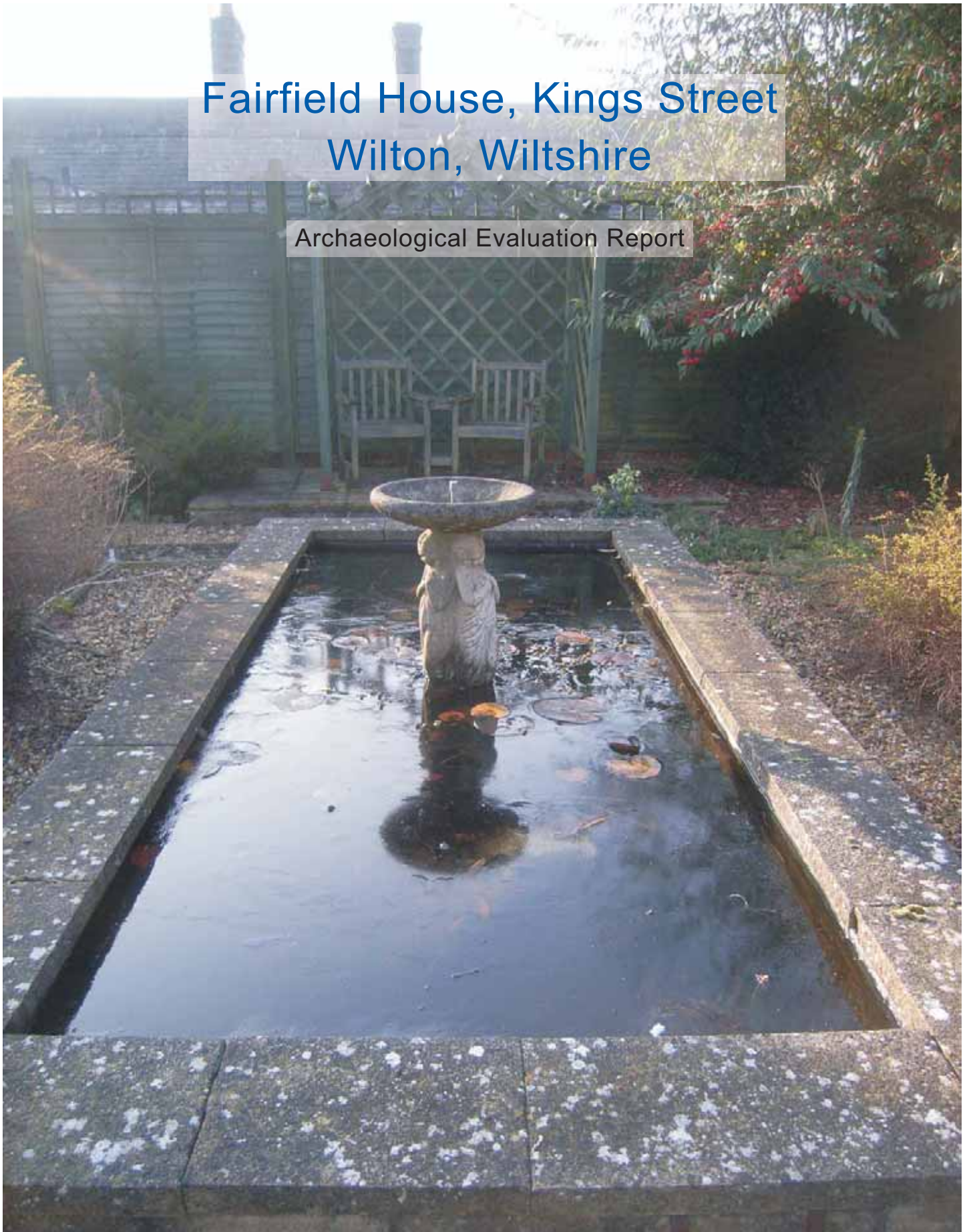




Fairfield House, Kings Street
Wilton, Wiltshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report



**Fairfield House, Kings Street,
Wilton
Wiltshire**

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Prepared on behalf of
Midsummer Homes Limited
Midsummer Wood
Warren Copse
Woodgreen
Fordingbridge
Wiltshire
SP6 2QY

by
Wessex Archaeology
Portway House
Old Sarum Park
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP4 6EB

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Midsummer Homes Ltd, to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of potential redevelopment on land at Fairfield House, Kings Street, Wilton, Wiltshire (hereafter the Site, see **Figure 1**). The Site is centred on Ordnance Survey NGR 410065, 131500.

The fieldwork was undertaken between the 17th and 19th of December 2007. Of the three trenches excavated only one produced any archaeological features, which proved to be a group of post-medieval/modern pits.

In the remaining two trenches the evaluation confirmed a small quantity of made ground was present as a result of the recent re-modelling and construction of Fairfield House.

Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Midsummer Homes Ltd and Wessex Archaeology is particularly grateful to Paul Martin and Helena Cave-Penney for their advice and assistance during the course of these investigations.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Mike Dinwiddy, Neil Fitzpatrick and John Diffy. This report was prepared by Mike Dinwiddy, with illustrations prepared by Kenneth Lymer. The project was managed by Mark Williams on behalf of Wessex Archaeology.

**Fairfield House, Kings Street,
Wilton
Wiltshire**

Archaeological Evaluation Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Midsummer Homes Ltd, to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of potential redevelopment on land at Fairfield House, Kings Street, Wilton, Wiltshire (**Figure 1**), NGR 410065, 131500 (hereafter the Site).

1.1.2 The evaluation is required by Salisbury District Council in support of the planning application (S/2007/2308) for the proposed construction of a series of 12 domestic dwellings in three separate terraces, on Land adjacent to Fairfield House, Kings Street, Wilton.

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

1.2.1 The Site comprises a sub-rectangular shaped plot located to the north of King Street (**Figure 1**). The Site is bounded to the north by open fields, to the east by adjacent housing, to the south by King Street and to the east by Kings Gate. The current land use is a single dwelling and associated land, the dwelling is to remain in use.

1.2.2 The underlying geology of the Site comprises a spur of Valley Gravel overlying solid geology consisting of Cretaceous Upper Chalk (Ordnance Survey 1976).

1.2.3 The Site is relatively flat and situated at 55m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1.1 The archaeological evidence from Wilton has recently been collated and synthesised as part of the extensive survey of Wiltshire's towns (Wiltshire County Council 2002). The existence of prehistoric and Romano-British activity on the gravel island which Wilton occupies has been postulated, but little archaeological evidence has so far been uncovered (Andrews et al. 2000, 200). Haslam (1976) suggests that there may have been an early river crossing utilising the gravel island, but implies that a significant Romano-British settlement or presence is unlikely as the main road between Dorchester and Old Sarum crosses the Nadder approximately two kilometres east of Wilton.

- 2.1.2 The Saxon settlement of Wilton probably originated in the 5th or 6th century. The Saxons are known to have favoured this type of site, particularly for royal residences. The first documentary reference to Wilton dates to 838AD, in the form of a concordat between the King of Wessex and the Archbishop of Canterbury written at Kingston upon Thames and confirmed at Wilton (Haslam 1976). The confirmation of the document at Wilton shows the presence of the King of Wessex at Wilton, emphasising the importance of this settlement.
- 2.1.3 The status of Wilton as a royal seat during the 9th century is further indicated by the charter 854AD in which King Ethelwulf tithed his lands (Haslam 1976). This document was dated at Wilton, although the council was held at Winchester. This shows that Wilton remained important even though Winchester was becoming predominant as the administrative centre of Wessex. By the time of Alfred's reign in the later 9th century the importance of Wilton as a royal seat was on the wane and Winchester was the major town of the Kingdom.
- 2.1.4 During the 9th and 10th centuries Wilton was a stronghold comprising part of a chain of defensive centres or burhs created by Alfred and listed in the Burghal Hidage – a document drawn up in the 10th century by one of Alfred's immediate successors. West Street is likely to have originated as one of the principal streets within the burh. Wilton was also the principal mint for the shire in this period. After 1003, when the town was sacked by the Danes, the moneyers appear to have preferred the more defensible site at Old Sarum, although Wilton was not abandoned as a mint until 1250 (VCH 1962).
- 2.1.5 The Domesday survey records that the Borough of Wilton paid a substantial custom of £50. Eighteen burgesses under seven manors are recorded, paying 14s, 15d. In addition, two other manors held five houses in Wilton, paying 4s, 10d. The suburb of Ditchampton to the north-west (just beyond the Site) was held by the Bishop of Bayeux; it had a small agricultural assessment, but contained four mills. At the end of the 11th century the town possessed eight parish churches with an additional four in the suburbs, suggesting a considerable population. The presence in the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries of a large Jewish community suggests both economic prosperity and a significant urban population with a cosmopolitan attitude (VCH 1962).
- 2.1.6 Wilton suffered a decline in importance in the 13th and 14th centuries, caused primarily by the establishment of the planned town of New Sarum (Salisbury) in 1219 and by the building of the Harnham bridge in 1244 (Haslam 1976, 51), and has seen limited development since. This has led to both its archaeological obscurity and archaeological potential. Relatively few disturbances have damaged the archaeological deposits within the town in the intervening centuries, but for the same reason recent development-led glimpses of the town's archaeology have been few.
- 2.1.7 Despite the significance of the town in the Late Saxon period, archaeological evidence is rare. However, evaluation of the St John's Hospital site (immediately to the north of the Site under consideration here) in the 1970s

(Anon. 1971; Anon. 1972) and by Wessex Archaeology in 1993 (WA 1993), followed by an excavation and watching brief in 1996 and 1997 (WA 1996; WA 1997; Andrews et al. 2000), revealed a well-preserved and complex sequence through the Late Saxon burgh defences comprising a ditch and bank. The Late Saxon defences may have been modified during the 13th century, but there were very few other features of medieval or post-medieval date (Andrews et al. 2000, 189).

- 2.1.8 The proposed development lies in an area recorded as Burdens Ball in the 14th century and may be within an area of suburbs occupied during 11th – 12th centuries. It is possible that work here may provide evidence of the nature of Wilton's decline in the 14th to 15th centuries.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The generic aim of the evaluation was to elucidate the character, distribution, extent, importance and state of preservation of any archaeological and historic remains within the Site.
- 3.1.2 To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence where development is proposed.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Project Design

- 4.1.1 The methodology was laid out in full in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI, WA doc ref **T11619.01**) produced by Wessex Archaeology prior to the commencement of fieldwork which was submitted to and approved by Wiltshire County Council prior to commencement of the fieldwork. This will not be reiterated in detail here.

4.2 Trial Trench Excavation

- 4.2.1 The fieldwork was undertaken between the 17th and 19thnd of December 2007. (**Figure 1**). Each trial trench was excavated to the top of the archaeology or the natural geological horizon.
- 4.2.2 Topsoil and subsoil were removed by a JCB mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket and under the constant supervision of a qualified professional archaeologist.

4.3 Survey

- 4.3.1 The trial trenches and the archaeological features were located on the ground using a GPS Leica 1200.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

Topsoil subsoil and natural geology

5.1.1 Topsoils in all three trenches consisted of a dark brown to black silty loam with sparse to occasional sub angular and sub rounded pebbles to a depth of *c.*0.4m, below which the subsoil was a light greyish brown firm sandy silt clay with occasional sub-rounded and sub oval flint pebbles from 0.3m to 0.5m in width. The natural varied with trenches 1 and 2 having a mid orangey brown sandy clay, with common to abundant mixed flint pebbles and nodules at depth of *c.*0.9m. Trench 3 had a natural of a mixed chalk with periglacial mid orangey brown clay mottling, flint pebbles and nodules were common. Summaries of all trenches are included in **Appendix 1**.

5.2 Trenches 1, 2 & 3

5.2.1 **Trench 1** was located to the east of the Site in the garden and was aligned approximately NW/SE. The trench measured 13.14m x 1.6m in plan and the maximum trench depth reached 0.85m below ground level (BGL) (**Figure 2**).

5.2.2 **Trench 2** was also located to the north of the Site alongside the garage and was aligned NE/SW. The trench dimensions were 11.25m x 1.85m in plan; maximum trench depth reached 1.05m BGL. A thin band of made ground was recorded at 0.55m BLG, a poorly mixed pebbles and gravels with occasional Ceramic Building Material (CBM) (**Figure 3**).

5.2.3 **Trench 3** was at the south of the site in the front garden and aligned NW/SE the trench was 13.24m x 1.86m in plan; maximum trench depth reached 0.6m. The western end of the trench contained three pits (**Figure 4**), Pits **303** and **309** were only visible in the section, pit **305** however was almost entirely exposed allowing for full excavation.

5.2.4 Pit **303** was 1.55m wide and 0.2m deep circular in plan with concave sides and base, it contained a single fill (**304**) a mid grey brown clayey silt, with occasional chalk fragments poorly sorted, further coarse components were pebble sized sub and rounded flint.

5.2.5 Pit **305** was circular in plan, 1.6m in diameter with concave side and a flat base, 0.6m deep. The pit contained two fills; the lower (**306**) a mid grey brown sandy silt with poorly sorted moderated fragments of chalk sub and angular pebbles sized flint making up its coarse components. Archaeological components were pot, CBM and bone. The upper fill (**307**) a mid dark grey brown sandy silt with occasional fragments of chalk and sub and angular flint pebbles.

5.2.6 Pit **308** was circular in plan with concave sides and a gently concave base, only visible in section it was 0.60m wide 0.35m deep. The pit contained one fill (**309**) a mid dark brown clayey silt with occasional fragments of chalk, angular and rounded flint pebbles poorly sorted. Archaeological components were burnt bone flint and bone.

5.3 Finds

- 5.3.1 Finds from the site comprised a single sherd of modern pottery and post medieval brick and CBM a small quantity of animal bone from 306. Also a small quantity of animal bone and burnt flint from 309.

5.4 Environmental Sampling

- 5.4.1 All features being relatively modern were considered not suitable for environmental sampling.

5.5 Reinstatement

- 5.5.1 Following the completion of the investigation, all trial trenches were fully reinstated, making every effort to leave the site in a tidy condition.

6 DISCUSSION

- 6.1.1 In the front garden to the south of the Site, three pits were discovered **303, 305 & 308** in **Trench 3**. These were dated to the post medieval or modern periods and contained dumped material most likely to have been domestic waste.

- 6.1.2 No archaeological remains were located in the remainder of the trenches. The relatively deep topsoil / subsoil may reflect landscaping and gardening.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1.1 The evaluation confirmed the presence of late post medieval activity confined to the south of the Site. No other archaeological features or objects were observed or recovered during the evaluation.

- 7.1.2 There was no evidence of medieval Wilton's decline in the 14th to 15th centuries.

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Appendix 1

Context Tables

Trench 1

Length	Width	Depth
13.4m	1.8m	0.85m
Context	Description	Depth
100	Topsoil- very dark grey brown silty clay loam, sparse to occasional rounded and angular poorly sorted flint pebbles	0-0.33m
101	Subsoil- mid greyish brown sandy silty clay, occasional rounded and angular poorly sorted flint pebbles/nodules	0.33-0.55m
102	Colluvium- mid orangey brown sandy clay silt, sparse flint rounded and angular poorly sorted flint pebbles	0.55-0.85m
103	Natural-mid orangey brown sandy clay, common rounded and angular flint nodules and pebbles	0.85m+

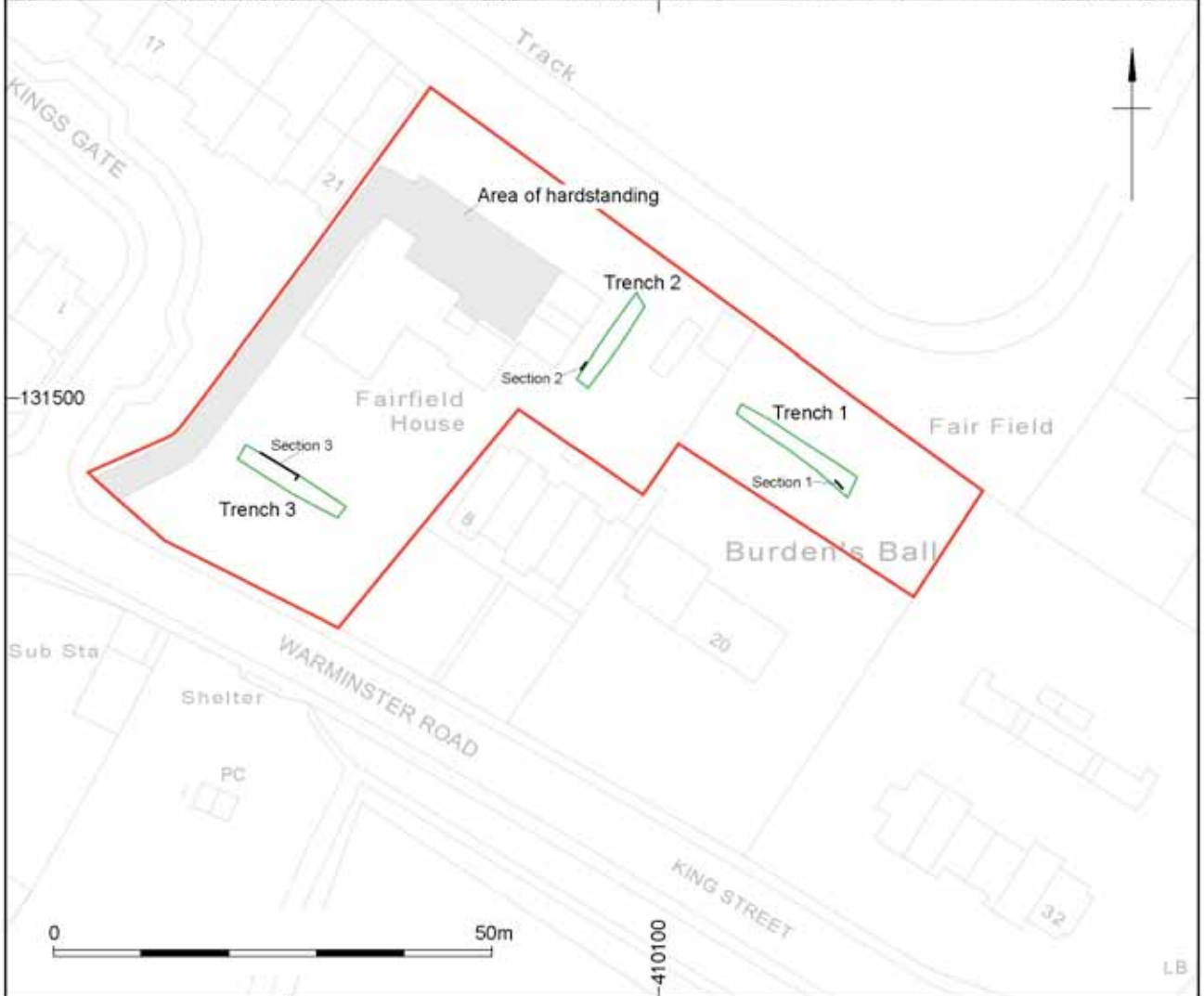
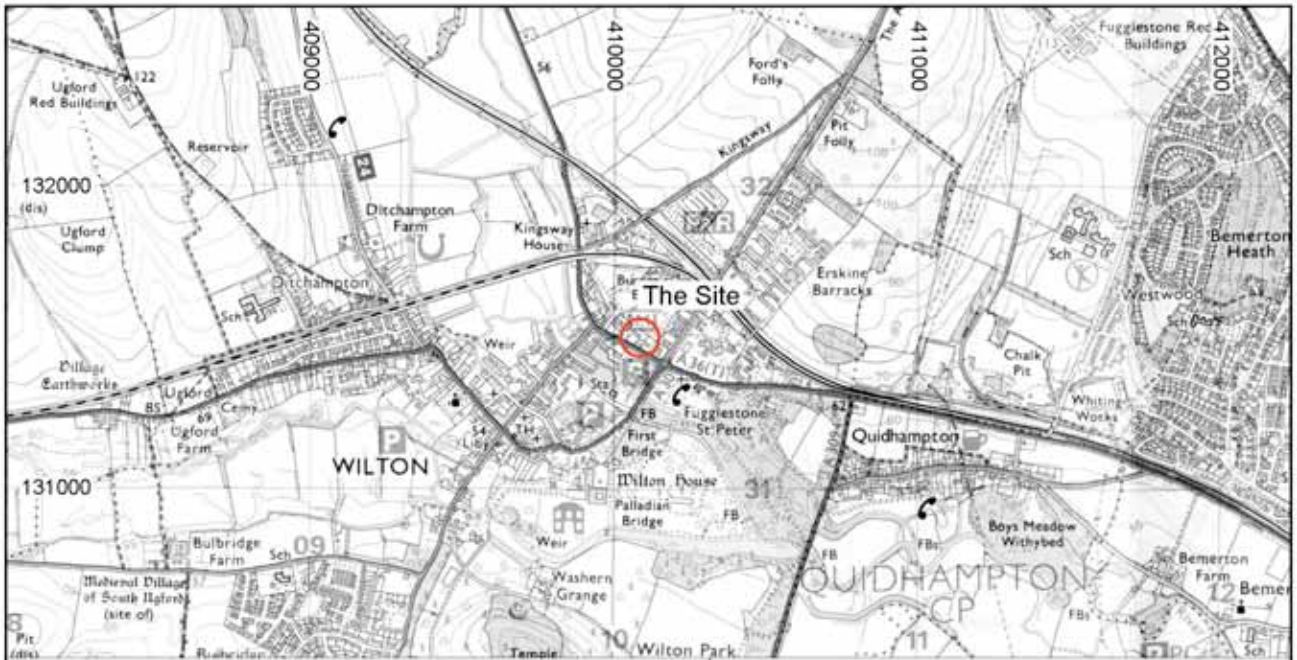
Trench 2

Length	Width	Depth
11.25m	1.80m	1.05m
Context	Description	Depth
200	Topsoil- very dark grey brown silty clay loam, sparse to occasional rounded and angular poorly sorted flint pebbles	0-0.55m
201	Made ground- mid brown sandy silty clay, poorly sorted common rounded and angular poorly sorted flint pebbles/nodules, CBM	0.55-1.05m
202	Natural-mid orangey brown sandy clay, common rounded and angular flint nodules and pebbles	1.05m+

Trench 3

Length	Width	Depth
13.24m	1.80m	0.6m
Context	Description	Depth
300	Topsoil- very dark grey brown silty clay loam, sparse to occasional rounded and angular poorly sorted flint pebbles	0-0.33m
301	Subsoil- mid greyish brown sandy silty clay, occasional rounded and angular poorly sorted flint pebbles/nodules	0.3-0.6m
302	Natural-mixed dirty whitish chalk and orangy brown periglacial sandy clay silts, common rounded and angular flint nodules and pebbles.	0.6m+
[303]	Cut of pit-circular in plan with concave sides and shallow concave base, 1.55m wide and 0.2m deep. Filled with 304	
304	Fill of 303, a mid grey brown clayish silt, with occasional chalk fragments and flint pebbles as coarse components.	
[305]	Cut of pit-circular in plan with concave sides and shallow concave base, 1.6m in diameter and 0.6m deep, filled with 306 & 307	

306	Lower fill of 305, a mid grey brown sandy silt with with occasional chalk fragments and flint pebbles as coarse components, possible silting. Pot, bone and CBM make up the archaeological components. 0.3m deep	
307	Upper fill of 305, a mid grey brown sandy silt with with occasional chalk fragments and flint pebbles as coarse components 0.3m deep.	
[308]	Cut of pit-circular in plan with concave sides and a concave base. 0.65m in diameter and 0.35m deep filled with 309	
309	Fill of 308 , a mid grey brown sandy silt with occasional chalk fragments and flint pebbles as coarse components, burnt flint and bone making up the archaeological components.	



- The Site
- Evaluation trench



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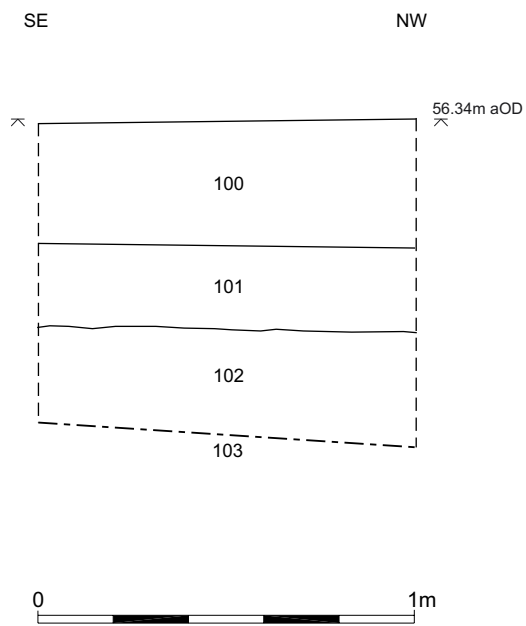
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Site with trench location

Figure 1



NE facing section



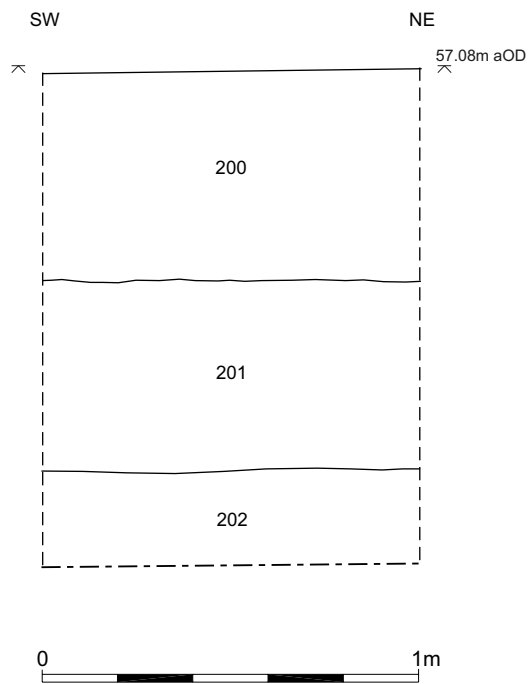
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SE facing section



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Plate: Pit 305

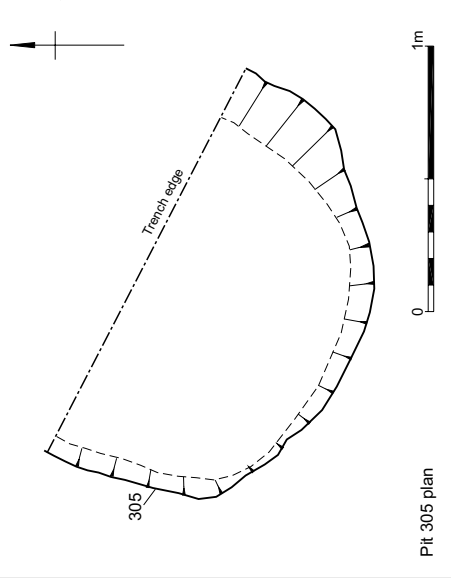
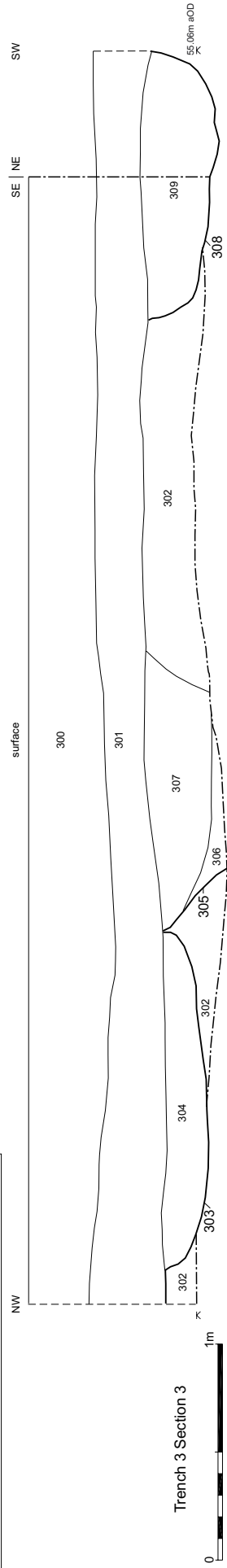
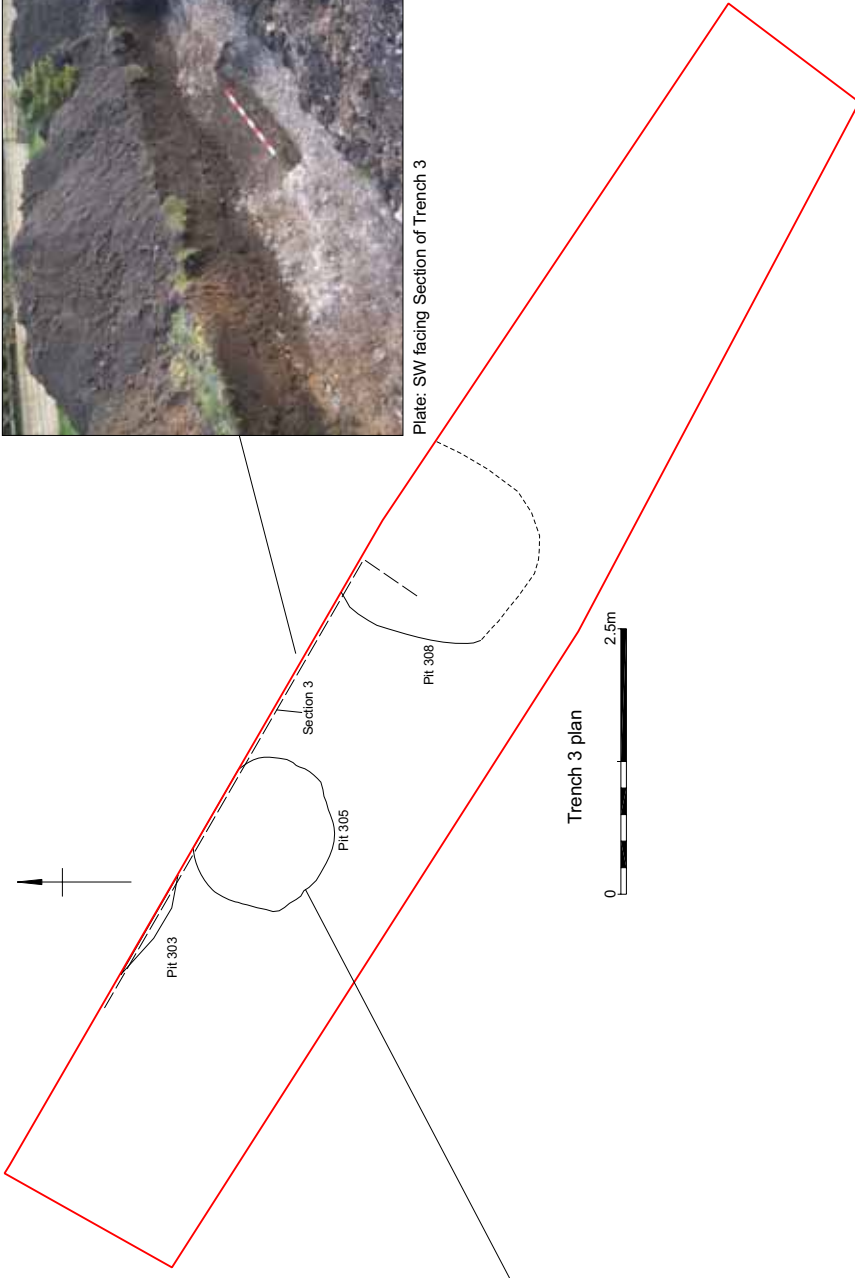


Plate: SW facing Section of Trench 3



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SW facing section of Trench 3 with section of 303, 305, 308 and plan of Pit 305

Figure 4



WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY LIMITED.

Registered Head Office: Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB.

Tel: 01722 326867 Fax: 01722 337562 info@wessexarch.co.uk www.wessexarch.co.uk

London Office: Unit 113, The Chandlery, 50 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7QY.

Tel: 020 7953 7494 Fax: 020 7953 7499 london-info@wessexarch.co.uk www.wessexarch.co.uk

