

Priory Nurseries Breedon on the Hill Leicestershire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION PHASE 1



EXPERTISE WHERE YOU NEED IT

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1731

MAY 2017



*Working for
Warwickshire*

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SUMMARY

PHASE 1 of an evaluation, consisting of seven 30m long trial trenches, was undertaken on behalf of Cameron Homes, prior to an application for the construction of 25 new houses and upgraded commercial buildings, at Priory Nurseries, Breedon on the Hill, Leicestershire.

No significant archaeological features were revealed in the trenches although some trenches had evidence for medieval or post-medieval agriculture in the form of furrows.

A small assemblage of pottery was recovered which seems likely to have derived from manure scattering.

Although several of the trenches were uncommonly deep, no trace of the ponds, known to exist elsewhere on the site, was found.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Proposals are being developed for the construction of 25 new dwellings and upgraded commercial buildings on land currently occupied by Priory Nurseries, Breedon on the Hill, Leicestershire, DE73 8AT.
- 1.2 A desk-based assessment commissioned from Archaeology Warwickshire in 2016 considered that the impact of the development on potential prehistoric to medieval archaeological remains would be moderate (Goacher 2016).
- 1.3 Leicestershire County Council Senior Planning Archaeologist, Sophie Clarke, in her capacity as adviser to the planning authority, has recommended that a programme of trial trenching be carried out prior to determination of the application.
- 1.4 Archaeology Warwickshire (hereafter AW) were subsequently commissioned to produce a Written Scheme of Investigation for field evaluation. Given that the site is currently occupied and live services cross much of the area to be disturbed by the development (Fig 4), it was agreed to adopt a phased approach to the evaluation. A first phase was designed to sample the least disturbed areas which would provide the Planning Authority with sufficient information to determine the application (PHASE 1). A second phase of at least 500m of trenching can be carried out post-determination (PHASE 2).
- 1.5 Archaeology Warwickshire were commissioned to undertake PHASE 1 and the fieldwork was carried out on the 24th and 25th of April 2017. 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 site is located at Ashby Road, Breedon on the Hill, DE73 8AZ at OS grid reference SK 40241 22926 (Figs 1 and 2). It is on the western edge of the village, which lies around the base of the south side of the hill, on a relatively level plot of land.

- 2.2 The underlying geology is the Taporley Siltstone Formation of siltstone, mudstone and sandstone (BGS 2016).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 A detailed archaeological background is given in the desk-based assessment (Goacher 2016). In summary, the site lies to the south-west of a prominent hilltop which is occupied by a hillfort of possible Bronze Age, and certain Iron Age date with some suggestion that activity continued into the Roman period. The hillfort also contains the parish church which includes elements of a Saxon minster and later Augustinian priory. The hillfort has been significantly truncated by quarrying, mostly during the 20th century. The evaluation site is on the western edge of the medieval and later settlement of Breedon on the Hill.
- 3.2 The site was in agricultural use in the 19th century (Fig 2). Ponds and a ford are depicted on the southern edge along with a small brook. The brook has been culverted to the south-east of the site. It is not clear if the ponds date back to the medieval period.

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. In particular there is potential for the evaluation to shed light on the contemporary landscape of the nearby hill fort (Cooper 2006) and to establish whether the possible fishponds are medieval and have monastic associations.
- 4.3 The objectives will be to locate, record and analyse archaeological materials and deposits and to disseminate the results in an appropriate format. In PHASE 2, it is proposed to target potential waterlogged remains associated with the fishponds and ford in the south of the site.
- 4.4 The PHASE 1 evaluation consisted of the excavation of 210m of trial trench. Seven trenches were excavated in locations agreed with the planning archaeologist, each 30m long by 1.6m wide. The position of Trench 1 was adjusted to avoid a belt of mature trees.
- 4.5 The trenches varied in character according to the part of the site they were excavated in. Trench 1 was excavated parallel to the entrance driveway at the southern part of the site whilst trenches 2-4 were excavated within the current Nursery car-park. Trenches 5-7 were excavated within the north-eastern part of the site.

5 RESULTS

Trench 1

- 5.1 Trench 1 was remarkably deep. Geological natural reddish brown clay with occasional sandstone fragments (102) was exposed at a depth of between 1.75 and 1.8m below the current ground surface. It was overlaid by a layer of brown clayey sand 1.4 - 1.45m deep (101). Overlying all was 0.35m of greyish brown sandy loam topsoil (100). No finds were recovered and there was no evidence to suggest that the trench had exposed a backfilled pond.

Trenches 2, 3, 4

- 5.2 Trenches 2, 3 and 4 revealed plough furrows associated with medieval or post-medieval open field agriculture. Occasional finds were recovered from these features including an abraded sherd of medieval pottery recovered from a furrow fill (410), several post-medieval pottery sherds and a fragment of clay tobacco pipe.

Trenches 5, 6, 7

- 5.3 Trenches 5 and 6 were relatively deep, whilst Trench 7 lay at the bottom of a moderate slope and was less deep. No significant archaeological features were found in any of these trenches although Trench 7 did contain a very modern soakaway (703). A few sherds of medieval and post-medieval pottery were recovered from the topsoil and subsoil in all three trenches, with medieval finds only coming from Trenches 5 and 6.

6 The Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 19 sherds with a total weight of 494g. It was all medieval or later, and was recorded using the conventions of the Leicestershire County type-series (Sawday 1994), as follows

- CC1:** Chilvers Coton 'A' Ware, 1200-1400. 2 sherds, 87g.
CC2: Chilvers Coton 'C' Ware, 1200-1475. 3 sherds, 37g.
EA: Post-medieval Red Earthenware, mid 16th century. 1 sherd, 20g.
EA6: Post-medieval Blackwares, late 17th century +. 3 sherds, 175g.
MB: Midland Blackware, 1550-1750. 1 sherd, 76g.
MP: Midland Purple Ware, 1370-1550. 7 sherds, 87g.
MY: Midland Yellow Ware, 1500-1725. 1 sherd, 9g.
PM: Potter's Marston Ware, 1100-1300. 1 sherd, 3g.

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 contemporary sites in the region. Given that much of the pottery is from topsoil contexts and plough furrows, a lot of the sherds are small and abraded to some degree, although a large, reasonably fresh fragment of the handle and neck of a glazed jug in CC1 was noted in context 601. Most of the assemblage consisted of bodysherds, with the medieval material a typical mixture of pieces of unglazed jars and glazed jugs.

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

Cntxt	PM		CC1		CC2		MP		MY		MB		EA		EA6		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
204							1	14									L14thC
206							1	7	1	9							M16thC
210													1	20			M16thC
410			1	1			1	3									L14thC
500					1	17					1	76			1	64	U/S
600					1	12	4	63							2	111	U/S
601			1	86	1	8											14thC
700	1	3															12thC
Total	1	3	2	87	3	37	7	87	1	9	1	76	1	20	3	175	

Bibliography

Sawday, D, 1994 The post-Roman pottery in P Clay and R Pollard *Iron Age and Roman Occupation in the West Bridge Area, Leicester. Excavations 1962-71* Leics. Museums

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 PHASE 1 of the evaluation has been able to establish that much of the proposed development site does not contain significant archaeological deposits. There was evidence for medieval and/or post-medieval open field agriculture in Trenches 2, 3 and 4.

- 7.2 The small amount of medieval and post-medieval pottery found is likely to be related to manure scattering. No evidence for archaeological features associated with medieval settlement was found within the evaluation trenches.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Philip Davey of Cameron Homes for commissioning the work and Paul Blinkhorn for producing the pottery report.

REFERENCES

BGS 2016 British Geological Survey Viewer

<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> (accessed April 2016)

Goacher, H, 2016 *Ashby Road, Breedon on the Hill, Leicestershire: Archaeological Desk-based Assessment*, Archaeology Warwickshire Report 1640

Ordnance Survey 1885 *First Edition 6 inch IX.SE*



1: Trench 1, looking south-east



2: Trench 2, looking north



3: Trench 3, looking north-east



4: Trench 4, looking north-east



5: Trench 5, looking north-east



6: Trench 6, looking north-west



7: Trench 7, looking south-west



8: Furrow 403, looking north-west



9: Furrow 405, looking north-west



10: Furrow 409, looking north-west

APPENDICES

A List of contexts

Trench	Context	Description	Depth (m)	Comment
1	100	Greyish brown sandy loam	0.35	Topsoil
1	101	Brown clayey sand	1.40-1.45	
1	102	Reddish brown clay with occasional sandstone frags.		Geological natural
2	200	Pink hardcore	0.10	Car-park surface
2	201	Greyish brown sandy loam		Buried topsoil
2	202	Reddish brown clay and sandstone fragments		Geological natural
2	203	Linear feature, 0.90m wide		Furrow, unexcavated
2	204	Brown silty sand		Furrow fill (of 203)
2	205	Linear feature, 1.40m wide		Furrow, unexcavated
2	206	Brown silty sand		Furrow fill (of 205)
2	207	Linear feature, 1.60m wide		Furrow, unexcavated
2	208	Brown silty sand		Furrow fill (of 207)
2	209	Linear feature, 0.88m wide		Furrow, unexcavated
2	210	Brown silty sand		Furrow fill (of 209)
3	300	Pink hardcore	0.08-.010	Car-park surface
3	301	Greyish brown sandy loam	0.14-0.17	Buried topsoil
3	302	Reddish brown clay		Geological natural
3	303	Linear feature, 1.55m wide		Furrow, unexcavated
3	304	Brown silty sand		Furrow fill (of 303)
3	305	Linear feature, 1.15m wide		Furrow, unexcavated
3	306	Brown silty sand		Furrow fill (of 305)
3	307	Linear feature, 0.85m wide		Furrow, unexcavated
3	308	Brown silty sand		Furrow fill (of 307)
3	309	Linear feature, 1.40m wide		Furrow, unexcavated
3	310	Brown silty sand		Furrow fill (of 309)

4	400	Pink hardcore	0.10	Car park surface
4	401	Greyish brown sandy loam	0.20-0.30	
4	402	Reddish brown clay and reddish brown clayey sand		Geological natural
4	403	Linear feature with gently sloping sides and a rounded base, 0.58m wide	0.09	Furrow
4	404	Brown silty sand	0.09	Furrow fill (of 404)
4	405	Linear feature with gently sloping sides and a flattish base, 0.68m wide.	0.05	Furrow
4	406	Brown silty sand	0.05	Furrow fill (of 405)
4	407	Linear feature with relatively gently sloping sides and an uneven base, 1.60m wide.	0.09m	Furrow
4	408	Brown silty sand	0.09	Furrow fill (of 407)
4	409	Linear feature with gently sloping sides and a flattish base, 1.25m wide.	0.06m	Furrow
4	410	Brown silty sand	0.06m	Furrow fill (409)
4	411	Linear furrow, 1.10m wide		Furrow, unexcavated
4	412	Brown silty sand		Furrow fill (of 411)
4	413	Narrow linear feature		Pipe trench, unexcavated
4	414	Mixed greyish brown sandy loam and reddish brown clay		Pipe trench fill (of 413)
5	500	Greyish brown sandy loam	0.30-0.32	Topsoil
5	501	Brown clayey sand	0.68-0.92	Subsoil
5	502	Reddish brown clay		Geological natural
6	600	Greyish brown sandy loam	0.36	Topsoil
6	601	Brown clayey sand	0.43-0.50	Subsoil
6	602	Dark reddish brown clay with very occasional sandstone frags.		Geological natural

7	700		0.30-0.36	Topsoil
7	701		0.30-0.43	Subsoil
7	702	Dark reddish brown and reddish brown clay		Geological natural
7	703	Soakaway		Modern feature
7	704	Dark greyish brown sandy loam with rubber pipes and building debris		Fill of 703, late 20th century

B List of Finds

Context	Type	Number	Comments
204	Pottery	1	
206	Pottery	2	
210	Pottery	1	
404	Tile	2	Small fragments
410	Pottery	2	
410	Clay pipe	1	Stem
		1	
500	Pottery	3	
600	Pottery	7	
601	Pottery	2	
601	Stone	1	Roof tile
700	Pottery	1	

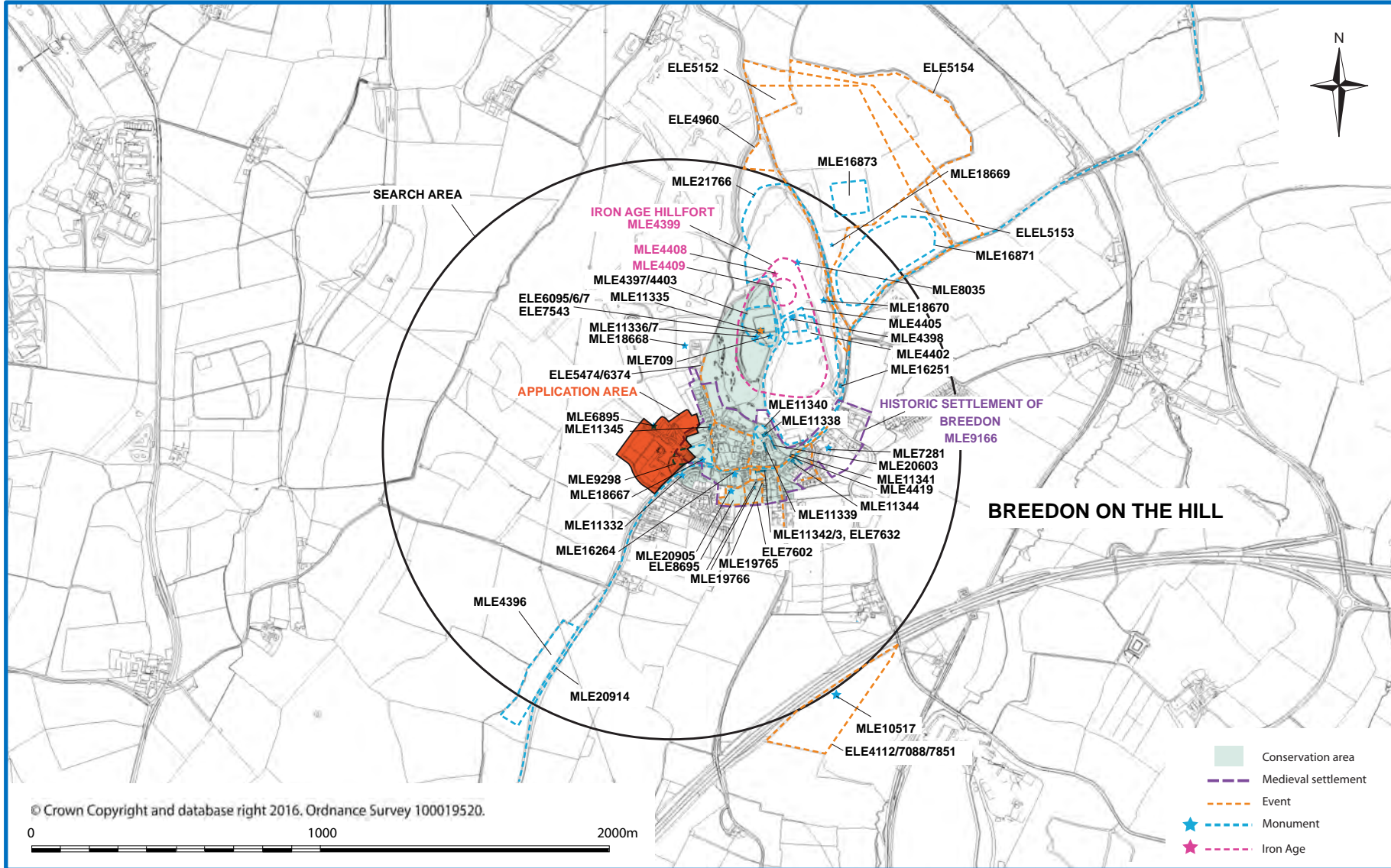


Fig 1: Location of application area and Historic Environment information

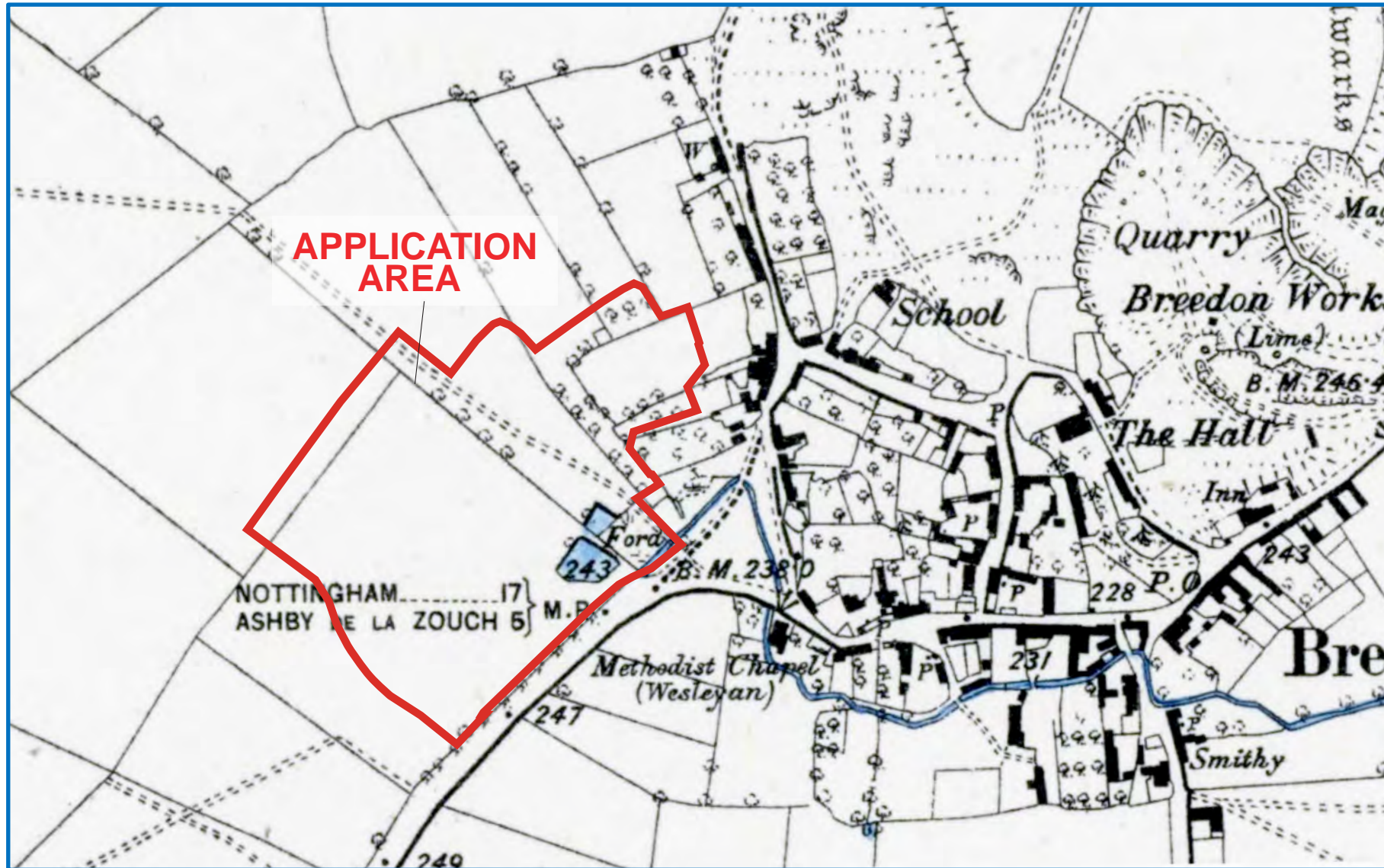


Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885

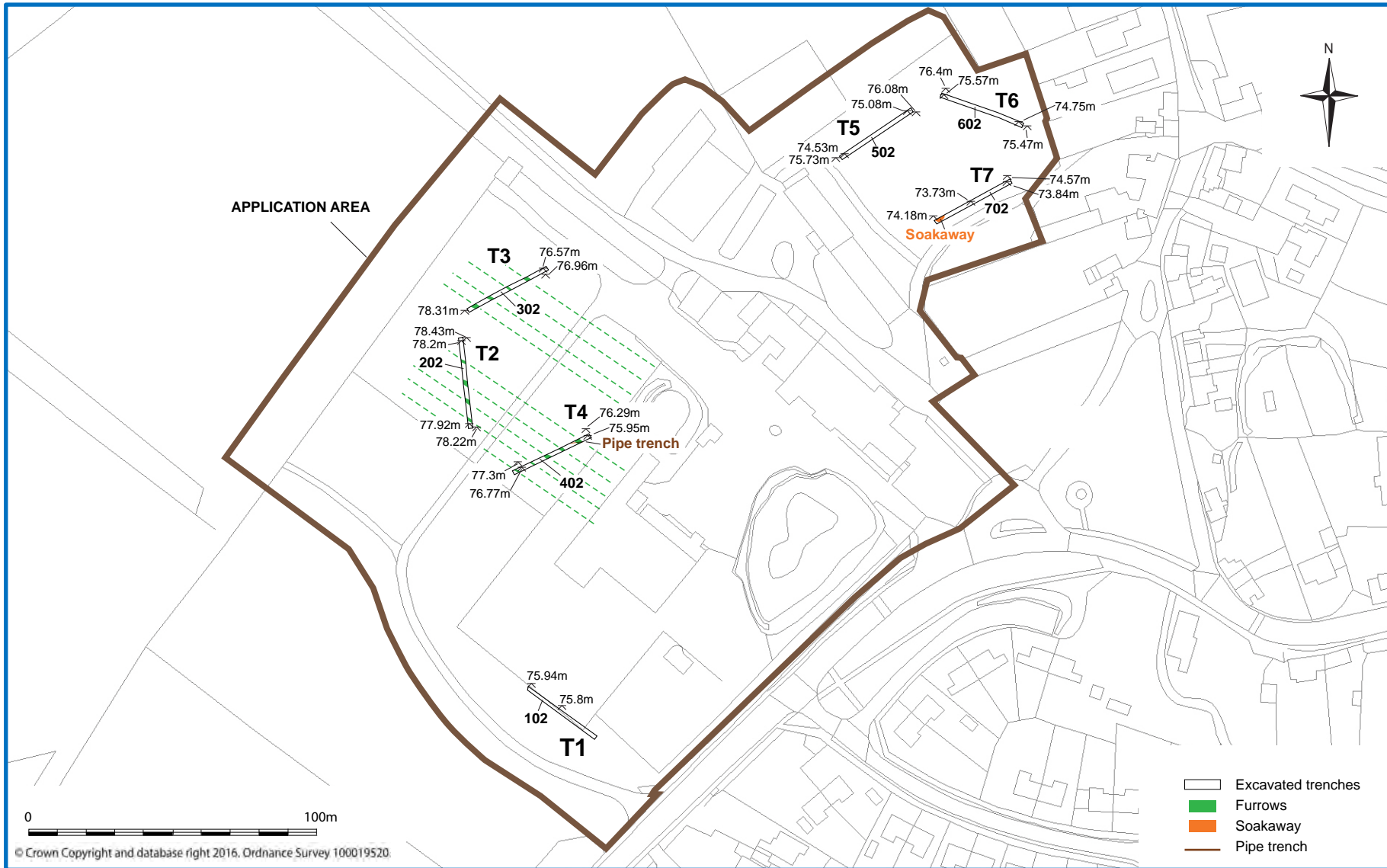


Fig 3: Location of excavated trenches (Phase 1)

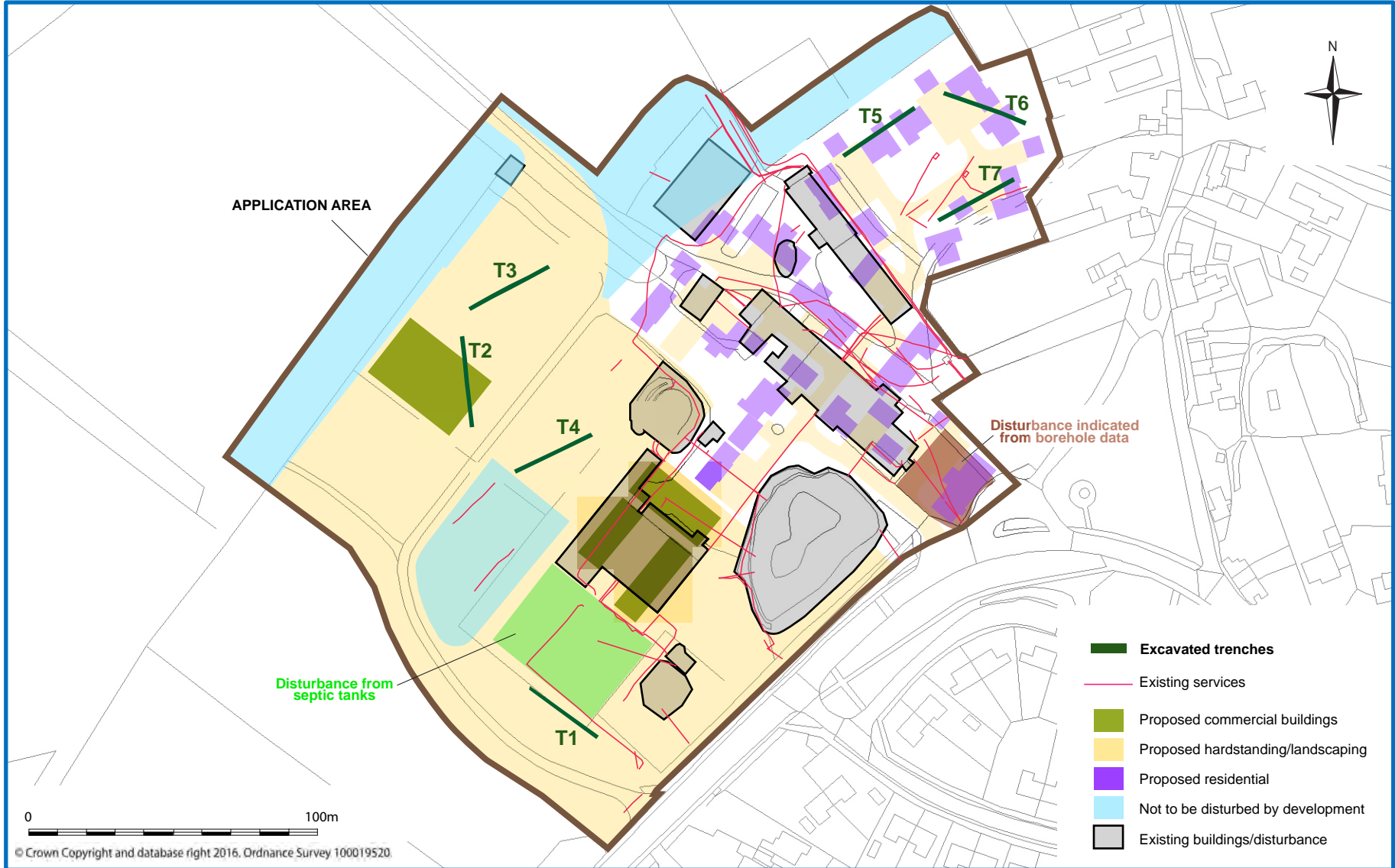


Fig 4: Location of development and excavated trenches (Phase 1)

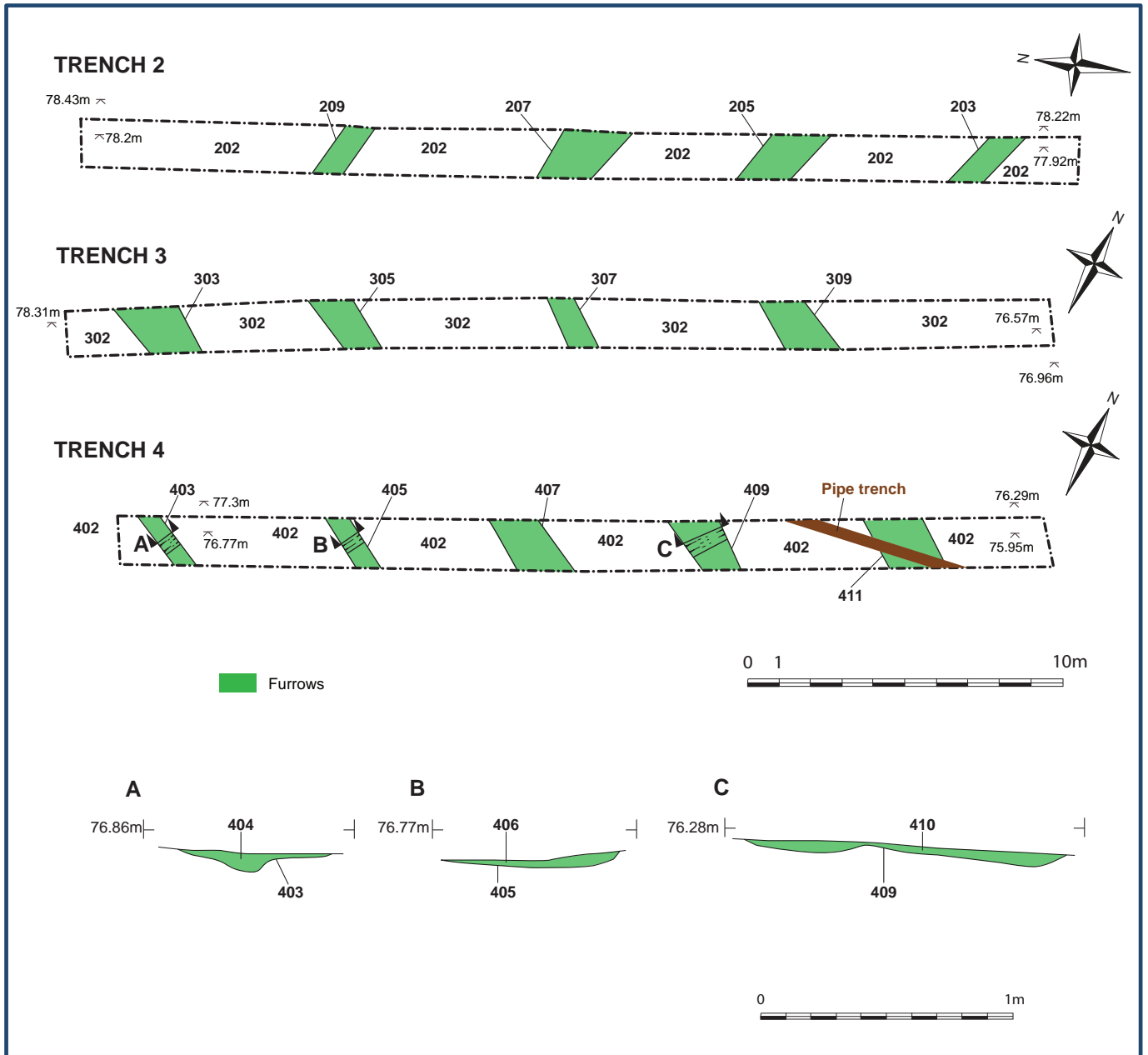


Fig 5: Trench detail and relevant sections