

# Brook Cottage, School Road, Snitterfield, Stratford-upon Avon, Warwickshire Archaeological Watching Brief



*understanding heritage matters*

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1342  
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*Working for  
Warwickshire*

**Project:** Brook Cottage, Snitterfield

**Commissioned by:** David Robotham on behalf of  
College Homes Ltd

**Project Report No.** 1342

**Site Code:** SB13

**NGR:** SP 214 600

**Planning Reference:** 12/02302

**Staff:**  
**Project Manager:** Stuart Palmer  
**Fieldwork:** Laurence Jones  
**Author:** Laurence Jones  
**Illustrations:** Candy Stevens

**Report checked by:** Pete Thompson

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Archaeology Warwickshire  
UNIT 9  
Montague Road  
Warwick  
CV34 5LW

Tel: 01926 412278

[fieldarchaeology@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:fieldarchaeology@warwickshire.gov.uk)  
[www.warwickshire.gov.uk/archaeology](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/archaeology)



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## Summary

**An archaeological watching brief was carried out on behalf of College Homes between February and July 2013 at Brook Cottage, Snitterfield, Warwickshire (National Grid Reference SP 214 600). No significant archaeological features or deposits were recorded. The negative results of the watching brief could suggest that the medieval settlement at Snitterfield did not extend into the development site. However, as only a small area of the site was affected by substantial development groundworks it is possible that archaeological features may remain undetected in areas of the site unaffected by groundworks.**

## 1 Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Stratford-upon-Avon District Council for redevelopment at Brook Cottage, School Road, Snitterfield (planning ref. 12/02302/FUL). The redevelopment consists of the demolition of existing barns, part demolition of the existing house, erection of part single-storey, part two-storey side/rear extension to Brook Cottage; conversion and extension of retained barn into a 3-bed dwelling; closure of two existing access points and creation of new access driveway and double garage. The proposed development site lies within an area of archaeological potential and it was a condition of planning permission that the development be accompanied by a programme of archaeological investigation. The Warwickshire County Council Planning Archaeologist requested that a watching brief be carried out during the groundworks associated with the redevelopment. A brief for the archaeological watching brief was prepared in January 2013.

1.2 Archaeology (Projects) Warwickshire were commissioned by College Homes to undertake the archaeological watching brief in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the Warwickshire County Council Planning Archaeologist.

1.3 This report represents the results of the watching brief in the area outlined in Fig. 3, which was undertaken between February and July 2013. The archive will be deposited with Warwickshire Museum under Site Code SB13.

## 2 Location

2.1 The site lies on the north side of the School Road (Fig. 1), centred on National Grid Reference SP 214 600, in the parish of Snitterfield.

2.2 The underlying geology of the area is Mercia Mudstone (British Geological Survey 1989).

## 3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 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).

3.2 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 Romano-British activity in the area, there is no other specific evidence for a settlement of this period nearby.

3.3 The present church of St James the Great (WA 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 (HER EWA 6726 EWA 6737; Warwickshire Museum 1999).

3.4 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 (WA 915, Fig. 1) 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).

3.5 Early maps of Snitterfield show that, prior to enclosure in 1766, the area was part of a large field called Middle Brook Field (Page and Page 1977). Unfortunately, this map does not give much indication of which parts of the village were occupied by buildings. In 1816 the area was called 'Dutton's Ground' (SBTRO DR 38/152; WRO CR 1784). The tithe map of 1840 does not show this area (WRO CR 569/206).

3.6 The site of Snitterfield Hall (WA 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, Fig. 1) 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).

3.7 Other archaeological work in the village is confined to two archaeological watching briefs; one to the south of Church Road (WA 7055, Fig. 1), and the other at Smith's Lane

(WA 7065, Fig. 1). No trace of medieval activity was recorded at either site although 19th century pottery was recovered.

## 4 Aims and Methods

4.1 The main aim of the work was to record any archaeological remains that are disturbed by the development, to collate the records in an archaeological archive and present the significant aspects of the archive in a report for dissemination.

4.2 The secondary aim was to form an understanding of the remains recorded in terms of their character and date, and to place the evidence in its local and regional context.

4.3 The objective of the work was to conduct an archaeological watching brief during the construction phase of the development. The watching brief was carried out in accordance with the Brief for Archaeological Work (January) issued by the County Planning Archaeologist. The watching brief consisted of the observation of topsoil stripping, ground reductions, foundation trenches and service trenches.

4.4 All archaeological work was undertaken in accordance with Archaeology (Projects) Warwickshire Procedures Manual (revised 2011) and to the appropriate Standard and Guidance of the Institute for Archaeologists.

## 5 Fieldwork

5.1 A 3-tonne mini- excavator fitted with 0.8m wide toothless bucket or a 0.4m bucket was used to carry out topsoil stripping and excavation of foundation/ service trenches.

5.2 At north part of the site (Fig. 3), 0.20m of topsoil (100) was removed, prior to the laying of a gravel drive and a north-west-south-east aligned modern drain was recorded. No archaeological features or deposits were observed as the required topsoil stripping was not to a depth sufficient for any potential archaeological deposits or natural subsoil to be visible.

5.3 Natural subsoil (101), a red brown clay with patches of sand and gravel, was recorded in two areas stripped to a greater depth. Close to a gate providing access to the Wolverton Road was a deposit of gravel and crushed brick (102, Figs. 3 and 5), 4m wide, this overlay natural subsoil 101. This was cut by the modern drain mentioned above and a sub-circular pit (108), 0.50m in diameter, which contained several sherds of 19th -20th century pottery (not retained). West of the gable end of the existing barn and abutting it were two parallel north-east to south-west aligned brick walls (109 and 110, Fig. 3), 2m apart, cutting the natural 101. Only a single course of brickwork survived and the walls extended beyond the limit of excavations. Walls 109 and 110 appeared to form a lean-to structure probably formerly housing livestock. Natural subsoil 101 and walls 109 and 110 were sealed by up to 0.50m of topsoil, west of the existing barn (Fig. 6).

5.4 The natural subsoil was also recorded at a depth of 0.25m, overlaid by topsoil 100, in an excavation for a new soakaway north of the existing barn (Fig. 3).

5.5 South of the existing barn, in a foundation trench (Figs. 4 and 7), the natural subsoil was recorded at a depth of 0.25-0.45m. It was sealed, at the east end of the trench, by a

yellow sand and gravel (111), 0.40m deep. Layer 111 and natural subsoil 101 was sealed by a dark brown silty sand and gravel containing brick and concrete fragments (103), 0.40m deep. A brown sand and gravel layer (112), 0.40m below the current ground surface, sealed by layer 103, was recorded in a service trench excavated to a depth of 0.40m, to the south of this foundation trench (Fig. 3).

5.6 North-east of Brook Cottage, in a foundation trench (Figs. 3, 4 and 8), the natural subsoil was recorded at a depth of 0.60-0.80m below the present ground surface. This was overlain, at the east end of the trench, by a layer of dark brown sand and gravel (105) containing large quantities of clinker, 0.20m deep. At the west end of the trench the natural 101 was sealed by a layer of yellow sand and gravel (104), 0.20m deep. Above layer 104 were the brick foundations (106), 0.60m deep, for a demolished structure associated with Brook Cottage. These foundations were abutted by a dark brown sandy silt deposit (107), 0.60m deep. Deposit 107 and layer 104 were sealed by layer 103, a brown silty sand and gravel (103) containing crushed brick, 0.20-0.65m deep. This was overlain by a brick yard surface, 0.08m deep.

## 6 Conclusions

6.1 No significant archaeological features or deposits were recorded and no finds were recovered, with the exception of a few sherds of 19th- 20th century pottery which were not retained. The negative results of the watching brief could suggest that the medieval settlement at Snitterfield did not extend into the development site. However, as only a small area of the site was affected by substantial development groundworks and it is possible that archaeological features may remain undetected in areas of the site unaffected by groundworks.

## Acknowledgements

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank David Robotham for commissioning the work and Richard Robotham for his assistance on site.

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## A List of Contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comments</i>
100	dark brown clay loam	topsoil
101	red-brown clay and gravel	geological natural subsoil
102	gravel and crushed brick	deposit
103	dark brown silty sand and gravel	layer
104	yellow sand and gravel	layer
105	dark brown sand and gravel	layer
106	brick foundations	structure
107	dark brown sandy silt	deposit
108	dark brown sandy clay	fill of pit
109	brick wall	structure
110	brick wall	structure
111	yellow sand and gravel	layer
112	brown sand and gravel	layer



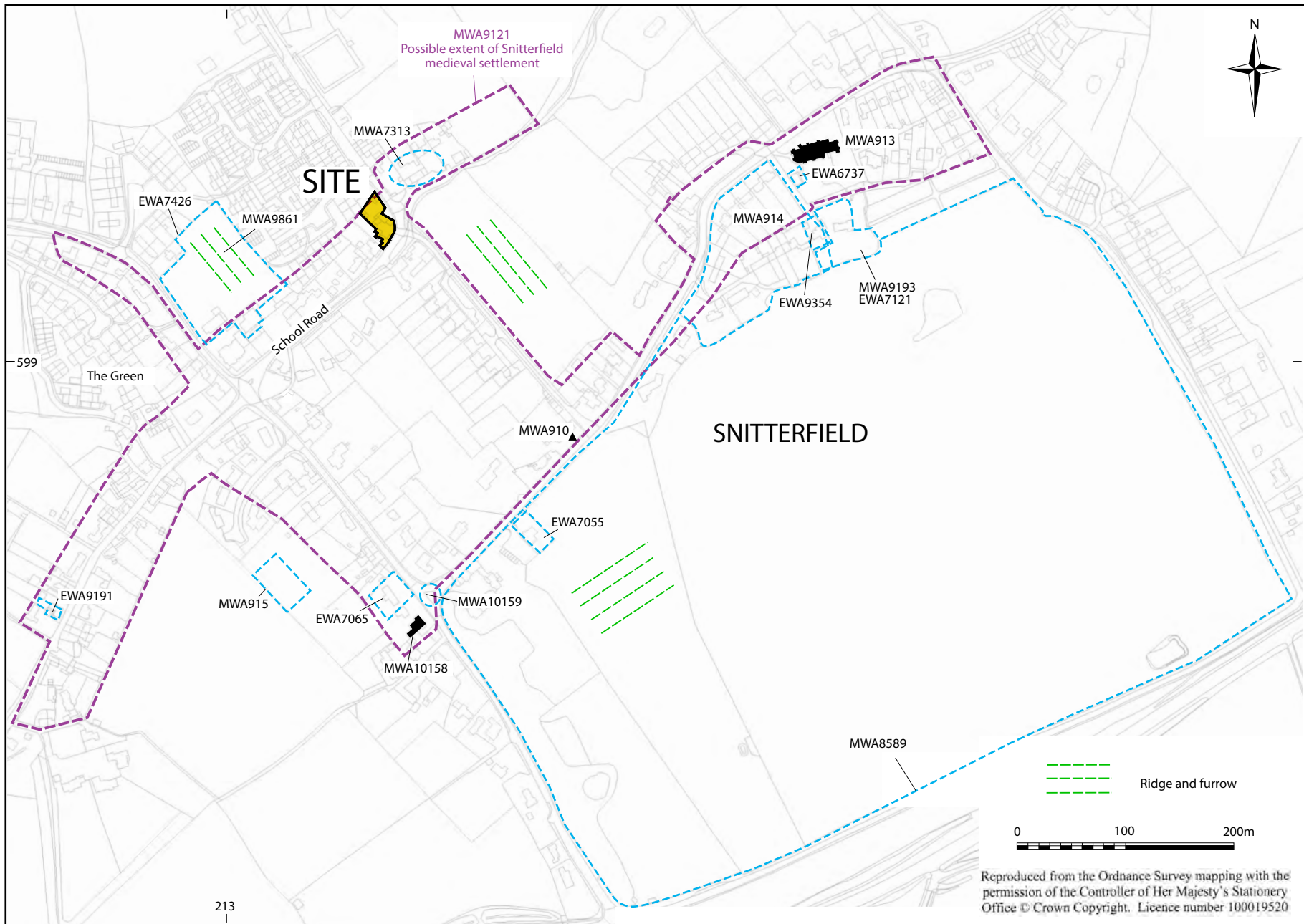


Fig 1: Site location

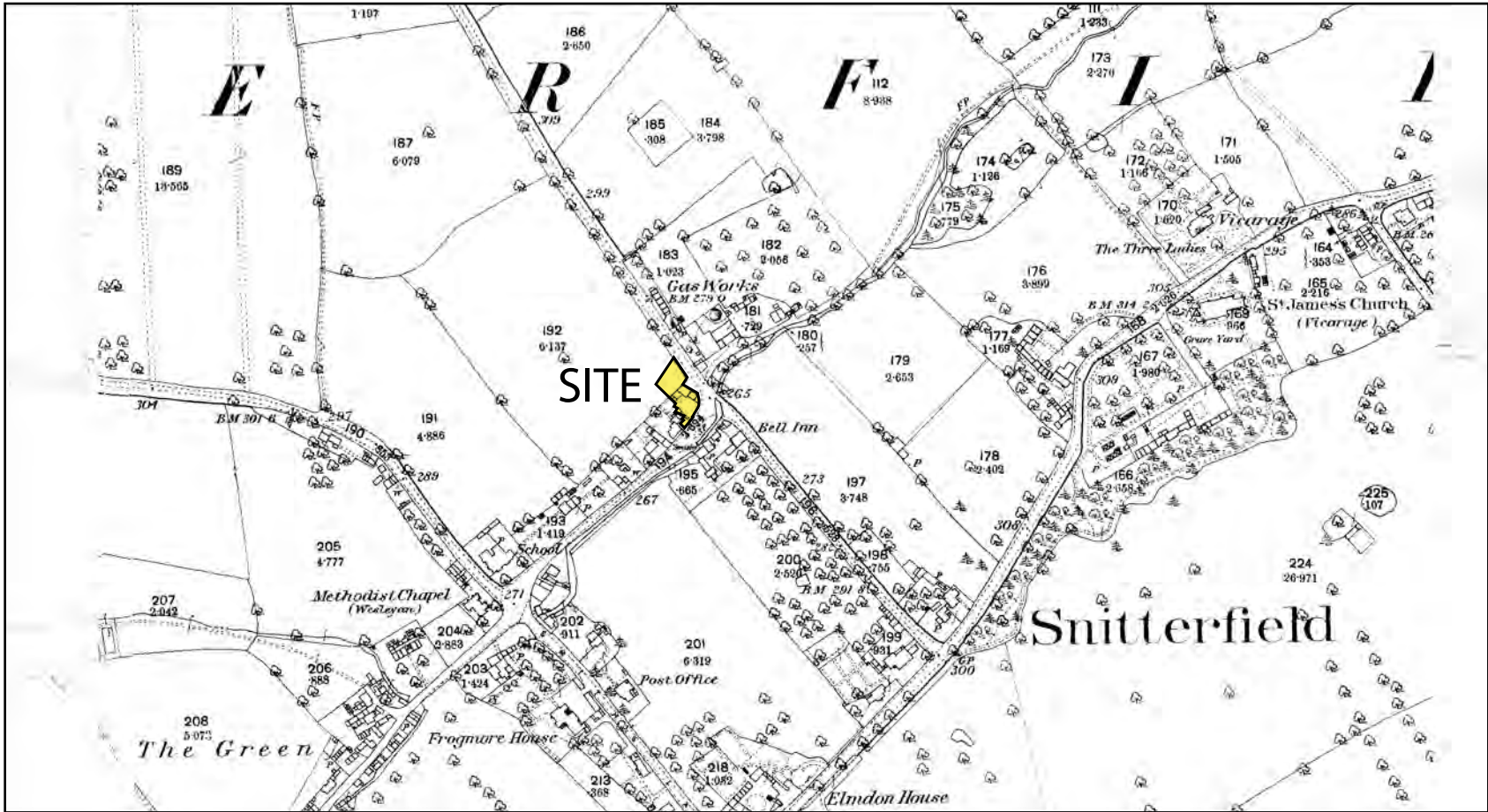


Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887

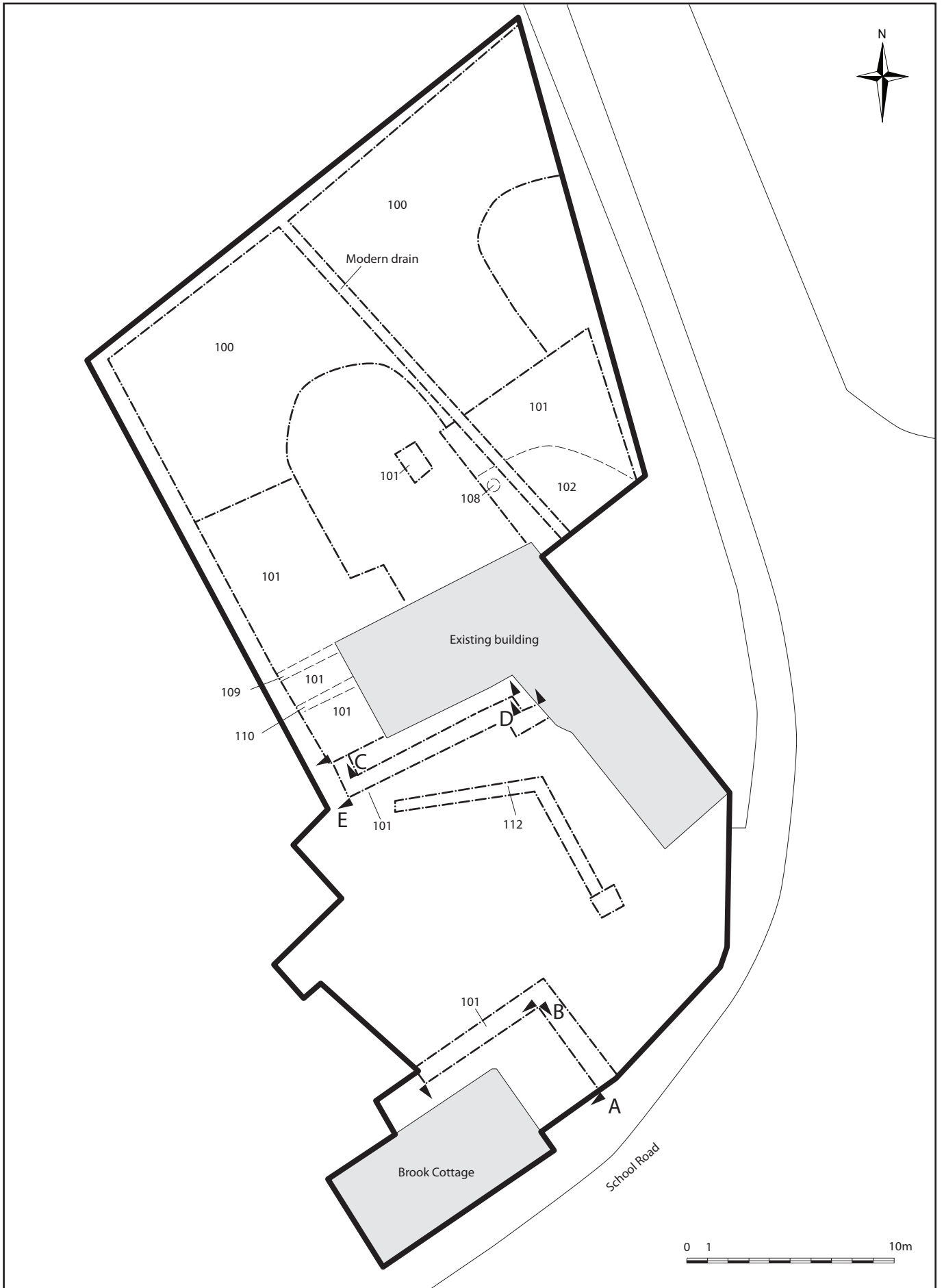


Fig 3: Site plan depicting areas stripped of topsoil, foundation and service trenches

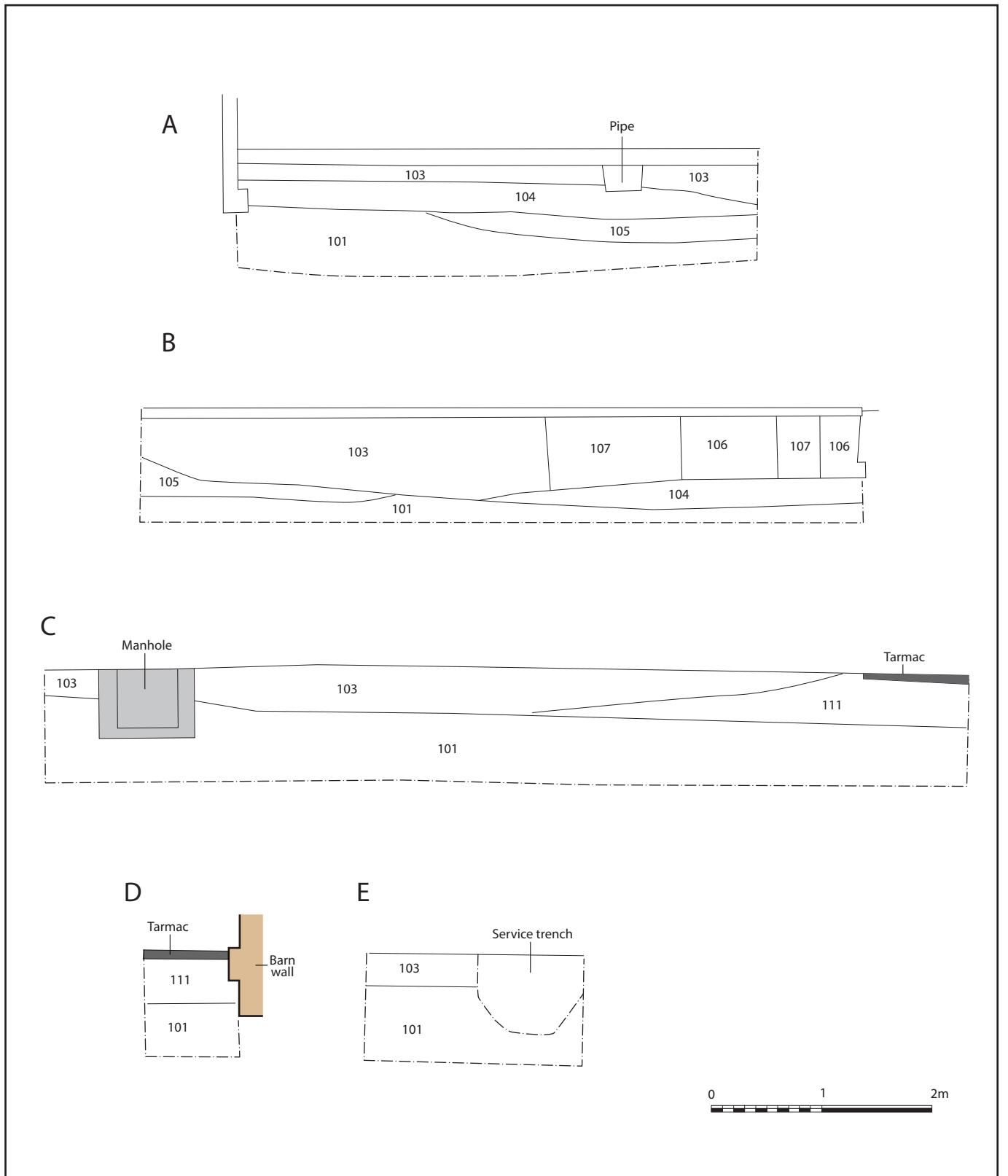


Fig 4: Sections A-E



Fig. 5: Stripped area north of barn showing deposit 102, view north



Fig. 6: Stripped area west of barn, view north



Fig. 7: Foundation trench south of barn, view north-east



Fig. 8: Foundation trench east of Brook Cottage, view south