

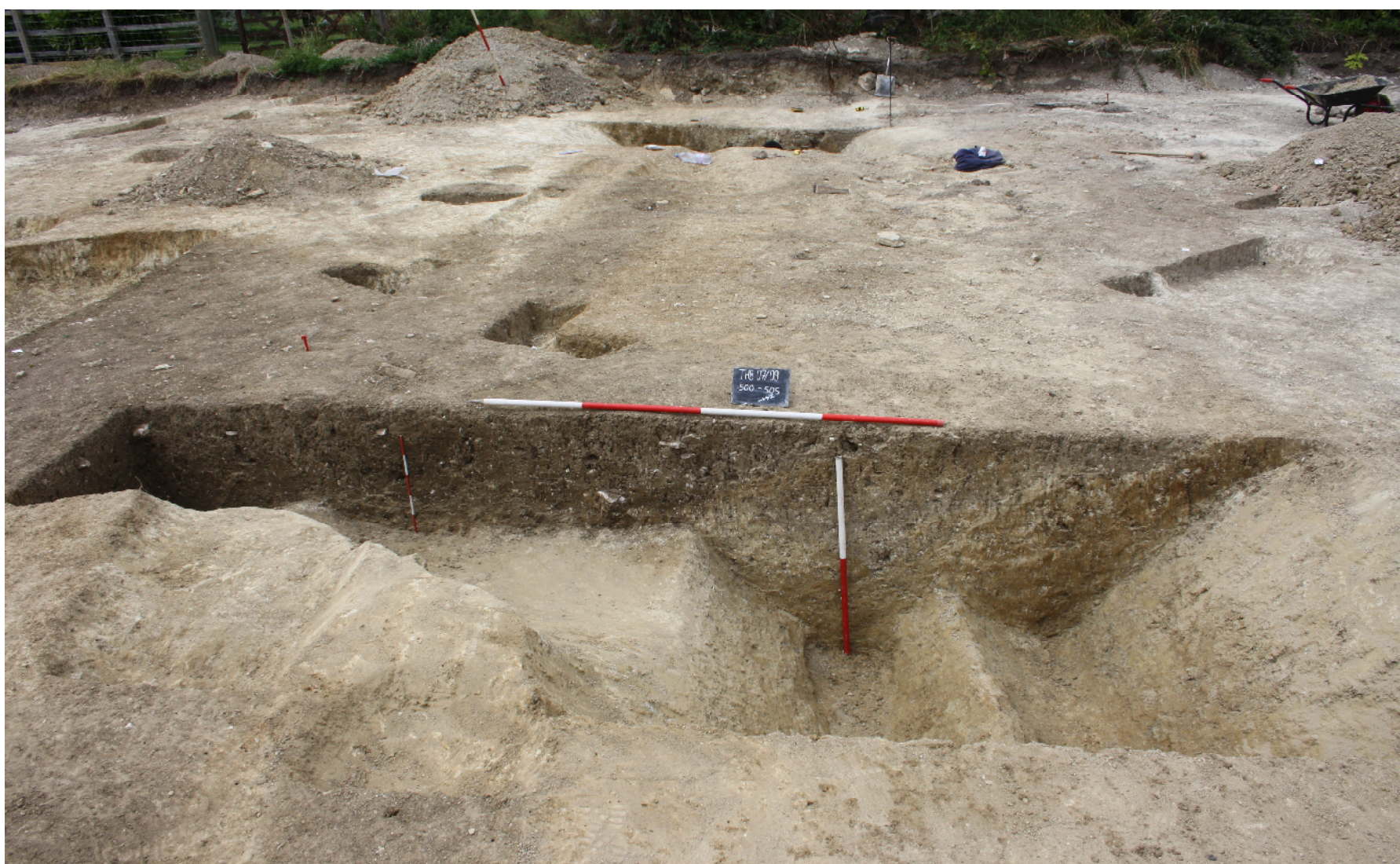
5 Townsend, Haddenham, Buckinghamshire

June- July 2011



The excavation

Once planning permission had been gained and a scheme for the works agreed with the council, the excavation commenced with the clearance of undergrowth, topsoil and subsoil by mechanical excavator to reveal the archaeological features cut into the natural geology (weathered limestone or witchert).



Medieval boundary ditches

The excavation has revealed what appears to be fairly typical deposits found in the 'backlands' of a medieval settlement. The linear features represent plot boundaries which are redefined on several occasions and here we appear to have at least two plots represented. It is assumed that the actual houses for the plots would be located closer to the street frontage whereas these zones are used for various activities including rubbish disposal and animal management. It is thought that the smaller linear features at the south of the site may have acted as small animal pens.



Animal burial

The majority of the deposits found here are tentatively dated to medieval times from about the 11th- 13th centuries indicating that the settlement was flourishing and had expanded from its Saxon origins. But, as is often encountered, the activity of digging of features and the depositing of pottery and other rubbish ceases and does not recommence, even if at all, until well into post-medieval (18th century) times.

It is often considered that this is an effect of the Black Death and indeed that epidemic caused a catastrophic decline in population. But it is also possible that the pattern of decline, such as witnessed here was a result of economic decay (bust following boom) or famine brought on by climatic change and that these changes were already underway before a generally weakened population was then struck down by epidemic disease.



Plan of excavated features on the site.



Chalk filled pit under excavation



Chalk filled pit after partial excavation