

DAMASK WAY, WARMINSTER, WILTSHIRE

(NGR ST 87766 44137)

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

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On behalf of:
Backhouse Housing

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archaeology

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The views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of AC archaeology and are presented in good faith on the basis of professional judgement and on information currently available.

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Contents

	Summary	
1.	Introduction	1
2.	Archaeological background	1
3.	Aims	2
4.	Methodology	2
5.	Results	2
6.	The finds	6
7.	Comments	6
8.	Mitigation	7
9.	Sources consulted	8

List of Illustrations

Fig. 1:	Site location
Fig. 2:	Trench layout plan
Fig. 3:	Plans and photographs of Trenches 2 and 6
Fig. 4:	Plans and photographs of Trenches 7 and 8

SUMMARY

An archaeological trench evaluation, consisting of nine machine-excavated trenches, was undertaken by AC archaeology on land east of Damask Way, Warminster, Wiltshire (NGR ST 87766 44137) during March 2018. The investigation was undertaken following a geophysical survey. Previous archaeological investigations in the vicinity of the site had identified a small number of Neolithic pits. During the evaluation several archaeological features were revealed comprising ditches and gullies of probable Iron Age date, along with undated pit-like features. A small quantity of worked flints, of Neolithic date, was recovered from a deposit in one trench and may be associated with the nearby activity of this period in the adjacent site.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of an archaeological trench evaluation undertaken in 2018 by AC archaeology, on behalf of Greatworth Properties, on land adjacent to Damask Way, Warminster, Wiltshire (NGR ST 87766 44137; Fig. 1). The evaluation was requested by the Wiltshire Council Assistant County Archaeologist (WCACA) in a consultation response to an outline planning application (17/12348/OUT) for a proposed residential development. The current document is a revision of the earlier evaluation report (Brace 2018), and has been prepared to support a new outline application for a residential development by Backhouse Housing.
- 1.2 The application site is located to the east of Damask Way and approximately 1km south of Warminster town centre. The site covers c. 2.2 hectares of land situated on the southeast end of a small ridgeline situated to the northwest of the River Wylye. To the south there is an unnamed tributary of this river, and to the north The Wyre (or Were) that flows through Warminster town centre. The topography of the site falls from a height of c. 125m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at the northwest corner to 115m aOD along the east boundary. The north and south sides of the site also drop down slightly in these directions. Damask Way is a modern housing development situated on the ridgeline.
- 1.3 The underlying geology comprises Cretaceous sandstone of the Boyne Hollow Chert Member; no overlying superficial deposits are recorded (British Geological Survey online viewer 2026).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND (Fig. 2)

- 2.1 Previous archaeological work in the area has included a geophysical survey, trial trenching and small-scale excavations of the adjacent residential development (Robinson 2012). This work revealed several features including two Neolithic pits (Wiltshire Historic Environment Record entries MWI75280 and MWI175282). Other entries in the Wiltshire Historic Environment Record further away from the site include findspots ranging in date from the Neolithic to medieval periods, together with ring ditches and hut circles identified through geophysical survey. In addition, numerous medieval and post-medieval remains relating to the town of Warminster and its surroundings have been recorded in the area.
- 2.2 As part of the 2017 application, a geophysical survey was undertaken in February 2018 (Lefort Geophysics 2018). Fig. 2 summarises the results. Few anomalies of archaeological potential were identified, although a number of trends and possible features and deposits were noted.

3. AIMS

- 3.1 The evaluation was undertaken to determine, as far as reasonably possible, the location, extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any buried archaeological remains present on the site.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The investigation was undertaken following advice from the WCACA, and in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' then applicable *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*, as well as a *Written Scheme of Investigation* prepared by AC archaeology (Clark 2018) that was approved prior to commencement by the WCACA.
- 4.2 The investigations comprised the excavation of nine trenches, totalling 250m in length, each no more than 1.9m wide. The trenches were positioned on the ground using a Leica Viva GPS and based on a geo-referenced plan of the geophysical survey results (Fig. 2). All site levels relate to Ordnance Datum.
- 4.3 All soil removal was undertaken under the control and direction of the site archaeologist. Topsoil was removed by a rubber tracked excavator, using a wide toothless bucket, and stored alongside each trench, separated from any subsoil as necessary. Mechanical excavation ceased at the level at which archaeological deposits, features or the natural geology was exposed.
- 4.4 All trenches were recorded using the standard AC archaeology *pro forma* recording system.
- 4.5 The archive has been prepared using the site code ACW1096 and is currently stored at the offices of AC archaeology in Bradninch, Devon.

5. RESULTS (Figs 3-4)

Introduction

- 5.1 Of the nine trenches excavated five revealed evidence for buried archaeological remains. These comprise linear features probably representing former field boundaries or forms of enclosure. Additional features were also present, including a number of pit-like features and deposit containing prehistoric flints was revealed in Trench 4. Some trenches contained features that, upon excavation, were not considered to be of archaeological origin. These are not shown on the accompanying plans. Negative trenches are summarised in Table 6.
- 5.2 A selection of photographs is included as figures associated with the relevant drawn plans on Figs 3 and 4.

Trench 2 (Plan Fig. 3a, Photograph Fig. 3b)

- 5.3 This trench was aligned approximately northwest to southeast, and was positioned on ground sloping down to the north. The natural was exposed at a maximum depth of 500mm below topsoil and subsoil. Two features – a linear and a pit-like feature – were exposed cutting into the natural. The recorded layer sequence is summarised in Table 1.

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
200	0 – 300mm	Mid brown silty sandy clay. Soft and loose with rare stones.	Topsoil and turf
201	300 – 500mm	Mid yellow-brown silty sand. Soft and loose with occasional flint / limestone	Subsoil
202	500mm +	Mottled yellow-brown sand with silt with patches of limestone	Natural geology

Table 1: Trench 2 deposit sequence

Feature F203

- 5.4** This feature was linear in plan, on a north-east to south-west alignment. It was no more than 1.35m wide by 0.60m deep, tapering to the north-east, and had a v-shaped profile with steep sides and a narrow, rounded base. The ditch contained three distinct deposits of sandy silts (contexts 204-206). The primary fill (context 206) contained large sandstone inclusions, concentrated at the base. This feature represents the remnants of a linear ditch and is similar in profile to F606 in Trench 6; albeit on a differing alignment, and with no indication from the geophysical survey that they form part of the same feature. The tapering to the north-east may suggest proximity to a terminus or a change of profile. A small fragment of worked flint was recovered from the fill of this feature (context 206).

- 5.5** A small pit-like feature was investigated approximately 5m northwest of F203. It had an overall diameter of 0.60m and was approximately 0.20m deep, and has a slightly unusual profile with a sloping edge towards the south-west, not wholly dissimilar to F703 (following full excavation). No finds or dating evidence was recovered from this feature, and it was interpreted as being of natural origin.

Trench 4

- 5.6** This trench was aligned east-northeast to west-southwest, and was positioned on ground sloping down to the south. The natural geology was exposed at a maximum depth of 550mm below topsoil and subsoil. This trench was located in an area where disturbance is evident on the geophysical survey, likely a result of the recent construction works to the north. In addition, approximately 8m of the trench was unexcavated due to the location of a newly installed inspection chamber positioned 10m to the south of the trench. At the western end of the trench a quantity of worked flint was recovered from a deposit exposed in the south-facing section. The recorded layer sequence is summarised in Table 2.

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
400	0 – 300mm	Dark grey-brown silty clay with building debris	Topsoil and turf
401	300 – 500mm	Mid yellow-brown sandy silt with sandstone	Subsoil
402	500mm +	Mottled yellow-brown/grey sands with sandstone	Natural geology

Table 2: Trench 4 deposit sequence

Layer F403

- 5.7** This deposit was recorded in section – between 1-2m wide – approximately 2m from the western end of the trench. It was approximately 0.10m deep and lay directly under the subsoil (401). No distinct feature was visible in plan, but a significant amount of worked flint was recovered from the layer, suggestive of possible archaeological activity, uphill to the north, perhaps within the existing Damask Way residential development.

Trench 6 (Plan Fig. 3c, Photographs Figs 3d-3f)

- 5.8** This trench was aligned north to south, and was positioned on fairly flat ground. The natural geology was exposed at a maximum depth of 400mm below topsoil and subsoil where linear features and a pit were exposed. The recorded layer sequence is summarised in Table 3.

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
600	0 – 300mm	Mid brown silty clay. Loose with common sandstones	Topsoil and turf
601	300mm – 450mm	Mid greyish/green-yellow sandy clay. Friable with common sandstone	Subsoil
602	450mm+	Light greenish-yellow sand with common sandstone	Natural geology

Table 3: Trench 6 deposit sequence

Feature F604

- 5.9** This feature was linear in plan, on a north-west to south-east alignment. It measured up to 0.40m wide by 0.15m deep, and had a gradual break of slope with concave sides and a rounded base. The ditch contained a single fill (context 603), composed of mid yellow-brown sandy clay. Feature F604 was located to the south of F606, and may have been contemporaneous; both represent the truncated remnants of ditches or gullies. They broadly align with F805 in Trench 8, although do not appear to relate to any of the 'trends' highlighted on the geophysical survey. It is likely to denote a form of drainage or land division. A fragment of worked flint (round scraper) was recovered from the fill of this feature.

Feature F606

- 5.10** This feature was linear in plan, on a north-west to south-west alignment, and was located approximately 2m south of F608/F610. It measured 1.04m wide by 0.62m deep, and had a v-shaped profile with steep sides and a narrow, rounded base. The feature contained a single fill (context 605) of sandy silt. This feature represents the remnants of a linear ditch and is very similar in profile to F203 in Trench 2. A small fragment of worked flint (flake) was recovered from the fill of this feature.

Features F608/F610

- 5.11** These comprise two pit-like features located approximately 2m north of linear ditch F606. Both were only partially exposed within the trench. Feature F608 was broadly circular in plan, approximately 0.90m in diameter and 0.27m deep. It had a u-shaped profile and a rounded base. Cut by F608, feature F610 was also sub-circular in plan with a slight north-east to south-west alignment. It had a recorded length of 0.95m and was 0.30m deep. Its profile was similar to F608 with a slightly stepped edge to the northeast and a rounded/flat base. Both pits contained single sandy clay fills (607 and 609) but no finds. The overall function and extent of these two intercutting features was not established.

Trench 7 (Plan Fig. 4a, Photograph Fig. 4b)

- 5.12** This trench was aligned northeast to southwest, and was positioned on ground sloping to the southwest. The natural was exposed at a maximum depth of 480mm below topsoil and subsoil, with two pit-like features present cutting into the natural geology. The recorded layer sequence is summarised in Table 4.

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
700	0 – 200mm	Mid grey-brown clay loam with sand. Friable with rare limestone	Topsoil and turf
701	200 - 310mm	Red-brown clayey sand with occasional limestone	Subsoil
702	310mm+	Mottled red-yellow and yellow-brown sandy clay with common limestone.	Natural geology

Table 4: Trench 7 deposit sequence

Feature F703

- 5.13** This oval-shaped feature had a maximum width of 0.60m and was a minimum of 0.20m deep. It had an unusual profile with an undercutting edge to the south; part of the sloping

base continuing beyond the extent of the trench. The feature contained a single fill (704), comprising a dark brown sandy clay. This feature may represent a pit-like feature or alternatively be natural in origin. Its profile and fills were not wholly dissimilar to the pit-like feature observed in Trench 2. An additional feature investigated to the northeast of F703 was found to be subsoil in a hollow no more than 0.10m deep, and was not considered to be man-made.

Trench 8 (Plan Fig. 4c, Photographs Figs 4d-4e)

- 5.14** This trench was aligned north to south, and was positioned on ground sloping to the south. The natural geology was exposed at a maximum depth of 400mm below topsoil and subsoil, with two linear features exposed cutting into this natural. The recorded layer sequence is summarised in Table 5.

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
800	0 – 250mm	Mid grey-brown silty clay with rare stones	Topsoil and turf
801	250 - 400mm	Dark yellow-brownish grey sandy loam with common stones	Subsoil
802	400mm +	Mottled yellow-brown and green-grey sands with sandstone	Natural geology

Table 5: Trench 8 deposit sequence

Feature F803

- 5.15** This feature was linear in plan, on an east to west alignment. It measured up to 0.60m wide and was 0.40m deep, with a steep sloping profile and a concave base. It does not relate to any of the ‘trends’ highlighted on the geophysical survey. Seven fragments of Iron Age pottery (30g) and a small quantity of worked flint were recovered from the fill of this feature.

Feature F805

- 5.16** This feature was linear in plan, on a northwest to southeast alignment (with a slight curve to the north). It measured up to 0.50m wide by 0.13m deep, and had a gradual break of slope with concave sides and a rounded base. The feature contained a single fill (context 806), composed of dark yellow-brown sandy clay with silt. Feature F805 was located to the north of F803, and may be contemporaneous; it represents the truncated remnants of a gully. It appears to align with F604 in Trench 6, although does not relate to any of the ‘trends’ highlighted on the geophysical survey. No finds were recovered from the fill of this feature.

Negative Trenches

- 5.17** A summary of the negative trenches is presented in Table 6.

Trench	Depth below ground	Contexts	Description
1	0 - 250mm 250 – 350mm 350mm+	Topsoil/grass - context 100 Subsoil – context 101 Natural - context 102	Approximate northwest-southeast alignment and situated in pasture field on ground sloping down gently to the north. Topsoil composed of mid brown silty clay loam. Subsoil composed of yellowish brown silty sand containing occasional sandstone/chert pieces and possibly alluvial in nature. Natural composed of varying mottled sand/ sandstone/chert.
3	0 - 200mm 200 – 300mm 300mm+	Topsoil/grass - context 300 Subsoil – context 301 Natural - context 302	North to south aligned and situated in pasture field on ground sloping down gently to the south. Topsoil composed of mid brown silty clay loam. Subsoil composed of yellowish brown silty sand containing occasional sandstone/chert pieces and possibly alluvial in nature. Natural composed of varying mottled sand/ sandstone/chert.
5	0 - 250mm 250 – 450mm 450mm+	Topsoil/grass - context 500 Subsoil - context 501 Natural - context 502	Approximate northwest-southeast alignment and situated in pasture field on ground sloping down gently, becoming steeper to the south/southwest. Topsoil composed of mid brown silty clay loam containing much modern building debris. Subsoil composed of light greyish brown silty sand containing occasional sandstone/chert pieces and possibly alluvial in nature. Natural composed of varying mottled sand/ sandstone/chert.
9	0 - 250mm 250 – 400mm 400mm+	Topsoil/grass - context 900 Subsoil - context 901 Natural - context 902	Approximate east-west alignment and situated in pasture field on ground sloping down gently to the east. Topsoil composed of mid brown silty clay loam. Subsoil composed of yellowish brown sandy clay containing common sandstone/chert pieces. Natural composed of varying mottled sand/ sandstone/chert.

Table 6: summary of negative trenches

6. THE FINDS

Introduction and methodology

6.1 All finds site have been retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. Finds have been quantified according to material type within each context. The assemblage was then scanned by context to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented. This information was recorded onto a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The pottery was further examined in order to identify fabrics and spot dates to establish the likely source of this material.

6.2 A small number of finds was recovered during the evaluation and comprises prehistoric material recovered from Trenches 2, 4, 6 and 8.

Flint

6.3 A total of twenty-two pieces of worked flint was recovered from the evaluation, the majority (15) of which was from layer (403). The material is generally fresh and unpatinated chalk flint. The assemblage includes a relatively high proportion of blades, three of which are retouched, (from layer 403), and scrapers, three of which are also from (403). The presence of the blades and scrapers may be indicative of a later Neolithic technology.

Iron Age pottery

6.4 A total of seven sherds of pottery, weighing 30g, was recovered from context (804). The sherds may derive from a single vessel and are in a hard fired, reduced, sandy fabric. There is no surface decoration, but the material is considered likely to be of later Iron Age date.

7. COMMENTS

7.1 The evaluation has demonstrated that archaeological features and deposits broadly survive throughout the site, with a notable concentration of deposits in the central portion. However,

the results of the evaluation do not strongly correlate with the results of the geophysical survey, and the extent of buried features cannot be extrapolated from either the geophysical survey or the evaluation.

- 7.2** Linear ditches were recorded in Trench 2, 6, and 8. These do not relate to a former historic field boundary which was identified during the geophysical survey, and while the exact function of the ditches is unknown, they are likely to have earlier origins, possibly relating to prehistoric land division or enclosure. The limited finds assemblage may indicate a later prehistoric (later Iron Age) date for the features. In addition to the linear ditches at least two smaller gullies were recorded in Trench 6 and Trench 8. Although no finds were recovered from these features, their alignment and proximity to other archaeological features suggests they may be contemporaneous.
- 7.3** A number of small pit-like features were recorded in Trench 6 and Trench 7 and are tentatively ascribed as having an archaeological origin. However, they had slightly unusual, sloping profiles and were devoid of any finds, and may therefore be of natural origin.
- 7.4** Despite the recent disturbance to the southwestern part of the site, a quantity of worked flint was recovered in Trench 4 (403). This comprised 15 pieces of worked flint from beneath the subsoil and of possible Neolithic date. These finds may represent evidence for nearby activity (rather than being *in situ* here), and may be associated with a colluvial deposit representing material brought down from the higher ground to the north where (within the existing Damask Way development) Neolithic features had previously been found.
- 7.5** The evaluation results have generally supported the results of previous archaeological investigations within the existing Damask Way development, in that the ridgeline containing the application site has evidence for prehistoric activity. No new Neolithic features were identified although a deposit containing flints of this period was found. Elsewhere a number of ditches were exposed, their alignments generally being different to the trends on the geophysical survey of the site. The limited finds are all prehistoric and the pottery indicates a late Iron Age date for one feature.

8. MITIGATION

- 8.1** Following the production of the initial evaluation report in 2018 the WCACO provided the following comments, and recommended that an archaeological condition be placed on the grant of consent:

In line with the National Planning Policy Framework, I recommend that a programme of archaeological mitigation be made a condition of planning permission. This is in line with the NPPF policy 141, to require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact and to make this evidence publicly accessible.

- 8.2** These comments would still be relevant under the current *NPPF* (paragraph 218), and a programme of archaeological investigations, reporting and archiving (in accordance with the relevant Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard* and *Guidance* documents) would be appropriate. No further intrusive investigations are required to support the current application, and the proposed mitigation would take place after granting of a future Reserved Matters application. The scope of the investigations could be drawn up in conjunction with WCACO during the preparation of such a Reserved Matters application.

9. SOURCES CONSULTED

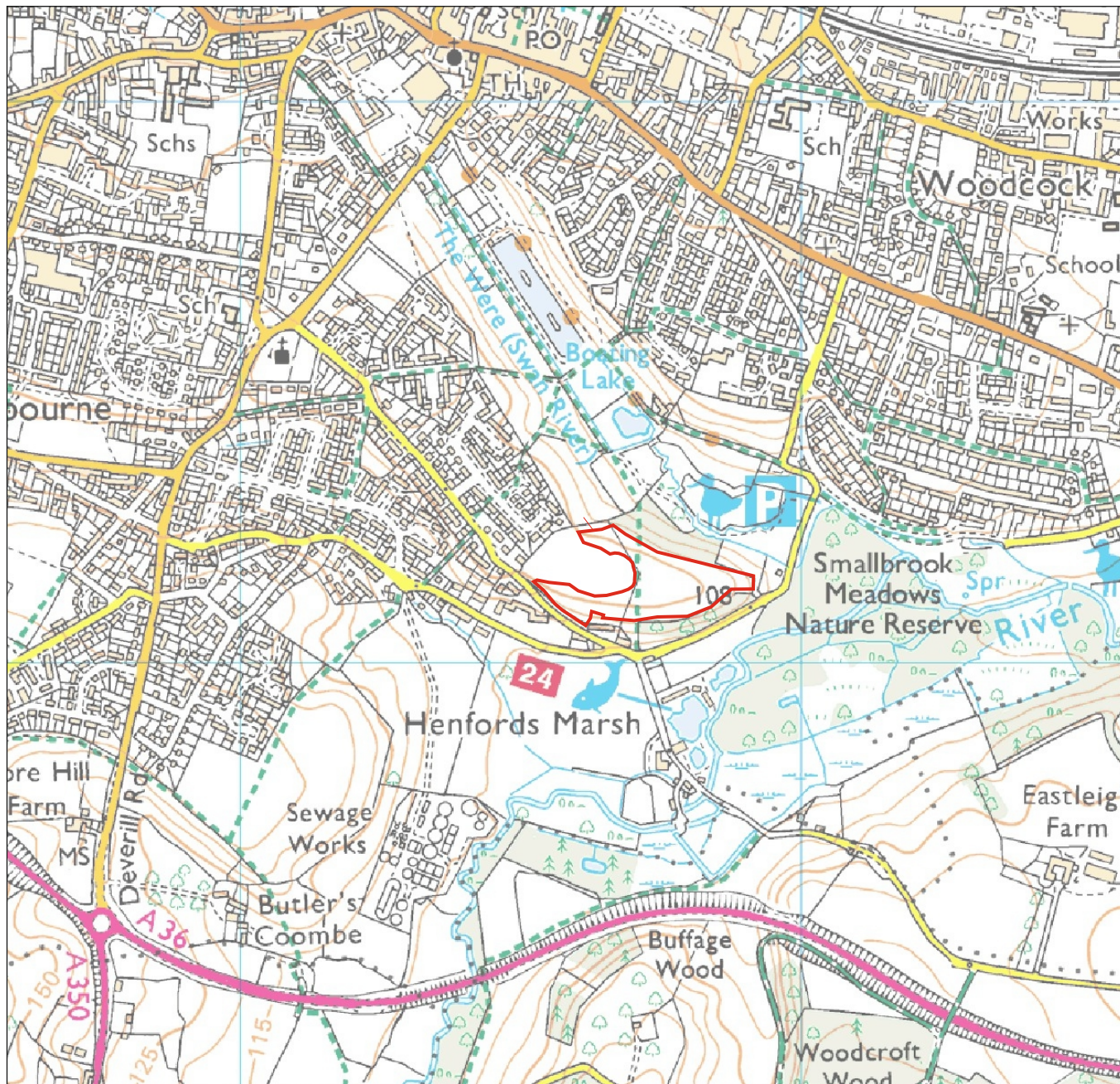
Brace, D., 2018. *Land at Henfords Marsh, Warminster, Wiltshire, Results of an archaeological trench evaluation, NGR 387725, 144150*, AC archaeology doc. no. **ACW1096/2/0**.

British Geological Survey, <http://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/>

Clark, R., 2018. *Land at Henfords Marsh, Warminster, Wiltshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological evaluation, NGR 387725, 144150*. AC archaeology doc. no. **ACW1096/1/1**.

Lefort Geophysics, 2018. *Land off Upper Marsh Road, Warminster, Wiltshire: Gradiometer Survey Report*. Lefort Geophysics doc. ref. **18-0002.01**.

Robinson, S., 2012. *Proposed Residential Development on Land East of Damask Way, Smallbrook Lane, Warminster, Wiltshire, NGR ST87604417, Results of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching*. AC archaeology doc. no. **ACW465/2/1**.



Key



Site location

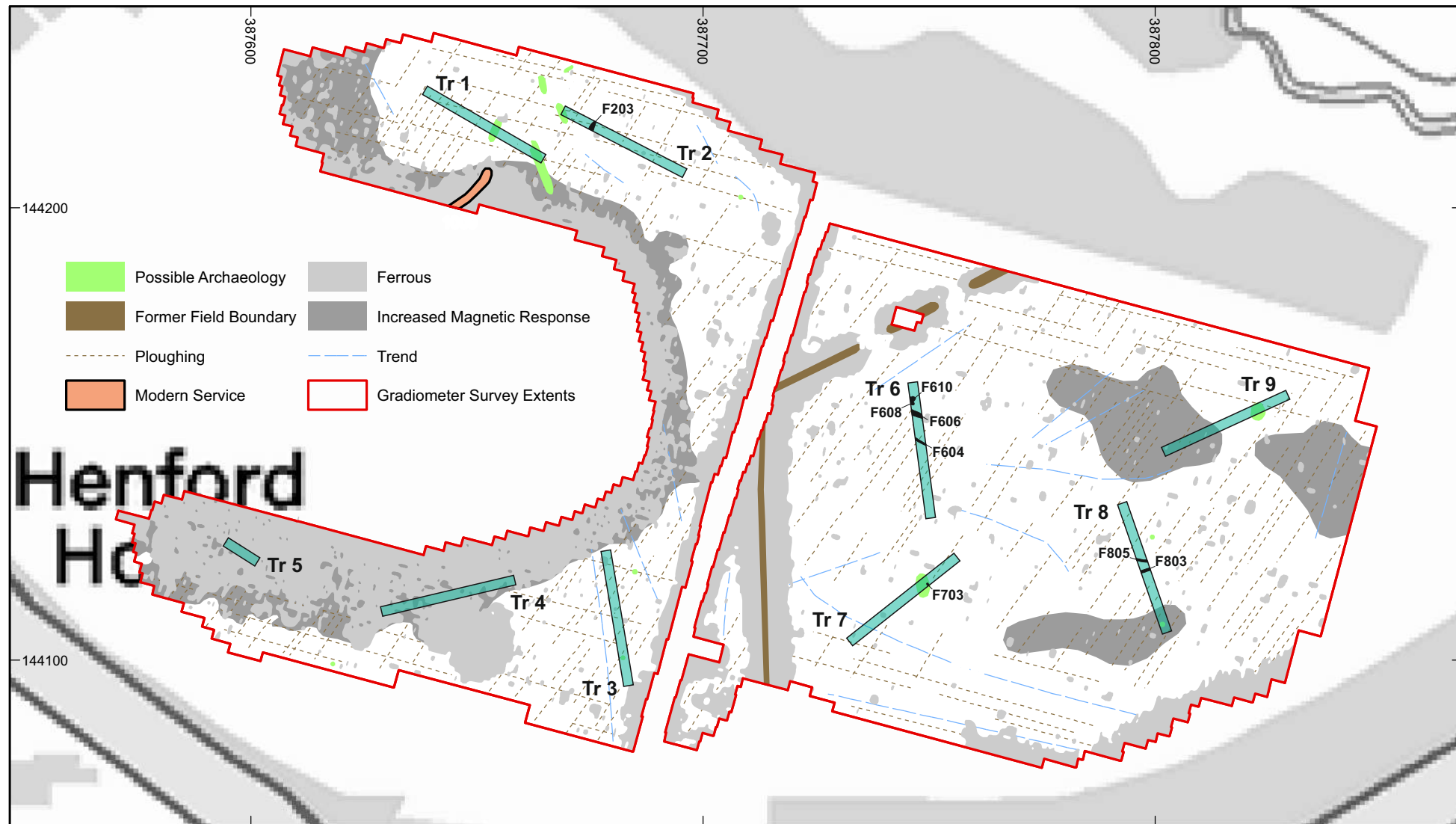


PROJECT

Damask Way, Warminster, Wiltshire

TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location

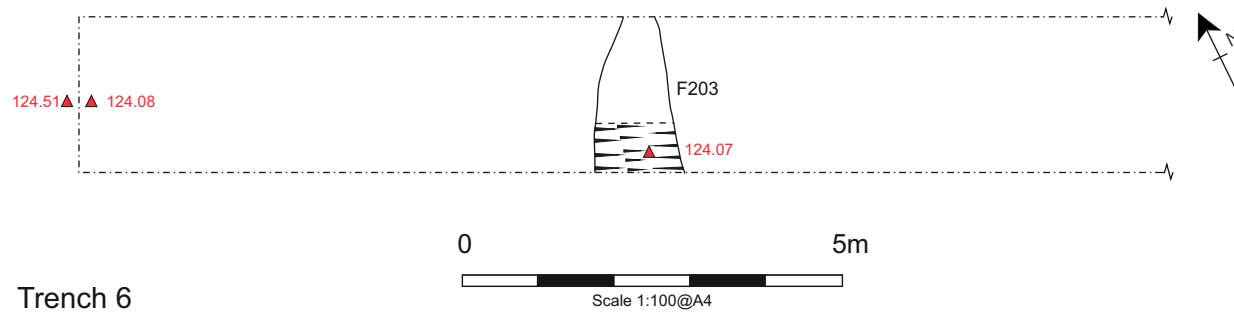


Based on the plan prepared by Lefort Geophysics



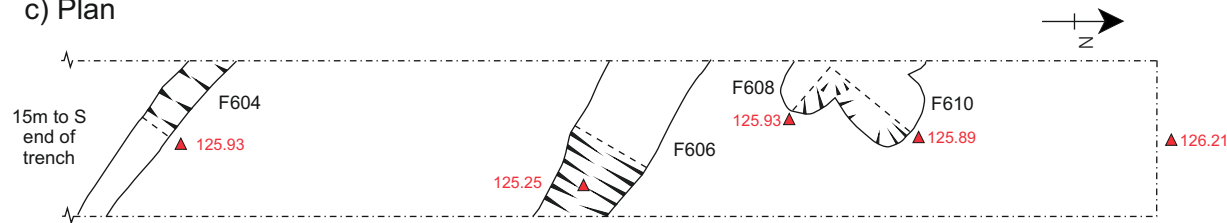
Trench 2

a) Plan



Trench 6

c) Plan



b) SW facing section of F203 (scale 1m)



d) E facing section of F604 (scale 1m)

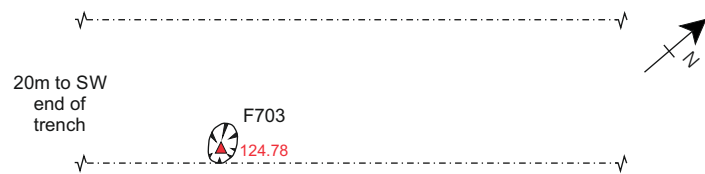


e) W facing section of F606 (scale 1m)



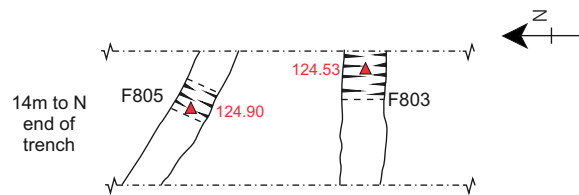
f) NE facing section of F608 and F610 (scale 1m)

Trench 7 a) Plan



b) NW facing section of of F703 (scale 0.2m)

Trench 8 c) Plan



d) W facing section of F803
(scale 0.5m)



e) NW facing section of F805 (scale 0.5m)



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