

Church Farm, Dorsington, Warwickshire

Archaeological Evaluation



understanding heritage matters

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1373
November 2013



*Working for
Warwickshire*

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Summary

Archaeological trial trenches excavated in advance of a planning application for a new dwelling at Church Farm, Dorsington uncovered no evidence associated with Romano-British or medieval settlement activity. No significant archaeological remains were revealed.

1 Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Stratford upon Avon District Council for the erection of a key farm worker dwelling at Church Farm (S10/02525). WCC Planning Archaeologist Anna Stocks, in her capacity as advisor to the Planning Authority has determined that the proposed development lies within an area of archaeological potential.

1.2 It is therefore a condition of the planning permission that, before the development commences, the applicant should secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Planning Authority.

1.3 Archaeology (Projects) Warwickshire were commissioned to prepare a Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological evaluation of the site of the proposed dwelling and to carry out that evaluation in accordance with that condition.

1.4 This report presents the results of the fieldwork which was undertaken in November 2013. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under the site code DC13.

2 Site Location

2.1 The site is located in Dorsington village, in the parish of the same name at National Grid Reference SP 1334 4983.

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 The Warwickshire Historic Environment Record contains no records indicating pre-Roman activity in the vicinity, though this is likely to be a reflection of the absence of survey rather than absence of evidence.

3.2 Romano-British activity in the area is indicated by the chance find of a Roman coin (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record No MWA 5067) and an copper alloy object,

thought to be a Roman chest fitting (MWA 5068), both found by metal detector in 1987 c.650-700m to the north-west of the site (not on plan). Archaeological excavation in 2004 in advance of the construction of a house immediately to the west of the site found a series of ditches, one of which contained Roman pottery and another a Roman coin. A concentration of features in the south-eastern corner of the excavation, including the possible edge of an enclosure, suggests that the main focus of activity may be to the south-east of the excavated area. None of these features could, however, be dated (Cook 2005).

3.3 The place name Dorsington is of Anglo-Saxon origin, and may mean Deorsige's farm (Gover et al 1936, 201). A single sherd of late Anglo-Saxon pottery was found in the 2004 excavation, though it was considered to be a residual sherd in a later feature interpreted as ridge and furrow cultivation (Cook 2005). It is possible that one or more of the undated features from the excavation could be of this period.

3.4 The manor of Dorsington was recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as possessing ten hides and five ploughs, with three ploughs in lordship. It was formerly held by Saxi, and at the time of the survey was held by one Robert from Roger of Beaumont (Morris 1976, EG12). There were eight villeins and six serfs, suggesting a total population of around seventy.

3.5 The HER records chance finds of a medieval harness attachment and a copper alloy vessel fragment c.650m north-west of the site, and a penny of Edward I c.350m to the north-east (MWA 5629 not on plan; MWA 10131), as well as more substantial evidence of medieval occupation. A moat, assumed to be medieval, surrounds Moat House to the south of Church Farm (MWA 1812), and a feature described as a moat lies to the east of the Old Rectory, c.200m to the south east of the site (MWA 1811). There is another moat c.500m to the north-east at Braggington (MWA 1813).

3.6 There is extensive ridge and furrow around Dorsington (MWA 3894, Fig 2), the extent of which has been plotted from aerial photographs by Warwickshire Museum (Fig 2). This extent also gives an indication of the limits of the medieval settlement (MWA 9020). The 2004 excavation revealed linear features interpreted as ridge and furrow cultivation immediately to the west of the site (Cook 2005), indicating that the area between the present site and the road leading north out of Dorsington was also originally part of the field system. This suggests that the present site may have been similar, and also that the settlement may not have extended as far north as recorded on the HER.

3.7 Dorsington today contains a number of early post-medieval buildings, listed Grade II. The house, formerly five cottages, known as "The Old Manor" (although not a former manor house) may date to the 16th century and several others, such as Whitegates, Aberfoyle Cottage, the Old Post Office and Moat House Farmhouse, are of 17th-century date (EH/DCMS 2006). St Peter's Church dates from 1754-8, although it may be on earlier foundations (MWA 1810; Pevsner and Wedgwood 1966, 286; Salter 1992, 31).

3.8 Several 19th-century and early 20th-century maps show the development site to have been an open field although it is perhaps worth noting that two footpaths merge adjacent to the site which could indicate formerly extant features.

3.9 Dorsington was administratively part of Gloucestershire until 1931, when it was transferred to Warwickshire in a series of boundary adjustments.

3.10 Archaeological observation of 44 foundation pad pits excavated at Church Farm in 2006 revealed that earlier farm buildings had truncated much of the site down to natural clay, and extensive disturbance was visible elsewhere (Greig 2006; EWA 7654).

4 Aims and Methods

4.1 The main aim of the evaluation was to determine if there were any significant archaeological remains in the area of development, to form an understanding of their value and their potential to shed light on the subsequent development of the Dorsington area.

4.2 Secondary aims included placing the results in their wider local and regional contexts as appropriate.

4.3 The objective was to locate, record and analyse archaeological materials and deposits and to disseminate the results in an appropriate format

4.4 A total of two trenches were opened up by a 6 tonne 360° excavator. Topsoil and other plough soils were removed under the supervision of an experienced archaeologist until either the top of archaeological remains or geological natural was reached.

5 Results

Trench 1

5.1 Trench 1 was 7.5m long and aligned NE/SW. Geological natural light olive clay (102) was reached at a depth of 0.22m below the modern ground surface. The natural was overlaid by 0.12m of dark olive clay (101). This was overlain by 0.1m of dark grey clay loam topsoil (100). Nothing of archaeological significance was found in this trench.

5.2 Trench 2 was 7.5m long and aligned WNW/ESE. Geological natural light olive clay (202) was achieved at 0.21m below the current ground surface. At the SE end of the trench 'blue' clay (203) was firmly established as a natural vein. The natural was overlaid by 0.10m of dark olive clay (201). This was overlain by 0.11m of dark grey clay loam topsoil (200). Nothing of archaeological significance was found in this trench.

5.3 The deposit sequence across the two trenches was entirely consistent with that of land being in agricultural use since at least the medieval period.

6 Conclusions

6.1 The evaluation has established that the proposed new dwelling is highly unlikely to impact on anything of archaeological significance.

Acknowledgements

Archaeology (Projects) Warwickshire would like to thank Mr Stephen Walters of Church Farm for commissioning the work, for driving the machine and for being a pleasure to work for.

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Appendices

A List of contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comment</i>
100	Topsoil	Dark grey clay loam
101	Layer	Old ploughsoil
102	Natural	Light olive
200	Topsoil	Dark grey clay loam
201	Layer	Old ploughsoil
202	Natural	Light olive
203	Natural	Blue clay

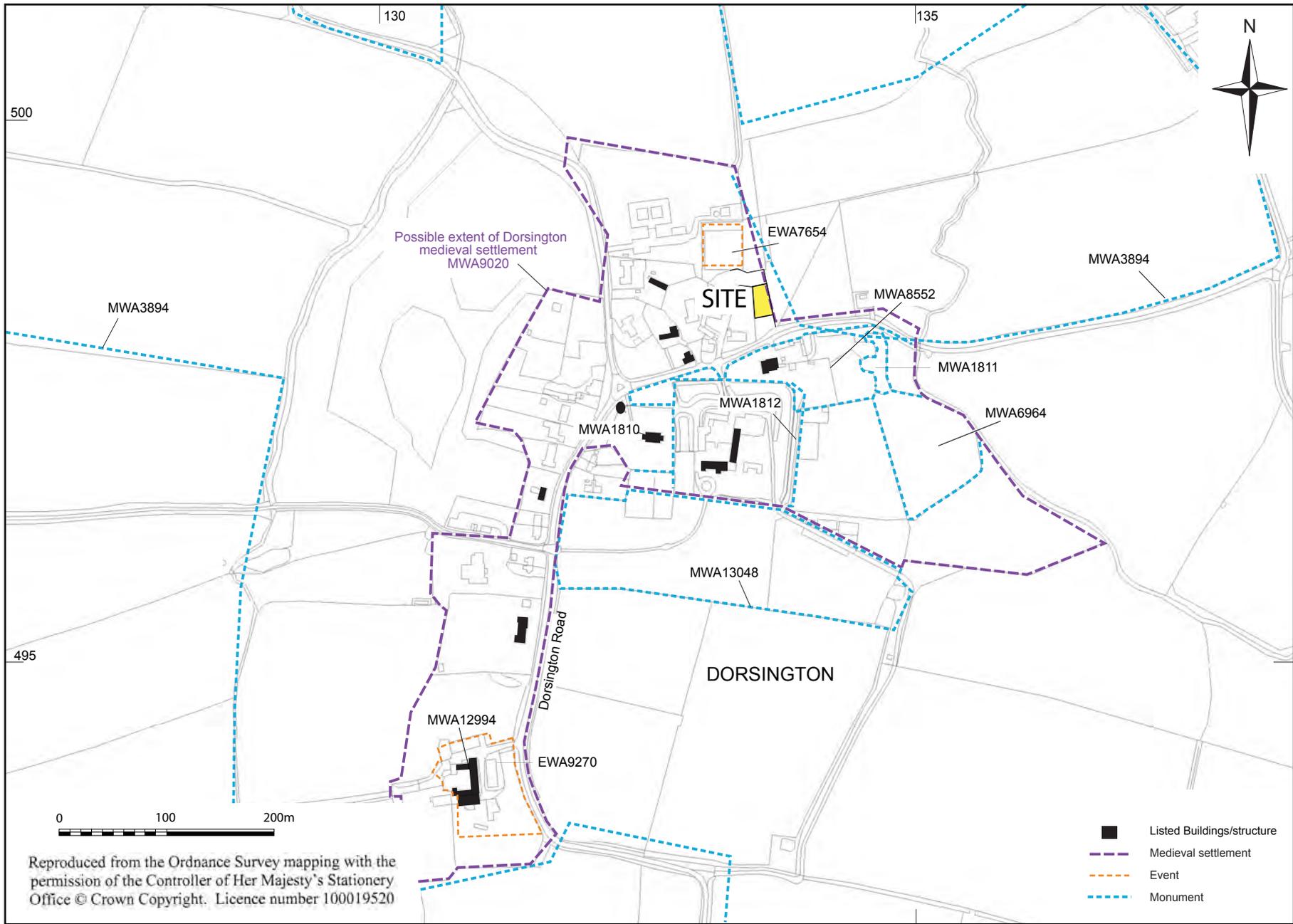


Fig 1: Site location

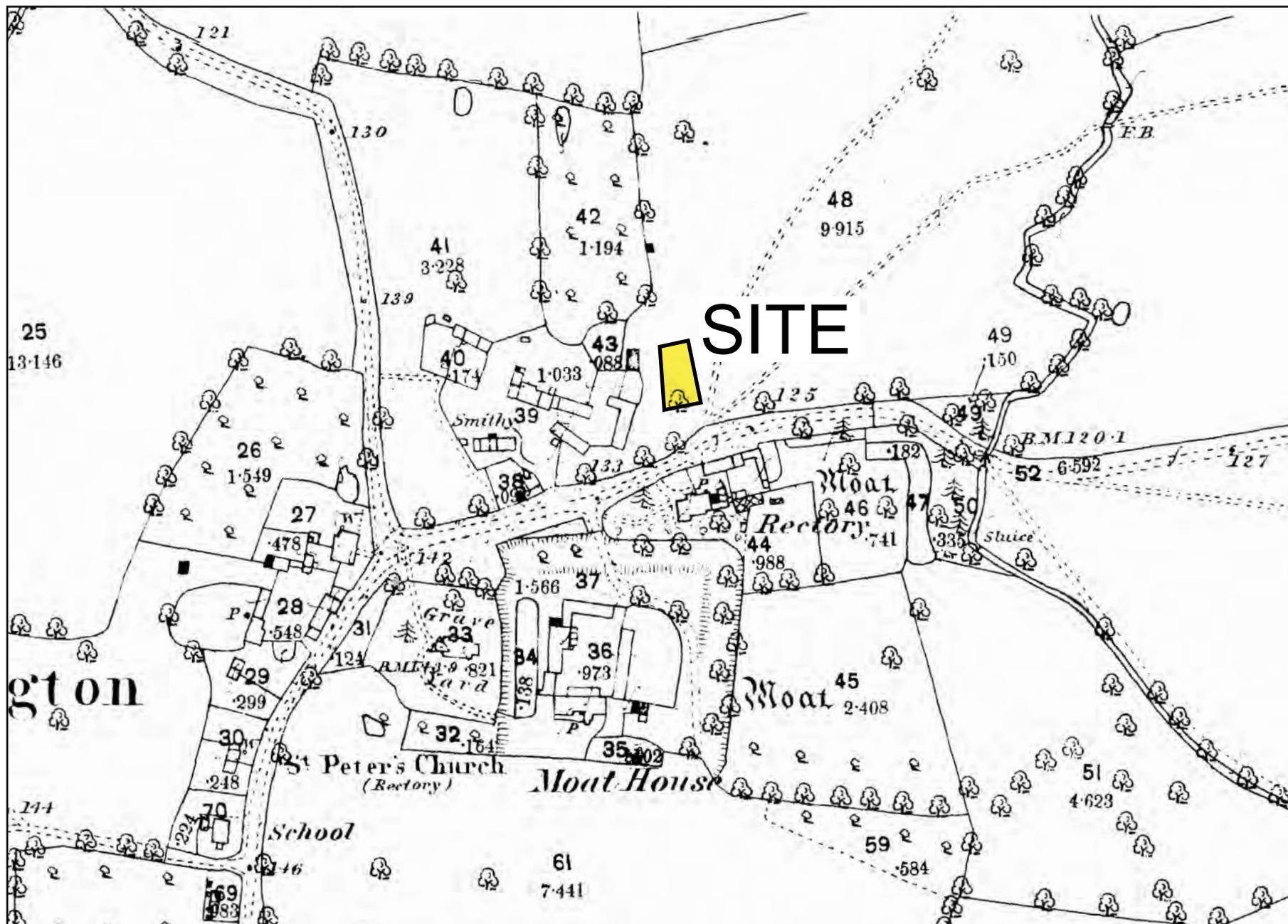


Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884

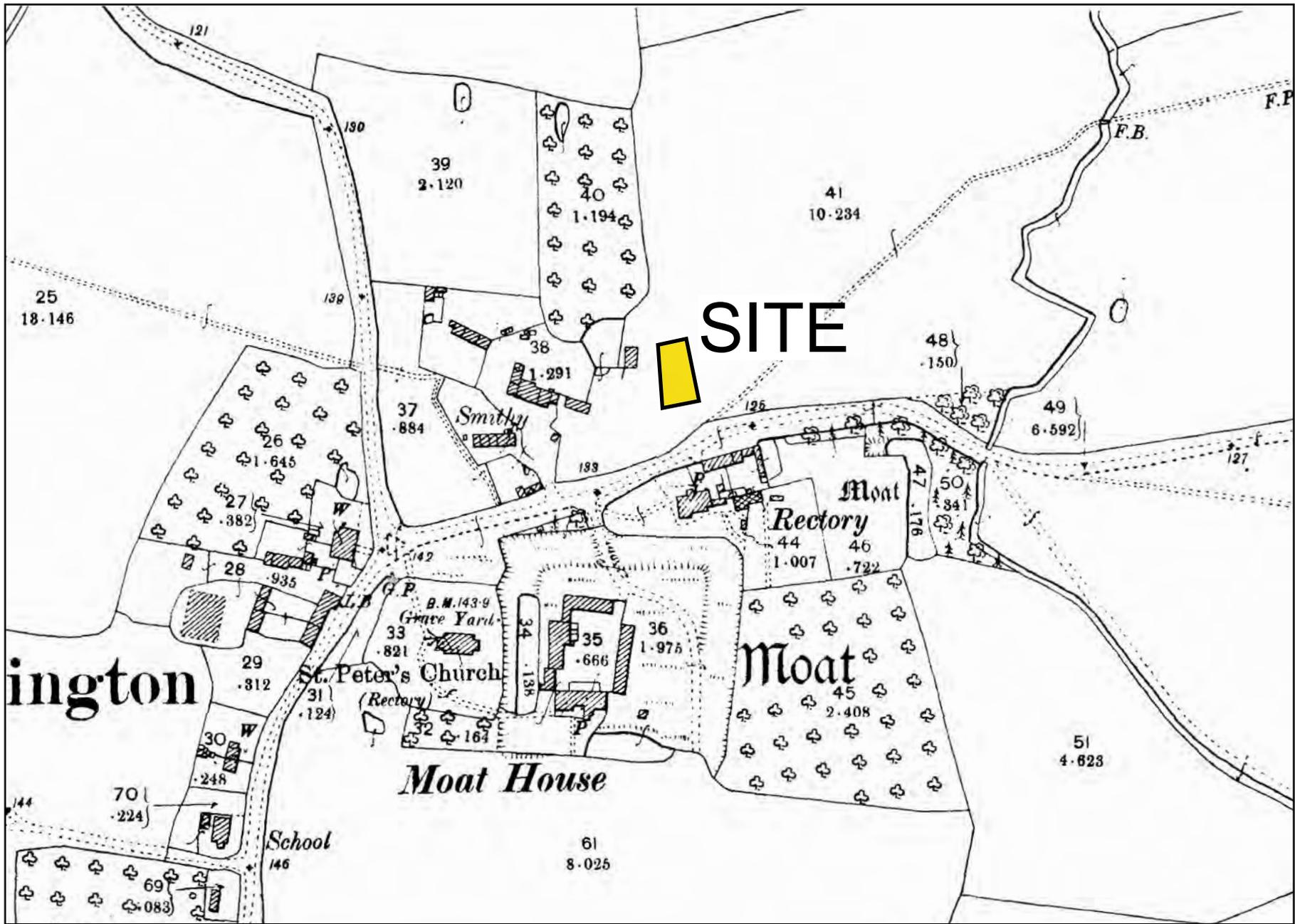


Fig 3: Detail from Second Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1901

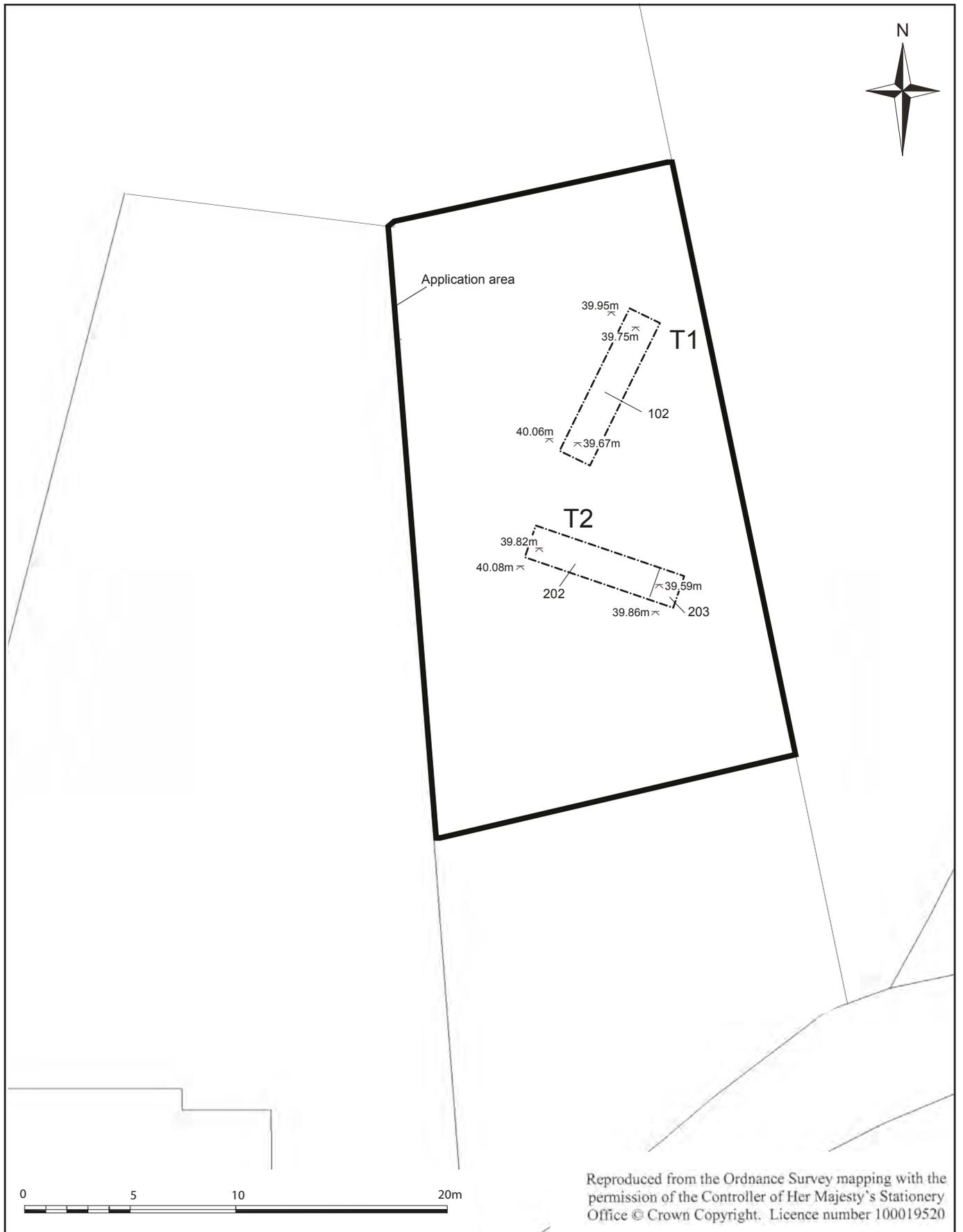


Fig 4: Location of excavated trenches



Fig 5: Trench 1 viewed from the NE



Fig 6: Trench 2 viewed from the SE; note the band of 'blue' natural clay in the foreground