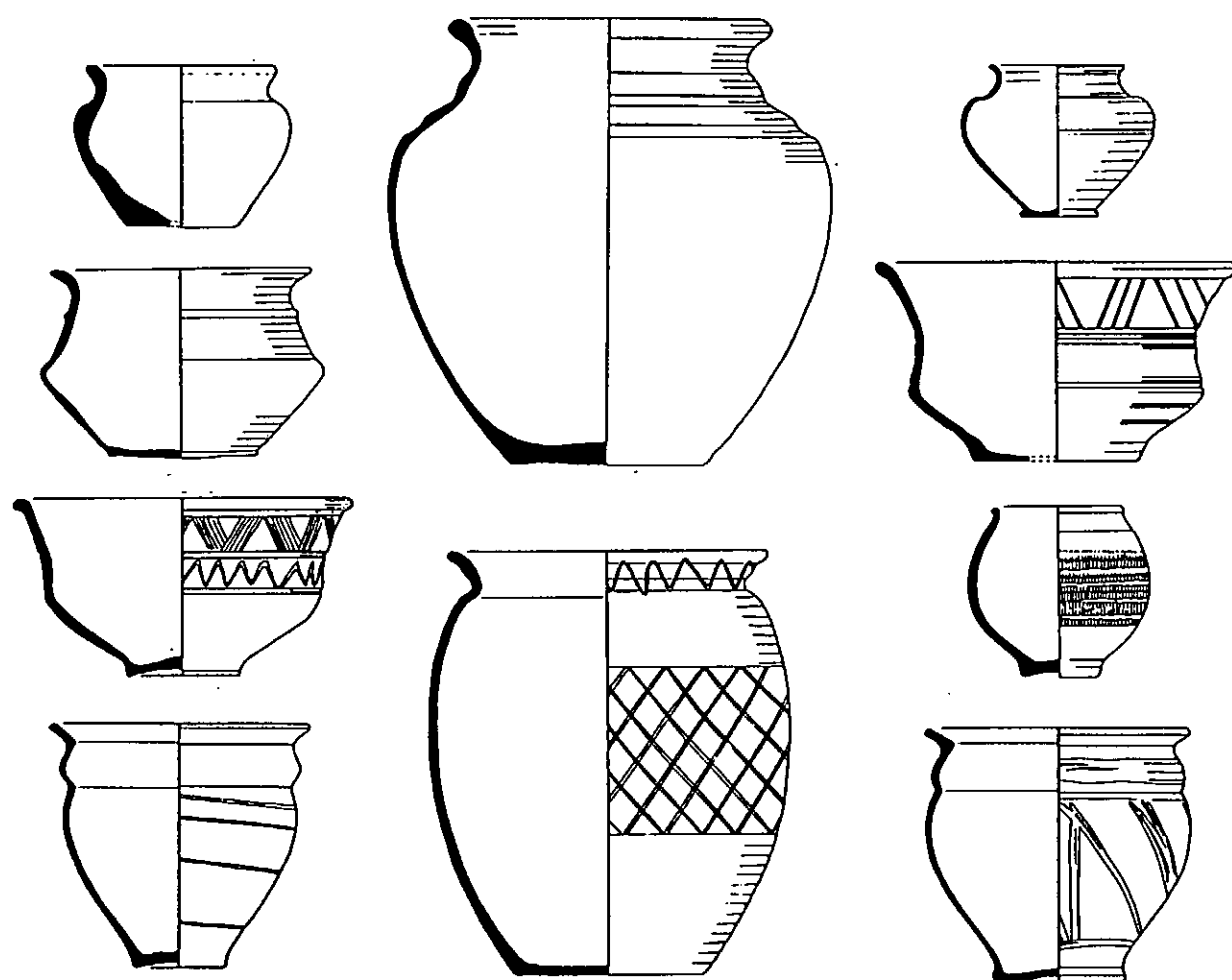


Archaeological Evaluation
at 124 Tiddington Road,
Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire



CWA 17864

EWA 6768

UWA 4469 - Roman Settlement at Tiddington -

Archaeological Evaluation at 124 Tiddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire

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Report 9934
September 1999

Warwickshire Museum Field Services
The Butts
Warwick
CV34 4SS

Summary

An archaeological evaluation involving background research and five trial trenches was carried out on a site on the eastern edge of the Romano-British settlement. Evidence for 1st-4th century activity, concentrating in the 1st-2nd century, was found across the area sampled, and features recorded included ditches, layers, a structural slot, pits and a large hollow, perhaps a gravel pit. Most of the ditches were aligned north west-south east, suggesting property boundaries running back from the Roman road on the line of the modern Tiddington Road. No trace was found of the defensive ditch found in 1980-1 which must therefore run just to the east. A single child's grave was probably one of the late Roman burials scattered across the settlement noted in previous excavations.

1. Introduction

1.1 An application has been submitted to Stratford-upon-Avon District Council for the erection of a single new house with double garage at 124 Tiddington Rd, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire (Ref. 99/01261/FUL). Because the site of the proposed development lies within the Romano-British settlement of Tiddington, an area of archaeological importance parts of which are a Scheduled Ancient Monument, it has been recommended that an archaeological evaluation of the site should take place prior to a decision being made over the application.

1.2 A programme of background research and fieldwork, in accordance with a Brief prepared by the Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the Planning Authority, was commissioned from Warwickshire Museum Field Archaeology Projects Group and carried out in August 1999. This report presents the result of that programme.

2. Location

2.1 The site of the proposed development lies on the south side of Tiddington Road in the parish of Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, centred around national grid reference SP 218 556. The total area of the current proposal affects some 0.22 hectares which is presently the site of a private house and garden.

2.2 The underlying geology of the proposed development area is Second River Terrace Gravels (Geological Survey 1974).

3. Aims and Methods of the Evaluation

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

3.2 The work undertaken involved the examination of records of archaeological discoveries in the area, early map evidence and aerial photographs. This was followed by excavation of five trial trenches, located, as far as possible, along the lines of the foundations of the proposed new buildings.

4. Archaeological and Historical Background

4.1 The earliest evidence for human activity in the area is a Palaeolithic hand axe found in about 1930 during the construction of no. 80 Tiddington Road (Sites and

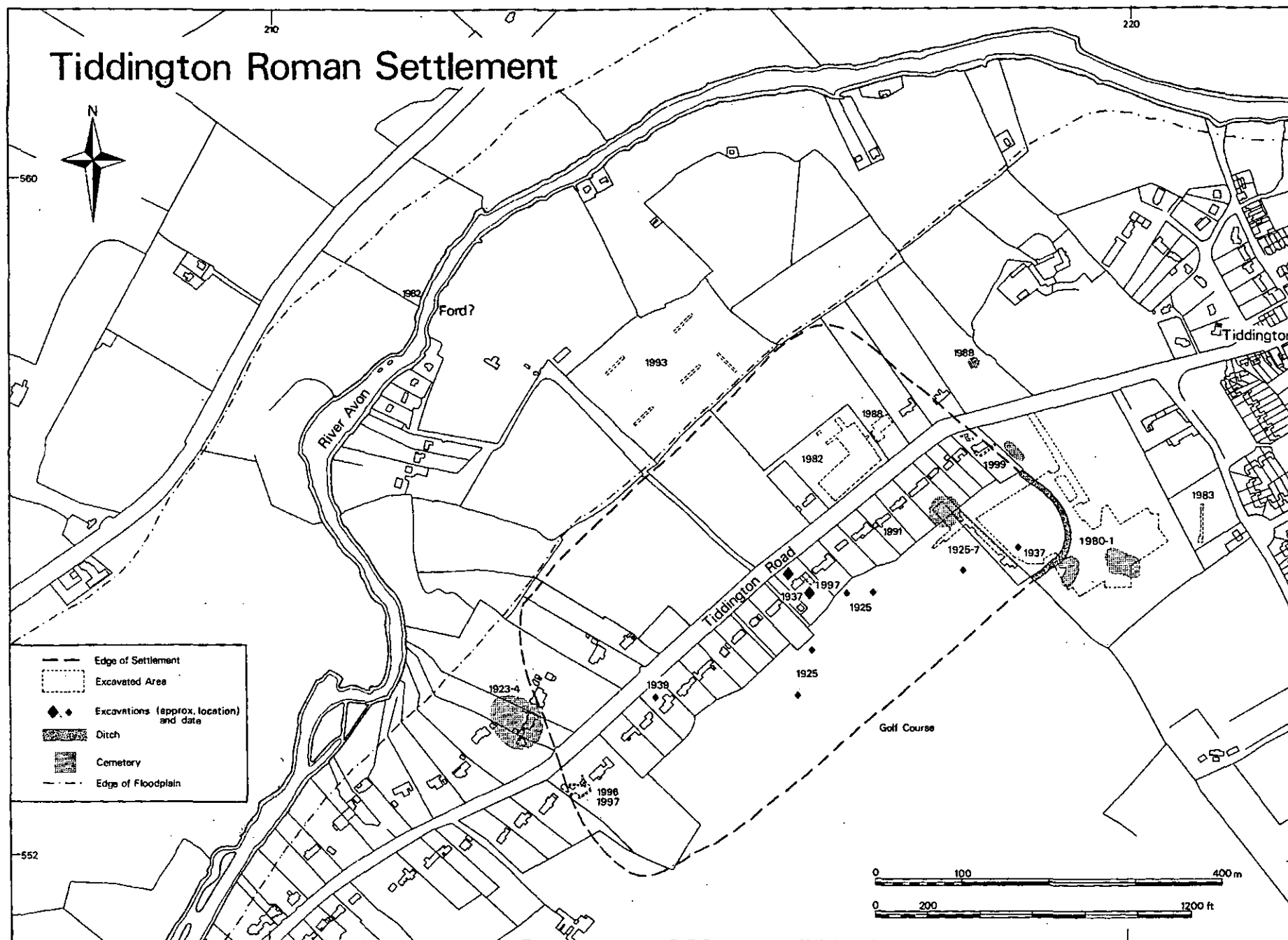


Fig. 1: Site Location

Monuments Record Ref WA 893). This is almost certainly a redeposited find in the gravel terrace and does not indicate a site of this period.

4.2 The most important remains in the vicinity are those of a Romano-British settlement (SMR WA 4469), covering an estimated 22ha on the south bank of the River Avon (Fig. 1). It appears to have grown up where a road along the south side of the river, following the line of the modern Tiddington Road, met another running south east to north west down to a ford. The ford was probably at the place where Roman coins and brooches were dredged out of the river in 1982.

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

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

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

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

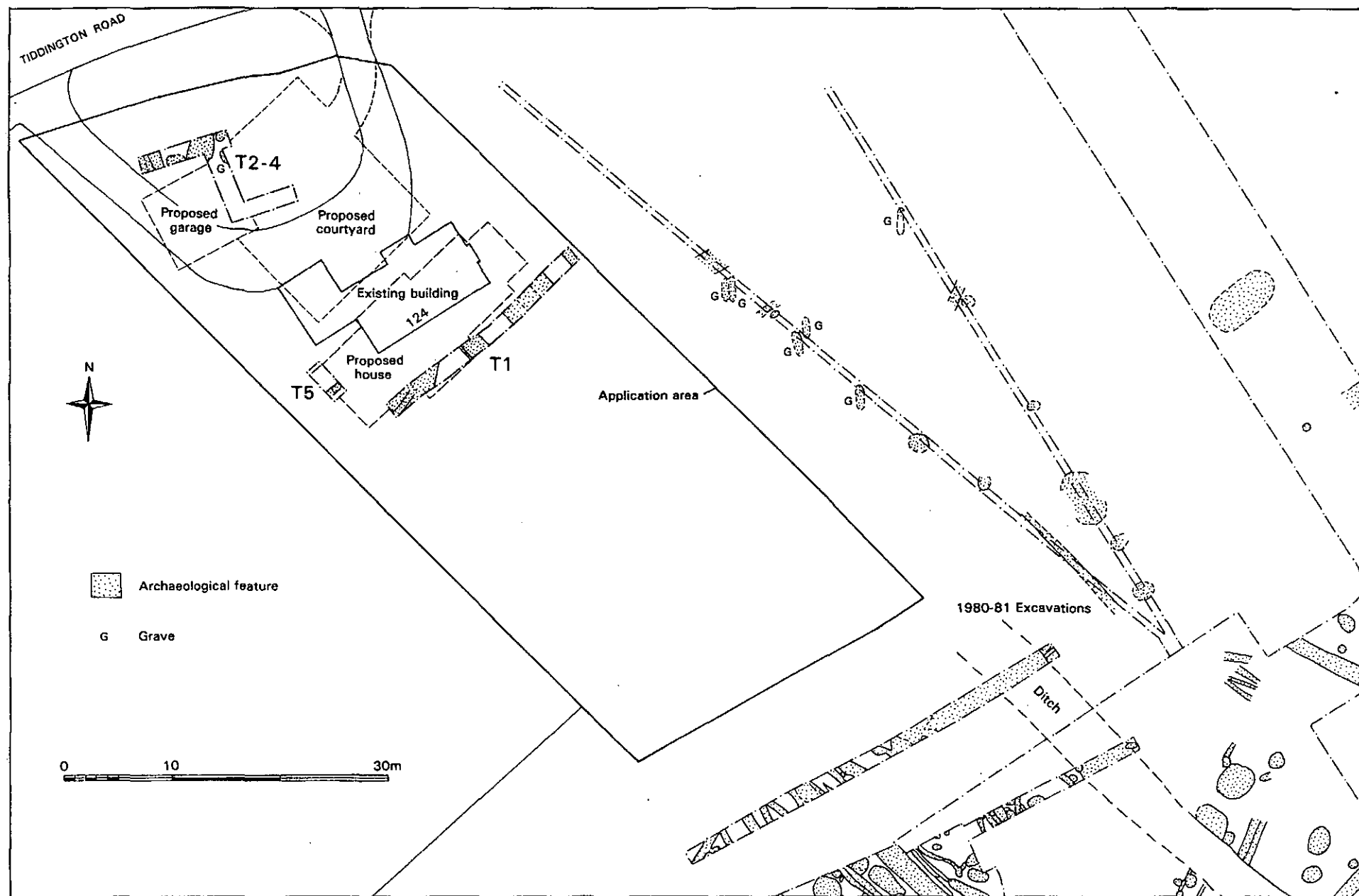


Fig. 2: Layout of Trenches and previous excavations in vicinity

4.7 As a result of the 1980-1983 excavations the importance of the site, both to the history of Stratford and Warwickshire, and as a well-preserved example of a little understood type of Romano-British settlement, was recognised and the undeveloped parts of the settlement were given legal protection as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Warwickshire No. 184). Since 1990 a number of observations and small excavations have been carried out on the settlement which have tended to confirm the conclusions of the earlier work.

4.8 The development site lies just to the north west and west of the area excavated in 1980-1 (Fig 2). To the south east these excavations revealed a dense sequence of domestic occupation dating from the mid-1st to the 4th century. Many of the features were aligned north west-south east suggesting that the settlement in this area was formed of properties at right angles to a Roman predecessor to the Tiddington Road. As has already been mentioned, in the mid-late 4th century the settlement was defended by a substantial, if irregular ditch, with a shallow V-shape, between 3.75m and 8m wide and 1.1-1.7m deep. The projected line of this ditch would take it along the eastern boundary of the development site. To the east of the site a number of graves were seen in the sides of service trenches, suggesting the presence of a small cemetery just outside the settlement. Roman law forbade burial within settlements and most cemeteries lay outside. However, at Tiddington, and elsewhere, occasional burials have been found within the settlement area. These appear to be late Roman in date and probably belonged to a period when the settlement was shrinking.

5. Trial Trenches

5.1 Trench 1 (22.5m long x 1.6m wide) and Trench 5 (4m x 1.6m) were located along the south east and south-west sides of the proposed house. Trenches 2-4 lay in the general area of the proposed garage; they were conjoined with Trench 2 to the north (8.5m x 1.6m), 3 in the middle (5.5m x 1.6m) and 4 to the south (6.5m x 1.6m). The topsoil was removed from all the trenches by a JCB excavator with a toothless bucket down to the top of undisturbed archaeological deposits. Features revealed were then sampled by hand.

Trench 1

5.2 At the north east end of Trench 1 the geological natural sand and gravel (102) lay at about 39.83m aod. It was cut by a series of features and deposits (Figs. 3-6), probably of Romano-British date and many of them aligned north west-south east like those excavated to the south in 1980-1. There was however no trace of the defensive ditch which might have been encountered at the north east end of the trench.

5.3 The earliest feature recorded, in the centre of the trench, appears to have been large, shallow irregular undated hollow c.4m across by up to 0.5m deep (116). There was a small depression (127) in the bottom of this, 0.5m across x 0.1m deep, filled with brown sandy loam (121), which was overlaid by a distinct gravel layer (109) c.2m across, perhaps forming a path. Hollow 116 was filled with layers of brown and brown/dark brown sandy loam (107 & 108).

5.4 To the north east hollow 116 was cut by a sequence of two or three recut ditches (113 & 114) aligned north west-south east. The earliest ditch (113) was over 2m wide x 0.8m deep, with a dark brown/brown sandy loam fill (103) containing early 2nd century pottery. To the north east the profile of ditch 114, suggested that it may have been two ditches, but its yellowish brown sandy loam fill (124) was homogenous, except for a patch of very dark greyish brown sandy loam and charcoal (119) in its top. These presumably represented successive boundary/drainage ditches.

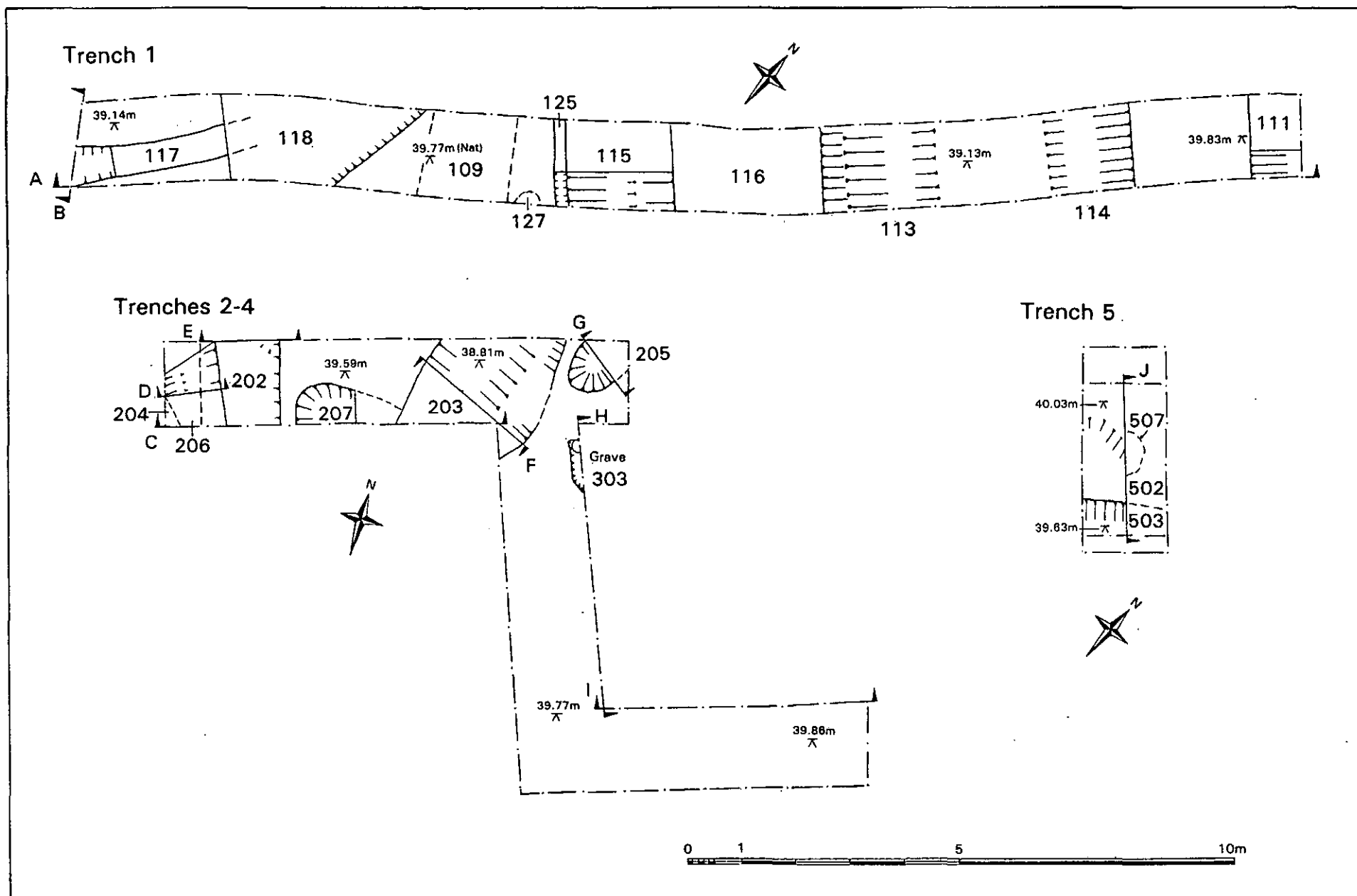


Fig. 3: Plans, Trenches 1-5

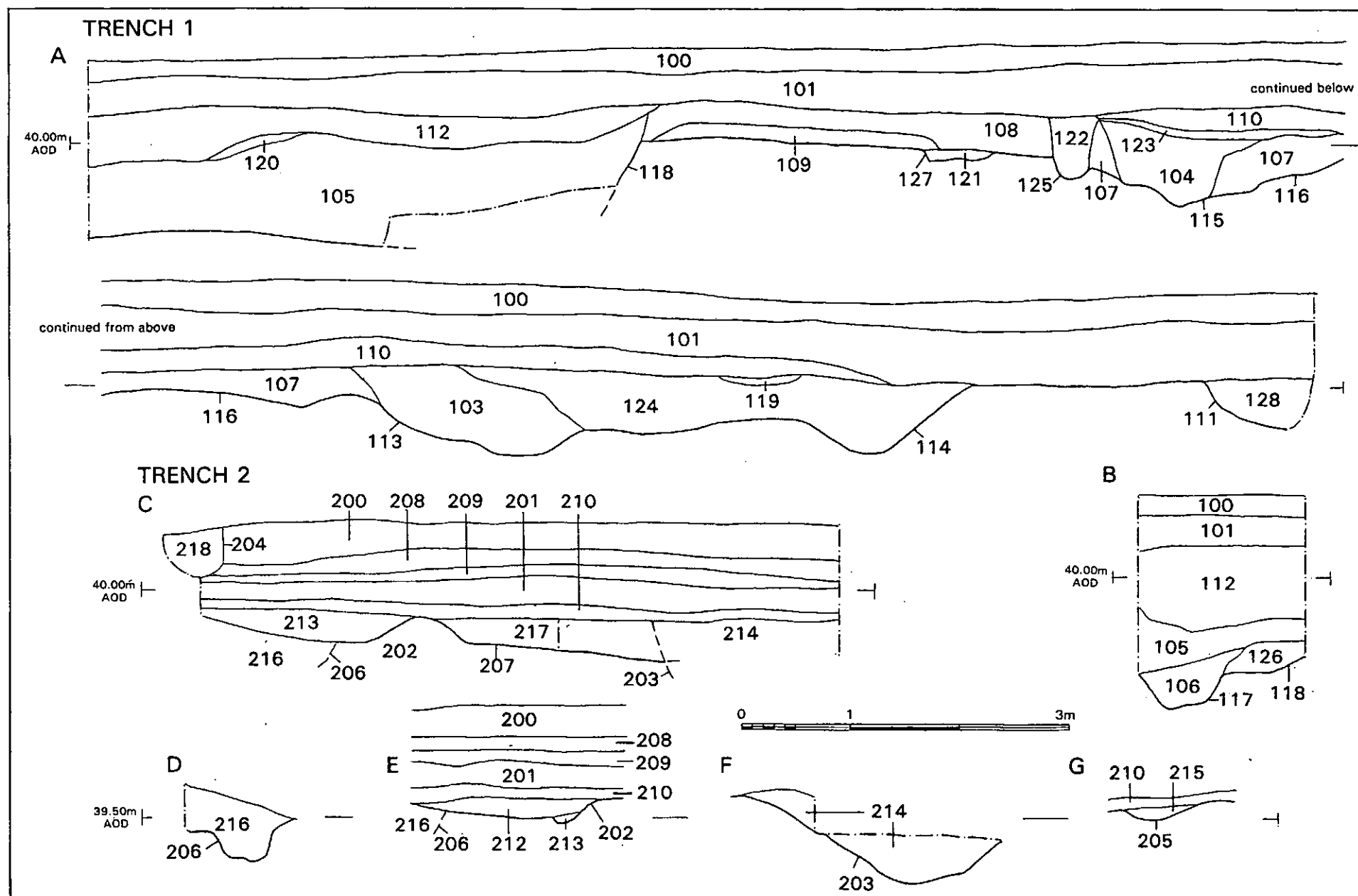


Fig. 4: Sections, Trenches 1-2

5.5 At the north east end of the trench there was another, undated ditch on the same alignment (111), filled with yellowish brown sandy loam (128); and there was another (115) to the south west of 113/114, 1.5m wide x 0.7m deep, filled with dark greyish brown sandy loam (104), containing 2nd/4th century pottery, overlaid by a spread of similar material with gravel (123). Again these ditches were probably boundaries. Along the south west edge of ditch 115, there was a possibly contemporary slot (125), 0.44m wide x 0.57m deep, with a brown/dark brown fill (122). This was probably structural, perhaps supporting a fence, or possibly the sill beam for a timber building whose south western side had been removed by later activity.

5.6 At the south-west end of the trench layer 108 was cut by a large feature (118), 5m across x 1.2m deep, whose precise nature remains uncertain but which may have been a gravel pit. The primary fill of this pit (126), redeposited sand and gravel, was cut by a gully (117), aligned north east-south west, 0.7m wide x 0.3m deep, and filled with dark yellowish brown sandy loam (106), containing 2nd/4th century pottery. The main fill of pit 118, a dark brown sandy loam layer (105) contained 1st-2nd/4th century pottery. In its top was a patch of very dark grey sandy loam and charcoal (120).

5.7 Overlying the Romano-British features was a series of layers representing post-Roman cultivation and modern topsoil. Earthwork traces of ridge and furrow ploughing, presumably belonging to the open fields of medieval Tiddington, are visible in the lawn south of the house. At the south west end of the trench a shallow hollow filled with very dark greyish brown sandy loam (112) may represent a furrow, and a slight bank formed of dark brown sandy loam (110) may represent a ridge. These were overlaid by a later ploughsoil (101) which may fill a later furrow to the north east. Layer 101 was overlaid by the modern garden soil (100).

Trench 2

5.8 Within Trench 2 the geological natural (211) lay at about 39.59m aod. Again it was cut by a series of ditches and pits of probable Romano-British date (Figs. 3 & 4). At the north east end of the trench there was a shallow gully or pit (205), 0.9m across x 0.1m deep, filled with dark reddish grey sandy loam (215) containing mid-late 1st century pottery. To the south west another pit (207), over 2m across x 0.35m deep, filled with dark reddish grey sandy loam (217), was cut by a third, elongated pit (203), 2.3m wide x c.0.85m deep, with a similar fill (214) containing 1st-2nd/4th century pottery.

5.9 At the south-west end of the trench an undated steep-sided ditch (206), 0.52m deep, aligned north west-south east, was filled with a dark reddish brown sandy loam (216). This was re-cut slightly to the north-east by a much shallower ditch on the same alignment (202), 1.5m wide x 0.2m deep. This was filled with two layers: a patch of dark reddish grey sandy loam (213), overlaid by sand and gravel (212).

5.10 These features were overlain by two post-Roman ploughsoil layers (210 & 201) which were in turn overlaid by modern garden soil layers (209, 208 & 200). In the southern corner of the trench the upper levels were cut by the trench for an electricity power cable (204) which had been backfilled with a brown sandy loam (218).

Trench 3

5.11 The natural in Trench 3 (312) sloped slightly up to 39.77m aod (Figs 3 & 7). At the north-west end of the trench it was cut by a grave (303) aligned north west-south

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5.7 Overlying the Romano-British features was a series of layers representing post-Roman cultivation and modern topsoil. Earthwork traces of ridge and furrow ploughing, presumably belonging to the open fields of medieval Tiddington, are visible in the lawn south of the house. At the south west end of the trench a shallow hollow filled with very dark greyish brown sandy loam (112) may represent a furrow, and a slight bank formed of dark brown sandy loam (110) may represent a ridge. These were overlaid by a later ploughsoil (101) which may fill a later furrow to the north east. Layer 101 was overlaid by the modern garden soil (100).

Trench 2

5.8 Within Trench 2 the geological natural (211) lay at about 39.59m aod. Again it was cut by a series of ditches and pits of probable Romano-British date (Figs. 3 & 4). At the north east end of the trench there was a shallow gully or pit (205), 0.9m across x 0.1m deep, filled with dark reddish grey sandy loam (215) containing mid-late 1st century pottery. To the south west another pit (207), over 2m across x 0.35m deep, filled with dark reddish grey sandy loam (217), was cut by a third, elongated pit (203), 2.3m wide x c.0.85m deep, with a similar fill (214) containing 1st-2nd/4th century pottery.

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Trench 3

5.11 The natural in Trench 3 (312) sloped slightly up to 39.77m aod (Figs 3 & 7). At the north-west end of the trench it was cut by a grave (303) aligned north west-south



Fig. 5: Trench 1, from north east



Fig. 6: Trench 1, from west

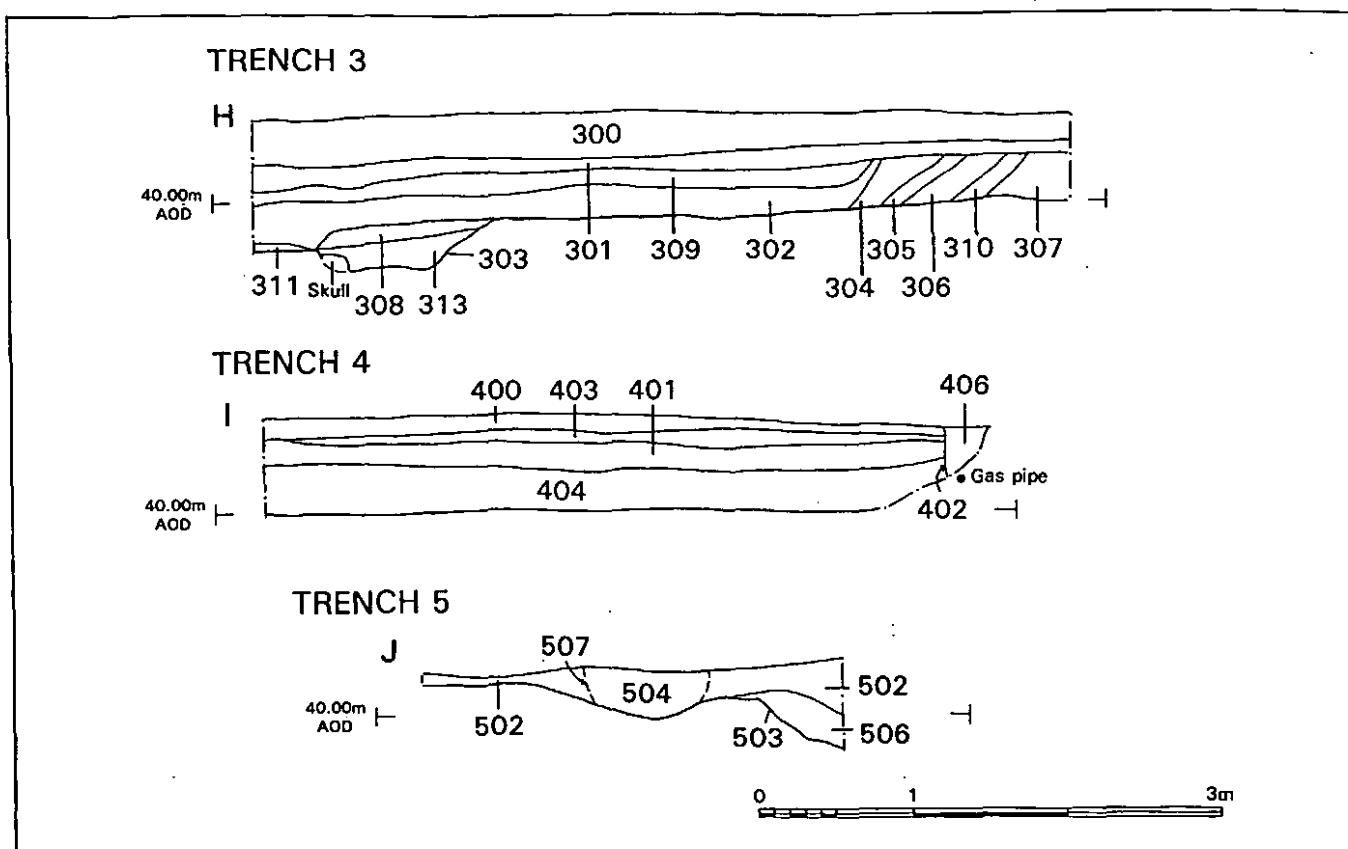


Fig. 7: Sections, Trenches 3-5

east, filled with dark reddish grey sandy loam (313) containing the disturbed skeleton of a child with its head to the north west (this was left in situ). The grave fill also contained 2nd/4th century pottery.

5.12 Overlying the grave there were patches of the post-Roman ploughsoil (307, 308 and 311), but the main build up here consisted of a series of tipped layers consisting of brown/dark brown-strong brown sandy loam (310, 306, 305, 304, 302 & 309). Layer 302 contained post-medieval pottery. The consistency of these layers suggested ploughsoil but the way they were deposited suggested that they may have resulted from modern landscaping perhaps when the existing house was built. They were overlain by topsoil layers associated with the modern garden (301 and 300).

Trench 4

5.13 In Trench 4 the geological natural (405) again sloped up to 39.86m aod to the south east. The trench contained no Romano-British features and the gravel was overlain by a ploughsoil layer (404), a continuation of 307 from Trench 3. This was overlain directly by layers of modern garden soil (401, 400) sandwiching a thin layer of stone chippings and tarmac (403). Layer 404 was also cut by the trench for a modern gas pipe (402), backfilled with brown sandy loam (406).

Trench 5

5.14 In Trench 5 the original surface of the natural gravel (505) did not survive. At the south east end of the trench it was cut by a steep-sided pit/ditch (503), over 0.6m across x 0.35m deep, filled with brown sandy loam (506) containing 1st century pottery.

5.15 This feature was cut by an irregular shallow hollow filled with very dark greyish brown sandy loam (502) containing 138 sherds of 1st-2nd/4th century, but also two post-medieval pot sherds and a fragment of post-medieval tile. Although the later material may have actually come from the layer above it is possible that the hollow was actually a post-medieval furrow. In the centre of the trench hollow/furrow 502 was cut by a large posthole (507), 0.8m across x 0.3m deep, filled with very dark greyish brown sandy loam (504) containing charcoal, 1st-2nd/4th century pottery and two limestone blocks, possibly the remains of post-packing.

5.16 As in the other trenches the features were overlaid by a ploughsoil (501) and modern garden soil (500).

6. Finds

6.1 The finds included animal bone, Romano-British pottery and daub, and post medieval pottery, tile and glass (For a full list see Appendix A). A single residual, prehistoric worked flint fragment came from Trench 2. The only metalwork recovered consisted of two iron nails (from 103, 313), two iron fragments (from 502) and a corroded copper alloy lump (from 214). A single fragment of slag (502) reflects blacksmithing in the settlement but the tiny amount means that it was probably not in the immediate vicinity.

6.2 The Romano-British pottery dated from the 1st to the 4th century, although most of the diagnostic pieces were 1st or 2nd century. The 1st century material included the carinated jars in grog-tempered 'Belgic' fabrics common elsewhere at Tiddington. Fragments of rusticated cooking pot suggested an early 2nd century date for ditch fill 103. Other regional and foreign imports included Severn Valley ware, Black Burnished ware, 'pink grogged ware' and some samian.

6.3 Generally the Romano-British finds represent a fairly typical collection from these type of features at Tiddington.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The trial trenching revealed evidence for Romano-British activity over the whole area sampled. The features concentrated in Trenches 1 and 2, but it is likely that the whole development site lies within the settlement area.

7.2 The features located included ditches, layers, a slot, pits and a large hollow. The ditches were mainly aligned north west-south east and were probably boundaries to properties running back from a Roman road on the line of the modern Tiddington Road. The slot may have held the ground beam for a timber building. No trace was found of the defensive ditch found in 1980-1 which must therefore run just to the east.

7.3 The child's grave in Trench 3 is more likely to be one of the scattered late Roman burials within the settlement rather than an outlier from the cemetery discovered to the east in 1980-1. This is not to say however that further burials will not be found in the near vicinity.

7.4 The Romano-British features were overlaid by quite thick layers of ploughsoil and topsoil. In Trench 1 these were 0.6-0.8m deep, in Trench 2 0.85m and in Trench 5 0.55m. In Trench 5 the Romano-British features appeared to have been cut by a post medieval furrow.

Acknowledgements

The Warwickshire Museum would like to thank Ian Purser of Corstorphine & Wright for commissioning the work on behalf of Mrs J Morrison, and supplying copies of plans. Work on site was carried out by Christopher Jones, Bryn Gethin, John Robinson and Ann Wilkins. This report was written by Christopher Jones with drawings by Andrew Isham and edited by Cathy Coutts and Nicholas Palmer.

Appendix A: List of Finds

| <i>Context</i> | <i>Material</i> | <i>Quantity</i> | <i>Date/Comments</i> |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|--|
| Trench 1 | | | |
| Unstrat | Pottery | 3 | RB |
| 103 | Pottery | 8 | RB (early 2nd century) |
| | Animal Bone | 2 | |
| | Iron nail | 1 | (SF1) |
| 104 | Pottery | 4 | RB (2nd-4th? century) |
| | Animal Bone | 1 | |
| 105 | Pottery | 40 | RB (1st-4th? century) |
| | Fired clay/daub | 1 | |
| | Animal Bone | 11 | |
| 106 | Pottery | 1 | RB (2nd-4th? century) |
| | Animal Bone | 1 | |
| Trench 2 | | | |
| Unstrat | Pottery | 3 | RB, modern |
| | Fired clay/daub | 2 | |
| | Glass | 2 | Post-medieval |
| | Worked flint | 1 | Prehistoric |
| 201 | Roof tile? | 1 | Medieval/post-medieval |
| 214 | Pottery | 6 | RB (1st-4th? century) |
| | Fired clay/daub | 2 | |
| | Animal Bone | 13 | |
| | Copper alloy lump | 1 | (SF3) |
| 215 | Pottery | 5 | RB (mid-later 1st century) |
| Trench 3 | | | |
| Unstrat | Pottery | 3 | RB |
| 302 | Pottery | 2 | RB, 17th/18th century |
| 313 | Pottery | 1 | RB (2nd-4th? century) |
| | Iron nail | 1 | (SF2) |
| Trench 4 | | | |
| Unstrat | Pottery | 1 | RB |
| Trench 5 | | | |
| 502 | Pottery | 140 | RB (1st-4th? century), 17th/18th century (x2) |
| | Animal Bone | 5 | |
| | Tile | 1 | ?Medieval/post-medieval |
| | Iron fragments | 2 | (SF4) |
| | Slag | 1 | |
| 504 | Pottery | 17 | RB (1st-4th? century) |
| | Fired clay/daub | 1 | |
| 506 | Pottery | 18 | RB (1st century) |
| | Animal Bone | 6 | |
| | Fired clay/daub | 10 | |



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Archaeology Projects Group, Warwickshire Museum Field Services
The Butts, Warwick, CV34 4SS *Tel: 01926 412280/412278 Fax: 01926 412974*