RPS Planning, Transport and Environment

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County Northamptonshire	
OS Reference SP64	
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NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY

SEPTEMBER 2000

A43 ROAD IMPROVEMENT

SILVERSTONE: SITES SL1 AND SL3

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATIONS: STAGE 3

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NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION: STAGE 3

SUMMARY REPORT

Abstract

Archaeological evaluations were carried out at Sites SL1 and SL3, Silverstone as part of a programme of archaeological work in advance of the A43 road improvement. At SL3 trial trenches confirmed the presence of Late Iron Age features as indicated by the earlier surface collection and geophysical surveys. The evidence suggested domestic occupation. The limits of the site appeared to correlate well with the features shown on the geophysical survey. At SL1 the projected line of the Roman road between Towcester and Alchester was examined with a trench. No structure was discernable and it is suggested that the road survives only as an eroded hollow-way. There were no significant features associated with the road line.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Proposals for improvements to the A43 between the M40 and Towcester will affect land adjacent to the A43. Site SL1 lies to the west of the A43-A413 junction and site SL3 is located on the western side of the A43 between Swinneyford Farm and Silverstone Fields Farm (NGR SP683466 - Fig 1). The archaeological implications of the improvement scheme were considered and accordingly the Northamptonshire County Council Highways commissioned Northamptonshire Archaeology to undertake an archaeological evaluation.

1.2 An initial desk-based study (Chapman & Shaw 1996), field walking and geophysical survey was undertaken in 1996 (Masters & Shaw 1997). Further geophysical reconnaissance and detailed survey was conducted over the winter 1999-2000 (Mudd 2000).

1.3 Site SL1 was known to be on or close to the alignment of the Roman road from Towcester to Alchester. Geophysical survey did not detect evidence of the Roman road or associated features, although a linear anomaly was present at an angle to the assumed Roman road. Two Iron Age coins have been reportedly found in the vicinity of this site.

1.4 The potential presence of archaeological features within site SL3 had been identified from surface scatters of Iron Age and Roman pottery. Geophysical survey showed this area to comprise an irregular group of small and medium enclosures, probably indicating a settlement, and appeared to have established the limits of the site on the northern, southern and eastern sides.

1.5 Following this work a specification for a series of trial trenches was submitted by Northamptonshire Heritage and Northamptonshire Archaeology to the Highways Agency ('A43 Road Improvement Scheme: Silverstone and Brackley Hatch Sections. Specification for Outstanding Archaeological Evaluation.' 30.6.2000).

1.6 The objectives of the trial trench evaluation were to establish the date, extent, character and degree of preservation of the archaeological remains on the sites. Eight trenches, four 30m long, three 20m long and one 25m long were excavated on site

SL3 (Fig 2). These trenches were positioned to examine a selection of features showing as geophysical anomalies, and to examine apparently blank areas.

1.7 Two trenches were excavated on site SL1 (Fig 4) in order to establish the presence or otherwise of the Roman road and associated features within the land-take of the A43 road improvement scheme. Both these trenches were 20m in length.

1.8 This summary report does not include a detailed assessment of the finds. The pottery has been examined for spot-dating by Dennis Jackson FSA and the other finds by Tora Hylton.

2 TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION – SITE SL3

Trench 1 (Fig 3)

2.1 Trench 1 ran SSE-NNW down slope and was 30m in length at the northern end of the site. No geophysical anomalies were recorded in this area.

2.2 The natural lay under approx. 0.3m of plough soil and varied in consistency from a yellow clay, a blue-grey clay to a limestone brash.

2.3 Towards the SSE end of the site an undated irregular feature was observed within the natural [104]. This contained a compact green-brown clay, which had been heavily disturbed by root/animal activity. A similar feature was observed further north but remained unexcavated.

Trench 2 (Fig 3)

2.4 Trench 2 was SE-NE aligned and measured 25m in length. The trench was located within an area showing a number of geophysical anomalies.

2.5 The natural lay 0.25m below the topsoil. The consistency of the natural varied from the blue-grey clay to a limestone brash at the base of the trench towards the hedge line.

2.6 A number of features were observed throughout the trench. Most features were linear and two possible pits were also recorded.

2.7 Towards the SE end of the trench a large linear feature [215] was present and partially excavated. The pottery recovered dated to the Late Iron Age. This feature was truncated through its centre by a substantial 19th century ditch [205] and on its eastern edge by another post-medieval linear feature [217].

Trench 3 (Fig 3)

2.8 Trench 3 ran on a SW-NE alignment and was 20m in length. The trench was located so as to evaluate the geophysical survey data.

2.9 The natural was present at a depth of 0.25m below the topsoil. A varying natural limestone brash was present at the SW end, following the slope down at the NE end. A natural linear outcrop of limestone plates ran approximately through the centre of the trench and reddish-brown clay lay below the topsoil, sealing the limestone towards the base of the slope at the NE end of the trench.

2.10 A fairly shallow undated linear feature [305] cut into the limestone. This feature ran N-S, oblique to the trench, and was located within the SW end of the trench. Towards the NE end of the trench a substantial Iron Age ditch [307] was recorded, reaching a depth of 1m with a width of 5m. This ditch was cut into the clay.

Trench 4 (Fig 3)

2.11 Trench 4 was aligned SSE-NNW and measured 30m in length. The geophysical survey indicated the probable presence of at least one feature in this trench.

2.12 A shallow topsoil, 0.25m, overlay a natural blue-grey clay.

2.13 At the northern end of the trench a shallow undated gully [410] ran N-S and was truncated on its southern end by an undated pit [408]. The pit also cut a spread of redeposited natural on its southern edge. The area of redeposited natural resulted from the upcast created from the excavation of a substantial linear feature [407] to the south of the spread. The ditch measured 2.5m in width reaching a depth of over 1m. Pottery, clay pipe bowls, and glass recovered from this feature can be dated to the late 17th century. Towards the southern end of the trench a linear running N-S was excavated but provided no dating evidence. The remains of wooden post stakes running E-W and associated root activity within the southern end of the trench relate to the late field boundary, which was recently scrubbed out.

Trenches 5,6,7 and 8

2.14 Trenches 5 and 8 ran SSW-NNE and were both 30m in length, and Trenches 6 and 7 ran E-W and measured 20m in length. All four trenches were within an apparent blank area on the geophysical survey data.

2.15 The height of the natural varied. Trenches 5 and 8 ran against the natural slope towards the hedge line and trenches 6 and 7 ran across the slope.

2.16 The natural limestone bed on the upper ground was occasionally overlain by natural blue-grey clay, but towards the base of the slope this was replaced by a natural reddish-brown alluvial clay deposit.

2.17 No archaeological features were observed in these four trenches.

3 TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION – SITE SL1

Trench 1 (Fig 5)

3.1 Trench 1 ran SSW-NNE and was 20m in length. The trench was located in a position to evaluate a linear geophysical anomaly.

3.2 The natural was present at between 0.25m to 0.3m below the topsoil/subsoil and varied from a limestone brash clay towards the south, to a sandy clay with frequent limestone inclusions further north.

3.3 A possible linear feature [105] ran NW-SE, but although this feature was only partially excavated finds of 19th century were recovered. Further to the south a possible posthole was located but was undated.

Trench 2 (Fig 5)

3.4 Trench 2 was 20m long and was aligned E-W. The trench was positioned close to the assumed route of the Roman road.

3.5 The natural was present at between 0.15m at the eastern end, to 0.40m at the western end of the trench. This consisted of a limestone brash and clay at both ends of the trench.

3.6 Running through the centre of the trench was a wide spread (10m in width) of mixed clay (204) and gravels (205). The measured depth of this feature was at least 0.5m from the height of the natural at either end of the trench. No dating evidence was recovered from this feature.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 The archaeological remains found within the SL3 trenches correlate relatively well with the information provided from the geophysical survey. The vast majority of features were located within the geophysical survey area providing the most anomalies. Though not all of the archaeological features were picked up in the survey this could result from some features being masked by stronger readings from certain other features close by. The Iron Age dates for features in Trenches 2 and 3 correspond to material recovered in the earlier fieldwalking survey.

4.2 The results of the evaluation provide evidence of Late Iron Age activity related to domestic settlement. Many other features, which at present remain undated, may well provide further evidence of this.

4.3 The presence within SL3 Trench 4 of a previously unrecorded substantial pit or ditch, falling into disuse in the late 17th century, will provide some information on the post-medieval land use in this area.

4.4 Trenches 5 to 8 within SL3 appear to confirm the geophysical survey that SL2 and SL3 are two separate sites with no intervening features.

4.5 Although no evidence for Roman activity was recovered, it seems probable from the surface finds and previous survey that some form of Roman settlement pattern followed on from the Iron Age.

4.6 On SL1 the large feature in Trench 2 may well relate to the Roman road. Though no structural or material evidence for a Roman road was recovered it is possible that the road had become a green lane or hollow-way in the intervening centuries.

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Mudd A 2000 A43 Road Improvement Silverstone and Brackley Hatch Sections. Archaeological Evaluation: Stage 3. January – March 2000. Northamptonshire Archaeology Report

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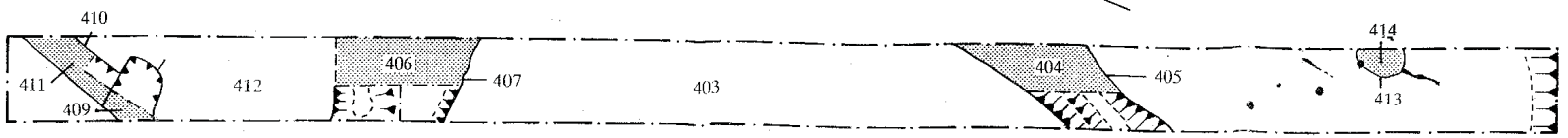
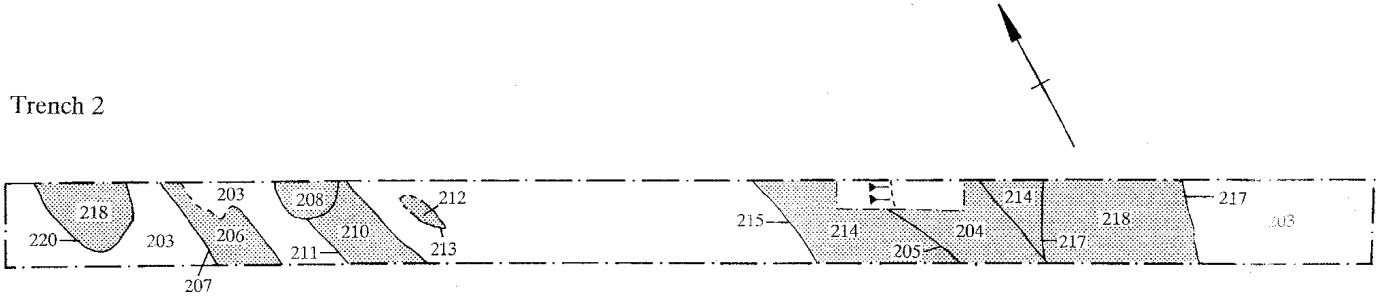
Trench 4



Trench 1

Trench 2



SL3

Trench 3

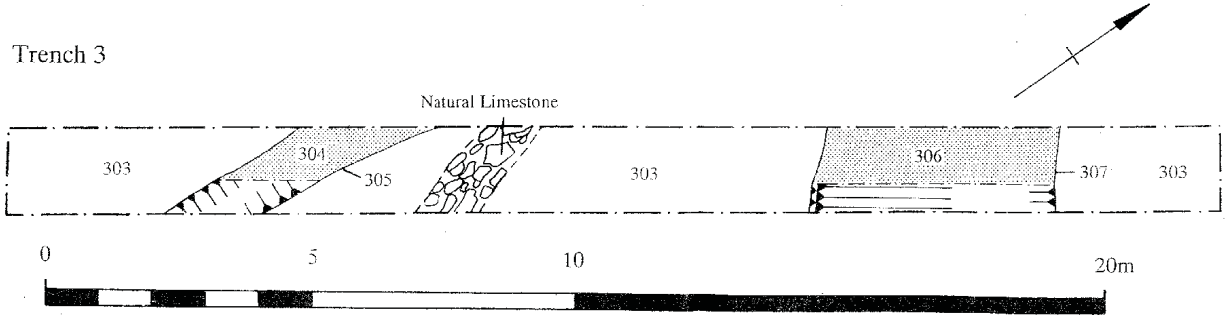
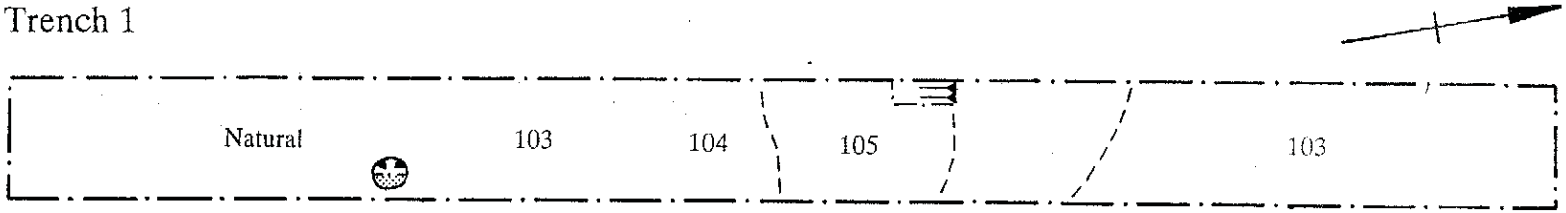


Fig 3

SL1

Trench 1



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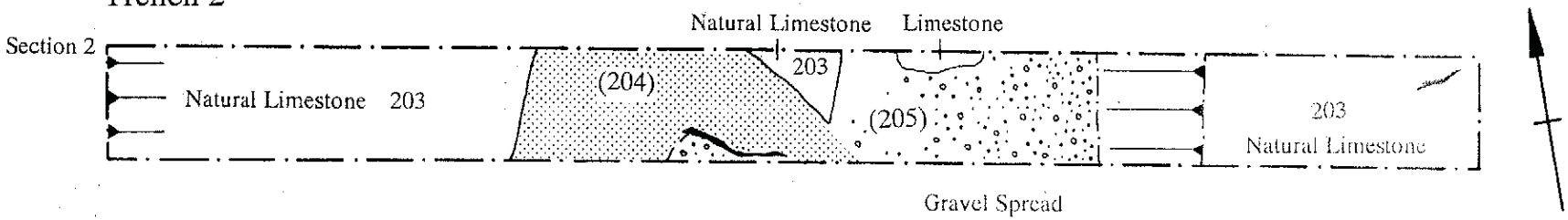

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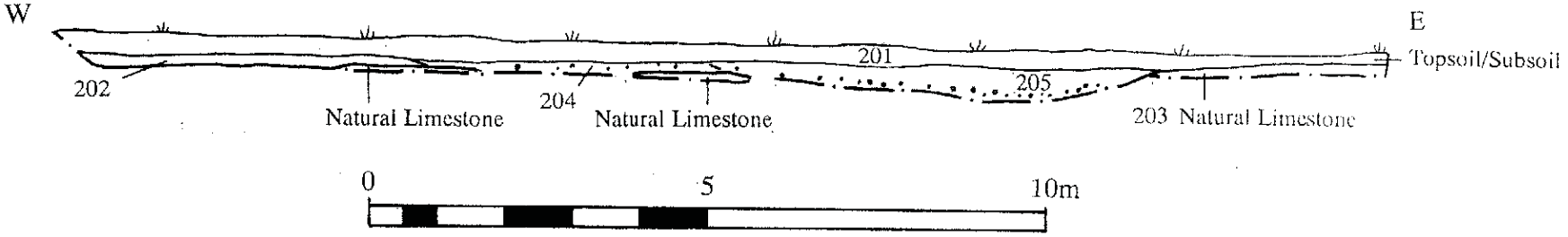

Fig 5

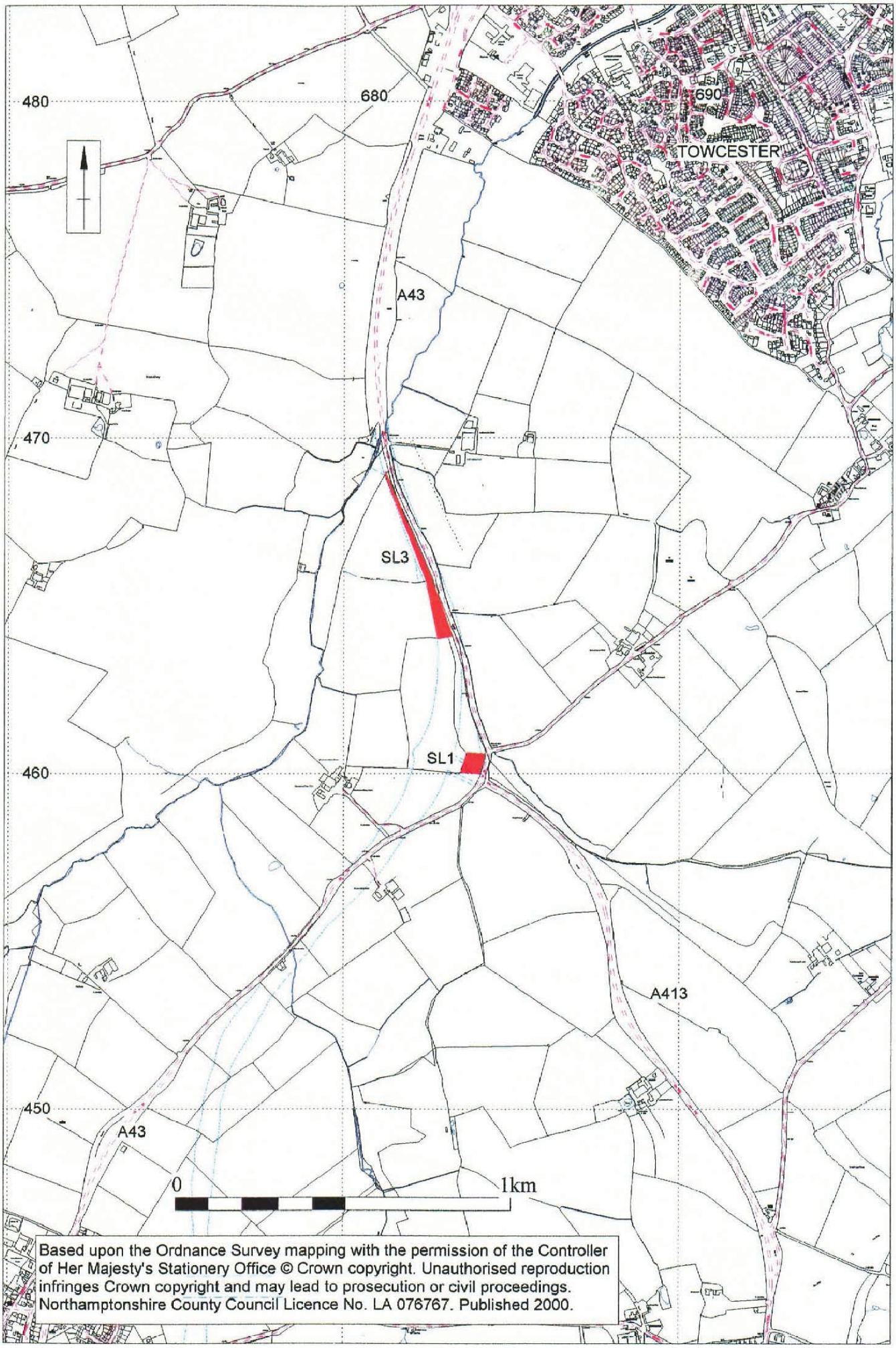
480
680
690
TOWCESTER
A43
470
SL3
SL1
460
A413
450
A43
0
1km
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Fig. 1

Fig. 2

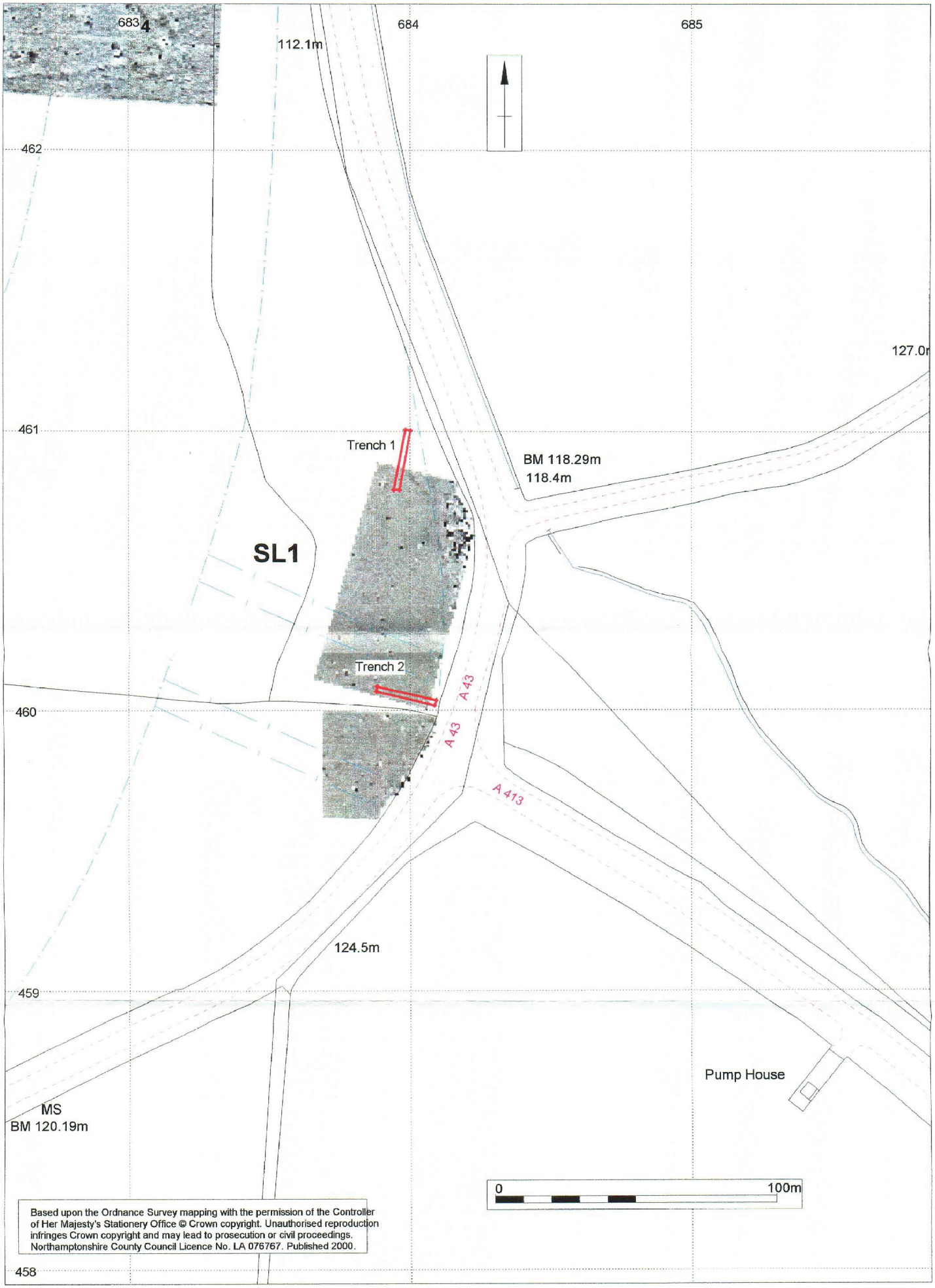
683
4
684
685
112.1m
462
461
460
459
458
127.0
Trench 1
Trench 2
SL1
BM 118.29m
118.4m
A 43
A 43
A 413
124.5m
Pump House
MS
BM 120.19m
0
100m
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Fig.4