

Land off the A5/A428

Junction 18 of the M1

Crick

Northamptonshire



Archaeological Excavation Report (Trench 9)

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Land off the A5/A428, Junction 18 of the M1, Crick, Northamptonshire

Archaeological Excavation Report (Trench 9)

Written by Steve Leech

with contributions from Lisa Brown and Julia Meen and illustrated by Julia Collins

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Summary

Between the 23rd and 25th of October 2012 Oxford Archaeology carried out the excavation of a 32 x 31.6m area (Trench 9) at Land off the A5/A428, Junction 18 of the M1, Crick, Northamptonshire. The excavation followed an 8 trench evaluation of the site which had been carried out in April 2012 and was required to investigate the possibility of further features in the vicinity of Trench 5 of that evaluation. The only archaeological feature of note was a pit containing charcoal and pottery of Early Iron Age date. An undated posthole and three tree boles were also recorded.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) has been commissioned by Winvic to undertake further investigation of a site of proposed development.
- 1.1.2 Daventry District Council has granted planning permission (DA/2012/0328) for a new Biomethane Refuelling Station and associated offices with access from the A5 onto the A428 at Land off A5/A428 Junction 18 of M1, Crick, Northamptonshire.
- 1.1.3 A condition of the planning permission required a programme of archaeological work to be undertaken. An archaeological evaluation of the site was undertaken (OA April 2012) following which an area was identified adjacent to Trench 5 which required further investigation. The County Archaeological Advisor for Northamptonshire County Council supplied a plan de-marking the area in question which consisted of a 30 x 30m excavation area and OA produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (OA September 2012) outlining how the work would be implemented.
- 1.1.4 All work was undertaken in accordance with this WSI and local and national planning policies.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The application site is 1.625 hectares in area and consists of a triangle of land bordered to the north east by the modern line of the A5, to the south east by the A428 and to the south west by the historic line of the A5 (Watling Street). The site is approximately 400 metres to the West of Junction 18 of the M1 and is centred on SP 5706 7304 (Fig.1).
- 1.2.2 The development is located within a Greenfield site. Topographically the site lies at around 105m aOD and geologically the northern end of the site is alluvium and the southern is of the Charmouth Mudstone Formation.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The development site lies within an area of archaeological and historic significance, and a number of archaeological investigations have taken place within the vicinity, ranging from watching briefs through to full scale excavation. Investigations have taken place in DIRFT East at Covert Farm, the "Crick Hotel", Long Dole to the north and The Lodge to the south. The investigations have been undertaken by the former Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit, Northamptonshire Archaeology, Cotswold Archaeology and Foundations Archaeology.
- 1.3.2 A number of articles and reports have been produced covering the works within the area and these are held within the Northamptonshire HER. A number of the investigations, including the more recent ones, have not as yet been published. In summary the activity within the landscape is multi period ranging from possible Mesolithic, Neolithic and early Bronze Age, through to early, middle and late Iron Age.
- 1.3.3 The western boundary of the development lies directly adjacent to a particularly well preserved stretch of Watling Street, a major Roman Road. This part of Watling Street is of considerable importance as it is not overlain by the current line of the A5. Intact archaeological stratigraphy and upstanding Roman "agger" earthworks are preserved within this stretch.
- 1.3.4 A Saxon cemetery is recorded on the western edge of the development area.



- 1.3.5 A geophysical survey of the site commissioned by OA on behalf of Stratus Environmental Ltd and carried out by Stratascan (Stratascan 2012) identified a low level of anomalies of possible archaeological origin which were targeted in the evaluation works.
- 1.3.6 In April 2012 OA carried out an 8 trench evaluation of the site. The results are illustrated on Figure 2. The only archaeological feature of note was a pit in Trench 5 containing charcoal and fired clay hearth or oven furniture of probable Iron Age or Romano British date. Undated features included a narrow ditch, a truncated posthole, and a burnt out tree root. Land drains of post medieval date were present in the majority of trenches, including one that had been inserted into a post medieval ditch. There were also a number of possible geophysical anomalies to the south of Trench 5 which given the pit might indicate similar features.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 OA would like to thank Ian Oliver of Winvic who commissioned the work, and Lesley-Ann Mather of Northamptonshire County Council who monitored the excavation. The project was managed for OA by David Score and the field work was Supervised by Steve Leech.



2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.2 General

- (i) To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive.
- (ii) To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains
- (iii) To determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means.
- (iv) To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
- (v) To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy.
- (vi) To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- (vii) To retrieve any palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence.
- (viii) To determine the implications of any remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity.
- (ix) To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.
- (x) To fully investigate and record any archaeological features present which will be impacted by the development.
- (xi) To produce a report on the results.

2.3 Specific aims and objectives

2.3.1 The specific aims and objectives of the evaluation are:

- (i) To excavate the specified area adjacent to Trench 5 and investigate and record any features present.

2.4 Methodology

2.4.1 The excavation location (Fig. 2) was agreed with Lesley-Ann Mather, the Northamptonshire County Archaeological Advisor. The excavation was 32 x 31.6m in size and was located to the south-east of Trench 5. It was intended both to target the anomalies identified by the geophysical survey and also provide a good general coverage of the site in that area.

2.4.2 For consistency the investigation has been undertaken using the same site code as the evaluation works and the excavation area is also identified as Trench 9 to avoid overlapping numbers with the earlier works. Records from the evaluation and excavation phases will be archived and deposited together.

2.4.3 The excavation was carried out under close archaeological supervision by a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket which removed the overburden of topsoil and sub-soil deposits exposing the natural horizon. Potential archaeological features were then cleaned and excavated by hand, and recorded in accordance with the methodologies outlined in the WSI for the work.



3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The excavation details and context inventory are given in the table in Appendix A. General stratigraphic data, ground conditions, the distribution of archaeological features and the descriptions of these are contained within the section below.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The area was excavated through up to 0.2m of topsoil which overlay a mid brown sandy clay subsoil up to 0.4m thick, and which may have formed through the ploughing flat of ridge and furrow, although no extant remains of this were noted. The trench contained land drains, either of the 'horseshoe' shaped ceramic variety, or thin channels filled with dark angular gravels.

3.2.2 The subsoil overlay the natural geology which generally consisted of bright orange brown gravel rich clays with outcrops of blue-brown mudstone.

3.2.3 The area remained dry throughout the course of the excavation.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits (Fig. 2)

3.3.1 The excavation contained one pit in the southern corner and one posthole in the western part of the trench. Three tree boles were also investigated. All features were cut into the natural clays.

3.4 Description of features

3.4.1 Pit 901 (Fig. 2, Section 900. Plate 2) was oval in shape, 0.8m wide, 1m long and 0.2m deep. The pit had steep sides and a flat base, and contained two fills. Fill 902 was a charcoal rich deposit containing numerous pottery sherds from the same vessel. This fill was 100% sampled for environmental remains. This was overlain by Fill 903 which was a sterile grey / brown silty clay.

3.4.2 Posthole 904 (Fig. 2, Section 901) was circular in shape, 0.4m in diameter and 0.1m deep. It contained a single fill (905) of grey silty clay, no finds were recovered.

3.4.3 Tree bole 906 was oval in shape, 0.6m wide, 1.2m long and 0.14m deep. It contained a single fill (907) of grey silty clay with a thin lens of charcoal, no finds were recovered.

3.4.4 Tree bole 908 was oval in shape, 0.9m wide, 1m long and 0.2m deep. It contained a single fill (909) of grey / brown silty clay, no finds were recovered.

3.4.5 Tree bole 910 was oval in shape, 0.4m wide, 0.5m long and 0.1m deep. It contained a single fill (911) of grey / brown silty clay, no finds were recovered.

3.5 Finds

Pottery

By Lisa Brown

3.5.1 Context 902, the primary fill of Pit 901, contained numerous sherds belonging to a very large carinated jar with weak, elongated, upstanding rim and kick base. The vessel has been modified at some point after firing, with a small perforation bored through just below the carination. The fabric is tempered with very coarse grade quartz sand, with



additional rare larger inclusions of quartzite. The vessel probably dates to the Early Iron Age.

- 3.5.2 A single rim sherd from a further vessel was also recorded from context 902. The fabric was finer than that noted from the vessel described above but still incorporated coarse sand. The rim is upstanding and flattened on the top and may belong to a flaring rim bowl dating to the Early Iron Age.

3.6 Environmental summary

- 3.6.1 A full report on the environmental evidence is presented in Appendix B.
- 3.6.2 The entire primary fill deposit (902) of Pit 901 was sampled for charred remains and artefacts. The potential for this sample to provide information about the environment or the agricultural regime at the site is low. A single, poorly preserved cereal grain that was present is likely to represent background wind blown material. The composition of the flot is comparable to that obtained from the pit in the earlier evaluation (OA April 2012) in that it's charred material was almost entirely charcoal, with only one potentially charred seed present.



4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 4.1.1 Ground conditions were good, and archaeological features were, where present, easy to identify with edge definition clear on excavation.

4.2 Excavation objectives and results

- 4.2.1 The excavation investigated a significant area immediately adjacent to the find of a pit in the previous evaluation. A further pit and a posthole were fully investigated and recorded and dating and environmental evidence retrieved.

4.3 Interpretation

- 4.3.1 Pit 901 was similar in character to the pit identified in Trench 5 of the evaluation and while Pit 506 could only be loosely dated to the Iron Age / Roman period Pit 901 produced positive dating evidence placing it in the Early Iron Age. The two pits are nearly 30m apart so although there has clearly been some activity on the site in the past it appears to be quite limited.
- 4.3.2 Posthole 904 was undated but as it was not associated with further postholes it does not indicate the presence of a significant structure but may be part of a fence line.
- 4.3.3 There was a broad correlation between the magnetic anomalies noted in the geophysical survey and the outcrops of mudstone natural which could be seen more clearly in the open excavation area than in the more limited evaluation trenches and therefore similar geophysical results are not thought to represent archaeological features.



APPENDIX B. EXCAVATION DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Excavation (Trench 9)						
General description				Orientation	NE-SW	
Excavation trench consisted of soil and subsoil overlying a natural deposit of clay. Cut into the clay were one pit, one posthole and three tree boles.				Avg. depth (m)	0.6	
				Width (m)	32	
				Length (m)	31.6	
Contexts						
Context no	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
900	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
901	Cut	0.8	0.2	Pit	-	-
902	Fill	0.7	0.05	Pit fill	Pottery	Early Iron Age
903	Fill	0.8	0.15	Pit fill	-	-
904	Cut	0.4	0.1	Posthole	-	-
905	Fill	0.4	0.1	Posthole fill	-	-
906	Cut	0.6	0.14	Tree bole	-	-
907	Fill	0.6	0.14	Tree bole fill	-	-
908	Cut	0.9	0.2	Tree bole	-	-
909	Fill	0.9	0.2	Tree bole fill	-	-
910	Cut	0.4	0.1	Tree bole	-	-
911	Fill	0.4	0.1	Tree bole fill	-	-
912	Layer	-	0.4	Subsoil	-	-
913	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil	-	-



APPENDIX C. ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

C.1 Environmental sample

By Julia Meen

Introduction

- C.1.1 An environmental sample was taken for the recovery of charred plant remains and artefacts during the excavation. Sample <900> was taken from context (902) and was the entire primary fill of Pit 901. It was a light yellowish brown (2.5Y 6/3) sandy clay loam, with darker mottling. Sherds belonging to two ceramic vessels were excavated from this context and given an Early Iron Age date.

Methodology

- C.1.2 Sample <900>, which was 18L in volume, was processed by water flotation using a modified Siraf style flotation machine. The flot was collected on a 250µm mesh and the heavy residues were sieved to 500µm and dried in a heated room, after which the residues were sorted by eye for artefacts and ecofactual remains. The dried flot was scanned for plant remains using a binocular microscope at approximately x15 magnification and identifications made with reference to published guides and the comparative seed collection held at OAS. Plant nomenclature follows Stace (2010).

Results

Charred Plant Remains

- C.1.3 The sample produced a flot of 100ml, 50% of which was scanned. Almost all of the flot was composed of charcoal, much of which was fragmented. However, occasional pieces greater than 4mm in size were noted. Several further items of charcoal were extracted from the >4mm heavy residue. A single, poorly preserved, indeterminate cereal grain was noted, and the weed seed assemblage was limited to a single charred seed of sedge (*Carex* sp.). Modern root was common, and a modern beetle elytra was noted.

Finds

- C.1.4 Abundant fragmented prehistoric pottery was recovered from this sample. Much of the fine residue was composed of very small fragments of abraded pottery.

Discussion and Recommendations

- C.1.5 The potential for this sample to provide information about the environment or the agricultural regime at the site is low. The single, poorly preserved cereal grain that was present is likely to represent background wind blown material. The composition of the flot is comparable to that obtained from the earlier evaluation (OA April 2012). That sample similarly contained almost entirely charcoal, with only one potentially charred seed present.



APPENDIX D. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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APPENDIX E. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Land off the A5/A428, Junction 18 of the M1, Crick, Northamptonshire. Archaeological Excavation Report (Trench 9)

Site code: CRDI 12

Grid reference: SP 5706 7304

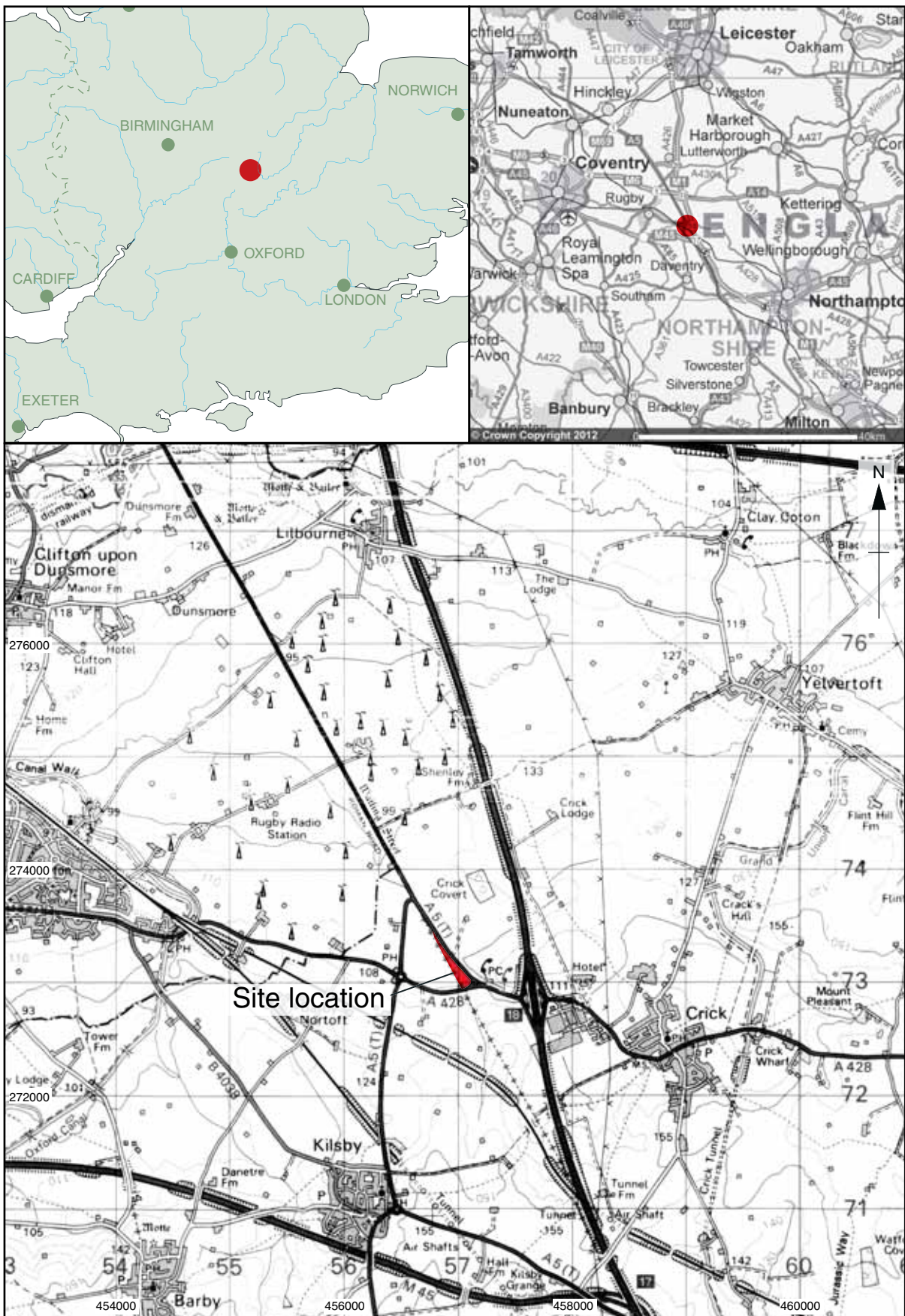
Type: Excavation

Date and duration: 23rd to 25th October 2012

Area of site: Excavation area 32 x 31.6m within 1.625 hectare development site

Summary of results: This excavation followed an 8 trench evaluation of the site which had been carried out in April 2012 and was required to investigate the possibility of further features in the vicinity of Trench 5 of that evaluation. In the excavation (Trench 9) the only archaeological feature of note was a pit containing charcoal and pottery of Early Iron Age date. An undated posthole and three tree boles were also recorded.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be combined with the records of the evaluation and deposited with the appropriate Northamptonshire Museum in due course, under an accession number to be confirmed.



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Figure 1: Site location

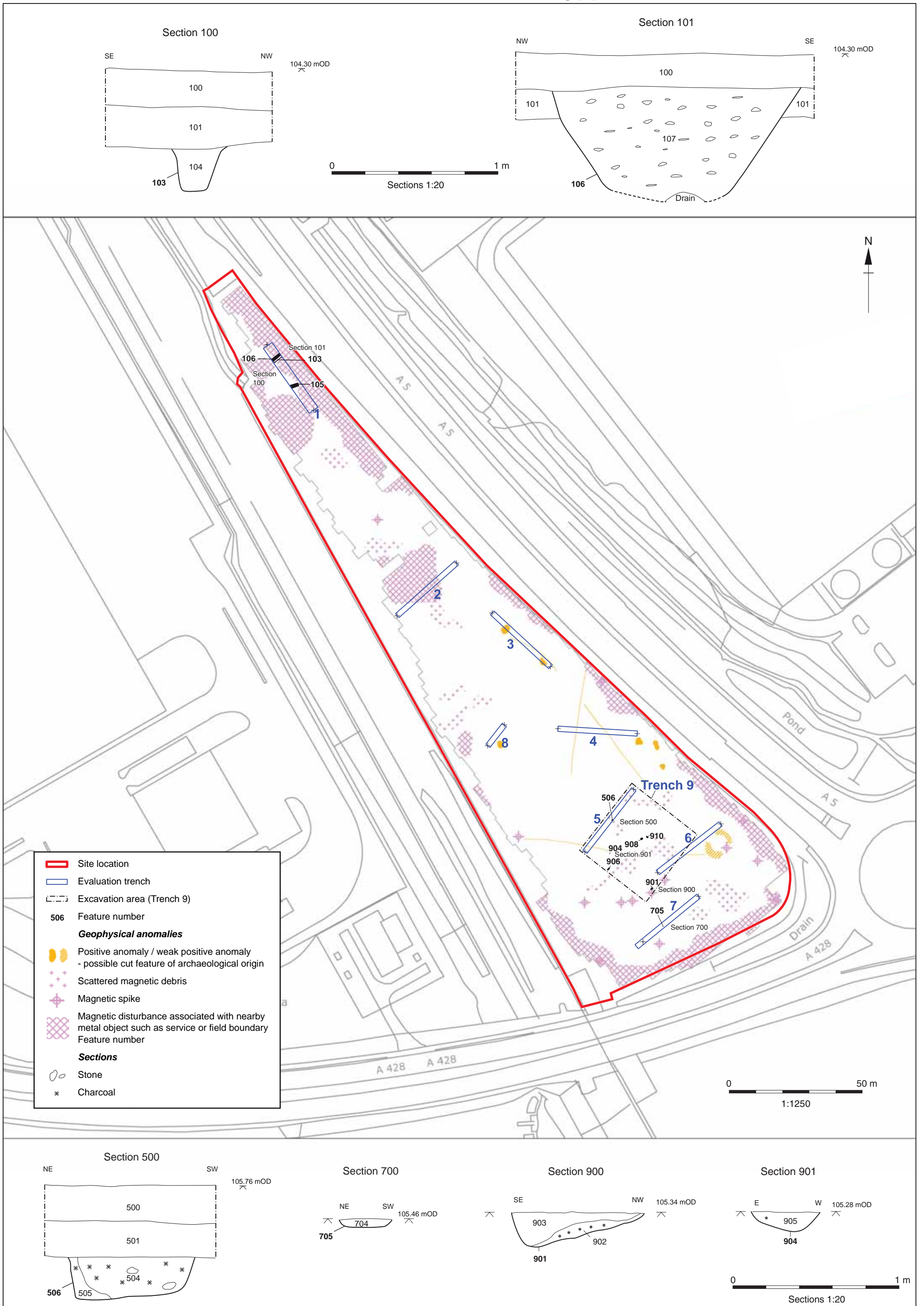


Figure 2: Results of Evaluation Phase with location of current Excavation Area (Trench 9) with features and sections 900 and 901



Plate 1: Excavation area, view to south



Plate 2: Pit 901



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