

Former Caravan Park Bush Hill Farm, Flecknoe Wolfhampcote, Warwickshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



EXPERTISE WHERE YOU NEED IT

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1965

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*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: Former Caravan Park, Flecknoe
Commissioned by: Jill Sinclair
Site Code: WFB19
Planning Reference: 19/0800
Planning Authority: Rugby Borough Council
National Grid Reference: SP 5122 6335
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SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation, comprising four approximately 30m x 1.8m trial trenches, was carried out on behalf of Ms Jill Sinclair in close proximity to the scheduled area of Flecknoe medieval settlement.

Geological natural sandy clay was revealed in all the trenches and along with several archaeological features.

The remains of 19th century buildings depicted on 19th century mapping were revealed at the eastern end of the site along with several large brick filled sumps of probable 20th century date.

A significant proportion of the features were undated and these included a large curving ditch and a sequence of co-axial ditches. These features were all sterile of finds or evidence of occupation activity which may suggest that they predated the medieval settlement.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Planning permission is being sought for the residential development of a former caravan park at Bush Hill Lane, Flecknoe, Wolfhampcote, Warwickshire, (Planning Ref: 19/0800). The site is within an area of archaeological potential being close to shrunken settlement earthworks of national significance. The planning adviser to Rugby District Council recommended a programme of trial trench evaluation prior to the determination of the application.
- 1.2 Archaeology Warwickshire were commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the planning authority. This took place on the 1st and 2nd May 2019. This report presents the results of that work.
- 1.3 The four trenches were positioned according to the agreed layout although the length was reduced in several instances due to the presence of services. The omitted sections are likely to have been disturbed by those services.
- 1.4 The work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standard and guidance for field evaluation (2014). The site archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under the site code WFB19.

2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The site is located at the western edge of the village of Flecknoe and to the south of Bush Hill Lane, partly surrounded by the modern farm buildings and dwellings of Bush Hill Farm, in the parish of Wolfhampcote. The application area backs onto farmland to the north and west and is centred on National Grid Reference SP 5122 6336 (Fig 1). The conversion to a caravan park included the construction of hardstanding, hook up points and a modern utility block which remain present on the site.
- 2.2 The application site is within an area of archaeological potential being within the shrunken medieval settlement of Flecknoe. Some of the better preserved remains adjacent to Bush Hill Farm are protected as a Scheduled Monument (National Heritage List for England (NHLE) no. 1020934).
- 2.3 The underlying bedrock geology of the site is Charmouth mudstone (British Geological Survey 2018).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Later Prehistoric

- 3.1 The Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (HER) records a number of crop marks in pasture 230m to the south-west of Bush Hill Farm (MWA 3049, Fig 1), describing features probably representing enclosures. However, a subsequent re-interpretation of these features has questioned the authenticity of these crop marks as being of archaeological origin.

Roman/ Anglo-Saxon

- 3.2 The earliest confirmed evidence of human activity within the village is in the form of excavated ditches, interpreted as belonging to a field/ enclosure system of the 2nd century AD (MWA 7401; EWA 3296), over 400m to the east of the site near to Manor Farmhouse. The same site also produced evidence for Late Anglo-Saxon activity, present from the fills of two ditches as sherds of St Neots ware pottery of 9th/10th century date.
- 3.3 Roman features have been found at Hunter's Moon, 230m to the east of Bush Hill Farm in the centre of the mediaeval village. Four trial trenches excavated in advance of a small housing development in 1996 (EWA 953) revealed Romano-British pottery and a possible Romano-British gully (MWA 7492) as well as medieval boundary gullies dating from the 11th to 15th centuries. An archaeological evaluation (EWA 7307), in 2001, revealed Roman period pottery and a possible Roman period gully (MWA 9668).

Medieval

- 3.4 By 1086, the time of the Domesday survey, Flecknoe was a thriving village (MWA 3042) containing about 26 households and a total population that can be estimated at about 110 people (VCH 1904, 303, 321, 342-3). It was one of four medieval settlements in the parish of Wolfhampcote, along with Sawbridge, Nethercote and Wolfhampcote (VCH 1951, 269). Along with most villages in the region it will have expanded during the 12th and 13th centuries reaching its maximum extent in the early 14th century.
- 3.5 By 1360 there was a chapel in Flecknoe (MWA6372) which may have belonged to the Manor House. Dugdale records a decayed chapel at Flecknoe in the 17th century.

Documentary evidence suggests that another chapel existed at Nethercote (MWA 5373) approximately 500m to the north of Flecknoe, although this too was described as decayed in the 17th century (VCH 1951, 273).

- 3.6 Medieval archaeological remains have been recovered from in a number of places in the village, the nearest of which to the application site were revealed within the Scheduled Area of the shrunken village behind Vicarage Road and approximately 130m to the north of Bush Hill Farm during the observation of trenches for a new sewerage system. A limestone surface, possibly associated with a building and a section of wall associated with a late medieval building were found alongside features which post-dated the medieval period (EWA 7108).
- 3.7 The wall foundations of one or two medieval buildings were revealed during an evaluation of land adjacent to Holly Tree House by Archaeology Warwickshire in 2001, approximately 280m to the north-east of the application site (MWA 9138; EWA 7082). On the east edge of the village, 430m to the east, trial trenching to the rear of Manor Farmhouse in 1992 (MWA 6406; EWA833) and a subsequent watching brief in 1994 (MWA 7401; EWA 3296) revealed evidence for medieval activity from the 10th to the 15th centuries, including re-cut boundary ditches and late medieval (14th-15th century) pits and a cobbled surface. The archaeological evaluation at Hunter's Moon, 230m to the east of Bush Hill Farm also revealed medieval boundary gullies dating from the 11th to 15th centuries (EWA 953; MWA 10248).

Post-Medieval

- 3.8 The earthwork remains of features interpreted as cock pits (probably 18th century, though possibly earlier) survive on Bush Hill, with the Scheduled Area (NHLE Ref: 1020934) to the west of the village (MWA 1355). A windmill, also on Bush Hill, is mentioned in 1587 and 1687 (MWA 2944; VCH 1951) and is depicted on a map of 1725 (Beighton 1725), although it went out of use in the 18th century.
- 3.9 The existing church of St Mark (MWA 3041) is a later replacement having been built in 1891 and the Methodist chapel in 1837 (MWA 3040). Other post-medieval features recorded within the village include the village stocks, described as being restored in 1983 (MWA 2946). A pair of post-medieval cottages are recorded at The Gate, the eastern of which was demolished during the 20th century (MWA 9709).

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 The area was evaluated by means of 115m of trial trenching located across the site. The presence of services including sewers and power cables resulted in some slight reduction in trench lengths in order to avoid these.
- 4.5 Topsoil, former ploughsoils 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 across the evaluation trenches was yellowish brown sandy clay (117, 203, 302 and 409) which was exposed at between 161.8m aOD and 160.8m aOD in the western part of the site. Where not truncated by anthropogenic activity, the top of the natural was typically 0.6m to 0.7m below current ground surface.

Archaeological Deposits

- 5.2 Archaeological features were found in all four trenches although significant features were restricted to the western trenches (1 and 2).

Undated Features

- 5.3 At the south end of Trench 1, east/west aligned ditch 106=114, was approximately 0.4m wide and 0.2m deep and probably aligned with ditch 216 at the southern end of Trench 2. It had an uncertain relationship with north/south aligned ditch 112 which was 0.9m wide and 0.25m deep. No finds were recovered from either feature.
- 5.4 At the northern end of trench 2, two broadly parallel and characteristically similar ditches (204 and 206), 0.18m-0.2m deep and 0.5m wide contained grey brown silty clay fills (205 and 207). No finds were recovered.

Possible Field Boundary

- 5.5 A large ditch, 1.8m to 2.2m wide but only 0.4m deep curved across the site in Trenches 1 – 3 (110, 209, 311). It was filled with silty clay (111, 310) but no dating evidence was recovered.

18th/19th/20th Century Features

- 5.6 This phase included a variety of pits and fragmentary building remains which roughly coincided with domestic buildings marked on the OS First Edition map of 1895. A 1952 halfpenny was recorded (not retained) from tiled surface (405).
- 5.7 The pits included 212, 309, and 307. Pit 307 was at least 7m wide and 1.8m deep, but probably substantially larger and was backfilled with brick rubble (303). Pit 309 was at least 5m in diameter and also contained brick rubble (309). These were

probably sumps as they appeared to be related to a timber and plastic-lined slot (105, 214). Other service trenches in trench (101, 103) were associated with the more recent use of the site.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Evidence for a variety of activities was revealed in the evaluation trenches although the majority of dateable features were linked with the 19th and 20th century usage of the site. These remains were associated with domestic and agricultural activity and included the evidence of 19th/20th century buildings shown on the First Edition and later Ordnance Survey mapping, large soakaway or rubbish pits and associated drains or other services.
- 6.2 No finds predating the 18th century were recovered during the evaluation and no features or remains which could be definitely ascribed to the nearby medieval settlement activity were present.
- 6.3 In Trenches 1 and 2 were found a sequence of undated linear features on an apparent co-axial alignment. It is likely that these features are contemporary and form a group. The absence of medieval debris in their fills, in such close proximity to known shrunken settlement, might be taken to suggest that they are earlier than the medieval village, although their apparent alignment with the modern boundary system counts against this.
- 6.4 The wide, shallow ditch evident in Trenches 1 - 3, possibly relates to a hedge line, a boundary is depicted close by on the First Edition Ordnance Survey, although the curving nature of the evaluated sections would seem to preclude this. In any event it is on a different alignment to the other undated features and seems likely to belong to a different phase of activity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1: Trench 1, looking north, with ditches 106 and 105 in foreground



2: Trench 2, showing 204 and 206



3: Trench 1, looking west showing ditch 104/110



4: Trench 3 looking south showing pits 309 and 311 in foreground



5: Trench 4, Wall 403 looking south

APPENDICES

A List of contexts

Trench	Context	Description	Thickness (m)	Comment
1	100	Grey brown silty clay loam	0.2	Topsoil
1	101	Service trench		Geological natural
1	102	Service trench	0.4	Modern
1	103	Service trench	0.6	Modern
1	104	Ditch (same as 109)		
1	105	Modern drain trench		Modern
1	106	Ditch (same as 112)		Undated
1	107	Ditch (same as 114)		Undated
1	108	Yellowish brown sandy clay		Geological natural
1	109	Fill of Ditch		Undated
1	110	Ditch		Undated
1	111	Fill of ditch		Undated
1	112	Ditch		Undated
1	113	Fill of ditch		Undated
1	114	Ditch		Undated
1	115	Overburden		Modern
1	116	Light grey brown silty clay		Subsoil/old ploughsoil
1	117	Yellowish brown silty sand clay		Geological natural
2	200	Grey brown silty clay loam	0.2	Topsoil
2	201	Layer of hardcore/rubble	0.25	Overburden
2	202	Yellowish brown silty clay	0.2	
2	203	Yellowish brown sandy clay		Geological natural
2	204	Ditch		Undated
2	205	Fill of ditch		Undated
2	206	Ditch/gully		Undated
2	207	Fill of ditch/gully		Undated
2	208	Fill of ditch		Undated
2	209	?Ditch (same as 210, 311)		Undated
2	210	Ditch		Undated
2	211	Fill of pit		18th/19th century
2	212	Pit		18th/19th century

Trench	Context	Description	Thickness (m)	Comment
3	300	Dark grey sandy loam	0.2 -0.25	Topsoil
3	301	Layer of hardcore/rubble	0.25	
3	302	?Upper fill of Pit 307		
3	303	Fill of Pit 307		20th century
3	304	Fill of Pit 307		19th/20th century
3	305	Yellowish brown sandy clay		Geological natural
3	306	?Fill of Pit 307		20th century
3	307	Pit		20th century
3	308	Fill of Pit		19th/20th century
3	309	Pit		19th/20th century
3	310	Fill of ditch		Undated
3	311	Ditch		Undated
3	312	Fill of pit		18th/19th century
3	313	Rectangular pit	1.1m long	18th/19th century
4	400	Mixed rubble and gravel	0.3	Modern overburden
4	401	Dark grey silty clay	0.3	
4	402	Fill of drain cut		modern
4	403	Wall foundation		19th/20th century
4	404	Tiled floor surface		20th century
4	405	Tiled floor surface		20th century
4	406	Tiled floor surface and brick		20th century
4	407	? wall foundation cut		
4	408	? wall foundation	0.3	
4	409	Yellowish brown sandy clay		Geological natural

B List of finds (not retained)

Context	Type	Quantity	Comment
303	Ceramic building material	6	19th/20th century brick and tile fragments
304	brick	1	19th/20th century
308	Ceramic building material	4	19th/20th century brick and tile fragments
405	coin	1	1952 halfpenny

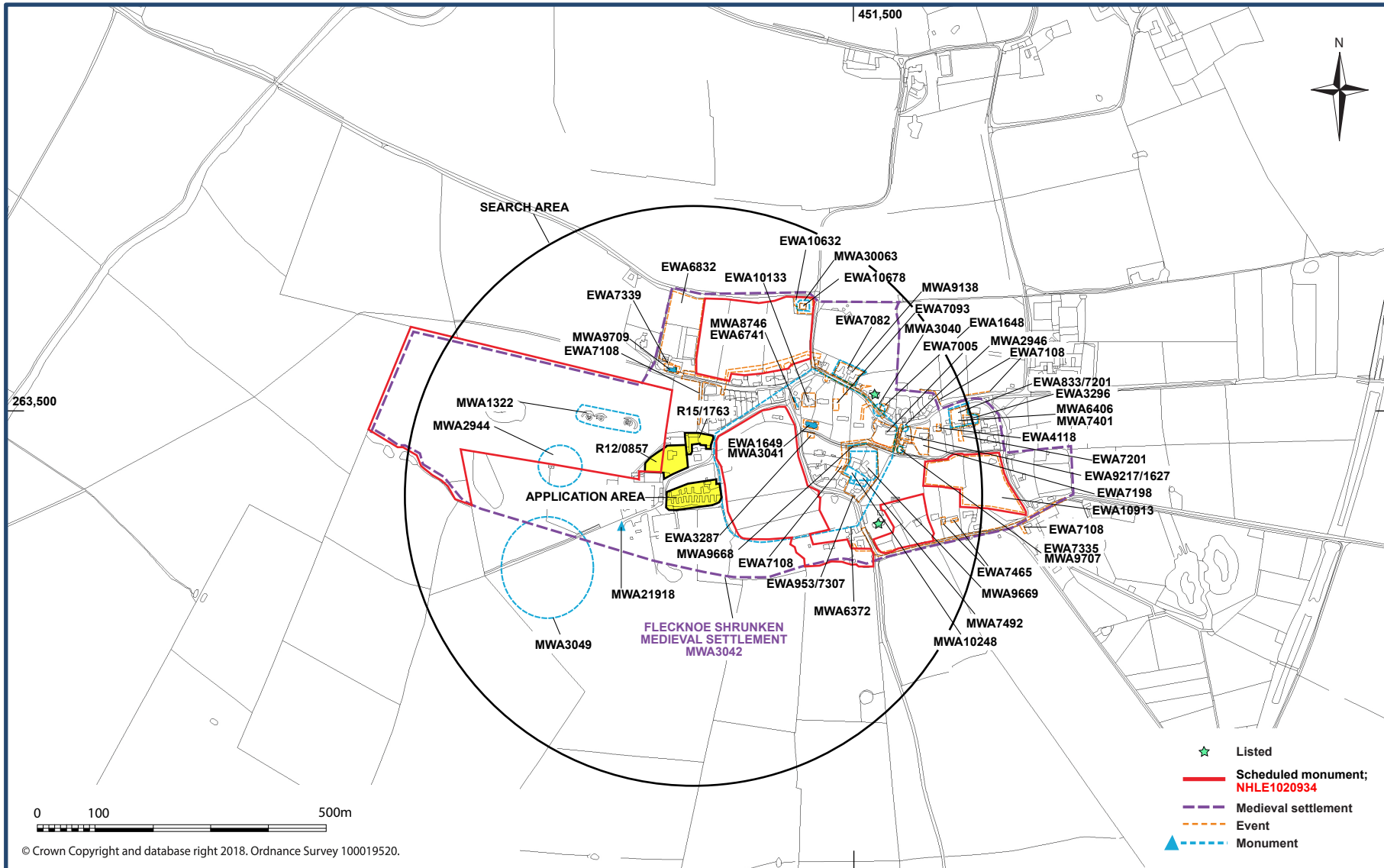


Fig 1: Location of application areas and Historic Environment information

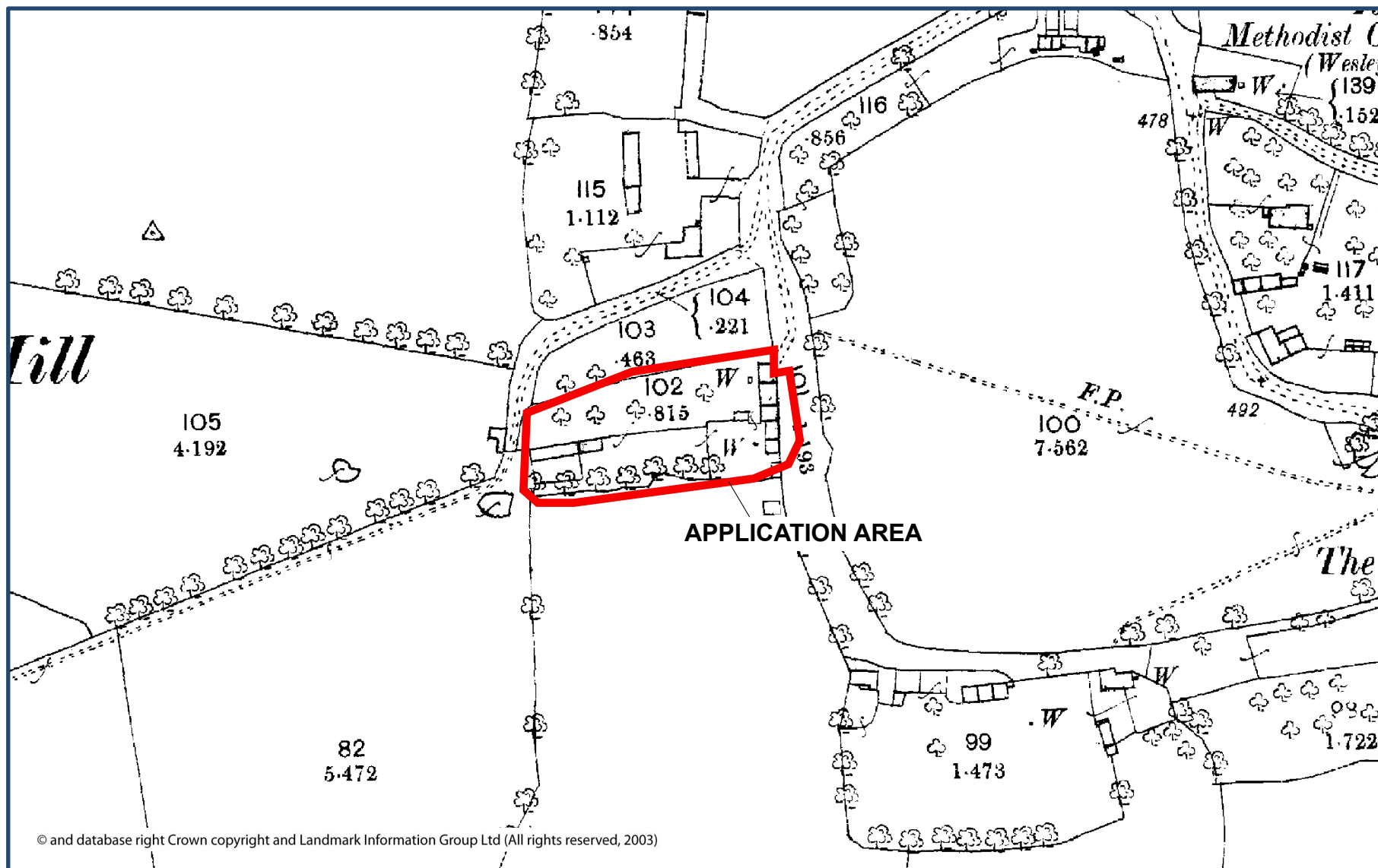


Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885

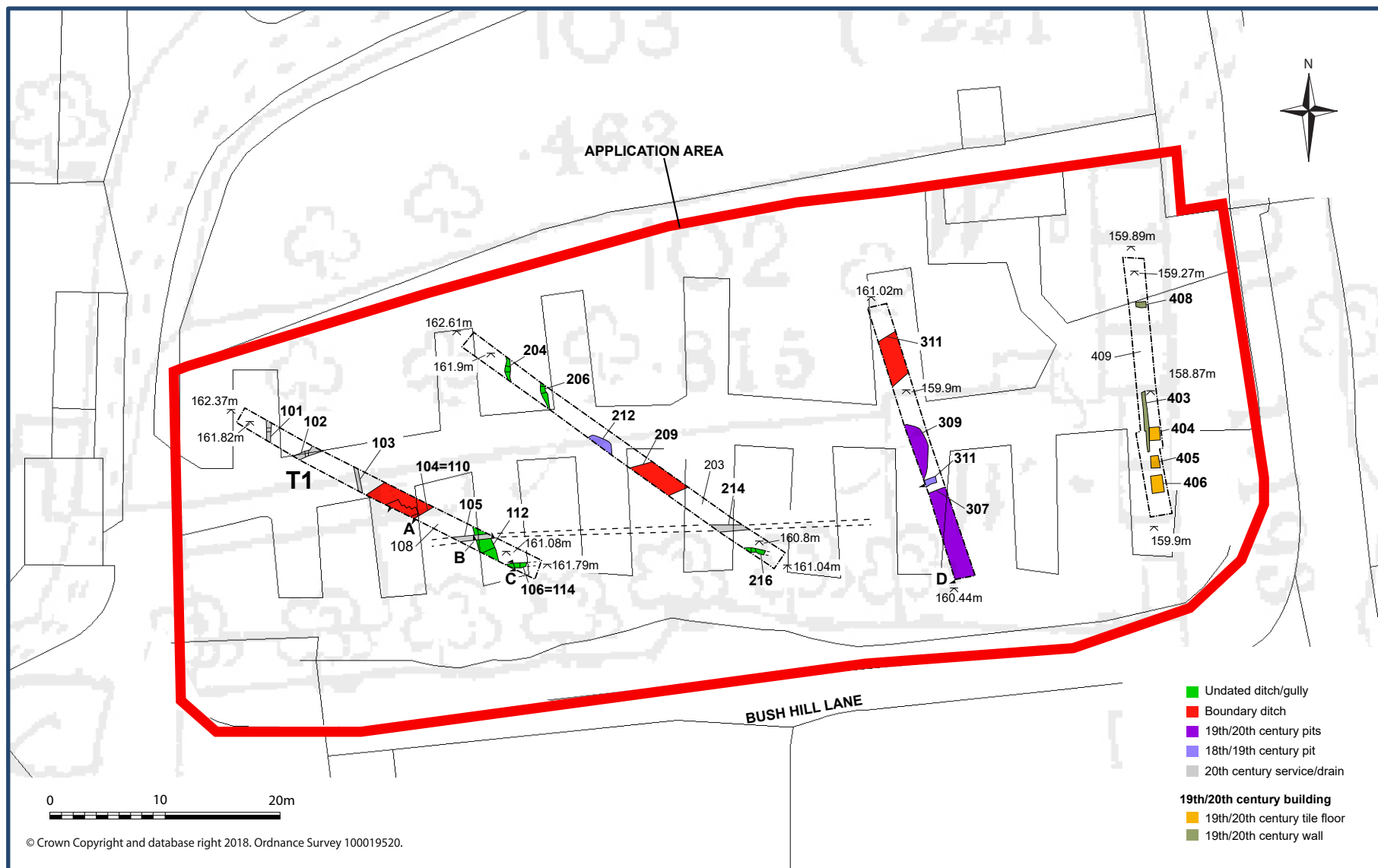


Fig 3: Location of excavated trenches with Ordnance Survey mapping of 1885

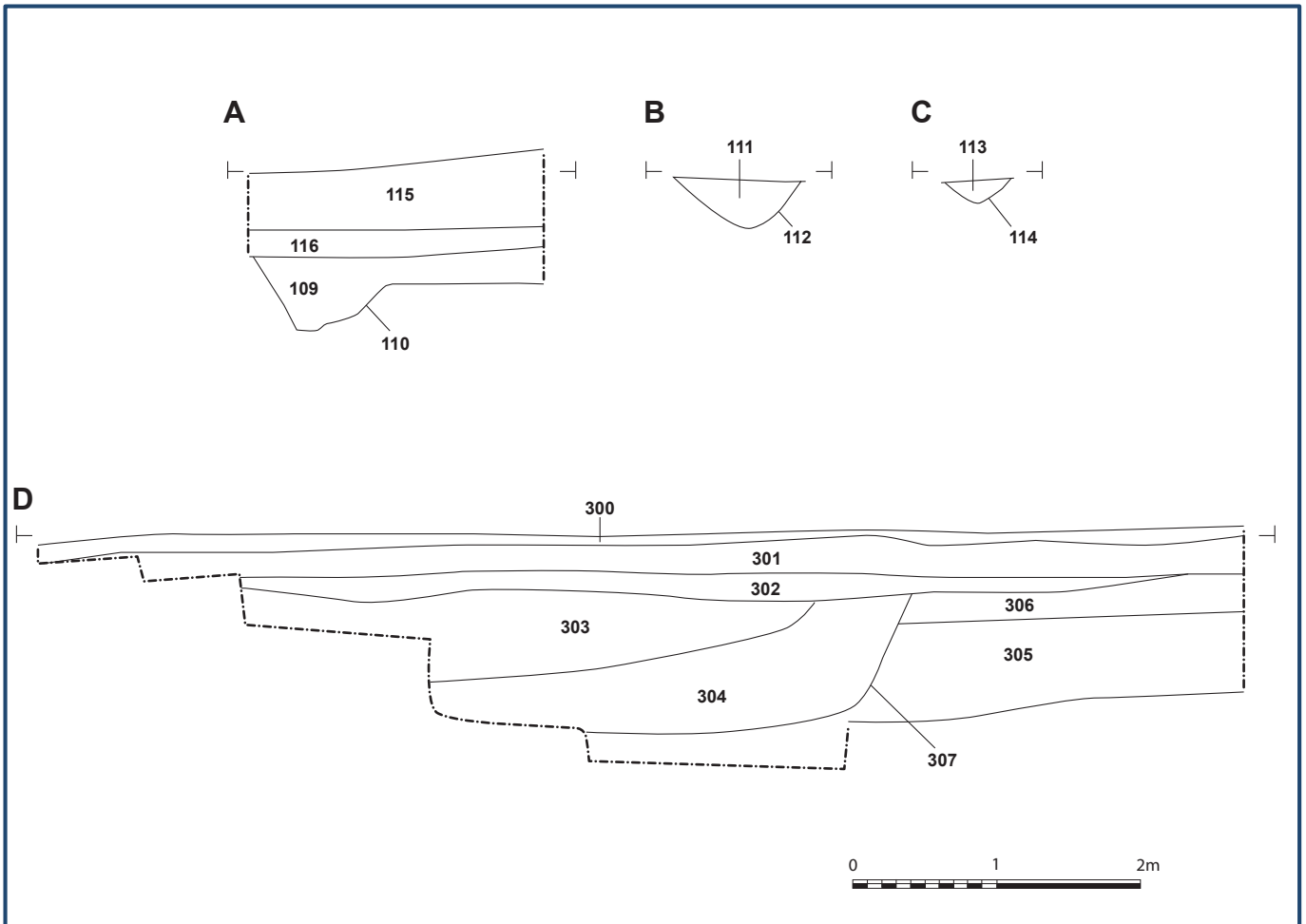


Fig 4: Sections A to D