

Isleham Drainage Resolution



Excavation Report



December 2014

Client: Anglian Water

OA East Report No: 1672

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NGR: 563402, 272314

Isleham Drainage Resolution

Archaeological Excavation

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Summary

During September 2014 Oxford Archaeology East undertook an excavation on two areas of land between Fordham Road and Fordham Moor, Isleham, Cambridgeshire (NGR: 563402, 272314) on behalf of Anglian Water and in advance of pipeline construction. Two fields were investigated, from the east: Field 1 and Field 2.

The earliest activity uncovered probably dates to the Middle Bronze Age in the form of ditches and a natural hollow which contained a concentration of burnt flint. Located approximately 140m north west of the western end of the trench in Field 1 was the Isleham Bronze Age Founders Hoard which consisted of 6500 pieces of bronze, found alongside Bronze Age ditches and a possible Bronze Age long house.

A single ditch was recorded within Field 2 tentatively dated to the Bronze Age.

Very little Iron Age activity has been recorded in Isleham thus far. During the current excavations, Iron Age pottery formed the bulk of the small ceramic assemblage, recovered mostly from tree throws towards the eastern end of the site in Field 1. No cut features have been identified as Iron Age in date, though trackway ditches towards the western end of Field 1 could feasibly date to the Late Iron Age or Early Roman period (though is more likely to be Medieval).

Medieval activity dating to the 12th-14th century was observed largely in the form of ditches. This activity suggested areas of farmland including a large trackway which runs north-west from Isleham road across the area of excavation. Post-medieval activity was also observed in the form of enclosure ditches running east-west which were later cut by the Mildenhall-Cambridge railway line which was erected in 1883.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological excavation was conducted on land between Fordham Road and Fordham Moor just south of Isleham (Fig.1).
- 1.1.2 This archaeological work was undertaken in accordance with a Specification prepared by OA East.
- 1.1.3 The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in *National Planning Policy Framework* (Department for Communities and Local Government March 2012). The results will enable decisions to be made by CCC, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.
- 1.1.4 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies at approximately 7m OD in the south-west, dropping to c.3m OD at the crooked ditch, before rising again to 7m OD at the eastern end. The site lies on a bedrock of West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation and the Zig Zag Chalk Formation which is separated by a corridor of Totternhoe Stone Member (BGS 2014). The only superficial deposit recorded is peat and alluvium, in the area of the crooked ditch, between the eastern and central pipeline strips.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

Prehistoric

- 1.3.1 One of the largest Late Bronze Age hoards in Britain was found in Isleham (TL 63197253). The hoard was found to be dug into a filled-in Bronze Age boundary ditch, next to a rectangular building and adjacent to the edge of low-lying wetland bordering a palaeochannel which revealed environmental evidence from the Mesolithic to the Bronze Age and a number of lithics (Malim 2010). The hoard consisted of 6500 pieces and many of the items were identified as tools, vessels, ornaments and harness fittings (Britton 1960).
- 1.3.2 The Isleham to Ely pipeline uncovered a wide range of prehistoric archaeology. Site 4 yielded few prehistoric features however redeposited prehistoric lithics were found in later features. Site 5 had a heavily truncated Bronze Age settlement area along with later features again containing high densities of Late Neolithic and Bronze Age flint (Gdaniec *et al* 2007). A Mesolithic to Bronze Age palaeochannel system of the River Snail was located at the northern end of Fordham Moor on Site 6 which had been previously recorded in part of the Fenland Survey (Hall 1996). High lithic densities were contained in the topsoil and Early Neolithic to Bronze Age lithics, pottery sherds, animal and human remains were excavated in the waterlogged palaeochannel deposits (Gdaniec *et al* 2007).
- 1.3.3 Very little evidence for Iron Age activity has been found in the area. Evidence for Iron Age occupation, in the form of storage pits, were however recovered at Chalk Farm (Gdaniec *et al* 2007). Further evidence for Iron Age occupation has been recorded at

the recreation ground in Isleham in the form of boundary ditches and pits alongside a possible structure, which have yielded some Iron Age pottery.

Roman and Saxon

- 1.3.4 Occupation in the Roman period is evident by the location of a villa to the north of Temple Road (HER 11661). This villa may have been associated with a driveway uncovered on Hall Barn Road to the south (HER 11894; Gdaniec *et al* 1997). Find spots and several individual features indicate that there was background activity in the Isleham area during the Roman period. For example some items from the west of the village include a brooch (MCB16203), a saddle quern (HER10864), several coins (HER07559) and a scatter of pottery (HER10866).
- 1.3.5 Evidence of Saxon occupation of Isleham is limited to a few individual finds consisting of two brooches (HER11691, 11708) and a coin (HER07612). However two features identified on the Fordham Road site (MCB16866) have been interpreted as possible sunken floor buildings that may relate to Saxon occupation.

Medieval

- 1.3.6 Within the village centre lies the Benedictine priory. The priory was probably founded soon after the land was granted to the Breton abbey of St-Jacut-de-lar-Mer in the 1110s. In the 1220s the monks were moved to the sister cell in Linton and the priory became a manor. The only standing priory building is the chapel of St Margaret of Antioch (HER07529) to the north of which lie the buried foundations of the conventual buildings. Recent archaeological works have uncovered possible contemporary features to the north-west of the priory (Webster 2011), whilst excavation to the west uncovered a large boundary ditch extending beyond the scheduled limits of the site (Knight 1997). Property boundaries associated with the medieval settlement have also been uncovered on West Street (Macaulay 2000).
- 1.3.7 At Isleham recreation ground a number of medieval features suggesting low level agricultural land use were identified dating from the 11th to 14th centuries, these included timber framed buildings and boundary ditches which contained medieval pottery (Rees 2014).
- 1.3.8 The remains of a moat survive to the south of the Roman villa, (HER05704a) pottery in this area suggests a 14th century date. Excavations to the west of the village at Hall Farm uncovered three rectangular pits on a north-west to south-east alignment which appeared to replicate the general alignment of medieval features in this area (HER11895 Gdaniec *et al* 2007). A post-built structure and a sunken floor building, dated to the 11th-12th century, were located to the south of Fordham Road (MCB16866; Newton 2006). This site also contained high intensity clunch quarrying and processing tanks indicating that it was a major source of building material in the early medieval period (Newton 2010).
- 1.3.9 Medieval features were also noted during excavations surrounding the Isleham hoard. These included mainly ditches including one which measured 4m wide and is believed to have been a tank or reservoir during the medieval period (Malim 2010).

Post-medieval

- 1.3.10 A windmill (HER07611) dating to this period was located in the village centre. A series of 19th century lime kilns on the east side of High Street (HER07489) may have been associated with a quarry. These kilns and clunch quarrying for construction purposes appear to have been common in the area and further examples have been uncovered

to the south at Fordham Road (CB15282; Kenney 2004) and to the east on Beck Road (MCB18442; Ennis 2009).

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The author would like to thank the client Anglian Water for funding the work along with Conroys who assisted on site. Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire Heritage and Environment Team initiated the work in conjunction with Jo Everitt of Anglian Water. Kasia Gdaniec of CHET monitored the work and the project was managed by Richard Mortimer.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The objective of this excavation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The Brief required that topsoil be stripped along an 8m wide corridor over two main areas of the pipeline between 180m to 1020m (Field 1) and 1120m to 1540m (Field 2), totalling in 1260m (Fig 2). A 2m wide strip was then carried out within the centre of this corridor in order to gauge to what extent archaeology remained *in situ* beneath the overlying topsoil or subsoil. If a vast amount of archaeology was present then expansion of the area would be undertaken. Drilling would be carried out in those areas where the pipe route would need to cross roads or water.
- 2.2.2 Topsoil was stripped between 1020m and 1070m which was left untouched due to this area being drilled.
- 2.2.3 Machine excavation was carried out by a tracked 360 type excavator using a 2m wide flat bladed ditching bucket under constant supervision of a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist.
- 2.2.4 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.
- 2.2.5 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
- 2.2.6 Environmental sampling was undertaken on sizeable and undatable features which had been least affected by ploughing.
- 2.2.7 Site conditions were generally good. When rain did occur walking unnecessarily in the trench was avoided.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 Archaeological remains were uncovered dating from potentially the Middle Bronze Age through to the Post-medieval period, with most material evidence coming from the Iron Age.
- 3.1.2 It was expected to find some features dating to the Bronze Age and medieval period as previous excavations within Isleham and the surrounding areas have given evidence for settlements dating to these periods. Most of the activity observed was located at the south west end of Field 1 with only the Iron Age activity being observed at the north east end of this field. Activity observed in Field 2 was very minimal with only one feature being present.
- 3.1.3 In an area stripped close to the crooked ditch, which was later agreed as being an area for drilling, a large spread of dark peaty material was observed but not excavated. It would be suitable to suggest that this spread is part of the fen edge deposits which have been seen in the field to the north (Malim 2010).

3.2 Period 1: Prehistoric

Phase 1.1: Bronze Age (1500BC-700BC)

Ditches

- 3.2.1 A series of largely undatable ditches have been tentatively assigned to the Middle Bronze Age period by their alignments (north to south and west to east), their fills, and their relationships with other features and to ditches recorded to the north during the hoard excavation. All these ditches lay at the western end of Field 1.
- 3.2.2 Ditch **16**, aligned north to south, measured 1.75m wide and 0.6m deep. The fill of this ditch (17) contained only animal bone and was light yellow brown in colour with chalk inclusions.
- 3.2.3 Two narrow ditches (**29** and **31**), 3m apart, ran parallel to ditch **16** c.30m to the west. Both were the same width at 1.3m but with depths of 0.23m (**29**) and 0.11m (**31**). No finds were recovered from either of the ditches fills (30 and 32) which were both light brown grey in colour with occasion chalk inclusions.
- 3.2.4 Ditch **57** located 250m south-west runs on the same north-south alignment, measuring 2.77m wide and 0.95m deep (Fig 3, S.25). Ditch **57** contained three fills with the basal fill (60) being 0.31m thick, the middle fill (59) is 0.30m thick and the upper fill (**58**) is 0.31m thick. These fills were light to mid brown in colour with chalk inclusions. Struck flint was recovered from all three fills which have been dated largely to the Neolithic. Environmental sampling took place on the fill of ditch **57** and contained evidence for dry-land and wet-land snails.
- 3.2.5 Ditch terminus **25** located at approximately 875m is seen running roughly east-west and has been heavily truncated by ploughing with a recorded depth of only 0.1m. This ditch had a dark grey brown fill which contained no finds and runs perpendicular to ditch **57**.
- 3.2.6 Ditch **51** at the east end of Field 2, runs north-west/south-east and is the only feature observed in this field. It measures 0.6m wide and 0.18m deep and its fill is very different

to the features seen in Field 1 with a large amount of flint inclusions in comparison to the chalk inclusions seen in Field 1.

Hollow

- 3.2.7 Hollow **35** (Plate 1) lies just south-west of the trackway ditch **23**. The maximum depth recorded was 0.30m and is approximately 15m wide. Burnt flint and one flake fragment along with animal bone were recovered from this hollow but has the potential to be prehistoric in date. This hollow is certainly characteristically different to others recorded north-east (**42**).

Phase 1.2: Iron Age (700BC-100BC)

Tree throws

- 3.2.8 Located at the north-east end of the stripped area approximately between 200m and 400m were a number of tree throws.
- 3.2.9 Tree throw **4** was located beneath a substantial medieval headland and had not been affected by ploughing. This tree throw measures 0.72m at its widest point and 0.3m in depth. The largest collection of pottery came from the fill of this feature (**5**), which was mid grey brown in colour with chalk inclusions. A total of 26 sherds of pottery dating to the Early Iron Age were recovered.
- 3.2.10 A tree throw (**12**) measuring 0.7m wide and 0.26m deep was located approximately 200m south-west of tree throw **4** and its fill (**13**) is mid grey brown in colour with small chalk inclusions. An assemblage of 20 sherds of pottery were recovered dating to the Iron Age. Both of these tree throws are partially covered by the baulk so the full extent could not be gauged.
- 3.2.11 Two smaller tree throws, **6** measuring 0.6m wide and 0.22m in depth and **8** 0.44m wide and 0.11m in depth were located at approximately 300m. Only one of these tree throws (**6**) contained any datable finds with its fill (**7**) containing one sherd of pottery dating to the Middle Iron Age.

3.3 Period 2: Medieval and Post-medieval

Phase 2.1: medieval (AD 1100-AD 1500)

Ditches

- 3.3.1 Two ditches (**23** and **33**) mark the extent of a medieval trackway (Fig 3, S.23 and 33) running north-west/south-east at approximately 850m. This trackway can be seen clearly in cropmarks running from Isleham Road across the fields in a north-west direction and respects the known medieval headlands located just to the east. These ditches are of a slightly different size and shape compared with western ditch **23** measuring 1.5m wide and 0.4m deep with near vertical sides and eastern ditch **33**, which measured 1m wide and 0.38m deep with more of a sloped side. Fill of ditch **33** (**34**) is mid grey brown in colour with occasional chalk inclusions and contained two small sherds of pottery dating to the latest Iron Age.
- 3.3.2 Ditch **14** located at approximately 725m has a north-west/south-east alignment measures 1.9m wide and 0.28m deep and its fill (**15**), is mid grey brown in colour and contained occasional chalk inclusions. A single sherd of very abraded pottery was recovered dating to the Late Iron Age. This ditch has the potential to be medieval in

date as it runs along the same alignment as the medieval trackway ditches (**23** and **33**) and runs just to the south west of a known medieval headland.

- 3.3.3 A boundary ditch (**47**) located at the south-west end of the trench which runs north-south. It measures 0.7m wide and 0.3m deep. The fill (48) contained no finds.

Hollows

- 3.3.4 One of the hollows (**42**) (Plate 2) located at 500m contained two fills (43 and 44) which were mid grey brown and light grey brown in colour with infrequent stone inclusions. The upper fill (43) measured 0.31 deep and contained one sherd of pottery dating to the Early Iron Age. The underlying fill (44) was not fully excavated but augured and has a depth of 0.81m. This fill contained two sherds of pottery dating to the Early Iron Age, three sherds of pottery dating to the Late Iron Age and eleven sherds dating to the later Iron Age. This hollow was most likely used through various phases.
- 3.3.5 Hollow **18** was noted at approximately 750m. This hollow, like **42** had two fills (19 and 20). The basal fill (20) is 0.20m deep and contained large amounts of animal bone along with 1 sherd of pottery dated to the Early Iron Age. The upper fill (19) measured 0.40m deep and contained no finds.

Phase 2.2: Post-medieval (AD 1500-AD 1800)

Enclosure ditches

- 3.3.6 Two ditches (**38** and **61**) on the same east-west alignment can be seen at approximately 600m and 800m.
- 3.3.7 Ditch **61** has a width of 0.6m and a varying depth of 0.15m to 0.33m. The fill (62) contained 2 sherds of pottery dating to the Late Iron Age and is mid grey brown in colour with infrequent stone inclusions.
- 3.3.8 Ditch **38** is 0.9m wide and 0.18m deep and contains fill 39 which is mid grey brown in colour with occasional stone and chalk inclusions. No finds were recovered.

Finds Summary

- 3.3.9 Flint found on site came from a number of periods. The earliest pieces are the product of a blade based reduction system dating to the Mesolithic or the Early Neolithic. These pieces came from ditch **57** which is thought to be Middle Bronze Age in date. The majority of the pieces have been dated to the Neolithic with characteristic pieces such as as part of a flaked axe or chisel and a discoidal knife. A few pieces of flint dating to the Middle Bronze Age and Iron Age were also recovered such as a flake struck from a flint quern (Appendix B.1). The flint is either contemporary in date or earlier than the earliest features on site. The large amount of burnt flint recovered is not uncommon with similar being seen during the Fenland Survey.
- 3.3.10 Prehistoric pottery made up the majority of the pottery sherds found, most of which dated to the Iron Age. There were 70 sherds in total. Sherds from an Early Iron Age tripartite jar were recovered from tree throw **4**. Similar fragments and distribution in tree throws has been noted locally at Fordham the Fordham Bypass site (Mortimer forthcoming). Late Iron Age sherds were recovered from two ditches (**14** and **61**) which are potentially medieval in date. A few sherds of Roman pottery were also recovered however no pottery was found dating to the Medieval period or later. (Appendix B.2). The majority of the pottery is not contemporary with many of the features on site however it does give an insight into potential nearby Iron Age occupation.

Environmental Summary

- 3.3.11 A single bulk sample was taken from fill 60 of Bronze Age ditch **57**. The sample is devoid of plant remains other than modern rootlets and sparse charcoal fragments. Both dry-land and wet-land snails are present indicating that the ditch had contained water, possibly seasonally.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Discussion

- 4.1.1 There are two main periods of activity at this site comprising of four phases. There are two phases from the prehistoric period with the possible Bronze Age activity being concentrated at the south-west end of the stripped area. The second phase is Iron Age activity seen in the form of material evidence within natural features at the north-east end of the site. The second period is noted as medieval and later with a large amount of activity being dated to this period in the form of agricultural land and a trackway.
- 4.1.2 The majority of finds collected were either animal bone or burnt flint alongside pottery which largely dated to the Iron Age along with a few sherds of Roman pottery.

Period 1: Prehistoric

- 4.1.3 Four ditches (**16**, **29**, **31**, **57**) have been noted as potentially being Bronze Age in date. One of these ditches (**57**) is located at the south-west end of the site. This ditch is the most likely to be of Bronze Age date due to its close proximity to the known Isleham Bronze Age hoard in the field to the north. During excavations by Tim Malim a ditch was found running north-south which has been dated to the Bronze Age from a fragment of pottery (Malim 2010). It is highly feasible that this ditch they recorded could be the same as ditch **57** or if not it is certainly on the same alignment and most likely of a contemporary date. It is also likely that this ditch represents the course of the old river and potentially has a bank along its western side. The other ditches have only been associated with the Bronze Age as they are along the same alignment. None of these features contained any of the pottery sherds which have been dated to the Iron Age perhaps suggesting that these ditches were fully out of use by the Iron Age. Struck flint found within ditch **57** has been dated to the Neolithic and also a number of the flakes recovered could be suggested as Middle Bronze Age in date. It seems therefore feasible to suggest that these ditches are Bronze Age, more specifically Middle Bronze Age due to the known activity located within close proximity.
- 4.1.4 The hollow (**35**) located at the south-west end of site was noticeably different to the other three, with a much darker fill containing a large concentration of burnt flint, along with no datable finds. This hollow was quite shallow compared to the others with a depth of only 0.3m and was within close proximity to the crooked ditch. It would be sensible to suggest that this has the potential to be Bronze Age in date as a similar burnt flint layer was found during excavations of the Bronze Age hoard (Malim *et al* 2010). The burnt flint layer witnessed approximately 140m north has the potential to be the same flint layer seen during this excavation. Lithics from within the layer excavated by Malim were dated to the Bronze Age. Only eight pieces of burnt flint and one flake fragment were recovered from the fill (**36**) of the hollow, most of which were dated to either the Neolithic or the Bronze Age.
- 4.1.5 Field 2 was surprisingly lacking in archaeology in comparison with the surrounding area. The single ditch (**51**) located here contained no datable evidence. There are however crop marks in the field to the north which may be related to archaeological features found during the excavations of the hoard. It may be possible that this ditch has potential to be Bronze Age in date like others that have been excavated and empty of datable evidence. There is potential for the circular cropmarks from the field to the north of the trench to be contemporary with this ditch due to the likelihood it runs within close proximity to it.

- 4.1.6 Tree throws (**4**, **6**, **8**, **12**) are the only features that can be dated to the Iron Age. They are all located towards the north-east end of the excavation, away from the main area of activity. These naturally occurring features contained a considerable amount of datable pottery (47 sherds) in comparison to the archaeological features at the south-west end of site. This pottery puts these tree throws firmly in the Iron Age phase of the site, and in particular the Early Iron Age with all but one of the sherds dating to this period. These tree throws are the only features to be dated to this period with the remaining Iron Age pottery sherds being residual. These important Iron Age finds have broadened the area known to be occupied around Isleham during the Iron Age period.

Period 2: medieval and Post-medieval

- 4.1.7 There is a vast amount of medieval activity apparent in this area. Most importantly is the trackway (**23** and **33**) which can be seen running from the current Isleham road through the excavation in a north-west/south-east direction. This trackway is quite substantial and appears to run between the known medieval headlands which run north-south through not only the field the site is located in, but the one to the north, and an area of pasture to the west of the trackway. The only datable evidence from the trackway ditches were two sherds of pottery which were dated to the later Iron Age but this is not surprising due to there being known Iron Age activity to the north-east therefore these finds are most likely residual.
- 4.1.8 The medieval headlands can be seen quite clearly not only as crop marks but as rises in the landscape and have a varying depth. No datable evidence was collected from these headlands as they were already known to be medieval. Ditch **14** appears to run along the western edge of one of the headlands and somewhat marks the western extent of the headlands, and could therefore be suggested as a boundary ditch. This ditch contained a single sherd of very abraded pottery dating to the Late Iron Age suggesting its a residual find.
- 4.1.9 Ditch **47** represents the current parish boundary. The location of the parish boundary is in itself interesting as it does not run up to the crooked ditch like one might expect. Instead it stops roughly 150m east of the river and is on roughly the same course as ditch **57** and the course of the old river.
- 4.1.10 Two of the ditches (**38** and **61**) are enclosure ditches dating to somewhere between 1847 and 1883. These enclosures can be seen on maps in the field to the north running roughly east-west, however they were later truncated by the Cambridge-Mildenhall railway line that was built in 1883 (British-history 2002). Ditch **61** contained two sherds of pottery dating to the Late Iron Age however these are not contemporary with the features they are from as they cut through the medieval headlands.

Multi phase hollows

- 4.1.11 Two of the hollows (**18** and **42**) contained two fills. Although one of the hollows (**18**) contained one sherd of pottery dating to the Early Iron Age. It could be suggested that its medieval in date with the pottery being residual. The other hollow (**42**) contained one sherd of pottery dating to the Early Iron Age from its upper fill (**43**) and within the basal fill (**44**) pottery dating to the Early and Late Iron Age and later Iron Age. It is likely that both of these hollows were being used for a prolonged amount of time and may have even held water, although there is only minimal evidence for human use.

4.2 Conclusion

- 4.2.1 Further knowledge of the extent of Bronze Age activity in Isleham has been gained from this excavation with ditches potentially dating to the Middle Bronze Age being observed continuing to the south of those recorded in the Isleham Hoard excavation.
- 4.2.2 It is also clear that the nearby area was occupied from as early as the Mesolithic and certainly the Neolithic period with many of the struck flints that were recovered dating to these periods although no *in situ* flint scatters were observed.
- 4.2.3 The pottery collected from the excavation was largely dated to the Early and Late Iron Age. There has been little known Iron Age activity in Isleham other than that recorded at Chalk Farm (Gdaniec et al 1997) and most recently at Isleham recreation ground (Rees 2014). It is now known that this Iron Age activity extends south along Isleham Road although only natural features were observed so it is likely that this area was not used for settlement during this period.
- 4.2.4 A substantial amount of medieval activity, most likely 12th-14th century in date, has been observed during this excavation in the form of headlands and a trackway which runs between areas of pasture and ploughing. Both of these features are substantial in size with the headland extending further north-west but always respecting the parish boundary and the trackway seen coming from the south east. It therefore suggests that agricultural land use is present at this time which could well be related to the priory.
- 4.2.5 Enclosure ditches that were observed within the trench running east-west were already known within the immediate area from maps suggesting that this area was used as farmland similar to how it is in the present day.

4.3 Significance

- 4.3.1 The excavation at Isleham has been important in extending our knowledge of the early prehistoric within this area with both archaeological features and finds such as struck flint which are all similar to that found on previous excavations of the Fenland survey and the Isleham Hoard.

APPENDIX A. CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Feature Type</i>
1		layer		0.25	Topsoil
2		layer		0.5	Subsoil
3	0	natural			Natural
4	0	cut	0.72	0.3	Tree throw
5	0	fill	0.72	0.3	Tree throw
6	0	cut	0.6	0.22	Tree throw
7	6	fill	0.6	0.22	Tree throw
8	0	cut	0.44	0.11	Tree throw
9	0	fill	0.44	0.11	Tree throw
10	10	cut	0.36	0.16	Posthole
11	10	fill	0.36	0.16	Posthole
12	12	cut	0.7	0.26	Tree throw
13	12	fill	0.7	0.26	Tree throw
14	14	cut	1.9	0.28	Ditch
15	14	fill	1.9	0.28	Ditch
16	16	cut	1.75	0.6	Ditch
17	16	fill	1.75	0.6	Ditch
18	18	cut	2.8	0.6	Pond/Hollow
19	18	fill	2.8		Pond/Hollow
20	18	fill			Pond/Hollow
21	21	cut	1.1	0.2	Ditch
22	21	fill	1.1	0.2	Ditch
23	23	cut	1.5	0.4	Ditch
24	23	fill	1.5	0.4	Ditch
25	25	cut	1.1	0.1	Ditch terminus
26	25	fill	0.85	0.05	Ditch terminus
27	27	cut	0.85	0.05	Ditch
28	27	fill	0.85	0.05	Ditch
29	29	cut	1.3	0.23	Ditch
30	29	fill	1.3	0.23	Ditch
31	31	cut	1.3	0.11	Ditch
32	31	fill	1.3	0.11	Ditch
33	33	cut	1	0.38	Ditch
34	33	fill	1	0.38	Ditch
35	35	cut	1.2	0.3	Test pit in Palaeochannel
36	35	fill		0.2	Palaeochannel
37	35	fill		0.1	Palaeochannel
38	38	cut	0.9	0.18	Ditch
39	38	fill	0.9	0.18	Ditch
40	40	cut	1.1	0.18	Ditch
41	40	fill	1.1	0.18	Ditch
42	42	cut	1.8	2.23	Pond/Hollow
43	42	fill	1.85	0.31	Pond/Hollow

<i>Context</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Feature Type</i>
44	42	fill	1.18	0.26	Pond/Hollow
45	45	cut			Test pit in Palaeochannel
46	45	fill			Palaeochannel
47	47	cut	0.7	0.3	Ditch
48	47	fill	0.7	0.3	Ditch
49	49	cut			Ditch
50	49	fill			Ditch
51	51	cut	0.6	0.18	Ditch
52	51	fill	0.6	0.18	Ditch
53	53	cut			Ditch
54	53	fill			Ditch
55	55	cut			Ditch
56	55	fill			Ditch
57	57	cut		0.95	Ditch
58	57	fill		0.31	Ditch
59	57	fill		0.3	Ditch
60	57	fill		0.31	Ditch
61	61	cut	0.67	0.33	Ditch
62	61	fill	0.67	0.33	Ditch

APPENDIX B. FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Struck flint

By Barry Bishop October 2014

Introduction

B.1.1 The archaeological evaluation at the above site resulted in the recovery of quantities of struck flint and unworked burnt flint. This report provides a brief description of the main characteristics of these assemblages, discusses their archaeological significance and recommends any further work required. This text should be read in conjunction with the catalogue which provides further details of each piece (Table 1). All metrical descriptions follow the methodology of Saville (1980).

Quantification

Context	Decortication flake	Flake	Chip	Blade-like flake	Flake fragment	Prismatic blade	Non-prismatic blade	Conchoidal chunk	Core	flakeEdge retouched	Discoidal knife	Core implement	Burnt Stone (no.)	Burnt Stone (wt:g)
1	1	2							2		1		30	398
34		4						1				1	5	48
36					1								8	52
41		1												
46	1	2			1		1						6	142
58	1	2	1	2	4	2			1	1			59	987
59				1	2								22	238
60		1			1								9	101
Total	3	12	1	3	9	2	1	1	3	1	1	1	139	1966

Table 1: Quantification by context of the lithic material

Burnt Flint

B.1.2 Just under 2kg of unworked burnt flint fragments were recovered from seven separate contexts representing the fills of two ditches, a palaeochannel and the topsoil. The largest quantity came from ditch **57** which produced just over 1.3kg with most of the remainder coming from the topsoil. Virtually all of the pieces had been intensively burnt to the extent that they had changed to a grey-white colour and become heavily fire-crazed and fragmented. Given the size of the excavation relatively large quantities were present, which combined with the intensity that the flint had been burnt would indicate that it had been deliberately produced.

Struck Flint

B.1.3 A total of 38 struck flints were recovered from eight separate contexts that represent the fills of three ditches, a palaeochannel and topsoil deposits. Most pieces are in either a good or only slightly chipped condition although six have been burnt. There is no evidence for *in situ* knapping or any deliberate or structured acts of deposition and

whilst most of the pieces are likely to have been redeposited they were probably recovered from close to where originally discarded. It is possible, however, that the struck pieces that are burnt may have been gathered elsewhere along with the other unworked burnt flint and caught up in the same processes that led to their burning. The flint is fine-grained and although recortication masks the colour of most pieces, recent chips on some indicate it to be translucent grey or black. Cortex is present on most pieces and is rough and only slightly weathered. Thermal surfaces are also present and thermal flaking in several pieces indicates that the flint was obtained from derived or shallow surface deposits, most likely superficial deposits associated with flint seams in the Holywell Nodular Chalk that outcrop to the east and south of the site.

- B.1.4 The typological and technological traits of the assemblage indicate it to have been produced over a long period. A few pieces are the product of a blade-based reduction system that can be dated to the Mesolithic or Early Neolithic. This includes the prismatic blades and blade-like flakes, and one of the cores, which although extensively worked down, may have produced blades earlier in its productive life. The majority of the assemblage comprises of competently made flakes that are not easy to precisely classify but are most typical of Neolithic assemblages. Of note are two fragments from bifacially worked implements, both of which have been burnt. One of these, from ditch **33** is very fragmented but is most probably from a Neolithic flaked axe or chisel.
- B.1.5 The other is more complete and almost certainly the greater part of a discoidal knife that has been polished around its edges and partially reflaked (Clark 1929). Polished discoidal knives are diagnostic implements of the Later Neolithic. They are relatively rare implements but in East Anglia are notably concentrated in the Breckland and the chalk bordering the southeast Fenland; a further example has been found less than 200m to the north of the present excavations, for example (Malim *et al.* 2010, 78). Other possible Later Neolithic pieces include the bifacially worked core along with a flake struck from a similar core. The only other retouched piece comprised an edge trimmed flake which is most probably of Neolithic or Early Bronze Age date.
- B.1.6 A smaller but certainly not insignificant part of the assemblages comprised a number of thicker and more crudely produced flakes, often with very obtuse striking platform / core face angles, and which are much more typical of Middle Bronze Age through to Iron Age industries. Of interest are one certain and another possible flake that have been struck from flint querns. These again are rare objects but they do have a marked concentration along the eastern and south-eastern Fenland margins. One of the cores, a small angular chunk with flakes removed from many directions, may also belong to this period of flintworking.

Discussion and Significance

- B.1.7 Both the assemblages of struck flint and unworked burnt flint can be considered as reasonably large given the size of the investigations. Concentrations of unworked burnt flint were frequently encountered in the vicinity of the site during the Fenland Survey and appear to represent a series of 'burnt mound' type features that run along the old course of the River Snail (Hall 1996, 86). The struck flint was made over a long period and clearly indicates fairly intensive activity in the area over a considerable time. Similar large and multiperiod assemblages were found in the vicinity during the Fenland survey and also during the recent excavations aimed at locating the findspot of the Isleham hoard (Hal 1996; Malim, *et al.* 2010, 113-117). Whilst it is likely that most of the struck pieces were residually deposited, there are a number of flakes including some struck

from flint querns that could be contemporary with the later prehistoric ditches identified during the excavations.

Recommendations

- B.1.8 The struck flint assemblage by itself is too small to warrant further technological, functional or metrical analyses and no further analytical work is recommended. Both the struck flint and the unworked burnt flint assemblages do, however, complement the findings from previous work in the vicinity and can contribute to further understanding of the nature and chronology of the prehistoric occupation along this part of the Snail valley. It is therefore recommended that reference should be made to it in the local Historic Environment Record and a short description of the assemblage included in any published account of the fieldwork.

B.2 Prehistoric pottery

By Sarah Percival

Introduction

- B.2.1 A total of 70 sherds weighing 244g were collected from nine excavated contexts (Table 2). The majority of the sherds are of Earlier Iron Age date (800-350BC). Smaller quantities of Mid Iron Age (350-100BC) and Latest Iron Age (100/50BC-AD50) pottery was also recovered. The pottery is fragmentary and no complete vessels were recovered. The sherds are mostly small and poorly preserved and the average sherd weight is 3g.

Spot Date	Feature type	Feature	Context	Quantity	Weight (g)
Earlier Iron Age	Pond/hollow	18	20	1	4
		42	43	1	15
			44	2	4
	Tree throw	4	5	26	108
		12	13	20	64
Later Iron Age	Ditch	14	15	1	7
		61	62	2	2
	Pond/hollow	42	44	3	9
	Tree throw	6	7	1	7
Later Iron Age/ERB	Ditch	33	34	2	3
	Pond/hollow	42	44	11	21
Total				70	244

Table 2: Quantity and weight of prehistoric pottery by pottery spot date and context

Methodology

- B.2.2 The assemblage was analysed in accordance with the Guidelines for analysis and publication laid down by the Prehistoric Ceramic Research Group (PCRG 2010). The total assemblage was studied and a full catalogue was prepared. The sherds were examined using a binocular microscope (x10 magnification) and were divided into fabric groups defined on the basis of inclusion types. Fabric codes were prefixed by a letter code representing the main inclusion present (F representing flint, G grog and Q quartz). Vessel form was recorded; R representing rim sherds, B base sherds, D decorated sherds and U undecorated body sherds. The sherds were counted and weighed to the nearest whole gram. Decoration and abrasion were also noted. The pottery and archive are curated by OAE.

Early Iron Age (800-350BC)

- B.2.3 A total of 50 sherds weighing 195g are of Early Iron Age type. The assemblage includes a rim and upper body sherds from a tripartite jar with high everted neck, simple rounded rim and burnished band or channel on the neck. The surfaces of the vessel are also burnished. These jars (Brudenell 2012, form I4) have a wide distribution with examples being found locally at Tower Works, Fengate and Fordham Bypass (Evans 2009, 190, fig. 5.5, no. 2; Percival forthcoming).

- B.2.4 Fabrics are predominately sandy containing various assorted sizes of white, angular flint, up to 3mm long. A small number of sherds are made of shell rich clays (Appendix 2).
- B.2.5 Early Iron Age pottery was collected from four features (Table 1). Small quantities came from pond/hollow **18** and **42**, whilst most was recovered from tree throws **4** and **12**. The deposition of Early Iron Age pottery in tree throws was also noted at Fordham Bypass where radiocarbon dating suggested that the pottery had been deposited between 540 and 400BC at 68.2% certainty (GU-15339, R. Mortimer pers. comm.).

Later Iron Age (350-100/50BC)

- B.2.6 A small assemblage of seven sherds of probable Later Iron Age pottery weighing 25g was collected from four features comprising two ditches (**14** and **61**), pond/hollow **42** and tree throw **6**. All are undecorated body sherds in a range of sandy fabrics, one with sparse flint inclusions and a second containing moderate shell pieces (Appendix 2).

Latest Iron Age (100/50BC-AD50)

- B.2.7 Thirteen sherds weighing 24g are dated to the latest Iron Age. These sherds were collected from ditch **33** and pond/hollow **42**. All are small, abraded body sherds including eight sherds weighing 15g from a single vessel in sandy reduced fabric with a dark slipped surface and incised decoration and three sherds, 6g, in sandy oxidised fabric with combed decoration. The remaining sherds are made of a fine sandy fabrics some with numerous micaceous inclusions.

Discussion

- B.2.8 The assemblage suggests occupation at the site from the Early Iron Age associated with tree clearance and probably contemporary with similar activity taking place locally at Fordham. This was followed by low level activity into the late Iron Age to perhaps the Early Roman period.

B.3 Prehistoric pottery fabrics

Spot Date	Fabric	Fabric Description	Quantity	Weight (g)
Earlier Iron Age	Flcf	Common, fine white angular flint pieces	14	28
	Flcm	Common, medium white angular flint pieces	1	15
	Flmm	Moderate, medium white angular flint pieces	2	4
	QFIs	Sandy with sparse small flint	1	4
	Qqu	Sandy with sparse rounded quartz	1	10
	QSh	Sandy with sparse shell pieces	5	26
	QssFL	Sandy with small, sparse flint	26	108
Later Iron Age	QFIs	Sandy with sparse small flint	3	9
	Qqu	Sandy with sparse rounded quartz	3	9
	QSh	Sandy with sparse shell pieces	1	7
Later Iron Age/ERB	Qmica	Fine sandy fabric with common silver mica	2	3
	SOW	Sandy oxidised ware	3	6
	SRW	Sandy reduced ware with slipped surface	8	15
Total			70	244

B.4 Prehistoric pottery catalogue

Context	Cut	Feature Type	Spot Date	Fabric	Form	Vessel Type	Quantity	Weight (g)
5	4	Tree throw	Earlier Iron Age	QssFL	R	tripartite jar	1	31
					U		25	77
7	6	Tree throw	Later Iron Age	QSh	U		1	7
13	12	Tree throw	Earlier Iron Age	Flcf	U		14	28
				Qqu	B		1	10
				QSh	U		5	26
15	14	Ditch	Later Iron Age	QFIs	U		1	7
20	18	Pond/hollow	Earlier Iron Age	QFIs	U		1	4
34	33	Ditch	Later Iron Age/ERB	Qmica	U		2	3
43	42	Pond/hollow	Earlier Iron Age	Flcm	U		1	15
44	42	Pond/hollow	Earlier Iron Age	Flmm	U		2	4
			Later Iron Age	Qqu	U		3	9
			Later Iron Age/ERB	SOW	U		3	6
				SRW	U		8	15
62	61	Ditch	Later Iron Age	QFIs	U		2	2
Total							70	244

APPENDIX C. ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

C.1 Environmental samples

By Rachel Fosberry

Introduction

- C.1.1 A single bulk sample was taken from fill 60 of Bronze Age ditch 57 within the excavated areas for Isleham Drainage Resolution in order to assess the quality of preservation of plant remains and their potential to provide useful data as part of further archaeological investigations.

Methodology

- C.1.2 The three-litre of sample was processed by water flotation (using a modified Siraff three-tank system) for the recovery of charred plant remains, dating evidence and any other artefactual evidence that might be present. The floating component (flot) of the sample was collected in a 0.3mm nylon mesh and the residue was washed through 10mm, 5mm, 2mm and a 0.5mm sieve. Both flot and residue were allowed to air dry. A magnet was dragged through each residue fraction prior to sorting for artefacts. The dried flot were subsequently sorted using a binocular microscope at magnifications up to x 60.

Results

- C.1.3 The sample is devoid of plant remains other than modern rootlets and sparse charcoal fragments. Both dry-land and wet-land snails are present indicating that the ditch had contained water, possibly seasonally.
- C.1.4 No artefacts were recovered from the residue.

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Online Resources

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URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk>. 'Isleham', *A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely: Volume 10: Cheveley, Flendish, Staine and Staploe Hundreds (north-eastern Cambridgeshire)* (2002), pp. 420-427. (Accessed 25/09/14).

APPENDIX E. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-194292		
Project Name	Isleham Drainage Resolution		
Project Dates (fieldwork) Start	10-09-2014	Finish	19-09-2014
Previous Work (by OA East)	No	Future Work	No

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	ISLDRA14	Planning App. No.	N/A
HER No.	ECB4263	Related HER/OASIS No.	N/A

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt

Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Field Observation (periodic visits)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Part Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Record
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Excavation (100%)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Field Walking
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Recorded Observation	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Metal Detector Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pit Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Open-Area Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Watching Brief

Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
Ditches	Bronze Age -2.5k to -700	Ceramic	Iron Age -800 to 43
Ditches	Medieval 1066 to 1540	Flint	Neolithic -4k to -2k
Tree throws	Iron Age -800 to 43	Flint	Roman 43 to 410

Project Location

County	Cambridgeshire	Site Address (including postcode if possible)	
District	East Cambridgeshire	133 Fordham Road Isleham Ely CB7 5QX	
Parish	Isleham		
HER	Cambridgeshire		
Study Area	1260m	National Grid Reference	TL 6331 7238

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	N/A
Project Design Originator	Richard Mortimer
Project Manager	Richard Mortimer
Supervisor	Kathryn Nicholls

Project Archives

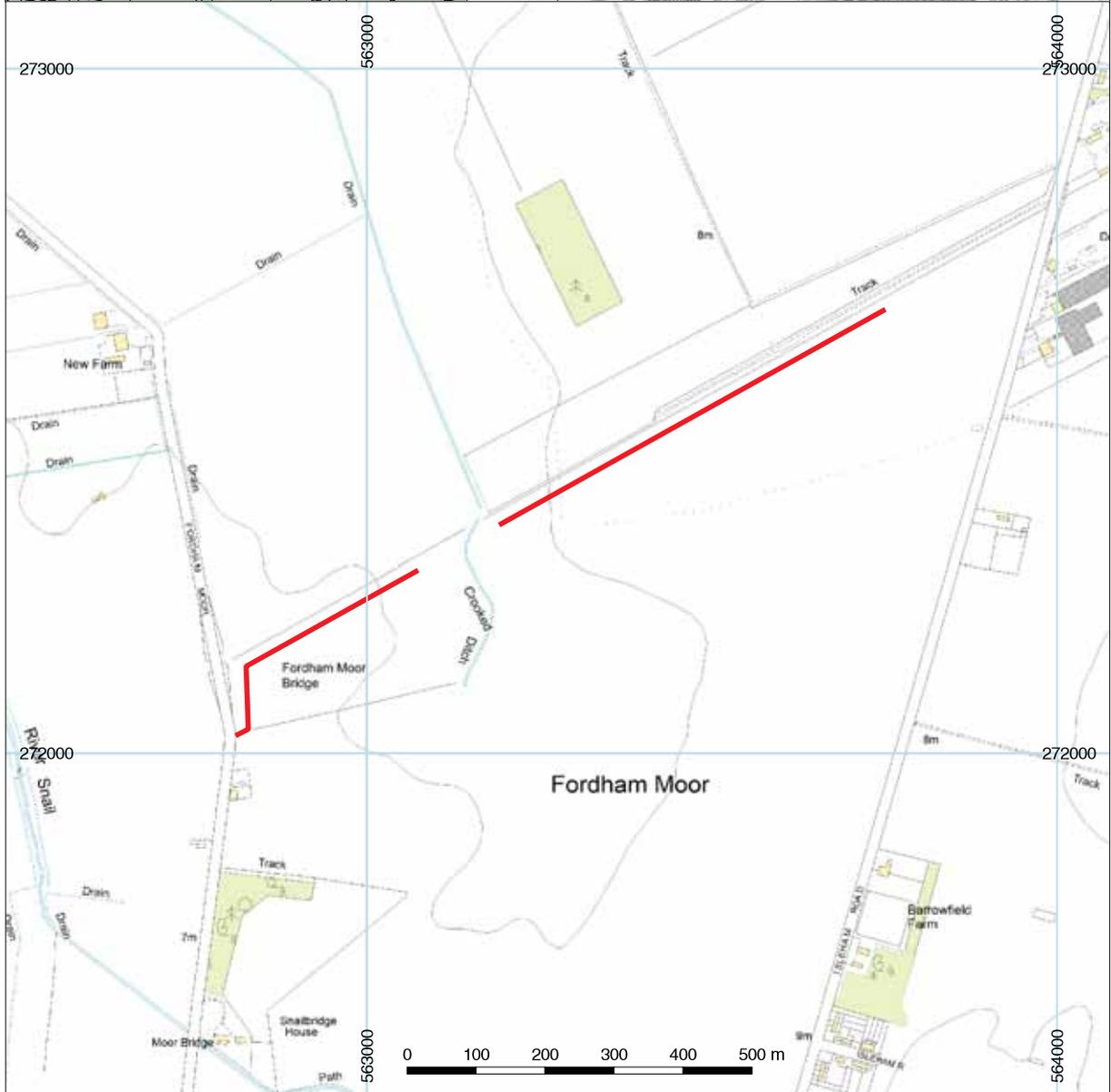
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CCC stores	OA East	CCC Stores
ISLDRA14	ISLDRA14	ISLDRA14

Archive Contents/Media

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Ceramics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Worked Stone/Lithic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Digital Media	Paper Media
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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey

Notes:



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Figure 1: Site location showing archaeological trenches (red)

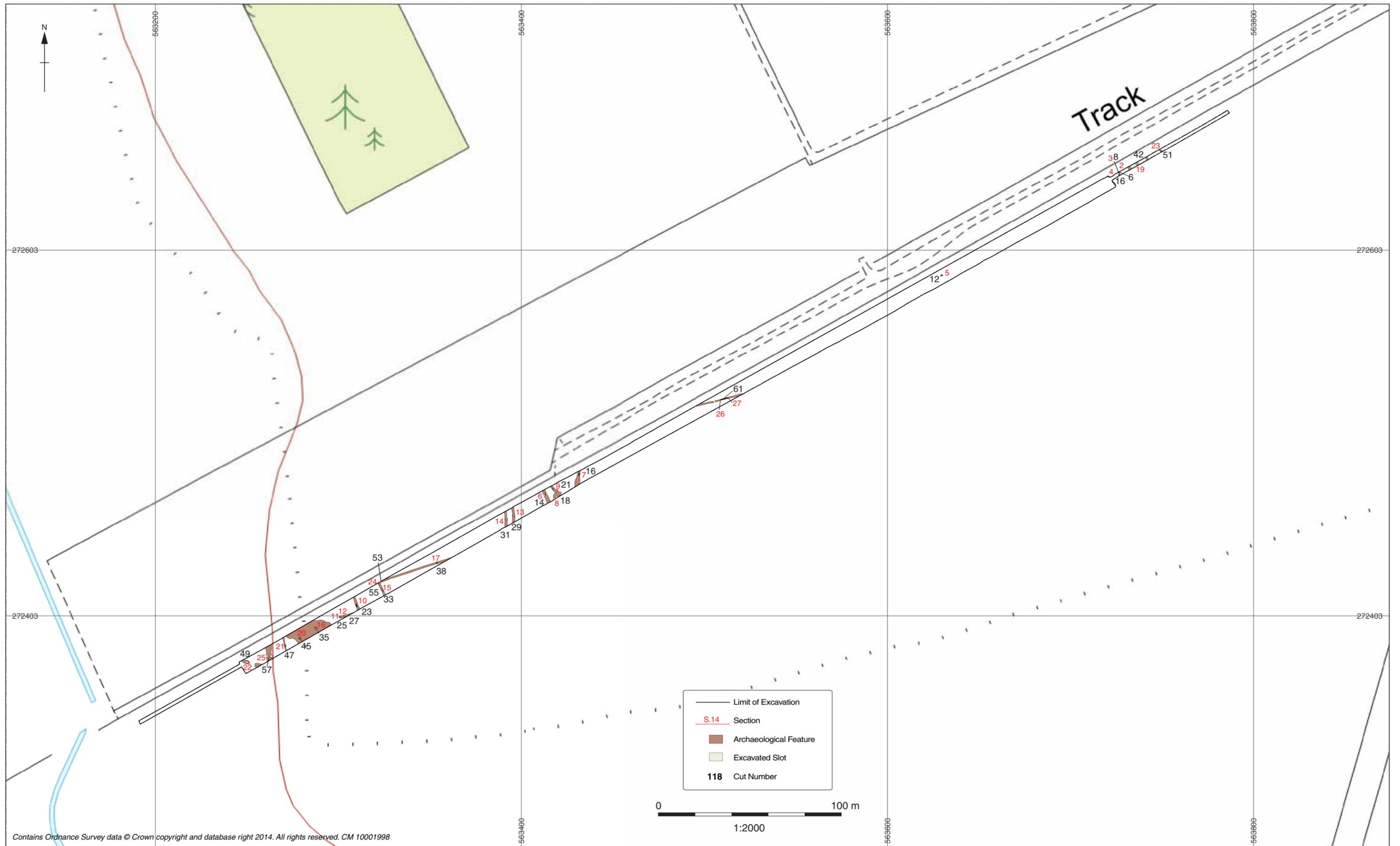


Figure 2: Trench plan

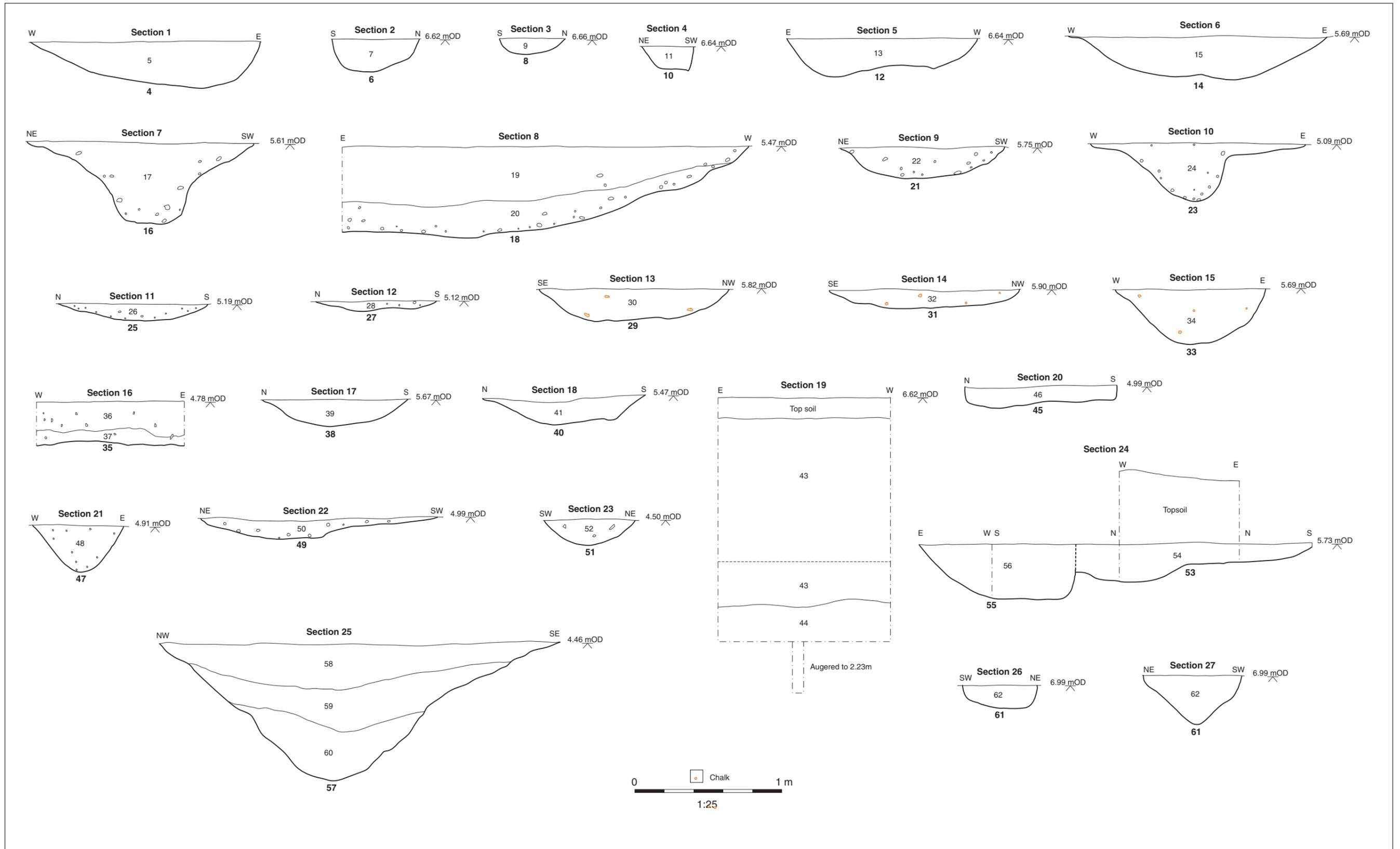


Figure 3: Sections



Plate 1: Photo of hollow 35



Plate 2: Photo of hollow 42



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