

Satellite Mediaport Services Lawford Heath, Rugby Warwickshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



EXPERTISE WHERE YOU NEED IT

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1824

APRIL 2018



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: Satellite Mediaport Services, Lawford Heath
Commissioned by: Satellite Mediaport Services Ltd
Site Code: LL18
Planning Reference: R18/0114
Planning Authority: Rugby
National Grid Reference: SP 4551 7354
Project Manager: Caroline Rann MCIfA
Fieldwork: Pete Thompson BA, Jodie Duffy BA,
Alexander Portch PhD
Author: Alexander Portch PhD
Illustrations: Candy Stevens
Checked by: Pete Thompson BA
Approved by: Stuart Palmer MCIfA
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Please address enquiries to: **Stuart C Palmer MCIfA**
**Principal Archaeologist & Business
Manager**
Archaeology Warwickshire
UNIT 9
Montague Road
Warwick
CV34 5LW
01926 412278
stuartpalmer@warwickshire.gov.uk
www.warwickshire.gov.uk/archaeology
tw.@archaeologyW



CONTENTS

	Summary	4
1	Introduction	5
2	Site Location	6
3	Archaeological and Historical Background	7
4	Aims and Methods	9
5	Results	10
6	Conclusions	12
	Acknowledgements	13
	References	14

PHOTOGRAPHS

1	General view of site during excavation, looking northwest	15
2	Trench 1 looking northwest	15
3	Trench 2 looking southwest	16
4	Trench 2 looking southwest	16
5	Southwest facing section of linear ditch 302	17
6	Trench 4 looking west	17
7	Southeast facing section of curvilinear ditch 402	18

APPENDICES

A	List of Contexts	19
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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 with associated sections A to E

SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation, comprising four 30m trial trenches, was carried out on Satellite Mediaport Services Ltd, in advance of a proposed extension to the Teleport site. Four undated linear features were identified, of which three may be associated with prehistoric activity previously recorded nearby. The fourth is more likely to be post-medieval or modern in date.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Rugby Borough Council has granted planning permission for an extension to Satellite Mediaport Services' Teleport site. The proposed development would involve a change of use of existing arable land adjacent to the site for the erection of six satellite antennae, each 9.3 metres in diameter.

- 1.2 Due to the presence nearby of significant archaeological features, and the potential for the new development to impact on buried remains, permission has been granted on the condition that a programme of trial trenching is carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the planning authority.

- 1.3 Archaeology Warwickshire were commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation which was carried out on 18th April 2018. This report presents the results of that work. This work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standard and guidance for field evaluation (2014).

2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The application area, centred on National Grid Reference SP 4551 7354, is positioned adjacent to the current northwest boundary of the Satellite Mediaport Services Teleport site, which itself is located northwest of Lawford Heath in Long Lawford parish. The evaluated area is currently under arable cultivation (Photo 1).

- 2.2 The underlying bedrock geology of the site is Rugby Limestone member, with superficial deposits of Dunsmore Sand and Gravel (British Geological Survey 2018).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The development site is located within an area of significant later prehistoric activity. Extensive evidence of settlement and land-use shows as cropmarks on the gravels to the north and east. These cropmarks were plotted as part of the Historic England National Mapping Programme (NMP) in 2008 (EWA 9109) to inform the Archaeological Resource Assessment of the Aggregate Producing Areas of Warwickshire and Solihull (Alexander, Palmer & Chadd 2008).
- 3.2 The most extensive area of gravels examined to date is that at Ling Hall Quarry where archaeological work between 1989 and 2008 identified extensive areas of activity of Neolithic to Roman date but mainly dating to the Iron Age (Palmer 2002).
- 3.3 An extensive series of dispersed cropmarks in the north of the study area comprising widespread linear features and enclosures (MWA 4973) and a separate group of conjoined rectangular enclosures (MWA 6805) to the west were partly excavated by Archaeology Warwickshire in 1989 in advance of quarrying (EWA 867). Trial trenching revealed Bronze Age to Roman occupation evidence (MWA 7208) comprising linear features, pit alignments and ditches across a wide area.
- 3.4 Additional evaluative fieldwork in 2000 (EWA 6835) furthered the interpretation of the conjoined enclosures as an Iron Age settlement of the mid – late Iron Age (MWA 8815). Another enclosure discovered a short distance to the east was not dated although was interpreted as being a funerary enclosure with internal ring ditch which may be contemporary with the adjacent settlement (MWA 8816).
- 3.5 Ongoing excavations at Ling Hall Quarry between 1998 and 1999 in an area extending from the eastern edge of the search area (EWA 7118) uncovered further prehistoric and early Roman features (MWA 9189, 9190). A prehistoric pit alignment cropmark (MWA 5550) on the south-western edge of the search area was not investigated during this later phase of fieldwork.
- 3.6 Another sub-rectangular cropmark enclosure which projecting ditch exists in the north-east extent of the search area (MWA 5417) and outside the area of Ling Hall Quarry. These cropmarks remain undated but share morphological characteristics with other known examples which have been dated to the Iron Age.

- 3.7 In the late 19th/early 20th century a hospital for infection diseases (smallpox hospital) was located some 150m to the south-west of the application site (MWA 3490). Nothing now remains and the building has been replaced by a modern bungalow. An archaeological observation (EWA 9348) in the vicinity of the former hospital site identified no features or finds of archaeological interest.
- 3.8 The application site falls within the extent of former RAF Church Lawford: a Royal Air Force station which was used by the RAF for training instructors between 1941 and 1955 (MWA 8028, EWA 6918)). A Royal Observer Corps HQ cold war bunker (underground monitoring post) (MWA 7966, EWA 6918) was located on the adjacent land to the east of the application site. The site was latterly in use as a MOD Laser Eye Clinic Site. Archaeological observation by Archaeology Warwickshire in 1997 (MWA 4170) revealed only modern building foundations with no earlier deposits observed.

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 Trench locations were plotted prior to excavation using a Leica GPS. The four 30m trenches were opened up by a 360° excavator fitted with a 1.80m 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 All four trenches were located in the positions originally proposed in the Written Scheme of Investigation; however, trench four was re-oriented slightly to accommodate a tree with a tree preservation order (Fig 3)

Geological Natural

- 5.2 The natural mostly comprised a reddish or yellowish brown sandy gravel, generally encountered 0.5m below the present ground surface. All four trenches were excavated to the level of the natural.

Deposit Sequence

- 5.3 No features of archaeological significance were encountered in trenches 1 and 2 (Photos 2 and 3), although large pieces of modern brick, concrete and metal were removed from the north-western end of trench 1. These may have been associated with the site's previous use as an RAF station. In both trenches the geological natural was directly overlain by topsoil (100 and 200; see below).
- 5.4 In trench 3 (Photo 4), ditch 302 was recorded cutting the natural (Photo 5). The feature was relatively shallow at 0.12m deep and followed an E-W course, terminating in the middle of the trench. Its greyish brown sandy silt fill (303) contained no finds. On its southwest side the ditch had been modified by an animal burrow 304. Both 302 and 304 were sealed beneath the topsoil (300), with no subsoil identified.
- 5.5 The greatest concentration of archaeological features was in trench 4 (Photo 6). This included two linear ditches (402 and 407) with dark fills, alongside a more rectilinear feature (409) with a lighter grey fill, which is likely to be post-medieval or modern in date. Ditch 402 was fully excavated to a depth of 0.41m. In plan it exhibited a broadly N-S orientation, but curved slightly to the SW. It remains possible that it comprised two separate linear features. In profile the ditch was steep sided with a flat base. It contained three fills. At the base was a dark bluish grey sandy silt (403), above which was a light bluish grey sandy silt with reddish brown mottling (403) that had slumped in from the feature's eastern side. Overlying both 403 and 404 was reddish brown silty sand, the shape of which may indicate that the ditch had in fact been re-cut at a later time. None of these fills yielded any finds. During excavation the ditch quickly began filling with water and remained waterlogged throughout the recording process

(Photo 7). Approximately 5m southwest of ditch 402, ditch 407 aligned NW-SE was not fully excavated but was a minimum of 0.3m deep and contained a similar upper fill (406) to that of 402 which also didn't produce any dating material. Feature 409 differed markedly to ditches 402 and 407, exhibiting a more rectangular shape, although with rounded corners, and a lighter grey silty clay fill. It too didn't produce any finds, but it is more likely to be post-medieval or modern in date.

Topsoil

- 5.6 All identified features and the geological natural (101, 201, 301 and 401) were sealed beneath the topsoil which primarily comprised a dark grey sandy loam (100, 200, 300 and 400).

Finds

- 5.7 No finds were discovered in any of the trenches.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Archaeological trial trenching on land adjacent to Satellite Mediaport Services Ltd's Teleport site near Lawford Heath has identified four undated linear features cutting the geological natural.
- 6.2 Three of the four features could be prehistoric or Roman and related to the extensively sampled settlements to the west. The absence of dating material might imply they are agricultural rather than residential features and the semi-permanent blue/grey fills in 402 might be related to drainage.
- 6.3 Ditch 409 seems most likely to be associated with the post-medieval agricultural system whilst conglomerations of modern brick and concrete are most likely associated with the site's position within the limits of a former RAF training station.
- 6.4 The absence of a defined subsoil in the trenches is typical of the area and supports notions that the area was not ploughed in the medieval period as it was part of the wider heath.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1: General view of site during excavation, looking NW



2: Trench 1 looking northwest



3: Trench 2 looking southwest



4: Trench 3 looking southwest



5: Southeast facing section of linear ditch 302



6: Trench 4 looking west



7: Southeast facing section of curvilinear ditch 402

APPENDICES

A List of contexts

Trench	Context	Description	Depth (m)	Comment
1	100	Dark grey brown sandy loam		Topsoil
1	101	Reddish brown gravelly sand		Geological natural
2	200	Dark greyish brown sandy silty loam	0.55m	Topsoil
2	201	Mid yellowish/reddish brown sand and gravel	>0.55m	Geological natural
3	300	Dark grey brown sandy loam		Topsoil
3	301	Reddish brown gravelly sand		Geological natural
3	302	E-W oriented shallow ditch	0.12m	Cut of ditch
3	303	Greyish brown sandy silt		Fill of ditch 302 and possible burrow 304
3	304	Steep sloping sides with rounded base		Possible cut or animal burrow
4	400	Dark grey brown sandy loam		Topsoil
4	401	Reddish brown gravelly sand		Geological natural
4	402	Curvilinear ditch	0.41m	Cut of ditch
4	403	Dark bluish grey sandy silt	0.22m	Lower fill of ditch 402
4	404	Light bluish grey with mid reddish brown mottling	0.18m	Middle fill of ditch 402
4	405	Mid reddish brown silty sand	0.25m	Upper fill of ditch 402
4	406	Brown /bluish/grey mottling, grey brown silty clay		Fill of ditch 407
4	407	Undated ditch		Cut of ditch
4	408	Grey clay/light grey silty clay		Fill of possible pit/trench 409
4	409	Regular straight sided post-medieval or modern pit, trench or intrusion	>0.25m	Cut of possible post-medieval or modern feature

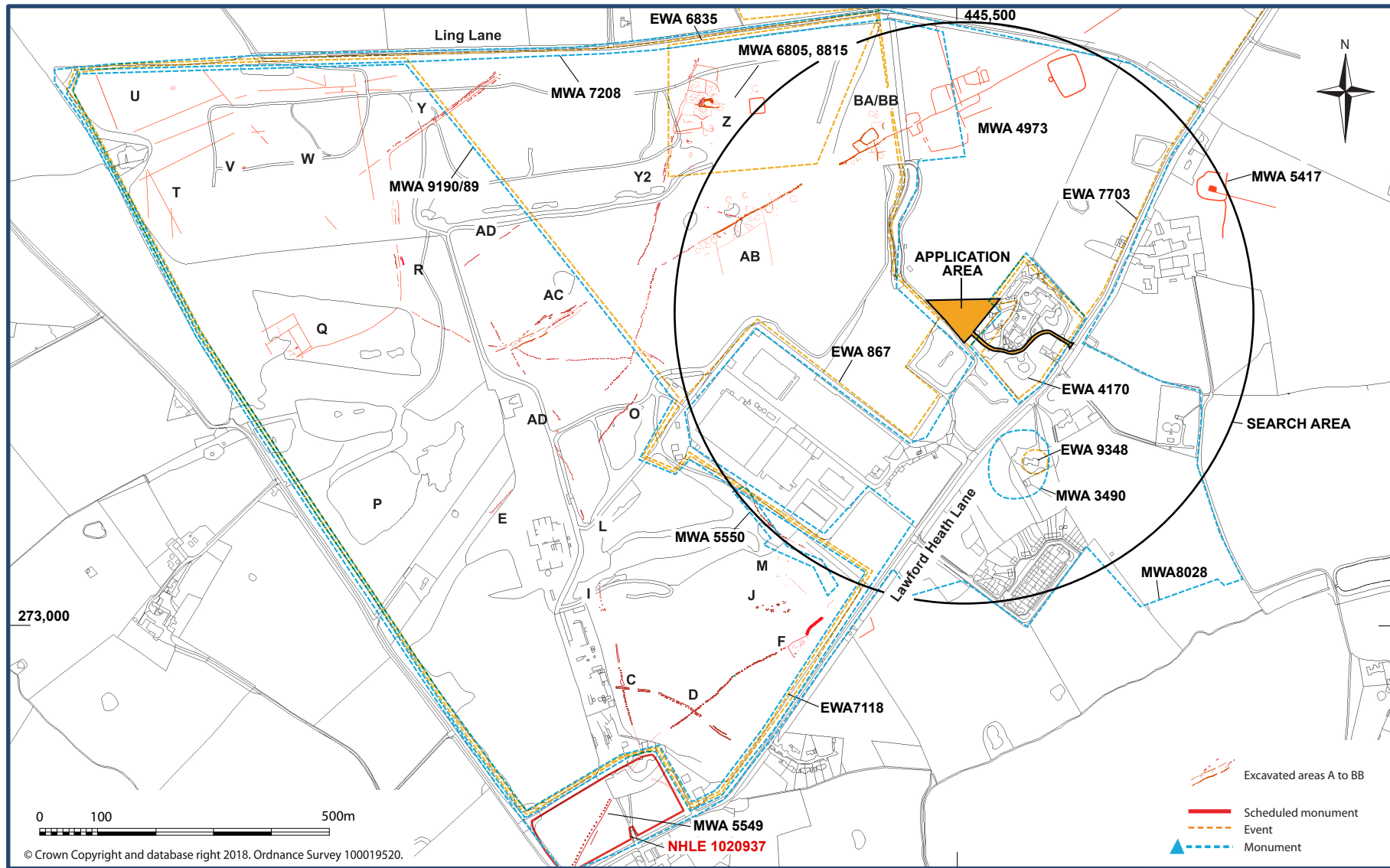


Fig 1: Location of application area and Historic Environment information

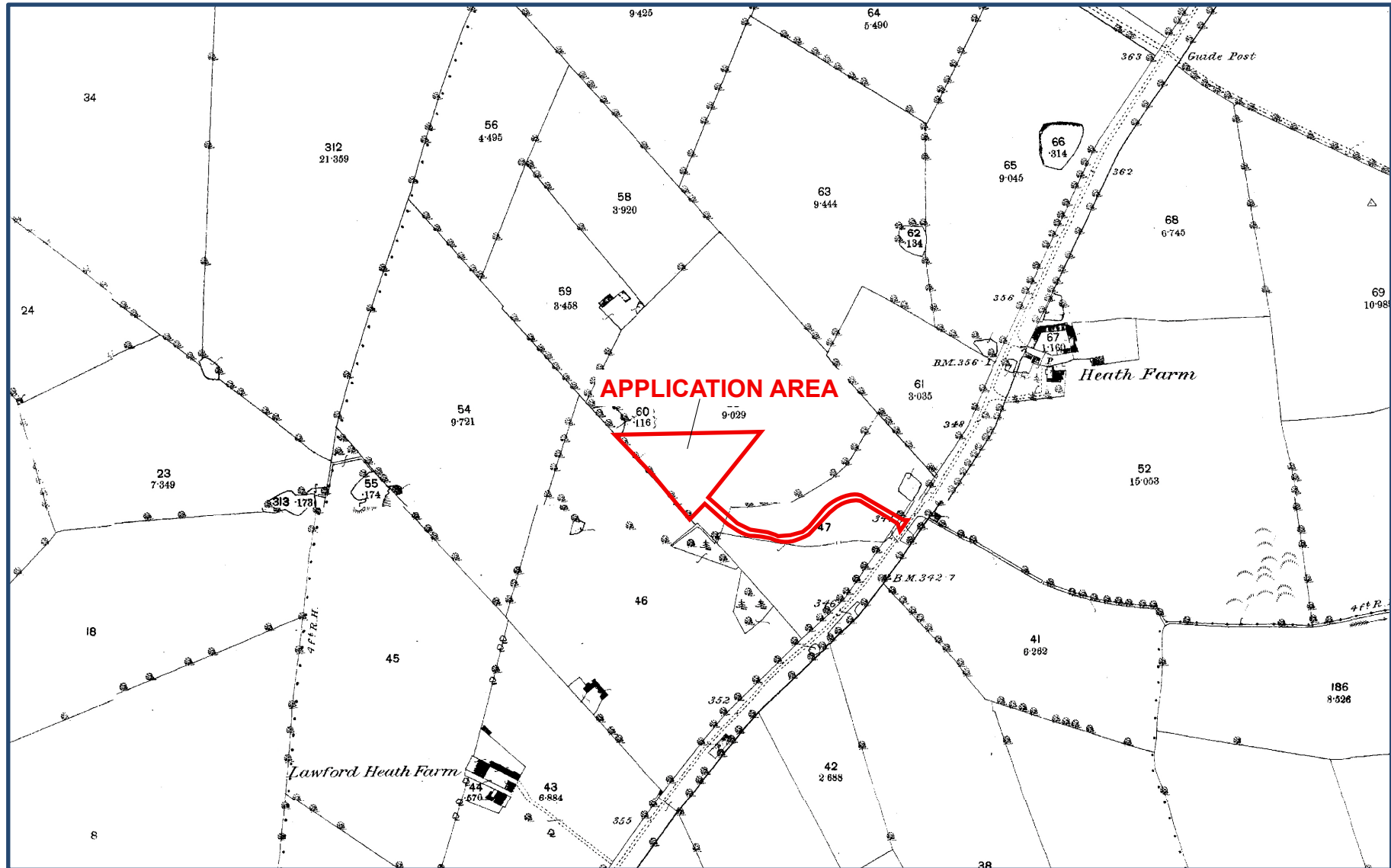


Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1889

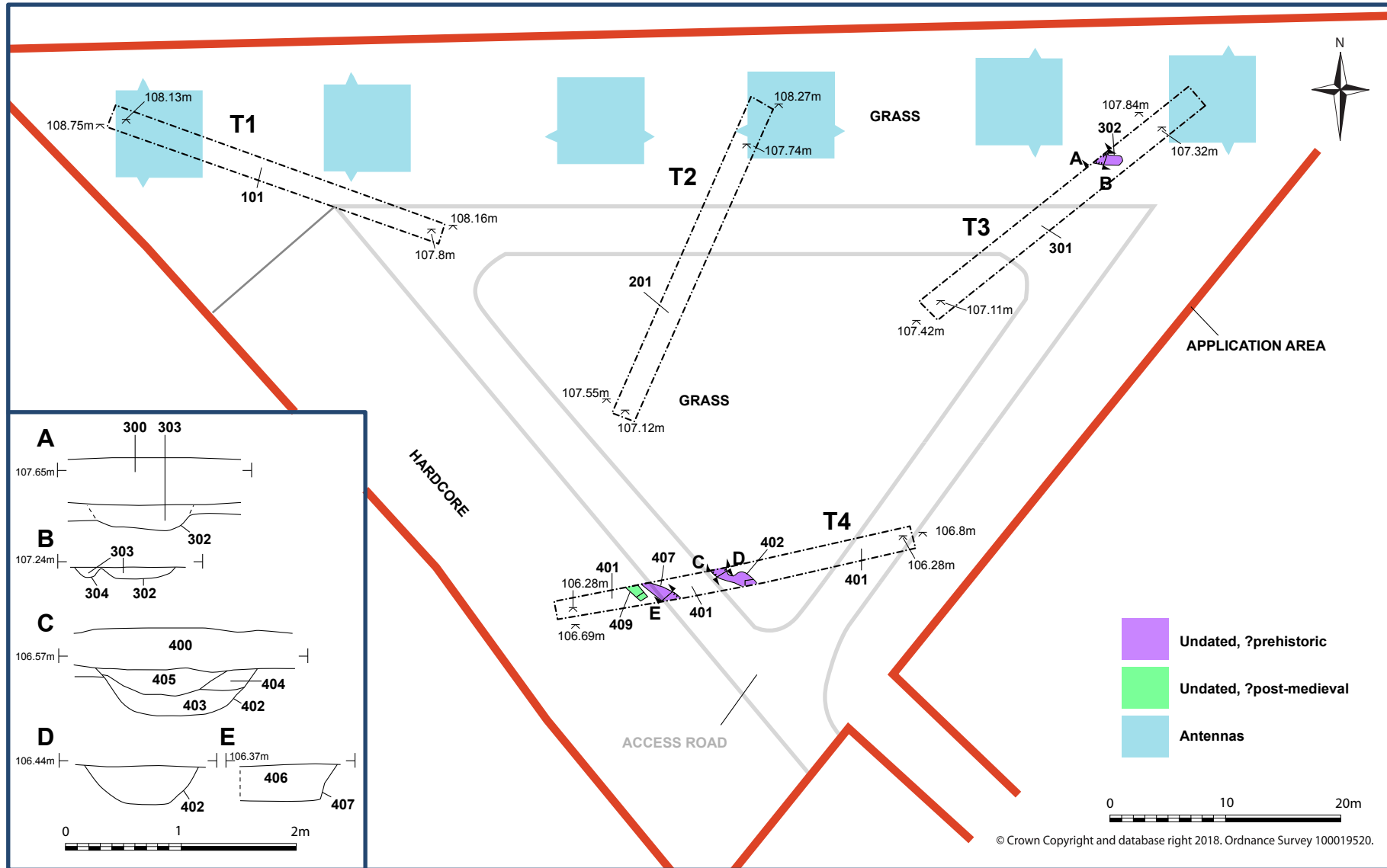


Fig 3: Location of excavated trenches with associated sections A to E