

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Land at Totmonslow Solar Farm, Staffordshire

ARS Report N°: 2025/003
OASIS ID: archaeol5-530882



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Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation at Land at Totmonslow Solar Farm, Staffordshire

ARS LTD REPORT 2025/003



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Planning Reference: SMD/2023/0197
Local Authority: Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Site central NGR: SJ 99562 39071
OASIS ID: archaeol5-530882

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Name:	Totmonslow Solar Farm, Totmonslow Farm, Totmonslow, Staffordshire
Site Code:	TOT24
Planning Authority:	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Planning Reference:	SMD/2023/0197
Location:	Totmonslow Solar Farm, Totmonslow Farm, Draycott Road, Totmonslow, Upper Tean, Staffordshire, ST10 4JJ
Parish:	Parish of Checkley
Hard Geology:	Mercian Mudstone Group – Sedimentary Triassic bedrock formation
Superficial Geology:	Dark sandy soil with infrequent pebbles and inclusions
Soil Type:	Soilscape 8, slightly acidic, loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage.
NGR:	SJ 99562 39071
Date of Fieldwork:	25 November – 13 December
Date of Report:	17 January 2024

ARS Ltd were commissioned on behalf of Abrams Archaeology and Uniper GmbH to undertake archaeological trial trenching on land at Totmonslow Farm, Staffordshire in support of a planning application for the construction of a ground mounted solar farm and associated infrastructure.

A total of 42 trenches were excavated in compliance with a Written Scheme of Investigation between 25th November to 13th December 2024.

Only seven trenches contained archaeological features. Trenches 3, 6, 13, 23, 36 revealed linear features broadly dated to the Post-medieval period. Trenches 20 and 26 contained remnants of a trackway also broadly dated to the Post-medieval period. Two modern linear features were also located in Trench 15 and 24.

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Background and Scope of Work	1
1.2	Site Location and Description	1
1.3	Geology and Soils	2
1.4	Archaeological and Historical Background	2
2	Aims And Objectives	4
2.1	Project Aims and objectives	4
2.2	Research Aims and Objectives	4
3	Method Statement.....	5
3.1	Introduction.....	5
3.2	Coverage.....	5
3.3	Professional Standards	5
3.4	Health and Safety	5
3.5	Fieldwork	5
4	Results	8
4.1	Overview.....	8
4.2	Site Taphonomy and Condition of Preservation	8
4.3	Results	8
4.4	Summary	22
5	Specialist Assessment and Analysis	23
6	Discussion.....	23
6.2	Overview.....	23
6.3	Trenches 3, 6, 13, 23 and 36	23
6.4	Trenches 20 and 26	23
6.5	Trenches 15 and 24	24
6.6	Conclusion	24
7	Publicity, Confidentiality and Copyright	24
8	Statement of Indemnity	24
9	Archive	24
10	Acknowledgements.....	25
11	References.....	26
	Appendix I: Context Description Table	27
	Appendix II: Empty Trenches	31
	Appendix III: Oasis Form	63

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Site location	3
Figure 2. Excavated trench plan.....	7
Figure 3. Plan of Trench 3 showing ridge and furrow.....	11
Figure 4. Trench 3, looking west. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	12
Figure 5. Ridge and furrow [303] in Trench 3, looking south. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	12
Figure 6. Trench 6, looking south. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	13
Figure 7. Gully [604] looking west. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	13
Figure 8. Trench 13 looking north. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	14
Figure 9. Trench 15, looking west, showing modern field boundary. Scale in 0.5m graduations. ..	15
Figure 10. Plan of Trench 20 showing gravel trackway.	16
Figure 11. Trench 20, looking south. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	17
Figure 12. Gravel deposit (2004) looking north-east. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	17
Figure 13. Plan of Trench 23 showing Post-medieval linear.....	18
Figure 14. Trench 23, looking north. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	19
Figure 15. Ditch (2304) looking north. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	19
Figure 16. Trench 24, looking east. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	20
Figure 17. Modern field boundary [2404] looking south-west. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	20
Figure 18. Trench 26, looking west. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	21
Figure 19. Gravel deposit (2604), looking north-west. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	21
Figure 20. Ditch [3604] looking north. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	22
Figure 21. Trench 1, looking north. Scale in 0.5m graduations	31
Figure 22. Trench 2, looking west. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	32
Figure 23. Trench 4, looking north. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	33
Figure 24. Trench 7, looking north. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	34
Figure 25. Trench 8, looking east. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	35
Figure 26. Trench 9, looking south. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	36
Figure 27. Trench 10, looking south. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	37
Figure 28. Trench 11, looking west. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	38
Figure 29. Trench 12, looking north. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	39
Figure 30. Trench 14, looking west. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	40
Figure 31. Trench 16, looking south. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	41
Figure 32. Trench 17, looking south. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	42
Figure 33. Trench 18, looking west. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	43
Figure 34. Trench 19, looking east. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	44
Figure 35. Trench 21, looking south. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	45
Figure 36. Trench 22, looking south. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	46
Figure 37. Trench 25, looking south. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	47
Figure 38. Trench 27, looking east. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	48
Figure 39. Trench 28, looking south. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	49
Figure 40. Trench 29, looking north. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	50
Figure 41. Trench 30, looking north. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	51
Figure 42. Trench 31, looking east. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	52
Figure 43. Trench 32, looking east. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	53
Figure 44. Trench 33, looking south. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	54
Figure 45. Trench 34, looking east. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	55
Figure 46. Trench 35, looking north. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	56
Figure 47. Trench 37, looking west. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	57
Figure 48. Trench 38, looking east. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	58
Figure 49. Trench 39, looking west. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	59

Figure 50. Trench 40, looking south. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	60
Figure 51. Trench 41, looking east. Scale in 0.5m graduations.	61
Figure 52. Trench 42, looking north, Scale in 0.5m graduations.	62

I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Scope of Work

- 1.1.1 A planning application SMD/2023/0197 was submitted to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council for the development of land at Totmonslow Farm comprising temporary ground-mounted solar farm and ancillary infrastructure, security fencing, grid connections and access routes.
- 1.1.2 A scheme of archaeological evaluation was required as a condition in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (MHCLG 2024), initially comprising a Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (Abrams 2023a) and a geophysical survey (Abrams 2023b). These elements were provided during the Application for Planning Permission. The cultural heritage baseline and impact assessment reported high potential for Medieval, Post-medieval and Industrial archaeological remains within the survey area, with a lower likelihood for earlier archaeological periods.
- 1.1.3 Further archaeological investigations consisting of high-resolution LiDAR mapping, geochemical soil analysis and a magnetic susceptibility survey, were undertaken in August and September 2024 by ARS Ltd (Cowap and Greasley 2024). Archaeological features identified included early medieval ridge and furrow cultivation, historical field boundaries, a former trackway and a possible enclosure footprint. The results correlated with previous geophysical investigations and the environmental impact assessment undertaken prior to these investigations.
- 1.1.4 Following advice from Staffordshire County Council Historic Environment Team (SCCHET) as advisors to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) the implementation of a programme of archaeological trial trenching in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was required.
- 1.1.5 Archaeological Research Services Ltd (ARS Ltd) was commissioned by Abrams Archaeology to undertake archaeological trial trenching on land at Totmonslow Solar Farm, Totmonslow Farm, Totmonslow, Staffordshire (Figure 1), centred at SJ 99562 39071.
- 1.1.6 The evaluation comprised the excavation and recording of 42 trenches measuring 50m by 1.8m wide. (Figure 2).
- 1.1.7 Works were carried out in compliance with the WSI (Collie 2024) approved by SCCHET and took place between 25 November and 13 December 2024.

1.2 Site Location and Description

- 1.2.1 The Proposed Development Area (PDA) boundary is indicated in red on Figure 1. The site is within Totmonslow Farm in East Staffordshire and is located 6km to the southeast of Stoke-On-Trent (Figure 1; NGR SJ 99562 39071). The proposed development encompasses a total area of 27.7ha.
- 1.2.2 Due to the potential archaeological features highlighted from previous investigations, the PDA was subdivided into western and eastern extents, comprising nine fields and three fields respectively (Figure 2). All fields were given over to pasture and were bordered by hedgerows and discrete woodland copses. The south/south-western extents of the PDA

were bounded by the A50; to the north/north-east were further fields given over to pasture and cultivation.

- 1.2.3 The topography of the PDA varied greatly; it is located across a northwest-southeast aligned ridgeline situated between the Rivers Blithe and Tean, ranging from 165-190m aOD.

1.3 Geology and Soils

- 1.3.1 The solid geology of the PDA comprises Mercian Mudstone Group mudstone across most of the site. Mercian Mudstone Group is categorized as a sedimentary Triassic bedrock formation (British Geological Survey 2025).
- 1.3.2 The solid geology is overlain by dark sandy soil with infrequent pebbles and inclusions and defined as *Soilscape 8* “slightly acidic, loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage” (Cranfield University 2025).

1.4 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 1.4.1 This archaeological and historical background is drawn from the Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (Abrams 2023a). Results from the very recent land surveys are also given here (Cowap 2024). The information is summarised below.
- 1.4.2 The landscape surrounding the PDA has a limited archaeological record spanning the prehistoric to the Romano-British periods. Evidence of prehistoric activity within the surrounding landscape can be drawn from a bowl barrow (Scheduled Monument; HE no. 1008540) situated atop the highest point of the Tean Valley, c.1.6km east of the PDA. Bowl barrows are funerary monuments typically dating from the Late Neolithic to Late Bronze Ages.
- 1.4.3 Medieval and Post-medieval earthworks, specifically ridge and furrow, are identifiable in the western extent of the PDA (as discerned from recent geophysical survey and DEFRA LiDAR 2024). UAV survey from 2024 definitively revealed these earthworks in both the eastern and western sides of the PDA although no provisional date was given due to the nature of the survey (Cowap and Greasley 2024). Further ditches and linear features were also revealed potentially indicating ditches and other earthworks.
- 1.4.4 Approximately 0.95km southwest of the PDA lies the Scheduled Monument of Paynsley Hall (HE no. 1011050), a Medieval moated enclosure surviving as earthwork remains. Further earthworks indicate the land surrounding Paynsley Hall was given over to cultivation and fisheries, visible as ridge and furrow and ponds respectively.
- 1.4.5 The PDA continued in use as agricultural hinterland and after the 19th century remained relatively unchanged and “static” regarding its field systems, layout and utilization as pasture.



Site name: Totmonslow
Date: November 2024
Drawn by: TC
Scale: Varies

**Figure 1:
Site location**



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 Proposed Development Area

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Project Aims and objectives

- 2.1.1 The aim of archaeological evaluation was to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains that may be affected by the proposed development, and where possible to establish their significance. It was also aimed at evaluating the features revealed during the preceding archaeological survey programme (Cowap and Greasley 2024).
- 2.1.2 The objectives of evaluation were to investigate the extent of the proposed development area in order to:
- ◆ record evidence for the absence/presence, location and extent of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present, especially those revealed by previous survey work;
 - ◆ identify, where possible, the broad date and sequence of the remains;
 - ◆ establish the integrity and condition of preservation of any remains present;
 - ◆ assess potential for recovery of artefactual and/or environmental remains;
 - ◆ assess any palaeo-environmental or other ecofactual potential of deposits; and,
 - ◆ where possible establish the significance of any archaeological remains.

2.2 Research Aims and Objectives

- 2.2.1 The aims and objectives of the archaeological evaluation are outlined in detail in the WSI (Collie 2024) prepared by ARS Ltd prior to the commencement of the works. They are summarised below.
- 2.2.2 The investigations were conducted with a view to address objectives suggested by the published research priorities set out by the online West Midlands Regional Research Framework (WMRRF). Regional research recommendations, coined ‘priorities’, by the WMRRF were initially outlined in *The Archaeology of the West Midlands: A Framework for research* (Watt 2011). While the WMRRF has no easily referable number research aims, broad themes and specific objectives are summarised below which are relevant to PDA:
- ◆ The presence and discovery of Prehistoric archaeological remains and the possible use of land, particularly with reference to any evidence of transition from nomadic to agricultural use from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age
 - ◆ The presence of Romano British use of settlement and agriculture, in addition to Iron Age or Prehistoric precedents, including examining the production of cereals and livestock
 - ◆ The use of land in the Medieval period for agriculture and an analysis of early field systems
 - ◆ The transition from Medieval communal spaces to privately enclosed agricultural and/or industrial spaces
 - ◆ The changing use of land and space during the Industrial period, with reference to changing field boundaries, lanes and footpaths

3 METHOD STATEMENT

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The methodology for the evaluation is set out in detail in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Collie 2024).

3.2 Coverage

- 3.2.1 The evaluation trenching comprised the excavation of 42 trenches measuring 50m by 1.8m wide. The locations of the evaluation trenches are shown in Figure 2. In a discussion and agreement of scope between the Consultant (Abrams Archaeology) and the SCCHE, the eastern side of the PDA (11ha) was investigated by a total of 24 trenches whereas the western side (16ha) was only examined by 18 trenches. The disparity of trench numbers between the two areas was due to the significance and number of potential features revealed from the earlier survey of 2024 (Cowap and Greasley 2024).
- 3.2.2 A contingency of an additional 1% of the western area and 2% of the eastern area was accounted for within the project scope, to be evaluated by trenching if significant archaeological finds/features were discovered.
- 3.2.3 The exact location of each trench was subject to minor repositioning to avoid utilities, overhead services, drains, tree preservation orders and/or other constraints (i.e. no more than 1.0m, or allowing for exclusion). Any substantive change was by agreement of the archaeological planning advisor.
- 3.2.4 Trenches targeted both locations where archaeological remains were expected based on the previous UAV and LIDAR survey (Cowap and Greasley 2024), and also areas where archaeological remains were less likely in order to evaluate for presence or absence.

3.3 Professional Standards

- 3.3.1 The archaeological fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (2022), *Standard for archaeological field evaluation* (2023a) and *Universal guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (2023b).

3.4 Health and Safety

- 3.4.1 All works were undertaken in full compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and with the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992.
- 3.4.2 A risk assessment (RA No. 2024/126) was produced before commencement of the work and was adhered to throughout the course of the fieldwork.

3.5 Fieldwork

- 3.5.1 The trenches were sited in accordance with the WSI (Collie 2024) using survey grade equipment that typically give a minimum tolerance of sub-metre accuracy and usually centimetre accuracy, dependent upon satellite visibility. The same equipment was used to record known points on drawn plans and sections and to take spot heights within the trenches.

- 3.5.2 Overburden was removed in level spits down to the first archaeological horizon using a 360° mechanical excavator equipped with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket under continuous archaeological supervision.
- 3.5.3 Each trench was cleaned by hand to expose and define archaeological features. Pre-excavation photographs were taken of each trench any exposed archaeology within them.
- 3.5.4 All archaeological features were drawn and recorded at an appropriate scale and were sample excavated in accordance with the WSI. All trenches and features were accurately drawn in accordance with the ARS Ltd Field Recording Manual.
- 3.5.5 All features and trenches were tied into the Ordnance Survey Grid and all spot heights expressed in metres above Ordnance Datum (aOD).
- 3.5.6 All archaeological deposits and artefacts encountered during the investigation were fully recorded. Recording followed the Company's field recording (ARS Ltd 2020). All archaeological features and deposits were given a separate context number.
- 3.5.7 Digital photographs form the principal photographic record for report purposes and follow the standards of Historic England (2015). A photographic record was maintained by high resolution digital photography and a full register of photographs was kept.
- 3.5.8 All written records were kept on pro forma recording sheets and a Harris Matrix was compiled for each trench where multiphase archaeological stratigraphy was present.

Figure 2: Excavated Trench Plan

 Limit of Excavation
 Site Boundary

0 100m



Site name: TOT24
 Date: 14.1.2025
 Drawn by: SM

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4 RESULTS

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 An overall plan of trench locations is presented in Figure 2. Individual trench plans and photographs for those trenches where archaeological features were present are included as subsequent figures.
- 4.1.2 The context records are summarised in Table 1 providing an overview of the presence/absence of, or potential for, archaeology associated with each evaluation trench. The table should be viewed in association with the figures, photographs, matrices and text for each trench where archaeological remains were present. For those trenches where only modern features or no archaeological remains were present they are described in table 2 but their plans have not produced within this report. Further details of such trenches are preserved within the site archive.
- 4.1.3 The overburden across the area subject to watching brief was machine excavated down to the start of the archaeological horizon or depth of development, whichever was the shallower, under continuous archaeological supervision.

4.2 Site Taphonomy and Condition of Preservation

- 4.2.1 The site comprises 12 fields, all fields given over to pasture and bordered by hedgerows and discrete woodland copses. The south/south-western extents of the PDA were bounded by the A50; to the north/north-east Lay further fields given over to pasture and cultivation.
- 4.2.2 The topography of the PDA varied greatly; it is located across a northwest-southeast aligned ridgeline situated between the Rivers Blithe and Tean, ranging from 165m-190m aOD.
- 4.2.3 The geological horizon consisted of a silty clay subsoil overlaying clay natural. Additionally, bioturbation was observed in several trenches through the presence of rooting and earthworms.

4.3 Results

- 4.3.1 A total of 42 evaluation trenches were excavated, each measuring approximately 50 m by 1.8 m, extending over 12 fields (Figure 2) and covering a combined excavated area of 3780m². All evaluation trenches were sited to provide appropriate coverage of the proposed development area and were located specifically to target anomalies identified on the geophysical survey as well as 'blank' areas.
- 4.3.2 Of the 42 trenches excavated, five (Trenches 3, 6, 13, 23, 36) contained linear features and two (Trenches 20 and 26) contained gravelly deposits overlaying the natural geology. The remaining 35 trenches were either sterile or had modern features such as field drains or modern field boundaries present (Figure 3).
- 4.3.3 The subsequent text describes those trenches where archaeological remains are present. This section should be read in conjunction with the accompanying figures and captions and the Context Description Table (Appendix I) and the Trench Summary Table (Table 1) These provide a synthesis of the presence/absence of archaeology or potential archaeology in

each of the trenches as well as the depths of the topsoil/over burden and subsoil below ground level (BGL).

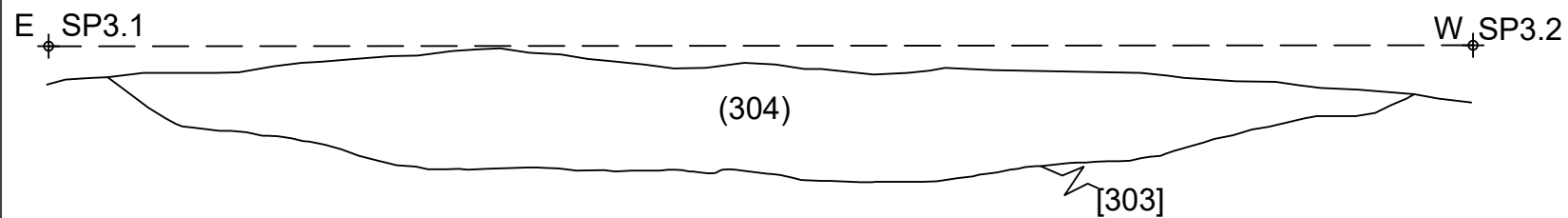
Table 1. Trench Summary Table

Trench No	Trench Dimensions (m)	Top soil thickness (m)	Sub soil thickness (m)	Archaeology?	Features	Context Number	Finds
1	50m x 1.8m	0.30m	-	-	-	-	-
2	50m x 1.8m	0.32m	-	-	-	-	-
3	50m x 1.8m	0.23m	-	X3 Ridge and Furrow	[Furrow] [Furrow] [Furrow]	[303] [305] [307]	-
4	50m x 1.8m	0.25m	0.20m	-	-	-	-
5	50m x 1.8m	0.25m	-	-	-	-	-
6	50m x 1.8m	0.13m	0.20m	X1 Gully	[Gully]	[605]	-
7	50m x 1.8m	0.15m	0.04m	-	-	-	-
8	50m x 1.8m	0.13m	0.12m	-	-	-	-
9	50m x 1.8m	0.38m	0.08m	-	-	-	-
10	50m x 1.8m	0.35m	0.06m	-	-	-	-
11	50m x 1.8m	0.25m	0.16m	-	-	-	-
12	50m x 1.8m	0.40m	0.12m	-	-	-	-
13	50m x 1.8m	0.22m	0.18m	X2 Ridge and Furrow	[Furrow] [Furrow]	[1304] [1306]	-
14	50m x 1.8m	0.32m	0.10m	-	-	-	-
15	50m x 1.8m	0.40m	-	X1 Field Boundary	[Field Boundary]	[1503]	-
16	50m x 1.8m	0.20m	-	-	-	-	-
17	50m x 1.8m	0.24m	0.16m	-	-	-	-
18	50m x 1.8m	0.24m	0.17m	-	-	-	-
19	50m x 1.8m	0.14m	0.14m	-	-	-	-
20	50m x 1.8m	0.23m	0.09m	X1 Gravel Deposit	(Trackway)	(2004)	-
21	50m x 1.8m	0.13m	0.05m	-	-	-	-
22	50m x 1.8m	0.22m	0.27m	-	-	-	-
23	50m x 1.8m	0.15m	0.14m	X1 Linear	[Ditch]	[2304]	-
24	50m x 1.8m	0.21m	0.13m	X1 Linear	[Ditch]	[2404]	Modern Shotgun Shell
25	50m x 1.8m	0.24m	0.14m	-	-	-	-
26	50m x 1.8m	0.25m	0.11m	X1 Gravel Deposit	(Trackway)	(2604)	-
27	50m x 1.8m	0.23m	0.15m	-	-	-	-
28	50m x 1.8m	0.30m	0.30m	-	-	-	-
29	50m x 1.8m	0.17m	0.12m	-	-	-	-
30	50m x 1.8m	0.20m	0.12m	-	-	-	-
31	50m x 1.8m	0.24m	0.15m	-	-	-	-
32	50m x 1.8m	0.20m	0.15m	-	-	-	-
33	50m x 1.8m	0.22m	0.15m	-	-	-	-
34	50m x 1.8m	0.25m	-	-	-	-	-
35	50m x 1.8m	0.20m	0.14m	-	-	-	-
36	50m x 1.8m	0.26m	-	X1 Linear	[Ditch]	[3603]	Fe metal plough fragment
37	50m x 1.8m	0.23m	-	-	-	-	-
38	50m x 1.8m	0.25m	-	-	-	-	-
39	50m x 1.8m	0.25m	0.08m	-	-	-	-
40	50m x 1.8m	0.23m	-	-	-	-	-
41	50m x 1.8m	0.15m	0.18m	-	-	-	-
42	50m x 1.8m	0.15m	0.18m	-	-	-	-

Trench 3

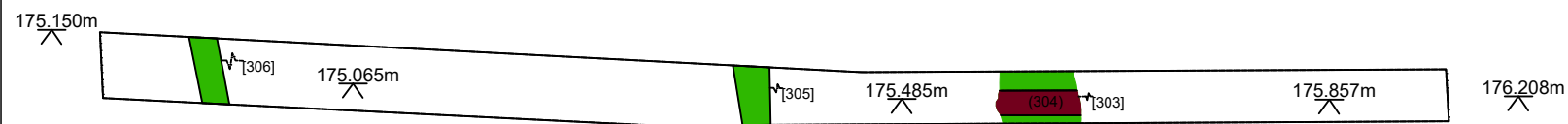
- 4.3.4 Trench 3 contained three linear features aligned north-south. After investigation, they were determined to be ridge and furrow. Only one of the furrows was excavated.
- 4.3.5 Furrow [303] had a width of 2.93m and a depth of 0.27m and contained a singular fill (304) (Figure 3, 4, 5). Fill (304) had a mid brown grey colour and a clay silt composition with moderate small stone inclusions. No finds were recovered and it was determined that the fill was deposited naturally after disuse of the furrow.

Figure 3: Plan of Trench 3 showing Ridge and Furrow



0 1m

- Limit of Excavation
- Unexcavated Ridge and Furrow
- Excavated Ridge and Furrow
- 175.150m Height AOD
- (...) Fill/Deposit
- [...] Cut
- Section Line



0 10m



Site name: TOT24
Date: 15.01.25
Drawn by: SM

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Figure 4. Trench 3, looking west. Scale in 0.5m graduations.

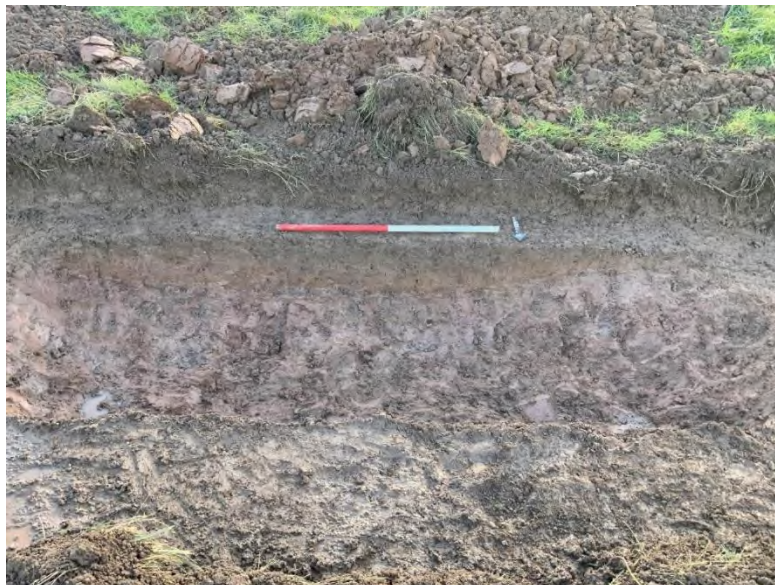


Figure 5. Ridge and furrow [303] in Trench 3, looking south. Scale in 0.5m graduations.

Trench 6

- 4.3.6 Trench 6 contained one linear feature aligned northwest/southeast. Feature [604] had a width of 0.48m and a depth of 0.11m and contained a single fill (605) (Figure 6, 7). Fill (605) had a brownish grey clay with no inclusions.
- 4.3.7 No finds were recovered. The form and depth of the feature indicated that it was a small drainage gully.

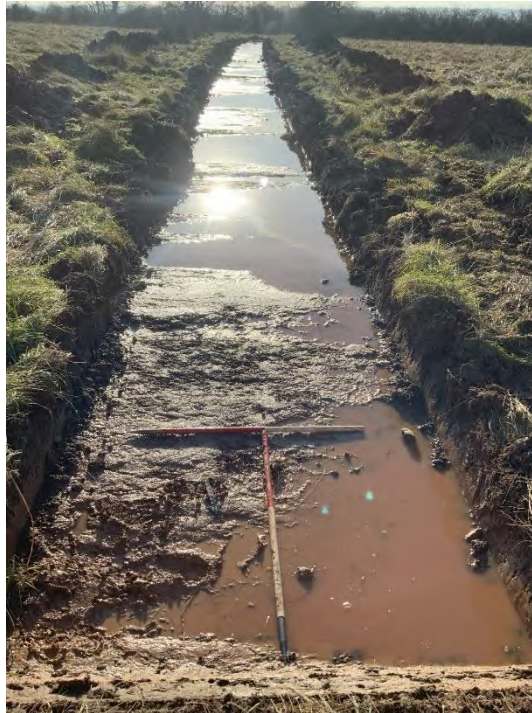


Figure 6. Trench 6, looking south. Scale in 0.5m graduations.



Figure 7. Gully [604] looking west. Scale in 0.5m graduations.

Trench 13

- 4.3.8 Trench 13 contained two linear features on an east-west alignment. After investigation, they were determined to be the remains of ridge and furrow. One furrow was test excavated for definitive classification.
- 4.3.9 Furrow [304] had a width of 1.5m and was excavated to a depth of 0.25m and contained a singular fill (1305) (Figure 8). This was a mid grey brown colour with a clay silt composition containing moderate small stone and charcoal inclusions. No finds were recovered and investigation showed that and it had formed through natural weathering processes naturally after disuse.



Figure 8. Trench 13 looking north. Scale in 0.5m graduations.

Trench 15

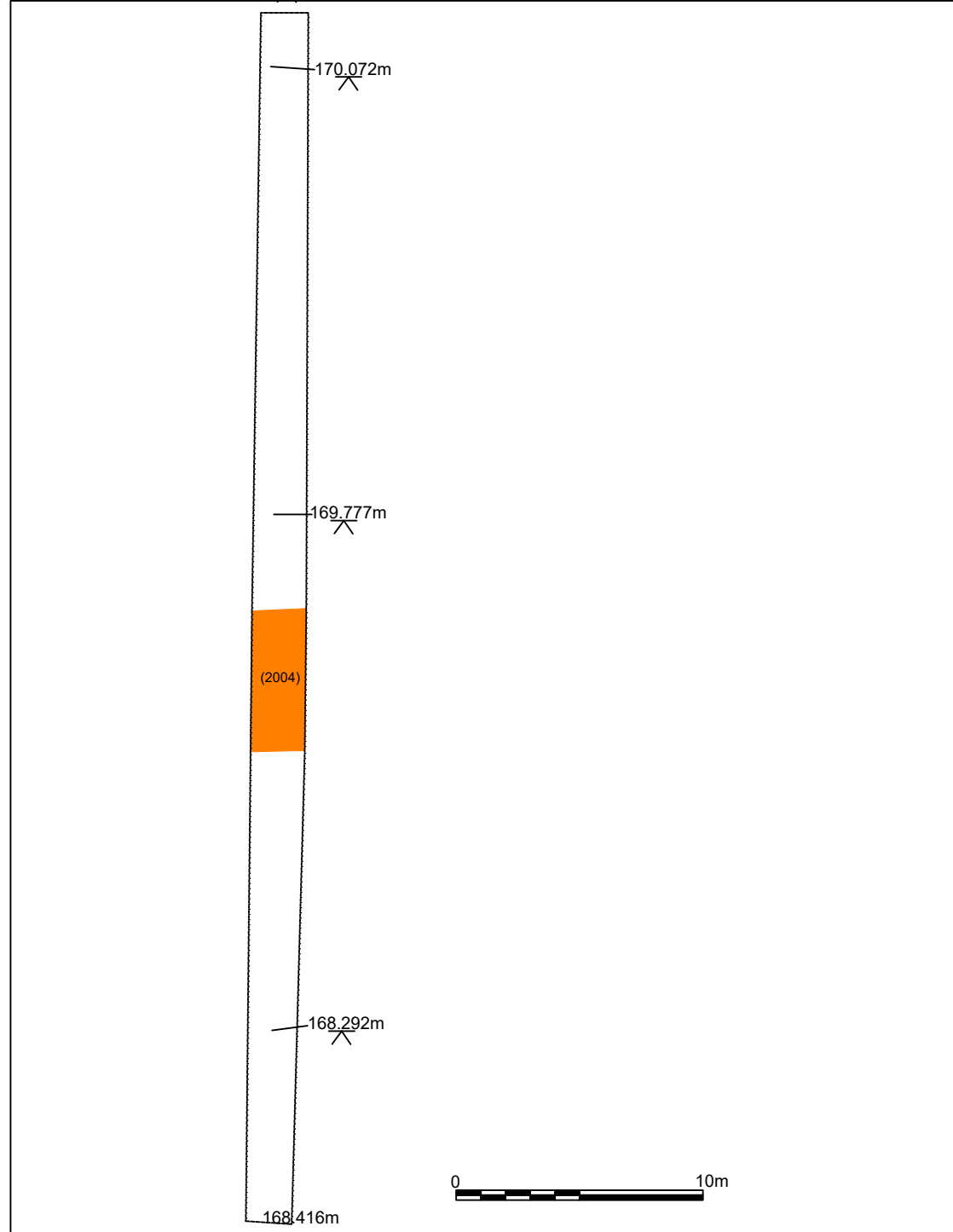
- 4.3.10 Trench 15 contained one linear feature aligned northwest-south east (Figure 9). The feature [1503] had a width of 1.62m. After investigation it was determined to be a modern field boundary due to material observed in the fill and therefore remained unexcavated.



Figure 9. Trench 15, looking west, showing modern field boundary. Scale in 0.5m graduations.

Trench 20

- 4.3.11 Trench 20 contained a gravel deposit located at the centre of the trench (Figure 10, 11, 12). Deposit (2004) had a width of 5.76m, the length of which extended beyond the trench boundary. The deposit had a brownish grey colour and gravelly clay composition with frequent large stone inclusions.



Site name: TOT24
Date: 16.01.2025
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**Figure 10: Plan of Trench 20 Showing
Gravel Trackway**



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— Limit of Excavation Gravel Trackway (...) Fill/Deposit
X Height AoD [...] Cut

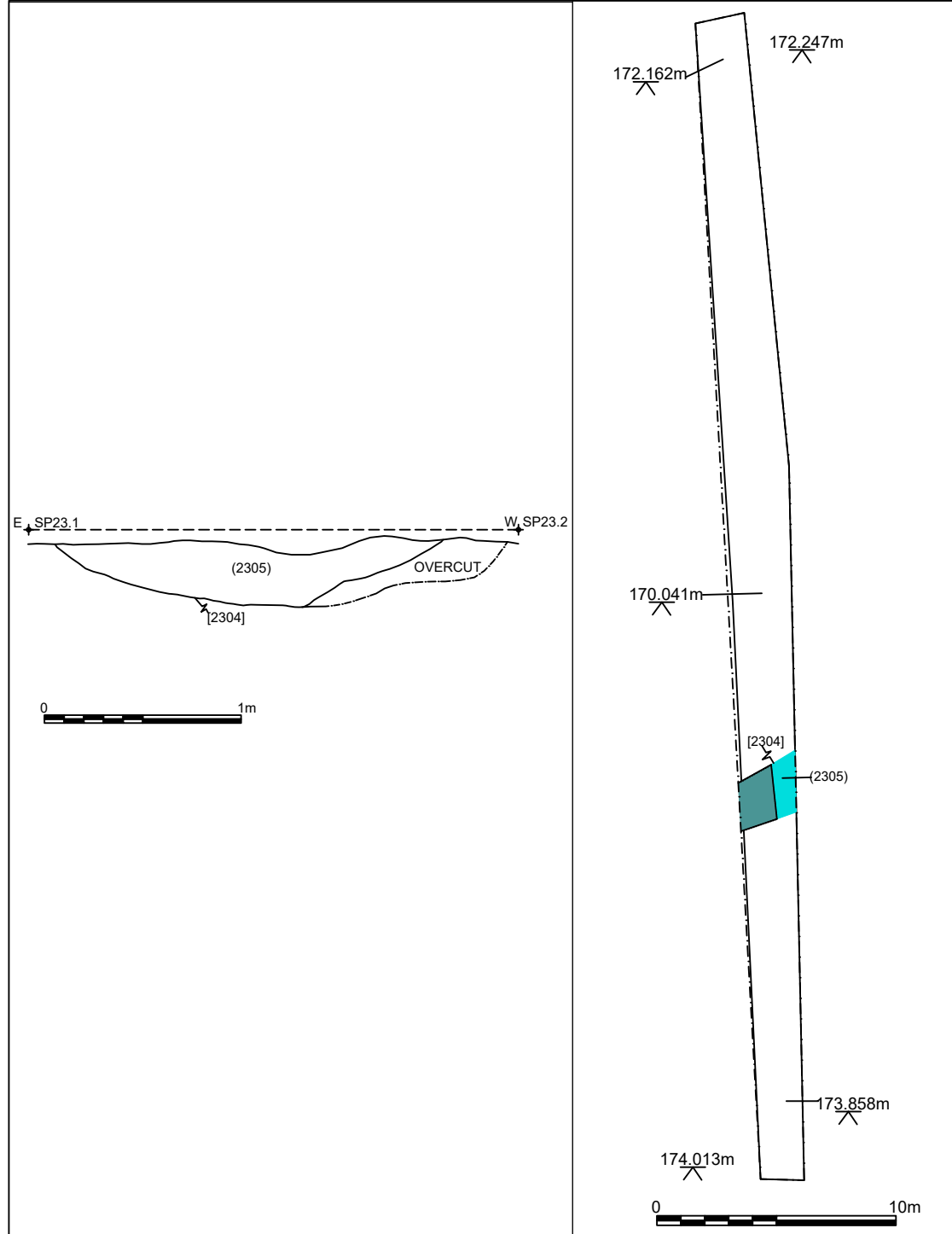
4.3.12 No datable finds were recovered.



Figure 11. Trench 20, looking south. Scale in 0.5m graduations.



Figure 12, Gravel deposit (2004) looking north-east. Scale in 0.5m graduations.



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Figure 1 Plan of Trench 23 showing linear feature



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— Limit of Excavation Excavated Post-Medieval Linear (...) Fill/Deposit
Unexcavated Post-Medieval Linear 168.292m Height AoD [...] Cut

Trench 23

- 4.3.13 Trench 23 contained one linear feature orientated north-south. Feature [2304] had a width of 1.96m and a depth of 0.34m and contained a singular fill (2305) (Figure 13, 14, 15). Fill (2305) had a greyish brown colour with a silty clay composition containing moderate small stone inclusions.
- 4.3.14 No datable finds were recovered. The form and depth of this feature suggested that it was a ditch.



Figure 14, Trench 23, looking north. Scale in 0.5m graduations.



Figure 15. Ditch (2304) looking north. Scale in 0.5m graduations.

Trench 24

- 4.3.15 Trench 24 contained one modern linear feature orientated north-south (Figure 16, 17). Feature [2404] had a width of 1.18m and was excavated to a depth of 0.37m. Fill (2405) was a greyish brown colour with a silty clay composition containing occasional small stone inclusions. A shotgun cartridge was identified from within the fill
- 4.3.16 The form of this feature, along with the shotgun shell buried deep within, suggested a ditch dating from the modern period.



Figure 16. Trench 24, looking east. Scale in 0.5m graduations.



Figure 17. Modern field boundary [2404] looking south-west. Scale in 0.5m graduations.

Trench 26

4.3.17 Trench 26 contained a gravel deposit located at its western end (Figure 18, 19). Deposit (2604) had a width of 2.06m, the length of which extended beyond the trench boundary. It was a brownish grey colour and had a gravelly clay composition with frequent large stone inclusions.

4.3.18 No datable finds were recovered.



Figure 18. Trench 26, looking west. Scale in 0.5m graduations.



Figure 19, Gravel deposit (2604), looking north-west. Scale in 0.5m graduations.

Trench 36

- 4.3.19 Trench 36 contained one linear feature orientated north/south. Feature [3603] had a width of 1.72m and a depth of 0.49m and contained two fills (3604) and (3605) (Figure 20). Upper fill (3604) was a mid orangey brown silty clay with occasional small stone inclusions. A fragment of metal plough blade was identified. The lower fill (3605) had a dark greyish brown colour with a clay composition and occasional small stone inclusions. No datable finds were recovered
- 4.3.20 The form of the feature as well as the plough blade remnant identified this as a drainage ditch from the Post Medieval period.



Figure 20. Ditch [3604] looking north. Scale in 0.5m graduations.

4.4 Summary

- 4.4.1 No finds or features of archaeological significance were uncovered during the evaluation.
- 4.4.2 Ridge and furrows were present in trenches 3 and 13 and indicated the presence of agricultural practices. Although no datable evidence was recovered, it is likely these date to the Post Medieval period.
- 4.4.3 Gravel deposits were present in trenches 20 and 26. No datable evidence was recovered from these. Their form suggested the deposition of hard material for traversing the immediate area or consolidation for purposes unknown.
- 4.4.4 A range of five linear features were discovered: In Trench 6, a small gully was located; a small ditch feature was found in Trench 15; and Trench 23, a wide shallow ditch was uncovered. None of these features contained any datable material.
- 4.4.5 In Trench 24, a ditch was located containing a modern shotgun cartridge and in Trench 36, a ditch was located containing fragments of plough blade.

5 SPECIALIST ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

- 5.1.1 No datable finds were recovered from the trial trenching and feature excavations. The metal plough fragment (Trench 36) and shotgun cartridge (Trench 24) were identified as such and discarded on site.

6 DISCUSSION

- 6.1.1 The 42 trenches excavated during the evaluation showed little in the way of archaeological finds or remains. Seven of the 42 trenches displayed archaeological features.

6.2 Overview

- 6.2.1 Five trenches contained linear ditches and ridge and furrow which ran through trenches 3, 6, 13, 15, 23, 24 and 36.
- 6.2.2 Trenches 20 and 26 contained two previously unidentified possible undated trackways, observed as gravel deposits overlain by dark overburden material.
- 6.2.3 Two linear features were investigated in Trench 15 and 24 and were determined to be modern due to the presence of a shotgun cartridge in Trench 24. All other linear features were considered to be associated with agricultural land practices representing ditches and gullies for drainage.
- 6.2.4 Previous investigation in the form of high-resolution LiDAR mapping, geochemical soil analysis and magnetic susceptibility survey, which occurred in August and September 2024 (Cowap and Greasley 2024) was undertaken by ARS Ltd. Archaeological features identified included ridge and furrow cultivation, historical field boundaries and a former trackway. The results correlate with previous geophysical investigations and the environmental impact assessment undertaken prior to these investigations.

6.3 Trenches 3, 6, 13, 23 and 36

- 6.3.1 Five linear features, were investigated in trenches 3, 6, 13, 23 and 36. The features in Trench 3 and 13 were determined to be ridge and furrow due to their size and depth and were suggestive of the former use of a Post-medieval open field system.
- 6.3.2 The linear running through Trench 6 was also determined to be Post-medieval due to the wider context of the site. Its purpose and true date remained unclear. It is possible, due to the size and depth of the feature, that it may have been used as a drainage gully which was backfilled naturally after disuse.
- 6.3.3 The remaining linear features in Trench 23 and 36 were determined to be ditches due to their form, size and depth. Alongside the ridge and furrow present across site, these features may also suggest evidence for an open field system.

6.4 Trenches 20 and 26

- 6.4.1 Trench 20 and 26 contained a gravelly deposit on a north-south alignment. It is possible, due to the width of the deposits, that they were part of some kind of trackway running through the farmland. However, no dating evidence was recovered from the features, and

an examination of old OS maps online (see National Library of Scotland online) does not depict such from the later 19th century onwards. It is possible that the deposits were indicative of further agricultural activity in the area and may have been used contemporaneously with the linear features found in the trenches described in the section prior.

6.5 Trenches 15 and 24

- 6.5.1 Trench 15 and 24 contained linear features that appeared archaeological. However, after investigation they were determined to be modern field boundaries. A shotgun cartridge was recovered from feature [2404] which further indicated that the feature was modern in date.

6.6 Conclusion

- 6.6.1 No evidence of the Prehistoric, Romano-British, or Medieval periods were represented by finds or features from the archaeological trial trenching results. Due to this, it is not possible to contribute to the research questions proposed in section 2.2, above.
- 6.6.2 The presence of ridge and furrow alongside a potential gravel trackway portray the changing use of land and space. However, these features were undatable and it was not possible to posit them to any period or era. The finds and features identified from this evaluation were typical of a rural agricultural area.

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9 ARCHIVE

- 9.1.1 A paper and digital archive will be prepared by ARS Ltd, consisting of all primary written documents, plans, sections, photographs and electronic data, which will be deposited with the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery. A reference number has been requested (TBC).
- 9.1.2 The archive will be prepared in line with Historic England guidelines (Cole and Backhouse 2015). The archive will follow the recommendations provided by ClfA's (2020) '*Standard and Guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives*', and the Society of Museum Archaeologists' (1993) '*Selection, Retention and*

Dispersal of Archaeological Collections. Guidelines for use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland'.

- 9.1.3 A set of annotated, illustrative pictures of the site, excavation and features is contained within the digital archive.
- 9.1.4 An OASIS online record <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/> has been initiated and completed for this work and all parts of the OASIS online form completed for submission to the HER. This will include an uploaded pdf version of the entire report. The site has produced a paper and digital archive which will be deposited, along with this report, in digital form with Archaeological Data Service (ADS). In addition, a copy of this report will be deposited with Historic Environment Record (HER).

10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 10.1.1 ARS Ltd would like to thank Abrams Archaeology Ltd for commissioning this project.

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