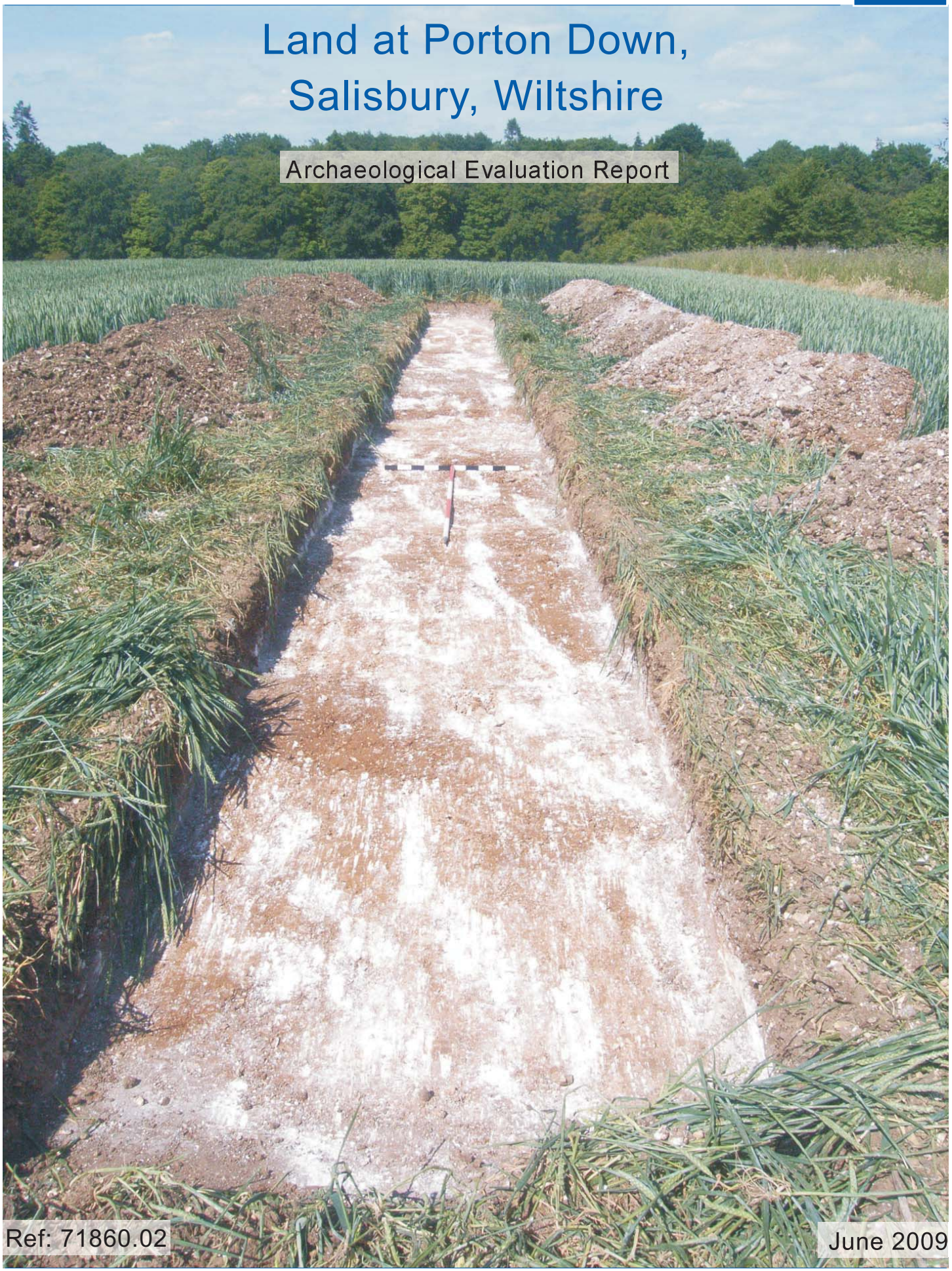
Wessex Archaeology

Land at Porton Down, Salisbury, Wiltshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report



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June 2009

LAND AT PORTON DOWN, SALISBURY, WILTSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

Prepared for
RPS PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
Mallams Court
18 Milton Park
Abingdon
Oxfordshire
OX14 4RP

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

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by RPS Planning and Development (the Client), to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of development on land at Porton Down, Salisbury, Wiltshire, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 420670 136850.

Subsequent to an archaeological desk-based assessment (Cotswold Archaeology 2008*a*) and a geophysical survey (Wessex Archaeology 2008) an archaeological evaluation was required by the Assistant County Archaeologist at Wiltshire Council to further inform the nature of the archaeological potential of the Site before the determination of the current planning application (S/2009/0669).

The evaluation comprised the excavation of two 25m x 1.8m trial trenches situated within the footprint of the proposed Training and Skills Centre. The trenches were located either side of a service aligned roughly north-south, bounded to the south by the Health Protection Agency (HPA) compound and to the east by a car park. Both trenches were located within an arable field and although the Site was generally level, the field itself sloped down from south-west to north-east, with a steeper gradient to the north.

The trenches exposed a single linear feature, interpreted as a ditch, located towards the western end of Trench 1. The ditch was aligned north-south and although a worked flint was retrieved, the feature cut through the subsoil layer and was considered to be modern in date. An additional worked flint was recovered from the topsoil and is indicative of prehistoric activity within the wider area.

LAND AT PORTON DOWN
SALISBURY, WILTSHIRE

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by RPS Planning and Development and the assistance of Mick Rawlings is gratefully acknowledged in this respect. The help throughout the project of Brigitte Guile, CEPR Environment Manager, was much appreciated.

The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Sue Farr. The field work was directed by John Powell and Vasilios Tsamis who were ably assisted by Piotor Brozyna. This report was written by John Powell and edited by Sue Farr. The figures were prepared by Elisabeth James.

LAND AT PORTON DOWN
SALISBURY, WILTSHIRE

Archaeological Evaluation Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by RPS Planning and Development to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land at Porton Down, Wiltshire (hereafter the Site, **Figure 1**), centred on NGR 420670 136850 in advance of development.

1.1.2 An archaeological evaluation was required by the Assistant County Archaeologist at Wiltshire Council following an earlier archaeological desk-based assessment (Cotswold Archaeology 2008*a*) and geophysical survey (WA 2008) undertaken on the Site. The evaluation aimed to further inform the nature of the archaeological potential of the Site before the determination of the current planning application (S/2009/0669) which proposes a single storey Training and Skill centre to the north of the HPA facilities.

1.1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (RPS 2008) was prepared ahead of fieldwork commencing. The WSI set out the strategy and methodology to be implemented during the works. The archaeological evaluation was designed to facilitate the assessment of the archaeological potential of the Site and subsequently, assist in any further decisions with regards to any additional mitigation that may be required.

1.1.4 The fieldwork took place between the 4th and 5th June 2009.

2 SITE LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

2.1.1 The Site is located to the north of the HPA facilities at Porton Down, near Salisbury and is positioned in the south-east corner of an existing arable field.

2.1.2 Although the Site was generally level, the field itself sloped down from south-west to north-east, with a steeper gradient to the north.

2.1.3 The underlying geology is Cretaceous Upper Chalk, which was overlain by brown redzinas of the 434h (Andover 1) association (SSEW 1983).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The archaeological background and potential of the Site was detailed in a desk-based assessment (Cotswold Archaeology 2008*a*) and is summarised below.

3.2 Previous archaeological work

3.2.1 To the south of the Site, an archaeological evaluation (ASI 1997) uncovered a possible prehistoric ditch.

3.2.2 Approximately 800m to the south-west, archaeological evaluation (WA 2000) uncovered three undated postholes and two probable Bronze Age postholes.

3.2.3 During works to install a water supply main in the 1970s, two Iron Age pits were excavated to the north-west of the Site under watching brief conditions.

3.2.4 A series of linear cropmarks, noted from aerial photography immediately to the north-west of the Site, are characteristic of former cultivation terraces or lynchets (earthen banks formed along earlier field boundaries).

3.2.5 An archaeological evaluation undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology to the immediate east of the Site did not expose any archaeological features (Cotswold Archaeology 2008*a*).

3.2.6 Within the wider area a number of archaeological features are present, including Early Bronze Age barrows, located on the higher ground to the north-west and the south-east of the Site.

3.2.7 The Portway Roman road that joined Salisbury to Silchester runs along the edge of the field to the north-west.

3.2.8 A geophysical survey of the Site was undertaken by Wessex Archaeology (Wessex Archaeology 2008). This survey confirmed the presence of a number of linear features noted from the aforementioned aerial photographic transcriptions. Furthermore, numerous curvilinear anomalies were also recorded and were interpreted as possible enclosures or trackways. Within the Site itself linear trends and possible archaeological features were identified.

4 AIMS

4.1.1 The archaeological evaluation aimed to establish, within the constraints of the agreed strategy, the presence or absence, location, extent, date, character, condition and depth of any surviving remains which may be affected by the proposed development.

4.1.2 This information was required to enable an informed decision to be taken on the archaeological potential of the Site, and to inform any further archaeological mitigation for the Site.

5 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

5.1 Fieldwork

5.1.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the standards set out within the Specification (RPS 2008) which was submitted to, and approved by, Wiltshire Council Archaeology Service and conducted in line with the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (as amended 2008).

5.1.2 Two trial trenches were excavated within the proposed development footprint by a JCB mechanical excavator using a toothless grading bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Topsoil and subsoil were stripped in sequence and stockpiled separately adjacent to the trenches. Machining in both trenches continued in spits down to the top of the underlying chalk.

5.1.3 Trench 2 measured 22.5m and was not excavated to the full length due to the presence of a buried service that crossed close to the southern end of the trench..

5.1.4 Trench positions, archaeological features and interventions were surveyed using Lecia GPS and tied into the Ordnance Survey.

5.1.5 All exposed archaeological deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system.

5.2 Health and Safety

5.2.1 All work was carried out in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992, and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.

6 RESULTS

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 The following section provides a summary description of the results of the evaluation. A full description of all trenches in tabulated form is included in **Appendix 1.** The locations and plans can be seen in **Figure 2**.

6.2 Trench 1

6.2.1 The depositional sequence within Trench 1 comprised a mid grey-brown topsoil overlying a mid brown subsoil, above the soliflucted chalk natural.

6.2.2 To the western end of Trench 1 a single roughly north-south shallow linear ditch [**104**] was recorded. This ditch cut through the subsoil and is modern in date. The ditch was 0.35m wide and 0.39m deep with steep concave sides and a flat base. A single mid grey brown silty clay deposit with moderate flint inclusions (**105**) was recorded within the ditch. This deposit contained a single worked flint and pieces of modern brick.

6.3 Trench 2

6.3.1 Trench 2 contained no archaeological features. The depositional sequence showed a thin topsoil was present above the soliflucted natural chalk. A single worked flint was recovered from the excavated topsoil of the trench.

7 FINDS AND ENVIROMENTAL SAMPLING

7.1 Finds

7.1.1 Only two worked flints were recovered from the evaluation trenches and neither are chronologically significant, although a broad late Neolithic to Early Bronze Age date is likely. A secondary flake and a tertiary fragment, the former quite heavily edge damaged were collected and given the heavy edge damage, have unquestionably been reworked in the plough soil.

7.1.2 The tertiary fragment from ditch [**104**] fill (**105**) is redeposited and the other flint flake was recovered from the topsoil of Trench 2 (**201**).

7.2 Environmental

7.2.1 No features or deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the course of the evaluation.

8 CONCLUSION

8.1.1 Other than the linear feature of modern date, no archaeological features were identified and the results broadly confirm the geophysical survey results (WA 2008) which identified a generally low level of activity within the Site boundary itself, but greater potential within the field overall.

8.1.2 The presence of a small number of worked flints is consistent with the generally high prehistoric activity recorded in the vicinity of the Site.

9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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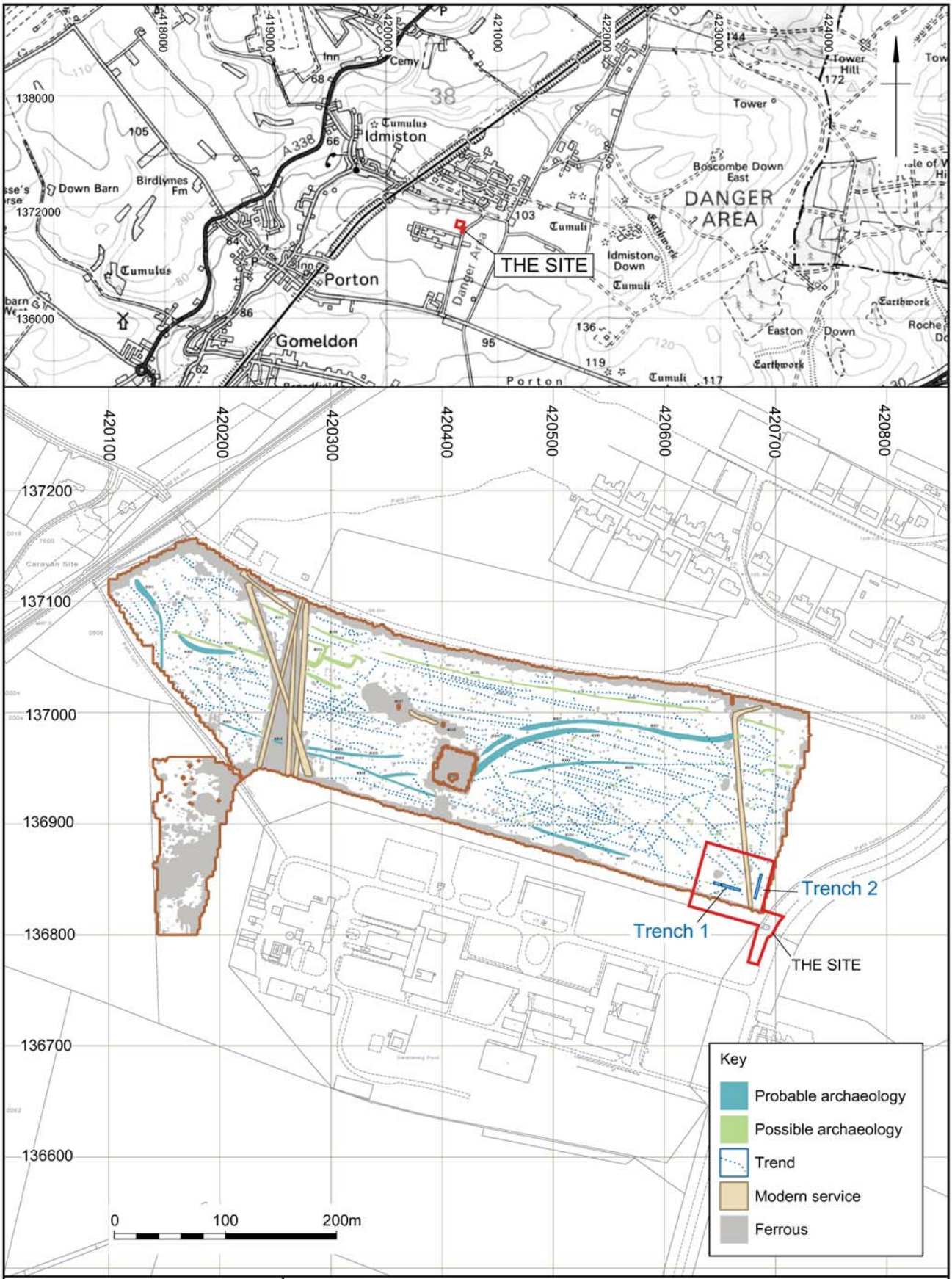
APPENDIX 1: EVALUATION TRENCH SUMMARIES

TRENCH 1			
Max. Dimensions	**Length: 25m**	**Width: 1.5m**	**Max. Depth: 0.70m**
Context	**Description**		**Depth (in metres) BGL**
101	**Topsoil**: Mid grey-brown silty loam. Humic topsoil recently ploughed and seeded.		0.00-0.30m
102	**Subsoil**: Mid reddish-brown silty clay, fairly compact. Deposit that was deepest to the western end of the trench.		0.30-0.50m
103	**Natural deposits**: Natural chalk bedrock. Disturbed with reddish-brown clay with flints due to solifluction.		0.50m+
104	**Cut of Ditch**: Aligned N-S, width 0.35m, depth 0.39m, steep concave sides with a flat base. Probably of modern date, could be seen to cut subsoil in section. Filled by (**105**).		0.20-0.59m
105	**Fill of Ditch [104]**: Mid grey-brown silty clay with moderate flint inclusions. Contained a single worked flint and pieces of modern CBM.		0.22-0.59m

TRENCH 2			
Max. Dimensions	**Length: 22.50m**	**Width: 1.5m**	**Max. Depth: 0.39 m**
Context	**Description**		**Depth (in metres) BGL**
201	**Topsoil**: Mid to dark grey-brown clay loam with common flint inclusions. Humic topsoil recently ploughed and seeded.		0.00 - 0.29m
202	**Natural Deposits**: Natural chalk bedrock. Disturbed with reddish-brown clay with flints due to solifluction.		0.29m+



Site outline
Evaluation trench
Geophysical survey areas

Wessex Archaeology

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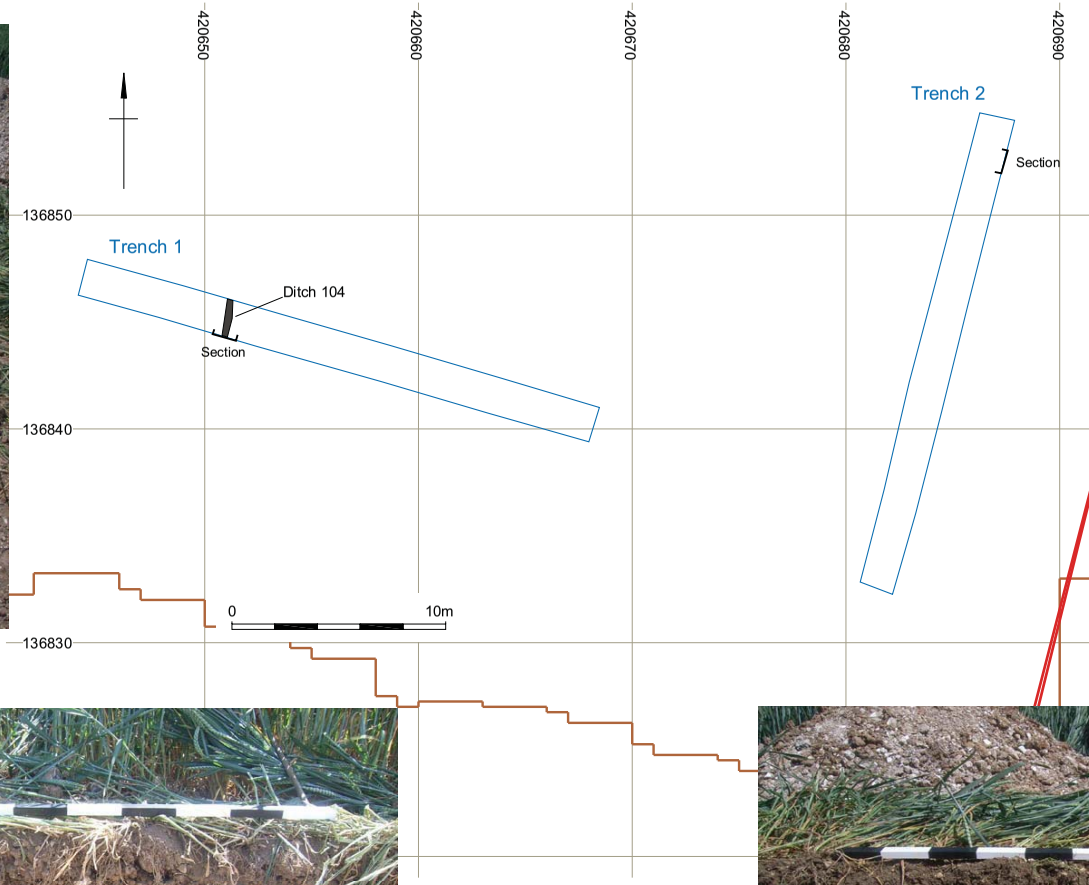
Site location plan

Figure 1

Plate 1: General view of Trench 1 viewed from the East



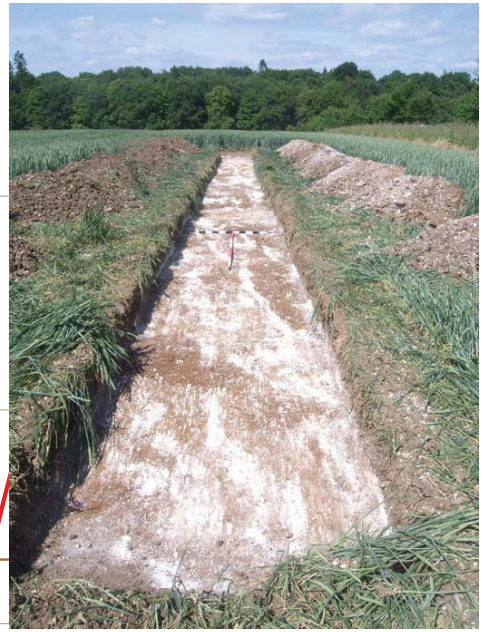


Plate 3: General view of Trench 2 viewed from the South

Plate 2: North facing section of Trench 1 showing Ditch 104 viewed from the North

Plate 4: West facing section of Trench 2 viewed from the West

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Evaluation trench plans and Plates 1 to 4

Figure 2

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