# Sherbourne Residences Warwick University, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

*understanding heritage matters*

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Working for Warwickshire

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| **Planning Archaeologist:** | John Robinson, Warwickshire |
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## SUMMARY

*An archaeological evaluation consisting of eleven trial trenches was undertaken on behalf of the University of Warwick in advance of the development of the site for student residences. No archaeological deposits were identified and no finds were recovered despite the site lying in an area where post-medieval pottery or tile production may have taken place.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning permission is being sought from Warwick District Council for the development of new student accommodation buildings within the University Campus at Scarman Road, Stoneleigh. The proposed development had the potential to disturb archaeological deposits on the site.

1.2 The University of Warwick secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in order to mitigate the impact of the development on any archaeological deposits that may be present.

1.3 Archaeology Warwickshire were commissioned to undertake an initial phase of archaeological evaluation in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation in order to provide the Planning Authority with further information as to the presence or absence, state of preservation and character of any deposits that may be present.

1.4 This report presents the results of that work. The archaeological archive will be deposited at the Warwickshire Museum under Site Code SW15.

## 2 SITE LOCATION

2.1 The site of the proposed development lies on the western side of Scarman Road towards the western limit of the University of Warwick Campus in the parish of Stoneleigh, Warwickshire. The site of the proposed development covers an approximately 1.4ha is centred around national grid reference SP 2911 7589 (Fig 1). The site which is bordered by University of Warwick facilities and buildings was previously part of agricultural fields and at the time of the work was rough grassed open ground.

2.2 The underlying geology of the proposed development area is designated as mudstone from the Kenilworth Formation or Tile Hill Mudstone Formation (British Geological Survey 2011).

# 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 An assessment of potential archaeological evidence on land held by the University of Warwick was undertaken in 1996 and it included the results of several phases of field walking (Hill and Smith 1996). This work indicated possible activity from the Neolithic onwards.

**Prehistoric**

3.2 The Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (HER) records a variety of prehistoric and Romano-British finds in the area. 54 Mesolithic and Neolithic flint fragments were recovered during fieldwalking (MWA 8346) and an evaluation in 1996 (Smith and Wilson 1997) revealed a concentration of Mesolithic and Neolithic finds (MWA 8208) associated with undated postholes and other features considered to possibly indicate Neolithic settlement activity.

3.3 Cropmarks have been identified on aerial photographs of the area which, although undated, may include prehistoric enclosure banks (MWA 8356), enclosure boundaries (MWA 2924) or a possible trackway (MWA 2925).

**Roman**

3.4 There is evidence for Roman settlement to the south of the site. Fieldwalking around Cryfield recovered fragments of mosaic (MWA 8362) and pottery (MWA 8360) which tend to suggest a significant Roman building in the vicinity. A mound in close proximity to these finds at the northern end of the field (MWA 8347) may have been enhanced in the Roman period, although it was certainly utilised in the post-medieval period.

**Medieval**

3.5 Cryfield Grange (MWA 2852) included a 16th-century barrel-vaulted cellar (VCH 1951) and it remains one possible site of a 12th century intended Cistercian monastic foundation when monks from Radmore were granted the right to establish a monastic site in the manor of Stoneleigh at Cryfield. However, the 12th-century pottery and sandstone foundations recorded at Cryfield House is a stronger possibility for this. The Cistercians eventually moved to the site of Stoneleigh Abbey.

**Post-medieval**

3.6 Clay excavation and brick making are evident from field names such as Pitt Hill Field and Old Brickyard Plantation (MWA 8365).

3.7 A mound to the north of Cryfield may have been the site of a windmill (WMA 8347) as the field containing the mound was labelled as “Mill Hill Field" on the Stoneleigh estate map of 1766. The mound could be of natural origin and was subject to geophysical survey as part of the assessment of Warwick University's archaeology (MWA 8344).

3.8 Post-medieval settlement and farming activity is known from Cryfield Grange and Cryfield House, where 17th and 18th-century sandstone foundations were recorded. Two possible fish ponds were associated with Cryfield House, one may have also been used as a marlpit (WMA 8348).

3.9 An archaeological evaluation on the adjacent student accommodation site in 2011 proved entirely negative. Geophysical survey across the area encountered a significant amount of modern detritus classified as areas of magnetic debris and strong discrete dipolar anomalies relating to ferrous objects. Subsequent trial trenching did not reveal any significant sub surface deposits or archaeological finds (Thompson 2011).

# 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 The proposal methodology was to evaluate the total development area by means of 11 trenches, each 30m long and 1.8m wide, which represented a 4% sample by area of the *c* 1.5ha site. The area included proposed building footprints as well as associated access, landscaping and planting. A contingency for an additional 30% of trenching by area was included in order to clarify the character or extent of any significant features or deposits if necessary.

4.5 The geophysical survey undertaken in 2011 and the observations made during the trial trenching as part of the previous evaluation on the adjacent site combined to

demonstrate that further survey in the locality was highly unlikely to produce any meaningful data by which to position evaluation trenches so no geophysical survey was included in this evaluation.

# 5 RESULTS

5.1 Eleven evaluation trenches were excavated across the site. Trenches were machine excavated 30m long and 1.8m wide by a 360° excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide ditching bucket.

**Table 1: Trenches 1-4**

| *Trench* | *Length* | *Width* | *Depths* | *Context Numbers* | *Archaeological Remains* | *Other features* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 29.4m | 1.9m | 0.4m to 0.66m | 100-102 | None | None |
| 2 | 30.7m | 1.9m | 0.44m to 0.78m | 200-202 | None | None |
| 3 | 29.4m | 1.9m | 0.48m to 0.54m | 300-302 | None | None |
| 4 | 29.7m | 1.9m | 0.5m to 0.63m | 400-402 | None | None |

5.2 Trenches 1-4 were located at the north-western end of the site and the excavation of the trenches revealed a very simple deposit sequence. Natural reddish clay (102, 202, 302, 402) was revealed in the base of all these trenches. No archaeological remains were present and the natural was undisturbed. The natural clay was overlain by a 0.32m thick layer of light brown sandy clay (101, 201, 301, 401), No finds or features were present in this layer and it was overlaid by 0.16m thick layer of dark brown silty sand (100, 200, 300, 400).

5.3 Trenches 5-7 were located in the central area of the site and the excavation of the trenches revealed a similar deposit sequence to that identified on the western side of the site. This included natural reddish clay (503, 602, 702) revealed in the bases of all these trenches. No archaeological remains were present and the natural was undisturbed. The natural clay was overlaid by a 0.42m thick layer of light brown sandy clay (501, 601, 701). No finds or features were present in this layer. This was partly overlaid by a 0.26m thick layer of brown silty sand topsoil (502, 600, 703), which extended across part of this area.

5.4 The surface layer of dark brown silty sand was a maximum of 0.25m thick (500, 700) and was present across the northern side of the area. No finds were recovered from the layers above the natural clay.

**Table 2: Trenches 5-7**

| *Trench* | *Length* | *Width* | *Depths* | *Context Numbers* | *Archaeological Remains* | *Other features* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 29.6m | 1.9m | 0.6m | 500-502 | None | None |
| 6 | 29.4.7m | 1.9m | 0.53m to 0.39m | 200-202 | None | None |
| 7 | 29.4m | 1.9m | 0.48m to 0.54m | 300-302 | None | None |

5.5 Trenches 8-11 were located in the south-eastern part of the site and the excavation of the trenches revealed a similar deposit sequence to that identified elsewhere over the site. This included natural reddish clay (802, 902, 1002, 1102) revealed in the base of all these trenches. The natural clay was overlaid by a 0.14m to 0.25m thick layer of light brown sandy clay (801, 901, 1001, 1101). No finds or features were present in this layer. This was overlaid by a 0.32m thick layer of brown silty sand topsoil (800, 900, 1000, 1100), which extended across part of this area and formed the ground surface at the time of the work.

**Table 3: Trenches 8-11**

| *Trench* | *Length* | *Width* | *Depths* | *Context Numbers* | *Archaeological Remains* | *Other features* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | 29.6m | 1.9m | 0.6m | 800-802 | None | Land drain |
| 9 | 29.6m | 1.9m | 0.52m | 900-902 | None | Land drain |
| 10 | 30.7m | 1.9m | 0.36m to 0.47m | 1000-1002 | None | |
| 11 | 29.4m | 1.9m | 0.48m | 1100-1102 | None | Land drains |

**Table 4: Deposit sequence and OD heights**

| | **Natural** | **Former topsoil horizon** | **Topsoil** | **Modern overburden** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Trench No** Description | Red clay with manganese mottling | Light brown sandy clay | Brown silty sand | Dark brown silty sand |
| 1 | 88.16m to 88.38m OD | 88.58m to 88.5m OD | | 89.09m to 88.54m OD |
| 2 | 88.38m to 87.75m OD | 88.78m to 88.05m OD | | 88.82m to 88.43m OD |
| 3 | 87.94m to 88.04m OD | 88.32m OD | | 88.45m OD |
| 4 | 87.99m to 87.86m OD | 88.4m OD | | 88.5m to 88.0m |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | OD |
| 5 | 87.56m to 86.85m OD | 88m.0m OD | | 88.07m to 87.41m OD |
| 6 | 87.15m to 86.75m OD | 87.45m to 87.0m OD | 87.65m to 87.17m OD | |
| 7 | 87.00m to 86.66m OD | | 87.48m OD | 87.06m OD |
| 8 | 86.90m to 86.3m OD | 87.10m OD to 86.55m OD | 87.34m to 86.74m OD | |
| 9 | 86.61m to 86.12m OD | 86.8m to 86.35m OD | 87.07m to 86.58m OD | |
| 10 | 86.35m to 86.05m OD | 86.6m to 8625m OD | 86.91m to 86.44m OD | |
| 11 | 86.11m to 85.76m OD | 86.35m to 86.0m OD | 86.64m to 86.15m OD | |

# 6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The archaeological evaluation of the site revealed no archaeological remains or finds. The trenches revealed a simple deposit sequence across the site comprising natural geological clays derived from the mudstones of the Tile Hill Mudstone Formation, a sandy clay older plough zone, recent topsoil and modern levelling.

6.2 The soils associated with the older plough zone suggest the site was under agricultural through the medieval and post-medieval periods. The extensive layer of modern levelling soil directly on top of the deposits suggests that some topsoil stripping or ground levels changes may have taken place across parts of the site.

6.3 Previous work close to the site has taken place with the intention of recovering evidence associated with post-medieval tile industry in the area, however no such evidence was identified. There was also no suggestion that kilns were in proximity to the site as no industrial debris was identified. There was also no evidence of clay extraction on the site and it is perhaps likely that this maybe further to the south of this area.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank the University of Warwick and Robert Gamble for commissioning the work

# REFERENCES

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Victoria County History (VCH) 1969 A History of Warwick Volume VIII The City of Coventry and the Borough of Warwick

Photograph 1. Trench 4

Photograph 2. Trench 5

Photograph 3. Trench 7

Photograph 4. Trench 11

# APPENDIX

## List of contexts

| *Context* | *Description* | *Comment* |
|---|---|---|
| 100 | Modern overburden/Topsoil | |
| 101 | Layer | |
| 102 | Natural clay | |
| | | |
| 200 | Modern overburden/Topsoil | |
| 201 | Layer | |
| 202 | Natural clay Layer | |
| | | |
| 300 | Modern overburden/Topsoil | |
| 301 | Layer | |
| 302 | Natural clay | |
| | | |
| 400 | Modern overburden/Topsoil | |
| 401 | Layer | |
| 402 | Natural clay | |
| | | |
| 500 | Modern overburden/Topsoil | |
| 501 | Layer | |
| 502 | Natural clay Layer | |
| | | |
| 600 | Modern overburden /Topsoil | |
| 601 | Layer | |
| 602 | Natural clay | |
| | | |
| 700 | Modern overburden | |
| 701 | Layer | |
| 702 | Natural clay Layer | |
| 703 | Topsoil | |
| | | |
| 800 | Topsoil | |

| *Context* | *Description* | *Comment* |
|---|---|---|
| 801 | Layer | |
| 802 | Natural clay | |
| | | |
| 900 | Modern overburden | |
| 901 | Layer | |
| 902 | Natural clay Layer | |
| 703 | Topsoil | |
| | | |
| 1000 | Topsoil | |
| 1001 | Layer | |
| 1002 | Natural clay | |
| | | |
| 1100 | Topsoil | |
| 1101 | Layer | |
| 1102 | Natural clay | |

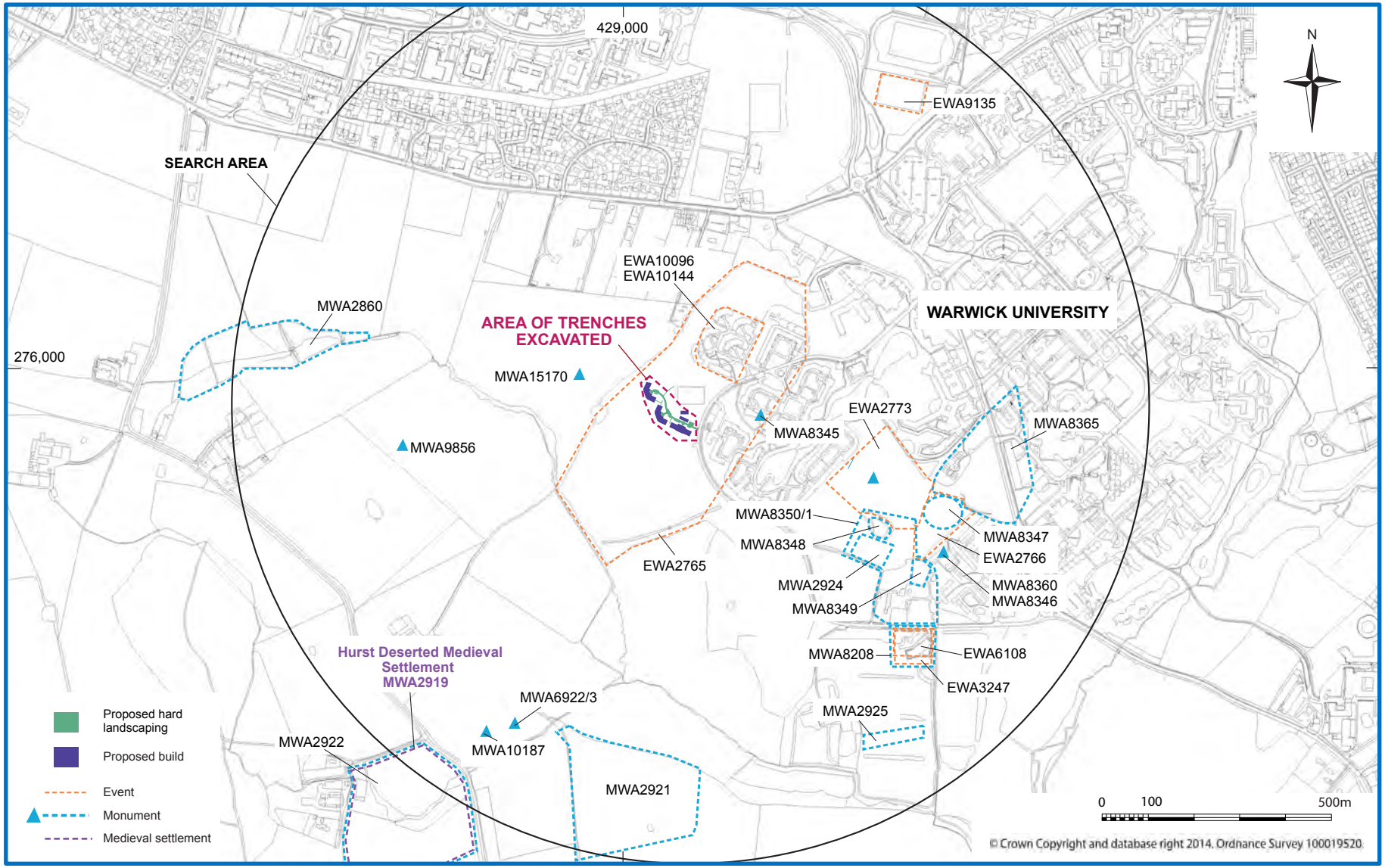


Fig 1: Location of trenches excavated and Historic Environment Information

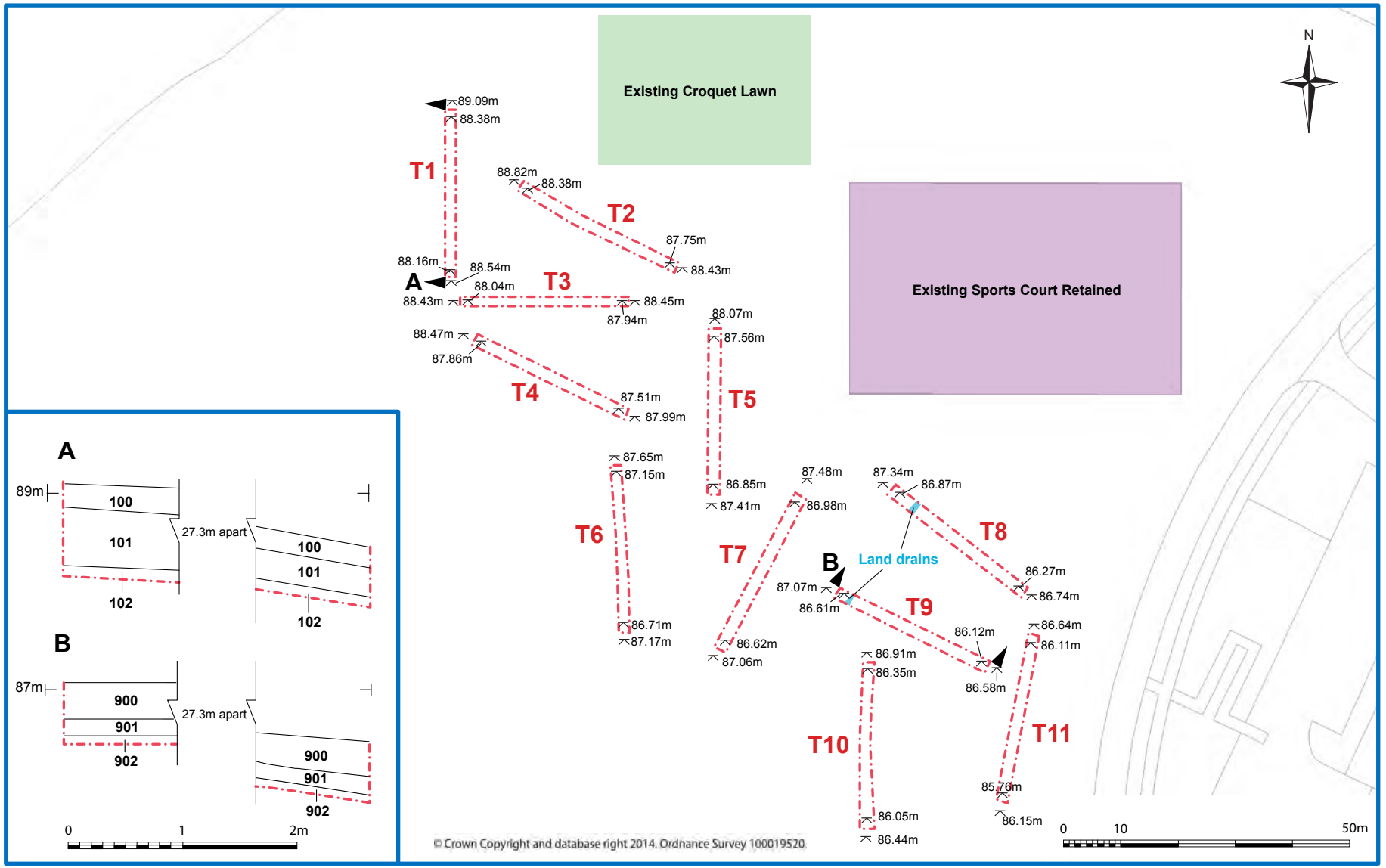


Fig 2: Detail of excavated trenches and sections A and B