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ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT



**SLIP END FARM, SLIP END
BALDOCK HERTFORDSHIRE.**

**Archaeological Monitoring and
Strip, Map and Sample**

**Ref: MA 345
Planning ref: 21/01358/FP**

VERSION 1.0

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Archaeological Monitoring and Strip, Map and Sample Report

Prepared on behalf of D Northern & Sons

by

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Summary

Minerva Archaeology is an independent practice specialising in archaeology and the historic environment. The company undertakes a wide variety of commercial archaeological projects for clients involved in housing and industrial development, pipeline and road construction, agriculture and landscaping.

In order to advise the local planning authority on the potential archaeological impact of a proposed development at Slip End Farm, Slip End, Baldock, Hertfordshire, Minerva Archaeology was commissioned to undertake archaeological works consisting of Strip, Map and Sample and Archaeological Monitoring across the site.

Significant archaeological features, artefacts and deposits were encountered during the evaluation. This included a ditch, a gully and three pits dating to the later Roman period. This demonstrates that the potential risk of impacting remains of archaeological significance, may be considered to be *High* for the Roman period and *Low* for all other periods.

Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared at the request of Mr James Northern, acting on the behalf of D Northern & Sons to cover a programme of archaeological work and recording carried out as a condition of planning consent for the construction of a new farm access road at Slip End Farm, Slip End, Baldock, Hertfordshire, SG7 6SG.

1.2 Slip End Farm lies northeast of Baldock and immediately northwest of the A505, centred at NGR TL 528565 237077. The site lies to the southwest of the Slip End Farm Yard and is bounded by Ashwell Road to the south and the A 505 to the east. Immediately to the west lies the Scheduled Monument (NHLE 1003549), maintained as an arable field (Figure 1).

1.3 The development consisted of the construction of a new access road from Ashwell Road to the farmyard, including a bell mouth and diversion of the existing drainage culvert where the new access road meets Ashwell Road.

Planning

1.4 In July 2021, the Historic Environment Team (HET) of Hertfordshire County Council, in line with Paragraph 199 of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), advised the need for archaeological work, to provide information on any potential archaeological remains which may be affected by the development of the site.

Scheme of Investigation

1.5 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for this work was produced by Heritage Network Ltd. (Hillelson 2021).

1.6 It was considered that the best strategy to mitigate the loss of any potential archaeological resource during the development of the site, was to carry out a programme of Strip, Map and Sample (SMS) of the bell mouth area, where the new access meets Ashwell Road (Figure 1), and a monitoring and recording of the groundworks associated with the new access road.

Site Background

Study Area

2.1 In order to establish the archaeological and historical context for the site, the overview set out below has been drawn under licence from the Hertfordshire County Council *Historic Environment Record* (HER), Minerva Archaeology's own records and other sources. The study area extends to a 1000m radius around the centre of the site.

Topography

2.2 The proposed development area is located on the eastern side of the A505 at Slip End in a shallow valley surrounded by large arable fields. The site lies within Landscape Character Area (LCA) 224, North Baldock Chalk Uplands. It is described as Rolling chalk landform, eroded by a complex of shallow dry valleys, surrounded by small rounded chalk knolls. The field pattern is described as large and arable with the core made up of regular rectilinear fields often with curving boundaries. The settlement pattern is described as nucleated (LCA, p. 148).

Geology

2.3 Locally the soils are described as shallow lime-rich soils over chalk or limestone on the north side of the site and freely draining slightly acid but base-rich soils on the south side (CSAI 2022).

2.4 The underlying geology consist of Holywell Nodular Chalk Formation and New Pit Chalk Formation (undifferentiated), a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 90 to 101 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period, where the local environment was dominated by warm chalk seas. The underlying deposits are described as alluvium consisting of clay, silt, sand and gravel and formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period, when the local environment was dominated by rivers (BGS 2022).

Previous Stages of work

2.5 There are no previous stages of work.

Archaeological Areas (*Alert, Areas of significance etc*)

2.6 The proposed development lies within Area of Archaeological Significance 35 (AAS35) as defined in the North Hertfordshire District Plan. It forms a strip, approximately 1000m wide, that runs parallel to the prehistoric track known as the Icknield Way and extends northwest from the line of the A505. AAS35 encompasses many prehistoric burial mounds, ring ditches and other enclosures, trackways, field systems and multiple linear ditches revealed from aerial photography. A high concentration of cropmarks occur at Slip End.

2.7 On the southeast side of the A505, approximately 900m to the east of proposed development, another Area of Archaeological Significance 38 (AAS38) covers a number of cropmarks and a bowl barrow around Deadman's Hill.

Conservation Areas

2.8 None within the site or within the 1000m study area.

Scheduled Monuments

2.9 The proposed development lies immediately adjacent to a high concentration of features that have been protected as a Scheduled Monument (NHLE 1003549). This includes a number of ring ditches of probable Bronze Age date, five rectilinear enclosures of late Iron Age or Roman date, a probable pit alignment, trackway, multiple ditches and a Romano-British cemetery.

2.10 A bowl barrow (NHLE 1012073), located approximately 900m to the east of the proposed development, sits on the summit of a knoll overlooking Icknield Way. Another monument, triple ditches at Galley Hill (NHLE 1003550), are located 300m west the bowl barrow.

Significant Heritage Assets and Historic Narrative

2.11 The immediately adjacent Scheduled Monument (see above) encompasses a number of cropmarks. HER 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2361, 2362, 6192 and 6755 refer to at least eight ring ditches (the probable remains of barrows dating the to the Bronze Age). Five rectilinear enclosures (HER 2358, 2363, 7895, 7896 and 7897) are indicative of settlement activity of Late Iron Age or Roman date. A probable pit alignment (HER 7892) and probable trackway (HER 7899), multiple ditches (HER 2317, 7898, 7900, 7901, 7902, 7903), a group of pits (HER 7893) have also been identified (Hillelson 2021).

2.12 450m to the north of the development, a Romano-British cemetery (HER 242), within a rectangular enclosure (HER 2363), was excavated by Letchworth Museum. It revealed two graves, one containing a single burial and the other, three inhumations and a further two skulls.

2.13 Further Romano-British inhumations were discovered in 1824 on the other side of Ashwell Road, approximately 190m to the east (HER 1321), dating to the 1st and 2nd century. In 1968 a group of 2nd century cremation were found during construction work at the same site. While laying a pipeline route across this site in 1991, 52 cremations and 10 inhumations were uncovered.

2.14 The laying of the pipeline in 1991 led to more extensive excavations. 120m to the east of the development intensive Roman occupation was uncovered (HER 15727). Two ditches were continuations of a large enclosure (HER 2358). Further ditches, a compacted chalk floor, possible traces of a timber structure destroyed by fire and postholes were also noted. The intensity dropped away to the west, suggesting the edge of the settlement.

Methodology

Introduction

3.1 All work was carried out in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Hillelson 2021), current health and safety legislation, and with ClfA and ALGAO guidance documents.

Fieldwork

3.2 The overburden was removed, under close supervision, to the first significant archaeological horizon or to the natural geological horizon, as appropriate, using a 22-tonne tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless bucket.

3.3 Spoil from the machining was scanned for archaeological artefacts both visually and using a metal detector.

3.4 All identified trenches were photographed and recorded using the appropriate pro-forma. Scaled plans and sections were drawn on drafting film at scales of 1:10, 1:20 and 1:50.

Schedule of site visits

Date	Staff	Hours	Comments
25.01.2022	KWM	8	SMR and OR area stripped, archaeology revealed
26.01.2022	KWM	8	Excavation of features
26.01.2022	LW	8	Excavation of features
27.01.2022	KWM	8	Excavation of features
27.01.2022	LW	8	Excavation of features
28.01.2022	KWM	8	Excavation of features
28.01.2022	LW	8	Excavation of features
28.01.2022	MS	1	Excavation of features
31.01.2022	KWM	8.25	Excavation of features
31.01.2022	LW	3	Excavation of features, pick up of samples
31.01.2022	GR	8.25	Excavation of features
31.01.2022	MS	1	Excavation of features

Post excavation

3.5 During the course of the excavations significant artefacts were recovered. As such, a physical archive was retrieved for post excavation processing and analysis, and the attention of appropriate specialists.

Archive Deposition and OASIS

3.6 The results of the present stage of work will be uploaded to the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS database.

3.7 On completion of all stages of the present project, it is intended that the full archive, including the documentary records owned by Minerva Archaeology, and the material records owned by the client and held in the care of Minerva Archaeology, will be deposited with the *North Hertfordshire Museum Service*.

Copyright

3.8 Minerva Archaeology shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provides an non-exclusive licence to the client for the use of such documents by the client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the Project Brief and the Written Scheme of Investigation.

3.9 Minerva Archaeology will assign copyright on completion of the project to the museum or repository undertaking the ultimate curation of the archive, but will retain the right to be identified as the author of all project documentation and reports as defined in the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (Chapter IV, s.79).

Fieldwork Data

Site Stratigraphy

4.1 The site at Slip End was divided into two areas. The new access road to the farm was subject to archaeological observation. Whereas the bell mouth, where the new access road meets Ashwell Road was subject to Strip, Map and Sample (SMS) (Figure 1).

4.2 The observed stratigraphy was similar across the site. It consisted of a mid grey brown silty clay topsoil, 0.15m in depth, seen all across the access road area but absent in the Bell mouth area, instead there was a layer of rubble, 0.20m in depth. Both of these overlay a thick layer of mid orange brown silty, chalky subsoil, this measured 0.60 – 0.80m in depth in the bell mouth area, but not fully removed in the access road area. The natural substratum consisted of light grey brown sandy, chalky clay with frequent flint inclusions.

MONITORING DATA

4.3 All ground reduction was monitored during the course of the development. This included the new access road and the bell mouth area, where the new access meets Ashwell Road (Figure 1).

New Access Road

4.4 The new access road extended from Slip End Farm in broadly southwest direction to Ashwell Road. The stripped area measured 120m in length, 8m in width and 0.20m in depth (Plate 1). The topsoil consisted of mid brown, silty clay with occasional modern rubble and small stone inclusions and measured 0.15m in depth. Beneath this lay a mid orange brown, silty, chalky subsoil including occasion CBM and measuring 0.10m in depth. The natural substratum was not reached (Plate 2).

4.5 No archaeological features, deposits or finds were encountered in this element.

SMS area (bell mouth)

4.6 This area was subject to SMS and was stripped to the natural substratum. The area was roughly triangular and measured 25m maximum in length, 8m maximum in width and 1.00m in depth (Plate 3 and Figure 2).

4.7 The overburden consisted of rubble hardcore measuring 0.20m in depth. This overlay a mid orange brown, chalky, silty clay with occasion CBM inclusions and measuring 0.60 – 0.80m in depth. The natural substratum consisted of light grey brown sandy, chalky clay with frequent flint inclusions.

4.8 Five archaeological features were observed during the course of the SMS element: three pits, a ditch and a small gully.

4.9 Pit [101] was the largest feature within the SMS area. The circular pit measured 5.40m in length, 4.90m in width and 2.02m in depth. The full extent of the feature was not observed due to the baulk of the SMS area partially covering the feature. It had moderate to steeply sloping sides and a concave base. It contained a single fill (111), a very compact, mid brown grey, silty, chalky clay, containing

frequent small to medium flints, occasional charcoal, pot sherds, animal bone and iron nails (Plate 4 and Figure 3).

4.10 Pit [102] was a rectangular shaped pit with vertical sides and a flat base. It measured 1.50m in length, 1.30m in width and 0.42m in depth. It contained a single fill (106), a very compact, mid yellow grey, silty clay, containing a moderate amount of small to medium sized stones and flints, moderate amounts of chalk and occasional charcoal, pot sherds and animal bone (Plate 5 and Figure 4). The high content of clay in the fill indicates, that it was backfilled rather than accumulated through natural siltation.

4.11 Pit [103] was an irregularly shaped pit with irregular sides and an irregular base. It measured 3.40m in length, 2.30m in width and 0.42m in depth. It contained two fills (Plate 6 and Figure 4). Fill (107) was a moderately compacted dark grey brown silty clay, containing frequent small to medium sized flints and stones, occasional pot sherds, iron nails and animal bone. It measured 2.40m in length, 1.50m in width and 0.42m in depth. Fill (108), the probable primary fill of pit [103] was a moderately compacted, mid yellow brown silty, sandy clay, measuring 3.40m in length, 2.30m in width and 0.32m in depth. It contained a frequent amount of chalk, small flints and stones, as well as occasional pot sherds and iron nails. The irregular shape of pit [103] suggests a tree throw exposed to natural siltation processes.

4.12 A linear feature was observed on the east side of the SMS area. Ditch [104] measured 4.40m in length, 1.30m in width and 0.33m in depth. It had moderately sloping sides and an undulating base (Plate 7 and Figure 5). Ditch [104] was orientated northeast to southwest and contained a single fill (109), a moderately compacted, mid grey brown, silty clay. Fill (109) contained frequent small to medium sized flints, moderate amounts of chalk, occasional animal bone and pot sherds. Colour and compaction of fill (109) suggest natural siltation processes, indicating use of ditch [104] for drainage purposes.

4.13 A further, smaller linear feature was noted cutting ditch [104] (Plate 8 and Figure 5). Gully [105] measured 2.90m in length, 0.80m in width and 0.21m in depth. It had moderately sloping sides, a concave base and was orientated north to south (Plate 9). Gully [105] contained one fill (110), a moderately compacted, dark grey brown, silty clay, including frequent small to medium sized flints, occasional chalk and charcoal, as well as very occasional pot sherds. The colour and compaction indicate natural siltation and drainage purpose is probable.

ARTEFACTS AND ECOFACTS

4.14 A number of finds were recovered and bulk environmental samples taken during the course of the works. The findings are discussed below.

Pottery Assessment

4.15 A total of 122 sherds, weighing 2045g, were recovered from six stratified contexts over the entrance to the access road, which was subject to a programme of strip, map and sample.

4.16 The assemblage was concorded, assessed and analysed by Helen Ashworth, of Heritage Network and Lisa Waldock, of Minerva Archaeology.

4.17 The condition of the sherds ranged from smaller abraded fragments to larger sherds, which were not in their primary place of deposition. The pottery was dated to the Roman period and comprised of local and regional and some imported wares.

4.18 The recording of the pottery was on existing pro-forma, which records by fabric, weight (in grammes), number and type of sherd (e.g. rim, plain body etc.) and vessel form, where identified. Individual sherds were examined through a binocular microscope at x10 magnification to determine the nature of the inclusions, any surface treatment or decoration and any other significant characteristics, which were noted of the form. The overall condition of the sherds from each context and the estimated date range, based on the forms and fabrics present, was also noted.

4.19 The largest quantity of pottery was recovered from pit fill (111) (89 sherds weighing 1087g) which represented approximately 72% of the assemblage by sherd count and 53% by weight. The second largest quantity was recovered from ditch fill (109) (21 sherds weighing 473g), which represented approximately 17% of the assemblage by count and 23% by weight. The smallest quantity of pottery was recovered from pit [103] fill (108) (1 sherd weighing 44g), which represented only 1% of the assemblage by sherd count and 2% by weight.

4.20 Of the identified fabric types the most prevalent fabric group was identified as hand-formed Harrold Shelly ware, which was present in three features [104], [105] and [101], contexts (109), (110) and (111). The Harrold coarse wares totalled 26 sherds weighing 662g, and were identified as of bowl vessel types, some of which formed a complete profile. This type of pottery fabric is dated to the late Roman period, 2nd - 4th century.

4.21 Hadham wares were also present in (111) which represented the second largest identified fabric group, comprising 20 sherds, weighing 214g. The Hadham wares included a higher quantity of oxidised wares (16, weighing 146g) compared to greywares (4, weighing 68g). This type of pottery fabric is dated from the 2nd century.

4.22 Small amounts of abraded coarse ware were also identified in (109) and (110) from kiln sites in the Verulamium region (7 sherds weighing 62g), as well as two sherds of Black Surface Romanising Grey wares, weighing 6g, from context (111). The Verulamium wares have been dated from the 1st - 2nd century.

4.23 Six small abraded sherds (weighing 30g) were identified as locally made grog-tempered wares of unidentified vessel types and four sherds were identified as Black Surface Wares (4 sherds, weighing 88g). Fifty-two small and abraded unsourced sherds of oxidised and reduced wares were also present, including two sherds of mortarium rim (42% by count).

4.24 A small amount of imported Roman finewares were also identified within the assemblage, which were present in four contexts; (106), (109), (110) and (111). These include; two small sherds of Samian ware, weighing 5g, were identified in (111) and likely belong to a platter form; two sherds of possible colour coated wares, weighing 2g, from the Nene Valley, (106) and (109) and a single sherd of Black Surface White Ware, weighing 26g, (109). The Nene Valley wares have been dated from the 2nd – 4th century.

4.25 From the assessment it would appear that most of the pottery identified within the features was supplied by local and regional industries including Harrold, Hadham and Verulamium. Imported and fine wares make up a very small part of the assemblage by count, 5%, and by weight, 1.5%, suggesting that in the vicinity, is a

low-status occupation site. The identified vessel types include those associated with a domestic assemblage, with date ranges that suggest that the deposits were established by the late Roman period.

4.26 The present assemblage forms part of a larger body of evidence for Roman settlement near to the town of Baldock. Specifically it provides a small indication of the potential date of archaeological remains in the scheduled monument to the northwest of the site (NHLE 1003549). Although no further information of archaeological significance is likely to be obtained from further examination of this assemblage as a singularity, it should be considered alongside other future work in the vicinity of the scheduled monument.

Animal Bone

4.27 A total of 84 animal bone elements weighing 1.418kg were collected from stratified contexts over the site. On the whole, the assemblage was in fair condition, however all elements were fragmentary. Animal bone was present in the fills of pits [101], [102], [103] and ditch [104].

4.28 Fill (106) of pit [102] contained two broken animal bone elements weighing 55g. This comprised a bovine unfused, proximal tibia element with evidence of gnawing, as well as a small, mammalian unidentifiable element.

4.29 Fill (107) of pit [103] contained 18 broken animal bone elements weighing 268g. This included one molar of probable bovine origin. The assemblage comprised a bovine molar, a mandibular hinge from a pig, a cervical bovine vertebrae, three elements of mammalian shaft bone, as well as a number of larger and smaller split and fragmented shaft bones. All elements show signs of gnawing.

4.30 Fill (109) of ditch [104] contained 7 elements of animal bone weighing 185g. These included a probable bovine molar, a metacarpus of a pig and five unidentifiable split and broken bone elements. Signs of gnawing were present on all bone elements.

4.31 Fill (111) of pit [101] contained 57 elements of animal bone weighing 910g. These included an equine metacarpus, a canine femur, a fused bovine proximal tibia and an equine molar. The rest consisted of fragmented and split large and small mammalian bone elements. Evidence of gnawing was present in most elements.

4.32 The splitting of bones and signs of gnawing suggest domestic activity. Due to the fragmentary nature of the assemblage and the poor condition of the bone, no further work proposed.

Ceramic Building Material

4.33 Eleven elements of CBM were recovered, weighing 1485 grammes, were recovered. Two elements originated from fill (107) of pit [103] and nine from fill (111) of pit [101]. Both contexts have been dated to the Roman period. All elements are only preserved as fragments. The largest piece measured 10cm at it's maxima. At least three of the CBM fragments from fill (111) can be identified as fragments of Roman tegula, the rest are not identifiable. No further work is proposed for this assemblage.

Iron Objects

4.34 Eleven elements of Iron objects, weighing 190 grammes, were recovered from five stratified contexts, (106), (107), (108), (109), (111).

4.35 The iron objects were found to comprise predominantly of iron nails, from contexts which have been dated to the Roman period.

Miscellaneous

4.36 Three fragments of stone were recovered from the present site, weighing 1075g. One from pit [101], one from pit [102] and one from ditch [104]. None of the stones appear to be local and are of three different types of unidentified rock. They do not appear to be worked.

4.37 Two fragments of oyster shell, weighing 20 grammes, were recovered from contexts (107) and (111). The presence of shell in the bulk assemblage provides further evidence of domestic activity. No further work is proposed on this small assemblage.

4.38 A single piece of flint, weighing 20 grammes, was recovered from context (111). The flint measures 4.2cm at its maxima and although it is not convincingly worked it may be residual debitage. No further work is proposed on this small assemblage.

4.39 A single piece of slag, weighing 140 grammes, was recovered from context (111). Its presence indicates some ironworking in the wider area. No further work is proposed on this small assemblage.

4.40 No other artefacts were observed or collected through the duration of the evaluation.

Environmental samples

4.41 During the course of the works, five bulk samples were taken for environmental archaeological analysis. The samples were processed and analysed by John Summers (2022) of Wardell Armstrong LLP. The samples were found to be rich in carbonised plant remains, providing evidence of Roman arable processing activity in the vicinity of the samples deposits.

4.42 The preservation of plant macrofossils was by carbonisation only, with no evidence for anaerobic waterlogging or mineralisation. Shells of terrestrial molluscs were well preserved and numerous, in keeping with the local calcareous conditions.

4.43 Sample <3> taken from fill (109) of ditch [104] showed remains consistent with debris from an agricultural kiln. The analysis showed bulk de-dehusking waste, that was often used to fuel a wide range of Roman kilns and ovens. Germinated grain was also present, indicating a role in the drying of malt, although a more general-purpose grain drying kiln is also possible.

4.44 Sample <1> taken from fill (107) of pit [103] and sample <2> taken from fill (106) of pit [102] also contained a range of carbonised grains and chaff, however in lower density, indicating most likely scattered debris from arable processing activities in the vicinity.

4.45 No chaff remains were found in samples <4> and <5> taken from fill (110) of gully [105] and fill (111) of pit [101], respectively. Fill (110) of gully [105] showed only scattered carbonised background debris. Fill (111) of pit [101] was richer and contained carbonised grains of hulled barley among others and is more likely derived from domestic activity.

4.46 Molluscs were abundant in the assemblage, with a range of taxa indicative of tall damp vegetation and ground litter in waste ground or scrub habitats. Other taxa found in samples could indicate a short-turf calcareous grassland which is likely to have existed in the vicinity.

4.47 The environmental analysis concludes that the remains are consistent with Roman arable processing activities in the near vicinity. In particular the deposit of bulk de-husking debris in fill (109) in ditch [104] suggests the presence of a possible malt drying kiln somewhere nearby but beyond the present limit of excavation. Such remains indicate that the present site is located in proximity to an area of Roman farm workings, perhaps of a farmstead engaged in arable cultivation and the preparation of grain for storage or possible export.

Discussion

Aims and Objectives

5.1 The aims of the present investigation have been to monitor all groundworks associated with the development, to ensure that an appropriate record is made of any archaeological features and deposits that were directly impacted by the development groundworks, in accordance with the research criteria of the project.

5.2 It was considered that the investigation had the potential to contribute to a number of regional research topics, and, in particular, to an increased understanding of activity along the route of the Icknield Way from the prehistoric period onwards. It also had the potential to contribute a better understanding of rural settlement and agricultural and mortuary practices in the late Iron Age and Roman periods in the hinterland around Baldock.

Evidence

5.3 The present site formed a field to the south of Slip End Farm. A new access road was stripped from the farm to Ashwell Road. Where the new access road meets Ashwell Road, an bell mouth shaped area was stripped to the natural substratum to divert the existing road drainage.

5.4 The stratigraphy of the new access road comprised topsoil above subsoil. The bell mouth area consisted of rubble hardcore and mixed topsoil above a thick layer of subsoil overlaying the natural chalky substratum. The thickness of the subsoil layer could indicate intensive ploughing. However, topsoil and subsoil finds were limited.

5.5 No archaeological evidence was noted in the area of the new access road.

5.6 Five features, three pits and two linear features, were recorded in the bell mouth area.

5.7 Pit [101] contained a single fill, suggesting a rapid siltation process or a possible backfill event. The environmental analysis indicated the remains of domestic activity. The assessment of the pottery found in the pit, indicated a later Roman date, 2nd to 4th century.

5.8 Pit [102] contained a clay fill (106), in contrast to the chalky natural substratum and the other features that contained chalky fills. This and the square shape in plan and flat base could indicate the clay fill was brought in from slightly further afield and was not subject to the same natural siltation processes as the other features. The environmental analysis showed a lower density of carbonised remains. The recovered pot sherds indicate a 2nd to 4th century date.

5.9 Pit [103] contained two fills (107) and (108). The irregular shape of pit [102] indicates a possible tree throw. Only four pot sherds were recovered from this feature that could not be assigned. The environmental analysis for fill (107) showed a low density of carbonised remains.

5.10 Ditch [104] is broadly on the same alignment (orientated southwest to northeast) as the ditch systems and enclosure within the adjacent scheduled monument, as well as roughly parallel to Icknield Way, the modern A505. The pot sherds recovered from fill (109) indicate a 1st to 4th century date, with the majority

being of later Roman date. The environmental assessment suggested the presence of a malt drying kiln in the vicinity.

5.11 Gully [105], that cuts ditch [104] contained a single fill (110). The environmental analysis showed a low density of carbonised remains and the assessment of the recovered pot sherds indicated a 2nd to 4th century date.

5.12 The pottery assessment concluded that the majority of the recovered pot sherds were supplied by local and regional industries, including Harrold, Hadham and Verulamium. Only a small part of the assemblage were made up of imported or fine wares, indicating a low-status occupation site. The vessel types can be associated with domestic assemblage dating to the later Roman period.

5.13 The features and finds fit in with known evidence of Roman agricultural activity in the vicinity and suggest that the present site was part of a rural Roman settlement or farmstead.

Conclusion

5.14 The investigation of the present site had the aim of gathering data that might increase our understanding of the origins and development of Slip End, Baldock from the prehistoric period onwards, in particular:

- activity along the route of the Icknield Way from the prehistoric period onward;
- rural settlement and agricultural practices in the late Iron Age and Roman periods in the hinterland around Baldock;
- mortuary practices in the Roman period in the hinterland around Baldock.

5.15 Evidence for archaeological activity, in particular from the Roman period, was identified in the 1000m study area. During the course of the archaeological work, five features were identified and dated to the later Roman period. The features and their finds indicated domestic and agricultural activity during this period.

5.16 This demonstrates that the potential risk of the development impacting remains of archaeological significance, may be considered to be *High* for the Roman period and *Low* for all other periods.

Confidence Rating

5.17 During the course of the fieldwork, the conditions were acceptable for the identification of potential features and deposits, and for their investigation. As such the confidence rating for the work may be considered to be *High*.

Bibliography

Site Specific

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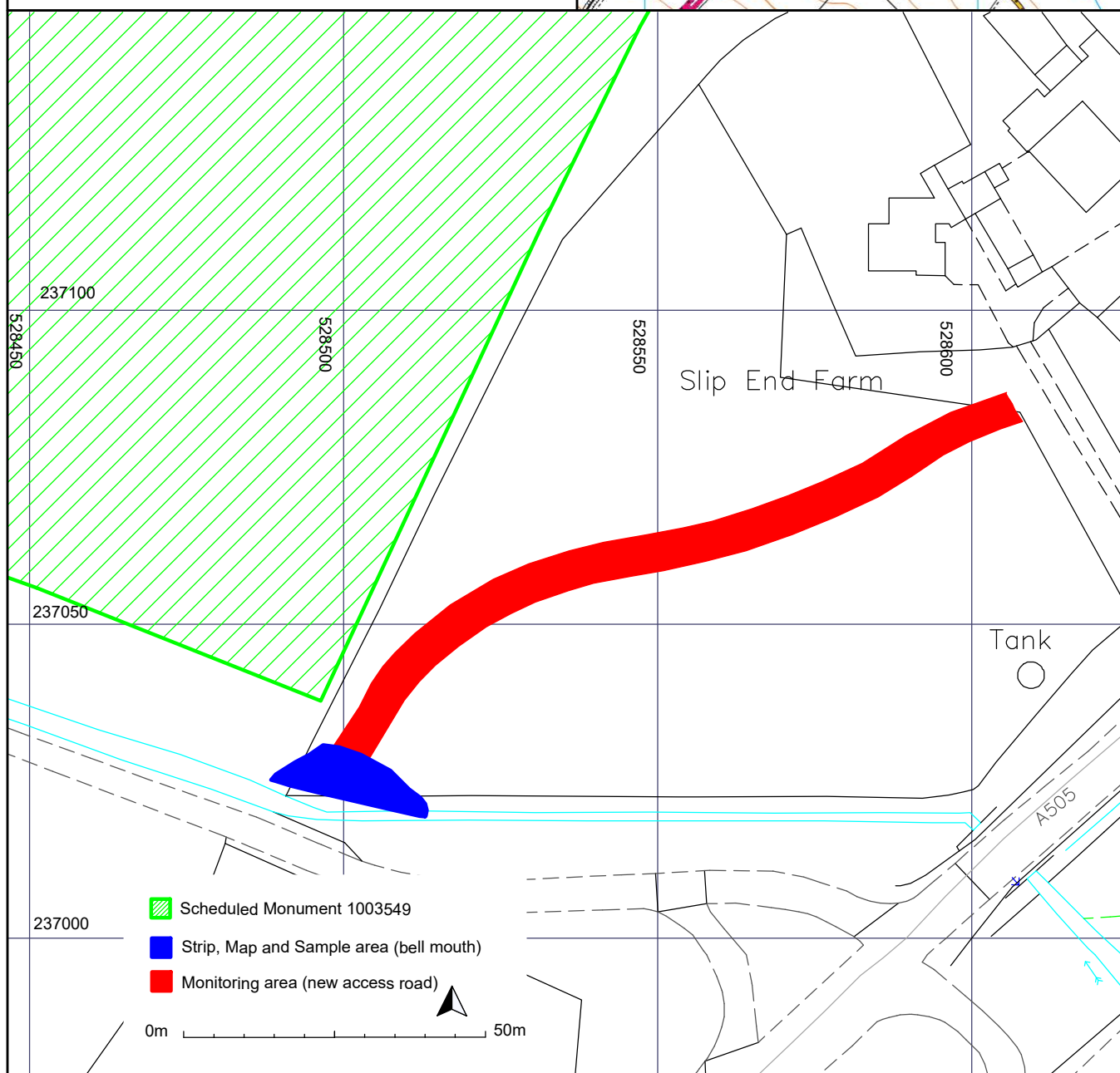
Pastoral Measure 1983

Treasure Act 1996 (Chapter XXIV, s. 1-3)

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Figure 4	Section 2 and 3
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Plate 6	Pit [103] – Looking South
Plate 7	Ditch [104] – Looking Northeast
Plate 8	Ditch [104] and Gully [105] – Looking Southwest
Plate 9	Gully [105] – Looking South

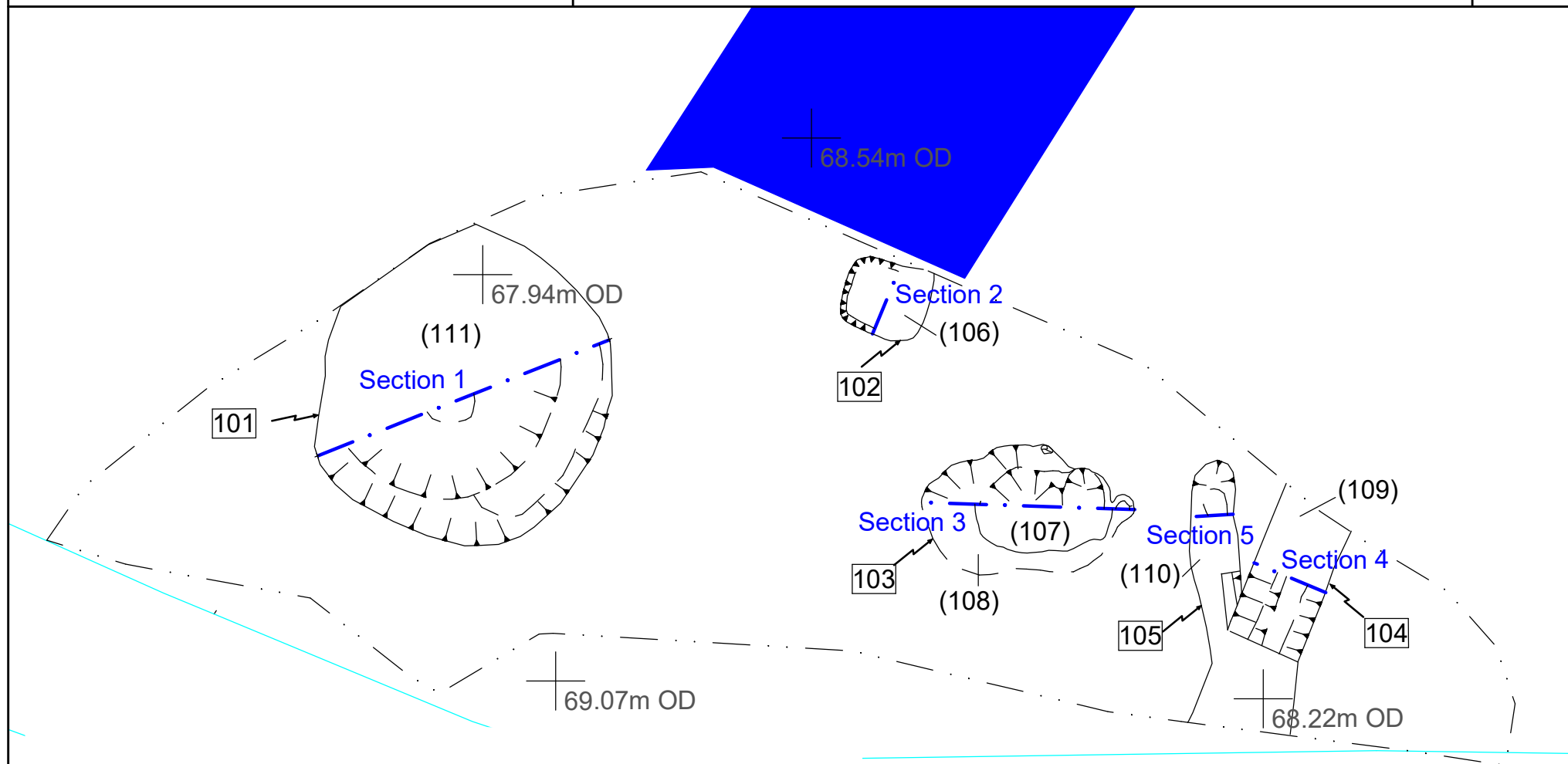


Site location and layout

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Scale 1:1000

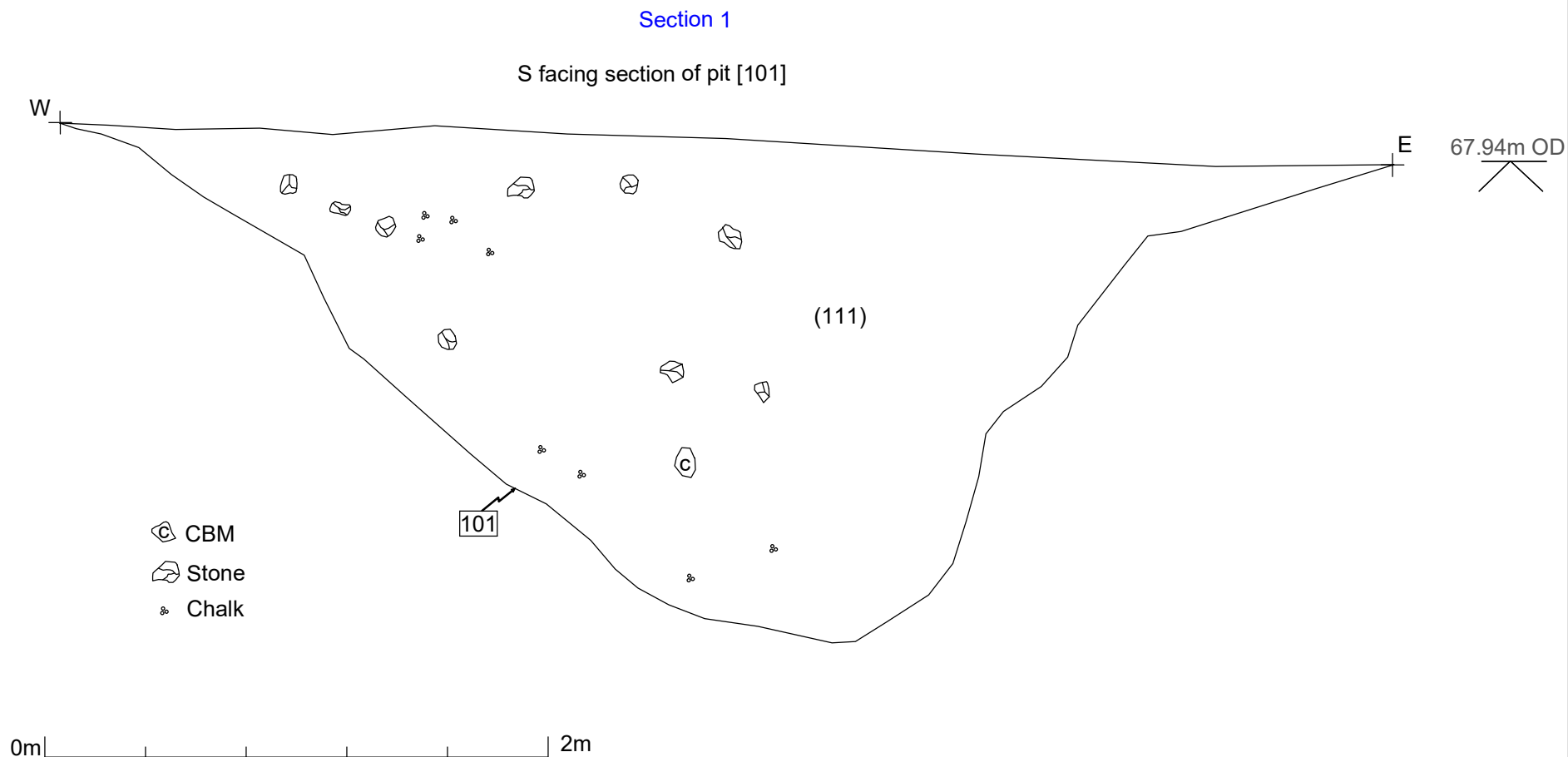
Figure 1



Plan of Bell mouth area

Scale 1:100

Figure 2

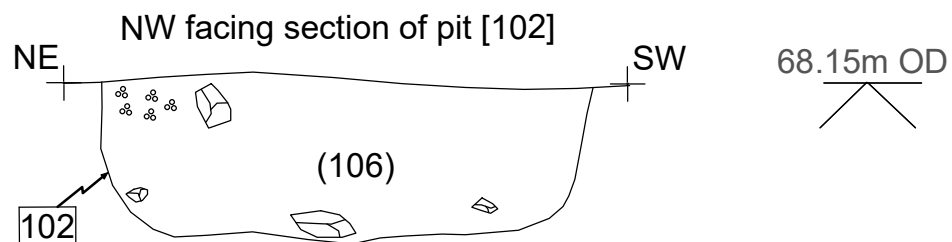


Section 1

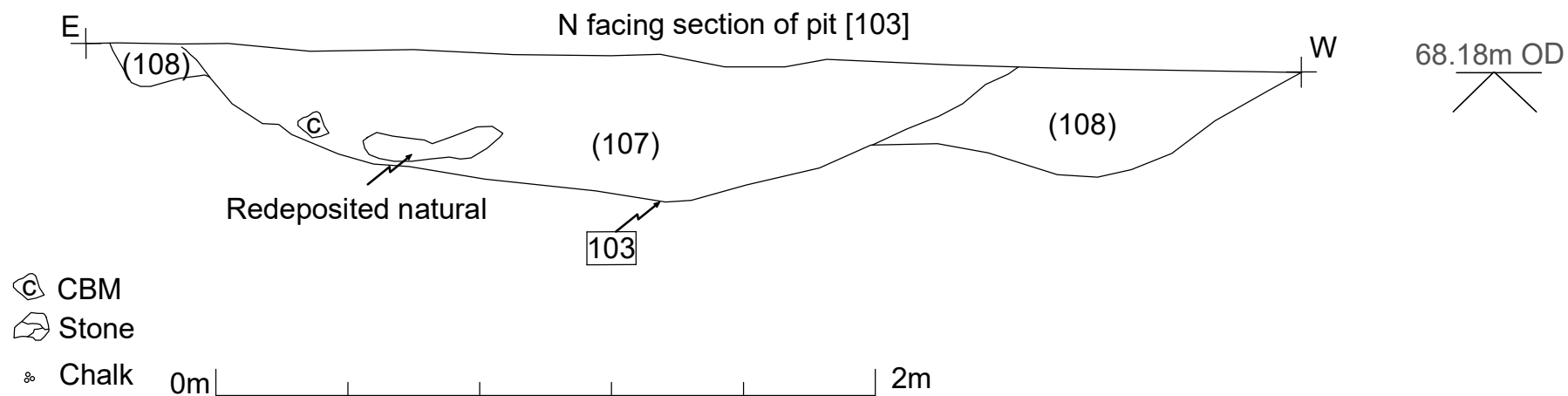
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Figure 3

Section 2



Section 3

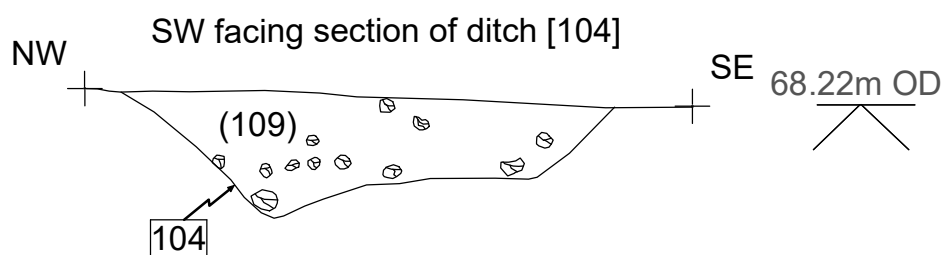


Section 2 and 3

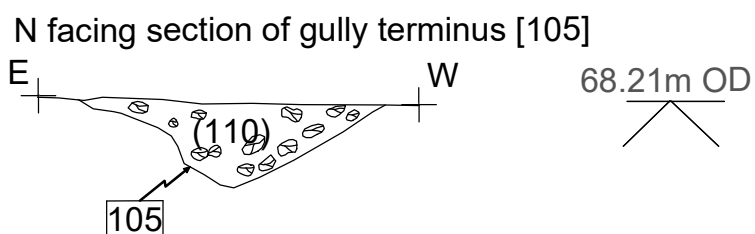
Scale 1:20

Figure 4

Section 4



Section 5



 CBM

 Stone

 Chalk

0m |-----| 2m

PLATES



Plate 1: New access road – Looking West.

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Plate 2: New access road Section – Looking Southeast.



Plate 3: Bell mouth area – Looking Northwest.

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Plate 4: Pit [101] – Looking North.



Plate 5: Pit [102] – Looking Southeast.

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Plate 6: Pit [103] – Looking South.



Plate 7: Ditch [104] – Looking Northeast.

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Plate 8: Ditch [104] and Gully [105] – Looking Southwest.



Plate 9: Gully [105] – Looking South.

Appendix 1

Fabric Type/Context	Pottery		CBM		An Bone		Shell		Fe object		Stone		Flint		Slag		Count	Weight
	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)
(106)	4	195			2	55			1	70	1	485					8	805
(107)	3	215	2	75	18	265	1	10	4	30							28	595
(108)	1	45							3	60							4	105
(109)	25	500			7	185			1	15	1	275					34	975
(110)	6	50															6	50
(111)	89	1115	9	1410	57	910	1	10	2	15	1	315	1	20	1	140	161	3935
TOTAL	128	2120	11	1485	84	1415	2	20	11	190	3	1075	1	20	1	140		
Total count	239																	
Total Wt (g)	6305																	

Appendix 2

Specialist Report



CLIENT:	Minerva Archaeology
PROJECT:	Slip End Farm, Baldock, Hertfordshire
TITLE:	Analysis of bulk sample light fractions from Slip End Farm, Baldock (MA345)
JOB NO.:	BE10515
DATE:	05/04/2022
PREPARED BY:	Dr John Summers (Wardell Armstrong LLP, 9 Lamdin Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP32 6NU)

Introduction

During archaeological investigations at Slip End Farm, Baldock, by Minerva Archaeology, five bulk samples were taken for environmental archaeological analysis. The samples were from features of Romano-British date and were submitted to Wardell Armstrong LLP for processing and analysis. The samples were found to be rich in carbonised plant remains, providing evidence of Roman arable processing activity in the vicinity of the sampled deposits.

Methods

Samples were processed at the WA facilities in Bury St. Edmunds using standard flotation methods. The light fractions were washed onto a mesh of 500µm (microns), while the heavy fractions were sieved to 1mm. The dried light fractions were sorted under a low power stereomicroscope (x10-x30 magnification). Botanical and molluscan remains were identified and recorded using reference literature (Cappers *et al.* 2006; Jacomet 2006; Kerney and Cameron 1979; Kerney 1999) and a reference collection of modern seeds was available as necessary. Potential contaminants, such as modern roots, seeds and invertebrate fauna were also recorded in order to gain an insight into possible disturbance of the deposits.

Results

The data from the bulk sample light fractions are presented in Table 1. Preservation of plant macrofossils was by carbonisation only, with no evidence for anaerobic waterlogging or mineralisation. Shells of terrestrial molluscs were well preserved and numerous, in keeping with the local calcareous conditions.

In general, the bulk samples were rich in carbonised remains, with the richest being Sample <3> of ditch fill (109)/ [104]. This sample was dominated by cereal remains, largely in the form of glume wheat chaff. Significant numbers of spelt wheat glume bases were recovered, which was the dominant cereal crop during the Roman period in England. Two emmer wheat (*Triticum dicoccum*) glume bases were also present, although this is not likely to have been much more than a weed contaminant of the economically dominant spelt crop. Glume bases significantly outnumbered carbonised cereal grains in the deposit, which is consistent with the presence of bulk de-husking by-products, during which the spikelets are parched, pounded and sieved to separate the grain from the tightly attached glumes.

Cereal grains in the sample included hulled barley (*Hordeum* sp.), glume wheat (*Triticum dicoccum/spelta*) and oat (*Avena* sp.). The barley grain was accompanied by a small number of rachis internodes, one of which was of a hulled six-row type (*Hordeum vulgare* var. *vulgare*). No oat floret bases were present to distinguish between wild and domesticated species, making it impossible to determine whether they were the product of local cultivation or a weed contaminant of other cereals. Oats became a more significant part of the economy during the later Roman period (e.g. Carruthers 2008). A single pea/ bean (large Fabaceae) was also probably part of the wider arable economy.

A small number of wheat grains showed a dorsal scar consistent with germination and six detached coleoptiles (sprouts) were also identified. Although the number of germinated specimens is relatively low, it is possible that these were derived from malt drying, although the presence of spoiled grain remains a possibility. Large-scale malting was a significant part of the Roman arable economy (e.g. Fryer 2004; Mustchin *et al.* 2016).

Non-cereal taxa in the sample were predominantly probable arable weeds, including medick-type (*Medicago* sp. type), dock (*Rumex* sp.), goosefoot (*Chenopodium* sp.) and brome grass (*Bromus* sp.). The number of specimens and range of taxa was limited, which is consistent with a deposit of late-stage cereal processing debris. A single specimen of hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) was most likely introduced with fuel wood, which could have been gathered from local hedgerows. Numerous medium-seeded grasses (e.g. fescues) were present, along with a single seed of selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*), which suggest input from grassland vegetation, such as grasses gathered as kindling.

The remains from (109)/ [104] are consistent with debris from an agricultural kiln. Such kilns were often fuelled with bulk de-husking waste, as were a wide range of other Roman kilns and ovens (e.g. van der Veen 1989; Ballantyne 2013; Carruthers 2008, 34.9-10; Fryer 2004; Mustchin *et al.* 2016; Summers 2018; 2020). The presence of germinated grain may indicate a role in the drying of malt, although a more general-purpose grain drying kiln/ corndrier is also possible.

Samples <1> and <2> of pit fills (107)/ [103] and (106)/ [102] also contained a range of carbonised cereal grains and chaff, accompanied by a small number of non-cereal taxa. These lower density mixed deposits most likely represent scattered debris from arable processing activities in the vicinity.

Samples <4> and <5> of gully fill (110)/ [105] and pit fill (111)/ [101] were different in that they contained no chaff remains. Gully fill (110)/ [105] was very low density and probably only represents scattered carbonised background debris. Pit fill (111)/ [101] was richer and contained carbonised grains of hulled barley (*Hordeum* sp.) and glume wheat (*Triticum dicoccum/ spelta*), accompanied by a small range of probable arable weeds (*Vicia/ Lathyrus* sp., small Fabaceae and small Poaceae). This deposit is more likely to be derived from domestic activity than the arable processing activities responsible for the deposit in ditch fill (109)/ [104].

Molluscs were abundant in the assemblage, with a range of taxa indicative of tall damp vegetation and ground litter in waste ground/ scrub habitats, such as *Cochlicopa* sp., *Discus rotundatus*, *Oxychilus* sp. and *Trichia hispida* group. *Ena obscura*, identified in pit fill (111)/ [101], is characteristic of denser, more shaded habitats, such as deciduous woodland, hedgerows and scrub (Kerney 1999, 113). Other taxa, such as *Pupilla muscorum* and some *Vallonia* species are indicative of short-turf calcareous grassland, which is also likely to have existed in the vicinity.

Conclusions

The bulk samples from Slip End Farm have produced a significant concentration of carbonised plant remains from a relatively small area of excavation. The remains are consistent with Roman arable processing activities in the near vicinity. In particular, the deposit of bulk de-husking debris in ditch fill (109)/ [104] suggests the presence of a corndrier or malt drying kiln somewhere nearby but beyond the present limit of excavation. Such remains indicate that the present site is located in proximity to an area of Roman farm workings, perhaps part of a farmstead engaged in arable cultivation and the preparation of grain for storage and/ or export.

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Table 1: Results from the assessment of bulk sample light fractions from Slip End Farm. Abbreviations: HB = hulled barley (*Hordeum* sp.); Hord = barley (*Hordeum* sp.); Emmer = *Triticum dicoccum*; Spelt = *Triticum spelta*; E/S = emmer/ spelt wheat (*Triticum dicoccum*/ *spelta*); FTW = free-threshing type wheat (*Triticum aestivum*/ *turgidum*); Trit = wheat (*Triticum* sp.); Oat (*Avena* sp.); NFI = not formally identified (indeterminate cereal grain); Germ = germinated grain; Embryo = detached cereal grain embryo; Sprout = detached cereal coleoptile; GB = glume base; SF = spikelet fork.

Site code	Sample number	Context	Feature	Description	Spot date	Volume (litres)	Carbonised cereals			Carbonised non-cereal taxa		Carbonised hazelnut shell	Charcoal		Molluscs		Contaminants					Other remains
							Cereal grains	Cereal chaff	Notes	Seeds	Notes		Charcoal >2mm	Notes	Molluscs	Notes	Roots	Molluscs	Modern seeds	Insects	Earthworm capsules	
MA345	1	107	103	Fill of Pit	Romano-British	40	XX	XX	HB (2), Hord (1), NFI (8), Spelt GB (2), E/S GB (10), E/S rachis (1)	X	Medium Poaceae (1)	-	X	-	XXX	<i>Cochlicopa</i> sp., <i>Pupilla muscorum</i> , <i>Trichia hispida</i> group, <i>Vallonia</i> sp., <i>Vertigo</i> sp.	XX	XX	X	X	-	Small mammal/ amphibian bone (XX)
MA345	2	106	102	Fill of Pit	Romano-British	40	XX	XX	HB (1), E/S (1), E/S germ (1), Trit (3), Trit germ (1), Oat (1), (NFI (7), Spelt GB (2), E/S GB (4)	X	<i>Atriplex</i> sp. (1)	-	X	-	XXX	<i>Carychium</i> sp., <i>Cochlicopa</i> sp., <i>Pupilla muscorum</i> , <i>Trichia hispida</i> group, <i>Vallonia</i> sp., <i>Vertigo</i> sp.	XX	XX	-	-	-	-

MA345	3	109	104	Fill of Ditch	Romano-British	40	XX	XXX	HB (3), Hord (2), E/S (8), E/S germ (2), Trit (18), Trit germ (1), Oat (2), NFI (26), NFI germ (1), Sprout (6), Embryo (2), Hord 6-row rachis (1), Hord rachis (2), Spelt GB (55), Spelt SF (1), Emmer GB (2), E/S GB (159), E/S SF (5), Spelt rachis (1), E/S rachis (4)	XX	Large Fabaceae (1), <i>Medicago</i> sp. Type (1), <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> (1), <i>Rumex</i> sp. (2), <i>Chenopodium</i> sp. (1), <i>Prunella vulgaris</i> (1), <i>Bromus</i> sp. (1), Medium Poaceae (8), Small Poaceae (1)	-	X	-	XX	<i>Pupilla muscorum</i> , <i>Trichia hispida</i> group, <i>Vallonia</i> sp.	XXX	XX	X	X	X	-
MA345	4	110	105	Fill of Gully	Romano-British	40	X	-	E/S (2), Trit (1), NFI (2)	-	-	-	X	-	XX	<i>Cochlicopa</i> sp., <i>Discus rotundatus</i> , <i>Oxychilus</i> sp., <i>Pupilla muscorum</i> , <i>Trichia hispida</i> group, <i>Vallonia</i> sp., <i>Vertigo</i> sp.	XX	XX	X	X	-	Small mammal/ amphibian bone (X); Carbonised rhizome (2)
MA345	5	111	101	Fill of Pit	Romano-British	40	XX	-	HB (3), E/S (9), Trit (15), NFI (16)	X	<i>Vicia/Lathyrus</i> sp. (1), Small Fabaceae (1), Small Poaceae (2)	-	XX	<i>Quercus</i> sp., Diffuse porous	XX	<i>Cochlicopa</i> sp., <i>Ena obscura</i> , <i>Oxychilus</i> sp., <i>Pupilla muscorum</i> , <i>Trichia hispida</i> group, <i>Vallonia</i> sp., <i>Vertigo</i> sp.	XX	X	X	-	-	Small mammal/ amphibian bone (X); Mammal bone fragments (X)

Appendix 3

HERTFORDSHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD

SUMMARY SHEET

Site name and address: Slip End Farm, Slip End, Baldock, Hertfordshire		
County: Hertfordshire	District: North Hertfordshire	
Village/Town: Baldock	Parish: Baldock	
Planning application reference: 21/01358/FP		
HER Enquiry reference: 166/21		
Nature of application: Housing		
Present land use: Arable field		
Size of application area: 10000m ²	Size of area investigated: c.1100 ²	
NGR (to 8 figures minimum): TL 528565 237077		
Site code (if applicable): MA 345		
Contractor: Minerva Archaeology Ltd		
Type of work: Strip, Map and Sample, Archaeological Monitoring		
Date of work	Start: 25/01/2022	Finish: 31/01/2022
Location of finds & site archive/Curating museum: North Hertfordshire Museum Services		
Related HER Nos: None	Periods represented: Roman	
Relevant previous summaries/reports : Hillelson, D. 2021: Archaeological Project Design. New Farm Access, Slip End Farm, Slip End, Baldock, Hertfordshire. Heritage Network.		
Summary of fieldwork results: Minerva Archaeology is an independent practice specialising in archaeology and the historic environment. The company undertakes a wide variety of commercial archaeological projects for clients involved in housing and industrial development, pipeline and road construction, agriculture and landscaping. In order to advise the local planning authority on the potential archaeological impact of a proposed development at Slip End Farm, Slip End, Baldock, Hertfordshire, Minerva Archaeology was commissioned to undertake archaeological works consisting of Strip, Map and Sample and Archaeological Monitoring across the site. Significant archaeological features, artefacts and deposits were encountered during the evaluation. This included a ditch, a gully and three pits dating to the later Roman period. This demonstrates that the potential risk of impacting remains of archaeological significance, may be considered to be High for all periods.		
Author of summary: K. Weber-Moll	Date of summary: 11/04/2022	

Appendix 1

Table of Contexts

Context No	Type	Relationship	Description
101	Pit Cut	Contains 111	Circular pit with moderate to steep sides and a concave base. 5.40m by 4.90m and 2.02m in depth.
102	Pit Cut	Contains 106	Rectangular shaped pit with vertical sides and a flat base. 1.50m by 1.30m and 0.42m in depth.
103	Pit Cut	Contains 107 and 108	Irregular shaped pit with irregular sides and an irregular base. 3.40m by 2.30m and 0.42m in depth.
104	Ditch Cut	Contains 109	Linear Ditch >4.40m in length, 1.30m in width and 0.33m in depth. With moderately sloping sides and an undulating base. Orientated northeast to southwest.
105	Gully Cut	Contains 110	Linear gully, 2.90m in length, 0.80m in width and 0.21m in depth. With moderately sloping sides, a concave base and was orientated north to south.
106	Pit Fill	Fill of 102	Compact, mid yellow grey, silty clay, with moderate small to medium sized stones and flints, moderate amounts of chalk and occasional charcoal.
107	Pit Fill	Fill of 103, overlies 108	Compact dark grey brown silty clay, containing frequent small to medium sized flints and stones.
108	Pit Fill	Fill of 103, underlying 107	Compact, mid yellow brown silty, sandy clay, With frequent chalk flecks, small flints and stones.
109	Ditch Fill	Fill of 104	Compact, mid grey brown, silty clay, with frequent small to medium sized flints, moderate amounts of chalk.
110	Gully Fill	Fill of 105	Compact, dark grey brown, silty clay, with frequent small to medium sized flints, occasional chalk and charcoal.
111	Pit Fill	Fill of 101	Compact, mid brown grey, silty, chalky clay with frequent small to medium flints, occasional charcoal.