

National Grid Car Park, Technology Park, Warwick, Warwickshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



understanding heritage matters

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1502
January 2015



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: National Grid Carpark
Commissioned by: Craig Davies @ Goldbeck Construction Ltd
Project Report No. 1502
Site Code: WT14
Planning Reference: W/14/0261
National Grid Reference: SP 2953 6404
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Date: January 2015
Report reference: Rann, C, National Grid Carpark, *Technology Park, Warwick: Archaeological Watching Brief, Archaeology Warwickshire Report 1502*

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SUMMARY

Archaeological observation of ground reduction during the creation of additional car parking facilities at National Grid House, Warwick Technology Park, uncovered two pits of unknown date. No other significant archaeological remains were revealed. The groundworks for the new carpark were undertaken in an area considerably disturbed by previous episodes of soil stripping and dumping; geotechnical ground investigations had previously demonstrated that the strip foundation would be constructed through 'made ground' up to 2.65m deep and areas where the surface had been scoured below the level of the geological substrate.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Warwick District Council for additional car parking facilities at National Grid House, Warwick Technology Park. An archaeological desk-based assessment and a Heritage Asset Assessment were carried out prior to the determination of the application. It was a condition of planning permission that the development be accompanied by a programme of archaeological investigation.

1.2 Archaeology Warwickshire was commissioned to undertake a programme of fieldwork, consisting of the archaeological observation of all groundworks associated with the development in accordance with a brief prepared by the County Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the Planning Authority (April 2012).

1.3 Groundworks for a temporary car park were monitored in November and December 2012 and the results were detailed in the desk-based assessment (Thompson 2013) in which the archaeological background to the site was also presented. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under a temporary accession number.

1.4 The current phase of fieldwork was carried out between October and November 2014, this report presents the results of that work.

2 SITE LOCATION

2.1 The site lies on the northern side of the Heathcote Lane and Gallows Hill and forms part of the southern side of Warwick Technology Park. It is situated on the western facing slope associated with Heathcote Hill and lies at between 55m aOD and 52m aOD.

2.2 The underlying geology of the area around the site is 4th Terrace River Gravel (BGS 1984), overlying Mercia Mudstone deposits.

3 AIMS AND METHODS

3.1 The main aim of the work was to record any archaeological remains 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 The objective of the work was a programme of controlled excavation to development formation levels, or the geological natural, whichever was higher.

3.4 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.

3.5 Ground investigations by Georisk Management (2014) including the excavation of nine test pits demonstrated the presence of a considerable mound of modern redeposition or 'made ground' across the development area. The carpark was to be constructed over the made ground with only the foundations penetrating to the load bearing substrate. The access road was to be reduced as necessary. No relic soils were described in the ground investigation report.

3.6 An experienced archaeologist was made available for each day of ground disturbance when notified by the client in accordance with the approved WSI.

4 RESULTS

Area recorded in 2012 (temporary car park)

4.1 Several pits were recorded across this area and were either undated or 20th century in origin. A 20th century ditch was also found (Fig 2). The results suggested that some levelling, ground reduction and landscaping may have taken place during the construction of the existing buildings and surrounding grounds.

2014 - new access road

4.2 Ground reduction to a depth of 0.45m took place across the area and several trees were grubbed out (Fig 2). The lowest and therefore earliest layer reached was greyish brown pebbly silt (4): Some 0.15m of this layer was removed during the groundworks. It seems likely this was an older (medieval/post-medieval) plough soil with no indication that it had been re-deposited. Layer 4 was overlain by a 0.15m deep layer of dark greyish brown silty loam (5). This appeared to be buried topsoil and no finds were recovered from it.

4.3 The topsoil was overlain by modern deposits consisting of 0.1m of hardcore (3), 0.1m of reddish clay (2) and modern topsoil up to 0.22m deep which covered the site.

2014 – attenuation tank

4.4 Geological natural reddish brown clay with sand and gravel patches (24) was observed at a depth of 1.2m below the current ground surface. Cutting the natural were two small pits (20 and 23). Pit 20 was sub-oval with a shallow U-shaped profile. It was 0.7m x 0.5m at its widest points and 0.07m deep. No finds were recovered from the greyish brown clay loam fill (21). Pit 23 was sub-oval and filled with greyish brown clay loam (22). It was 1.2m x 0.85m at its widest points and 0.1m deep with a U-shaped profile. There was no evidence to suggest a function for the pits.

4.5 Overlying the pits was a sterile layer of light yellowish brown sand and gravel (18) which was 0.2m deep. Layers above this were the result of recent landscaping; firstly layer 17 was 0.5m of dark grey silty clay with modern brick fragments. It was overlain by 0.5m of red clay with modern brick fragments (16) and 0.25m of light grey aggregates (25).

2014 – foundations

4.6 Material from the access road was added to the modern made ground in the vicinity of the proposed carpark in order to provide the base for the lower deck. Foundation trenches were cut through this level. Given the inherent instability of the made ground and the fact that the trenches were in excess of 2.0m deep, it was deemed not possible to safely inspect the trenches.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The site of the new carpark had clearly been subject to multiple episodes of recent landscaping as was noted in the archaeological work undertaken in 2012. This clearly

involved the removal of topsoils and the dumping of re-deposited soils and builder's detritus. Geological natural was only revealed in the attenuation tank, but the two undated pits examined and recorded, revealed no evidence for their function.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Craig Davies for commissioning the work.

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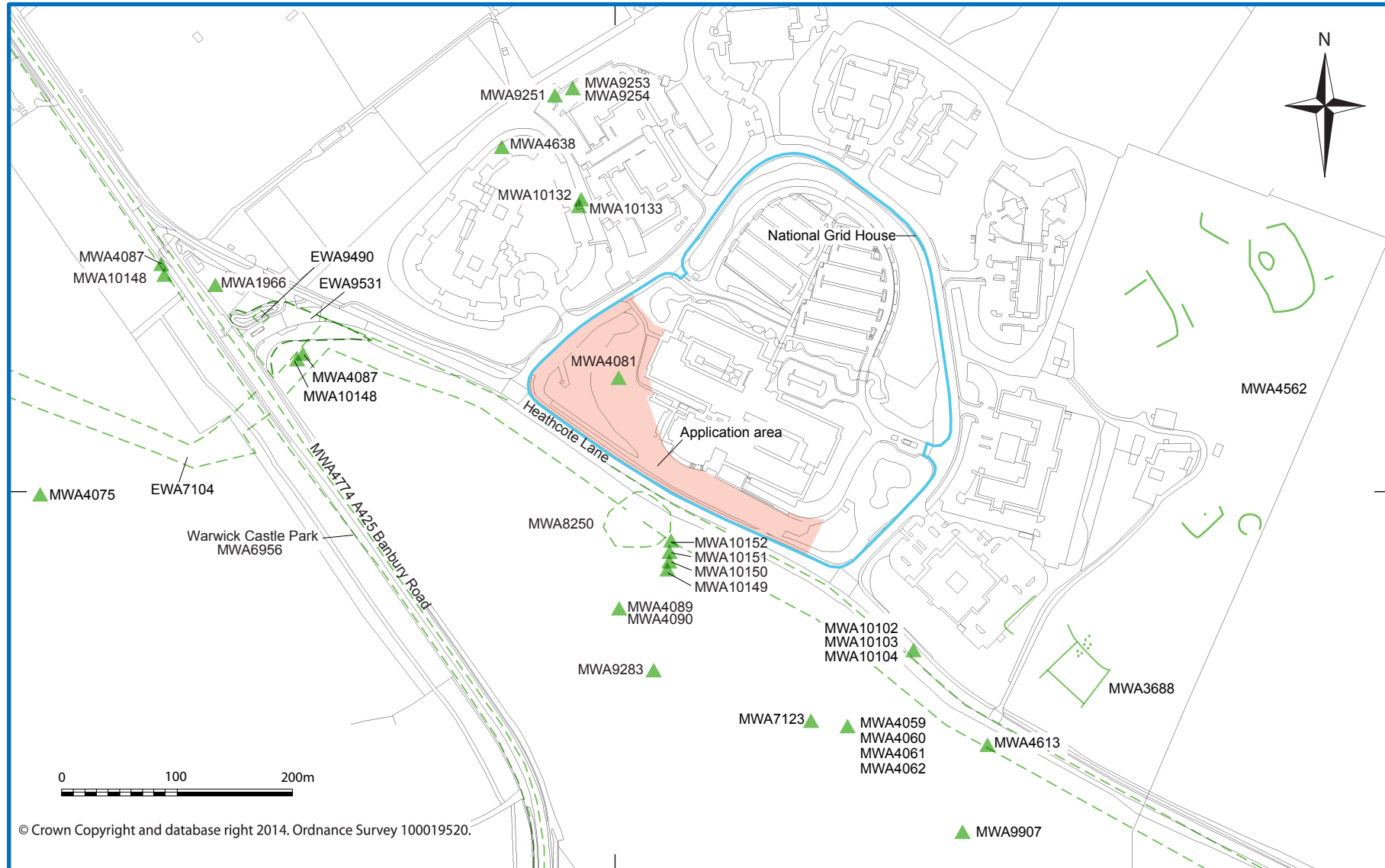
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APPENDICES

A List of contexts from 2014

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	Topsoil	Mid brown clay loam
2	Layer	Reddish clay and modern rubble
3	Layer	Modern hardcore
4	Subsoil	Grey brown pebbly silt
5	Buried topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silty loam
16	Layer	Red clay with brick fragments
17	Layer	Dark grey silty clay with brick fragments
18	Layer	Light yellowish brown sand and gravel
20	Pit	Sub oval
21	Fill of 21	Olive brown clay loam
22	Fill of 23	Greyish brown clay loam
23	Pit	sub oval
24	Geological Natural	Red clay
25	Layer	Light Grey Aggregates



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Fig 1: Site location with immediately surrounding HER information

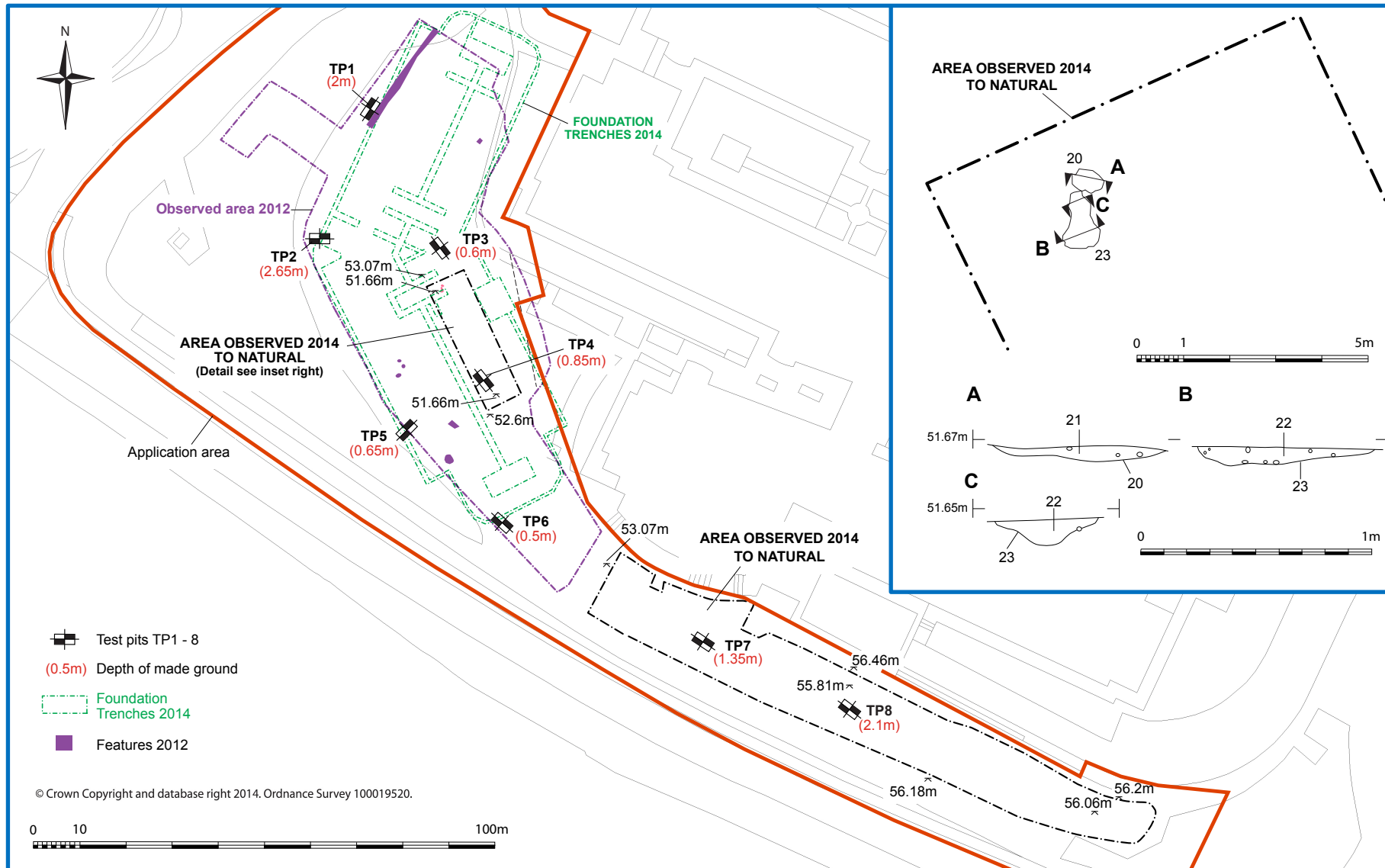


Fig 2: Groundworks plan



Fig 3: Ground reduction for Car Park in progress



Fig 4: Ground reduction for road



Fig 5: Tank excavations in progress



Fig 6: Pit 20



Fig 7: Pit 23