



**ARCHAEOLOGY
WARWICKSHIRE**

A MIDDLE TO LATE IRON AGE DITCH OF IMPORTANCE

**Archaeological investigations at 68 Tiddington
Road, Stratford-upon-Avon Warwickshire**

Archaeology Warwickshire
Report No 2252
May 2022



**Warwickshire
County Council**

*Working for
Warwickshire*

A middle to late Iron Age ditch of importance

Archaeological investigations at 68 Tiddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire
Date: June 2022

Commissioned by:	Kimpton Developments LLP
Site Code:	ST21
Planning Reference:	21/04072/FUL
Planning Authority:	Stratford-on-Avon District Council
National Grid Reference:	SP 21205 55207
Project Manager:	Nigel Page MCIfA
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SUMMARY

Archaeological fieldwork was carried out ahead of an extension to the rear and side of no 68 Tiddington Road by Kimpton Developments, on behalf of Mr & Mrs Ingham.

An archaeological evaluation had revealed part of a large ditch thought likely to be associated with the Roman settlement at Tiddington that would be disturbed by the proposals. Consequently to mitigate against the impact of the proposed disturbance, a second phase of work was designed to expose the full width and depth of the ditch and recover material which might further characterise the feature and its place in the development of the settlement.

The ditch was revealed to be over 3m wide and 2m deep extending under the extant house towards the River Avon. Pottery recovered from the ditch places its construction and use in the 2nd to 4th centuries BC, and very likely completely infilled before the development of the Roman town.

The ditch could form part of an arm of a substantial ditched enclosure, similar examples are known along the major river valleys in this period and pits of this date were recorded only 93m to the north at 69 Tiddington Road. However, it could also belong to a class of landscape boundaries used to define estates or land units in the increasingly divided landscape of the late 1st millennium BC and as such represent the first indication of formal land division in the area. The ditch contained pottery from the Malverns as well as more local wares similar to the regionally important assemblage found in the exceptional and regionally important intercutting pit group at 79 Tiddington Road just, 210m to the north-east.

In any event the ditch is clearly a significant find that will impact on any new developments in the area where it or its associated features will be affected.

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Stratford-on-Avon District Council for rear and side extensions to 68 Tiddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire (Planning Reference: 21/04072/FUL). The development site lies within an area of archaeological potential as established through an archaeological assessment (Bradbury 2021).
- 1.2 A condition of the planning permission required the applicant to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work. An archaeological evaluation was carried out, which revealed a large, possibly Iron Age, ditch that could not be fully characterised within the confines of the evaluation trench (Morgan 2022). Further archaeological investigation was therefore required to better understand how the ditch and any other associated features related to the development of the settlement.
- 1.3 Archaeology Warwickshire were commissioned to carry out the excavation in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Morgan 2022). The fieldwork was carried out on the 26th April 2022 and this report presents the results of that work.
- 1.4 The project archive consisting of 5 context sheets, 2 drawing sheets, 16 digital photographs, and a small assemblage of animal bone and pottery will be deposited, along with the project archive from the archaeological evaluation, with Warwickshire Museum Service under Site Code ST21 with digital data deposited with the Archaeological Data Service (ADS).
- 1.5 The work was carried out in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Excavation* (CIfA 2014).

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2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The site is located on the south-east side of Tiddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire and is centred on National Grid Reference SP 21205 55207 (Fig 1). The site itself comprises the rear garden of No 68 (Photo 1) bounded to the north-west by Tiddington Road, to the south-west and north-east by adjacent residential properties and to the south-east by the car park for the Stratford-upon-Avon Golf Club. The site lies at height of around 41.1m above Ordnance Datum with the River Avon some 175m to the north-west.

- 2.2 The British Geological Survey (BGS, 2022) records the site as underlain by mudstone of the Mercia Mudstone group, a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 201 – 252 million years ago in the Triassic Period. Superficial deposits of Wasperton sand and gravel are also present, which were formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period.

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3 BASELINE ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA

- 3.1 The baseline archaeological data was detailed in the archaeological assessment (Bradbury, 2021) and the archaeological evaluation report (Morgan, 2022). Only the relevant aspects are reiterated below.
- 3.2 Around 320m to the north-east of the site is the Scheduled Monument, Tiddington Roman Settlement (National Heritage List for England no. 1003741) which is designated in two separate areas either side of Tiddington Road and comprises the buried remains (including structures, layers and deposits) of the Roman town.
- Prehistoric**
- 3.3 The Avon Valley was undoubtedly an important feature in the prehistoric landscape, providing a route-way and line of communication that by the end of the Neolithic period (c.2200 BC) was a focus for ceremonial monument building and burial. The valley remained important in the earlier Bronze Age (c.2200 BC – 1500 BC), with some of the monument complexes remaining a focus for burial, whilst burial mounds were created on the valley slopes. There is still no evidence for settlement in the valley before the 1st millennium BC, with a generally low incidence of flint tool finds (Barfield unpublished), even when areas are concertedly field walked (Jones & Palmer 1998).
- 3.4 There is evidence, albeit circumstantial and in the form of undated cropmarks, to suppose that the site lay within a well-used Neolithic and Bronze Age landscape. Concentrations of cropmark ring ditches occur on the west side of Stratford and the south-east side of Tiddington village, of which one adjacent to the Home Guard Club has recently been excavated, although the results are not yet available (Busby & Holt 2016).
- 3.5 It has been widely assumed that permanent, farming settlement in this part of the valley is likely to have originated in the later Bronze Age

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(c.1000 BC). Pit alignment cropmarks to the east of Tiddington seem to suggest the development of boundaries similar to examples investigated elsewhere that have been interpreted as defining land-units or estates such as at Salford Priors (Palmer 2000), Church Lawford (Palmer 2007), and nearby across the river at Hampton Lucy (Palmer 2010).

- 3.6 At Tiddington the earliest reasonably well-dated evidence to date, subject to the results of the 2016 excavations east of the Home Guard site, came from the NFU site which yielded two distinct pit groups of mid-Iron Age date (Booth 1996) which were interpreted as evidence for distinct farmsteads (Palmer 1982). Given the absence of evidence for any other function this was a reasonable conclusion which has been repeated for similar, subsequent work along the road (Palmer & Jones 2008, Palmer 2010a). A concentration of Iron Age pottery from an excavation at 102 Tiddington Road in 1937, within the cemetery excavated at 77 Tiddington Road and in the former Loxley Lane gravel pit could also be from pit groups. The absence of evidence for buildings or enclosures on these sites is curious and cannot reasonably be explained by later truncation when Roman features subject to similar levels of denudation survive so well. Four 'grain storage' pits were also reported from the excavations at New Place, whilst a large Iron Age 'burial urn' is reported from the Tiddington Road and pottery is provenanced to the Loxley Lane gravel pit at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (Mitchell 2012), although it is not certain if these have been correctly dated.

Roman period (AD43-410)

- 3.7 The importance of the Tiddington Road area began to emerge in the 18th century when labourers collected Roman coins in the fields to the south. Tiddington has been synonymous with a Roman settlement since excavations at the golf course in the 1920s and 30s, which recorded significant stone buildings and burials amongst other features. Excavations in the early 1980's at the unpublished NFU and Reading Court sites

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(Palmer 1982) now lie within the area of the Scheduled Monument (1003741), which is listed as a Roman Settlement but described in the listing as a 'Roman Small Town'. The extent of the settlement was hypothesised in the early 1980s on the assumption that the Tiddington Road followed the pre-Roman route along the river's edge and that the Roman settlement developed either side it. A substantial enclosure ditch excavated at the NFU was posited as the easternmost corner, and the supposed Roman cemetery excavated at 77 Tiddington Road the westernmost extent (Palmer 1982).

- 3.8 More recently a watching brief was undertaken in 2001 at the Stratford Golf Club, directly to the south of the site (EWA6941). No archaeological remains were recorded, but this may have been due to the shallow nature of the excavations. Watching briefs were also carried out at 74 Tiddington Road in 2011, c.30m to the north-east (EWA9891), where an undated gully was recorded and was suggested to comprise part of a Roman field system; and at 62 Tiddington Road, c.85m to the south-west (EWA9427), where no archaeological finds or features were identified.

Cartographic Sources

- 3.9 The site is depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1886 (Fig 2) as occupying the north-eastern part of a field on the south side of Tiddington Road. No structures or features are shown within the bounds of the field. There is no change on the Ordnance Survey maps dated to 1905 or 1915, although a gravel pit is depicted to the south-west in the same field.
- 3.10 Most of the development along Tiddington Road took place from the 1920s and 30s. By the date of the 1946 Ordnance Survey map No. 68, an L-shaped building, had been constructed with a probable detached garage to its south-west. By 1966 the garage had been joined to the house. There has been little change since this date.

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4 AIMS AND METHODS

- 4.1 The main aim of the work was to record any significant archaeological deposits revealed by the development, to collate the fieldwork records into an archaeological archive and present the results of the fieldwork for dissemination.
- 4.2 This report will describe and discuss the extent, character and dates of all archaeological remains exposed and place the results in their local and regional contexts.
- 4.3 The footprint for the extension was excavated by a machine using a toothless bucket under direct archaeological supervision. The area was 4.50m wide by 11.30m in length and excavated to a depth of 0.53m below the modern ground surface. The exposed ditch was then excavated to reveal its full profile.
- 4.4 A modern service was uncovered in the eastern corner of the excavated area, preventing further excavation.

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5 RESULTS

5.1 Geological natural brownish red clay and gravel (302) was recorded 0.53m below the existing ground level. It was cut by one significant feature.

The ditch (Fig 3: Photo 2)

5.2 The NW / SE aligned ditch, previously recorded in evaluation Trench 1 (105), crossed the centre of the excavated area (303; Photos 1 & 2). Excavation revealed it to have steep sloping sides 2.76m wide and a rounded base 1.39m deep.

5.3 The ditch had four fills: A primary fill of reddish-brown silty gravel (304) that formed from material weathering out from the sides of the ditch, contained a cattle horn core. The overlying deposit over 1m deep was dark brown sandy clayey silt (306) which contained bones from cattle, horse and pigs (Appendix B). This layer overlapped a lens of brown sandy clay (305) which may have derived from a bank on the southern side of the ditch. A depression at the top of the ditch was filled with dark reddish brown sandy clay (307) which yielded a sherd of probably Middle Iron Age Malvernian ware pottery.

Environmental evidence *Bekky Hillman ACIfA*

5.4 Bulk samples were recovered from the primary fill (304) and the secondary fill (106) with the intention of establishing if there was any evidence for the contemporary environment or agricultural practices.

5.5 The lower fill contained a small amount of charcoal and uncharred seeds and the secondary fill (106) contained charcoal, uncharred weed seeds, cereal grains and a small amount of chaff.

5.6 The occurrence of uncharred seeds in both fills suggest that the feature was subject to high levels of contamination as uncharred seeds should not survive in the slightly acidic soil unless preserved in water. The occurrence

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of charred crop processing waste in the secondary fill is therefore not a reliable indicator of what was happening when the ditch was in use.

Pottery *Dr Alexander Portch ACIfA*

- 5.7 Five sherds weighing 36g were examined. All were undecorated body sherds and likely date from the Middle to Late Iron Age (c.4th Century BC – 1st Century AD).
- 5.8 Each sherd was weighed and examined under a x20 light microscope. Fabrics were cross-referenced with the recently developed fabric reference collection for the substantial Iron Age pottery assemblage from excavations at No. 79 Tiddington Road (Site Code: TR19; Morris and Portch forthcoming). All recording was conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group (PCRG 2010).
- 5.9 All sherds were recovered from the uppermost fills of ditch 105/303; four from the evaluation phase (106) and one from cleaning the feature prior to excavation (307).
- 5.10 While two sherds could feasibly derive from the same vessel, both with thicknesses of 3 – 5mm, the other three each represent different pots.
- 5.11 Despite their small size (min: 20mm across; max: 48mm) the sherds are in generally good condition with little abrasion. Breaks are mostly fine or slightly hackly reflecting the sandy character of the fabrics.

Fabrics

- 5.12 At least two, possibly three, fabrics are represented: -
Q1 – Medium-grained sandy fabric
QFe1 – Sandy fabric with significant iron oxides
MalvA – Malvernian igneous- and metamorphic-tempered fabric (Group A)
(Peacock 1968, 415 – 421)

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- 5.13 The single sherd from the mitigation phase corresponds approximately with TR19 fabric Q1, although the presence of rare iron oxides may equate it with fabric QFe1 (Morris and Portch forthcoming). Such sandy fabrics were the most common at No. 79 and were typical of Middle Iron Age vessels. The fabric may also be equivalent to Worcestershire fabric 5.1 which originates in the Middle Iron Age but continues in use into the 1st Century AD (<https://www.worcestershireceramics.org/fabrics/143>).
- 5.14 One sherd from the evaluation is a clear example of Peacock's (1968) Handmade Malvernian Group A; igneous and metamorphic tempered pottery manufactured in the Malvern Hills of Worcestershire/Herefordshire from the Middle Iron Age into the early Roman period (Peacock 1967; Peacock 1968). The three other, smaller sherds also closely resemble Malvernian A but with slightly fewer inclusions than the clearest example.
- 5.15 All four sherds from the evaluation exhibit some light burnishing of principally the external surfaces, although three are burnished both externally and internally with the clear example of Malvernian A being particularly strongly burnished. The sherd recovered during the mitigation phase is not burnished but does show signs of external smoothing while up to four discontinuous incised lines on the internal surface may be a product of wiping but do not represent decoration.

Conclusion

- 5.16 The assemblage is modest but nonetheless significant, providing a source of dating evidence that places the ditch in the Middle to Late Iron Age. One sherd is composed of a sandy fabric closely comparable to that from pits of Middle Iron Age date at No. 79. It is likely a product of local manufacture with clay sourced from within a 10km radius (Morris and Portch forthcoming). In contrast the four smaller sherds from the evaluation appear to be examples of Handmade Malvernian A, igneous and metamorphic tempered pottery produced up to 50km to the west of

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Tiddington Road in the Malvern Hills of Worcestershire and Herefordshire
(Peacock 1967; Peacock 1968;
<https://www.worcestershireceramics.org/fabrics/62>).

5.17 Often well-made with finely executed rims and stamped decoration, Group A fabrics are a more frequent occurrence east of the Malverns in contrast to Group B1 and C (Peacock 1968). However, only Group B1 was represented at No. 79 where it served to reinforce the site's long-distance connections and likely function as an important focus of trade and communication as well as less mundane communal activities. While both Groups were produced from the Middle Iron Age into the Roman period, the complete absence of other Roman wares in the ditch at No. 68, and the relatively low quantity of pottery overall from what is quite a substantial feature, strongly supports a pre-Roman date for the ditch's backfilling and probable construction. At other sites east of the Malverns, including Gilder's Paddock, Bishops Cleeve, Gloucestershire (Parry 1999), Malvernian A and B1 fabrics have also been found together in Middle Iron Age contexts. As such, in all likelihood the ditch at No. 68 was in use contemporaneously with at least some of the activity at No. 79.

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6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The archaeological investigations at 68 Tiddington Road have identified a significant and previously unsuspected feature in the Middle to Late Iron Age landscape (c.400-200 BC). The Iron Age ditch aligns broadly NW/SE and continues under the present structure and towards Stratford upon Avon golf course.
- 6.2 It is a substantial ditch, probably originally dug at least 3m wide and 2m deep with the upcast possibly dumped on its southern side to form a linear bank. Its dimensions make it comparable to boundary and enclosure ditches, although locally there are few examples of ditches of this size and this date that are not proven to be rectangular enclosures (Palmer 2017).
- 6.2 This is the first evidence for an Iron Age ditch in this part of the valley despite the evidence for pit groups being considerable (Palmer and Portch forthcoming) including two Iron Age pits c.93m north from the site at 69 Tiddington Road (Palmer, 2010a). If ditch 303 continues to the north-west towards the River Avon, it could be as close as 50m south-west of the two Iron Age pits, quite within the possible extent of a large enclosure.
- 6.3 At 79 Tiddington Road c.210m to the north-east, a complex of intercutting pits containing human and animal remains, possible feasting detritus and a significant assemblage of pottery demonstrated that the site was an important meeting place by the river in the mid-late Iron Age (Palmer and Portch forthcoming). It is unlikely that this group would be within an enclosure formed by ditch 305, but it could form a boundary to a land unit. Much like pit alignments, estate boundaries in the Iron Age will often connect at right angles with rivers (Hingley 1989).
- 6.4 Several undated features have been recorded in the area including a NE/SW aligned gully at 74 Tiddington Road, c.30m to the north-east, which could extend through the very south-east of the garden for this property. The

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absence of Roman pottery in this feature increases the likelihood that it was prehistoric.

- 6.5 The ditch at 68 Tiddington Road is therefore an extremely important adjunct to the dataset for the area and may well represent a major landscape division associated with an important meeting place, or the first evidence for a ditched enclosure in this part of the Avon valley.
- 6.6 Any new development in this area runs the risk of disturbing regionally important remains associated with this feature.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Landmark 2003b *Second Edition Ordnance Survey map, 1905, 1:2500*

Landmark 2003c *Ordnance Survey map, 1915, 1:2500*

Landmark 2003d *Ordnance Survey map, 1946, 1:2500*

Landmark 2003e *Ordnance Survey map, 1966, 1:2500*

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PHOTOGRAPHS



1: The site prior to digging



2: South-east facing section of ditch 303

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APPENDICES

A List of contexts

Context	Description	Width (m)	Thickness (m)	Comment
300	Dark brown humic loam		0.39	Topsoil
301	Reddish brown silty clay		0.14	Former ploughsoil
302	Brownish red clay and gravels			Geological natural
303	Linear ditch with moderately steep sides and rounded base. NW-SE aligned	2.76	1.39	Cut of ditch
304	Reddish brown silty gravel	0.98	0.53	Primary fill of ditch 303
305	Slightly firm reddish brown sandy clay, with moderate rate of small pebbles	1.04	0.22	Tertiary fill of ditch 303
306	Dark brown sandy clayey silt with moderately occurring small stone inclusions	2.76	1.06	Secondary fill of ditch 303
307	Dark reddish brown sandy clay, with small to medium stones including river rolled flint	2.01	0.30	Quaternary fill of ditch 303
308	Modern brick soakaway		Unexcavated	Also found in trench 2

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B List of Finds

<i>Context</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Quantity/ Weight (g)</i>	<i>Date/Comments</i>
304	Animal Bone	1/40	Horn Core, possibly cattle
306	Animal Bone	45/690	2 x Cattle left mandible fragments, one with partially erupted molar teeth 2 x Cattle thoracic vertebrae fragments, both with one unfused vertebral body 1 x Cattle sacrum fragment 1 x Possible horse rib fragment, proximal end 1 x Possible cattle vertebrae body fragment 1 x Possible cattle axis vertebrae fragment 2 x Large mammal sacrum fragments 2 x Mammal vertebrae fragments 3 x Large mammal long bone fragments 21 x Unidentified rib fragments 9 x Unidentified fragments
307	Pottery	1/20	1 x Middle Iron Age sherd

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C Oasis Form

Summary for archaeol27-507429

OASIS ID (UID)	archaeol27-507429
Project Name	A middle to Late Iron Age ditch of importance; Archaeological investigations at 68 Tiddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon Warwickshire
Sitename	68 Tiddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire
Activity type	Excavation
Project Identifier(s)	ST21 68 Tiddington Road mitigation
Planning Id	21/04072/FUL
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Archaeology Warwickshire
Project Dates	26-Apr-2022 - 26-Apr-2022
Location	68 Tiddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire NGR : SP 21205 55207 LL : 52.194696173267, -1.6911956612216 12 Fig : 421205,255207
Administrative Areas	Country : England County : Warwickshire District : Stratford-on-Avon Parish : Stratford-upon-Avon
Project Methodology	<p>An archaeological evaluation had revealed part of a large ditch thought likely to be associated with the Roman settlement at Tiddington that would be disturbed by the proposals. Consequently to mitigate against the impact of the proposed disturbance, a second phase of work was designed to expose the full width and depth of the ditch and recover material which might further characterise the feature and its place in the development of the settlement.</p> <p>The work was carried out in accordance with the Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Excavation (ClfA 2014).</p>
Project Results	<p>The archaeological investigations at 68 Tiddington Road have identified a significant and previously unsuspected feature in the Middle to Late Iron Age landscape (c.400-200 BC). The Iron Age ditch aligns broadly NW/SE and continues under the present structure and towards Stratford upon Avon golf course.</p> <p>This is the first evidence for an Iron Age ditch in this part of the valley despite the evidence for pit groups being considerable (Palmer and Portch forthcoming) including two Iron Age pits c.93m north from the site at 69 Tiddington Road (Palmer, 2010a). If ditch 303 continues to the north-west towards the River Avon, it could be as close as 50m south-west of the two Iron Age pits, quite within the possible extent of a large enclosure.</p> <p>The ditch at 68 Tiddington Road is therefore an extremely important adjunct to the dataset for the area and may well represent a major landscape division associated with an important meeting place, or the first evidence for a ditched enclosure in this part of the Avon valley.</p>
Keywords	Ditch - MIDDLE IRON AGE - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Sherd - MIDDLE IRON AGE - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus Animal Remains - IRON AGE - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus
Funder	

HER	Warwickshire HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	S C, Palmer, A, Portch, Hannah, Child
HER Identifiers	
Archives	Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive; Physical Archive, Documentary Archive - to be deposited with Warwickshire Museum;

A middle to late Iron Age ditch of importance

Archaeological investigations at 68 Tiddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon

June 2022

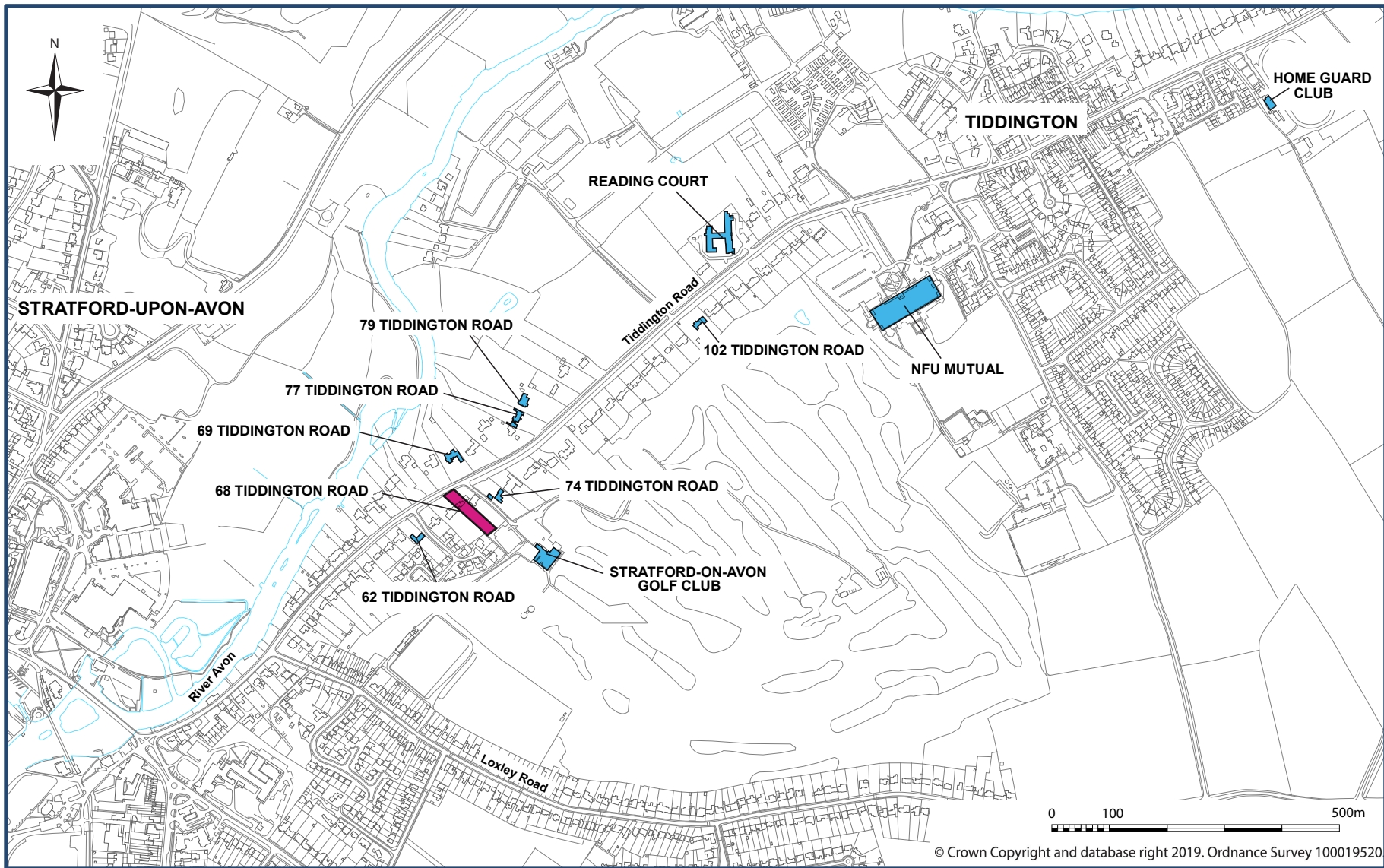


Fig 1: Location of application area and selected addresses from the report

A middle to late Iron Age ditch of importance

Archaeological investigations at 68 Tiddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon

June 2022

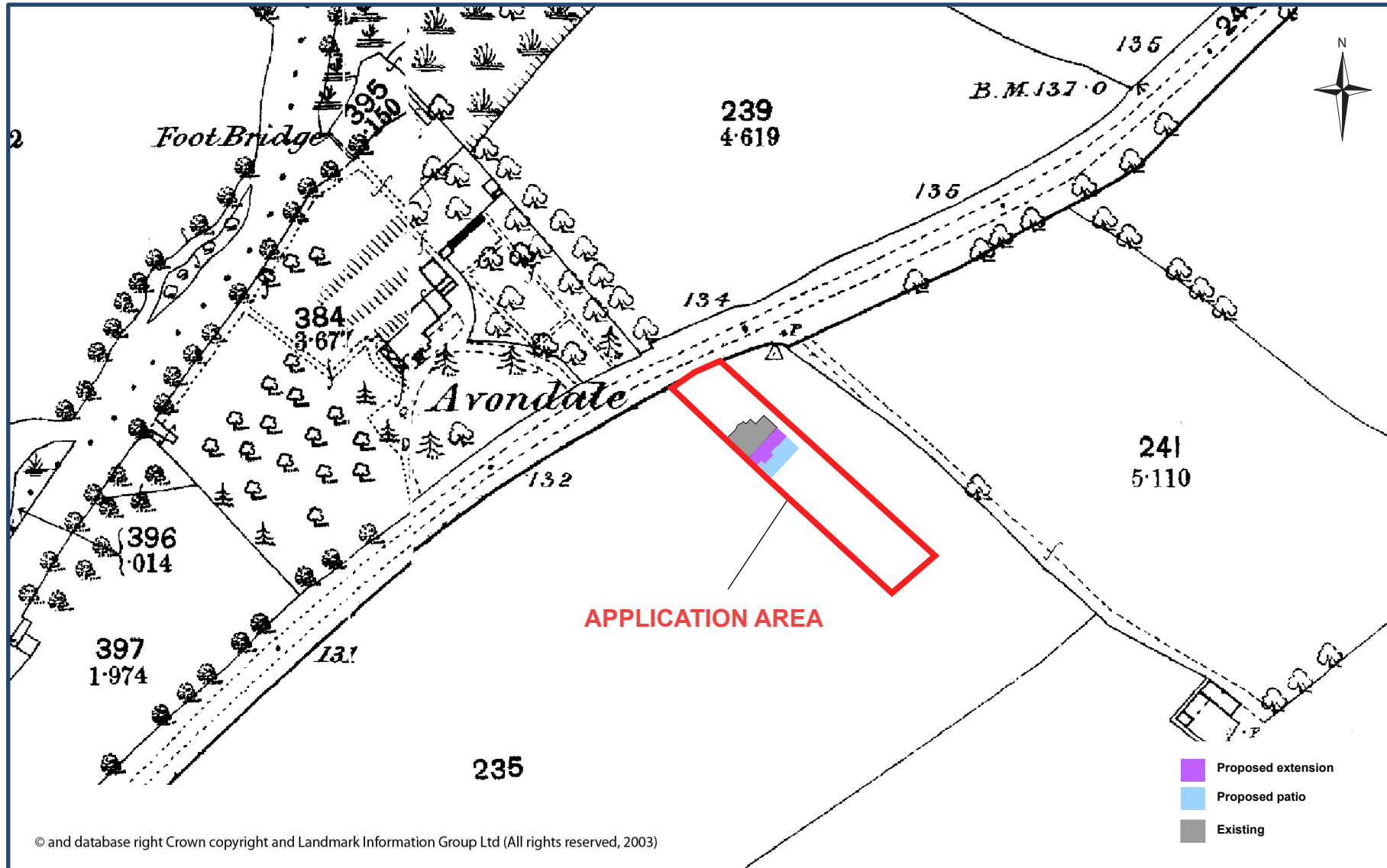


Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of 1886

A middle to late Iron Age ditch of importance

Archaeological investigations at 68 Tiddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon
June 2022

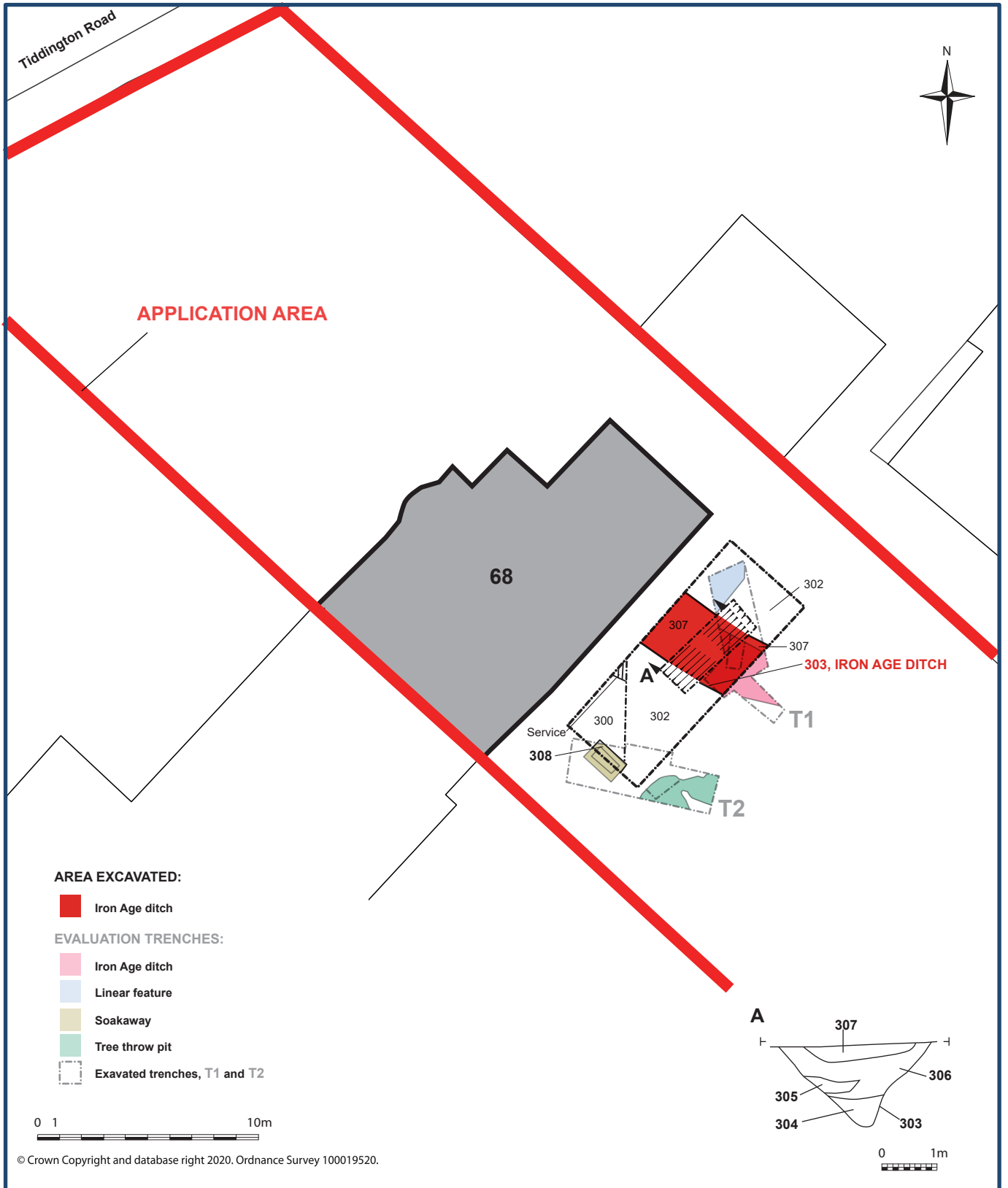


Fig 3: Location of excavated area and previous trenching