

Rycote Lane, Thame, Oxfordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



EXPERTISE WHERE YOU NEED IT

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1810

FEBRUARY 2018



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: Evaluation at Rycote Lane, Thame
Commissioned by: Matt Sutton
Project Report No: 1810
Site Code: OXT17
Planning Reference: Pre-determination
Planning Authority: Oxfordshire
Planning Archaeologist: Richard Oram
National Grid Reference: SP 68759 05393
Project Manager: Caroline Rann BA MCI fA
Fieldwork: Bryn Gethin, Eri Kleisoura, Edwin Pearson,
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Report checked by: Caroline Rann BA MCI fA
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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No	arcaeol27 - 309473
Project name	Rycote Lane, Thame, Oxfordshire		
Short description (250 words max)	Following geophysics by SUMO services LTD in October 2017, which showed no evidence for archaeological features other than ridge and furrow. An archaeological evaluation, consisting of 28 trenches, was carried out prior to the development of a light industrial development at Rycote Lane, Thame, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 68759 05393). No archaeological finds or features were present in the trenches. The pre-determination evaluative work was monitored by Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the Planning Authority.		
Project type (Eg DBA, Eval etc)	Evaluation		
Site status (None, NT, SAM etc)	None		
Previous work (HER nos etc)	None		
Current land use	Agricultural		
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	No		
Monument type / period	None		
Significant finds (artefact, type, period)	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Oxfordshire		
Site address (inc postcode)	Rycote Lane Thame OX9 2BQ		
Study area (sq.m or ha)			
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq letter code)	SP 68759 05393		
Height OD			
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	Archaeology Warwickshire		
Project brief originator	Richard Oram		
Project design originator	Bryn gethin		
Director/supervisor	Bryn Gethin		
Manager	Caroline Rann		
Sponsor or funding body			
PROJECT DATE			
Start date /end date			

ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		
Paper		
Digital		
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, forthcoming, AW report no 1810	
Title	Rycote Lane ,Thame, Oxfordshire	
Serial title, volume,	1810	
Author(s)	Gethin B and Duffy, J	
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SUMMARY

Following geophysics by SUMO services LTD in October 2017, which showed no evidence for archaeological features other than ridge and furrow. A second phase of archaeological evaluation, consisting of 28 trenches, was carried out prior to the development of a light industrial development at Rycote Lane, Thame, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 68759 05393). No archaeological finds or features were present in the trenches. The pre-determination evaluative work was monitored by Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the Planning Authority.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Planning permission is being sought for a light industrial development at Rycote Lane, Thame, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 68759 05393, Fig 1).
- 1.2 The Oxford County Council planning authority archaeological advisor, Richard Oram has indicated that the site requires a pre-determination archaeological evaluation, consisting of 4% by area sample trial trenching. This request for trial trenching follows on from an initial phase of evaluative fieldwork comprising geophysical survey, carried out by Sumo Survey on behalf of Archaeology Warwickshire in October 2017.
- 1.3 Archaeology Warwickshire has been commissioned by Matt Sutton on behalf of Blakelands LLP to produce a written scheme of investigation for this second phase of archaeological evaluation. The work carried out under this WSI will conform to the standard and guidance published by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA).

2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The site is to the south west of Thame on the north side of Rycote Lane, c.1km beyond the nearest modern development on the edge of the town, and c.2km from its historic centre. It lies almost entirely between the 70m and 75m contours, and is generally fairly level with the higher areas to the north and south. It is currently an area of rough pasture most of which is covered by the slight, but visible, earthwork remains of ridge and furrow ploughing. In the south-west corner of the site is a level area associated with a derelict wooden shed. In the south-east corner of the site, around the field entrance builder's rubble has been deposited and is extant as spoil heaps or levelled to create a hardstanding area. This is now overgrown.
- 2.2 The underlying geology is Gault Member Mudstone. No superficial deposits are recorded (BGS 2016).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The following Archaeological Background is taken from an Archaeological Desk Based Assessment of the site carried out by Archaeology Warwickshire previously (Greig 2016). The assessment draws on data supplied from the Oxfordshire HER within a 1km radius from the edge of the site boundary.

General Background

- 3.2 *Until recently, the only prehistoric evidence known from the wider study area was a small Iron Age jar found c.1km north east of the PDA in the 1960s as a result of badger activity (Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record no. MOX 5676).*
- 3.3 *In 2013, archaeological monitoring and recording of geotechnical test pits in response to proposed residential development at Oxford Road, Thame, very close to the 1960s find (EOX 3462), following a desk-based assessment (EOX 3163) and followed by an evaluation in 2014 (EOX 5777; Murray 2014). These recorded remains of Mesolithic and later periods in an extensive and complex archaeological landscape around an area of natural springs (MOX 24731; FOX 9040-42 / 11762-83), plus a peat layer of possible archaeological potential (FOX 9066). The site was excavated between January and August in 2015 by Oxford Cotswold Archaeology, revealing important features of Neolithic to Anglo-Saxon date, plus a rich assemblage of artefacts and environmental evidence. The results are not yet published or on the HER, but a summary report is available (OCA 2015); the main findings are discussed chronologically below.*
- 3.4 *The earliest evidence from the initial work was a small quantity of late Mesolithic to late Neolithic artefacts (FOX 11782), thought to suggest seasonal hunting in the earlier prehistoric period, although there was no evidence of an occupation site. The excavation, however, exposed three concentric circuits of pits and ditches, interpreted as an early Neolithic causewayed enclosure. Towards the west of the site, a circular ditch with a single entrance is provisionally thought to be a small later Neolithic henge.*
- 3.5 *Iron Age occupation is shown by a D-shaped enclosure ditch and bank, a dense concentration of pits with early Iron Age pottery, other ditches, droveways, three*

penannular ditches and a number of 3- and 4-post structures, probably granaries. A single crouched inhumation was found in the evaluation.

- 3.6 *Roman activity spread across most of the site, and suggests a complex agricultural landscape with alterations over a lengthy period of time. Features included several enclosures, ovens and at least six corn-driers.*
- 3.7 *Thame was an important place in the Anglo-Saxon period (VCH 1962, 178-193). King Wulfhere of Mercia was in the town in 675 AD. During his time Thame appears to have been the centre of a group of episcopal estates belonging to the Bishop of Dorchester, and gave its name to the Thame Hundred. The work in 2013/4 produced only three sherds of pottery dated as Dark Age / Early medieval (FOX 11765). In contrast, the 2015 excavation located eleven Anglo-Saxon sunken-featured buildings in the south-west of the site, with a range of finds and dated by pottery to the 6th or 7th centuries AD.*
- 3.8 *The villages of Moreton, c.1km to the south east of the PDA, and North Weston, c.600m to the west, are not mentioned in Domesday, but both have names derived from Old English roots and are likely to have been in existence by then. The PDA itself was within a group of medieval fields known as Priestend. Thame Abbey had an estate at Moreton, which was attached to its Home Grange. The 1377 poll tax recorded 49 adult inhabitants at Weston and 69 at Moreton (VCH 1962, 178-193).*
- 3.9 *North Weston is now a Deserted Medieval Village (MOX 5678), with only its manor house, the Grade II Listed Manor Farm (MOX 5682) and associated buildings surviving. Its earliest elements are of 17th-century, possibly earlier, with a 15/16th-century outbuilding (MOX 17158), and post-medieval walled garden (MOX 5680), granary (MOX 5679), and barn (MOX 17449), all Listed Grade II. On the western edge of the DMV is the site of a medieval chapel, in a field immediately to the west of Manor Farm known as Chapel Field. It was demolished c.1810-20 (MOX 5681).*
- 3.10 *The historic core of Moreton is designated as a Conservation Area. All the HER entries relate to Grade II Listed Buildings, mostly houses of 17th- to 19th-century origin, except for an 18th-century granary (MOX 17695), the site of a post-medieval*

primitive methodist chapel (MOX 5885) and a cache of post-medieval side-arms (cutlasses etc) found beneath the floor of a cottage, now demolished (MOX 5913).

- 3.11 *Other post-medieval HER site records include a former toll house (MOX 5683). Rycote Lane was turnpiked in 1770 as part of the Aylesbury to Shillingford road (VCH 1962, 160-178). There was a brickworks to the east of the site, which map evidence indicates was established between 1881 and 1898 (MOX 5685) - see below for detail. It re-opened in 1934 after a period of disuse, finally closing in 1939. The only other archaeological event recorded on the HER in the study area is an assessment and ecological survey at the Oxfordshire Golf Course (EOX 291).*

Archaeological background in the application area

- 3.12 *There are no records of archaeological sites, findspots or events within the Proposed Development Area (PDA) itself.*
- 3.13 *Before inclosure, the PDA was part of the Priest End open field system, its western edge forming the boundary with the fields of North Weston, which by then had been inclosed. The open field is shown on Davis's map of 1797 (Brown & Guest 1935, facing p 160). The strip holdings are shown by dotted lines, but it is not certain to what extent these are accurate or indicative. The inclosure map of 1826 (OHC QSD/A/56; Fig 2) shows this area divided into separate fields, the PDA being within land parcel 112 owned by John Jemmett. The map also marks Rycote Lane as the 'Thame and Shillingford Turnpike Road'. The Thame tithe map of 1845 does not show the PDA, as the Priest End tithes were commuted on inclosure; it shows the fields of North Weston immediately to the west in detail, but merely annotates the area to the east with its old title of 'Priest End Common Field'.*
- 3.14 *The 1st Edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of 1881 and 1:10560 (6 inch) map of 1885 show the PDA as a single open field, with a small pond and a small building, probably a barn or shed, roughly centrally along the eastern boundary. The PDA on the 1898 1:2500 and 1900 6 inch maps is the same, but they also show that a brickworks had been established c.250m to the east. This is recorded on the HER as Christmas Hill Brickworks (MOX 5685); the HER location spot is at the extreme southern edge of the brickworks site. Quarrying, presumably for clay extraction, is shown at the north of the site.*

- 3.15 *The 1921 1:2500 (Fig 3) and 1922 1:10560 maps again show no change to the PDA. The brickworks also appears the same, except that the quarrying covers a larger area, but it is now marked disused. The 1938 1:10,560 map shows two small structures in the south west corner of the PDA, which is otherwise unaltered, but the brickworks site extended further west to include the field immediately to the east of the PDA (Fig 4). The main brickworks building had either been extended or replaced by a much larger one.*
- 3.16 *The 1960 1:10,560 map (examined online) shows that the small building on the eastern boundary of the PDA had been removed. One of those in the south west corner had been removed, and a new one added slightly further north. The brickworks is marked as disused. Its buildings are unchanged, but a substantial quarried area is now shown between the buildings and the PDA.*
- 3.17 *The 1975 1:2500 map (examined online) shows the small buildings in the south west corner of the PDA enclosed by a fence. From the small pond on the eastern boundary, a straight channel or ditch crosses the PDA roughly south west for most of its width, before turning north to follow an irregular course for a short distance before turning west to exit the site and cross the next field to join a stream near Manor Farm. To the east of the PDA it connects with the former quarry, now shown as a pond. It appears to be an overflow channel to control the level of water in the pond. The reason for the change of direction in the PDA is not apparent. The rest of the former brickworks is shown redeveloped as a depot and timber works.*
- 3.18 *Modern air photography shows the PDA uncultivated (www.bing.com/maps; www.google.co.uk/maps). A derelict structure is visible in the south east corner, and lines of darker vegetation suggest ridge and furrow running roughly SW-NE. The channel across the PDA no longer exists, but there is no other significant change. The pond at the former brickworks is now infilled and site has been redeveloped for mixed commercial uses.*

WALKOVER SURVEY

- 3.19 A site visit walkover survey was carried out by Ian Greig of Archaeology Warwickshire in October 2016 and confirmed the presence of denuded ridge and furrow earthworks

on the site. It was not possible to inspect the derelict building in the south-west corner of the site as it was too overgrown. No remains of the former buildings against the eastern boundary of the site were detected, again due to heavy overgrowth, although demolition rubble was noted in places.

GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY

- 3.20 A geophysical of the site was carried out by SUMO Services LTD in October 2017, commissioned by Archaeology Warwickshire.
- 3.21 No anomalies of probable or possible archaeological interest were identified but evidence of former ridge and furrow was detected, in line with the aerial photographic evidence. A number of ferrous anomalies were identified and reflect modern land use.
- 3.22 The site is located on mudstone. It was noted within the report that English Heritage guidelines (EH 2008) state that the average magnetic response on mudstones is poor. It was suggested that because evidence for ridge and furrow has been detected on this site (albeit weak), if substantial archaeological features (such as settlement) were to exist here then they would be expected to show with a detectable magnetic response.

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 All 28 trenches were 30m in length, excavated by a 360 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 Possible linear features were present in trenches 8 and 13, but after excavation it was apparent these features were natural in origin. Three trenches; trenches 20, 25 and 29, were not excavated with permission from the planning archaeologist due to their location through a rubble spread.

Geological Natural

- 5.2 The natural consisted of yellowish brown clay with grey patches and red mottling in all trenches, at a depth of between c. 0.25m and 0.50m below the current ground level.

Deposit Sequence

- 5.3 Overlying the geological natural in all trenches was a subsoil layer consisting of brown silty clay and yellowish brown silty clay ranging from 0.14m to 0.36m in depth. The topsoil consisted of brownish grey clay loam to greyish brown clay loam ranging from a depth of 0.09m to 0.27m. The changes in the depths of topsoil and subsoil are most likely due to the ridge and furrow earthworks which are still visible.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Although the geophysical survey failed to show any recognisable archaeological features it was possible, as has been shown on many archaeological sites around the country, that the underlying geology was not receptive to this type of survey. However, the following evaluation trenches failed to expose any archaeological features other than furrows, which were already visible on the surface although in a partially silted state. The various archaeological sites that have been located in the immediate area, to the west and north-east, all occupied areas of sandy geology. It might be that the underlying clay geology of this piece of ground, which was sticky and poorly drained, meant that it had always been an unpopular settlement site, and was more suitable for agricultural use.
- 6.2 It would appear that the land was utilised as part of an open field system, probably associated with the deserted settlement at North Weston. The few fragments of ceramic roof tile noted within the topsoil of a number of trenches along with the very few sherds of pottery recovered are all likely to be medieval to earlier post-medieval (17th-18th century) in date and might represent rubbish spread from this settlement as part of the manuring of these fields. The extant ridge and furrow is likely to be medieval in origin but this method of ploughing often carried on in use into the 19th century.
- 6.3 In conclusion the evaluation only exposed the remains of partially backfilled furrows associated with the surviving ridge and furrow earthworks on the site and it seems unlikely that any significant archaeological remains will be disturbed by the proposed development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Matt Sutton of Blakelands LLP for commissioning the work and Fields Commercial for facilitating access to the site. We would also like to thank Richard Oram for monitoring the work on behalf of the planning authority.

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BGS British Geological Survey 2018 *Geology of Britain Viewer*
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html?> Accessed February 2018

Greig, I, 2016 *Land at Rycote Lane, Thame, Oxfordshire: Archaeological Desk-based Assessment*, Archaeology Warwickshire Report 1695.2

Steele, W, 2017, *Rycote Lane, Thame, Oxfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation*, Archaeology Warwickshire WSI

Ordnance Survey First Edition 1885 Buckinghamshire XXXVI six inch map



1:Trench 1 looking NNW



2: Trench 2 looking NE



3: Trench 3 looking NW



4: Trench 4 looking NW



5: Trench 5 looking ESE



6: Trench 6 looking NNE



7: Trench 7 looking NNE



8: Trench 8 looking SSW



9: Trench 9 looking S



10: Trench 10 looking NW



11: Trench 11 looking SE



12: Trench 12 looking SE



13: Trench 13 looking NW



14: Trench 14 looking NE



15: Trench 15 looking SW



16: Trench 16 looking SW



17: Trench 17 looking NE



18: Trench 18 looking NW



19: Trench 19 looking E



20: Trench 21 looking N



21: Trench 22 looking NE



22: Trench 23 looking NW



23: Trench 24 looking SE



24: Trench 26 looking NE



25: Trench 27 looking N



26: Trench 28 looking NNE



27: Trench 30 looking NW



28: Trench 31 Looking NE

APPENDICES

A List of contexts

Trench	Context	Description	Depth (m)	Comment
1	100	Mid greyish brown	0.15	Topsoil
1	101	Light greyish brown with reddish mottling.	0.15	Subsoil
1	102	Light bluish grey/reddish brown clay.	>0.15	Geological natural
2	200	Dark greyish brown	0.09	Topsoil
2	201	Mid greyish brown	0.14	Subsoil
2	202	Light bluish grey and reddish brown mottled clay	>0.12	Geological natural
3	300	Dark greyish brown	0.12	Topsoil
3	301	Mid greyish brown, slight orange mottling	0.18	Subsoil
3	302	Light bluish grey/reddish yellow mottled clay	0.10	Geological natural
4	400	Greyish brown clay loam		Topsoil
4	401	Grey brown silty clay		Subsoil
4	402	Yellowish brown clay with grey patches		Geological natural
5	500	Greyish brown clay loam	0.25	Topsoil
5	501	Brown silty clay	0.20	Subsoil
5	502	Yellowish brown clay		Geological natural
6	600	Greyish brown clay loam	0.15	Topsoil
6	601	Yellowish brown silty clay	0.20	Subsoil
6	602	Yellowish brown clay with occasional grey patches		Geological natural
7	700	Greyish brown clay loam	0.15	Topsoil
7	701	Brown silty clay	0.21	Subsoil
7	702	Yellowish brown clay, occasional grey patches, occasional pebbles		Geological natural
8	800	Dark greyish brown	0.10	Topsoil
8	801	Mid greyish brown	0.20	Subsoil

8	802	Mid yellowish brown, light bluish grey patches		Geological natural
8	803	Light bluish grey clay, silty sand. Occasional flecks /smears of charcoal and possible CBM. Firm compaction, vague horizons.	0.17	Fill of [804]
8	804	Linear with gentle curve towards the NW facing trench end. Concave rounded base with steep sides.	0.36	Cut
8	805	Dark greyish brown silty/sand clay. Occasional small sub-angled stone stone. Firm compaction.	0.19	Fill of [804]
9	900	Greyish brown clay loam	0.15	Topsoil
9	901	Brown silty clay	0.21	Subsoil
9	902	Yellowish brown clay with occasional grey patches		Geological natural
10	1000	Brownish grey clay loam	0.23	Topsoil
10	1001	Brown silty clay	0.25	Subsoil
10	1002	Yellowish brown clay with occasional grey patches		Geological natural
11	1100	Greyish brown clay loam	0.25	Topsoil
11	1101	Brown silty clay	0.25	Subsoil
11	1102	Yellowish brown clay with occasional grey patches		Geological natural
12	1200	Greyish brown clay loam	0.23	Topsoil
12	1201	Brown silty clay	0.17	Subsoil
12	1202	Yellowish brown clay , some grey patches, occasional pebbles including flint nodules		Geological natural
13	1300	Grey brown clay silt	0.25	Topsoil
13	1301	Brownish grey clayey silt	0.08	Subsoil
13	1302	Bluish yellow clay		Geological natural
13	1303	Linear, shallow – gradual sides nearly concave base.	0.09	?Gully cut

13	1304	Greyish yellow silty clay, rare inclusions of pebbles, hard compaction, diffuse and no finds	0.05	Fill of [1303]
13	1305	Grey silty clay, occasional gravel, hard compaction, clear horizons	0.09	Fill of [1303]
14	1400	Brownish grey clayey silt	0.20	Topsoil
14	1401	Greyish brown clayey silt	0.20	Subsoil
14	1402	Bluish yellow clay		Geological natural
15	1500	Greyish brown clay loam	0.17	Topsoil
15	1501	Brownish silty clay	0.23	Subsoil
15	1502	Yellowish brown clay and occasional patches grey clay		Geological natural
16	1600	Grey brown loam	0.20	Topsoil
16	1601	Brown silty clay	0.30	Subsoil
16	1602	Yellowish brown clay and occasional grey patches.		Geological natural
17	1700	Greyish brown clay loam	0.18	Topsoil
17	1701	Brown silty clay	0.22	Subsoil
17	1702	Yellowish brown clay with occasional grey patches		Geological natural
18	1800	Greyish brown clay loam	0.18	Topsoil
18	1801	Brownish silty clay	0.16	Subsoil
18	1802	Yellowish brown clay with occasional grey patches		Geological natural
19	1900	Greyish brown clay loam	0.18	Topsoil
19	1901	Brown silty clay	0.22	Subsoil
19	1902	Yellowish brown clay with occasional grey patches		Geological natural
21	2100	Greyish brown clay loam	0.10	Topsoil
21	2101	Brown silty clay – furrows caused up and down surface.	0.20	Subsoil
21	2102	Yellowish brown clay with occasional patches of grey clay		Geological natural
22	2200	Greyish brown clay loam	0.14	Topsoil
22	2201	Brown silty clay	0.36	Subsoil
22	2202	Yellowish brown clay with		Geological natural

		occasional grey patches		
24	2400	Greyish brown silty clay	0.12	Topsoil
24	2401	Brown silty clay	0.20	Subsoil
24	2402	Yellowish brown clay with occasional patches of grey clay		Geological natural
26	2600	Greyish brown silty clay	0.25	Topsoil
26	2601	Brownish silty clay	0.30	Subsoil
26	2602	Yellowish brown clay with patches of grey		Geological natural
27	2700	Greyish brown clay loam	0.28	Topsoil
27	2701	Brown silty clay	0.32	Subsoil
27	2702	Yellowish brown clay and occasional grey patches		Geological natural
28	2800	Greyish brown clay loam	0.10	Topsoil
28	2801	Brown silty clay	0.20	Subsoil
28	2802	Yellowish brown clay with occasional grey patches		Geological natural
30	3000	Greyish brown clay loam	0.20	Topsoil
30	3001	Brown silty clay	0.35	Subsoil
30	3002	Yellowish brown clay with occasional grey patches		Geological natural
31	3100	Greyish brown clay loam	0.27	Topsoil
31	3101	Brown silty clay	0.33	Subsoil
31	3102	Yellowish brown clay with occasional grey patches		Geological natural

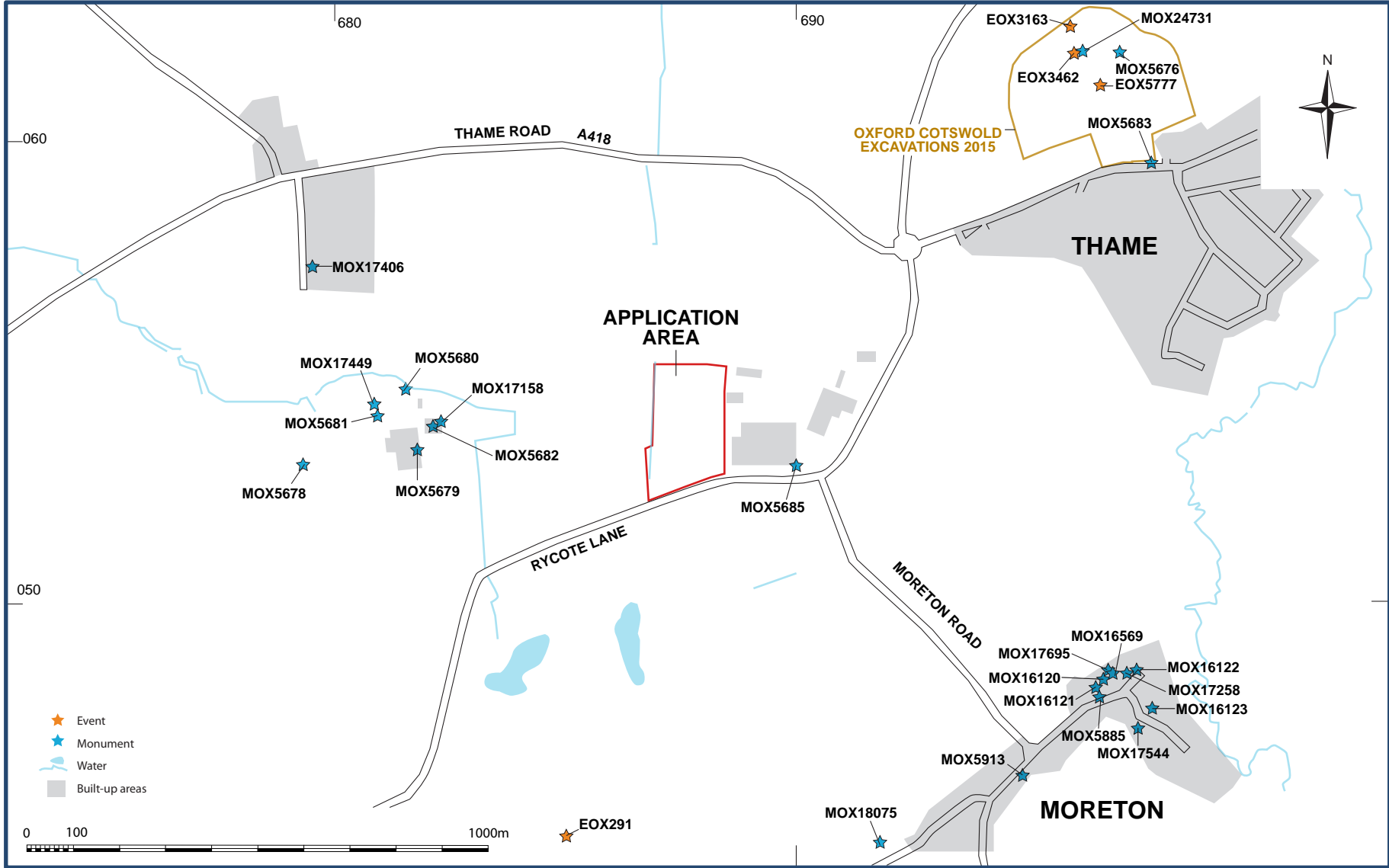


Fig 1: Location of application area and Historic Environment information

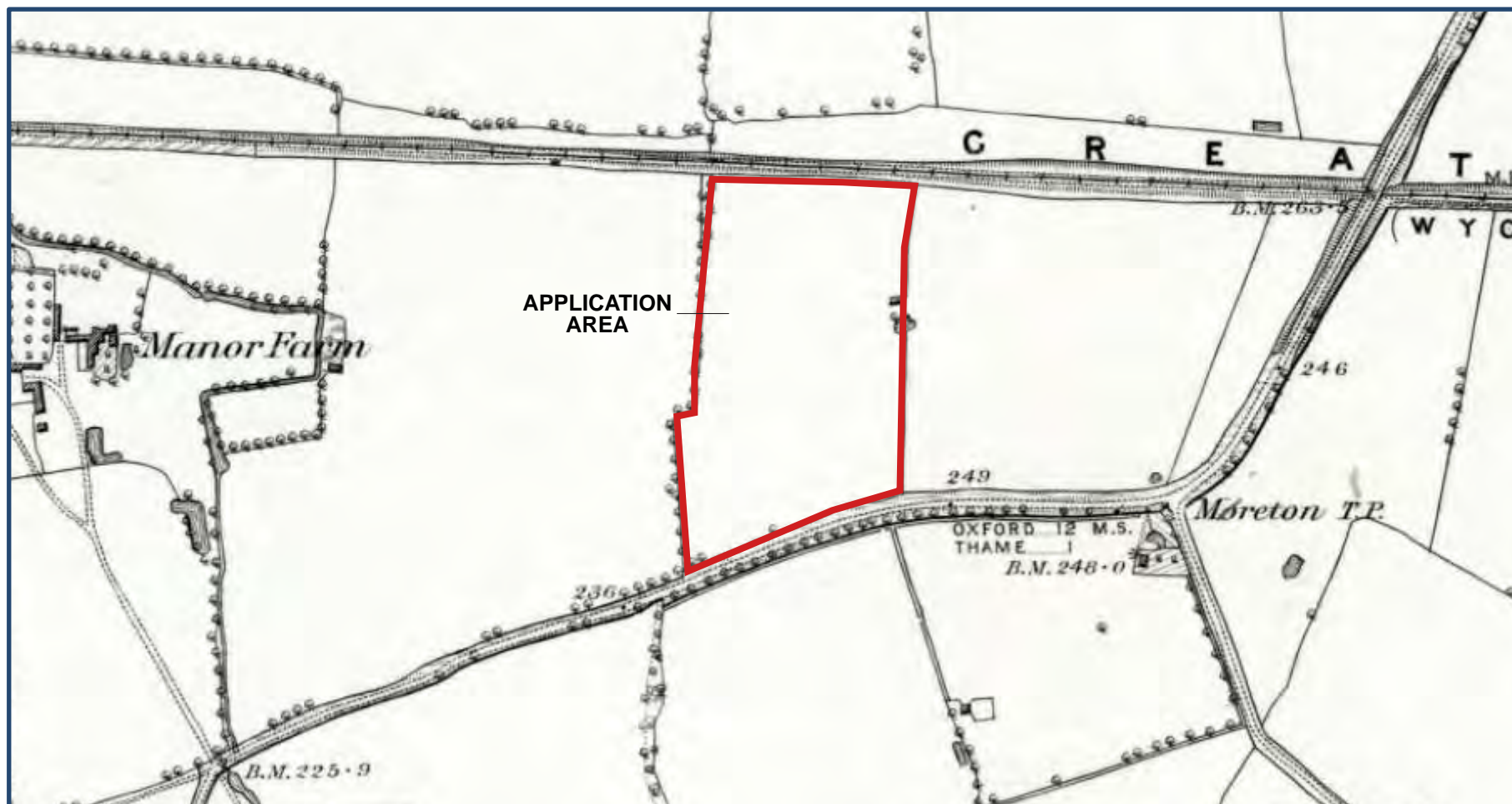


Fig 2: Detail from OS Six inch map of 1885

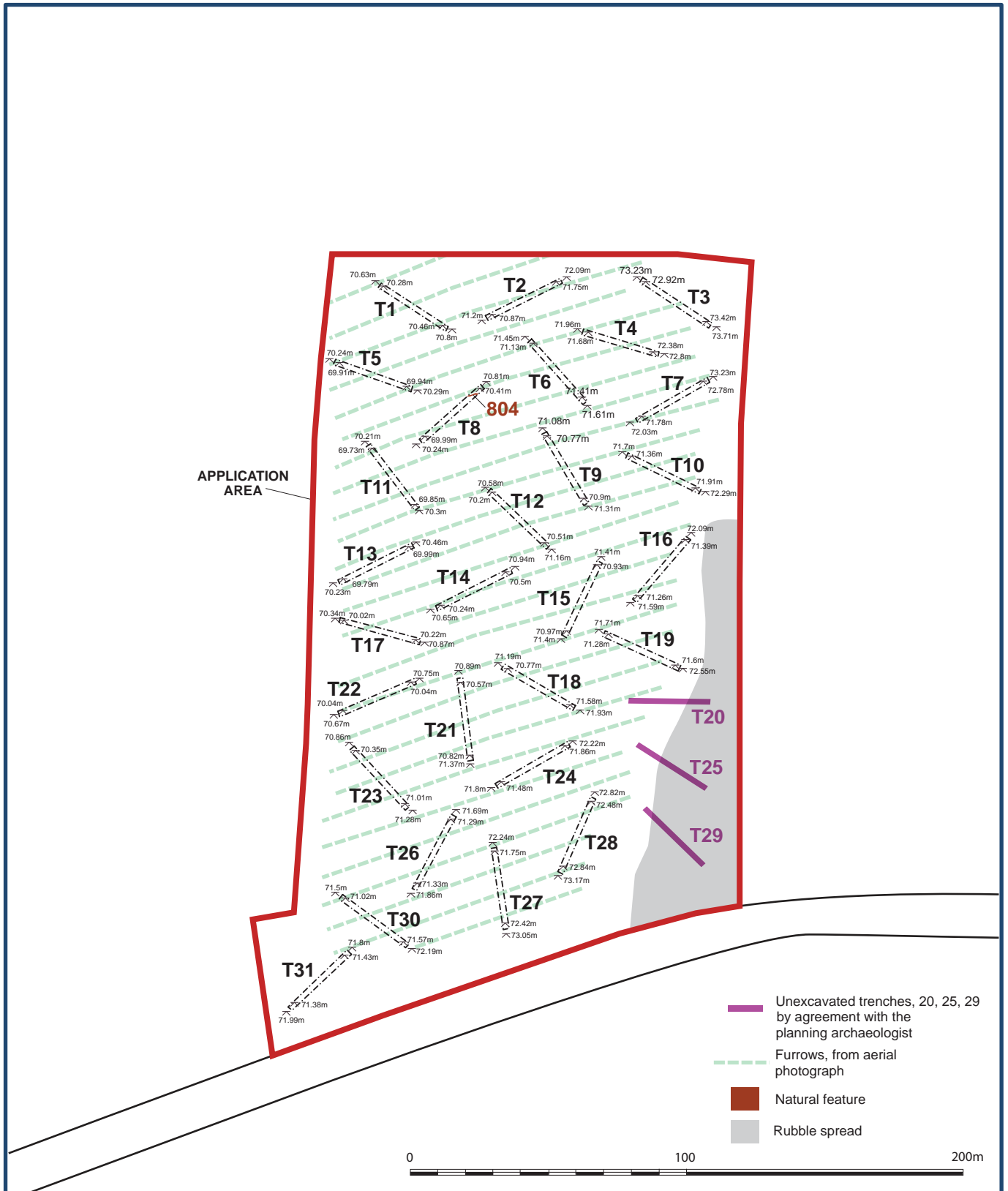


Fig 3: Location of excavated trenches