

Mary Ann Evans Hospice, Nuneaton, Warwickshire

Archaeological Evaluation



understanding heritage matters

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1338
August 2013



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: Mary Ann Evans Hospice

Commissioned by: Emily Kippen @ KKE Architects

Project Report No. 1338

Site Code: NG13

NGR: SP 3545 9058

Planning Reference: 12/31875

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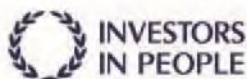
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Summary

An archaeological evaluation comprising the excavation of two trenches in advance of the construction of a new building at the Mary Ann Evans Hospice recorded little trace of the nearby medieval pottery industry at Chilvers Coton. The trench within the hospice garden was shallow and contained no archaeological features other than several plough cuts. A few finds were recovered from an old ploughsoil including a single sherd of late 13th to 14th century pottery possibly deriving from the nearby pottery kilns, a single 17th to 18th century sherd and a fragment of clay tobacco pipe. These finds can be attributed to manure spreading in arable fields. The trench for the new car park was excavated through a considerable depth of building debris associated with the construction of the George Eliot Hospital. However, no archaeological features were encountered and no finds were recovered from this trench.

1 Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council for the erection of a new two-storey bereavement centre, small area of additional car parking and replacement canopy to an existing building at the Mary Ann Evans Hospice, George Eliot Hospital, Nuneaton, Warwickshire. WCC Planning Archaeologist Anna Stocks, in her capacity as advisor to the Planning Authority determined that the development is within an area of archaeological potential.

1.2 It was therefore a condition of planning permission that, before the development commenced, the applicant secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which had been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Planning Authority. A Brief setting out the requirements for the first phase of archaeological evaluation on the site was prepared (dated May 2013).

1.3 Archaeology (Projects) Warwickshire was commissioned to undertake an evaluation in July 2013 and this report presents the results of that work. The archive arising from the work will be deposited at the County Museum under Site Code NG13.

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 Nuneaton 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 site is located around National Grid Reference SP 3544 9059 and is currently partially the garden of the hospice and an area of short grass just outside it.

4 Archaeological and Historical Background

4.1 There is no recorded prehistoric or Roman activity in the immediate vicinity of the site. However, it does lie on the south-east edge of the medieval settlement of Chilvers Coton. This was the location of a major medieval and early post-medieval pottery and tile making industry. A considerable number of kilns have been found to the west of the Hospice site with most of them being around 200m away. These and other sites of archaeological industry are shown on the Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (Fig 1) and include:

MWA 7370	Possible extent of medieval pottery industry at Chilvers Coton
MWA 4442	Medieval pottery kiln and features
MWA 5042	Two medieval pottery kilns and associated features
MWA 5043	Medieval feature
MWA 5044	Several 17th century pits
MWA 5045	Medieval and post-med pottery kiln
MWA 5046	Medieval pottery kiln
MWA 5049	Medieval pit
MWA 5050	Two medieval pottery kilns
MWA 5051	Medieval pottery kiln
MWA 5052	Two medieval pottery kilns
MWA 5053	Medieval pottery kiln
MWA 5054	Group of medieval pits with 13th century pottery
MWA 5055	Medieval pottery kiln
MWA 5146	Medieval tile kiln
MWA 5147	Medieval tile kiln
MWA 5149	Two tile kilns
MWA 5150	Medieval tile kiln
MWA 5151	Two medieval tile kilns
MWA 5152	A 17th century pit
MWA 5700	Medieval tile kiln
MWA 5754	Old mine shaft shown on 1887 map

4.2 The 1888 First Edition Ordnance Survey map shows the whole area as part of a large field whilst by the Second Edition of 1903 the area of the hospice garden had been separated off into a small field and the larger one had become allotment gardens. The Workhouse infirmary, which the George Eliot hospital grew out of, is marked on the Third Edition map of 1926.

5 Trial Trenches

5.1 Two trial trenches (Fig 3) were excavated by a tracked mini-excavator using a toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision.

Trench 1

5.2 Trench 1 was T shaped in order to accommodate existing structures and trees. The arms of the trench were 11m and 8m long and the trench was 3m wide. Geological natural was strong brown clay with occasional patches of small pebbles (102) and was revealed some 0.3-0.5m below the current ground level at 104.10m aod. No significant archaeological features cut the natural although several linear scars filled with topsoil, attributed to recent ploughing, and an electricity cable were aligned north to south along the trench.

5.3 The natural was overlain by a very dark greyish brown sandy loam with very occasional small pebbles (101) which was between 0.15m and 0.17m thick. This soil contained two sherds of pottery, one dating from the 13th to 14th century and a fragment of clay tobacco pipe stem. Overlying this was between 0.29 and 0.32m of very dark greyish brown sandy loam topsoil (100) which included the turf and contained frequent tree roots.

Trench 2

5.4 Trench 2 was 9.5m long by 1.35m wide. Geological natural clay (203), identical to that in trench 1, was revealed some 1.25m below the current ground level at 103.60m aod. No archaeological features were observed cutting the natural. Overlying this was a 0.30m layer of very dark greyish brown sandy loam with very occasional small pebbles (202) which was the former topsoil. It was covered by a thick layer of mixed greyish brown clay (201) which contained considerable amounts of brick and concrete. It varied in depth between 0.8m and 0.84m and was clearly landscaped building debris associated with the construction of the current hospital. Overlaying all was only 0.05m of very dark greyish brown sandy loam and turf (200).

6 Conclusions

6.1 No significant archaeological deposits were revealed in the evaluation. The finds recovered included a sherd of 13th to 14th century pottery which no doubt derived from the kiln sites to the north-west. This sherd and the two other finds were probably deposited with manure collected from areas of settlement and spread across the local fields.

6.2 The absence of pottery 'wasters' (pots that have failed during firing and discarded around the kilns), implies that area evaluated lies some distance from the medieval kiln sites.

Acknowledgements

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Emily Kippen for commissioning the work, Anna Stocks of Warwickshire County Council for preparing the brief and the staff of the Mary Ann Evans Hospice for their tolerance during the disruption: particular thanks go to the Hospice staff who stripped the turf within the garden.

Bibliography

British Geological Society 1994 Geological Survey of Great Britain, England and Wales, Coventry Sheet 169

Ordnance Survey 1888 *First Edition 1:2500 map*, Warwickshire Sheet 11.13

Ordnance Survey 1903 *Second Edition 1:2500 map*, Warwickshire Sheet 11.13

Ordnance Survey 1926 *Third Edition 1:2500 map*, Warwickshire Sheet 11.13

Appendix A List of Contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comments</i>
100	Topsoil layer	Modern
101	Old ploughsoil	
102	Geological natural clay	
200	Topsoil layer	Modern
201	Construction debris layer	Modern
202	Old topsoil	
203	Geological natural	

Appendix B List of Finds

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
101	Pottery	2	13th-18th century
101	Clay pipe	1	17th-18th century

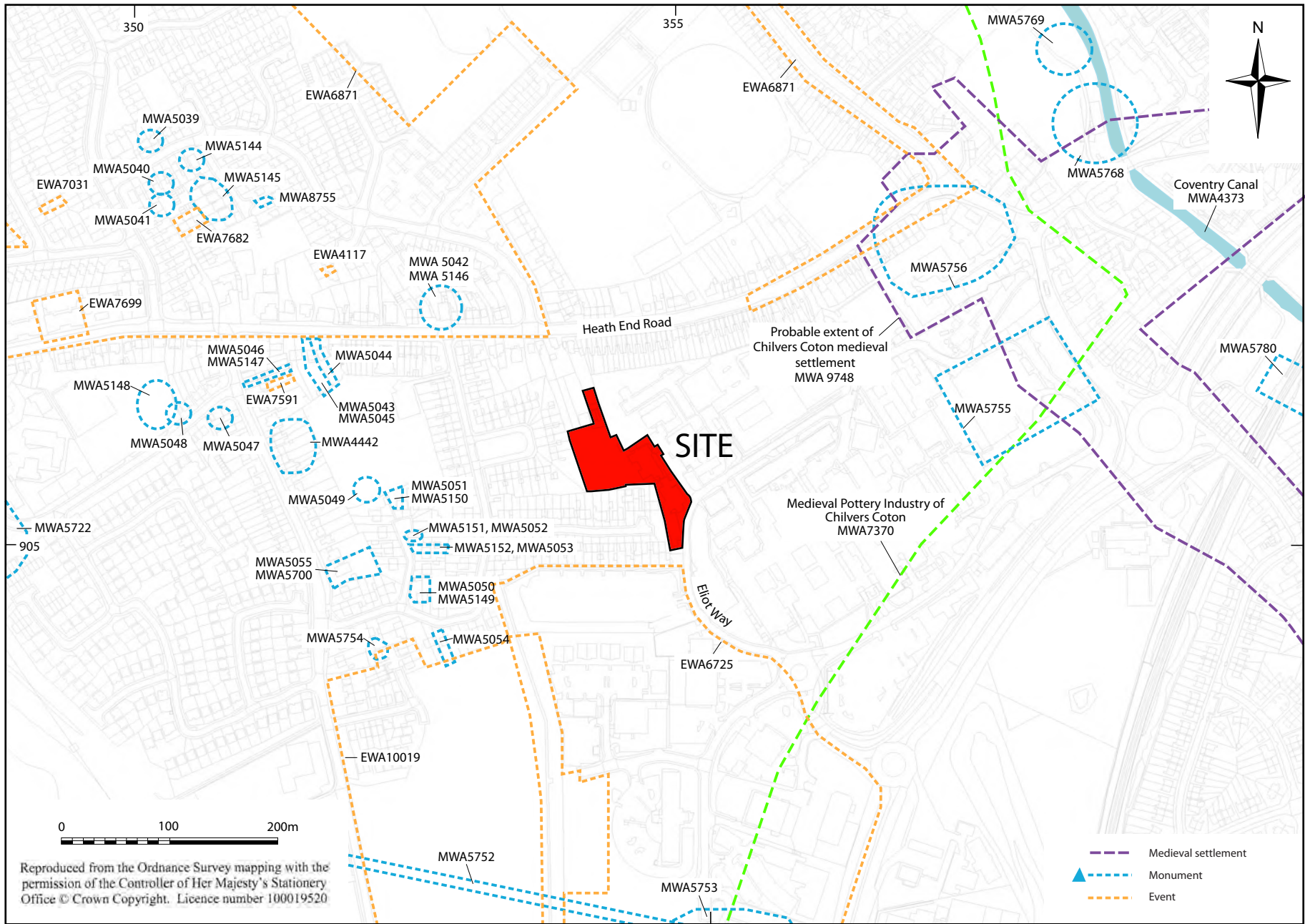


Fig 1: Site location

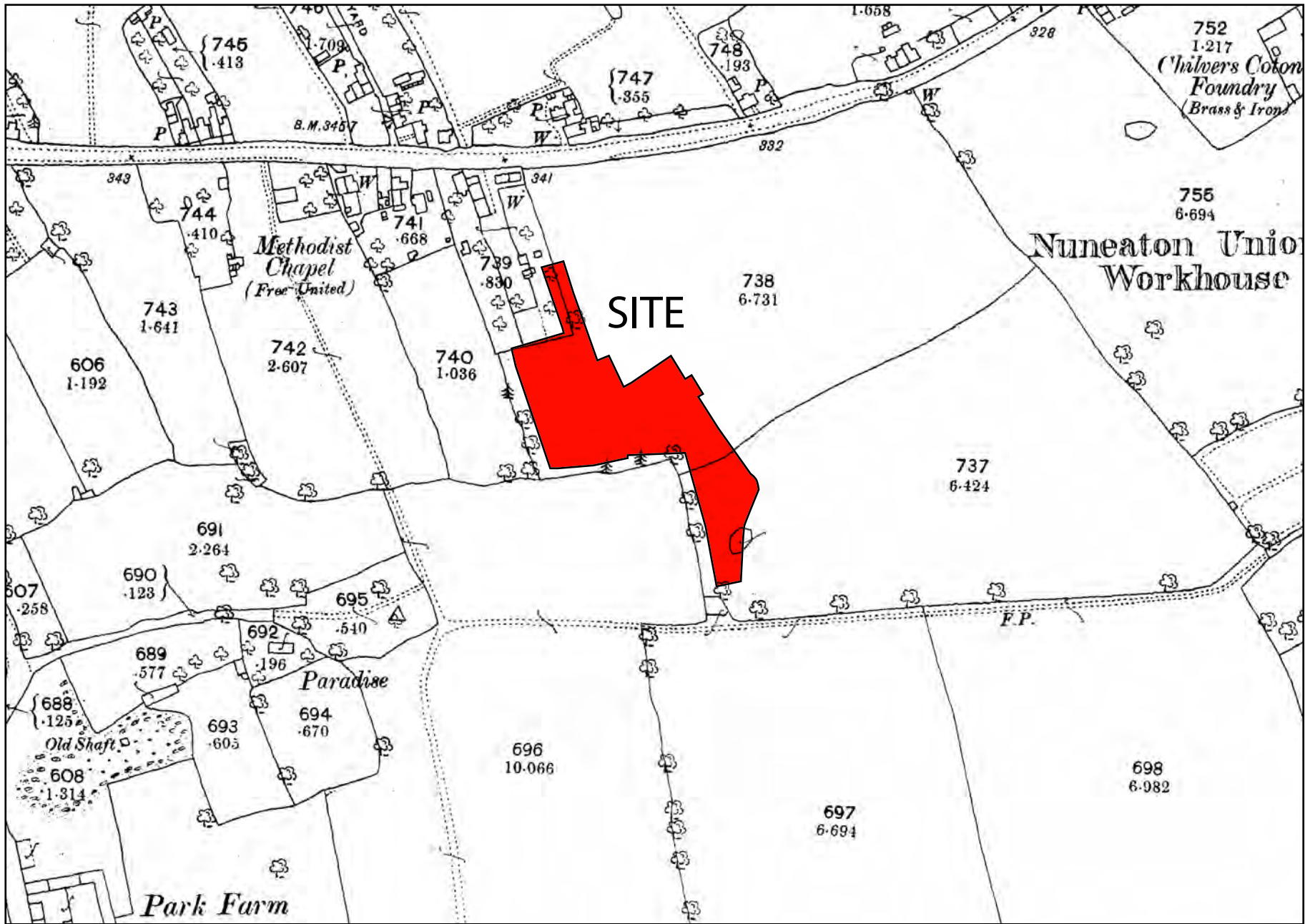


Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1888

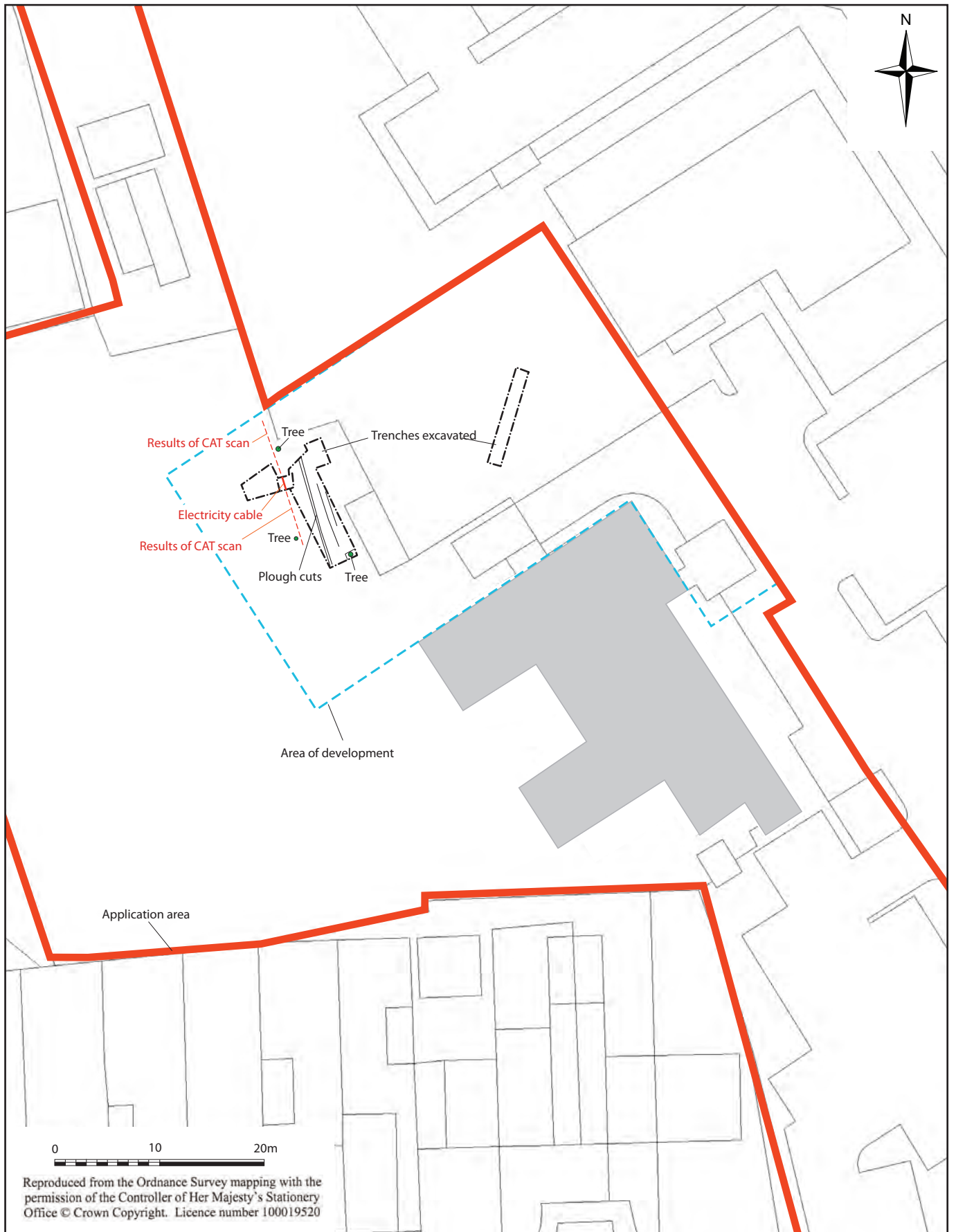


Fig 3: Trenches excavated



Fig 4: Trench 1 looking north



Fig 5: Trench 1 looking east



Fig 6: Trench 2 looking north-east