

**74 TIDDINGTON ROAD,
STRATFORD-UPON-AVON,
WARWICKSHIRE**

Archaeological Evaluation



understanding heritage matters

Report No 1137
November 2011



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project Name: 74 Tiddington Road

Commissioned by: Craig Errington

Project Report No. 1137

Site Code: TN11

NGR: SP 2127 5522

Planning Reference: S11/01944/Ful

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation comprising three trial trenches at 74 Tiddington Road for Mr Craig Errington recorded no definite evidence for any prehistoric, Roman or Anglo-Saxon activity on the site. A single undated gully aligned parallel to the Tiddington Road may have been part of a Roman field system although this remains far from certain.

1 Introduction

1.1 Planning permission is being sought from Stratford on Avon District Council for the redevelopment of 74 Tiddington Road. The development site lies close by an area of archaeological significance, and the developer was therefore advised that the development could not take place without a suitable archaeological scheme of works.

1.2 Watching briefs were undertaken at No 76 Tiddington Road in 2002 and at Stratford Golf Club in 2001 with negative results, but it is likely that the methodology employed in both these cases was inadequate for this type of geology. An archaeological evaluation using trial trenches undertaken opposite the present site at 69 Tiddington Road in 2010 revealed some Iron Age and Roman deposits, relating to the early development of the area, thus proving the case for the archaeological potential of the area.

1.3 Archaeology Warwickshire were commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the planning authority in November 2011.

2 Location

2.1 The site lies on the south side of the Tiddington Road, in Stratford-upon-Avon, at National Grid Reference SP 2127 5522.

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 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 lie in the area of the proposed 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.

4 Archaeological and Historical Background

4.1 The earliest datable find from the area is a rare form of stone implement, a possible leaf point of Upper/Final Upper Palaeolithic date (c40,000-8,000 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.

4.2 After the last Ice Age had ended c10,000 years ago, the region was sporadically visited by growing numbers of Mesolithic (c8000 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 (c4000 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 c2500 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.

4.3 Permanent settlement of this part of the Avon Valley probably originated in the Late Bronze Age c1000 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 (c800 BC – AD 43) and later.

4.4 The earliest dated settlement evidence in the area is Middle Iron Age (c400 BC – 0 AD) and was excavated at the NFU site in the early 1980s. 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 at Tiddington Fields (Warwickshire Museum 2008), within the cemetery excavated at No 77 (MWA 1064), in the former Loxley Lane gravel pit (MWA 4623), and most recently at 69 Tiddington Road MWA 12519; Warwickshire Museum 2010).

4.5 The scattered Iron Age settlements appear to have been succeeded by a large nucleated village (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.

4.6 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.

4.7 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. This culminated in a total absence by c430 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 2010a), Anglo-Saxon features on the north-west edge (Palmer 2010b) and further features along the south-west edge (Warwickshire Museum 2009).

4.8 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 1923 a cemetery of 220 burials was encountered during the building of 77 Tiddington Road (MWA 1014) and further burials are now known to extend under No 79 (Warwickshire Museum 2009). At least one burial has now been confirmed as middle Saxon, dating from between 680 and 820 (Palmer forthcoming) which evidence along with some other Anglo-Saxon material (MWA 6268) suggests that there may have been continuous settlement at Tiddington from the Iron Age onwards. In 1925-7 the construction of the golf course revealed more probable 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 (MWA 1072).

4.9 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.

4.10 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.

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

5 Evaluation Trenches

5.1 Three trial trenches were machine-dug by a 360 degree 3 tonne mini excavator, using a 1.2m toothless ditching bucket. Geological natural was achieved in each of the trenches.

Trench 1

5.2 Trench 1 was aligned NE-SW and was 5.7m long. Geological natural sand and gravel (108) was reached at a depth of 0.62m from the modern surface at 39.6m aod. The natural was cut by:

- 106 Undated gully
- 109 Undated Tree hole

5.3 Features 106 and 109 contained fills indistinguishable from that of the overlying plough soil (103) and thus their individual stratigraphic relationships remain unknown. This plough soil is likely to be of Roman and/or medieval date.

5.4 Modern soakaway pit 104 cut through layer 103 and into the natural but it was not fully excavated. It was sealed by garden soil 102, bedding sand 101 and concrete slabs 100.

Trench 2

5.5 Trench 2 was aligned ESE-WNW and measured 19.5m long, necessarily foreshortened due to the position of a modern soil pipe. Geological natural 207 was achieved at 0.89m below the modern surface at 39.63m aod. The natural was cut by a single feature:

- 205 Undated tree hole

5.6 Feature 205 contained a fill that was indistinguishable from the overlying plough soil (201) and thus their stratigraphic relationships remains unknown. This plough soil is likely to be of Roman and/or medieval date.

5.7 Modern deposits in this trench included drain 204, bedding sand 203, slabs 202 and garden soil 200.

Trench 3

5.8 Trench 3 was aligned broadly NW-SE and positioned within an existing flowerbed. Geological natural was achieved at 0.83m below the modern surface. The natural was overlain by 0.58m of Roman and/or medieval plough soil and 0.25m of modern garden topsoil.

6 Conclusion

6.1 No significant archaeological features or deposits were recorded in the evaluation. The absence of any significant archaeological materials within the soils excavated would seem to suggest that the site lies outside the area of prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon settlement. The undated gully in Trench 1 might, given its alignment common to other similar features recorded in the vicinity, be part of a Roman period field system: a similar feature was recorded in the evaluation of 69 Tiddington Road (Warwickshire Museum 2010).

Acknowledgements

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Appendix

List of Contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>
Trench 1		
100	Paving slabs	Modern concrete slabs, 0.04m thick
101	Bedding sand	Yellowish brown sand bedding for slabs, 0.06m deep
102	Garden soil	Dark brown sandy loam, 0.18m deep
103	Ancient plough soil	Yellowish brown sandy loam, 0.50-0.58m deep
104	Soakaway pit	Sub-circular cut, with vertical sides, that was constructed as drainage for the downpipe from the existing house
105	Fill of 104	Loosely compacted, brown sandy loam, back-fill of soakaway 104, containing bricks, tile, metal & concrete
106	Gully	Linear gully, with moderately steep sides, aligned NE-SW
107	Fill of 106	Yellowish brown sandy loam, fill of gully 106
108	Natural	Reddish brown sand/sand & gravel, geological deposit
109	Tree hole	Tree bowl caused by uprooted tree
110	Tree hole gravel	Redeposited sand and gravel
111	Tree hole silt	Dark reddish brown sandy loam
Trench 2		
200	Topsoil	Dark greyish brown loam, 0.50m deep
201	Plough soil	Yellowish brown sandy loam, 0.45m deep
202	Paving slabs	Modern concrete slabs, 0.04m thick
203	Bedding sand	Yellowish brown sand bedding for slabs, 0.06m deep deposit
204	Drain	Linear, ceramic pipe, 0.10m/4 inch diameter
205	Tree hole	Sub-circular pit, possibly a natural feature
206	Fill of 205	Yellowish brown sandy loam, filly of 205
207	Natural	Reddish brown sand/sand & gravel, geological deposit
Trench 3		
300	Topsoil	Very dark grey loam, 0.25m deep
301	Plough soil	Yellowish brown sandy loam, 0.58m deep
302	Natural	Reddish brown sand/sand & gravel, geological deposit

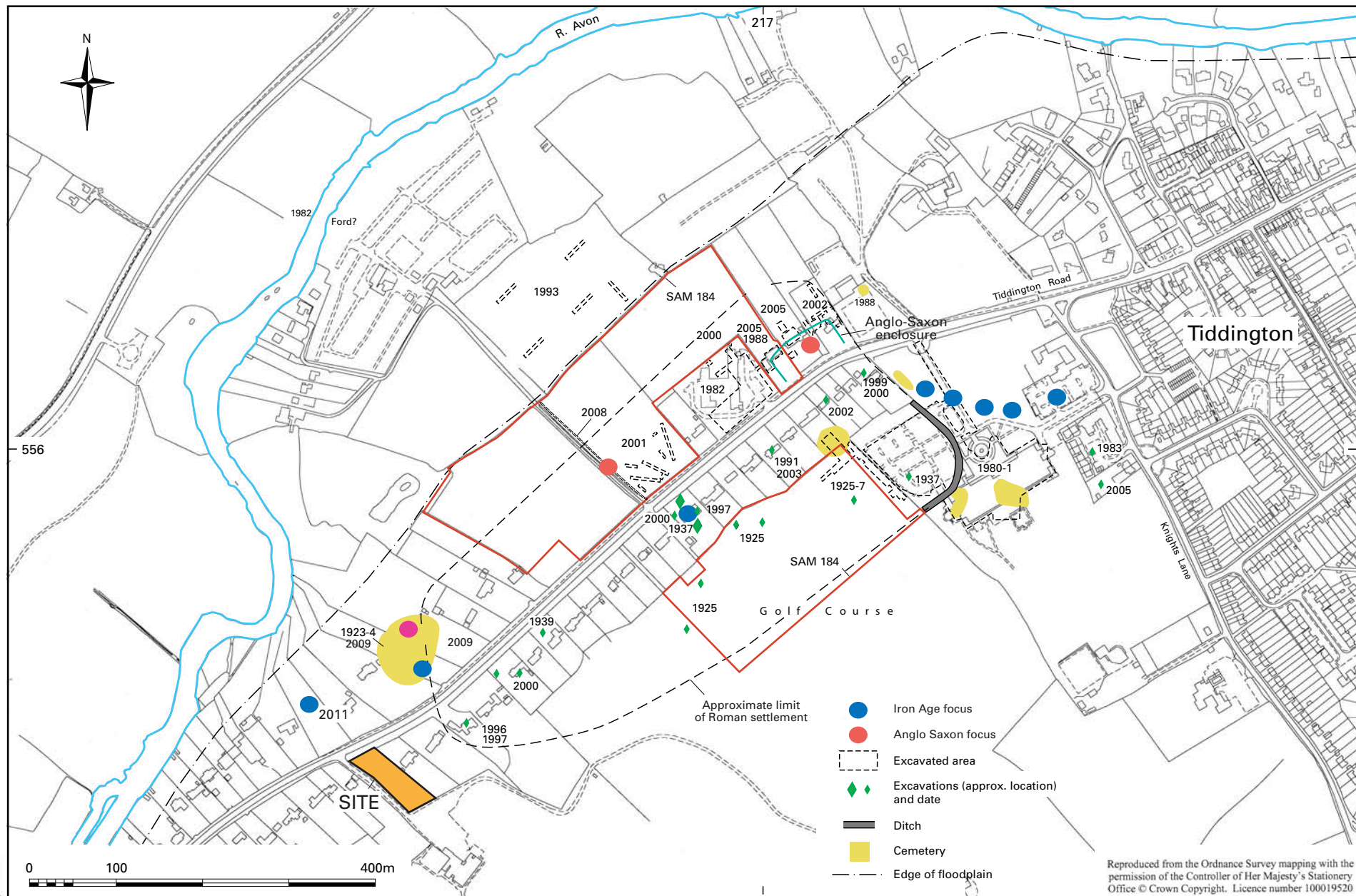


Fig 1: Tiddington Roman settlement showing the location of archaeological excavations

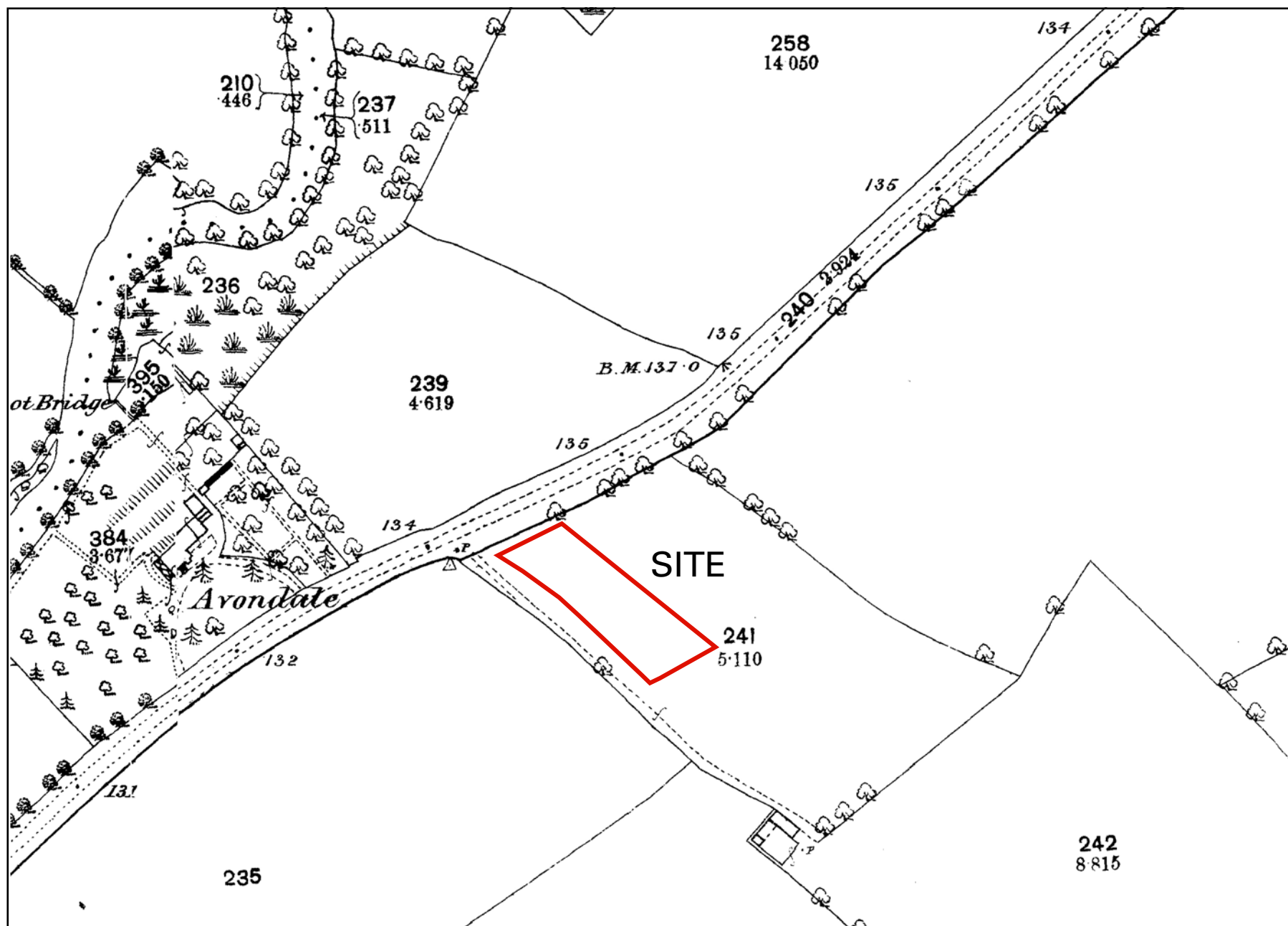


Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1886-1889

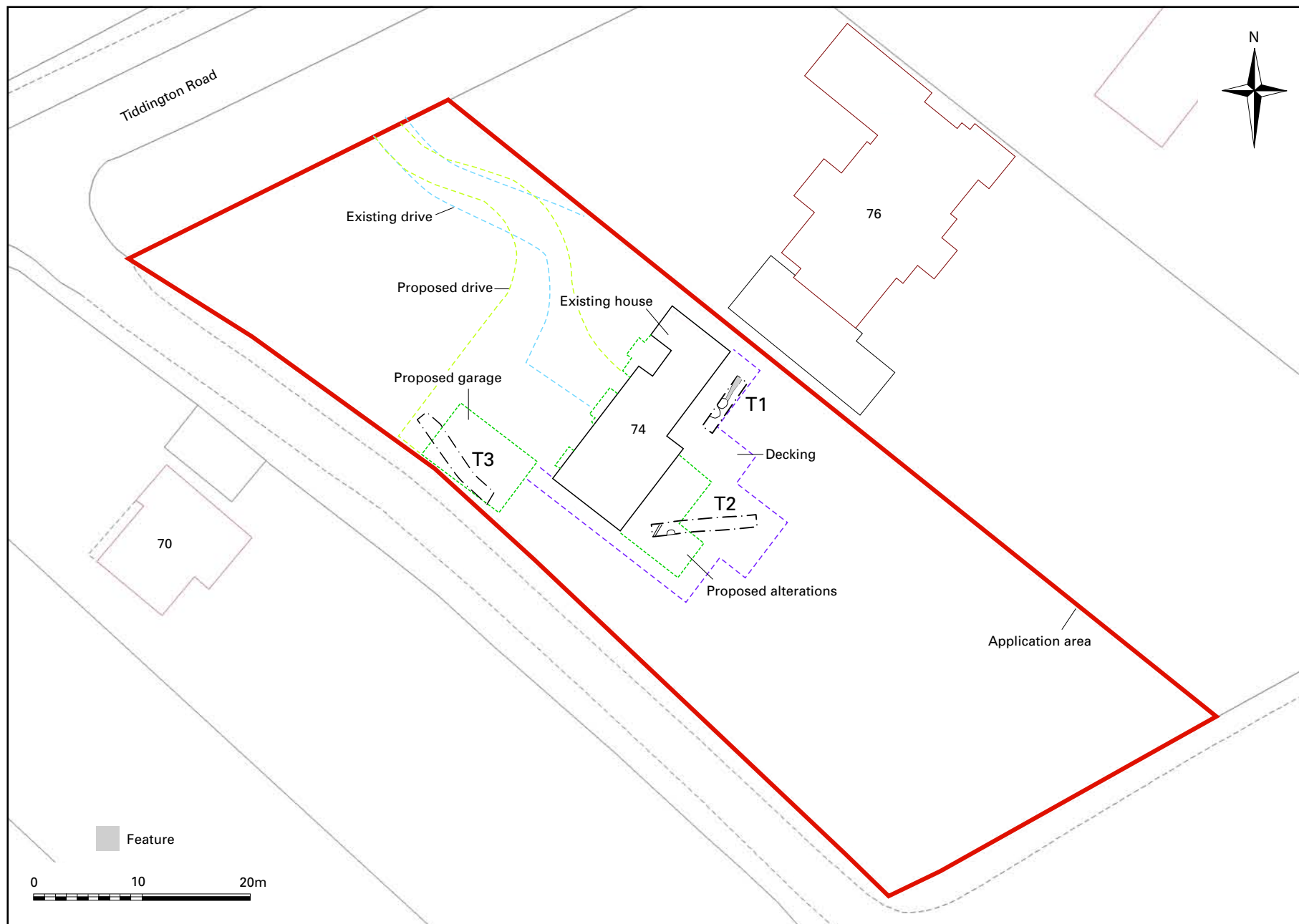
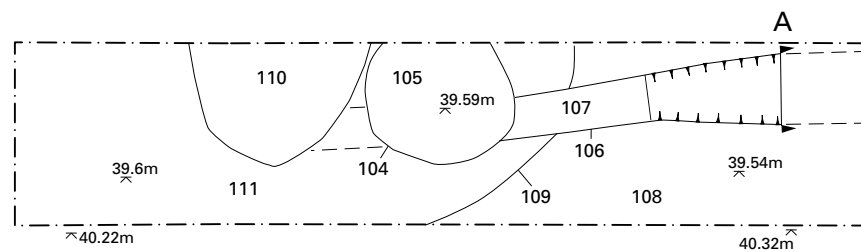


Fig 3: Trench location

TRENCH 1



TRENCH 2

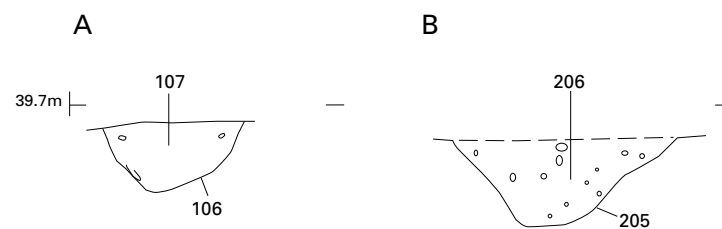
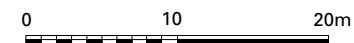
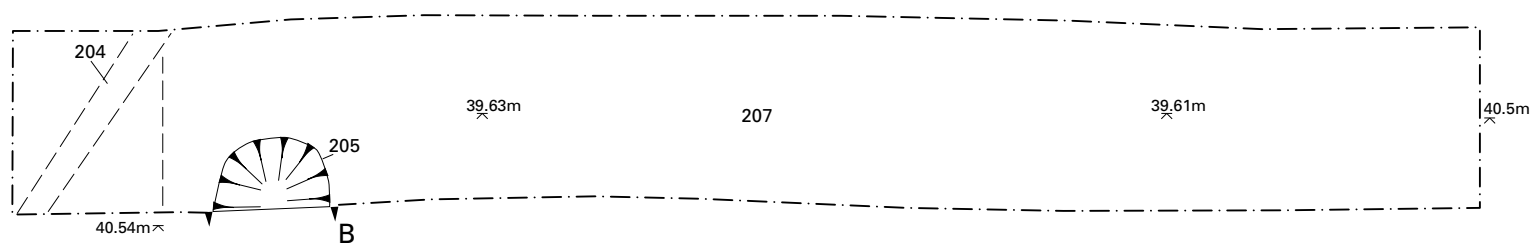


Fig 4: Plans of trenches 1 and 2 and associated sections



Fig 5: Trench 1 viewed from above



Fig 6: Gully 106 viewed from the SSW



Fig 7: Soakaway pit 104



Fig 8: Trench 2 from above



Fig 9: Trench 2 from the ENE



Fig 10: Tree hole 205



Fig 11: Trench 3 from the SE



Fig 12: Trench 3 from the NW