

# Stapenhall Farm, Deppers Bridge, Harbury Warwickshire

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



*understanding heritage matters*

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1567

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*Working for  
Warwickshire*

<b>Project:</b>	Stapenhall Farmhouse
<b>Commissioned by:</b>	Prospect Archaeology on behalf of West Register (Realisations) Ltd
<b>Project Report No.</b>	1567
<b>Site Code:</b>	HA15
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<b>Planning Authority:</b>	Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire
<b>Planning Archaeologist:</b>	Anna Stocks, Warwickshire
<b>National Grid Reference:</b>	SP 3964 6028
<b>Team:</b>	
<b>Project Manager:</b>	Pete Thompson BA
<b>Fieldwork:</b>	Bryn Gethin BA, Pete Thompson BA
<b>Author:</b>	Dr Cathy Coutts, Pete Thompson BA
<b>Illustrations:</b>	Candy Stevens
<b>Report checked by:</b>	Stuart Palmer MCIfA
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Archaeology Warwickshire

Unit 9

Montague Road

Warwick

CV34 5LW

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 evaluation consisting of four trial trenches was undertaken for Prospect Archaeology on behalf of West Register (Realisations) Ltd. No evidence was found relating to the Romano-British settlement recorded to the north-east of the site but wall foundations and demolition material was recorded relating to the 19th century farmhouse depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Stratford-upon-Avon District Council for the erection of a replacement dwelling at Stapenhall Farm, Deppers Bridge, Southam CV47 2SU (Planning Ref 15/01547/FUL). The former farmhouse, which is shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1887, was demolished a few years ago.

1.2 A planning condition attached to the consent requires that the applicant secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work 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 in September 2015.

## 2 SITE LOCATION

2.1 The site is centred around National Grid Reference SP 3964 6028 to the south-east of Stapenhall Farm buildings, approximately 1km north of the village centre of Deppers Bridge, in the parish of Harbury (Fig 1). The underlying geology of the site is Lias mudstone and clays with limestone (BGS 1984).

## 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 A scatter of at least 81 sherds of Roman pottery was recovered from a field immediately east of Stapenhall Farm in 1971 (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record MWA 639), suggesting the possibility of a Romano-British site there. Another possible Romano-British site lies to the north-east (MWA 19204) and there are also finds of Roman coins (MWA 765) and Iron Age coins in the Southam area (MWA 763).

3.2 Harbury is mentioned in 1003 when Wulfric Spot gave an estate there to Burton Abbey in Staffordshire (VCH 1951, 104). By the time of the Domesday survey (1086), having been partly laid waste by the king's army in 1066, (VCH 1904, 291, 305), the parish had a population that can be estimated at c.216 people, although no mention of Burton Abbey is made at this time. There are areas of medieval ridge and furrow recorded in some of the surrounding fields (MWA 19527 and 19530).

3.3 The parish was something of a backwater, not being crossed by any main road up until recent times and described in 1625 as having no thoroughfare. The land was also described as unproductive and the village was known as 'Hungry Harbury' in 1740. The parish has, however, always been large, having 145 houses in 1730 and in the 19th century acting as a source of labour for neighbouring parishes such as Ufton and Chesterton (VCH 1951, 103).

3.4 The earliest surviving structure at Stapenhall Farm is the cottage, now part of a range of farm outbuildings converted to residential use in 2007-9. The cottage is a Grade II Listed Building (LB no 307097) and dates from the latter part of the 18th century with later additions of the early 19th and 20th centuries. The site probably lay within the open fields of Harbury during the medieval period and there is no evidence for there being a farm here at that date. It is possible that the farm was built as a result of the enclosure of Harbury, the maps for Harbury and the earliest map to show the farm is the Ordnance Survey map of 1887 (Fig 2).

3.5 A former quarry pit and associated buildings of mid-20th century date, with the line of a former mineral railway running south-west from it (MWA 9602), have been noted to the north-west of the current development.

3.6 There are no tithe or enclosure maps of Harbury and no estate maps cover this area. The earliest known map is the Ordnance Survey Drawing of Ladbrooke of 1812 by Henry Stevens, which shows the farm buildings to the north-west in existence, but not Stapenhall farmhouse (OSD 227). Stapenhall Farm is shown on the First Edition 1 inch to 1 mile map of 1834, but again, the farmhouse is not indicated, suggesting it was probably built in the second half of the 19th century, as it is indicated by 1887, when it was shown as an L-shaped house, with a wing projecting to the north-east. A similar picture is shown on the second edition map of 1904, with a well to the west side of the northern wing.

3.7 An aerial photograph of 2007 shows a number of trees and shrubs within the application area, and a later aerial photograph of 2013 shows the site without the trees and house, but with a track running across it from south-west to north-east.

3.8 Between 2007 and 2009 a programme of building recording and archaeological recording during groundworks was carried out at Stapenhall Farm (MWA 12997; EWA 9415; Coutts and Jones 2010). No evidence of Romano-British activity was recorded and the only features identified were associated with the existing farm.

## 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.

4.4 Four trenches were opened up by a 180° excavator with a 1.60m wide, toothless ditching bucket. Topsoil and other plough soils were removed under the supervision of an experienced archaeologist until either the top of archaeological remains or geological natural was reached.

## 5 RESULTS

5.1 A simple sequence of deposits was identified across the four trenches; primarily topsoil, an earlier ploughsoil horizon and natural geology. A drainage ditch had recently been machine dug (approximately 0.7m deep and 1.4m wide), across the evaluated area. The ditch cut through several service trenches, drains and manholes.

### **Trench 1**

5.2 Trench 1 contained no significant archaeological features, but the deposit sequence was truncated by a 0.7m wide service trench and by a water main supply pipe.

5.3 Geological natural yellowish brown clay (103) was sealed by a 0.12m to 0.18m thick layer of greyish brown silty clay (102). A 0.15m to 0.2m thick layer of demolition rubble (101) including brick and concrete was present across much of the trench. A greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil deposit (100) was recorded across the trench.

**Table A Deposit sequence details**

Deposits	Trench				Description
	1	2	3	4	
Topsoil	100	200	300	400	Greyish brown silty clay loam
Soil horizon (previous ploughsoil)	102	203	301	403	Greyish brown silty clay
Natural geological clays	103	204	302	404	Yellowish brown clay (also with sandy patches and limestone fragments)

### Trench 2

5.4 Trench 2 contained a single brick wall foundation but no other significant archaeological features. The trench was truncated by a modern drainage channel.

5.5 Geological natural (204) was sealed by a 0.12m to 0.18m thick layer of greyish brown silty clay (203). A 0.3m to 0.35m thick layer of demolition rubble (201) including brick, large pebbles and some Tarmac was present across much of the trench. Adjacent to the demolition rubble was a 0.37m wide brick wall. A single course was recorded and bricks were bonded with yellowish brown mortar.

5.6 A topsoil deposit (200) extended across the trench and sealed the wall foundation and rubble.

### Trench 3

5.7 Trench 3 contained a single pit for a dog burial, but no other archaeological features or remains were revealed.

5.8 The layer of geological natural (302) included patches of reddish brown sand and frequent limestone fragments. This was sealed by a 0.2m thick layer of greyish brown silty clay (301). A single, 0.6m wide pit (305) was at least 0.4m deep contained the skeleton of dog (304) and was cut through ploughsoil deposits.

5.9 A topsoil deposit (300) extended across the trench. Two ceramic land drains (303) also extended across the trench.

#### **Trench 4**

5.10 Trench 4 contained a single brick wall foundation, however no other significant archaeological features or remains were revealed.

5.11 Geological natural (404) was sealed by a 0.2m thick layer of greyish brown silty clay (403). A 0.4m to 0.45m thick layer of demolition rubble (401) including a variety of bricks, concrete and other 20th century debris was present across a large part of the trench. At the northern limit of the demolition rubble 401 was a 0.5m wide brick wall foundation (402). A single course of bricks survived and were bonded by a light yellowish brown mortar.

5.12 A topsoil deposit (400) extended over the trench and sealed the wall foundation and rubble.

## **6 CONCLUSIONS**

6.1 No significant archaeological remains were revealed during the evaluation and there was no evidence to indicate any medieval or earlier activity. The large, open drainage ditch, recently excavated across the area had removed the deposit sequence down to and into natural deposits but there was no evidence that this had impacted on significant archaeological remains.

6.2 The absence of any Roman deposits or finds suggests that the Roman settlement activity to the north did not extend this far south. This would concur with HER record (MWA639) which recorded a greater intensity of finds to the north-east.

6.3 The trenches revealed brick wall foundations associated with the previous farmhouse building and farmyard. The layers of rubble and building material clearly relate to the recent demolition and levelling of these structures.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## REFERENCES

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1. Trench 1 looking south



2. Trench 2 looking south-west



3. Wall foundation 202



4. Trench 3 looking north-east



5. Trench 4 looking north



6. Wall foundation 402

## APPENDICES

### A List of contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<b>Trench 1</b>		
100	Layer	Topsoil
101	Layer	
102	Layer	
103	Layer	Natural
<b>Trench 2</b>		
200	Layer	Topsoil
201	Layer	Demolition rubble
202	Wall foundation	
203	Layer	
204	Layer	Natural geology
<b>Trench 3</b>		
300	Layer	Topsoil
301	Layer	
302	Layer	Natural geology
303	Land drains	
304	Fill of pit	
305	Pit (dog burial)	
<b>Trench 4</b>		
400	Layer	Topsoil
401	Layer	Demolition rubble
402	Wall foundation	
403	Layer	
404	Layer	Natural geology

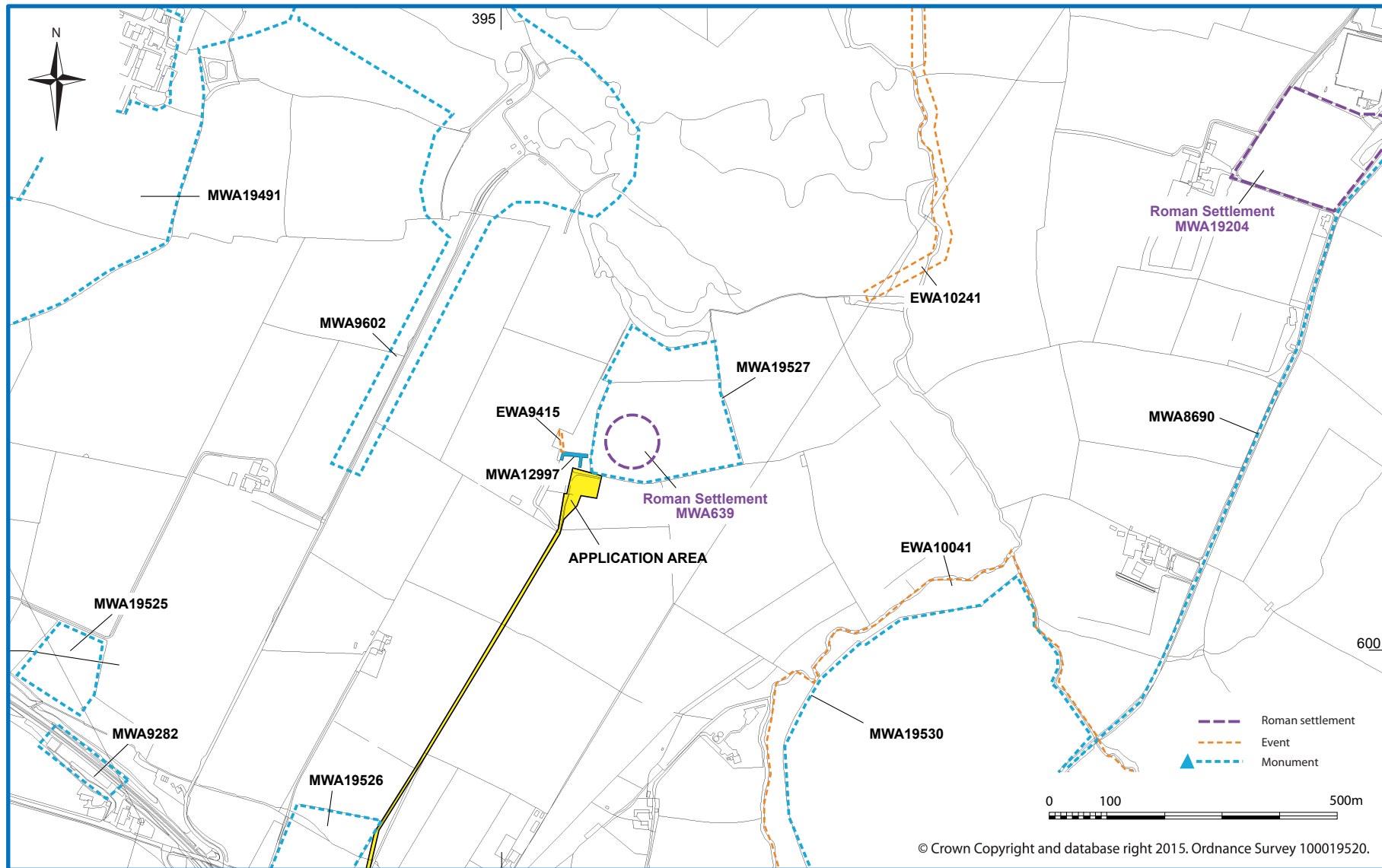
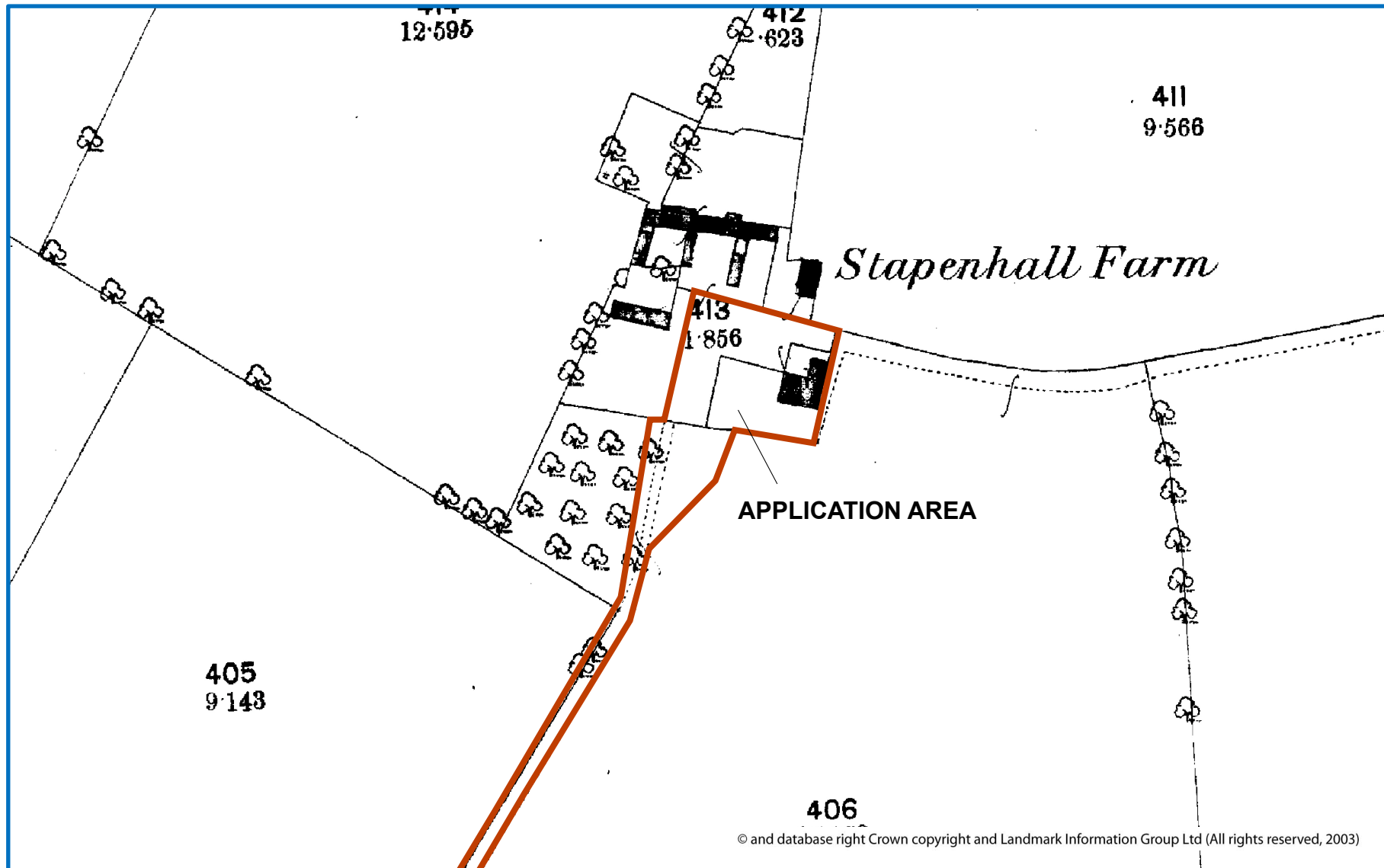


Fig 1: Location of application area and Historic Environment Information



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

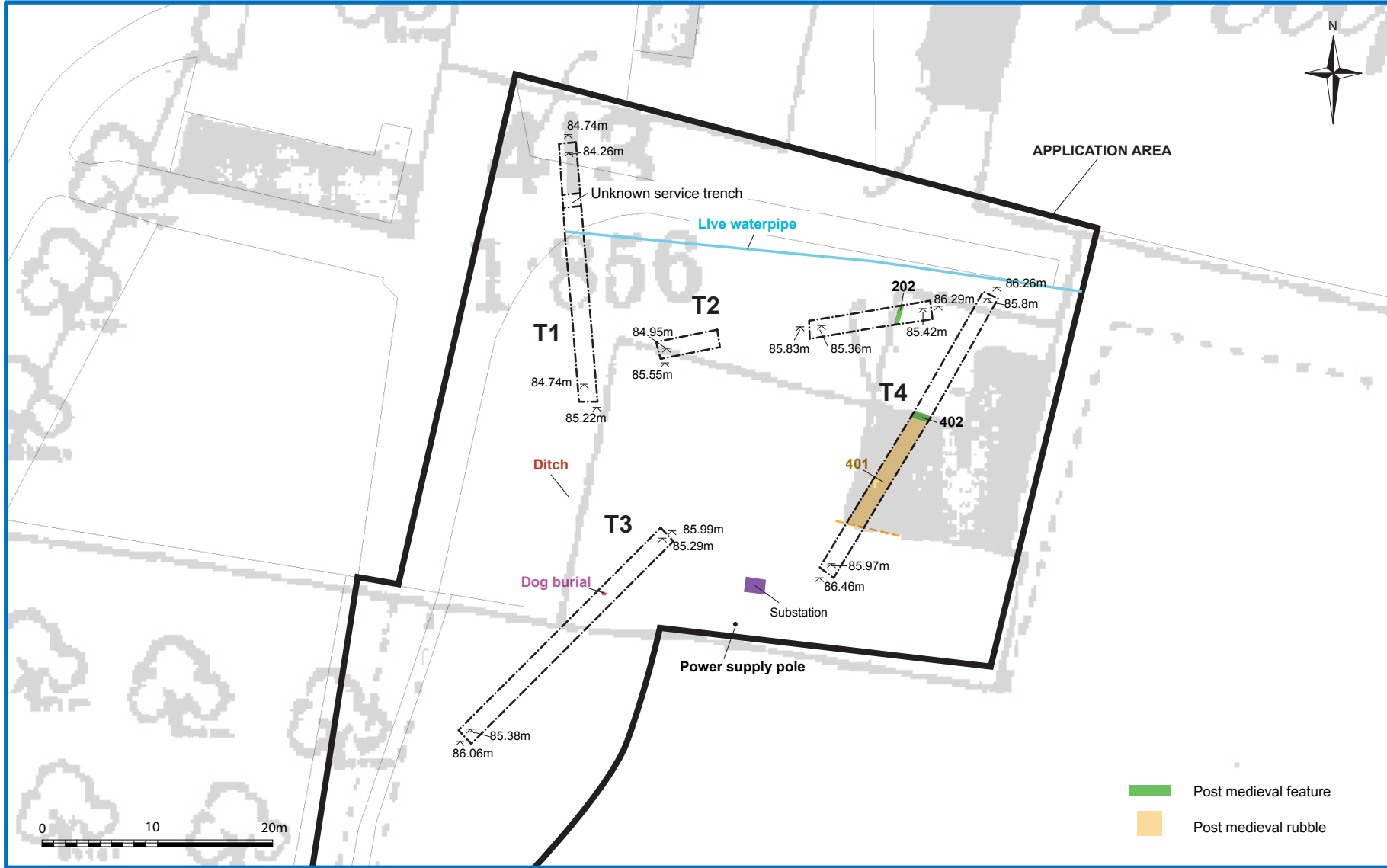


Fig 3: Detail of trenches excavated with First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887