

# Harold's Orchard, Stretton-on-Fosse, Warwickshire

## Evaluation - Trial Trenching



*understanding heritage matters*

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*Working for  
Warwickshire*

**Project:** Harold's Orchard, Stretton-on Fosse  
**Commissioned by:** Mr Jonathan Collis @ Grewayne Properties Limited  
**Project Report No.** 1371  
**Site Code:** SF13  
**Planning Reference:** n\A  
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## Summary

Archaeological trial trenches excavated in advance of a planning application for a housing development at Harold's Orchard, Stretton on Fosse revealed the fragmentary remains of a possible burnt mound. The mound was evident as a degraded spread of heat cracked pebbles and may have been associated with a grey clay deposit uncovered in the lowest part of the site. It will require further excavation to characterise and date these features.

## 1 Introduction

1.1 A planning application is to be submitted for the development of land at Harold's Orchard for housing. Warwickshire County Council Planning Archaeologist, Anna Stocks has advised that, should such a planning application be submitted, a recommendation would be made that an archaeological evaluation be undertaken prior to determination to provide further information about any archaeological deposits which survive across this site.

1.2 Archaeology (Projects) Warwickshire were commissioned to undertake such an evaluation which included an initial phase of geophysical survey undertaken in August 2013. This report presents the results of the second phase trial trenching. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under the site code SF13.

## 2 Site Location

2.1 The site is located on the north-western edge of Stretton-on-Fosse in Warwickshire. It is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference SP 21930 38405, see Fig 1 and 3.

2.2 The underlying geology is of the Charmouth Mudstone Formation (BGS 1975). The overlying soils across the site are from the Denchworth association and are pelo-stagnogley soils. These consist of slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged, clayey soils (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

## 3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 The site lies in an area of archaeological potential at the western edge of the known medieval settlement of Stretton-on-Fosse (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record No WA 8944). It is located on the northern edge of the Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 168) and there is also potential for archaeological deposits associated with the utilisation of this area from at least the Roman period.

## Prehistoric

3.2 Mesolithic or Neolithic flints were found in a pit during excavations to the south (WA 6056). These indicate activity in the general area rather than a settlement. Excavations to the west of the village have recorded prehistoric remains, including those listed below.

HER ref no MWA	Date	Description
4608	Unknown	Site of possible standing stone
5462	Bronze Age-Neolithic	Ditch and flints
5359	Mesolithic	Inhumation pit

3.3 Burials including Iron Age metalwork have been found in the area (MWA 3004), as well as pre-Roman pottery (WA 5508) and an Iron Age round house with associated pottery (MWA 5463) has been recorded to the west of the village.

## Roman

3.4 An undated cropmark enclosure may indicate a later prehistoric or Romano-British settlement to the north-east (WA 1667). Cropmarks form when the remains of buried sites show as differential growth or ripening in crops over features such as ditches, walls or pits.

3.5 A large body of evidence has been found for Roman activity in the area. The Fosse Way (WA 4759) was in existence by AD 47 and is thought to have originated during the Roman conquest as a link road along a militarized zone. Evidence for Romano-British settlement has also been uncovered in the area of Stretton-on-Fosse (Scheduled Ancient Monument 168; WA 5360, WA 1849, WA 1838 and WA 4752). Other probable Romano-British features, such as ditches and pits, have been recorded to the south of the Scheduled area (WA 1839) and to the west (WA 5358). Archaeological work within the Scheduled area in recent years has not uncovered any further evidence of Roman remains.

3.6 Excavations to the west of the Scheduled area have produced a large number of burials of early Anglo-Saxon date (WA 1832). Anglo-Saxon pottery and evidence for structures have also been found in the vicinity (WA 4752). A number of the burials within the Scheduled Ancient Monument were oriented west-east and without grave goods. This suggests that they are likely to be Christian burials, probably of Anglo-Saxon date (WA 5360).

HER ref no MWA	Date	Description
3003	Unknown	Possible Romano-British or Anglo Saxon graves
8754	Unknown	Human bone

## Medieval

3.7 At the time of Domesday (AD 1086) Stretton-on-Fosse, then *Stratone*, had a population that can be estimated at about 90 people (VCH 1904, 337 and 339). The parish also had a priest at this time, suggesting the existence of a church, although the present church of St Peter's itself was first recorded in the 12th century (MWA 5361). A ford is recorded in Domesday, as *Dicforde*, where the Fosse Way crosses the Paddle Brook to the south (MWA 8658) and the Fosse Way continued as a major road through the medieval period (MWA 8656).

3.8 The remains of an earthwork, probably a medieval hollow way, are recorded to the north-west (MWA 3010). It has been suggested that this represents an area of the village which was occupied during the medieval period but has since shrunken. The extent of the medieval village is suggested by the ridge and furrow which surround the village. Ridge and furrow runs roughly north-south in the area of current building works. Evidence of 12th-15th century occupation at 14 Church Street was uncovered in 1975 (WA 3001).

## Recent Archaeological Work

3.9 A watching brief was recently undertaken at Toad Hall in Stretton on Fosse (Gethin 2013). This recorded evidence of medieval or post-medieval activity in the village. The recent magnetometer survey conducted on the site in August this year revealed evidence of ridge and furrow cultivation, but few other potential features (Sabin 2013).

## 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 of development, to form an understanding of their value and their potential to shed light on the subsequent development of the Stretton-on-Fosse area.

4.2 Secondary aims included placing the results in their wider local and regional contexts as appropriate.

4.3 The objective was to locate, record and analyse archaeological materials and deposits and to disseminate the results in an appropriate format

4.4 The magnetometer survey conducted as part of the first phase identified a few discrete anomalies of potential archaeological interest, as well as anomalies likely to be caused by ridge and furrow and also a possible linear feature. The positions of the trial trenches were designed to investigate these features, as well as the areas which did not return a geophysical signal.

4.5 A total of four trenches, representing a 4% sample of the site, were opened up by a JCB-type machine. Topsoil and other plough soils were removed under supervision of an experienced archaeologist until either the top of archaeological remains or geological natural was reached.

## 5 Results

### **Trench 1**

5.1 Trench 1 was 25m long and was aligned NW-SE. Geological natural (103 & 104) was reached at a depth of 0.63m below the surface. A deposit of burnt stones (102) was uncovered above the natural, approximately 6m from the SE end of the trench. A 5m long sondage was machined on the side of the trench in order to try and characterise the stone spread. The new expanse of trench uncovered an adjacent spread of burnt stone (105). The extent of this feature was not fully revealed and no datable evidence was recovered from it.

5.2 To the south-east of the stones a dark grey clay deposit (106) appeared to fill a hollow of uncertain character. This feature lay at the lowest point of the site and may have been a natural deposit, although this remains uncertain. Above the stone spreads and natural was a 0.38m deep layer of yellowish brown clay loam (101) that was thought to be old ploughsoil. The modern ploughzone was represented by 0.25m of reddish brown clay loam topsoil (100).

### **Trench 2**

5.3 Trench 2 was 20m long and was aligned SW-NE. Geological natural (202) was achieved 0.62m below the current ground surface. The natural was overlain by 0.30m of

yellowish brown clay loam (201). The reddish brown clay loam topsoil (200) was 0.32m thick. No significant archaeological deposits or remains were observed within this trench.

### **Trench 3**

5.4 Trench 3 was 20m long and was aligned WSW-ENE. Geological natural (303 & 304) was achieved at a depth of 0.70m below the current land surface. Above the natural was a 0.40m thick layer of yellowish brown clay loam (301) former ploughsoil. Over the ploughsoil was, approximately, 0.3m of reddish brown clay loam topsoil (300). No significant archaeological deposits or remains were recovered from this trench.

### **Trench 4**

5.5 Trench 4 was 25m long and was aligned NW-SE. Geological natural (402 & 403) was achieved 0.62m below the modern ground surface. The natural was overlain by 0.32m of yellowish brown clay loam (401). The topsoil in Trench 4 was approximately 0.30m deep and was composed of reddish brown clay loam (400). No significant archaeological deposits or remains were obtained from this trench.

## **6 Conclusions**

6.1 The deposit sequence across the majority of the site was simply geological natural overlaid by former plough soils associated with ridge and furrow cultivation, sealed by a modern plough soil.

6.2 The deposits in Trench 1 included a horizon of heat-cracked pebbles and probably an intermittently waterlogged (grey) deposit of uncertain character. The heat-cracked pebble deposits most resemble a degraded burnt mound (normally a Bronze Age phenomenon) although this is far from certain. Burnt mounds are often found in association with water-filled features and it remains possible that the grey deposits in the vicinity represent the remains of such features.

6.3 Further excavation would be required to attempt to establish a date, and character for the burnt deposits, although it is entirely possible that any such further work may not provide unambiguous answers.

## **Acknowledgements**

Archaeology (Projects) Warwickshire would like to thank Mr Jonathan Collis of Grevayne Properties Limited for commissioning the work.



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## Appendices

### A List of contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comment</i>
100	Topsoil	
101	Layer	Old ploughsoil
102	Spread	Burnt stone deposit
103	Natural	Geological natural deposit
104	Natural	Geological natural deposit
105	Spread	Burnt stone deposit
106	Hollow	Grey clay hollow fill
200	Topsoil	
201	Layer	Old ploughsoil
202	Natural	Geological natural deposit
300	Topsoil	
301	Layer	Old ploughsoil
303	Natural	Geological natural deposit
304	Natural	Geological natural deposit
400	Topsoil	
401	Layer	Old ploughsoil
403	Natural	Geological natural deposit
404	Natural	Geological natural deposit

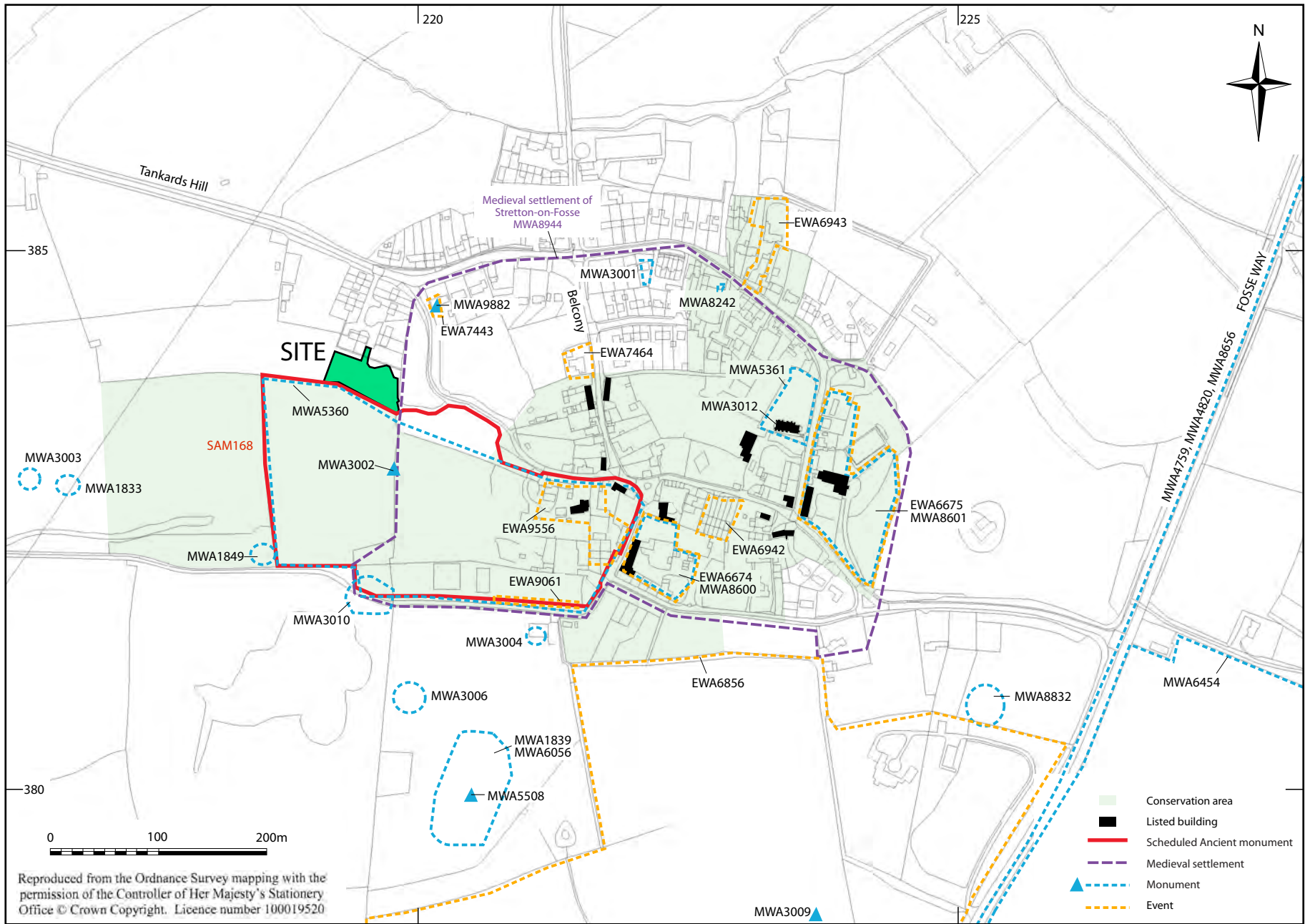


Fig 1: Site location

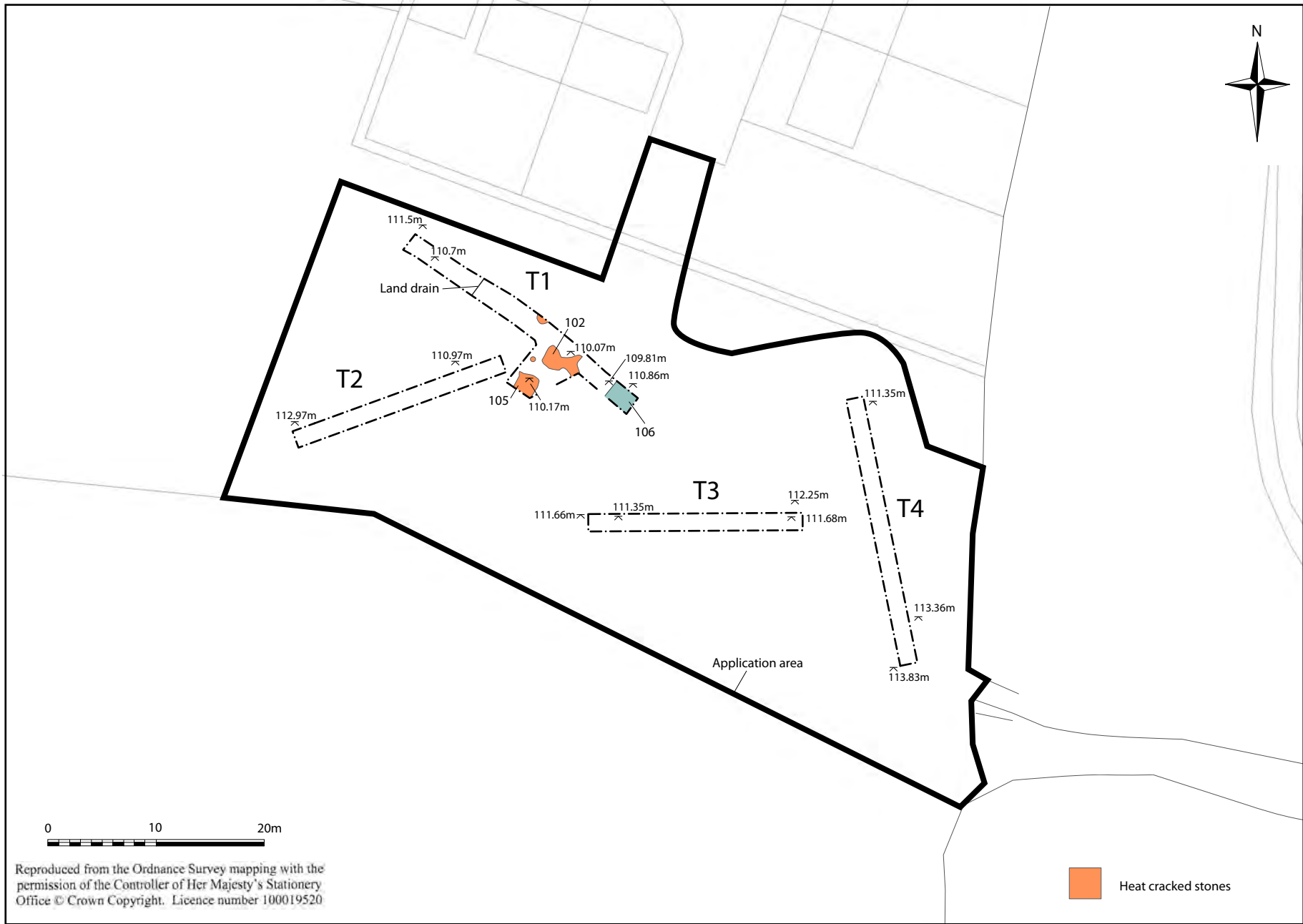


Fig 2: Location of trial trenches



Fig 3: Trench 1 viewed from the SE. The deposit 102 is in the mid-ground and the deposit 106 in the foreground



Fig 4: Trench 2 viewed from the SW



Fig 5: Trench 3 viewed from the SW



Fig 6: Trench 4 viewed from the SE



Fig 7: Trench 1 deposits 102 and 105