

Rectory Barns Dorsington Warwickshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION AND RECORDING



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Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1793
OCTOBER 2017



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: Rectory Barns, Dorsington
Commissioned by: Mr and Mrs Phillips
Project Report No. 1793
Site Code: DR15
Planning References: 15/03738/FUL, 15/03739/LBC
Planning Authority: Stratford-on-Avon District Council
National Grid Reference: SP 1338 4979
Team:
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SUMMARY

Archaeological observation during the excavation of foundation trenches for a new extension to Rectory Barns, following the demolition of some of the outbuildings, in the core of medieval Dorsington, was undertaken on behalf of Mr and Mrs Phillips.

No significant archaeological remains associated with medieval settlement or earlier activity were observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Stratford-on-Avon District Council for the conversion and extension of remaining outbuildings attached to former barns and stables known as Rectory Barns, to form a self-contained annex consisting of a new kitchen/living/dining area with bedroom and en suite bathroom (Refs. 15/03738/FUL, 15/03739/LBC).
- 1.2 The development site lies within an area of archaeological potential within the historic core of the medieval settlement of Dorsington. It was therefore considered possible that archaeological remains might be disturbed during the development. A condition of planning permission required the applicant to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work to be carried out in conjunction with the development.
- 1.3 Archaeology Warwickshire were commissioned to undertake a programme of observation and recording to be undertaken in conjunction with the groundworks phase of the development in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the planning authority.
- 1.4 The fieldwork was carried out in October 2017 in accordance with Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standards and Guidelines (2014). The buildings had been subject to basic level photographic survey earlier in the year by a photographer contracted directly by the owners. The prints and negatives were handed over to Archaeology Warwickshire to be included in the archive. This report presents the results of the fieldwork. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under Site Code DR15.

2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The site is centred on national grid reference SP 1338 4979, in the parish of Dorsington in the village of the same name. The proposed development area covers an area of approximately 78 square metres.

- 2.2 The underlying geology of the area is Blue Lias Formation and Charmouth Mudstone Formation (British Geological Survey 2017).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Warwickshire Historic Environment Record contains no records indicating pre-Roman activity in the vicinity, though this is likely to be a reflection of the absence of survey rather than absence of evidence.
- 3.2 Romano-British activity in the area is indicated by the chance find of a Roman coin (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record No MWA 5067) and a copper alloy object, thought to be a Roman chest fitting (MWA 5068), both found by metal detector in 1987 c.650-700m to the north-west of the site (not on plan). Archaeological excavation in 2004 in advance of the construction of a house to the north-west of the site found a series of ditches, one of which contained Roman pottery and another a Roman coin. A concentration of features in the south-eastern corner of the excavation, including the possible edge of an enclosure, suggests that the main focus of activity may be to the south-east of the excavated area. None of these features could, however, be dated (Cook 2005).
- 3.3 The place name Dorsington is of Anglo-Saxon origin, and may mean Deorsige's farm (Gover *et al* 1936, 201). A single sherd of late Anglo-Saxon pottery was found in the 2004 excavation, though it was considered to be a residual sherd in a later feature interpreted as ridge and furrow cultivation (Cook 2005). It is possible that one or more of the undated features from the excavation could be of this period.
- 3.4 The manor of Dorsington was recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as possessing ten hides and five ploughs, with three ploughs in lordship. It was formerly held by Saxi, and at the time of the survey was held by one Robert from Roger of Beaumont (Morris 1976, EG12). There were eight villeins and six serfs, suggesting a total population of around seventy.
- 3.5 The HER records chance finds of a medieval harness attachment and a copper alloy vessel fragment c.650m north-west of the site, and a penny of Edward I to the north-east (MWA 5629 not on plan; MWA 10131), as well as more substantial evidence of medieval occupation. A moat, assumed to be medieval, surrounds Moat House to the west (MWA 1812), and a feature described as a moat lies to the east of the present site (MWA 1811). There is another moated site to the north-east at Braggington (MWA 1813, 13002).

- 3.6 There is extensive ridge and furrow around Dorsington (MWA 3894, Fig 2), which has been plotted from aerial photographs by Warwickshire Museum (Fig 2). The extent of the visible evidence also gives an indication of the limits of the medieval settlement (MWA 9020). The 2004 excavation revealed linear features interpreted as ridge and furrow cultivation (Cook 2005). Earthworks exist to the south of the site (MWA 6964); these may be of geological origin, rather than archaeological.
- 3.7 Dorsington today contains a number of early post-medieval buildings, Listed Grade II. The house, formerly five cottages, known as 'The Old Manor' (although not a former manor house) may date to the 16th century and several others, such as Whitegates, Aberfoyle Cottage, The Old Post Office and Moat House Farmhouse, are of 17th-century date (EH/DCMS 2006). Manor House Farm is a 17th-century timber-framed barn, now converted to a residential dwelling (MWA 12994); building recording was carried out here prior to its conversion (EWA 9720). St Peter's Church dates from 1754-8, although it may be on earlier foundations (MWA 1810; Pevsner and Wedgwood 1966, 286; Salter 1992, 31). The Rectory itself is early 18th-century in date with 19th-century alterations and additions while the outbuildings are believed to date to the 18th century. The Rectory is Grade II Listed (List Entry no. 1382746). The main barn is timber-framed and was converted to residential use in the late 1990s. The site lies within the extent of the Old Rectory's gardens (MWA 8552).
- 3.8 Several 19th-century and early 20th-century maps show the development site to have been occupied by outbuildings since at least 1884, occupying the same footprint as those recently demolished. Dorsington was administratively part of Gloucestershire until 1931, when it was transferred to Warwickshire in a series of boundary adjustments.
- 3.10 Archaeological observation of 44 foundation pad pits excavated at Church Farm, in 2006, revealed that earlier farm buildings had truncated much of the site down to natural clay, and extensive disturbance was visible elsewhere (Greig 2006; EWA 7654).
- 3.11 Archaeological trial trenches excavated in 2013 in advance of a planning application for a new dwelling at Church Farm, uncovered no evidence associated with Romano-British or medieval settlement activity. No significant archaeological remains were revealed (Palmer 2013; EWA 10227).

4 AIMS AND METHODS

- 4.1 The main aim of the work was to record the buildings before the proposed conversion took place, to record any archaeological remains revealed or disturbed by the development, to collate the records in an archaeological archive and present the significant aspects of the archive in a report for dissemination. The secondary aim was to form an understanding of the remains recorded in terms of their character and date, and to place the evidence in its local and regional context. The objective of the work was a programme of observation and recording during ground reduction to development formation levels.
- 4.2 The work undertaken involved the examination of early map evidence as well as records of archaeological remains in the area and local historical journals and other publications.
- 4.3 An experienced archaeologist was made available for each day of ground disturbance when notified by the client in accordance with the WSI. Where potential archaeological deposits were encountered, the supervising archaeologist assessed or recorded these before they were disturbed by the machine.

5 RESULTS

Buildings

- 5.1 The outbuildings were subject to photographic recording in 2017, with black and white photographs of the exterior and interior of the outbuildings. The single-storey buildings were in two parts, with a northern limestone-built structure, weather-boarded on the courtyard side and with a pitched and hipped roof covered in clay tiles. The upper few courses on the eastern wall were of brick and there was a sloping brick buttress supporting the stone walling. There were two stable doors on the west elevation and an unglazed window with a timber grille. The southerly structure was brick built with a sloping corrugated asbestos roof, and appears to be a later addition, possibly a re-working of a pre-existing building in the 20th century. The building had a wooden stable door on the west elevation and a boarded opening on the east elevation. There was also an unglazed window on the west wall; the southern part of the building was covered with ivy and other climbing plants. When the ivy and other plant material were removed from the southern end of the building it was realised that the brick walling was unsound and much fell apart as the ivy was removed. The decision was therefore made to demolish the walls and re-use the limestone in the new building.

Groundworks

- 5.2 The internal footprint had already been reduced by 0.25m as part of the process of demolition and clearance of the site. The concrete that had formed the yard surface in the area of the new area of buildings had partly been broken up and removed. The trenches for the new building were excavated with a 360° excavator fitted with a toothless bucket to a depth of 1.50m from the level of the surrounding ground.

Deposit sequence

- 5.2 Geological natural Lias clay (3) was recorded at a depth of c.0.45m below present ground level on the eastern side of the building and was overlain by 0.15m of grey claim loam subsoil (6), itself overlain by 0.25m of topsoil, mixed with root fragments, bricks and limestone fragments (4). On the western side the natural clay was overlaid by 0.40m of grey clay mixed with large rounded stones (9).

- 5.3 The remains of the limestone footings (2) of the former northern building were visible in the section, to a depth of 0.50m below ground. Further to the south the remains of a brick floor (5) were visible below c.0.10m of demolition rubble, presumably the former floor of the southern, brick-built, outbuilding. Large amounts of tree roots were visible below the level of this floor, suggesting the close proximity of a former ash tree had significantly destabilised the building. A brick wall visible on the south side of the southern trench (10) is likely to have been the footing of the southern wall of the former brick building.
- 5.4 On the western side of the building layer 9 was overlain by a band of topsoil nearest the standing building, but elsewhere directly by modern hardcore (8) for the concrete yard surface (7), the remains of which were broken up and removed the same day as the new footings were excavated.
- 5.5 The only finds recovered were a fragment of black-glazed pottery, probably of 18th-century date, and the base of a stoneware bottle of late 19th or early 20th-century date. These were not retained.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The programme of observation recorded the below-ground remains of the limestone wall of the former northern building, and elements relating to the demolished brick building. The building that the limestone wall was once part of is thought to have been 18th-century in date and a building is certainly shown here on the Ordnance Survey map of 1884. However, the six courses of bricks that surmounted the stone walling appeared to be considerably later in date, probably replacing stone coursing at some point

- 6.2 No evidence of Romano-British or medieval settlement was recorded and no significant finds were recovered.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Mr and Mrs Phillips for commissioning the work.

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APPENDIX

A List of contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thickness (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	Mix of limestone, bricks and humic clay loam		0.40m	Demolition rubble
2	Limestone wall footings	0.50	0.50	Directly onto natural clay
3	Grey-blue/olive clay			Geological natural
4	Brown humic clay loam		0.25	Topsoil on E side of building
5	Brick floor	3.5	0.10	In southern outbuilding
6	Grey clay loam		0.15	Subsoil
7	Concrete		0.12	Yard surface
8	Yellow hardcore		0.12	Make-up
9	Mixed layer of clay and large rounded stones		0.40	?Natural



1: Site prior to foundation trenches being excavated



2: Brick floor 5 in section



3: Trenches under excavation

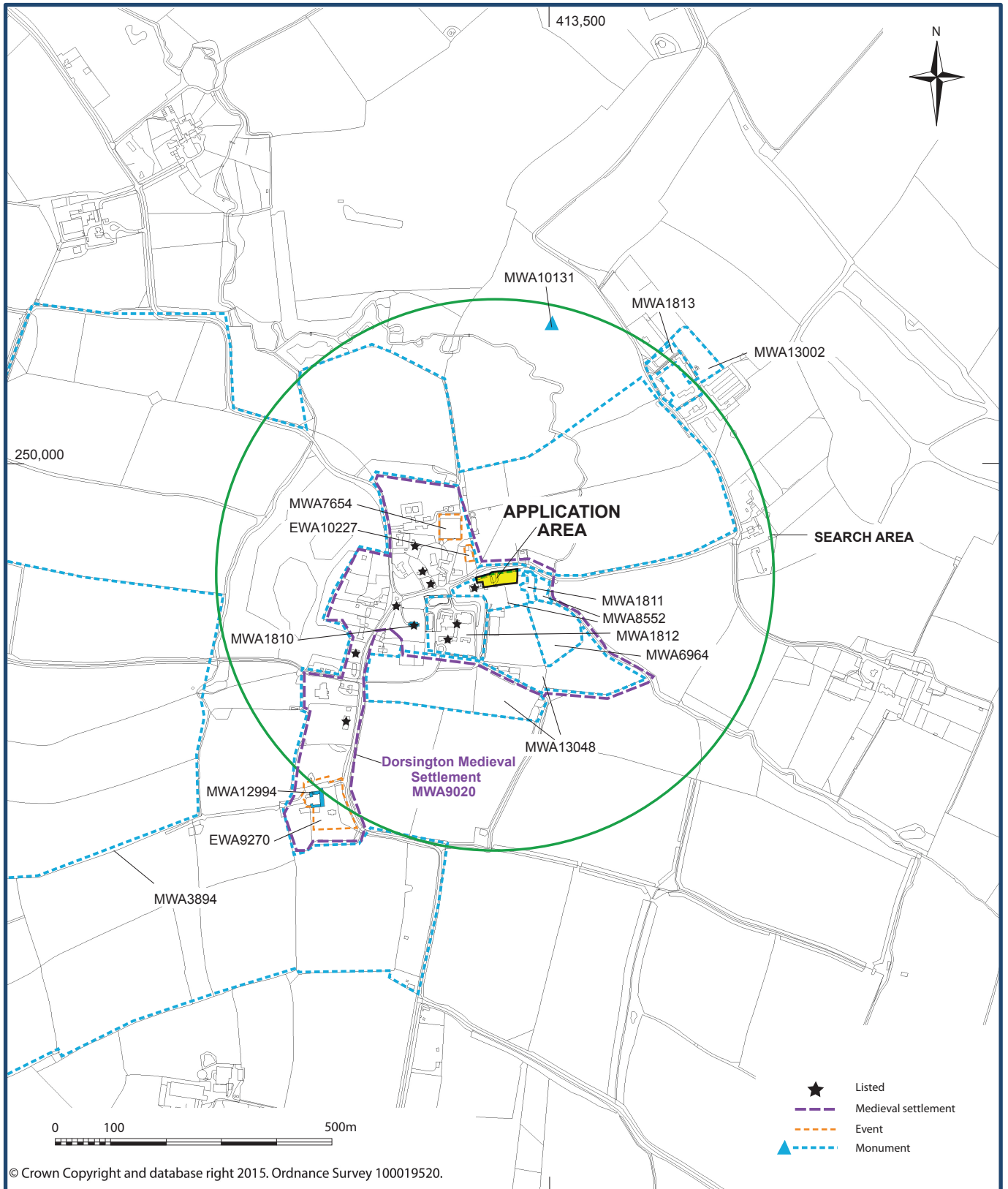


Fig 1: Location of Application Area and Historic Environment Information

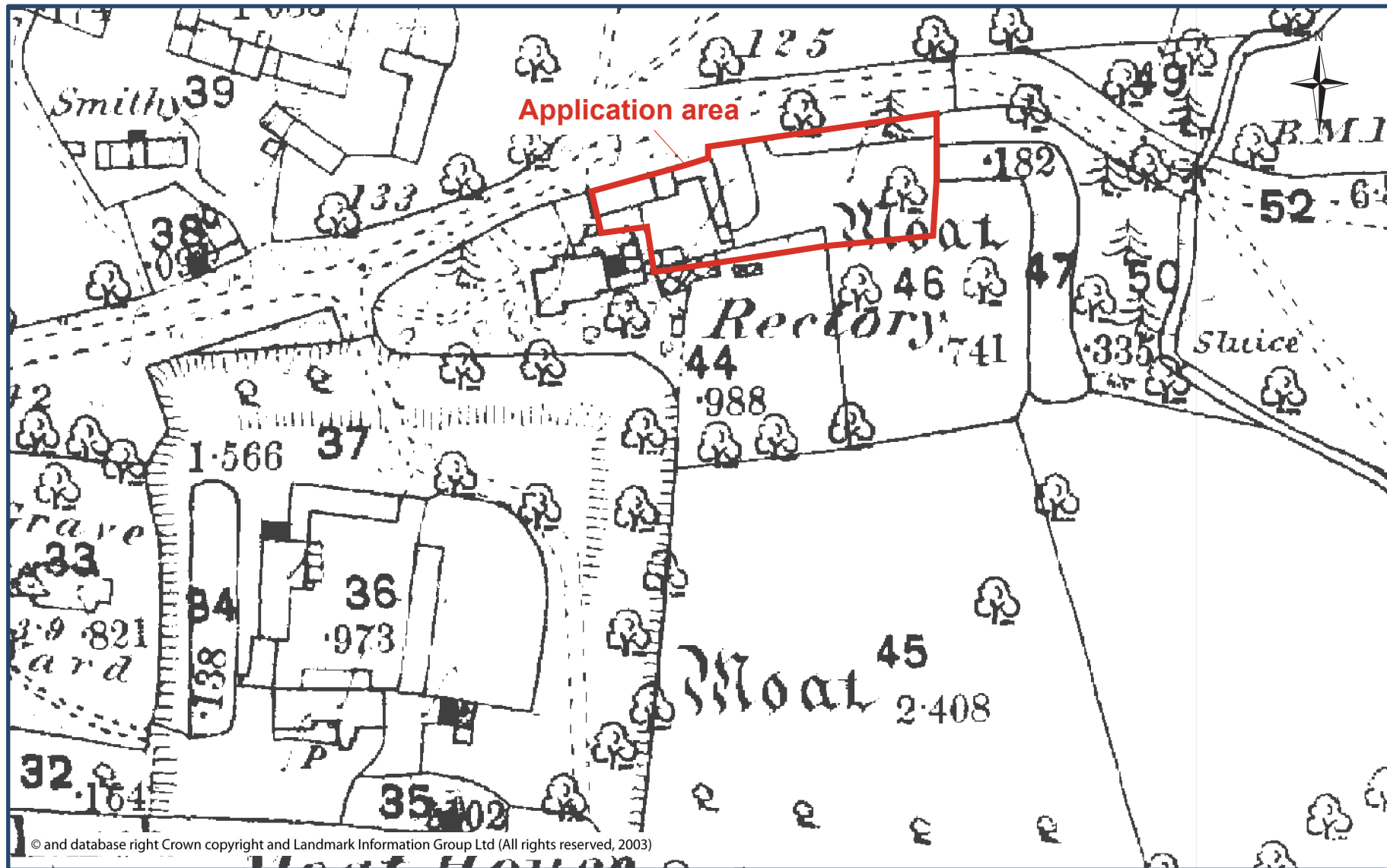


Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884



Fig 3: Location of trenches observed and recorded