

**Harnham Flood Defence Scheme:  
Middle Street Meadow and  
Harnham Recreation Ground,  
Salisbury, Wiltshire**

**Archaeological Evaluation Report**



**HARNHAM FLOOD DEFENCE SCHEME:  
MIDDLE STREET MEADOW AND  
HARNHAM RECREATION GROUND,  
SALISBURY, WILTSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT**

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### APPENDIX 1: Catalogue of Trench Descriptions

- Figure 1:** Site and trench location plan.
- Figure 2:** Harnham Recreation Ground (Trenches 4-6) showing prehistoric, Saxon, medieval and modern features.
- Figure 3:** Section through Saxon ditch **403**.
- Figure 4:** Middle Street Meadow (Trenches 1-3) showing medieval and post-medieval features and deposits.
- Figure 5:** South facing section through Saxon ditch **403** Trench 3.
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- Plate 1:** North-east facing section through ditch **403**.
- Plate 2:** Oblique view of Trench 3 looking north-east showing surviving water meadow earthworks.
- Plate 3:** Detail of Trench 3, showing drain running between panes.

## Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by The Environment Agency, through Halcrow Group Ltd, to carry out an archaeological evaluation, comprising six machine excavated trenches, at Middle Street Meadow (NGR 413335 129545) and Harnham Recreation Ground (NGR 413591 129234), Salisbury, Wiltshire. The evaluation was carried out in respect of proposals for flood defences and was undertaken between 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> February 2006.

In Middle Street Meadow (Trenches 1-3) natural clay and gravel substrata lay at between 45.22m and 45.55m aOD and in Trenches 2 and 3 was overlain by grey, silty clay, probably the result of over-bank flooding. In Trench 1 natural substrata was higher than elsewhere and cut into it were medieval features, which were directly below the present topsoil. In Harnham Recreation Ground (Trenches 4-6) the surface of the natural substrata lay at approximately 44.95m aOD and was cut by archaeological features of prehistoric, Early Saxon and medieval date, which were in turn sealed below silty clay subsoil.

A small, shallow, sub-circular pit was found in the northern end of Trench 5, from which a small assemblage of worked and burnt flint was recovered. Although not closely datable, the assemblage is broadly datable to the prehistoric period.

In Trench 4 a ditch of Early Saxon date was found containing a relatively large pottery assemblage, datable to between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, was recovered from the two upper fills, along with a moderate assemblage of animal bone and a small assemblage of charred and waterlogged plant remains. The relatively large quantity of pottery and animal bone that was recovered from the small intervention across the ditch suggests the close proximity of a contemporary settlement. Evidence for settlements of Early Saxon date is rare and this example is therefore significant and potentially of regional importance.

Medieval features were encountered in Trench 1, on Middle Street Meadow and in Trench 5 on Harnham Recreation Ground. Only a single feature, a possible elongated pit or ditch terminal, was found in Trench 5. The features in Trench 1 comprised two pits and a linear feature, possibly a beam slot, and constitute evidence of settled occupation. Pottery, datable to the late 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century was recovered from the pit fills. The area of Trench 1 has a relatively higher elevation on the valley floor, which may have made it a more sustainable location and more suitable for settlement. The nature of the features appears to be domestic, and possibly represent a small farmstead, probably characteristic of the immediate medieval landscape.

Traces of the post-medieval water meadow system, visible as earthworks, were noted in Middle Street Meadow and recorded. Modern features, comprising a backfilled water course, a field ditch, a foul sewer, and a large, feature of indeterminate nature were found in Trenches 5 and 6. It was clear from the finds recovered from the various fills of these features that they were of 20<sup>th</sup> century date.

## **Acknowledgements**

Wessex Archaeology is grateful to The Environment Agency for commissioning the evaluation and Helena Cave-Penny of Wiltshire County Archaeological Service for providing advice. Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank Reg Williams of Salisbury District Council for arranging access.

Paul McCulloch managed the project for Wessex Archaeology. The fieldwork was directed by Vaughan Birbeck, assisted by Jon Powell, Laura Catlin, Steve Thompson and Elina Brook. This report was prepared by Vaughan Birbeck with the assistance of Lorraine Mephram (finds) and Dr Chris Stevens (environmental). Liz James prepared the illustrations.

**HARNHAM FLOOD DEFENCE SCHEME:  
MIDDLE STREET MEADOW AND  
HARNHAM RECREATION GROUND,  
SALISBURY, WILTSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Project Background**

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by The Environment Agency, through Halcrow Group Ltd, to carry out an archaeological evaluation at Middle Street Meadow (NGR 413335 129545) and Harnham Recreation Ground (NGR 413591 129234), Salisbury, Wiltshire (the 'Site') (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 The evaluation was carried out in respect of proposals to construct flood defences and followed consultation between The Environment Agency and Wiltshire County Archaeological Service (WCAS).
- 1.1.3 A written scheme of investigation for the evaluation was prepared by Wessex Archaeology (2006) in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists standards and guidance for archaeological works, and English Heritage's 1992 guidance 'Management of Archaeological Projects'. The evaluation was undertaken between 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> February 2006.

**1.2 The Site**

- 1.2.1 The Site, to the south-west of the historic core of Salisbury, comprises land to the south of, and flanking, the southern side of the River Nadder at Harnham, formed of two areas, Middle Street Meadow and Harnham Recreation Ground. The natural topography of the Site is generally flat, typical of its valley floor location. The Site lies at approximately 46m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).
- 1.2.2 Natural deposits previously recorded in the area of the Site comprise valley clay and gravels at between 0.65m and 1m below ground level (AC Archaeology 2005).

**1.3 Archaeological Background**

- 1.3.1 There are no known monuments, sites or findspots associated with the Site, but there is general archaeological potential within the Harnham area. The Site lies beyond the study area of the Salisbury Extensive Urban Survey (undertaken by Wiltshire County Council 2003) and a programme of archaeological works carried out on the route of the proposed Harnham Relief Road, which encountered a Palaeolithic site yielding in excess of 2,000 artefacts, is not in close proximity to the Site.

- 1.3.2 Finds of Neolithic flint implements are known from the Harnham area (e.g. Wiltshire County Sites and Monuments Record No. SUI2NW U03) and an Early Saxon cemetery was excavated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Akerman 1853), approximately 500m to the south of the Site. Well-preserved water meadow earthworks exist between the Avon and the Nadder river channels, to the north of the Site. The development of water meadows, probably in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, was widespread on the River Avon, and their management continued well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Relic elements of this system of irrigation may extend into the Site (Middle Street Meadow).
- 1.3.3 An archaeological watching brief was carried out by AC Archaeology (2005) on geotechnical site investigations in connection with the current flood defence proposals. Test pits were observed that revealed no archaeological deposits or finds.

## **2 AIMS**

### **2.1 Trial trenches**

- 2.1.1 The aim of the trial trenching was to establish the presence, date, nature, extent, and condition of any archaeological remains that were encountered on the Site, and to obtain a representative sample of the remains.

### **2.2 Report**

- 2.2.1 The aim of this report is to present the results of the trial trenching and thereby provide evidence on which an informed decision can be made on the future treatment of the archaeological remains that were found.

## **3 METHODS**

### **3.1 Trial Trenches**

- 3.1.1 The archaeological evaluation comprised the proposed machine excavation of six 30m by 1.8m trenches. However all trenches were shortened in order to minimise damage to the grass surfaces and to avoid buried services, trees and other obstacles.
- 3.1.2 A unique-number site code (62340) was allocated to the Site, and is used on all records and finds generated by the evaluation. Arrangements will be made with the relevant local museum for the deposition of the archive and finds, subject to agreement with the Landowner and commissioning body (The Environment Agency).
- 3.1.3 Each trench was topsoil stripped using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket under the direct supervision of a suitably qualified archaeologist. Machining of the trenches continued in spits down to the top of the undisturbed natural soils or archaeological deposits, whichever was first encountered.

- 3.1.4 Where archaeological deposits were encountered within the trenches, excavation continued by hand. A sufficient sample of each layer/feature type was excavated in order to establish the date, nature, extent and condition of the archaeological remains. These were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's pro forma recording system. Deposits and features were surveyed and planned at an appropriate scale. Sections were drawn at 1:10 on drawing film and include existing ground surface and overburden where appropriate in order to provide a full record and deposit column information.
- 3.1.5 A photographic record, comprising monochrome, colour transparencies and digital images was made. The record includes detailed images of archaeological deposits and features and other images to illustrate their location and context, and the location and context of the separate working areas.

## **3.2 Finds and Environmental Sampling**

### *General*

- 3.2.1 Appropriate strategies for the recovery of artefacts and environmental samples, and for archaeological science, were devised and implemented by Wessex Archaeology staff in consultation with WCAS, and English Heritage's Regional Advisor for Archaeological Science, and are detailed in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Wessex Archaeology 2006).

### *Finds*

- 3.2.2 All artefacts from excavated contexts were retained, except those from features or deposits of obviously modern date. Material of undoubtedly modern date observed in up-cast was noted but not retained.
- 3.2.3 All recovered artefacts were, as a minimum, washed, weighed, counted and identified. Suitable material, primarily the pottery and worked flint, were scanned to assess the date range of the recovered assemblages and features.

### *Environmental samples*

- 3.2.4 A single bulk environmental soil sample was taken from a well-sealed and datable deposit for plant macro-fossils, charcoal, waterlogged remains, small animal bones and other small artefacts and environmental remains.

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The results of the archaeological evaluation are detailed below by period. A full description of all archaeological contexts is retained in the site archive, currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology under the project code 62340: a summary catalogue of contexts recorded in each trench is provided in **Appendix 1**.

### 4.2 The Soil Sequence

4.2.1 The natural clays and river gravel substrata was very mixed with much interleaving of coarse gravels and brown silty clay, although in places this was overlain by a thin layer of well-sorted, pale greyish brown calcareous gravels.

4.2.2 In Harnham Recreation Ground the surface of the clay and gravel substrata lay at approximately 44.95m aOD and in Trenches 4 and 5 was cut by archaeological features of prehistoric, Early Saxon and medieval date, which were in turn sealed below greyish brown silty clay subsoil. The subsoil was in turn cut by modern features such as the field boundary and sewer trench in Trench 6 and was sealed below the present topsoil.

4.2.3 In Middle Street Meadow the surface of the natural clay and gravel substrata in Trenches 2 and 3 lay at between 45.22m and 45.55m aOD and was overlain by grey silty clay subsoil, probably the result of overbank flooding. In Trench 1, where the surface of the natural substrata was highest, the subsoil comprised redeposited gravels in a dark greyish brown silty loam matrix, which was cut into by medieval features visible directly below the present topsoil.

### 4.3 Prehistoric

4.3.1 The earliest traces of human activity recognised during the evaluation comprised a small, shallow, sub-circular pit (**503**) in the northern end of Trench 5 (**Figure 2**), from which a small assemblage of worked and burnt flint was recovered. Although not closely datable, the small assemblage of worked flint and the single piece of burnt flint recovered from the single fill (**504**) are broadly datable to the prehistoric period. A small undated feature (**505**), approximately 1m to the south, maybe of a similar date, however, as this feature continued beneath the western limit of the trench, its nature, extent and function remain indeterminate.

### 4.4 Saxon

4.4.1 In Trench 4 (**Figure 2**) a single feature (**403**), a ditch aligned approximately north-east to south-west, was dated to the Early Saxon period. This ditch (**Figure 3**) was 1.60m wide and 0.55m deep with moderately steep sides and a concave base. The lower fills of this ditch appear to represent slumping of the gravels from the sides of the ditch (**404** and **405**) followed by a period of gradual silting (**406** and **407**). The two uppermost fills (**408** and **409**)

contained abundant, poorly sorted, small stone inclusions, which were absent in the silting deposits, suggesting the deliberate backfilling of the feature. A relatively large pottery assemblage, datable to between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, was recovered from the two upper fills, along with a moderate assemblage of animal bone. The sheer quantity of pottery (31/309g) and animal bone (16/675g) that was recovered suggests the close proximity of a contemporary settlement.

4.4.2 Hand excavation demonstrated that the majority of the ditch fills lay below the present water table (**Plate 1**). A single bulk environmental sample was taken from fill **408**, to examine the potential survival of charcoal, charred plant remains and waterlogged remains. Although charcoal was poorly preserved, probably due to waterlogging and leaching, a small assemblage of charred plant remains included barley (*Hordeum vulgare* sl), free-threshing wheat (*Triticum aestivum* sl), cultivated oats (*Avena sativa*) and pea/bean (*Pisum sativum/Vicia faba*) and remains suggestive of crop processing, reinforcing the suggestion of the close proximity of a settlement from which this assemblage may have derived. While only a small quantity of waterlogged material was present, the wide range of plant seeds is indicative of wet, rough, and poorly managed grassland or pasture and disturbed, nitrogen rich soils, possibly associable with stock-keeping and/or midden material in the immediate vicinity.

## 4.5 Medieval

4.5.1 Medieval features were encountered in Trench 1, on Middle Street Meadow and in Trench 5 on the Harnham Recreation Ground. A single feature (**508**), a possible elongated pit or ditch terminal, 1.3m+ long, 1.40m wide and 0.18m deep with moderately steep sides and a concave base was found in Trench 5 (**Figure 2**). This was dated on the basis of a small assemblage of peg tile fragments, datable to the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century, although its nature and function are uncertain.

4.5.2 Features in Trench 1 (**Figure 4**) comprised two pits (**103** and **108**) and a linear feature (**106**). All three were cut through the gravel rich subsoil (**501**) and were sealed below the present topsoil (**100**). The shapes of the two pits in plan is uncertain, as both continued beyond the limits of the Trench, but they appear to be sub-circular or sub-rectangular, with steep sides; both were approximately 0.50m deep. Pottery, datable to the late 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century was recovered from the lower fill of pit **103** and the single fill of **108**, suggesting that the two pits were broadly contemporary. The narrow linear feature (**106**), which may represent a structural feature, such as a beam slot, was aligned approximately north-west to south-east, was 0.38m wide and 0.19m deep with steep, concave sides and a flat base, was traced for approximately 3.5m within the Trench. No finds were recovered from its single silty clay fill, but the regularity of the feature, at least within the *c.* 0.75m long hand dug intervention, suggests an anthropomorphic origin. The similarity of the single fill of feature **106** to the fills of pits **103** and **108** could indicate that all were contemporary.

## 4.6 Post-medieval

- 4.6.1 Possible traces of the post-medieval water meadow system, visible as earthworks, were noted in Middle Street Meadow. Trench 3 was located across what appeared to be two “panes” (**Plate 2**) and the soil sequence recorded within this trench appeared to contain evidence for their construction (**Figure 5**). A layer of very pale grey silty clay subsoil (**305**) directly overlay the natural clay and gravel substrata. This was in turn overlain by a 0.02-0.10m thick deposit of similar pale grey silty clay (**303**) with abundant gravel and chalk inclusions (**Plate 3**), from which a single fragment of medieval peg tile was recovered. Overlying **303** was a mid grey silty clay subsoil (**301**), very similar to **305** but with manganese and iron staining; this was overlain by the present topsoil. The possible remains of the drain (**304**) between the two “panes”, filled with modern topsoil, was also noted (**Plate 3**).
- 4.6.2 It is possible that this sequence of deposits represents natural overbank flooding (**305**) that has been truncated to some extent, perhaps when the area was levelled for the construction of the water meadow. The overlying deposit (**303**) could represent a trample of material deposited during their construction, or perhaps a deliberate deposit to improve the drainage. The clay used to construct the “panes” (**301**) is probably re-deposited local clay, excavated from the many feeders and drains that would have been dug during water meadow construction.

## 4.7 Modern

- 4.7.1 Modern features, comprising a possible backfilled water course (**510**), a modern field ditch (**605**), a modern foul sewer (**602**), and a large feature of uncertain function (**607**), were found in trenches 5 and 6. It was clear from the finds recovered from the various fills of these features that they were of 20<sup>th</sup> century date (plastic, stamped milk bottles, frogged bricks etc.). These were excavated by machine where feasible, although the sewer remained unexcavated.

## 4.8 Finds

- 4.8.1 Finds were recovered from Trenches 1, 3, 4 and 5, and range in date from Saxon to medieval, with a few pieces of prehistoric flintwork. The quantification of finds by context is given in **Table 1**.
- 4.8.2 Datable material comprises the pottery and ceramic building material. Pottery sherds of early Saxon and medieval date are present. All 32 sherds from Trench 4 (one from topsoil and the rest from the upper fills of ditch **403**) have been dated as Saxon, largely on fabric grounds. These sherds are in relatively hard-fired sandy or sparsely organic-tempered fabrics with smoothed surfaces, in some cases possibly burnished. Two rims are present, although the vessel forms represented are not particularly chronologically distinctive.
- 4.8.3 Pottery of this date (5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century AD) is scarce within Wiltshire, particularly from domestic contexts. Comparable material is known from the settlement and associated cemetery at Market Lavington (Mepham

forthcoming), from Downton (Rahtz 1964), and from a small settlement site at Amesbury (Wessex Archaeology 1995; 2003).

- 4.8.4 The remaining 14 sherds, all from Trench 1 (pits **103** and **108**) are all medieval Laverstock-type coarsewares, with a potential date range of late 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century. Sherds from pit **108** derive from a single jar.
- 4.8.5 The ceramic building material recovered is all of medieval date and comprises fragments of roof tile (three peg tiles and one curved ?ridge tile) in coarse, poorly wedged fabrics, probably of 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century date.

**Table 1: All finds by context (number / weight in grammes)**

Context	Description	Animal Bone	Burnt Flint	CBM	Pottery	Worked Flint
<b>104</b>	Pit <b>103</b>				1/7	
<b>109</b>	Pit <b>108</b>				13/681	
<b>303</b>	Layer			1/32		
<b>400</b>	Topsoil				1/97	1/6
<b>408</b>	Ditch <b>403</b>				10/76	
<b>409</b>	Ditch <b>403</b>	16/675			21/233	
<b>504</b>	Pit <b>503</b>		1/5			2/5
<b>509</b>	Feature <b>508</b>			3/589		
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16/675</b>	<b>1/5</b>	<b>4/621</b>	<b>46/1094</b>	<b>3/11</b>

## 4.9 Palaeo-environmental Remains

- 4.9.1 A single bulk sample was taken from the secondary fill of an Early Anglo-Saxon ditch (**403**) in Trench 4, to evaluate the presence and preservation of palaeo-environmental remains. The sample was processed by standard flotation methods; the flot retained on a 0.25 mm mesh, and the residue fractionated into 5.6 mm, 2mm, 1mm and 0.5mm fractions and dried. The coarse fraction (>5.6 mm) was sorted, weighed and discarded. The flot was scanned under a x10 – x40 stereo-binocular microscope and the presence of charred remains quantified (**Table 2**). Preliminary identifications of dominant or important taxa are noted below, following the nomenclature of Stace (1997).
- 4.9.2 The sample showed good preservation of charred material adding to the weight of evidence for a Saxon settlement in close proximity to the Site. While the waterlogged material did not produce any economic remains, it demonstrated the potential for their recovery should further sampling of the Site be carried out. Saxon charred remains are rare in Wiltshire, as are waterlogged remains, hence the potential is significant.
- 4.9.3 The flot was small. There was a reasonable quantity of root type material although most was probably derived from waterlogged material. Despite the small flot size there were quite a few charred plant macroscopic remains. The

charred material was exceptionally well preserved, which is probably reflective of the slightly waterlogged nature of the deposit.

#### *Charred plant remains*

- 4.9.4 The sample contained several grains of barley (*Hordeum vulgare* sl) and free-threshing wheat (*Triticum aestivum* sl). It also contained several rachis fragments of six-row barley and probable tetraploid free-threshing wheat (*Triticum turgidum* sl) and a few basal rachis fragments/terminal culm node (the node at the base of the ear). The sample also produced a very well preserved floret base of cultivated oats (*Avena sativa*) and a probable grain of pea/bean (*Pisum sativum/Vicia faba*). Seeds of wild species included possible sedge (*Carex* sp.), black bindweed (*Fallopia convolvulus*), docks (*Rumex* sp.) and small seeded grasses.
- 4.9.5 While only a small amount of material was examined, it is interesting to note the presence of four crop species within the sample. The higher presence of rachis fragments can be taken to be indicative of the burning of waste containing earlier processing stages. Such charred material in general is in keeping with the other remains of pottery and bone that indicate fairly close proximity to settlement. The crops represented are fairly typical of those known from the Saxon period (Greig 1991). This evidence is generally rare from this part of southern England, much of the available information being concentrated around Southampton and Winchester (Buckland *et al.* 1976; Monk 1978; Green 1981; Hunter 2005) and in these cases urban rather than rural sites. Data for earlier Saxon rural settlements is available for Abbots Worthy (Carruthers 1991) and Lechlade and Yarnton (Stevens 2003; 2004) in the Upper Thames Valley.

#### *Charcoal*

- 4.9.6 Charcoal was noted from the flot of the bulk sample and is recorded in **Table 2**. Little charcoal was present, although this may be a product of its breakdown through water action assuming, ditch 403 held water in the past.

#### *Waterlogged*

- 4.9.7 Visual inspection revealed little preservation of waterlogged material. However, although no waterlogged sub-sample was taken, the bulk sample was processed using a 250µm mesh in order to assess any waterlogged material that may be present.
- 4.9.8 While only a small amount of waterlogged material was present, a range of species were represented. Seeds were noted of buttercup (*Ranunculus acris/repens/bulbosus*), sedge (*Carex* sp.), knotgrass (*Polygonum aviculare*), thistle (*Cirsium/Carduus* sp.), goosefoots (*Chenopodium* sp.), rush (*Juncus* sp.), and individual seeds of Persicaria (*Persicaria maculosa/lapathifolia*), bramble (*Rubus* sp.), fumitory (*Fumaria* sp.), and possible weld/mignonette (*Reseda* sp.). Most of the species present indicate wet, rough, poorly managed grassland or pasture, with a small and limited amount of shrub. The presence of goosefoot (*Chenopodium* sp.) would indicate disturbed, nitrogen rich soils, and may be associated with animals, and/or midden material around the ditch.

**Table 2. Assessment of the charred plant remains and charcoal**

Feature type/no	Context	Sample	size litres	Flot								Residue
				flot ml	size	Grain	Chaff	Weed seeds uncharred charred	Charcoal >5.6mm	Other	Charcoal >5.6mm	
Early Saxon Ditch												
Tr4	403	408	1	8	50 <sup>3</sup>	A	A	a*	B	C	-	-

KEY: A\*\* = exceptional, A\* = 30+ items, A = ≥10 items, B = 9 - 5 items, C = < 5 items, (h) = hazelnuts, smb = small mammal bones; Moll-t = terrestrial molluscs Moll-f = freshwater molluscs;

Analysis: C = charcoal, P = plant, M = molluscs, C14 = radiocarbon suggestions

NOTE: <sup>1</sup>flot is total, but flot in superscript = ml of rooty material. <sup>2</sup>Unburnt seeds are in lower case to distinguish it from charred remains and in this case most comprise probable waterlogged material.

## 5 DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Prehistoric

5.1.1 The earliest activity located by the evaluation comprised a small pit from which a small assemblage of prehistoric worked flint and burnt flint was recovered. An undated feature in the near vicinity may also be of prehistoric date. It is uncertain whether these are isolated features or from part of a larger site; however, the absence of prehistoric material in other trenches, or redeposited finds of this date in later features suggests that the former is likely to be the case. Although apparently isolated, these features testify to prehistoric exploitation of the flood plain, albeit rather limited, but in the absence of diagnostic finds, it is uncertain whether this represents Mesolithic, Neolithic or Bronze Age activity.

### 5.2 Early Saxon

5.2.1 The single, but substantial, ditch of Early Saxon date found in Trench 4 produced a relatively large assemblage of pottery and animal bone. This was recovered, along with possible crop processing remains, from what appeared to be deposits representing the dumping of domestic waste. This material was recovered from only a small slot (0.85m long) excavated across the ditch, and it indicates there was domestic activity in the near vicinity, possibly a settlement, an assumption reinforced by evidence for stock-keeping and/or maddening derived from environmental remains. The waterlogged remains indicate wet, rough grassland or pasture in the immediate vicinity. Although waterlogged organic remains of this date have been recovered elsewhere in the region (Birbeck et al 2005) these related to urban settlement rather than rural activity.

5.2.2 It is tempting to associate this activity with the known Saxon cemetery approximately 500m to the south of the site (Akerman 1853), where 68 individuals were recovered from 60 graves. Burial at this cemetery appears to have started in the 5<sup>th</sup> century (Eagles 1994, 15), but its longevity is uncertain.

The wide date range of the pottery recovered from the ditch, while encompassing the date range of the cemetery could also extend beyond it.

- 5.2.3 Early Saxon settlement activity is rare in Wiltshire. Although this activity is represented on the Site by a single feature and a moderate finds assemblage, it is nonetheless of regional significance. Evidence for settlements of this date have been identified at Downton (Rahtz 1964), Amesbury (Wessex Archaeology 1995, 2003), Market Lavington (Williams and Newman forthcoming) and Collingbourne Ducis (Pine 2001), where they appear to comprise sunken-featured and post built buildings and associated features dispersed over relatively wide areas. It is interesting to note that the eleven buildings found at Collingbourne Ducis and the remains found at Amesbury were in flood plain/riverside locations, similar to that at Harnham Sports Ground.

### **5.3 Medieval**

- 5.3.1 Medieval activity is represented by a single feature, probably an elongated pit or ditch terminal, in Trench 5, and by a small group of two pits and a linear feature, in Trench 1, on Middle Street Meadow. The nature and function of the feature in Trench 5 is uncertain; the only finds recovered from its single fill (509) comprised fragments of roof tile, suggesting that there may have been a building in the general area.

- 5.3.2 The two pits and possible linear feature recorded in Trench 1 were cut through a very gravelly subsoil, markedly different to the generally stone free clay subsoil recorded in the other trenches. The small assemblage of pottery recovered from the pits was datable to the late 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century and appears to represent domestic debris while the linear feature is thought to represent structural remains, such as a beamslot. The surface of the natural clay and gravel substrata in Trench 1 lay at 45.55m aOD, approximately 0.30m higher than elsewhere in Middle Street Meadow and 0.50m higher than comparable deposits on Harnham Recreation Ground. Thus the area of Trench 1 has a relatively higher elevation on the valley floor, which may have made it a more sustainable location and more suitable for settlement. The nature of the features appears to be domestic, and they possibly represent a small farmstead, probably characteristic of the immediate medieval landscape.

### **5.4 Post-medieval**

- 5.4.1 Although slight undulations in the present ground surface, which may represent relict earthworks of a post-medieval water meadow system, were noted in both Harnham Recreation Ground and Middle Street Meadow, clear evidence for their form and construction was only observed in Trench 3. Here it appears that the original topsoil was probably removed and the surface of the silty clay subsoil was modified by the deposition of gravel and chalk fragments, presumably to improve the drainage. Following this the “panes” seem to have been constructed from re-deposited local clay subsoil, presumably obtained from the construction of the feeders and drains, prior to the reinstatement of the topsoil. The only dating evidence obtained comprised

a single fragment of medieval tile recovered from the modified surface of the natural clay subsoil. As the water meadows were probably constructed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Cowan 1982) this is probably a residual find.

- 5.4.2 There is evidence for considerable modern dumping or levelling in Harnham Recreation Ground, including the filling in of a former field boundary, a possible water course and other modern features of uncertain function. The 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887 depicts this area as several small fields and orchards, with a possible building a short distance to the east of Trench 5. Apart from the disappearance of the building and slight changes to the field boundaries, the 1962 edition Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map shows a similar arrangement. Other modern disturbances comprised a foul sewer in Trench 6 and a storm drain in Trench 4. Levelling in Middle Street Meadow appears to have been limited to the football pitch, to the south of Trenches 1, 2 and 3.

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## APPENDIX 1: Catalogue of Trench Descriptions

### *Middle Street Meadow*

<b>TRENCH - 1</b>		<b>NGR: 413270 129535</b>
<b>Dimensions – 21m x 1.80m</b>		<b>Ground Level – 46.15m aOD</b>
<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth</b>
100	Mid greyish brown silty loam topsoil.	0-0.25m
101	Mid-dark greyish brown silty loam subsoil with approximately 70% gravel inclusions.	0.25-0.60m
102	Pale greyish brown calcareous river gravels with mid brown clay lenses and banding. Natural substrata, surface at <b>45.55m aOD</b> .	0.60m+
103	Small, sub-circular pit approximately 1.20m in diameter and 0.45m deep with steep, slightly irregular sides and a flat base. Cut through 101 and filled with 104 and 105. Continues beyond southern limit of excavation.	0.25-0.65m
104	Dark greyish brown silty clay with abundant gravel inclusions. Basal fill of pit 103, probably representing gradual silting and erosion of the pit sides. Late 12 <sup>th</sup> to 13 <sup>th</sup> century pottery recovered.	0.55-0.65m
105	Dark greyish brown silty loam with common small gravel inclusions. Upper fill of pit 103. Sealed below topsoil 100.	0.25-0.55m
106	Possible beam slot or gully traced for 3.5m within the trench. Aligned approximately north-west to south-east, 0.38m wide and 0.19m deep with steep, straight sides and a concave base. Cuts 101 and filled with 107. It was uncertain whether this feature represents a structural feature, such as a beam slot, a drainage feature, such as a gully or a natural feature, such as a tree root. As the feature appeared fairly regular it is assumed anthropogenic, but the complete absence of any finds makes this uncertain.	0.25-0.63m
107	Mid brown silty clay fill of feature 106 with approximately 60% gravel inclusions.	0.25-0.63m
108	Sub-rectangular pit, 1.70m long, 1.0m+ wide and 0.55m deep with steep, concave sides and a flat base. Continues beyond northern limit of excavation. Cut through 101 and filled with 109.	0.25-0.80m
109	Mid greyish brown silty clay with abundant gravel inclusions. Fill of pit 108. Late 12 <sup>th</sup> to 13 <sup>th</sup> century pottery recovered.	0.25-0.80m

<b>TRENCH – 2</b>		<b>NGR 413337 129540</b>
<b>Dimensions – 25m x 1.80m</b>		<b>Ground Level – 46.12m aOD</b>
<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth</b>
200	Dark greyish brown silty loam topsoil with sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.30m
201	Mid grey silty clay subsoil with manganese and iron staining.	0.30-0.65m
202	Pale greyish brown calcareous river gravels with mid brown clay lenses and banding. Natural substrata, surface at <b>45.47m aOD</b> .	0.65m+

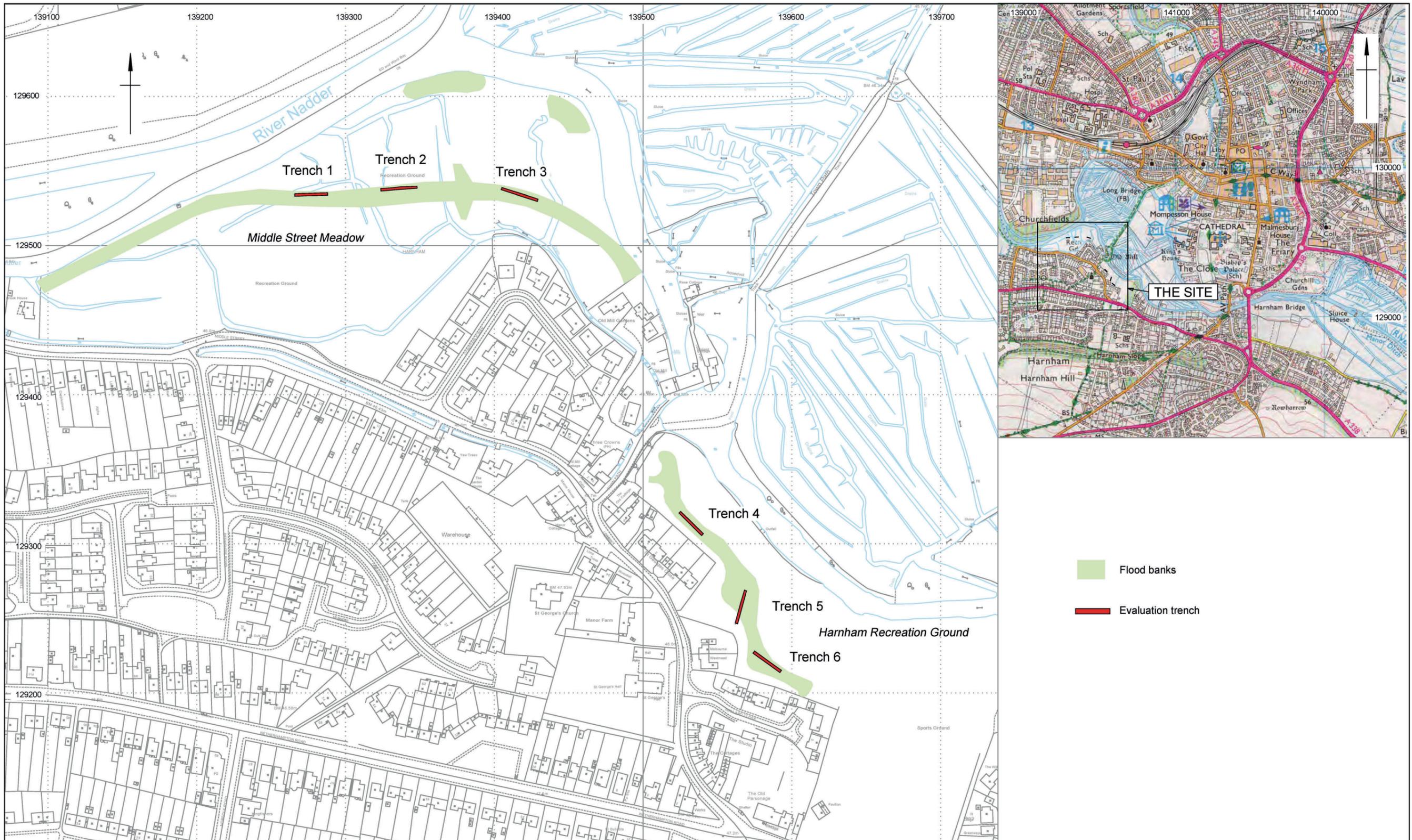
<b>TRENCH - 3</b>		<b>NGR 413417 129535</b>
<b>Dimensions – 23.5m x 1.80m</b>		<b>Ground Level – 45.70-46.01m aOD</b>
<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth</b>
300	Dark greyish brown silty loam topsoil with sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.20m
301	Mid grey silty clay subsoil with manganese and iron staining.	0.20-0.40m
302	Pale greyish brown calcareous river gravels with mid brown clay lenses and banding. Natural substrata, surface at <b>45.22m aOD</b> .	0.60m+
303	Very pale grey silty clay with abundant local gravel and small chalk inclusions. One small fragment of medieval peg tile recovered.	0.40-0.50m
304	Context number assigned to probable drain cut between two “panes”, relict water meadow feature. Filled with modern topsoil.	0.20-0.30m
305	Very pale grey silty clay subsoil. Very similar to 302 and 303, but lacks the manganese and iron staining of 302 and the gravel and chalk inclusions of 303.	0.50-0.60m

***Harnham Recreation Ground***

<b>TRENCH - 4</b>		<b>NGR 413535 129310</b>
<b>Dimensions – 21.6m x 1.80m</b>		<b>Ground Level – 45.60m aOD</b>
<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth</b>
400	Very dark greyish brown silty loam topsoil with sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.30m
401	Mid-dark greyish brown silty clay subsoil with sparse flint inclusions, becoming more abundant towards the base of the deposit.	0.30-0.62m
402	Mid-dark yellowish brown clay and gravels. Natural substrata, surface at <b>44.98m aOD</b> .	0.62m+
403	Ditch, aligned approximately north-south, 1.60m wide and 0.55m deep with moderately steep, concave sides and a concave base. Cuts natural substrata 402. Filled with 404 – 409.	0.62-1.17m
404	Light greyish brown silty clay, basal fill of ditch 403, probably representing the primary slumping of the feature sides. Same as 405.	1.05-1.17m
405	Light greyish brown silty clay, basal fill of ditch 403, probably representing the primary slumping of the feature sides. Same as 404.	0.80-1.17m
406	Mid greyish blue alluvial silty clay fill of ditch 403. Overlies 404 and 405. Probably represents primary silting of the ditch.	1.05-1.17m
407	Light greyish brown silty clay with common small gravel inclusions. Overlies 406, probably represents secondary silting of ditch.	0.70-1.05m
408	Mid greyish brown silty clay fill of ditch 403 with abundant small flint inclusions. Overlies 407. Early Saxon pottery (5 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> century), animal bone, charred and waterlogged plant remains (sample 1) recovered.	0.70-1.05m
409	Dark greyish brown silty clay with abundant gravel inclusions, upper fill of ditch 403. Overlies 408 and sealed below subsoil 401. Early Saxon pottery (5 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> century) and animal bone recovered.	0.62-0.88m
410	Modern pipe trench in south-east end of trench, filled with 411. Not excavated	0.30-0.62m+
411	Fill of modern pipe trench. Contains 9-inch salt glazed pipe.	0.30-0.62m+

<b>TRENCH - 5</b>		<b>NGR 413570 129260</b>
<b>Dimensions – 23m x 1.8m</b>		<b>Ground Level – 45.70m aOD</b>
<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth</b>
500	Very dark greyish brown silty loam topsoil with sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.25m
501	Mid-dark greyish brown silty clay subsoil with sparse flint inclusions.	0.25-0.75m
502	Mid-dark yellowish brown calcareous clays and gravels. Natural substrata, surface at <b>44.95m aOD</b> .	0.75m+
503	Small, sub-circular pit, approximately 0.70m in diameter and 0.10m deep with steep, straight sides and a concave base. Cut into natural substrata 502, filled with 504.	0.75-0.85m
504	Mid grey silty clay fill of pit 503, contained sparse charcoal and rare worked flint and burnt flint. Sealed below subsoil 501.	0.75-0.85m
505	Possible sub-circular pit, continues beyond western limit of excavation, 0.40m+ in diameter and 0.40m deep with steep, irregular sides and a flat base. Cut into natural substrata 502, filled with 506 and 507.	0.75-1.15m
506	Mid brown silty clay with sparse gravel inclusions, basal fill of feature 505. No finds recovered.	1.0-1.15m
507	Mid brownish grey silty clay with sparse gravel inclusions, upper fill of feature 505. No finds recovered. Sealed below subsoil 501.	0.75-1.00m
508	Possible elongated pit or ditch terminal, 1.3m+ long, 1.40m wide and 0.18m deep with moderately steep sides and a concave base. Filled with 509.	0.75-0.93m
509	Dark greyish brown silty loam with abundant gravel inclusions, fill of feature 508. Medieval peg tile fragments retrieved.	0.75-0.93m
510	Large, probably east-west, backfilled water course in centre of trench, approximately 8.50m wide and over 1.2m deep. Cuts subsoil 501. Appears to have been deliberately backfilled in the fairly recent past. Filled with 511.	0.25-1.20m+
511	Variable dark greyish brown silty loam fill of palaeochannel. Abundant modern material such as frogged brick fragments, modern bottle glass, plastic and modern whiteware pottery noted but not retained.	0.25-1.20m+

<b>TRENCH - 6</b>		<b>NGR 413585 129220</b>
<b>Dimensions – 22m x 1.80m</b>		<b>Ground Level – 45.80m aOD</b>
<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth</b>
600	Very dark greyish brown silty loam topsoil with sparse flint inclusions.	0-0.15m
601	Mid-dark greyish brown silty clay subsoil with common flint inclusions.	0.15-0.70m
602	Modern sewer trench, cuts subsoil 601, filled with 603. Not excavated.	0.15m+
603	Very dark greyish brown silty loam with abundant gravel inclusions. Backfill of sewer trench 602. Not excavated.	0.15m+
604	Mid-dark yellowish brown calcareous clays and gravels. Natural river gravels substrata, surface at <b>45.10m aOD</b> . Overlies the more mixed clay and gravel deposit 609.	0.70-0.85m
605	Recent field ditch, depicted on the 1887 1 <sup>st</sup> edition OS map and most recently on the 1962 OS 6" map, aligned approximately north-east to south-west, an alignment still visible in a line of trees to the north-east. Approximately 0.80m wide and 0.75m deep with steep, straight sides and a concave base. Cuts through 608, filled with 606.	0.15-0.90m
606	Dark greyish brown silty loam fill of ditch 605 with common flint inclusions. Modern bottle glass and transfer printed pottery noted, but not retained.	0.15-0.90m
607	Large feature, 8.5m+ long and 1.80m+ wide that continues beyond the limits of the trench. Cut through the subsoil (601) and the upper 0.15m of river gravels to the surface of the underlying clay and gravels (609), with vertical to undercutting sides, the function of this feature is uncertain, although some form of gravel extraction appears most likely. Backfilled with 608.	0.15-0.85m
608	Very mixed dump deposit, generally dark greyish brown silty loam with chalk, clay and gravel lenses. Fill of feature 607. Modern bottle glass (Puritan Maid 1/3 <sup>rd</sup> pint milk bottles) and whiteware pottery noted but not retained.	0.15-0.85m
609	Mid-dark yellowish brown clay and gravels. Natural substrata overlain by more recent calcareous gravels 604. Surface at <b>44.95m aOD</b> .	0.85m+



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Site and trench location plan

Figure 1