

EXCAVATION AND SURVEY AT CHURCH PLACE, DENNY WAIT, IN THE NEW FOREST IN 2016/17

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a programme of survey and excavation at the scheduled site of Church Place, Denny Wait in the New Forest that took place in 2016 and 2017 with a team from the University of Winchester. The extant earthworks at the site have been long considered to represent one of the royal hunting lodges built in the 14th century by command of Edward III, and is one of eight similar sites across the New Forest. While dating evidence was retrieved that confirm a 14th/15th century date for the earthworks, which share physical characteristics with other lodge sites in the forest, excavations indicate that the site was never the focus of high status activity. Of particular interest is the fact that the results do not actually support significant activity at the site of any kind, suggesting a far more temporary and occasional use of it, such as an ancillary encampment (eg for beaters), or as a meeting place. The work at the site unexpectedly also produced evidence of a previously unknown prehistoric enclosure underlying the medieval remains, probably dating to the Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age.

INTRODUCTION

Located immediately southwest of the B3056 (Beaulieu Road), approximately 3km east-southeast of Lyndhurst in the New Forest (Fig. 1), lies the sub-square enclosure known as Church Place. Being one of two ‘church place’ sites in the parish of Denny Lodge, it is often referred to as Church Place 2, Denny Lodge; or Church Place, Denny Wait. The other site is referred to as Church Place 1, or Church Place, Ashurst. The enclosure was first scheduled as a royal hunting lodge by English Heritage on 21st August 1981 (amended 19th March 1999) and

was assigned the National Monument Number 30269 (and subsequently given the current Historic England List entry Number: 1016526). The earthwork, as described by Historic England, measures approximately 35m N–S and 40m E–W, and is defined by a 4.5m wide, 0.6m high, bank with an outer ditch up to 3m wide, and 0.3m deep. The schedule describes a gap entrance through the earthworks on the south side, towards the southeast corner, which measures approximately 10m wide. Visual inspection of the site reveals that the low bank defines a level area, however there is no surface evidence of internal structures. The east side of the earthwork appears significantly weathered or damaged and is difficult to see in places. A forest track of unknown age runs across the enclosure from the NE to the NW corner. There is damage to the earthwork at these points, and where the track runs along the north bank. Heywood Sumner’s brief description of the site 100 years ago remains true:

“CHURCH PLACE, Denny Wait, is now overgrown with beautiful trees – beech, oak, and birch – and beneath the litter of their fallen leaves lies the square-shaped earthwork shown in the plan. It is so much wasted and concealed that its existence has been overlooked. Church Place, however, is a tell-tale name – suggestive of some sort of bygone occupation – and this place-name led me here, and to Church Place inclosure, Ashurst, on quests of re-discovery which were rewarded” (Sumner 1917, 64).

The site is situated within the Denny Inclosure, created in 1870 under the terms of the 1851 New Forest Act (Deer Removal Act). It is today managed by the Forestry Commission as natural woodland, and is located at the northeast end of a low ridge. The site sits about 10m above



Fig. 1 Church Place, Denny Wait (within the dark grey rectangle), in relation to Lyndhurst © Crown Copyright and Database Right 2015. Ordnance Survey (Digimap Licence)

the Beaulieu Road and the heathland to the northeast, located on geology of the Becton Sand Formation (British Geological Survey 2015). The only known previous archaeological interventions at the site appear to have been informal in nature. William Stewart Rose describes digging here at some point in the early 19th century (Rose 1807), in search of building material; and the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society, New Forest section, searched the surface of the enclosed platform for signs of West Country slate in 1968/9 (Pasmore 1970). This paper describes recent archaeological work at the site; implications for the eight New Forest sites currently scheduled as 14th or 15th century, royal, hunting lodges; and evidence of a prehistoric enclosure underlying the visible, medieval earthworks.

THE HUNTING LODGES

The New Forest, established as such by order of William the Conqueror in 1079, had already been a favourite royal hunting ground for some time prior to that. Documentary evidence for the hunting lodges themselves, however, is relatively sparse with the first recorded being that of King John's "principal house in the Forest" (Allen-Brown *et al.* 1963, 983) at Beaulieu. This land was given to the Cistercian order for the building of an Abbey in 1204, after which King John had a new house built at Romsey; though this itself was given by King Henry III to the abbess of Romsey in 1221 (Allen-Brown *et al.* 1963, 983–4). For much of the remainder of the 13th century the 'keepership' of the Forest was granted to the reigning queen, and apart from brief mention of King Edward I visiting the deer park at Lyndhurst; or repairs being carried out in preparation for another of his visits in 1297 (Allen-Brown *et al.* 1963, 984), there is very little evidence for the location of royal hunting lodges – if indeed any existed outside of Lyndhurst. It was not until the reign of King Edward III (r.1327–1377), the height of a conscious creation of an English chivalric tradition, that historical sources described the construction and maintenance of a number of royal hunting lodges, surrounded by a ditch. The king took

control of the Forest from his queen in 1358, and "immediately ordered the construction of four lodges, upon which, together with certain associate works at Lyndhurst, £328 were spent between November 1358 and August 1361. The lodges are described as those of 'the Park' (*de Parco*), Hatheburgh, Studley and Helmesley" (Allen-Brown *et al.* 1963, 984). Three further New Forest hunting lodges are named in later documents detailing repairs (Houndesdown, 1366, 'New Lodge', 1387 and Queneboure, 1428) though it is not clear precisely when they had been constructed (Allen-Brown *et al.* 1963, 985–986).

The location of the hunting lodges is not particularly clear, with the exception of those where surviving earthworks and place-names make an association very likely, as with Studley (Studley Castle) and Queneboure (Queen Bower, near Brockenhurst) or, in the case of *de Parco* and Hatheburgh, where the historical documents describe them as having been within Lyndhurst deer park (Allen-Brown *et al.* 1963; Smith 1999; Stamper 1983). It should be noted, however, that there are no known earthworks within the park that can be linked to the latter two lodges. The named lodge of Houndesdown was associated with Church Place Denny Wait by Smith (1999); however this seems likely to be an error, repeated in the Historic England description, as Church Place Ashurst is located a short distance southwest of the Hounsdown district of Totton (Stamper 1983). Of the eight medieval hunting lodges listed on the Hampshire County Council *Archaeology and Historic Buildings Record* (AHBR), seven have been identified through the similarities in extent and nature of surviving bank and ditch, while the eighth listing is an arbitrary one for *de Parco* (Table 1, Fig. 2).

The lodges are most commonly observed today as a platform of about 40m², enclosed by a shallow but wide bank and outer ditch. The 'Church Place' names for some of the earthworks seems to stem from a widely held, but mistaken, belief that they indicated the presence of a church that had been destroyed during the reign of William the Conqueror, in order to create the Forest. By 1863, when John Wise published the first edition of his *New Forest: Its history and scenery*, this belief was

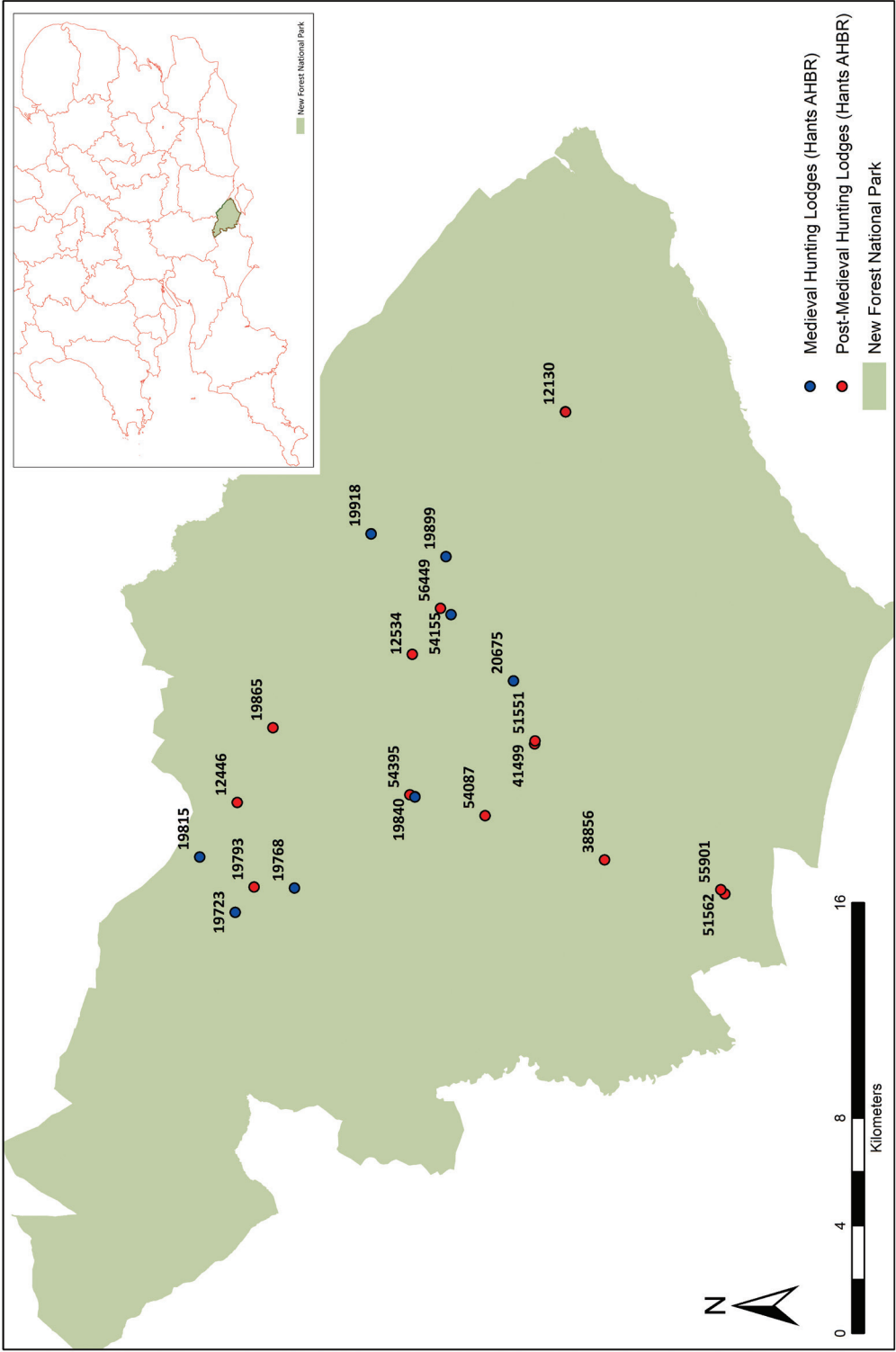


Fig. 2 New Forest hunting lodges listed on the Hampshire AHBR (see Table 1)

Table 1 Medieval hunting lodges in the New Forest

<i>Hants</i>			<i>Royal lodges with first and last known dates (Allen-Brown et al 1963)</i>	<i>Notes relating to the association of known sites with royal lodges</i>
<i>AHBR Site ID</i>	<i>Medieval Lodge Site</i>	<i>Parish</i>		
19723	Ashley Lodge	Godshill		
19768	Church Place, Sloden	Hyde		
19815	Studley Castle	Bramshaw	Studley 1358-1381	Stamper 1983
19840	Boldrewood	Minstead	Hatheburgh 1358-1440	Roberts 1993; Smith 1999 However, Allen-Brown <i>et al</i> (1963); and Stamper (1983) note that Hatheburgh was located in Lyndhurst Park)
19899	Church Place 2, Denny Wait	Denny Lodge	Houndesdoun 1366	Smith 1999
19918	Church Place 1, Ashurst	Denny Lodge	Houndesdoun 1366	Stamper 1983
20675	Queen Bower	Brockenhurst	Queneboure 1428 Brockenhurst 1362-1390 (NB. Possible manor rather than lodge)	Sumner (1915). He also suggests that Queneboure and Brockenhurst lodges described in documents are one and the same.
54155	“de Parco”, Lyndhurst Park	Lyndhurst	“de Parco” 1358	N.B. Precise location unknown – arbitrary NGR assigned by AHBR
-	-	-	New Lodge 1387-1480	Location unknown - Allen-Brown <i>et al</i> (1963)
-	-	-	Helmesley 1358-1381	Allen-Brown <i>et al</i> (1963) link this with Holmesley Lodge (ID: 38856) though no known earthworks

widely challenged. Instead there was a growing recognition that the Forest had never been well-populated on account of its "most ungrateful soil" (Wise 1883, footnote 33).

Prior to the work being reported here, the only formal archaeological investigation of any of these sites was by Heywood Sumner, though the observed results were not overly encouraging. In *Ancient Earthworks of the New Forest* (1917) he describes, under the section heading of 'Enclosures probably for pastoral usage', the earthworks of Church-Yard, Sloden Wood; Studley Castle; Church Place, Denny Wait; and Church Place, Ashurst:

"These four small enclosures compare in every respect. All four are situated on hill crests, and are similar in their size (about one-third of an

acre), in their square shape, in the slight profile and precise alignment of their banks and ditches, and in their gap entrances. It is most unusual to find such exact similarity in earthworks, and there can be no doubt that they were all four made for the same purpose and during the same period. The waste and consolidation of their earthworks suggest ancient, not mediaeval origin. But in spite of some knowledge having been gained by excavation, the purpose and period of these small enclosures has not been exactly determined" (Sumner 1917, 61–62).

Sumner goes on to describe his excavations at the first-named enclosure and, despite his undoubted ability as an excavator, it is difficult to escape the feeling that he had already decided what the earthworks represented and it seems to have partly determined his strategy.

"In 1915 I made partial excavations in Sloden "church-yard" by kind permission of Mr V.F. Leese, Deputy Surveyor of the New Forest. The results obtained were negative. No datable relics were found, nor signs of habitation... [] ... Two trenches were dug, 9 feet wide and 40 feet long, one [across the bank and ditch], the other through the entrance into the area. At the latter place post-holes, for a stockade gate, were looked for in vain, but the nature of the soil would soon obliterate such evidence... []... The soil here is clean shingle gravel, resting on yellow clay which is about 2 feet 3 inches below the surface. There is very little top mould. Neither moles nor earthworms – who avoid this soil – work in the silting of the ditches. The tree roots go down through the gravel into the clay... [] ... If the depth of silting in the ditch is added to the present profile of the bank, it gives the restored section as shown in plan rising 7 feet 3 inches above the bottom of the ditch. A stockade of 4 feet 6 inches on the crest of such bank would have raised a barrier 11 feet 9 inches in height to protect the folded cattle or pigs from wolves and from the elements. Such, probably, was the usage of this and of the [other three] small enclosures" (Sumner 1917, 63–64).

Sumner's interpretation of this class of earthwork was shared, unsurprisingly, by his friend John Peere Williams-Freeman, whose *Introduction to Field Archaeology as illustrated by Hampshire* (1915) includes a classification of Hampshire earthworks. Under category "F: Small Square Enclosures suitable for Cattle" he listed Castle Piece, New Forest; Ladle Hill; Sloden, New Forest; and Penley Copse (Williams-Freeman 1915, 341), though he does not include either Church Place, Denny Wait or Church Place, Ashurst in his classification. In noting the similarities across the four enclosures he described in his own work, Sumner also compares them with the site at Ladle Hill, near Sydmonton, Hampshire; and Handley Hill enclosure on Cranborne Chase, with which they have "points of resemblance and of difference" (Sumner 1917, 62). It is worth noting here that Handley Hill had been excavated by Pitt-Rivers in 1893, and he also interpreted it as a prehistoric enclosure (Pitt-Rivers 1898), however subsequent reassessment of the site by Stuart Piggott revealed the bank and ditch to be 12th century (Piggott 1936).

By way of a postscript to this section of *Ancient Earthworks of the New Forest* Sumner (1917, 66) describes how, after writing the descriptions of the four enclosures and his excavation at Sloden, he had discovered that Church Place, Denny Wait; and Church Place, Ashurst, are mentioned in the notes accompanying the publication of William Stewart Rose's ballad *The Red King* which accompanied his translation of *Partenopex le Blois, a Romance in Four Cantos* (Rose 1807). Sumner dismisses the potential contribution of these informal observations, largely because Rose is using them to support the discredited argument (outlined above) that a great number of churches had been destroyed during the creation of the New Forest. John Wise had already described some of Rose's observations (Wise 1883, footnote 33), alongside a note that John Yonge Akerman had unsuccessfully "endeavoured to discover the traces of the sites of dwellings in this district of the New Forest" (Akerman 1853). Wise's *New Forest: Its history and scenery* was possibly the source of Sumner's information on Rose's investigation also, however it is useful at this stage to return to the original.

"Digging in these spots [where the old pound of Denny formerly stood], I found very minute fragments of brick and mortar. I discovered the same materials, in the same state of decay, in Denny Wait, and in Church Place. In the latter, also, were dug up fragments of a species of rock, of which there is a great quantity at Burley, situated at the other extremity of the Forest, and which was probably used for a foundation; chalk and slate, cut thin, and bored with holes, like that now used for the covering of buildings" (Rose 1807, 205).

It is the mention of slate in this account that is potentially important, as the historical records describing the four lodges built in the three years from 1358 notes that "each of the lodges was of timber-frame and plaster construction, roofed with Purbeck and Cornish slates, included a kitchen and fireplaces and was surrounded by a ditch" (Allen-Brown *et al.* 1963, 984–5).

The connection between the presence of slate at some of the sites and this description in medieval documents appears not to have been made until 1968, after the Hampshire Field

Club undertook a fairly superficial examination of the enclosure at Studley Castle (Pasmore 1970). This revealed the surface of the internal area to be covered in small fragments of slate, which could be identified as being of the West Country type. Subsequent examination of the interior of Church Place, Ashurst also produced slate, however none was observed at Church Place, Denny Wait or Sloden (Pasmore 1970, 151). The discovery of slate at two of this group led to a re-reading of the original medieval documents, and the realisation that the previously observed similarities in the nature of the earthworks and their topographical situation (Sumner 1917), might be combined with the presence of West Country slate being observed at more than one location within the group. The consequence of this was that the class of sub-square Forest earthwork previously interpreted as prehistoric pastoral enclosures might actually represent the remains of the royal hunting lodges. As described above, it might also now be possible to include the Handley Hill enclosure of Cranborne Chase, excavated but misinterpreted by Pitt-Rivers, within this class of quite modest, but eminently practical, royal hunting lodges. This would be in contrast to those sites often described as royal hunting lodges that might in reality better be described as rural palaces (e.g. Tidgrove Warren Farm, Hampshire (Strutt 2006) and Writtle, Essex) some of which (e.g. Clarendon Palace (James & Robinson 1988)) evolved into very grand residences indeed. Roberts (1995) highlighted the discrepancy between the modern term ‘hunting lodge’, and the medieval ‘*loge*’ or ‘*loggia*’ by observing that the latter “seems rarely, if ever, to have been applied to principal residences, such as Clarendon palace, which were generally called ‘the king’s houses’, *domus regis*. Instead, a *loge* seems to have been a subsidiary dwelling situated at some distance from a principal residence” (Roberts 1995, 98). He goes on to note that “most *loges* [...] were satellite buildings of a humbler nature, situated in a park and designed mainly for the use of the keeper of a park or warren” (*ibid.*).

Since 1970, little new work has been done on the so-called ‘Church Place earthworks’ with the notable exceptions of an historical thesis on the medieval landscape of Hampshire (Stamper

1983); and a programme of earthwork surveys undertaken by the RCHME between 1994 and 1997 (Smith 1999).

GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY

The first geophysical survey at the site, undertaken as part of a Bournemouth University student project in May 2015 (Powell 2015), made use of a wide range of techniques (Resistivity; Gradiometry; Magnetic susceptibility; EM38B Conductivity; and EM38B Magnetic Susceptibility) of which by far the most illustrative was the data derived from Resistivity. Following the granting of a licence by Historic England under the terms of Section 42 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, the first stage of the University of Winchester project was to undertake a second Resistivity survey at the site in February and March 2016, but at a higher resolution (0.5m intervals, rather than 1m) and over a bigger area in order to include ground beyond the enclosure. Ground Penetrating Radar and Magnetometry were also used, though as the Forestry Commission routinely burn invasive plant species in the area the latter was of negligible use in determining the survival of archaeological remains. The resistivity survey predominantly picked up the extant earthwork (Fig. 3), with no clear indication of internal structures, however the Ground Penetrating Radar survey was the most informative and identified a curvilinear feature, underlying the medieval earthwork and possibly picked up west of this enclosure on the resistivity (Fig. 4). This curvilinear feature appeared to continue to the west and, in order to better understand its character, additional GPR survey was carried out beyond the initial study area. The results of the GPR survey enabled a limited excavation of the earlier feature, described below.

Initial earthwork survey was also undertaken alongside the Geophysical survey in February and March 2016, with 227 points being recorded with a Total Station; and 282 with a dGPS. During the period of the 2016 excavation a further 1128 points were recorded with the Total Station, enabling a raster image to be produced in ArcGIS. This image (Fig. 5) clearly shows the

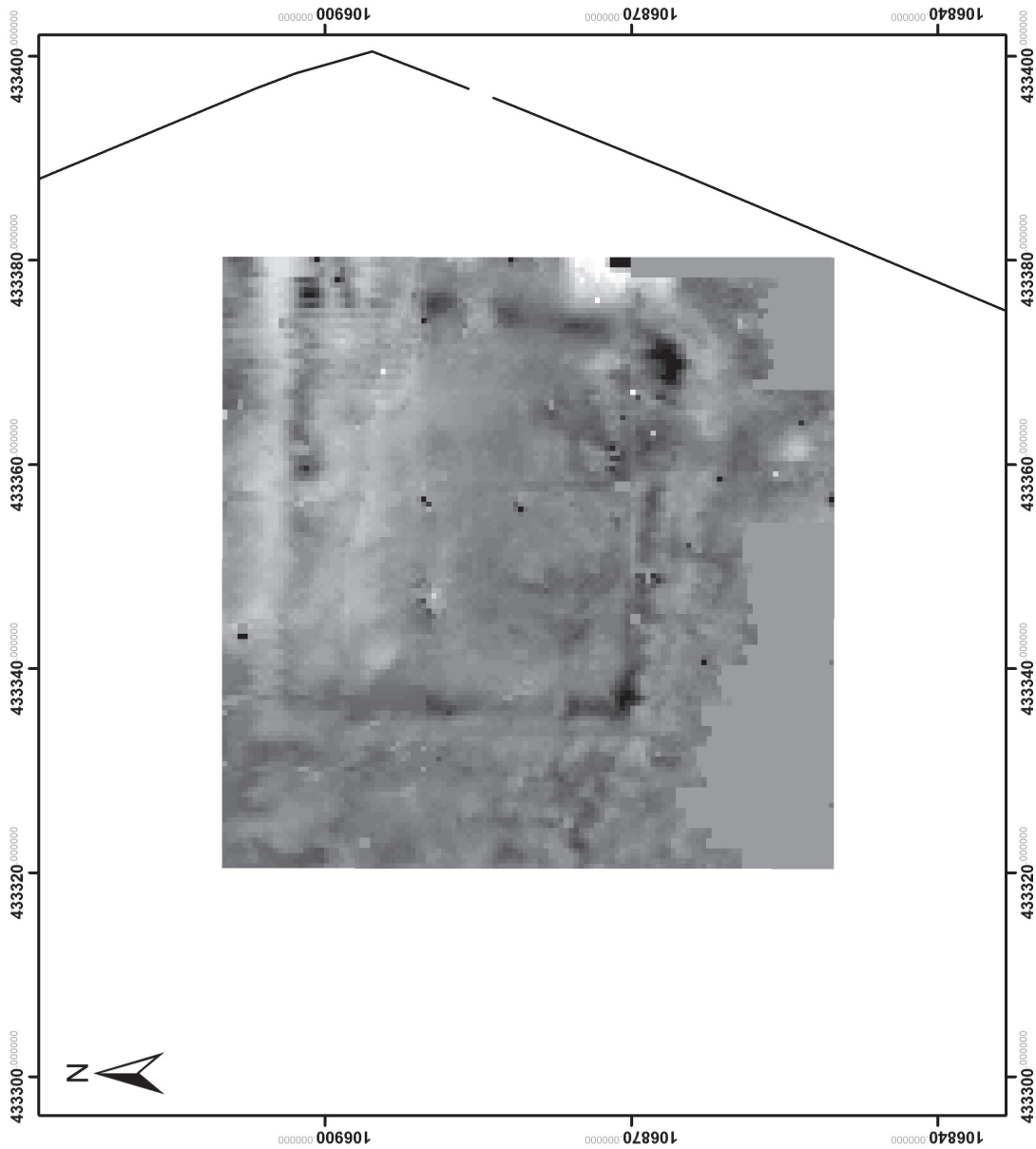
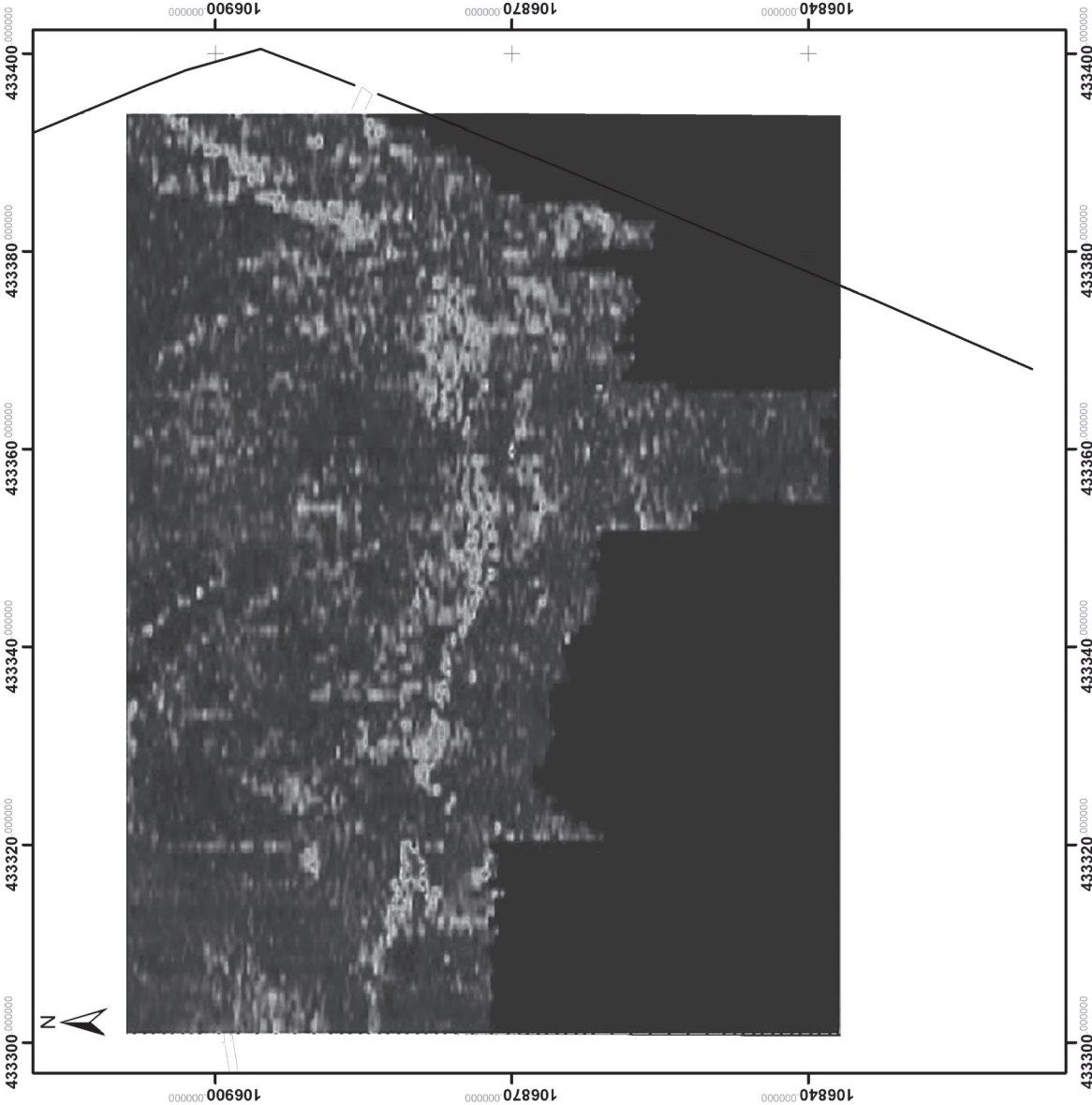


Fig. 3 Results of the resistivity survey, showing medieval earthworks

Fig. 4 Results of the GPR survey (0.3m–0.4m timeslice), showing prehistoric enclosure (light grey)



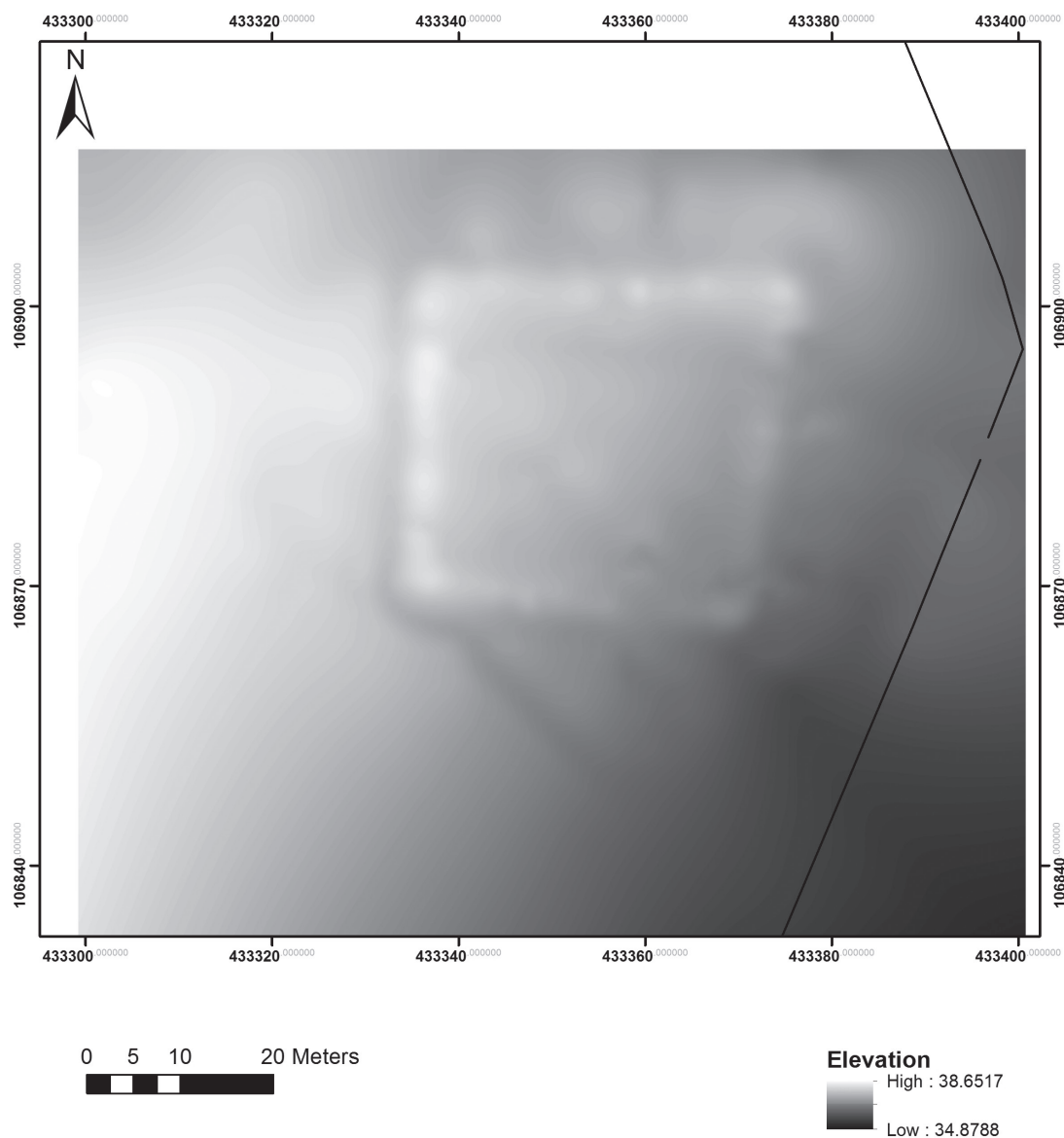


Fig. 5 Results of topographic survey

extent of erosion along the eastern earthwork, and around the southeast corner. Slight linear depressions running southeast, east, and north from the earthwork, may represent shallow gullies formed by water runoff.

EXCAVATION AT THE SITE

Archaeological fieldwork took place at Church Place, Denny Wait, in the summers of 2016 and 2017 with a total of nine small trenches being excavated (Fig. 6). These trenches

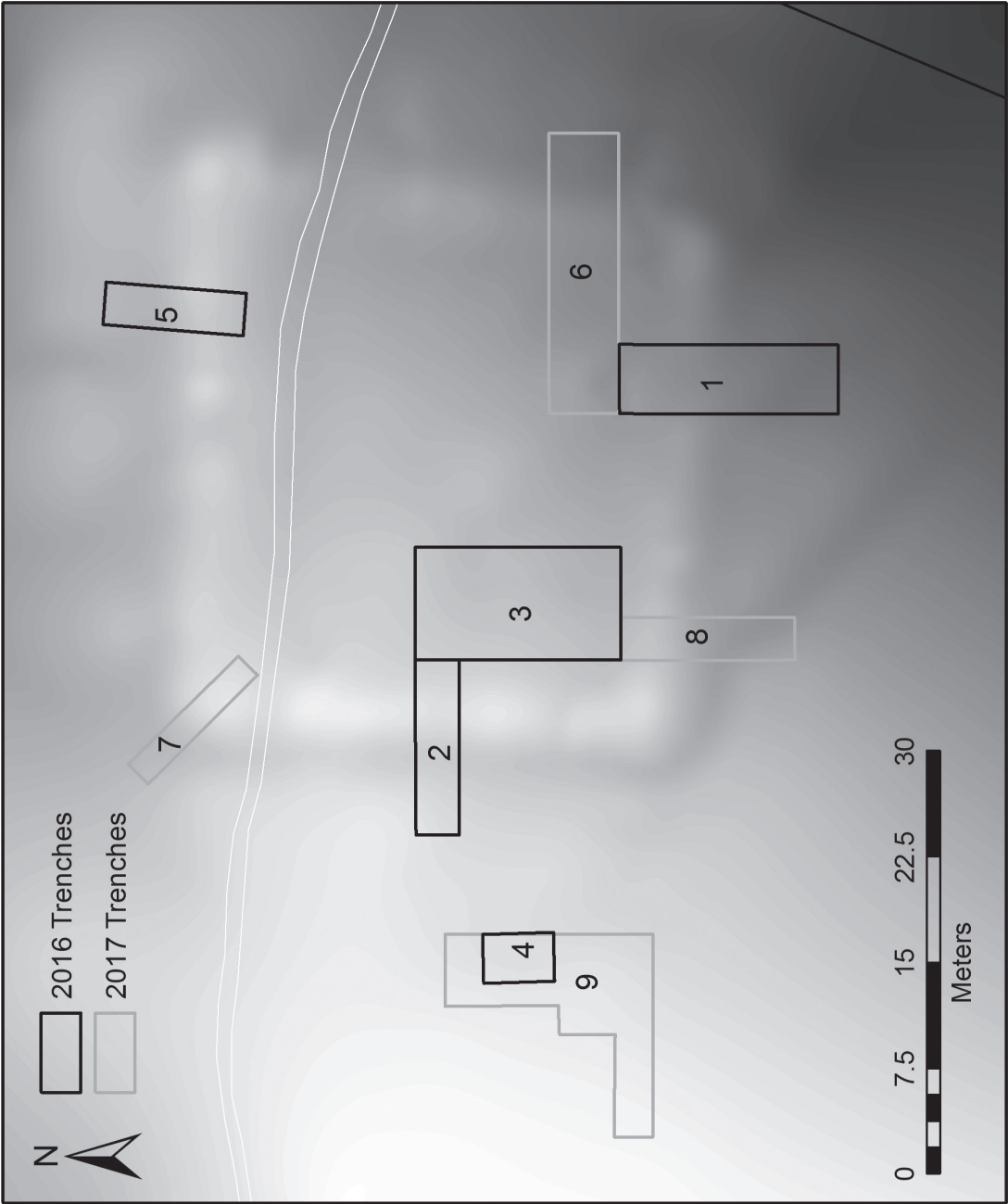


Fig. 6 Trench locations

were targeted in order to investigate one or more aspects of the site, including the supposed 'gap entrance' at the south; slots across the bank and ditch; the interior of the enclosure; and the underlying, curvilinear feature. The soil formation over the bank and interior of the enclosure was remarkably shallow, reflecting the acidic conditions in the forest, and often presented diffuse boundaries between contexts that more closely resembled natural soil formation processes than those more commonly observed on archaeological sites. Trenches were opened and excavated by hand. Following Natural England protocols subsoil, topsoil and the leaf litter were kept separate and backfilled by hand in the correct stratigraphic order in order to restore the habitat to its original state. This proved to be more time-consuming than anticipated, and undoubtedly impacted on time available for archaeological investigation.

Trench 1 covered a 5m × 15m area, and was located near the southeast corner of the enclosure, extending several metres south of it. It was designed to investigate the area previously described as a 'gap entrance' to determine whether the earthwork continued through or terminated; and investigate anomalies on the resistivity data. Trench 2 was 12m × 3m in size, and was located across the western bank and ditch with the intention of determining date, construction and form of the earthwork. Trench 3 was planned as 15m × 15m area in the southwest corner of the enclosure. This trench was designed to test for internal structures across approximately a quarter of the enclosed area; to 'groundtruth' results of Geophysical survey; and investigate an underlying feature running across the south of the defined area, visible in the GPR results. However, this area was reduced to 15m × 8m in order to minimise impact on a mature Beech tree at the request of the Forestry Commission. Trench 4 was proposed, on paper, as a 6m × 40m area to the west of the scheduled area, in order to investigate external features indicated by resistivity anomalies; and investigate the continuation the underlying feature running across the south of the defined area. The greater density of vegetation in this area led to it being reduced to 5m × 3.5m, targeted over an apparent intersection in the

curvilinear feature(s) underlying the medieval enclosure. Trench 5 covered a 3m × 10m area, and was located across the northern bank and ditch with the intention of determining date, construction and form of the earthwork.

Exposing an area of 5m × 20m, Trench 6 was designed to investigate the badly weathered eastern bank and ditch in 2017, as well as an area of the interior of the enclosure. It was also located over GPR anomalies identified in the survey and thought to represent a continuation of the curvilinear feature investigated in Trench 4. Trench 7 was located diagonally across the northwest corner of the bank and ditch, opening an area of 10m × 2m. It was primarily an opportunity to try to retrieve more dating evidence from the earthwork, but also to assess one of the corners where the bank appeared to be higher than along the sides. Trench 8 covered a 3m × 12m area, and was located across the southern bank and ditch to obtain additional data relating to the date, construction and form of the earthwork. Trench 9 was first proposed as an area of 14m × 14m, as an opportunity to complete the excavation of the curvilinear features first exposed in Trench 4. It was effectively halved in size because of a large tree and was opened as an area of 108 square metres with the southern and eastern sides 14m long (Fig. 6).

Results

The medieval earthwork

The results of work in Trench 1 were relatively inconclusive, however, in combination with the resistivity results (Everill & Ashby 2016) there is no evidence to support the theory that there was a gap entrance at this location. There are no obvious termini of either the bank or the ditch, instead the impression is simply that the earthwork has been eroded at this location, as much of this corner and the eastern bank appear to have been. There is certainly no evidence of any kind of surface that would have prevented it from cutting up with regular use, however the possibility of an organic surface, such as cut plant material, cannot be excluded.

It was hoped that Trench 3 might provide important evidence for internal structures of the medieval enclosure. Instead the only

archaeologically significant deposit in this trench consisted of eroded bank material. There was a rather ephemeral spread of gravel near the surface at the south of the trench, which could perhaps represent some kind of temporary working surface but this was inconclusive. Furthermore, all but two of the 131 finds were flint, and of those only two appeared to have been worked (see below); the rest were simply burnt.

Trench 6 offered another opportunity to investigate the interior of the enclosure. An unusual north-south orientated feature was found towards the western end of the trench, immediately north of Trench 1, approximately 2.5m long and 1.4m wide. Investigation of the deposits determined that the feature was 0.7m deep, with near-vertical sides and a flat base. Two robbing events had removed a substantial percentage of the fill, but what remained was a combination of silty clay and gravel. The degree of compaction was such that it was interpreted as having been deliberately prepared, and had the feature continued for a longer distance it might have conceivably been a wall foundation in what was otherwise soft sand. Instead it is possible that it supported a large post, perhaps even a corner post of a building, but in isolation and with hardly any material culture being found anywhere on the site it remains problematic to claim this as evidence for a timber building in this enclosure. A series of thin layers immediately east of the feature was initially thought to represent floor surfaces, but given their limited extent they were most likely short-lived and localised working surfaces dating to the time of the robbing events.

The bank and ditch was examined in Trenches 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8. In none of the areas where the earthworks were exposed was there any evidence of postholes that might indicate a stockade or any other structure along the bank, with only a small surface scatter of charcoal being observed on the top of the bank in Trench 5 (see below). Variation in the size of the earthwork were noted (Table 2; Fig. 7), which seem to reflect slightly elevated rates of erosion at the south (Trench 8) and east (Trench 6) and, to a lesser extent, the north (Trench 5). Bank and ditch width measurements from

Table 2 Observed dimensions of the bank and ditch

	<i>Bank Height</i>	<i>Bank width</i>	<i>Ditch Depth</i>	<i>Ditch Width (max)</i>
<i>Trench 2</i>	0.5m	3.9m	0.48m	2.4m
<i>Trench 5</i>	0.25m	3m	0.4m	2m
<i>Trench 6</i>	0.35m	4.5m	0.25m	1m
<i>Trench 7</i>	0.4m	-	0.3m	-
<i>Trench 8</i>	0.35m	3.1m	0.3m	1.9m

Trench 7 are excluded because it was orientated diagonally across the earthwork.

A charcoal sample was taken from a deposit overlying the bank material in Trench 5, in the hope that it might represent the remains of a fence, or stockade, from the time of its construction. Analysis of this sample produced a 90.1% probability of a date between 1520 and 1803calAD; 67.6% probability that it dated between 1520 and 1682calAD. A small piece of charcoal was retrieved from near the base of the bank deposit in Trench 2, and analysis of this has provided a 91% probability of a date between 1395 and 1450calAD. As an initial indication of the date of construction of the earthwork this would fit perfectly well with the known dates of the royal hunting lodges of this type, which were first constructed from 1358. In 2017, a single sherd of Laverstock-type coarseware, probably dating to the 13th or 14th century (see below) was retrieved from the base of the bank in Trench 6 (context 605).

The prehistoric enclosure

Although not the focus of the project, attempts were made to better understand the nature of the underlying enclosure seen in the GPR results (Fig. 8). Trench 4 was located over one of the bigger anomalies, to the west of the medieval enclosure, and it soon became clear that the probable wind-blown sand deposits which sealed the prehistoric features could easily be mistaken for natural, *in situ* surface



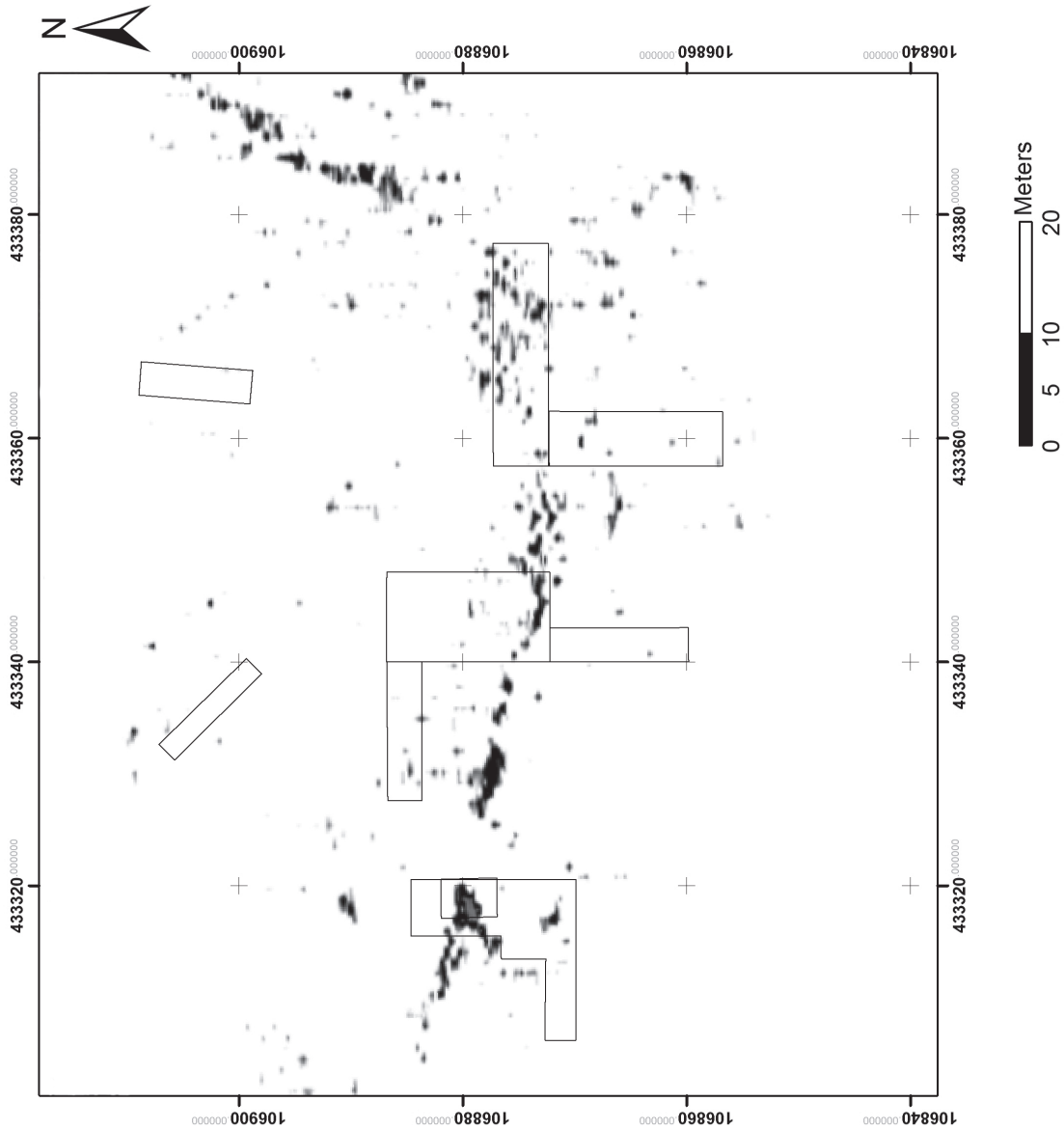


Fig. 8 A simplified GPR plot in relation to trench locations (see also Fig 6)

geology. Indeed, were it not for the GPR it is highly likely that these features would have remained undiscovered. Two intersecting linear features were excavated in Trench 4 (work which was completed when the area was reopened as Trench 9 in 2017), however the east end of Trench 6 provided the best opportunity to expose and investigate a bigger area. This included slots through two of the features, both of which showed signs of having been recut on at least one occasion (Fig. 9). No material culture was retrieved from any of the excavated features, though a quantity of worked flint and a single sherd of prehistoric pottery was found in various layers around the site (see below), which points to occupation of the site in the Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age. This is likely to be contemporary with the two Bowl Barrows that lie approximately 150m to the east, at the end of the same ridge.

THE FINDS

Ceramic material

Only six sherds of pottery and one fragment of late medieval or early post-medieval peg tile were retrieved during the 2016 excavation, most likely indicative of very temporary occupation of the site. The pottery from Trench 1 consisted of two sherds of Laverstock-type coarseware (11th–14th century); and one very small sherd in a coarse sandy/flint-gritted fabric, from a source likely to be local to the New Forest, dated to the 11th–13th century. Two sherds of sandy ware with very worn glaze were retrieved from Trench 4. One was part of a rim, possibly from a cup, in which case it is thought likely to be later medieval (13th–15th century); the second, of the same date, was possibly from a Laverstock fineware, but it was not sufficiently distinctive for definitive identification and could equally well be a Southampton type.

In 2017, a further 17 sherds of pottery were recovered. One sherd was post-medieval, and the remainder medieval in date. The pottery was recovered mainly from Trench 6 (14 sherds, from contexts 601, 604, 605 and 622), with the remaining three sherds from Trench 9 (one sherd unstratified, other sherds from contexts

901 and 903 respectively). Each sherd (or group of conjoining sherds) was allocated a Small Find (SF) number. There is also one small ceramic fragment, recovered unstratified in Trench 6 (SF40) which cannot be confidently identified as pottery and is probably best classified as ‘fired clay’; this is in a fine-grained clay matrix with moderate organic inclusions, and is of unknown date.

This small assemblage was dominated by sandy wares which are comparable to products of the Laverstock kilns outside Salisbury (Musty *et al.* 1969; Musty *et al.* 2001). Production of finewares (represented here by two conjoining, patchily glazed jug base sherds from Trench 9) appears to have been limited to the Laverstock production centre in the 13th and 14th centuries. The coarsewares, however, fall into a wider regional ceramic tradition of Wessex Coarseware which occurs across southeast Wiltshire and east Dorset as far south as Poole Harbour, and have a lengthy currency from at least the 11th century through to the 14th century (Mephram forthcoming). As well as Laverstock, other production centres for the Wessex coarsewares are postulated in the Verwood area of east Dorset, and somewhere in the vicinity of Poole Harbour or Purbeck (Hinton & Hodges 1977; Spoerry 1990, 14), and even in the Salisbury area, production prior to the establishment of the Laverstock kilns was probably taking place close to Old Sarum from at least the late 11th century. In this instance, however, there is no reason to suppose that the Laverstock-type coarsewares date any earlier than the 13th century – there are no examples of early tripod pitchers, nor any of the coarser fabric variants seen in 11th/12th century contexts in the Salisbury area (e.g. Mephram 2012, fabric E422a). There are two identifiable vessel forms: one strap handle from a jug (Trench 6, SF6), and a jar rim with a stubby, squared profile (Trench 6, SF38). The latter only occurs in contexts of 13th century date or later, for example in Poole (Barton *et al.* 1992, fig. 31, 1–13).

As well as Laverstock-type wares, there are two sherds in sandy fabrics with rare flint inclusions. These have a superficial macroscopic similarity to the Laverstock wares, but variants with flint inclusions occur in the area between Salisbury

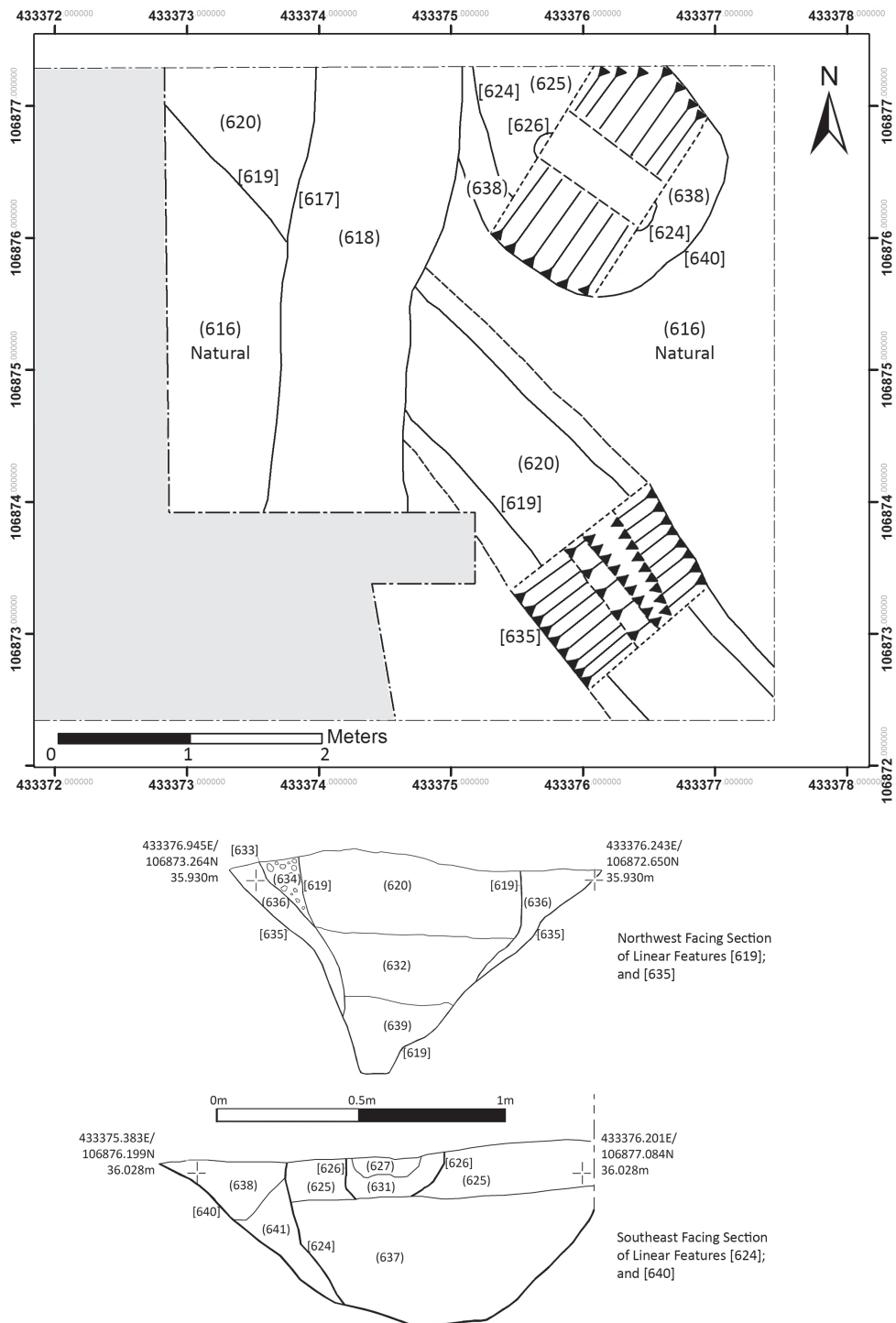


Fig. 9 Plan and Section drawings of prehistoric linear features at the east end of Trench 6

and Winchester, and may represent the products of local production. One diagnostic sherd is from a jar rim with slight internal lid seating. A date range similar to the Laverstock-type coarsewares is likely.

The single post-medieval sherd is an unglazed redware (Trench 6, SF7), which cannot be dated more closely within the period. A sherd of pottery was found in Trench 3 which had a coarse sandy/flint-gritted fabric. It was assessed as prehistoric, possibly domestic Beaker, though it could not be definitively identified.

Lithics

The vast majority of flint found during the excavations was burnt, but unworked (220 pieces in 2016 alone, when all were 3D recorded). However, 13 worked pieces of flint were recovered in 2016, and a further nine in 2017. Of the 22 pieces found in total, the majority (nine pieces) were from Trench 1, with six from Trench 6, three from Trench 9, and two pieces from each of Trenches 2 and 3. Raw material was mixed, but included five main types: a pale brownish-grey flint with a worn white chalk cortex; a pale yellowish-brown material with a worn sandy brown cortex; a dark brownish-grey material with a worn sandy brown cortex; a pale yellowish-brown material with a worn chalky cortex; and a mottled pale grey material with a worn sandy brown cortex. All were clearly from derived sources. The condition of the pieces was generally good, and most of the pieces were fresh, with only a little gloss and no patination.

Most pieces (15) were debitage, consisting of blades, flakes and broken flakes. Among them were two trimming flakes (Trench 1, SF14 and SF75) removing step and hinge fractures from core faces; and two large blades (Fig. 10), one (Trench 9, SF4) removing a step fracture from the core face, the other (Trench 6, SF9; burnt) rejuvenating the platform edge. Both blades were struck from bi-polar blade cores. The broken flakes include one (Trench 6, SF37) which probably derives from a similar blade-based technology. One flake (Trench 9, SF3) comes from a multi-directional flake core, and three (Trench 3, SF2; Trench 2, SFs 9 and 10) are medial portions of flakes from blade

cores. One broken flake (Trench 3, SF107) has been altered by heat. The remaining pieces of debitage are simple flakes and fragments, about which nothing can be said.

Retouched tools (see Fig. 10) comprise two scrapers, one microlith and a fabricator (Trench 6, SF42). One of the scrapers (Trench 1, SF5) is a small example reminiscent of thumbnail type, made on a small *flanc de nucleus* from a flake core; the other (Trench 1, SF1) is a long end scraper on a trimming flake from blade core. The microlith (Trench 1, SF66) is an unfinished example of Clark's form B1 (1934: 56).

A single core (Trench 9, SF1) is a rather crude sub-discoidal form, worked to exhaustion.

The assemblage is mixed, but appears to break down into two main groups: some rather squat, relatively crude flakes, broken flakes, the core and the smaller scraper, made on yellow-brown or dark brownish-grey flint, which appear to be later Neolithic or Bronze Age; and the long scraper, microlith, and one trimming flake (in brownish-grey flint); and a group of medial flake fragments (in yellow-brown flint), and the blades and blade-based flakes, (in mottled pale grey material), which appear to be Mesolithic. The fabricator could belong in either group, although the raw material is similar to the Neolithic material.

ENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS

Monolith samples

In 2016, a total of six sediment samples were taken in 0.5m monolith tins driven into the sections across the bank and ditch of the medieval earthwork in Trenches 2 and 5. One tin in each trench was sufficient to sample the bank material, and two overlapping tins sampled the ditch fill and the top of underlying natural sediment in both trenches. Four samples were taken in 2017, in individual 0.5m monolith tins driven into the bank in Trench 6; the ditch in Trench 7; and both the bank and ditch in Trench 8. The monoliths were assessed in the ARCA Research Laboratory at the University of Winchester. The bank material was very similar in the four relevant samples. Assessment of the ditch fill corresponded

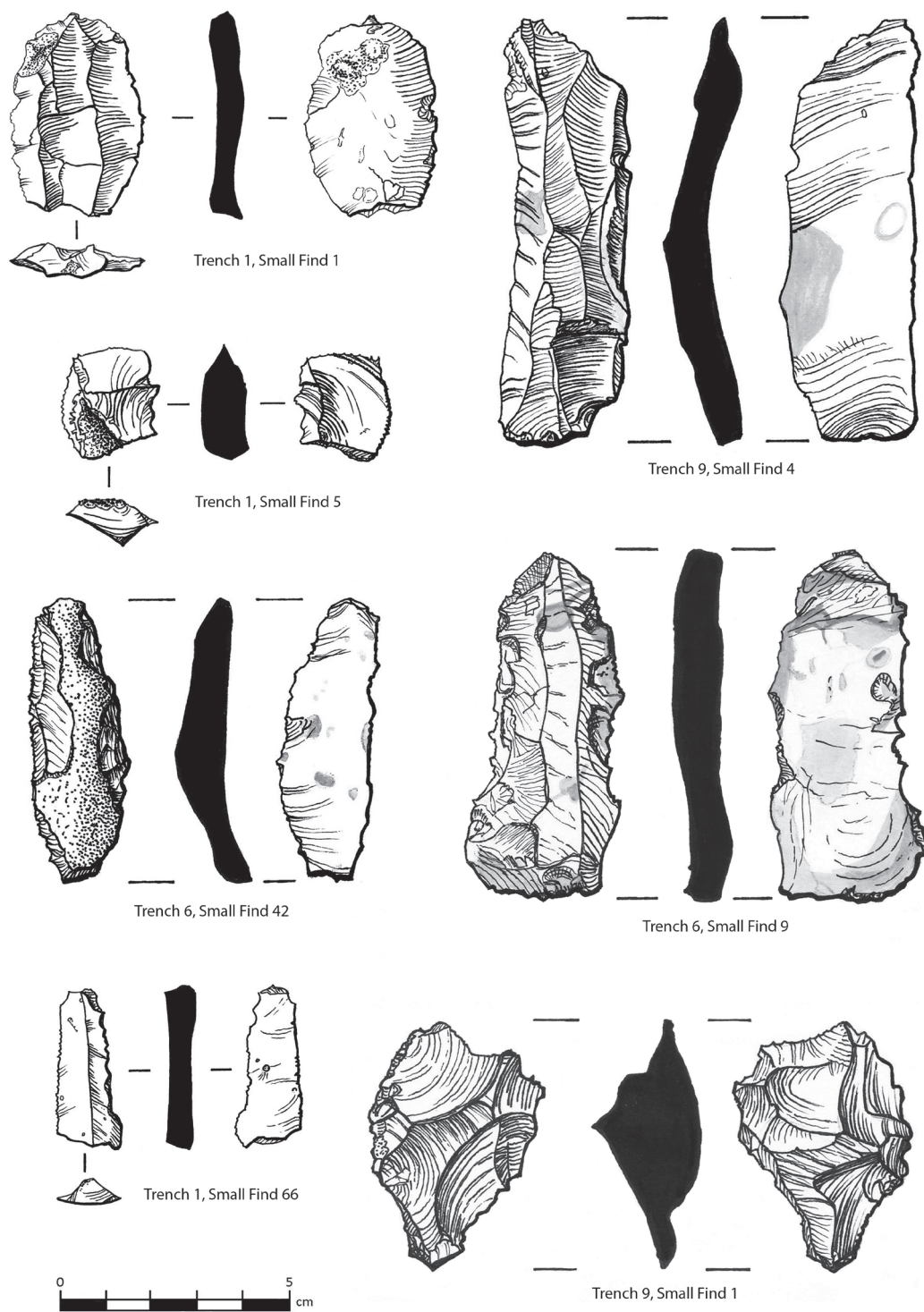


Fig. 10 A sample of the diagnostic flint tools found at Church Place

broadly with the observations made during excavation (two fills in the ditch in Trenches 2 and 8, only one in Trenches 5 and 7) and provided some evidence for the natural process by which the ditch was partially back-filled. Unit 3 from combined Monoliths 2 and 1 in Trench 2 (corresponding with context 205), was described as humic secondary fill derived from higher up the bank by rain wash eroding the O horizon after abandonment of the site. The underlying Unit 4 (corresponding with context 208) was interpreted as the primary fill derived from the bank side sediment mixed with darker humic material. Analysis of the ditch fills in Trenches 7 and 8 also suggests that the bank material had eroded into the ditch. No evidence was observed of phases of construction or use beyond that observed during excavation, and there was no evidence of any deliberate back-filling or modification of the earthwork.

Soil samples

The majority of the contexts excavated in 2016 showed low potential in terms of sampling, however four samples were taken from contexts which contained a high percentage of burnt material in case carbonised seeds were also present. Following processing, no seeds were identified. The sample from Trench 2 produced only a quantity of burnt flint and no organic material. Ferrous material was recovered from Trench 5 and, of the 11 fine fragments that responded to a magnet, the majority were angular or sub-angular, of a pale brownish red colour. Consequently it is thought that this material is not 'hammer scale', but more likely connected to the leaching of minerals through sediments, and the observation of 'iron panning' within some of the excavated deposits. Three further bulk soil samples were taken in 2017, however none of them produced any organic material or anything of note.

Phosphate analysis

Increased phosphate content within soil and sediment can be indicative of decomposed organic material, and discrete concentrations on archaeological sites are considered good

indicators of past human activity. It was decided to take a number of soil samples for phosphate analysis during the 2016 field season in the hope that results might indicate variations in use, such as stabling, in different parts of the enclosure. Small (<20g) samples were taken from surface deposits of the trenches associated with the medieval hunting lodge (Trenches 1, 2, 3 and 5); from archaeological deposits within them; and from the geological Becton Sand at the bottom of each of these trenches. The results were inconclusive, and it is only possible to note the very low levels (no higher than 200ppm) of phosphate detected in the samples, and to compare the results relative to each other. In general terms the results show higher levels of PO_4 within the current topsoil, with the quantity tending to decrease with depth from the surface. The range of PO_4 detected by the analysis was from a minimum of 18ppm (the geology in Trench 5) to a maximum of 200ppm (the topsoil, also in Trench 5). These low levels are, most likely, indicative of natural organic decomposition processes within an acidic, woodland soil formation.

CONCLUSION

Alongside the similarity of the extant earthworks with those New Forest sites also thought to date to this period, some evidence was found which supports the interpretation of this site as one of the lodges constructed to support royal hunting parties in the 14th/15th centuries. This includes the 14th/15th century date from the charcoal sample taken from the bank material in Trench 2; the presence of Laverstock-type coarseware (and possible fineware) of the 11th–14th centuries; and glazed sandy ware of the 13th–15th centuries. A thin and sparse stony deposit, located close to the surface at the southern end of Trench 3, might conceivably have been a crude surface, and a feature in Trench 6 had some structural characteristics. However, the limited quantity of material culture and absence of unequivocal structural evidence means that there remains some doubt over whether the site was ever actually occupied long-term, or if it was simply a temporary encampment rather than a formal lodge.

There is currently no evidence to support a high status function for the site in this period. The most likely interpretation of the extant earthworks is that they represent a far more temporary and occasional use of the site, such as an ancillary encampment (eg for beaters), or as a meeting place.

The results of both Trench 1 and Trench 3 were relatively uninformative, with no evidence of any kind of surface in the former – indeed, no evidence at all to support the idea that this was a gap entrance, rather than just the result of weathering/erosion of this corner of the earthwork. Resistivity results, and the topographic survey, also failed to support the idea of a planned entrance through the earthwork at this location. A post-medieval date from charcoal recovered from the top of the bank in Trench 5, and the presence of a late medieval, or post-medieval, peg tile from Trench 1, may indicate that the earthwork was modified (either as a deliberate act, or passively through traffic) in this period. Trenches 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8 allowed for the investigation of the surviving earthwork, and provided evidence that the bank survived to a maximum height of 0.5m, and a width that varied from between 3m and 4.5m. The ditch was between 1m and 2.4m wide, with a maximum depth of 0.48m.

In addition to the excavation, GPR survey provided information on the character and extent of a curvi-linear feature underlying the medieval lodge. Excavation in Trenches 4 and 6 targeted this feature, and revealed a prehistoric ditch with one or more recuts. The presence of Late Neolithic, or Early Bronze Age lithic material across the site; a sherd of possible Beaker pottery; and the proximity of the two Bowl Barrows at the northeast end of the same ridge, all point towards an enclosure of that period. The lithic material also indicates exploitation of the site in the Mesolithic, however it seems likely that the first actual settlement at the site dates to the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age, and that this

may account for the large quantity of burnt flint in the area. No evidence was found for later periods, prior to the construction of the earthwork in the 14th or 15th century AD. There is limited evidence of a brief re-use of the site in the post-medieval period.

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