

78 Mancetter Road, Mancetter, Warwickshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



understanding heritage matters

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 16114

NOVEMBER 2016



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project:	78 Mancetter Road, Mancetter
Commissioned by:	Isabella Wayte
Project Report No.	16114
Site Code:	MR16
Planning Reference:	PAP/2016/0315
Planning Authority:	North Warwickshire
Planning Archaeologist:	John Robinson, Warwickshire
National Grid Reference:	SP 3200 9682
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Date:	November 2016
Report reference:	Charles, E, 2016 <i>78 Mancetter Road, Mancetter, Warwickshire, Archaeological Evaluation</i> , Archaeology Warwickshire Report 16114.

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CONTENTS

	Summary	2
1	Introduction	3
2	Site Location	4
3	Archaeological and Historical Background	5
4	Aims and Methods	10
5	Results	11
6	Conclusions	13
	Acknowledgements	14
	References	15

PHOTOGRAPHS

1	Trench 1	18
2	Roman pit 4	18
3	South-facing section of Trench 1	19
4	Undated pit 6	19
5	Undated pit 8	20
6	Probable Roman V-shaped ditch 22	20
7	Seventeenth-century storage jar	21

APPENDIX

A	List of Finds	22
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FIGURES

1	Location of application area and Historic Environment information
2	Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1889
3	Location of excavated trenches
4	Interpretive plan

SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation, consisting of two trial trenches, was undertaken on behalf of Isabella Wayte, in advance of extensions and alterations within an area suspected of overlying a Roman camp.

Trench 1 revealed three pits, one dated by pottery to the late 1st to 2nd century AD whilst two remained undated. Trench 2 revealed a V-shaped ditch which although not directly datable, was remarkably similar to, and possibly aligning with, a Roman ditch previously excavated some 75m to the north-west and thought likely to belong to a temporary Roman camp.

Both trenches exhibited a substantial post-medieval plough soil, up to 0.74m thick, from which an almost complete 17th-century black-glazed storage jar was recovered. This layer seems likely to relate to medieval ridge and furrow ploughing but could also be associated with post-medieval earthworks.

The proposed extensions could potentially impact on additional features although the exceptional depth of plough soil will certainly act as a buffer for floor reductions.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Planning permission has been granted by North Warwickshire Borough Council for extensions and alterations at 78 Mancetter Road, Mancetter (Planning Ref. PAP/2016/0315).
- 1.2 It is a condition of the planning permission that the applicant secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work which has been approved by the Planning Authority.
- 1.3 Archaeology Warwickshire have been commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved in November 2016. This report presents the results of that work.

2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The site is located on the western side of Mancetter Road and is centred around National Grid Reference SP 3200 9682 (Fig 1). The area of new development is 1095 square metres.

- 2.2 The underlying geology of the site is Mercia Mudstone Group overlain by Anker Sand and Gravel (British Geological Survey 2016).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prehistoric

- 3.1 The earliest evidence for human activity in the area is in the form of a Neolithic axe, found on Mancetter Road (MWA 380).
- 3.2 Middle Bronze Age pottery has been recovered from pits in Old Farm Road (Palmer 2004) and at Mancetter Extracare in 2014 where late Iron Age pits were also recorded (Gethin and Palmer 2014).

Roman

- 3.3 The Roman fortress at Mancetter (MWA 3867) was constructed in the 1st century AD, as part of the Roman conquest and consolidation of this part of Britain. There were, in fact, several successive forts in Mancetter on the same site (MWA 8267). The importance of the site to studies of that period is reflected in the fact that substantial parts of the area are Scheduled as an Ancient Monument (Warwickshire No 124). The fortress was approximately 350m across and encompassed an area of some 9-12 hectares. This suggests that although it was too large to be a standard fort of an auxiliary unit, it was only half the standard size of a full legionary fort – usually 16-20 hectares in area and would have been occupied by a legionary detachment or vexillation (Booth 1996).
- 3.4 The fortress is believed to have been occupied from the late AD 40s to c.AD 60. It would probably have been replaced by a smaller auxiliary fort that would have been occupied until the 80s. Later Roman activity in Mancetter gravitated towards Watling Street, to the west of the fort. Settlement was concentrated along the roadside and a pottery industry is known to have developed to the south, over a large area. An area to the east of the River Anker has also been Scheduled (Ancient Monument 30024) including the settlement, the pottery production area and a building complex with later Anglo-Saxon interments. In addition to the fort there is a possible vicus, north of the fort, or an annexe to the fort itself (MWA 13493).
- 3.5 Excavations began in Mancetter village in 1955, when an earthwork behind the Almshouses on Mancetter Road was trenched (Oswald and Gathercole 1958; MWA 397), revealing 1st-century bank and ditch defences of a Roman fort. A further

- section was cut in 1968 (Scott 1968, 13; 1973, 211-3; MWA 3850). The section coincided with the inner ditch of a three-ditch military system. The outer ditch was steep-sided whilst the inner one was shallow and may have contained a thorn barrier.
- 3.6 Other small-scale excavation in the central area during the 1970s by Scott uncovered part of a timber building with a rack for amphorae storage. The structural sequence suggested that at least two phases were represented in these excavations and slots and postholes indicated that a number of buildings were present (Scott 1981a; 1977, 38; 1978, 440-441; MWA 3496). Three pieces of legionary body armour, *lorica segmentata*, were also recovered. A rescue excavation also by Scott in Quarry Lane toward the SW corner of the fort in 1977, revealed several timber slots for a building, along with a latrine pit; the pottery from these excavations is thought to date from between AD 45-58 (Scott 1977, 40; 1981a, 5; MWA 385).
- 3.7 Excavation south of 'The Barn' in 1980 and 1981, then belonging to Mancetter Farm, prior to landscaping work, revealed evidence for structures, military-style ditches, a latrine and various finds such as a stone cauldron, bronze fittings, beads, pottery and raw pigment; the Samian pottery probably dates to c.AD 45-65 (Scott 1981b, 88-90, 2000, 12-15; MWA 3498).
- 3.8 Limited recording of foundation trenches took place at Mancetter Vicarage, on the east side of Quarry Lane, in 1981. A ditch was recorded in the sides of one of the trenches, along with foundation slots and pits; finds included an inscribed Samian vessel and a coin dating to AD 73 (Scott 1984, 2000, 15; MWA 3852).
- 3.9 A large-scale excavation carried out in the centre of the fort (Scott 1983; MWA 3853), encountered the remains of a 1st-century AD building, thought likely to be the headquarters building or commanding officer's house (Baddeley 1991, 211; Scott 2000, 6-12).
- 3.10 A single trench dug in the northern part of the fort in 1988 recorded the remains of a possible ditch of 1st-century date (Scott 1988; MWA 8032). Other excavations in 1989 and 1990 in the southern part of the fort recorded a pit containing burnt barley and emmer wheat, which had been overlain by a timber structure with other similar structures nearby (MWA 7960). These had later been cut by a double line of ditches

aligned north-south with a corner turning east, which suggest that the fort had a rectangular shape. Further defences including an outer Punic ditch were recorded to the south and these were overlaid, upon being backfilled, by a track with cart ruts dated by a coin to the late 2nd /early 3rd century.

- 3.11 Excavations in Mill Lane in 1992 and 1994 revealed a pair of ditches aligned between the fort and the river, which along with other features demonstrate substantial extramural activity outside the confines of the fort (Scott 1994; MWA 8034). A Roman bronze ring was found in a field alongside the A5 in 1983 (MWA 1890). Excavations at Gramer Almshouse in 1983 revealed several pits of Roman date (MWA 3851).
- 3.12 Observations on development sites straddling the northern part of the forts defences in 1995 recorded an E-W ditch which although undated, seems likely to be part of the fort defensive sequence (Warwickshire Museum 1995a; MWA 8399). A single sherd of Romano-British pottery was observed on an adjacent site (Warwickshire Museum 1995b; MWA 8398).
- 3.13 In 1997 an evaluation in the grounds of Gramer House, north of the manor house, revealed the remains of two pits, a gully and a ditch of Romano-British date (MWA 7968; Warwickshire Museum 1997).
- 3.14 Evaluation and salvage recording undertaken in 1997 within the housing estate which covers the NW corner of the fort was able to demonstrate the former presence of at least four defensive ditches (MWA 8038; Wilson and Smith 1998). Work adjacent to the site revealed evidence of a Roman kiln and ditch (MWA 9844 and 9845).
- 3.15 Excavations within the grounds of Mancetter Manor in 2000 revealed the foundations of a timber building, possibly part of a barracks block and a probable latrine pit. A later series of three N-S aligned ditches may have been elements in a subsequent phase of fort.
- 3.16 Observations made during redevelopment within the fort area recorded a small amount of abraded Roman pottery in the northern part of the fort (Coutts 1999a; MWA 8730) and some residual Roman pottery on the west side (Coutts 1999b; MWA

8751). A Roman ditch was recorded during an evaluation at Gramer's Almshouses (MWA 8031).

- 3.17 In 2012 and 2014 evaluation and excavations to the north of the fort established the possibility that the area in which the present development lies was occupied by an annexe to the fort or a marching camp (MWA 13493; Gethin and Palmer 2014).

Medieval

- 3.18 Medieval settlement remains have also been found to the east, close to the medieval church and manor house. In 1981 a 1.5m thick layer of medieval occupation was revealed to the south of the manor house. The layer of reddish clay included much pottery, bone, charcoal and slag and was removed to reveal a complex sequence of medieval postholes and pits suggesting a timber building of 13th-century date (Scott 1981a, MWA 6423).

- 3.19 The Church of St. Peter dates to the 12th century, although much of the fabric is 13th-15th century (MWA 383). The church is a Grade I Listed Building. Post-medieval pottery was recovered during observations within the northern part of the church (MWA 8731). At least seven graves were recorded during fieldwork at Gramer House, along with medieval pottery, suggesting the medieval cemetery had a different boundary to the current one (MWA 12459). A bank and ditch of medieval date were recorded east of Gramer Cottages (MWA 6412).

Post-medieval

- 3.20 There are two sets of Almshouses in Mancetter. Gramer Almshouses (MWA 382) lie immediately south of St Peter's Church and dates back to 1728. A second row of Almshouses, dating to 1822 (MWA 381) are also Grade II Listed Buildings. Mancetter Manor House garden is also recorded on the HER (MWA 12559). There is the site of marl pit marked on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map to the east of Mancetter Road (MWA 5832). Post-medieval features, including two 18th/19th-century pits and a possible pad for a garden feature were recorded north of Mancetter Manor House (MWA 9655).
- 3.21 In the late 19th century the site of the proposed development was within a field, with a footpath passing through part of it (Ordnance Survey 1889). This remained the case

until the construction of the post-war housing estate (Ordnance Survey 1965). An archaeological evaluation at Charity Field recorded very little activity (MWA 7525). Negative evaluations also took place at 88 Mancetter Road (MWA 8033) and 86 Mancetter Road (MWA 8091), although Roman pottery was recorded during a watching brief at 86 Mancetter Road (MWA 8398) and a ditch probably associated with the roman fort at 88 Mancetter Road in 1995 (MWA 8399). Negative watching briefs took place at Mancetter Memorial Hall in 1973 and 1977 (MWA 8119) and at 74 Mancetter Road in 1998 (MWA 8385). Undated gullies and postholes have been recorded north of Mancetter manor (MWA9654).

3.22 The following events are recorded in the Historic Environment Record:

Event	Description	Date
EWA 977	Archaeological evaluation at Gramer House	1997
EWA 6716	Archaeological observation at Mancetter Memorial Hall	1999
EWA 7285	Archaeological recording north of Mancetter Manor House	2001
EWA 7423	Archaeological observation to the rear of Mancetter Memorial Hall	2004
EWA 9377	Archaeological observation at Little Stars Nursery	2009
EWA 9568	Site visit to Mancetter Manor House Garden by Lovie	1996
EWA 9349	Excavation and watching brief at Gramer House	2005
EWA 10001	Archaeological evaluation and geophysical survey at Mancetter Extracare	2012
EWA 10080	Archaeological investigations at Mancetter Manor	1999-2001

4 AIMS AND METHODS

- 4.1 The main aim of the evaluation was to determine if there were 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 Two trenches were excavated by a tracked mini-excavator using a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Trench 1 was 15m long and located in a grassed garden area; it was moved from its intended position to avoid a tree. Trench 2 was 5m long and located in the driveway; it too was moved from the intended position but in this instance because it had become clear that its original location was between two inspection chambers for live drains.

5 RESULTS

Geological Natural

- 5.1 The natural in Trench 1 was light brown orange clay with occasional patches of pebbles (10). The natural in Trench 2 was light orange brown clay, turning to firm clay sand in places (24).

Roman

- 5.2 Cutting the natural In Trench 1, sub-oval pit 4, had steep sides (0.72m x 0.73m) and an irregular base (0.12m deep). It was filled with dark grey clay sand silt with frequent charcoal flecks and a couple of fragments of yellow sandstone. Pottery from this fill included Samian, Greyware, and oxidised gritty coarseware of late 1st- to 2nd-century date. A sample of the fill was taken to be sieved and floated. This produced further fragments of pottery and ceramic building material (CBM) as well as small fragments of burnt bone.

Undated but probably Roman

- 5.3 Cutting the natural in Trench 2, a V-shaped ditch (22) was 0.94m wide and 0.44m deep. A single iron object was recovered from its grey brown sandy clay fill (23).

Undated

Context	Description	Width m	Depth m	Length m	Fills
6	Small sub-circular pit or posthole with steep sides and a rounded base	0.39	0.13	0.32	7 – Light grey brown clayey sandy silt with occasional flecks of charcoal. Wet/soft.
8	Sub-circular small pit with gradual sides and a slightly rounded base. Base disturbed by a stone.	0.60	0.10		9 – Grey clay silt with occasional rounded pebbles included. Wet/soft. Sterile fill

Post-medieval

- 5.4 In Trench 1, a 0.54-0.74m thick layer of dark brown grey sandy clayey silt (3) overlay the features and geological natural. Layer 3 produced a quantity of pottery of post-medieval date, including fragments of feathered slipware and what was probably a complete 17th-century coarseware storage jar with a black internal glaze, measuring 230mm high and with a rim diameter of 230mm, as well as a residual fragment of coarseware pottery. Similarly, in Trench 2, a 0.32m thick layer of dark brown sandy clay silt with occasional flecks of charcoal (21) overlay the natural and contained a small black-glazed pottery handle, probably dating from the late 16th or 17th century.
- 5.5 Overlying layer 3 was a 0.25-0.30m thick layer of light-mid sandy silt with occasional small pebbles which did not produce any finds (2).

Modern

- 5.6 Overlying layer 2 was a 0.10m-0.15m thick dark brown sandy silt topsoil layer (1). Trench 2 was sealed by a 0.30m thick layer of tarmac, concrete and rubble (20).

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The evaluation has revealed a single securely dated Roman feature (pit 4) and a probable Roman feature (ditch 22) although other undated features could also be Roman in date.
- 6.2 Ditch 22 has exactly the same profile as some of the Roman ditches found in archaeological investigations at Manor Road, c.75m north-west of the application area (MWA 13493 and EWA 10001; Gethin 2012) and could potentially align with one of these ditches. This new evidence certainly adds weight to the posited camp.
- 6.3 The earliest features were overlaid by a considerable deposit of plough soil (Trench 1, layer 3) which, given the location at the top of the slope, seems likely to have been created as a ridge and furrow headland, a bank of earth that builds up where the medieval plough repetitively turns. The almost complete black-glazed coarseware storage jar recovered from this layer may well have been cast into a furrow and covered by later ploughing.
- 6.4 The proposed extensions may impact on some surviving Roman features but the posited headland provides a useful buffer from potentially destructive floor level reductions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Isabella Wayte for commissioning the work and providing the hot drinks. We would also like to thank Dr Phil Mills for his comments on the Roman pottery, Stephanie Ratkai for commenting on the post-medieval pottery and Trevor Parsons for working on reconstructing the jar.

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1. Trench 1



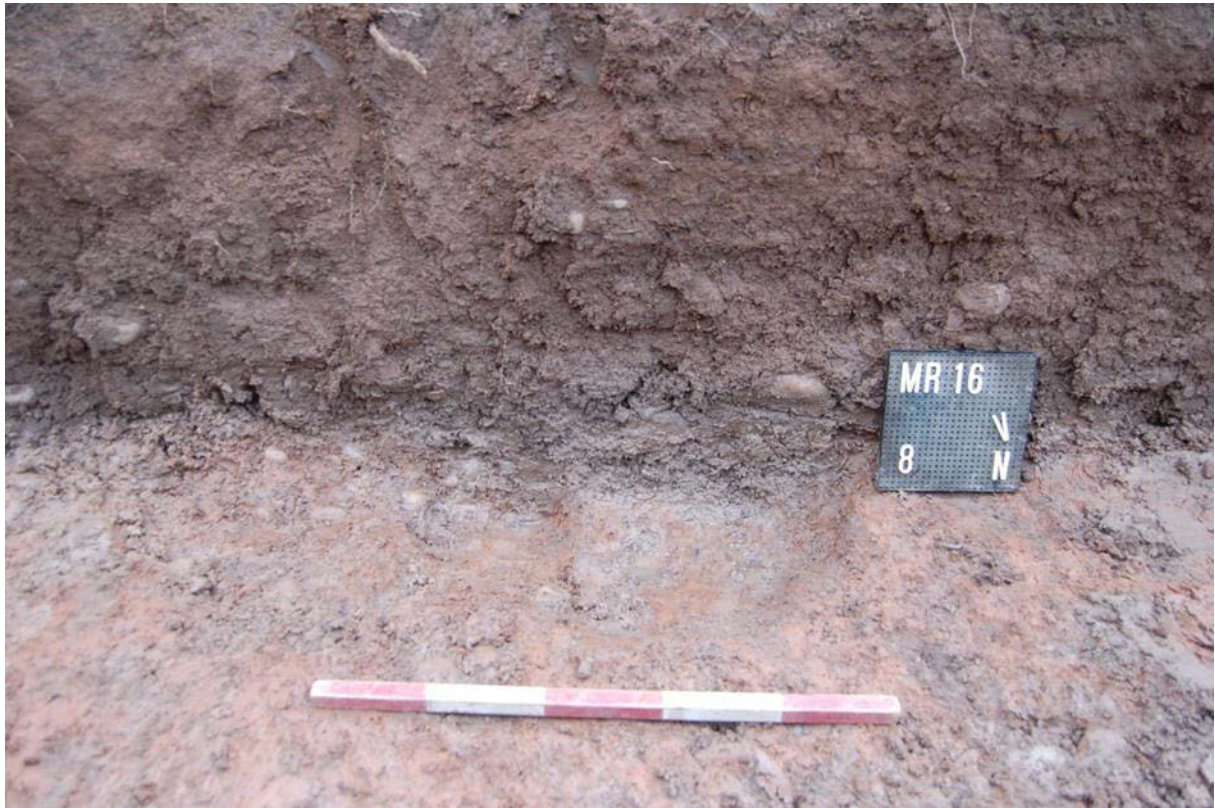
2. Roman pit 4



3. South facing section of Trench 1



4. Undated pit 6



5. Undated pit 8



6. Probable Roman V-shaped ditch 22



7. Seventeenth-century storage jar

APPENDIX

A List of Finds

Context	Type	Number	Comments
1	Pottery	1	Post-medieval black-glazed coarseware
1	CBM	1	Small fragment of brick or tile
3	Pottery	10 + 24 from CW pot	1 possible Roman coarseware rim, 6 feathered slipware (SLPW01 1680-1730, 1 pearlware, 1 black-glazed coarseware, 1 Midlands Black MB02 - 1600-1800) Almost complete 17th-century coarseware storage jar with internal black glaze
3	Tile	1	Small fragment of roof tile
3	CBM	2	Small fragments of brick or tile
5	Pottery	21	Roman pottery, including 3 small Samian fragment 5 sherds Greyware, 14 sherds oxidised gritty coarseware
5	CBM	5	Small abraded fragments of building material
5	Bone	18	Very small fragments of burnt bone
21	Pottery	1	Midlands Black small handle (MBO1 1540s-1700)
23	Iron	1	Small corroded iron bar

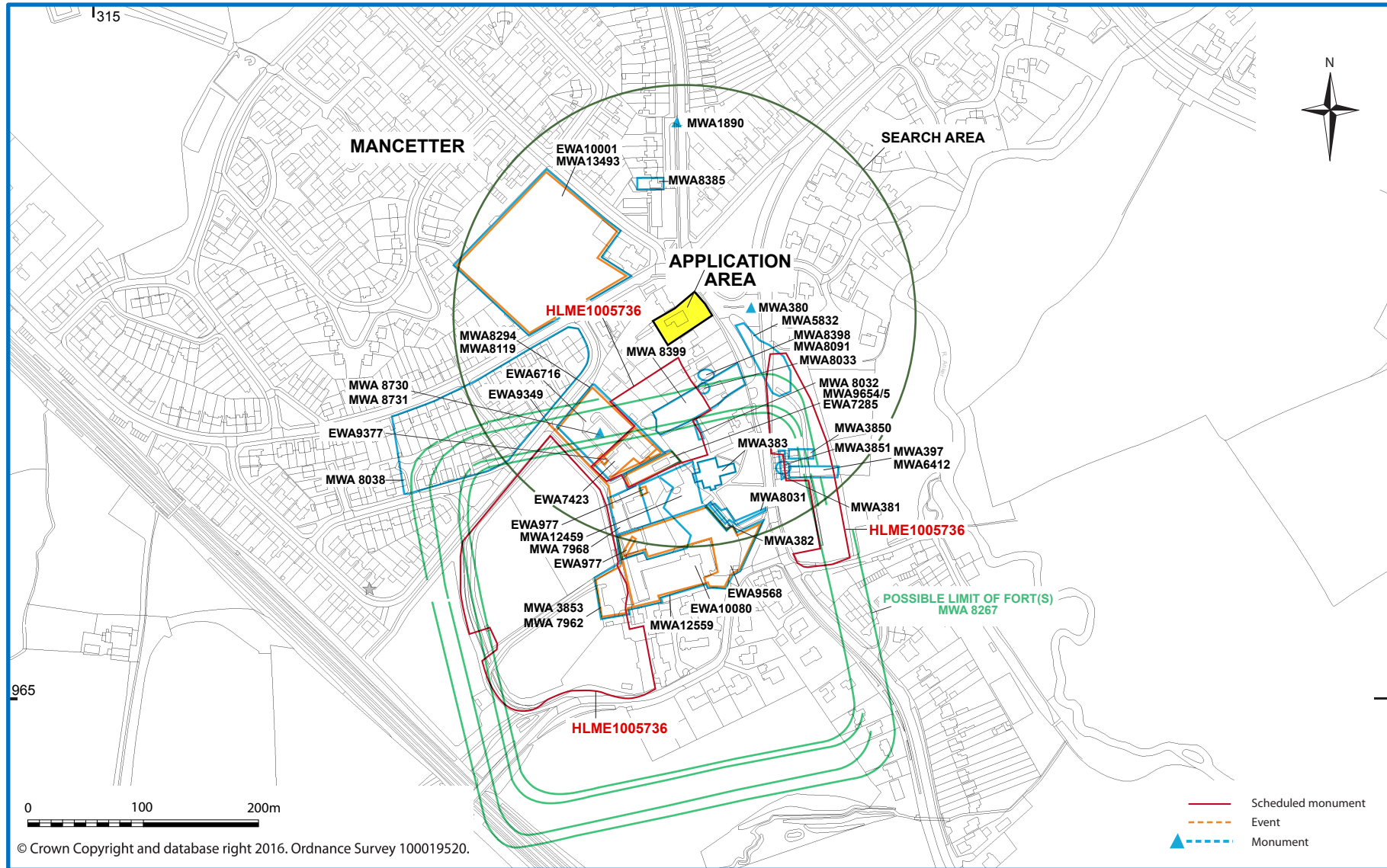


Fig 1: Location of application area and Historic Environment information

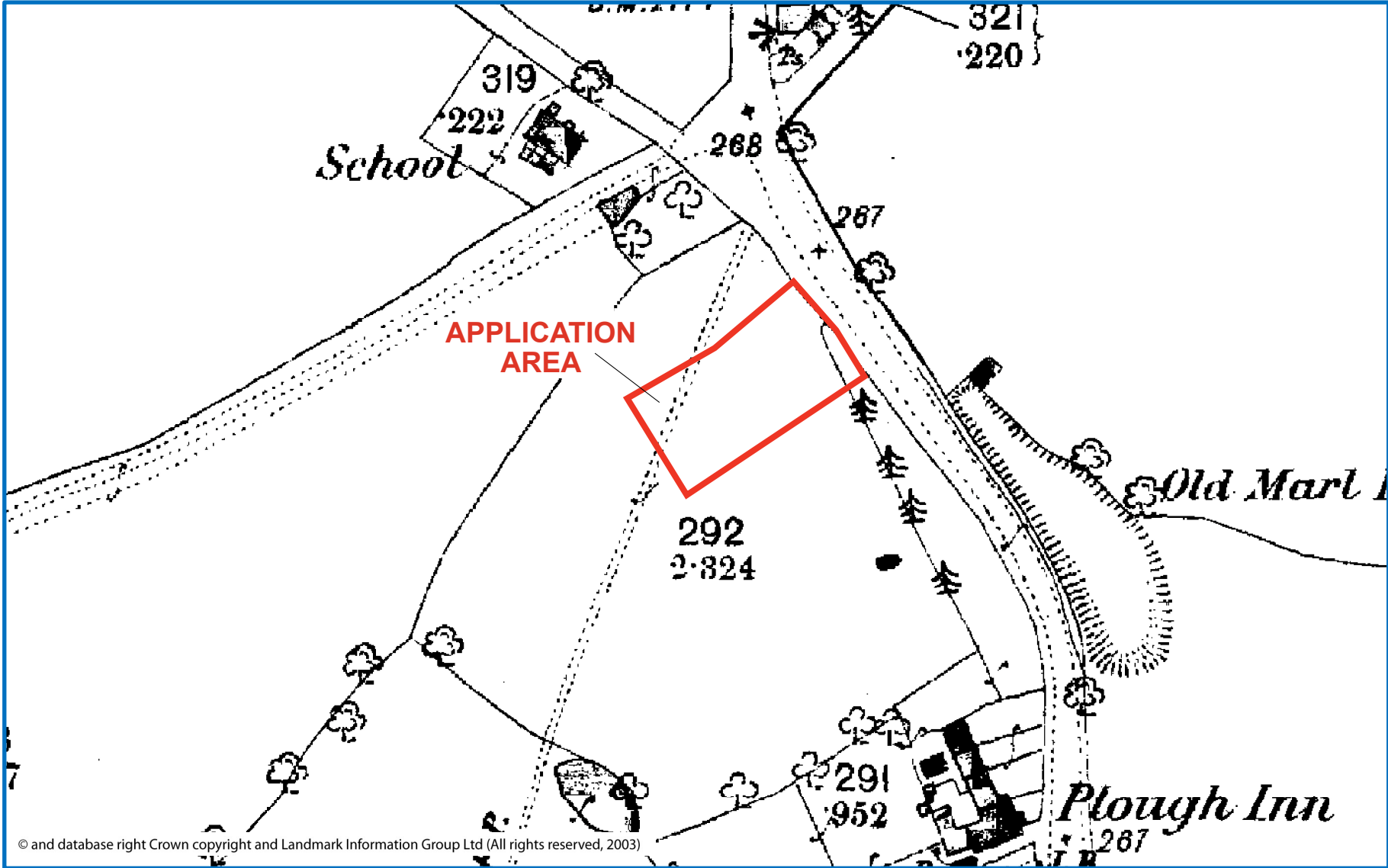


Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1889

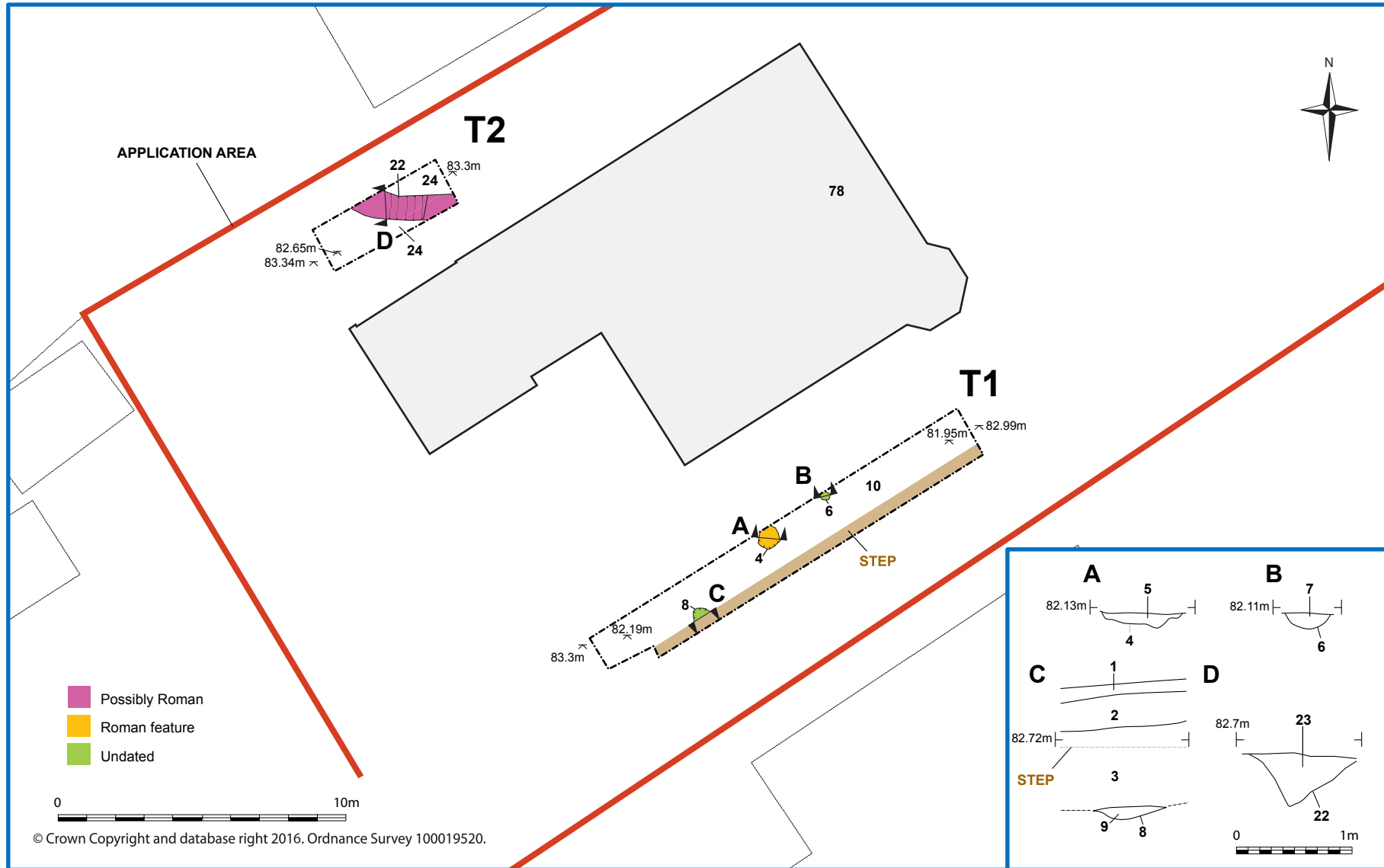


Fig 3: Location of excavated trenches

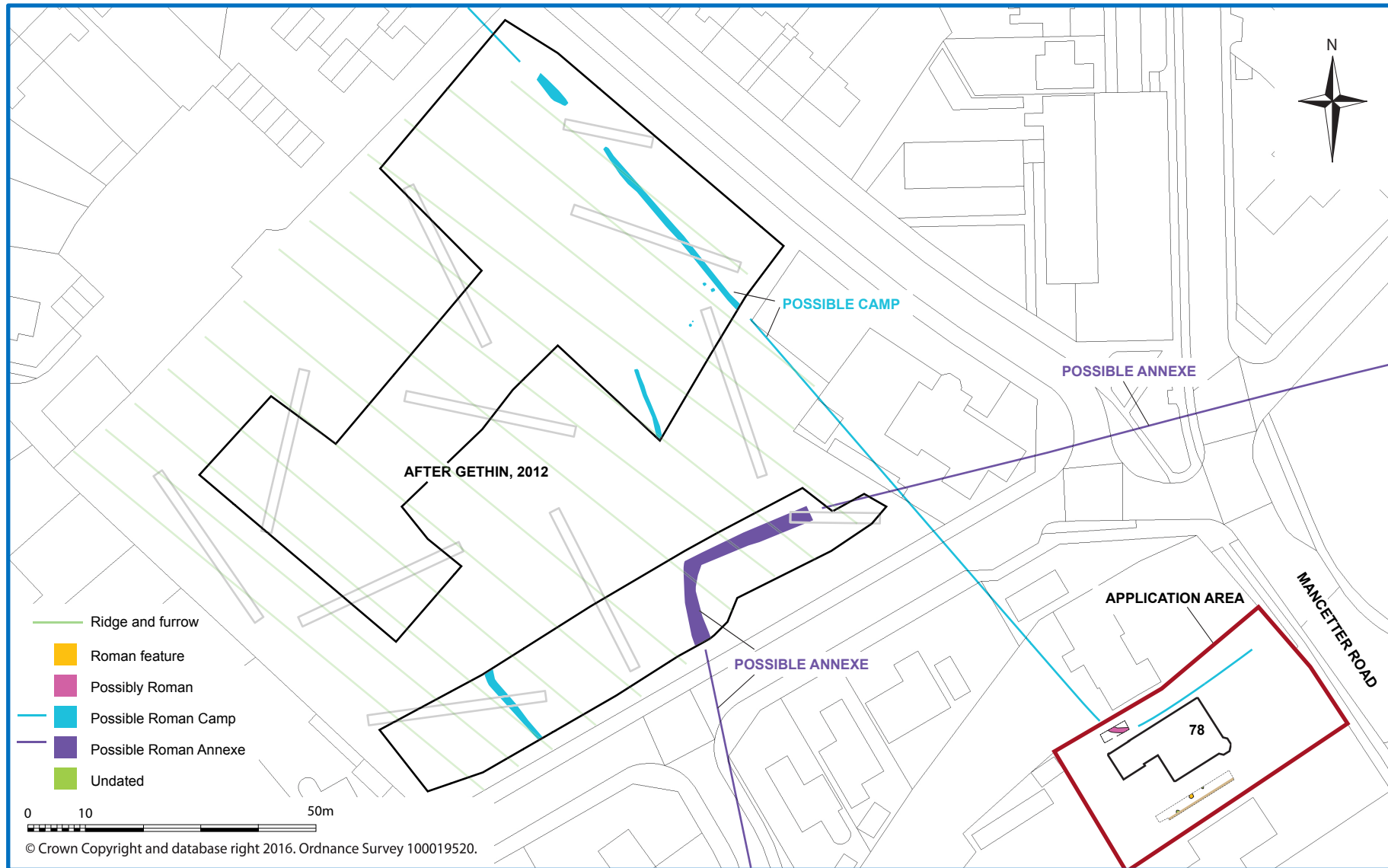


Fig 4: Interpretive plan