

South Marston.

Primary Street – Archaeological Investigations

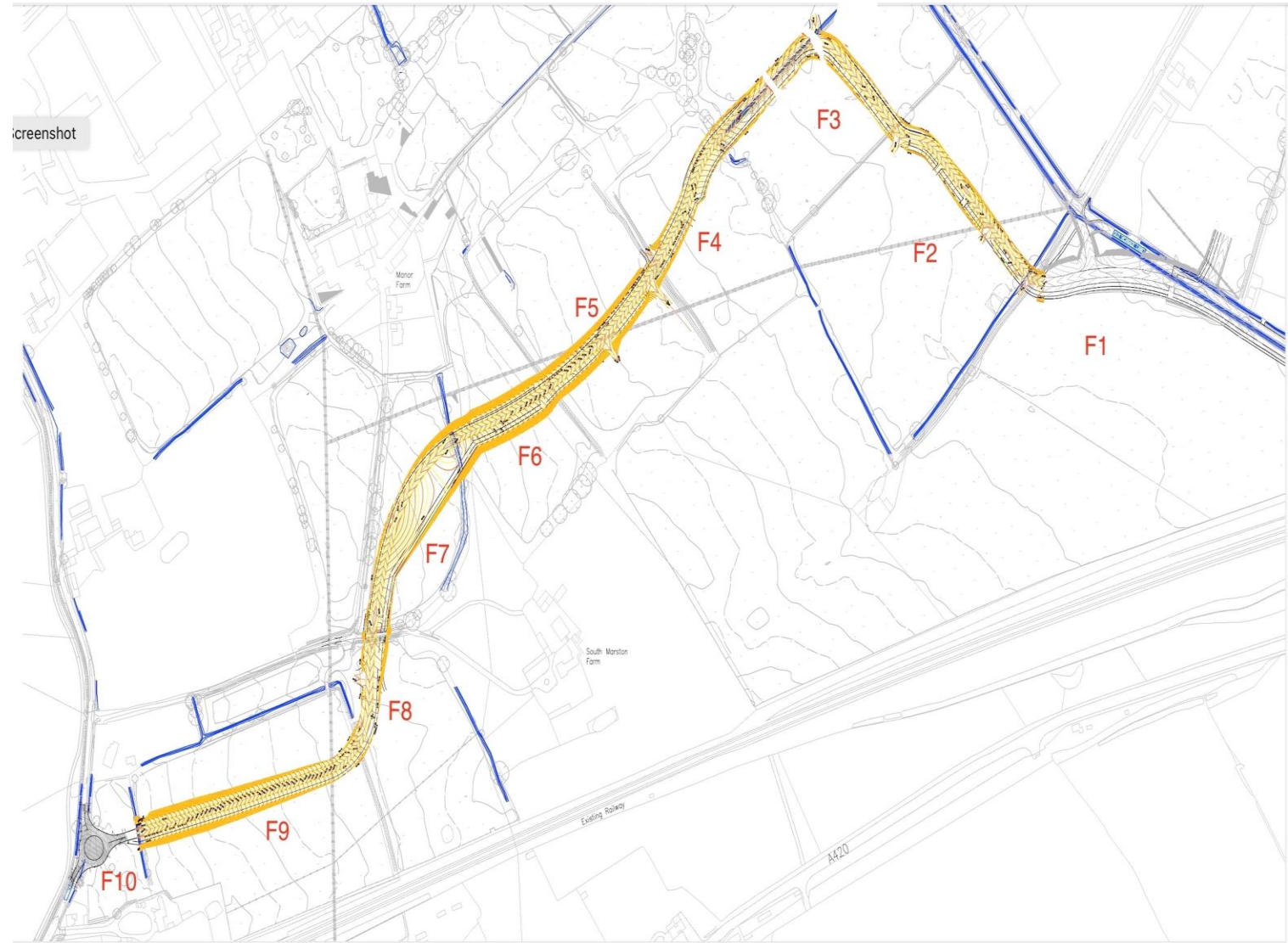


South Marston.

Background

June 2024 - most recent successful planning application. Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) appointed to investigate the archaeological remains, beginning with land to the west of Old Vicarage Lane.]

Current work – Investigating the route of Primary St, the new road which will run from Thornbury Lane to Old Vicarage Lane.





Primary Street.

How we know where to excavate

Desk based assessments including:

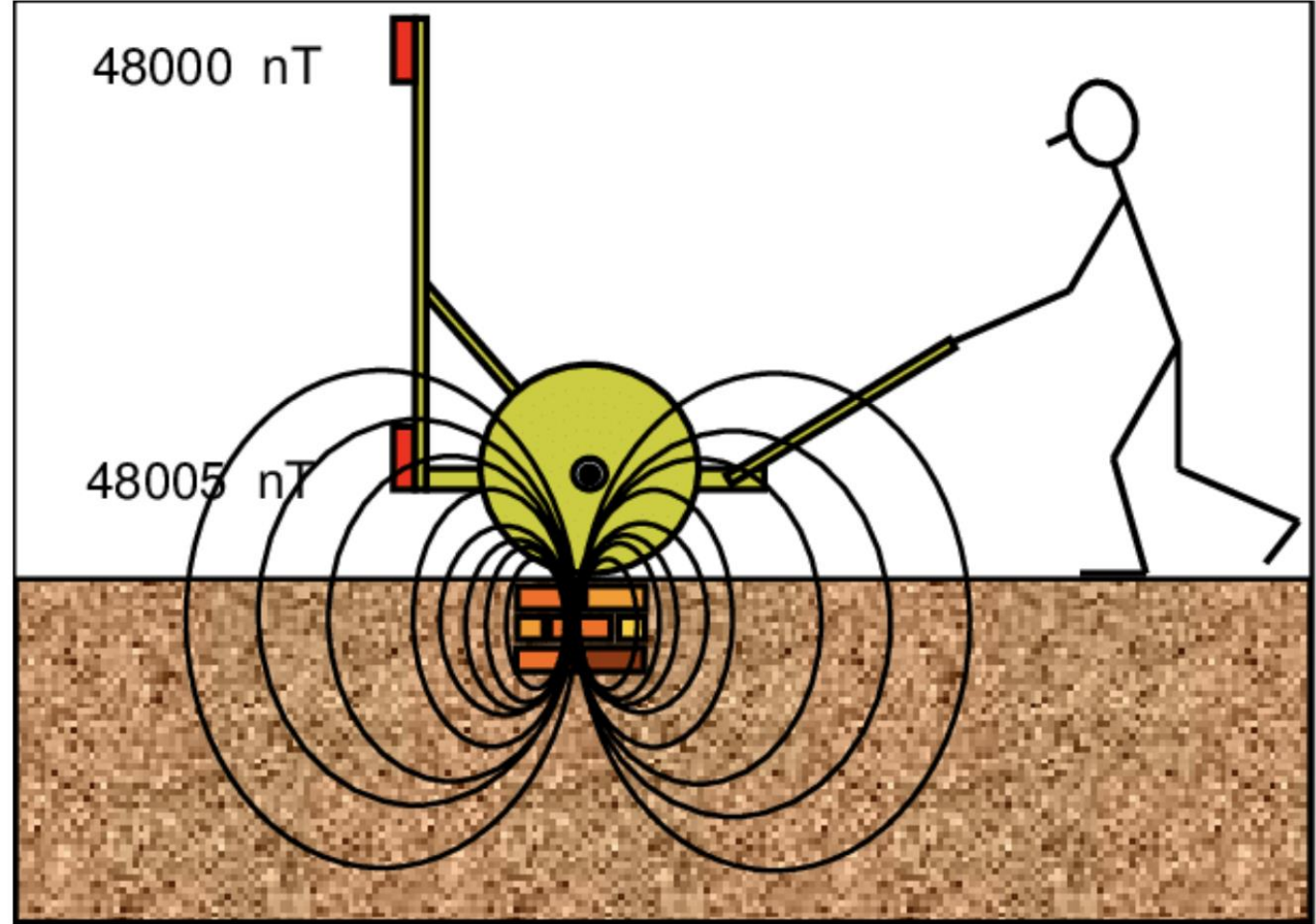
- documentary research
- finding nearby known sites on the Historic Environment Record
- study of historic maps.

Primary Street.

How we know where to excavate

Geophysical survey:

- A magnetometer is passed over the ground surface.
- By measuring minute variations in the earth's magnetic field, we get an image of sub-surface features before we start excavations.





Primary Street.

The excavations

Excavations began July 2024.

The first task was to remove the topsoil and subsoil which covered any archaeological features.

Starting in the fields next to Old Vicarage Lane we began the process of 'stripping' the route of Primary Street.



Primary Street.

The excavations

The topsoil and subsoil rarely contain archaeological material of value because they have usually been 'turbated' or mixed up through years of agricultural activity.

This was the case along Primary Street. Plough scars can be clearly seen.



Primary Street.

The excavations

The fields alongside Old Vicarage Lane revealed very few archaeological features.

The stones in this picture are quite modern activity. They are crossing a winterbourne (a stream that is dry in the summer).



Primary Street.

Field 4

The geophysical survey only showed a single ditch running across the western side of the field.

But once we got down to the archaeology it was clear that this area was criss-crossed by many ditches.

These represent late Iron Age (150 BC – AD 43) field systems

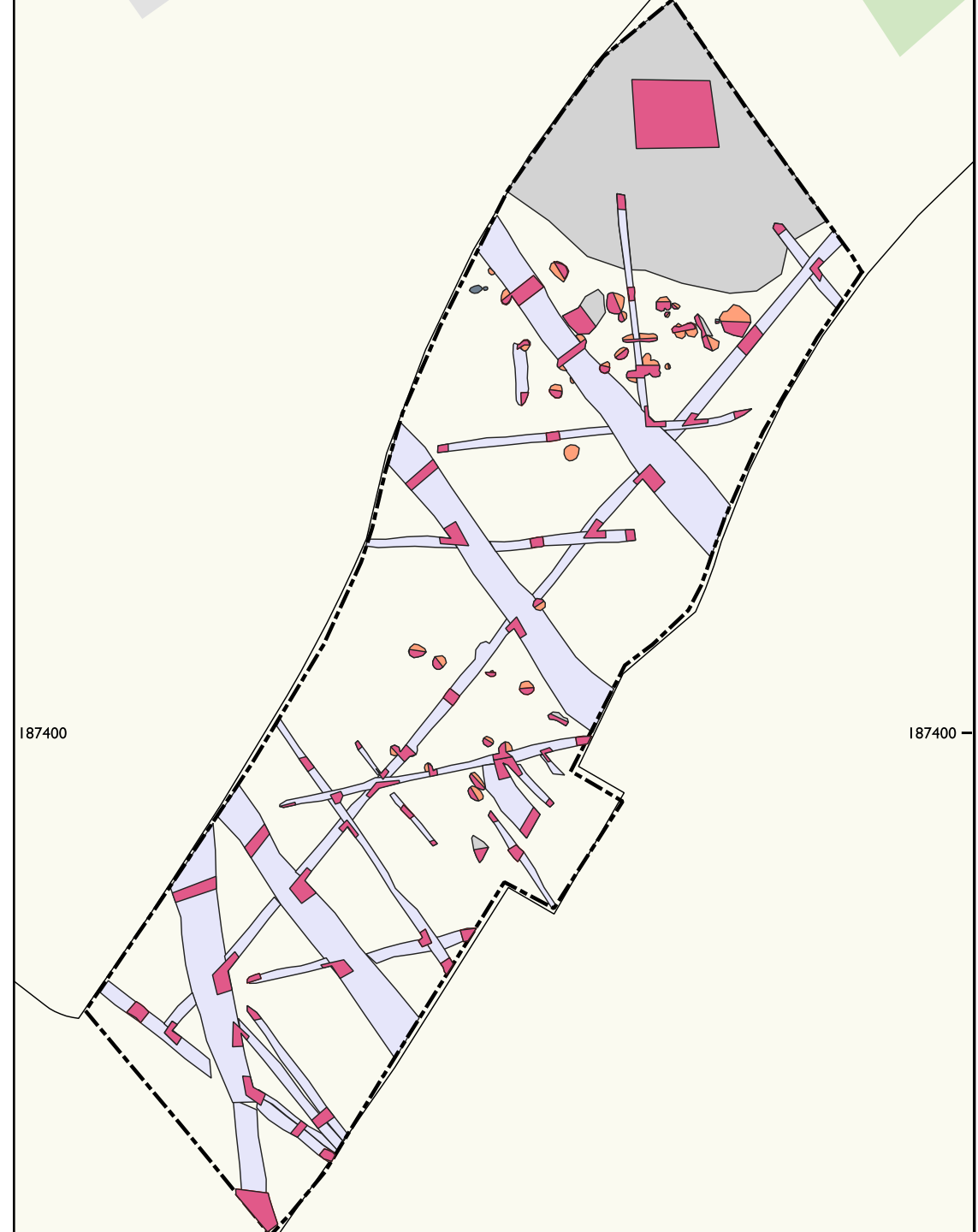


Primary Street.

Field 4

The different alignments of these ditches show four phases of activity.

To properly understand this activity, we had to dig in 150 places - compared to the three we had planned!



Primary Street.

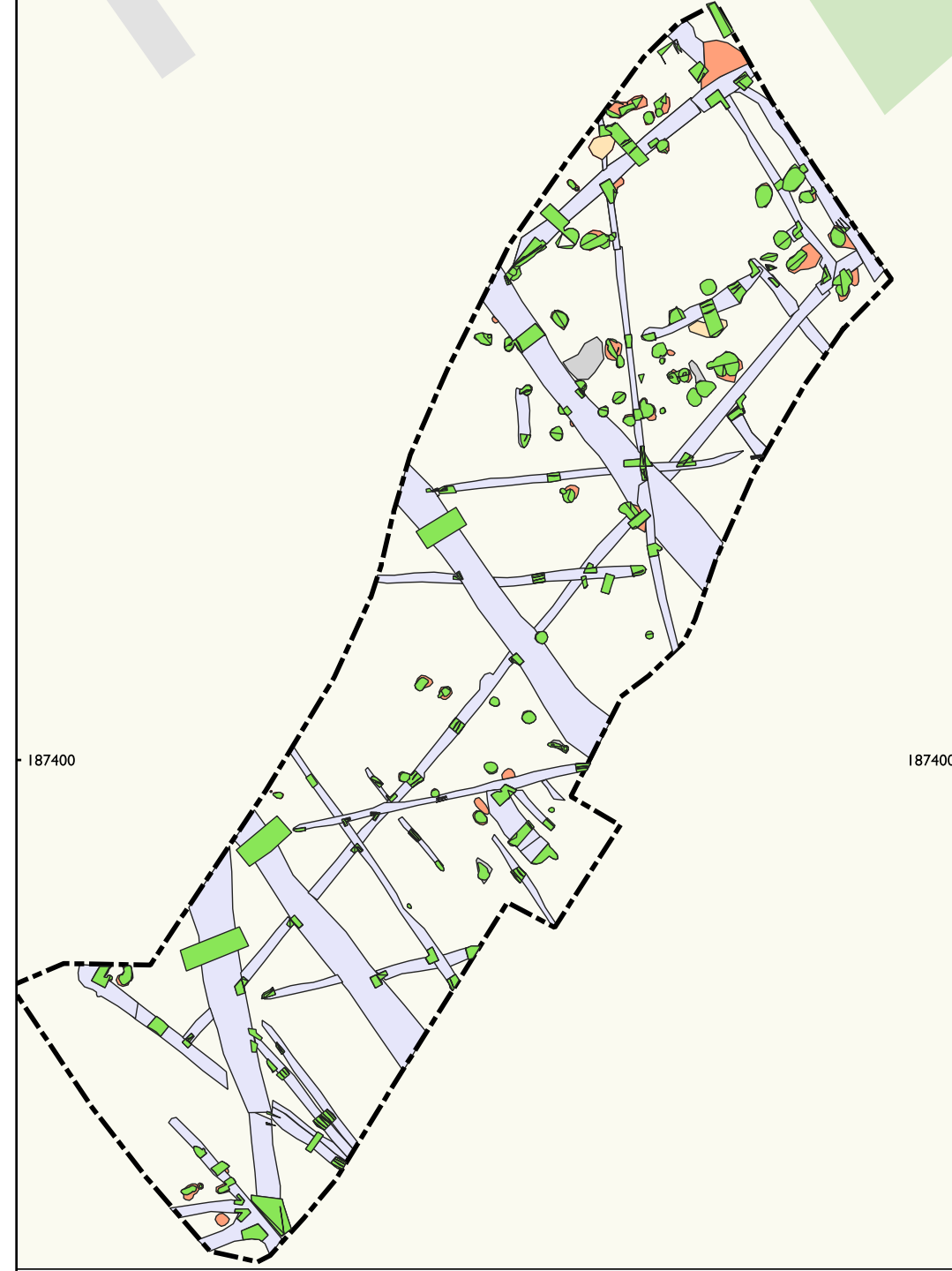
Field 4

This took us a month to complete.

As well as the field boundaries we found:

- Pits, for storing grain
- Four cremations, buried in pairs
- An inhumation burial

We'll be carrying out more excavations in this field in the future.



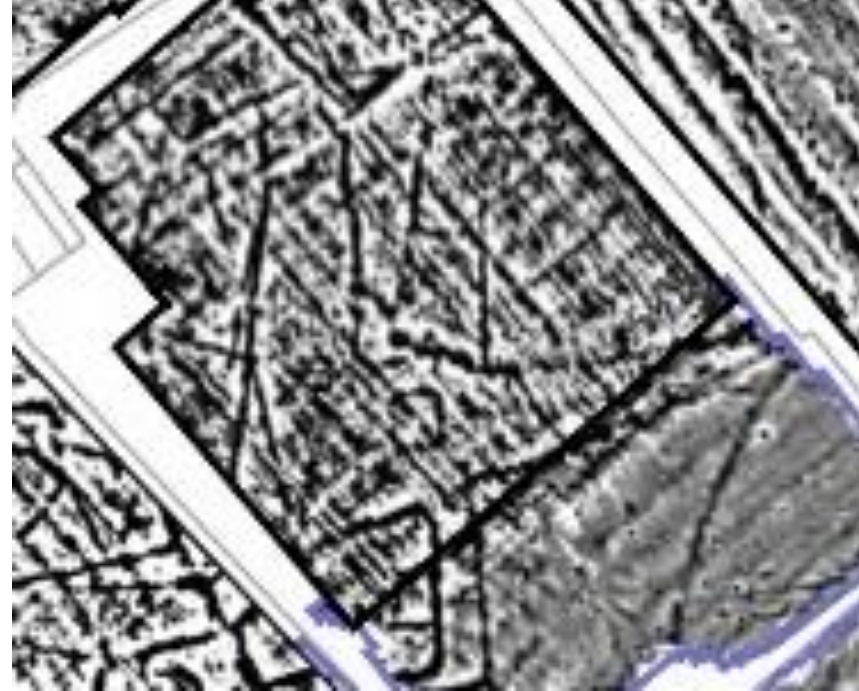
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Field 5

The archaeology of Field 5 was much closer to what the geophysical survey showed.

We found:

- The north edges of two enclosures
- a trackway leading south
- A ditch and trackway running east – west



Primary Street.

Field 5

What was unexpected in this field were the remains of two burials, thought to be late Iron Age.

One lying face down in a shallow gully close to the ditch forming the eastern enclosure.

The other, located within the north-south trackway, was less complete. It had been cut into by a later pit.

These remains will now be studied by our osteologists (human remains specialists).



Primary Street.

Field 6

The archaeology in Field 6 was a lot more complex than Field 5.

The landscape changed from rural fields into more domestic occupation.

Later agriculture has removed evidence of the Iron Age houses, but we can see the pattern of domestic enclosures.



Primary Street.

Field 6

Field 6 gave us our first surprise find!

Lying in the silt, at the base of one of the Iron Age ditches, we found a Neolithic axe head.

This may be a 'curated' object - thrown into the ditch as part of a ritual offering.

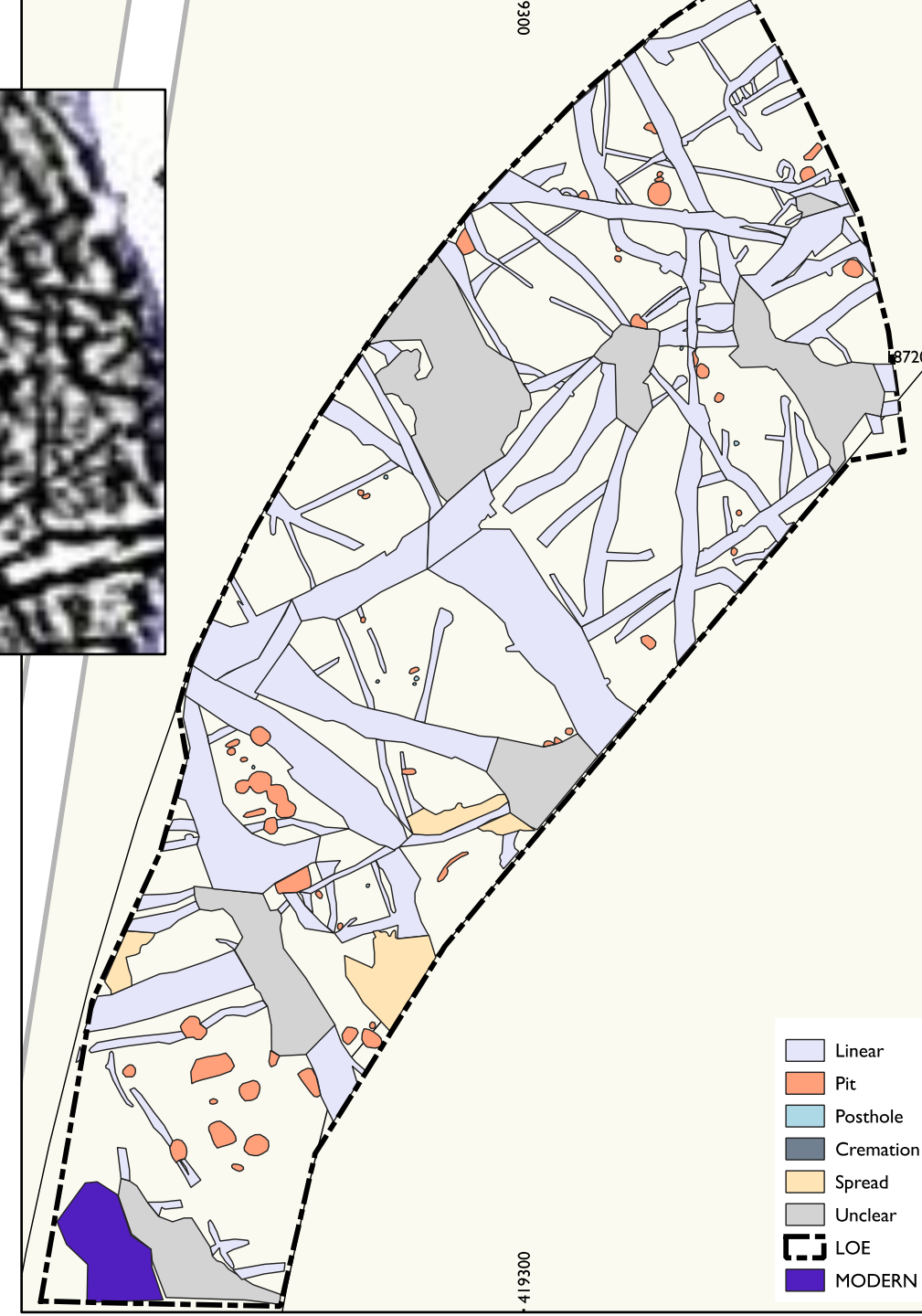


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Field 7

Despite the weather, we finished Field 6 in late November and moved to Field 7.

Just like Field 5, the geophysics didn't prepare us for the complex archaeology we were going to find here.



Primary Street.

Field 7

A multitude of ditches!

These had been re-dug many times, sometimes changing in shape and size.

Some of the ditches were very large. These may have acted as moats, filling with water and draining the settlement.



Primary Street.

Field 7

We found a number of objects in these ditches. These may be votive deposits, and we hope to explore this theory further.

- Two Late Iron Age “Le Tene” fibula brooches
- an early Roman Umbonate brooch
- a late Mesolithic leaf-shaped arrowhead – from the time society was moving from hunter-gathering to farming



Primary Street.

Field 7

Two large features – possibly track or drove ways, flanked by ditches and ending just inside the site.

May have been used to move livestock in and out of the settlement.



Primary Street.

Field 7

One unresolved mystery of this area were the 'donuts'

Recorded only in this field these are circular gullies about 1 meter across, with a raised centre.

So far, no parallel has been found for these features and our imaginations are running wild trying to interpret them.

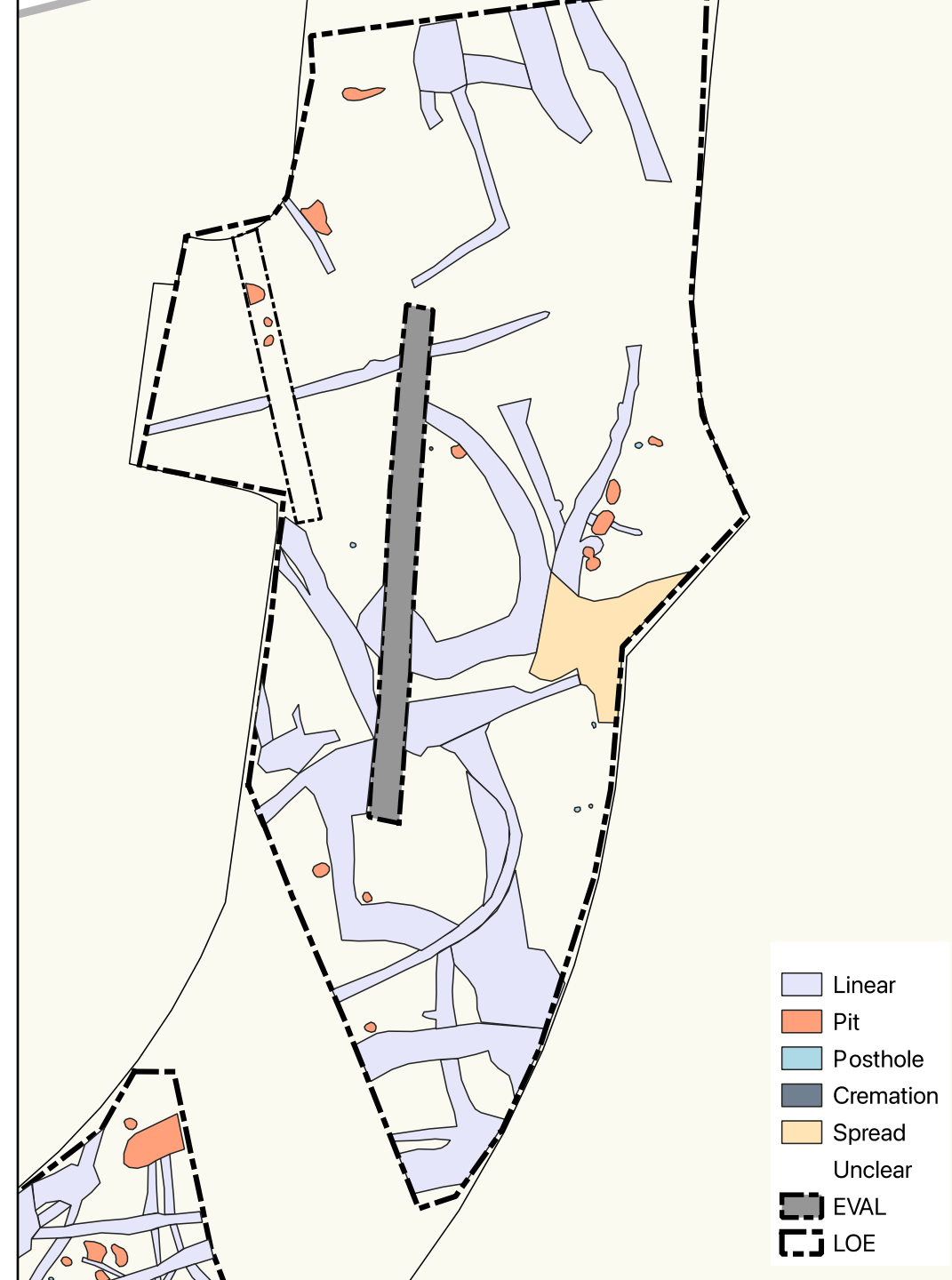


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Field 8

The main feature in this field is a palaeo-channel (the remains of an ancient river)

This runs through the northern end, but because of heavy rain we have started excavating at the southern end.



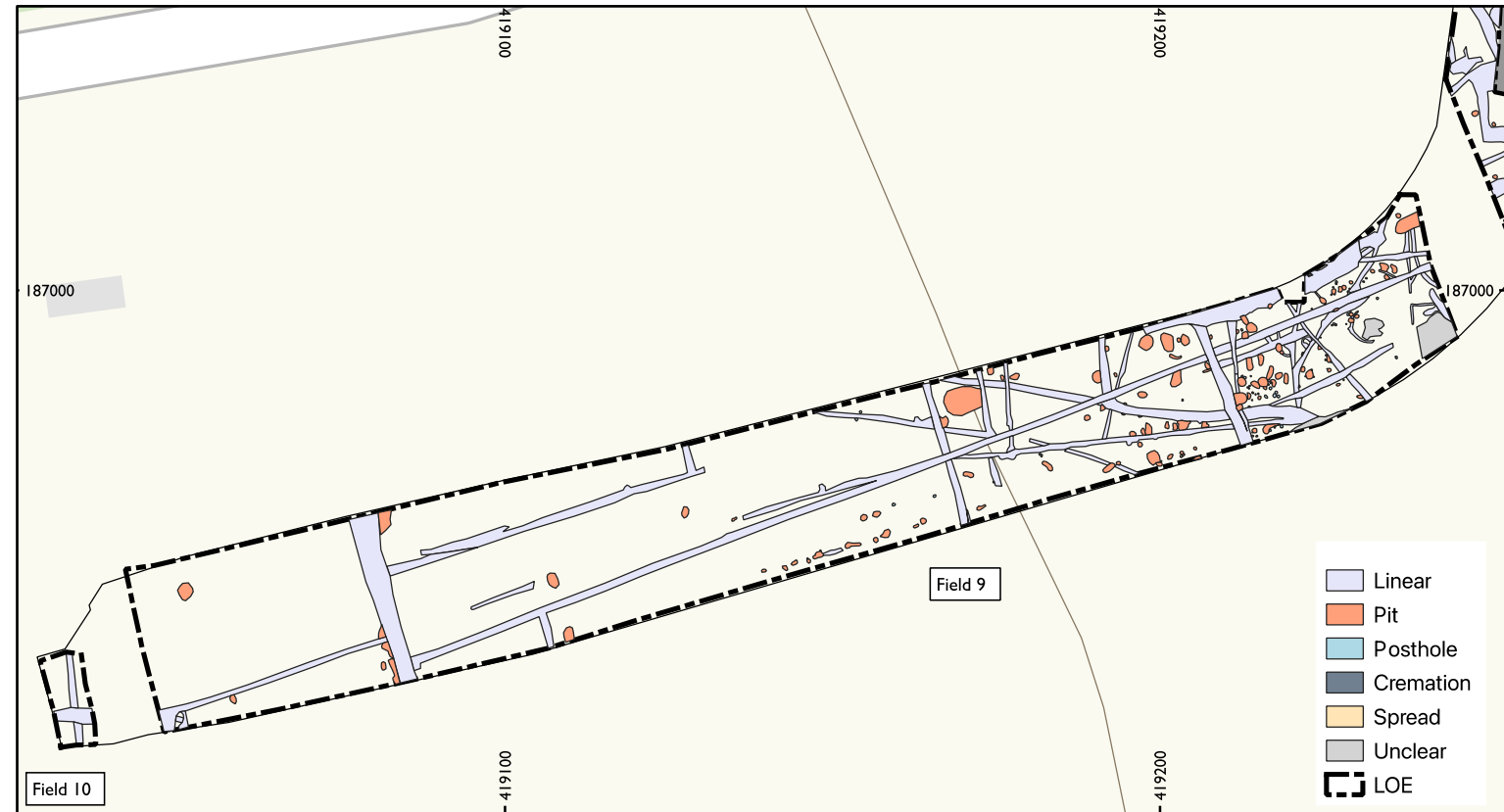
Primary Street.

Fields 9 and 10

So far, we've excavated the part of Field 9 and Field 10.

Here we found post-medieval field boundaries, deliberately infilled during the 19th century.

We're continuing to excavate in this area.



Get In Touch.

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