



Northamptonshire  
County Council

# Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological trial trench evaluation of  
land around Hemel Hempstead

Hertfordshire

H18 Spencer's Park

Final report

May - June 2008



Anne Foard-Colby

January 2009

Report 08/169

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**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY**  
**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**JANUARY 2009**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION**  
**OF**  
**LAND AROUND HEMEL HEMPSTEAD**  
**HERTFORDSHIRE**  
**H18 (SPENCER'S PARK)**  
**MAY – JUNE 2008**

**FINAL REPORT**

Accession number: DACT: 2642

**REPORT 08/169**

*NGR TL 0800 0945*

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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land around Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, H18 (Spencer's Park) Final report	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land proposed for housing at Spencer's Park, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire. The evaluation identified a number of pits, ditches and cremations occupying a plateau at the north-west corner of the site. The features date from the early 1st – 3rd centuries AD and are thought to represent enclosures and field boundaries on the periphery of a settlement. The cremations, two of which were possibly buried in wooden boxes, appear to have been bounded by a ditched enclosure. Finds from the site include pottery from the Middle Iron Age to 2nd century AD, glass and tile, together with opus signinum and a quern fragment, suggesting that a settlement may lie close by.	
Project type (e.g. DBA, evaluation etc)	Trial trench evaluation	
Site status (none, NT, SAM etc)	None	
Previous work (SMR numbers etc)	Geophysical survey	
Current Land use	Arable	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	Unknown	
Monument type/period	Roman cremations and enclosures	
Significant finds (artifact type and period)	Roman pottery, tile	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Hertfordshire	
Site address (including postcode)	Land at Cherry Tree Lane, Hertfordshire	
Study area (sq.m or ha)	12.9 ha	
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq. letter code)	TL 0800 0945	
Height OD	128m	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Hertfordshire County Council	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Anne Foard-Colby	
Project Manager	Mark Holmes	
Sponsor or funding body	ENTEC	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	28 May 2008	
End date	19 June 2008	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no.)</b>	<b>Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)</b>
Physical	DACHT: 2642	
Paper		
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<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION  
OF  
LAND AROUND HEMEL HEMPSTEAD  
HERTFORDSHIRE  
H18 (SPENCER'S PARK)**

**FINAL REPORT**

*ABSTRACT*

*Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land proposed for housing, at Spencer's Park, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire. The evaluation identified a number of pits, ditches and cremations occupying a plateau at the north-west corner of the site. The features date from the early 1st – 3rd centuries AD and are thought to represent enclosures and field boundaries on the periphery of a settlement. The cremations, two of which were possibly buried in boxes, appear to have been bounded by a ditched enclosure. Finds from the site include pottery from the Middle Iron Age to 2nd century AD, glass and tile, together with opus signinum and a quern fragment, suggesting that a settlement may lie close by.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Archaeological evaluation comprising trial excavation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology between May and June 2008 on land to the north of Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire (NGR: TL 0800 0945; Fig 1).

The work was undertaken in order to inform a pre-application enquiry with regard to developing land for housing at Spencer's Park, Cherry Tree Lane, Hemel Hempstead. The evaluation met the requirements of brief prepared by the County Archaeological Office of Hertfordshire County Council, dated 6 May 2008.

The trial trenching formed the second stage of archaeological evaluation. A previous stage of geophysical survey identified magnetic anomalies thought to be archaeological in origin (Smith and Butler 2008) (Fig 1). The objective of the archaeological evaluation was to test the results of the geophysical survey and to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of surviving archaeological remains liable to be affected by the proposed development.

## **2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

The proposed development site is located on the north-east corner of the suburbs of Hemel Hempstead, to the west of the M1 motorway and is bounded to the north by Redbourn Road, to the east by Cherry Tree Lane and to the south-west by Three Cherry Trees Road. The area of evaluation is approximately 12.9 hectares and the land is currently given over to set-aside.

A flat, natural plateau at the far north-west corner of the site lies at approximately 128m OD (Plate 1). The land falls away to the east and south, to a small east-west aligned valley, before rising again. The solid geology of the area comprises chalk and red chalk, the drift geology is clay with flints ([www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index.htm](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index.htm)).

## **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

There were no archaeological remains known within the proposed development site prior to the geophysical survey, although an aerial photograph of the area appears to show the cropmark of a possible broad ditch curving around the edge of the natural plateau (Kathy Batt, pers comm). The geophysical survey did not detect this feature but other possible archaeological features interpreted as pits and ditches were identified by the survey.

The wider area, within which the proposed development site sits, is rich in prehistoric and Roman remains (Fig 2). A number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments surround the site. An Iron Age plateau fort known as The Aubreys lies 2km to the north-west. The High Street Green Roman barrow lies about 3km away to the west, whilst a Roman temple mausoleum lies 2km to the south. To the south-west, approximately 3km away, the remains of a Roman villa were discovered and 5.5km to the south-west Roman buildings including another villa have been found. To the south-east further Roman buildings have been identified.

The Roman town of Verulamium (St Albans) lay 5km to the east and had a network of Roman roads connecting it to the rest of Roman Britain. Watling Street, the Roman road from London (Londinium) to Chester (Deva) is 4km to the east of the site. The final route of Geddesden Row Roman road into Verulamium from the north-west is unknown but the existing part of the road lies only 2.5km from the site. Akerman Street, which also leads to Verulamium is located to the south-west of the site.

Nineteenth and twentieth-century Ordnance Survey maps show a small area of woodland, shown as Pratts Dell on the map of 1883, situated to the south of the site and on the east side of Three Cherry Trees Lane. Within the dell was a triangular depression shown as the Old Clay Pit. The site of the dell is presently occupied by a caravan site. Between 1898 and 1925 Claydales Brickworks was built to the west of Three Cherry Trees Road. A branch of railway line ran from the brickworks to the main line, which is to the north of the site.

#### 4 METHODOLOGY

Initially, seven 50m long trial trenches (Trenches 1 – 7; Fig 1) were excavated using a mechanical digger fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket under continuous archaeological supervision. In all trenches mechanical excavation proceeded as far as the surface of the natural substrate.

Additional trenches (the north and south extensions to Trench 4 and Trenches 8 -13; Figs 3 and 4) were excavated in order to further clarify the extent and character of the archaeology. They ranged in length from between 3.5m to 34m. The positions were discussed and agreed with the Historic Environment Advisor of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC).

The trenches were related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid by GPS survey. Archaeological information was recorded on pro-forma sheets, with a unique context number being allocated to each distinct deposit and feature. A 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. The site code is HSP08. The archive will be deposited with the Luton museum under the archive number DACT: 2642.

All works were carried out according to the IFA Code of Conduct and *Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Evaluation* (IFA 2001), and all procedures complied with the Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions and Northamptonshire Archaeology Health and Safety at Work Guidelines.

## 5 EVALUATION RESULTS

The same natural substrate was encountered in all trenches. This consisted of mid orange-brown silty clay with patches of medium to large flint nodules encountered at a depth of 0.35m. No subsoil was identified anywhere on the site. All trenches were overlain by dark brown silty clay topsoil, measuring up to 0.35m thick.

Trenches 1 – 4, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 13 contained archaeological features and are described below. There were no archaeological features present in Trenches 5 – 7 and 10.

### **Trench 1**

Trench 1 was 40m long, aligned north-west to south-east (Figs 1 and 3, Plate 2). Two gullies, a ditch and part of a large pit were present. All contained Roman pottery and tile.

Ditch [108] (Figs 3 and 6, section 11 Plate 4) aligned north-east to south-west, was 1.30m wide by 0.60m deep, with a V-shaped profile and flat base. The fill (107) consisted of dark yellow-grey mottled silty clay containing Roman pottery dating to the later 1st century AD and pieces of charcoal. A tipline of compacted natural flint nodules was present on the western edge of the ditch and may indicate the existence of a bank.

A pit or the terminal of a ditch [110] on the south side of the trench was 1.10m wide and 0.12m deep, with a shallow U-shaped profile. Its fill (109) consisted of yellow-grey mottled silty clay with dense charcoal, Roman pottery of the later 1st century, fired clay and burnt flint. Cremated human remains (cremation 8) were recovered from a bulk soil sample (sample 8) taken from the fill (see section 7).

Gully [104] (Fig 3, Plate 3), aligned north-west to south-east, was 0.55m wide and 0.20m deep, with a steep side U-shaped profile. Its fill (103) was light grey silty clay with and flint nodules. Roman pottery dated to the 2nd century AD was recovered.

Pit [106] (Figs 3 and 6, section 2), was more than 4.00m wide and 0.80m deep, with a wide U-shaped profile; it was not fully excavated for safety reasons concerning its depth. Its lower fill (112) consisted of mid grey silty clay with pottery dating to the late 1st to 2nd century AD, animal bone, lumps of fired clay and charcoal, and was 0.50m thick. It was overlain by a layer of re-deposited natural (111), mid orange brown silty clay with flint nodules, 0.14m thick. The upper fill (105) was mid grey-brown silty clay, 0.30m thick, which contained Roman pottery of the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, bone and tile fragments.

Cremated human remains (cremation 7) were recovered from a bulk soil sample (sample 1) taken from the fill (see section 7).

### **Trench 2**

Aligned north-west to south-east, Trench 2 (Figs 1 and 3) measured 50m long. It contained three ditches.

Ditch [207] (Figs 3 and 6, section 6), aligned east-west, was 1.50m wide by 0.65m deep with a V-shaped profile. The primary fill (206) was a dark orange-grey silty clay, 0.45m thick, containing frequent sherds of pottery, including a large sherd on the base of the ditch. The pottery is dated to the 1st century AD and possibly pre-conquest. The upper fill (205) was grey-orange silty clay with flint nodules, 0.20m thick, and a residual Middle Iron Age sherd was recovered.

The terminal of a small gully [204] (Figs 3 and 6, section 7), parallel to ditch [207] was 0.70m wide by 0.21m deep with a U-shaped profile. Fill (203) consisted of mid orange-brown silty clay with flint and charcoal flecks. There were no finds present.

Two gullies [209] and [211], also on the same alignment, were 0.50m wide but were not excavated. They were both filled with mid orange-brown silty clay. A small rim sherd of possible 2nd century date was recovered from cleaning over gully [209].

Part of a feature [213] exposed at the far north-western end of the trench may have been ditch [108] seen in Trench 1, as it is on the similar alignment.

### **Trench 3**

Aligned north-east to south-west, Trench 3 (Figs 1 and 3) was 50m long. It contained three ditches, a ditch terminal, a gully and a small pit.

Ditch [306], aligned north-west to south-east, and measured 1.20m wide by 0.46m deep with a U-shaped profile. Its fill (305) consisted of dark grey clay with flint nodules. Pottery, possibly indicating a late 1st century date, and tile fragments were recovered from the fill. It was cut by ditch [308] which on a similar alignment, 1.72m wide by 0.16m deep, with shallow sides and a flat base. The fill (307) was similar to fill (305). To the west of these features the ditch terminal [304] was 0.80m wide by 0.23m deep. It was filled with a dark brown silty clay frequent flint nodules (303).

Ditch [311], aligned north-south, was 1.20m wide by 0.58m deep with a V-shaped profile. The lower fill (310) consisted of dark orange brown mottled silty clay with frequent charcoal and was 0.34m thick. The upper fill (309) was dark grey silty clay with frequent flints and 0.24m thick.

A small pit [313] was 1.00m long by 0.35m wide and filled with light yellow brown silty clay (312). A small gully [315], parallel to ditch [311], was 0.45m wide, but was not excavated. Its fill (314) was similar to that of pit [313].

#### **Trench 4**

Trench 4 (Figs 1 and 3) was a cross-shaped trench, which had been extended to explore the extent of a small cremation cemetery. There were three ditches, four gullies, five pits, two possible postholes and six cremations. The cremations appeared to be set within a ditched enclosure. The three ditches contained pottery which indicated that they might be Middle Iron age in date, whilst the cremations contained Romano-British pottery of both pre-and post-conquest date, possibly indicating a continuity of use for the site.

Ditch [422], aligned north-east to south-west, was not excavated. The fill (421) consisted of grey brown silty clay and contained charcoal and sherds of Middle Iron Age pottery. It was cut by gully [414] on the same alignment, 0.80m wide, with a fill (413) consisting of dark grey brown silty clay with flint nodules and charcoal.

Cremated bone was present within five shallow pits; [404], [408], [410], [412] and [418] and the fill of gully [414]. In pit [404] cremation 1 was contained within a small pottery jar, which had been truncated by ploughing. Cremations 2, 3 and 4 were deposited in shallow pits, [408], [410] and [412] respectively. Recovered from cremation 3 (409) were 14 iron nails together with pieces of charcoal, which may indicate that this cremation was in a wooden box and perhaps similar to that described in cremation 6 below. This cremation was only partly recovered as the rest was outside the limit of the trench., Cremation 5 was deposited within the fill of gully [414].

Cremation 6 was buried in a sub-rectangular pit [418], which measured 1.15m long, 1.00m wide and 0.08m deep (Figs 3 and 5), possibly within a wooden box. There were five pieces of burnt wood, four of which appeared to be parts of small 'planks', together with 19 iron nails in two distinct rows. The cremation was accompanied by a small pottery vessel (truncated) and a ceramic bead (see 6.6), which because of its close proximity to the cremated bone could have been a bead for the closure of a cloth or hide bag which held the bone. The pottery vessel was fine ware dated to the mid to late 1st century AD.



The cremations were concentrated in an area which may have been partially enclosed by gully [406] which was aligned north-west to south-east in Trench 4 and continued eastwards across the southern extension trench and may be the same as feature [432] which was observed at the east end of Trench 4. The gully measured approximately 0.50m wide by 0.15m deep, and its fill (405) consisted of dark grey silty clay with flint nodules and pieces of charcoal. To the north of the concentration of cremations was gully [414], aligned north-east to south-west, 0.50m wide and filled with similar grey clay (413) to that of gullies [406] and [432]. This may represent the northern limit of the cremation cemetery.

Other features at the north end of the northern extension were two gullies [424] and [426], both about 0.70m wide which were not excavated. Fills (423) and (425) consisted of mid grey-brown silty clay with flint nodules. There were no finds present.

Ditch [420], aligned north-east to south-west, was 1.80m wide and cut gully [424]. Fill (419) was mid grey-brown silty clay with flint nodules and charcoal and contained sherds of possible Middle Iron Age pottery.

Ditch [416] was aligned north-east to south-west and was 0.80m wide by 0.26m deep, with a deep U-shaped profile. Fill (415) consisted of light orange-grey silty clay with flint nodules and contained sherds of possible middle Iron Age pottery. To the south of the ditch were two possible postholes [428] and [430], measuring 0.40m wide, they were not excavated. Fills (427) and (429) were similar to that of ditch [416]. There were no finds present.

### **Trench 8**

Trench 8 (Figs 1 and 4) measured 50m long and was aligned east to west. It contained two ditches and two gullies.

Ditch [810] (Plate 5) was 1.50m wide by 0.25m deep and aligned east-west. It had shallow U-shaped sides with a flat base. Its fill (809) consisted of dark brown silty clay containing Roman pottery, charcoal flecks and flint nodules, which were concentrated on the west side. The fill was cut by ditch [808] which was 1.05m wide and 0.40m deep, aligned north-west to south-east, with a steep sided V-shaped profile. Its fill (807) was dark grey-brown silty clay, containing Roman pottery, pieces of charcoal and large flint nodules which appeared to have tipped back into the ditch from the west edge.

The terminal of gully [806] was aligned east-west and 0.52m wide. Its fill (805) consisted of dark grey-brown silty clay which contained Roman pottery, tile and a lump of Opus Signinum. It was not excavated. Gully [804] was aligned north-west to south-east and measured 0.68m wide. Its fill (803) was dark grey brown silty clay with Roman pottery, charcoal pieces of charcaol and flint nodules and was not excavated.

### **Trench 9**

Measuring 14m and aligned north-west to south-east, Trench 9 (Figs 1 and 3) contained part of a large pit [904], similar to [106] in Trench 1. It appeared to have a diameter of 3.90m but may be larger, as indicated on the geophysical survey plot (Smith and Butler 2008). Pottery sherds of the late 1st to 2nd century AD were retrieved from the fill.

### **Trench 11**

Trench 11 (Figs 1 and 3) measured 3.5m long and was aligned north-west to south-east. It was excavated close to Trench 1 to further investigate the extent of feature [106], a large pit, measuring c4m in diameter which was deeper than the 0.80m excavated, as it was not bottomed due to safety concerns.

Trench 11 revealed the eastern edge of the pit which was c 4m in diameter. It had a similar fill to (105) in Trench 1. This pit corresponds to one shown on the geophysical survey (Smith and Butler 2008).

### **Trench 12**

Trench 12 (Figs 1 and 3) measured 9m long and was aligned north-west to south-east. Two features were present, a ditch and a small pit.

Ditch [1204], which was 1.7m at its widest, was the same ditch as [108] in Trench 1. An assemblage of pottery indicating a mid to later 1st century date was recovered from the fill. The second feature was a small pit [1206] 0.70m in diameter; its fill (1205) consisted of mid orange-brown silty clay with flint nodules and contained fragments of ceramic roof tile.

### **Trench 13**

Measuring 12m long and aligned north-west to south-east, Trench 13 (Figs 1 and 3, Plate 6) contained ditch [1304], 1.50m wide and the same as ditch [108] in Trench 1. Pottery of the 2nd century AD was recovered from the fill.

## 6 THE FINDS

### 6.1 The flint by Andy Chapman

A total of 11 pieces of flint was recovered, including two pieces of irregular burnt flint. Eight of the pieces are irregular cortical flakes that show no sign of having been struck from prepared cores, and none show any sign of having been retouched or utilised. A single cortical flake, 45mm long, has been struck from a prepared core which had previously had small blade-like flake removals. Part of one edge has been retouched. This piece is likely to be of Neolithic/early Bronze Age date.

### 6.2 The Roman pottery by Isobel Thompson

A small assemblage of pottery was recovered from the trial trench evaluation and can be grouped roughly as follows:

- Middle Iron Age: (205), (415), (419), (421)
- Probably pre-Boudiccan (Late Iron Age – early Roman): (206), (404), (1203)?
- Later 1st century (and early 2nd): (107), (109), (112), (212), (305), (417), (803), (805), (807), (809), (903)
- 2nd century: (103), (105), (209), (1303)

These rough categories are, of course, not necessarily the date of the features themselves, as these are refuse deposits.

#### *Fabrics:*

The Middle Iron Age (MIA) is represented only by small body sherds, with no indication of form. But the fabric, a black, fine, sandy type often with slightly paler surfaces, is similar to that found at Mayne Avenue, St Albans and Manor Estate, Apsley (both close to Spencer's Park), as well as other sites in southern Hertfordshire. None of them are published, and Middle Iron Age pottery is still very scarce in the county. But it is beginning to be recognised more frequently. Interestingly, those contexts containing this fabric at Spencer's Park do not include any later pottery.

The late Iron Age, grog-tempered wares include several versions of the ubiquitous Late Iron Age fabric in Hertfordshire. The standard fabric continued to be made until the Flavian period, gradually modified, and was still used for certain forms (storage jars, coarse bead rim jars) into the 2nd century.

- *Standard* grey-brown core with some pink or brown beneath grey-brown surfaces, tooled or burnished; includes the plain jar base in fill (403) of pit [404], cremation 1; a tall narrow-necked cordoned jar, form B3-8, which is a common form in Herts and is often post-conquest, fill (206) of ditch [207]; another one, possibly also this form and with tooled zig-zag decoration fill (1203); rilled jars, form C7-1 (105, 107, 206); fragmentary everted cup rims (107, 206); an everted-rim jar, possibly form B1-2, with a footring (107); at least one very large storage jar with a flaring rim (which is often post-conquest) in (112) and a big storage jar with the usual combed decoration in (206). The lumpy fragment of a C5-1 lid-seated jar in (112) is probably also later. These are the usual domestic forms of the period: storage jars, rilled jars, lid-seated jars, and at least three finer cordoned jars. None of them is unusual.
- '*TR4*', a fine version of ordinary grog using carefully controlled firing to produce a brown grog, with evenly-coloured red surfaces, for making copies of imported vessels; often pre-conquest, but not always. Here represented by a G5-5 butt-beaker with a trace of rouletting, in (206).
- A *harder-fired, brittle version* with untooled matt surfaces and often plain shaping, without the characteristic cordons; this is post-conquest and usually found in post-Boudiccan contexts. Here represented by an everted-rim bowl, form D1-1, and flat jar bases, all in (107); everted jar rims in (109, 803); storage jar (109); B3-1 cordoned jar rim (112); rilled jar (803); bead-rim jar form C1-2 (807). The range of forms is similar to that of the standard grog, but slightly narrower and less interesting.
- *Grog and sand*: post-conquest, hard and very gritty. Single sherds, in (305, 805).
- *Grog and shell*: often missed, as the shell leaches out, and the vessel breaks easily into worn plain body sherds. A variation which can be late 1st century. Three sherds, in (107).

**Shell-tempered:** any Late Iron Age-early Roman assemblage of any size is likely to have a few shelly sherds, although they often go unrecognised. Single sherds occur here in (105, 903). Often used in Hertfordshire for lid-seated jars, forms are here represented by an interesting rim sherd in (103), from what appears to be a flanged bowl. Similar flanged bowls are made in shell in the Bedfordshire-Buckinghamshire area; in Buckinghamshire these can be 1st century but are often 2nd century or even later (Marney 1989, figs 25-6). Flanged bowls are, of course, common during this period in the Verulamium area, but it is not clear what proportions of these are made in shelly fabrics.

**Roman:** note the presence of Samian, two different kinds of amphora, and various other fine wares, as well as Ver Region Fabric. Although not a great many recognisable forms are represented, parallels are, as might be expected, with Verulamium. The latest may be the mortarium rim in (105), which ought to be AD 150-200 (Frere 1983, fig 136).

*Table 1: Pottery index*

<b>Fill/cut feature</b>	<b>Fabrics, types, condition</b>	<b>Approximate date of deposit</b>
103/104 gully	<p>The sherds are generally small, and possibly represent six vessels</p> <p><i>Samian:</i> Drag 37 bowl, 6 sherds, rim and decoration in panels; ?Antonine</p> <p>2 RB everted rims, sandy fabrics 1 plate or bowl rim sherd, Romano-British sandy Flanged rim sherd, shelly, possibly Bedfordshire-Buckinghamshire; 6 sherds; 1st-2nd century Jug base, salmon pink, RB sandy Also 6 plain body sherds, at least some of which may belong to the above</p>	2nd century AD
105/106 pit	<p>Sherds are small and abraded, with a wide range of vessels represented</p> <p><i>Samian:</i> Drag 33a, body and rim, very abraded; more likely 1st than 2nd century; Drag 18 rim sherd, 1st century plate; also 4 assorted body sherds</p> <p>Mortarium rim, 3 sherds, very abraded; form is AD 150-200</p> <p>Plate rim, 1 sherd, RB sandy, ?2nd century 4 assorted RB sandy everted rims, 1 sherd each 1 RB sandy bead rim, 1 sherd, ?2nd century 1 large colour-coat sherd, with barbotine dots 1 probably shelly sherd 2 sherds RB grey with silver slip, early 2nd cent 3 assorted white sandy sherds, one a ?VRF jug sherd Several assorted RB grey wares 3 grog-tempered sherds from a rilled jar, 1st century At least 6 plain grog-tempered sherds, 1st century 1 grog sherd with cordon and tooled decoration, 1st century</p>	1st and 2nd century, up to AD 200
107/108 ditch	<p>Fairly consistent group; largely late grog (later 1st century) and a little RB</p> <p><i>Grog-tempered:</i> D1-1 bowl, 9 sherds plus others which may belong; a common Hertfordshire form 2 rilled jars, several sherds each 2 everted rim jars, 1 in a late version of grog, and a sherd of another Foot-ring base, part of body, and rim sherd of a tall curving jar with cordon and everted rim, possibly pre-conquest 3 other flat jar bases, at least 1 in a brittle matt version of grog which can be Flavian About 20 plain body sherds (no storage jar sherds)</p> <p>3 sherds of grog and shell</p> <p>RB: everted rim sherd in grey; a lid rim fragment, in pink sandy; and 7 very small plain sherds Very large thick storage jar base, nearly all present but broken</p>	Later 1st century AD
109/110 ditch terminus/pit	<p>Small abraded sherds,</p> <p>?Amphora, 3 joining, abraded sherds from neck &amp; shoulder, thin soft fabric</p> <p><i>Grog-tempered:</i></p>	Later 1st century AD

Fill/cut feature	Fabrics, types, condition	Approximate date of deposit
	5 rim sherds and several neck sherds from an everted rim jar, post-conquest grog, and another similar rim sherd from a different vessel Storage jar base, hard fired Several small plain body sherds  1 pale orange RB sherd	
112/106 pit	Several large unabraded sherds <i>Grog-tempered:</i> Storage jar rim, C6-1, flaring shape, combing Very large storage jar base, which may belong to the rim. Lid-seated jar rim, C5-1 Multi-cordoned jar rim, B3-1, 5 joining sherds in brittle later grog 3 sherds with a cordon, and tooled zig-zag decoration on offset neck, in brittle late grog Everted rim in similar fabric 13 assorted plain body sherds  RB: ?Highgate C rim, thin grey with silver wash, and vertical lines painted below shallow cordon; probably earlier 2nd century 2 everted rims in grey ware Small piece tile 8 body sherds white ware, probably 2 pots, ?jugs	Late 1st-early 2nd century AD
205/207 ditch	1 sherd, probably Middle Iron Age	Middle Iron Age?
206/207 ditch	A number of vessels are represented. <i>Grog-tempered:</i> B3-8 everted rim tall cordoned jar, several sherds G5-5 rouletted butt beaker in TR4, ie deliberate imitation of terra rubra; 26 small sherds 1 sherd from a small everted rim, good soft burnished grog 1 very large C6-1 storage jar sherd, combed, and at least 2 other combed sherds 1 sherd from near the base of a coarse rilled jar, C7-1 1 neck sherd, very abraded, from a B2 form Assorted plain body sherds, mostly from one pot	1st century; possibly pre-conquest, and ought to be pre-Boudiccan
208/209 ditch/gully	1 small rim sherd from a lid, in RB sandy	?2nd century AD
212/213 ditch	1 abraded grog sherd	?1st century AD
305/306 ditch	4 sherds, all very small and abraded: 1 RB grey ware everted rim 2 abraded red sandy sherds 1 post-conquest grog-and-sand sherd	Late 1st century AD?
403/404 pit	Pottery vessel from cremation 1: large coarse soft (underfired) jar base, grog-tempered, not large but thick; no discernible body form, but may have originally had tooling on outer surface of upper body. The fabric is not post-conquest.	1st century, likely to be pre-Boudiccan
415/416 ditch	2 joining sherds in grey-black HM, look like Middle Iron Age	Middle Iron Age
417/418 pit	1 vessel from cremation 6, RB fine ware, very fragile; thicker base, small rounded jar, ?surfaces gone	Mid-late 1st century AD?
419/420 ditch	7 sherds in grey-black HM, look like Middle Iron Age	Middle Iron Age
421/422 ditch	4 sherds grey-black HM, like the others all small and abraded, Middle Iron Age	Middle Iron Age

Fill/cut feature	Fabrics, types, condition	Approximate date of deposit
803/804 ditch	Very fragmented and abraded: Rim sherd of cream colour-coat fine ware with worn red-brown slip 2 everted rims in late grog with some quartz sand Jar base in late matt grog, with some rilled body sherds (C7-1) Small body sherds which probably belong to the above	Later 1st century AD
805/806 ditch terminus	RB grey ware jar base; 1 RB grey ware body sherd; 1 grog-and-sand sherd (post-43), and 1 small grog sherd	Later 1st century AD
807/808 ditch	Several vessels represented but fragmentary and abraded Amphora: 2 large body sherds, and flakes spalled away from one of them; micaceous, pink-cream  5 joining sherds of a grog-tempered bead-rim jar, C1-2, thick 1 large uncombed storage-jar sherd, grog, C6-1; both these forms can be late 1st century at least  Early RB everted rim sherd, very worn Shallow plate, 3 joining sherds in RB brown sandy Several sherds thin RB grey ware with silver wash	Late 1st century AD
809/810 ditch	6 sherds RB sandy wares	Late 1st-2nd century AD
903/904 ?pit	5 sherds RB sandy ware, and 1 shell-tempered	Late 1st-2nd century AD
1203/1204 ditch	Grog-tempered cordoned and decorated jar, 11 sherds, probably a B3-8 (which can be post-conquest), good native fabric 3 grog-tempered sherds 1 RB grey sherd 13 sherds which appear to be Samian but all the surfaces have been lost	Mid-later 1st century AD
1303/1304 ditch	Reeded-rim bowl in RB thin grey sandy, up to AD 150 2 thin sherds red sandy 1 grey sandy	2nd century AD

### 6.3 The ceramic building material by Pat Chapman

#### *Tile*

There are 46 tile sherds varying in size from fragments to sherds up to 85mm long. They are all abraded. Sherds 35-45mm thick, from contexts (103, 112, 305, 903, 1203), could be a few scattered remnants from floor tiles, or the tiles forming the pillars of a hypocaust system indicated by three flue tile fragments with a broad comb design from context (107). The flue tile and the thicker floor tile are Roman in date. There appears to be a concentration within the features in Trench 1.

The other measurable tiles are 12-13mm thick, from contexts (201, 301, 307 and 901) and two of these, from topsoil (201) and (301), have pegholes 11mm and 12mm in diameter.

The thickness of 12-13mm is unusually thin for a Roman *tegula* roof tile, and none of them have the distinctive curve of an *imbrex* roof tile which are generally thinner. These are more appropriate to the medieval period.

Table2: Quantification of tile

Context/feature	No	Comment
103 / 104	3	1-35mm thick
105 /106	12	fragments
107 /108	6	3-flue
112 /106	2	1-40mm thick
201 /topsoil	2	13mm thick – 1 peghole
301 /topsoil	2	15mm thick – 1 peghole
305 /306	3	2-35mm, 1-45mm thick
307 /308	6	2-12mm thick
805 /806	1	11mm thick
901 /topsoil	1	11mm thick
903 /904	4	1-35mm thick
1203 /1204	1	35mm thick
1205 /1206	3	fragments
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	

#### ***Fired clay***

Thirty-six fragments of fired clay come from two contexts, five from context (105) and 31 from context (109). These are typically orange to brown and quite hard, generally irregular with an occasional smooth surface. One large fragment comes from (805). This is just general debris from occupation.

#### **6.4 Opus signinum** by Pat Chapman

A possible fragment of *opus signinum* came from the fill (805) of gully terminal [806]. It is an irregular piece 35mm thick with one flat surface and one irregular. It is composed of soft pale pink mortar with small calcareous inclusions and finely crushed tile.

#### **6.5 The stone** by Andy Chapman

A small irregular fragment of conglomerate contains rounded pebbles, but angular edges of heavily burnt flint pebbles protrude from the surface, suggesting that the piece had disintegrated following intense heating. It may have come from a quern in Hertfordshire puddingstone.

#### **6.6 Other finds** by Tora Hylton

The excavations produced 26 individual or group recorded finds in four material types, iron (32), glass (2), ceramic (1) and stone (1). The finds were recovered by hand and



during the sieving of soil samples. All the finds were recovered from stratified deposits relating to Roman settlement.

The assemblage comprises many iron nails from two cremation burials. There is one item which may be for personal adornment, and fragments of vessel glass.

### ***Iron***

The assemblage is dominated by nails (32+) either single or in clumps, which were sent for X-ray to help determine their function. These were found within the fills of two cremations (Cremations 1 and 6). Two distinct rows of nails were found in Cremation 6, together with traces of carbonised wood and may represent the presence of a wooden box.

### ***Glass***

There are four fragments of glass, from Trench 1. One fragment from a gully is post-medieval in date and thought to be intrusive; the other three are fragments of blue/green Roman vessel glass from a large pit [106].

### ***Ceramic***

A ceramic bead measuring 23mm through the hole and 25mm across its widest part was recovered from the contents of Cremation 6. The hole was probably made with a 4mm square sectioned stick or nail. The fabric of the bead was similar to pottery found on site and contained a shelly temper and had been fired.

## **7 THE HUMAN CREMATIONS** by Sarah Inskip

Six cremations were excavated, however, only three (Cremations 1, 3 and 4) were processed after consultation with the Historic Environment Advisor (HCC). Cremations 2, 5 and 6 are held in archive and will be processed should further archaeological work be undertaken on site. The three cremations were wet-sieved, dried and sent for specialist analysis. In addition to the further cremated bone was recovered from two bulk soil samples (Cremations 7 and 8) and they were also sent for analysis.

### **Summary**

Five cremated deposits were received at the University of Southampton for osteological reporting. Very little information was available from the bone. Two of these deposits contained identifiable human bone fragments from which the progression of epiphyseal fusion provided a minimum age estimate of 13 to 14 years for both individuals. Cremation 3 appeared to contain a tooth root, but it was unclear as to which tooth this

originated from. The trabecular bone patterning of fragments in Cremation 4 and 7 indicates human bone, but no specific fragments could be identified. The deposition of cremated material in pottery vessels and loose into pits and gullies is not unusual for the Roman period and Spencer's Park falls inline with other contemporaneous sites. Archaeological evidence found with Cremation 1 indicates that it was interred in a pottery jar and was found to contain iron nails (Foard-Colby 2008).

## **Analysis and methodology**

### ***Analysis***

The material was received washed and dried. The total weight of each deposit was recorded to the nearest 1g. The material was then sorted using 10mm, 5mm, 2mm and 1mm sieves and each fraction weighed. The material was sorted into element groups (skull, upper limbs, lower limbs, vertebrae, ribs, pelvis, hands and feet).

To assess for variation in pyre conditions, the colour of each elemental group was noted. The largest fragment in each cremated deposit was measured to the nearest 0.1mm. Identifiable bone fragments were recorded and assessed for information regarding number of individuals, side, age, sex, pathology and non-metric traits.

### ***Methodology***

The high temperatures reached during cremation can cause bone to fragment and warp creating a challenge to the osteologist. Further to this, loss or selective deposition of the cremated material is commonplace and it is not unusual to have multiple or partial individuals. Despite these problems, it is still possible to obtain some information from cremated bone.

Data was collected following the Institute of Field Archaeology's *The Guidelines to the Standards for Recording Human Remains* (Brickley and McKinley 2004) and English Heritage's *Human bones from Archaeological Sites: Guidelines for Producing Assessment Documents and Analytical reports* (Mays *et al* 2004). Tooth roots were examined using Hillson (2002). Epiphyseal closure ages were taken from the relevant pages in Scheuer and Black (2000).

## Results

### *Fragmentation*

The total weight and fragmentation of each cremated deposit is presented in Table 3.

Table 4 presents the weights of skeletal element groups.

*Table 3: Fragmentation levels for the cremated deposits*

cremation no.	feature no.	total weight (g)	weight 10mm (g)	weight 5mm (g)	weight 2mm (g)	weight 1mm (g)	weight < 1mm (g)	maximum fragment size
1	Pit fill (403)	436	158	201	74	<1g	2	33.2mm x 24.8mm
3	Pit fill (409)	2	0	<1	2	0	0	8.9mm x 6.8mm
4	Pit fill (411)	9	0	2	7	0	0	15.0mm x 9.4mm
7	Pit fill (105)	2	2	1	1	0	0	13.6mm x 8.6mm
8	Ditch fill (109)	2	0	0	2	0	0	9.2mm x 6.6mm

*Table 4: Weights of the identified skeletal elements in grams (g)*

cremation no	total weight (g)	unknown	skull	vertebrae	ribs	upper limb	lower limb	unid long bone	pelvis	hands and feet
1	436	255	13	6	3	25	60	68	5	1
3	2	2	<1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	9	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	2	1.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.5

Studies based on cremated human skeletal material from modern crematoria estimate an average weight of 1650g for an adult cremation with a range of weight of 1000g – 2400g (McKinley 1997:68). Therefore none of the cremated deposits here represent a complete adult skeleton. Cremation 1 contained the most skeletal material and 42% could be identified to elemental group. It was noted that there was little skull (only 7.2% of the identified material) compared to other cremations (Inskip n.d., Inskip and Lally n.d.). This is unusual as the large quantity of skeletal landmarks on the skull usually results in its overrepresentation (McKinley 2004). Additionally just a few fragments of trabecular bone were identified and this possibly the result of fragmentation and post-mortem decay. It was noted from Romano-British material from West Sussex that, on excavation, trabecular bone could crumble leaving no trace of the bone (McKinley 1997:57). Unfortunately, Cremation 1 has been subject to truncation and this may have lead to loss of and greater fragmentation of the skeletal material. For this reason the fragmentation of

the deposit and skeletal element representation cannot be speculated upon. No information on sex or pathology was available for any of the cremated deposits. No non-metric traits were recorded.

#### ***Cremation 1***

Identifiable elements in Cremation 1 include, femur shaft fragments, linea aspera, distal joint surface. Humeral distal joint surface. Humerus shaft fragments, ulna and radius shaft fragments. Rib fragments. Mandible, 2 tooth roots. Vault fragments. Fibula shaft fragments, Axis body and dens. Various fragments of articular surface of vertebra. Proximal tibia joint surface. Proximal hand phalange. Examination of the bone fragments indicate only a single individual.

The normal bony indicators of age have been destroyed in the cremation process or have become separated from the excavated material. Fortunately, some information on age was obtainable by observing the progression of epiphyseal fusion. The youngest possible age is presented. As the bones of female individuals generally fuse earlier than males, it is the youngest female estimate that is provided. The size and thickness of the bone indicates young adult remains. The deposit contained a number of epiphyses that could be analysed for age estimates. The axis (C2) was completely fused suggesting a minimum age of 12 years. A fused distal humerus indicates an age of approximately 13 years. A proximal hand phalange fused at the proximal joint surface indicates a minimum age of 14 years.

#### ***Cremation 3***

The trabecular bone pattern suggests that the material is human but with such a limited quantity of small fragmented material it is difficult to be certain.

#### ***Cremation 4***

The trabecular bone pattern suggests that the material is human but with such a limited quantity of small fragmented material it is difficult to be certain.

#### ***Cremation 7***

The trabecular bone pattern suggests that the material is human but with such a limited quantity of small fragmented material it is difficult to be certain. Particularly as the sample contained a cremated animal carpal/tarsal.

#### ***Cremation 8***

The elements included in cremation 8 were a proximal foot phalange and various fragments of long bone. The foot phalange is fused at the earliest by 13 years. The epiphysis is thick and well defined and the size of the epiphysis suggests an individual

close to this age.

### ***Efficiency of the cremations***

The colour of bone reflects the oxidation and temperature of the pyre (McKinley 2004). White/cream reflects temperatures above 645 °C. Grey colouration indicates temperatures from 440 to 645 °C and temperatures of 360 - 440°C produce black and brown fragments (Mays 1998:217). All the fragments in Cremations 1, 3, 4 and 7, were white and cream in colour. In particular, within Cremation 1, the endocranial and exocranial skull surfaces and the long bone medullary cavities were white/cream. This white/buff colouration is indicative of full oxidation of the bone (McKinley 1997) and the uniformity in colour suggests consistent pyre conditions across the cremation. Cremation 8 had slightly more colour variation with a few fragments of grey and black material. This suggests a lower temperature than the other four deposits. Due to the limited quantity of the material in Cremations 3, 4, 7 and 8, it is not reasonable to comment further on the consistency of cremations.

### **Conclusions**

Cremation 1 and 8 definitely contain human remains, one adult (Cremation 1) and one adolescent (Cremation 8). Cremation 3 appears to contain a tooth root, which is more than likely to be human. Cremation 8 contains an animal bone (carpel/tarsal) and possibly fragments of human bone. The distribution and pattern of the trabecular bone in Cremations 3, 4, and 7 also indicate human bone; however it is not possible to rule out the presence of animal bone.

### **Discussion**

There is very little that can be said about the individuals that have been cremated. As a result, no further work is recommended on the remains. However a brief amount can be said regarding the burials. Cremation was popular in the Roman period up to the second century AD with burial becoming more widely adopted after this time (Jupp and Gittings 1999). It is not uncommon when dealing with remains from the Roman period to find partial cremations in pits and gullies, similar examples are found at Snettisham, Norfolk (Flitcroft 2001) and Watling Street, London (Mackinder 2000). It is, however, difficult to comment on the reason for partial burials within pits and ditches and ritual or religion may play a role.

It is normal for the cremated remains to be placed into pottery or organic containers after cremation and then buried (Jupp and Gittings 1999). Examples of cremated burials found in pottery vessels include a number of individuals at Watling Street, London (Mackinder 2000) and Beddington, Surrey (Howell 2005). The position of the burials on the periphery of a settlement is in line with Roman belief, where individuals were buried outside of towns and settlements, often along the roadside (Jupp and Gittings 1999).

The colour distribution through out the remains in Cremation 1 is white/buff. As mentioned above, this is indicative of high temperatures and full oxidation of the bone. This is in accordance with most Roman cremated burials (examples include Watling Street, London (Mackinder 2000), Westhampnett (Fitzpatrick 1997)) and indeed most cremated bone deposits in general (McKinley 2000). Accordingly, the burials found at Spencer's Park are not unusual for the location or the Romano-British period.

## **8 THE ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE**

### **8.1 The animal bone** by Karen Deighton

#### *Animal bone*

A total of 301g of animal bone was collected by hand from six contexts during the course of trial trenching. A further 23g was collected from sieved residues (mesh sizes 500microns, 1mm and 3.5mm).

Preservation was extremely poor with heavy fragmentation and abrasion. The condition of the material is likely to be due to the local soil conditions. The bone also exhibited brown mottling which is often consistent with temporary waterlogging. Only two taxa could be identified; Cattle (Bos) and dog (Canid). Cattle were represented by 4 maxillary tooth fragments, a mandible fragment of a young adult and a splinter from the shaft of a femur. Dog was represented by a single carnassial tooth fragment.

The potential for further analysis is severely limited by the low level of preservation and the scarcity of material, which in turn is possibly due to unfavourable soil conditions.

## 8.2 The charred plant remains by Wallis Lord-Hart

Four bulk soil samples were taken in order to identify macroscopic plant remains.

*Table 5: Samples per context*

Sample	1	2	8	9
Context	105	310	109	807
Feature	106	311	110	808
Volume	40	20	40	20
Feature	pit	ditch	ditch	ditch

### *Method*

All samples were processed by flotation with a 1mm sieve used for the residue in a modified siraf tank, and then agitated in order to assist in separation. The floating fraction (float) was collected into a 500 micron mesh. This fraction was then dried and scanned using a binocular microscope with a magnification of up to x 20.

### *Results*

Few seeds were recovered from these samples, and those that were recovered were charred and fragmentary. What was recovered mostly came from sample 9. The types of seeds recovered from the site were unidentifiable cereal grains, spelt glume bases, and a few seeds of the *fabaceae* (pea) family.

### *Discussion*

The small number of seeds recovered from this site makes interpretation difficult. The presence of cereal grains, chaff and weed seeds are likely to have been brought on site with the grain as a crop contaminant.

## 9 DISCUSSION

The trial trenching confirmed the presence of archaeological features identified by the geophysical survey. It also demonstrated that there were further features that had not been detected. The lack of archaeological features in Trenches 5 – 7 suggests that activity was concentrated on the plateau in the north-west of the site.

Absence of subsoil and the shallowness of the topsoil has resulted in the truncation of small features such as the cremations. However, there are sufficient remains surviving for further exploration of the area, as seen in the recovery of finds from the cremation burials.

The cluster of cremations on the north-eastern side of the site may be enclosed by a small gully, identified to the north and south, which may define a small cremation cemetery. Analysis of the excavated cremated bone suggests that all of the cremations were probably human, however the amount of bone recovered was small in some cases. The possibility of at least two of the cremations being buried within wooden boxes, from the evidence of the numerous nails and charred wood, suggests that the cremated individuals may have had some social status. Further cremated bone was recovered from two bulk samples taken from features in Trench 1 and may represent a deliberate deposition within the features or a random burial. It is unclear how the two areas from which the cremated bone was recovered are related.

Other ditches and gullies recovered during the evaluation may represent field boundaries or enclosures associated with nearby settlement. Finds recovered from these features indicate activity at the site dates from the middle Iron Age onwards but with the majority of features probably dating to the 1st – 2nd centuries AD. Both pre-conquest and post-conquest pottery was present and included table and kitchen wares together with roof, hypocaust and box flue tiles. These latter finds were most prevalent in the area of Trench 1 in the far north-west of the site and this would appear to indicate that Roman stone buildings were probably located in the vicinity.



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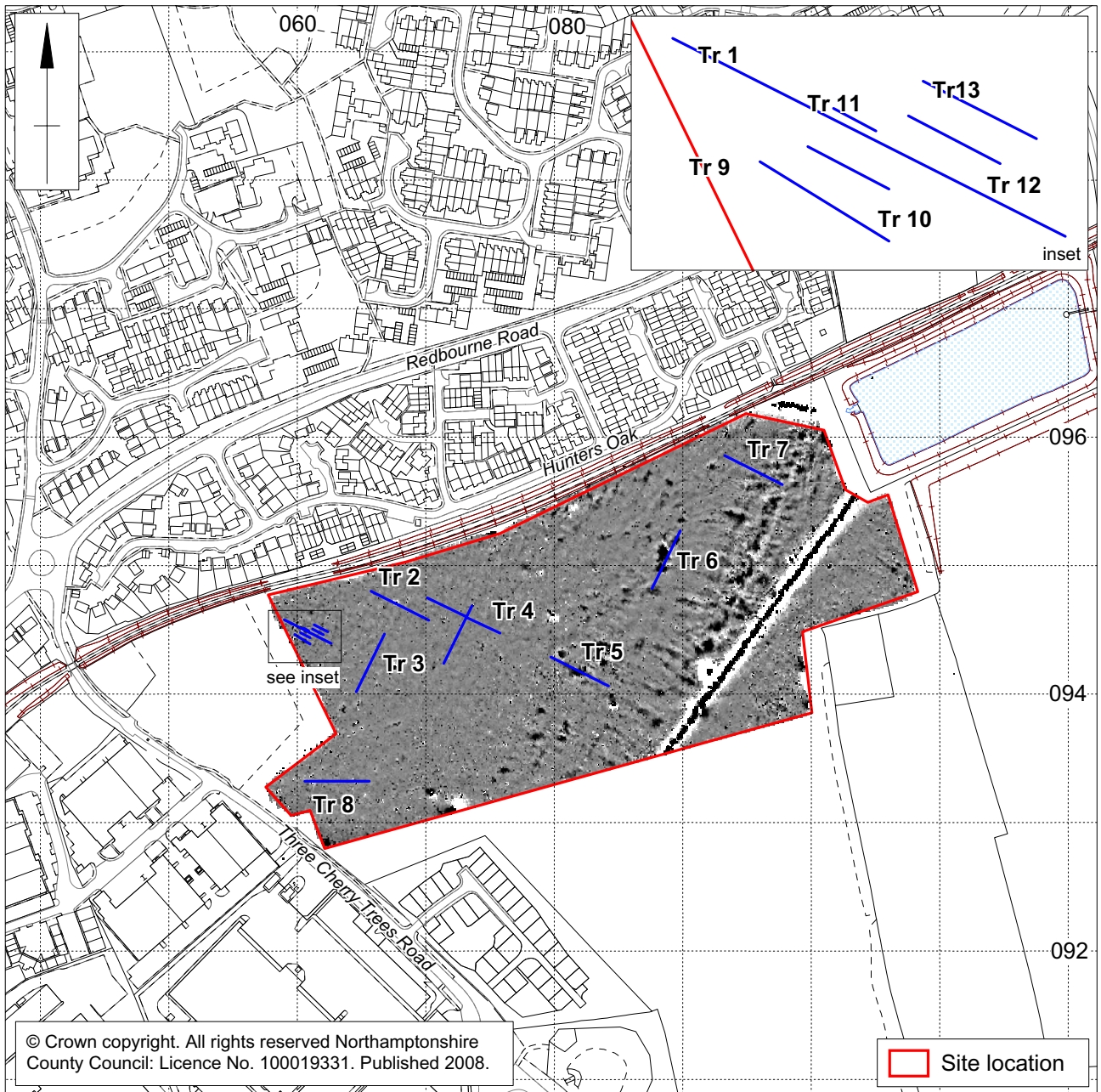
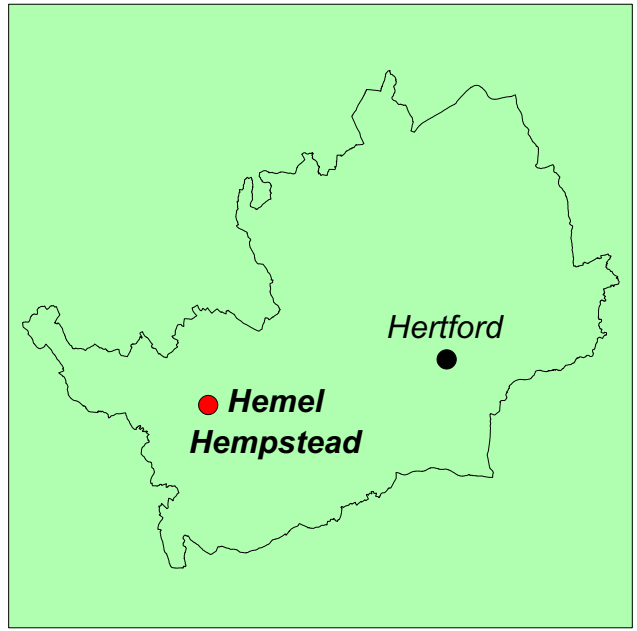
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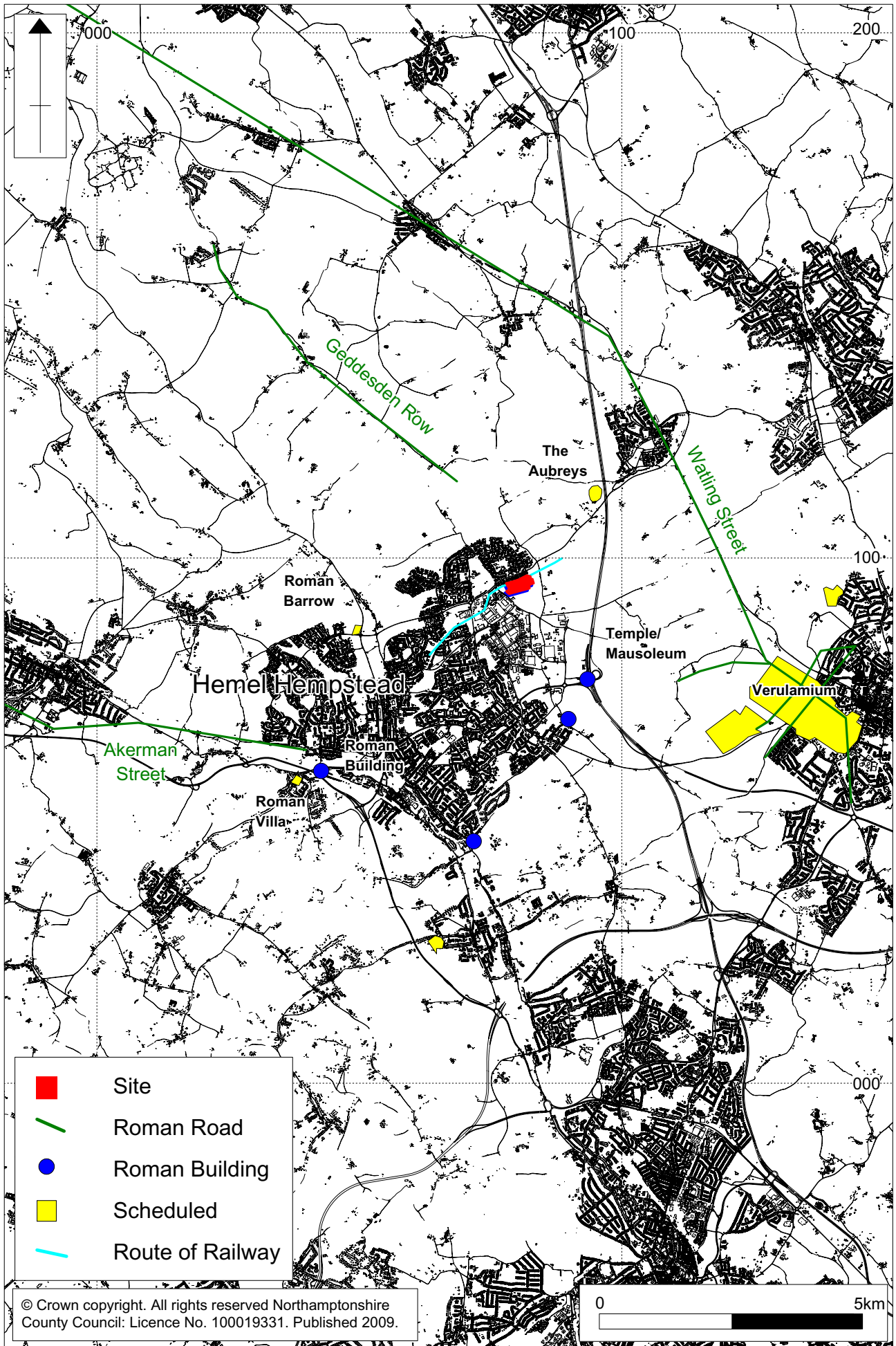
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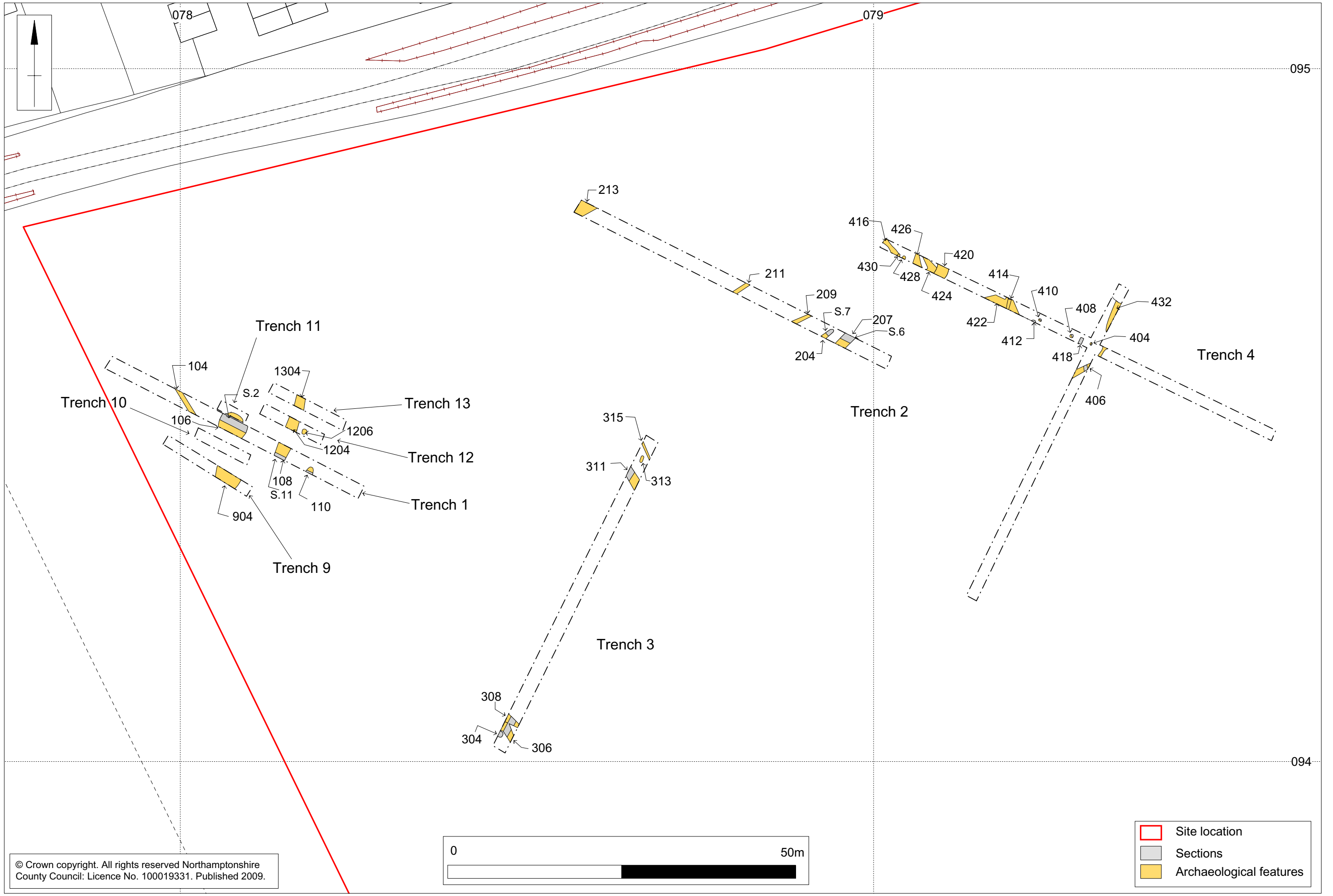
Scale 1:5000

Site location Fig 1



1:50000

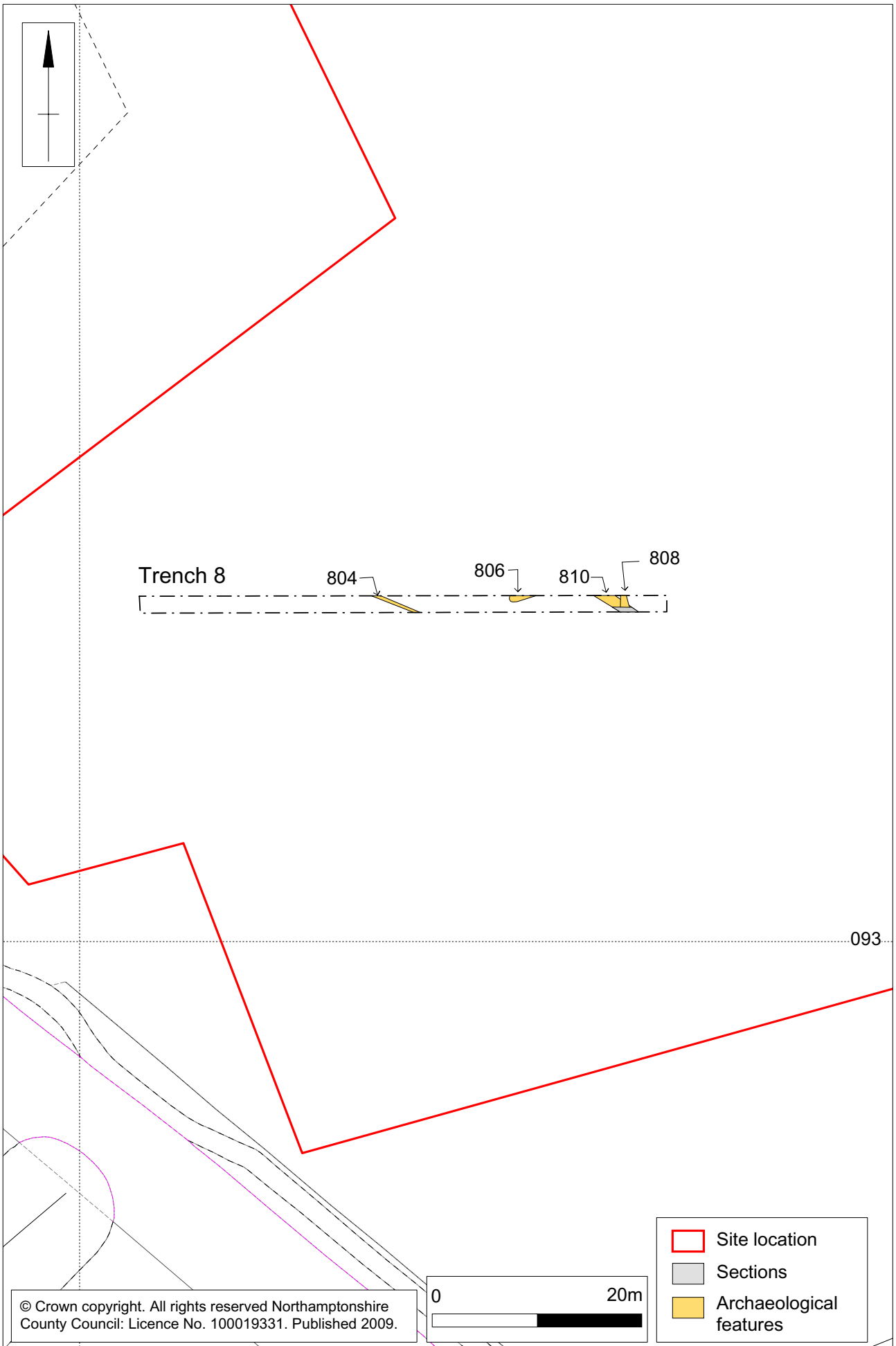
Historic Environment Record Fig 2



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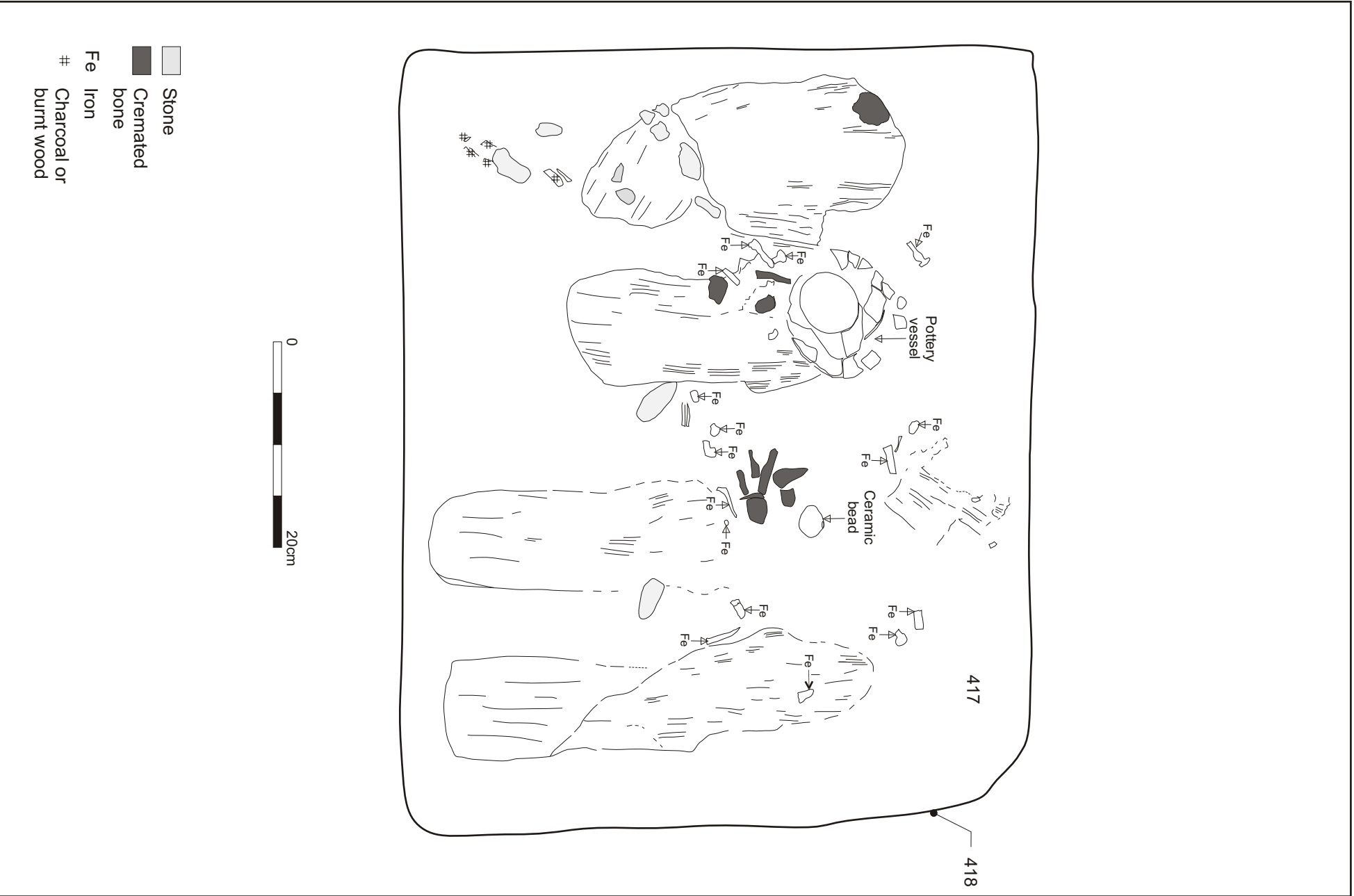
Scale 1:500

The northern trenches Fig 3



Scale 1:500

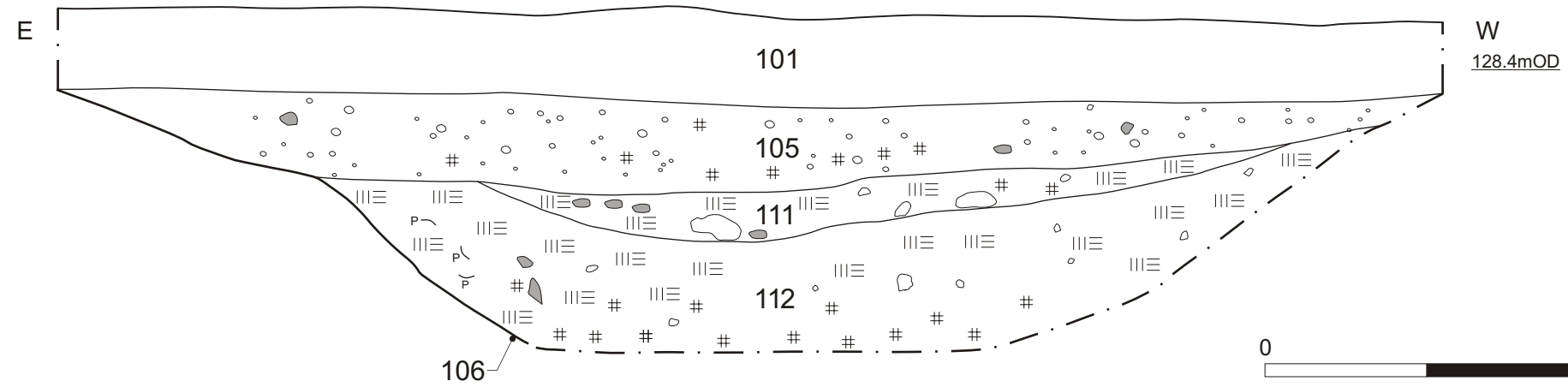
Trench 8 Fig 4



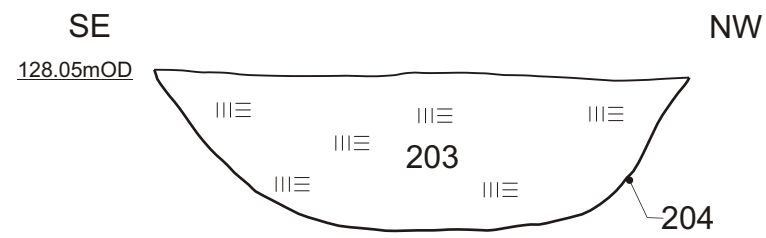
Plan of remains of wooden box, cremation 6 Fig 5



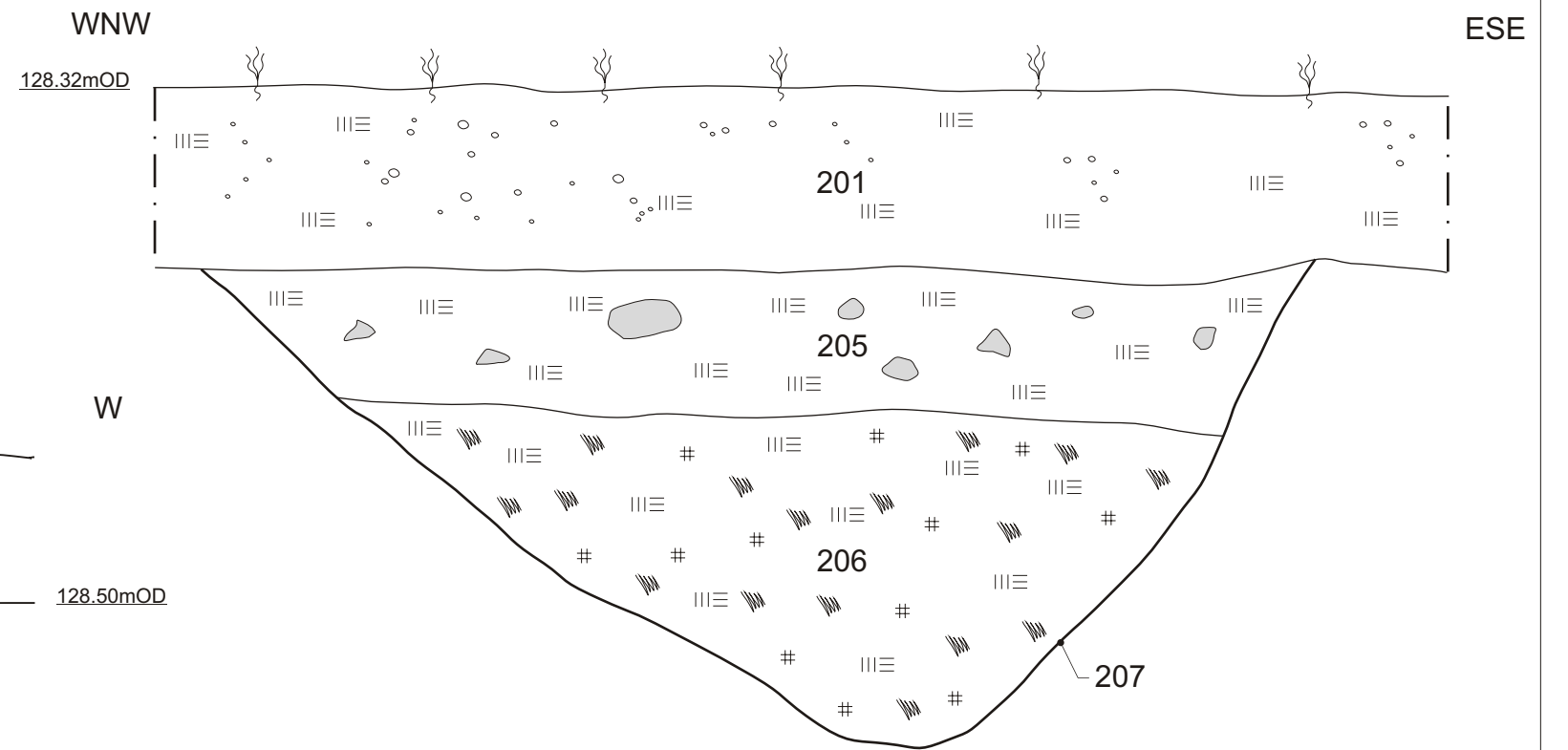
**Section 2**



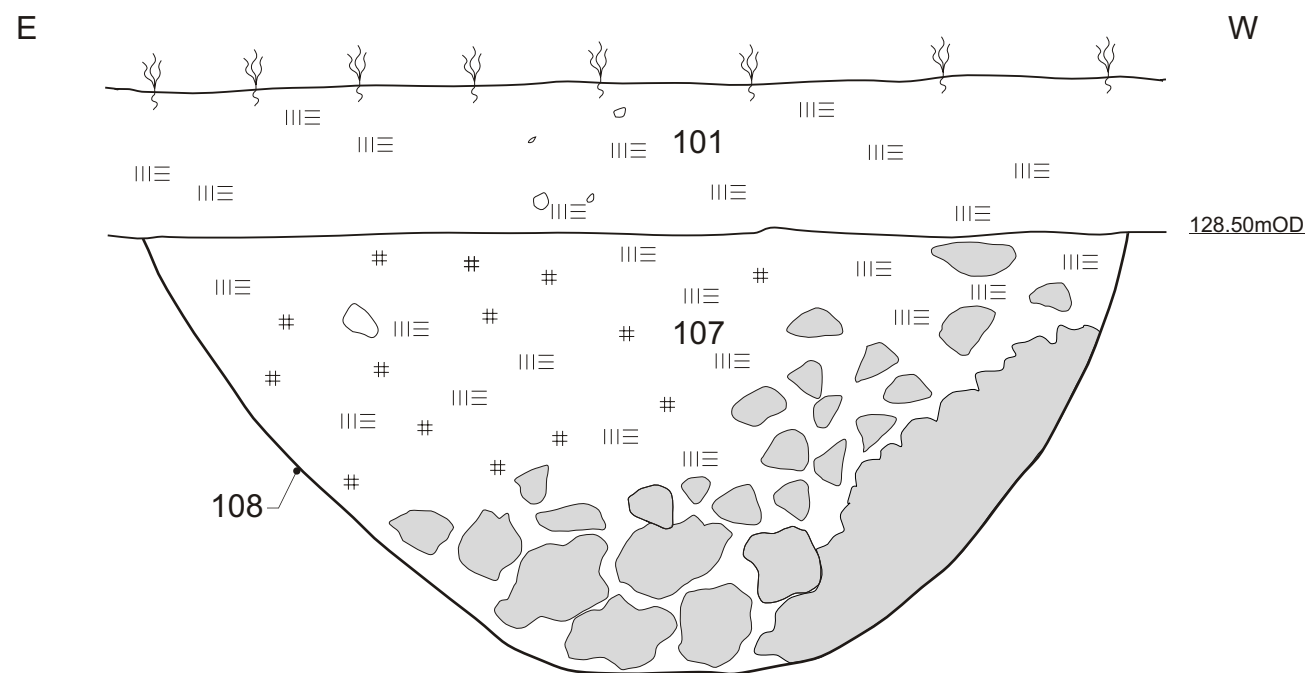
**Section 7**



**Section 6**



**Section 11**



- ||| Clay
- # Charcoal
- ∩ P Pot
- Flint
- ▨ Iron pan



Sections 2,6,7 and 11 Fig 6





Plate 1: Ground rising to the plateau in the north-west corner of the site,  
looking south-west



Plate 2: Trench 1, looking north-west





Plate 3: Trench 1, gully [104], looking north-east



Plate 4: Trench 1, ditch [108], looking south-west





Plate 5: Trench 8, ditches [808] and [810], looking west



Plate 6: Trench 13, ditch [1304], looking north-east