

Myrtle Cottage, Upper Brailes, Warwickshire

Archaeological Evaluation



understanding heritage matters

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1340
August 2013



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: Myrtle Cottage

Commissioned by: Will Down
Montrose Property Development Ltd
Unit 65, Northwick Business Centre,
Blockley

Project Report No. 1340

Site Code: BM13

NGR: SP 3051 3976

Planning Reference: 12/02966/FUL

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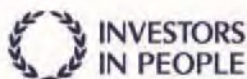
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Summary

An archaeological evaluation comprising a single 10m long evaluation trench was excavated within the medieval settlement of Upper Brailes, probably within the area re-founded as a borough in the 13th century. The site is close to the present street frontage and also lies immediately adjacent to earthworks which possibly represent building platforms. The trench revealed at least two medieval layers, possibly the result of small scale cultivation or animal husbandry, containing 12th-13th century pottery. No clear features were exposed during the evaluation although a small linear concentration of limestone might indicate the presence of a structure. The site must lie within part of a medieval plot laid out in the 12th or 13th century, although the boundaries of this plot are now unclear.

1 Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Stratford on Avon District Council for the erection of a new dwelling on land adjacent to Myrtle Cottage, Upper Brailes. The Warwickshire Planning Archaeologist Anna Stocks, in her capacity as archaeological advisor to the planning authority, has advised that the proposed development lies within an area of significant archaeological potential, within the probable extent of the medieval settlement at Upper Brailes.

1.2 It is therefore a condition of planning permission that, before the development commences, the applicant should secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation which has been submitted by the applicant. A brief setting out the requirements for the first phase of archaeological evaluation at the site was produced (dated April 2013).

1.3 Archaeology Warwickshire was commissioned to produce a Written Scheme of Investigation for the evaluation which was approved on behalf of the planning authority in July 2013. The evaluation was commissioned and carried out in the same month. The archive arising from the work will be deposited at Warwickshire Museum under Site Code BM13.

2 Aims and Methods

2.1 The main aim of the evaluation was to determine if there were 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 Brailes area.

2.2 Secondary aims included placing the results in their wider local and regional contexts as appropriate.

2.3 The objectives were to locate, record and analyse archaeological materials and deposits and to disseminate the results in an appropriate format.

2.4 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.

3 Location

3.1 The development site is located on the east side of the main street (the B4035), in Upper Brailes, in the parish of Brailes (National Grid Reference SP 3051 3976). Until recently the site was occupied by a garage, set a few metres back from the street frontage, with the remainder being a private garden.

3.2 The underlying geology is recorded by the British Geological Survey (1963) as Lower Lias Clay (BGS 1963).

4 Archaeological and Historical Background

4.1 A large number of archaeological sites are recorded on the Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (HER). These cover a long period of time and are shown on Fig 1.

Prehistoric

4.2 The earliest evidence for settlement in the vicinity is the possible site of a Neolithic (c.4000-2300 BC) long barrow (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record No. MWA 2321), as suggested by the place-name 'Long Barrow Field' 1km north-east of Upper Brailes. However, there is no trace of the barrow on aerial photographs. Nearby a large Iron Age settlement has been revealed by geophysical survey and tested by excavation.

Roman

4.3 Romano-British settlement evidence is known to the east of Upper Brailes (MWA 2318) and Roman finds have been recovered from Upper Brailes itself. These include coins and pottery found during limited excavation in 1968 of a site on the east side of High Street (MWA 2322). Two ditches were also excavated, but no dating evidence was recovered. Further finds include a coin of Nero dating to AD55 (MWA 2332) and a 4th-century coin (MWA 2326). Roman pottery has also been recovered from brick-earth pits at the north end of the village (MWA 2312).

Medieval

4.4 Brailes is mentioned in the Domesday Book (1086) as a royal manor with an estimated population of c.665. However this population would have been divided between various settlements in the parish including Upper (Over) Brailes (MWA 2359), Lower (Nether) Brailes (MWA 2315) and others at Winderton and Chelmscote. The settlements continued to expand in the 12th and 13th centuries and in 1248 a grant to hold a weekly market was acquired by the heirs of the Earl of Warwick. Recent work has shown that a borough was also founded in the 13th century, perhaps at the same time as the granting of the market charter. The Hundred Roll of 1279 refers to a number of individuals with the surname 'burgeys' (i.e. Burgess, someone occupying a burgage plot) as well as a number of surnames indicating trade professions such as 'Taylor'. The borough was certainly in Upper Brailes

and may have involved some remodelling of the earlier village plus the laying out of a series of burgage plots, probably still represented by the roughly rectangular area of plots running either side of the main north-south street (Fig 2). The same work has also identified the location of the market place as occupying the triangular green space to the south of the site and just to the east of the former Primitive Methodist chapel (Warwickshire Extensive Urban Survey, Morton, B, forthcoming).

4.5 The medieval village of Upper Brailes probably began to decline during the 14th and 15th centuries, in common with many such settlements in the parish and county. The full extent of the medieval village (MWA 2359) can be made out from the topography of existing properties and the extent of settlement earthworks visible in aerial photographs. A series of settlement earthworks lie to the south and west of the village. Ridge and furrow cultivation from the medieval or later periods is visible on aerial photographs of the parish of Brailes (MWA 6436).

4.6 Evidence of possible medieval burials and a building was located in the 19th century (MWA 2325) at Radnall Bush. More recent work in 1968 suggested possible settlement evidence within an area of ridge and furrow, although no further evidence was recovered of either the building or burials.

4.7 A motte and bailey castle (MWA 2311) lies to the east of the village at Castle Hill. The mound survives and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 21630). It is likely that Robert Newburgh, Earl of Warwick had the castle built in the early-12th century, probably with a timber tower and a palisade around the small bailey. The castle may well have had a very short life of perhaps no more than 50 years. Several 15th-century jettons and a bronze hinge (MWA 9340) have been discovered to the east of the castle.

4.8 At Stonecroft Farm, an evaluation in 1992 revealed no evidence for medieval occupation (MWA 7231). It is likely that extensive 19th-century and modern pitting may have disturbed medieval deposits (Warwickshire Museum 1992). At Grove End House, another evaluation was carried out in 1991 which recovered eight sherds of medieval pottery (Oxford Archaeological Unit 1991), but revealed no significant archaeological features (MWA 7250). The main road through the village marks the line of a Salt Road or salt track from Droitwich (MWA 8672), which may have been in use during the medieval period. Furthermore, there is evidence of a post-medieval toll road, established from 1781, that ran between Banbury and Barcheston via Brailes (MWA 4828).

4.9 Other finds, including a 1669 halfpenny and a second 17th-century halfpenny (MWA 2330), have been found in Upper Brailes. At land adjacent to Henbrook Lane, post-medieval finds, including a bronze button, a fragment of horse harness (possibly medieval) and clay pipe bowls, were recovered (MWA 7136).

4.10 A Primitive Methodist chapel was built in 1863 (MWA 2305), whilst in Lower Brailes and a Quaker meeting house (MWA 2304) was also in use from c.1684. Meetings continued until 1854, when it became a Wesleyan Methodist chapel and a new Methodist chapel was built on this site in 1891.

4.11 Archaeological work carried out in 2003 at Pleasant View, Upper Brailes, revealed a ditch of unknown date during the excavation of a trial trench prior to the erection of a new

dwelling. No further evidence of the ditch or other archaeological features was identified during subsequent observation (MWA 9681).

4.12 In 2007 archaeological evaluation and subsequent observation at land adjacent to Midcot, Upper Brailes, only 100m to the north of the current site, revealed a cultivation soil containing probably 11th-century pottery, and probable linear features, a pit and post hole with 11th- to 13th-century pottery. The pottery in the posthole was thought to be residual, and no definitely medieval structural evidence was found. An undated ditch roughly following the present southern boundary may have been a medieval or early post-medieval predecessor. The absence of later medieval and early post-medieval pottery suggested abandonment of the site or perhaps conversion to pasture in the 14th century. A probable Neolithic quern stone fragment and flint flake along with two sherds of Romano-British pottery were also found along with later 18th and 19th century occupation deposits (Pratt and Rann, 2009).

4.13 The Sheldon Estate map of 1867 does not show any development on the current site (WRO CR 1253/5). The first edition 1:2500 map of 1885 shows a small paddock in a larger field.

5 Evaluation

Trial trench

5.1 A single trench, 10m in length, was located at the western part of the site in apposition agreed by the Planning Archaeologist. The trench was excavated using a JCB-type machine with a toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision.

Deposit sequence

Geology

5.2 Geological natural olive brown Lias clay (105) was achieved at 1.4m below the current land surface and occurred at 117.16m aOD in the south-east part of the trench.

Medieval

5.3 The natural was overlaid by a 0.3m thick layer of bluish grey clay with brown mottling (104), which was initially interpreted as a natural deposit, however 27 sherds of medieval pottery were subsequently recovered from the deposit. Layer 104 was overlaid by a layer of brownish grey clay loam (103) which contained 39 sherds of medieval pottery. The top of this layer was at 117.55m aOD. A roughly aligned series of limestone fragments imbedded in this layer, 106, may not have been coincidental and possibly formed the remnants of part of a structure.

Post-medieval

5.4 Layer 103 was overlain by a 0.30m thick layer of greyish brown clay loam (102) in which three sherds of medieval pottery were found. This layer probably represented a cultivation soil, probably associated with small scale use of the area for food production.

Modern

5.5 A layer of dark greyish brown clay loam (101) probably represented the former garden soil and contained a few sherds of pottery dating from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. The uppermost deposit was a reddish brown sandy loam layer mixed with brick, concrete and occasional hardcore (100), which was associated with the use and subsequent demolition of the former garage.

6 The Pottery by *Stephanie Ratkai*

6.1 Most of the pottery appears to be fairly local or types found in north-west Oxfordshire. The sandy cooking pot (Sq05 Group) ought to be local but there is no exact match in the Warwickshire Medieval Pottery Type Series, although similar fabrics are found in Stratford.

6.2 The shelly wares (one fine, one coarse) could be fairly local, as intermittent shelly beds are found in this area of Warwickshire. If they are not local then a source in the south-east Midlands is most likely. Unfortunately, there is insufficient material to draw definite conclusions.

6.3 The absence of Brill-Boarstall ware and whiteware tends to support a date of before c.1250 for the medieval assemblage. A transitional early Oxford/Brill ware (Oxford fabric OXAW) which dates to the early 13th century was present. There is no separate code for this fabric in the Warwickshire County Type Series.

6.4 The near absence of Malvernian ware is unusual, but perhaps indicates that the medieval assemblage dates primarily from the 12th and early 13th centuries, before the full extent of Malvernian ware distribution was reached.

6.5 The presence of Deritend wares is interesting as their occurrence here must mark one of the furthest southern distribution points in Warwickshire. The fabrics were also recorded previously in Brailes (at Midcot; site code BM07).

7 Conclusions

7.1 The evaluation revealed two medieval layers which contained significant concentrations of unabraded medieval pottery. The layers contained no later material and seem likely therefore to date from the late 12th to before 1250. The condition of the pottery is such that it is unlikely to have moved very far from its place of deposition and in all likelihood must have been deposited very close by. The alignment of limestone potentially represents the remains of part of a structure, perhaps a footing for a timber wall plate, or the remnants of a surface which may have abutted a timber-framed wall.

7.2 The date range of the pottery implies that it is associated with the earlier, pre-borough phase of Upper Brailes. The settlement probably existed at the time of the Domesday Survey (1086) and was important enough to be chosen, probably by the Earl of Warwick, as the site for a small castle. Pottery from the time of the medieval borough, probably after 1250, was

not well represented in the recovered assemblage. No sherds of 14th, 15th or 16th century pottery were found. Naturally a single 10m trench is not enough to fully understand the development of a medieval house plot, but the nature of the pottery assemblage might imply that in this particular part of Upper Brailes the later medieval borough never flourished. The total of seventy sherds of medieval pottery recovered during the evaluation represents the largest assemblage of medieval pottery found during any archaeological work within Brailes.

7.3 There can be little doubt that the site formed part of a medieval plot, most probably consisting of a house with a garden to the rear although the exact boundaries of this plot are now unclear. The recorded medieval occupation deposits were probably the result of small scale cultivation or animal husbandry. No definite traces of any house were found in the evaluation trench and it may have lain either further back or to one side, beyond the limits of the current development area.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix A List of Contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comments</i>
100	Recent demolition layer	21st century
101	Old garden soil	18th/19th century
102	Greyish brown clay loam layer	Possibly medieval
103	Brownish grey clay loam layer	Early 13th century
104	Blue grey clay layer	Early 13th century
105	Olive brown clay	Geological natural
106	Limestone feature	Early 13th century

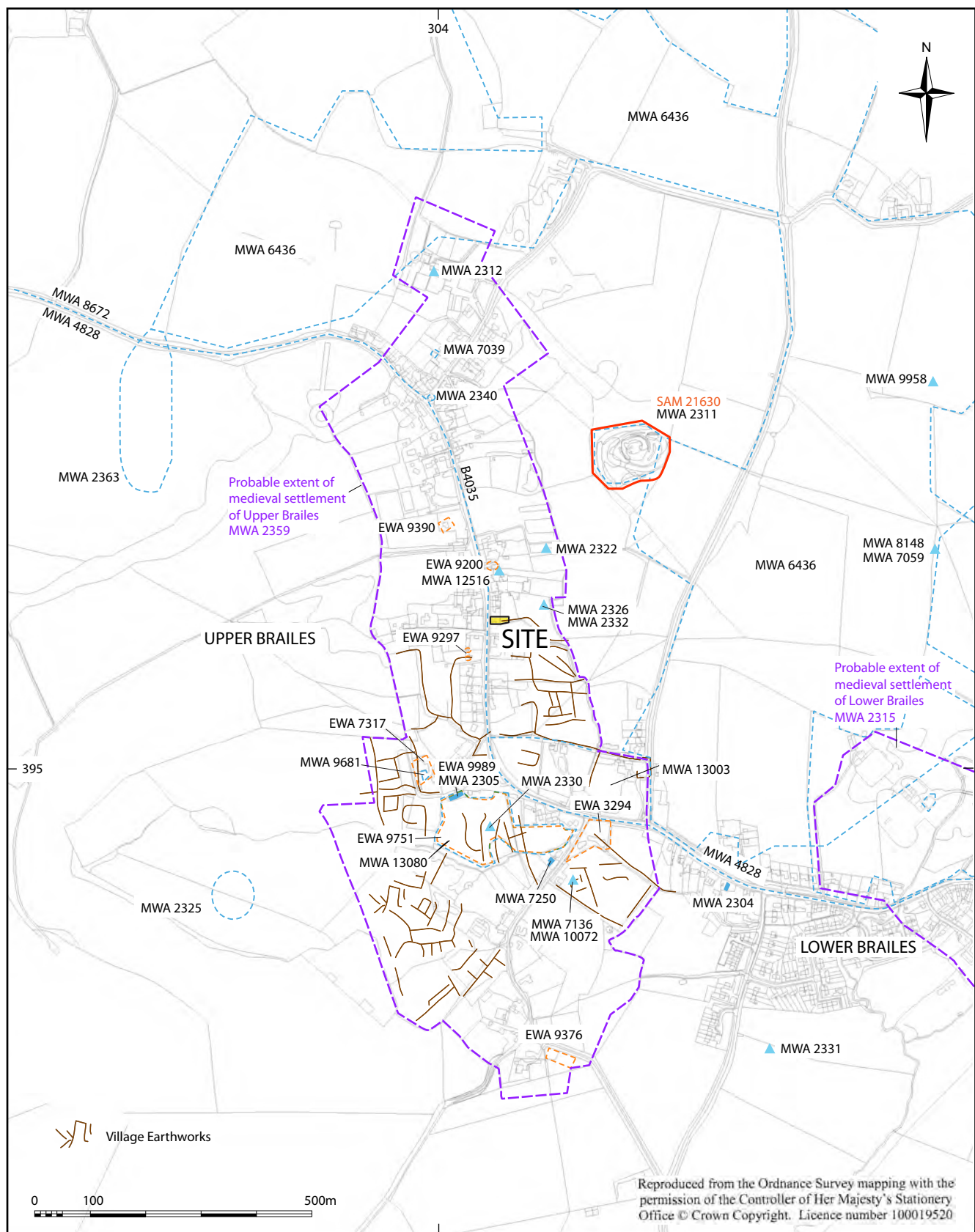
Appendix B List of Finds

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
101	Pottery	6	2 17th century glazed red earthenware, 1 17th century Westerwald stoneware, 3 19th century MGW
102	Pottery	4	late 12th-early 13th century
103	Pottery	39	early 13th century
104	Pottery	27	early 13th century

Appendix C Pottery data

Ctx t	Fabric	WCTS code	qty	wght	Comment
101	Glazed red earthenware	GRE	1	5	bowl?
101	Glazed red earthenware	GRE	1	36	handled jar
101	Modern yellow ware	MGW	1	31	HW
101	Utilitarian whiteware	MGW	2	49	Chamber pot
101	Westerwald stoneware	STG05	1	10	mug/jug, blue ground, applied rosettes
102	Malvernian cpj	StR10	1	4	cooking pot/jar (cpj)
102	Oolitic	CO01	2	17	cpj
102	Sandy calcareous	SC01-09 Group	1	3	cpj, fabric not in TS, moderate-abundant quartz 0.25mm, sparse-moderate ooliths, limestone and shell; brown, grey core
103	Deritend ware	Sg12	1	5	jug, red lattice decoration
103	Early Oxford	Sg03	3	18	cpj
103	Early Oxford	Sg03	1	8	cpj, very pale grey fabric, very overfired
103	Early Oxford-type?	Sg03	1	15	cpj rim
103	Early Oxford/Brill transitional	no code*	1	1	jug, yellow glaze, horizontal combing
103	Early Oxford/Brill transitional	no code*	1	1	
103	Early Oxford/Brill transitional	no code*	1	5	jug, light olive green glaze, horiz combing
103	Early Oxford/Brill transitional	no code*	1	31	jug handle, thin yellow glaze, fine oblique slashing along centre of handle
103	Oolitic	CO01	1	9	cooking pot rim
103	Pellet ware	Sq25.1/Sq26	4	19	cpj
103	Pellet ware	Sq25.1/Sq26	2	6	burnt, heavy soot
103	Reduced sandy ware	RS03	3	16	cpj (2 joining base sherds and 1 body sherd)
103	Reduced Deritend ware	RS01	3	11	
103	Reduced Deritend ware	RS02	3	42	

103	Sandy cooking pot	Sq05 group	4	23	cpj, one sherd with part of a drilled rivet/repair hole
103	Shelly ware (coarse)	CS (coarse)	2	15	heavily abraded/leached interior
103	Shelly ware (coarse)	CS (coarse)	1	5	
103	Shelly ware (fine)	CS	1	1	unsooted
103	Shelly ware (fine)	CS	2	13	base of cpj, heavy soot
103	Shelly ware (fine)	CS	1	18	base of ?cpj, unsooted
103	Shelly ware (fine)	CS	1	2	small frag of jug rim
104	Deritend ware?	RS01?	1	38	base sherd, possible internal burnish? Or may be a result of burnt matter, int carbon deposit or similar
104	Pellet ware	Sq25.1/Sq26	3	17	cpj base
104	Pellet ware	Sq25.1/Sq26	1	2	trace of wavy combing
104	Sandy cooking pot	Sq05 group	11	27	
104	Sandy cooking pot	Sq05 group	2	9	cpj base, sherds join
104	Sandy cooking pot	Sq05 group	1	9	cpj rim, slightly dished/lid-seated
104	Shelly ware (fine)	CS	6	46	sooted
104	Shelly ware (fine)	CS	1	3	jug, possible corrugated neck
104	Shelly ware (fine)	CS	1	52	plain rounded rim, wide-mouthed bowl



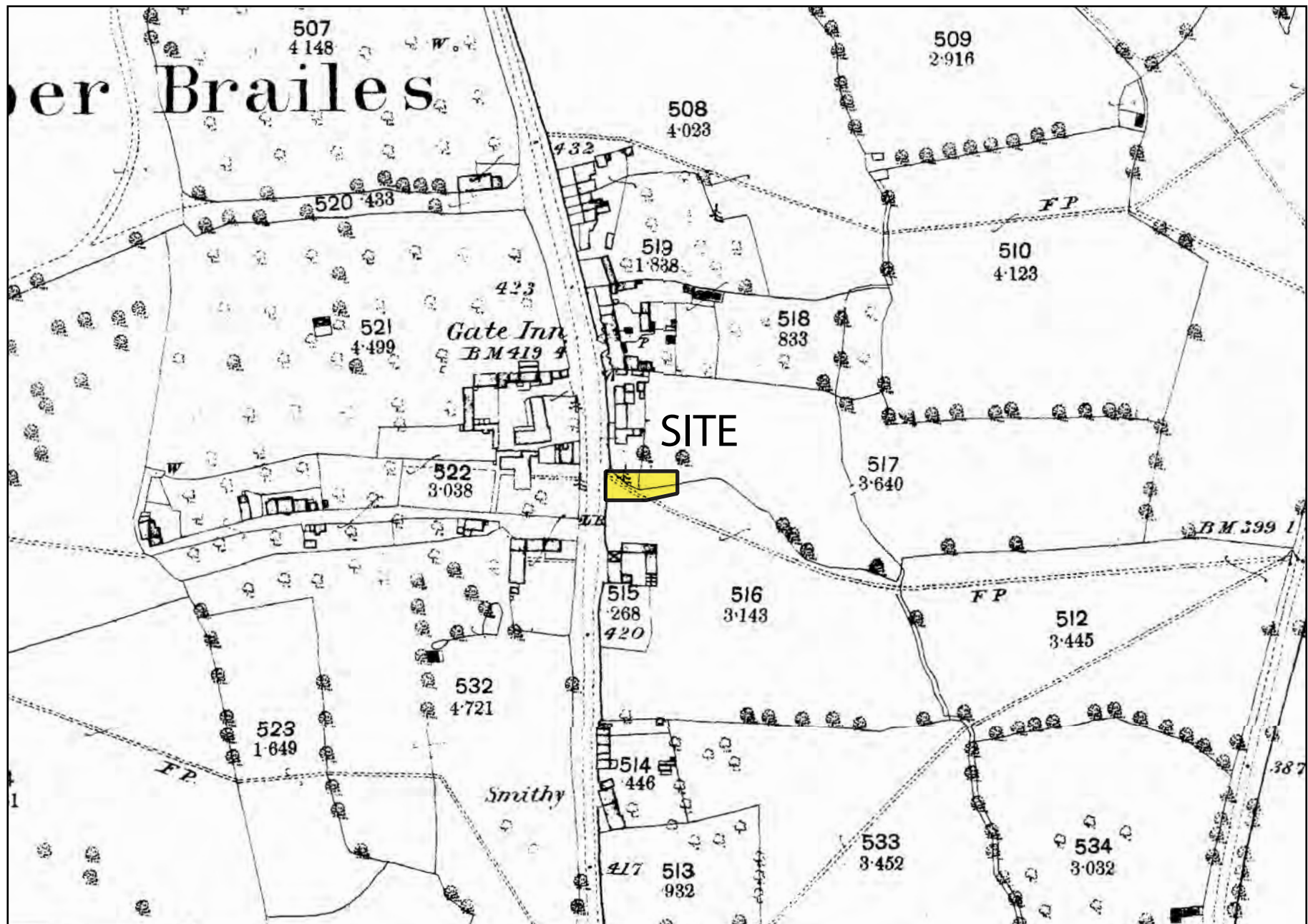


Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885-1888

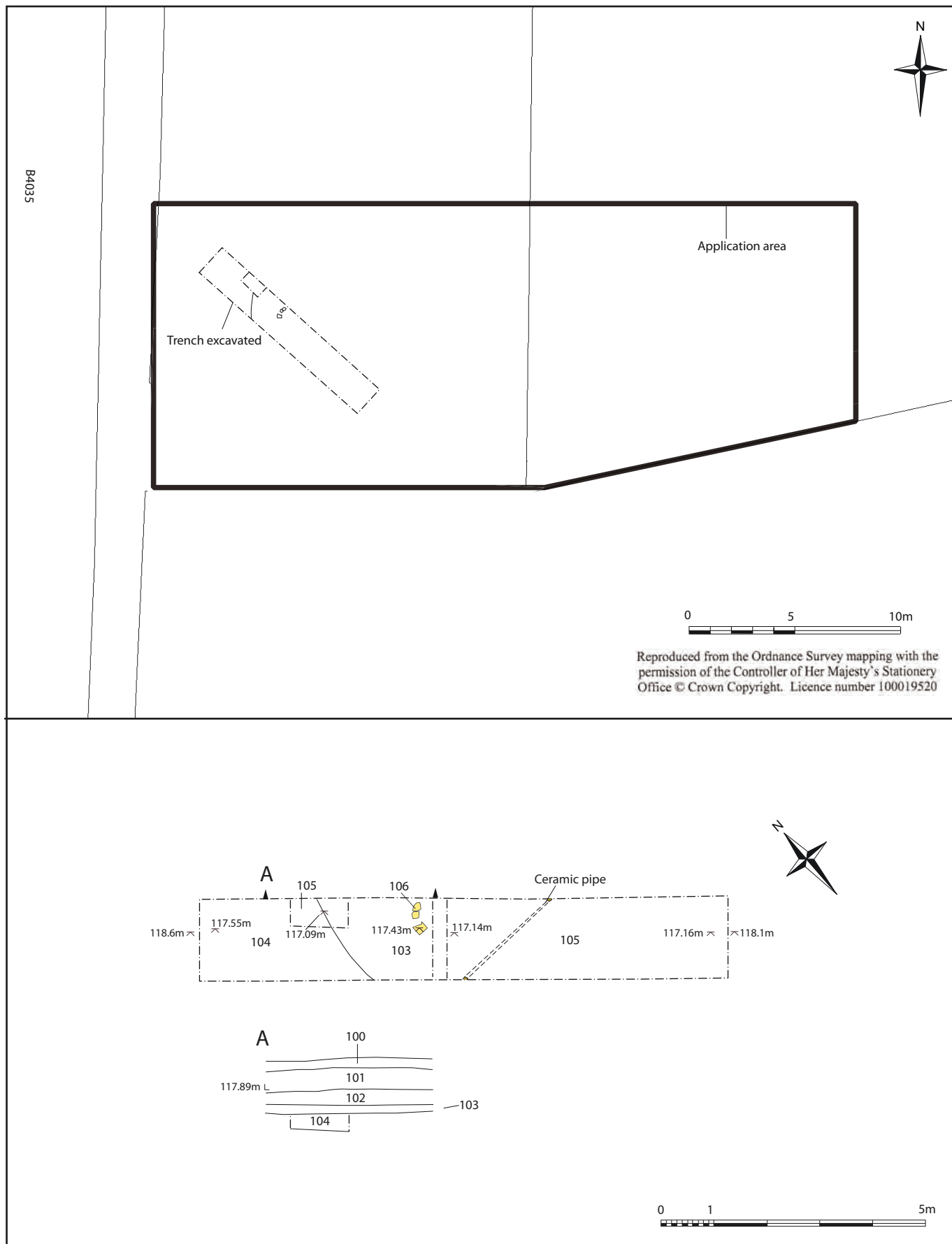


Fig 3: Trench location, detail and section A



Fig 4: Trench looking south-east. The grass field beyond contains medieval settlement earthworks



Fig 5: Section of trench showing sondage through layer 104 and small stone feature (106), within layer 103.