

Archaeological evaluation at Carisbrooke Road, Mitcheldean, Gloucestershire

Worcestershire Archaeology
for CSA Environmental
November 2025



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Archaeological evaluation report



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SITE INFORMATION

Site name:	Carisbrooke Road, Mitcheldean, Gloucestershire
Local planning authority:	Forest of Dean District Council
Planning reference:	P0672/25/OUT
Central NGR:	SO 6642 1932
Commissioning client:	CSA Environmental
WA project number:	P7015
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CONTENTS

SUMMARY	1
REPORT	2
1 INTRODUCTION	2
1.1 Background to the project	2
1.2 Site location, topography and geology	2
2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	2
2.1 Introduction	2
2.2 Prehistoric and Romano-British	2
2.3 Early medieval and medieval	3
2.4 Post-medieval and modern	3
2.5 Previous archaeological work on the site	3
3 PROJECT AIMS	3
4 PROJECT METHODOLOGY	4
5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS	4
5.1 Introduction	4
5.1.2 Topsoil and subsoil	5
5.2 Trench descriptions	5
5.2.1 Trench 1	5
5.2.2 Trench 2	5
5.2.3 Trench 3	5
5.2.4 Trench 5	5
5.2.5 Trench 8	5
5.2.6 Trench 11	5
5.2.7 Trench 15	6
5.2.8 Trench 17	6
5.2.9 Trench 18	6
5.2.10 Blank Trenches	6
6 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE, BY LAURA GRIFFIN	6
6.1 Introduction	6
6.2 Aims	6
6.3 Methodology	6
6.3.1 Recovery policy	6
6.3.2 Method of analysis	6
6.3.3 Discard policy	7
6.4 Results	7
6.4.1 Summary of artefacts by site period	7
6.5 Discussion	9
6.6 Significance	9
6.7 Recommendations	9
6.7.1 Further analysis	9
6.7.2 Discard/retention	9
7 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE, BY ELIZABETH PEARSON	9

7.1	Introduction	9
7.1.1	Site location and geology.....	9
7.2	Methodology	9
7.2.1	Sampling policy	9
7.2.2	Processing and analysis	9
7.2.3	Charcoal	10
7.2.4	Discard policy	10
7.3	Results	10
7.3.1	Charred plant macrofossils and charcoal	10
7.4	Significance	11
7.5	Recommendations	11
7.5.1	Further analysis.....	11
8	DISCUSSION	11
9	SIGNIFICANCE	12
10	CONCLUSIONS	12
11	PROJECT PERSONNEL	12
12	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	13
13	BIBLIOGRAPHY	13

FIGURES

PLATES

APPENDIX 1: TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF PROJECT ARCHIVE

Archaeological evaluation at Carisbrooke Road, Mitcheldean, Gloucestershire

By Peter Lovett

With contributions by Laura Griffin and Elizabeth Pearson

Illustrations by Abbie Horton

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Carisbrooke Road, Mitcheldean, Gloucestershire (NGR SO 6642 1932). The project was commissioned by CSA Environmental on behalf of Gladman Developments Ltd, in advance of a proposed residential development. An outline planning application has been submitted to Forest of Dean District Council.

The evaluation consisted of eighteen trenches and was undertaken on farmland on the northern edge of Mitcheldean. A series of shallow ditches corresponding to mapped historic field boundaries were identified, corroborating the results of a geophysical survey. Two other ditches that did not correspond to the geophysical survey were also identified, and these remain undated.

The most significant archaeological remains identified consisted of a large slag deposit, measuring at least 31m by 17m in plan, and c 0.40m thick. Three sherds of medieval pottery recovered from the deposit indicate it dates to the 13th-15th century. As well as the pottery, a furnace base and tap slag from a tapping pit were also recovered. The slag deposit is likely the waste (or cinders) from slag tapping bloomeries, the remains of which may be under the slag deposit. Such medieval industrial sites were often excavated in the post-medieval period following the introduction of the blast furnace, which enabled the re-smelting of the earlier cinders, as they still contained a large amount of iron. As such, medieval iron smelting sites are a rare archaeological resource and of regional significance.

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the project aims have been achieved. It is considered that the nature, density and distribution of archaeological features provide an accurate characterisation of the development site as a whole.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in October 2025 at Carisbrooke Road, Mitcheldean, Gloucestershire (NGR SO 66518 19150; Fig 1). This comprised eighteen evaluation trenches across one field. The project was commissioned by CSA Environmental (the Consultant) on behalf of Gladman Developments Ltd (The Client), in advance of a proposed residential development. An outline planning application has been submitted to Forest of Dean District Council for the construction of residential properties at the Site (P0672/25/OUT).

The archaeological advisor to the local planning authority considered that the proposed development has the potential to impact upon possible heritage assets. A desk-based assessment (CSA 2025) was conducted for the Site, and a geophysical survey (Magnitude Surveys, 2018) was carried out. However, the latter only appeared to confirm the presence of former mapped field boundaries.

No brief was prepared by the Curator. However, following discussions between the Consultant (Rosey Meara) and the Curator (Toby Catchpole), it was established that a 1% evaluation trenching sample of the Site would be required. A WSI was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2025), which aims to conform to the general nature of the briefs (the Brief) that have been previously issued. The evaluation also conforms to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in the *Standard for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2023a) and *Universal guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2023b).

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The Site occupies an area of c 9.72ha and is located around central grid reference SO 66518 18150, to the north of Mitcheldean. It consists of a single agricultural field, under arable use and is bounded by further agrarian fields to the north, the B4224 to the west and the Bradley Court Road to the east.

The Site is located on a south-facing slope which drops from c 160m aOD at the north of the Site to c 140m aOD at the south.

The underlying geology comprises sandstone of the Brownstones Formation - Sandstone and argillaceous rocks, interbedded. (BGS, 2025).

2 Archaeological and historical background

2.1 Introduction

A desk-based assessment (CSA 2025) was prepared to support the planning application, incorporating the results of a geophysical survey (Magnitude Surveys, 2018).

The DBA concluded that *“there is no evidence to suggest prehistoric or later settlement, or other significant activity, was focused within the Site. Antiquarian sources suggested that the road bounding the Site to the east was a Roman road, but later interpretations consider this unlikely. Trial trench evaluation immediately west of the Site did not record any significant archaeological finds or features. Geophysical survey within the Site did not identify any anomalies of archaeological interest”* (CSA 2025).

The summary of the archaeological background presented in the DBA (CSA 2025) is given below.

2.2 Prehistoric and Romano-British

Cropmarks potentially representing a D-shaped enclosure are recorded c. 350m north of the Site. The presence of any associated below-ground archaeological remains is uncertain, and the HER

describes the feature as 'possible' and 'somewhat dubious'. Two curvilinear cropmarks are recorded c. 50m to the west of the Site, which might also have represented an enclosure (now developed for housing).

Iron ore deposits occurring within Carboniferous limestones in the Forest of Dean area were exploited from the late prehistoric to the post- medieval period and are known to have been a focus for Roman period activity. Undated earthworks associated with iron stone workings are recorded c. 500m west of the Site, and there is further evidence of ore extraction beyond the study area. There is no evidence to suggest that activity associated with ore extraction or working extended into the Site area.

The Dean Road has historically been suggested as a Roman road although this interpretation is no longer generally accepted. The Dean Road as mapped by the HER stops at the southern edge of Mitcheldean c. 800m south of the Site. Margary's publication, 'Roman Roads in Britain', suggests the Dean Road continued north from Mitcheldean towards the Site of the Roman town of Ariconium, c. 4.5km north-west of the Site. The theory was that this road would have connected iron mines at Lydney with smelting furnaces at Ariconium (Gloucestershire HER). Margary describes the road between Mitcheldean and Lea (north of the Site) as following 'a minor ridge on the east of the higher ground'. This most likely describes the road which bounds the eastern edge of the Site, labelled 'Roman Road (site of)' on the late 19th-century Ordnance Survey mapping. A stretch to the north-east of the Site is labelled 'Traces of Roman Paving', as are other parts of the route. However, the antiquarian interpretation of 'Roman paving' has been criticised by later authors and generally a medieval or later origin is favoured. At the eastern Site boundary, the road is certainly less straight than might typically be expected for a Roman road.

The A4136 c. 600m to the south of the Site is also suggested as fossilising the course of a Roman road, the route from Gloucester to Mitcheldean (Margary road). This is generally still accepted as a Roman road, although a continuation west towards Lower Lydbrook, not recorded by Margary but suggested as Roman by antiquarian sources, is now more usually thought to be post-medieval. Again these routes are generally sinuous in nature, not a typical Roman morphology.

2.3 Early medieval and medieval

The Site is located within the historic parish of Mitcheldean. Medieval activity would have been focused within the historic settlement core of Mitcheldean, including the medieval market c. 330m south of the Site and the Church of St Michael and All Angels. The Site was most likely part of the agricultural hinterland from at least the medieval period. A lynchet of possible medieval origin is recorded c. 60m west of the Site. The presence of lynchets is consistent with agricultural use of this area.

A well, referred to as 'holy well' is recorded c. 300m west of the Site, potentially of medieval or later date. Possible charcoal burning platforms, linear earthworks and evidence of ridge and furrow are recorded in the study area. These are undated but could be medieval.

2.4 Post-medieval and modern

The Site was most likely in agricultural use through the post-medieval period. The roads bounding the eastern and western edges of the Site are likely to have been turnpike roads in the 18th century.

The 1840 Mitcheldean parish Tithe map depicts the Site as situated across agricultural fields, recorded as a mix of arable and meadow in the associated apportionment register. Ponds and an associated watercourse are shown at the southern edge of the Site.

2.5 Previous archaeological work on the site

There has been no previous archaeological work on the site.

3 Project aims

The aims and scope of the Project were to undertake sufficient fieldwork to:

- determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits beyond reasonable doubt;
- identify their location, nature date and preservation;
- assess their significance;
- assess the likely impact of the proposed development.

The evaluation will only assess heritage assets which are of archaeological interest. This project will not include consideration of Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, historic hedgerows.

The Project will be undertaken within the research frameworks and aims as identified in: The Archaeology of South West England: South West Archaeological Research Framework (Croft and Grove (ed) 2012) and Research Framework for the Forest of Dean District (Hoyle 2017).

4 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2025). Fieldwork was undertaken between 6th and 10th October 2025.

Eighteen trenches, amounting to 972m² in area, were excavated over the 9.72ha site, representing a sample of 1%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

The trenches were laid out in a non-gridded pattern and positioned to investigate geophysical anomalies and blank areas, as defined by the survey. Trenches 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 17, and 18 were positioned over probable ditches, with Trench 5 located over a potential discrete feature. An extension to Trench 5 was pulled perpendicularly to the west to reveal the extent of the feature. Trenches 4, 10, 11, 14, and 16 were located to test geological anomalies, whilst Trenches 9, 12, 13, and 14 were positioned in blank areas on the survey.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012) and trench and feature locations were surveyed using a GNSS device with an accuracy limit set at <0.04m. On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was undertaken through a combination of structural, artefactual and environmental evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology. Subject to the agreement of the landowner, it is anticipated that it will eventually be deposited at Dean Heritage Centre. Currently, no Gloucestershire Museums are accepting archaeological archives, and the archive will remain at Worcestershire Archaeology, The Hive, Worcester, until it can be deposited.

5 Archaeological results

5.1 Introduction

The features recorded in the trenches are shown in Figures 3-10. The trench and context inventory is presented in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Natural deposits across the Site

The natural strata across the site varied, but was predominantly a light pinkish-brown sand with outcrops of sandstone in places. Trenches 17 and 18 were located over more clay-rich geology.

5.1.2 Topsoil and subsoil

The natural was overlain by a dark reddish-brown silty sand subsoil, which was present in most of the trenches. In some places, the subsoil was very thin and petered out to nothing on occasion. Where present, it was consistently 0.25m thick. Several mapped field boundary ditches of post-medieval date had cut the subsoil.

The topsoil present in all trenches consisted of a mid-reddish-brown sandy loam, up to 0.42m thick.

5.2 Trench descriptions

5.2.1 Trench 1

A single east to west aligned ditch (103) was excavated in Trench 1. It measured 0.35m wide and 0.12m deep. It cut through the subsoil and corresponded to a ditch identified on the geophysical survey. It contained a homogeneous, sterile fill (104), derived from low-energy inwash of surrounding soils and upcast material.

5.2.2 Trench 2

Two small gullies, running parallel to each other on a northeast to southwest alignment, were present in Trench 2. Gully (203) was 0.08m deep and 0.37m wide, and gully (205) to the west measured 0.09m deep and 0.27m wide. Both features appeared to cut the subsoil and were filled with a single sterile deposit derived from surrounding soils. The gullies corresponded quite well to the linear features shown on the geophysical survey, although they were slightly offset to the west. They are considered part of the post-medieval field system visible on historic maps.

5.2.3 Trench 3

Ditch (303) was larger than most of the other field boundaries investigated, measuring 1.22m in width and 0.50m in depth, and containing two distinct fills (304 and 305) (Fig 3). Both were sterile and homogenous, with the upper deposit clearly derived from the surrounding subsoil through which the ditch was cut. The ditch corresponds to a linear geophysical anomaly, but not to the mapped field boundaries, which are aligned differently.

5.2.4 Trench 5

A large spread of slag-rich soil was revealed beneath the topsoil in Trench 5 (Fig 4). It ran nearly the whole length of the trench, being 31m long, although the end of the deposit extended beyond the south-eastern limit of the trench. An extension was pulled from the middle of the trench to the west to determine the extent of the deposit, giving an extrapolated width of c 17m. This is larger than the geophysical anomaly targeted by the trench. The deposit (503) was generally consistent at 0.40m thick, comprising large fragments of iron slag in a loose, dark, sandy matrix, with occasional charcoal and fired clay fragments and three sherds of medieval pottery. The slag deposit was located within a shallow scoop cut (504), which was dug into a thick colluvial deposit (505) up to 0.60m thick, containing flecks of charcoal throughout. This deposit may have been filling a natural depression.

5.2.5 Trench 8

Another small ditch (803), corresponding to the mapped field system and correlating with a linear anomaly on the geophysical survey, was excavated in this trench (Fig 5). Ditch (804) cut the subsoil, was 0.50m wide and 0.18m deep, and had been filled by a single deposit (803) which contained a fragment of CBM and four fragments of slag.

5.2.6 Trench 11

This trench contained a ditch (1103) that did not correspond to geophysical anomalies or the mapped field system. Ditch (1103) was aligned north to south and measured 1.28m wide and 0.46m deep (Fig 6). It was quite a uniform profile, containing a single sterile fill (1104), similar to the lower deposit of ditch (303) in Trench 3.

5.2.7 Trench 15

Another ditch (1504), which did not correspond to geophysical anomalies or the mapped field boundaries, was identified in this trench (Fig 7). It was less regular than the other ditches excavated across the site, though that could have been a factor of the sandstone through which it was cut. The ditch was aligned north to south, measured 0.44m deep and 0.90m deep and contained a single sterile fill (1503). There was no subsoil present in this part of the trench, and the topsoil sealed the ditch.

5.2.8 Trench 17

Ditch (1704) was the only feature in the trench (Fig 8). The ditch was aligned north to south and corresponded to the linear geophysical anomaly and the mapped field boundaries. The ditch, measuring 1.32m wide and 0.78m deep, cut through the subsoil and its two fills (1704 and 1703) contained four fragments of slag.

5.2.9 Trench 18

The final trench contained a single ditch (1804), aligned northeast to southwest and corresponded to the geophysical anomalies and mapped field boundaries (Fig 9). The ditch measured 0.96m wide and 0.27m deep. Its single fill contained three fragments of medieval roof tile and three fragments of slag. There was no subsoil present here, and so the ditch lay directly beneath the topsoil.

5.2.10 Blank Trenches

Trenches 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 16 were all blank. Trenches 6 and 7 were located to test linear geophysical features, but no such features were observed. The ditch may have been present in Trench 6, but it may not have been deep enough to impact the natural stratum. Despite an appraisal of the cleaned subsoil in the section, it could not be identified.

6 Artefactual evidence, by Laura Griffin

6.1 Introduction

The artefact report conforms to standards and guidance issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014), as well as further guidance on pottery analysis, archive creation and museum deposition created by various pottery study groups (PCRG/SGRP/MPRG 2016), the Archaeological Archives Forum (AAF 2011), and the Society of Museum Archaeologists (SMA 1993).

6.2 Aims

This assessment aimed to identify, sort, spot date, and quantify all artefacts and describe the range of artefacts present. The information has been used to provide a preliminary assessment of the significance of the artefacts.

This report covers artefacts of medieval and post-medieval date.

6.3 Methodology

6.3.1 Recovery policy

Artefacts were recovered according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012).

The majority of artefacts collected in the field were recovered by hand. However, a particularly large deposit of iron smelting slag was sampled, with 40 litres taken.

6.3.2 Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date (TPQ) was produced for each stratified context. This date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on a Microsoft

Access 2007 database, with tables generated using Microsoft Excel. The slag sample was quantified by weight only.

The pottery was examined under x20 magnification and referenced as appropriate by fabric type according to the Monmouth fabric type series (Clarke 2011).

Where possible, the results from analysis of this assemblage have been compared to assemblages from other local and regional sites.

A selection of artefacts was photographed (Figs 10 and 11).

6.3.3 Discard policy

Artefacts from topsoil and subsoil and unstratified contexts will normally be noted but not retained, unless they are of intrinsic interest (e.g. worked flint or flint debitage, featured pottery sherds, and other potential 'registered artefacts'). Large assemblages of post-medieval or modern material, unless there is some special reason to retain (such as local production), may be noted and not retained, or, if appropriate, a representative sample will be retained. Discard of finds from post-medieval and earlier deposits will only be instituted with reference to museum collection policy and/or with agreement of the local museum.

6.4 Results

The results below provide a summary of the finds and of their associated location or contexts by site period. Where possible, dates have been allocated, and the importance of individual finds commented upon as necessary.

The assemblage consisted of 19 finds and a 40 litre sample of slag totalling 54.9kg in weight (Tables 1 and 2). Finds came from five stratified contexts across four trenches and could be dated from the medieval period onwards.

Period	Material class	Material subtype	Object specific type	Total	Weight (g)
medieval	ceramic		pot	3	16
post-medieval	ceramic		pot	1	20
post-med	ceramic		roof tile (flat)	3	104
undated	ceramic		undiagnostic ceramic building material	1	7
undated	slag	slag(Fe)	smelting slag	11	2844
undated	slag	slag(Fe)	smelting slag (40 litre sample)	-	52000
Total				19	54991

Table 1: Quantification of site assemblage

6.4.1 Summary of artefacts by site period

Medieval

Pottery

Three sherds of undiagnostic medieval pottery were retrieved from a large slag deposit in Trench 5 (context 503; Fig 11). Two were from a single vessel, featuring a fine, micaceous oxidised fabric with

rare sand inclusions and a thin external glaze with green copper flecks. Sand grains underneath this glaze gave the exterior surface a rough feel. Comparison with fabric descriptions in the Monmouth fabric type series (Clarke 2011) indicated that it is of locally produced fabric type A5b and datable to the first half of the 13th century.

The remaining sherd was small and abraded. The fabric was off-white with a pale grey core and had inclusions of common sub-rounded sand, occasional red ironstone and organic temper. A very fragmentary dark green glaze could be seen on the external surface. Although small in size, the sherd has been tentatively identified as Bristol Redcliffe A (fabric C2) and dated mid 13th – early 15th century.

Slag

Iron smelting slag was retrieved from four trenches: 5, 8, 17 and 18. The largest quantity was sampled from the deposit, which yielded the medieval pottery in Trench 5 (context 503), amounting to 40 litres weighing 52kg. For the purposes of this report, only a basic examination of this material has been undertaken. However, the range of slag present appeared consistent with bloomery smelting in a slag-tapping furnace, with tap slag, furnace slag and slag prills present, as well as a large piece of furnace bottom with fired clay adhered to the underside and a large block of tap slag weighing 1kg and likely from a tapping pit (Fig 10). No definite fuel ash slag was identified, which is consistent with primary smelting sites (Hedge 2016, 42).

Small quantities of slag were retrieved from a gully fill (context 803) and two ditch fills (contexts 1705 and 1803) in other trenches. The fragments from ditch fill (1803) were found alongside three fragments of flat roof tile, likely of medieval date. There were no datable associated finds to suggest a date for the material from Trenches 8 and 18, but it was consistent with that from Trenches 5 and 18, with both tap and furnace slags identified.

Post-medieval

Pottery

A rim from a large jar or bowl of post-medieval date was identified in the topsoil of Trench 5 (context 500). It was made in a fine fabric with what appeared to be red sandstone inclusions, indicating local production. It had highly abraded surfaces with fragments of brownish green glaze just visible under the rim.

context	material class	material subtype	object specific type	total	weight (g)	finds TPQ
500	ceramic		pot	1	20	post-medieval
503	ceramic		pot	2	13	mid 13th – early 15th C
	ceramic		pot	1	3	
	slag	slag(Fe)	smelting slag (sample)		52000	
803	ceramic		cbm	1	7	undated
	slag	slag(Fe)	smelting slag	4	322	
1705	slag	slag(Fe)	smelting slag	4	2050	undated
1803	ceramic		roof tile(flat)	3	104	medieval

	slag	slag(Fe)	smelting slag	3	472	
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Table 2: Summary of context dating based on artefacts

6.5 Discussion

Although types of slag can be identified diagnostically, it is not a datable material. Furthermore, in this region, bloomery smelting was used in both the Roman and medieval periods. However, the association of this material with medieval pottery and ceramic building materials of medieval date in Trenches 5 and 18 indicates that the slag dates from this period. This is further supported by the absence of material from any other period in these deposits.

6.6 Significance

Documentary sources provide evidence for ironworking at numerous sites in the Forest of Dean during the medieval period (Baggs and Jurica 1996); however, archaeological evidence remains scarce, making this site particularly significant. A smelting site of similar date was excavated at nearby Yorkley as part of the Foresters' Forest project (Jackson *et al.* 2016), providing a useful comparison for the Mitcheldean assemblage.

6.7 Recommendations

6.7.1 Further analysis

Should further work be undertaken, it is recommended that the slag is fully analysed by an appropriate specialist.

6.7.2 Discard/retention

At present, it is recommended that all non-slag finds and the slag from contexts 803, 1705 and 1803 are retained, along with all the slag from deposit (503) until appropriate mitigation analysis has been undertaken. An archaeometallurgical specialist should undertake this work.

7 Environmental evidence, by Elizabeth Pearson

7.1 Introduction

The environmental project conforms to guidance by ClfA (2023a) on archaeological evaluation, further guidance by English Heritage (2011) and the Association for Environmental Archaeology (1995).

7.1.1 Site location and geology

The site is situated on freely draining, slightly acidic, loamy soils of low fertility (Cranfield and Agrifood Institute, 2025; Soilscape 6). The underlying geology comprises Brownstones Formation - Sandstone and argillaceous rocks, interbedded (BGS 2025).

7.2 Methodology

7.2.1 Sampling policy

Samples were taken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (2012). A single sample (40 litres) was taken from the Site (Table 3).

7.2.2 Processing and analysis

The samples were processed by flotation using a Siraf tank. The flots were collected on a 300µm sieve and the residue was retained on a 1mm mesh. This allows for the recovery of items such as small animal bones, molluscs and seeds.

The residues were visually scanned, and the abundance of each category of environmental remains was estimated. The flots were scanned using a low power MEIJI stereo light microscope and plant remains identified using modern reference collections maintained by Worcestershire Archaeology,

and a seed identification manual (Cappers *et al* 2012). Nomenclature for the plant remains follows Stace (2010).

Context	Sample	Description	Period	Sample volume (L)	Volume processed (L)	Residue assessed	Flot assessed
503	1	Slag deposit - Trench 5	Medieval to post-medieval	40	20	Yes	Yes

Table 3: List of bulk samples

7.2.3 Charcoal

Charcoal was examined under a low-power MEIJI stereo light microscope to determine the presence of oak and non-oak charcoal and the cell structure of selected non-oak charcoal fragments examined in three planes under a MEIJI dark illumination microscope. Identifications were carried out using reference texts (Schweingruber 1978 and Hather 2000) and reference slides housed at Worcestershire Archaeology.

7.2.4 Discard policy

The remaining soil sample, residues (post-scanning), flots, and sorted remains will be stored until the mitigation strategy for the site has been established/completed, as they contain considerable amounts of slag. However, the actual environmental assemblage is poorly preserved and of little potential for further analysis.

7.3 Results

7.3.1 Charred plant macrofossils and charcoal

The results are summarised in Tables 4 and 5.

Environmental remains were abundant but poorly preserved, consisting of oak and unidentified charcoal fragments. Little interpretation could be made of these remains. The lack of charred cereal crop waste is unsurprising considering the deposit sampled and its obvious industrial origin.

Context	Sample	Charcoal	Comments
503	1	abt	No remains from residue

Table 4: Summary of environmental remains; abt = abundant

Context	Sample	Preservation type	Species detail	Category remains	Quantity/diversity
503	1	ch	<i>Quercus robur/petraea</i> wood, unidentified wood fragments	misc	+++/low

Table 5: Plant remains from bulk samples

Key:

preservation	quantity
ch = charred	+ = 1 - 10

	++ = 11- 50
	+++ = 51 - 100
	++++ = 101+
	* = probably modern and intrusive

7.4 Significance

The environmental remains are of negligible significance, being abundant but poorly preserved and mostly unidentifiable.

7.5 Recommendations

7.5.1 Further analysis

No further work is required on the remains from the single sample assessed. Should further fieldwork be conducted on this site, targeted sampling of the slag deposit (503) is recommended, as the preserved charcoal may have the potential to aid in the interpretation of fuel selection strategies.

8 Discussion

The results of the evaluation demonstrate that the field system recorded on the 1840 Tithe map correlates well with the geophysical survey and the archaeological features present in the ground. Beyond that, two ditches were identified that did not correlate to the survey; neither was dated, nor was it possible to determine if they cut through the subsoil as the post-medieval field system did.

The extensive spread of iron slag in Trench 5 is of medieval date and likely represents either a dump of waste material or a remnant of a former production site. Whilst no structural remains of the furnace were observed in the evaluation trench, a piece of furnace base was recovered. It is also unlikely that a large amount of waste slag was relocated to an arbitrary location, some distance away from the production site, and production sites are typically associated with substantial amounts of waste slag.

An excavation at Yorkley Slade (11km south of Mitcheldean) revealed a similarly dated sub-rectangular enclosure with extant bank and ditch (Jackson, Walsh and Wheeler 2016). A pit or shaft furnace was identified within the enclosure, associated with a large quantity of iron slag and furnace material. The enclosure dates to around the 12th to early 14th century, although its primary function remains unclear. Although of comparable function, there is no evidence to suggest the potential Iron working site at Mitcheldean was located within an enclosure.

From the Roman period to the early post-medieval period, slag-tapping bloomeries were used for smelting iron, fueled by charcoal (Hoyle 2019). These furnaces were typically tall, cylindrical structures made of clay, with charcoal and ore fed into the opening at the top. Airflow was controlled by several holes located lower down the structure, typically connected via ceramic tubes called tuyeres, to manually operated bellows (Historic England, 2018). A hole near the base of the structure could be opened or “tapped” to allow the buildup of waste slag to be drained from the bloomery, leaving the bloom, the semi-solid mass of iron.

The upper parts of these clay-built bloomeries tended to be dismantled during the retrieval of the bloom, so the furnace base and tapping pit are likely to be the only in situ remains to survive. If present, these would likely be buried under a large amount of slag, and multiple furnaces may have been constructed.

The smelting process tended to be inefficient, as it was not hot enough to fully separate the iron from the slag. The waste product of slag (or cinders) was later re-smelted in the 16th century when the blast furnace was introduced to the Forest (Hoyle 2019, 134). As such, the preservation of this

medieval slag deposit, along with the possibility of evidence of structural remains from the bloomery, adds to its significance.

9 Significance

As highlighted above, the introduction of the blast furnace in the post-medieval period led to the extraction of medieval cinders on a vast scale for re-smelting. As such, the number of earlier production sites will have been diminished to an unknown extent, adding extra significance to any potentially in situ deposits.

Further investigations of the slag deposit may yield evidence of the bloomery structure, and analysis of the slag itself could contribute to a broader understanding of the chemical composition and origin of the ores. Therefore, the medieval slag deposits in Trench 5 are potentially of **regional significance** and have the potential to contribute to the research aims below.

The archaeological research framework for the Forest of Dean (FODRA; Hoyle 2017) includes Research Aim 54: *How was the bloomery iron smelting industry organised at different periods? What changes in the technology of bloomery smelting (including early steel production) took place in the Forest of Dean over time? How do technologically different sites relate to each other?*

The Historical Metallurgy Society research framework (Bayley *et al* 2008) has the following as the most relevant research topic: *Investigate medieval steel – did it come from bloomeries or from alternative technologies?*

10 Conclusions

An archaeological evaluation consisting of eighteen trenches was undertaken on farmland on the northern edge of Mitcheldean. A series of shallow ditches corresponding to known historic field boundaries were identified, corroborating the results of the geophysical survey. Two other ditches that did not correspond to the geophysical survey were also identified; these remain undated but are also considered to be field boundaries.

The most significant archaeological remains identified consisted of a large slag deposit, measuring at least 31m by 17m in plan, and c 0.40m thick. A few sherds of pottery were recovered from it, dating it to the 13th-15th century. As well as the pottery, a furnace base and tap slag from a tapping pit were also recovered. The slag deposit is likely the waste (or cinders) from slag tapping bloomeries, the remains of which may be preserved under the slag deposit. Such medieval industrial sites were often excavated and destroyed in the post-medieval period following the introduction of the blast furnace, which enabled the re-smelting of the earlier cinders, as they still contained a large amount of iron. As such, medieval iron smelting sites are a rare archaeological resource and of regional significance.

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Conditions were suitable in all of the trenches to identify the presence or absence of archaeological features. It is considered that the nature, density and distribution of archaeological features provides an accurate characterisation of the development site as a whole.

11 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Peter Lovett, ACIfA, assisted by Bobbie Carter, PCIfA.

The project was managed by Andy Mann, MCIfA. The report was produced and collated by Peter Lovett. Specialist contributions and individual sections of the report are attributed to the relevant authors throughout the text.

12 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for the successful conclusion of the project: Rosey Meara of CSA Environmental, and Toby Catchpole, archaeological planning officer for Gloucestershire County Council).

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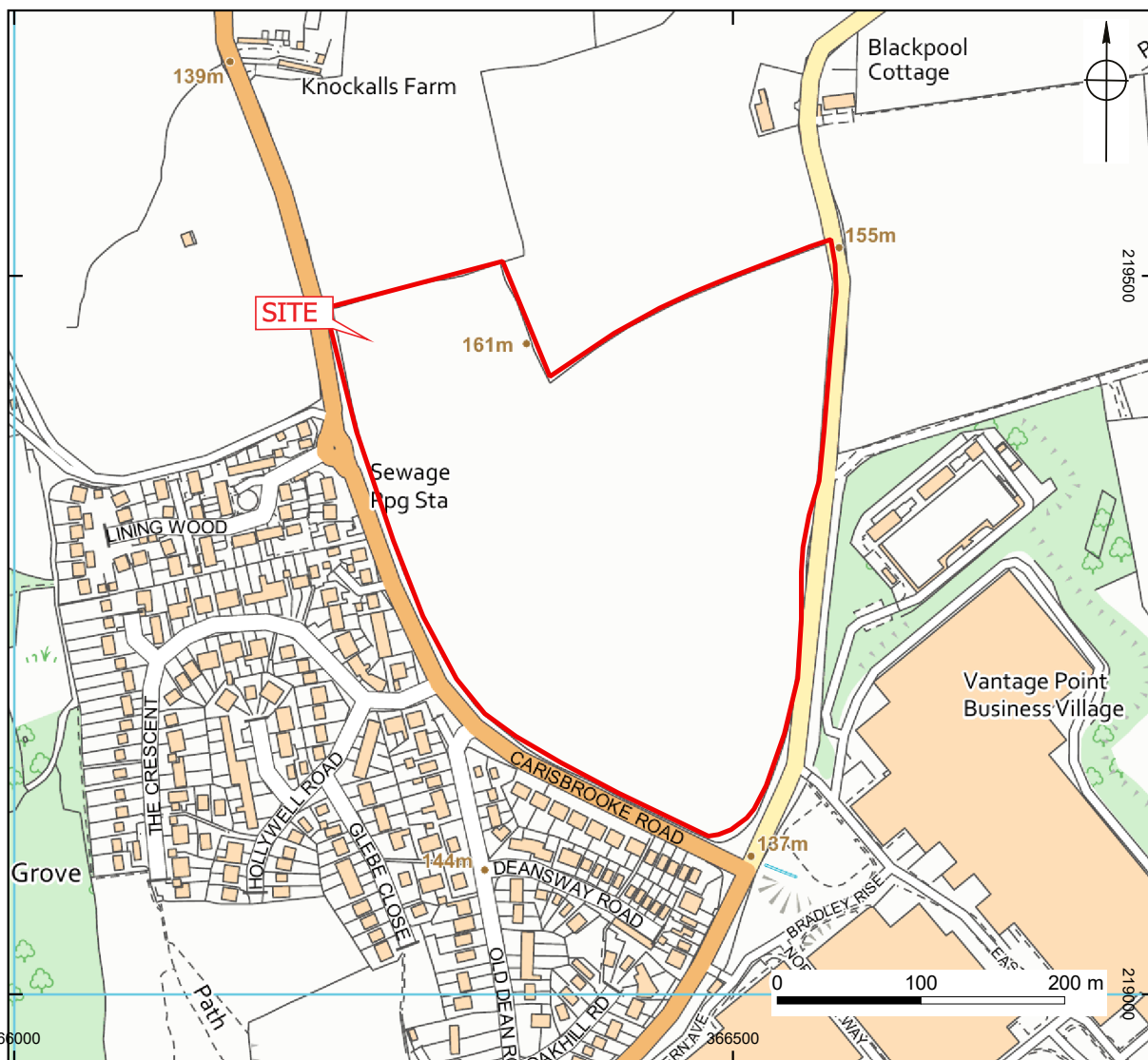
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Figures



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Figure 1: Location of the site



Figure 2

Trenches overlaid on
geophysics interpretation

- Site Boundary
- Edge of Trench
- Archaeological Feature
- Projected Slag Pit

Carisbrook Lane, Mitcheldean,
Gloucestershire

WA Project Number: P7015

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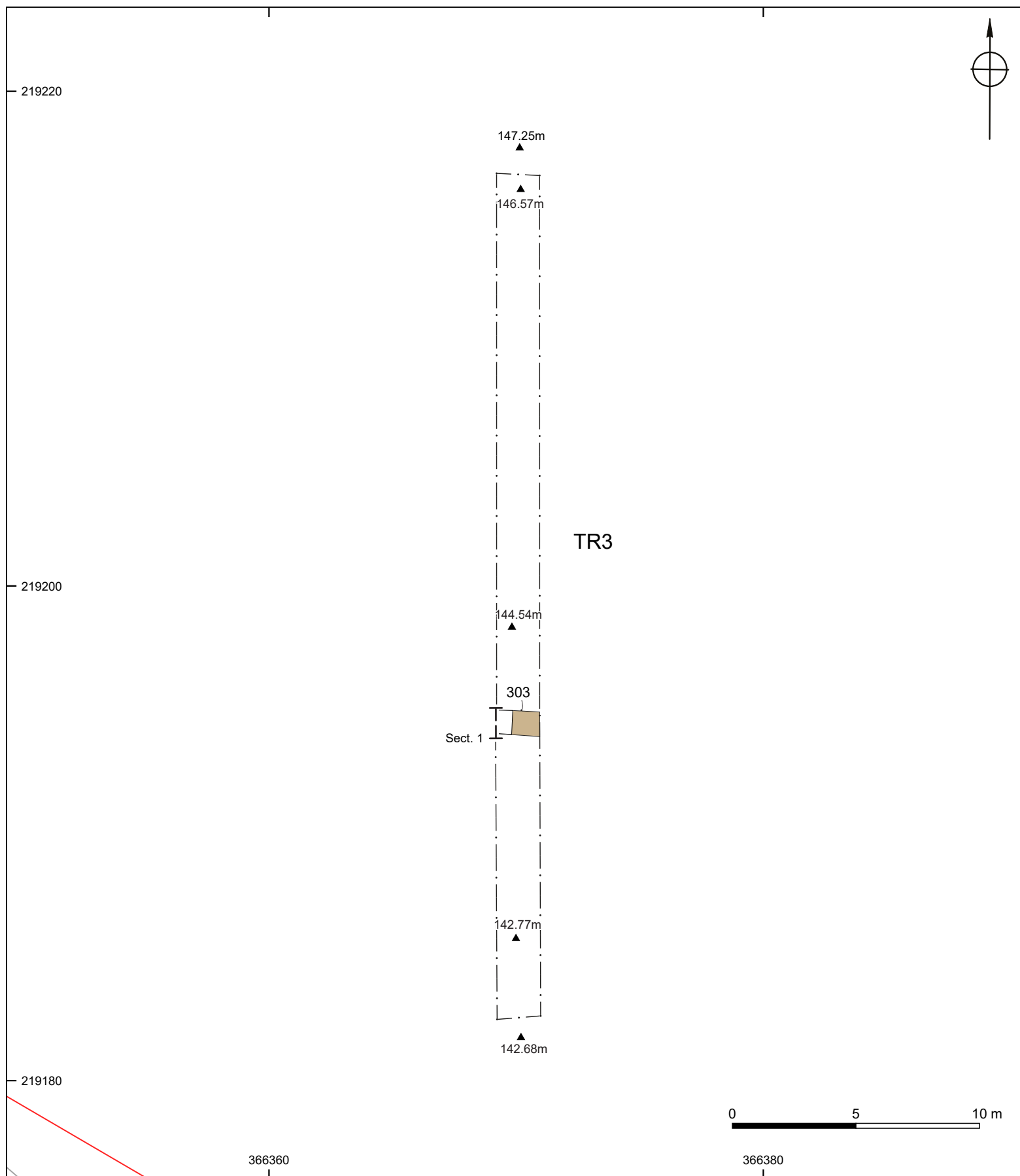


Figure 3.1: Plan of Trench 3



Figure 3.2: Ditch 303, looking west, 1m scale

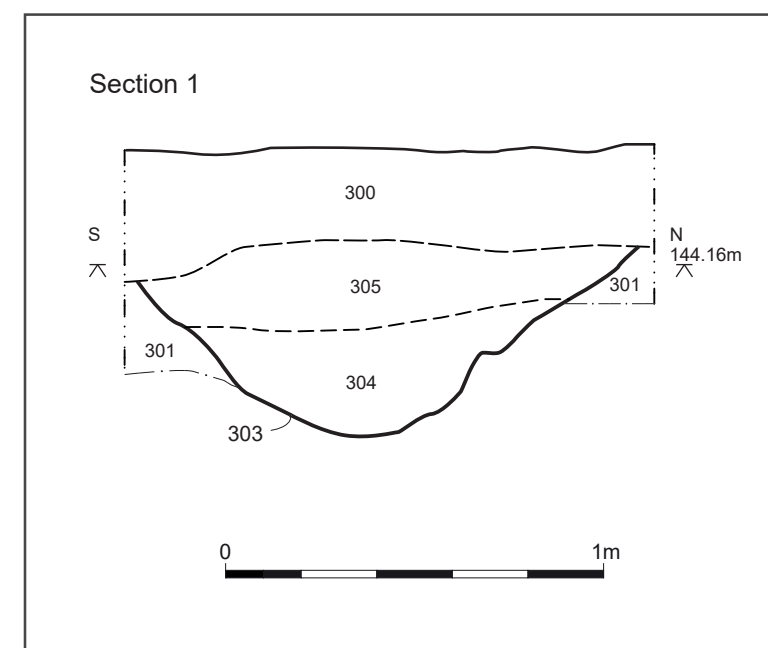


Figure 3.3: Section through ditch 303

Figure 3

Trench 3

- Site Boundary
- Edge of Trench
- Archaeological Feature
- Slot
- Drawing
- Spot Height

Carisbrook Lane, Mitcheldean,
Gloucestershire

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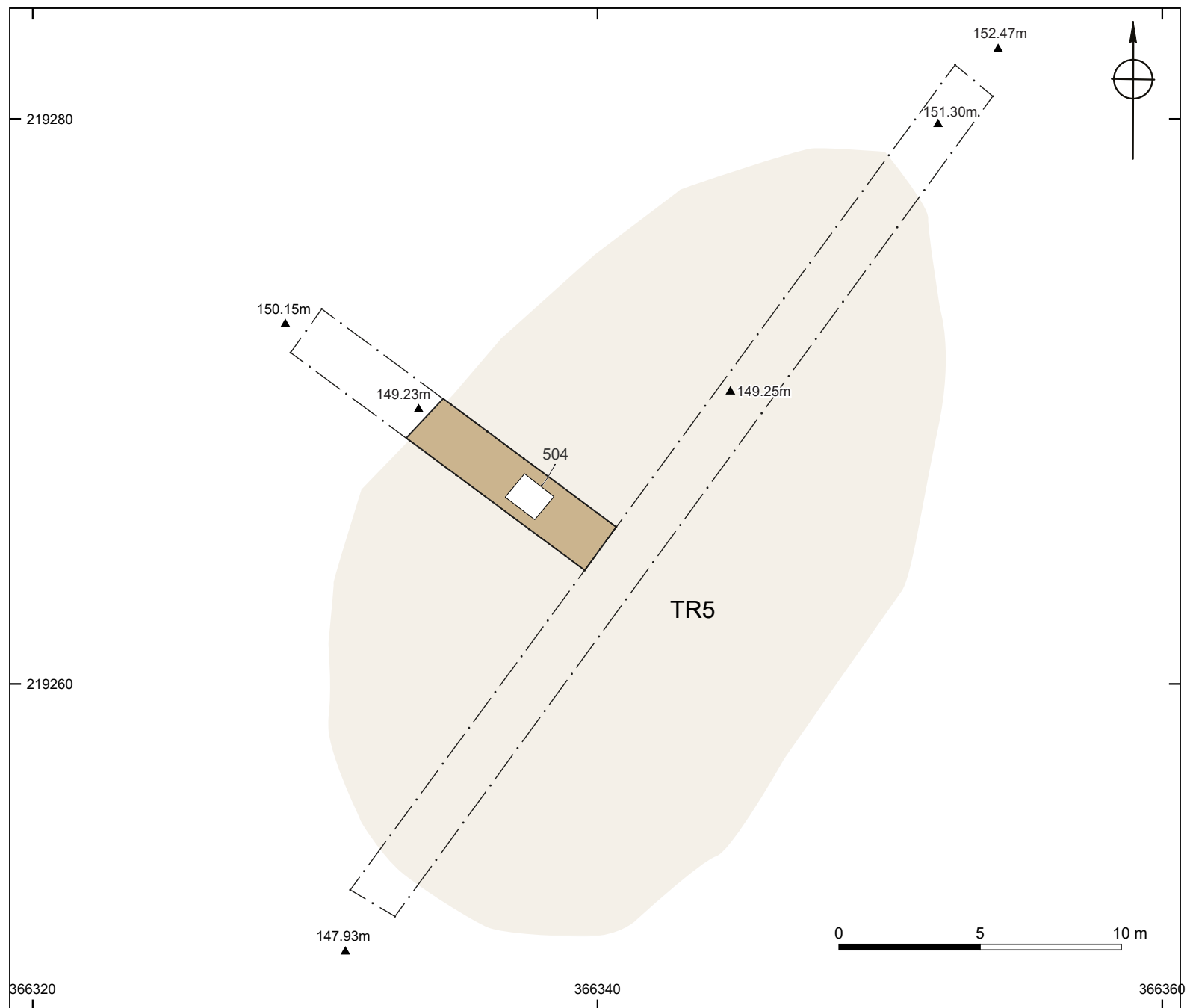


Figure 3.1: Plan of Trench 5



Figure 3.2: Slag deposit 503 in Trench 5, looking southwest, 2x1m scales



Figure 3.3: Showing slag deposit 503 directly beneath topsoil in Trench 5. Looking west, 2x1m scales



Figure 3.4: Sondage dug through slag deposit 503, looking east, 1m scale

Figure 4

Trench 5

- Edge of Trench
- Projected Slag Pit
- Archaeological Feature
- Slot
- Spot Height

Carisbrook Lane, Mitcheldean,
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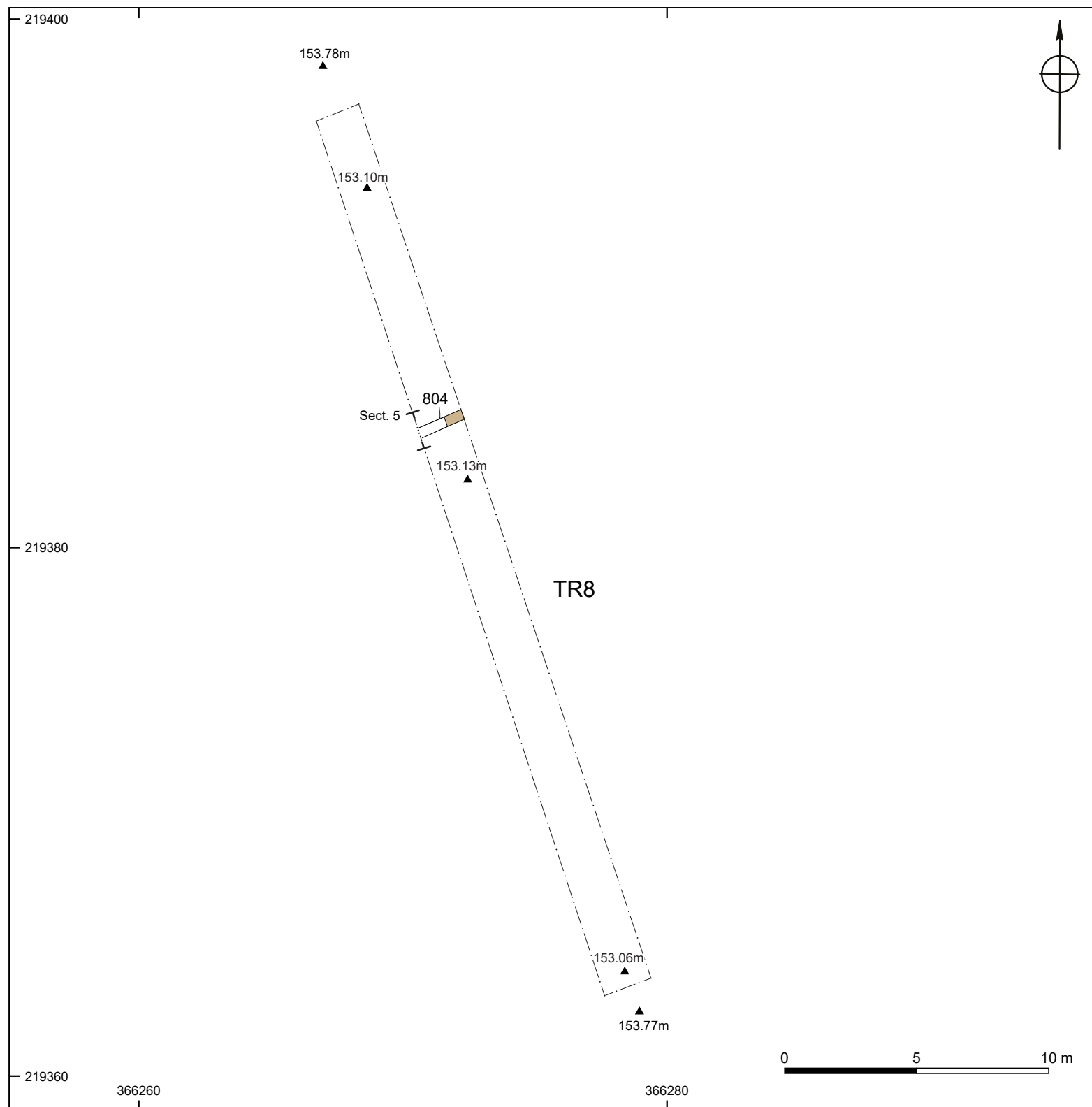


Figure 5.1: Plan of Trench 8



Figure 5.2: Trench 8, looking southeast, 1m scales



Figure 5.3: Ditch 804, looking southwest, 1m scale

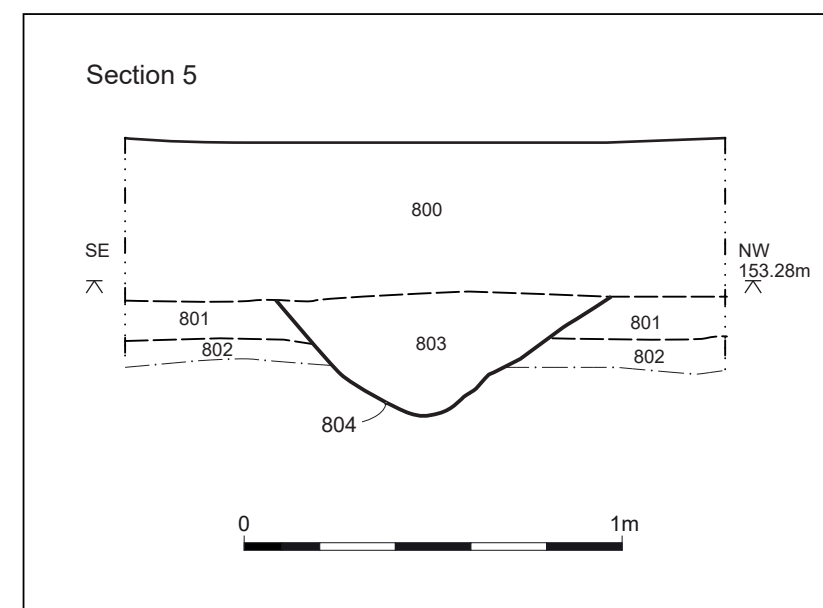


Figure 5.4: Section through ditch 804

Figure 5

Trench 8

- Edge of Trench
- Archaeological Feature
- Slot
- Drawing
- Spot Height

Carisbrook Lane, Mitcheldean,
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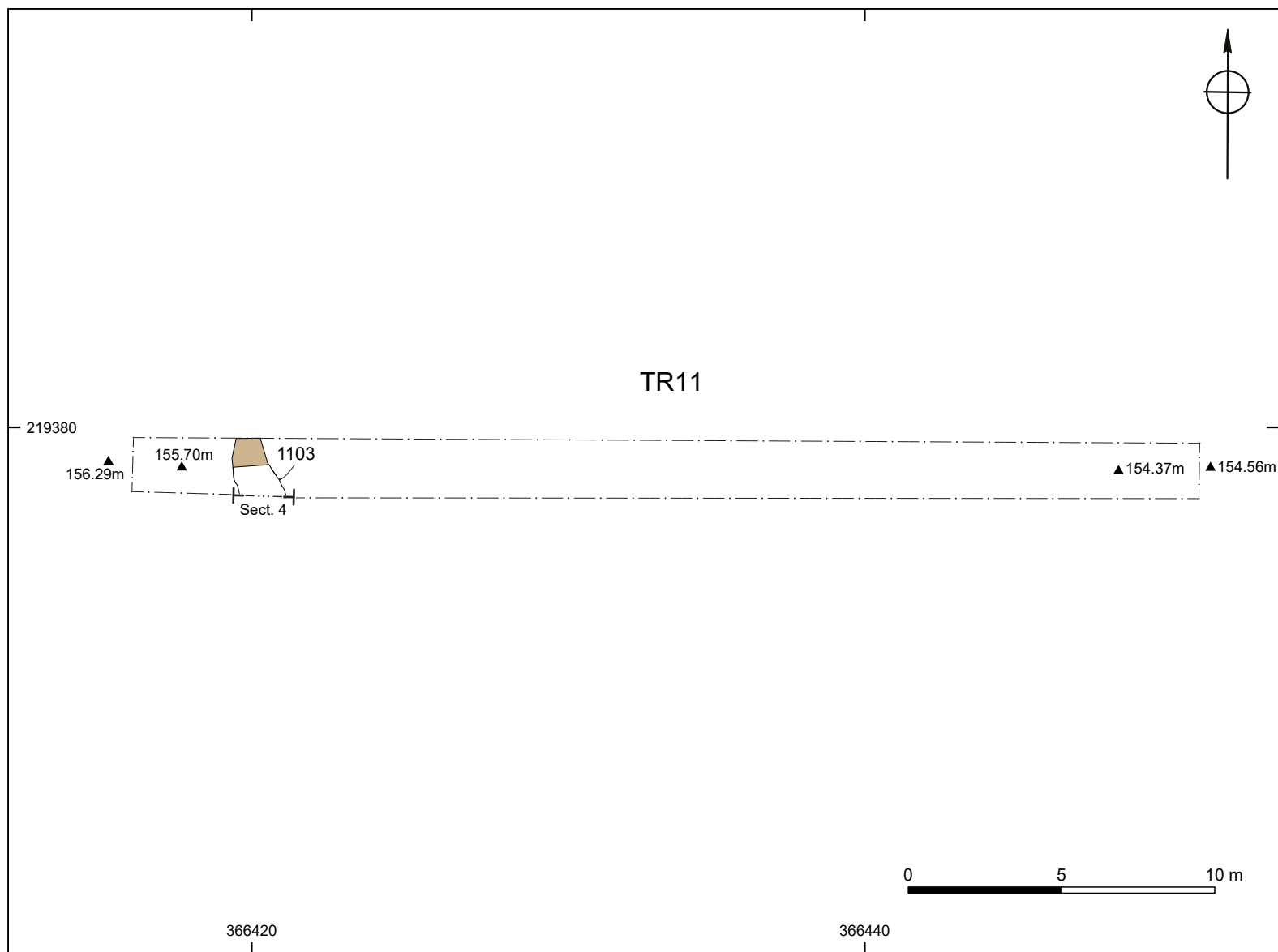


Figure 6.1: Plan of Trench 6

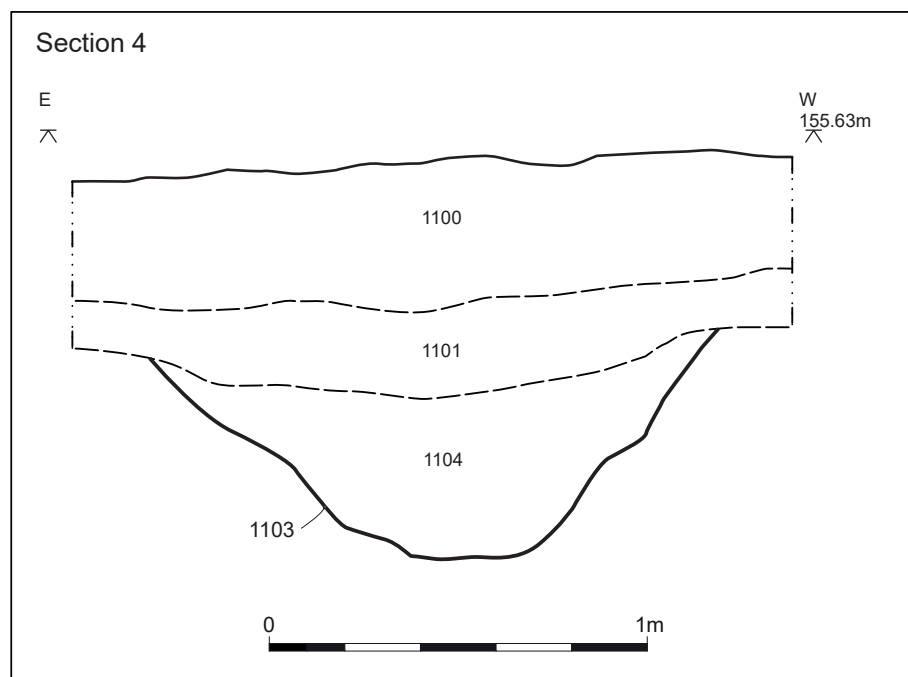


Figure 6.2: Section through ditch 1103



Figure 6.3: Ditch 1103, looking south, 1m scale

Figure 6

Trench 11

- Edge of Trench
- Archaeological Feature
- Slot
- Drawing
- Spot Height

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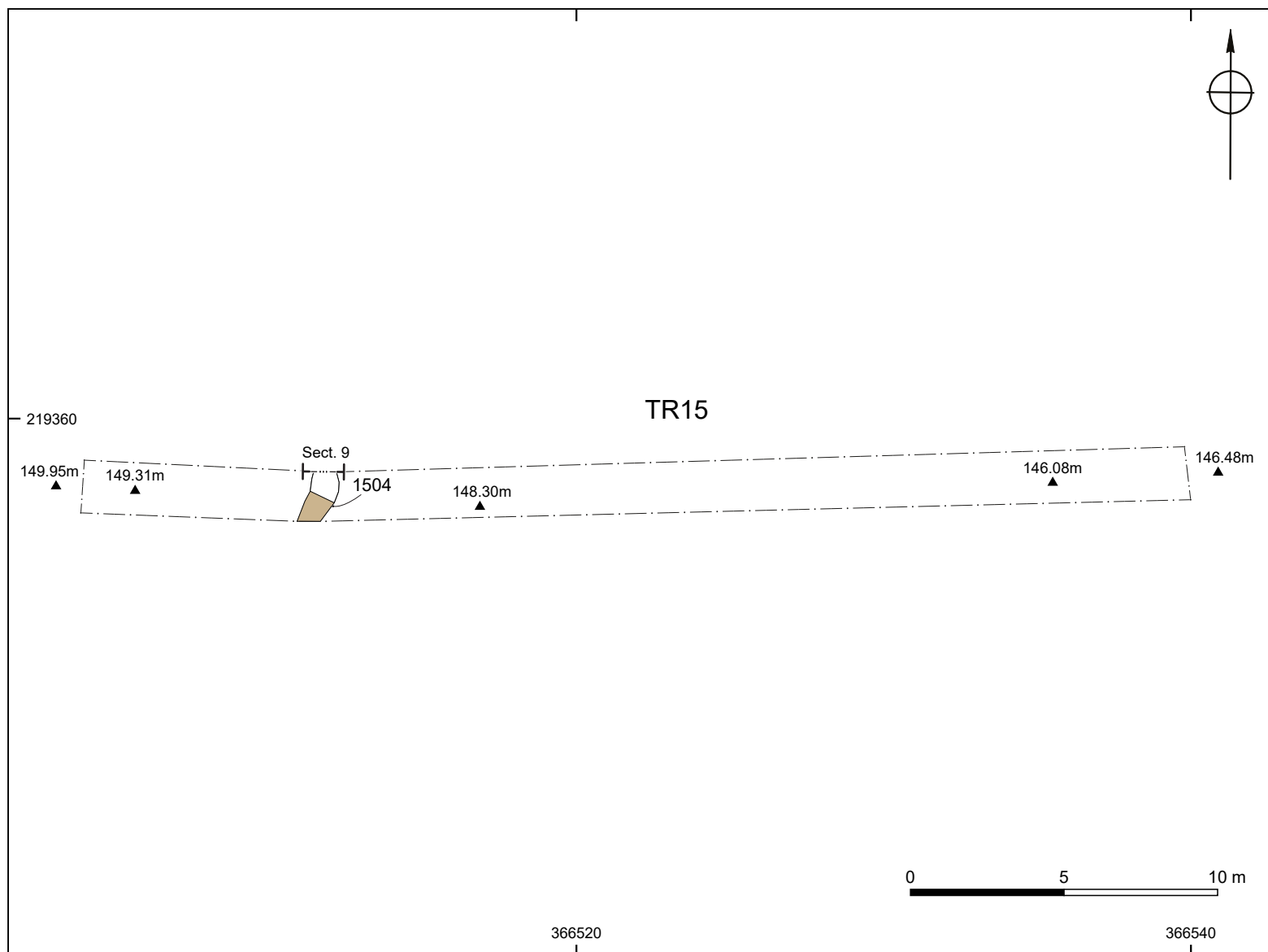


Figure 7.1: Plan of Trench 17

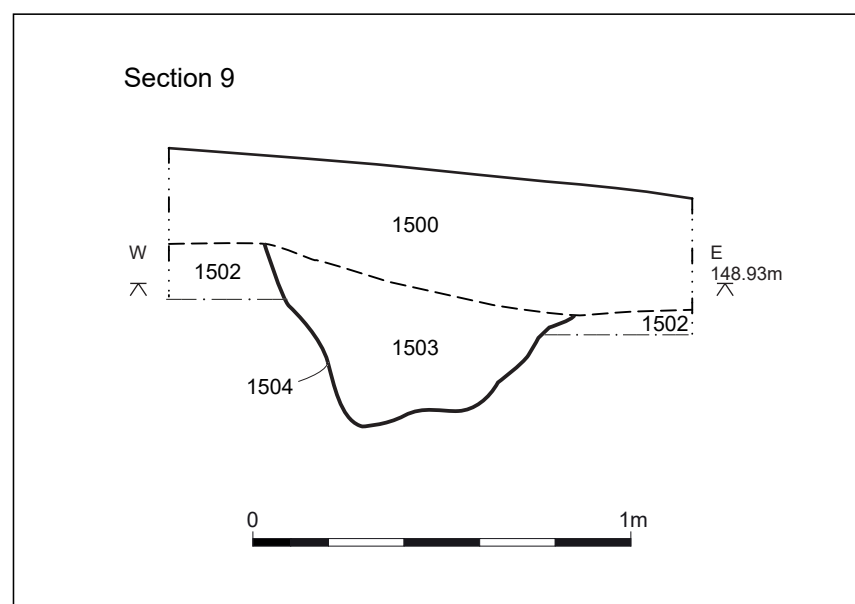


Figure 7.2: Section through ditch 1504



Figure 7.3: Ditch 1504, looking north, 1m scale

Figure 7

Trench 15

- Edge of Trench
- Archaeological Feature
- Slot
- Drawing
- Spot Height

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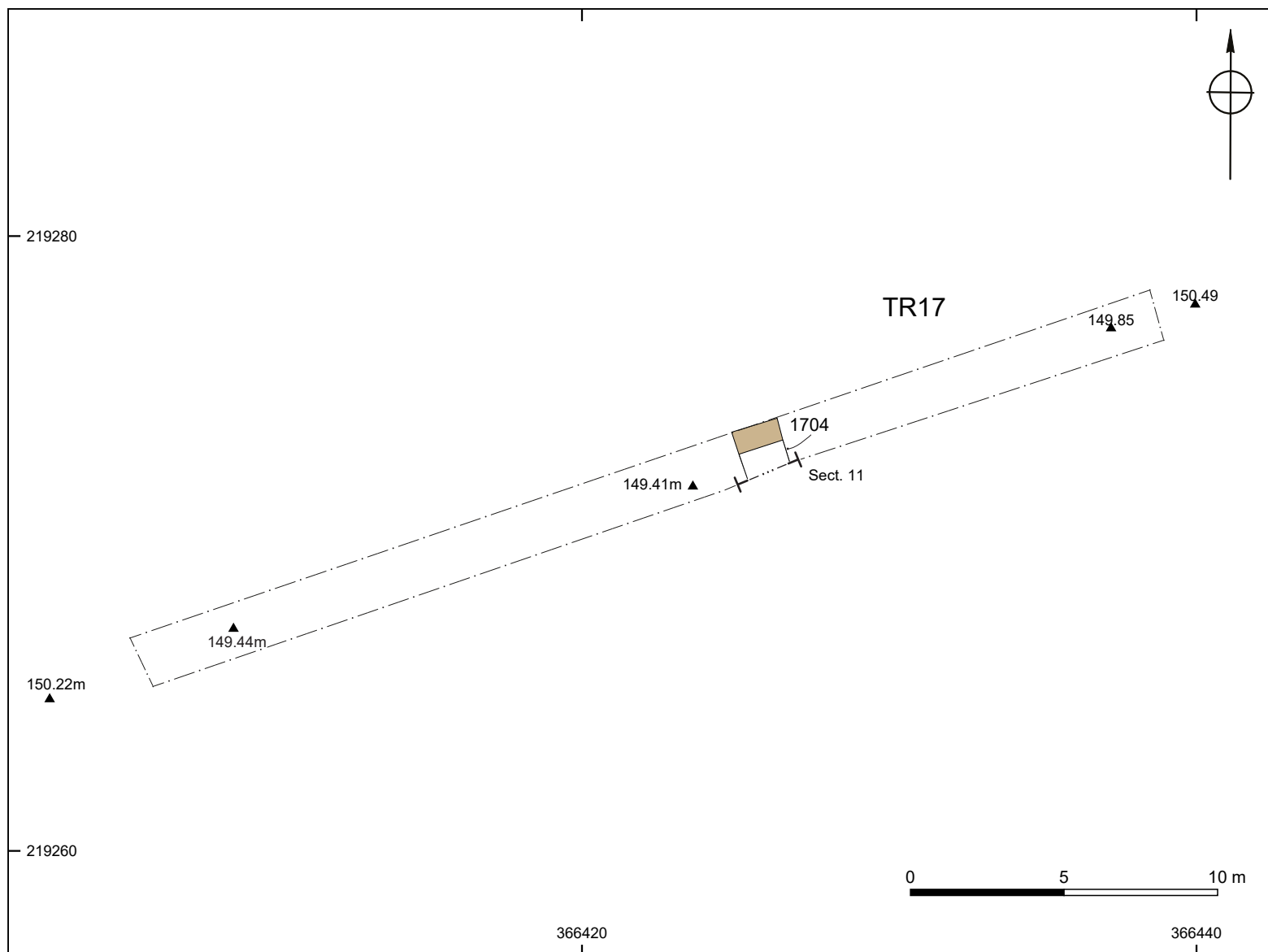


Figure 8.1: Plan of Trench 8

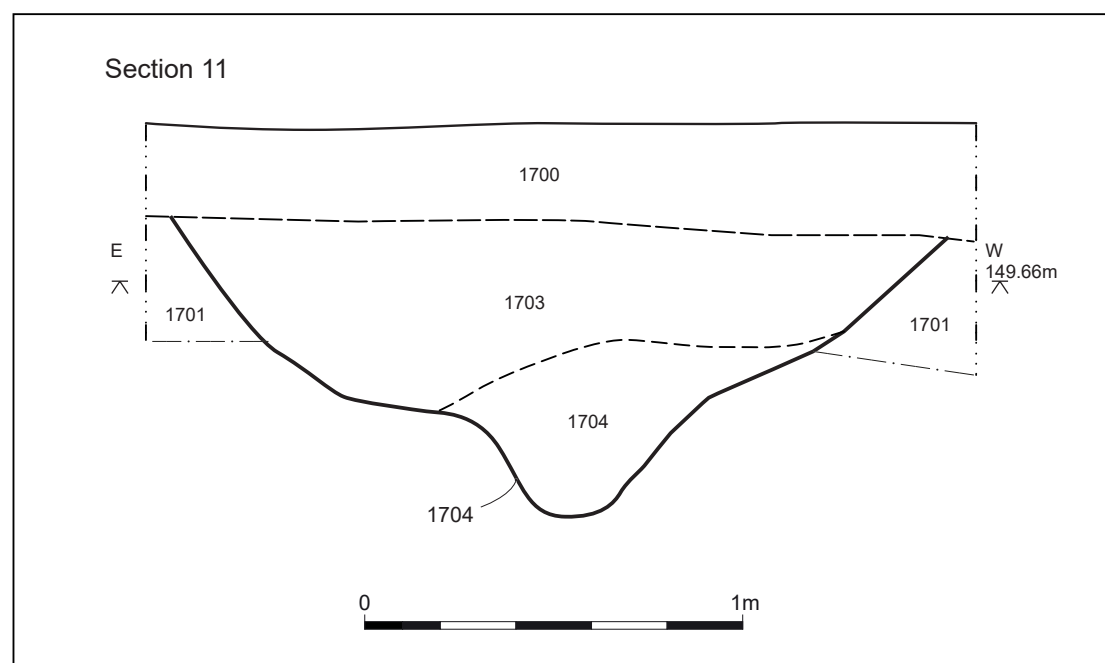


Figure 8.2: Section through ditch 1704



Figure 8.3: Trench 17, looking east, 2x1m scales



Figure 8.4: Ditch 1704, looking south-east, 1m scale

Figure 8
Trench 17

- Edge of Trench
- Archaeological Feature
- Slot
- Drawing
- ▲ Spot Height

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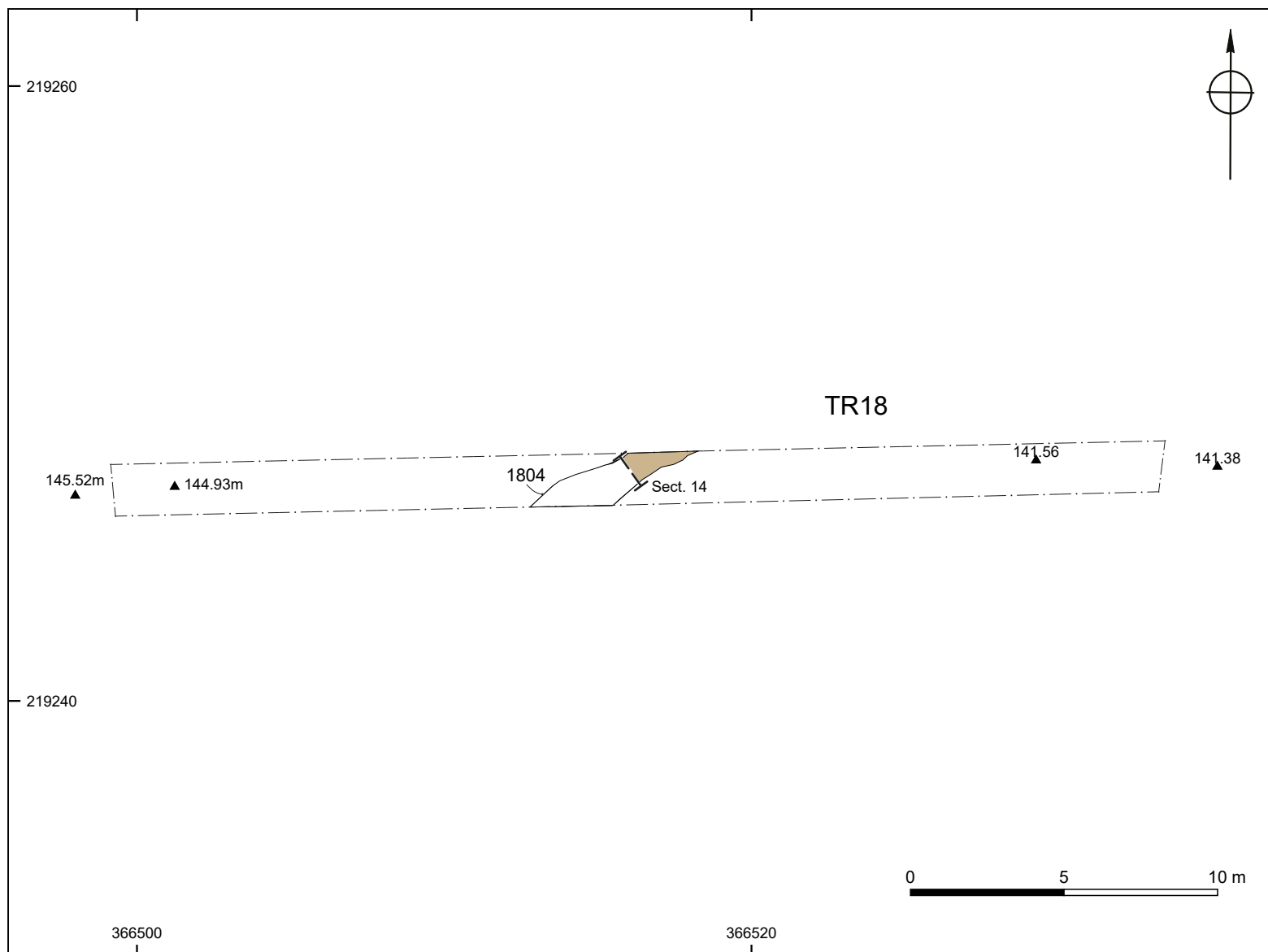


Figure 9.1: Plan of Trench 8

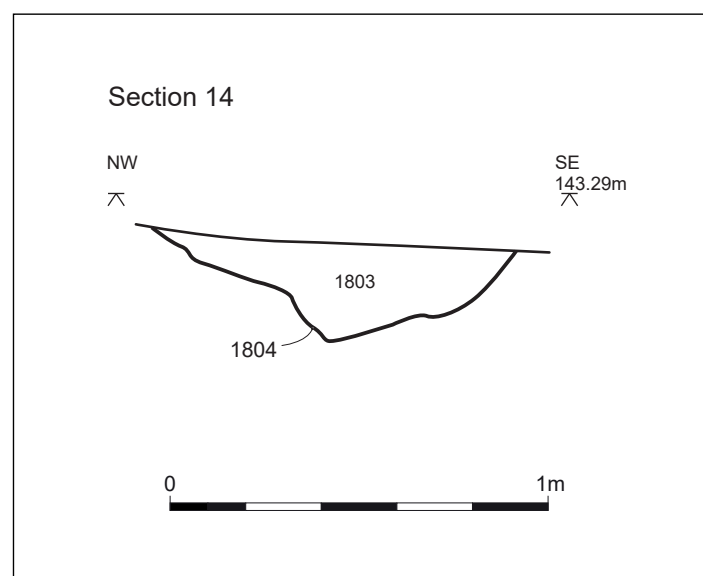


Figure 9.2: Section through ditch 1804



Figure 9.3: Trench 18, looking east, 2x1m scales



Figure 9.4: Ditch 1804, looking south, 1m scale

Figure 9

Trench 18

- Edge of Trench
- Archaeological Feature
- Slot
- Drawing
- Spot Height

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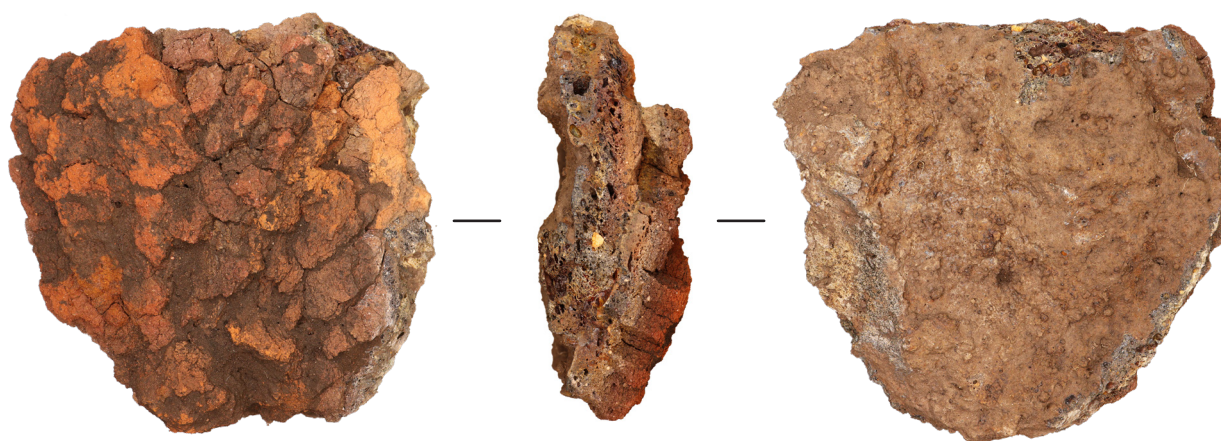
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Furnace base from (503)

Figure 10



Medieval pottery from (503)

Figure 11

Appendix 1: Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Length (m):34

Width (m): 1.7

Orientation: NW-SE

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
100	Deposit	Topsoil - Trench 1	0.39 to 0.42	Colour: mid grey. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: medium silty sand.
101	Deposit	Subsoil - Trench 1	0.21 (avg.)	Colour: mid orangey brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: fine silty sand.
102	Deposit	Natural - Trench 1	0.19 to 0.10	Colour: light pinkish brown. Compaction: dry, firm. Composition: fine silty sand.
103	Cut	Cut - Ditch [103]	0.12	Orientation: E-W. Shape in plan: linear. Shape in profile: regular, shallow u-shaped. Break at top: sharp. Break at base: gradual. Base: rounded. Sides: moderate,
104	Fill	Fill - Ditch [103]	0.12	Colour: mid orangey brown. Compaction: dry, friable. Composition: fine silty sand.

Trench 2

Length (m):34

Width (m): 1.8

Orientation: E-W

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
200	Deposit	Topsoil - Trench 2	0.38 (avg.)	Colour: mid greyish brown. Compaction: moist, loose. Composition: silty sand.
201	Deposit	Subsoil - Trench 2	0.24 (avg.)	Colour: mid reddish brown. Compaction: dry, very loose. Composition: fine silty sand.
202	Deposit	Natural - Trench 2	0.10 (avg.)	Colour: light pinkish brown. Compaction: dry, firm. Composition: fine silty sand.
203	Cut	Cut - Gully [203]	0.08	Shape in plan: irregular, linear. Shape in profile: irregular, shallow. Break at top: gradual. Break at base: gradual. Base: uneven. Sides: gentle, straight.
204	Fill	Fill - Gully [203]	0.08	Colour: mid brownish grey. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: fine silty sand.
205	Cut	Cut - Gully [205]	0.09	Orientation: NE-SW. Shape in plan: regular, linear. Shape in profile: regular, shallow. Break at top: gradual. Break at base: gradual. Base: rounded. Sides: gentle, concave.
206	Fill	Fill - Gully [205]	0.09	Colour: mid greyish brown. Compaction: moist, loose. Composition: fine silty sand.

Trench 3

Length (m):34

Width (m): 1.7

Orientation: N-S

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
300	Deposit	Topsoil - Trench 3	0.30 (avg.)	Colour: mid greyish brown. Compaction: moist, loose. Composition: medium silty sand.
301	Deposit	Subsoil - Trench 3	0.25 (avg.)	Colour: mid orangey brown. Compaction: dry, plastic. Composition: clay.
302	Deposit	Natural - Trench 3		Colour: light pinkish brown. Compaction: dry, plastic. Composition: silty clay.
303	Cut	Cut - Ditch [303]	0.5	Orientation: E-W. Shape in plan: regular, linear. Shape in profile: regular. Break at top: gradual. Break at base: gradual. Base: rounded. Sides: moderate, straight.
304	Fill	Fill - Ditch [303]	0.28	Colour: light grey. Compaction: dry, very loose. Composition: silt.
305	Fill	Fill - Ditch [303]	0.24	Colour: light orangey brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: fine silty sand.

Trench 4

Length (m):34

Width (m): 1.8

Orientation: NW-SE

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
400	Deposit	Topsoil - Trench 4	0.39 (avg.)	Colour: mid greyish brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: medium silty sand.
401	Deposit	Natural - Trench 4	0.19 (avg.)	Colour: mid reddish brown. Compaction: dry, firm. Composition: silty clay.

Trench 5

Length (m):34

Width (m): 1.6

Orientation: NE-SW

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
500	Deposit	Topsoil - Trench 5	0.27 to 0.35	Colour: mid greyish brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: medium silty sand.
501	Deposit	Subsoil - Trench 5	0.20 to 0.50	Colour: mid orangey brown. Compaction: dry, very loose. Composition: fine silty sand.
502	Deposit	Natural - Trench 5	0.19 (avg.)	Colour: light pinkish brown. Compaction: dry, firm. Composition: medium sand. Notes: sandstone also within natural.
503	Deposit	Slag deposit - Trench 5	0.40 (avg.)	Colour: dark greyish black. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: slag in sandy matrix.
504	Deposit	Cut for slag 503 - Trench 5	0.40 (avg.)	
505	Deposit	Colluvium - Trench 5	0.60	Colour: mid pinkish orange. Compaction:

(avg.) dry, firm. Composition: fine silty sand.
Inclusions: occasional charcoal.

Trench 6

Length (m):34 Width (m): 1.7 Orientation: NW-SE

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
600	Deposit	Topsoil - Trench 6	0.40 (avg.)	Colour: mid greyish brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: medium silty sand.
601	Deposit	Subsoil - Trench 6	0.19 (avg.)	Colour: mid orangey brown. Compaction: dry, very loose. Composition: fine silty sand.
602	Deposit	Natural - Trench 6	0.12 (avg.)	Colour: light pinkish brown. Compaction: dry, firm. Composition: fine silty sand.

Trench 7

Length (m):34 Width (m): 1.7 Orientation:

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
700	Deposit	Topsoil - Trench 7	0.25 (avg.)	Colour: mid greyish brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: medium silty sand.
701	Deposit	Subsoil - Trench 7	0.30 (avg.)	Colour: mid orangey brown. Compaction: dry, very loose. Composition: fine silty sand.
702	Deposit	Natural - Trench 7	0.11 (avg.)	Colour: light pinkish brown. Compaction: dry, firm. Composition: fine silty sand. Notes: also had sandstone.

Trench 8

Length (m):34 Width (m): 1.6 Orientation: NW-SE

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
800	Deposit	Topsoil - Trench 8	0.35 (avg.)	Colour: mid reddish brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: fine silty sand.
801	Deposit	Subsoil - Trench 8	0.18 (avg.)	Colour: mid orangey brown. Compaction: moist, friable. Composition: fine silty sand.
802	Deposit	Natural - Trench 8	0.07 (avg.)	Colour: light yellowish brown. Compaction: dry, firm. Composition: fine silty sand.
803	Fill	Fill - Gully [804]	0.18	Colour: light yellowish brown. Compaction: dry, friable. Composition: silty sand.
804	Cut	Cut - Gully [804]	0.18	Orientation: E-W. Shape in plan: linear. Shape in profile: regular, shallow u-shaped. Break at top: sharp. Break at base: imperceptible. Base: rounded. Sides: moderate, straight.

Trench 9

Length (m):34

Width (m): 1.7

Orientation: N-S

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
900	Deposit	Topsoil - Trench 9	0.29 (avg.)	Colour: mid reddish brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: fine silty sand.
901	Deposit	Subsoil - Trench 9	0.17 (avg.)	Colour: mid orangey brown. Compaction: moist, friable. Composition: fine silty sand.
902	Deposit	Natural - Trench 9	0.06 (avg.)	Colour: light yellowish brown. Compaction: dry, firm. Composition: fine silty sand.

Trench 10

Length (m):34

Width (m): 1.7

Orientation:

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
1000	Deposit	Topsoil - Trench 10	0.28 (avg.)	Colour: mid reddish brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: fine silty sand.
1001	Deposit	Subsoil - Trench 10	0.20 (avg.)	Colour: mid orangey brown. Compaction: moist, friable. Composition: fine silty sand.
1002	Deposit	Natural - Trench 10	0.10 (avg.)	Colour: light yellowish brown. Compaction: dry, firm. Composition: fine silty sand.

Trench 11

Length (m):34

Width (m): 1.7

Orientation: E-W

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
1100	Deposit	Topsoil - Trench 11	0.30 to 0.36	Colour: mid greyish brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: medium silty sand.
1101	Deposit	Subsoil - Trench 11	0.28 (avg.)	Colour: mid orangey brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: fine silty sand.
1102	Deposit	Natural - Trench 11	0.08 (avg.)	Colour: pinkish brown. Compaction: dry, firm. Composition: fine silty sand. Notes: sandstone.
1103	Cut	Cut - Ditch [1103]	0.46	Orientation: NW-SE. Shape in plan: regular, linear. Shape in profile: regular. Break at top: sharp. Break at base: sharp. Base: flat. Sides: steep, straight.
1104	Fill	Fill - Ditch [1103]	0.46	Colour: light orangey brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: fine silty sand.

Trench 12

Length (m):34

Width (m): 1.7

Orientation: N-S

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
1200	Deposit	Topsoil - Trench 12	0.30 (avg.)	Colour: mid greyish brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: medium silty sand.
1201	Deposit	Subsoil - Trench 12	0.21 (avg.)	Colour: mid orangey brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: fine silty sand.
1202	Deposit	Natural - Trench 12		Colour: pinkish brown. Compaction: dry, firm. Composition: fine silty sand. Notes: sandstone.

Trench 13

Length (m):34

Width (m): 1.7

Orientation: E-W

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
1300	Deposit	Topsoil - Trench 13	0.26 to 0.37	Colour: mid greyish brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: medium silty sand.
1301	Deposit	Subsoil - Trench 13	0.22 to 0.34	Colour: mid orangey brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: fine silty sand.
1302	Deposit	Natural - Trench 13	0.10 (avg.)	Colour: mid brown. Compaction: dry, firm. Composition: fine silty sand.

Trench 14

Length (m):34

Width (m): 1.7

Orientation:

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
1400	Deposit	Topsoil - Trench 14	0.34 (avg.)	Colour: mid greyish brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: medium silty sand.
1401	Deposit	Subsoil - Trench 14	0.16 (avg.)	Colour: mid orangey brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: fine silty sand.
1402	Deposit	Natural - Trench 14		Colour: mid brown. Compaction: dry, firm. Composition: fine silty sand.

Trench 15

Length (m):34

Width (m): 1.7

Orientation: E-W

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
1500	Deposit	Topsoil - Trench 15	0.31 (avg.)	Colour: mid greyish brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: medium silty sand.
1501	Deposit	Subsoil - Trench 15	0.21 (avg.)	Colour: mid orangey brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: fine silty sand.
1502	Deposit	Natural - Trench 15	0.09 (avg.)	Colour: mid brown. Compaction: dry, firm. Composition: fine silty sand.
1503	Fill	Fill - Ditch [1504]	0.44	Colour: light yellowish brown. Compaction: dry, friable. Composition: fine silty sand. Inclusions: rare large angular platy sandstone.
1504	Cut	Cut - Ditch [1504]	0.44	Orientation: N-S. Shape in plan: linear. Break at top: sharp. Break at base: gradual. Base: uneven. Sides: steep,

Trench 16

Length (m):34

Width (m): 1.7

Orientation: E-W

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
1600	Deposit	Topsoil - Trench 16	0.28 (avg.)	Colour: mid greyish brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: medium silty sand.
1601	Deposit	Subsoil - Trench 16	0.24 (avg.)	Colour: mid orangey brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: fine silty sand.
1602	Deposit	Natural - Trench 16	0.07 (avg.)	Colour: mid brown. Compaction: dry, firm. Composition: fine silty sand.

Trench 17

Length (m):34

Width (m): 1.6

Orientation: NE-SW

Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
1700	Deposit	Topsoil - Trench 17	0.28 (avg.)	Colour: mid reddish brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: fine silty sand.
1701	Deposit	Subsoil - Trench 17	0.34 (avg.)	Colour: dark reddish brown. Compaction: dry, friable. Composition: fine silty sand.
1702	Deposit	Natural - Trench 17	0.10 (avg.)	Colour: mid orangey pink. Compaction: dry, firm. Composition: clay.
1703	Fill	Fill - Ditch [1704]	0.48	Colour: dark reddish brown. Compaction: dry, friable. Composition: fine silty sand.
1704	Cut	Cut - Ditch [1704]	0.78	Shape in plan: linear. Shape in profile: regular, deep u-shaped. Break at top: sharp. Break at base: sharp. Base: flat. Sides: steep, straight.

1705	Fill	Fill - Ditch [1704]	0.52	Colour: light yellowish grey. Compaction: dry, friable. Composition: fine silty sand.
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Trench 18

Length (m):34	Width (m): 1.7	Orientation: E-W
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Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context type	Height/depth	Deposit description
1800	Deposit	Topsoil - Trench 18	0.20 (avg.)	Colour: mid reddish brown. Compaction: dry, loose. Composition: fine silty sand.
1801	Deposit	Subsoil - Trench 18	0.12 (avg.)	Colour: dark reddish brown. Compaction: dry, friable. Composition: fine silty sand.
1802	Deposit	Natural - Trench 18	0.08 (avg.)	Colour: mid orangey pink. Compaction: dry, firm. Composition: clay. Inclusions: moderate sandstone.
1803	Fill	Fill - Ditch [1804]	0.27	Colour: mid orangey brown. Compaction: dry, friable. Composition: fine silty sand.
1804	Cut	Cut - Ditch [1804]	0.27	Orientation: NE-SW. Shape in plan: linear. Shape in profile: regular, shallow u-shaped. Break at top: sharp. Break at base: gradual. Base: rounded. Sides: moderate,

Appendix 2: Summary of project archive

TYPE	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	Ceramics, Environmental, Industrial, Metal
Paper	Drawing, Plan, Section
Digital	Database, GIS, Images raster/digital photography, Survey, Text

**OASIS terminology*

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology. Subject to the agreement of the landowner it is anticipated that it will be deposited at Dean Heritage Centre. Although no museums in Gloucestershire are currently accepting archaeological archives and the archive will remain at Worcestershire Archaeology until it can be deposited.