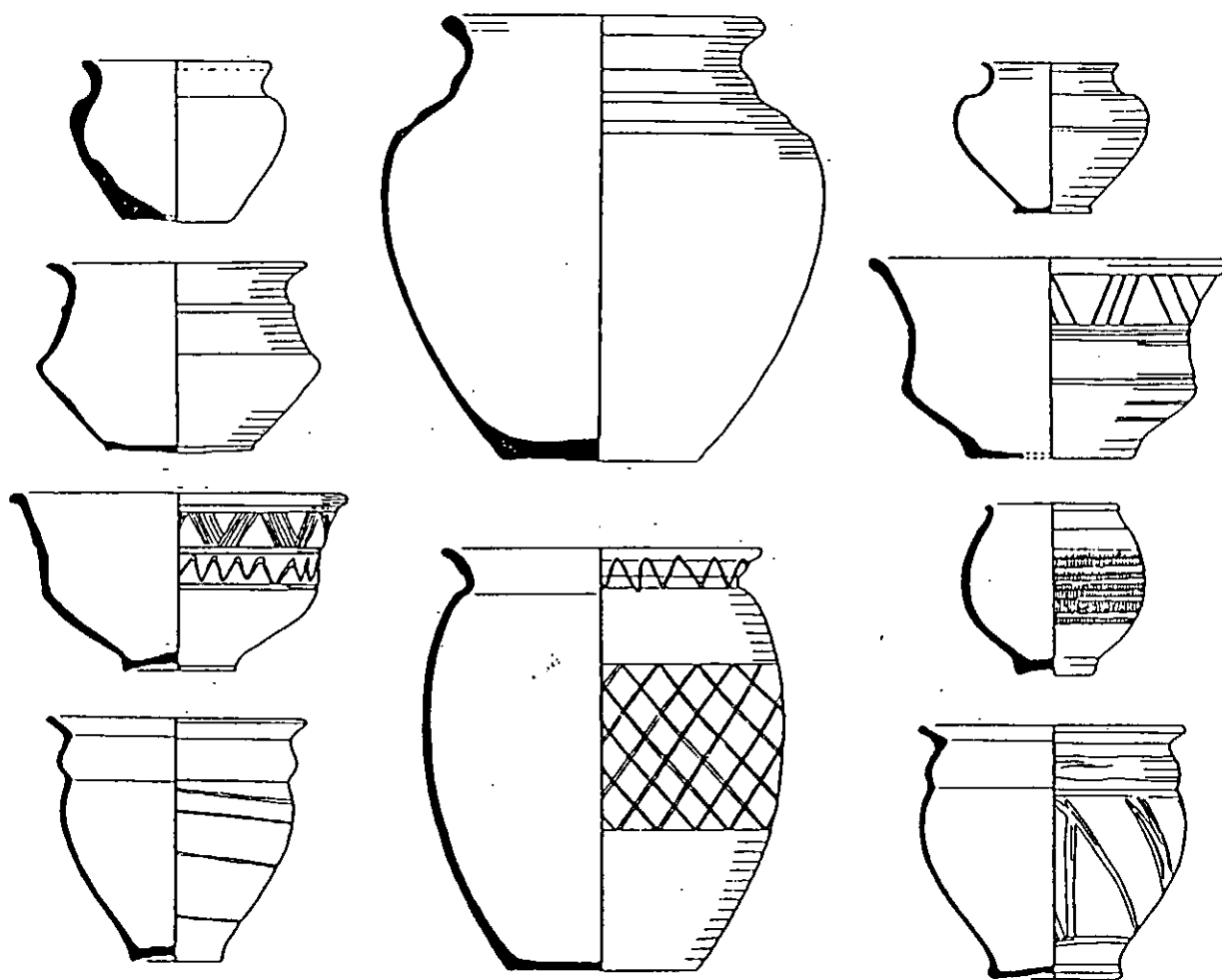


SWA 19600
EWA 7688
MWA 10283
MWA 10284

Archaeological evaluation
to the rear of 34 Knights Lane,
Tiddington, Stratford-upon-Avon,

Warwickshire



Report 0522
June 2005



Warwickshire
County Council

Archaeological evaluation to the rear of 34 Knights Lane, Tiddington, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire

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Report 0522
June 2005

Warwickshire Museum Field Services
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Summary

Archaeological evaluation to the rear of 34 Knights Lane, Tiddington, Stratford-upon-Avon, on the eastern edge of the Tiddington Roman settlement, revealed two pits containing Romano-British (probably 2nd-century AD) pottery and a number of undated features including a posthole and a gully. The site lay just to the south of a cluster of Romano-British pits and a corn drying oven/malting kiln alongside a road running east from the settlement that was excavated in 1983. The Romano-British features and finds were confined to the northernmost of the three trial trenches suggesting that activity did not extend across the whole evaluation area.

1. Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Stratford-upon-Avon District Council for the erection of four semi-detached bungalows, the creation of six parking spaces and associated site works, the re-positioning of an existing conservatory and the erection of one new conservatory to the rear of 34 Knights Lane, Tiddington and adjacent to Tiddington Court (04/03246/FUL). Because the site lies within an area of archaeological potential, adjacent to an area where Romano-British remains were found in 1983, it was thought that significant archaeological deposits might be disturbed during the work. It was therefore a condition of planning permission that the applicant should secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, in accordance with a brief prepared by the County Planning Archaeologist, to be carried out in conjunction with the development.

1.2 Stage 1 of a possible two-stage programme of fieldwork, consisting of the excavation of three archaeological evaluation trenches, was commissioned from the Warwickshire Museum Field Archaeology Projects Group and carried out in June 2005. This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford-upon-Avon under the site code TK05.

2. Location

2.1 The site is located at national grid reference SP 2211 5557 in the parish of Stratford-upon-Avon. The development site was previously occupied by gardens to the rear of a house.

2.2 The underlying geology of the area is Second Terrace River Gravels (British 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 within the area of the development.

3.2 The work undertaken involved the examination of early 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 three trial trenches which were positioned to cover a representative sample of the area to be developed.

4. Archaeological and historical background

4.1 The earliest evidence for human activity in the general area is a Palaeolithic hand axe found in about 1930 during the construction of 80 Tiddington Road (Sites and 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 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 102 Tiddington Road and in 1939 at 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. In 1983 a small excavation in advance of the construction of Tiddington Court on Knights Lane, adjacent to the NFUMAI site, traced further rubbish pits and a corndrying oven/malting kiln alongside a trackway running eastwards from the settlement.

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

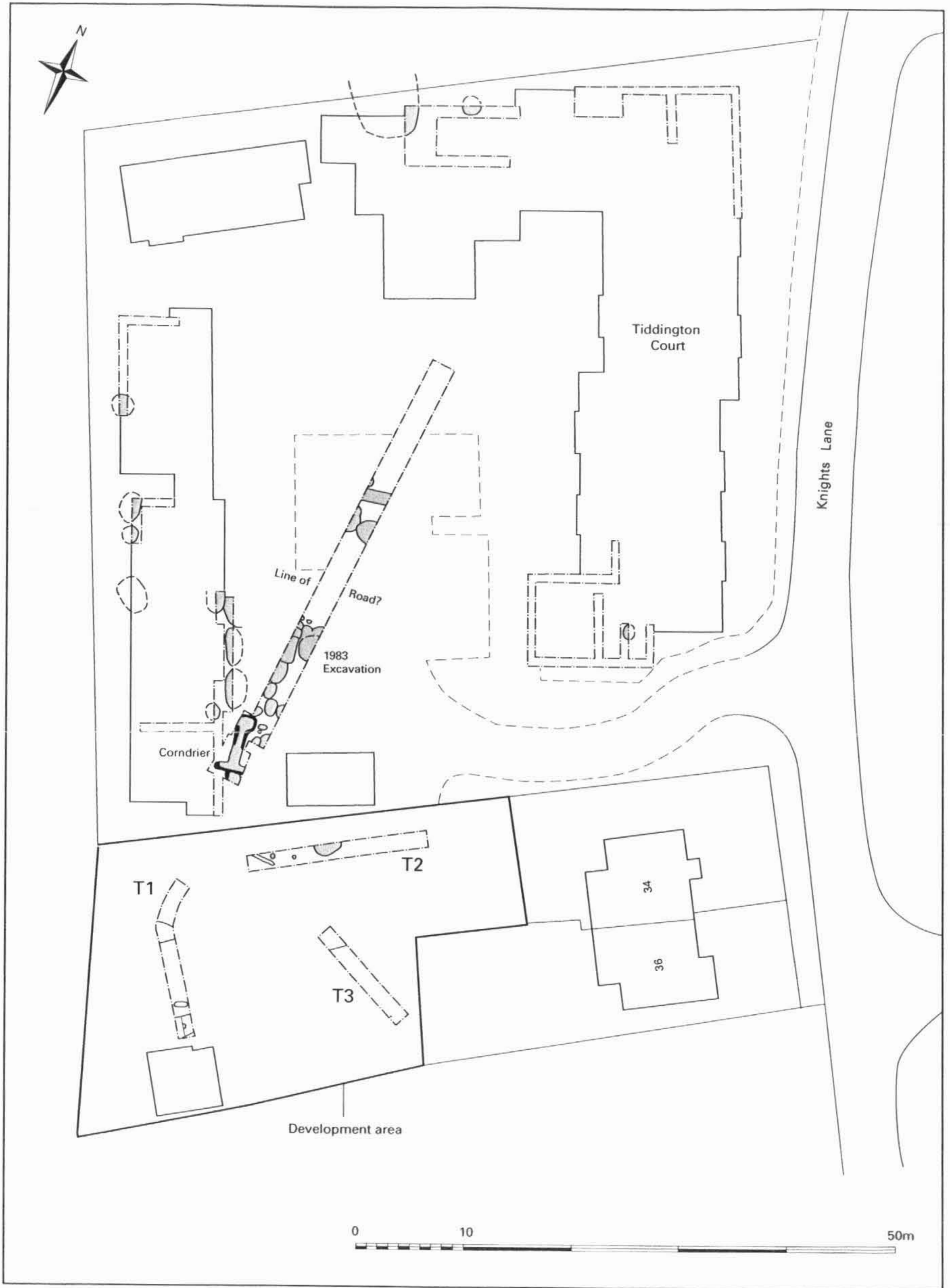


Fig. 2: Location of trenches

In 1988 in advance of the building of 117 Tiddington Road next door more late 1st- and 2nd-century activity was identified along with an enclosure dating to the early Anglo-Saxon period.

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, mainly in advance of building work, and these have tended to confirm the conclusions of the earlier work.

4.8 The development site lies just to the south of the area investigated in 1983 when the existing Tiddington Court was built. As already mentioned this contained features alongside a road or trackway running out of the settlement to the east probably into the fields. Its continuation is visible on air photographs as a cropmark to the east of Tiddington village. This road was first laid out in the early 2nd century AD and continued in use until the 4th century when it was cut off from the settlement by the digging of the defensive ditch. The 1983 work revealed a cluster of mid-late 2nd-century pits, probably for rubbish disposal and a corndrying oven/malting kiln in the south-west corner of the Tiddington Court site. The corndrier/malting kiln consisted of a stone-lined T-shaped flue with a rectangular stokehole to the north. The remains of a possible second corndrier lay to the south. To the north was a clay-lined pit probably for steeping grain before malting. These features lay to the south of the road whose line was marked by a drainage ditch along its north side. The 2nd-century features were sealed by a gravel surface in the late 3rd/early 4th and further pits were dug in the 4th century, some of which impinged on the by now disused road.

5. Evaluation trenches

5.1 Three trial trenches were excavated by a JCB-type machine with a 1.5m toothless ditching bucket. The archaeological features revealed were then excavated by hand.

Trench 1

5.2 Trench 1 ran along the west side of the site; it was 17m long and 1.5m wide (Figs. 3, 4). It was excavated down to geological natural which consisted of small gravel in a yellowish sand matrix (102) at a level of between 39.48 and 39.68m AOD. The gravel was cut by a number of post-medieval and undated features.

5.3 At the south end of the trench there was a large pit (105). Only its northern edge was visible and this was gently sloping before becoming near vertical down to a flat base (Sections A, C). The pit was up to 0.5m deep and was filled by a brown sandy loam (106) with occasional small gravel. A single fragment of 19th-century glass was recovered from this fill (not kept). This pit (along with layer 101 above) was cut by a round posthole (103) which was 0.3m deep with steeply sloping sides and a flat base (Section C). It was filled by a dark greyish-brown sandy loam (104) which contained occasional fragments of modern slag. A modern metal water pipe ran across pit 105. At the northern end of the trench the natural was cut by a small pit (111) containing a modern dog burial (112, not excavated).

5.4 Approximately 3m from the southern edge of the trench there was an undated, small sub-oval pit 107, up to 0.14m deep, with gently sloping sides and a flattish base (Section B). It was filled by a greyish-brown sandy loam with occasional small gravel (108). A further hollow (109), also undated, was located on a bend in the trench 4m from its northern end. This was largely machined out during the excavation of the

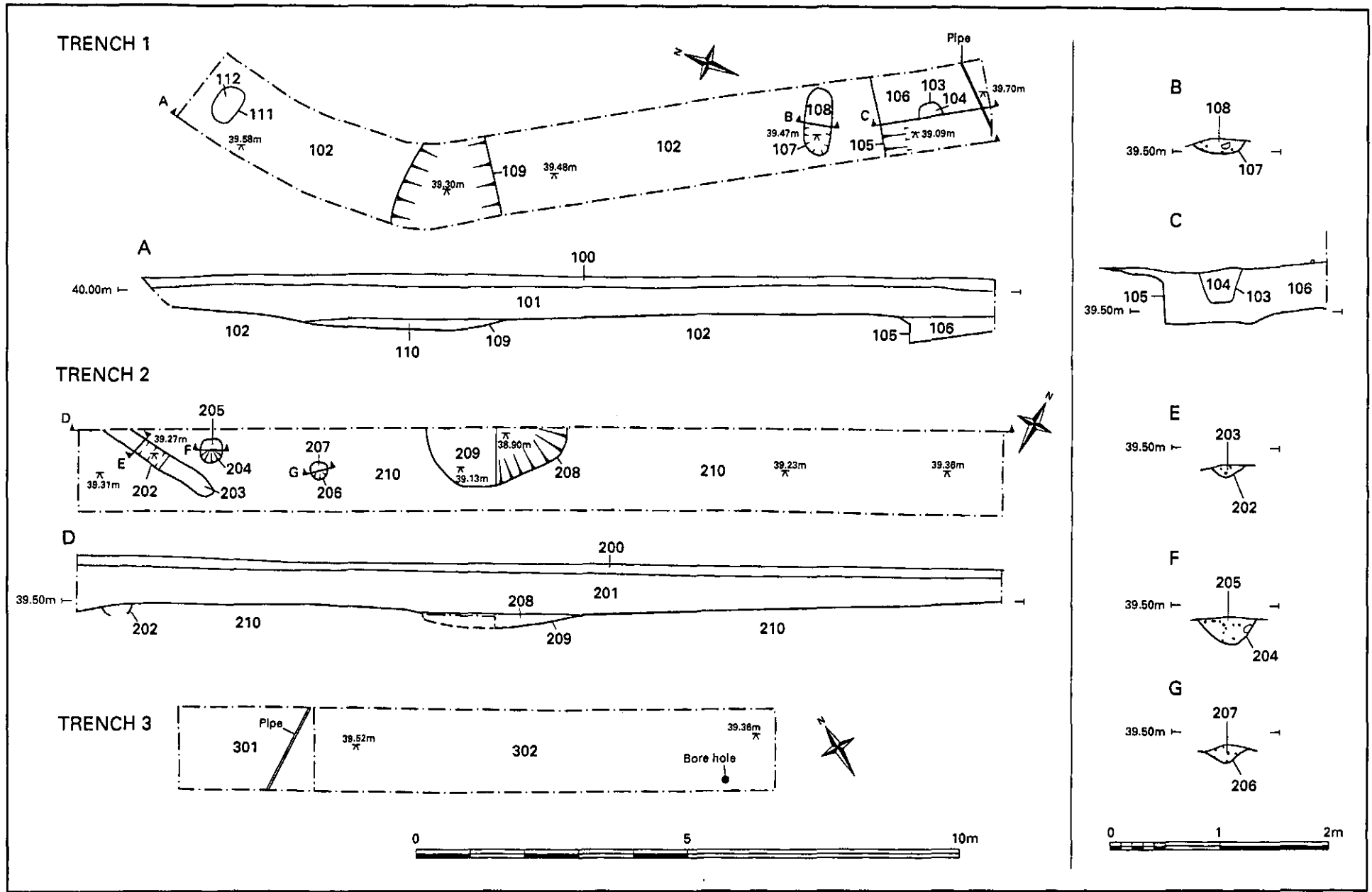


Fig. 3: Trench plans and sections A-G



Fig. 4: Trench 1, southern part



Fig. 6: Gully 202



Fig. 5: Trench 2 from south-west



Fig. 7: Pit 204



Fig. 8: Pit 208

trench but appeared to be somewhat irregular in shape with a flattish base (Section A). It was up to 0.18m deep and was filled by a brown sandy loam with occasional small gravel (110). It could have been a medieval furrow – a series running WSW-ESE was located to the north in 1983. All the features were overlaid by layers of yellowish-brown loamy sand (101) and greyish-brown sandy loam topsoil (100).

Trench 2

5.5 Trench 2 was 17m long and c.1.5m wide (Figs. 3, 5). It was excavated down to geological natural sand and gravel (210) which lay at between 39.23m and 39.36m AOD. It was cut by four features, all at the western end of the trench, two of which contained Roman pottery or tile.

5.6 At the western end of the trench was a small sub-round pit (204) with moderately steeply sloping sides and a rounded base (Fig. 7; Section F). It was 0.26m deep and was filled by a greyish-brown sandy loam (205) with occasional small pebbles and very occasional charcoal flecks. Three sherds of Roman (probably 2nd-century) pottery and a small fragment of tile were recovered from this feature. A large sub-oval pit (208) was located to the east of pit 204. It had gently sloping sides and a flattish base and was filled by 0.25m of brown sandy loam (209) with very occasional small gravel (Fig. 8; Section D). A single fragment of Roman roof tile was recovered from fill 209.

5.7 The westernmost feature was an undated gully (202) which ran in an approximately north-east to south-west direction and butt-ended within the trench. It was 0.11m deep and had moderately steeply sloping sides and a flat base (Fig. 6; Section E). No finds were recovered from its fill, a brown sandy loam with occasional very small gravel (203). To the north-west was a small round posthole (206), 0.18m deep and filled by a greyish-brown sandy loam (207). The features were sealed by layers of yellowish-brown loamy sand (201) and greyish-brown sandy loam topsoil (200). A prehistoric flint scraper and six probably 2nd-century sherds came from 201.

Trench 3

5.8 Trench 3 was 11m long and was c.1.5m wide. It was excavated down to the natural sand and gravel (302) which lay at between 39.36m and 39.52m AOD. The north-western end of the trench which was not fully excavated due to the presence of a live water pipe. The natural sand and gravel was overlaid by 0.53-0.62m of yellowish-brown sandy loam (301) with frequent small gravel. This was overlain by between 0.18 and 0.2m of greyish-brown sandy loam topsoil (300). No archaeological features were observed although a recent borehole was noted at the south-east end of the trench.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Romano-British finds and dated features were confined to the northernmost Trench 2. These consisted of pits 204 and 208, which were broadly similar to the mid-late 2nd-century pits of the cluster located to the north in 1983. The small amount of diagnostic pottery from Trench 2 was also 2nd-century. The undated features in this trench may also have been Romano-British; it is possible that the undated gully marked the southern boundary of the area of pits. The absence of Romano-British features from the other trenches does suggest that activity of this period did not spread over the whole evaluation area.

6.2 The hollow 208 may have been a furrow from the medieval open fields of Tiddington, belonging to the series of these running WSW-ESE which were located to the north in 1983. The features at the south end of Trench 1 were mainly 19th-century and recent. They are likely to be related to the standing building which predates the houses on the frontage and is shown on the 1886 1st edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map within a small enclosure.

Acknowledgements

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Bibliography

British Geological Survey 1974 *Geological Survey of Great Britain 1:50,000 Series England and Wales, Sheet 200, Stratford-upon-Avon, Solid and Drift Geology*

Appendix A: List of contexts recorded

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>
Trench 1	
100	Greyish-brown sandy loam topsoil
101	Yellowish-brown loamy sand layer
102	Geological natural pale yellow sand and small gravel
103	Posthole
104	Posthole fill (of 103)
105	Pit
106	Pit fill (of 105)
107	Pit
108	Pit fill (of 107)
109	Possible pit
110	Possible pit fill (of 109)
111	Modern dog burial
112	Fill of 111
Trench 2	
200	Greyish-brown sandy loam topsoil
201	Yellowish-brown loamy sand layer
202	Gully
203	Gully fill (of 202)
204	Pit
205	Pit fill (of 204)
206	Posthole
207	Posthole fill (of 206)
208	Pit
209	Pit fill (of 208)
210	Geological natural pale yellow sand and small gravel
Trench 3	
300	Greyish-brown sandy loam topsoil
301	Yellowish-brown loamy sand layer
302	Geological natural pale yellow sand and small gravel

Appendix B: List of finds

<i>Context</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Date/Comments</i>
201	Pottery	6	Roman (2nd-century)
201	Flint	1	Side scraper
205	Pottery	3	Roman (?2nd-century)
205	Tile	1	?Roman
209	Tile	1	Roman

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