

Cryfield Residences University of Warwick

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION



EXPERTISE WHERE YOU NEED IT

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1831



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SUMMARY

A programme of archaeological excavation was undertaken on behalf of the University of Warwick prior to the development of new student accommodation at Scarman Road/Gibbet Hill Road, Burton Green.

The excavation followed an earlier phase of evaluation that recorded a pit containing three fragments of cooking ware that were originally dated to the Roman period, but the results from this excavation suggest that they were most likely medieval in date.

The excavation located the pit from the evaluation and it was shown to be one of a line of four pits or possible postholes. All the pits were of a similar size and shape and contained a number of pottery sherds dating to the 12th-14th century. Another pit was recorded directly to the north of the line of pits and this also contained a small number of sherds of 12th-14th century pottery. Although the line of pits or postholes were clearly contemporary and associated, it is not certain if they were part of a structure. A single fragment of a 12th-14th century patterned tile was recovered from the subsoil which may indicate the presence of a medieval building in the vicinity.

Documentary sources suggest Cryfield was the location of a monastic settlement or grange in the mid-12th century. Sandstone foundations and 12th-century pottery have been recorded at Cryfield House, which is immediately to the west of the development area, which suggests the features recorded during the excavation may have been associated with them. It therefore remains possible that the posthole arrangement and associated pit represent activity within the grange.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Warwick District Council for the development of new student accommodation at Scarman Road/Gibbet Hill Road, University of Warwick, Burton Green. The proposed development of the site (W/17/0395) includes the retention of existing Cryfield residential blocks, the demolition of Redfern Halls of Residence and Warden's house and the construction of 11 news buildings to provide new student residences, new Warden's house together with a 'village hall' and associated parking facilities.

- 1.2 Previous archaeological trial trenching on the site established that archaeological remains survive in the northwest part of the site (Page 2017), and these would be affected by the proposed construction of new buildings and any associated landscaping. Therefore, the archaeological advisor to Warwick District Council recommended that the area containing the archaeological remains excavated to mitigate the impact of the development.

- 1.3 Archaeology Warwickshire were commissioned to undertake the archaeological investigations in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the planning authority. Works took place from 10th to 14th April 2018. This report presents the results of that work. The site archive will be deposited at the Warwickshire Museum under Site Code BC18.

2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The site of the proposed development lies north of Leighfield Road /Scarman Road and west of Gibbet Hill Road in the southern part of the University of Warwick campus and in the parish of Barton Green, Warwickshire, centred around national grid reference SP 2978 7555 (Fig 1). The total area of the proposed development covers approximately 4.4ha which was previously developed as a series of university residential blocks. Prior to its development for the university it was part a small paddock associated with the adjacent Cryfield House (Fig.2).

- 2.2 Archaeological trial trenching ahead of the development identified surviving archaeological features in the area around Trench 2 in the northwest corner of the site (Fig 3). This was the only part of the site that had not been built on, or heavily landscaped during the development of the campus.

- 2.3 The underlying geology of the proposed development area is mapped as Kenilworth Sandstone and Tile Hill Mudstone Formation (British Geological Survey 2018). The geology recorded during the excavation was sands, clays and sandstone in the northwest corner of the site.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 An assessment of potential archaeological evidence on land held by the University of Warwick included the results of several phases of field walking (Hill and Smith 1996). This work indicated possible activity from the Neolithic onwards (Fig. 1). The archaeological background to the site and the surrounding area has been detailed in the Written Scheme of Investigation for the earlier trial trenching phase of this project (Thompson 2017) and extracts are included below:

Prehistoric

- 3.2 *The Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (HER) records a variety of prehistoric and Romano-British finds in the area. A large number of Mesolithic and Neolithic flint fragments were recovered outside the search area during fieldwalking (MWA 8346) and an evaluation in 1997 (EWA 8320/ EWA 3247) revealed a concentration of Mesolithic and Neolithic finds (MWA 8208) associated with undated postholes and other features considered to possibly indicate prehistoric settlement activity.*
- 3.3 *Cropmarks have been identified on aerial photographs within the search area which, although undated, may include prehistoric enclosure banks (MWA 8356), enclosure boundaries (MWA 2924) to the west of the site or a possible trackway to the southwest (MWA 2925).*

Roman

- 3.4 *There is evidence for Roman settlement close to 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.*
- 3.5 A large amount of Roman material including fragments of mosaic (tesserae), grey ware, Samian, Oxford colour coat and cooking ware were recovered during fieldwalking just north to the site (unrecorded event). 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

- 3.6 *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. Documentary evidence suggests that an early monastic foundation was established at Cryfield but the monks found the proximity of the Coventry–Kenilworth road ‘too distracting’. Henry II accordingly gave them a new site surrounded by Echill Woods and River Avon, later known as Stoneleigh Abbey. However, the evidence of 12th-century pottery and sandstone foundations recorded at Cryfield House is a stronger possibility for this.

Post-medieval

- 3.7 *Clay excavation and brick making are evident from field names such as Pitt Hill Field and Old Brickyard Plantation (MWA 8365), which is immediately north of the site.*
- 3.8 *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).*
- 3.9 *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).*

Undated

- 3.10 *The geophysical survey undertaken as part of the 1996 evaluation revealed ‘a significant anomaly’ (MWA 8349) in the area of Trench 2, which significantly was the only part of the site that contained the only archaeological feature recorded during this evaluation.*
- 3.11 *An archaeological evaluation on a student accommodation site further north on Scarman Road 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 aim of the excavation was to record the archaeological features identified in the evaluation and any further significant archaeological remains in the area to be developed and present the results in a report. The archive will be prepared for deposition with the Warwickshire Museum.
- 4.2 The excavation focussed on the area around evaluation trench 2 which exposed a pit which contained pottery that was initially identified as Roman.
- 4.3 The excavation consisted of a 20m x 20m area, which was stripped by a 360 degree excavator using a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. The exposed surface was cleaned by hand and all archaeological features recorded.
- 4.4 All works were carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standards and Guidance (2014).

5 RESULTS

- 5.1 The presence of a live electricity cable running NE-SW across the excavation area required a 3m buffer zone along its length (Fig 3).
- 5.2 The excavation revealed a concentration of archaeological features towards the northeast corner of the site. These features were overlaid by c. 0.19m of reddish brown loamy subsoil and c. 0.28m of dark greyish brown loamy topsoil. The ground was disturbed in the northeastern part of the excavation area due to the presence of large trees.

Geological Natural

- 5.3 The geological natural was variable across the site. Sandstone bedrock was encountered in the northeast quarter of the excavated area whereas elsewhere a mixture of red clay patches and degraded sandstone was observed at a depth of c. 0.50 below present ground level. (Photographs 1 and 2)

Medieval

- 5.4 A group of pits and possible post holes cut into the sandstone bedrock was revealed in the northeast corner of the excavated area (Photograph 3). No other archaeological features were present, although a fragment of floor tile of 12th-13th century date was recovered from the subsoil during the site stripping (Photograph 4).
- 5.5 Pit 4 was irregular in shape with very sharp sloping sides and nearly flat base. It contained a single fill of reddish brown clayey loam with occasional fragments of broken sandstone (Photograph 5), which appeared to have been the result of natural weathering the surrounding clay and sand. It contained four sherds of possible medieval cooking ware of 12th-14th century date, but no other material.
- 5.6 A NW-SE aligned row of four postholes or pits (6, 8, 10 and 12) were recorded directly to the south of Pit 4. They were all of similar dimensions and cut into the bedrock, with gaps between the features of approximately 0.50m
- 5.7 Pit 6 was partially excavated during the former evaluation of the site. It was 0.70 x 0.60 x 0.35m deep and filled by a single deposit of grey brown silty clay containing charcoal flecks and small rounded stones (7). A small number of sherds of cooking

ware recovered during the evaluation were identified as probably Roman, but the results from this excavation support a medieval date for the pottery and the pit.

- 5.8 Pit 8 was sub-ovoid with moderate to very steep sloping sides and a nearly flat base (Photograph 6). It measured 0.69 x 0.73 x 0.26m deep and it contained a single fill of reddish brown clayey silt with occasional sandstone fragments (9). It also contained nine sherds of cooking ware of 12th – 14th century date.
- 5.9 Pit 10 had gradual to steep sloping sides with a nearly flat base (Photograph 7). It was wider than the rest of the pits, 0.80 x 0.47 x 0.23m deep and was filled by reddish brown clayey silt (11) which contained 12 pottery sherds dating from the 12th – 14th century.
- 5.10 Pit 12 was located at the eastern end of the alignment. It measured 0.61 x 0.52 x 0.31m deep. It had sharp sloping sides and a rounded base (Photograph 8). It contained a single fill of sand and clay (13) from which nine fragments of 12th – 14th century cooking ware were recovered.

6 THE FINDS

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

6.1 The pottery assemblage comprised 35 sherds with a total weight of 507g. It was all earlier medieval, and was recorded using the codes and chronology of the Warwickshire Medieval and Post-Medieval Pottery Type-Series (Ratkai and Soden, in archive), as follows:

CS02: Calcareous Shelly Ware, 12th – 13th century. 1 sherd, 4g.

RS02: Warwickshire Grey Ware, 13th – 14th century. 1 sherd, 6g.

Sq02: Warwick Sandy Ware, 12th – 13th century. 8 sherds, 78g.

Sq202: Coventry 'A' Ware, 12th – 14th century. 25 sherds, 419g.

6.2 The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region. Most of the sherds were reasonably large and in good condition, and the assemblage appears reliably stratified. No re-fits were noted, indicating that the material is all the product of secondary deposition.

6.3 The entire assemblage consisted of plain body- and base-sherds from unglazed jars, other than a single small rimsherd from such a vessel in fabric CS02. All the calcareous inclusions had been leached out, presumably due to the burial conditions.

Table: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Cntxt	Sq02		Sq202		CS02		RS02		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
1							1	6	13thC
2			2	24					12thC
5	1	2	3	36					12thC
9	2	13	5	47	1	4			12thC
11	4	53	8	134					12thC
13	1	10	7	178					12thC
Total	8	78	25	419	1	4	1	6	

Ceramic Building Material

6.3 A fragment of a medieval pavement tile with chequered decoration was recovered from the subsoil (2). A heraldic tile found in Stoneleigh Abbey has similar decoration depicting a shield with chequered pattern (Chatwin 1940, 27 fig.12). Part of the corner survives as suggested by the 'slip' covering two of the perpendicular sides.

7 DISCUSSION

- 7.1 The archaeological works established that the site contains archaeological features dating to the medieval period in the northeast corner of the site, which was the only part of the site not previously developed as the Cryfield campus was constructed.
- 7.2 No evidence for Roman activity was revealed during this phase of works; however, Roman finds were recovered by the current tenants of Cryfield Farmhouse to the east and northeast of the house. The majority of the finds were pottery sherds which included *mortaria*, greyware, Samian, and Oxford colour-coat. They also recovered black and white *tesserae* and larger parts of tessellated pavements. The nature of the artefacts point to a nearby Roman building but its exact location is not yet established.
- 7.3 The excavation did reveal evidence of medieval activity in the form of the line of pits or possible post holes, which were possibly part of a structure and a medium-sized pit. Fragments of pottery dating to the 12th-14th century were recovered from the fills of all of the features. A fragment of a medieval floor tile, of probable 12th-13th century date with a chequered pattern was recovered from the subsoil during the site stripping. Tiles with similar patterns are known at nearby Stoneleigh Abbey suggesting there was a link between the sites.
- 7.4 Documentary evidence suggests that a 12th century monastic foundation was established at Cryfield before being moved to Stoneleigh Abbey in the 13th century (VCH 1951). The presence of sandstone foundations and 12th century pottery recorded at the nearby Cryfield Farmhouse along with the possible postholes, pit and the 12th-14th century pottery and floor tile from the excavation suggests that Cryfield Farmhouse is a potential location for the early monastic settlement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Photograph 1: NW corner of the site during stripping looking S



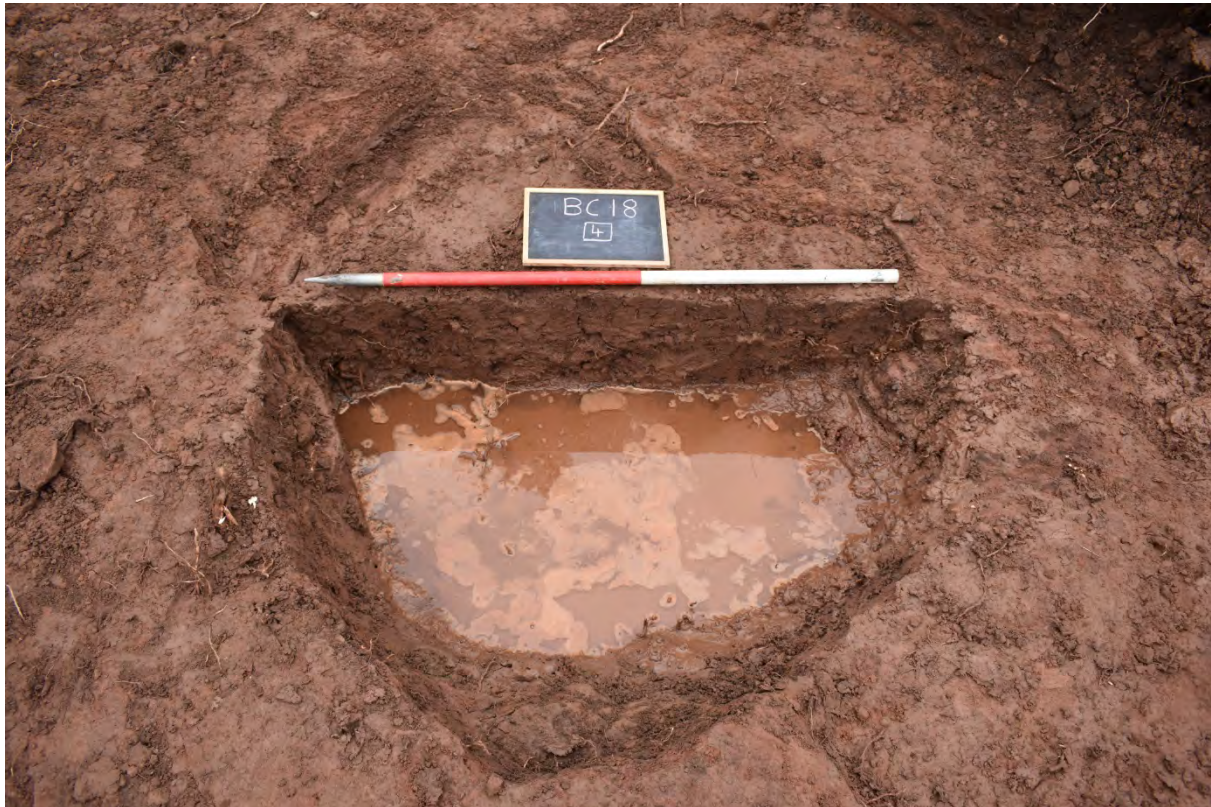
Photograph 2: SE corner of the site during stripping looking SE



Photograph 3: Medieval floor tile with chequered decoration



Photograph 4: NE corner of the site looking NW



Photograph 5: Pit 4 looking NW



Photograph 6: Posthole 8 looking W



Photograph 7: Posthole 10 looking E



Photograph 8: Posthole 12 looking W

APPENDICES

A List of contexts

Context	Description	Depth
1	Topsoil- dark greyish brown loam with occasional modern building material, glass, plastic and metal fragments	0.28
2	Subsoil- reddish brown loam	0.19
3	Geological natural- reddish yellow sandstone bedrock and mixture of red clay patches and degraded sandstone	
4	Pit cut- irregular shape, very sharp sloping sides and flat base	0.29
5	Pit fill- reddish brown clayey loam with occasional fragments of broken sandstone	0.29
6	Pit cut- excavated in evaluation	
7	Pit fill- excavated in evaluation	
8	Pit cut- oval, very sharp northern side, sharp sloping southern side and flat base	0.26
9	Pit fill- reddish brown clayey silt with occasional sandstone fragments	0.26
10	Pit cut- oval, very sharp sloping sides and nearly flat base	0.23
11	Pit fill- reddish brown clayey loam with occasional sandstone fragments	0.23
12	Pit cut- square to oval, sharp sloping sides, flat base	0.31
13	Pit fill- reddish brown clayey loam with occasional sandstone fragments	0.31

B List of finds

Context	Type	Description	Quantity
1	Pottery	Warwickshire grey ware	1
2	Pottery	Coventry 'A' ware	2
2	Tile	Decorated tile	1
5	Pottery	Warwick sandy ware	1
5	Pottery	Coventry 'A' ware	2
9	Pottery	Warwick sandy ware	2
9	Pottery	Coventry 'A' ware	5
11	Pottery	Warwick sandy ware	4
11	Pottery	Coventry 'A' ware	8
13	Pottery	Warwick sandy ware	1
13	Pottery	Coventry 'A' ware	7

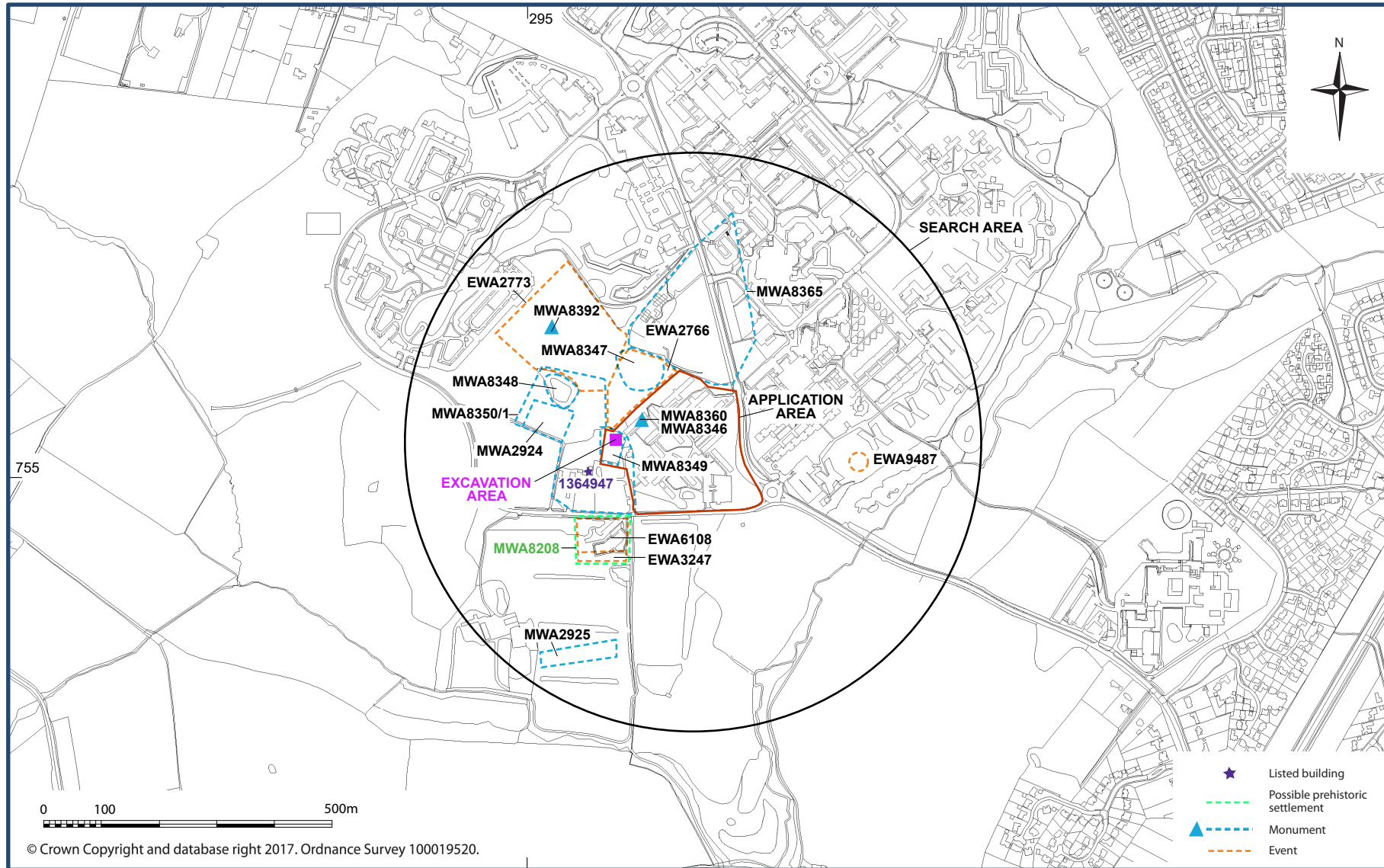


Fig 1: Location of excavation area, application area and Historic Environment information

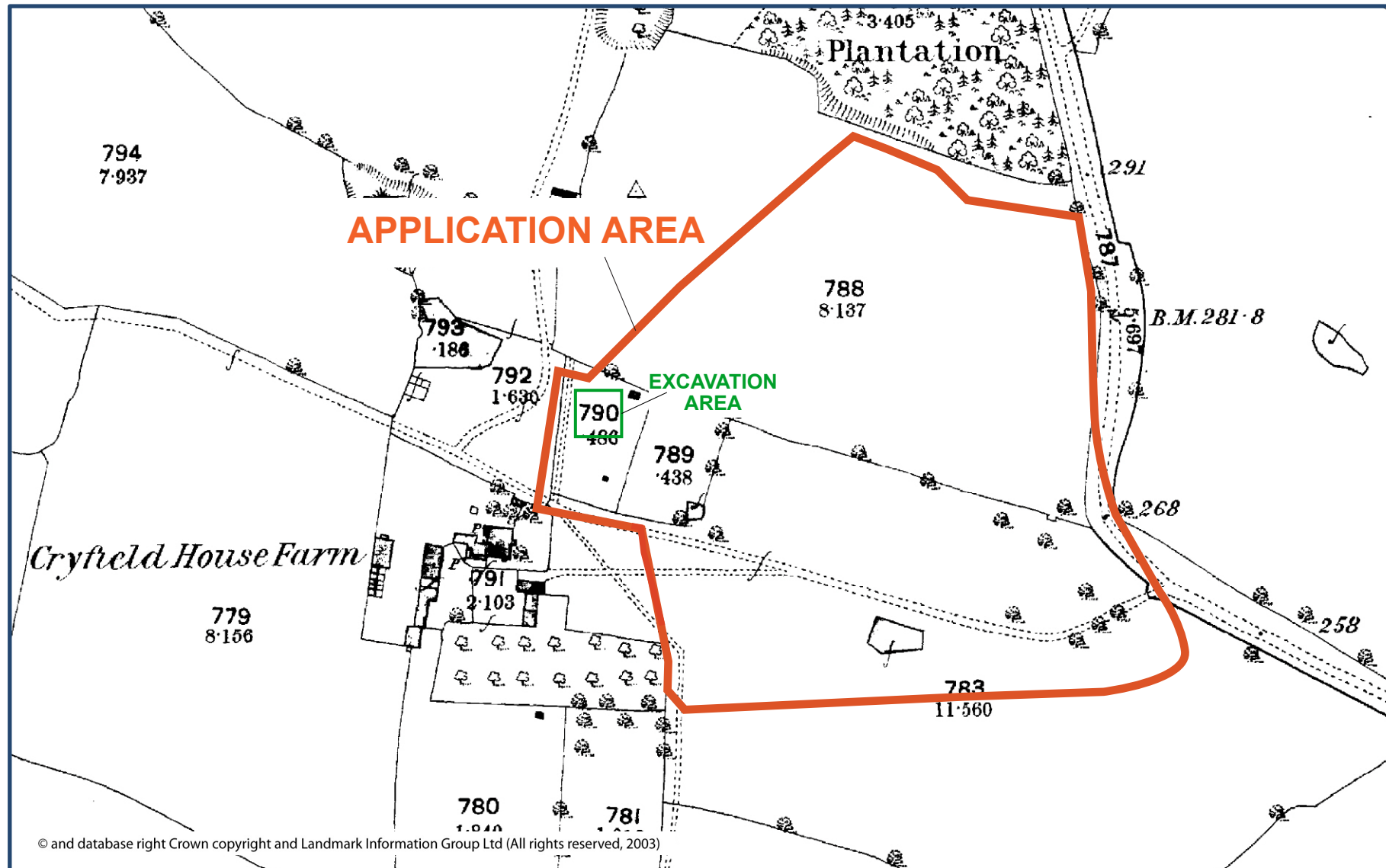


Fig 2: Detail from First Ordnance Survey map of 1887

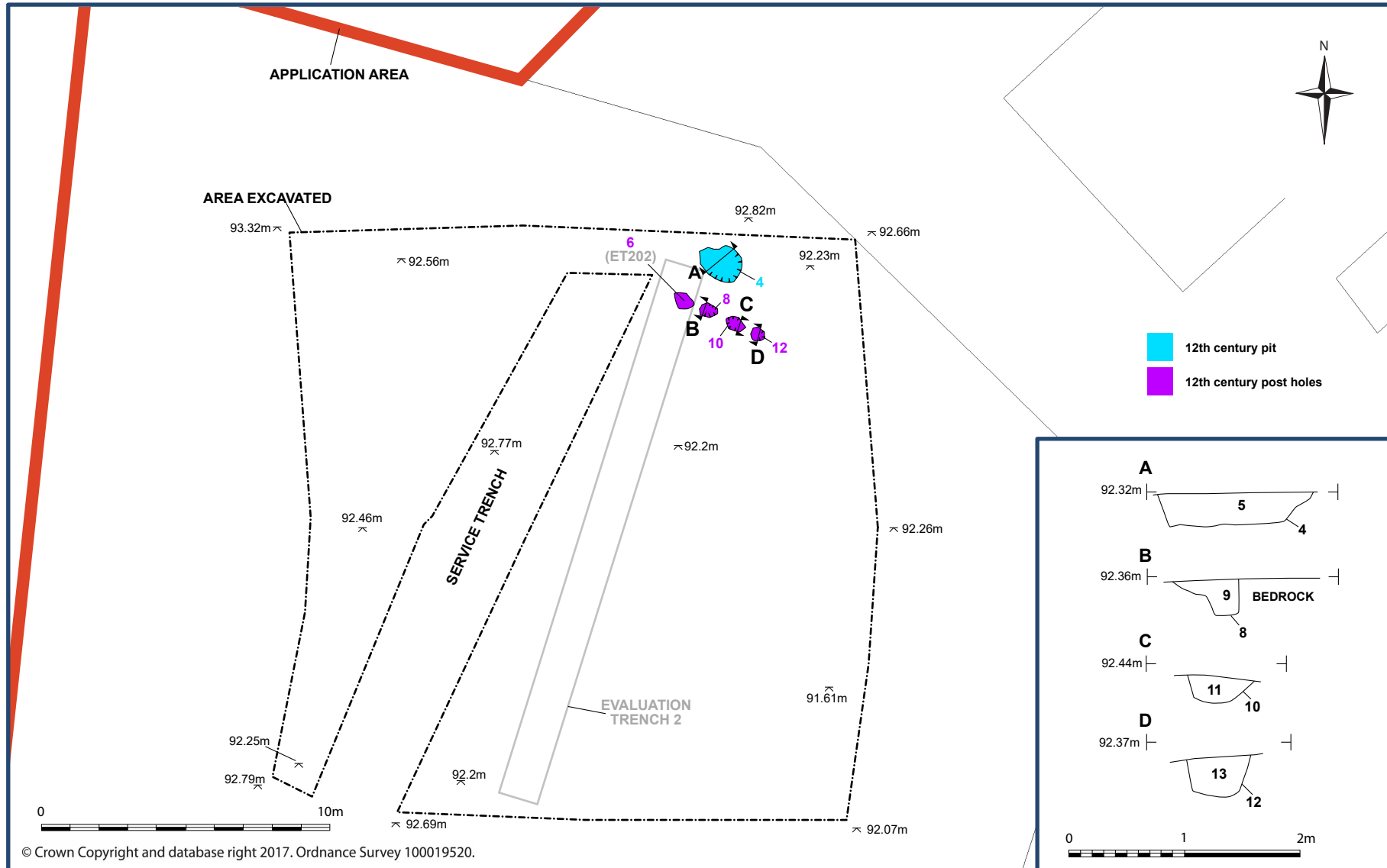


Fig 3: Location of excavated area, sections A to D and evaluation trench 2