

Stanford in the Vale Excavation

2008 archaeological excavation site report

David Richard Ashby

2008

This document contains the excavation and background to the archaeological excavations in a field in Stanford in the Vale in Oxfordshire.

Back ground to SF/08

Maps

One way in which I researched the site and its surrounding area was from historical maps. I have looked at the following maps: 1760's; 1877; 1920's.

The 1760's map was one of the first maps to be produced accurately in Britain. On this map the stream is shown at the East end of the field. Though the field its self is not shown accurately, unlike some of the other surrounding fields. This may be because the field at this time did not exist, as the place were the field should be on the map seems to be a section of road/track which is heading for the stream. Also next to this track there are 2 large buildings, one either side of the track. These may be out-buildings or sheds, though they may also be small dwellings in this area. Behind these seems to be the land which most likely goes with the dwellings and these then have the fields behind them, this includes the field that I am examining.

The 1877 map is one of the first OS maps which have the field shown on it. This is shown on the map as field numbers 131, 145, and parts of field 143. This means that the field at this time was split in to 3 fields; one of these contains trees which may mean that it was a small orchard during this period. This map also shows the out buildings and land (including field 130) which goes with the landowner's house. This house still exists now and is known to have been built before this time (built in the 18thC). This map also shows that some of the surrounding dwellings may still be on the same pieces of land since medieval times, though as different buildings, as the map shows the strip land behind them (strip fields). These are also shown on the 1920' map.

The 1920's map shows mostly the same pieces of land as the 1877 map. Though the field numbers have changed to being 169, 171, part of 172 and also another field which I do not have the number for. The only other difference between this map and the 1877 map is that field 169 has some trees with in it which may be an orchard. This map still shows the field as 2 fields at this time. This map also shows more of the strip fields, which may be reused from the medieval period, to the north of the field. This may then show the back ground to the field in the past. This can be shown in figure 3.

This is the main background to the site, though I also use other historical map from the 1760's to the 1920's of the field, which I am excavating in and also the close area around it.

Geophysics

The geophysical survey which has occurred in the field had happened after the trenches were put in to the field. This survey was completed by William Wintle. The location of the geophysical survey is shown on Figure 1 and the main geophysical results are shown on Figure 2. William Wintle says that the geophysical survey shows that there are: two short straight ditches ; one large curving ditch which stops just short of trench 6; and one large straight ditch which runs down the north side of the field, which may be a boundary ditch for a medieval strip field. There is also a large curved ditch which is about 60 M in length and is about 2 M wide, which may be prehistoric in date as it does not follow any of the other field boundaries. Also within grid square 4 there is a large geophysical anomaly which may be a large ditch and bank with an entrance way within it, as there is a large gape on one side. The large feature is about 8m wide at its widest point. Though it has also has been surmised that the feature may be a kiln or metal working area, with a spread of associated material around it. This is as the magnetic response seems to be so strong in this area.

Also, bar one small anomaly there are no other small spikes with in the area on the in side of the susceptible ditch. Also shown on the survey there is a large anomaly in the top corner of square one. This is a large solid surface, which has been confirmed by a small exploratory trench (trench 8) across the anomaly. This has shown that the anomaly is a large cobbled surface which cambers on 2 sides. This looks like it is about 6M wide. This is most likely to be a cobbled track down the side of the field.

There is also scattered across the field a large quantity of small metal objects which are most likely to be mainly modern. Though, I do think that some of the larger anomalies may be pits as there are large patches of nettles spread across the field.

These are the main archaeological features which have shown up on the geophysical survey with in the top part of the field (closest to the house), shown on figure 2.

Arial photos

The Ariel photographs that I have obtained and researched from are from the NMR office in Swindon.

The Ariel photograph from the NMR office is from the years of 1971, 1994, 1996 and the year 2000. The Ariel photography from the 12th April 1971 shows that the field was then split in to three separate fields. This shows that the field had to have been combined into one field after this date. This also shows that the upper part of the field used to be part of the of the left hand field which is next to it. This is shown by there being no hedge between the two fields. Though there does seem to be a track down the edge of this field which is in the same location as the modern field boundary. Also shown on the 1971 Ariel photograph is a small square parch mark in the lower field. This may be a structure as this feature is not shown on the magnetometer survey (geophysical survey). Also shown is a long straight line which seems to stretch from the buildings next to the left top field. This may only be a modern feature such as a pipe line as it is very straight and it is coming away from the main village.

On the 1996 Ariel photography the field is shown as one big field like it is now. This is as the hedgerow between the top and bottom fields has been removed and also one of the other hedges has also been removed to make it a larger field. Though this field boundary can still be seen as a parch mark as a straight line going across the field. The top part of the field has been split away from the other field next to it and a hedge has been put in place to split the two fields. These are the main fractures which are shown on the NMR office Ariel photography for the site (field) of S.F/08.

Other documents about the site

I have used a vast array of other documents and information on Stanford in the Vale. This ranges from the information from documents relating to other sites and material that have been found in the area to a document discussing the history of Stanford in the Vale and its surrounding areas.

The first main piece of information that I have is the place name of Stanford in the Vale. Stanford means “stone ford or stony ford” and the affix of in the Vale means the “situation in the Vale of the white horse” (mills 2003). The stream which the ford crosses in Stanford in the Vale is Frogmore Brook which crossed, now by bridges, by Bow Road and Faringdon Road. The place name Bow means “the arched bridge” (mills 2003). This then means that Frogmore brook has most likely always been crossed by a bridge on Bow Road, and so Frogmore Brook must have also been forded at the point crossing Faringdon Road. The meaning of Frogmore, as in Frogmore Brook, is usually a “pool frequented by frogs” (mills 2003). This meaning has most likely come from the pool from which the Brook originates.

The other archaeological excavations which have occurred within the close proximity to the site have mainly come across roman ditches and pits and also medieval pits. There have also been some post medieval features found in the area which were: a ditch; a pit; and a section of walling. The sites are marked on figure 4,

These are the main pieces of useful information which I have gathered about the site and the close area surrounding it.

List of figures

Figure 1	location of geophysical survey
Figure 2	geophysical survey
Figure 3	1920's map
Figure 4	locations of other excavations
Figure 5	piece of pottery boll from trench 6
Figure 6	pieces of cooking pot from trench 6
Figure 7	decorated Saxon pottery from trench 6
Figure 8	decorated Saxon pottery from trench 6
Figure 9	plan of trench 6, top of midden
Figure 10	pottery from midden, trench 6
Figure 11	pottery from midden, trench 6
Figure 12	pottery from midden, trench 6
Figure 13	large piece of pottery jug or vessel from trench 6
Figure 14	photos of post holes, from trench 6
Figure 15	patterned pottery from trench 3
Figure 16	lead find from trench 7
Figure 17	Mesolithic flint from trench 6
Figure 18	peace of had made pottery from trench 6

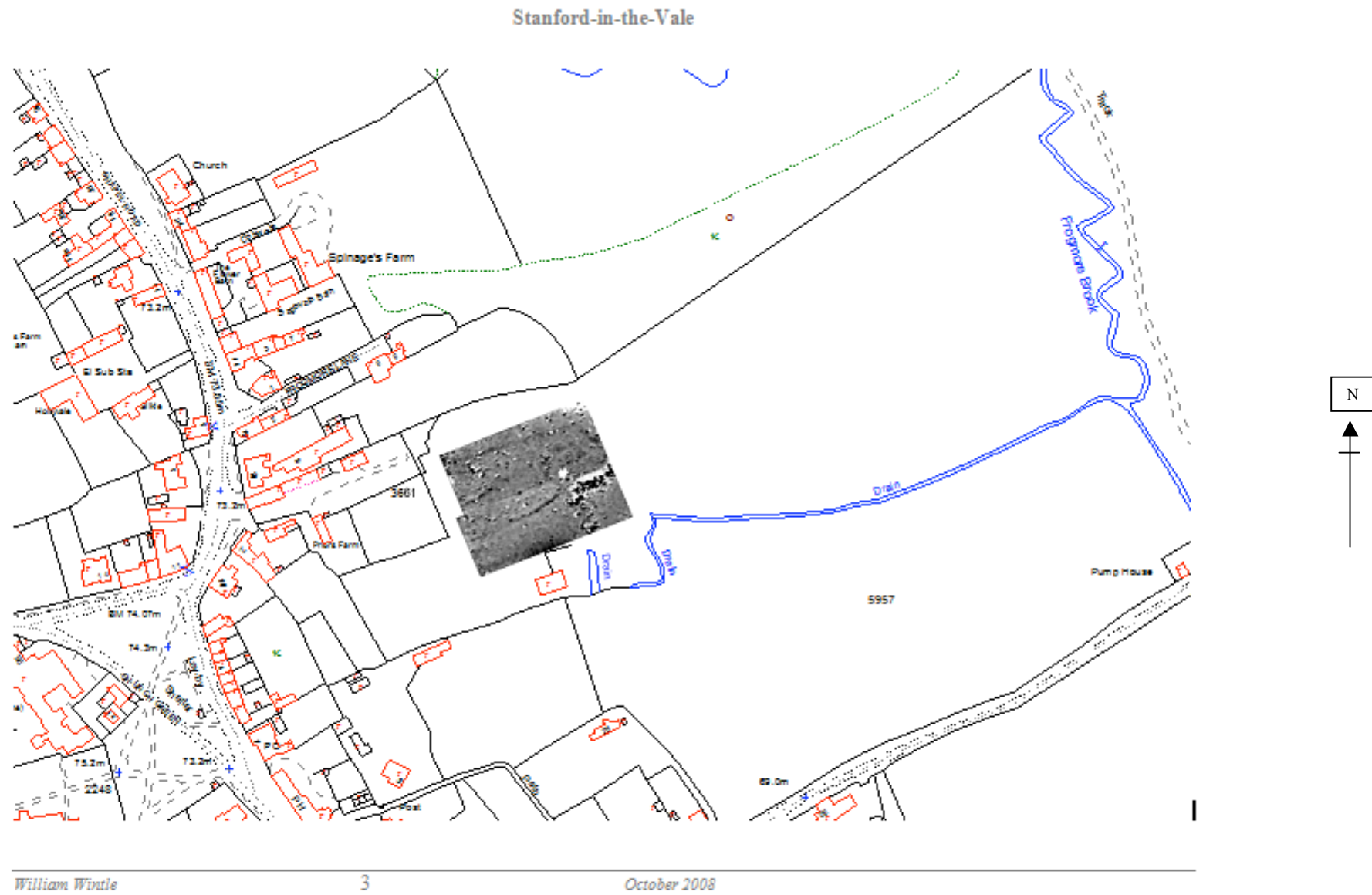


Figure 1. This shows the location of the geophysical (magnetometer) survey within the field that I have been excavating. (Wintle 2008)

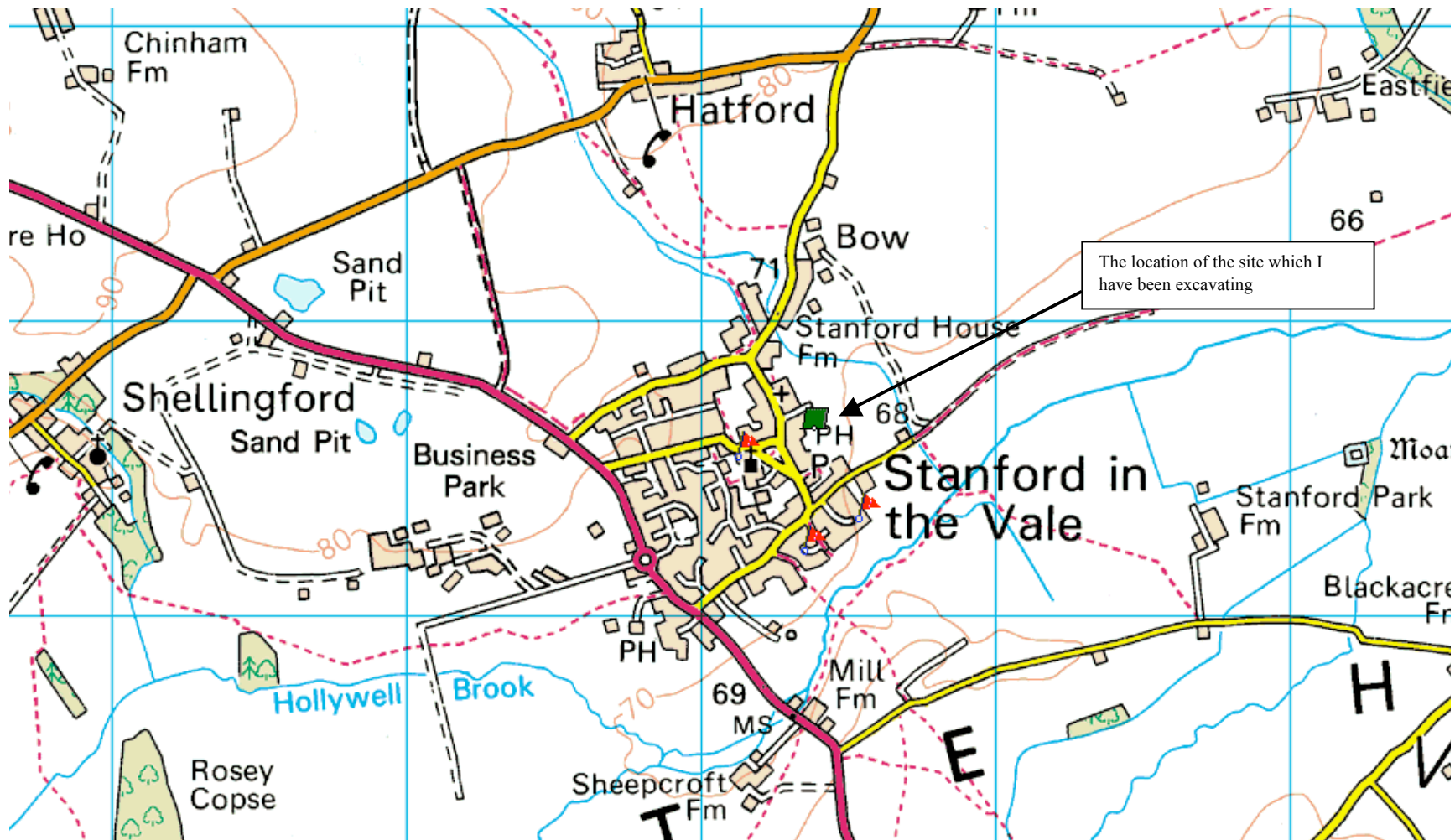



Figure 4. This map shows the location of the site which I am excavating and also the location of the other archaeological sites which have been excavated in the area. These sites are all pre-post medieval.

Key  = The other archaeological sites which have been excavated in the area.

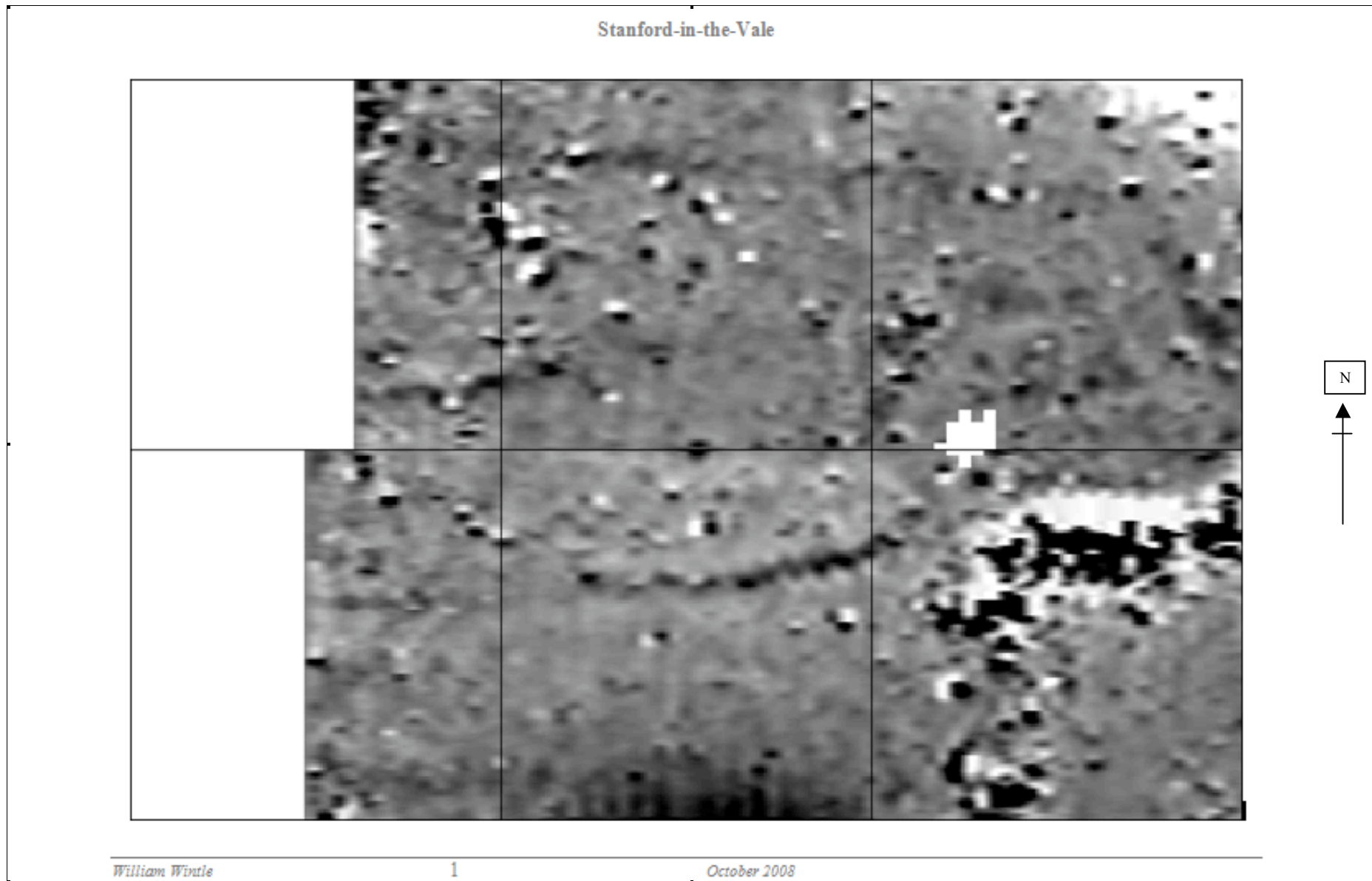


Figure 2. This show the geophysical (magnetometer) survey of the field which I have been excavating in. The weight square in the middle is trench 6. (Wintle 2008)

S.F/08 explanation and contents of trenches

This will explain what was found in each trench, both the finds and the features, and also interprets what some of the features are.

Trench content

The top soil is the same in all trenches across the site. All the trenches area also 1 m² test pits unless otherwise specified.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was put over a parch mark which can be seen on the areal photography of the site. These showed two small ditches which joined together at this point. We did not find this feature, though the trench could have easily been out by a meter or two, so would have missed the feature. Also the trench was shut down before we could finish the excavation as we ran out of time. This feature may be looked at again in the future. Most of the finds from this trench were large amount of dark grey stone, which is not natural to the area. This stone is most likely to be granite and are in pieces which are about 3 to 6 cm in size. This material may have been brought in for hard core but otherwise it is unknown why this material has been brought to the site. We hope to answer this question in future.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was put over a large clump of nettles which was thought to be a small pit. Though it turned out to be nothing as there was only one layer of soil within the trench, which was top soil, and went straight down on to the top of the natural clay and bedrock. The only find within the trench was a small amount of medieval pottery which was spread though out the context. There were also some pieces of modern material within this context.

Trench 3

- pit fill

The fill of the suspected pit is of a dark, greyish brown soil. The soil within the fill of the pit also contains a large quantity of charcoal which gives the soil a darker colour. This also means that the soil has been redeposited into this area as the other soil around it (other trenches) is not this dark and contains no charcoal.

The finds within the top of the pit are a mixture of mainly pieces of medieval pottery and also pieces of late Saxon pottery. The medieval pottery which is contained in the top of the pit is mainly pieces of green glazed pottery (11th – 14th C). There were also 4 pieces of green glaze pottery within this context. Two of the pieces of green glaze pot are from two different green glaze jugs, which have horizontal patterns on them. The third piece of green glaze pottery is very small but has diagonal glaze pattern across it and the fourth piece has small patches of a yellow mustard glaze on it. The pot also has a groove pattern that has been indented into the clay before it was fired (figure 15). There are also some small pieces of domestic medieval pottery as well, with some of these pieces having soot on the outside of them indicating they have been used for cooking. The other pieces of pottery within this context are suspected to be from the late Saxon period. These are also mainly pieces of cooking pot and domestic pottery. The pieces of cooking pot range in size from 10mm to 20mm. There is also one small piece of mortaria of the size of 10mm. Also, there is one piece of a large base with a cream slip on both sides of it. Within the pot's base there is a thumb shaped indentation which makes a pattern around the base of the pot. This piece of base is most likely from a shallow pot or bowl. The other main decorated piece of late Saxon pottery is from the side of a pot with a comb pattern indented into it.

The bone which was within the pit fill is mostly made up of pieces of butchered limb bones of cattle, which includes a humerus from a pig. There are also one small piece of scapular, which is about 45mm in size. Also there are two small pieces of jaw bone, which are unidentifiable to what type of animal it comes from. There is also two small

pieces of bird bone, one of which is a limb bone, which has been butchered. Within this context there is also one small piece of bone which is about 35 mm long, but which has not been butchered. This piece of bone is a piece of healed bone from an old injury while the animal was still alive. There are also three animal teeth, two of which are molars and one of which is an incisor. There are also five small pieces of oyster shell within the top of the pit fill.

There are also sixteen pieces of un-worked flint within the pit fill and also one piece of semi worked flint which has been removed from a flint core. Also there is one piece of heated flint. There is also one piece of coke, a piece of slag and also a small piece of iron ore from within the pit fill. This may be from a metal working which could have occurred on or close to the site. This may mean that the pit was used for disposing of the metal working materials and domestic rubbish.

Trench 4

- top soil

The finds within the top soil of trench 4 were mainly large pieces of granite stone which must have been brought in to the area as it is not natural to the area. There is also one small piece of pottery, which is un- datable, and also one piece of un-worked flint. There is also a small amount of coal.

The layer beneath the top soil was a dark soil which contained small stones and other stone material which is most likely from the top of the stone capping of the midden. The finds from this layer contained one piece of 11th C to 13th C pottery. There I also one small pieces of pottery with a com pattern on it. There was also large quantity of flint which is un-worked. There is also three small pieces of suspected iron ore, which may have meant that metal working occurred on the site.

This trench was then shut down before it could be fully excavated and was then reopened and extended, so becoming trench 6. This is discussed below.

Trench 5

Trench 5 was put in to investigate the relationship between trenches 3 and 4. This trench did not show any significant connection between these two trenches in the end. However, the trench did contain some pieces of stone which could be part of a structure which could have capped a feature such as a ditch or other types of feature. Below this layer (0502) was not excavated as we ran out of time, though this feature may be further examined and excavated in the future. The finds from this layer (0502) are mainly comprised of animal bone. These are mainly small pieces of unidentifiable bone but there is one piece of limb bone. There is also 3 pieces of mandible and teeth from a pig. There are also 4 small pieces of pottery, 2 of which are pieces of medieval, green glazed pottery.

These are the main finds and features from trench 5 and this trench may be fully excavated and extended in the future.

Trench 6

This is an extension of trench 4 which is 1.5m by 2m.

- **Context 0602**

This context contains mostly medieval pottery, both green glaze (11th – 14th C) and also other types. There are seven pieces of green glaze pot; these are mainly from medieval jugs with both razed decoration and also decoration using both the green, cream and mustard coloured glazes/slip (Figure 6). The main other types of medieval pottery which were contained within this context were small pieces of narrow bowl (Figure 5), pieces of rim and also pieces of domestic cooking pot. Also, within this context there was one piece of Roman pottery, a rim, and also one piece of late Saxon pot which had been handmade and had not been fired very well. This is a pot rim which contains large pieces of grit and grog within it, and also has a friable temper (figure 18).

One of the other types of finds in this layer is flint. A large amount of it is un-worked, but some pieces have been heated. The un-worked flint is not natural to the area so has

been brought onto the site, mostly from the Ridgeway area. The natural stone of the area is sandstone. There is one piece of worked flint in this layer. This is a small Bronze Age thumb nail scraper.

Also with in this layer there are quite large amounts of butchered bone. These pieces of butchered bone are ranging in sizes from 0.02 m to 0.10 m in length. The pieces of bone are mainly limb and rib bones from cattle. There are also small pieces of oyster shell contained within this context.

Also with in this context there is about 210g of metal working slag. This may mean that there was metal smelting or metal working nearby, most likely in the medieval period. The soil in this context is about 0.20 m deep and covers the hole of the trench.

- The midden

The midden is made up of 3 contexts which are 0603, 0607, 0608 with the cut number being 0613. The context of 0603 is the top of the fill of the midden which is the cut of 0613 which contained 4 small pieces of Saxon pottery which are decorated (Figure 7 and 8). Also within this layer there are two pieces of worked flint. One of which is a micro flint, which has been dated to the Mesolithic period (8,500 BC). The second is a convex flake of gravel flint, which is updatable. This is shown on figure 17. This layer is on top of the layer of stones which filled the midden cut.

The next layer, in the midden cut, contains large quantities of un-worked stone with pieces up to 0.20 m wide. This material has been used to cap the top of the ditch. This is contained within context 0607. The plan of this is shown in figure 9 which shows the layout of the packing of the top of the midden. The fill also contains pieces of pottery which are up to 0.15 m wide and also many of the pieces of pot fit together to make up the pot profiles. The pottery within the midden is mostly made up of late Saxon material (figure 10-12). One of the largest pieces of pot which fits back together is the top of a jug or storage vessel (figure 13). There are also large quantities of cooking pot or domestic wares. This includes four large pieces of base and also many pieces of pot body, of which the sizes range between 10 mm to 150 mm. There are also two small flint objects within this fill. One other the flint objects is a struck convex flake which has been dated

to the Bronze Age period and the other is a worked flint or flake which has been dated to either the Mesolithic or Neolithic periods. These are within the later layers of the midden.

The midden seems to have been filled in two main stages with the bottom fill (0608) being made up of a silty sand which seems to have been filled naturally over time, and contains no finds. The upper fill of the midden (0607) seems to have been filled very quickly, as it contains large piece of freshly broken pottery, and is also filled with packed stone. This fill has most likely been put in within the late Saxon period. The fill also contains a large horse jaw which seems to have been de-fleshed before being put in the ground. The horse jaw is unusual as there were only a few other small pieces of bone within the whole fill of the midden, compared to the other higher contexts in the trench. The ditch is between 1 to 1.5 m's wide and seems to surround circle a mound of earth. There is also a section of horse jaw within trench 7 so there may be a reason for the placement of this object in the top fill of the midden.

The midden is about 15 m wide and can be seen as a circular mound of earth on the ground. Though, the midden is only about 0.20 m's deep at its edge. The midden may be deeper in the middle.

- Post holes

The post holes contained within this trench surround the outside of the midden. Each post hole (there are two within the trench) is about 0.15 m deep by about 0.20 m across. The post holes are spread about 0.50 m apart from one centre to the next. The post holes are also spaced about 0.70M from the edge of the midden. The post holes have most likely been filled naturally as the posts have rotted and then the holes have filled with soil and other material.

One of the post holes contained a piece of pottery. The material which was within the post holes was removed and wet sieved and the environmental and other material was removed. This operation occurred for both the post holes.

The material out of the post hole fill soil sample, 0610 are made up of small pieces of oyster shell which are about 0.01 m big and also small pieces of unidentifiable bone

which is about 5mm in size. There are also some small peaces of un-worked flint and also some small pieces of metal working slag. Also, within the soil sample, there are two different types of snail shell. One of the types of snail which is within the sample is the Water Snail; these shells being about 4mm across. This means that this part of the field was constantly wet when the post holes were filled in. The other type of snail shell which I found is the Rims Horn Snail. This is a type of snail which is found in stagnant or brackish water. This means that there was more water in the field, which was not flowing, before the post holes were totally filled in.

The posts holes have been placed with stones in the top so that the posts can be heeled upright by the tightly packed stones. The post holes are shown on figure 14.

- The sondage

The sondage which I dug was in the North West corner of the trench. The sondage showed that there were five different layers which made up the historical layers within the ground. The top layer of the sondage was made up of the top soil. The second layer was mainly deposited and made up though ploughing. This layer has already been explained in the report.

The third layer in the sondage is mainly made up of a darker soil which is made up of dark clay. This context also contains large quantities of small stones which are between 0.02 m to 0.05 m in size. The layer is about 0.05 m thick. The finds within this layer are mainly made up of pieces of un-worked flint. Some of theses pieces of flint have been heated. Also there were three small pieces of prehistoric pottery. There are also three small pieces of bone, which are unidentifiable and also two pieces of oyster shell. 15 small pieces of metal working slag were also found. There were also three pieces of worked flint within this context. The first piece of worked flint I have are a small Bronze Age thumb scraper. The second piece of worked flint may be part of a blade or flake. This is another Bronze Age flint tool. The third piece of worked flint, which was found in this context, is most likely to be a piece of flint knife or flint axe.

The next layer within the sondage is about 0.30 m thick. This layer is made up of yellowy brown clay. This layer contains one large stone which is about 0.20 m by 0.10 m

in size. This is one of the largest stones which I found within this site. The finds within this layer are mainly made up of un-worked flint from 30 mm to 5 mm in size. Also, within this layer there are two small pieces of animal bone, one piece of which is a joint. There are also two pieces of prehistoric pot, one of which is a piece of rim which has a thumb print in the top of it. Also there are two more Bronze Age thumb scrapers within this layer.

The last layer within the sondage is the natural.

- The natural

The natural bedrock is formed out of sand stone with some iron staining on the surface of the stones. This is the deepest context in the trench and is about 0.54 m below ground level (66.46 m above sea level). Just above, and around the bedrock, is made up of sterile clay. It is likely that this material was built up by a palaeo-channel.

Trench 7

Trench 7 was a 0.5 m² trench which was put in order to investigate if the amount and type of finds coming out of trench 6 was localised or to see if they carried on further. It was found that the finds in trench 6 were not localised but were in fact part of a larger midden feature, which was stone capped. The trench was only excavated to the top of this stone capping. The finds from this trench were mainly pieces of medieval pottery. Though there was also a second section of horse mandible, which was smaller than the one found in trench 6, but very little other bone was found. The trench also revealed a small round lead object with a hole through the middle of it. A pattern can be seen on both sides of the object, though this may not have been put on, on purpose. This can be shown in figure 16. This object is also undateable.

Trench 8

Trench 8 was also small 0.5 m² test pit put across one of the geophysical anomalies in the top right had corner of the survey. The feature which is on the geophysical survey has been found to be a cobbled track which runs along the side of the field. This is estimated to be about 6 meters wide and cambers on 2 sides. There were no finds to date this feature. I am hoping to excavate this further in the future to find out the date of it and also more information.

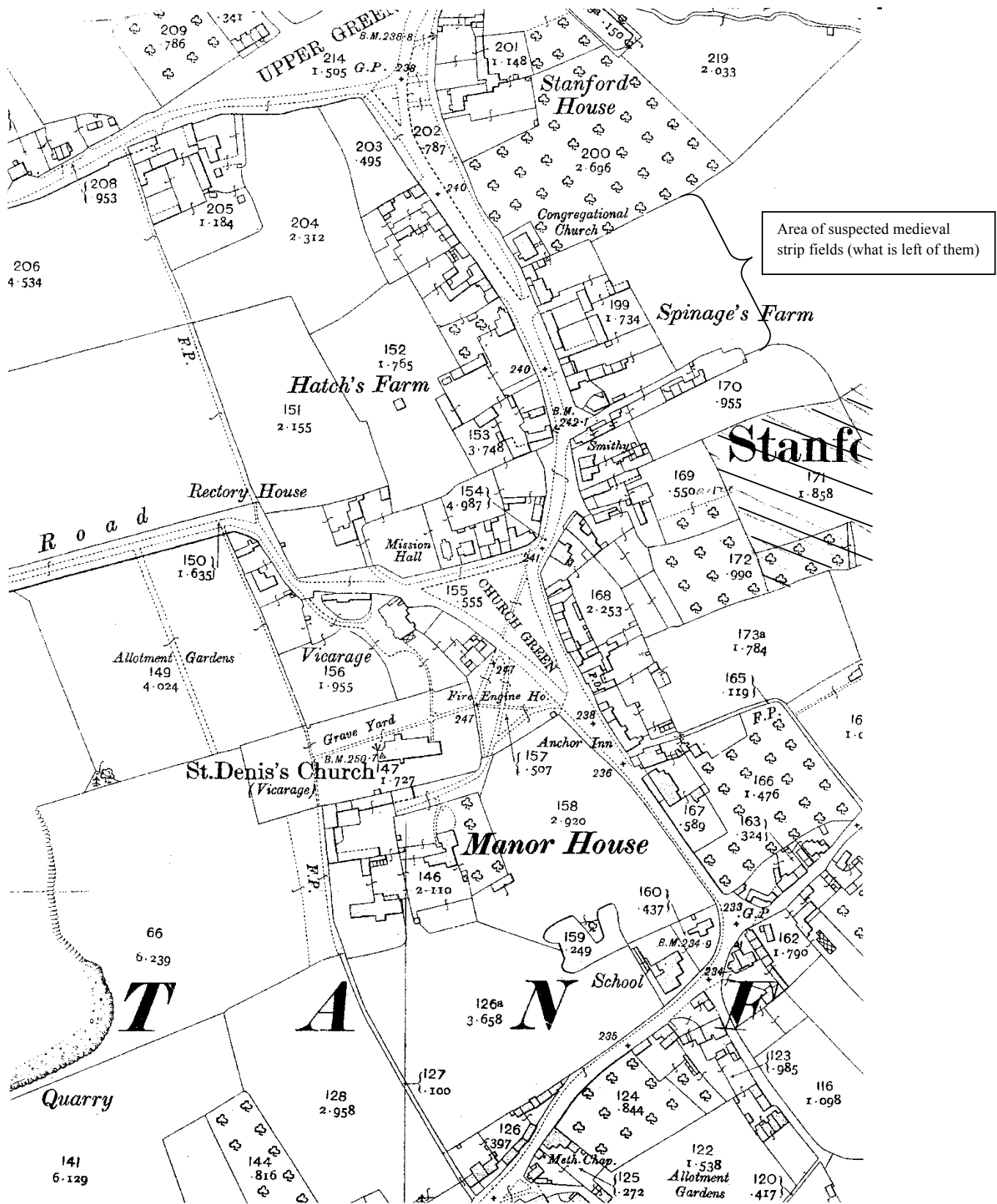


Figure 3. This is a map from the 1920's of Stanford in the vale which shows the field that I am excavation and also some of the small medieval strip fields which surround it.



Figure 5. A piece of pottery boll from trench 6.

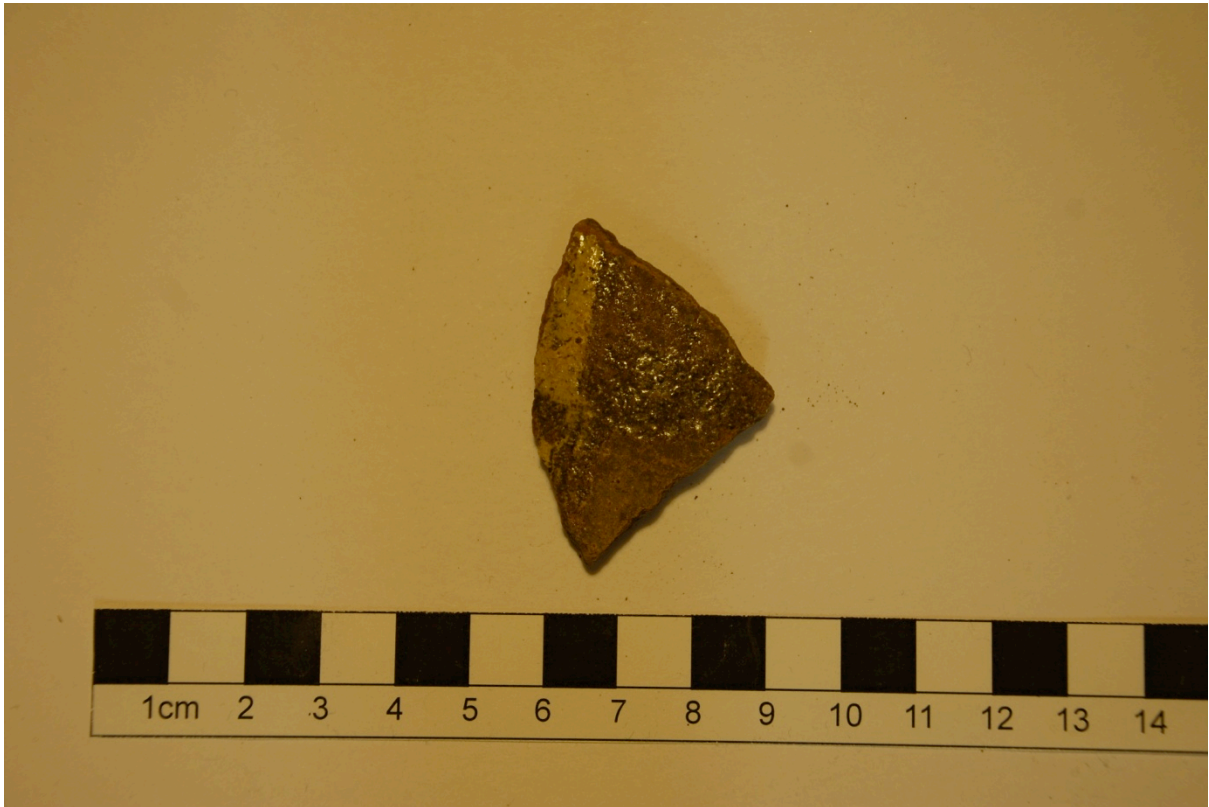


Figure 6. pieces of pottery from a medieval jug, which came from trench 6.



Figure 7. Decorated Saxon pottery from trench 6.



Figure 8. Decorated Saxon pottery from trench 6.



Figure 10. Saxon pottery from the midden in trench 6.



Figure 11. This is a piece of late Saxon pottery from the midden in trench 6.



Figure 12. This is a pieces of late Saxon pottery from the midden in trench 6.

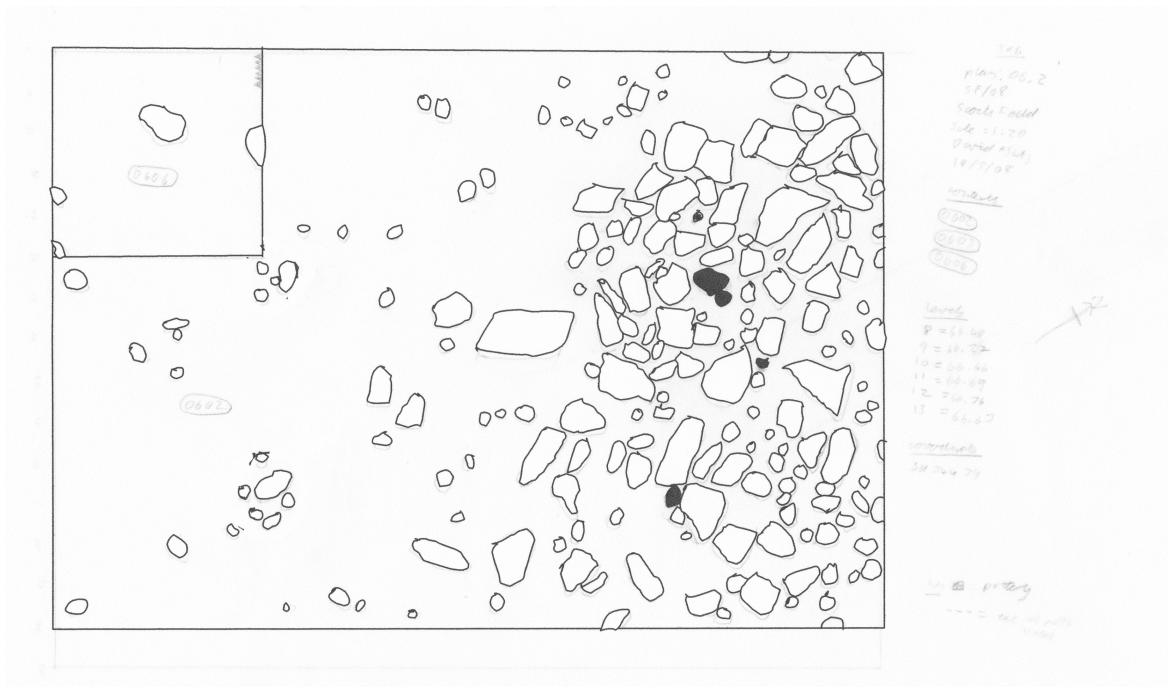


Figure 9. This is plan 06.2 which is of the top of the midden in trench 6. The black areas on the plan are pieces of pottery which could be seen in the top of the midden.



Figure 13. This is part of a late Saxon jug or jar from the top of the midden in trench 6.



Figure 14. These are the photos of the two post-hole features which were found in trench 6.



Figure 15. This is a piece of patterned pottery from trench 3.



Figure 16. This is a lead artefact from trench 7. Though it is unknown what it was used for.

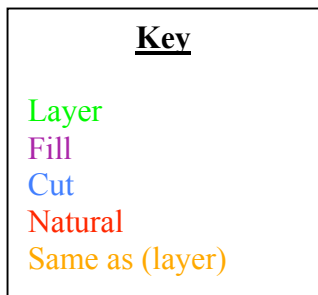
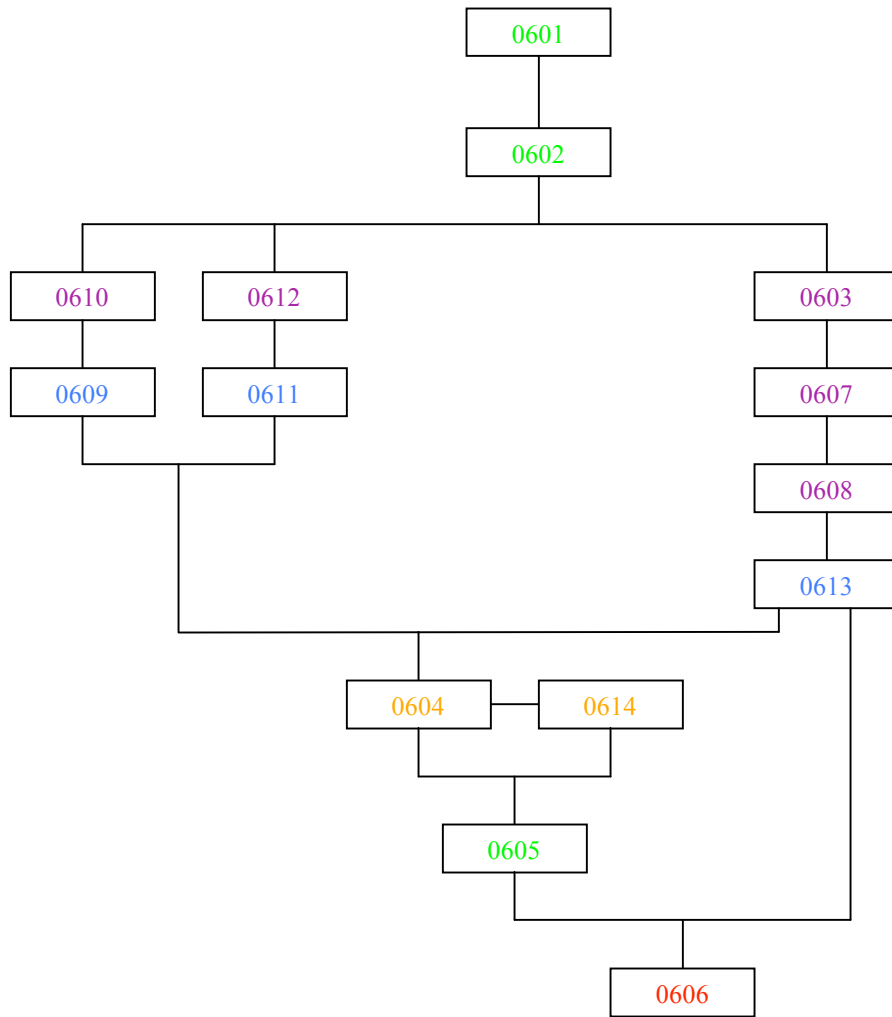


Figure 17. This is a small micro flint from the Mesolithic period. It was found in trench 6.



Figure 18. This is a piece of late Saxon handmade pottery has not been well fired and contains large quantities of grit and grog. This find came from trench 6.

Harris matrix: Trench 6 (SF.08)



Aims for 2009 excavation (SF/08)

The aims of the 2009 excavations are to be able to look at some of the features which are shown on the magnetometer survey. The main feature which I hope to investigate in 2009 is the large feature in the 4th grid on the geophysical survey. This is to determine if this feature is a large ditch, kiln or an iron working area. I am also hoping to be able to find the relationship between this feature and the midden which I excavated this year. I am also hoping to date this feature.

Also in I am hoping to look further at the track which goes runs along the edge of the field, to determine its date and look at where the track is going to, and if it crosses the stream at the bottom of the field. I also would like to find out if there are any other features that relate to it on the site or surrounding areas.

I am also hoping to look at any of the other features which are shown on the geophysical survey next year or in the next few years and to extend the geophysical survey so that I can look at other parts of the field, to see if there are any other archaeological features of interest within the site.

Bibliography

Mills, A. (2003). *oxford dictionary of british place name*. st Ives: oxford univeraty press.

Servay, o. (1912). *Stanford in the vale - edition of 1912*. southampton: ordance survey.

Survay, o. (2008). *memry map southen england 1:50,000 scale*. memry map (ordance survey).(CD Rom)

I have had help with finds identification from the archaeological lecheries at Winchester University. I also had help from William Wintle in producing and interpreting the geophysical survey of the site.