

LAND OFF WEST ASHTON ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, WILTSHIRE

(Centred on NGR ST 86875 57473)

Results of archaeological investigations

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

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On behalf of:
Hills Homes Development Ltd

Report No: ACA0568/3/1

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

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation was undertaken by AC Archaeology and Heritage during June 2026 on land off West Ashton Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire (centred on NGR ST 86875 57473). The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of 10 trenches totalling approximately 300m in length, with each trench 1.85m wide. Trenches were positioned to target a series of linear anomalies interpreted from a previous geophysical survey.

In each of the trenches the natural subsoil was exposed beneath subsoil and topsoil. Potential features shown as linear anomalies on the interpreted geophysical survey results were shown to relate to modern land drains or were not encountered.

The western part of the site contained a spread of material within the subsoil that included heat-affected clay, charcoal and clinker, which was dated from finds recovered to the 19th century. An assemblage of finds recovered from subsoil in each of the trenches comprised a piece of prehistoric worked flint, 18 sherds of post-medieval pottery, two shards of post-medieval glass, seven clay tobacco-pipe fragments, and a piece of ceramic tile.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation was undertaken by AC Archaeology and Heritage during June 2026 on land off West Ashton Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire (centred on NGR ST 86875 57473). The work was required to provide supporting information for a forthcoming planning application, following consultation with the Wiltshire Council Assistant County Archaeologist (hereafter WCACA).
- 1.2 The site is located on the current southeast extent of Trowbridge and occupies part of a wider agricultural field (Fig. 1; Plates 1-2). It is bounded by The Uplands residential property and associated gardens to the northwest, Trowbridge Lodge Park to the north, Ashton Road to the west, and a tree lined stream to the south. The site is situated at approximately 42m above Ordnance Datum on ground that slopes down gradually towards flat ground adjacent to the stream. The underlying solid geology comprises Jurassic mudstone of the Oxford Clay Formation. This is beneath superficial Quaternary alluvial deposits (British Geological Survey online viewer 2026).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site has been the subject of a desk-based assessment (McNicoll-Norbury 2026) and a geophysical survey (LeFort 2026). The desk-based assessment determined that there is known potential for post-medieval and modern archaeology associated with former field subdivisions, as well as the course of a former road in the southern part of the site (McNicoll-Norbury 2026). The desk-based assessment also acknowledged that there is moderate potential for Roman, Saxon and medieval activity based on the nearby settlements and proximity of recorded remains within the wider area.
- 2.2 The geophysical survey identified several anomalies of potential archaeological origin. A potential circular feature, located in the centre of the site, was tentatively thought to indicate prehistoric activity. Anomalies interpreted as representing a probable former field boundary and extensive ploughing activity across the site were also shown in the geophysical survey data (LeFort 2026).

3. AIMS

- 3.1 The aim of the archaeological trench evaluation was to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character, date and significance of any archaeological features, deposits and finds within the site. The results of the work will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent mitigation that may be required should planning consent be obtained.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Landgage Heritage (Brown 2026), a Project Design prepared by AC Archaeology and Heritage (Vinnels 2026), the Wiltshire Council Archaeology Service's *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Assessment and Fieldwork in Wiltshire and Swindon Borough* (2025), and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' documents *Standard for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2023a) and *Universal Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2023b).
- 4.2 The work comprised the machine excavation of 10 trenches totalling c. 300m in length, with each trench 1.85m wide. Trench locations are shown on Fig. 1 and were positioned to target anomalies identified from the previous geophysical survey (Lefort 2026).
- 4.3 All trenches were located with a Leica Netrover GPS accurate to 10mm. The removal of soils within the trenches was undertaken in 20cm spits (maximum) under the control and direction of the site archaeologist. Stripping by mechanical excavator ceased at the level at which archaeological deposits or natural subsoil was exposed.
- 4.4 All features and deposits revealed were recorded using the standard AC Archaeology and Heritage *pro forma* recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2* (revised August 2014). Detailed sections and plans were produced at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20, while all site levels relate to Ordnance Datum.

5. RESULTS (Fig. 1 Plates 1-6)

- 5.1 All trenches exposed natural subsoil, which comprised mid to light yellowish brown firm clay. This was present at a depth of between 0.26m and 0.38m below existing levels. It was overlain in each trench by a mid greyish brown silty clay subsoil and a dark greyish brown topsoil. No archaeological features were exposed in any of the trenches, with several of the targeted anomalies found to correspond with modern land drains. Tabulated context descriptions for all trenches are provided in Appendix 1. Context numbers are prefixed by the relevant trench number (e.g. 100 for Trench 1, 200 for Trench 2 etc.).
- 5.2 The subsoil in the trenches to the west of the site contained moderately common pieces and flecks of heat-affected clay, and occasional charcoal and clinker. These inclusions were principally noted in Trenches 1-5 as having the densest concentrations. Finds were recovered from the subsoil in all trenches except Trench 9, with these comprising a piece of prehistoric worked flint, 18 sherds of post-medieval pottery, two shards of post-medieval glass, seven clay tobacco-pipe fragments and a piece of ceramic tile.

6. THE FINDS *by Naomi Payne and Charlotte Coles*

6.1 Introduction

All finds recovered on site during the evaluation have been retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. They have been quantified according to material type within each context and the assemblage examined to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented. Small quantities of finds were hand-excavated from nine evaluation trenches. Almost all the finds are post-medieval in date and are of low significance. The collection is summarised in Appendix 2. This is Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Level 1 type (descriptive) report as per the online guidance *Toolkit for Specialist Reporting*, to provide information on the finds and their dating.

6.2 Lithics *by Naomi Payne*

A single piece of worked flint weighing 30g was recovered from the subsoil in Trench 2. This is a secondary flake of mottled light to dark flint with two small areas of nodule cortex. There is some retouch along both lateral edges, but this is not abrupt enough to classify the piece as a scraper. It can be broadly dated as Neolithic to Early Bronze Age.

6.3 Post-medieval pottery *by Naomi Payne*

In total, 18 sherds (134g) of post-medieval pottery were recovered from eight subsoil contexts. The sherds potentially span the 17th to 19th centuries, although most are at the latter end of this range. Fabrics and forms present are summarised in the following table.

Table 1. Summary of post-medieval pot by fabric and form

Fabric	Sherd count	Forms
Redware	3	Dish or bowl
Verwood	2	
English brown stoneware	2	?Flagon with strap handle (salt-glazed)
Bristol-type stoneware	1	
Black basalt ware	1	
Pearlware	1	
Refined white ware	8	Cup and plate with blue transfer-printed or sponged decoration, mocha ware mug or tankard
Total	18	

6.4 Glass *by Charlotte Coles*

Two shards (50g) of glass were recovered from two subsoil contexts. These are a piece of 20th century brown beer bottle glass from context 201 and a piece of clear 19th or 20th century bottle glass from context 601.

6.5 Fired clay *by Naomi Payne*

A single piece (27g) of fired clay was recovered from the subsoil in Trench 3. This has orange to orange-brown surfaces/margins and a reduced black core. There are no original surfaces present and no clear indication of original form or date.

6.6 Clay tobacco-pipe *by Charlotte Coles*

A total of seven pieces (16g) of clay pipe were recovered from three subsoil contexts. These are all undecorated stem pieces. One of the fragments from context 201 has a heel and therefore dates from the 17th century or the first half of the 18th.

6.7 Ceramic building material by Naomi Payne

A single fragment of tile weighing 180g was recovered from the subsoil in Trench 2. This is a corner piece of flat tile with a thickness of 20mm

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 In each of the trenches the natural subsoil was exposed was exposed at a depth of approximately 0.3m below existing levels and consistently shown to be overlain by subsoil and topsoil. Potential features interpreted as linear anomalies from the geophysical survey were found to relate to modern land drains or were not encountered.

6.2 The western part of the site contained a spread of material within the subsoil that included heat affected clay, charcoal and clinker. Its presence suggests the dumping of material in this part of the field, with the finds recovered providing a broadly 19th century date for this event.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The trial trench evaluation provided negative results with no archaeological features or pre-modern deposits exposed. Targeted geophysical anomalies were shown to relate to modern drainage or were not encountered.

7.2 The results therefore do not provide any evidence for any pre-modern activity within the area investigated.

8. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

8.1 An online OASIS entry has been completed using the unique identifier **543276**, which will include a digital copy of the approved version of this report.

8.2 This report represents the archive for the project.

9. SOURCES CONSULTED

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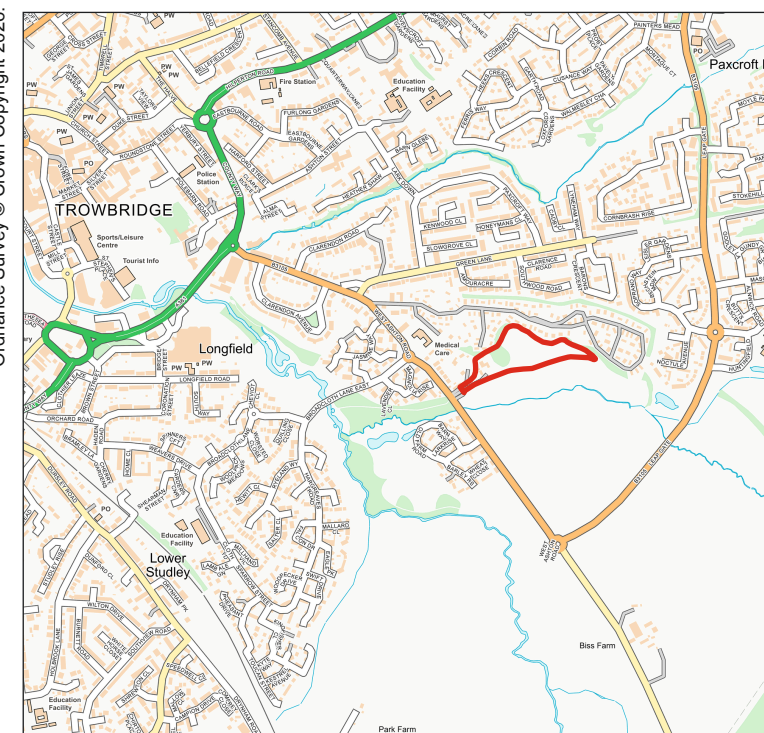
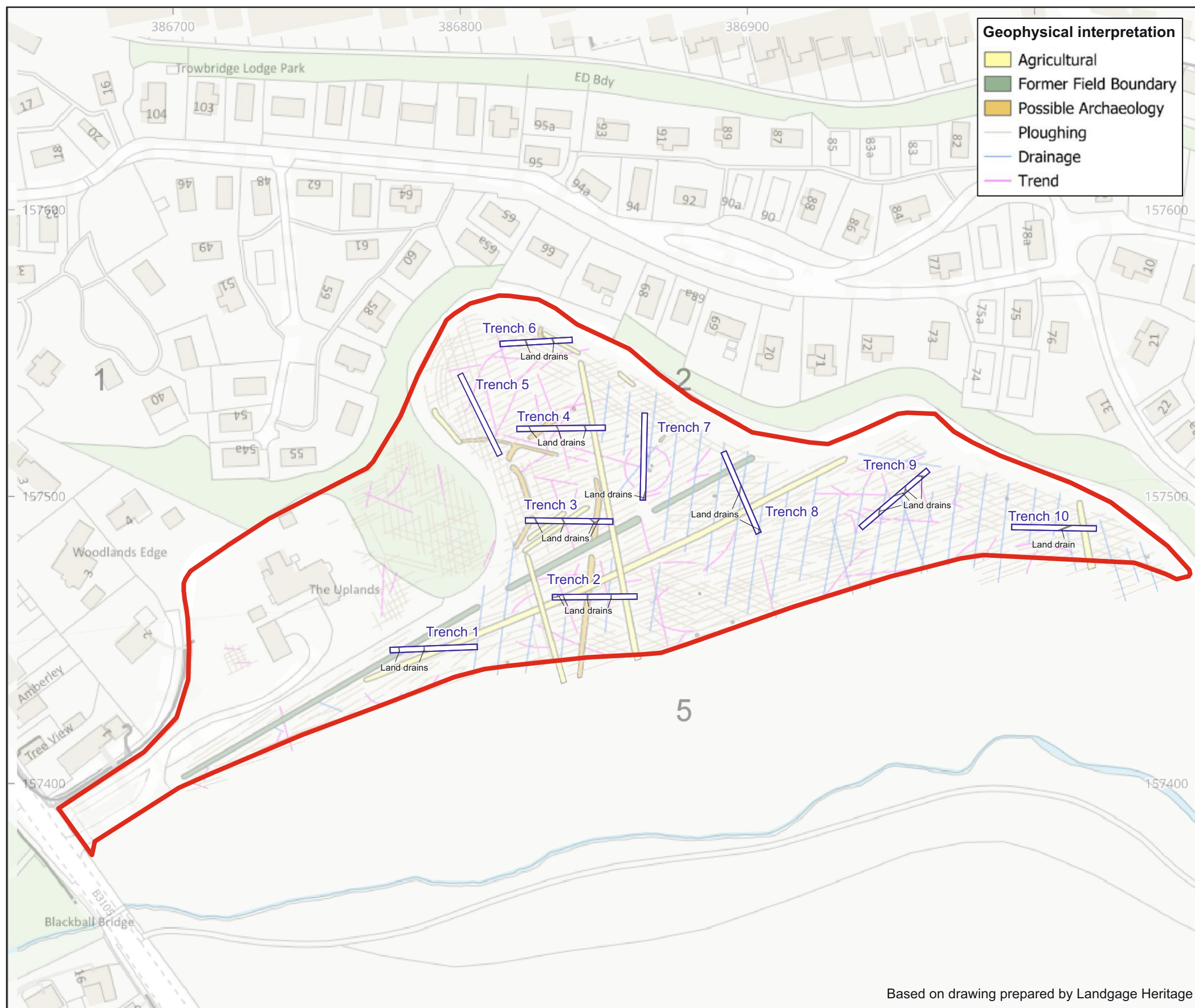
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PROJECT

Land off West Ashton Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire

Fig. 1: Location of site and excavated trenches in relation to geophysical survey interpretation



Plate 1: Working view during excavation of Trench 1. Looking northwest towards The Uplands



Plate 2: General view of site. Looking west with Trench 9 in foreground

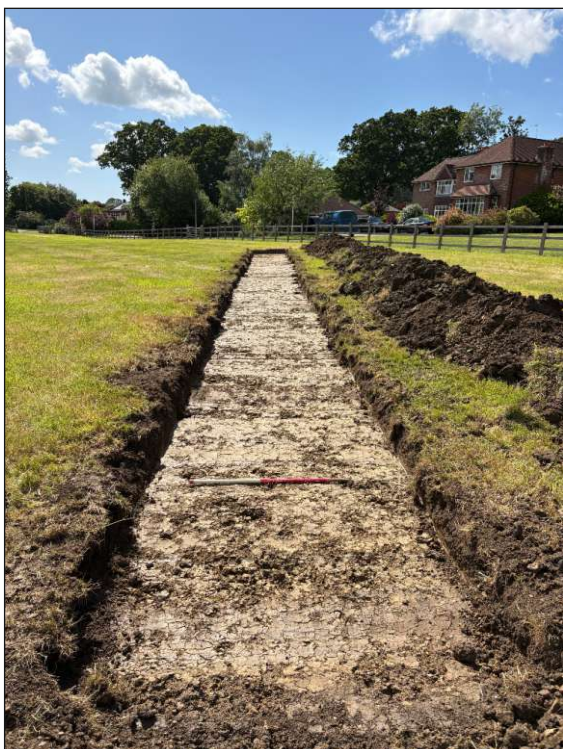


Plate 3: Trench 1. View to west (1m scale)



Plate 4: Trench 3, view to east (1m scale)



Plate 5: Trench 3, representative section.
View to south (0.5m scale)



Plate 6: Trench 9, view to northeast
(1m scale)

Appendix 1

Tabulated context descriptions by Trench

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 1		Long 30m	Wide 1.85m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s.	Interpretation	
100	Dark greyish brown clay loam	0-0.2m	Topsoil	
101	Mid greyish brown firm silty clay with common heat affected clay flecks, charcoal and clinker inclusions	0.2m-0.28m	Subsoil	
102	Mid-light yellowish brown firm clay	0.28m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 2		Long 29.5m	Wide 1.85m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s.	Interpretation	
200	Dark greyish brown clay loam	0-0.2m	Topsoil	
201	Mid greyish brown firm silty clay with common heat affected clay flecks, charcoal and clinker inclusions	0.2-0.26m+	Subsoil	
202	Mid-light yellowish brown firm clay	0.26m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 3		Long 30m	Wide 1.85m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s.	Interpretation	
300	Dark greyish brown clay loam	0-0.2m	Topsoil	
301	Mid greyish brown firm silty clay with common heat affected clay flecks, charcoal and clinker inclusions	0.2-0.3m	Subsoil	
302	Mid-light yellowish brown firm clay	0.3m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 4		Long 30m	Wide 1.85m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s.	Interpretation	
400	Dark greyish brown clay loam	0-0.24m	Topsoil	
401	Mid greyish brown firm silty clay with common heat affected clay flecks, charcoal and clinker inclusions	0.24-0.32m	Subsoil	
402	Mid-light yellowish brown firm clay	0.32m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 5		Long 30m	Wide 1.85m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s.	Interpretation	
500	Dark greyish brown clay loam	0-0.23m	Topsoil	
501	Mid greyish brown firm silty clay with common heat affected clay flecks, charcoal and clinker inclusions	0.23-0.28m	Subsoil	
502	Mid-light yellowish brown firm clay	0.28m+	Natural subsoil	

b.g.s. = below ground surface

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 6		Long 30m	Wide 1.85m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s.	Interpretation	
600	Dark greyish brown clay loam	0-0.23m	Topsoil	
601	Mid greyish brown firm silty clay	0.23-0.38m	Subsoil	
602	Mid-light yellowish brown firm clay	0.38m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 7		Long 30.5m	Wide 1.85m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s.	Interpretation	
700	Dark greyish brown clay loam	0-0.24m	Topsoil	
701	Mid greyish brown firm silty clay	0.24-0.3m	Subsoil	
702	Mid-light yellowish brown firm clay	0.3m	Natural subsoil	

Trench 8		Long 30.5m	Wide 1.85m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s.	Interpretation	
800	Dark greyish brown clay loam	0-0.24m	Topsoil	
801	Mid greyish brown firm silty clay	0.24-0.36m	Subsoil	
802	Mid-light yellowish brown firm clay	0.36m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 9		Long 29.5m	Wide 1.85m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s.	Interpretation	
900	Dark greyish brown clay loam	0-0.25m	Topsoil	
901	Mid greyish brown firm silty clay	0.25-0.36m	Subsoil	
902	Mid-light yellowish brown firm clay	0.36m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 10		Long 31m	Wide 1.85m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s.	Interpretation	
1000	Dark greyish brown clay loam	0-0.25m	Topsoil	
1001	Mid greyish brown firm silty clay with occasional heat affected clay flecks and clinker inclusions	0.25m-0.35m	Subsoil	
1002	Mid-light yellowish brown firm clay	0.35m+	Natural subsoil	

b.g.s. = below ground surface

Appendix 2

Summary of finds by context

APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF FINDS BY CONTEXT

Context	Context description	Lithics		Post-medieval pottery		Fired clay		Glass		Clay pipe		CBM	
		No.	Wt	No.	Wt	No.	Wt	No.	Wt	No.	Wt	No.	Wt
101	Trench 1 subsoil									2	2		
201	Trench 2 subsoil	1	30	5	42			1	47	4	13	1	180
301	Trench 3 subsoil			4	30	1	27			1	1		
401	Trench 4 subsoil			2	6								
501	Trench 5 subsoil			1	18								
601	Trench 6 subsoil			2	6			1	3				
701	Trench 7 subsoil			2	14								
801	Trench 8 subsoil			1	14								
1001	Trench 10 subsoil			1	4								
Totals		1	30	18	134	1	27	2	50	7	16	1	180

(weights in grams)

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