

The Hermitage , 42 Warwick Road, Southam, Warwickshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



understanding heritage matters

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1544

JULY 2015



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: Warwick Road Evaluation
Commissioned by: Mr David Coles
Project Report No. 1544
Site Code: SO15
Planning Reference: 14/02843/FUL
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Date: July 2015
Report reference: Thompson, P. 2015 *The Hermitage, 42 Warwick Road, Southam, Warwickshire: Archaeological Evaluation*, Archaeology Warwickshire Report 1544.

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SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation consisting of two trial trenches was undertaken in advance of the construction a new dwelling on behalf of Mr David Coles. Two fragments of medieval pottery were recovered from the topsoil, along with post-medieval finds, and two undated gullies and a pit were recorded during the evaluation.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Stratford-upon-Avon District Council for the demolition of outbuildings and erection of new dormer bungalow at The Hermitage, 42 Warwick Road, Southam. The site lies in an area of archaeological potential and there is a possibility that archaeological deposits could be disturbed or exposed by the development.

1.2 It was a condition of the planning permission that the applicant secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation which has been approved by the Planning Authority.

1.3 Archaeology Warwickshire were commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the Planning Authority. This report presents the results of that work. The archaeological archive will be deposited at the Warwickshire Museum under Site Code SO15.

2 SITE LOCATION

2.1 The site is located on the north side of Warwick Road, Southam on land that begins to slope towards the River Sowe to the north. The site is located in the south-western part of the town and within the parish of Southam and is on the western edge of the settlement.

2.2 The proposed development includes a new dwelling which will be set back from the road and to the east of no. 42 Warwick Road. At the time of the work the site was occupied by various extant outbuildings which are to be demolished.

2.3 The underlying geology of the site is Rugby Limestone member (BGS 2015).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 A 500m search of the Historic Environment Record centred on the site was carried out. The development site lies on the western edge of the medieval settlement of Southam (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record MWA 9045; Fig 1). The extent of the medieval settlement has been estimated using the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1888. It is possible that this western edge of Southam was a later post-medieval development however no. 24 Warwick Road to the east, dates to the 15th century (The National Heritage List for England NHLE no. 1364730) and the Farmhouse across the road from it dates to the early 17th century (NHLE no. 1035597).

Prehistoric/Romano-British

3.2 The only evidence for pre-medieval activity in the vicinity is in the form of three 3rd- and 4th-century Romano-British coins found in the churchyard and to the west of the church (MWA 764 and MWA 779). These indicate only a possible Romano-British presence in the general area rather than any specific settlement site.

Medieval

3.3 The boundaries of the manor and parish area were first recorded in a charter of AD 998 (VCH 1951, 219) and by the time of the Domesday survey (1086) the manor belonged to the Priory of Coventry and had a population that can be estimated at around 175 people (VCH 1904). Southam is an old market town; in 1227 the Prior of Coventry was granted the right to hold a weekly market and annual fair. During the medieval period the town itself developed around the church and market at the crossroads of the main Oxford to Coventry road and the Northampton to Warwick road. The 'Welsh Road', an ancient drover's road running from Watling Street at Towcester to Birmingham, also ran through the town (MWA 4766).

3.4 A church is mentioned here in 1248 (VCH 1951, 224) and this is likely to have been constructed at an earlier date, possibly on the site of an older church. The Church of St James is the earliest surviving building in the town with parts of the structure dating to the late 13th/early 14th century (MWA 761)

3.5 Other medieval monuments recorded on the HER include:-

MWA 7244	Medieval building near Southam
MWA 758	Holy Well
MWA 757	Site of possible Manor House

Post-medieval

3.5 By the 19th century the area had become a fashionable place to live. Another villa within extensive gardens was also added at Beech Hurst (a Grade II Listed Building, Number 307217) to the west of the Abbey in the early 19th century (MWA 8595). The Eye and Ear Infirmary, now the Stoneythorpe Hotel, is a Grade II Listed Building (LBS Number 307212).

3.6 At the time of the First Edition Ordnance Survey map the site was located between the dwelling known as the Hermitage and an L-shaped complex of buildings to the east (Ordnance Survey 1888; Fig 2).

3.7 Other post-medieval monuments recorded on the HER include:-

MWA 1647	Stoneythorpe Park
MWA 758	Holy Well
MWA 13376	Site of the Black Horse Inn
MWA 766	Browns Bridge
MWA 8595	Beech Hurst Garden
MWA 8690	Turnpike Southam to Kineton
MWA 8596	The Abbey House
MWA 13377	Black Dog Inn
MWA 770	Site of Tannery
MWA 4789	Turnpike Ryton to Banbury
MWA 4804	Turnpike Warwick to Northampton

Previous archaeological work

3.8 No previous archaeological work has taken place to investigate the western end of the settlement of Southam. The only other archaeological material found in the general area was a trade token, a 1650-75 farthing of T H Coles, found by the sexton when digging graves north of the church (MWA 777) along with a silver two pence coin of Charles I (MWA 778), minted in Aberystwyth, from the same location.

3.9 Previous work in the vicinity

EWA 10241	Watching brief Severn Trent
EWA 10277	Geophysical survey between Banbury Road and Kineton Road
EWA 10278	Archaeological Evaluation west of Banbury Road
EWA 9179	Archaeological Observation at 12 Warwick Road

EWA 7318

Archaeological Observation 1 Warwick Place

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 include 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.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Two evaluation trenches were excavated in agreed positions relative to the proposed building footprints whilst avoiding existing buildings. Trenches were machine excavated 8m long and 5m long using a 360° excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide ditching bucket. Archaeological features were recorded in both the trenches (T1 and T2) and a modern land drain crossed both trenches.

Trench 1

5.2 Trench 1 was located in the footprint of the western part of the plot and was 8m long. Geological natural clay (4) was revealed across most of the trench at a depth of 0.7m. The natural clay, a greenish, grey brown clay with frequent limestone fragments, occurred at approximately 88.75m OD.

5.3 A simple deposit sequence was revealed and the natural was overlain by a 0.2m thick layer of grey brown clay (3), which contained no apparent inclusions. This was overlain by 0.22m thick layer of dark grey brown silty clay (2). This was covered by 0.1m thick layer of topsoil and turf (1).

5.4 The natural clay was cut by a 2.8m long gully (8), which extended across the trench on a south-west to north-easterly alignment. The excavation and cleaning of the gully revealed a shallow and irregular feature which was filled by greyish brown silty clay (7). No finds were recovered from the gully.

5.5 Several sherds of post-medieval pottery, three fragments of clay pipe and one sherd of medieval pottery were recovered from topsoil deposits. This appeared to be a typical assemblage from a site in this part of Southam. The trench was crossed by a land drain which cut layer 2 and partially revealed a probable 20th-century brick-lined feature (10) at the northern end of the trench.

Trench 2

5.6 Trench 2 was 5m long and located towards the northern end of the plot. Geological natural clay (15) was revealed at a depth of c.0.75m. The natural clay was the same as recorded in Trench 1 and was at approximately 88.60m OD.

5.7 The natural clay was cut by a shallow linear gully (17) which was 0.35m wide and a maximum of 0.1m deep. The fill of the gully was a dark grey brown silty clay (16) from which no finds were recovered.

5.8 The south-eastern edge of a large feature (19) was also revealed. This was cleaned and the greyish brown silty clay fill (18) was partially excavated by hand. The feature was at least 0.6m deep and at least 2m wide. The full extent of the feature was not revealed and the excavated area was extended. Further work provided no details on the form or full extent of this possible pit or linear feature. Whilst several fragments of cattle bone were recovered no dating evidence was apparent. The nature of the feature remains unclear, but it is possible that it may be a large pit possibly relating to agricultural or garden activities.

5.9 A land drain extended across the trench and this may be the same feature as recorded in Trench 1.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 One or two sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from topsoil deposits, but no evidence for medieval settlement activity was revealed during the evaluation. This may suggest that the site lies at the periphery of the medieval settlement.

6.2 The evaluation did establish that there was a low density of archaeological features surviving in the investigated area. These features included possible gullies and a pit which survived approximately 0.7m below existing ground level. No dating evidence was recovered from these features and it is not clear how significant they may be. The alignment of the

gullies did not conform to likely alignment of property boundaries and it is possible that they may be garden or drainage features of unknown date.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank David Coles for commissioning the work and for providing the machine on site.

REFERENCES

BGS 2014 British Geological Survey Viewer

<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> accessed December 2014.

Ordnance Survey 1888 First Edition Ordnance Survey map, Warwickshire, Sheet 40.7.



Photograph 1. Trench 1 looking north



Photograph 2. Trench 1, Gully 8



Photograph 3. Trench 2



Photograph 4 Trench 2, feature 19

APPENDICES

A List of contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Trench 1		
1	Topsoil	
2	Layer	
3	Layer	
4	Natural	
5	Land drain	
6	Land drain	
7	Fill of 8	
8	Gully	
9	Fill of 10	
10	Brick-lined feature	
Trench 2		
11	Topsoil	
12	Layer	
13	Fill of pit	
14	Layer	
15	Natural	
16	Fill of 17	
17	Gully	
18	Fill of 19	
19	?Pit	

B List of Finds

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1	Pottery	4	3 (17th -19th century),1 (medieval)
1	Clay pipe	3	

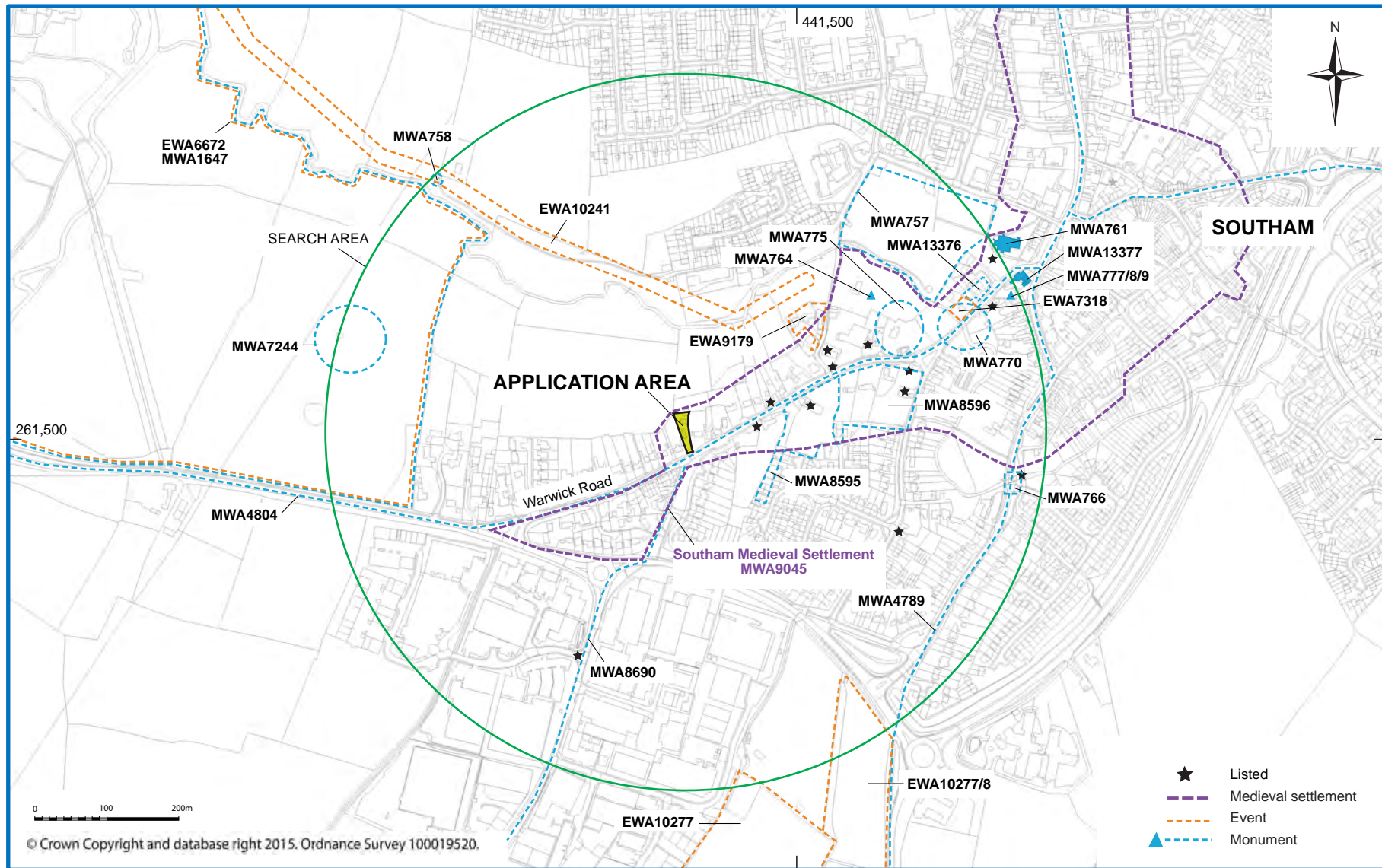


Fig 1: Location of Application Area and Historic Environment Information

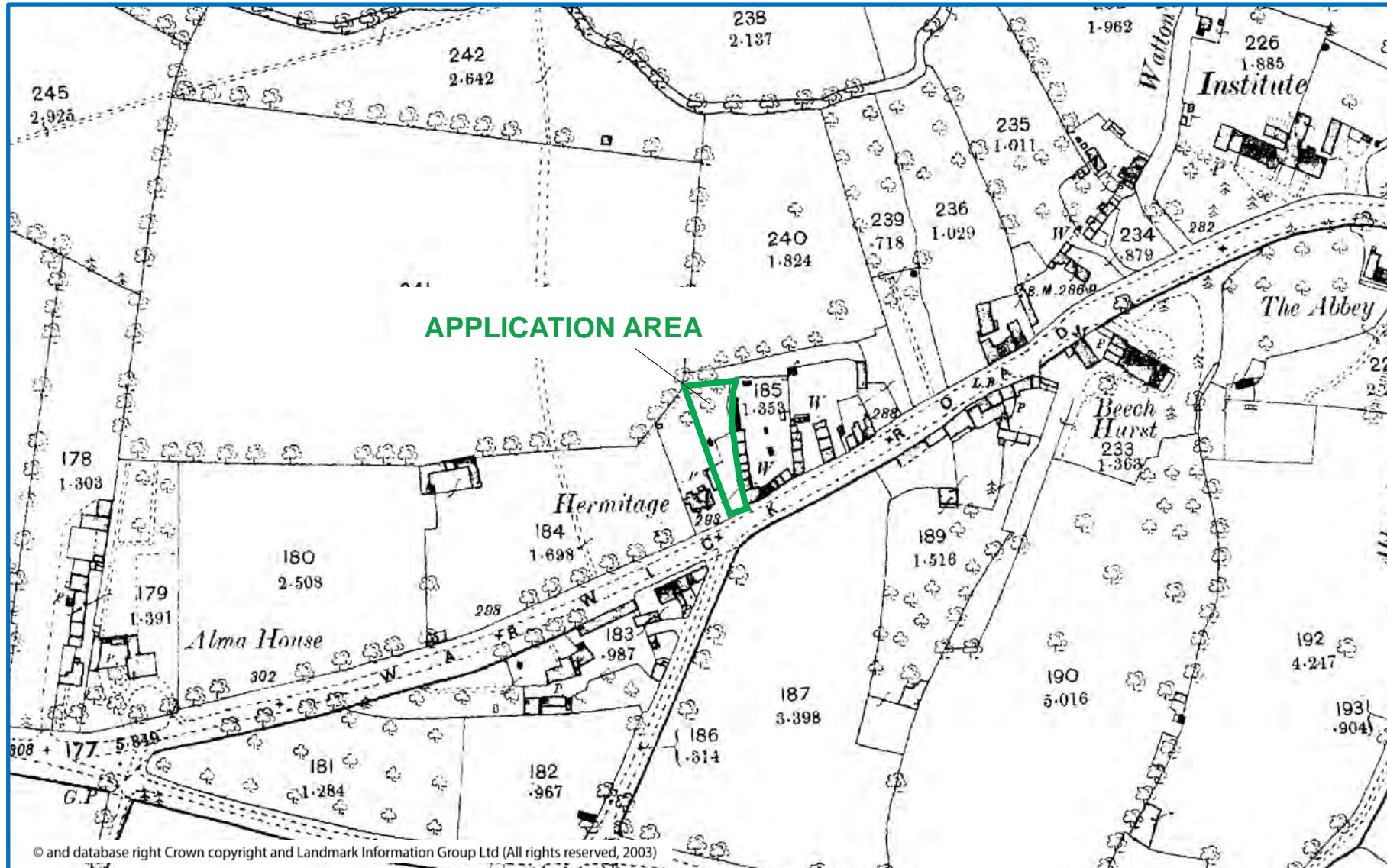


Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1888

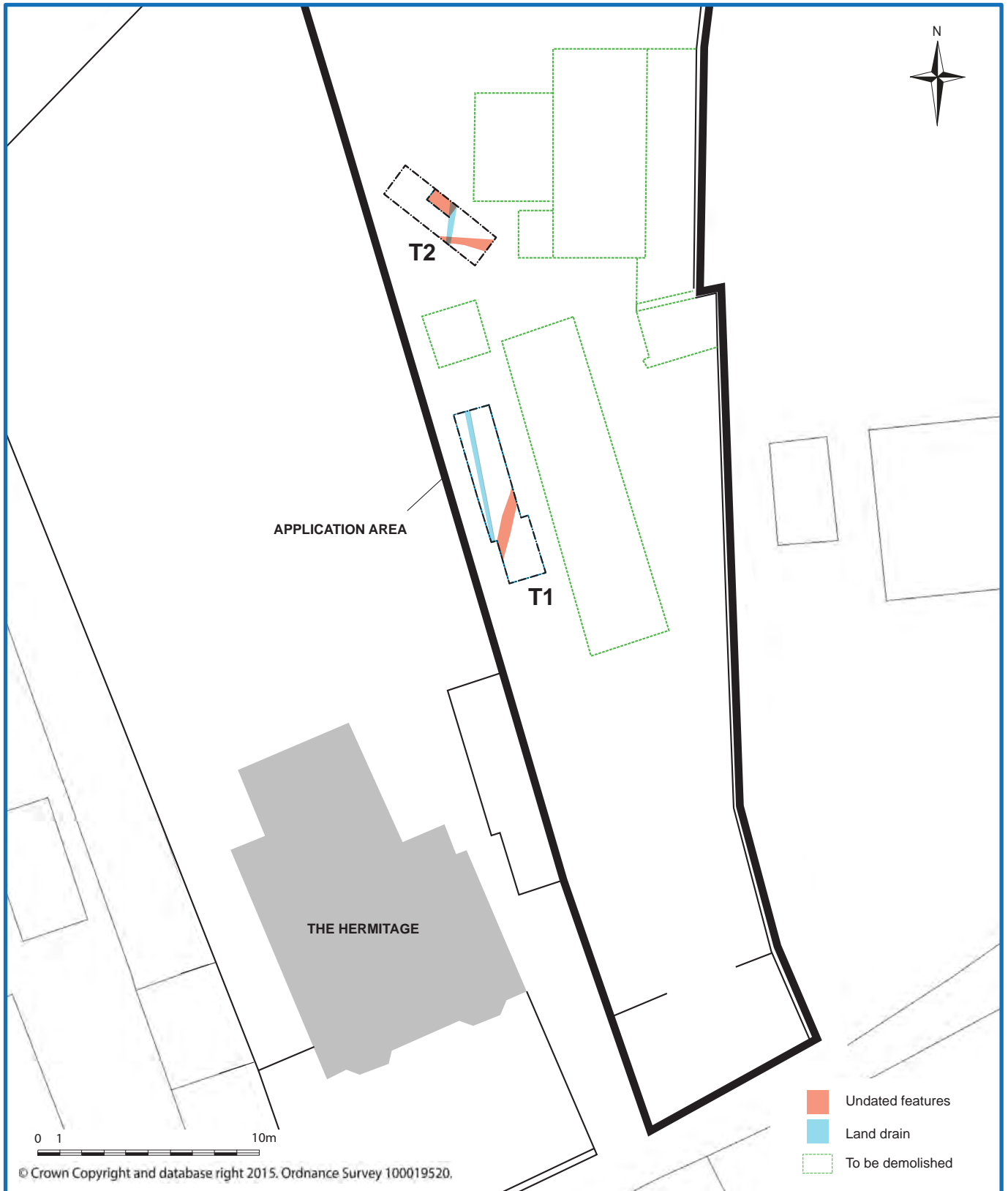


Fig 3: Location of excavated trench

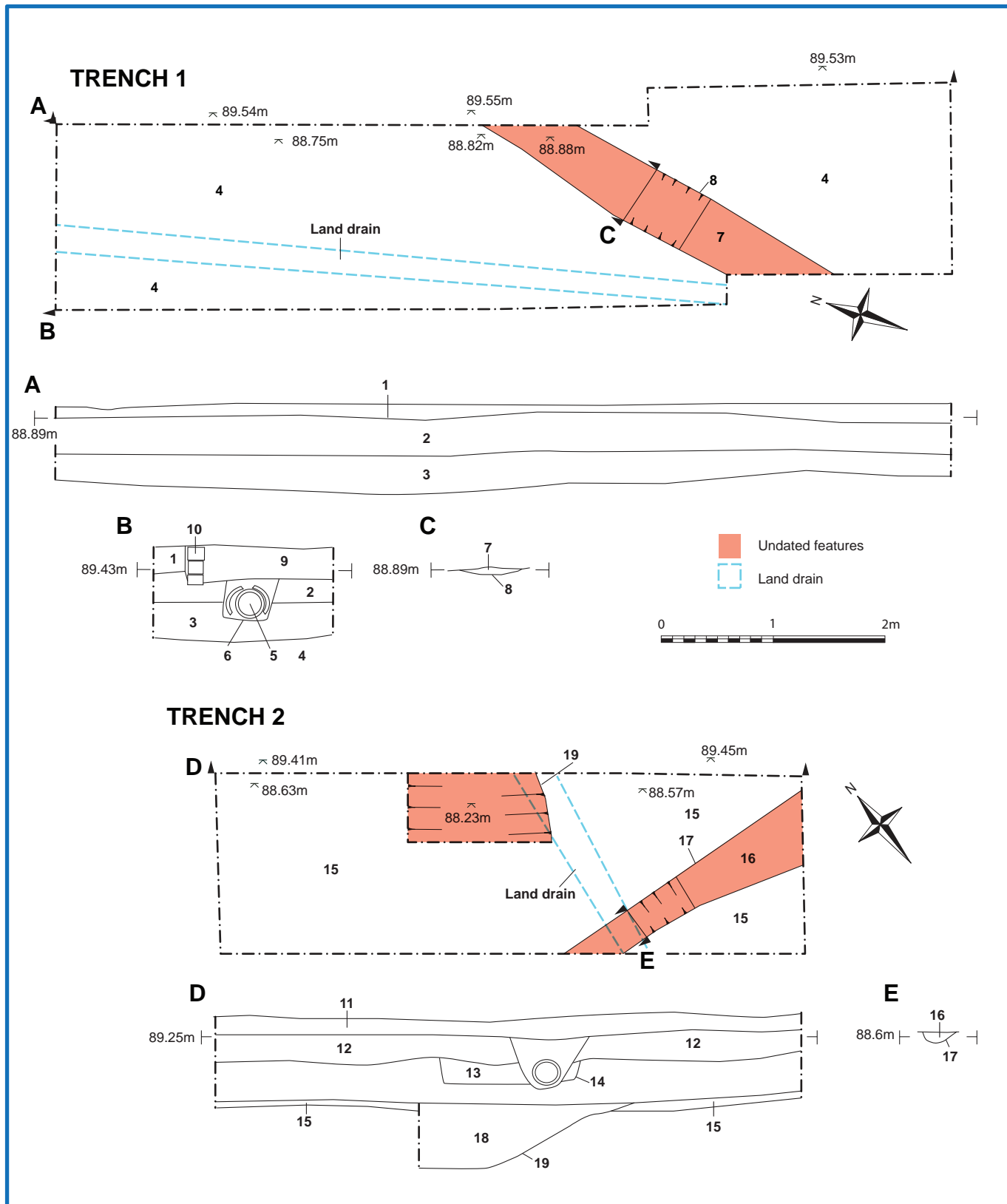


Fig 4: Detail of trenches and relevant sections