



IRON AGE AND ROMANO-BRITISH SITE AT OLD PARK FARM, BEECH

E&OE. The information in this report is believed to be accurate, based on the data obtained from the survey and excavation.

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Summary

This report provides details of Iron Age and Romano-British activity that Liss Archaeology has found via geophysics surveys and excavation at Old Park Farm, Beech, near Alton Hampshire GU34 4AP.

The area of Old Park Farm that has been surveyed comprises two fields named Wood Close and Stoney Close, shown outlined in yellow in Figure 1 below, with Bushy Leaze Wood to the north, Chawton Park Farm abutting to the east and Chawton Park Wood to the south.

This area was chosen because the landowner had metal-detected this area and found numerous finds, many of them from the Roman and Iron Age periods.



Figure 1 - Area of Interest

Geophysical surveys (magnetometry, resistivity and ground-penetrating radar) have been conducted during the summer of 2024, during 2025, and the spring/summer of 2026. Excavations have been undertaken in September 2024 and September 2025.

In summary, this report provides details of the following “Items of interest”, some of which have been added to the Hampshire Historic Environment Record (HER).

1. Iron Age Banjo Enclosure
2. Potential Roman cremation burial with lead vessel, and an assemblage of Roman pots.
3. Potential Roman hexagonal structure with Roman pottery finds
4. Potential Iron Age or Roman ditch
5. Small circular feature, probably Roman
6. Linear and rectilinear features showing in resistivity survey
7. Unknown curvilinear feature showing in resistivity survey

Landscape

The location of the site is on a south and eastwards facing slope, towards a dry tributary valley to the River Wey, and Alton. The underlying geology is chalk capped by clay with flints.

The Area of Interest is about 6.5 km south-west of the Roman site at Neatham (Vindomis?). Previous archaeology studies in the areaⁱ, have looked at the possibility of a Roman road running east from Winchester (Venta) that crossed the north-south Roman road running between Silchester (Callewa) and Chichester (Noviomagus), at Neatham (Vindomis?). The studies show that a possible route for this road runs within 200 m of the northern edge of Wood Close (see the Red Line on the left of *Figure 1*, a section of which was excavated because a linear feature was visible on an old aerial photograph).

Location

All location co-ordinates in this report were obtained using GNSS equipment with accuracy confirmed to be within 1 cm, with CRS used being OSGB1936 (EPSG:27700) and ODN height datum.

Geophysical Survey - Magnetometry

A magnetometry survey of the area was carried out during 2024 and 2025 using a Bartington Grad-601 dual axis model, see *Figure 2 - Magnetometry Survey*.

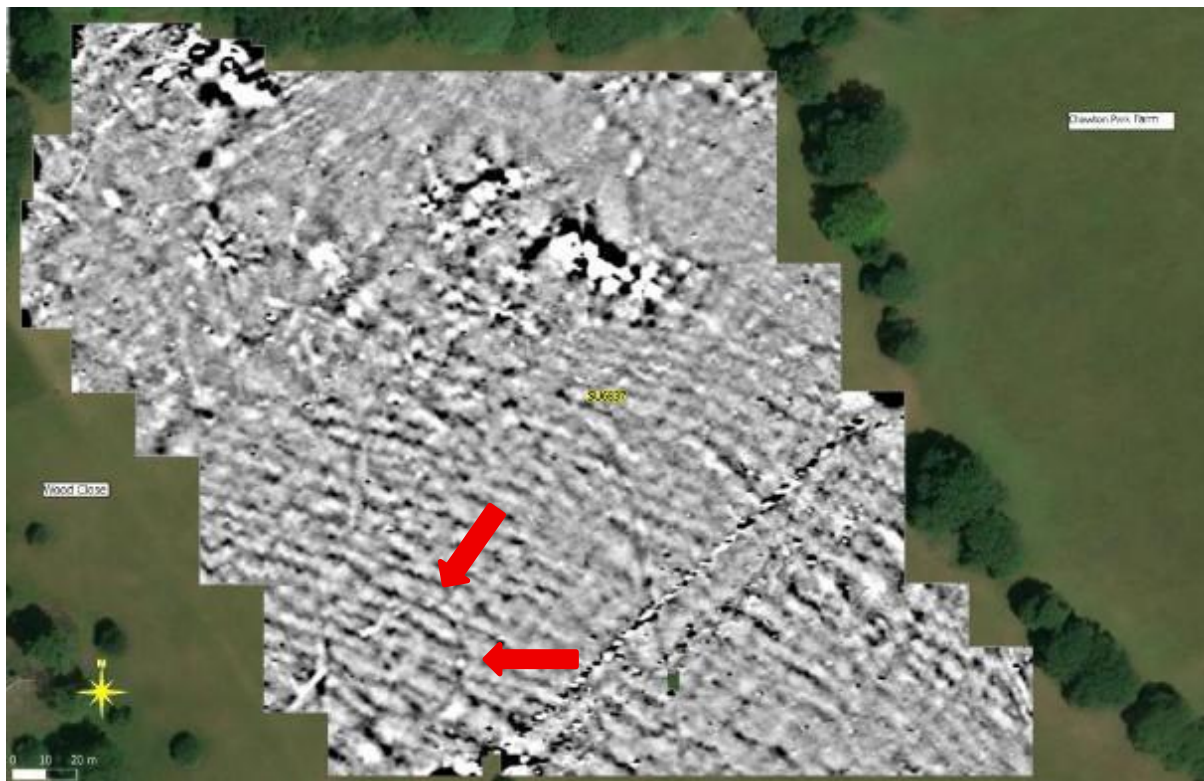


Figure 2 - Magnetometry Survey

While many of the lines on the survey are due to natural hill wash (colluvial action), some features are visible, such as the circular feature bottom left (Banjo Enclosure shown by the red arrows), several trackways and areas of high magnetic disturbance (towards the north of the survey). These were used to focus the areas that were subsequently surveyed using Resistivity Geophysics.

Geophysical Survey – Resistivity

Resistivity surveys were undertaken over areas of interest identified in the Magnetometry survey between the summer of 2024 and the summer of 2026. The surveys were undertaken using a RM85 machine, see *Figure 3 - Resistivity Survey*.

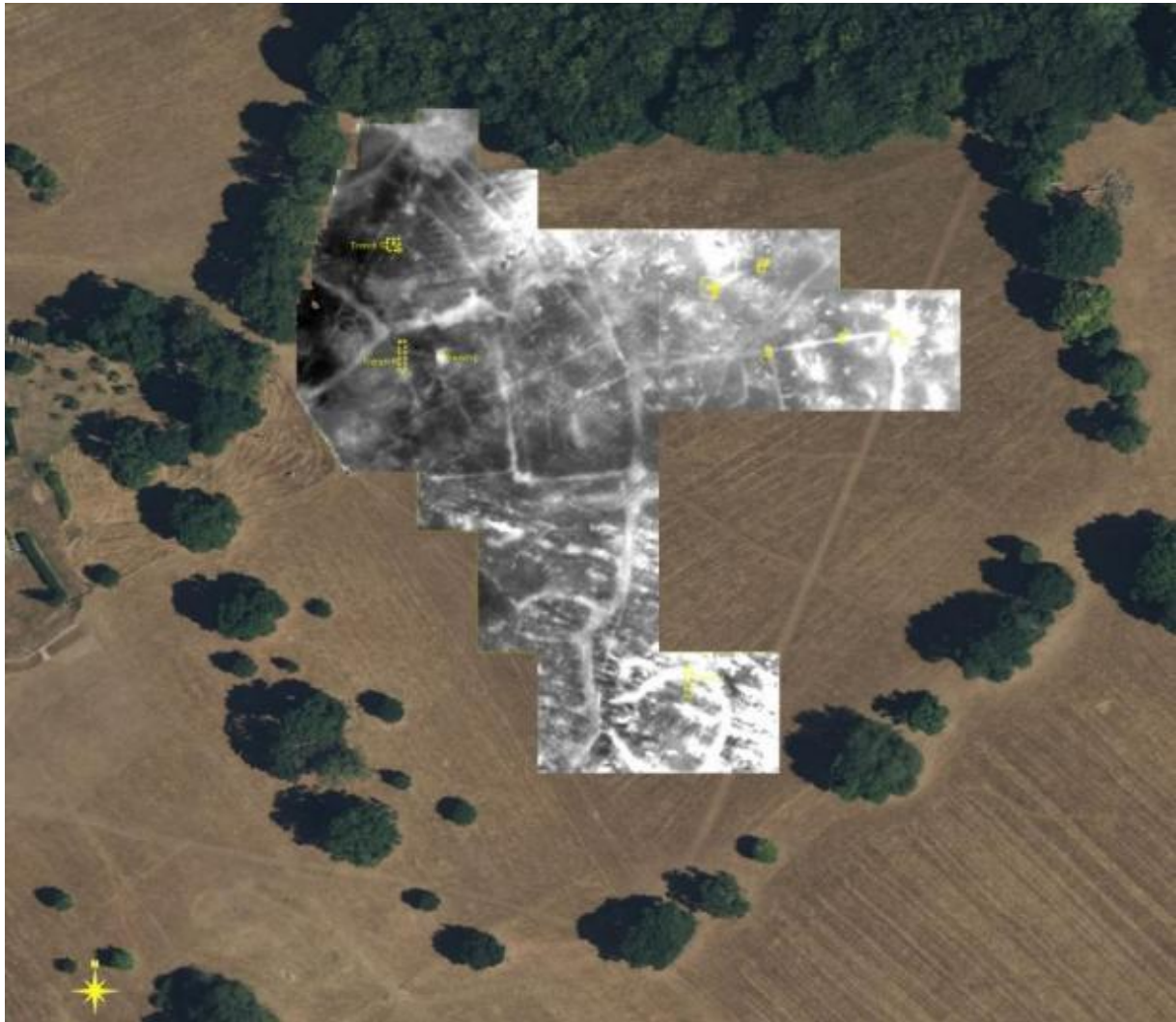


Figure 3 - Resistivity Survey

Geophysical Survey – Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR)

GPR surveys have been done in 2025 and 2026. Liss Archaeology uses a Mala Easy Locator Pro HDR machine and the other survey was done by a third party using a Proceq GS8000.

The Mala GPR uses a 500MHz antenna to direct radar signals vertically downwards into the ground, to a depth of up to 4 metres. The radar signals reflect from surfaces where there is a change in density, such as voids or surfaces more dense than the surrounding soil. Compared with other geophysics techniques, GPR has the added benefit that it can produce amplitude maps for horizontal slices of selected thickness at various depths, showing features in 3 dimensions.

As can be seen in *Figure 4*, the GPR survey showed similar details to the resistivity survey, but also indicated the depth of the top and bottom of the features.

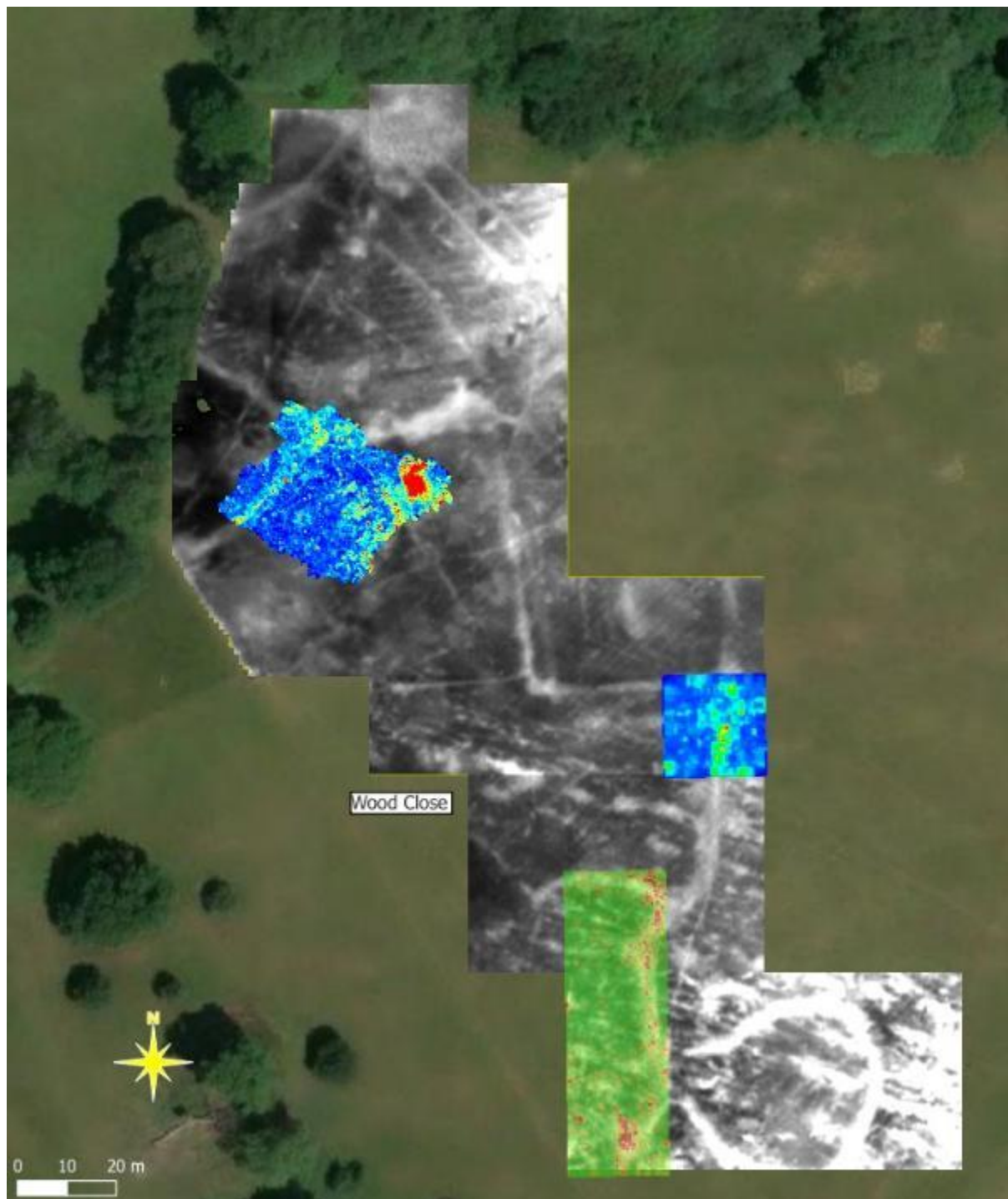


Figure 4 – GPR Survey superimposed on Resistivity Survey

Items of Interest

Table 1 provides a summary of Items of Interest, with their locations shown on the Resistivity Survey (Figure 5). The following Sections provide further details of each item.

Table 1 - Items of Interest

	Trench	Eastings	Northings	Notes
Iron Age Banjo Enclosure	AM925J	468324	137475	HER 73420 Banjo Enclosure
Potential Roman cremation burial	AM925G	468232	137635	HER 73431 Possible cremation
Potential Roman hexagonal structure	AM925H	468235	137600	HER 73432 Hexagonal building
Potential Iron Age or Roman ditch	AM924D	468397	137606	HER 73433 Ditch
Small circular feature	AM924A	468338	137617	HER 73434 Circular feature
Linear and rectilinear features showing in resistivity survey	Area 1	468295	137595	See Figure 5
Unknown curvilinear feature showing in resistivity survey	Area 2	468300	137520	See Figure 5
Numerous metal finds reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme	N/A			See Table 3

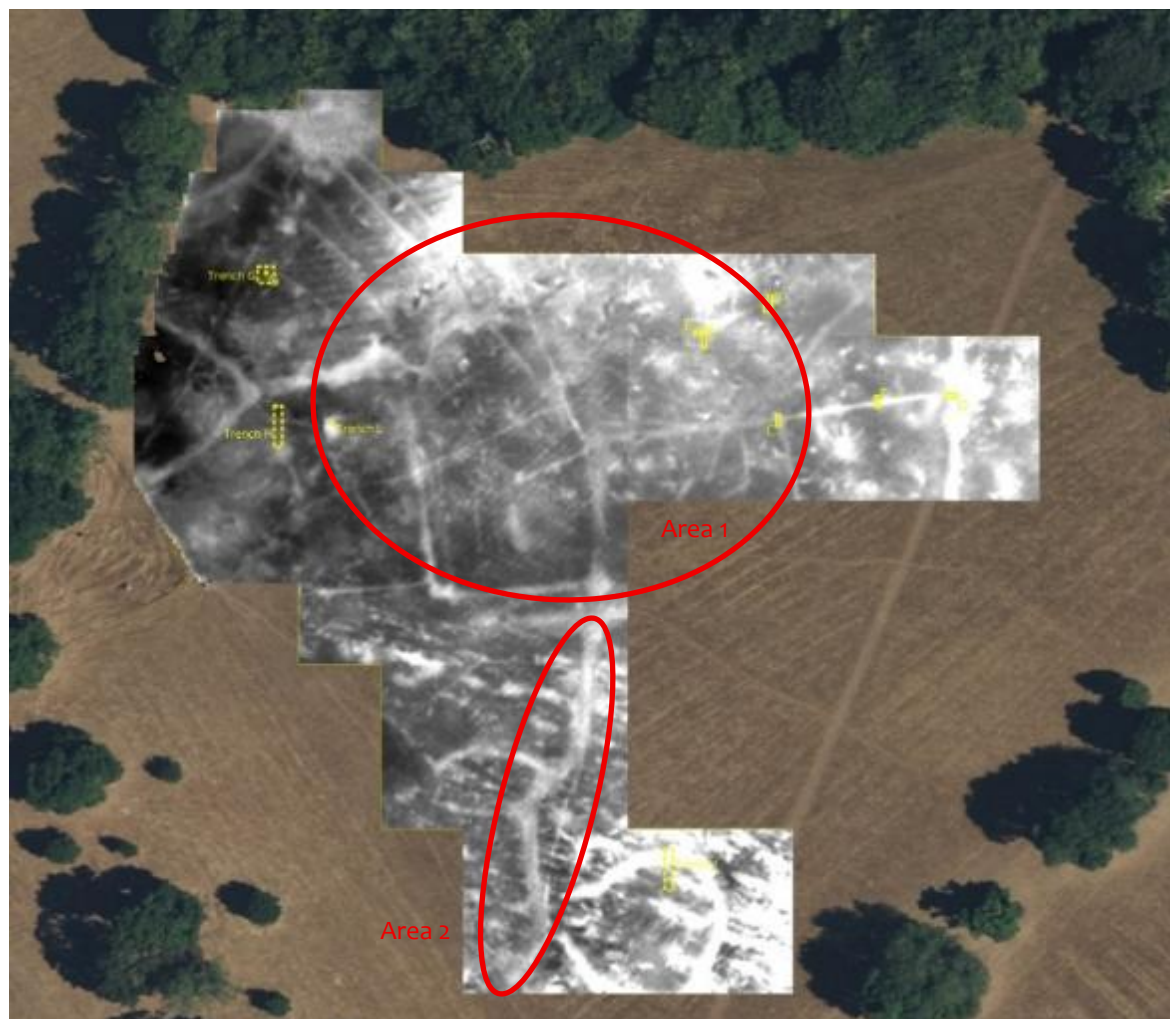


Figure 5 - Resistivity Survey Showing Items of Interest

Iron Age Banjo Enclosure (AM925 Trench J)

On 9 April 2025 a circular feature, approximately 40 metres in diameter, was noted during a magnetometry survey (see Figure 2). The presence of this feature was confirmed by a resistivity geophysics survey on 18 June 2025 (see Figure 6) and the shape indicated it was probably a banjo enclosure. A trench excavated across the northern section of the feature in September 2025 confirmed this diagnosis, by the shape of the enclosure ditch and the dating of the finds made. No bank is visible in the landscape, and neither did the excavation trench reveal anything, although there may have been one that was ploughed out in antiquity. The County Archaeologist visited the site during excavation and was of the same view.

The centroid of the feature is at **468324 137475**. It is not perfectly circular. It is widest in the NW-SE direction at 37.5 metres and shortest in the NE-SW direction at 32.3 metres. The 'neck' of the enclosure is at the western end and at its widest is 10.32 metres across. The entrance to the enclosure is short and subsequent resistivity and GPR surveys across the 'neck' indicate it may have been intersected by a later north-south curvilinear feature (Area 2) yet to be investigated.

The interior area of the enclosure was fully surveyed to a depth of 4 metres with ground-penetrating radar during the dig. No features were found within the enclosure.

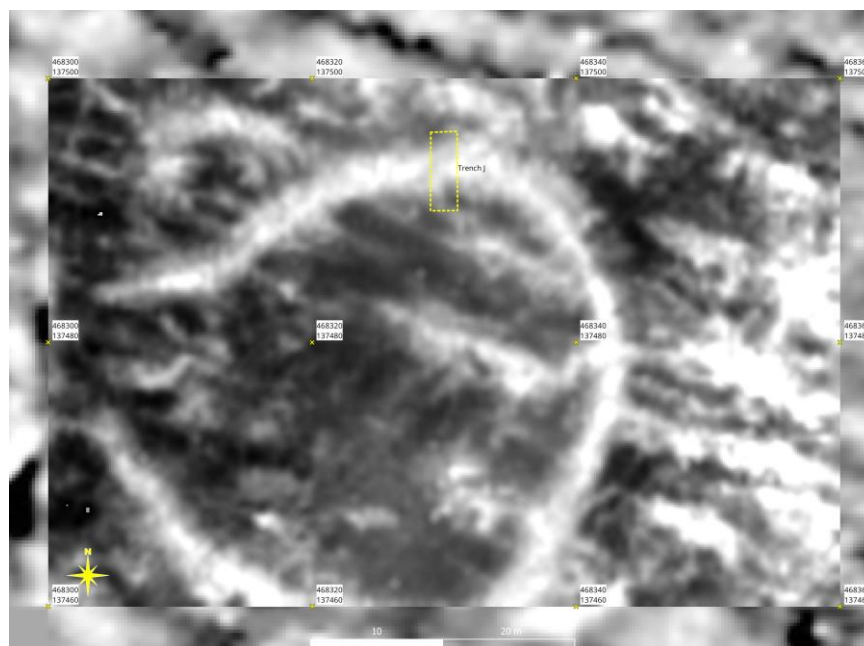


Figure 6 - Resistivity Survey of Banjo Enclosure

A narrow rectangular trench 2x6m (Trench J – see Table 2) was sited across the northern section of what was expected to be the enclosure ditch.

Table 2 - Trench J Final Co-ordinates

Corner	Easting	Northing	Height
A	468328.99	137495.91	197.66
B	468330.98	137495.99	197.57
C	468331.02	137489.98	197.45
D	468328.97	137489.97	197.56

The following diagrams show the plan and sections of Trench J.

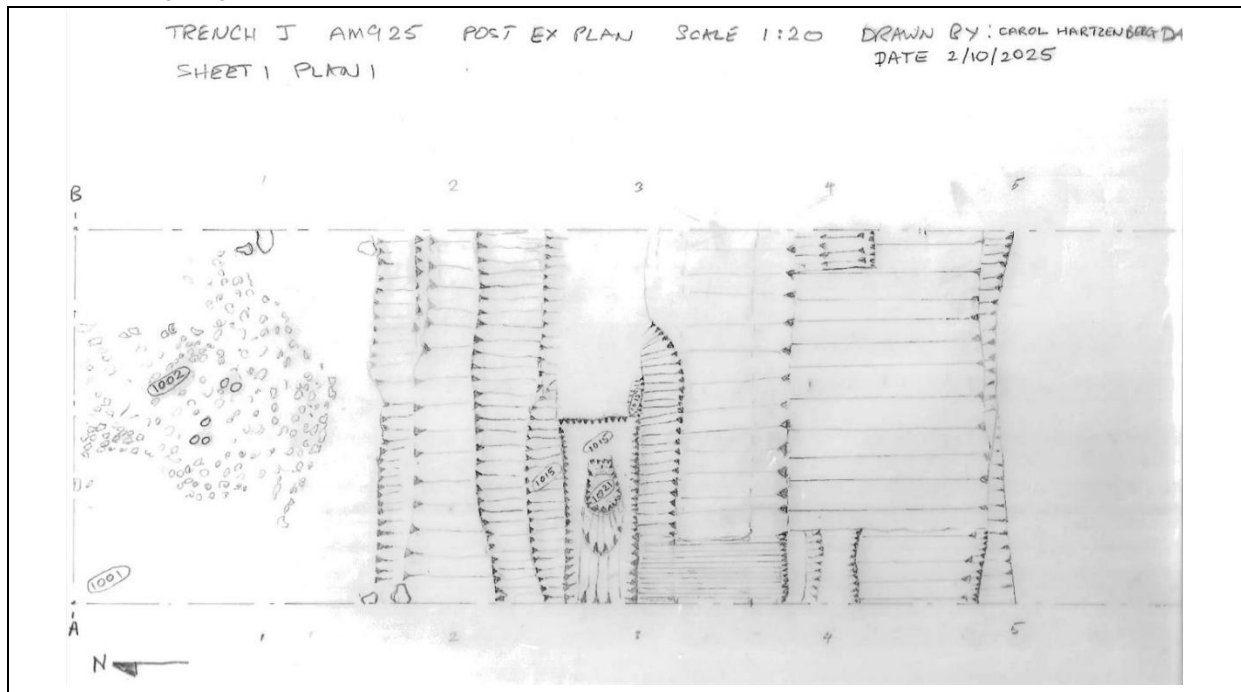


Figure 7 Trench J Plan

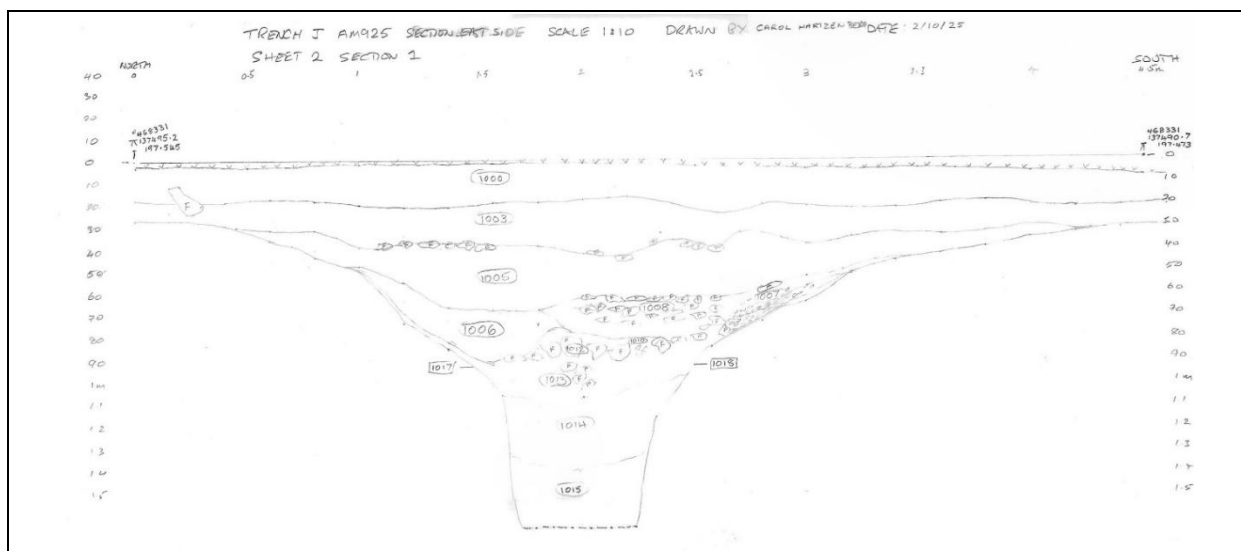


Figure 8 – Trench J East Side Section

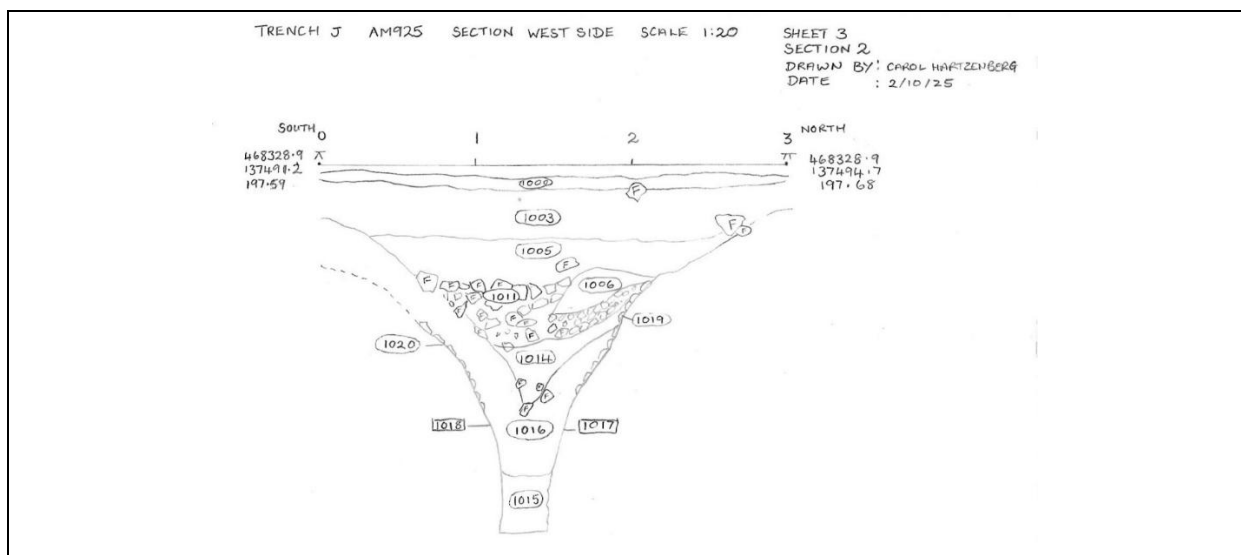


Figure 9 – Trench J West Side Section

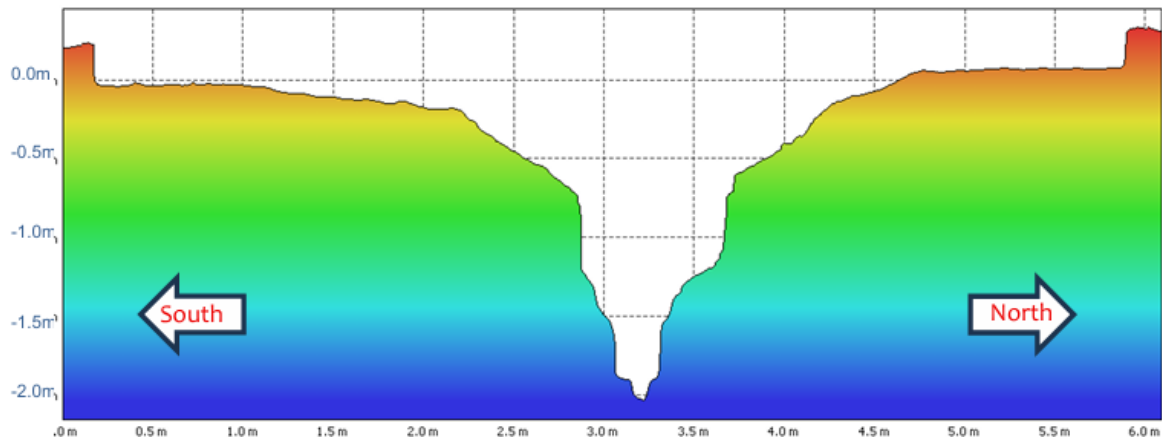


Figure 10 –Section through middle of the trench J derived from photogrammetry model

Finds

While there were a few pieces of Ceramic Building Material and other stone/building material, the bulk of the finds were pottery (839 pieces weighing 7.9Kg), largely consisting of pottery identifiable to both the Roman and Iron Age periods, see Table 3. Much of the Roman pottery is identifiable with the bulk being Alice Holt/Farnham coarseware, with a minority from Oxfordshire, New Forest and Rowlands Castle. To date, no further analysis has been done on the Iron Age pottery.

Table 3 - Trench J Roman and Iron Age Pottery by Depth

Depth from top – in m	Roman		Iron Age	
	Number	Weight g	Number	Weight g
0.10	12	17	3	113
0.27	54	190	8	507
0.59	10	0	0	42
0.14	518	116	13	4852
0.51	27	0	0	313
0.83	18	607	65	184
0.85	9	60	9	67
0.86	15	34	2	100
1.07	27	14	2	317
1.12	1	115	13	11

The finds support the conclusion that the site was occupied in the Iron Age period, and subsequently by the Romans.



Figure 11 - Oblique view facing westwards of Trench J on completion, showing steep V-shaped ditch cut through clay and flint into chalk bedrock at bottom. Steps cut were for access by diggers.



Figure 12 - Oblique view facing north-west of Trench J on completion.



Figure 13 - North-oriented overhead view of Trench J on completion, showing intersection with the northern edge of the steep V-shaped banjo enclosure cut over 2 metres deep into chalk bedrock.

Potential Roman cremation burial (AM925 Trench G)

In early 2025 the landowner contacted us, as he had metal detected and uncovered, but not excavated, a lead object that was surrounded by various pots at a depth of 30cm in the north-west corner of the field. One of the pots was an obvious Roman Indented Beaker (New Forest), so this gave Roman dating of 3rd/4th century CE. This find spot was covered up again, until such time as it could be excavated as part of a formal dig.

Geophysics across the find spot did not show any specific buildings but there were some linear features a few meters away. The horizontal streaks on the resistivity plot are plough-lines but it is not known what the linear features are that intersect them diagonally.

In September 2025, Liss Archaeology ran a dig which included excavating the find spot. As the find spot assemblage (lead container and pots) would usually be associated with a burial or cremation, we obtained an *Authority to Excavate Human Remains for Archaeological Purposes* from the Ministry of Justice.

A 4x4 m trench was dug, centred on the find spot. The remaining top of the assemblage was at the same level as the occupation layer which consisted of flint gravel on top of the underlying clay (just under the plough soil). The top of the assemblage had been ploughed out, with damage to the upper part of the lead vessel, and with a spread of pottery sherds, see Figure 14.

No evidence of any coffin, building or construction was found around the assemblage, though it may have been clay-capped as there was a mound of clay to the north-east of the assemblage containing lead fragments that had probably been moved by ploughing.

At the end of the dig, the corner of a potential building was found, 2 m to the north of the find spot. It is intended that this will be investigated further in a future dig (see top of Figure 19).



Figure 14 – Lead Vessel and Pottery Assemblage in situ

No human remains were found, only a very small amount of bone (which was thought to be animal). The pots were excavated and have subsequently been identified as Roman.

The lead container was block lifted, wrapped and stored until it can be investigated further by Historic England.

The top of the lead vessel in the ground (but probably its bottom, as it is thought to be an inverted burial) has been damaged by ploughing. It is thought that the bottom in the ground (but probably its top) is open, but we did not want to remove any clay until this can be done under the right conditions. The dimensions of the cylinder were measured when we scanned it for photogrammetry. The cylinder is not perfectly circular and diameter varies between 150-165mm. Height of the shortest part seen is 90mm (where the lead is torn), but in places where not damaged goes up to about 150mm. It is made from sheet lead approx. 3mm thick, welded in a seam down one side. Both this weld and that joining the 'circular' section to the inside of the cylinder have well-made seams (see *Figure 15 – Lead Vessel*).

The lead vessel is unusual; to date, only one published paper has been found that has a similar vessel (The Well's Bridge Roman Ash-Chest and Cremation Cylinder, Ellis, Henig, Hayward - Bristol & Gloucester Archaeological Society 135 -2017).



Figure 15 – Lead Vessel post excavation

Table 4 provides details of the pottery found in the assemblage (for photos see *Figure 16* and *Figure 17*).

Table 4 – Trench G – Pottery Assemblage

Description	Easting	Northing	Elevation	Pot Analysis and Dating CE
1. Lead Cylinder	468231.95	137635.37	203.50	
2. Indented Beaker	468231.92	137635.50	203.53	New Forest metallic indented beaker 270-400
3. Terracotta pots	468232.02	137635.52	203.51	Oxford Colour Coat 240-410 Alice Holt 60-420
4. Small black pot	468232.10	137635.40	203.53	Alice Holt 5B.07 270-350
5 Small black pot	468232.02	137635.29	203.54	Alice Holt 5B.07 270-350
Bottom below lead	468231.94	137635.44	203.36	

Within the trench other pottery, both Roman and Iron Age, was found on the occupation surface and in the ditch/gully at the north-east corner of the trench.

It is probable that the assemblage is an inverted cremation burial, but this is yet to be proven; the lead vessel requires further investigation.



Figure 16 – Pottery from the Assemblage



Figure 17 – New Forest Indented beaker

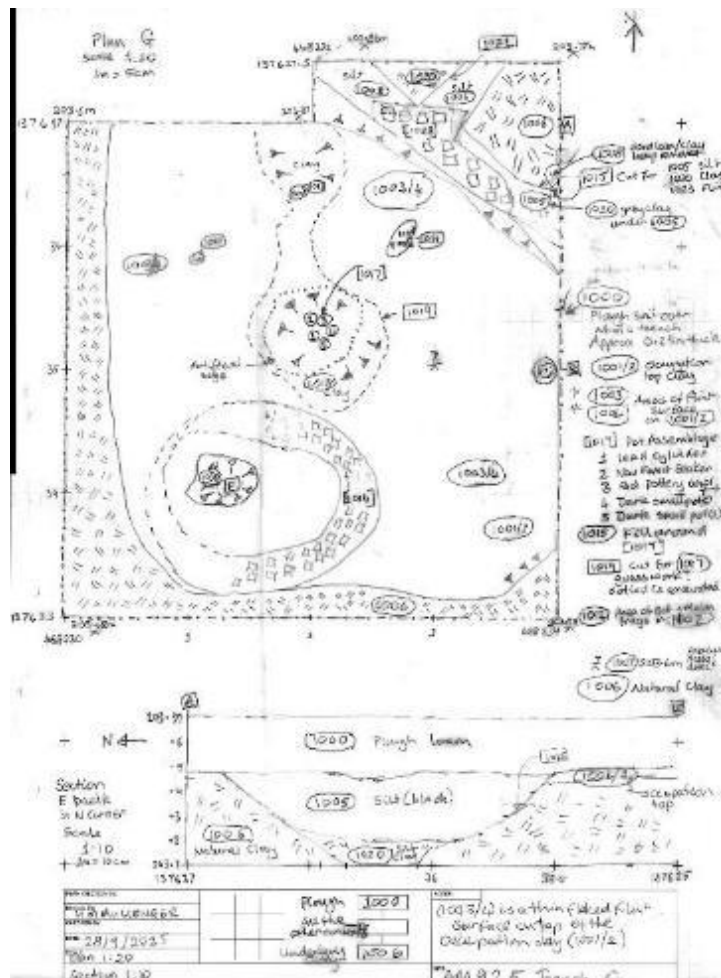


Figure 18 – Trench G Plan



Figure 19 – Trench G as excavated Overhead

Potential Roman hexagonal structure (AM925 Trench H)

The purpose of this trench was to explore a number of features that are seen in the Resistivity Survey (Figure 20), and in a Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey. An extract of the survey (Figure 5) is seen below annotated with the specific features of interest:

1. The Hexagonal feature. The trench should catch the northern end of this at the south end of the trench;
2. A linear feature aligned with and just north of the hexagonal feature;
3. A linear feature crossing near the centre of the trench on a different alignment;
4. A curvilinear feature starting north- west of the northern end of the trench and looping through the centre of the trench.

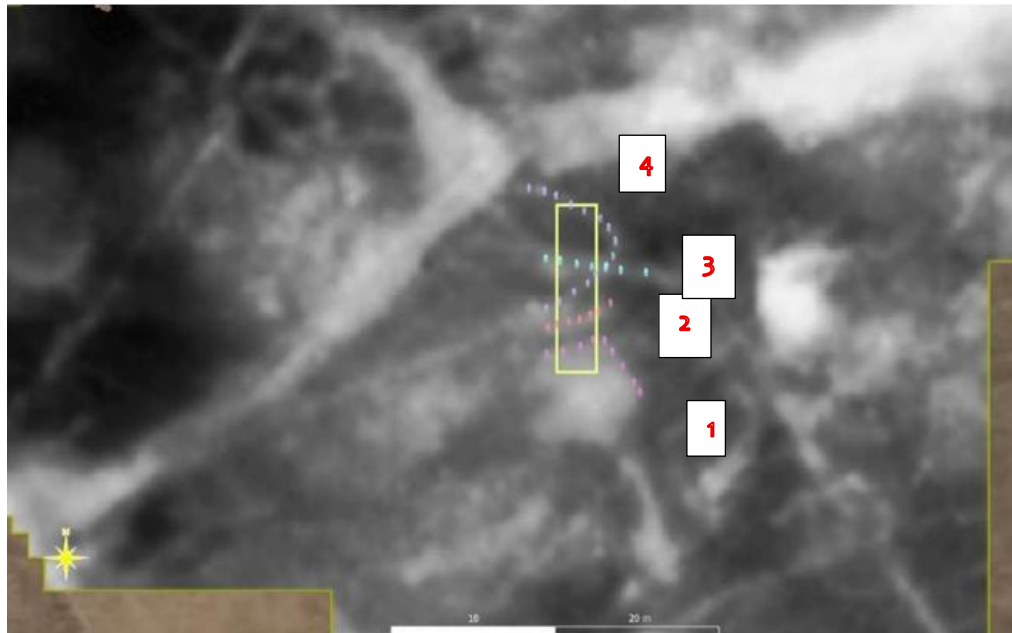


Figure 20 – Trench H Resistivity Extract showing features

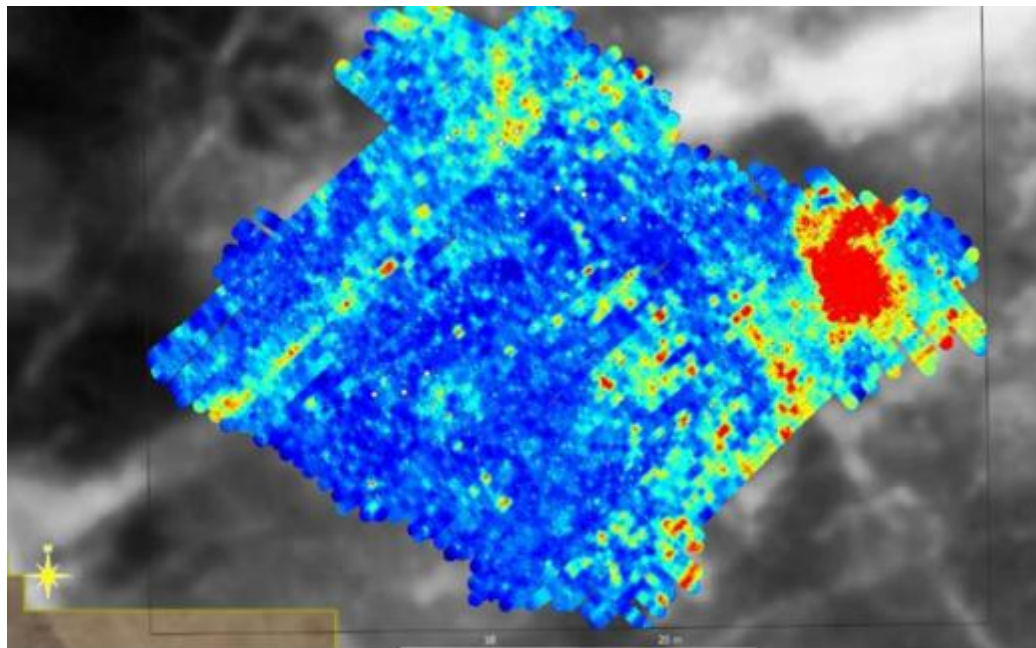


Figure 21 – Trench H GPR Survey – Depth 0.25 to 0.5 m

The hexagonal feature appeared to be about 7.5 m across and the GPR suggests that this starts at a depth of about 0.25 m and goes down in places to about 1 m.

Figure 22 and Figure 23 show the post-excavation overhead and plan. The results of the excavation are as follows:

1. The Hexagonal feature
About a quarter of a circular feature was exposed. The feature was encircled by an area of soft red clay with few inclusions easily distinguishable from the surrounding orangey brown clay. Inside this red clay the fill of the feature was 30-50% chalk, large flints (150 mm), smaller stones / gravel and red clay. This was the only place where chalk was found in the trench. Five pieces of Romano-British pottery was found in this context and two of Iron Age date.
2. A linear feature aligned with and just north of the hexagonal feature;
A flint feature possibly the remains of a foundation or structure that had been damaged by ploughing and a flint surface appeared to be elements on the hexagonal feature.
3. A linear feature crossing near the centre of the trench on a different alignment;
This appears to be a narrow gravel track.
4. A curvilinear feature starting north- west of the northern end of the trench and looping through the centre of the trench.
The excavation found a man-made gully, most probably of Iron Age date, that was at least partially filled in during the Romano-British period when a trackway was added that crossed it.

The trench was extended southwards beyond that shown in the geophysics survey, to see if a matching flint feature (as 2 above) could be found, but this was not the case, probably due to the land dropping away on the south side, and hence the feature may have been ploughed out.

Overall within the trench about 370 pottery sherds were found, mainly Roman from Alice Holt and Rowlands Castle, and a small number of Iron Age sherds.

While a hexagonal Roman feature could indicate a temple, future excavation is required to try and establish an understanding of the whole feature:

1. Further explore the central chalky area;
2. Follow the flint feature to establish its ground pattern.

On the Resistivity and GPR surveys, a blob can be seen on the right side of the survey (white in Resistivity, red in GPR). A 1 m trench (L) was dug into this, exposing a tightly-packed flint area, with a couple of pieces of Roman pottery. No silting was seen between the flints or where they met the underlying clay, indicating that this was not an infilled ditch. Again, further work is required.



Figure 22 – Trench H - As Excavated Overhead



Figure 23 – Trench H Plan

Potential Iron Age or Roman ditch (AM924 Trench D)

This trench (3 m x 1 m) was positioned over the intersection of N-S linear feature, and the eastern end of straight linear feature as shown in the resistivity geophysical survey (Figure 5). The trench was very different from the others, in that the plough soil was very compressed and dry. Under the compacted soil, a flint surface or raft was found. In excavating through the flints, a significant V-shaped ditch was exposed running N-S, similar to other ditches seen at Liss Archaeology excavations at Colemore. Two pieces of Roman pottery were found at the flint level, and 3 pieces of flint-tempered pottery (possibly Iron Age) were found in the ditch contexts.

The section and photos were done before the ditch was further excavated, to expose the approx. 2 m deep V-shaped ditch running north-south as shown on Resistivity Geophysics.

The ditch may be from either the Iron Age or Roman periods, but was later filled probably during later Roman times. It was inconclusive as to whether the flint raft continued westwards along the line shown on the resistivity geophysical survey.

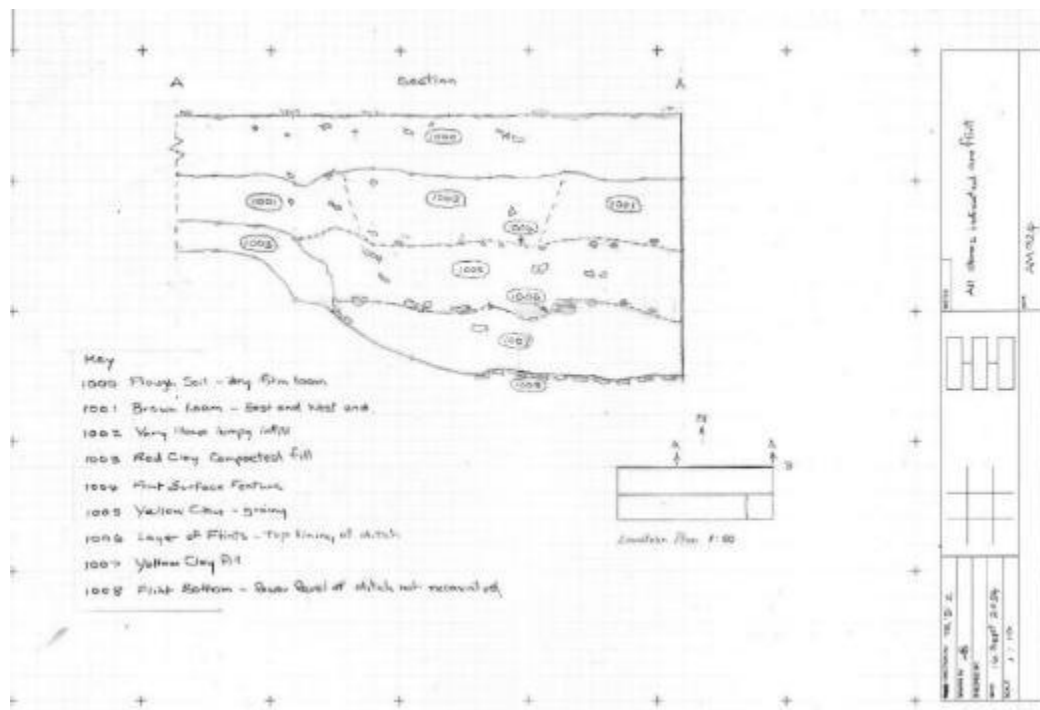


Figure 24 – Trench D North Section before full excavation of the V shaped ditch



Figure 25 – Trench D – North Section, before full excavation of the V shaped ditch



Figure 26 – Trench D As Excavated

Small circular feature (AM924 Trench A)

The purpose of Trench A was to explore a circular feature (approximately 6.5 m in diameter) showing on the resistivity survey.

A 5 x 1m trench was dug, running north to south from the northern inside of the circle, over the lower part of the circle. During digging, the southern 2 m of the trench was extended eastwards by 1m to more clearly expose the circular feature.

A small section of the circular feature was exposed. This was a rough flint wall, not necessarily continuous, the upper parts obviously ploughed out. A broken pottery “bowl” (30 sherds grog tempered 280-410) was found on the inside of the flint wall. In the northern part of the trench, there was a deep conglomeration of flints. We were unable to determine whether these were natural or some sort of feature (post base?) that would have been in approximate middle of the circular feature.

Due to the lack of finds, and the insubstantial construction of the flint circular feature, it was thought that this feature may be agricultural rather than residential.



Figure 27 – Trench A Plan



Figure 28 – Trench A Photo with red line showing curve of flints

Linear and rectilinear features showing in resistivity survey

Resistivity Geophysical surveys done in 2024, 2025 and 2026 show a large number of linear and rectilinear features, which look man-made (see Area 1 in *Figure 5*).

A small test pit was put across one of these (Trench F) revealing a narrow ditch partially filled with flints, one piece of Roman pottery was found.

Further excavation work is required to try and identify what they are.

Unknown curvilinear feature showing in resistivity survey

Resistivity Geophysics surveys done in the first half of 2026 (see Area 2 in *Figure 5*), show a north-south feature of significant width, cutting across the entrance of the Banjo enclosure. A Ground Penetrating Radar survey (*Figure 29*) across part of this feature identified dense material at a depth of 1 m, and a thickness of 0.5 m.

Currently, the nature of this feature is unknown, but it is planned that it will be excavated later in 2026.

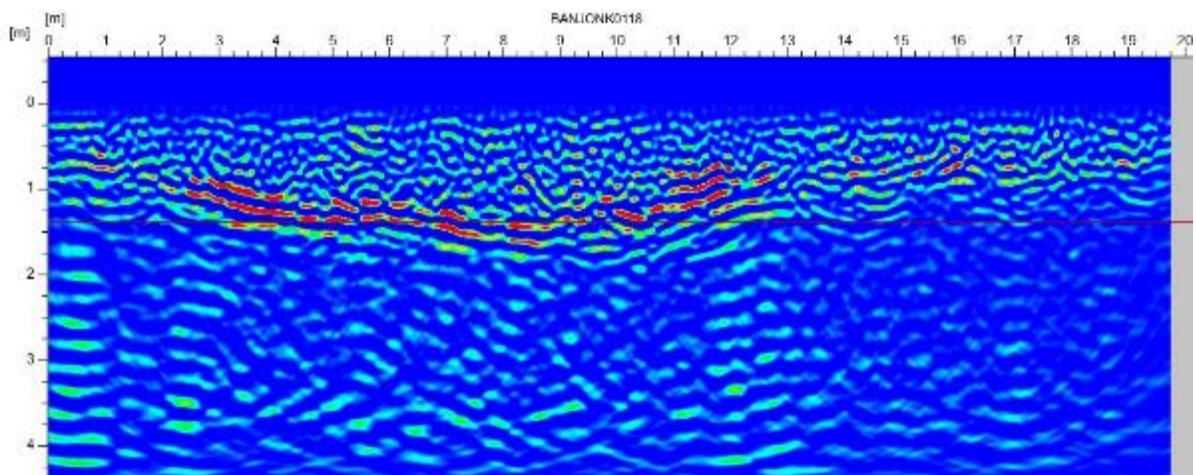


Figure 29 – GPR Survey running N-S in Curvilinear Feature

Numerous Metal Finds

	Wood Close		Stoney Close		Total
	Coin	Other	Coin	Other	
Roman	6	4	8	8	26
Other Eras	8	11	7	10	36

Table 5 provides a summary of the metal detecting finds in the Area of Interest.

Table 5 - Metal Detecting Finds in Wood Close and Stoney Close fields

	Wood Close		Stoney Close		Total
	Coin	Other	Coin	Other	
Roman	6	4	8	8	26
Other Eras	8	11	7	10	36

References

ⁱ HER ID: 57992, Linear Feature, S of Abbey Road (Calow, David; Reports of the Bighton and Medstead Excavations), Roman Roads East of Winchester, David J Weston, Roman Roads Research Association Newsletter No 4, Spring 2017