

Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological evaluation at
IKEA
Corporation Street, Coventry
July 2006



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Report 06/114

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project title	Archaeological evaluation at former Co-Op site, (IKEA), Corporation Street, Coventry	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Ten evaluation trenches in and around the former Co-Op building and its adjacent surface car park uncovered traces of 19 th -century industrial buildings, in particular a silk dye works and a malthouse. These remains are traceable on the 1851 Board of Health Map of the City. Beneath a considerable buildup of previous garden soils lay three large tanning pits of the 17 th century, close to the north bank of the River Sherbourne.	
Project type (e.g. desk-based, field evaluation etc)	Field Evaluation (Site Code: ICS06)	
Previous work (reference to organisation or SMR numbers etc)	Watching brief 1987 (Coventry Archaeology Rescue Project [CARP] for Coventry Museums: no code recorded in WMA 30)	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	Unknown	
Monument type And period	Post-medieval and late post-medieval industrial	
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Coventry	
Site address (including postcode)	IKEA, Corporation Street, Coventry, CV1	
Easting	SP 329	
Northing	788	
Height OD	80m	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Coventry City Council	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Adrian Burrow	
Project Manager	Iain Soden	
Sponsor or funding body	IKEA Property Investments Ltd	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	June 2006	
End date	July 2006	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		Pottery, animal bone
Paper	Northants Archaeology – Coventry HAGM	Site records, report
Digital	Northants Archaeology – Coventry SMR	Survey data, report
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Title	An archaeological evaluation at IKEA, Corporation Street, Coventry	
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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
AT
IKEA, CORPORATION STREET
COVENTRY**

ABSTRACT

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned to carry out an evaluation prior to re-development of the former Co-op site as an IKEA store. Below a considerable build-up of garden soil little archaeology was present, other than in one area which contained portions of three large tanning pits cut into river alluvium. They were filled in during the 17th century. In the majority 19th-century brick foundations were present, cut into and overlying the garden deposits, some of which can be related to named buildings of specific industrial or domestic uses as mapped in 1851

1 INTRODUCTION

Planning permission has been granted for the re-development of the former Co-op site for a new IKEA store in Corporation Street, Coventry (NGR: SP 329 788, Fig 1). The development occupies a 2ha plot bounded by Corporation Street to the east, Croft Road to the south and Spon Street to the north. On the west side lie the premises of Coventry Skydome multiplex cinema (Fig 2).

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Entec UK to carry out an archaeological evaluation of the site, commencing in June 2006, on behalf of IKEA Property Investments Ltd. The evaluation met the prescriptions of a specification issued by Northamptonshire Archaeology in response to a brief for a programme of Archaeological evaluation issued by the Coventry City Council Planning Archaeologist in April 2006 (Patrick 2006).

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence, date, character, integrity, state of preservation and depth of burial of any archaeological deposits within its cultural and environmental setting.

2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The site is situated on flat ground at an elevation of approximately 80m above Ordnance Datum on the west side of Coventry city centre, adjacent to the former course of the now-

culverted River Sherbourne where it flowed into the city. The underlying geology is mapped as Keresley member sandstone overlain by alluvial sand, clay and gravel (www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

No previous archaeological evaluation or other excavation has taken place in the immediate vicinity. In 1987-8 a watching brief was carried out on the construction of the Co-op but the results were largely inconclusive other than to note, quite rightly, that the whole site had been buried in the 19th century by up to 2m of material (*West Midlands Archaeology* 30 (1987), 65).

Adjacent to the site, excavation had taken place on the former Fleet Street (which now no longer exists), which located the course of the medieval town wall at SP 330 790 (*West Midlands Archaeology* 30 (1987), 64).

No archaeological fieldwork attended the modern developments on the northern side of the current site in the late 1990s.

Map analysis shows that the site has been depicted as open ground, principally back-plots to the properties of the medieval Spon Street from at least 1610, the date of the earliest surviving map of Coventry, by John Speed. This open space continued until the depiction of the Board of Health map of 1851, by which time the site was dominated by a Watch Factory, a Silk Dye Works, a Malt House and Court Housing, all probably built after c1820. These survived into the 20th century. The high-resolution Ordnance Survey 2nd edition for the city is that of 1903, which shows that the buildings mapped in 1851 were little changed into the early 20th century. Along with much of the environs, the site was bombed in November 1940, by which time other industrial premises had been added to the 19th-century core. Further shed-type warehouses were built on the plot after World War II. The Co-op building, recently demolished, was constructed in 1987-8.

4 METHODOLOGY

A total of ten trial trenches were excavated, producing a 5% area sample totalling approximately 800 sq. m (Fig 2). Eight were dug in the surface car park on the north (Trenches 1-3, 6-10) and two on the former Co-op store site (Trenches 4, 5). Two tracked excavators employed toothed buckets to remove tarmac and other modern deposits, before

switching to 2m toothless ditching buckets to remove underlying deposits. Archaeological supervision was constant throughout the excavation.

Four 10m x 2m trenches were located in the car park with a view to identify 19th-century remains in this area, specifically a watch factory and the row constituting Court No.7 (Trenches 6, 7, 8 and 9; Fig 2). Six larger trenches (approximately 15m x 6m at the surface) were dug, firstly to assess surviving Victorian remains and then to descend to characterise underlying deposits. Because these trenches would potentially reach 3m in depth, they were twice stepped to reach the required depth in safety. While at the surface they measured c15m x 6m, at 2.4-3m depth the excavated areas measured c10m x 2m (Trenches 1-5 and 10).

Standard Northamptonshire Archaeology recording procedures were employed. Each trench was planned at 1:50, and trench sections were recorded at 1:10 or 1:20. The trenches were located relative to the Ordnance Survey National Grid using a GPS (Leica 1200 system operating in RTK mode). Levels were taken in all trenches and related to Ordnance Survey Datum. Contexts were recorded on pro-forma sheets with a unique context number being allocated to each distinct deposit and feature.

Samples of 40 litres were taken from securely dated and well-sealed pre-Victorian deposits with the potential to retain palaeo-environmental information. In the event, two such features were found.

A full photographic record comprising both 35mm monochrome negatives, with associated prints, and colour transparencies was maintained, with additional digital photographs.

All records were compiled during fieldwork into a comprehensive and fully cross-referenced site archive.

All works were carried out in accordance with the *IFA Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Excavations* (1994, revised 1999) and the *Code of Conduct* of the Institute of Field Archaeologist (1985, revised 2000).

All procedures complied with the Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions and Northamptonshire Archaeology Health and Safety Guidelines (NA 2003).

5 RESULTS OF FIELDWORK

Trench 1 (Fig 3)

Measuring 15m x 6m and aligned north-south, this trench contained extensive brick-built 19th- and 20th-century remains.

The natural substrate, comprising yellowish orange sand and gravels was encountered at 77.84m above Ordnance Datum. Overlying this was (104), a firm dark grey-brown clayey loam up to 1.2m thick. This represents the accumulation of ‘garden soils’ from the medieval period onwards, although constant churning and extensive 19th century disturbance had resulted in it becoming a largely homogeneous deposit, undifferentiated down to the natural level 2m below the modern ground level.

The brick remains survived below at an average depth of 800mm below the modern car park level. These comprised a cellar, several brick foundations, fragments of truncated floor surfaces and a well (Fig 3; Plate 1). All were cut into the underlying garden soils. No archaeology was present which predated the brick remains.



Plate 1: Trench 1 looking south, cellar and corridor in foreground

The northern end of the trench was occupied by part of a cellar comprising the inner wall (106), the upper door stop (112) and part of an encircling corridor wall (105) (Plate 1). Due to the unstable nature of the cellar and corridor fills the outer wall was left in situ to form the northern baulk when the rest of the trench was deepened.

A large brick wall (120) cut the middle of the trench on an east-west alignment. Abutting the north side this wall were the truncated remnants of brick floor surfaces, (118) and (119). The size of this wall, up to four bricks wide, with floor surfaces on just one side of it suggests this was most likely an exterior wall or major internal partition.

A brick-lined well (114) was present between the cellar and wall (Plate 1). Measuring 1m in diameter, it had been surmounted by a contemporary brick cone to prevent rubbish falling in. Upon reduction it was seen to extend 1.15m down from the excavated surface to the natural substrate and an unknown depth beneath that. A lead pipe for water extraction extended down the side of the well.

Elsewhere, patches of heavily truncated brick floor surfaces were recorded across the trench.

Trench 2 (Fig 3)

This trench measured 15m x 6m at the modern ground surface and, due to a dearth of 19th-century features, it was possible to proceed using the machine in three steps to the natural gravels at a depth of over 2m (77.67m above Ordnance Datum). The intervening depth was comprised on top of the same homogenous garden soils (204) seen in most other trenches overlain by the 1980s car park makeup layer. These contained scattered 19th-20th-century brick and other dateable material right down to the natural. This trench contained no archaeological features other than artefacts.

Trench 3 (Figs 3 & 5)

This trench measured c15m x 6m and exposed post-medieval features overlain by 19th-century brick and concrete foundations.



Plate 2: Trench 3 looking west

The trench was reduced during phased machining in two steps to the natural gravels lying at 77.27m above Ordnance Datum at a depth of burial of 2.5m.

Overlying this, the majority of the trench comprised the ubiquitous dark clayey loam soil layers (312, 327 and 315). At the west end of the trench lay two small gullies, [322] and [324], both filled with silty deposits (321) and (323), (Fig 5). The larger of the two, [322] is firmly dated by pottery within fill (321) to the 17th-century or later. The presence of significant amounts of un-abraded pottery with a high average sherd size/weight show, however, that this was not naturally-occurring alluvium washed in but a deliberately deposited fill of 17th-century date or later. At the other end of the trench lay a hollow, [317] containing timber remains (Fig 5, Section 1). This may be the vestiges of a tree-bole or another tanning pit as seen in Trench 5 (Fig 5, Section 2).

Cutting into this deposit was an array of brick and concrete foundations. Wall (306) was 700mm below the modern ground surface and make-up (301-304 on Fig 5). There were large open rubble-strewn areas between some of the relatively insubstantial brick walls such as (306) and (313), (Fig 5, Section 1), which were of 2 bricks thickness equalling standard domestic 9-inch walls) (Plate 2). There were patches of surviving brick floor of which none

were distinctive.

Trench 4 (Fig 3)

This trench was intended to measure *c*15m x 6m at the surface but sub-surface constraints and live services were encountered which involved extending the machine-dug area to the west considerably in order to select a sensible area for scrutiny. Once this area was chosen it was seen to contain numerous brick foundations, some of which were built on sandstone footings. The foundations here were more substantial than in most other trenches and relatively tightly-packed. They included a square, brick-built tank (410) with an inner cement lining, flanked by a major north to south-aligned wall (406) and other lesser cross-walls with brick floors (409), (414) between (Plate 3).



Plate 3: Trench 4 looking south-west, the tank (410) is at far left.

The judgement on site was that these remains constituted the remnants of the Silk Dye Works mapped in 1851 (Fig 7) and it was decided not to proceed to any greater depth but to leave these preserved under the new scheme. Subsequent map analysis has shown this to be the correct identification.

Trench 5 (Figs 3, 4 and 5)

Located towards the north end of the footprint of the former superstore on a north-south orientation, this 15m x 6m trench was situated closest to the original course of the Sherbourne River before its diversion. Consequently, it was perceived as having the greatest potential for picking up both the remains of a Malthouse formerly on the site and any earlier structures exploiting the river as a resource. Evidence for previous industrial use of the riverside area in the form of early post-medieval tanning pits was present, along with 19th-century building remains including brick walls and foundations together with a tiled floor surface .

Excavation exposed a grey alluvial silty sand (526) at a level of 77.6m above Ordnance Datum, some 2.6m below the modern ground surface. This was the only trench where the natural gravels were not present at this depth.

Into this alluvium had been cut three large rectilinear pits [518], [520], [525] which contained small quantities of domestic waste in a waterlogged matrix and seen to comprise silt and birch-bark, a constituent raw material of tanning industries. One of the pits [520] is at least 5m long and another [525] where sampled, was 500mm deep (Fig 4 and 5, Section 2, Plate 4). Water flowed steadily in at this level. Fragments of leather, including mainly shoes were retrieved from waterlogged levels in pit fill (524), part of the domestic waste with which they were filled (Fig 6). On site they were provisionally dated to the late medieval period (Paul Thompson [HAGM], pers comm). This would make them residual amongst the 17th-century pottery. These will need to be conserved, a process which will take up to a year, and thus form no part of this report, the pits already being properly dated by pottery. They will be deposited with the site archive.

The same dark clay loam build-up layers as present in most of the other trenches were overlying the alluvium although here there was greater differentiation between layers (511), (516), (521), (522), (523) (Fig 5, Section 2). A maximum of 1.3m thick here-about, they contained patches of hydrocarbon pollutants and an assortment of residual post-medieval pottery and other ceramic types.

This garden soil was overlain and truncated by extensive Victorian foundations. In the western half of the trench, beneath the modern makeup (501-3 on Fig 5) survived an array of brick walls which formed three sides of a structure extending to the south, beyond the

trench edge (Fig 3). This was a lightly-founded structure and at only two bricks wide and, on average, five courses deep (506, 513 on Fig 5), only the most ephemeral evidence for related floors had survived.

Directly to the east of this, an uneven concrete floor surface was encountered across much of the trench area. Clearly of 20th century date, this was machined through, revealing the truncated but still extensive remnants of a quarry-tiled floor beneath. This surface clearly once covered most of the east end of the trench. Due to the loss of much of this surface, the exact relationship with the walls to the west could not be definitively established. A 1m-deep, circular, brick-lined pit was present in the middle of this tile floor and was not sealed by the overlying concrete surface (Fig 3). The upper fill of this comprised of the Type-2 gravels from the car park levelling layer. Clearly, this feature was still partially open at the time of the car park construction. Its purpose remains unknown.



Plate 4: Trench 5, looking north-tanning pit [525]



Plate 5: Trench 5 (detail), leather shoe parts from (524)

Trench 6 (Fig 3)

Trench 6 measured 10m x 3m and contained a brick wall and return (605), (606) at its western end. They occurred at a depth of 650mm below the modern ground surface, lying directly on the ubiquitous garden soil (607). No further excavation was required, although it was ascertained that here the garden soil was in excess of 400mm thickness. Map analysis shows that these walls coincide with mapped examples in Court 7 in 1851 (Fig 7).

Trench 7 (Fig 3)

This trench measured 10m x 2.3m and contained three brick foundations (705), (706) and (707), and a patch of brick floor (709). They were spaced along the trench and may relate to either the same or different former buildings. All lay at a depth of 750mm below the modern ground level, beneath the car park makeup. The brick foundations lay set into the top of the ubiquitous garden soils (710) seen in most other trenches. No further excavation was required.

Trench 8 (Fig 3)

This trench measured 11m x 3.5m. It contained numerous brick foundations (805), (806), (807), (808), (809) and (810) of between one and four bricks' thickness, perhaps denoting a

mix of load-bearing exterior and interior walls. Between them lay brick rubble. All the remains lay at a depth of 550mm below the modern ground surface. No further excavation was required.

Trench 9 (Fig 3)

Trench 9 measured 9m x 3m. It contained a single brick wall foundation (904) beneath car park makeup and brick rubble. The wall lay at a depth of 850mm below modern ground surface and was set on top of the ubiquitous black garden soil (905). No further excavation was required.

Trench 10 (Figs 3 and 5)

Trench 10 measured 15m x 6m at the surface. The natural gravel occurred at a depth of 2.8m below the modern ground surface. Above this, a slightly more organic layer (1012) was cut by a single pit [1013], 1.5m wide and 1.3m deep. Its lower of two fills produced a sherd of late 17th- or early 18th-century pottery (1014, see below). The homogeneous garden soil (1011), (Fig 5, Section 3) overlay this, in turn cut by brick remains (1010). These comprised widely-spaced and relatively insubstantial brick walls with patches of brick floor surviving between. A series of regularly-spaced drainpipes in the floor were seen upon further excavation to turn in a bend through one of the walls (1010 in Fig 5). The configuration and spacing are redolent of a line of toilet or sink arrangements in a line. These probably date to the early 20th-century.

6 THE FINDS

The Pottery by Iain Soden

A total of 41 sherds of pottery were recovered, weighing 1.863kg. They comprised twelve fabrics or types from eight contexts spread between trenches 1, 3, 5 and 10. They range in date from the 12th to the 20th centuries, with the greatest proportion (also the best stratified) dating from the 17th century. The pottery has been related to the Warwickshire Medieval and Post-medieval Ceramic Type Series (CTS) (Ratkai and Soden 1998).

The types present were as follows:

<i>Warks CTS</i>	<i>Common name</i>	<i>Production range</i>
CL01	Calcareous shelly ware	c1100-1400

WW01	Chilvers Coton A	c1250-1300
Sq30	Chilvers Coton C ware	c1300-1500
WW02	Tudor Green type	c1400-1475
MP	Midland Purple	c1500-1650
MB01	Midland Black	c1580-1680
MANG	Manganese mottled ware	c1690-1740
CRW	Creamware	c1740-1790
PLW01	Pearlware	c1775-1840
MB02	Pancheon	c1800-1900
STE02	English Stoneware	c1890-1920
MGW	Underglaze transfer printed	c1800-1940

Table 1: Pottery fabric occurrence showing sherd count and weight by context.

Context/ Type	104	315	321	515	517	519	524	1014	Total
CL01						1/61			1/61g
WW01							1/12		1/12g
Sq30			1/14				3/132		4/146g
WW02							1/17		1/17g
MP			1/15			8/348	6/288		15/651g
MB01	1/4		4/186		1/140	1/176			7/506g
MANG	1/1							1/125	2/126g
CRW	3/78								3/78
PLW01	1/11								1/11
MB02		1/72							1/72
STE02	1/47								1/47
MGW	3/24			1/112					4/136
Total	10/	1/72	6/215	1/112	1/140	10/585	11/349	1/125	41/1863

The material is a fairly typical evaluation assemblage and none of the types are unexpected in Coventry. All are domestic types, with no industrial overtones. Their origins are unknown, but the presence of domestic wares in former industrial tanning pits (as far from the frontage as it was possible to go without going into the river) suggests that the pits might have been filled in at once by domestic refuse from a host of properties. The pottery provides useful dating where they occur in well-stratified contexts (see below). They contain no further potential for study.

Dating

Pottery from Trench 1 (104) set the benchmark for dating this black soil for the rest of the site, where present, confirming that the brick buildings on the site were put up from the 19th-century onwards.

In Trench 3, gully [322] is dated by the pottery within it (321), to the 17th century or later. This is one of the two gullies which on site were thought to contain possible alluvium, but from which a sample for soil micromorphology comparison was not possible. The presence of the pottery indicates that the material is simply a silty gully fill, not naturally-occurring alluvium. It is also arguably the earliest feature in that trench. The overlying layer, 315, dates from the 19th century, as does everything else above, therefore.

In Trench 5 the tanning pits [518], [520] and [525] are securely dated in the 17th centuries (pottery from their fills 517, 519 and 524). In each case the sherds are large and unabraded (the two Midland Black examples are intact half-tygs) suggesting primary refuse dumping.

In Trench 10 the pit [1013] is dated by the base of a Manganese mottled jar, dating it to after c1690. Only layer [1012] predates this, but produced no dating material.

Leather by Iain Soden (Fig 6)

A group of leather fragments was recovered from the fill of one of the 17th-century tanning pits in Trench 5 (Context 524). The following is a catalogue of the entire assemblage, the datable styles of which indicate that all all constitute residual medieval material. All of the items have been cleaned and washed prior to all being drawn for archive (to provide a record before any possible shrinkage during freeze-drying), although mere scraps/offcuts and the poorly preserved fragments have not been included for illustration in the present report. All the items have now been sent for conservation at Museum of London Archaeology Services Conservation Laboratories prior to their deposition with the site archive. The items below have been compared for parallels with the published Coventry material of Thomas (1980 [Shelton Collection]; 1986 [Cox Street excavations 1976-8]; 1996 [Broadgate excavations 1974]).

1. SF1. Left ankle boot upper of economy turnshoe construction, together with separated pointed-toe sole, probably of the same shoe, heavily worn through at the ball of the foot. A small iron buckle survives on the upper but is heavily corroded (Thomas type 1b). The strap is missing. A group of six leather offcuts and featureless strips have been similarly numbered as part of the assemblage SF1 but they are unlikely to derive from the same shoe (no edges match). The closest parallels are from Shelton Colln (Broadgate) – HAGM Acc no 78/51/52 and from the Belgrade site – HAGM Acc No 57/113/6 (Thomas 1980, Figs 2 & 4). Pre-1600 in date.

2. SF2. Left ankle boot upper of economy turnshoe construction, similar to SF1 but laced instead of buckled and a full ankle-height piece of leather. The closest parallel is that from the Shelton Collection (Broadgate) HAGM Acc no 78/51/60. A separate unused turnshoe sole (not illustrated; without any evidence of stitching) was found close by of a shape closely paralleled by a similar (but used) sole from the 1974 Broadgate excavations (Thomas 1996, Fig 56, no 12). There its parent context was dated to the mid-12th to mid-13th centuries (Rylatt and Stokes 1996). The shape has a distinctive cut off toe with a wide instep. Fragments of a third shoe were also recovered but they are very poorly preserved (not illustrated).

3. SF3. Fragmentary left upper from a vamp with pointed toe, formerly laced. Most closely resembles Thomas' type 4 (Thomas 1980). The nearest parallel of the toe-shape and cut of the opening is perhaps that from the Shelton Collection (West Orchard Chapel), HAGM Acc No 49/180/5 (Thomas 1980 fig 17). Medieval in date.

4. SF4. Sole, vamp and heel fragment from a shoe to which the closest parallel is perhaps that from the Shelton Collection (Newsome's Garage site, Corporation Street) HAGM Acc no 49/210/15 (Thomas 1980 fig 13). With this example it shares the distinctive pleat in the leather. Possibly 16th-century.

5. SF5. Incomplete sole and upper from a turnshoe with a relatively rounded toe, (although the sole is missing its toe). The upper was possibly laced but the edge where the lace-holes ought to be is frayed, serrations marking the possible former holes. Possibly of 16th-century date, the piece has only generic late medieval parallels (such as

the round, wide toe of the upper), since it lacks more distinguishing characteristics. With this piece were some very fragmentary leather pieces, poorly preserved (not illustrated).

6. SF6. Almost complete child's shoe, fastening with an iron buckle. Only two child's shoes are currently published from Coventry, from the Shelton Collection (New Art Gallery Site) HAGM Acc No 56/64/1 (Thomas 1980, fig 12). This example is not dissimilar, although not as complete as that from the Shelton Collection. Its rounded toe is redolent of a 16th-century date although the level of concession made to the growth of children's feet is unknown, making the development of fashionable shapes perhaps less reliable.

7. SF7. Two fragments of the chape-end of a belt, punched for fastening to a buckle. Total length 207mm x 32mm wide, 3mm thick; hole spacings 37mm. (Not illustrated)

The Environmental samples by Karen Deighton and Wallis Lord

Method

Two samples of 40 litres were hand-collected during the excavation. The samples were washed through a series of sieves (500microns-3.4mm). The resulting residues were examined using a microscope (10x). Identifications were made with the aid of a reference collection and seed atlas.

Results

Preservation

Preservation was by waterlogging. Very occasional charcoal fragments were noted from both samples, but these were too small to permit identification.

Taxonomic distribution

Table 2: Ecofacts by sample

Sample		1	2
Context		519	524
Feature		520	525
Fraction examined		0.2	0.5
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	Hulled barley		7

Cerealia	Cereal indet	1	2
<i>Chenopodium album</i>	Fat hen	3	
<i>Sambucus</i> sp	Elder	1	
Chenopodiaceae	Goosefoot family	2	1
Caryophyllaceae cf. <i>Stellaria media</i>	Daisy family pos.chickweed	20	4
Labiatae cf. <i>Ajuga reptans</i>	Labiatae family pos.bugle	1	
Labiatae	Labiatae family	1	
Polygonaceae	Buckwheat family	9	
Ranunculaceae	Buttercup family	1	
<i>Corylus</i> sp	Hazelnut shell		1
Indeterminate		3	3

Significance

The contexts (tanning pits) from which the samples were taken were apparently deliberately backfilled with domestic waste. As such the archaeobotanical waste is most likely to have come in from a variety of sources, probably deriving from an area from the river-banks all the way up to Spon Street. As such it is unlikely to indicate clear aspects of the immediate riparian environment without contaminants related to the pits' demise and the occupation of the plots to the north.

7 CONCLUSIONS (see Figs 7 and 8)

No certain medieval features were present in the excavation. The earliest features encountered were three probable tanning pits filled in during the 17th century (Trench 5). Since they were cut into the naturally-occurring alluvium, it is unclear how long they had been in use. While other, near-contemporary features occur scattered in Trenches 3 and 10, no pattern of contemporary occupation emerges from this sparse distribution.

Landscape context

Both the alluvium of the immediate river valley and the natural sand and gravel of the outlying terrace lie beneath a very substantial build-up of black, mostly homogeneous garden soils. This accumulation is comparatively thick, compared to the city interior but bears close comparison with similar material at other sites around the edge of the medieval and early post medieval city. It has been noted nearby on the following sites:

- Hill Street west/south (Excavations by Warwickshire Museum 2003, beneath the current buildings of Bonds Hospital)

- Hill Street east/north (Excavations by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 2005 for Belgrade Plaza)
- Behind Greyfriars' Road United Reformed Church (Watching Brief by Birmingham Archaeology 2004)
- Friars Road and The Cheylesmore (Excavations by Coventry Museum 1990, 1991).

It occurs in all these sites in close association with the very edge of the medieval and later town, in close proximity to a watercourse, be it the Sherbourne (the current site), the Radford Brook (Hill Street east/north) or a wet defensive ditch (both Hill Streets, Greyfriars Road and Friars Road/ The Cheylesmore). It is not unusual to see the accumulation reaching 1.5m in thickness.

Its extensive coverage and the above associations suggest that the normal processes of agricultural practice, whether pastoral, arable or more horticultural, may have been combined with the cleaning out of watercourses and wet ditches to produce a local, highly enriched loam which built up at a fast rate during the medieval and early post-medieval periods in some of the fields immediately beyond the city's edge. At the Cheylesmore, pottery from gardening trenches enriched within it suggested the land there was in cultivation soon after the town wall was destroyed in 1662. Nearby dumping into the open, wet town ditch suggested the land was still so used into the 19th-century (Soden 1991). At Hill Street documentary evidence for intensive root-vegetable cultivation exists as early as the years 1644-6 (Mason, McAree and Soden, forthcoming).

Most trenches contained 19th- or 20th-century brick foundations, lying directly beneath the modern car park the dating confirmed by pottery from Trench 1. Map analysis shows that remains located in the following trenches can be associated with mapped buildings from 1851 and later (Figs 7 and 8 map overlays):

Trench 1	20 th -century unnamed buildings; mainly gardens in 1851
Trench 2	No archaeology present of any date, wholly gardens in 1851
Trench 3	1851 Silk dye works northern buildings, exterior and interior walls
Trench 4	1851 Silk dye works main core, interior and exterior walls, tank

Trench 5	Parts of 1851 former malt-house and later additions
Trench 6	Internal and external wall of house in Court 7 in 1851
Trench 7	Some walls relate to mapped buildings from both 1851 and 1903 – no specific attribution, however (boundary walls)
Trench 8	Some walls relate to mapped buildings from both 1851 and 1903 – no specific attribution, however (boundary walls)
Trench 9	The single wall may relate to Court 7 but is not a good match
Trench 10	The walls all relate to the Malt-house mapped in 1851, including main exterior wall

Table 3 summarises the relative heights above Ordnance Datum of the natural geology, the 19th-century remains and the thickness of overburden overlying the remains.

Table 3: Relative heights above OS of natural geology, garden soil, 19th century remains and car park

Trench	Car Park Overburden	OD level for C19th-remains	Garden soil thickness	OD level of natural
1	79.87m	79.04m	1200mm	77.84m
2	79.93m	n/a	950mm	77.67m
3	79.97m	79.43m	1500mm	77.27m
4	80.06m	79.08m	n/a	n/a
5	80.01m	79.48m	1500mm	77.34m
6	80.10m	79.31m	400mm +	n/a
7	79.94m	79.34m	300mm+	n/a
8	79.95m	79.51m	n/a	n/a
9	79.97m	79.27m	200mm+	n/a
10	79.98m	79.33m	500mm	77.57m

The above figures show that while the modern (recent) car park surface was almost totally flat, this merely mirrors the 19th-century remains which are very consistent across the site. While one might expect the modification of the natural river valley to smooth out natural contours as time went on, the levels of natural encountered in five trenches indicated that the contours were already very naturally smooth, this apparently being an almost flat terrace when the topsoils began to build up from the 17th century and possibly before. Such a flat floodplain, prey to regular inundation, and always boggy, perhaps exacerbated by uncoordinated milling up- and down-stream, may have mitigated against widespread occupation, producing the relatively sparse occupation seen at this site until the 19th-century. The city end of Spon Street was the scene of some of the worst flooding ever seen in Coventry as late as c1900.

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APPENDIX

Ikea Coventry Context Index

Context No. Description

Trench 1

(101)	Tarmac layer of car park
(102)	Grade 1 levelling layer for car park
(103)	Grade 2 levelling layer for car park
(104)	Late Med./Post Med. Garden soils
(105)	Outer brick wall for cellar
(106)	Inner cellar wall
(107)	Infill of corridor for cellar
(108)	Section of inner cellar wall
(109)	Back fill of cellar
(110)	Inner cellar wall- incorporating steps
(111)	Level of steps leading down to cellar
(112)	Outer cellar wall/door stop
(113)	Robber trench/wooden partition
(114)	Circular brick well shaft
(115)	Infill of well shaft
(116)	Wall feature (double thickness)
(117)	Area of brickwork-floor surface or pathway
(118)	Area of brickwork-floor surface or pathway
(119)	Concrete surface overlying (120)
(120)	Brick wall remains
(121)	Double rowed brick structure adjoining (120)
(122)	Infill of (121)
(123)	Rubble layer
(124)	Floor surface/Brick layer
(125)	Concrete layer covering modern pipe
(126)	Small patch of bricks/Floor surface
(127)	Brickwork/Foundation
(128)	Natural sands/Gravels

Trench 2

(201)	Tarmac layer of car park
(202)	Grade 1 levelling layer for car park

- (203) Grade 2 levelling layer for car park
- (204) Garden soil layer
- (205) Natural sand/Gravels

Trench 3

- (301) Tarmac layer of car park
- (302) Grade 1 levelling layer for car park
- (303) Grade 2 levelling layer for car park
- (304) Mixed rubble and silt layer
- (305) Brick floor surface
- (306) Brick wall
- (307) Brick wall
- (308) Brick wall
- (309) Floor surface
- (310) Brick base for column or supports
- (311) Brick base for column or supports
- (312) Garden soil/loam layer
- (313) Fill of Victorian foundation pit [314]
- [314] Cut of Foundation
- (315) Medieval layer
- (316) Fill of [317]
- [317] Cut of linear feature
- (318) Not assigned
- (319) Not assigned
- (320) Organic/wood lens within (328)
- (321) Fill of [322]
- [322] Cut of linear feature- channel way
- (323) Fill of [324]
- [324] Cut of linear feature
- (325) Not Assigned
- (326) Not Assigned
- (327) Layer found between (312) and (315)
- (328) Layer with lens (320) found within it

Trench 4

- (401) Concrete floor to Co-Op
- (402) Grade 1 levelling layer for Co-Op
- (403) Grade 2 Levelling layer for Co-Op
- (404) Rubble/backfill layer
- (405) Brick wall

(406)	Brick wall
(407)	Brick wall
(408)	Brick wall
(409)	Brick floor surface

Trench 4 cont...

(410)	Brick surface
(411)	Garden soil layer
(412)	Brick wall
(413)	Brick wall
(414)	Brick floor surface
(415)	Brick floor surface
(416)	Brick floor surface
(417)	Extension to wall

Trench 5

(501)	Asphalt floor to Co-Op
(502)	Grade 1 levelling layer for Co-Op
(503)	Grade 2 Levelling layer for Co-Op
(504)	Modern demolition layer
(505)	Modern concrete layer
(506)	Wall to Malt house
(507)	Wall to Malt house
(508)	Wall to Malt house
(509)	Demolition layer
(510)	Floor area to Malt house
(511)	Make up layer
[512]	Cut of storage pit
(513)	Fill of storage pit
[514]	Cut of wall foundation
(515)	Not Assigned
(516)	Layer
(517)	Fill of tanning pit
[518]	Cut of tanning pit
(519)	Fill of tanning pit
[520]	Cut of tanning pit
(521)	Post Medieval layer
(522)	Post Medieval layer
(523)	Layer
(524)	Fill of tanning pit
[525]	Cut of tanning pit

- (526) Alluvial Layer
- (527) Natural sands/Gravels

Trench 6

- (601) Tarmac layer of car park
- (602) Grade 1 levelling layer for car park
- (603) Grade 2 levelling layer for car park
- (604) Rubble layer
- (605) Brick wall
- (606) Brick wall
- (607) Mixed garden soil and gravel

Trench 7

- (701) Tarmac layer of car park
- (702) Grade 1 levelling layer for car park
- (703) Grade 2 levelling layer for car park
- (704) Rubble/backfill layer
- (705) Brick wall to cellar
- (706) Brick wall to cellar
- (707) Brick wall
- (708) Brick wall
- (709) Floor surface
- (710) Garden soil layer

Trench 8

- (801) Tarmac layer of car park
- (802) Grade 1 levelling layer for car park
- [803] Cut of pipe trench
- (804) Fill of pipe trench
- (805) Brick wall-double thickness
- (806) Brick wall
- (807) Brick wall- Truncates walls (806) (808) and (811)
- (808) Brick wall. Truncated by (807) and then appears to continue
- (809) Double row brick wall. Ends at wall (807)
- (810) Four line brick wall. Outside wall
- (811) Brick wall
- (812) Mixed soil and rubble layer. Infill between (806) and (808)
- (813) Mixed rubble and clay layer. Infill between room/cellar (808)
- (814) Mixed rubble and soil layer. Infill between (808) and (809)
- (815) Mixed rubble and soil layer. Infill between (809) and (810)

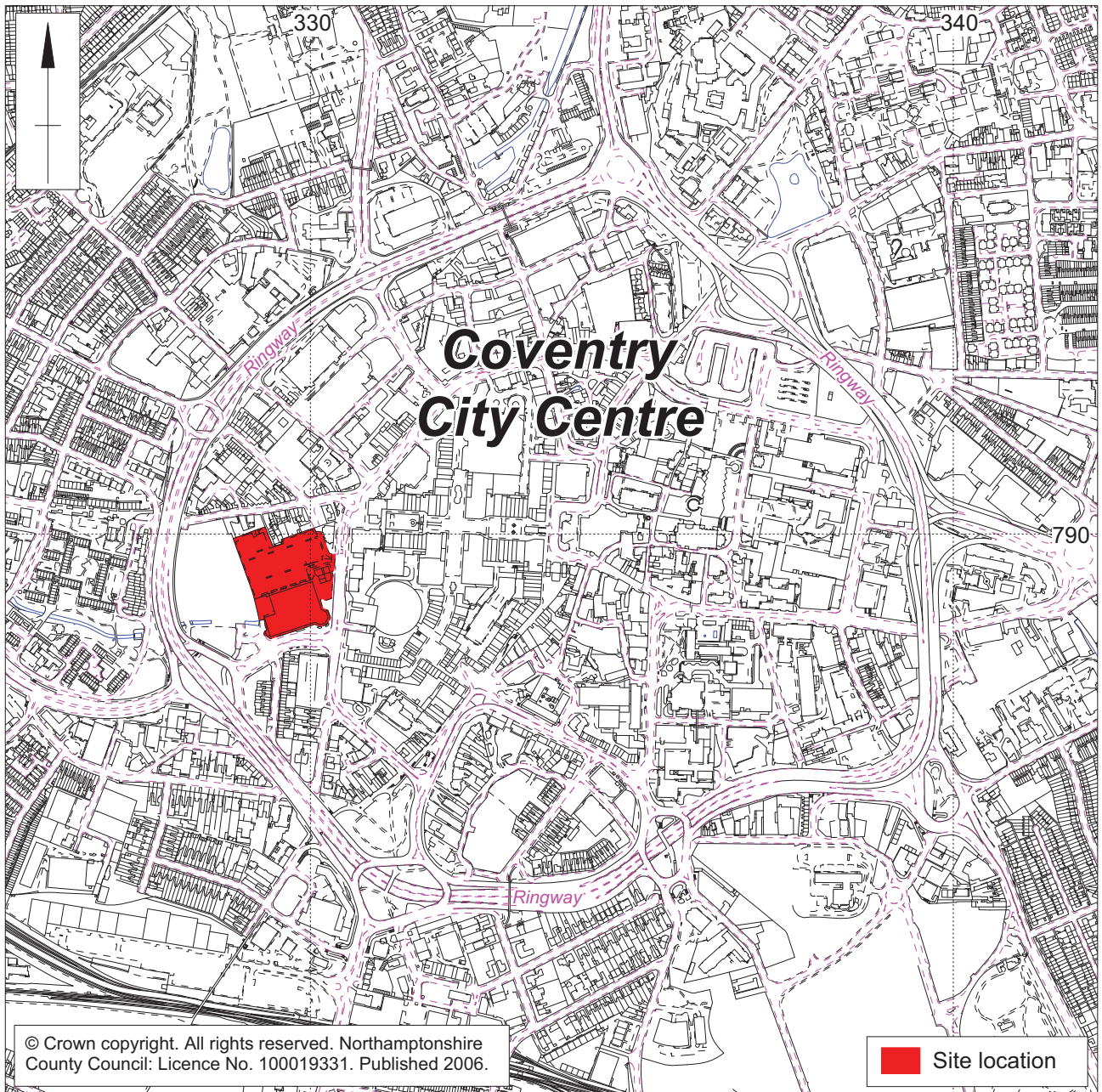
- (816) Grade 2 levelling layer for car park
- (817) Garden soil/loam layer

Trench 9

- (901) Tarmac layer of car park
- (902) Grade 1 levelling layer for car park
- (903) Grade 2 levelling layer for car park
- (904) Brick wall
- (905) Garden soil layer
- (906) Floor structure
- (907) Mixed soil and building rubble layer

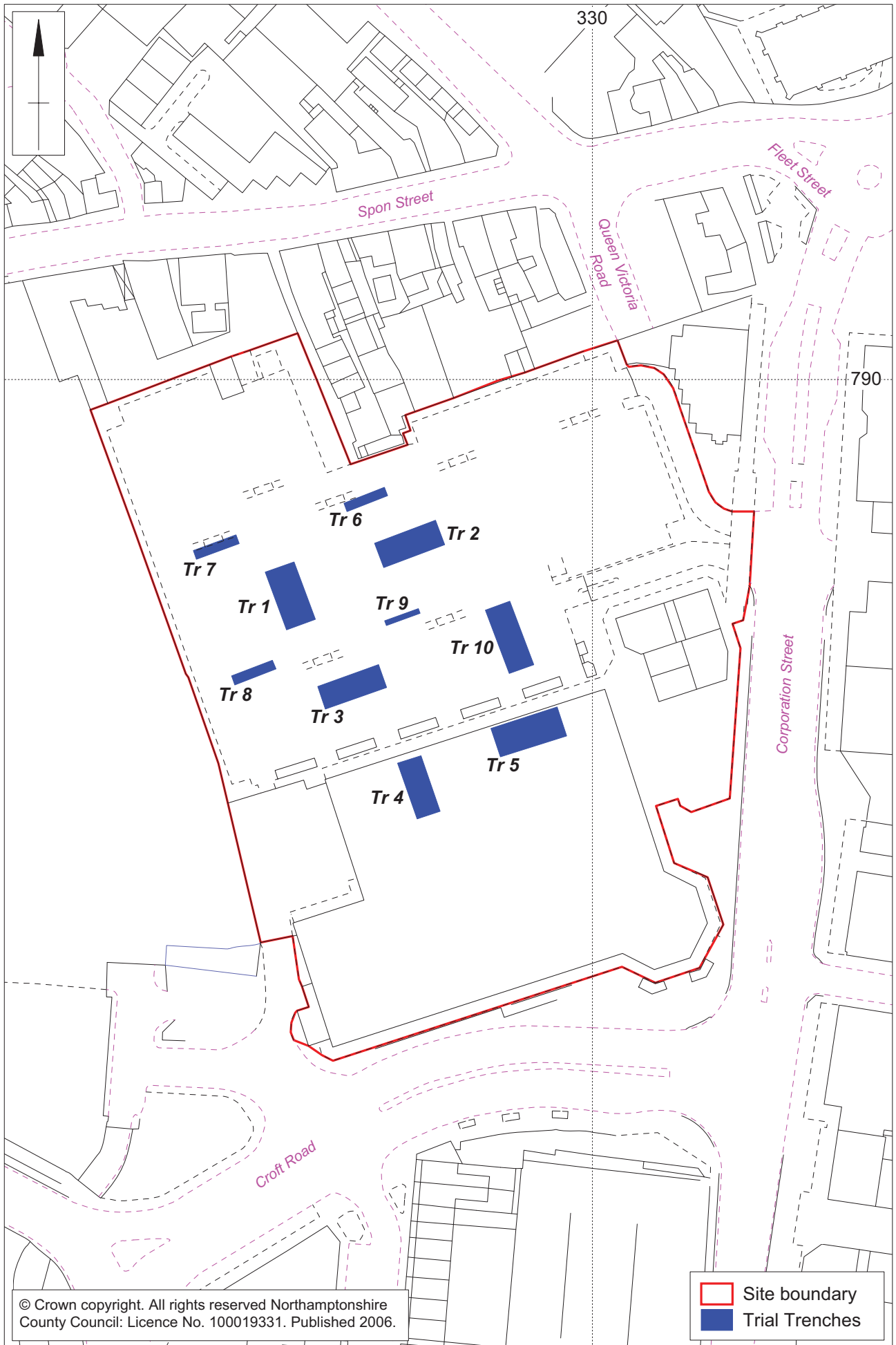
Trench 10

- (1001) Tarmac surface to car park
- (1002) Grade 1 levelling layer to car park
- (1003) Grade 2 levelling layer to car park
- (1004) Mixed soil and rubble backfill layer
- (1005) Brick wall
- (1006) Floor surface
- (1007) Brick wall
- (1008) Brick wall
- (1009) Floor surface
- (1010) Brick wall
- (1011) Garden soil layer
- (1012) Mixed soil layer with organic material
- [1013] Cut of circular pit
- (1014) Primary fill of pit [1013]
- (1015) Upper fill of pit [1013]
- [1016] Cut of circular pit
- (1017) Primary fill of circular pit [1016]



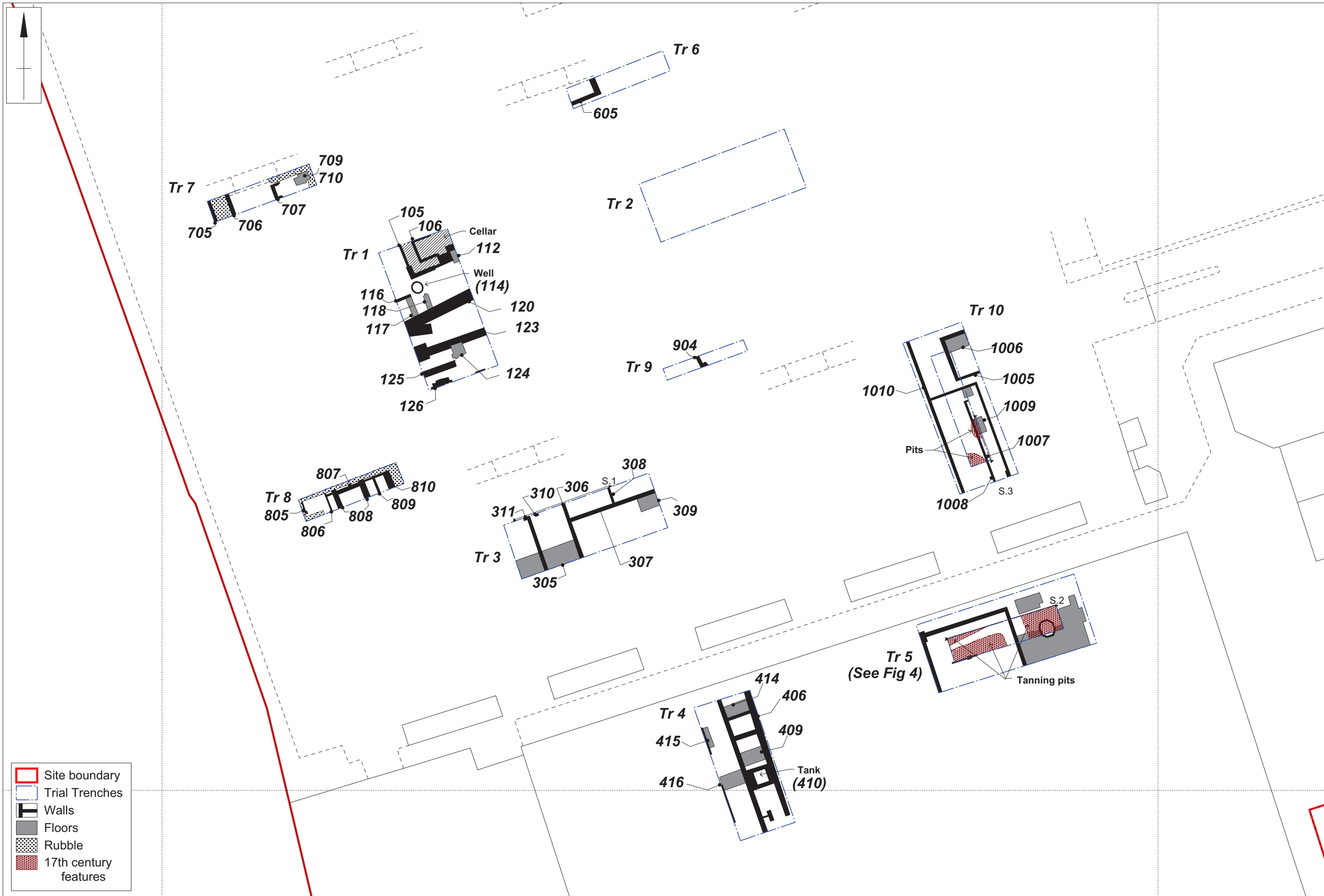
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Site location Fig 1



Scale 1:1250

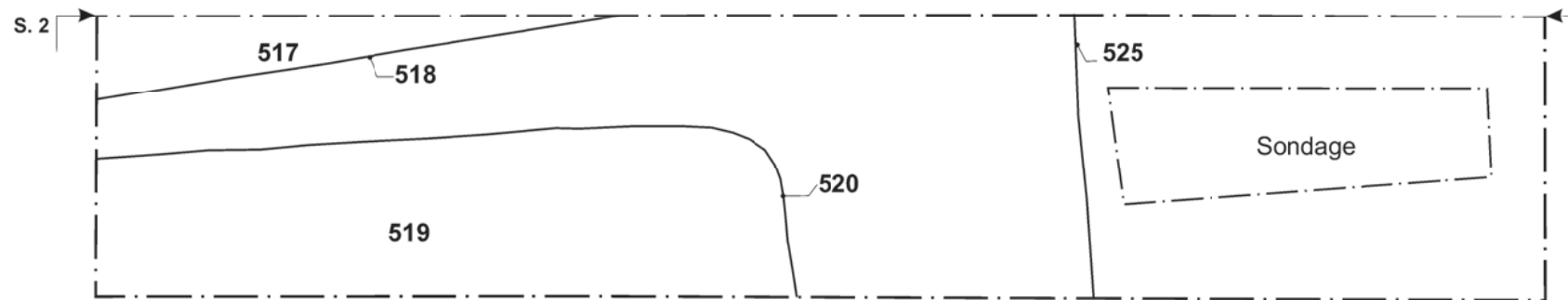
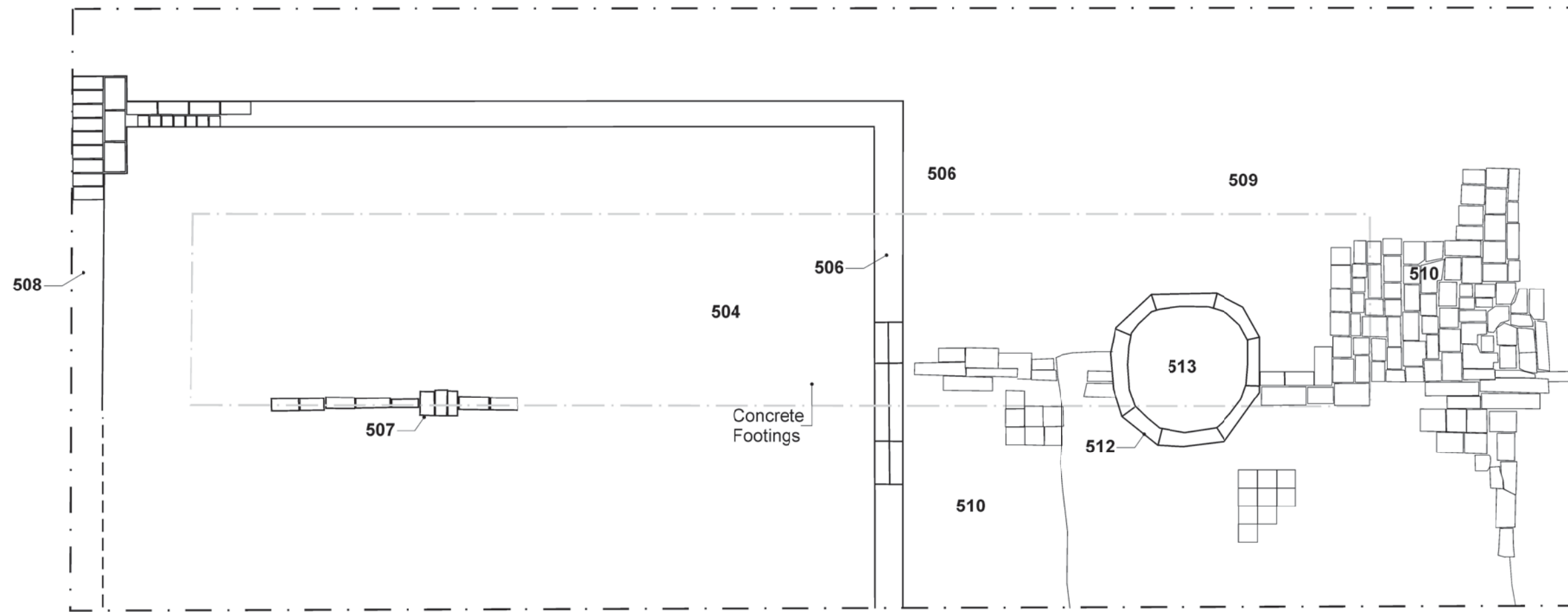
Trench locations Fig 2



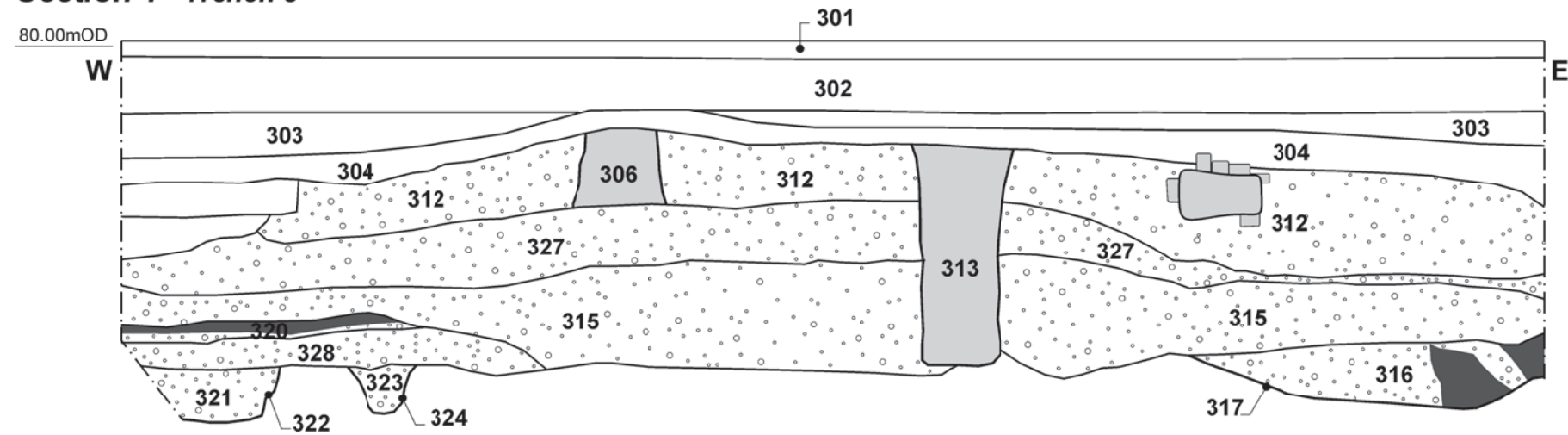
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Archaeological features Fig 3

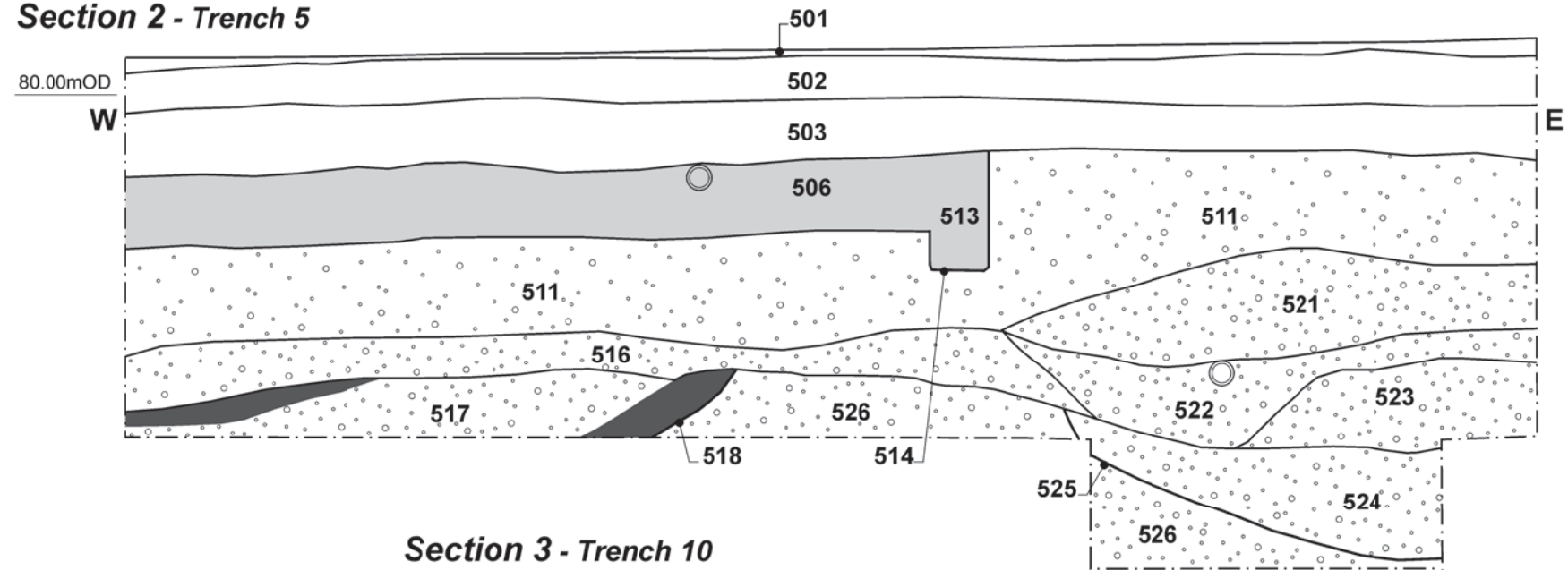
Trench 5



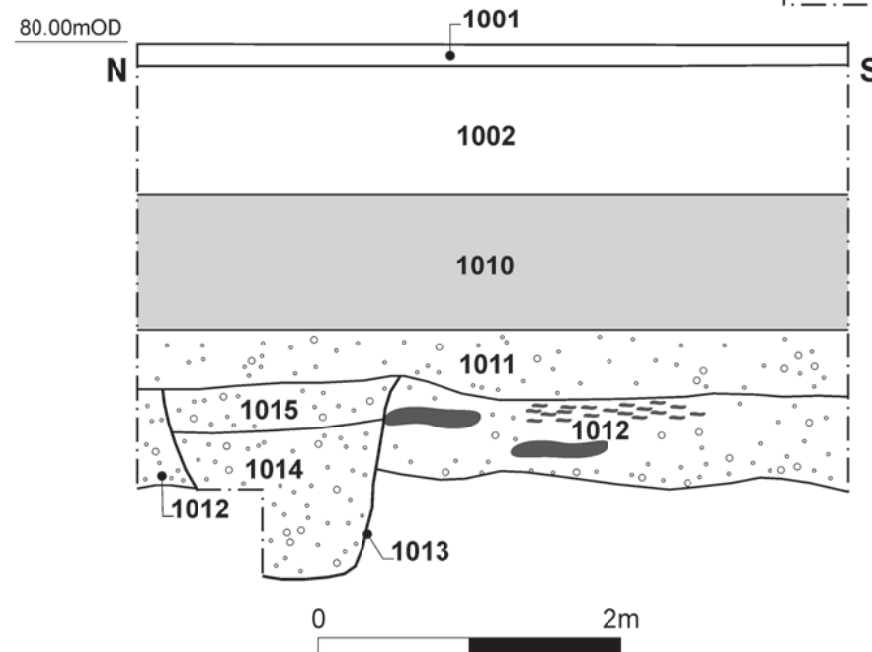
Section 1 - Trench 3



Section 2 - Trench 5



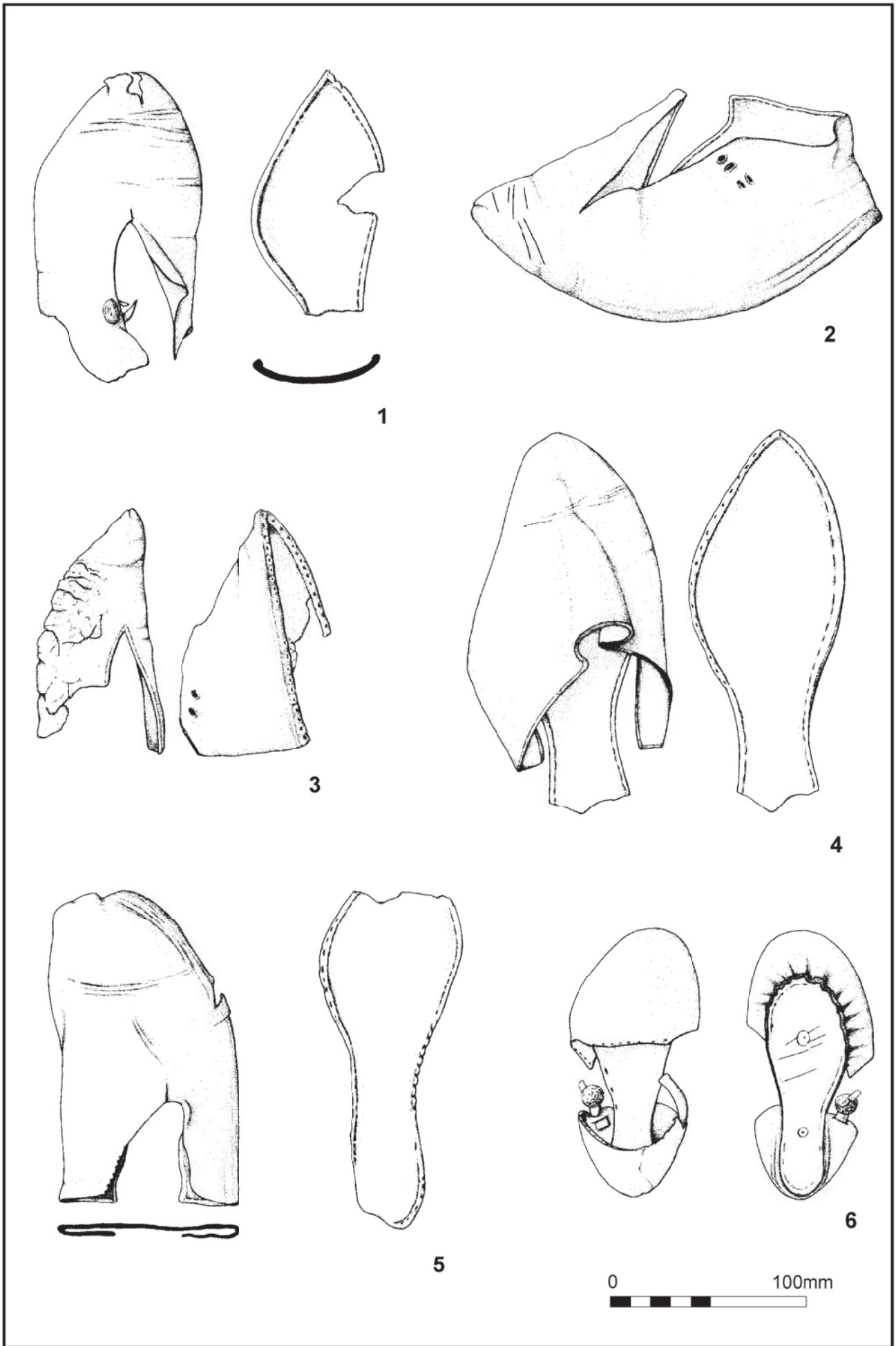
Section 3 - Trench 10



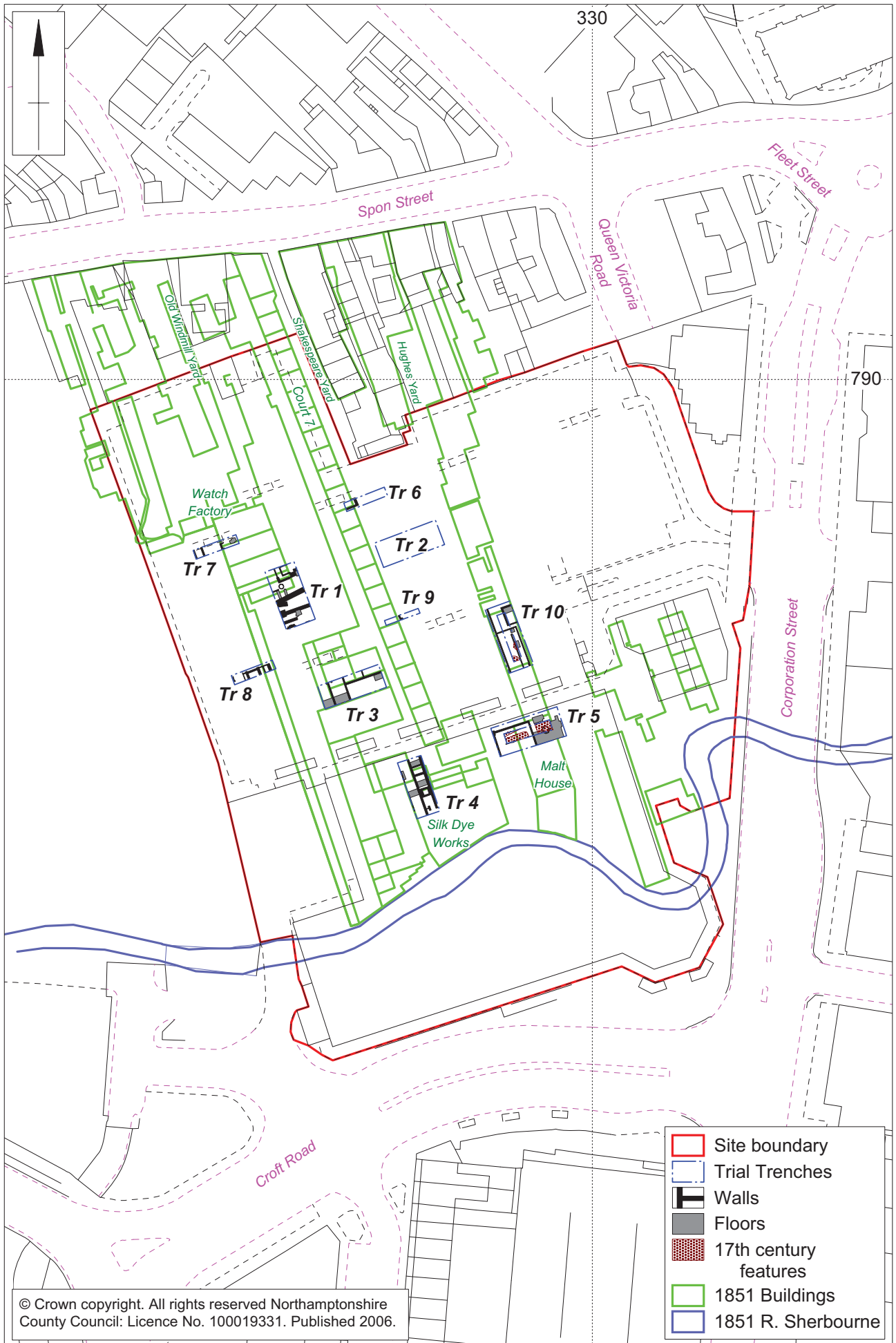
- Walls
- Wood/bark

Trench steps have been removed from sections for clarity





Leather shoes Fig 6



Scale 1:1250

Board of Health Map 1851 overlay Fig 7



Scale 1:1250

Ordnance Survey Map 1903 overlay Fig 8