



Moss Brow Farm, Warburton, Greater Manchester

Archaeological Evaluation and Assessment of the Results



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Summary

In September 2006 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Channel 4's 'Time Team' at the site of Moss Brow Farm, Warburton, Greater Manchester (NGR 371100 388900) to investigate the remains of a possible Romano-British fortlet, previously unknown, and which may only have been occupied for a short period of time. The Site would have been ideally located for a fortlet between the two Romano-British settlements of Wilderspool and Manchester along the alignment of a postulated Roman road.

The site has been under investigation since 1998 by the University of Manchester Archaeology Unit (UMAU) and the South Trafford Archaeological Group (STAG), following the discovery of numerous Romano-British finds through metal detecting in the surrounding area. The work by UMAU and STAG identified a ditch which was interpreted as having the classical Roman defensive profile, that of a 'Punic' ditch, in having one edge steeper than the other.

The programme of work undertaken by Time Team aimed to investigate the possible fortlet, by looking for buildings within the enclosure and their position in the landscape, and how the site related to the known Romano-British military sites and settlements in the area.

Following the excavation of a number of trenches, however, it became clear that there was no Romano-British fortlet at Warburton, and that the feature identified as 'Punic' defensive ditch was in fact the remains of an old hedgerow which had been removed in the last quarter of the 19th century. The evaluation revealed no evidence for settlement of any kind from the Romano-British period, but was able to show that the land use of the fields around Moss Brow Farm had remained unchanged possibly since the Romano-British period. The land was divided into fields at that time and remains as fields today.

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The geophysical survey was undertaken by John Gater, Jimmy Adcock and Emma Wood of GSB Prospection. The field survey was undertaken by Henry Chapman, University of Birmingham and landscape survey and map regression was undertaken by Stewart Ainsworth of English Heritage. The excavation strategy was devised by Francis Pryor. The on-site recording was co-ordinated by Steve Thompson assisted by Naomi Hall, both of Wessex Archaeology. Naomi Hall was also responsible for on-site finds processing.

The excavations and field walking were undertaken by Time Team's retained archaeologists, Phil Harding (Wessex Archaeology), Kerry Ely, Brigid Gallagher, Ian Powlesland, Naomi Sewpaul and Matt Williams assisted by Tracey Smith, Sam Worrell, Lee O'Hara, David Lloyd and Ivan Hradil, with help from volunteers from South Trafford Archaeological Group (STAG).

The archive was collated and all post-excavation assessment and analysis undertaken by Wessex Archaeology. This report was compiled by Steve Thompson assisted by Naomi Hall with specialist reports prepared by Lorraine Mephram (finds). The illustrations were prepared by Kitty Brandon.

The post-excavation project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Lorraine Mephram.

The work benefited from discussion on site with Professor David Shotter of the University of Lancaster; Dr Robert Philpott, Curator of Roman and Later Archaeology, National Museums Liverpool; Mike Nevell of the University of Manchester Archaeology Unit; Phil Harding of Wessex Archaeology; Helen Geake of Cambridge University; and Nigel Herepath, Finds Liaison Officer for the North West.

Finally thanks are extended to Richard Clegg and family and David Priestner for allowing access to the Site for field walking, geophysical survey and archaeological evaluation.

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Archaeological Evaluation and Assessment of Results

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Videotext Communications Ltd to undertake a programme of archaeological recording and post-excavation work on an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Channel 4's 'Time Team' at the site of Moss Brow Farm, Warburton, Greater Manchester (hereafter the 'Site') (**Figure 1, Plate 7**).

1.1.2 This report documents the results of archaeological survey and evaluation undertaken by Time Team, and presents an assessment of the results of these works.

1.2 Site Location, Topography and Geology

1.2.1 Moss Brow Farm, Warburton is located approximately five miles from Warrington, in the parish of Warburton, in the Trafford District of Greater Manchester and is centred upon NGR 371100 388900. The site is situated 500m to the north of the River Bollin, and 1.5 miles from the Cheshire border, which is marked by the Manchester ship canal.

1.2.2 The Site comprises two fields currently under plough, the first; Site A (centred on NGR 371000 388900) is part of an east-west aligned ridge of high ground sloping away to the south and east. The highest point is recorded as *c.* 26.50m above Ordnance Datum (m aOD). The second, Site B (centred on NGR 371300 388900), has fairly flat topography and is situated at approximately 25m aOD. The underlying geology is Shirdley Hill sand, fluvio-glacial gravel and glacial sand and gravel (BGS Sheet 98 D).

1.3 Archaeological Background

Prehistoric

1.3.1 Neolithic Cheshire has few impressive monuments compared to other parts of the country, apart from the remains of a chambered tomb at Bridestones, near Congleton, to the south-east (five miles from Macclesfield) and the possible long barrow at Someford (near Congleton) (Videotext Communications 2006, 6; Carrington 1994).

1.3.2 The area may have gained in importance after the appearance of bronze tools in the mid 3rd millennium BC. The source of copper needed to make bronze may have been found within the vein that runs along the eastern side of the mid-Cheshire range, and there is evidence for Bronze Age copper mining at

Alderley Edge. There are many stray Bronze Age finds from the area, particularly axe heads and palstaves, and three axe-heads were found at Beeston (six miles outside Chester). Evidence for Bronze Age burial practices can be seen from the hundred or so known Bronze Age barrows in the county (Videotext Communications 2006, 6; Carrington 1994).

- 1.3.3 By about 1250 BC there appears to have been a change in burial practice, with barrows being replaced by cremation cemeteries, and many upland settlements became deserted due to over-intensive farming. A string of hilltop enclosures was constructed at this time along the mid-Cheshire ridge. Apart from Beeston, where evidence for metalworking was discovered, including hearths and crucibles, no other enclosures have been excavated, and so little is known about their date and function.
- 1.3.4 There are hints of agricultural intensification in the late Iron Age from sites such as Great Woolden Hall farm (Greater Manchester), founded in the Iron Age with continued use after the Roman conquest. The material found at Meols on the north coast of the Wirral peninsula, including three Carthaginian coins, two silver coins from Brittany and one British gold coin, suggests a centre of economic and, possibly, political control - necessary for the management of a wide ranging trade network (Carrington 1994). Apart from Meols and the hillfort at Beeston there is a distinct lack of evidence for the organisation of settlement prior to the Roman occupation.

Romano-British

- 1.3.5 Warburton is situated in the region occupied by the Brigantes at the time of Roman occupation. The Brigantes, roughly translated as the 'People of Brigid' were a loose confederation of several other tribes, including the Setanti, Gabrantovices and Textoverdi. The client Kingdom of Brigantia was sandwiched between more hostile, anti-Roman, tribes to the north and Roman occupied territory to the south; at the time of the conquest it was ruled by the client Queen Cartimandua (Redhead 1989).
- 1.3.6 In 51 AD Scapula, under the rule of Emperor Claudius, crushed the British warlord Caratacus, who subsequently fled to safety in Brigantian territory. Cartimandua, however, honoured the Roman treaty by delivering Caratacus to them. This led to a certain amount of dissension amongst the Brigantian people, especially from Cartimandua's husband, Venutius. In AD 69/70 Venutius revolted, eventually taking the Brigantian throne. The Roman army came to Cartimandua's aid and removed her from hostile territory (Tacitus, *Historia* iii, 45). In AD 71 Cerialis began his campaign to subdue the anti-Roman resistance now that Brigantian loyalties could no longer be guaranteed, and he "*annexed a large portion of the Brigantes*" (Tacitus, *Agricola* xvii, 1). The Brigantes then enjoyed a short respite until the Agricola campaign of AD 77-91.
- 1.3.7 It has been suggested from pottery assemblages and coin finds around the north-western estuaries that during the conquest of the area, even before c. AD 70, that Roman troops operating on land were being assisted by sea-based troops. A strong relationship is proposed between troops operating

within the Dee Estuary and a supposed fort in or around Chester (*Deva*) (Videotext Communications 2006, 3; Philpott 2004).

- 1.3.8 More is known about military activity in the area than of any other aspect of the Roman occupation. From the numerous excavations that have taken place at supposed military sites in the north-west, only a handful have been labelled as 'sites of conquest'. The preferred interpretation, such as that of the fortlet at Ince, north-east of *Deva*, was that they were located to monitor trade routes and act as strategic holding forts operating within a wider military network, relying on support from a larger fort where necessary (Philpott 1998).
- 1.3.9 In the AD 70s a series of turf and timber forts were constructed as the Romans moved into the north-west, including Chester (*Deva*), Northwich (*Condane*), Middlewich (*Salinae*) and Manchester (*Mamucium*) (see **Figure 1**). By AD 78-9 a fort at Castleshaw (*?Rigodunum*), north-east of the fort at Manchester, was founded as a way of monitoring the Pennine passes. The fort was abandoned by the mid AD 90s, but rebuilt c. AD 105. The main roles of these forts would have been to protect Agricola's rear as he moved into northern Brigantia by cordoning off transport links and restricting unauthorized movement (Redhead 1989).
- 1.3.10 The fortlets of Northwich, Manchester and Castleshaw lie along the main Roman road connecting Chester to York, with a settlement at Wilderspool connected by a road to Northwich. Wilderspool is connected by a possible road to Manchester, and it is along this possible road that Warburton lies.

Medieval

- 1.3.11 Warburton is mentioned in Domesday as two separate hundreds, but by 1180 the two manors were held by the de Duttons, who held it until 1918. The origins of the name of Warburton have been interpreted as either the settlement of War, or the town of St Werburgh (in Domesday as *Werburchtune*), to whom the medieval church of the village is dedicated. St Werburgh, the patron saint of Chester, was instrumental in convent reform in the 7th century. After her death her remains were translated to Chester where she became the patroness of the monastery and church (Videotext Communications 2006, 2)

1.4 Previous Archaeological Work

- 1.4.1 In 1998-99 Moss Brow Farm was the subject of an archaeological evaluation by the University of Manchester and the South Trafford Archaeological Group (STAG), following the discovery of a number of metal-detected finds with a potential date range from the Bronze Age to the Roman period, which included two copper alloy brooches (one late 1st-century AD Aucissa/Hod Hill type, and one mid 1st- to 2nd-century AD Dolphin type), a cast bronze dropped-bar terret ring, a 1st-century AD zoomorphic bracelet, an early Roman silver denarius, and a miniature copper alloy axe head.

- 1.4.2 The metal detected finds were recovered from the fields surrounding Site A, mainly concentrating to the north and west. A number of medieval finds including lead spindle whorls were also identified. Spatial analysis of the finds did show a concentration of Romano-British finds at Site A.
- 1.4.3 The 1999 evaluation consisted of the excavation of a number of test pits which were largely inconclusive, although a north-south aligned ditch was identified.
- 1.4.4 In 2001 a geophysical survey of the Site was conducted after more surface finds were produced and to clarify the results of the 1999 evaluation. The survey produced positive results, including a possible ditch oriented north-south and aligned with a ditch discovered in 1999. A number of other linear features were also discovered and interpreted as probable field boundaries. A rectilinear feature and a circular anomaly were also observed. On excavation the latter proved to be a layer of compact soil, approximately 0.5m in width. The rectilinear feature contained bands of sand and gravel, interpreted as archaeological.
- 1.4.5 The north-south aligned ditch was identified as having a ‘Punic’ form (with one side steeper than the other so that the ditch was easy to enter but difficult to get out of), complete with ‘ankle-breaker’ and, therefore, was considered to be Romano-British, and military in origin. No dating material, however, was recovered from the excavated trenches.
- 1.4.6 In 2002 the University of Manchester conducted another geophysical survey of the site. The results are interpreted as showing a playing card-shaped fort.
- 1.4.7 The 1999 and 2001 work concluded that the lack of diagnostically datable material recovered from the Site was due to the acidic nature of the underlying geology, which was not suitable for the survival of pottery.

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1.1 A project design for the work was compiled by Videotext Communications (2006), providing full details of the research aims and methods. A brief summary is provided here.
- 2.1.2 The primary aim of the project was to test the hypothesis that the site represented an unknown Roman fortlet. A number of specific research questions were posed:
- Is it possible to establish any other extensions of the ‘Punic’ ditch?
 - Is there any dating evidence from the site?
 - Is there any evidence for internal structures within the ditched enclosure that may clarify the function of this site? Is it Roman/military?

- Is there an ancient routeway connecting this site to known settlements in the wider landscape?
- Is it possible to locate an entrance for the fortlet and to determine its typology?
- Is there a reason why the projected fortlet does not occupy the highest point in the landscape?
- Could the discovery of a miniature bronze axe indicate activity from the Bronze Age?

3 METHODS

3.1 Geophysical Survey

- 3.1.1 Prior to the excavation of evaluation trenches, a geophysical survey was carried out across the Site using a combination of resistance and magnetic survey. The survey grid was set out by Dr Henry Chapman and tied in to the Ordnance Survey grid using a Trimble real time differential GPS system.

3.2 Landscape and Earthwork Survey

- 3.2.1 A landscape survey and analysis of the cartographic evidence was undertaken by Stewart Ainsworth, Senior Investigator of the Archaeological Survey and Investigation Team, English Heritage. The results of discussions with Stewart Ainsworth are incorporated here.

3.3 Fieldwalking

- 3.3.1 Fieldwalking was conducted at Site A over the area of the proposed fortlet and involved the laying out of 136 10m by 10m grid squares, numbered 1-136 (**Figures 2 & 4**). Each 10m by 10m square was surveyed by two people for ten minutes with all finds (except animal bone, an undatable material type) being collected. A metal detector survey of the same area was also carried out. The fieldwalking was used to identify potential concentrations of material, which could be used for the placing of evaluation trenches.

3.4 Shovel Test Pits and Metal Detector Survey

- 3.4.1 Site B was not suitable for field walking as it had only just been ploughed, and it was decided instead to subject the area to shovel test-pitting. An area of Site B was laid out with a grid of 28 20m by 20m squares numbered 1000-1012, 1014, 1015, 1016, 1018-1029, and a single shovel test pit excavated within each square (**Figure 5**). At the same time a metal detector survey was undertaken within selected squares (1005, 1012, 1014, 1021-1023 and 1025-1027). Each shovel test pit was excavated through the ploughsoil to the top of the underlying deposits (either subsoil or natural basal geology), and all finds were collected from the topsoil. The metal detector survey identified both ferrous and non-ferrous signals, but no single

signals were investigated. The finds recovered from the shovel test pits and concentrations of non-ferrous signals from the metal detector survey were used to provide targets for the positioning of evaluation trenches.

3.5 Evaluation Trenches

- 3.5.1 Seventeen evaluation trenches of varying sizes were excavated. These were located to investigate either geophysical anomalies, or concentrations of finds from the fieldwalking and shovel test pits.
- 3.5.2 The trenches were excavated using a combination of machine and hand digging. All machine trenches were excavated under constant archaeological supervision and ceased at the identification of significant archaeological remains, or where natural geology was encountered first. When machine excavation had ceased all trenches were cleaned by hand and archaeological deposits investigated.
- 3.5.3 The excavated up-cast was scanned by metal detector.
- 3.5.4 All archaeological deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* record sheets with a unique numbering system for individual contexts. Trenches were located using a Trimble Real Time Differential GPS survey system. All archaeological features and deposits were planned at a scale of 1:20 with sections drawn at 1:10. All principal strata and features were related to the Ordnance Survey datum.
- 3.5.5 A full photographic record of the investigations and individual features was maintained, utilising colour transparencies, black and white negatives (on 35mm film) and digital images. The photographic record illustrated both the detail and general context of the archaeology revealed and the Site as a whole.
- 3.5.6 At the completion of the work, all trenches were reinstated using the excavated soil.
- 3.5.7 A unique site code (MBF 06) was agreed prior to the commencement of works. The work was carried out on the 4th - 7th September 2006. The archive and all artefacts were subsequently transported to the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Salisbury where they were processed and assessed for this report.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 Details of individual excavated contexts and features, the full geophysical report (GSB 2006), the summary of the landscape and earthwork survey and details of artefactual and environmental assessments, are retained in the archive. Summaries of the excavated sequences can be found in **Appendix 1**.

4.2 Geophysical Survey

- 4.2.1 No detectable archaeology was located within the areas of Site A and Site B, except for the identification of a linear feature which corresponded with the line of an old hedgerow identified on the 19th-century Ordnance Survey maps. All anomalies observed were revealed to be geological trends, agricultural activity or modern dumps of metallic material.

4.3 Evaluation Trenches

Site A

- 4.3.1 The trenches within Site A were positioned to target anomalies from the geophysical survey and archaeology identified from the 1999 and 2001 evaluations. Each trench saw the removal of between 0.28m and 0.32m of overlying ploughsoil.

Trench 1 (Figures 2 & 3)

- 4.3.2 Trench 1 was positioned to locate the north-south aligned ditch identified in the 2001 excavation by UMAU and STAG, and interpreted as the defensive ditch of the possible fortlet.
- 4.3.3 A single north-south aligned ditch (103) was revealed on the removal of the ploughsoil, and its profile clearly fitted with the so-called 'Punic' ditch revealed in the 2001 evaluation. The sides and the base of the feature were very irregular and showed signs of considerable bioturbation (**Figure 3, Plates 1 and 2**).
- 4.3.4 The cartographic evidence, however, identified ditch (103) as the remnant of a removed land division. The field in which Site A was positioned had once been two fields separated by a north-south aligned division (recorded on a mid 18th-century map), most likely a hedgerow, which had been removed between 1875 and 1898.
- 4.3.5 No other archaeology was identified in Trench 1.

Trench 2 (Figure 2, Plates 3 and 4)

- 4.3.6 Trench 2 was positioned at the western end of Trench 1, in order to locate the defensive ditch of the proposed fortlet, using the hypothesis that the landscape division identified as (103) may have utilised the alignment of an earlier ditch.
- 4.3.7 The excavation of Trench 2, however, showed that there was clearly no ditch parallel to (103), and therefore no fortlet or Romano-British enclosure of any kind.

Trench 3 (Figure 2)

- 4.3.8 Trench 3 was positioned to locate the northern defensive ditch of the proposed fortlet.
- 4.3.9 Following the removal of the ploughsoil, the natural basal geology (304) was encountered. This consisted of east-west aligned bands of gravel and sand,

and it appeared that these natural bands had been misinterpreted as archaeological in the 2001 evaluation. A sondage was excavated into one of the bands of gravel, revealing a clear sloping edge between the gravel and the sand which could be quite easily have been misinterpreted as a ditch profile.

Trench 4 (Figure 2)

- 4.3.10 Trench 4 was positioned to investigate the east-west aligned track-way which runs along the northern limit of the field in which Site A was located. This track-way was thought to be part of the route leading to the possible fortlet.
- 4.3.11 The subsoil below the ploughsoil clearly butted the underlying natural geology in this trench and had been formed as a plough headland, giving rise to a higher area of land which was subsequently utilised as track-way. The orientation of the plough headland showed that teams had originally been ploughing north-south, but with the change to east-west aligned ploughing the headland had been eroded and incorporated back into the main body of the field, though the track-way continued to be used.

Trench 5 (Figure 2, Plate 6)

- 4.3.12 Trench 5 was positioned to investigate a slightly raised area of ground, the field sloping away to the south. This small mounded area was thought to be the site of a possible Bronze Age barrow, from the metal detecting recovery of a miniature copper alloy axe head. No evidence for a Bronze Age barrow was found, although a number of archaeological features were identified cutting the natural geology.
- 4.3.13 A large irregular shaped feature (504) towards the northern end of the trench was recorded as a possible tree throw. No dating evidence was recovered.
- 4.3.14 At the southern end of Trench 5, on the downward slope, two east-west aligned strip lynchets were identified. The northern lynchet (506) had been extensively ploughed away by later agricultural activity which had resulted in almost complete removal of the riser. The southern strip lynchet (510) had survived better, with a more intact riser and a clearer tread.
- 4.3.15 Investigation into the land use of the area from the medieval period was carried out during the landscape study, which showed that the highest strip of land had been under pasture for most of the time from the early medieval period onwards, and that major ploughing of the land occurred in the post-medieval period, beginning in earnest perhaps in the 17th century (S. Ainsworth pers. comm.). As the strip lynchets had suffered from later ploughing, they are likely to pre-date the early medieval period (when the land was mainly under pasture), potentially being Romano-British or earlier.
- 4.3.16 A single small, east-west aligned gully was identified to the south of (510) and recorded as (508). This gully could be part of a series of east-west aligned strip fields, and may be contemporaneous with the strip lynchets.

Trench 6 (Figure 2)

- 4.3.17 Trench 6 was positioned to investigate an area of high magnetic response from the geophysical survey. Prior to the opening of the trench the area was scanned by metal detector, which identified numerous ferrous signals.
- 4.3.18 No archaeology was identified. The magnetic signals from the geophysics and the ferrous signals from the metal detector survey were revealed as a dump of modern nails.

Trench 7 (Figure 2)

- 4.3.19 Trench 7 was positioned to investigate a possible crop mark identified during a flyover of the site by helicopter. No archaeology was discovered.

Trench 8 (Figure 4)

- 4.3.20 Trench 8 was cross-shaped and positioned to investigate features identified in the 1999 and 2001 fieldwork. However, it transpired that Time Team had been misinformed as to the position of the earlier trench, and Trench 8 was therefore placed incorrectly.
- 4.3.21 Two features were revealed following the removal of ploughsoil and subsoil: a small east-west aligned gully (Group 808), and a possible posthole (809). Both features cut the natural geology.
- 4.3.22 Following the identification of the gully, the trench was extended to expose more of it. Two interventions were excavated through the gully (recorded as (804) and (806)), which was filled with material very similar to the overlying subsoil. The east-west alignment of the gully perhaps implies that it belongs to the same series of strip fields identified in Trench 5.

- 4.3.23 The posthole (809) potentially belongs to part of a fence line dividing the landscape.

Trench 9 (Figure 2)

- 4.3.24 Trench 9 was positioned to locate evidence from the 2001 evaluation, which had identified bands of gravel as archaeological in origin. These bands of gravel were revealed to form part of the natural basal geology, below the current ploughsoil and an earlier remnant ploughsoil. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered.

Site B (Figure 5)

- 4.3.25 Eight trenches were excavated within Site B following the excavation of the shovel test pits and metal detector survey. The trenches were targeted upon high concentrations of finds or non-ferrous metal detector signals.
- 4.3.26 In Trenches 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16 and 17 the removal of the current ploughsoil revealed either an earlier ploughsoil or subsoil before the underlying natural geology was encountered. No archaeology was identified in any of these trenches.

Trench 15

- 4.3.27 In Trench 15 an irregular tree throw (1505) cut the natural geology. No dating material was recovered from the fill, and no other archaeological remains were identified.

5 FINDS

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 Finds were recovered from 12 of the 17 trenches excavated (no finds were recovered from Trenches 1, 3, 7-9), and also from the fieldwalking and shovel test pit survey, and from the metal detector survey.
- 5.1.2 Fieldwalking and shovel test pit finds were quickly scanned and found to comprise almost exclusively post-medieval and modern artefacts. Artefacts which were demonstrably or possibly of earlier date were extracted and only these have been recorded from this group of material. These and all other finds recovered (from trenches and from the metal detector survey) have been quantified by material type within each context. **Table 1** summarises finds totals by material type within each site subdivision.
- 5.1.3 Subsequent to quantification, all finds have been at least visually scanned in order to gain an overall idea of the range of types present, their condition, and their potential date range. Spot dates have been recorded for selected material types as appropriate (pottery, ceramic building material). All finds data are currently held on an Access database.

5.2 Results

- 5.2.1 Very little material was recovered which pre-dated the post-medieval period, although a small number of objects remain undated, including ten small fragments of undiagnostic and abraded ceramic building material (from the topsoil in Trenches 2, 10, 11, 12), a possible whetstone (fieldwalking square 46), and 13 metal objects (nails, scraps and waste pieces).

Prehistoric

- 5.2.2 Three prehistoric worked flints were recovered, two from fieldwalking (squares 95 and 96) and one from a shovel test pit (square 1025). These comprise two broken flakes (one burnt) and one core. None are datable more closely within the prehistoric period.

Romano-British

- 5.2.3 Two pottery sherds were identified as Romano-British, both are coarsewares, one oxidised (Trench 16 topsoil) and one greyware (fieldwalking square 23). Both are body sherds and neither is more closely datable within the Roman period.

Medieval

- 5.2.4 Fieldwalking also produced two medieval sherds, one oxidised sandy ware (square 116) and one fine whiteware (square 134). Again, these are undiagnostic; a probable date range of 12th/13th century can be suggested.

Post-medieval

- 5.2.5 The remainder of the assemblage is of post-medieval or modern date and includes pottery (coarse red earthenwares, Staffordshire-type mottled wares, stonewares and modern refined wares), ceramic building material (brick fragments), clay pipe (stem fragments), glass (vessel and window), roofing slate and metalwork (fittings, sheet fragments, a U-staple, a Victorian farthing, a button, a lead seal stamped TATE). Full details of all post-medieval finds are held in the project archive.

5.3 Further Recommendations

- 5.3.1 The finds assemblage warrants no further analysis, given the predominantly post-medieval/modern date range. The assemblage could be subjected to selective discard prior to archive deposition, subject to the agreement of the recipient museum.

6 DISCUSSION

- 6.1.1 The evaluation at Moss Brow Farm clearly demonstrated that the site did not represent a previously unknown Roman fortlet, or settlement of any kind.
- 6.1.2 A number of factors had led to the hypothesis of the existence of a fortlet, which subsequently led to this programme of works. First, the amount of metal-detected Romano-British material was initially thought to be greater than it actually was. Re-examination of the material by Helen Geake and Nick Herepath re-classified material which had been misidentified as Romano-British, and which actually belonged to much later periods.
- 6.1.3 Secondly, the misinterpretation of variations in the underlying basal geology as archaeological features, accompanied by a lack of analysis of the historical cartographic evidence, had led to the misinterpretation of real archaeological remains (the hedgerow as a defensive ditch).
- 6.1.4 Thirdly, the position of the site and its proximity to known Romano-British settlements and other small Romano-British forts identified the Site at Moss Brow Farm as a good candidate for a fortlet. The Site is in an area of known Romano-British military activity, with fortlets identified at Ince to the south-west, Middlewich and Northwich to the south, as well as Castleshaw and Slack to the north-east. This, together with the large fort and settlement at Chester, and settlements at Wilderspool and Manchester, placed Warburton in a landscape rich in Romano-British archaeology. Warburton's position between Wilderspool and Manchester, and the existence of a possible Roman road linking the two settlements, added to the circumstantial evidence for a military site at Moss Brow Farm.

- 6.1.5 Finally, the lack of pottery and other evidence for settlement activity could be accounted for by the nature of the geology. The geology of north-west England is renowned for its acidity and thus is not favourable for the survival of pottery and other artefacts.
- 6.1.6 However, the questions remained as to how the material recovered through metal detecting arrived on the Site, and what the past land use of the Site had been. The metal detected finds can be accounted for simply by the movement of people through the landscape. Such an assemblage of Romano-British metalwork is not unusual in the area (N. Herepath pers. comm.)
- 6.1.7 As for past land use of the Site at Moss Brow Farm it would appear that it has remained relatively unchanged for at least the last 2000 years. The only evidence for activity and land use is agricultural, with the formation of strip lynchets, and creation of field boundaries, either by hedges or fence lines.
- 6.1.8 The landscape study suggested that ploughing of the site probably began in the post-medieval period following the earlier use of the site as pasture. The surrounding area included land divided into woodland, arable and meadow; the long east-west aligned ridge of high ground on which both Sites A and B were situated was ideally placed for pasture. This landscape division probably originated at the time of Domesday. The formation of strip fields and strip lynchets probably pre-dates the 11th century, and therefore the lynchets and field gullies are likely to belong to a time before the division of land following the Norman Conquest. It is possible, therefore, that the agricultural features identified within the evaluation trenches may be late prehistoric, Romano-British or Saxon, but without dating evidence it is difficult to be more precise.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1.1 Given the largely negative results of the evaluation, no further analysis or publication is proposed. A copy of this report will be lodged with the Greater Manchester Sites and Monuments Record.

8 ARCHIVE

- 8.1.1 The excavated material and archive, including plans, photographs and written records, are currently held at the Wessex Archaeology offices under the project code 62510 and site code MBF 06. It is intended that the archive will ultimately be deposited with Manchester Museum.

9 REFERENCES

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Table 1: Finds totals by material type and by site subdivision (number / weight in grammes)

F/W = fieldwalking & shovel test pits; M/D = metal detector survey

	SITE A					SITE B										
Material	Tr 2	Tr 4	Tr 5	Tr 6	Tr 10	Tr 11	Tr 12	Tr 13	Tr 14	Tr 15	Tr 16	Tr 17	F/W	M/D	unstrat	Total
Pottery	4/35	8/30	4/56	-	17/43	13/54	11/52	28/91	16/116	5/77	2/3	6/19	22/53	-	-	136/629
Ceramic Building Material	3/12	-	3/37	-	2/15	3/24	3/17	1/64	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15/169
Clay Pipe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/1	-	-	-	1/1	-	-	2/2
Stone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/2	-	-	-	1/94	-	-	2/96
Flint	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3/26	-	-	3/26
Glass	1/1	1/9	-	-	5/38	4/36	4/6	14/37	3/28	6/103	1/3	2/2	8/9	-	-	49/272
Metalwork (no. objects) <i>Copper Alloy</i> <i>Iron</i> <i>Lead</i>	-	-	1	1	3	5	3	1	3	3	1	1	-	5	2	29
	-	-	-	-	3	2	-	1	-	3	1	-	-	5	-	15
	-	-	1	-	-	1	2	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	2	8
	-	-	-	1	-	2	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
Animal Bone	-	-	1/1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/1

APPENDIX 1: Trench Summaries

bgl = below ground level

Site A

Trench 1			Type:	Machine excavated	
Dimensions:		Max. depth: 0.86m	Ground level: 26.08m aOD		
context	description			depth (bgl)	
101	<i>Topsoil</i>	Modern ploughsoil. Mid-dark grey-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-5cm. Very bioturbated. Homogeneous. Loose and friable. Sharp interface. Overlies (104).			0.00-0.28m
102	<i>Natural</i>	Natural geology. Mid orange sand. <1% gravel, subrounded-rounded, <1-2cm. Loose. Contains bands of gravel, 60%, subrounded-rounded, <1-5cm.			0.28m+
103	<i>Cut</i>	Cut of north – south aligned ditch. Sides and base irregular. Bioturbated. In a previous excavation thought to be a ‘Punic’ ditch but reinterpreted as a field boundary. Filled with (104).			0.58m deep
104	<i>Fill</i>	Secondary fill of [103]. Mid yellow brown silty sand. Derived from ploughsoil and redeposited natural sand.			0.58m thick

Trench 2			Type:	Machine excavated	
Dimensions:		Max. depth: 0.49m	Ground level: 24.78-25.59m aOD		
context	Description			depth (bgl)	
201	<i>Topsoil</i>	Modern ploughsoil. Dark grey-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-5cm. Very bioturbated. Homogeneous. Loose and friable. Clear interface. Overlies (202).			0.00-0.30m
202	<i>Subsoil</i>	Current subsoil. Dark orange-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular to rounded, <1-6cm. Some bioturbation. Compact. Did not occur along the full length of the trench, restricted to the middle. Overlies (203).			0.30-0.49m
203	<i>Natural</i>	Natural geology. Light orange sand. <1% gravel, subrounded-rounded, <1-2cm. Loose. Contains bands of gravel, 60%, subrounded-rounded, <1-5cm.			0.49m+

Trench 3			Type:	Machine excavated	
Dimensions:		Max. depth: 1.33m	Ground level: 25.60m aOD		
context	description			depth (bgl)	
301	Topsoil	Modern ploughsoil. Dark grey-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-5cm. Very bioturbated. Homogeneous. Loose and friable. Clear interface. Overlies (303).			0.00-0.27m
302	Cut	Continuation of the same band of material identified in the 2001 excavation as one side of a defensive ditch. When examined proved to be the edge of geological banding. ‘Filled’ with (303).			0.27-1.33m
303	Layer	‘Fill’ of [302]. Geological banding recorded in 2001 excavation as the fill of a ditch. Dark orange sand. 10% gravel, subrounded-rounded, <1-5cm with lower band of gravel, 60% subrounded-rounded, <1-12cm. Homogeneous. Loose.			0.27-1.33m
304	Natural	Natural geology. Mid orange sand. <1% gravel, subrounded-rounded, <1-2cm. Homogenous. Loose.			0.37-0.65m+

Trench 4			Type:	Machine excavated
Dimensions:		Max. depth: 0.71m	Ground level: 24.92m aOD	
context	description		depth (bgl)	
401	<i>Topsoil</i>	Modern ploughsoil. Dark grey-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-5cm. Very bioturbated. Homogeneous. Loose and friable. Clear interface. Overlies (402).	0.00-0.33m	
402	<i>Subsoil</i>	Current subsoil. Mid orange-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular to rounded, <1-6cm. Some bioturbation. Compact. Result of plough headland. Area possibly becomes ploughed 17th-18th century, this is utilised as trackway along edge of field. Overlies (403).	0.33-0.71m	
403	<i>Natural</i>	Natural geology. Mid orange sand. <1% gravel, subrounded-rounded, <1-2cm. Homogenous. Loose. Contains bands of gravel, 40%, subrounded-rounded, <1-5cm.	0.71m+	

Trench 5			Type:	Machine excavated
Dimensions:		Max. depth: 0.51m	Ground level: 25.85-22.63m aOD	
context	Description		depth (bgl)	
501	<i>Topsoil</i>	Modern ploughsoil. Dark grey-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-5cm. Very bioturbated. Homogeneous. Loose and friable. Clear interface. Overlies (502).	0.00-0.37m	
502	<i>Subsoil</i>	Current subsoil. Mid orange-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular to rounded, <1-6cm. Some bioturbation. Compact.	0.37-0.51m	
503	<i>Natural</i>	Natural geology. Mid orange sand. <1% gravel, subrounded-rounded, <1-2cm. Homogenous. Loose. Contains bands of gravel, 40%, subrounded-rounded, <1-5cm.	0.51m+	
504	<i>Cut</i>	Cut of large irregular feature. Edges very irregular. Either a tree throw or geological feature. Filled with (504).	0.22m deep	
505	<i>Fill</i>	Fill of [504]. Bands of mid orange sand and gravel.	-	
506	<i>Cut</i>	Cut of lynchet. East - west aligned linear with flat base. Filled with (507).	0.32m deep	
507	<i>Fill</i>	Fill of [506]. Redeposited natural sand.	-	
508	<i>Cut</i>	Cut of east west aligned gully. Probable field boundary associated with strip fields. 0.50m wide. Filled with (509).	0.26m deep	
509	<i>Fill</i>	Fill of [508]. Mid orange brown silty sand.	-	
510	<i>Cut</i>	Cut of lynchet. East west aligned. Filled with (511).	0.50m deep	
511	<i>Fill</i>	Fill of lynchet [510]. Mid orange brown silty sand.	-	

Trench 6			Type:	Machine excavated
Dimensions:		Max. depth: 0.46m	Ground level: 24.44m aOD	
context	description		depth (bgl)	
601	<i>Topsoil</i>	Modern ploughsoil. Dark grey-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-5cm. Very bioturbated. Homogeneous. Loose and friable. Clear interface. Overlies (604).	0.00-0.30m	
602	<i>Subsoil</i>	Current subsoil. Dark red-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular to rounded, <1-6cm. Some bioturbation. Compact. Overlies (603).	0.36-0.47m	
603	<i>Natural</i>	Natural geology. Mid orange sand. <1% gravel, subrounded-rounded, <1-2cm. Homogenous. Loose. Contains bands of gravel, 40%, subrounded-rounded, <1-5cm.	0.47m+	
604	<i>Layer</i>	Buried ploughsoil. Dark grey-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-3cm. Compact. Some bioturbation. Overlies (602).	0.30-0.36m	

Trench 7			Type:	Machine excavated	
Dimensions:		Max. depth: 0.42m	Ground level: 24.90m aOD		
context	description			depth (bgl)	
701	Topsoil	Modern ploughsoil. Dark grey-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-5cm. Very bioturbated. Homogeneous. Loose and friable. Clear interface. Overlies (702).			0.00-0.31m
702	Subsoil	Current subsoil. Dark red-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular to rounded, <1-6cm. Some bioturbation. Compact. Overlies (703).			0.31-0.42m
703	Natural	Natural geology. Mid orange sand. <1% gravel, subrounded-rounded, <1-2cm. Homogenous. Loose. Contains bands of gravel, 40%, subrounded-rounded, <1-5cm.			0.42m+

Trench 8			Type:	Machine excavated	
Dimensions:		Max. depth: 0.79m	Ground level: 24.69m aOD		
context	description			depth (bgl)	
801	<i>Topsoil</i>	Modern ploughsoil. Dark grey-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-5cm. Very bioturbated. Homogeneous. Loose and friable. Clear interface. Overlies (802).			0.00-0.32m
802	<i>Subsoil</i>	Current subsoil. Dark red-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular to rounded, <1-6cm. Some bioturbation. Compact. Overlies (803).			0.32-0.52m
803	<i>Natural</i>	Natural geology. Mid orange sand. <1% gravel, subrounded-rounded, <1-2cm. Homogenous. Loose. Contains bands of gravel, 40%, subrounded-rounded, <1-5cm.			0.52m+
804	<i>Cut</i>	Cut of east – west aligned gully. Moderately steeped sided with a flat base. Filled with (805).			0.27m deep
805	<i>Fill</i>	Secondary fill of gully [804]. Mid orange brown silty sand. 1% gravel subrounded-rounded, <1-2cm.			0.27m thick
806	<i>Cut</i>	Cut of east – west aligned gully. Moderately steeped sided with a concave base. Filled with (807). 0.50m wide.			0.17m deep
807	<i>Fill</i>	Secondary fill of gully [806]. Mid orange brown silty sand. <1% gravel subrounded-rounded, <1-2cm.			0.17m thick
808	<i>Group</i>	Group number for gully. Consists of [804] and [806].			-
809	<i>Cut</i>	Cut of small, circular posthole. Steep sided, concave base. Diameter 0.15m. Filled with (810). Not a load bearing post as has no post pad or packing, probably part of a fence line, land division.			0.14m deep
810	<i>Fill</i>	Fill of posthole [809]. Mid orange brown silty sand.			0.14m thick

Trench 9			Type:	Machine excavated	
Dimensions:		Max. depth: 0.34m	Ground level: 26.26m aOD		
context	description			depth (bgl)	
901	Topsoil	Modern ploughsoil. Dark grey-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-5cm. Very bioturbated. Homogeneous. Loose and friable. Clear interface. Overlies (902).			0.00-0.28m
902	Layer	Buried ploughsoil. Dark grey-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-3cm. Compact. Some bioturbation. Overlies (903).			0.28-0.34m
903	Natural	Natural geology. Mid orange sand. <1% gravel, subrounded-rounded, <1-2cm. Homogenous. Loose. Contains bands of gravel, 40%, subrounded-rounded, <1-5cm.			0.34m+
904	Cut	Cut of 2001 evaluation trench. East – west aligned. 2m wide. Cuts (903). Unexcavated			-
905	Fill	Backfill of [904]. Derived from plough soil and re-deposited natural sand.			-

Site B

Trench 10			Type:	Hand and machine excavated
Dimensions: 3.04x1.32m		Max. depth: 0.62m		Ground level: 25.44m aOD
context	description			depth (bgl)
1001	Topsoil	Modern ploughsoil. Dark grey-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-4cm. Very bioturbated. Homogeneous. Loose and friable. Freshly ploughed. Clear interface. Overlies (1002). Dug in two spits.		0.00-0.30m
1002	Subsoil	Current subsoil. Mid red-brown silty sand. <1% stone and gravel, subangular to rounded, <1-4cm. Some bioturbation. Compact. Overlies (1003). Machine excavated.		0.30-0.62m
1003	Natural	Natural geology. Mid orange sand. <1% gravel, subrounded-rounded, <1-2cm. Homogenous. Compact.		0.62m+

Trench 11			Type:	Hand and machine excavated
Dimensions: 2.20x2.20m		Max. depth: 0.58m		Ground level:25.02 m aOD
context	description			depth (bgl)
1101	Topsoil	Modern ploughsoil. Dark grey-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-5cm. Very bioturbated. Homogeneous. Loose and friable. Freshly ploughed. Clear interface. Overlies (1102). Dug in two spits.		
1102	Layer	Buried ploughsoil. Dark grey-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-6cm. Compact. Some bioturbation. Overlies (1103).		
1103	Subsoil	Current subsoil. Dark red-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular to rounded, <1-6cm. Some bioturbation. Compact. Overlies (1104). Machine excavated.		
1104	Natural	Natural geology. Mid orange sand. <1% gravel, subrounded-rounded, <1-2cm. Homogenous. Compact.		

Trench 12			Type:	Hand and machine excavated
Dimensions: 2.00x2.00m		Max. depth: 0.60m	Ground level: 24.28m aOD	
context	description			depth (bgl)
1201	Topsoil	Modern ploughsoil. Dark grey-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-4cm. Very bioturbated. Homogeneous. Loose and friable. Freshly ploughed. Clear interface. Overlies (1202). Dug in two spits.		
1202	Subsoil	Current subsoil. Mid red-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular to rounded, <1-4cm. Some bioturbation. Compact. Overlies (1203). Machine excavated.		
1203	Natural	Natural geology. Mid orange sand. <1% gravel, subrounded-rounded, <1-2cm. Homogenous. Compact.		

Trench 13			Type:	Hand and machine excavated
Dimensions: 4.20x2.30m		Max. depth: 0.49m	Ground level: 25.57m aOD	
context	description			depth (bgl)
1301	<i>Topsoil</i>	Modern ploughsoil. Dark grey-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-4cm. Very bioturbated. Homogeneous. Loose and friable. Freshly ploughed. Clear interface. Overlies (1302). Dug in two spits.		0.00-0.24m
1302	<i>Layer</i>	Buried ploughsoil. Dark grey-brown silty sand. 1% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-3cm. Compact. Some bioturbation. Overlies (1303).		0.24-0.35m
1303	<i>Subsoil</i>	Current subsoil. Mid red-brown silty sand. <1% stone and gravel, subangular to rounded, <1-2cm. Some bioturbation. Compact. Overlies (1304). Machine excavated.		0.35-0.49m
1304	<i>Natural</i>	Natural geology. Mid orange sand. <1% gravel, subrounded-rounded, <1-2cm. Homogenous. Compact.		0.49m+

Trench 14			Type:	Hand and machine excavated
Dimensions: 4.00x1.00m		Max. depth: 0.60m	Ground level: 24.57m aOD	
context	description			depth (bgl)
1401	<i>Topsoil</i>	Modern ploughsoil. Dark grey-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-4cm. Very bioturbated. Homogeneous. Loose and friable. Freshly ploughed. Clear interface. Overlies (1402). Dug in two spits.		0.00-0.34m
1402	<i>Subsoil</i>	Current subsoil. Mid red-brown silty sand. <1% stone and gravel, subangular to rounded, <1-4cm. Some bioturbation. Compact. Overlies (1403). Machine excavated.		0.34-0.60m
1403	<i>Natural</i>	Natural geology. Mid orange sand. <1% gravel, subrounded-rounded, <1-2cm. Homogenous. Compact.		0.60m+

Trench 15			Type:	Hand and machine excavated
Dimensions: 2.00x2.00m		Max. depth: 0.53m	Ground level: 24.92m aOD	
context	description			depth (bgl)
1501	<i>Topsoil</i>	Modern ploughsoil. Dark grey-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-4cm. Very bioturbated. Homogeneous. Loose and friable. Freshly ploughed. Clear interface. Overlies (1502). Dug in two spits.		0.00-0.26m
1502	<i>Layer</i>	Buried ploughsoil. Dark grey-brown silty sand. 1% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-3cm. Compact. Some bioturbation. Overlies (1503).		0.26-0.33m
1503	<i>Subsoil</i>	Current subsoil. Mid red-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular to rounded, <1-4cm. Some bioturbation. Compact. Overlies (1504). Machine excavated.		0.33-0.53
1504	<i>Natural</i>	Natural geology. Mid orange sand. <1% gravel, subrounded-rounded, <1-2cm. Homogenous. Compact.		0.53m+
1505	<i>Cut</i>	Cut of tree throw. Irregular. Filled with (1506).		0.19m deep
1506	<i>Fill</i>	Fill of tree throw [1505].		0.19m thick

Trench 16			Type:	Hand and machine excavated
Dimensions: 1.00x1.00m		Max. depth: 0.59m	Ground level: 23.32m aOD	
context	description			depth (bgl)
1601	<i>Topsoil</i>	Modern ploughsoil. Dark grey-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-5cm. Very bioturbated. Homogeneous. Loose and friable. Freshly ploughed. Clear interface. Overlies (1602). Dug in two spits.		0.00-0.27m
1602	<i>Subsoil</i>	Current subsoil. Mid red-brown silty sand. 1% stone and gravel, subangular to rounded, <1-2cm. Some bioturbation. Compact. Overlies (1603). Machine excavated.		0.27-0.59m
1603	<i>Natural</i>	Natural geology. Mid orange sand. <1% gravel, subrounded-rounded, <1-2cm. Homogenous. Compact.		0.59m+

Trench 17			Type:	Hand and machine excavated
Dimensions: 2.00x1.10m		Max. depth: 0.68m	Ground level: 25.66m	
context	description			depth (bgl)
1701	<i>Topsoil</i>	Modern ploughsoil. Dark grey-brown silty sand. 2% stone and gravel, subangular-subrounded, <1-6cm. Very bioturbated. Homogeneous. Loose and friable. Freshly ploughed. Clear interface. Overlies (1702). Dug in two spits.		0.00-0.31m
1702	<i>Subsoil</i>	Current subsoil. Mid red-brown silty sand. 1% stone and gravel, subangular to rounded, <1-2cm. Some bioturbation. Compact. Overlies (1703). Machine excavated.		0.31-0.42m
1703	<i>Natural</i>	Natural geology. Mid orange sand. <1% gravel, subrounded-rounded, <1-2cm. Homogenous. Compact.		0.42m+



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Figure 1

370900

-388900



- Area covered by Magnetometer Survey
- Area covered by Resistance Survey
- Field walking grid
- Datable finds recovered
- Trench
- Archaeology



Geophysical data courtesy of GSB Prospection Ltd

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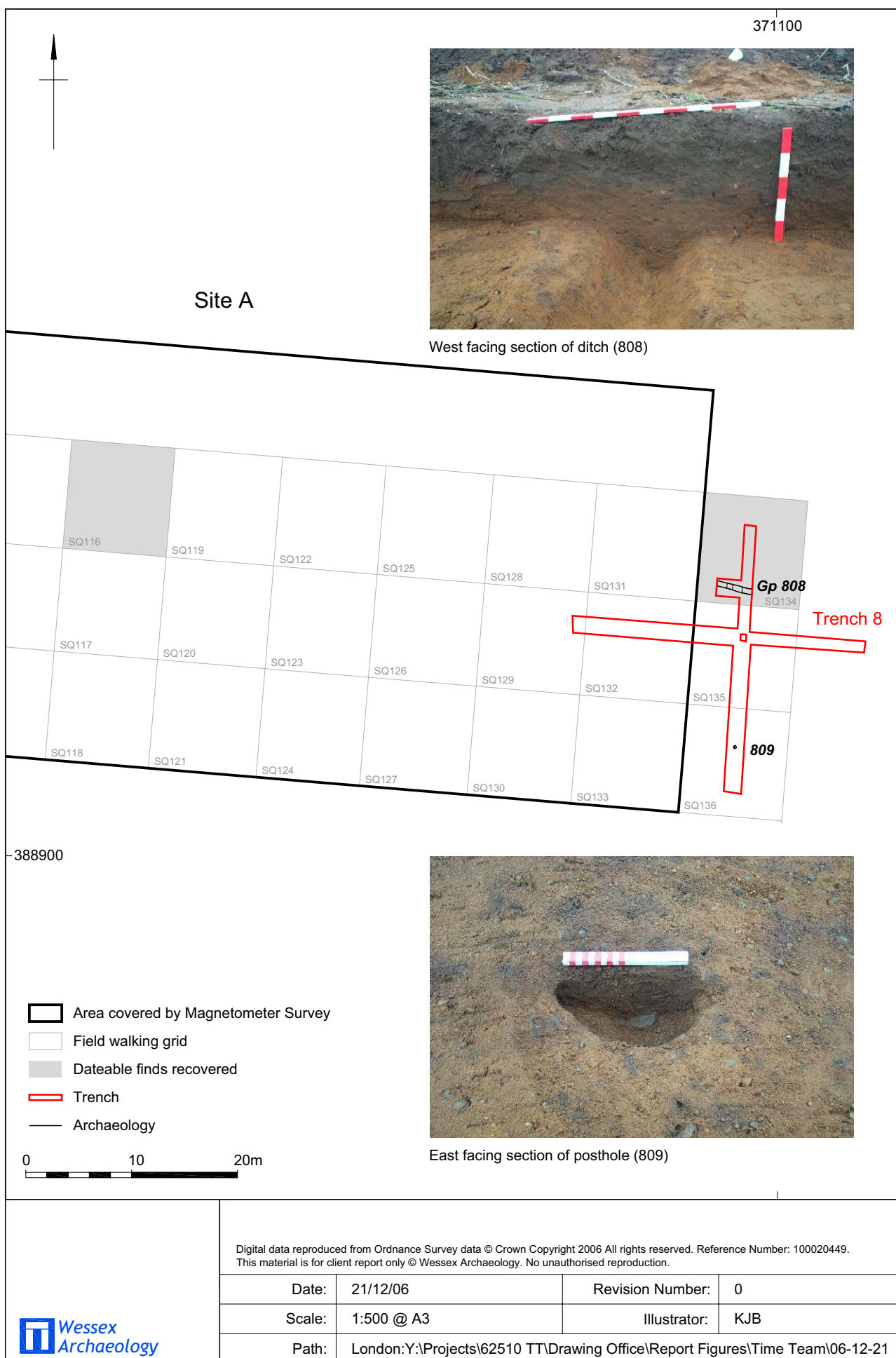
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Site A, trenches 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9

Figure 2





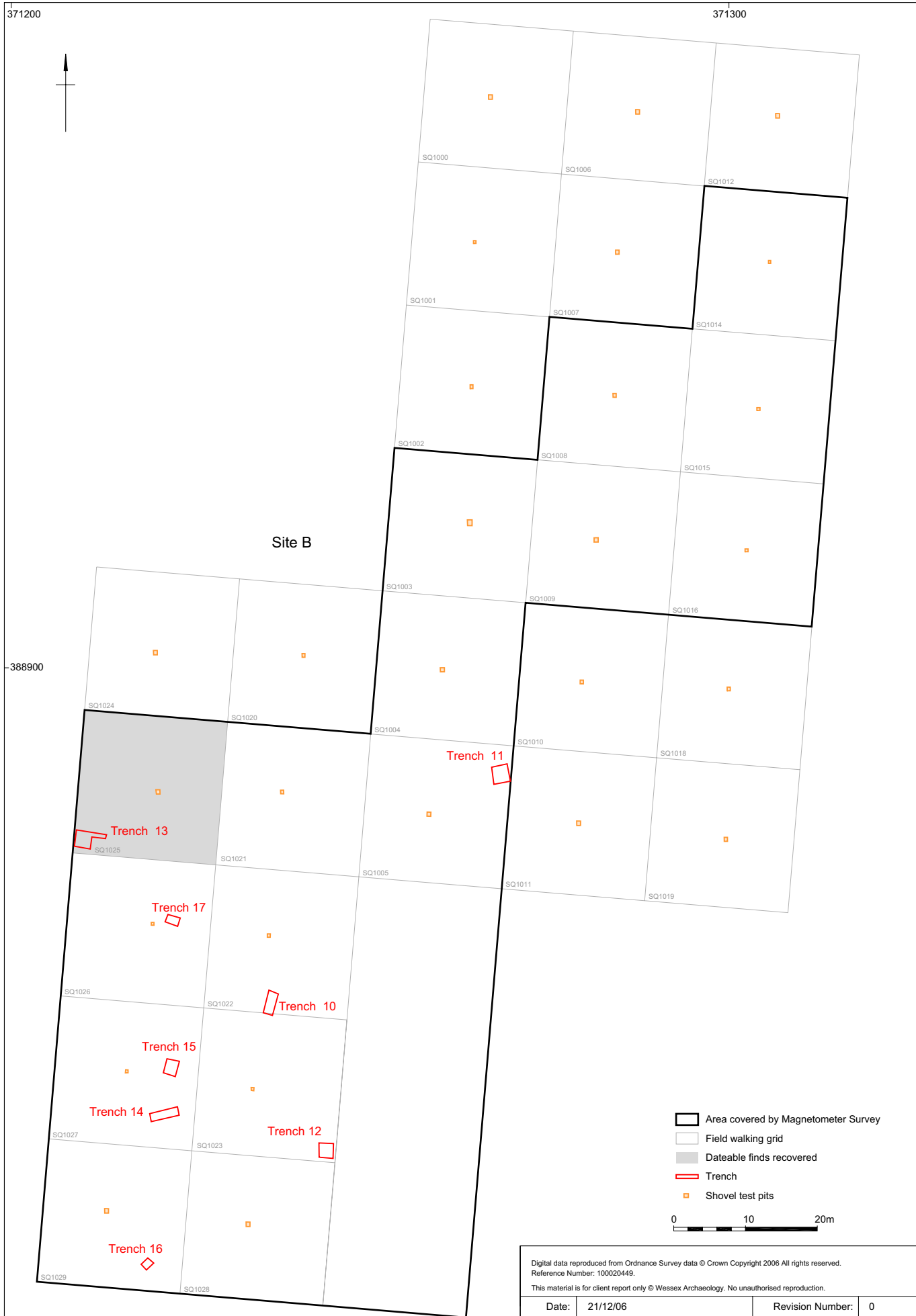




Plate 1. Excavation of hedgerow (103)



Plate 2. Trench 1 north facing section hedgerow (103)



Plate 3. Trench 3 from north



Plate 4. Geological banding misinterpreted as archaeology in Trench 3



Plate 5. Trench 4 from north



Plate 6. East facing section Tree Throw (504)



Plate 7. Aerial shot of Trenches 1,2,3,4 and 5 from the north east



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