Wessex Archaeology



Harnham Flood Defence Scheme:
Middle Street Meadow,
Salisbury, Wiltshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report
(Additional Evaluation Trenches 7 & 8)



Ref: 62341.02 May 2006

HARNHAM FLOOD DEFENCE SCHEME: MIDDLE STREET MEADOW SALISBURY, WILTSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT Additional Evaluation Trenches 7 & 8

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Contents

Summary Acknowledgements

1	INTR	RODUCTION1
	1.1	Project Background1
		The Site1
	1.3	Archaeological Background2
2		S2
	2.1	Evaluation trenches2
	2.2	Report2
3	MET	HOD2
	3.1	Evaluation Trenches
4	RESU	ULTS3
	4.1	Introduction3
	4.2	The Soil Sequence
	4.3	Prehistoric3
	4.5	Medieval4
	4.6	Post-medieval4
	4.7	Modern4
		Finds4
		Environmental Remains5
5		USSION6
		Prehistoric6
		Medieval6
		Post-medieval6
		Conclusion
8	REFI	ERENCES7
API	PENDL	X 1: Catalogue of Trench Descriptions
T • 4	6 17.	
	of Figu	
0	re 1:	Site and trench location plan (Trenches 7 & 8)
Ü	ire 2:	Middle Street Meadow (Trenches 7 & 8) plan showing archaeological features and section locations
Figu	ire 3:	Section through features at the west end of Trench 7 and representative section showing the change in natural deposits
Figu	ıre 4:	Representative section at the south-east end of Trench 8
Figu	ire 5:	
Plat	e 1:	Trench 7 from the west
Plat	e 2:	North facing representative section of Trench 7 showing the change in
		natural and soil sequence
Plat	e 3:	Trench 8 from the south-east
Plat	e 4:	North-east facing representative section at south-east end of Trench 8
Fron	nt cover	<u> </u>
Bacl	k cover	View to east, and Salisbury Cathedral from Trench 8

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by The Environment Agency, through Halcrow Group Ltd, to carry out an additional phase of archaeological trial trench evaluation at Middle Street Meadow (NGR 413335 129545), Salisbury, Wiltshire, following an initial phase carried out in February 2006.

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). Specifically, the additional trenches (numbered 7 and 8) were intended to target proposed groundwork to form a reed bed filtration system and any archaeological potential this may impact.

The natural clay and gravel substrata was encountered between 45.12m and 45.15m aOD and was overlain by a sequence of grey, silty clay alluvial deposits, possibly the result of over-bank flooding or upcast from riverbank management.

Sealed beneath alluvial deposits and cut into the natural clay and gravel a small, shallow, sub-circular feature was found in Trench 7, from which a small assemblage of worked and burnt flint was recovered. Although not closely datable, the assemblage is broadly datable to the later prehistoric period. The feature would appear to be isolated and unrelated to features of medieval date found in the initial phase of evaluation to the south.

No other significant archaeological deposits or features were found. It is concluded that the area of Trenches 7 and 8 appears to retain no significant archaeological potential and no further evidence for the medieval settlement established by the initial phase of evaluation to the south.

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 Kirsten Egging, assisted by Naomi Hall. This report was prepared by Kirsten Egging with contributions from Lorraine Mepham (finds) and Dr Chris Stevens (environmental). S E James prepared the illustrations.

HARNHAM FLOOD DEFENCE SCHEME: MIDDLE STREET MEADOW SALISBURY, WILTSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT Additional Evaluation Trenches 7 & 8

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 additional phase of archaeological trial trench evaluation at Middle Street Meadow (NGR 139300 129500), Salisbury, Wiltshire (the 'Site') (**Figure 1**), following an initial phase carried out in February 2006 (Wessex Archaeology 2006a)
- 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). Specifically, the additional trenches were intended to target proposed groundwork to form a reed bed filtration system and any archaeological potential this may impact.
- 1.1.3 An updated Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the additional evaluation trenches was prepared by Wessex Archaeology (2006b) 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 15th and 17th May 2006.

1.2 The Site

- 1.2.1 The Site (**Figure 1**), 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, Middle Street Meadow. The natural topography of the Site is generally flat, typical of its valley floor location. The earthworks that represent the Post-medieval water-meadows were clearly observable; the two trenches were located on reasonably level areas of raised ground north of the initial phase of evaluation and inside the River Nadder riverbank. 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) and 0.60m 0.65m below ground level in the Middle Street Meadow (Wessex Archaeology 2006a).

1.3 Archaeological Background

- 1.3.1 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 19th 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 17th century, was widespread on the River Avon, and their management continued well into the 20th century. Relic elements of this system of irrigation extend into the Site.
- 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.
- 1.3.4 The first phase of evaluation, (Wessex Archaeology 2006b), included three trenches in Middle Street Meadow. These revealed evidence of medieval settlement and extensive grey clayey alluvial deposits. Post-medieval water-meadow features were also recorded.

2 AIMS

2.1 Evaluation trenches

2.1.1 The aim of the additional evaluation trenching was to establish the presence, date, nature, extent, and condition of any archaeological remains within 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 additional evaluation trenching and thereby augment the evidence on which an informed decision can be made on the future treatment of archaeological remains, where present, in respect of the proposed flood defence scheme.

3 METHOD

3.1 Evaluation Trenches

3.1.1 The archaeological evaluation comprised the machine excavation of two 30m by 1.8m trenches. However, both trenches were slightly shortened in order to

- minimise damage to trees and avoid other obstacles, whilst remaining within the targeted area (Figure 2)
- 3.1.2 A unique-number Site code (62341) 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. The topsoil and underlying deposits were stored separately.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The results of the archaeological evaluation are detailed below. 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 62341. 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 yellow-brown clay. This was overlain by a thin layer of well-sorted, pale brownish-grey chalky gravel (**Figures 3 & 4**).
- 4.2.2 The surface of the natural clay and chalky gravel (brash) substrata lay at between 45.12m and 45.15m aOD (slightly lower than observed in Trenches 1-3 of the previous evaluation) and was overlain by grey silty clay alluvial deposits, the result of either over-bank flooding or up-cast from riverbank management.
- 4.2.3 In Trench 8, the lower horizon of the alluvial sequence (810) lacked bioturbation and iron staining. It was sealed by a horizon comprising a much grittier matrix (809). This in turn was overlain by 808, similar to 810.
- 4.2.4 Above the alluvial sequence, the subsoil in both trenches was pale orange-grey clay with small chalk and flint inclusions. It was 0.20m deep and lay directly below the topsoil, a 0.20m thick dark greyish-brown silty loam.

4.3 Prehistoric

4.3.1 A small, shallow, pit or ditch terminus, (706) was found in the western end of Trench 7 (Figures 2 & 3). This feature contained a small assemblage of worked and burnt flint and extended to the north, beyond the evaluation trench. Although not closely datable, the small assemblage of worked flint

and burnt flint recovered from the upper fill (708) are broadly datable to the later prehistoric period. A small undated feature (709), approximately 0.5m to the west, maybe of a similar date, however, as this feature continued beneath the northern limit of the trench, its nature, extent and function remain uncertain.

4.5 Medieval

4.5.1 No features or deposits of medieval date were revealed, but there was a sparse presence of peg tile in deposits **703** and **803**, and a single piece of green glazed pottery within deposit **703** (**Figures 3 & 4**), all probably residual.

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 and recorded in the initial phase of evaluation.
- 4.6.2 At the south-west end of Trench 8, the level of the natural geology sloped down to the south-west (**Figure 4**). Between the alluvial deposit **803** and the natural deposit **804** were two slightly organic deposits (**805 & 806**). The lower deposit **806** was immediately above the natural deposit and was greenish-brown silty clay with occasional roots, some of which were burnt. Above **806**, deposit **805** was purple-brown silty clay with occasional charcoal inclusions. It is possible that these represent a former, now buried, subsoil and topsoil sequence, or an accumulation of organic material in the base of a waterlogged depression. No dating evidence was retrieved from these deposits.

4.7 Modern

4.7.1 Modern features (807) comprised an *in situ* stake, a chalk and flint packed posthole with *in situ* post and possible foundation of chalk and flint, aligned north-west to south-east (Figure 2). Above this was a deposit of poorly sorted, coarse gravel and two loose stone blocks (greenstone and limestone).

4.8 Finds

- 4.8.1 Finds were recovered from three contexts in the two trenches; these have been quantified by material type and the results are given in **Table 1**.
- 4.8.2 The upper fill (708) of feature 706 produced two pieces of unretouched worked flint, and a small amount of burnt, unworked flint. The latter is undatable, and the worked flint, in the absence of chronologically diagnostic features, can only be broadly dated as Neolithic/Bronze Age.
- 4.8.3 Finds from the alluvial (**703** & **803**) comprise one sherd of Laverstock-type fineware pottery (13th/early 14th century), fragments of medieval ceramic roof tile, animal bone (cattle and dog) and oyster shell.

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

Context	Pottery	CBM	Burnt Flint	Worked Flint	Animal Bone	Shell
703	1/4	4/257			3/71	1/1
708			67/1276	2/19		
803		1/258			1/9	
TOTAL	1/4	5/515	67/1276	5/30	4/80	1/1

4.9 Environmental Remains

4.9.1 A single bulk sample was taken from the upper fill (708) of a probable prehistoric pit or ditch terminal (706). The feature contained quantities of redeposited burnt flint, as well as some unburnt and struck flint.

Charred Plant Remains and Charcoals

- 4.9.2 The bulk sample was processed by standard flotation methods; the flot retained on a 0.5 mm mesh, residues fractionated into 5.6 mm, 2mm and 1mm fractions and dried. The coarse fractions (>5.6 mm) were sorted, weighed and discarded. Flots were scanned under a x10 x40 stereo-binocular microscope and the presence of charred remains quantified (**Table 2**).
- 4.9.3 The flot was small with large amounts of roots and some modern seeds. These may be indicative of stratigraphic movement, reworking or the degree of contamination by later intrusive elements.

Charred plant remains

4.9.4 No charred plant remains were seen. The lack of charred plant remains may indicate the absence of settlement activities within the immediate vicinity, but it should be noted that Early Bronze Age samples often only produce little evidence.

Charcoal

- 4.9.4 No charcoal greater than 5.6mm was in the sample (**Table 2**), but some fragments smaller pieces, none larger than 2mm in size, were present. The lack of evidence for charcoal is in keeping with the interpretation during excavation that the burnt flint was redeposited.
- 4.9.5 The charred remains indicate only very limited undated activity. There is no potential for further work.

Waterlogged plant remains

4.9.6 A small sub-sample was tested for waterlogged remains. No waterlogged preservation was seen in the sample and there is consequently no further potential.

Land and fresh/brackish water molluscs

4.9.7 During the processing of bulk soil samples for the recovery of charred remains, snails were noted, and recorded (**Table 2**), in the flots. These included a few shells of *Cochlicopa* spp. and some of *Helicella itala*, as well as a single shell of a freshwater species, Planorbid. Given the amounts of roots in the sample these shells may however be intrusive. The presence of shells is of interest, the lack of woodland species may indicate a post-clearance environment. There is no potential for further work.

Table 2. Assessment of the charred plant remains and charcoal

								Flot				Residue	
Feature type/no	Context	Sample	size litres		size	Grain	Chaff	Weed uncharred		Charcoal >5.6mm	Other	Charcoal >5.6mm	analysis
Ditch/ pit 706	708	2	10	50	80%	-	-	-	a	-	moll-t (B) moll-f (C)	-]-

KEY: A^{**} = exceptional, A^{*} = 30+ items, A = \geq 10 items, B = 9 - 5 items, C = < 5 items, (h) = hazelnuts, smb = small mammal bones; Moll-t = terrestrial molluses Moll-f = freshwater molluses; Analysis: C = charcoal, P = plant, M = molluses, C14 = radiocarbon suggestions

NOTE: ¹flot is total, but flot in superscript = % of rooty material. ²Unburnt seed is in lower case to distinguish it from charred remains

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Prehistoric

5.1.1 In Trench 7, a small pit from which a small assemblage of later prehistoric worked flint and burnt flint, and an undated feature adjacent to it, may be of later prehistoric date. It is uncertain whether these are isolated features or from part of a larger site. However, the absence of more widespread prehistoric activity in the programme of evaluation suggests that the former is likely to be the case. Although apparently isolated, these features appear to represent exploitation of the flood plain, albeit rather limited, but in the absence of diagnostic finds, it is uncertain whether this represents, for instance, Neolithic or Bronze Age activity.

5.3 Medieval

5.3.1 No *in situ* remains of medieval date were recorded although residual finds of medieval date were found redeposited within the alluvial silty clay subsoil. The finds included several pieces of peg tile, animal bone and a single piece of pottery.

5.4 Post-medieval

5.4.1 Although undulations in the present ground surface, which probably represent relict earthworks of a post-medieval water meadow system probably constructed in the 17th century (Cowan 1982), were observed in Middle Street

Meadow, clear evidence for their form and construction was not observed in either trench.

5.5 Conclusion

5.5.1 The evaluation would appear to indicate that there is little archaeological potential within the area of the proposed reed bed filtration system. No further evidence for settlement remains of medieval date, comparable with that recorded in the initial phase of evaluation trenching to the south, was found.

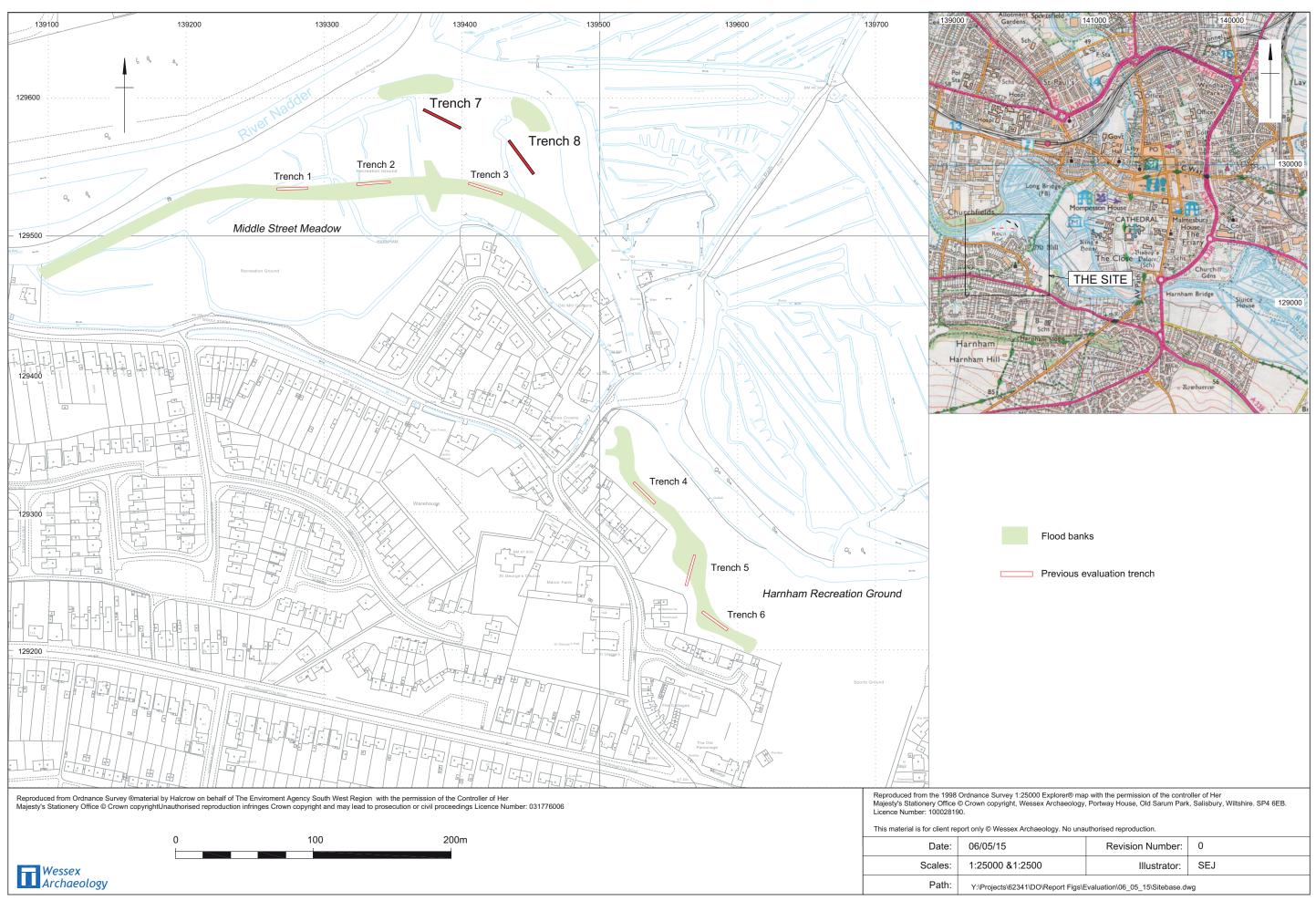
8 REFERENCES

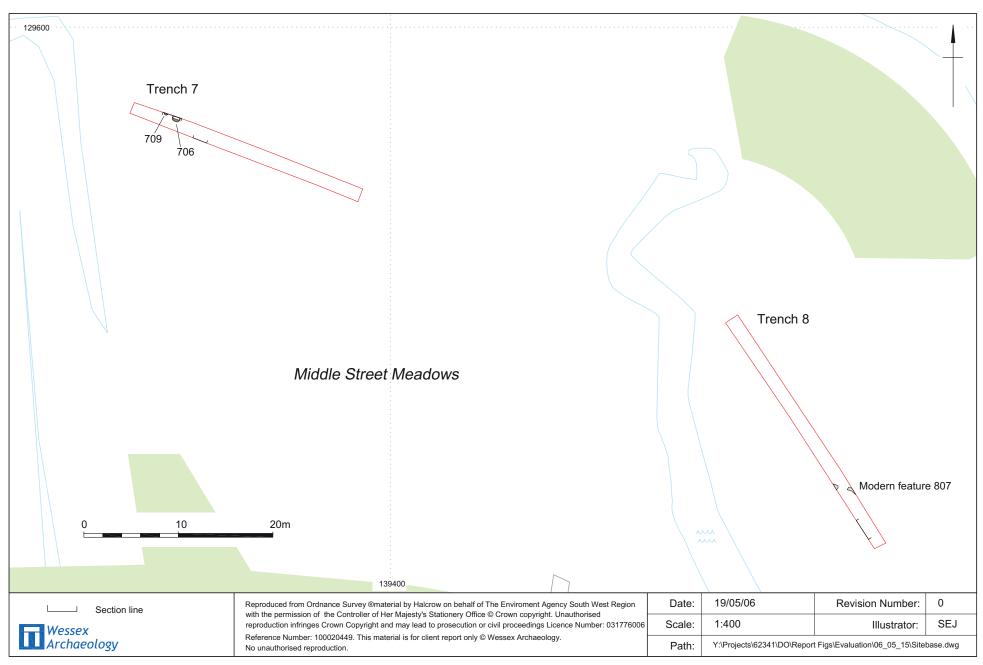
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APPENDIX 1: Catalogue of Trench Descriptions

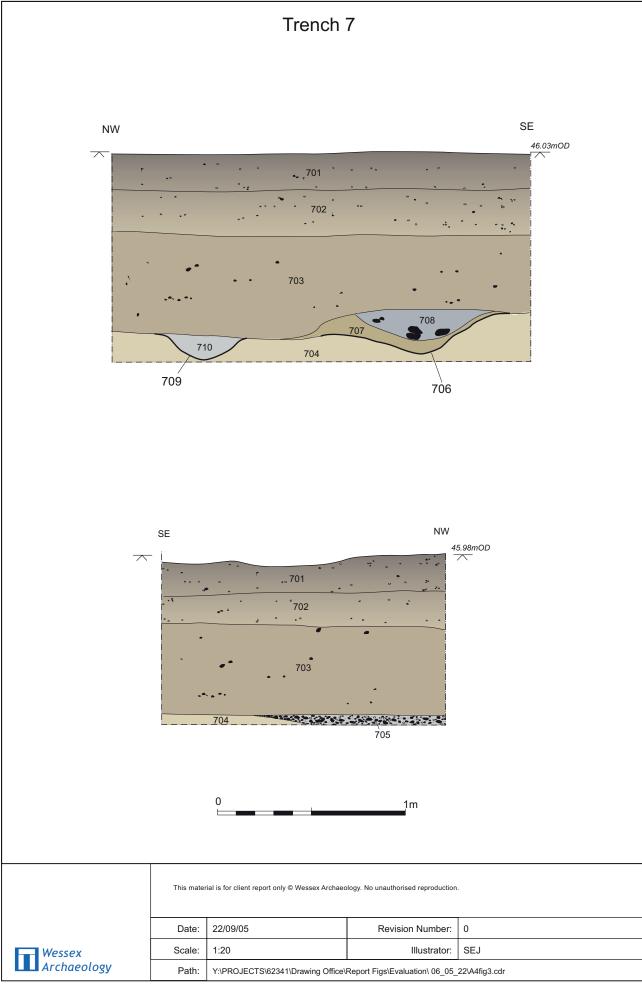
TRENCH	7	NGR 413384 129587			
Dimensions	27.8m x 1.65m x 1.09m	Ground Level – 46.03m aOD			
Context No.	Description	on	Depth		
701	Topsoil: Dark greyish-brown silty loa rounded <10-20mm; 1% flint, sub-an friable. Considerable bioturbation. C	gular, <10-20mm. Loose and	0-0.20m		
702	Subsoil: Mid orange grey silty clay rounded, <10mm; 1% flint, sub-ang Fairly homogenous. Considerable b with (703).	0.20-0.40m			
703	Probable Post-medieval made-ground. 10% flint gravel, sub-angular – sub-roin patches. Compact. Some bioturb mottles. Occasional yellow clay mottles. Occasional yellow clay mottles, and (704) and (705). Peg tile, animal glazed pottery recovered.	0.40-0.88m			
704	Natural geology: Pale yellowish gramottling. 1% flint nodules, sub-anacompact. Wet as close to water table.	0.88m+			
705	Natural geology (brash/calcareous gravel, rounded, <10-20mm. Patches inclusions. Loose, seen at W end of transport to the second	0.88m+			
706	Cut of feature: small pit of ditch ter Moderately sloping, concave sides an (708). Pre-dates (703) (examined p otherwise).	0.80-1.04m			
707	Secondary fill of [706]: Mid orang angular, <10-20mm. No finds. erosion of surrounding surfaces.	0.80-1.04m			
708	Secondary fill of [706]. Mid bluis angular, 10-30mm. Occasional in bioturbation. Diffuse in section. W flint recovered. Prehistoric?	0.80-0.96m			
709	Cut of feature: Undated, shallow and trench. Filled with [710]. Probably deposit (703).	0.96-1.09m			
710	Secondary fill of [709]: Mid grey cla <10-20mm. Very occasional iron accumulated deposit in natural feature	0.96-1.09m			

TRENCH	8	NGR 413444 129558				
Dimensions	28.65m x 1.65m x 1.15m	Ground Level – 46.02m aOI)			
Context No.	Description	Depth				
801	Topsoil: Dark greyish-brown silty clarounded 10mm; 1% flint, sub-angula Considerable bioturbation. Clear bour	r, 10mm. Loose and friable.	0-0.20m			
802	rounded, 10mm; 1% flint, sub-angul	Subsoil: Pale orange-grey clay. <1% chalk inclusions, subrounded, 10mm; 1% flint, sub-angular, 10mm. Compact. Fairly homogenous. Considerable bioturbation. Occasional iron oxide mottling. Clear boundary with (703).				
803	Probable Post-medieval made-groundary. <1% chalk, sub-rounded, 10mm. Compact. Some bioturbate mottles and manganese flecks. Occ Sharp boundary with (704) and (705), shell and green glazed pottery recover	mm; <1% flint, sub-angular, tion. Occasional iron oxide casional yellow clay mottles. Peg tile, animal bone, oyster	0.40-0.88m			
804	Natural geology (brash/calcareous gravel, rounded, <10-20mm. Patches inclusions. Loose, seen at W end of transport to the second	0.88m+				
805	Possible buried soil. Purplish brown/s charcoal fleck. Soft and damp. Clos SE end of trench 8 only, where the national states of the solution	0.96m – 1.12m				
806	Very similar to 805, but greenish broassociated with medium roots. Occ where the geology is lower.	1.08m – 1.12m				
807	Modern structural features: chalk an post extant. Also an extant stake nea foundation material, crosses trench S Above this was a deposit of coarse approx 500mm. (greenstone and limes be part of bench or bridge structure Unexcavated.	0.30m +				
808	Mid yellowish brown silty clay deposit with moderate iron mottling. Very similar to the more friable subsoil (802). Damper and smoother.					
809	Same as 803 but with gritty inclusion 6mm and angular.	ons – chalk and flint approx	0.6m - 0.65m			
810	Same as 803 but with no iron mottling	g. Very smooth and clean.	0.87m x 0.93m			





Middle Street Meadow (Trenches 7 and 8) plan showing archaeological features and section locations



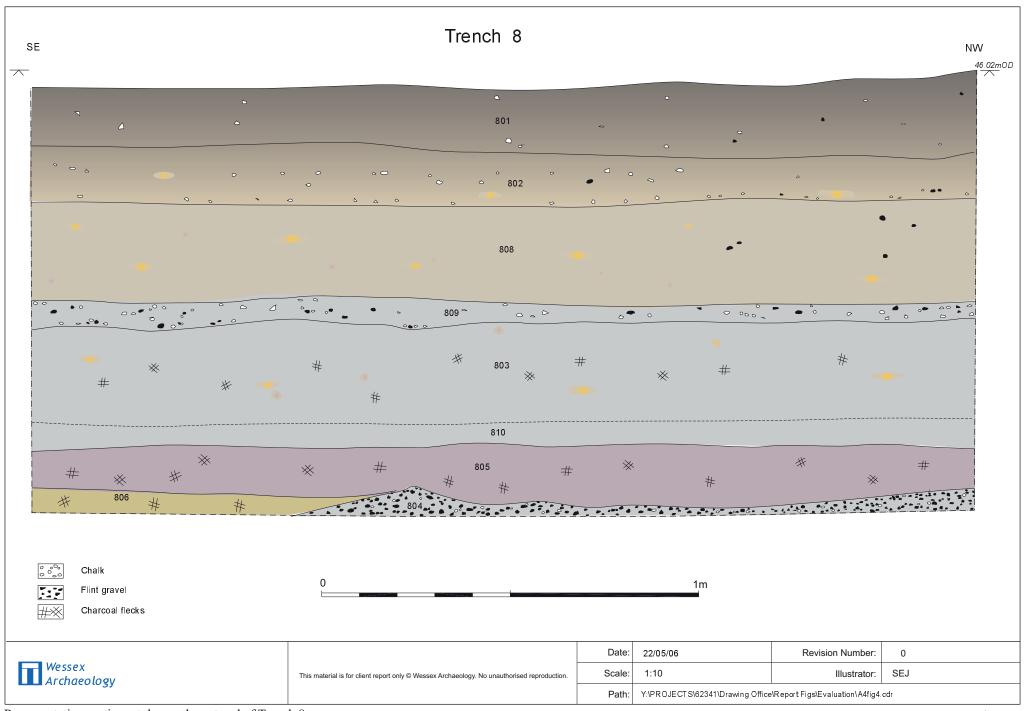




Plate 1. Trench 7 from the west

Trench 7



Plate 2. North facing representative section of Trench 7 showing change in natural and soil sequence



Plate 3. Trench 8 from the south-east





Plate 4. North-east facing representative section at south-east of Trench 8



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