE	-	-
103	Fill	1.1	0.42	Fill of ditch, mid reddish brown, clayey silt	-	-
104	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
105	Cut	0.6/0.4	0.4	Posthole	-	-
106	Fill		0.17	Fill of posthole, mid to dark grey, silty sand	-	-
107	Fill		0.23	Fill of posthole, mixed mid grey+brown, silty sand	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					**Orientation**	NW-SE
Located within an old valley, filled by the med/ post-med. N-S furrows- probably related to pond in the east 1st edition of OS map. Valley runs E-W					**Avg. depth (m)**	2
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
200	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil: dark grey sandy silt	-	-
201	Layer	-	0.8	Colluvium- mid to dark brown grey sandy silt. Mod. pebbles	Pottery	C18th-C19th
202	Layer	-	1	Colluivium- dark brown grey, sandy silt. Mod. pebbles	-	-
203	Layer	-	-	Natural, clayey sand, light brown, rare pebbles	-	-

Trench 3						
General description					**Orientation**	NE-SW

Trench 3						
Contains two ditches, running SE-NW at northern end of trench. Both approximately match features on the geophysical survey plot.					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.5
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
300	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil, loose, dark grey silt, occasional stones	-	-
301	Layer	-	0.3	Subsoil, firm orange silty sand containing occasional small stones	-	-
302	Cut	1.56	0.5	Ditch aligned SE-NW	-	-
303	Fill	1.1	0.24	Fill of ditch, orange brown sand		
304	Fill	1.56	0.43	Fill of ditch, mid greyish orange, fine silt	-	-
305	Cut	1.92	0.98	Ditch, NW-SE		
306	Fill	0.4	0.22	Fill of ditch, mid brown orange sand	-	-
307	Fill	0.8	0.42	Fill of ditch, greyish orange sand		
308	Fill	1.92	0.36	Fill of ditch, greyish yellow fine sandy silt	Pottery, animal bone	LIA-ERB?
309	Layer	-	-	Natural, mid yellowy orange, sandy silt, high stoney content	-	-

Trench 4						
General description					**Orientation**	NE-SW
Trench contains enclosure ditch also observed in Trenches 3,6 and 7. Observed only in section of trench. The trench also has an interface layer (between natural and subsoil), very similar to the fill of ditch.					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.75
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
400	Layer	-	0.25-0.38	Topsoil: dark greyish brown silty clay	-	-
401	Layer	-	0.25-0.4	Subsoil: mid greyish yellow clay	-	-
402	Cut	1.2	0.3	Ditch:		
403	Fill	1.2	0.3	Ditch fill: mid greyish brown silty sand		

Trench 4						
404	Layer	-	0.17	Interface layer, reddish grey, friable, silty sand, rare stones	-	-
405	Layer	-	-	Natural, mid brownish yellow sand	-	-

Trench 5						
General description					**Orientation**	NNE-SSW
Trench contained one linear at northern end. The southern end had a 1.6m sondage dug my machine and colluivium formation recorded.					**Avg. depth (m)**	1
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
500	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil, dark grey sandy silt	-	-
501	Layer	-	0.68	Subsoil, mid brown silty sand	-	-
502	Layer	-	0.44	Colluvium, dark grey brown, silty sand	-	-
503	Layer	-	0.2	Colluvium, mid to dark brownish grey, slightly clayey sand, rounded pebbles	-	-
504	Layer	-	-	Natural, reddish brown clay	-	-
505	Cut	1.2+	0.24	Gully	-	-
506	Fill	1.2+	0.24	Fill of gully, light orange brown silty sand	-	-

Trench 6						
General description					**Orientation**	Ne-SW
Trench has several features. Three pits, two of which were excavated. Pit 615 was not excavated. The trench also had two ditches within it.					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.65
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
600	Layer	-	0.24-0.4	Topsoil, light brownish grey, sandy silt, rare small stones	-	-
601	Layer	-	0.3-0.42	Mid yellowish brown, silty sand, small stones	-	-

Trench 6						
602	Cut	1.75	0.86	Ditch, east-west	-	-
603	Fill	1.75	0.24	Ditch fill, dark brownish grey, sandy clayey silt	pot	LIA-ERB
604	Fill	1.75	0.4	Ditch fill, dark brownish grey, silty sand	Pot, flint	LIA-ERB
605	Fill	1.75	0.22	Ditch fill, mid reddish grey sandy silt	Pot, stone	LIA-ERB
606	Fill	1.4	0.24	Enclosure ditch fill, blueish grey, sandy clay	pot	LIA-ERB
607	Cut	3.7	1.2+	Cut for enclosure ditch	-	-
608	Fill	3.2	0.45	Enclosure ditch fill, dark brownish grey, silty sand	-	-
609	Fill	3.7	0.55	Enclosure ditch fill, yellowish brown, sandy clayey silt	-	-
610	Cut	1.25/1.1	1.5	Pit	-	-
611	Fill	1.25/1.1	0.56	Fill of pit	Pot	RB?
612	Cut	1.2/0.9	0.44	Pit	-	-
613	Fill	1.2/0.9	0.44	Pit fill, mid brownish grey, silty sand	Fired clay	-
614	Fill	1.25/1.1	0.48	Pit fill, mid greyish brown silty sand	Pot	MIA
615	Cut	1.1/0.5	-	Pit. Not excavated.	-	-
616	Fill	1.1/0.5	-	Fill of pit, not excavated. Mid greyish brown silty sand	-	-
617	Layer	-	-	Natural, reddish yellow sand	-	-

Trench 7						
General description					**Orientation**	NW-SE
Trench 7 has two ditches - [702] and [705]. Interior of trench cleaned, but no further features revealed.					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.7
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
700	Layer	-	-	Topsoil, light brownish grey sandy silt, occasional stones	-	-
701	Layer	-	-	Subsoil, light yellowish silty sand, moderate stones	-	-

Trench 7						
702	Cut	3.16	1.3	Enclosure ditch	-	-
703	Fill	2.4	0.32	Enclosure ditch fill, light yellowish brown sandy silt	pot	M-LIA
704	Fill	1.8	0.48	Enclosure ditch fill, light reddish brown clayey sand	-	-
705	Cut	2.4	1	Ditch	-	-
706	Fill	2.4	0.36	Ditch fill, light brownish yellow sandy silt	Flint	EPH (residual)
707	Fill	2.2	0.24	Ditch fill, light reddish brown sandy silt	Flint	EPH (residual)
708	Fill	1.18	0.4	Ditch fill, Mid-reddish brown silty sand	-	-
709	Layer	-	-	Natural, reddish yellow silty sand	-	-

Trench 8						
General description					**Orientation**	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Depth of natural is similar throughout the whole trench.					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.75
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
800	Layer	-	0.19	Topsoil, mid yellowish brown, rare small stones	-	-
801	Layer	-	0.52	Subsoil, light yellowish brown sandy silt, mod stones	-	-
802	Layer	-	-	Natural, mid-reddish yellow silty sand, moderately stony	-	-

Trench 9						
General description					**Orientation**	NNE-SSW
Two ditches, trackway 903 and the enclosure 902.					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.5
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
900	Layer	-	0.24	Topsoil	-	-

Trench 9						
901	Layer	-	0.24	Subsoil	-	-
902	Cut	3.8	1.28	Enclosure ditch	-	-
903	Cut	1.8	1.2	Ditch, trackway	-	-
904	Fill	-	0.1	Enclosure ditch fill, dark reddish brown, clay	-	-
905	Fill	-	0.2	Enclosure ditch fill, mid to dark brown grey, clayey silt	-	-
906	Fill		0.2	Enclosure ditch fill: dark yellow brown, clay silty sand	-	-
907	Fill	-	0.68	Enclosure ditch fill: mottled, brown grey clay silt	Flint	EPH (residual)
908	Fill	-	0.48	Enclosure ditch fill, orange grey brown sandy silt	Flint	Prehistoric
909	Fill	-	0.6	Ditch fill, mid to light brown silty sand	--	-
910	Fill	-	0.6	Ditch fill, mid brown grey silty sand	-	-
911	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 10						
General description					**Orientation**	N-S
N-S furrow partially revealed, no archaeological features.					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.4
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
1000	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil, dark grey sandy silt	-	-
1001	Layer	-	0.1-0.35	Subsoil, mottled orange + grey silty sand	-	-
1002	Layer	-	-	Natural, mixed orangey brown/ reddish brown clay + sandy gravel		

Trench 11		
General description	**Orientation**	N-S
Perpendicular E-W furrows, these were excavated by machine.	**Avg. depth (m)**	0.6
	Width (m)	1.8

Trench 11						
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
1100	Layer	-	0.24	Topsoil: dark grey, sandy silt	-	-
1101	Layer	-	0.32	Subsoil: mottled orangey light brown, grey brown silty sand	-	-
1102	Layer	-	-	Natural, reddish brown clay with rounded pebble patches	-	-

Trench 12						
General description					**Orientation**	E-W
Aligned with E-W furrows, no archaeology seen.					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.4
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
1200	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil: dark grey sandy silt	-	-
1201	Layer	-	0.12	Subsoil: grey brown, clay sandy silt, very stoney	-	-
1202	Layer	-	-	Natural, reddish brown clay with gravel patches	-	-

Trench 13						
General description					**Orientation**	N-S
N-S trench across headland between N-S and E-W furrows.					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.4
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
1300	Layer	-	0.1-0.15	Topsoil: mid brown sandy silt	-	-
1301	Layer	-	0.2-0.48	Subsoil: mid reddish brown sandy silt	-	-
1302	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 14						
General description					**Orientation**	SE-NW
Trench contained just one feature, a fairly narrow linear [1402].					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.55
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
1400	Layer	-	0.26	Topsoil, grey sandy silt	-	-
1401	Layer	-	0.32	Subsoil, soft brownish orange sandy silt	-	-
1402	Cut	0.43	0.2	Linear	-	-
1403	Fill	0.43	0.2	Linear fill, light brown silty sand	-	-
1404	Layer	-	-	Natural, firm brownish orange sand, clay patches	-	-

Trench 15						
General description					**Orientation**	NE-SW
One possible feature investigated, appeared to be linear in plan. But when investigated, base was undulating and shape not actually linear once cleaned up more likely geological.					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.6
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
1500	Layer	-	0.35	Topsoil, light grey silt not, rare stones	-	-
1501	Layer	-	0.3	Subsoil, light yellow silty sand, occasional stones	-	-
1502	Layer	-	-	Natural, firm yellow sand, patches of stones	-	-

Trench 16						
General description					**Orientation**	-
Trench not excavated due to overhead cables.					**Avg. depth (m)**	-
					Width (m)	-
					Length (m)	-
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**

Trench 17						
General description					**Orientation**	SW-NE
Trench devoid of archaeology.					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.7
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
1700	Layer	-	0.25	Topsoil, mid brownish grey sandy silt with rare stones	-	-
1701	Layer	-	0.5	Subsoil, brownish yellow sandy silt, occasional stones	-	-
1702	Layer	-	-	Natural, mid brownish yellow sand, frequent stones	-	-

Trench 18						
General description					**Orientation**	SE-NW
Trench contained one furrow orientated E-W. No archaeological features.					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.55
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
1800	Layer	-	0.25	Topsoil, mid grey sandy silt	-	-
1801	Layer	-	0.2	Subsoil, light orange sandy silt, frequent small stones	-	-
1802	Layer	-	-	Natural, light orange sand, frequent stones	-	-

Trench 19						
General description					**Orientation**	SE-NW
Trench contained one thin curving linear [1902]. One flint was recovered from the topsoil and retained.					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.3
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
1900	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil, light grey sandy	flint	EPH

Trench 19						
				silt		
1901	Layer	-	0.1	Subsoil, light orange, silty sand, occasional stones	-	-
1902	Cut	0.43	0.17	Ditch	-	-
1903	Fill	0.43	0.17	Fill of ditch, light brown silty sand		
1904	Layer	-	-	Natural, light orange sand, stoney		

Trench 20						
General description					**Orientation**	NNE-SSW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Was machined deeper at southern end to confirm that the natural has been fully exposed.					**Avg. depth (m)**	0.6
					Width (m)	1.8
					Length (m)	30
Contexts						
Context no	**Type**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Comment**	**Finds**	**Date**
2000	Layer	-	0.35	Topsoil, brownish grey silt, rare stones	-	-
2001	Layer	-	0.3	Subsoil, orangey brown sand, rare stones	-	-
2002	Layer	-	-	Natural, orange clay, occasional stones	-	-
2003	Layer	-	-	Natural, light orange sand, rare stones	-	-
2004	Layer	-	-	Natural, firm gritty sand, orange, frequent small stones	-	-

APPENDIX B. FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Pottery

By Paul Booth

Introduction and methodology

B.1.1 The evaluation produced 44 sherds (571g) of pottery, mostly of middle Iron Age to late Iron Age/early Roman date, from nine separate contexts, including material from two sieved soil sample residues. The pottery was recorded using the generic codes set out in the Oxford Archaeology recording system for later prehistoric and Roman pottery (Booth 2014). The pottery was in variable condition. Some sherds were small and relatively eroded, but the late Iron Age material was generally in good condition, consisting of relatively large, fresh sherds.

Fabrics and forms

B.1.2 A limited range of pottery fabrics was present, falling essentially into three main groups, two of middle or middle-late Iron Age date and one late Iron Age/early Roman. Prehistoric fabrics are defined in terms of letter codes for their principal inclusion types and late Iron Age and Roman fabrics are defined in terms of codes for major ware groups and subdivisions thereof, down to the level of individual fabrics/wares where appropriate. The codes assigned are as follows:

Prehistoric

R. 'Rock' – igneous-tempered fabrics. 18 sherds, 139g.

ZA. Voids, probably organic, and sparse quartz sand. 8 sherds, 34g.

Late Iron Age/Roman

W39. North Gaulish white ware. 1 sherd, 33g.

E20. Fine sand-tempered 'Belgic type' ware. 1 sherd, 3g.

E80. Grog-tempered 'Belgic type' ware. 12 sherds, 336g.

O10. Fine sand-tempered oxidised ware. 1 sherd, <1g.

R20. Coarse-tempered reduced ware. 1 sherd, 4g.

B.1.3 The first group of earlier material comprised igneous-tempered fabrics (identified as R ('rock'-tempered) detailed separation of these was not attempted at this stage) totalling 14 sherds (93g) in context 308, 3 sherds (44g) in context 614 and a tiny fragment (2g) in context 611. The sherds in 614 included the flat-topped rim of a jar with a fairly well-defined shoulder; this and another sherd in this context had scored decoration, and the fragment in context 611 may have been treated in the same way. Fabrics of this general type are associated with the Charnwood Forest area of north-west Leicestershire and are widespread within the region.

B.1.4 A separate fabric tradition consisted of material characterised by voids (inclusion type Z – uncertain voids), probably (but not certainly) for organic inclusions, supplemented by sparse quartz sand. This fabric was present in contexts 603 (6 sherds, 20g), 604 (1 sherd, 6g) and 703 – a single rim sherd from a simple roughly barrel-shaped jar.

B.1.5 Distinctive late Iron Age pottery in the 'Belgic' tradition was the dominant material in the assemblage in terms of weight. A single sherd (3g) from context 604 was perhaps in a fine sand-tempered version of this tradition (fabric E20). The dominant fabric was grog-

tempered (E80), with fine and coarse variants represented. Three sherds (10g) were from context 603, while E80 sherds accounted for all the pottery from contexts 605 and 606. A large jar and a possible carinated bowl were represented by rim sherds, while further jars and a couple of uncertain vessels with sharply 'rippled' ?shoulders were present amongst the body sherds. The E80 fabrics were notably well-finished.

B.1.6 Amongst the other sherds part of a large three-ribbed handle from a flagon in probable north Gaulish fine white ware was notable. Small oxidised and reduced coarse ware fragments were not particularly diagnostic, but fabric R20 had igneous inclusions comparable to those of the Iron Age fabric R. This sherd occurred alongside R fabric sherds in context 308, where it was perhaps intrusive but might possibly represent a 'Romanised' version of this tempering tradition. A further small sherd from context 611, in a comparable fabric but thin walled and with mixed firing (one surface reduced, the other oxidised), is of uncertain date, and perhaps medieval rather than Roman.

B.1.7 Only one certain post-medieval sherd was present, in context 201.

Discussion

B.1.8 The prehistoric pottery indicates a middle Iron Age date, but both the main tempering traditions involved, and the scored ware decoration tradition, can extend into the late Iron Age. In view of the close association of this material with 'Belgic type' pottery it is possible that the hand-made material belongs to the later part of its overall chronological range. It seems less likely that there was a significant hiatus in the occupation sequence from the middle to the late Iron Age.

B.1.9 The 'Belgic type' pottery is most likely to belong to the 1st century AD. It is not possible to determine whether it is of pre- or post-Conquest date. The absence of Roman material, however, with the exception of a couple of very small sherds of uncertain significance, suggests that activity did not extend much beyond the middle of the 1st century. The one obvious non-local sherd, a probable north Gaulish white ware, is consistent with this chronological emphasis.

B.1.10 The assemblage is otherwise too small to allow comment on aspects beyond very basic questions of supply (almost entirely local) and chronology.

Table B.1 Pottery quantities and spot dates by context

Context	No. sherds	Wt. (g)	Context ceramic date	Notes
201	1	17	18-19C	Midlands purple ware type
308	15	97	LIA-ERB?	All but one sherd MIA (fabric R - igneous-tempered)
603	10	63	LIA-ERB	Fabrics Z, E80 and W39; includes 4 sherds from sample 1
604	3	10	LIA-ERB	Fabrics Z, E20 and O10
605	8	293	LIA-ERB	Coarse & fine fabric E80; large jar and ?bowl rims
606	1	33	LIA-ERB	E80
611	2	6	??RB	One frag fabric R, RB date uncertain, possibly later; sample 4
614	3	44	MIA	Igneous-tempered scored ware (fabric R), 1 jar rim
703	1	8	M-LIA	Fabric Z, simple jar rim

B.2 Fired Clay

By Paul Booth

Introduction

B.2.1 Fifteen fragments of fired clay (79g) were recovered from five contexts. The material is not intrinsically datable, but four of the contexts were spot-dated to the late Iron Age-early Roman date on the basis of pottery finds, while the fifth was undated. The absence of definite Roman pottery from the site suggests that a late Iron Age date is most likely.

Discussion

B.2.2 The majority of the fragments were small amorphous pieces in slightly sandy oxidised fabrics. The largest piece, unoxidised, appeared to have a very slightly concave, roughly finger-smoothed surface, and might possibly have been a fragment of interior oven wall.

Table B.2 Fired clay quantities and spot dates by contex

Context	No. fragments	Wt. (g)	Context ceramic date	Notes
308	7	27	LIA-ERB?	
603	2	5	LIA-ERB	From sample 1
604	2	10	LIA-ERB	
605	3	14	LIA-ERB	
613	1	23	undated	Finger-marked surface

B.3 Struck Flint

By Michael Donnelly

Introduction

B.3.1 A very small assemblage of nine flints was recovered during the evaluation. The flints were concentrated in the northern half of the evaluation with just one flint being recovered in the southern portion of the site. The flints were in very good condition and primarily related to a blade/regular flake reduction strategy likely to be of early prehistoric date. No diagnostic artefacts were recovered, and the exact age of the assemblage is unknown.

B.3.2 The assemblage contained an equal balance of flakes and blade forms (3/6 blanks). Although the number of pieces was small and some of the blades are far from elegant, the flakes were generally thin and regular in form and could be said to be typical of earlier industries. Moreover, one core and another probable core fragment were clearly related to blade production and the only tool recovered was formed on a regular thin blank.

B.3.3 Most of the flints were recovered from features associated with a trackway and oval enclosure in the northern half of the evaluation area. One pit in this area also produced struck flint. Two pieces were recovered from pit fill 614. One of these is a chunk of flint that displayed some blade negative scars and was probably a core fragment. However, two of its scars intersected in a manner reminiscent of a dihedral burin and it may be that this piece was a broken tool of early date.

B.3.4 Three flints were recovered from trench 7, all of which represented blade forms. One fairly chunky blade was recovered from enclosure ditch fill 704 and may be fortuitous and potentially later prehistoric in date. However, the remaining two pieces are more typical of true blade forms and consisted of a utilised bladelet segment and an inner blade. Both were found in the fills of trackway ditch 705.

B.3.5 Trench 9 also produced three flints including an opposed platform bladelet core. The remaining two flakes are very thin in form. All three were recovered from fills from enclosure ditch 904.

B.3.6 The sole find recovered from the southern half of the site was an end scraper found in the topsoil of trench 19 (1900). This was broken and its exact form cannot be determined but it could broadly be described as early in form, with parallel negative scars and well executed and slightly nosed retouch at its distal end.

B.3.7 The assemblage recovered from this evaluation is very small and these findings could easily be atypical of the local assemblage as a whole. However, based on this limited set of flints the assemblages would be described as early prehistoric in date with a likely date range spanning the Mesolithic and earlier Neolithic periods.

B.3.8 There is no indication that any of the flints recovered could be seen as constituting the continuity of flint knapping into Iron Age (Clay 2000). As such, the assemblage must be seen as residual. The condition of the pieces indicates that they had not moved far and it is likely that earlier prehistoric features or sub-soil/buried horizons in the immediate vicinity may have been the source of the assemblage.

Table B.3 Worked flint quantity and spot date by context

Context	Feature type	Flakes	Blades	Waste/ chips	Cores	Tools	Totals	Date
614	pit fill	1		1			2	EPH?
703	enclosure ditch filll		1				1	EPH?
706	trackway ditch filll		1				1	EPH
707	trackway ditch filll		1				1	EPH
907	enclosure ditch filll	1			1		2	EPH
909	enclosure ditch filll	1					1	
1900	topsoil						1	EPH

B.4 Animal Bones

By Lee G Broderick

Introduction

B.4.1 A total of 4 animal bones were recovered from the site, with 3 specimens coming from a context dated to the Late Iron Age and one associated with Roman activity on the site (Table 1). All of the material was hand-collected.

Discussion

B.4.2 The Late Iron Age specimens comprised three mandibular horse (*Equus ferus caballus*) teeth. Horse remains are relatively uncommon on archaeological sites of this period when compared to the other domesticates, they have, however, been identified in 41 assemblages of this period from sites in southern Britain (Hambleton 2008).

B.4.3 A mandibular third molar from domestic cattle (*Bos taurus taurus*) was incomplete, meaning it was not possible to determine a definite wear stage for the tooth, although it must have been at least stage g and at most stage j (Grant 1982). This would mean a minimum age at death of 3 years and 10 months (Jones and Sadler 2012).

Table B.4 Animal bone quantities by context

Context	Period					Total NISP	Total NSP
308	LIA	Mammalia	Perissodactyla	Equidae	Equus ferus caballus	3	
611	RB	Mammalia	Artiodactyla	Bovidae	Bos taurus taurus		1

B.5 Stone

By Ruth Shaffrey

Description

B.5.1 One piece of stone was retained. This is a rim fragment of an upper beehive rotary quern from a ditch fill (605). Its curved circumference is pecked while the slightly concave grinding surface has been worn smooth. It is made from a medium-grained pale brown quartz arenite that has been imported to the site from an unknown source. There are very few suitable stone sources for querns in Leicestershire and so most will have been imported, but it is possible that it is from the Brand Hills or the Hartshill sandstone formations. Beehive rotary querns began during the middle Iron Age and in this area continued in use until the mid Roman period.

APPENDIX C. ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

C.1 Environmental samples

By Sharon Cook

Introduction

C.1.1 Four soil samples, each of 40 litres, were taken from the evaluation at Love Lane, Dunton Bassett. Sample 1 (603) was taken from the fill of a ditch in Trench 6 which cut a curvilinear enclosure ditch. Sample 2 (907) was taken from the fill of enclosure ditch 902 in Trench 9. Sample 3 (909) was taken from the fill of a linear ditch (903) within Trench 9 and sample 4 (611) was taken from the fill of a bell shaped pit (610) within Trench 6. The samples are most likely to date from the late Iron Age, extending into the 1st century AD.

Methodology

C.1.2 The samples were processed in their entirety by water flotation with the flots collected on a 250µm mesh and the heavy residues sieved to 500µm; these were then dried in a heated room, after which the residues were sorted by eye for artefacts.

C.1.3 The entire flots were scanned using a binocular microscope at approximately x10 magnification. Seed identifications were made with reference to Oxford Archaeology's reference collection. Nomenclature for the plant remains follows Stace (2010).

Results

C.1.4 The samples contained a few artefacts, which are reported in the relevant specialist reports.

Trench 6

C.1.5 The flots for the two samples from trench 6 contained very similar material. Sample 1 produced a 75ml flot and sample 4 a 50ml flot, both include large quantities of fine modern roots as well as occasional modern seeds and insects. While charcoal is present in both flots it is largely of small size with only occasional fragments potentially large enough for species identification.

C.1.6 Both samples also contain other charred plant material in relatively poor condition. Many of the grains and seeds have a glassy appearance which is indicative of burning at a high temperature, in many cases the exterior of seeds is no longer present with just the puffy interior surviving. There are over 40 unidentifiable cereal grains in each of these two flots, together with moderate quantities (30+) of small fragments of glume wheat chaff, too fragmented to identify to species. Seven wheat grains (*Triticum* sp.) were identified within sample 1 and five in sample 4. Oat (*Avena* sp.) and oat/brome (*Avena/Bromus*) grain fragments were also noted in both samples together with a small quantity of oat (*Avena* sp.) awn, although sample 4 contains a much larger quantity of oat/brome with 30+ fragments noted. Two possible barley grains (cf *Hordeum* sp.) are present within sample 1.

C.1.7 Large quantities of charred seeds from wild plants are also present in both samples but again the majority are in poor condition and so unidentifiable. Identified seeds in sample 1 include eight Caryophyllaceae (pink family), six Polygonaceae (knotweed family), five Poaceae (grass) and nine rush (*Juncus* sp.). Sample 4 contains a smaller quantity of identified seeds from the same taxa: two Caryophyllaceae, three Polygonaceae, fourteen Poaceae and eleven *Juncus* seeds.

C.1.8 Two hazelnut fragments are present within sample 1 and one within sample 4. Both samples contain five fragments of legumes <2mm and one fragment of legume >2mm.

Trench 9

C.1.9 The two flots from Trench 9 samples are both small: 15ml in the case of sample 2and 5ml for sample 3. Both contain small quantities of modern roots and very little charred material, but a few fragments of charcoal in each flot may be large enough for species identification. Sample 2 contains a single unidentifiable cereal grain and a single fragment of glume wheat chaff. It also contains three seeds which are heavily mineral encrusted and unidentifiable. Sample 3 contains thirteen unidentifiable charred cereal grains, one grain of wheat (*Triticum* sp.) and one grain of oat/brome (*Avena/Bromus*). A single fragment of legume <2mm is also present.

Conclusions

C.1.10 Samples 1 and 4 contained small assemblages of charred cereal remains consistent with an Iron Age or Roman date. The majority of the wild plant seeds are likely to be crop contaminants or plants which grew in peripheral areas around fields or areas of human habitation. Charred rush seeds could have come either from plants growing in damp areas of the fields and burnt accidentally or from the burning of floor coverings or thatch.

C.1.11 Samples 2 and 3 also contain material consistent with a late Iron Age date, but the small size of the flots precludes further interpretation.

C.1.12 It is unlikely that further work on this material would produce any additional useful information, but the fact that delicate charred plant material such as oat awns are present shows that, where charred remains are present, good preservation is possible.

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Appendix E. Summary of Site Details

Site name:	Love's Lane, Dunton Bassett, Leicestershire
Site code:	X.A122.2016
Grid reference:	SP 5450 9030
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	24th October to 2nd November
Area of site:	2.9ha

Summary of results: Oxford Archaeology Ltd undertook an archaeological evaluation of the site of a proposed housing development in the village of Dunton Bassett, Leicestershire, between 24th October and 2nd November 2016. The evaluation comprised 20 trenches, some placed to investigate features identified by a previous geophysical survey and otherwise distributed throughout the remainder of the application site. The trenches were placed at greater density in the southern part of the site where any archaeological features were obscured on the geophysical survey plot by traces of ridge-and-furrow and magnetic debris.

No features or in situ deposits were dated to earlier than the middle to late Iron Age, but the presence of a very small amount of residual worked flint suggests that Mesolithic and earlier Neolithic activity is likely to have taken place in the vicinity of the site.

A D-shaped enclosure ditch, identified by the geophysical survey in the north-eastern part of the site, was investigated in three trenches and is thought most likely to date from the late Iron Age, on the basis of pottery finds. The most closely datable artefact recovered is a fine flagon handle of the 1st century AD, recovered from the latest fill of the enclosure ditch. The absence of any definite Roman pottery suggests that the enclosure is most likely to have been abandoned prior to, or during, the Roman conquest period.

As few internal features were found, the function of the enclosure is not certain, although its form is closely comparable with numerous late Iron Age farmsteads known in Leicestershire. In contrast to more extensively excavated examples there was clear no trace of roundhouses, which are usually indicated in this region by pennannular eavesdrip and/or foundation ditches. A possible rectilinear arrangement of pits on the geophysical survey plot, inside the enclosure, may indicate lines of storage pits rather than posthole structures. The trenching revealed two probable storage pits just outside the enclosure ditch to the north and a third inside the enclosure.

The evaluation proved the existence of a pair of parallel ditches, forming a possible trackway, which crossed the site on a NW-SE alignment, apparently cutting through the D-shaped enclosure. Pottery dating evidence was limited but also suggests a late Iron Age date for this feature.

Charred plant remains from the late Iron Age features indicate that arable agriculture and cereal processing took place in the vicinity, supported by the discovery of a beehive quernstone fragment. Animal bone was very scarce, possibly because the local soil conditions are not conducive to bone preservation.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Leicestershire Museum Service in due course, under the following accession number: X.A122.2016

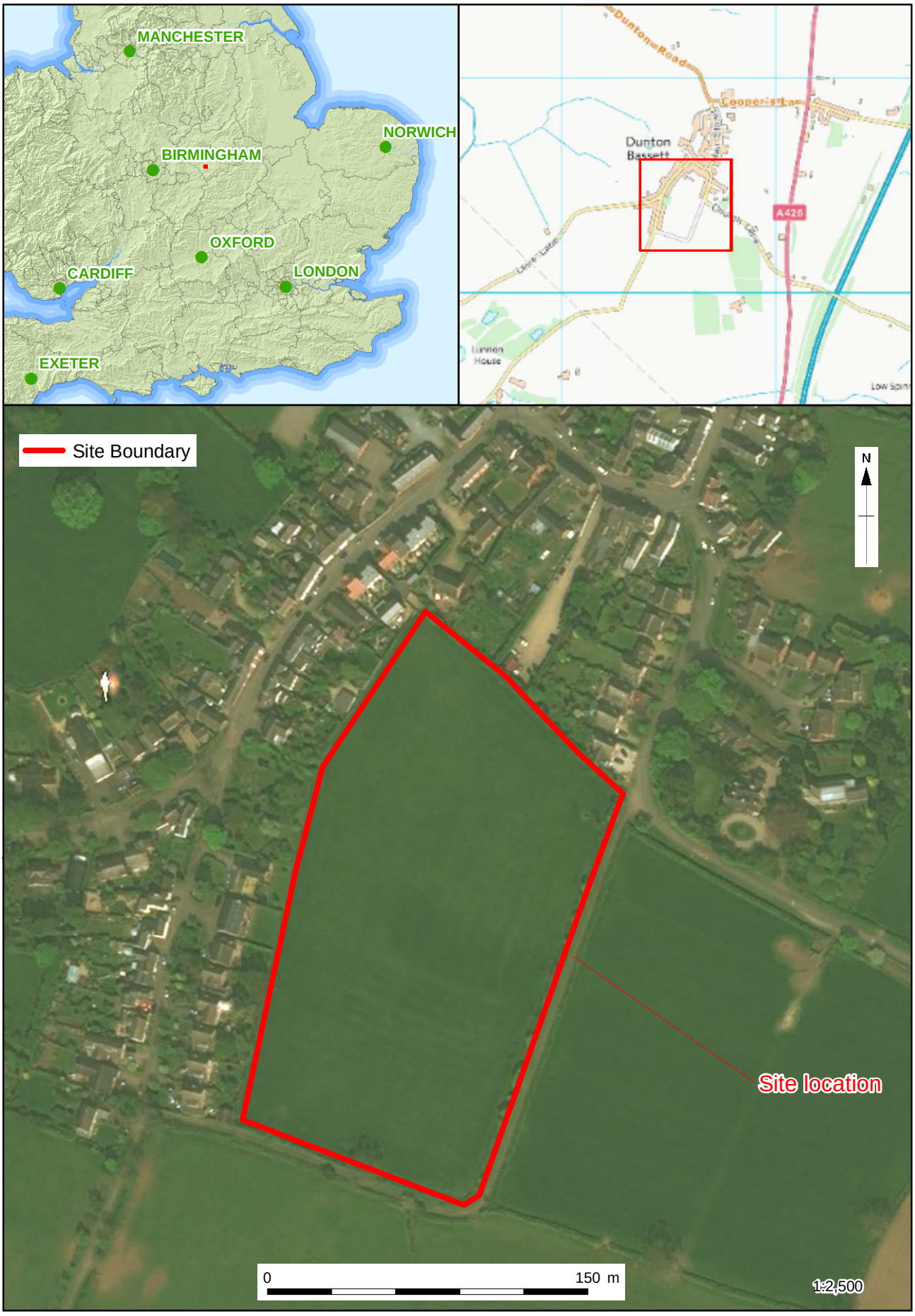

Figure 1: Site location

X:\d\Dunton_Bassett_Loves_Lane\010Geomatics\02 CAD\DUBALLEV_Dunton_Bassett_2016-10-28.dwg(Figure 2)*DUBALL16*DUBALLEV*Dunton Bassett, Leicestershire*benjamin.brown* 08 Nov 2016

N

454473
290506

454656
290506

Trench 1
Trench 2
Trench 3
Trench 4
Trench 5
Trench 6
Trench 7
Trench 8
Trench 9
Trench 10
Trench 11
Trench 12
Trench 13
Trench 14
Trench 15
Trench 16
Trench 17
Trench 18
Trench 19
Trench 20

454473
290251

Site boundary
Limit of excavation
Geophysical features
Archaeological feature
Archaeological intervention
Archaeological section
Archaeology extrapolated
Archaeological hachure

CHECKED BY:

0 50 m

Scale at A3 1:750

Figure 2: Trench layout plan with magnetometer geophysics plot

X:\d\Dunton_Bassett_Loves_Lane\010Geomatics\02 CAD\DUBALLEV_Dunton_Bassett_2016-10-28.dwg(Figure 3)*DUBALL16*DUBALLEV*Dunton Bassett, Leicestershire*benjamin.brown* 25 Nov 2016

N

454473
290506

454656
290506

Trench 1
105
S.102
102
S.100

S.200
Trench 2

Trench 3

Trench 4
S.400

500
S.502
Trench 5
S.500

610
Trench 6
S.601
602
S.600
607
S.602
612

702
S.703
Trench 7
S.702
705
S.704

Trench 8

S.901
903
S.900
902
Trench 9

Trench 10

Trench 11

Trench 12

Trench 13

1402
S.1401
Trench 14

Trench 15

Trench 16

Trench 17

Trench 18

S.1901
1902
Trench 19

Trench 20

454473
290251

Site boundary
Limit of excavation
Geophysical features
Archaeological feature
Archaeological intervention
Archaeological section
Archaeology extrapolated
Archaeological hachure

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0 50 m

Scale at A3 1:750

Figure 3: Trench layout with archaeological and geophysical features

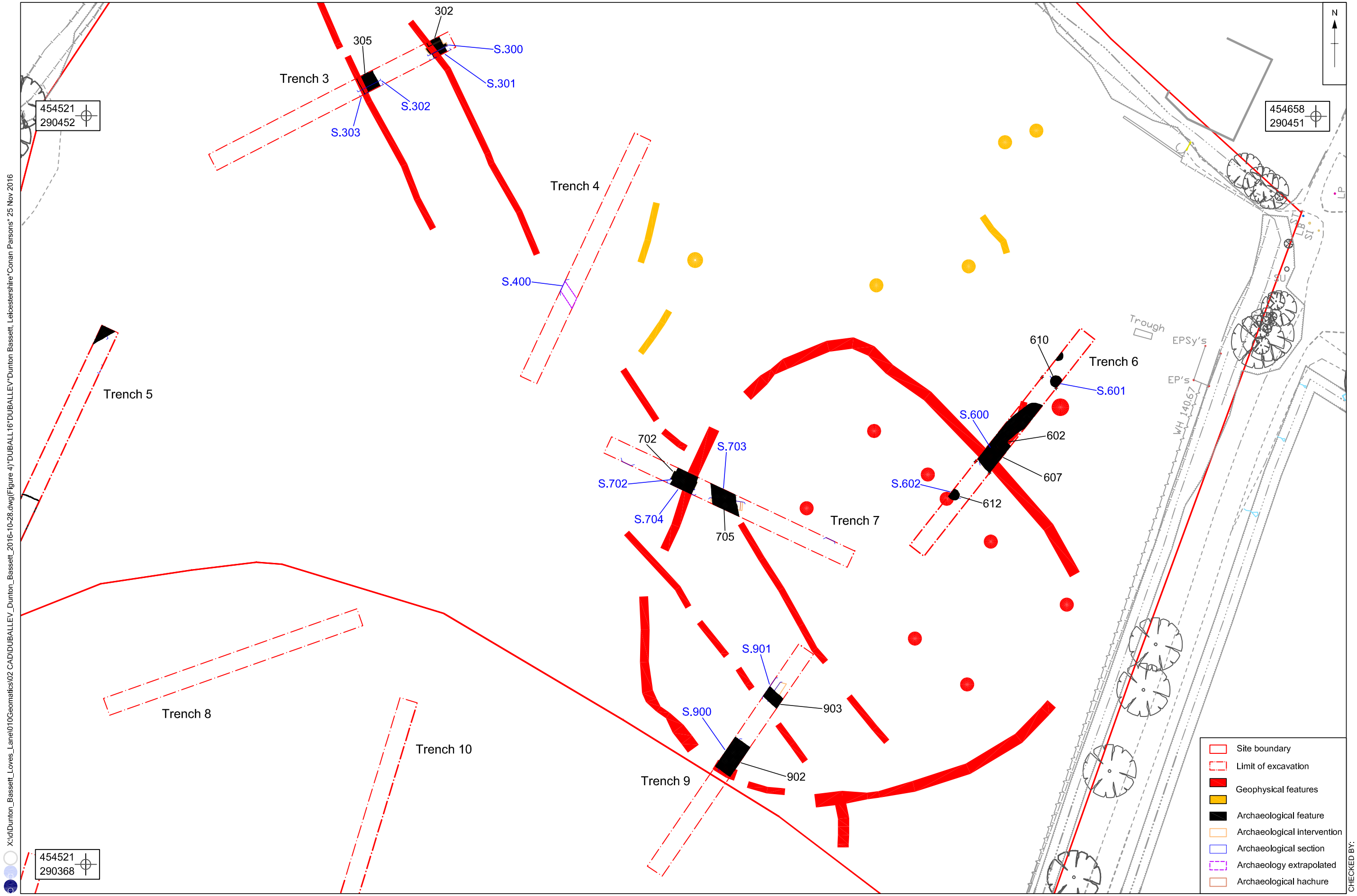

Figure 4: Detailed view of the Iron Age enclosure and track (Trenches 3, 4, 6, 7 and 9)

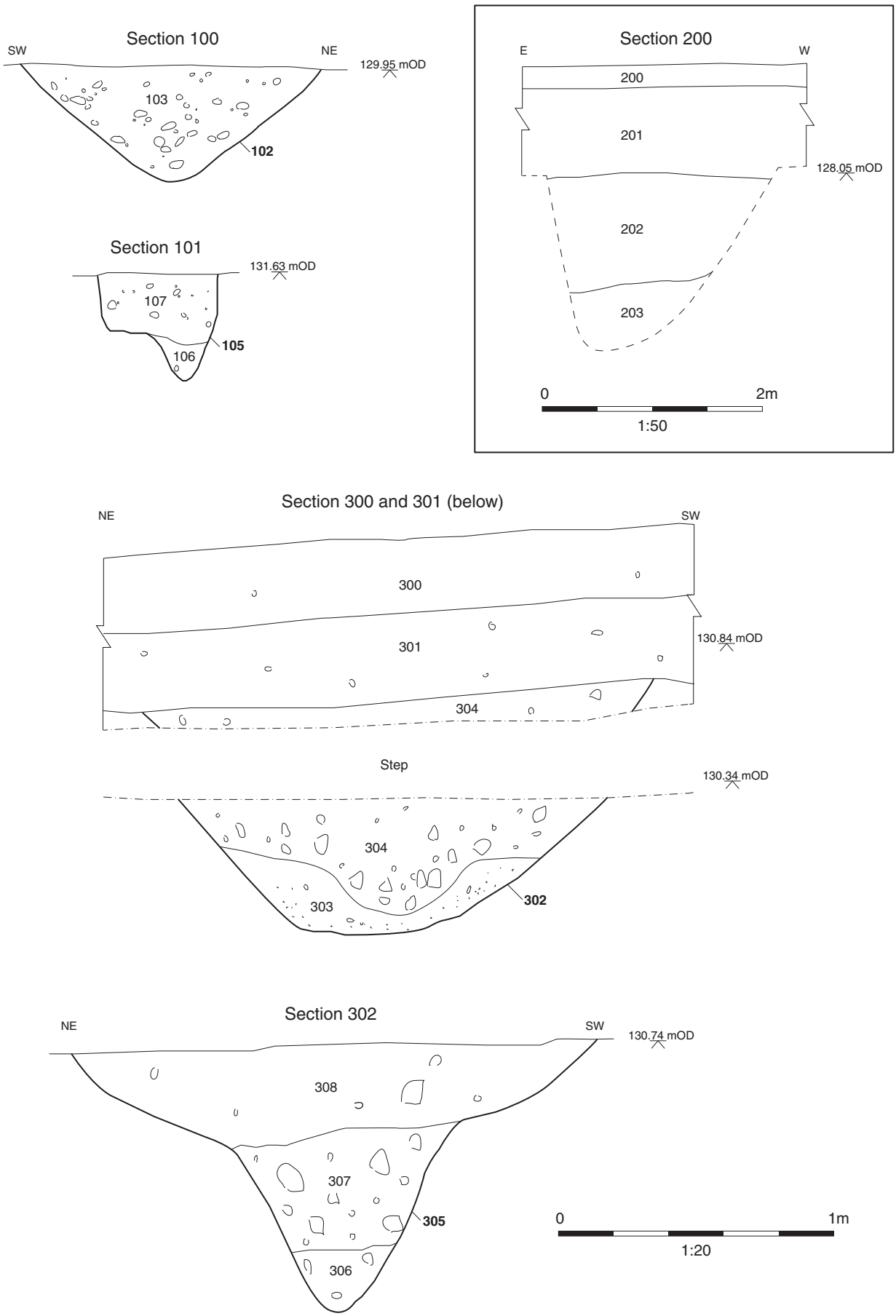

Figure 5: Sections 100, 101, 200, 300, 301 and 302

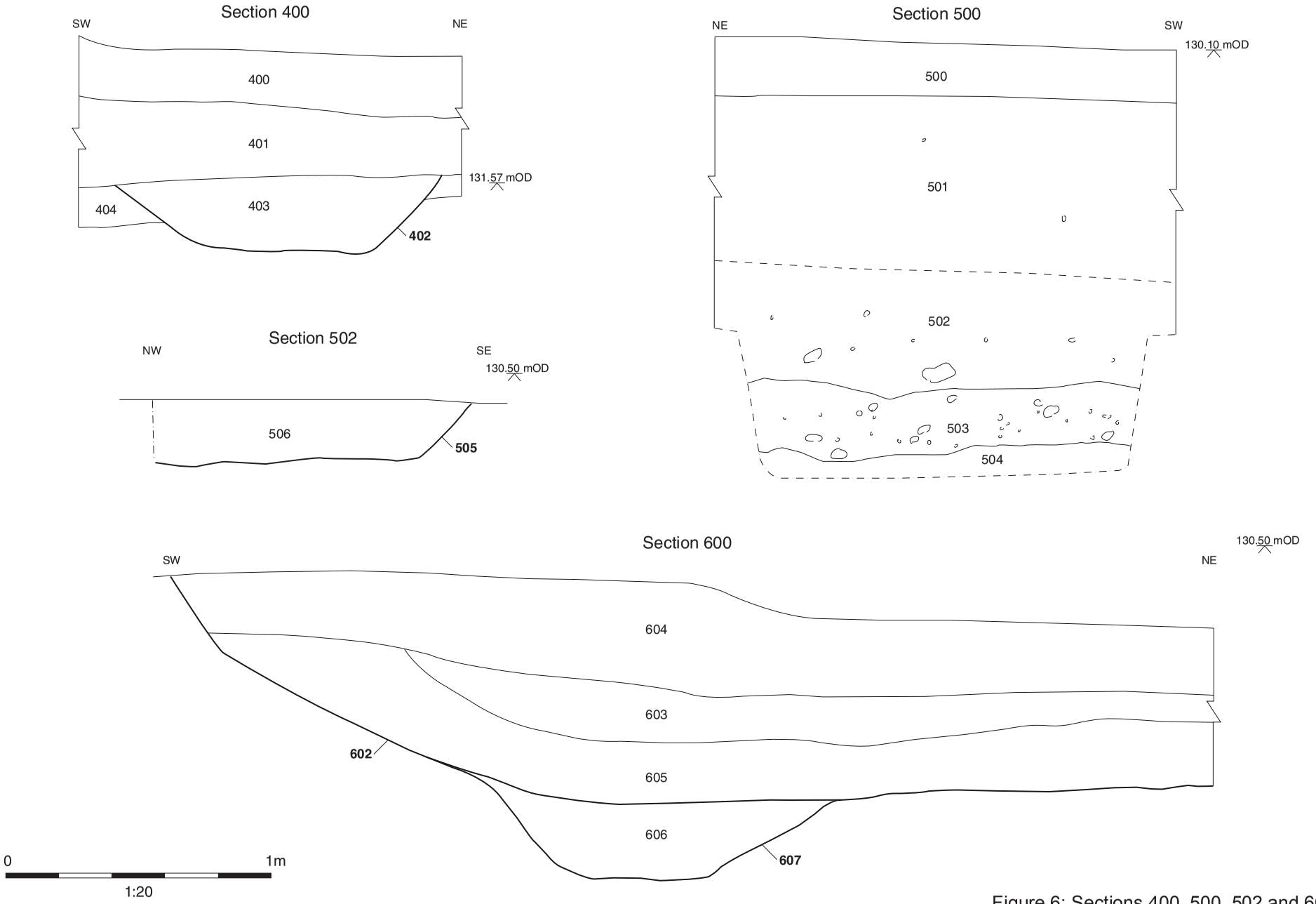

Figure 6: Sections 400, 500, 502 and 600

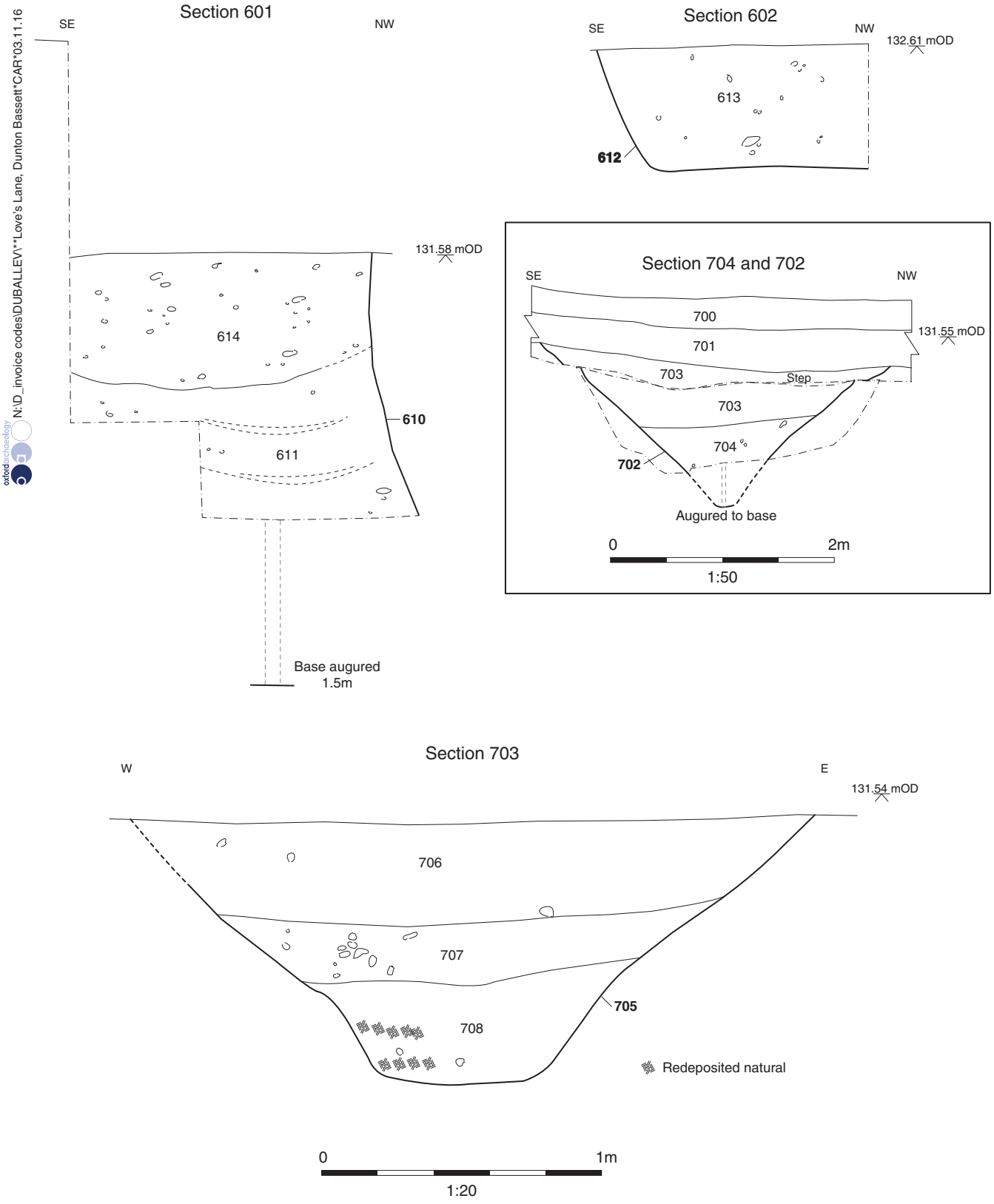

Figure 7: Sections 601, 602, 702, 704 and 703

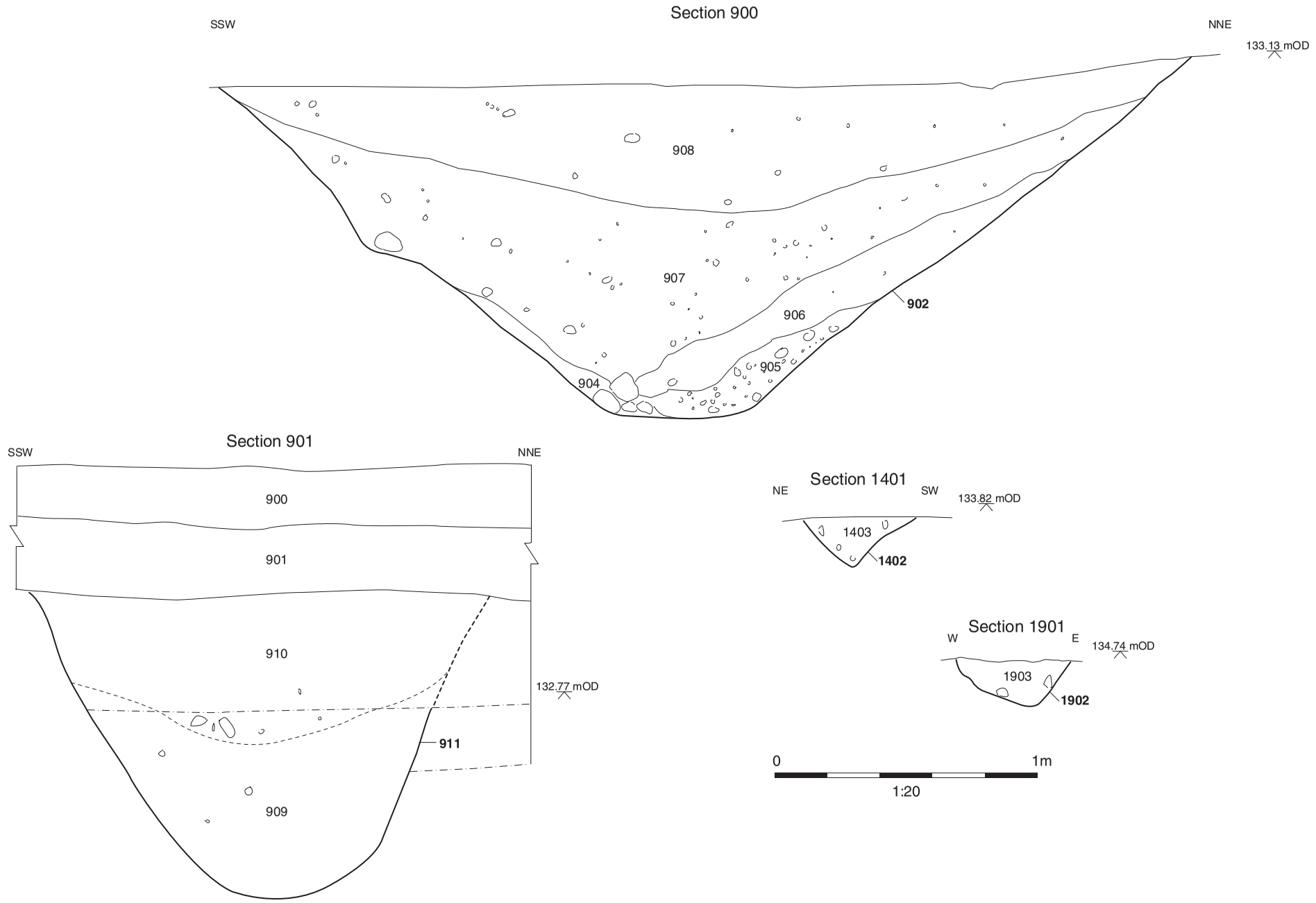

Figure 8: Sections 900, 901, 1401 and 1901

Plate 1: Trench 1, Ditch 102

Plate 2: Trench 1, Post hole 105

Plate 3: Trench 3, Ditch 302

Plate 4: Trench 3, Ditch 305

Plate 5: Trench 6, Pit 610

Plate 6: Trench 6, Pit 612

Plate 7: Trench 7, Ditch 702

Plate 8: Trench 7, Ditch 705

Plate 9: Trench 7, Interior of enclosure, looking north-west

Plate 10: Trench 9, Ditch 902

Plate 11: Trench 9: Ditch 903

Plate 12: Trench 5, Colluvial sequence in section 500

Plate 13: Trench 2, Colluvial sequence in section 200

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