

LAND AT LYNCHMEAD FARM, EBDON ROAD, WICK ST LAWRENCE, WESTON-SUPER-MARE, NORTH SOMERSET

(Centred on NGR ST 3583 6430)

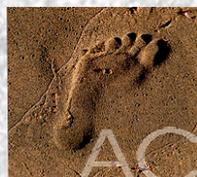
Results of an Archaeological Trench Evaluation

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On behalf of:
Mead Realisations Ltd

Report No: ACD1953/3/0

Date: December 2020



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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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology during November and December 2020 on land at Lynchmead Farm, Ebdon Road, Wick St Lawrence, Weston-super-Mare, North Somerset (NGR ST 3583 6430). The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of 14 trenches totalling 565m long with each trench 2m wide. The trenches were positioned to target the main anomalies identified by a geophysical survey, as well as crossing into nearby blank areas to confirm the effectiveness of the survey.

The trench evaluation returned negative results with no archaeological features, deposits or finds uncovered in any of the trenches. The main finding of the evaluation was that the site is located in an area that was subject to flooding prior to the medieval period with deep accumulation deposits of alluvial clay found sealing the natural bedrock.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology during November and December 2020 on land at Lynchmead Farm, Ebdon Road, Wick St Lawrence, Weston-super-Mare, North Somerset (NGR ST 3583 6430). The evaluation was commissioned by Walsingham Planning on behalf of Mead Realisations Ltd and was required by North Somerset Council, following consultation with their Archaeologist. The location of the site is shown on Fig. 1.
- 1.2 The proposed development site is located within agricultural land to the north of Ebdon Road, within the parishes of Wick St Lawrence and Kewstoke. It comprises an area of five hectares that lies between 5m and 6m aOD (above Ordnance Datum). The site is bounded by agricultural land to the north, east and west and by Ebdon Road and a group of residential buildings to the south (Plates 1 and 2).
- 1.3 The underlying solid geology comprises interbedded mudstone and limestone of the Blue Lias Formation, a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 191 to 210 million years ago in the Jurassic and Triassic periods when the local environment was dominated by shallow lime-mud seas. Tidal Flat Deposits comprising clay, silt and sand are also recorded within the proposed development site and formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary period when the local environment was dominated by shorelines (British Geological Survey 2020).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site has been the subject of a Historic Environment Assessment (Pink and Costen 2020) and geophysical survey (Edwards 2019). While there are no heritage assets currently recorded within the site, the field name 'Salt Hams' within the northern part may have alluded to land from which salt was extracted or which was connected with this industry in some way. There is currently no further evidence for salt working in the study area, although it was an important industry within the North Somerset Levels from the Roman period onwards. The North Somerset Historic Environment Record (HER) holds a record relating to the findspot of Romano-British pottery immediately beyond the southern boundary of the site, while there are further records relating to findspots of Iron Age and Romano-British pottery within the landscape to the south and southeast.

2.2 The geophysical survey identified a total of 14 magnetic anomaly groups (Fig. 1). One of the groups (Group 1) corresponds with a former land drain depicted on historic mapping which was infilled sometime after 1991. Several groups (Groups 2, 7, 8 and 10) may also represent former field drains that have been infilled with stony material. Anomaly Group 6 relates to a series of north-south aligned parallel linear anomalies that are likely to represent either cultivation marks or land drainage. Anomaly Group 3 may represent a stony bank with flanking ditches, while anomaly Group 5 may represent a small pit. Five of the groups (Groups 4, 9, 11, 12 and 14) may represent linear or curvilinear ditches, although a natural origin is possible. Group 13 is likely to represent modern rubble or made ground.

3. AIMS

3.1 The aim of the work was to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character and date of any archaeological features, deposits or finds within the site, with particular reference to the main anomalies of interest identified by the geophysical survey. The results of the work will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent mitigation and whether or not the significance and state of survival of any buried archaeological remains is great enough to influence the layout of the proposed scheme should planning consent be obtained. More site-specific aims were:

- To excavate and record any buried archaeological remains/structures relating to the Iron Age and Romano-British periods as identified by findspots nearby;
- To establish if the field name 'Salt Hams' relates to below-ground evidence for early saltworking in the area;
- To establish the nature of the activity of any hitherto previously unrecorded archaeological remains;
- To recover any environmental evidence from archaeological features;
- To identify any artefacts relating to the occupation or use of the site;
- To provide further information on the archaeology of North Somerset from any archaeological remains encountered; and,
- To analyse, publish and archive the most significant results and finds.

The following research objectives from South West Archaeological Research Framework (SWARF) were initially considered valid:

- Aim 2: Encourage works of synthesis within and across periods, settlements, monuments and areas;
- Aim 17: Improve the quality and quantity of environmental data and our understanding of what it represents;
- Aim 18: Target specific soil and sediment contexts for environmental data;
- Aim 19: Improve our understanding of wild and domestic animals in the past; and,
- Aim 20: Improve our understanding of wild and cultivated plants in the past.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a project design prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2020) and with reference to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation* (revised June 2020). It comprised the machine excavation of 14 trenches with each 2m wide and totalling 565m in length. These were positioned to target the main anomalies identified by a

geophysical survey, as well as crossing into nearby blank areas to confirm the effectiveness of the survey.

- 4.2 All trenches were located with a Leica Netrover GPS accurate to 1cm. 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.
- 4.3 All features and deposits revealed were recorded using the standard AC archaeology 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 2012). 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 (*Plan Fig. 1 and representative sections Figs 1a-b; Plates 3 and 4*)

- 5.1 No archaeological features, deposits or finds were uncovered in any of the trenches. In all of the trenches a sterile blueish grey clay was exposed at depths of 1.3m to 2.18m below the ground surface. The blueish grey clay was sealed by a sterile greyish brown clay alluvium between 0.6m and 1.65m thick and present at depths of 0.32m to 0.65m below the ground surface. In one trench (Trench 3) this secondary clay was found to be directly overlying bedrock at a depth of 1.84m below ground surface. The layer sequences for each trench are presented in Appendix 1.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1 The trench evaluation returned negative results. The depths of deposits in the trenches meant that the basal alluvium was present below safe working levels and was exposed through machine excavated sondages. However, the sterile nature of the deposits and lack of even stray finds indicates that this area probably sits outside of prehistoric or Romano-British settlement. In addition, no evidence was found for saltmaking or which could inform the other aims outlined in section 3, above.
- 6.2 The anomalies interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey were not identified as relating to features in the evaluation trenches. These anomalies are presumably related to minor distinctions in the composition of the overlying deposits. In regard to linear anomalies these may relate to the many surface drainage channels present on the site.
- 6.3 The blueish grey clay alluvium is usually interpreted as having been deposited during a marine transgression event in the North Somerset Levels during the post-Roman period (Rippon 1997). The blueish grey clay was sealed by a greyish brown clay alluvium between 0.6m and 1.3m thick and presumably represents a secondary transgression (a similar sequence was recorded at Pyde Drove, near Woolavington, in the Central Somerset Levels; Hughes *et al.* 2017).
- 6.4 The main finding of the evaluation was that the site is located in an area that was subject to flooding in the past with the resulting deep accumulation deposits, particularly the alluvial clay, shown to have been laid down prior to reclamation for agriculture in the medieval period (see Rippon 1997).

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The trench evaluation returned negative results with no archaeological features, deposits or finds uncovered in any of the trenches. The main finding of the evaluation was that the site is located in an area that was subject to flooding prior to the medieval period with the deep accumulation deposits of alluvial clay found sealing the natural bedrock.

8. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

- 8.1 The paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaias Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ under the unique project code of **ACD1953** and the accession number **pending** obtained from Somerset Heritage Centre. On completion of all fieldwork the contents of the archive will be reviewed by the Somerset Heritage Centre.
- 8.2 An online OASIS entry has been completed using the unique identifier **408551**, which includes a digital copy of this report.

9. SOURCES CONSULTED

British Geological Survey Online Viewer, 2020, www.bgs.ac.uk.

Edwards, M., 2019, *An Archaeological Magnetometer Survey. Land at Lynchmead Farm, Wick St Lawrence, Weston Super Mare*. Substrata Report No. **1901LYN-R-1**.

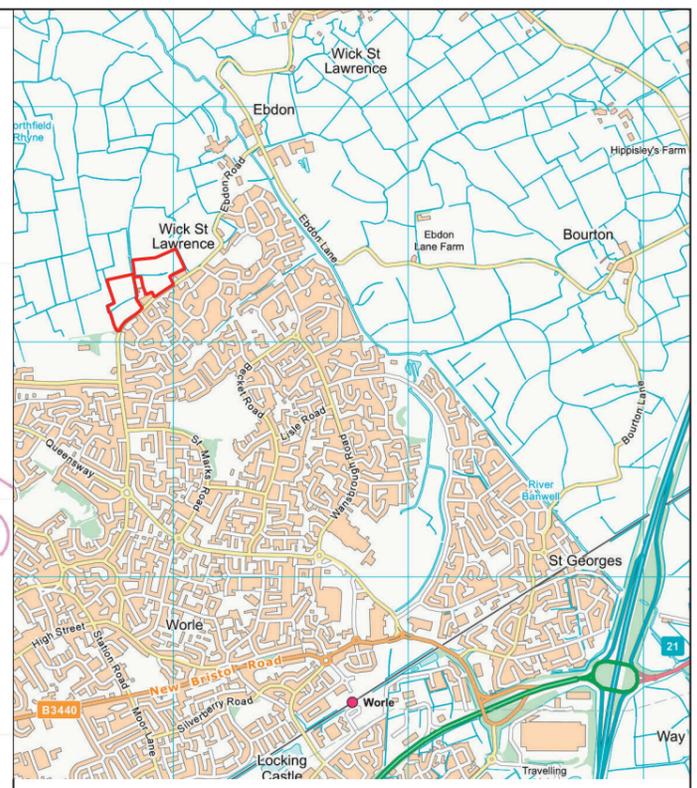
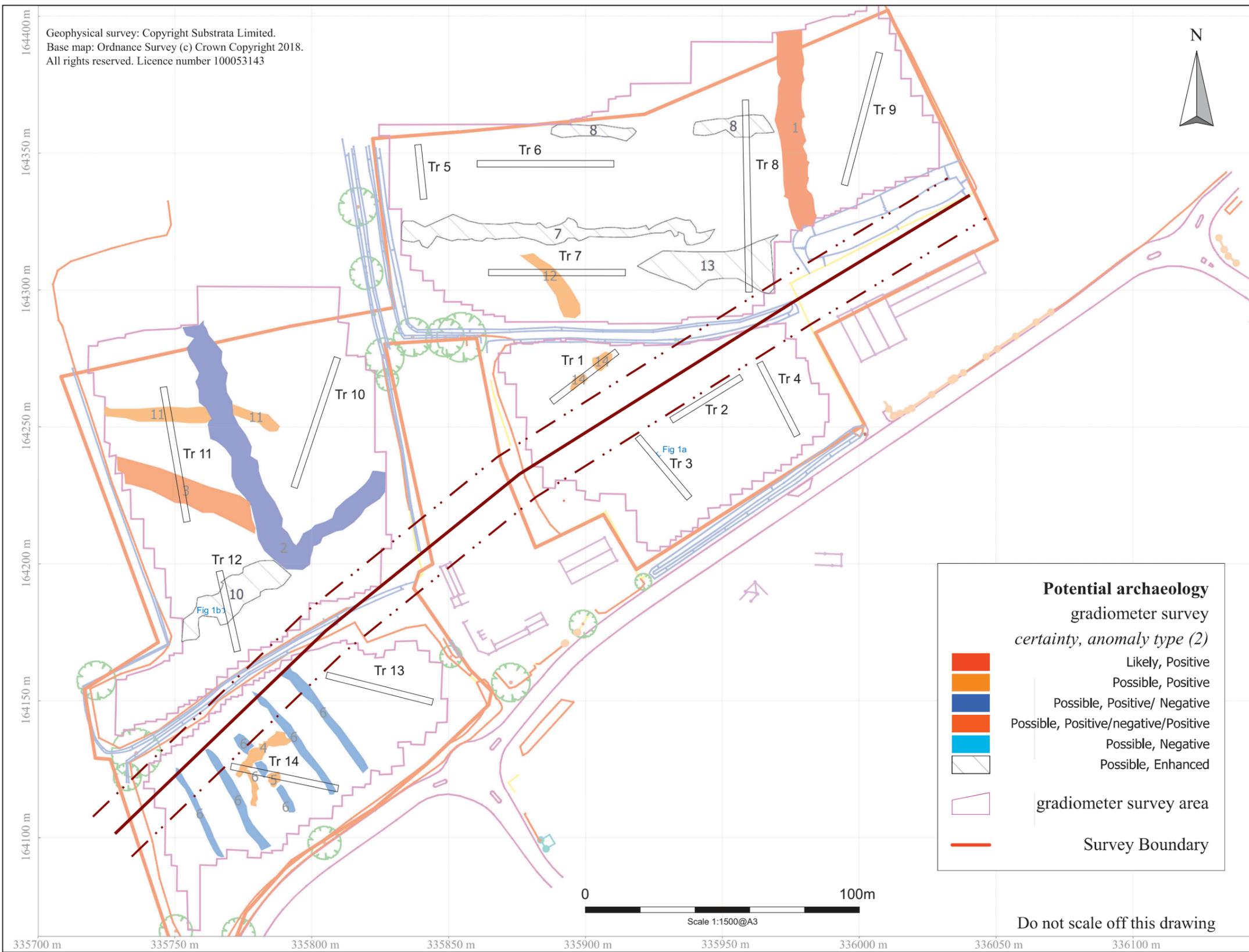
Hughes, S., Payne N. and Rainbird, P., 2017, 'Salt of the hearth: understanding the briquetage from a later Romano-British saltern at Pyde Drove, near Woolavington, Somerset.' *Britannia* **48**, 117-133.

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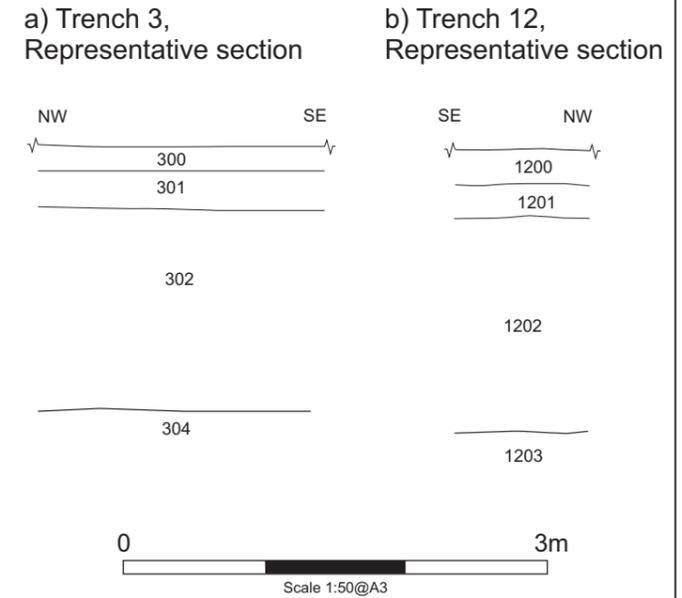
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Potential archaeology
 gradiometer survey
certainty, anomaly type (2)

- Likely, Positive
- Possible, Positive
- Possible, Positive/ Negative
- Possible, Positive/negative/Positive
- Possible, Negative
- Possible, Enhanced
- gradiometer survey area
- Survey Boundary



Do not scale off this drawing

- Legend**
- Site
 - Trenches 1-14
 - Overhead electricity cable



Plate 1: General view of the site, Trench 5 in the foreground, looking south



Plate 2: General view of the site, Trench 6 in the foreground, looking northeast



Plate 3: Trench 11, looking northwest (1m scale)



Plate 4: Trench 12, sondage, looking southwest (1m scale)

Appendix 1

Tabulated Context Descriptions by Trench



APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 1		Length 30m	Width 2m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
100	Mid greyish brown silty clay with rare subangular pebbles	0-0.15m	Topsoil	
101	Mid greyish brown silty clay	0.15m-0.47m	Subsoil	
102	Mid greyish brown clay	0.47m-1.92m	Alluvium	
103	Light blueish grey clay	1.92m+	Alluvium	

Trench 2		Length 30m	Width 2m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
200	Mid greyish brown silty clay with rare subangular pebbles	0-0.21m	Topsoil	
201	Mid greyish brown silty clay	0.21m-0.46m	Subsoil	
202	Mid greyish brown clay	0.46m-1.97m	Alluvium	
203	Light blueish grey clay	1.97m +	Alluvium	

Trench 3		Length 30m	Width 2m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
300	Mid greyish brown silty clay with rare subangular pebbles	0-0.14m	Topsoil	
301	Mid greyish brown silty clay	0.14m-0.32m	Subsoil	
302	Mid greyish brown clay	0.32m-1.74m	Alluvium	
303	Light blueish grey clay	1.74m+	Alluvium	
304	Solid geology	1.84m+	Bedrock	

Trench 4		Length 30m	Width 2m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
400	Mid greyish brown silty clay with rare subangular pebbles	0-0.26m	Topsoil	
401	Mid greyish brown silty clay	0.26m-0.64m	Subsoil	
402	Mid greyish brown clay	0.64m-1.96	Alluvium	
403	Light blueish grey clay	1.96m+	Alluvium	

Trench 5		Length 20m	Width 2m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
500	Mid greyish brown silty clay with rare subangular pebbles	0-0.42m	Topsoil	
501	Mid greyish brown silty clay	0.42m-0.65m	Subsoil	
502	Mid greyish brown clay	0.65m-1.5m	Alluvium	
503	Light blueish grey clay	1.5m+	Alluvium	

Trench 6		Length 50m	Width 2m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
600	Mid greyish brown silty clay with rare subangular pebbles	0-0.36m	Topsoil	
601	Mid greyish brown silty clay	0.36m-0.41m	Subsoil	
602	Mid greyish brown clay	0.41m-1.48m	Alluvium	
603	Light blueish grey clay	1.48m+	Alluvium	

b.g.s = below ground surface

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 7		Length 50m	Width 2m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
700	Mid greyish brown silty clay with rare subangular pebbles	0-0.35m	Topsoil	
701	Mid greyish brown silty clay	0.35m-0.48m	Subsoil	
702	Mid greyish brown clay	0.48m-1.7m	Alluvium	
703	Light blueish grey clay	1.7m+	Alluvium	

Trench 8		Length 65m	Width 2m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
800	Mid greyish brown silty clay with rare subangular pebbles	0-0.32m	Topsoil	
801	Mid greyish brown silty clay	0.32m-0.52m	Subsoil	
802	Mid greyish brown clay	0.52m-1.4m	Alluvium	
803	Light blueish grey clay	1.4m+	Alluvium	

Trench 9		Length 50m	Width 2m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
900	Mid greyish brown silty clay with rare subangular pebbles	0-0.4m	Topsoil	
901	Mid greyish brown silty clay	0.4m-0.65m	Subsoil	
902	Mid greyish brown clay	0.65m-1.44m	Alluvium	
903	Light blueish grey clay	1.44m+	Alluvium	

Trench 10		Length 50m	Width 2m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
1000	Mid greyish brown silty clay with rare subangular pebbles	0-0.25m	Topsoil	
1001	Mid greyish brown silty clay	0.25m-0.65m	Subsoil	
1002	Mid greyish brown clay	0.65m-1.3m	Alluvium	
1003	Light blueish grey clay	1.3m+	Alluvium	

Trench 11		Length 50m	Width 2m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
1100	Mid greyish brown silty clay with rare subangular pebbles	0-0.2m	Topsoil	
1101	Mid greyish brown silty clay	0.2m-0.55m	Subsoil	
1102	Mid greyish brown clay	0.55m-2m	Alluvium	
1103	Light blueish grey clay	2m+	Alluvium	

Trench 12		Length 30m	Width 2m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
1200	Mid greyish brown silty clay with rare subangular pebbles	0-0.29m	Topsoil	
1201	Mid greyish brown silty clay	0.29m-0.58m	Subsoil	
1202	Mid greyish brown clay	0.58m-2.18m	Alluvium	
1203	Light blueish grey clay	2.18m+	Alluvium	

b.g.s = below ground surface

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 13		Length 40m	Width 2m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
1300	Mid greyish brown silty clay with rare subangular pebbles	0-0.14m	Topsoil	
1301	Mid greyish brown silty clay	0.14m-0.5m	Subsoil	
1302	Mid greyish brown clay	0.5m-2.09m	Alluvium	
1303	Light blueish grey clay	2.09m +	Alluvium	

Trench 14		Length 40m	Width 2m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
1400	Mid greyish brown silty clay with rare subangular pebbles	0-0.14m	Topsoil	
1401	Mid greyish brown silty clay	0.14m-0.52m	Subsoil	
1402	Mid greyish brown clay	0.52m-2.14m	Alluvium	
1403	Light blueish grey clay	2.14m+	Alluvium	

b.g.s = below ground surface

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