

# 45 North Street Atherstone Warwickshire

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



**EXPERTISE WHERE YOU NEED IT**

**Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 2104**

**JANUARY 2021**



*Working for  
Warwickshire*

**Project:** 45 North Street evaluation  
**Commissioned by:** John Meeks  
**Site Code:** AN19  
**Planning Reference:** PAP/2018/0724  
**Planning Authority:** North Warwickshire  
**National Grid Reference:** SP 3116 9772  
**Project Manager:** Stuart Palmer MCIfA  
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## SUMMARY

*An archaeological evaluation was carried out on behalf of Mr John Meeks, in advance of the erection of a new dwelling to the rear of 45 North Street, Atherstone, in an area of archaeological potential within the historic town.*

*Geological natural sandy clay was exposed in both trenches. No finds pre-dating the later post-medieval period were recovered and the remains of structures depicted on mapping from the later 19th century were uncovered in both trenches.*

*No significant archaeological deposits or finds were recorded.*

# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Planning permission has been granted by North Warwickshire Borough Council for the erection of 2 x two bed maisonettes and 1 x one bed maisonette and alterations to an existing dwelling at 45 North Street, Atherstone, CV9 1JW (Planning Ref: PAP/2018/0724). The development site lies within an area of archaeological potential in the near vicinity of the route of a Roman road and within the medieval town of Atherstone. A condition of planning permission required that a programme of trial trenching be carried out prior to the development, in line with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared on behalf of the developer, dated May 2019.
- 1.2 Archaeology Warwickshire were commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation in accordance with the approved WSI, which took place on the 23rd January 2020. This report presents the results of that work.
- 1.3 From an initially anticipated 2 x 20m long trenches, the scope was reduced to two shorter trenches as the ground in the south-western part of the site houses a main foul drain and a live water pipe and the extent of the site as shown on the original planning application was 12m wider than the plot under the ownership of the client at present.
- 1.4 The archive will be stored at Warwickshire Museum under the site code AN19.
- 1.5 This work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standard and guidance for field evaluation (2014).

## 2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The site is centred on national grid reference SP 3116 9772, in the town of Atherstone, on the north side of Long Street, to the rear of 45 North Street. The proposed development area covers an area of approximately 0.08 hectares. The site slopes down from south to north.
  
- 2.2 The underlying geology of the area is Gunthorpe member – Mudstone, Sedimentary Bedrock with superficial deposits of Anker Sand and Gravel (British Geological Survey 2019).

### 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 North Street runs parallel and slightly to the north of Long Street: the name within Atherstone for a stretch of the Roman road known as Watling Street (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record No MWA 420) which was constructed by the Romans between Wroxeter and Canterbury (Margary 1973). No Roman period finds or deposits have been found within the town of Atherstone although to the south-east the village of Mancetter is built around an important Roman fortress constructed in the 1st century AD, which was succeeded by a Roman town at Mancetter (*Manduessedum*).
- 3.2 The manor of Atherstone (*Aderstone*) was held by the Countess Godiva (*Godgifu*) of Mercia (widow of Leofric) at the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086 (VCH 1904, 309). That it was a relatively minor place at this time is shown by the fact that it belonged to the parish of Mancetter and had no church of its own. Atherstone, along with most of Godiva's other lands, subsequently passed into the hands of the Earl of Chester. It was then granted by Hugh the Earl of Chester to the Abbey of Bec Herlouin in Normandy (VCH 1947, 126-8). The Church of St Mary (MWA 269) to the north of Long Street was probably built on the foundations of the 12th-century chapel of the alien Abbey of Bec (MWA 6115). A house of Austin Friars was founded by Ralph Lord Basset of Drayton in 1375 (MWA 267) to the north-east of the present church.
- 3.3 In 1246 Henry III granted the *Abbey of Bec* a weekly market in their manor of Atherstone. The promotion of markets by lords, both lay and ecclesiastical, was common in this period and was normally accompanied by the laying out of a market place and properties for rental by traders and others drawn to settle by the market. In some instances a whole new town would be created. Atherstone was one of these (MWA 9488) and a plan of 1716 by Robert Hewitt shows the market place and, long thin plots in the streets off the market place in a manner that was typical of medieval town planning. These plots combined a maximum of area with a minimum of valuable frontage space. Many of these properties survive in the modern town plan (Fig 1).
- 3.4 Medieval archaeological remains have been found within 25m of the application site when a pit containing medieval pottery sherds was recorded at The Dolphin Inn to the south, during archaeological observation in 2000 (MWA 8830; EWA 6854).

- 3.5 Although there were a number of other market towns in the area, Atherstone was well situated to attract custom, the market flourished through the 13th and early 14th centuries and the town grew with it. Atherstone thrived and by the mid-16th century the population was again on the increase (Watts and Winyard 1988, 13).
- 3.6 As the plan of 1716 suggests the town retained its medieval character into the 18th century. However, in the 19th century it changed from a market town serving an area whose economy was predominantly based on agriculture to a place whose prosperity was based on the factory manufacture of hats and silk ribbons. In 1828 the town had seven hat factories and by the 1880s this had increased to twelve factories which form the economic base for the modern town. Hat factory sites recorded within the search area include a hat factory west of Woolpack Way (MWA 5818) and Vero Works Hat Factory (MWA 12996).
- 3.7 Observation of foundation trenches 20m to the south-east of the application site and to the rear of 176 Long Street in 2001 (EWA 7039) revealed three or possibly four post-medieval rubbish pits containing pottery sherds, although the majority of the pottery was post-1800 (MWA 8984). The pits are thought to be refuse pits associated with a row of cottages extant in 1903. Cobbled surfaces were also uncovered and probably represent yards associated with the former dwellings (MWA 8982).
- 3.8 The modern Market Place lies to the south of St Mary's Church (MWA 269) and probably originally extended as far as Watling Street to attract passing travellers. Encroachment onto market places in the course of the medieval period is a process that is observable in many towns. It seems that stalls gradually became less temporary and developed into permanent buildings.
- 3.9 In the post-medieval period Atherstone became home to a large number of Inns and public houses as the town was on a major coaching route. Hat-making developed as a major industry in the town.
- 3.10 Census records tell us that the 'Yard' in which the site lies, Cotton Mill Yard, was in existence at least as early as 1841, when a number of hatters lived in properties there. It is not known if the yard was ever occupied by a cotton mill, but a large number of people from the former workhouse (MWA 5825) on the south side of Long Street were



employed in manufacturing cotton. Map regression identifies building within the application site being under a different alignment to that of today. The Ordnance Survey First Edition 1:500 map of 1887 (Fig 2) shows a yard, recorded as Cotton Mill Yard, perpendicular to North Street, running down the centre of the plot. A row of 8 or 9 tenements face into it down the north-western side of the plot. Further buildings are present to the rear of the tenements. Another row of four buildings is present on the eastern side of the lane.

3.11 This broad arrangement persists to the time of the Ordnance Survey mapping of 1958 (Landmark 2003b) although the layout of buildings on the eastern side of the plot had changed and the yard was still known as Cotton Mill Yard. These houses were demolished shortly after and the land at the rear of the site was occupied by another building, locally referred to as ‘the Water Board building’. The small buildings to the rear of the tenements have now gone. No 45 North Street is first shown on OS mapping of 1971.

3.12 The current layout of road frontage dwelling and rear yard is present at the time of the Google Earth Images of 1999 (earth.google.com). The area was under hardstanding and another building was present at the rear of the plot. The application site also takes in part of the rear of the neighbouring plot to the west (No 43, and on the original application, part of the plot further west than this, but this is not within the application area of the current development).

3.13 Monuments within the 500m radius search area which are not otherwise mentioned in the text:

MONUMENT	DESCRIPTION
MWA 260	Findspot of post-medieval coin hoard
MWA 262	Probable site of Windmill near “Mill View”, South Street
MWA264	Probable site of Windmill, South Street
MWA 267	Site of Atherstone Friary
MWA 269	Church of St Mary
MWA 270	Site of Atherstone Hall
MWA 271	Site of Convent Priory of St Scholastica, a priory dating to the imperial period.
MWA 277	The site of a post medieval/ imperial brick kiln south of Witherley Road, Atherstone
MWA 296	Direction sign, Long Street

MWA 375	Site of Ice House off Long Street
MWA 420	Watling Street Roman Road
MWA 2428	Site of post-medieval Nonconformist Meeting House
MWA 2429	Independent Chapel, Nonconformist
MWA 2430	Friends Meeting House (Quaker Meeting House), Atherstone
MWA 2431	Wesleyan Chapel
MWA 4449	Neolithic or Bronze Age flint findspot
MWA 5819	Site of Smithy
MWA 5825	Site of Atherstone Union Workhouse and Cotton Mill
MWA 5826	Site of Corn Mill
MWA 5827	Site of Smithy
MWA 5828	The site of a racecourse which was located north of Princess Road, Atherstone, recorded on the Ordnance Survey map of 1887.
MWA 6115	Chapel of Atherstone Friary
MWA 6116	Atherstone Grammar School
MWA 7392	Atherstone Market Place
MWA 8755	15 Market Place, Grade II Listed Building
MWA 8928	Undated building material at Holte Road
MWA 9488	Atherstone Medieval settlement
MWA 12502	Atherstone Hall Park
MWA 12506	Atherstone Villa Group Gardens, early 19 <sup>th</sup> century urban villa gardens
MWA 12717	206 Long Street (Part of Atherstone Upper School). Late 18 <sup>th</sup> / early 19 <sup>th</sup> century house.
MWA 13092	Trinity Church – Wesleyan Methodist
MWA 13218	Druid Arms public house
MWA 13219	Lord Nelson public house
MWA 13220	Hand and Bottle public house
MWA 13221	Blue Bell public house
MWA 13222	Black Boy public house
MWA 13223	The Three Tuns public house
MWA 13224	Red Lion Hotel public house
MWA 13237	Site of Phoenix Inn
MWA 13239	The Angel public house
MWA 13241	Spirit Vaults public house
MWA 13242	Royal Oak public house
MWA 13243	New Swan public house
MWA 13244	Site of The Board public house

MWA 13245	White Horse Inn
MWA 13246	Site of Coach and Horses public house
MWA 13247	Site of Haunch of Venison public house
MWA 13248	Hat and Beaver public house
MWA 13249	Black Horse public house
MWA 13250	The Dolphin Inn public house
MWA 13251	Old Swan Inn public house
MWA 13253	Site of Bull's Head public house
MWA 20193	Timber-framed building at rear of 14 Church Street
MWA 20195	Medieval timber-framed building at 12 Church Street, encased in 18th-century building
MWA 20200	Industrial building at 12 Church St, 19th-century
MWA 20201	Phoenix House, 19th-century building
MWA 20273	10 Church Street, 18th-century
MWA 20274	Building at rear of 10 Church Street, 19th-century
MWA 20275	Former Unitarian Chapel
MWA 20276	Boundary Wall at Phoenix Yard
MWA 20277	Hat factory building
MWA 20278	Hat factory building
MWA 20280	W. A. Hatton hat factory
MWA 20282	W. A. Hatton hat factory
MWA 29635	An area of quarrying south of Mancetter Cottage

## 4 AIMS AND METHODS

- 4.1 The main aim of the evaluation was to determine if there are any significant archaeological remains in the area to be developed; to form an understanding of their value and their potential to shed light on the subsequent development of the area.
- 4.2 Secondary aims included placing the results in their wider local and regional contexts as appropriate.
- 4.3 The objectives were to locate, record and analyse archaeological materials and deposits and to disseminate the results in an appropriate format.
- 4.4 Prior to the evaluation the garage that had stood adjacent to No 45 North Street had been demolished, as had the building that had previously stood in the rear of the site. The tarmac was partially grubbed out and the former boundary walling between the rear parts of Nos 45 and 43 North Street had been largely demolished. The ramp along the rear part of the south-east boundary was still in existence and the majority of the central part of the site had demolition debris on the surface. The ground to the rear of No 43 was significantly higher than the majority of the area behind No 45. We were informed that a large sewer main and a live water pipe ran down the south-eastern side of the site, making trenching there inadvisable.
- 4.5 it was originally proposed to evaluate the site by means of two x 20m long trenches, however the development area proved to be significantly narrower than originally drawn up, with live services running down the south-eastern part, meaning both trenches were shorter than anticipated due to the constraints of the site.
- 4.6 Topsoil and demonstrably modern overburden were removed by an appropriate machine using a toothless bucket under direct archaeological supervision. Ground reduction was carried out in shallow spits until the uppermost archaeological horizon, or the geological natural was reached (whichever the higher).

## 5 RESULTS

### Geological Natural

- 5.1 The geological natural in both trenches was a red clayey sand (104 and 206) which was exposed at a depth of 0.80-1.00 below the current ground surface.

### Deposit Sequence

- 5.2 Where not disturbed by anthropogenic activity, the geological natural was directly overlain by a simple sequence of soils in the north-western ends of both trenches. A layer of brownish pebbly clay (103 and 205) 0.20-0.29m thick, overlain by 0.30-0.41m of dark brown buried topsoil (102 and 204). This old topsoil layer had been overlain with 0.17-0.23m of reddish brown hardcore, itself overlain by 0.24-0.35m of modern topsoil (100 and 200).
- 5.3 The remains of modern boundary walls (105, 201, 207, 220) were associated with a number of salt-glazed drains (106, 110, 225) that crossed the area.
- 5.4 A 1.20m wide blue brick path was recorded in Trench 1 on the upper terrace on the south section of the trench; it did not appear to extend into the trench nor reach the north section. A similar area of blue brick paving was recorded in Trench 2 (210), here suggesting a path heading towards the former alley between 43 and 45. This paving was overlaid by modern topsoil.

### Structural features

- 5.5 Archaeological features relating to the former line of houses along the north-west property boundary of No 45 were recorded in both trenches. A single construction cut number was given for this in each trench (113 in T1 and 126 in T2). The walls of the former buildings had been demolished roughly to former ground level, with the walls standing a maximum of two bricks high above their internal floor levels (0.17m). In Trench 1 the southern wall of a building was recorded, 0.24m wide (117) and c.5.20m long, with a fireplace off the central wall (126 and 126). The floor (123) was mostly of brick pavers, but a few large (9") quarry tiles had been laid to the west side of the chimney breast and the paving of the floor was haphazard. To the south of wall 117 was an area of rubble (116), with a small stub of another wall projecting south (127).

- 5.6 In Trench 2 the house that had formerly occupied this area was less well preserved. The eastern wall of the building (215) was recorded, along with the remnant of a central wall, possible subdividing the building, or part of a chimney breast (217) and a single skin brick wall (216) subdividing rooms or houses. Wall 214 may represent the subdivision between two buildings. The western wall to the structure in this trench has been lost in the area of modern walling 221, which followed the NW property line. Within the building the geological natural was overlain by yellowish brown sand (212), itself overlain by 10mm of red bedding sand for the paved/tiled floor, of which only a small area was apparent. The remnants of flooring within the building existed in two areas, with quarry tiles by wall 215 and pavers by wall 217; it is possible that these are simply variants of the same floor.
- 5.7 In both trenches the remains of a blue brick path was recorded alongside the houses (120 and 218), bounded by a brick wall (121 and 220). This external wall is recorded as a line parallel to the houses on historic mapping and on a photograph of the houses taken c.1950, the yard itself can be seen to slope up from North Street towards Long Street while this paved area ran in front of the entrances to the houses, with a low wall separating it from the raised area of the yard (WCRO PH 1035/C9109). The paving sloped down to the outer wall slightly, presumably to facilitate drainage away from the houses. In the south side of Trench 1 two steps were recorded (118) leading down onto the path; steps are indicated in this area on the 1:500 plan of 1887. The 0.27m change in level between the path in Trenches 1 and 2 suggests the path probably sloped down towards the street.
- 5.8 The blue brick paving was overlaid, in both trenches, by a thin layer (max 0.10m) of broken roof slates (119 and 219), which does not occur inside the buildings. The slate layer and the remaining walls and flooring were overlaid with a mix of topsoil and demolition rubble (116).

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 No early archaeological deposits or finds were recorded on the site. Geological natural was recorded in both trenches.
- 6.2 The remains of structures that existed from at least the late 19th century into the 1950s were recorded, demolished to ground level.
- 6.3 The ground had been built up in the area behind No 43 North Street, while much of that in the area behind 45 North Street had been truncated in the later 20th century after the 19th-century buildings had been demolished and a 20th-century building erected in the middle of the rear part of the site.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## APPENDICES

### A List of contexts

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Depth ( m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	100	Dark grey brown humic loam	0.24	Topsoil
1	101	Layer of reddish brown hardcore	0.17	Modern layer
1	102	Layer of dark grey brown silt with large fragments of stone and bricks	0.41	Old topsoil layer? Produced finds of glass and pottery
1	103	Layer of brown clay with pebbles	0.29	
1	104	Reddish clayey sand		Geological natural
1	105	Brick wall		Wall runs NE-SW, former property boundary
1	106	Salt-glazed drain running diagonally across trench (W-E)		200mm pipe, upper terrace
1	107	Cut for drain 106		
1	108	Square cut		Modern feature
1	109	Dark grey gritty silt with brick fragments		Not excavated
1	110	Second salt-glazed drain		Running diagonally across trench, upper terrace
1	111	Layer of rubble – large sandstone fragments and bricks	0.40	Lower terrace, partly the result of material from the upper terrace being moved backwards during excavation of trench on upper terrace part
1	112	Cut for brick wall 113		
1	113	Brick wall		Western side of former house
1	114	Layer of very mixed	0.40	Backfill to east of former house

		reddish-brown clay with lots of tile fragments		
1	115	Blue brick floor in south section, 1.20m wide	0.11	Path?
1	116	Layer of rubble – mixed topsoil, brick, stones in dark grey brown silty loam	0.50	Post-1950s demolition
1	117	Brick walling		South side of former house
1	118	Blue brick steps		Two high,
1	119	Layer of slate rubble	0.10	Slate roof debris
1	120	Blue brick paved passage floor		In line with steps 118
1	121	Brick wall		On east side of floor 120, marks edge of passage
1	122	Brick wall		East side of house
1	123	Floor made up of brick pavers and large quarry tiles		Floor of house interior
1	124	Layer of broken wall plaster over paved floor	0.12-0.14	Remains of plaster adhering to wall in recess east of fireplace
1	125	Chimney breast side wall		West side of fireplace
1	126	Chimney breast side wall		East side of fireplace
1	127	Stub of wall to south of 117		
2	200	Dark grey brown humic loam and rubble	0.35	Topsoil
2	201	Modern hollow-concrete block wall, part demolished		Former property boundary between rear of 43 and 45 North Street, still standing in south part of site

2	202	Line of bricks (one brick thick) in NW end of trench, modern		
2	203	Layer of reddish brown hardcore, as in T1	0.23	Modern layer
2	204	Very dark brown silty loam,. Runs up to wall 201	0.30	Old topsoil on upper terrace behind 43 North Street
2	205	Layer of reddish brown silty clay with pebbles	0.20	Subsoil layer
2	206	Red clayey sand		Geological natural
2	207	Modern concrete block boundary wall		Property boundary running to W side of former passage behind No 43
2	208	Cut for wall 207, 0.12m to W of wall		Modern wall cut
2	209	Fill of 208, concrete		Modern fill
2	210	Blue brick path surface		Passage outside of houses, modern, leading to former gateway behind No 43
2	211	Brick wall, very solid, NCB Birch Coppice bricks		Recent boundary wall
2	212	Layer of yellowish brown sand		?levelling deposit
2	213	Quarry tile floor, 9" tiles (240mm)	0.03	
2	214	Brick wall		Cross wall within houses
2	215	Brick wall, east wall of house		
2	216	Brick wall, single skin, running off 216		1.55 SW of No 43 current back wall
2	217	Remnant of brick wall		
2	218	Blue brick paved surface of passage E of houses		19thC surface – passage indicated on 1st Edition map

2	219	Layer of broken roof slate overlying passage floor	0.08	
2	220	Brick wall, east side of passage		
2	221	Red bedding sand below quarry tile floor		
2	222	Pipe trench cut for salt-glazed pipe leading to inspection chamber west of wall 211		Modern service trench
2	223	Area of pavers and quarry tile paving to E of wall 217		May be part of same floor as 213
2	224	Fill of 222 – mixed topsoil and rubble		Not excavated
2	225	Salt-glazed drain within 222		Leading to inspection chamber behind No 43
2	226	Cut for construction of walling in T2		

**B List of finds (not retained)**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>102</b>	Glass	2	1 miniature brown JAMES EADIE LTD, BURTON ON TRENT bottle, 1 colourless wine glass base
<b>102</b>	Pottery	8	1 green shell-edged Pearlware, 1 Pearlware with blue-transfer decoration, 1 black transfer-decorated pearlware, 1 Creamware, 2 banded slipware (probably Mocha), 2 MGW blue-transfer-decorated
<b>223</b>	Pottery	2	1 blue shell-edged Pearlware, 1 MGW cup handle
<b>223</b>	Clay pipe	1	Stem





1: Site before evaluation, note higher ground to rear of No 43 on left



2: Trench 1





3: Trench 1, blue brick paving and steps outside former house



4: Trench 2, blue brick paving 218 with former house beyond



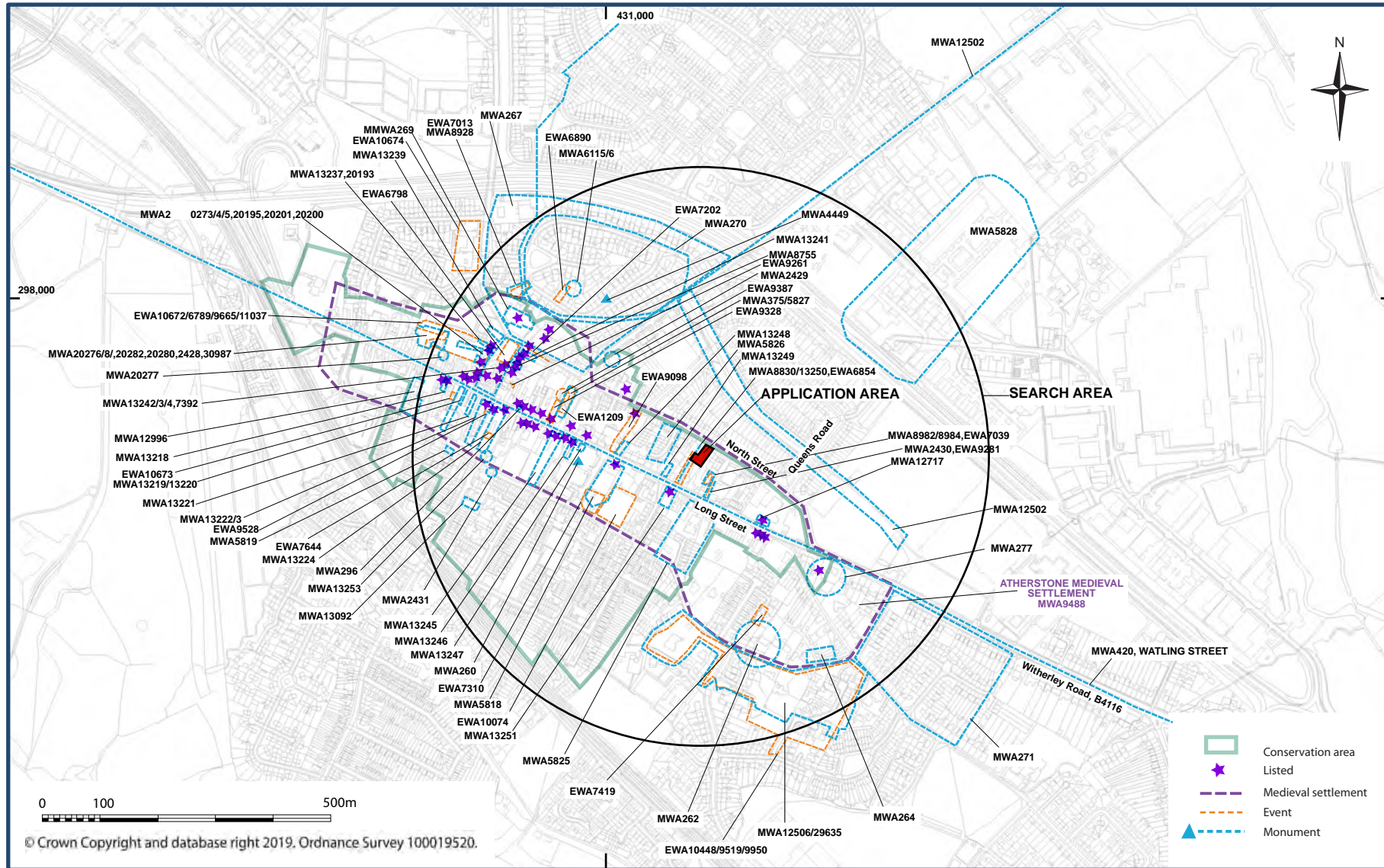


Fig 1: Location of application area and Historic Environment information





Fig 2: Detail from Atherstone 1:500 town map 1887

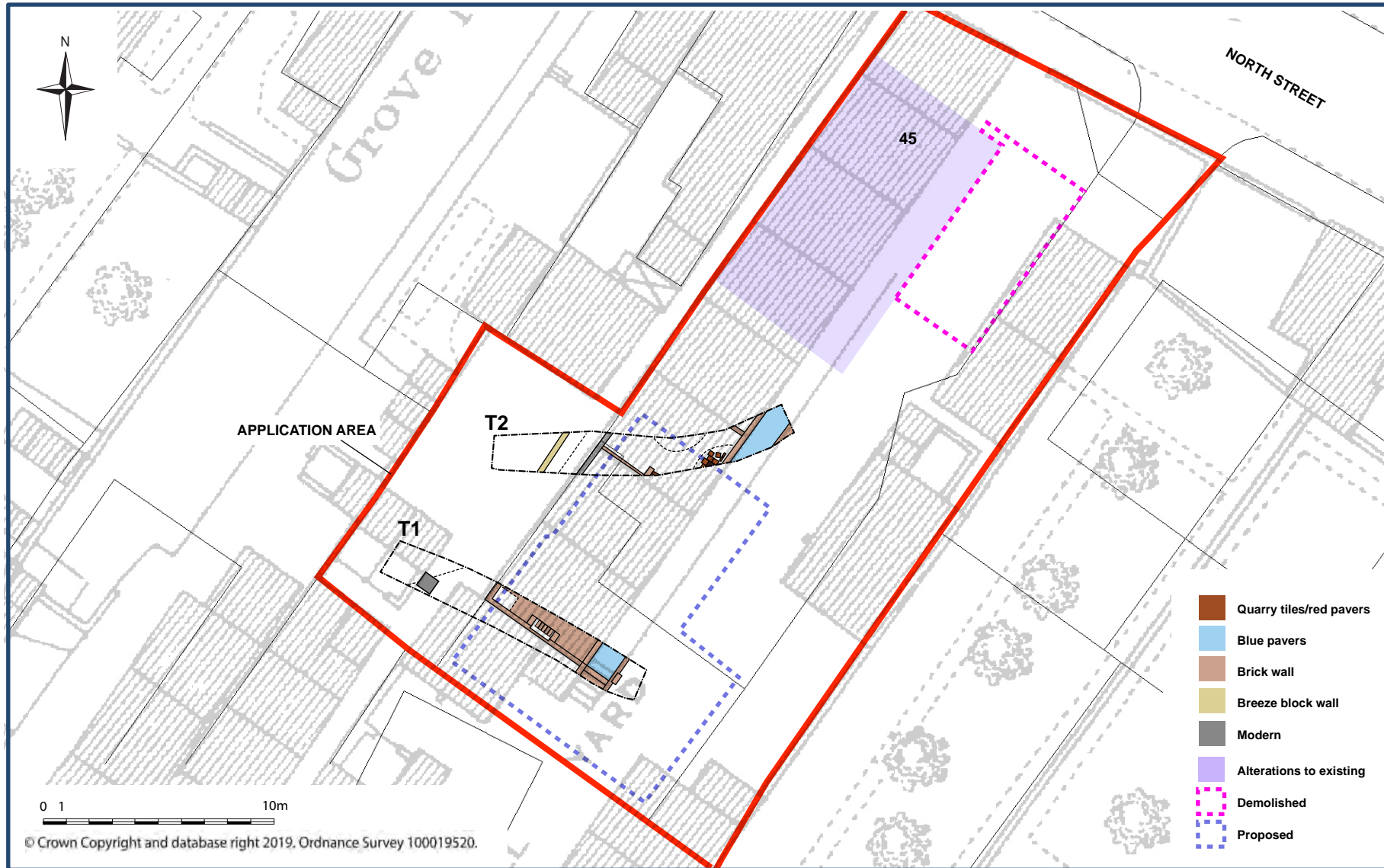


Fig 3: Location of excavated trenches with Atherstone 1:500 town map 1887 in the background



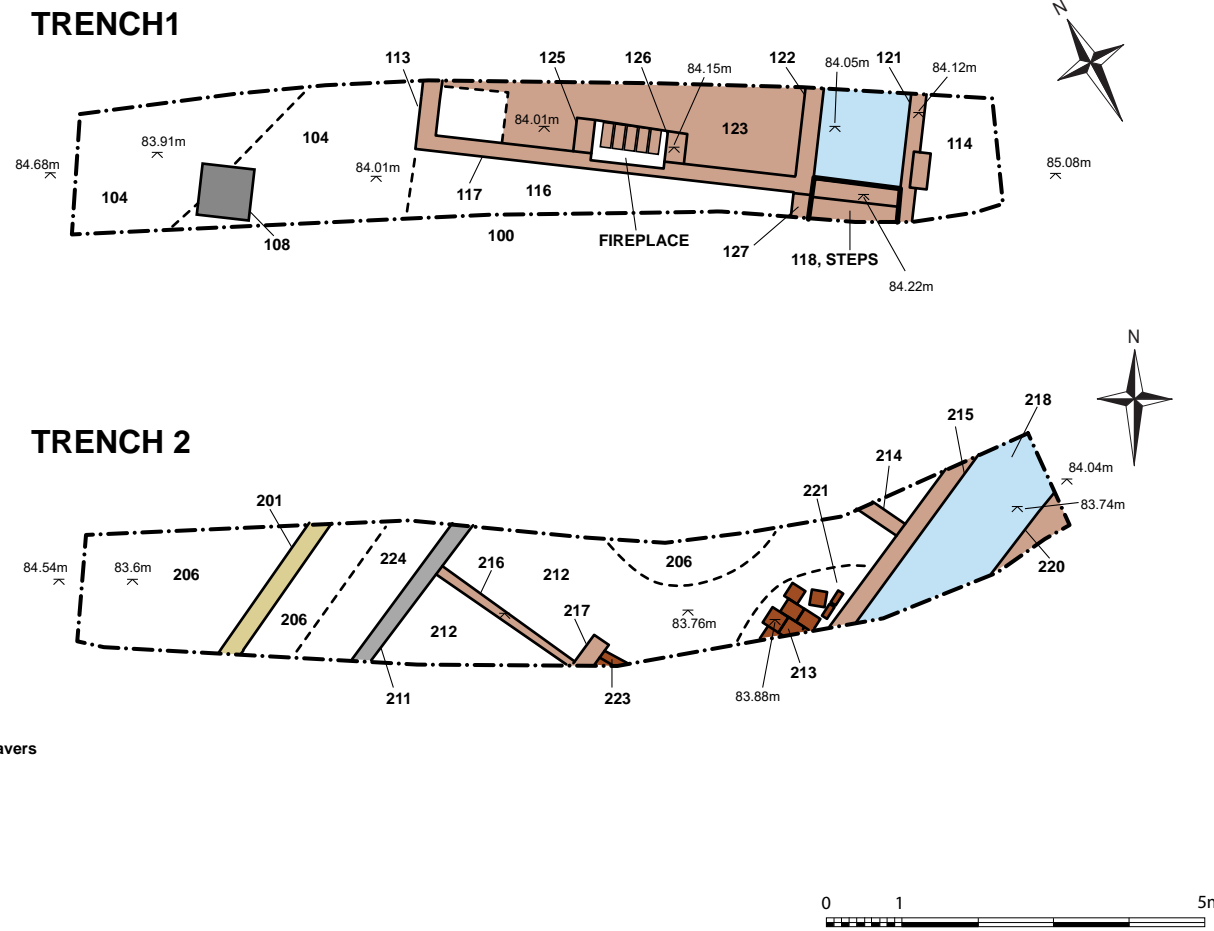


Fig 4: Detail of trenches