



**An archaeological trial trench evaluation  
at 43 Watling Street, Potterspury  
Northamptonshire  
August 2014**

Report No. 14/202

Author: James Ladocha

Illustrator: James Ladocha



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Project Manager: Jim Brown  
Site Code: ENN 107487  
NGR: SP 7546 4329

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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		<b>Oasis No. molanort1-192884</b>	
Project title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation at 43 Watling Street, Potterspur, Northamptonshire. August 2014		
Short description	An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by MOLA at 43 Watling Street, Potterspur prior to the proposed redevelopment of the site. Three trial trenches were excavated around a 1970s building prior to its demolition. The trial trench evaluation identified no archaeological features of great antiquity. The narrow limestone walls are perhaps 19th-century in date and were probably the walls of a small out-building shown on historic maps from 1884 to 1958. The tile surface and brick additions are probably from remodelling of this structure in the late 19th or early 20th centuries. Features dating to the 20th century were also present and the whole site appears to have been levelled, probably at or after the building construction in the 1970s, which sealed the previous ground level.		
Project type	Trial trench evaluation		
Site Status	None		
Previous work	None		
Current land use	Car park		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type and period	None		
Significant finds	None		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address	43 Watling Street, Potterspur		
Post code	NN12 7QD		
OS co-ordinates	NGR SP 7546 4329		
Area (sq m/ha)	0.109ha		
Height aOD	90m		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	Liz Mordue (NCC planning)		
Project Design originator	Jim Brown (MOLA)		
Director/Supervisor	James Ladocha (MOLA)		
Project Managers	Jim Brown (MOLA)		
Sponsor or funding body	Tuckley Chester Design		
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>			
Start date	01/09/2014		
End date	02/09/2014		
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no.)</b>	<b>Contents</b>	
Physical	MOLA Northampton Offices ENN 107487	None	
Paper		Site records (1 small archive box)	
Digital		Client report PDF	
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation at 43 Watling Street, Potterspur, Northamptonshire. August 2014		
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# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY</b>	<b>1</b>
	2.1 Topography	1
	2.2 Geology	3
<b>3</b>	<b>HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>AIMS AND OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>EVALUATION METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE</b>	<b>7</b>
	6.1 Trench 1	7
	6.2 Trench 2	7
	6.3 Trench 3	8
<b>7</b>	<b>DISCUSSION</b>	<b>10</b>
	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>11</b>
	<b>APPENDIX: CONTEXT INVENTORY</b>	<b>12</b>

## Figures

Front cover: Trench 1 prior to excavation, looking south-west

Fig 1: Site location

Fig 2: The excavated trenches

Fig 3: Trench 1 section, looking north-west

Fig 4: Trench 2, pit [208], looking east

Fig 5: Trench 3 with walls [306], [311] and [312], drain [307] and surface (309)

# An archaeological trial trench evaluation at 43 Watling Street, Potterspurpy Northamptonshire August 2014

## *Abstract*

*An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by MOLA at 43 Watling Street, Potterspurpy prior to the proposed redevelopment of the site. Three trial trenches were excavated around a 1970s building prior to its demolition. The trial trench evaluation identified no archaeological features of great antiquity. The narrow limestone walls are perhaps 19th-century in date and were probably the walls of a small out-building shown on historic maps from 1884 to 1958. The tile surface and brick additions are probably from remodelling of this structure in the late 19th or early 20th centuries. Features dating to the 20th century were also present and the whole site appears to have been levelled, probably at or after the building construction in the 1970s, which sealed the previous ground level.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

MOLA was commissioned by Tuckley Cheter Design to carry out archaeological trial trenching on the proposed development site at 43 Watling Street, Potterspurpy, Northamptonshire (NGR 47546 24329; Fig 1). The proposed development site comprises c 0.109 ha of land.

The works were undertaken in accordance with *the National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012) and with the *Written Scheme of Investigation* produced by MOLA (Brown 2014) to meet the requirements of the brief issued by Northamptonshire County Council (Mordue 2014a; 2014b).

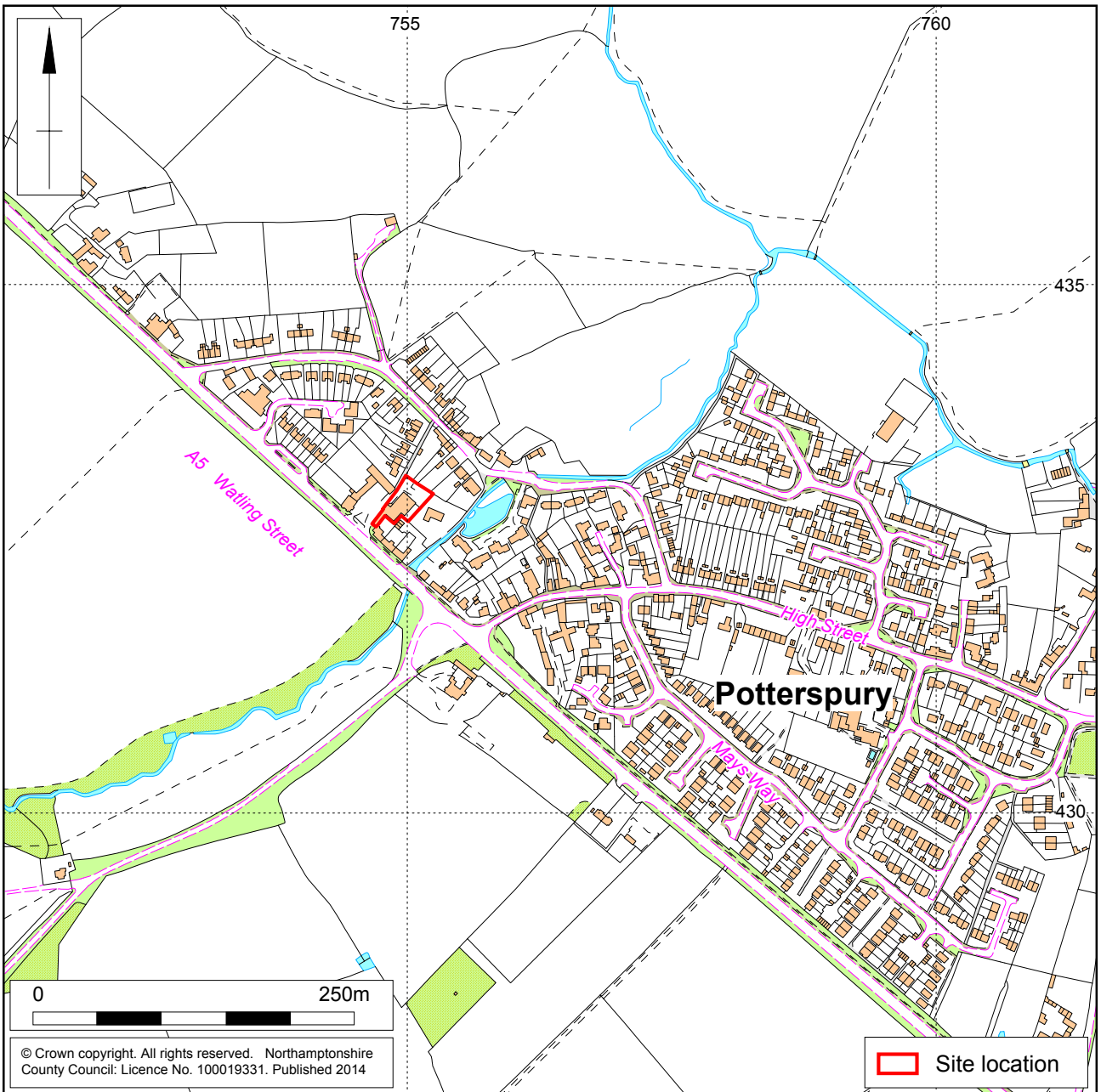
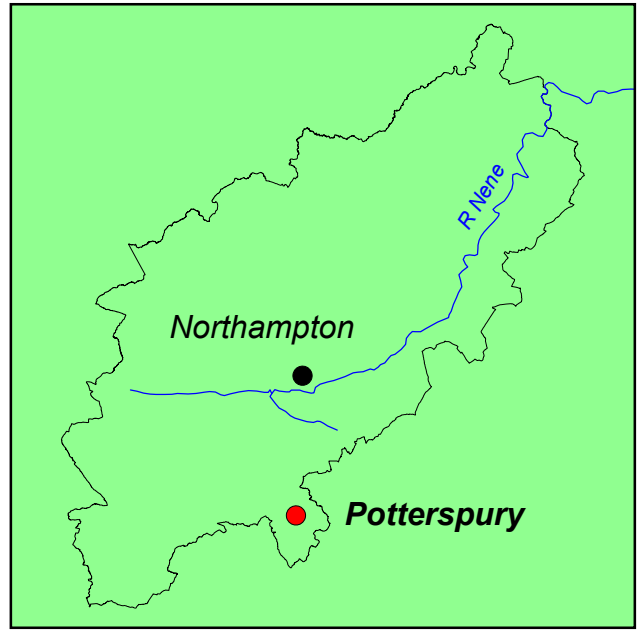
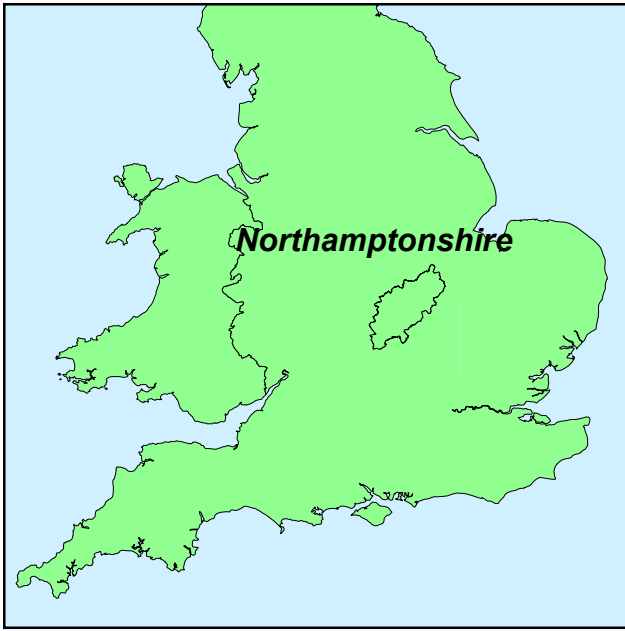
All works were conducted in accordance with the IfA's *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* and *Code of conduct* (IfA 2008; 2014).

## **2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

### **2.1 Topography**

The development area is located in the north-west of Potterspurpy. It is bounded to the south-west by the A5 Watling Street, a Roman road, and on all other sides by residential properties and gardens (Fig 1). Potterspurpy village lies within a tributary valley of the Dogsmouth Brook that feeds the River Great Ouse to the south. The whole of the village lies on the north-east side of Watling Street, with the medieval core focused around the church in the valley bottom and away from the Roman road.

The site comprises yard buildings, with car park and gardens to the rear, which formerly housed an antiques business, facing into a courtyard that opens onto Watling Street. The former buildings known as The Barn and The Studio will be retained and refurbished. The building known as The Maltings is likely to undergo some considerable alterations but will be largely reused. The largest building, to the rear of 41 Watling Street, which was built in the 1970s will be demolished and replaced by a new modern terrace. A portion of the current car park and gardens to the rear may be given over to provide new garage space. Ground level is relatively flat at c90m above Ordnance Datum, and the site is immediately north-west of Dogsmouth Brook.



Scale 1:5000

Site location Fig 1

## 2.2 Geology

The geology of the wider area is mapped as Great Oolitic Limestone, which overlies the Upper Lias Clay (BGS 2001), localised Northampton sand with ironstone is also expected and would be typical of the varied geology along the Jurassic ridge through Northamptonshire. The soils are of the Aberford (511a) association, comprising locally brashy well drained calcareous fine loamy soils over limestone (LAT 1983).

## 3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

### *Excerpts from the Victoria County History (Riden & Insley 2002)*

The ancient parish stretched across the whole of Cleley Hundred from the River Tove to the middle of Whittlewood forest; touching the Buckinghamshire border. Prior to the late 17th century the parish contained two hamlets, Potterspury and Yardley Gobion. Two areas within the ancient parish were in neither hamlet for civil purposes but were common to both; Potterspury Park and Wakefield Lawn. In 1935 the parishes were separated and this land apportioned between the two. The former civil parish of Furtho was added to Potterspury in 1951.

Flint and stone implements have been found in the north-west of the parish, including a Bronze Age stone battle axe. Iron Age and Roman settlements have been located in several places, including a villa found beneath the 18th-century lake at Wakefield Lodge.

The site of the earliest Saxon/Medieval settlement in Potterspury is presumably indicated by the position of the parish church, which stands on the south bank of Dogsmouth Brook. The church was built just under half a mile east of the Roman road. Immediately upstream stood a water-mill, recorded in 1086. The village of Potterspury evidently developed from a nucleus around the church and mill, and appears to have spread gradually west along a road which runs parallel with Watling Street for about half a mile before turning to join the main road, where a lane ran west from Watling Street to Puxley. In the 18th century the village had two distinct 'Ends', with clusters of houses near the church to the east and near Watling Street to the west, the former known as Lower End (later Church End) and the latter as Blackwell End. Only in the 19th century did the growth of population lead to the complete development of the High Street frontage. The 18th-century maps also show some cottages built on the waste on the east side of Watling Street, north of Blackwell End.

Domesday Book appears to treat the whole of Potterspury as a single manor, although there was clearly intermixture of holdings between Potterspury, Furtho and Cosgrove from an early date. Separate manors of Yardley Gobion and Moor End (where a castle was built in the 14th century) can be identified from the mid 12th century, and a third manor in Yardley known as Cromwell's Fee arose from a partition of the main manor in 1297. A small Domesday estate at Wakefield, within Whittlewood, has no later history, but the name survived as a division of the forest, in which the keeper's lodge was transformed in the 18th century into the Northamptonshire seat of the dukes of Grafton. The 13th-century park at Potterspury was greatly enlarged in the 16th century and became a freehold estate in the 17th, its lodge at different dates serving as both a gentry house and a farmhouse. Several religious houses had small estates in Potterspury before the Dissolution, of which the most important was the rectory manor belonging to St. Anne's, Coventry. There were also a number of lay freeholds in the Middle Ages, the origins of the numerous small estates of later centuries.

Manufacture of pottery is well evidenced from the late 13th century. During the 1960s fieldwork in north Buckinghamshire demonstrated that a fine sand-tempered ware, sometimes slightly gritty, generally buff to pink in colour with a grey core, had a



distribution area with Potterspurly roughly at its centre, which appears to be the obvious site for its production, although other kilns have been found in both Buckinghamshire and south Northamptonshire. Gardens in Potterspurly have also produced this ware and the excavation of kilns have yielded sherds from a medieval level. The idea that the industry did not begin in the Potterspurly area before the mid 13th century is supported by the absence of any recognisable earlier forms.

A kiln in the garden of 102 High Street, Potterspurly, operated during the 14th-15th centuries, associated with a silver halfpenny of Edward I's reign. Two other medieval kilns have since been found in Potterspurly and two more in Yardley Gobion. In 2000 a group of kilns was discovered at the west end of Potterspurly, behind 29 High Street. Five kilns spanning the 14th to 17th centuries were identified among vast heaps of wasters. The medieval kiln produced a range of jugs, bowls, cooking pots and green-glazed roof tiles. A larger, late 17th-century kiln and its waster heaps yielded a range of glazed jugs, cups, mugs and flower-pots, and also an enormous number of large bowls and platters which had been decorated with different coloured clay slips to form elaborate and ornate patterns.

In 1965 two adjacent kilns were excavated in the garden of the former vicarage at Potterspurly, which appear to have been in use for much of the 17th century, making a wide variety of ware. They may have been operated for part of their life by Leonard Benton, who is described as a potter in deeds of 1649 and 1653, and died early in 1665, leaving all his pottery and potash-making equipment to his grandson Leonard. When the last pottery kiln in the parish ceased work has not been established, although Baker noted in the 1830s that the trade had been discontinued for many years.

At least three generations of the Hillier family operated a tannery in Potterspurly. A John Hillier is mentioned in the 1540s and 1550s, when John Woodfield was also described as a tanner of Potterspurly. In 1688 Alexander Rigby, a bellfounder of Earls Barton, bought a cottage in Potterspurly from Thomas Herne of Potterspurly. Shortly afterwards Rigby rebuilt the premises as a 'workhouse', presumably to use as a foundry. Other trades are noted in Potterspurly in the 17th-19th centuries, many of which were supporting trades for the potteries and their workers. In addition to these, was the significant contribution to trade of the turnpike along Watling Street and the operation of inns and alehouses.

Historic maps of the area show the majority of the site targeted by the trenching to have been a possible orchard from 1884 up to 1977, after which the building which is to be demolished was built. However, there is a small structure/out-building, to the south-east of the building known as 'The Maltings', on maps from 1884 to 1958. This structure was approximately in the location of Trench 3 (Old-maps.co.uk).

#### **4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The objective of the archaeological evaluation was to understand the nature, function and character of the site in its cultural and environmental setting, in order to establish the possible impact of development on the archaeological potential of the site. The specific aims were to:

- *establish the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation on the development site;*
- *recover artefacts to assist in development of the type series within the region;*
- *recover palaeo-environmental remains where they are encountered.*

The excavation was carried out according to the objectives suggested by the published research priorities set out for the East Midlands (EH 1997; Cooper 2006; Knight *et al* 2012).

## 5 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Three trial trenches were excavated around the standing 1970s building that is planned for demolition, and examined the area of impact in the vicinity of the new terrace development and its garages. The proposed trench plan was to excavate three trenches 20m long. However, due to space constraints from trees, services, and a public right of way, Trenches 1 and 3 had to be shortened to 17m and 16m respectively. Trenches 1 and 2 also had to be shifted to form a L-shape. The trial trench locations were accurately recorded using a Leica Viva GPS and related to the Ordnance Survey (Fig 2).

Machine excavation was under the direction of a suitably experienced archaeologist. Trenches were excavated by machine using a toothless bucket to reveal archaeological remains or, where these were absent, undisturbed natural horizons. Machine excavation removed topsoil, subsoil and modern levelling layers.

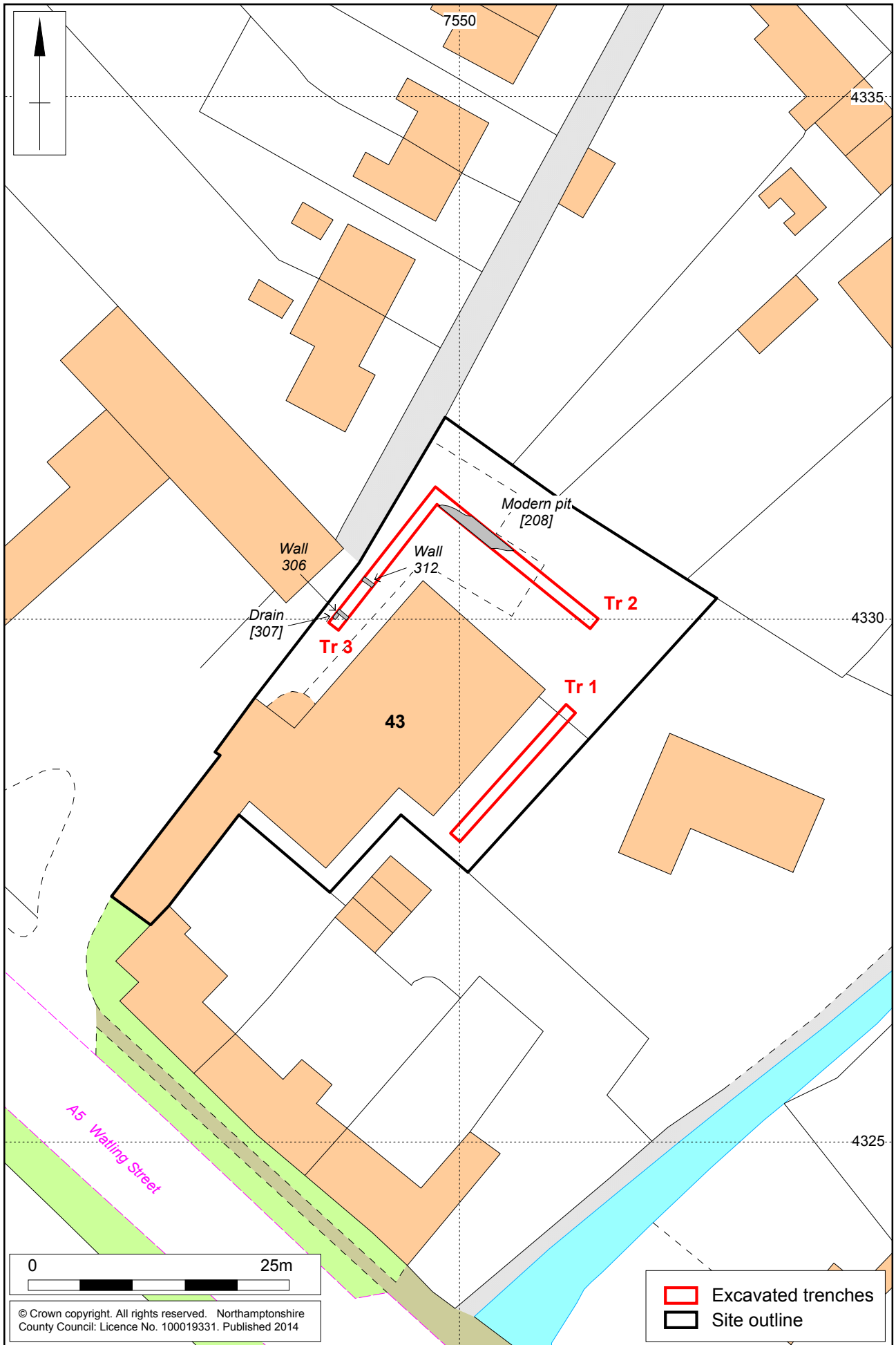
Each trench was cleaned sufficiently to enhance the definition of features, unless it was certain that there were no archaeological remains present. All archaeological features were investigated with care taken not to compromise the integrity of the archaeological record.

All archaeological deposits and artefacts encountered during the course of evaluation were fully recorded. Recording followed standard MOLA procedures (MOLA 2014). All archaeological features were given a separate context number. Deposits were described on *pro-forma* trench sheets to include details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds.

Archaeological features were plotted on an overall plan at a scale of 1:50. Sections or profiles through features and areas of complex stratigraphy were drawn at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20 as appropriate. All levels were related to Ordnance Datum.

Digital photographs formed the principal photographic record for report purposes, these were supplemented with 35mm monochrome negatives for the archive.

Artefacts were collected by hand and received appropriate care prior to removal from site (IfA 2008b; Walker 1990; Watkinson & Neale 1998). Unstratified animal bones and modern material was not collected. The artefacts were of 19th and 20th century date and were used to give approximate dating but were not retained for the archive.



Scale 1:500

The excavated trenches Fig 2

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## 6 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

### 6.1 Trench 1

The natural substrate was limestone with some patches of mid orange-brown slightly silty clay between 1.0m and 1.2m deep. This was overlain by mid grey-yellow mixed silty clay and limestone subsoil, 0.20m thick, and black-brown silty clay topsoil, 0.20m thick. This represents a previous ground level as this was overlain by 0.30m of yellow-brown silty clay and limestone, with frequent fragments of brick, tile, plastic and other modern material, probably deposited as a levelling layer after the construction of the 1970s building.

This made ground abutted a concrete slab, 0.15m thick, that was exposed in the north-western section of the trench. The slab was 4.5m long and lay on a base of sand and modern thermal bricks. This structure may have been a foundation base or possible yard surface and abutted the buried topsoil and cut into the buried subsoil.

To the north-east of this structure the made ground was a lot thicker, 0.90m, and there was no buried topsoil and only a small amount of subsoil. The made ground and concrete slab were overlain by mid grey-brown sandy silt topsoil, 0.30m thick, which was probably laid as part of landscaping after the construction of the 1970s building (Figs 2 and 3).



Trench 1 section, looking north-west Fig 3

### 6.2 Trench 2

The general stratigraphy was similar to that of Trench 1. The natural limestone substrate overlain by a subsoil of orange-brown slightly silty clay mixed with limestone, (205), 0.35-0.45m thick. This was topped by a buried topsoil the same as that in Trench 1, (204), 0.30m thick. Buried topsoil (204), (205) and the natural substrate were cut by a large irregular-shaped pit, [208], the full extent of which is unknown. The pit was steep sided and filled by white-yellow sand containing modern

pottery, brick, and metal. A slot was machine dug into this pit to try and establish its depth but had to be stopped at 1.9m for health and safety reasons (Figs 2 and 4).

Both the pit, [208], and buried topsoil were sealed by a levelling layer of dark grey silty sand, containing modern pottery, brick, etc., 0.20-0.40m thick. This was overlain by the car park surface which consisted of an ironstone base overlain by compacted gravel, 0.20-0.30m and 0.15-0.20m thick respectively.



Trench 2, pit [208], looking east Fig 4

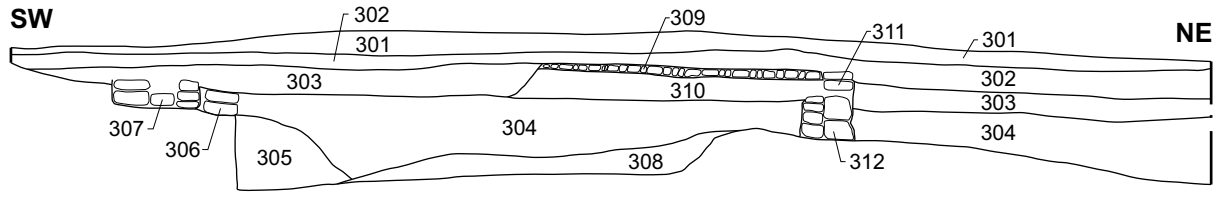
### 6.3 Trench 3

The natural substrate was overlain by the same subsoil encountered in Trench 2, (304), 0.25-0.50m thick. A small number of sherds of 19th-century willow pattern pottery were recovered from (304). However, the buried topsoil found in Trenches 1 and 2 was not present across the majority of the trench.

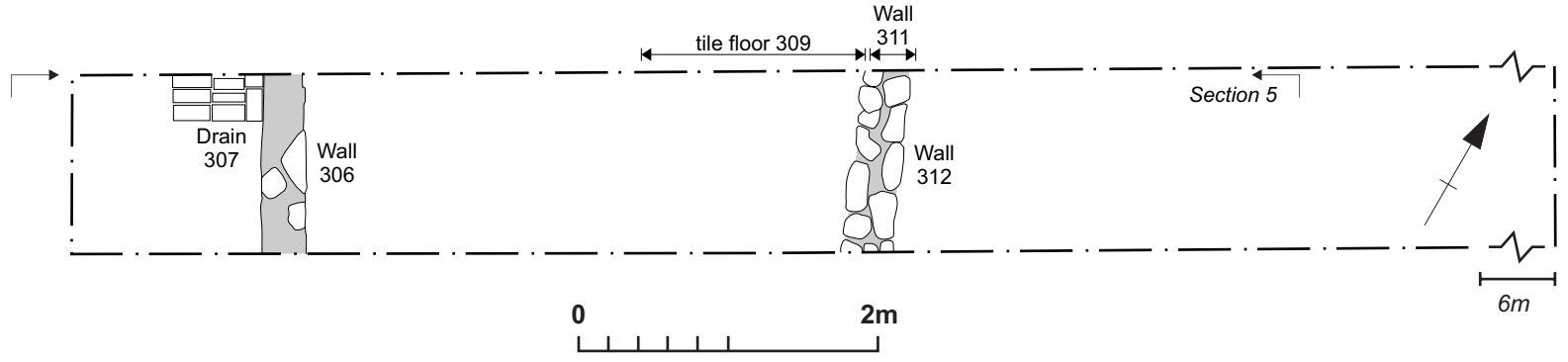
Subsoil (304) was cut by wall, [312], however, there was no foundation cut visible. Wall [312] was built directly onto the natural limestone substrate and consisted of three courses of roughly faced limestone blocks. The wall was on a north-west to south-east alignment and stood to a height of 0.30m. It was on approximately the same alignment to the rear wall of 'The Maltings' building to the north-west. Mortared on top of this wall were the remains of two courses of brick wall, [311]. It is uncertain whether [311] was a later remodelling of wall [312] or whether [312] was the foundation for [311]. However, wall [311] was abutted to the south-west by a sand and mortar layer, (310), which was used as a base for a tile floor, (309). Plastic was recovered from the mortar layer, (310). The modern surface, (309) was in quite poor condition and disturbed by the levelling layer, (303), which was the same as that in Trench 2, (203). As a result it was removed during the excavation of the trench (Fig 5).

Scale 1:50

**Section 5**  
SW



NE



Trench 3, plan, section and photographs Fig 5

The tile surface, (309), probably originally extended to another wall, [306], which was 4m to the south-west of [311]/[312], and lay on roughly the same alignment. Wall [306] consisted of two courses of roughly-faced limestone and was built on a layer of compact grey-brown clay mixed with limestone, (305), from which a fragment of 19th-century clay tobacco pipe was recovered. The relationship between (305) and the subsoil (304) was unclear within the confines of the trench. Wall [306] was abutted to the south-west by a possible brick lined drain base for a down-pipe, [307] (Fig 5).

The modern levelling layer (303) overlaid drain [307], wall [306] and the majority of subsoil (304). This was overlain by the car park layers (302) and (301), same as those present in Trench 2. The base layer for the car park, (302), also directly overlay surface (309) and wall [311] (Fig 5).

## **8 DISCUSSION**

The trial trench evaluation identified no archaeological features of great antiquity.

The narrow limestone walls in Trench 1 are perhaps 19th-century in date and were probably the walls of a small out-building shown on historic maps from 1884 to 1958. The tile surface and brick additions are probably from remodelling of this structure in the late 19th or early 20th centuries.

Features dating to the 20th century were also present in Trenches 2 and 3 and the whole site appears to have been levelled, probably at or after the building construction in the 1970s, which sealed the previous ground level.

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**APPENDIX: CONTEXT INVENTORY**

<b>Trench 1 20m x 1.5m</b>				
<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Finds/Samples</b>
101	Topsoil	Mid grey-brown sandy silt, root disturbance	D: 0.30m	--
102	Made ground	Mid yellow-brown silty clay mixed with limestone	D: 0.30m	Modern material
103	Buried topsoil	Dark black-brown silty clay	D: 0.20m	--
104	Subsoil	Mid grey-yellow silty clay and limestone, root disturbance	D: 0.20m	--
105	Concrete	Concrete block	W: 4.50m D: 0.15m	--
106	Layer	Sand and grey thermal brick base for concrete	W: 4.50m D: 0.15m	--
107	Natural	Limestone with some patches of mid orange-brown silty clay	--	--
108	Made ground	Same as 102 but with higher concentration of modern debris	D: 0.90m	--

<b>Trench 2 20m x 1.5m</b>				
<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Finds/Samples</b>
201	Car park surface	Compacted gravel	D: 0.20m	--
202	Car park base	Ironstone	D: 0.20m - 0.30m	--
203	Made ground	Dark grey silty sand	D: 0.20m - 0.40m	Modern material
204	Buried topsoil	Dark black-brown silty clay	D: 0.30m - 0.35m	--
205	Subsoil	Mid orange-brown slightly silty clay mixed with limestone	D: 0.35m - 0.45m	--
206	Natural	Limestone with some patches of mid orange-brown silty clay	--	--
207	Fill of 208	White-yellow sand	W: >5.0m D: >1.20m	Modern material
208	Pit	Steep sided modern pit, full extent unknown		

<b>Trench 3 20m x 1.5m</b>				
<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Findings/Samples</b>
301	Car park surface	Compacted gravel	D: 0.20m	--
302	Car park base	Ironstone	D: 0.10m - 0.25m	--
303	Made ground	Dark grey silty sand	D: 0.20m - 0.40m	Modern material
304	Subsoil	Mid orange-brown slightly silty clay mixed with limestone	D: 0.35m - 0.45m	19th century pottery
305	Layer	Compact grey-brown clay with limestone	D: 0.45m W: >0.50m	19th century clay tobacco pipe
306	Wall	2 courses of roughly-faced limestone	H: 0.20m W: 0.30m	--
307	Drain	Possible brick drain for down pipe	H: 0.20m W: 0.60m	--
308	Natural	Limestone with some patches of mid orange-brown silty clay	--	--
309	Floor surface	Heavily disturbed surface of square floor tiles (0.22x0.22x0.05m)	D: 0.05m W: 1.90m L: >1.20m	--
310	Layer	Mortar and sand base for 309	D: 0.18m W: 1.90m L: >1.20m	Plastic
311	Wall	2 courses of brick mortared onto 312	H: 0.15m W: 0.20m	--
312	Wall	3 courses of roughly-faced limestone	H: 0.30m W: 0.35m	--



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