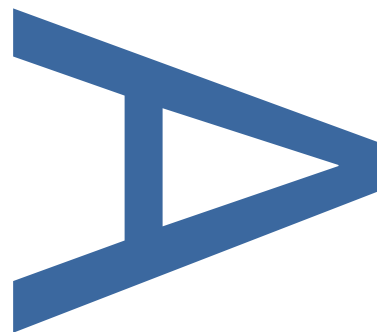
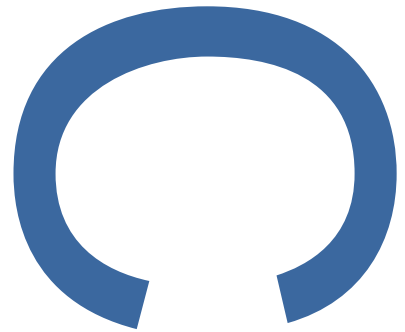


**LAND AT GARTREE, MARKET
HARBOROUGH, LEICESTERSHIRE,
LE16**



**SUMMARY REPORT ON RESULTS OF
THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**



DECEMBER 2021

PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

Summary Report: Archaeological Evaluation on Land at HMP Gartree, Market Harborough, Leicestershire

Prepared by Robin Weaver, Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited

13th December 2021

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (PCA) on land at Gartree, Market Harborough, Leicestershire (centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (NGR) SP 70449 88871: Figure 1) between the 1st November 2021 and 3rd December 2021. The investigations were commissioned by Pick Everard to inform upon the potential archaeological resource and impact upon it from the construction of a new Category B prison in support of a planning application to be submitted to Harborough District Council (Planning Reference: 21/01600/OUT).
- 1.2 The proposed development was assessed to be within 1km of three areas of Iron Age and Romano-British settlement, two “Saxon” Early Medieval settlements, medieval ridge and furrow field systems, and a former World War II airfield (RAF Market Harborough) which was later used as a Polish resettlement camp (Orion 2021: 4.0). A geophysical survey (Magnitude Surveys, 2021) highlighted several linear and curvilinear features with archaeological potential and accordingly the Local Planning Authority (LPA) required a program of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching.
- 1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (PCA 2021; Figure 2) for the evaluation was agreed and proposed the excavation of 55 trenches: 21no. to be 50m long and 1.8m wide and 34no. to be 30m long and 1.8m wide, representing a 2% sample of the site. The trenches were positioned to target possible geophysical anomalies, provide even spatial coverage of the site and to avoid existing site constraints including badger setts, Geotechnical works and overhead powerlines. Following a site visit on 10th November 2021, an additional 50m trench (Trench 56) was opened in response to a request by Richard Clarke, Planning Archaeologist.

- 1.4 All the geophysical anomalies were accounted for by either geological variations, modern land drains and made ground, or by archaeological features. Archaeological features were sample excavated sufficiently to characterize, date them and determine their significance.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

- 2.1 The basic historical sequence on the site is of 7 periods, as follows: 1. Geological clay, mudstone and manganese layers, 2, Iron Age period (see Figure 3), 3. Medieval/post-medieval furrows and field boundaries, 4. Subsoil, 5. Early 20th century ceramic land drains, 6. RAF Market 7. Use of tarmacadam and airfield debris in land drains, and restitution of topsoil/turf.
- 2.2 The natural substrate (**Period 1**) was encountered at varying depths across the site, and this was largely dependent on the effect of the airfield (**Period 6**). In the eastern part of the site (Trenches 1-9) and the central areas west of the brook (Trenches 36-39, Trench 52 and Trenches 41-49) the geological substrate was typically between 0.30m and 0.50m below the present ground level (Plate 1). This relatively wide margin is explained by the presence or absence of a clay subsoil.
- 2.3 The subsoil was broadly uniform in appearance and date (medieval to post-medieval) and always overlay the fills of furrows (frequently with only moderate horizon clarity). It most likely relates to a shift from ploughing to a pastoral land use.
- 2.4 The topsoil also varied greatly in depth – sometimes only the turf was in place – and held more obviously modern materials (broken ceramic land drains, plastic, window glass).
- 2.5 Plate 2 demonstrates the basic archaeological sequence, with the geological manganese and clay substrates (**Period 1**) cut by Iron Age ditch [1304] (**Period 2**; see Figure 3), which itself was shallowly cut by a furrow (**Period 3**). The furrow was subsequently sealed by subsoil (**Period 4**), and in this case escaped the 20th century impacts on the site (**Periods 5-7**).
- 2.6 Where airfield activity was recorded, (notably between Trenches 26 and 35) there was evidence that the topsoil and subsoil had been removed, with even

the geological substrate being truncated prior to the construction works. In Trench 32, for example, an unbroken early 20th century land drain was seen over 1m below the present ground level (Plate 3): significantly, no subsoils or buried previous topsoil/s were seen and it is therefore considered that the archaeological potential of locations where airfield activity was recorded is limited.

3 THE IRON AGE (Figure 3)

- 3.1 Archaeological activity (**Period 3**) within the area of the site was situated entirely within the eastern portion of the site between the dispersal strip and runway No. 1 in Trenches 12 to 14 and 16 (Figures 2 & 3). Trenches 13, 14 and 16 recorded an “L”-shaped Iron Age dated ditch, which contained pottery including fragments of Iron Age Scored ware and iron smithing slag and an associated piece of furnace lining. The feature was oriented north northeast by south southwest in Trenches 13 and 14 and spurred to the west in Trench 16 where it terminated. Excavation showed that the ditches were up to 2m wide and between 0.50m (ditch [1605]) and 1.30m (ditch [1304]; Plate 2) deep, with narrow bases. This arrangement was predicted by the geophysics and a similar western spur and terminus may lie to the north of Trench 13, which fell within a badger exclusion zone (together with another possible feature to the north of Trench 12). The location of a curved possible feature to the west was also tested but proved to be geological, as did a suggested eastern spur targeted by Trench 56.
- 3.2 Trench 12 identified two predicted features, both near identical deep steep sided ditches of similar proportions to those of the “L”-shaped formation (Plate 5) and also dating to the Iron Age. With the geophysical survey in mind, these two potentially form a small subcircular enclosure, which is further suggested to link to a second such feature to the immediate east. In the general area of these two features, natural mudstone and / or manganese accumulations (to the south and east) and modern tarmac ‘crush’ modern land drains (to the east and north) define the limits of this archaeological area. To the immediate west and north is the airfield dispersal strip and made ground, discussed below.

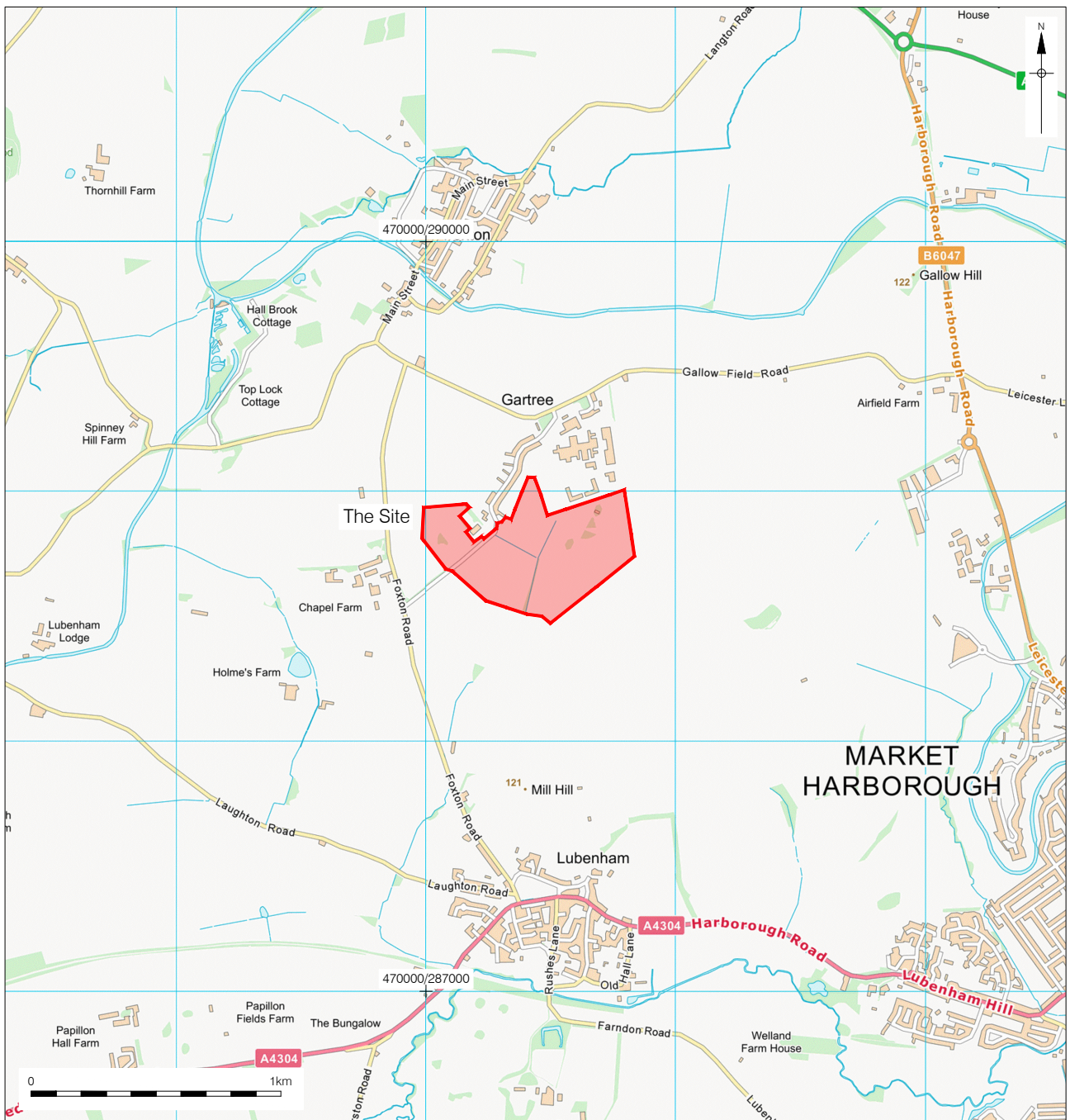
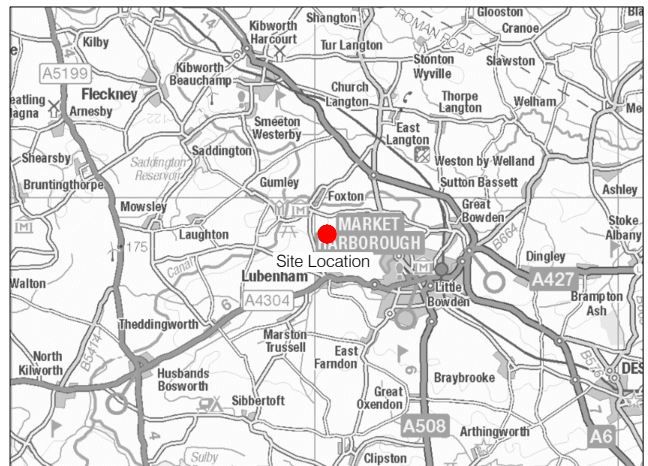
4 THE AIRFIELD

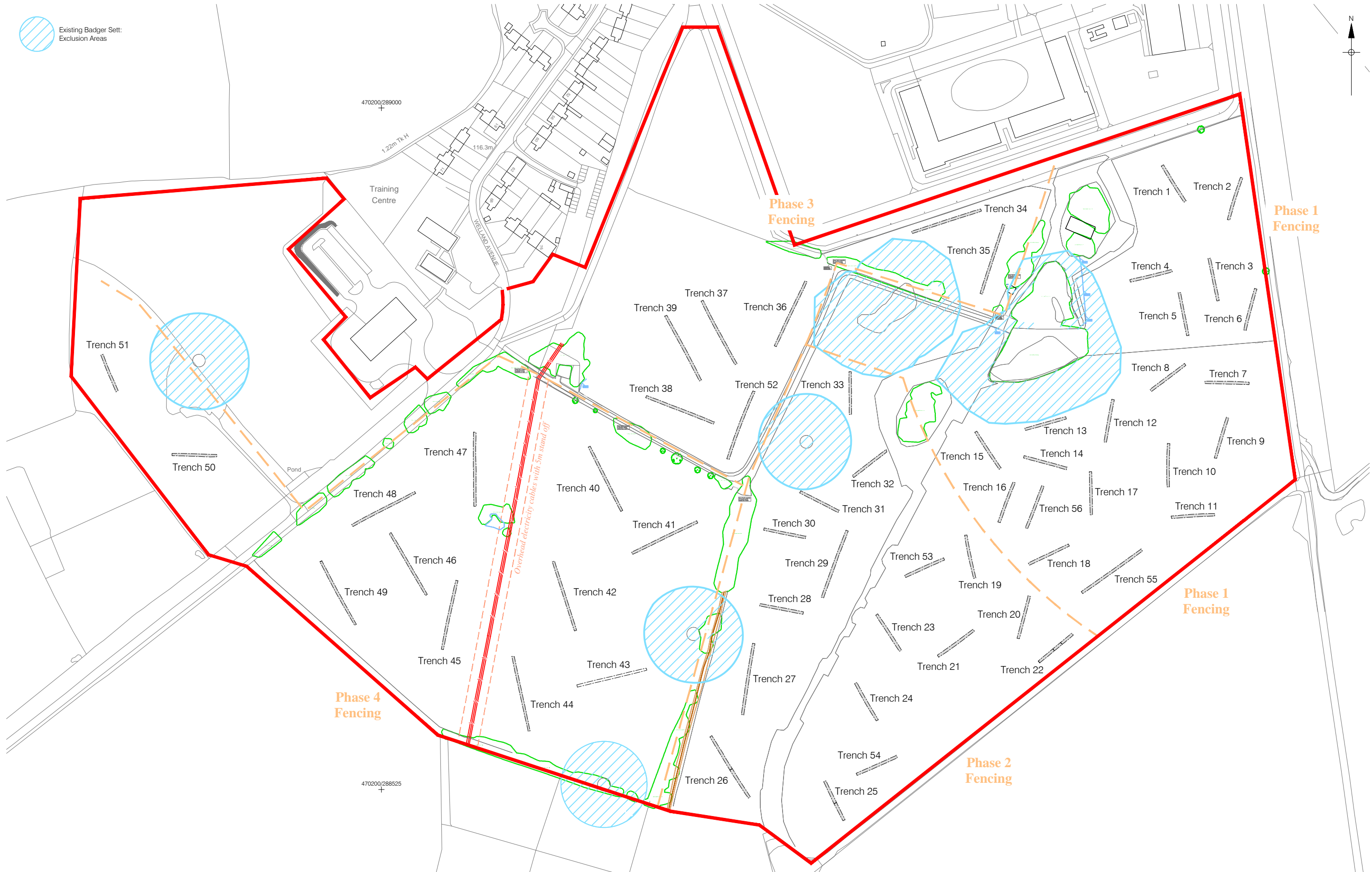
- 4.1 The evaluation recorded only one small intact airfield structure (Trench 32; see Plate 6). The edge of the dispersal strip was uncovered and showed a small square brick structure, of unknown function but potentially a lighting or communications point, given the proximity to metal cables.
- 4.2 More common on the site was made ground of two general types: a) that comprising layers of redeposited geological clay apparently brought in to support the construction of the dispersal strip (Trenches 26-33) and, b) layers of made ground and demolition material in the two locations in which airfield buildings were anticipated (centered on Trenches 34 & 35 and Trenches 50 and 51, respectively). In both cases, the resulting over burden was deep, more than 1.20m, and very mixed in composition. Alongside the western side of the dispersal strip, the composition of this backfill tended to be redeposited geological clay in near horizontal layers but often featured dumps of different clay material and inclusions of natural cobble and boulder-sizes ironstone geology. Made ground became noticeably thicker towards the south of the site, west of the dispersal strip. For example, in Trench 26 the made ground was around 2m thick at the eastern part of the trench.
- 4.3 It was noticeable that concrete was a feature of the two areas where buildings had previously been mapped, and in Trenches 35 and 51 large obstacles effectively limited the depth that the trenches could be taken (Plate 7).

5 NON-ARCHAEOLOGICAL GEOPHYSICAL ANOMALIES

- 5.1 The geophysical survey represented a generally accurate guide to subsurface features; few features were not caught by the survey, and these were insignificant. It was clear that the greater disturbance and deep made ground to the west of the dispersal strip represented an obstacle and signals in this area related to cables, concentrations of concrete and the like.
- 5.2 Another notable aspect of the results was that an apparently modern tarmac 'crush' had been used to form land drains (in Trenches 1, 3-6, 8, 11, 28, 33, 35 & 40) and incorporated in to 'dumps' (Trenches 22 & 30). This material,

and accumulations of manganese-heavy geological features, apparently gave the same signal as the prehistoric archaeology (collectively denoted by purple lines in Figure 2). This is explained by the high manganese content of some archaeological deposits (e.g. (1211) & (1305).), which were recorded in proximity to natural spreads of manganese, and, in the case of Trench 14, the iron slag-rich deposit (1406), found in an archaeological feature. Anomalies in Trench 11, part of 13 and 25 were accounted for by manganese spreads. A lesser signal (narrow blue lines), seen most often in the survey of Trenches 7-23, was also geological in character and related to mudstone bands (Plate 8).





0 100m

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Figure 2
Detailed Site and Trench Locations
1:2,500 at A3

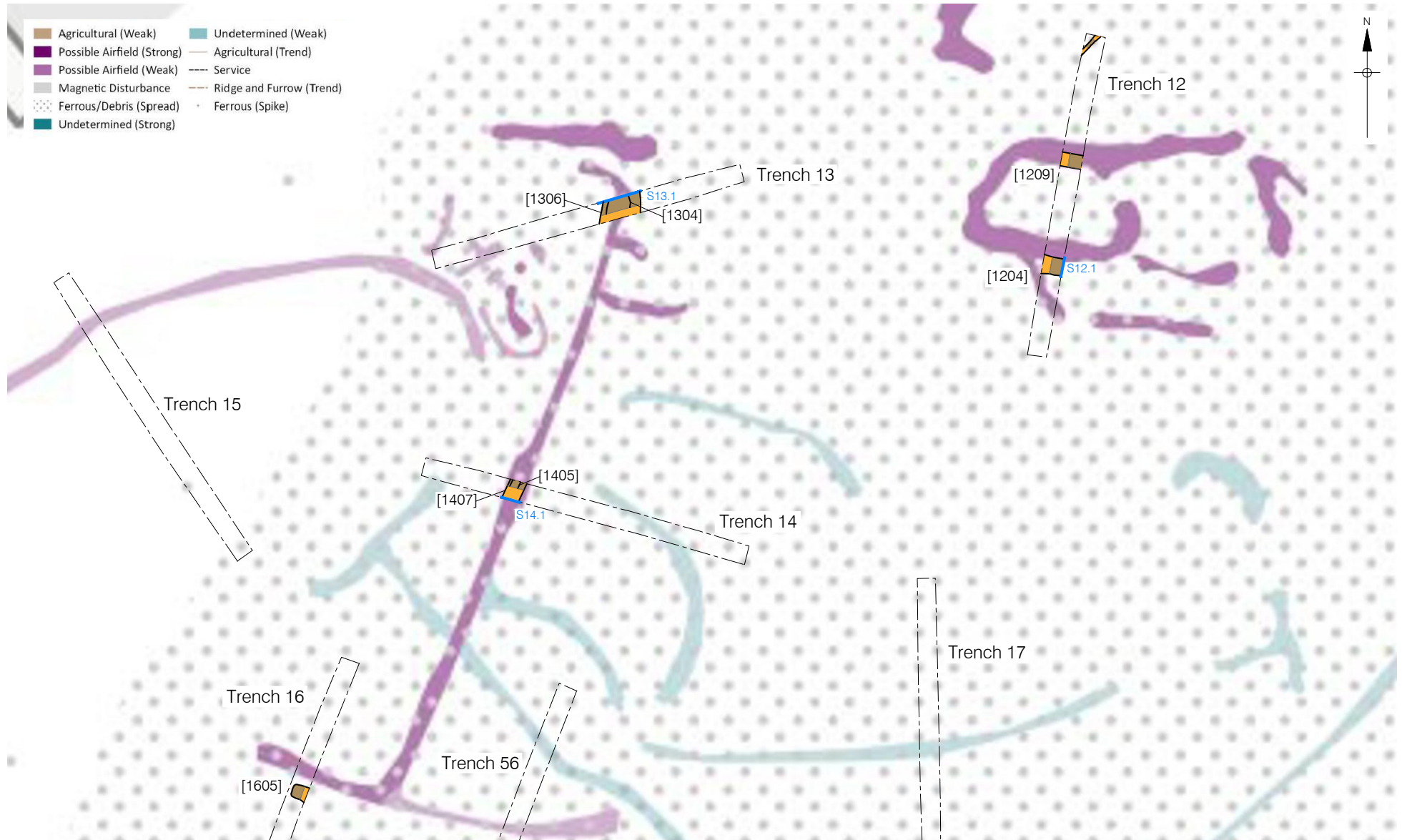


Figure 2
Detailed Plan of features in the Archaeological Area overlain on the Geophysical Survey Results
1:500 at A4

PLATES



Plate 1: A typical 30m long evaluation trench, showing a sequence of orange geological clay, with grey-blue mottle, overlain by orange-brown clay subsoil, sealed by topsoil/turf. In the foreground is a band of manganese geology, picked out by the geophysical survey. A modern gravel land drain is seen in the centre ground (Trench 24 - 1m scale; looking southeast).



Plate 2: The Iron Age ditch in Trench 13 [1304], overlain by furrow [1305]. Note the manganese-rich purpleish geology of the upper sides of the ditch, which overlays the yellowish-orange clay geology further down in this shot.



Plate 3: Excavation in Trench 32, where made ground (3203) and (3204) associated with the dispersal strip (see plate 6), directly overlays the geological substrate (3205) and an unbroken early 20th century land drain.



Plate 4: The iron slag-heavy ditch in Trench 14, [1407], which is part of the "L"-shaped feature seen in Trench 13 and 16 (1m scale; looking south).



Plate 5: Iron Age enclosure ditch [1204] in Trench 12 (1m scale; looking east).



Plate 6: Trench 32, excavated against the concrete dispersal strip (3207), foreground, featuring a small brick structure {3206} and, beyond that, layers of made ground (3202), (3203) and (3204), over geology (3205) (1m scale).



Plate 7: The northern part of Trench 35, which exposed truncation containing large broken blocks of concrete, amongst other debris. This area corresponds to an area of WW2 nissen-huts; see Figure 4 (1m scale; looking south).



Plate 8: Mudstone geology seen in the centre of Trench 18 (1m scale).

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