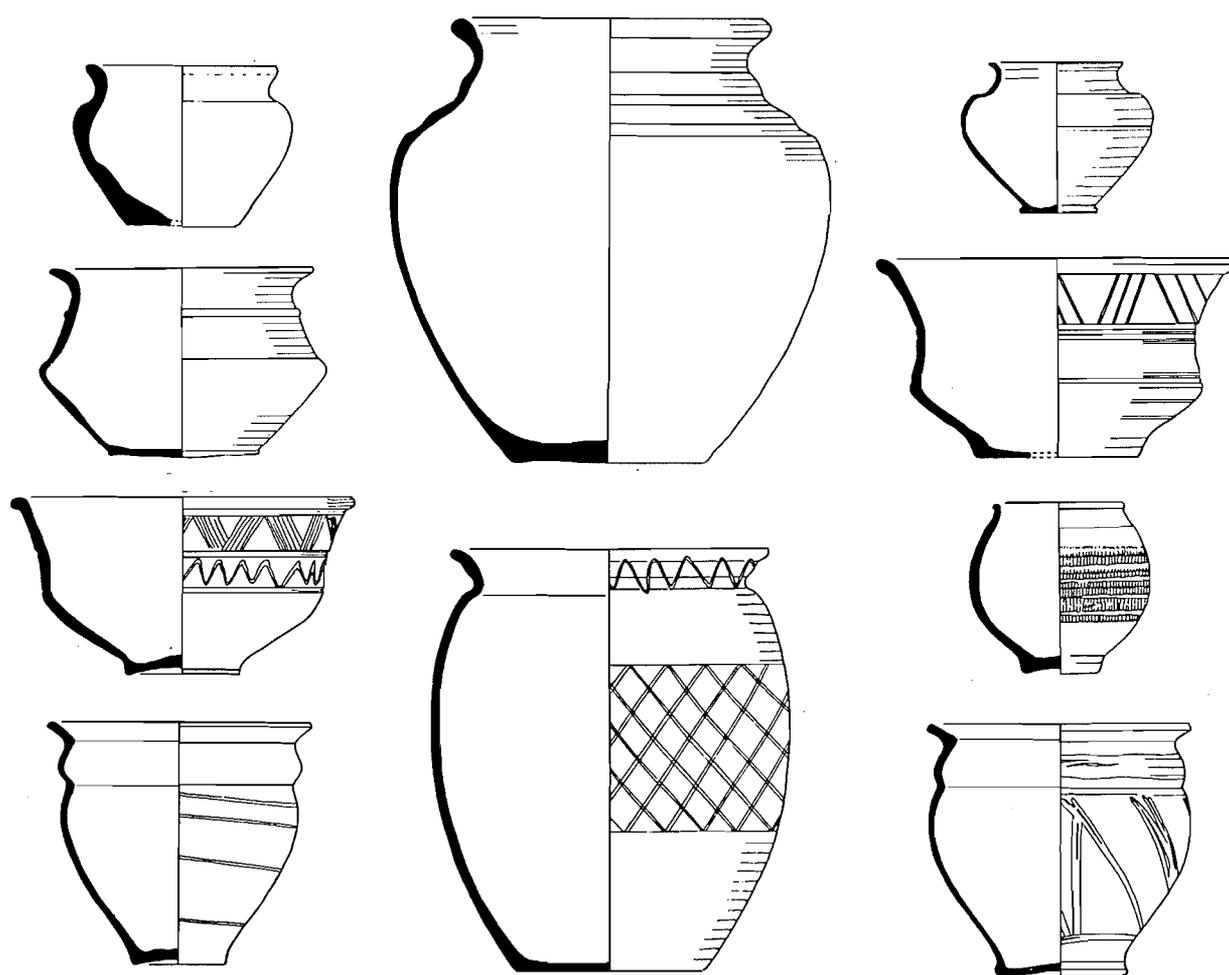


**Archaeological Evaluation**  
**at 80 Tiddington Road,**  
**Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire**



# Archaeological Evaluation at 80 Tiddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire

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Warwickshire Museum  
Market Place  
Warwick  
CV34 4SA

## **Summary**

An archaeological evaluation involving background research and trial trenching was carried out at 80 Tiddington Road on the south west edge of the Roman settlement. All three trenches produced Romano-British material and features, but none of the latter belonged to the cemetery that lay in this vicinity. This suggests that the site lies within the settlement itself, although no structural remains were found.

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 A planning application has been submitted to Stratford-upon-Avon District Council for the erection of a new detached dwelling adjacent to 80 Tiddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon (Planning Ref. S96/1257). Since the proposed development lies within an area of potential archaeological importance on the south west edge of the Romano-British settlement of Tiddington and close to one of its cemeteries, it has been recommended that an archaeological evaluation of the site should take place prior to a decision being made over the application.

1.2 A programme of fieldwork in accordance with a Brief prepared by the Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the Planning Authority was commissioned from the Warwickshire Museum and carried out in November 1996. This report presents the results of that programme.

## **2. Location**

2.1 The site of the proposed development lies on the south side of the Tiddington Road, to the west of no. 80, in the parish of Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, centering around national grid reference SP 2130 5520. The current proposal affects some 0.25 hectares which is presently part of the garden of no. 80.

2.2 The underlying geology of the proposed development area is 2nd river terrace gravels.

## **3. Aims and Methods of the Evaluation**

3.1 The evaluation was designed to discover the date, nature and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits which might be present in the area of the proposed development.

3.2 The work undertaken involved the examination of records of archaeological discoveries in the area; followed by the excavation of three trial trenches, two located within the area of the proposed dwelling, the third within the area of the proposed driveway.

## **4. Archaeological and Historical Background**

4.1 The earliest evidence for human activity in the area is a Palaeolithic hand axe found in about 1930 during the construction of the foundations of the existing house (Sites and Monuments Record Ref WA 893). This is almost certainly a redeposited find in the gravel terrace and does not indicate a site of this period.

4.2 The most important remains in the vicinity are those of a Romano-British settlement (SMR WA 4469), covering an estimated 22ha on the south bank of the River Avon (Fig. 1). It appears to have grown up where a road along the south side of the river, following the line of the modern Tiddington Road, met another running

south east to north west down to a ford. The ford was probably at the place where Roman coins and brooches were dredged out of the river in 1982.

4.3 It seems likely that the village came into existence at the very end of the Iron Age, about AD30-50, just before the arrival of the Roman army, but it is possible that it began a little later around a Roman fort set to dominate the river crossing. Whatever its origin it grew rapidly through the late 1st and 2nd centuries, serving as a market for the farms in the vicinity, clustered on the easily worked soils of the gravel terraces along the river. The village was itself linked by Roman roads to the main Roman towns in the area at Alcester and Chesterton-on-Fosse. The main road from the Fosse to Alcester by-passed Tiddington using another ford downstream by Clopton Bridge; and it seems to have been the rise in importance of this, the "Straetford", which led to the abandonment of the Tiddington site at the end of the Roman period and the development of modern Stratford in its current position.

4.4 The first modern indications of the existence of the settlement came in the 18th and 19th centuries when large numbers of Roman coins were collected from the fields at Tiddington. Systematic investigation began in the 1920s when housing development spreading along the Tiddington Road uncovered Roman remains. In 1923 a cemetery of 220 burials was encountered under no. 77 Tiddington Road (SMR WA 1014), opposite the application site. These excavations also produced some Iron Age pottery (SMR WA 1064) [but the suggestion that there were also Anglo Saxon finds (SMR WA 6268) is unsubstantiated]. In 1925-7 the construction of the golf course revealed more Romano-British burials and the remains of buildings. Further excavation work was carried out in 1937-8 at no. 102 Tiddington Road and in 1939 at no. 84 (SMR WA 1072).

4.5 In 1980-1 a large scale excavation was carried out in advance of the construction of new offices for the NFU Mutual and Avon Insurance on a 4ha site on the east side of the settlement. This revealed dense Roman occupation from the 1st century AD to the 4th century when a large defensive ditch was dug round the settlement. The houses of the settlement were mostly of timber with thatched roofs, although one large stone house was also found. The plots also contained outbuildings, corn drying ovens, wells and rubbish pits, and there were streets paved with gravel. Outside the settlement areas of cemetery, rubbish pits and field system were located.

4.6 In 1982 another large area, within the settlement to the north of the Tiddington Road, was excavated in advance of the building of the Reading Court sheltered housing. Here also dense Roman occupation dating from the 1st century AD to the mid-3rd century was found. The earliest buildings were timber roundhouses surrounded by animal enclosures. In the 2nd century paved roads were laid out accompanied by more timber buildings, now rectangular, of a more Romanised form. Two pottery kilns, one late 1st century, the other early 2nd century were also found. After the early third century no further buildings were constructed, but the roads continued in use and some late (4th century) burials were deposited alongside them. In 1983 a small excavation, adjacent to the NFUMAI site, on Knights Lane traced further rubbish pits and a corndrying oven alongside a trackway outside the settlement; and in 1988 in advance of the building of 117 Tiddington Road more late 1st and 2nd century, and some Anglo Saxon, activity was identified.

4.7 As a result of the 1980-1983 excavations the importance of the site, both to the history of Stratford and Warwickshire, and as a well-preserved example of a little understood type of Romano-British settlement, was recognised and the undeveloped parts of the settlement were given legal protection as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Warwickshire No. 184).

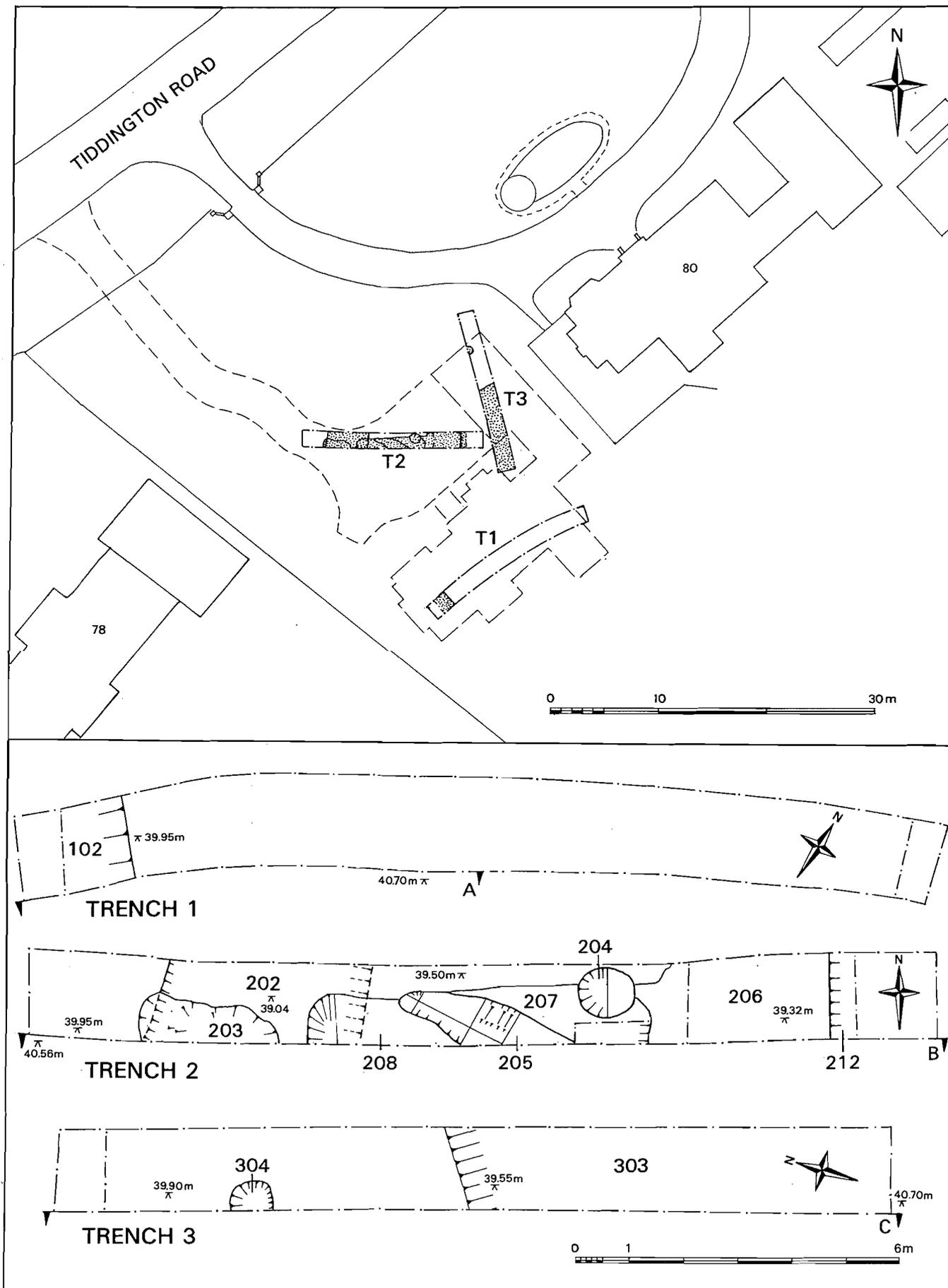


Fig. 2: Layout of Trenches and Trenches 1-3, Plans

## 5. Trial Trenches

### Trench 1

5.1 Trench 1 lay to the south. It measured 17m by 1.6m and was aligned roughly north east-south west. The trench was curved to avoid damaging a conifer hedge and a tree to the south of it. The geological natural gravel lay at a level of c.40.0m aod. At the south west end of the trench it was cut by a moderately steep sided ditch (102) with a rounded base aligned north west-south east, but whose south west side was not exposed. The ditch produced no finds, but was presumably Roman. The whole trench was overlain by a thick, sandy loam subsoil layer (101), up to 0.5m deep, presumably deriving from medieval/post medieval cultivation, and which was in turn overlain by the modern sandy loam topsoil (100), c.0.22m deep.

### Trench 2

5.2 Trench 2 lay to the west and measured 16.70m by 1.6m and was aligned roughly east-west to the south west of the existing house. The natural at the west end of the trench was at a level of 39.95m. The earliest feature in the trench was a hollow (206), c.0.35m deep, cut into the gravel. Because most of its edges had been destroyed by later activity, its dimensions and shape were uncertain, but it was filled by a layer of dark yellowish brown gravel containing a single Romano-British potsherd.

5.3 To the west 206 was cut by a large rectangular hollow or ditch (207, 208), 6.25m across by up to 0.6m deep. This was filled with layers of brown sandy silt loam (208/3) strong brown sand and gravel (208/2) and dark yellowish brown sandy loam (207/2, 207/1 and 208/1). Layer 207/1 contained Romano-British pottery, animal bone and some metalworking slag. To the west again, cutting 207/207, was a pit (203), c.2.8m across and 0.85m deep, filled with dark yellowish brown sandy loam, containing Romano-British pottery.

5.4 Pit 203 was cut by a large shallow ditch (202), 3.8m wide x 0.7m deep, aligned NNE-SSW. To the east of the ditch layers of dark greyish brown sandy loam (210) and brown sandy (clay) loam (211) appeared to form a bank, possibly of upcast from the ditch. Ditch 202 was itself filled with layers of brown sandy clay loam (201/1) containing RB pottery, animal bone, slag and ironwork, and brown sandy clay loam (202/2).

5.5 At the east end of the trench layer 206 was overlaid by a probable surface (209) of gravel and brown sandy loam. To the east this was cut by another, undated ditch (212), aligned north-south, but which only partly lay within the trench. Layer 209 was also cut by another undated ditch (205), aligned north west-south east, 1.05m wide by 0.58m deep. Over Ditch 205 was another ditch (213) on the same alignment; this was either the same feature or a recut; their fills were the same dark greyish brown sandy loam (205/1, 213/1). North of 205 was a round shallow pit (204), 0.85m in diameter by 0.1m deep, containing quantities of charcoal in its dark brown sandy loam fill. All the features within the trench were overlain by a sandy loam subsoil layer (201) 0.40-0.54m deep, and by the modern topsoil (200) which was 0.30-0.40m deep.

### Trench 3

5.3 Trench 3 lay to the north east; it measured 15.35m by 1.6m and was aligned roughly north-south. The geological natural lay at a level of c.40.1m. Over the southern part of the trench it was cut by a large shallow depression (303), c.0.40m deep, which continued out of the trench to the south. The depression was filled by a layer of sandy loam and gravel containing RB pottery. Towards the north end of the trench there was another shallow depression (304), 0.8m across by 0.15m deep. This

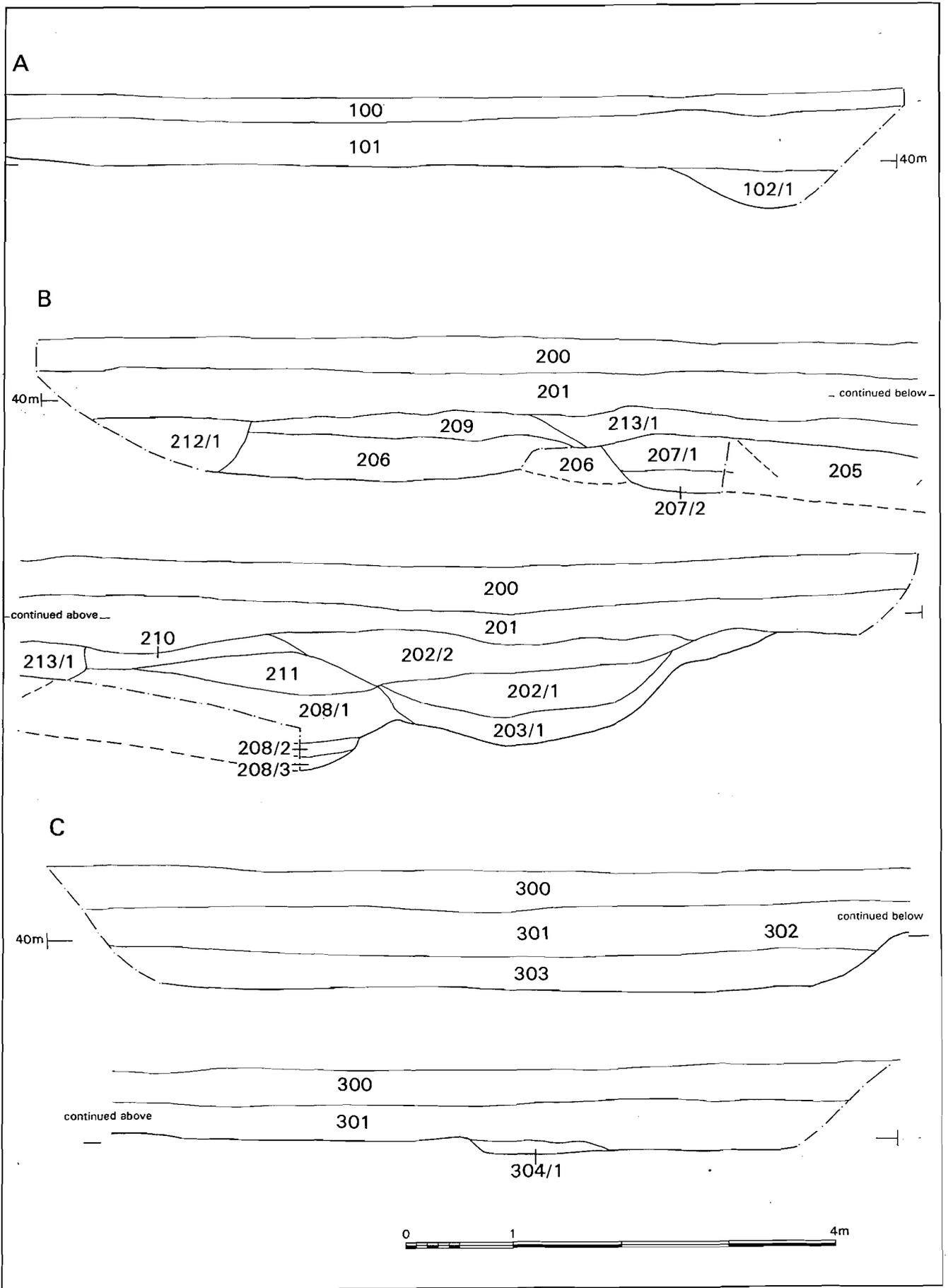


Fig. 3: Trenches 1-3, Sections A-C



Fig. 4: Trench 2, general view



Fig. 5: Trench 2, Ditch 205

was filled with dark brown sandy loam containing a fragment of post medieval clay tobacco pipe; it may be a garden feature or relate to the construction of the existing house in the 1930s. The whole of the trench was covered by a sandy loam subsoil layer (301, 322) between 0.32m and 0.44m, overlaid by a similar topsoil layer (300), c.0.32m thick.

## **6. Finds**

6.1 The finds included animal bone, daub, Romano-British pottery and tile and post medieval pottery, tile and clay tobacco pipe. Two residual, prehistoric worked flints came from 101. A very worn, tanged iron knife blade and a nail, both of Romano-British date, came from 202/1, and small quantities of probable iron smithing slag came from 202/1 and 207/1. The slag reflects blacksmithing in the settlement but the small amount means that it was probably not in the immediate vicinity. The Romano-British pottery was mainly undiagnostic 2nd-4th century material. It included some Severn Valley ware and Black Burnished ware but there were no fine wares. Generally the Romano-British finds represent a fairly typical collection from these type of features at Tiddington.

## **7. Conclusions**

7.1 Romano-British material and features were found in all three trenches, although the main concentration was in Trench 2. The evaluation area clearly seems to lie within the settlement and no evidence of the Roman-British cemetery known from north of Tiddington Road was discovered.

7.2 No evidence for buildings or other structural remains was found, but the complicated sequence in Trench 2 shows that activity probably continued over a long time. Some of the large hollows in Trenches 2 and 3 may have been dug to provide gravel for road and floor surfaces within the settlement, but the relatively small quantities of finds from them suggest that they were not then used for rubbish disposal.

7.3 Apart from two prehistoric worked flints from the Trench 1 subsoil, which on their own do not suggest the presence of contemporary settlement, there was no evidence for pre-Roman activity. There was also no evidence for significant post-Roman activity except for a subsoil layer which will have derived from medieval/post medieval cultivation. The Romano-British features were all sealed by 0.65-0.8m of later material.

## **Acknowledgements**

The Warwickshire Museum would like to thank Crosby Homes (Midlands) Ltd of Warwick for commissioning this work and supplying copies of plans. Work on site was carried out by Christopher Jones, Bryn Gethin, Robert Jones and Kevin Wright and this report was written by Christopher Jones and Nicholas Palmer with drawings by Andrew Isham.

## Appendix A: List of Finds

Context	Material	No	
100	Pottery	5	1 RB, 4 Post medieval
101	Flint	1	Scraper
101	Flint	1	Flake
200	A. Bone	1	
200	Pottery	4	4 RB
201	Pottery	3	3 RB
201	Tile	1	RB?
202/1	A. Bone	64	(including skull fragments)
202/1	Iron knife	1	
202/1	Nail	1	
202/1	Pottery	4	RB
202/1	Slag	1	
202/1	Soil sample	1	
202/1	Tile	1	?
203/1	A. Bone	2	
203/1	Pottery	3	RB
205/1	A. Bone	6	
206	Pottery	1	RB
207/1	A. Bone	1	
207/1	Pottery	2	RB
207/1	Slag	4	
302	Pottery	7	RB 2, Post medieval 5
302	Tile	8	RB? 4, Medieval/Post medieval 4
303	A. Bone	1	
303	Pottery	4	
303	Tile	1	?
304/1	A. Bone	4	
304/1	Clay pipe	1	Post medieval
304/1	Daub	1	

Warwickshire Museum, Market Place, Warwick, CV34 4SA