

# 8-9 Pigeon Green, Snitterfield, Warwickshire

## Archaeological Evaluation



*understanding heritage matters*

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1365  
November 2013



*Working for  
Warwickshire*

**Project:** 8-9 Pigeon Green, Snitterfield

**Commissioned by:** Martyn Jerome on behalf of Graham Martyn Builders

**Project Report No.** 1365

**Site Code:** SP13

**NGR:** SP 221 602

**Planning Reference:** 12/01888/FUL

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**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> November 2013

**Report reference:** Rann, C, 2013 8-9 Pigeon Green, Snitterfield, Warwickshire: Archaeological Evaluation, Archaeology Warwickshire Report 1365

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## Summary

**The excavation of three trial trenches on land at 8-9 Pigeon Green revealed no evidence for the medieval Snitterfield. A ditch containing a fragment of 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century tile was recorded but this is thought likely to represent a relatively recent boundary or drainage feature. The site also contained land drains and sewer pipes and a soakaway added by the current owners. It was not possible to ascertain whether the site was part of the open fields during the medieval period.**

## Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Stratford on Avon District Council for the erection of a dwelling at Pigeon Green, Snitterfield, Warwickshire. The site lies within the possible extent of the medieval settlement. A condition of planning permission required the applicant to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work to be carried out prior to development works commencing.

1.2 A programme of fieldwork, consisting of the excavation of 20m of trial trench in accordance with a brief prepared by the County Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the Planning Authority (October 2013), was commissioned from Archaeology (Projects) Warwickshire and carried out on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2013 and this report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum.

## Location

2.1 The site is located on the western side of Snitterfield, in the parish of the same name (Fig 1). The underlying geology of the area is Mercia Mudstone Group - Mudstone (BGS 2013).

2.2 The site was previously occupied by a garden and sloped slightly downwards to the east.

## Methodology

3.1 The evaluation consisted of three trial trenches c1.6m wide which were excavated using a JCB fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Trenches were photographed, recorded and levelled to Ordnance Survey Datum (Figs 4-9).

3.2 The work undertaken also involved the examination of early map evidence as well as records of archaeological remains in the area and local historical journals and other publications. The results of this work are presented below.

## Archaeological and Historical Background

4.1 The settlement of Snitterfield dates from the Saxon period and is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 as *Snitefeld* (VCH 1904, 312) when it had an estimated population of 136. The name is a composite of *snite*, the Old English name for snipe and field (Mills 1998, 317). A priest is also mentioned in the Domesday Book suggesting that a church existed in the settlement at this time (VCH 1945, 171).

4.2 A Roman period burial urn (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record no. MWA 910) discovered on the southwest side of the village before 1869 represents the earliest evidence for human activity in the vicinity (VCH 1904, 248). The urn, which was discovered in 21 sherds, dates from the 1st-2nd century AD and whilst being indicative of Roman activity in the area, there is no other specific evidence for a settlement of this period nearby.

4.3 The present church of St James the Great (MWA 913) retains elements of its 13th century structure together with later sections from the 14th and 15th centuries and the Georgian period, but was remodelled considerably in 1840 and again in 1881 (Shelby 1994, 3; VCH 1945, 169-171). An archaeological evaluation of the churchyard to the south recorded a number of late 19th century inhumations c. 1m below the present ground surface. No earlier structural evidence was recorded, although a small quantity of residual medieval pottery was recovered (EWA 6726 EWA 6737; Warwickshire Museum 1999).

4.4 The extent of the medieval village is difficult to gauge. That shown on the Historic Environment Record is unconvincing and includes a number of shallow plots that look like post-medieval encroachments. It is probable that the original village was multi-focal with one nucleus around the church and another around The Green. An undated earthwork to the south of the site (MWA 915) may be the platform for a large house or a moated site dating to the medieval period. During the 2004 archaeological observation at Snitterfield Primary School, just to the west of the site, two previously unrecorded groups of earthworks, most likely associated with deserted areas of the medieval settlement, were noted within the village. Medieval ridge and furrow was also recorded (Coutts and Jones 2004, 3-4).

4.5 The tithe map of 1841 does not show this area (WRO CR 569/206). The First Edition Ordnance survey map of 1887 (Ordnance Survey 1887 1:2500), shows that the site was within an orchard belonging to a property to the west.

4.6 The site of Snitterfield Hall (MWA 914) is known to lie to the west of the church. The Hall was demolished in 1820 but is thought to have its origins in the post-medieval period. An archaeological watching brief to the south of the church, at 'Treetops', recorded 19th-century brick walling and an undated pit, possibly associated with Snitterfield Hall. Snitterfield Hall Gasworks are shown on the 1886 Ordnance Survey map (HER 7313, Figs. 1 and 2); the gasholder has since been demolished. Other sites in the village include a smithy (WA 7760, Fig. 1) and the location of the stocks (WA 7759) shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1887. During the archaeological observation at the primary school finds relating to the 18th and 19th century agricultural use of the site were recorded, but no evidence for the medieval village was found. While it is possible that this survives at a greater depth than was reached, the presence of ridge and furrow on the school playing fields to the north of the site, coupled with the 18th century maps, suggests that the school lies outside of the area of the medieval settlement (Coutts and Jones 2004).

4.7 Other archaeological work in the village includes two archaeological watching briefs; one to the south of Church Road (MWA 7055), and the other at Smith's Lane (MWA 7065). No trace of medieval activity was recorded at either site although 19th century pottery was recovered. More recently a negative watching brief was carried out at Brook Cottage in Snitterfield.

## **5 Evaluation**

### **Trench 1**

5.1 Trench 1 was 10m long and ran NE-SW along the front of the site (Fig 3). Geological natural, of reddish brown and grey clay (102) and brownish-grey sand, clay and gravel (103) was reached at a depth of *c.*0.7m below the current ground level. The variation in the natural was due to a layer of superficial sand, clay gravel overlying the Mercia Mudstone clay.

5.2 Overlying the geological natural was up to 0.2m of light brownish-grey clay loam (101). No finds were noted in this layer. It was cut by a ditch (104). The ditch had a u-shaped profile and a single fill. From the light brownish-grey clay loam fill (105) a single fragment of 18<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century roof tile was recovered. The ditch ran along most of the trench in a NE-SW direction (Fig 4). In the southern section it appeared to turn slightly more to the west. The ditch may have been a drainage feature, as several clay land drains were noted across the site or it may have been marking a property boundary.

5.3 Cutting the ditch was a sub-circular soakaway (106). Cobbles and bricks were noted in the grey clay fill (107). There was 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery in the fill (not collected) and the current owners believe the soakaway was created when the houses were built to the west of the site. Overlying the soakaway was up to 0.5m of very dark greyish-brown sandy, clay loam topsoil (100).

### **Trench 2**

5.4 Trench 2 was 5m long and ran north-south. The brownish-grey sand, clay and gravel superficial geological natural (203) and the reddish-brown and grey clay geological natural (202) was reached at a depth of *c.*0.6m. Overlying the natural was a 0.2m deep deposit of light brownish-grey clay loam (201). No finds or building material was observed in this layer. It was cut by a sewer pipe (6") and a ceramic land drain (Fig 3). Very dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam topsoil (200) covered the trench to a depth of 0.4m.

### **Trench 3**

5.5 Trench 3 was 5m long and ran WNW-ESE. The geological natural, brownish grey sand, clay and gravel (302) occurred at a depth of *c.*0.92m. It was overlain by 0.4m of light brownish-grey clay loam (301). A sub-circular pit (303) cut this layer and 0.08m into the natural. The light brownish-grey clay loam fill (304) contained a fragment of modern tile (20<sup>th</sup> century). It seems likely that the pit was garden related and might have been for a tree. To the

east of the possible tree-pit the top of a large sewer pipe trench, c.0.5m wide, was uncovered (Fig 3).

## 6 Conclusions

6.1 No medieval finds or features were noted during the evaluation, suggesting that the site was outside of the medieval settlement. The ditch feature noted in trench 1 was post-medieval in date and was probably a drainage ditch on the south-eastern side of the former boundary hedge.

6.2 The disturbance caused by sewer pipes and land drains meant that it was not possible to ascertain whether the site had once been covered in ridge and furrow, indicative of the medieval open fields.

## Acknowledgements

Archaeology (Projects) Warwickshire would like to thank Martyn Jerome for commissioning the work and the Planning Archaeologist for preparing the brief.

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WRO CR 569/206, *Snitterfield Tithe Map 1840*, Warwickshire County Record Office.

## Appendix

### List of Contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comments</i>
100	Very dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam	Topsoil
101	Light brownish grey clay loam	Layer
102	Reddish-brown and grey clay mix	Geological Natural
103	Brownish grey sand, clay and gravel	Geological Natural
104	Ditch cut	Drainage/boundary ditch
105	Light brownish grey clay loam	Ditch fill
106	Oval cut	Soakaway
107	Rubble and modern pottery in grey clay matrix	Soakaway fill
200	Very dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam	Topsoil
201	Light brownish grey clay loam	Layer
202	Reddish-brown and grey clay mix	Geological Natural
203	brownish grey, sand, clay and gravel	Geological Natural
300	Very dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam	Topsoil
301	Light brownish grey clay loam	Layer
302	Brownish grey, sand, clay and gravel	Geological Natural
303	Sub-circular pit	tree pit?
304	Light brownish grey clay loam	Fill of 303



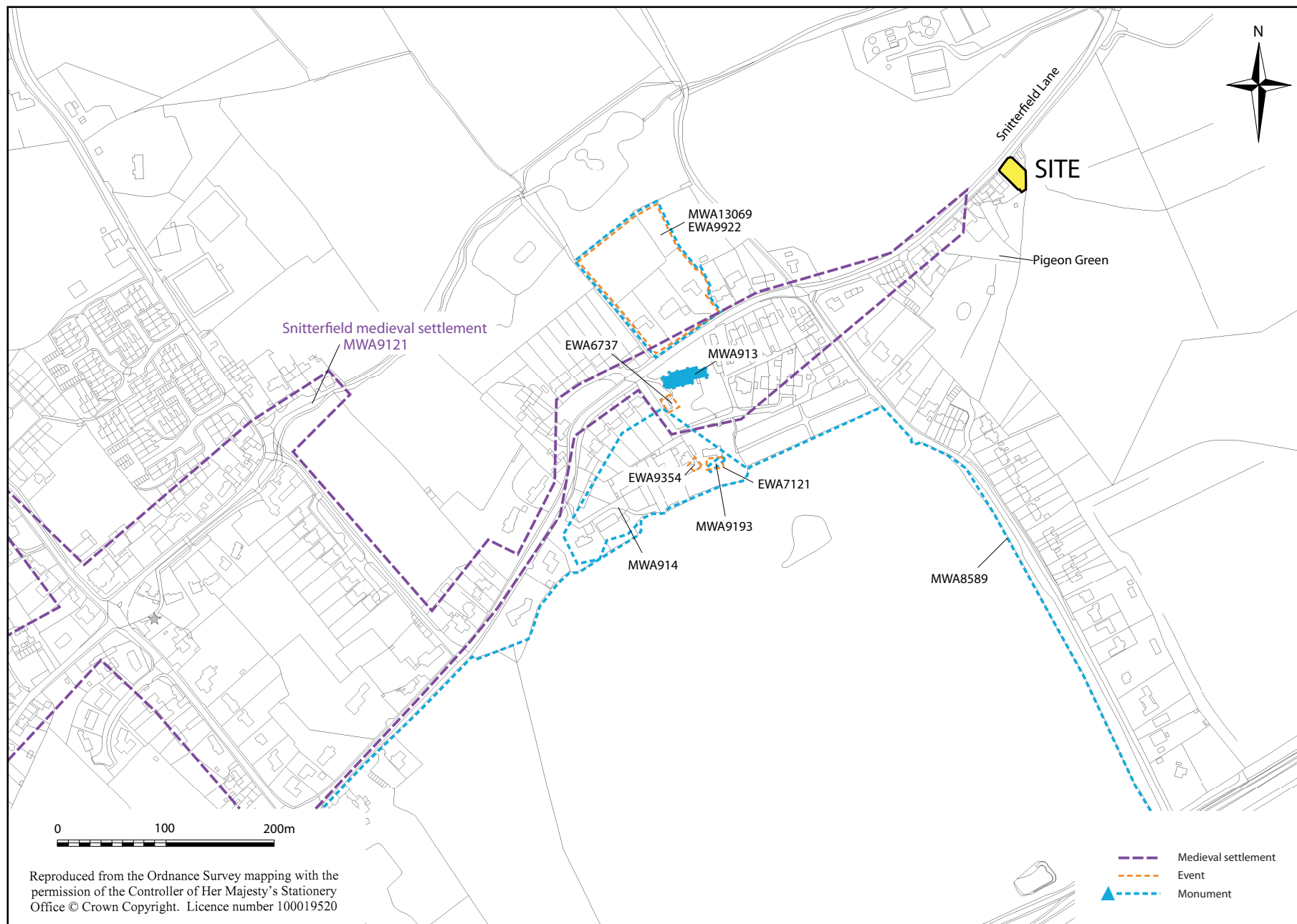


Fig 1: Site location

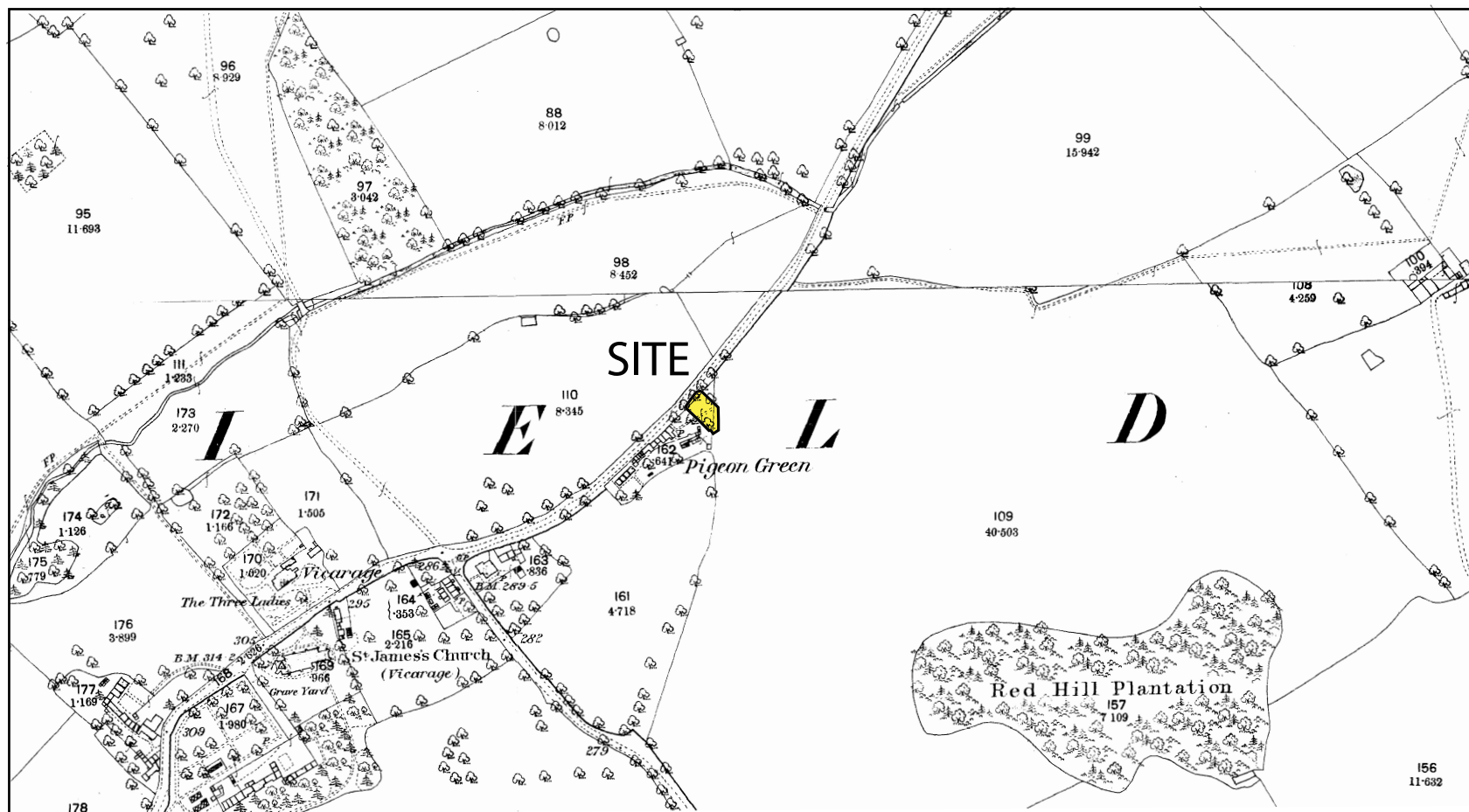


Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887

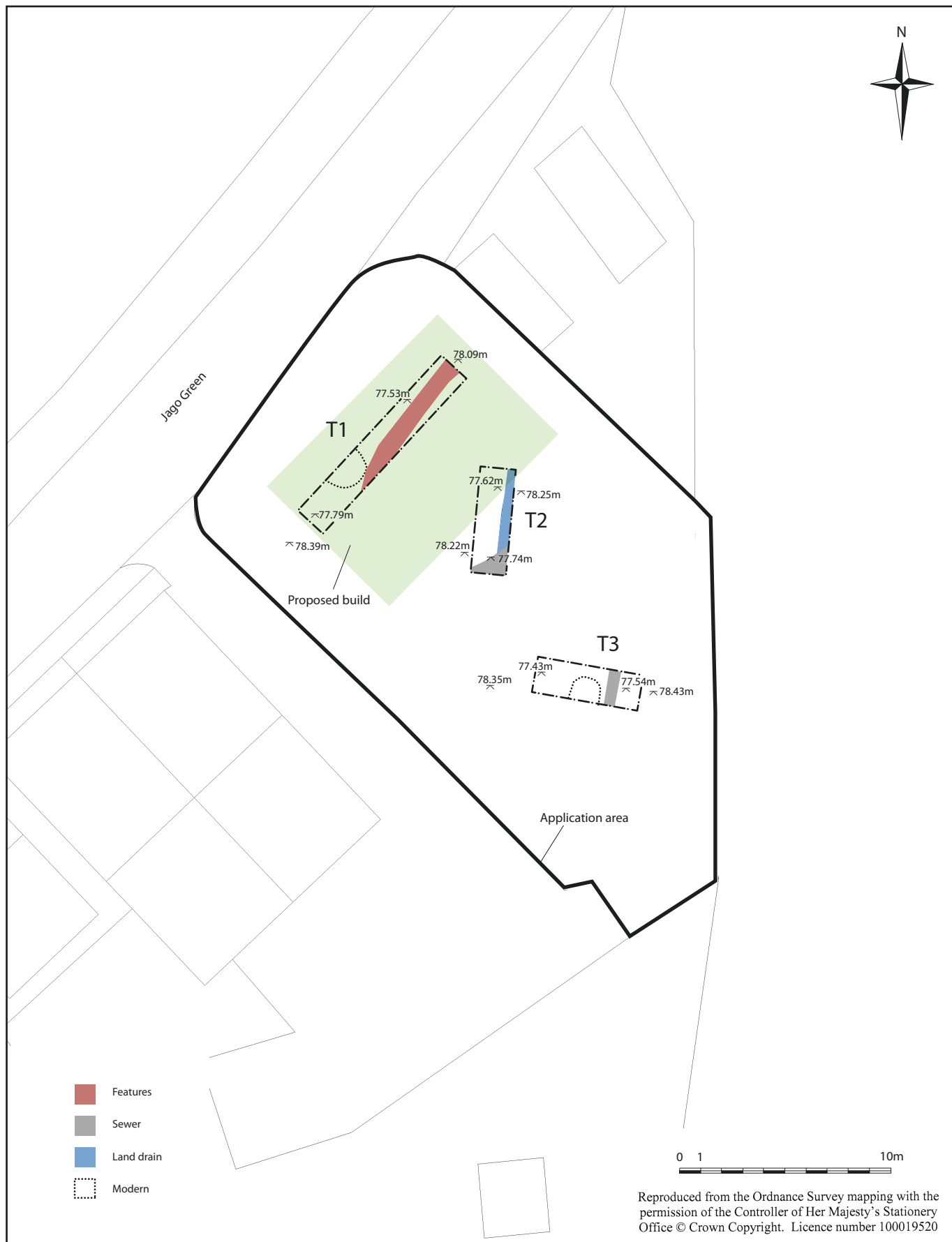


Fig 3: Trench location

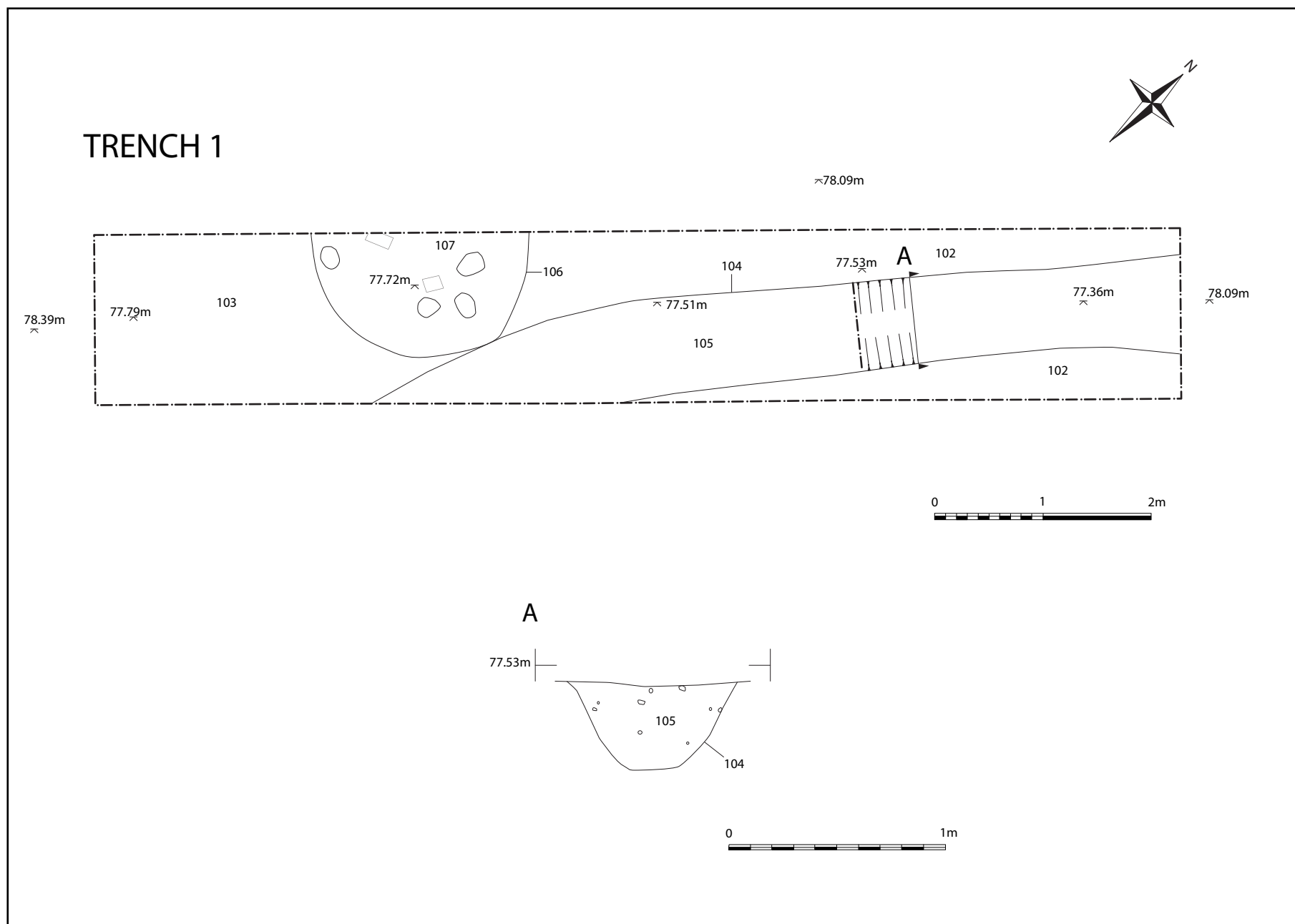


Fig 4: Trench plan and section





Fig 5: Trench 1, looking SW



Fig 6: Ditch 104, looking SW





Fig 7: Trench 2, Looking NE



Fig 8: Trench 3, looking WSW