Archaeological Evaluation at

69 Tiddington Road,

Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire

Report 1001

January 2010

Warwickshire County Council

Working for Warwickshire

Archaeological Evaluation at 69 Tiddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire

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Summary

Five archaeological trial trenches excavated at 69 Tiddington Road revealed evidence for Iron Age and Romano-British activity in two trenches. A large storage pit was half excavated in Trench 4 and yielded hand made Iron Age pottery and a small assemblage of animal bone. An adjacent, shallow pit yielded a crumb of probable Iron Age pottery. Pits like these are commonly found, often in small groups or associated with other settlement features, but also discretely in relative isolation. There is therefore no indication whether the pits form part of a larger archaeological site. A narrow gully identified in Trench 5 yielded a single sherd of Romano-British greyware pottery and a small assemblage of animal bone. The gully most likely forms part of a Romano-British field system associated with the nearby settlement.

1. Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been sought from Stratford on Avon District Council for the re-development of 69 Tiddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire (Ref 09/01675/FUL). The development site lies near to a known Romano-British settlement which is partly Scheduled as an Ancient Monument (Warwickshire 184) and close to a large cemetery, which the Planning Archaeologist determined could be disturbed by the development. The planning authority was therefore advised that the archaeological implications of the development could not be ascertained until the site had been subject to an archaeological field evaluation which would provide the appropriate information before any planning decision is reached.

1.2 An archaeological field evaluation was therefore commissioned from the Warwickshire Museum Field Archaeology Projects Group and carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation in January 2010.

1.3 This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under site code TX10.

2. Location

2.1 The site lies on the north side of the Tiddington Road, in Stratford-upon-Avon, at National Grid Reference SP 2119 5528 (Fig 1).

2.2 The Tiddington Road runs along the southern side of the Avon along the ridge formed by the 2nd river gravel terrace (BGS 1974). The land surface falls away to the north-west across an outcrop of Mercia Mudstone onto the first river terrace, and again down to the alluvial floodplain.

3. Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 The earliest datable find from the area is a rare form of stone implement, a possible leaf point of Upper/Final Upper Palaeolithic date (*c*40,000-8,000 BC), the period in which modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) began to colonise the part of the continental landmass that is now the British Isles. It was found in about 1930 during the construction of 80 Tiddington Road (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record Number MWA 893). It is one of only two finds of this period known from the entire county and their general paucity in Britain suggests that there was only a very small population at this time.

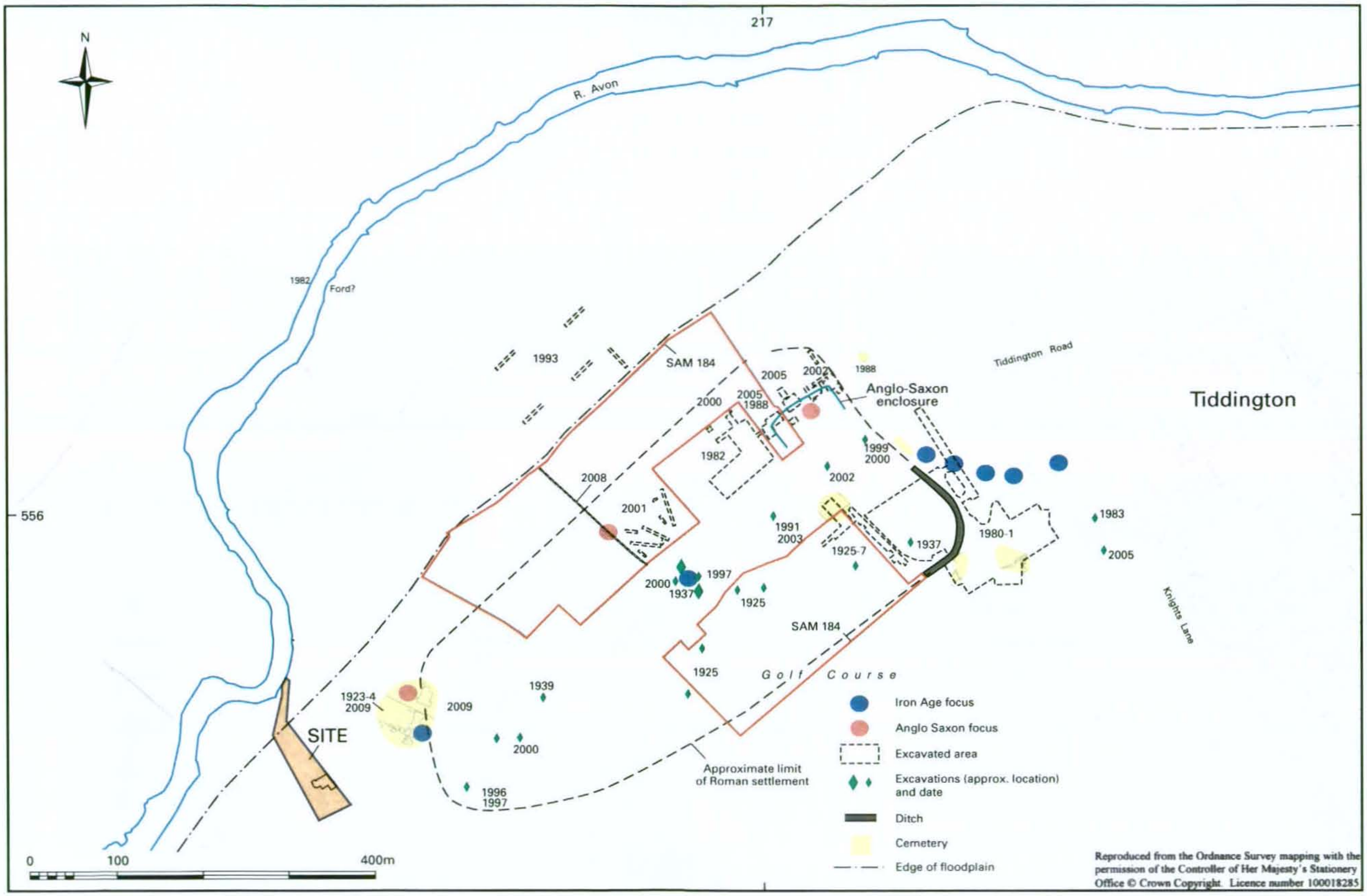

Fig 1: Tiddington Roman Settlement showing the location of archaeological excavations

3.2 After the last Ice Age had ended *c*10,000 years ago, the region was sporadically visited by growing numbers of Mesolithic (*c*8000 BC – 4000 BC) hunter gatherers. No finds of this date are known in Tiddington but it is certain that they would have travelled along the Avon Valley during this time. At the beginning of the Neolithic period (*c*4000 BC) domesticated cattle and sheep along with domesticated cereals such as wheat and barley began to arrive from the continent and the indigenous people slowly adopted a new world view which included the construction of ceremonial and funerary monuments and the inevitable, but piecemeal adoption of agriculture. Thin scatters of flint tools and waste flakes of this date have been found in fields to the east of Tiddington suggesting the locale was visited but no concentrations are dense enough to suggest settlement. The technology for working metals such as copper and tin was imported from the continent around *c*2500 BC in the Early Bronze Age. There are sporadic flint finds of this date in the area and a number of cropmarks east of Tiddington represent ring-ditches or ploughed out burial mounds of Neolithic or Bronze Age date.

3.3 Permanent settlement of this part of the Avon Valley probably originated in the Late Bronze Age *c*1000 BC. Cropmarks to the east of Tiddington represent boundary features that define land-units that may well have remained in existence throughout the Iron Age (*c*800 BC – AD 43) and later.

3.4 The earliest dated settlement evidence in the area is Middle Iron Age (*c*400 BC – 0 AD) and was excavated at the NFU site in the early 1980s (Fig 1). This was probably one of a number of small farmsteads in this part of the Avon Valley, which is likely to have been heavily exploited by this time (Palmer 1983). A concentration of Iron Age pottery from an excavation at 102 Tiddington Road in 1937 suggests there may have been another in this vicinity. Further evidence for Iron age activity has been recorded along the Tiddington Road to the east of the area on Fig 1 at Tiddington Fields (Warwickshire Museum 2008), within the cemetery excavated at 77 (HER MWA 1064) and in the former Loxley Lane gravel pit (HER MWA 4623) to the west of the area shown on Fig 1.

3.5 The scattered Iron Age settlements appear to have been succeeded by a large nucleated village (HER MWA 4469), in the late Iron Age/early roman period (30-70 AD). The impetus for this development may well have been its location at a crossroads: 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.

3.6 The village grew rapidly during the 1st and 2nd centuries, serving as a market for the farms in the vicinity. The settlement seems to have contracted during the 3rd and 4th centuries, with some areas being abandoned.

3.7 Imperial Rome withdrew from Britain in AD 410, and settlement after this date is often difficult to identify in the archaeological record not least because of the collapse of the Roman industries which produced datable artefacts in the later 4th century which culminated in a total absence by *c*430 AD (Esmonde-Cleary 1989) and the absence of any building forms which have left a recognisable trace. However, recent excavations have identified an early Anglo-Saxon enclosure on the north-east edge of the settlement (Palmer & Palmer 1988; Biddulph 2005; Palmer forthcoming a), Anglo-Saxon features on the north-west edge (Palmer forthcoming b) and further features along the south-west edge (Warwickshire Museum 2009).

3.8 The first modern indications of the existence of the Roman 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

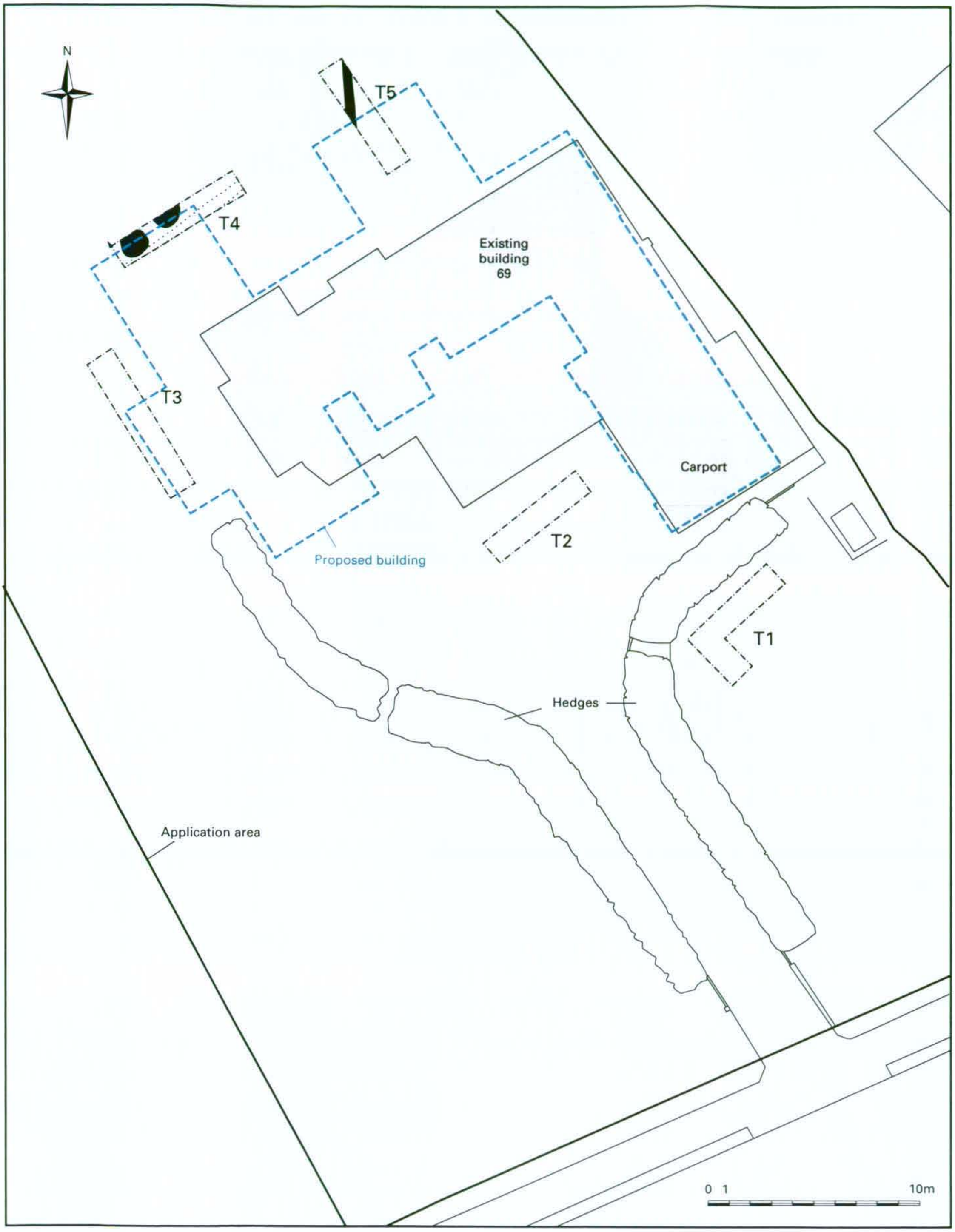

Fig 2: 69 Tiddington Road and the location of the trial trenches

1923 a cemetery of 220 burials was encountered during the building of 77 Tiddington Road (HER MWA 1014) and further burials are now known to extend under no 79 Warwickshire Museum 2009). These excavations also produced some Anglo-Saxon material (HER MWA 6268). In 1925-7 the construction of the golf course revealed more Romano-British burials and the remains of buildings (Fieldhouse *et al* 1931). Further excavation work was carried out in 1937-8 at 102 Tiddington Road and in 1939 at no 84 (HER MWA 1072).

3.9 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 late 4th century when a large defensive ditch was dug round part of the settlement. Many settlements were fortified at this time, a reflection of uncertain times at the end of the empire, but the extent of the defended area remains unknown. The houses 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.

3.10 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 3rd century no further buildings were constructed, but the roads continued in use and some late (4th-century) burials were deposited alongside them.

3.11 Since 1982 further, mainly small-scale excavations have been undertaken in the area, mostly as a result of local authority planning requirements during redevelopment.

4. Aims and Methods

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

4.2 The work undertaken involved the examination of historical map evidence as well as records of archaeological remains in the area and local historical journals and other publications. This was followed by the excavation of a series of five trial trenches in positions agreed with the Planning Archaeologist (Fig 2). The trenches were excavated using a 3 tonne mini-excavator with a 1.2m wide ditching bucket.

4.3 The artefact content of the topsoil was assessed by inspecting the spoil from the trenches and found to be negligible.

5. Evaluation Trenches

Trench 1

5.1 Trench 1 was L-shaped a total of 7m long by 1.3m wide and positioned in the lawn to the south of the carport (Fig 2). Geological natural (**100**) was reddish-brown loamy gravel and was achieved 0.70m below the present surface level. The north-

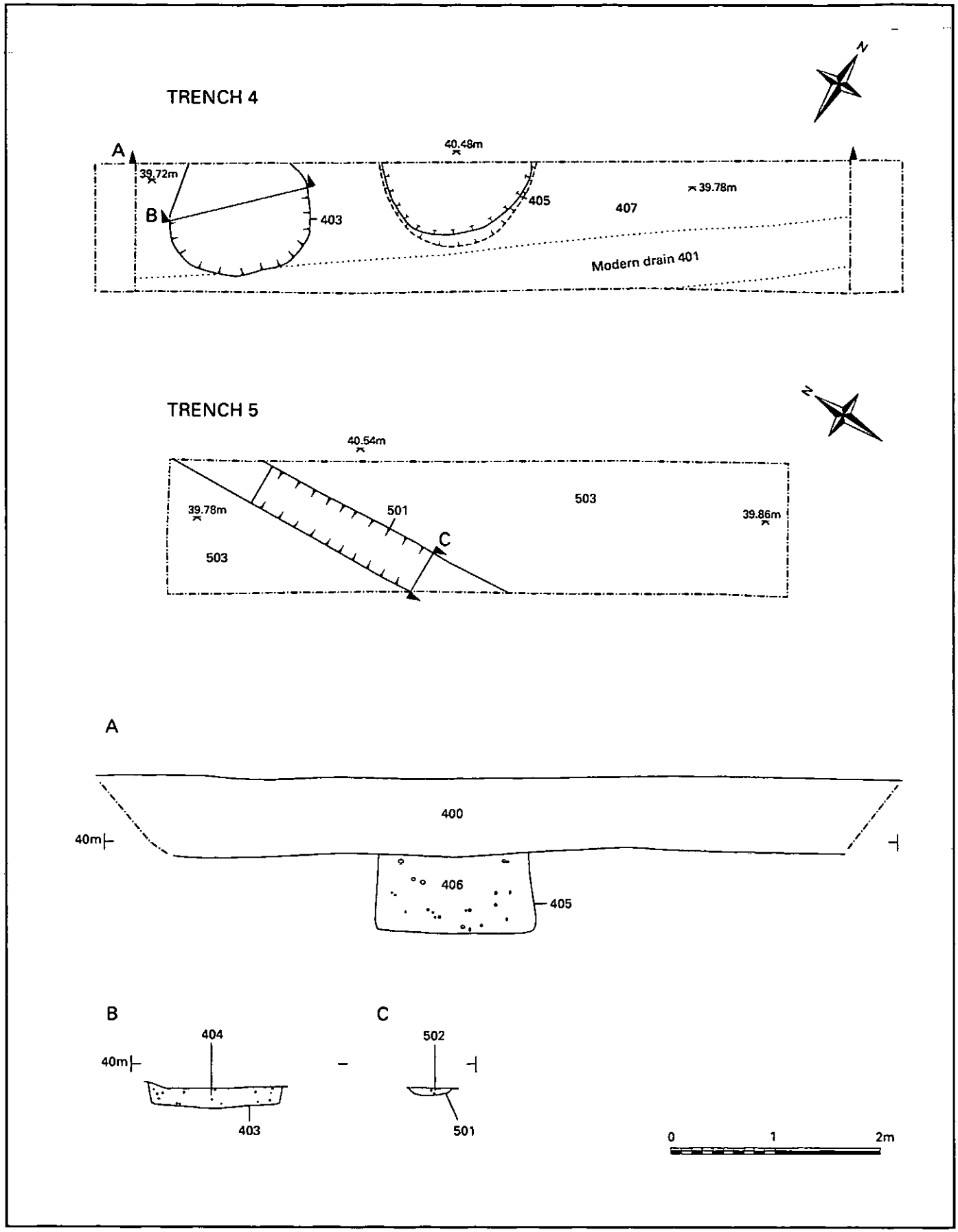

Fig 3: Detailed plans (Trenches 4 & 5) and sections (A - C)

eastern arm of the trench was crossed by both electricity and gas services which were sealed within topsoil layer **101**. No features were revealed.

5.2 Trench 2 was 5m long by 1.5m wide and aligned ENE/WSW in the tarmac west of the carport (Fig 2). Geological natural was reddish-brown sandy loam (**205**) and was achieved some 0.60m below surface level. It was sealed by 0.57m of brown sandy clay loam plough soil (**204**). The plough soil was cut by a modern cemented foundation (**203**) along the northern edge of the trench and sealed under 0.16m of hardcore (**202**), 0.13m gravel makeup (**201**) and 0.10m of tarmac (**200**).

Fig 4: Trench 1 viewed from the WSW

Fig 5: Trench 2 viewed from the WSW

5.3 Trench 3 (7.5m long by 1.5m wide) was excavated in the lawn on the western side of the present structure and aligned north-west to south-east. Geological natural (**301**) was reddish-brown loamy gravel which was sealed 0.60m below the surface beneath a brown topsoil layer (**300**).

Fig 6: Trench 3 viewed from the south-east

5.4 Trench 4 (6.8m long by 1.5m wide) was aligned ENE/WSW in the lawn north-west of the present building. Geological natural was reddish-brown sandy gravel which was achieved 0.70m below the modern surface. The gravel was cut by three features, of which two were archaeologically significant. At the western end of the trench, pit **403** was circular, 1.15-1.30m in diameter with vertical sides and a flat base 0.19m deep. It was filled with brown sandy clay loam which yielded a single crumb of probable Iron Age pottery, a fragment of animal bone and a heat-cracked quartzite pebble that had probably been used as a pot boiler.

Fig 7: Trench 4 viewed from the WSW

Fig 8: Pit **403** viewed from the south-east

Fig 9: Pit **405** viewed from the south-east

5.5 Pit **405** lay to the east of pit **403** and was 1.40m in diameter with a bell-shaped profile and flat base 0.80m deep. It was filled with dark brown sandy clay loam (**406**) which yielded animal bone, heat-cracked pebbles, a small quantity of charcoal and six sherds of Iron Age pottery. A modern drain **401** aligned along the base of the trench contained a 4 inch ceramic pipe and was backfilled with gravel (**402**). All features were sealed by 0.70m of modern topsoil (**400**) from which a late Iron Age/early Roman iron brooch was recovered.

5.6 Trench 5 (6m long by 1.3m wide) was aligned north-west to south-east on the north side of the present building. Geological natural was reddish-brown sandy gravel (**503**) which was achieved 0.60m below modern ground level. The natural was cut by a north to south aligned gully (**501**) which had a concave profile 0.46m wide by only 0.07m deep. The gully was filled with reddish-brown sandy clay loam (**502**) which yielded a single sherd of Roman pottery. The trench was sealed with brown sandy clay loam topsoil (**500**).

Fig 10: Trench 5 viewed from the north-west with gully **501** just visible aligned diagonally (north to south) below the middle scale

6. Conclusions

6.1 The discovery of at least two Iron Age features in the evaluation trenches represents a significant contribution to our understanding of the development of pre-historic Tiddington. Their discovery here potentially indicates the location of another Iron Age settlement focus from which the later village developed. However, other discrete areas of Iron Age activity in the Tiddington area have been recorded at Tiddington Fields, the NFU site, 102 Tiddington Road and probably at 77 Tiddington Road, although only at the NFU site is substantial settlement reported.

6.2 Pit **405** is a classic example of a later prehistoric storage pit whose undercutting profile has been shown to aid the preservation of cereal seeds whilst being stored over winter for sowing in spring (Reynolds 1974). It can be paralleled on local sites such as Barford, Hampton Lucy and Ryton-on-Dunsmore where storage pits form an integral part of the agricultural landscape. The probably contemporary pit **403** is also matched on many local sites and such pits could have been used to store other crops such as vegetables. Sites consisting solely of clusters of storage pits are known at High Cross, Burton Dassett and Barford (Palmer forthcoming c), as well as within Tiddington itself. There is therefore no way of determining if any other features are associated with the pits or if other features extend into the area of proposed disturbance. However, storage pits remain one of the most important later prehistoric feature types for the wealth of data that can be extracted from them. On some sites the disused storage pits were used as repositories for a wide range of material culture as well as economic and environmental indicators.

6.3 A Romano-British field boundary gully was examined in Trench 5. Although of some interest, the presence of this feature adds little to the developmental history of the area other than to provide tangible evidence for an agricultural economy. A field system has been recorded at the NFU site but the majority of the excavations in the area have been too small-scale to identify these landscape features. Clearly the alignment of this example extends under both the present house and the proposed building, but it is doubtful if further excavation will prove informative.

6.4 The archaeological trial trenches have clearly established that significant archaeological deposits exist in the immediate vicinity of the present building. There is however no evidence that such deposits will be disturbed by the proposed replacement dwelling.

Acknowledgements

The Warwickshire Museum would like to thank Kevin Burrows for commissioning the work and Russell and his team from K B Construction for their assistance and cooperation during the fieldwork. The project was initiated for the Museum by Ian Greig and subsequently directed by Stuart Palmer. Rob Jones and Kevin Wright undertook the fieldwork. This report was written by Stuart Palmer with drawings by Candy Stevens and it was checked by Nicholas Palmer.

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Appendix A: List of Finds

Trench	*Context*	*Material*	*No*	*Comments*
2	202	Pottery	1	Stoneware bottle/jar, probable ink well of later 19th century date
4	400	Iron	1	Brooch *see below
	403	Bone	1	Fragment of animal bone
	403	Pottery	1	Hand made Iron Age sherd
	406	Pottery	6	Hand made Iron Age sherds
	406	Bone	11	Animal bone fragments
5	500	Pottery	1	Basal sherd from coarseware pot of 18th/19th century date (not retained)
	500	Clay pipe	1	Post-medieval tobacco pipe stem
	502	Pottery	1	Romano-British greyware sherd
	502	Bone	9	Animal bone fragments

*Late Iron Age/early Roman brooch

One-piece, wire, bow brooch, iron, with distorted spring, flat bow and apparently looped catch-plate, pin broken (identification provisional in the absence of radiograph or cleaning). L 70mm. (Trench 4, 400, topsoil)

Because of the catch-plate this represents an unusual example of a relatively common type of brooch, formerly known as 'Nauheim-derivative', current in Southern Britain from the first half of the 1st century AD to the end of the century (Olivier 1996, 235-7). Five other iron brooches of this general type are known from Tiddington, the two stratified examples presumably residual in 4th-century contexts (Mould forthcoming, nos 100-104).

Appendix B: List of Contexts

Trench	*Context*	*Description*	*Date*
1	**100**	Brown sandy clay loam topsoil	Modern
	101	Reddish-brown loamy gravel	Geology
2	**200**	Tarmac	Modern
	201	Reddish-brown sandy gravel makeup layer	Modern
	202	Hardcore	Modern
	203	Cement	Modern
	204	Brown plough soil 0.57m deep	Modern
	205	Reddish-brown sandy loam	Geology
3	**300**	Brown sandy loam topsoil	Modern
	301	Reddish-brown loamy gravel	Geology
4	**400**	Brown sandy clay loam topsoil	Modern
	401	Drain cut	Modern
	402	Drain fill	Modern
	403	Pit	Iron Age
	404	Brown sandy clay loam pit fill	Iron Age
	405	Pit	Iron Age
	406	Dark brown sandy clay loam pit fill	Iron Age
	407	Reddish-brown sandy gravel	Geology
5	**500**	Brown sandy clay loam topsoil	Modern
	501	Gully cut	Roman
	502	Gully fill	Roman
	503	Reddish-brown sandy gravel	Geology

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Field Archaeology Projects Group

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