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# Durno's Nursery, Atherstone, Warwickshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report



Ref: 108610.01  
April 2015



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**Durno's Nursery,  
Atherstone, Warwickshire**

**Archaeological Evaluation Report**

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\* I= Internal Draft; E= External Draft; F= Final

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# Durno's Nursery, Atherstone, Warwickshire

## Archaeological Evaluation Report

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# **Durno's Nursery, Atherstone, Warwickshire**

## **Archaeological Evaluation Report**

### **Summary**

Wessex Archaeology has been commissioned by CgMs Consulting to carry out a programme of evaluation trenching on a parcel of land at Durno's Nursery between Old Holly Lane and Innage Brook, to the northwest of Atherstone, Warwickshire (centered on NGR 430494, 298921) to determine an application for residential development.

The proposed development was situated to the north of known Anglo Saxon features, identified during excavations in 2013. Following the production of a Desk-Based Assessment (DBA, CgMs 2014) and discussions between Cathy Patrick (CgMs) and Anna Stocks (the Planning Archaeologist for Warwickshire County Council) it was agreed that a programme of archaeological evaluation would be required to determine a full application. Eight trenches ranging between 25m and 50m in length and 2m in width were excavated across the site. Proposed Trenches 9 and 10 could not be accessed with a JCB and it was agreed with Anna Stocks that these could be excavated as part of a programme of works to be completed as a condition of consent.

Trenches 1, 2, 5 and 7 showed evidence of post-medieval agriculture represented by furrows, along with associated field boundaries. Trenches 1 and 3 contained modern disturbance associated with now demolished sheds that had been used by the nursery. No evidence of Anglo Saxon occupation was discovered.

It is recommended that the project archive resulting from the excavation be deposited with Warwickshire Museum. The Museum has agreed in principle to accept the project archive on completion of the project under **accession code T/1428**. Deposition of any finds with the Museum will only be carried out with the full agreement of the landowner.



# **Durno's Nursery, Atherstone, Warwickshire**

## **Archaeological Evaluation Report**

### **Acknowledgements**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting and is grateful to Cathy Patrick (CgMs) in this regard. Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank Anna Stocks, the Planning Archaeologist for Warwickshire County Council.

The fieldwork was directed by Martyn Cooper with the assistance of Emma Carter, Hannah Holbrook, Johnathon Landless and Michael Keech. The report was compiled by Martyn Cooper. Fieldwork was undertaken between the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. The illustrations were prepared by Alix Sperr. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Chris Swales.





# **Durno's Nursery, Atherstone, Warwickshire**

## **Archaeological Evaluation Trenching Report**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Project background**

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to carry out a programme of evaluation trenching on a parcel of land at Durno's Nursery between Old Holly Lane and Innage Brook, to the northwest of Atherstone, Warwickshire (hereafter the 'Site', centred on NGR 430494, 298921) to determine an application for residential development (**Figure 1**).

1.1.2 Following the production of a Desk-Based Assessment (DBA, CgMs 2014 and discussions between Cathy Patrick (CgMs) and Anna Stocks (the Planning Archaeologist for Warwickshire County Council) it was agreed that a programme of archaeological evaluation would be required to determine a full application. Eight trenches ranging between 25m and 50m in length and 2m in width were excavated across the Site. Proposed Trenches 9 and 10 could not be accessed with a JCB and it was agreed with Anna Stocks that these could be excavated as part of a programme of works to be completed as a condition of consent.

1.1.3 Wessex Archaeology produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) outlining how the requirements of the work would be met. The WSI was approved by the curator prior to work commencing (Wessex Archaeology 2015). All works undertaken conformed to current best practice and to the guidance outlined in Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment ('MoRPHE') (English Heritage 2006), the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014a and 2014b) and in accordance with CIfA Codes of Conduct (2014c).

#### **1.2 Site location and topography**

1.2.1 The Site comprised of a mixture of commercial (Durno's plant nursery) and residential properties east of Old Holly Lane, Atherstone, Warwickshire, near Innage Brook to the southeast. The Site was bounded by Old Holly Lane to the west, housing to the east, by arable farmland to the north, and housing to the south just north of Rowlands Way (**Figure 1**).

1.2.2 Levels within the study site decrease from the south to the north, from c.85m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) to c.75m aOD in the north. To the east of Old Holly Lane, the Innage Brook flows north into the River Anker c.500m to the north.

1.2.3 The solid geology is recorded as mudstone of the gunthorpe member. No superficial deposits are recorded in the north of the Site, but alluvial sands and gravels are present in the southwest (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).



## 2 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The following section summarises the Site's historical and archaeological background as presented in the Desk Based Assessment (CgMs 2014) and considered evidence in the Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (HER), the National Monuments Record (NMR) and the National Heritage List (NHL). Evidence was gathered for the Site and a wider study site extending 1km from the proposed development area. The DBA also consulted Warwickshire Record Office to examine historic maps.

### 2.2 Prehistoric and Roman

2.2.1 Flint implements dating to the Upper Palaeolithic to Early Bronze Age have been recorded at Mythe Farm, and a possible findspot of Iron Age staters has been recorded to the northeast. An isolated findspot of Early Neolithic to Early Iron Age flint implements have been recorded within Atherstone village.

2.2.2 Roman Watling Street is located c.750m to the south of the study site. The scheduled remains of Mancetter Roman Settlement are c.2.5km distant.

### 2.3 Saxon and medieval

2.3.1 Atherstone is recorded in the Domesday Survey. The historic core of settlement during this period is likely to have been focussed to the south of the study site, within the bounds of the later medieval settlement. It is noted that Saxon remains (pits with artefactual evidence) have been recorded on land immediately to the south of the Site during recent archaeological excavation (Archaeological Solutions 2013). Remains are thought to have originally continued to the west, towards land now developed as a depot facility. In the light of these findings, a moderate potential for Saxon activity is identified for the study site.

2.3.2 Settlement during the medieval period was located c.740m to the south of the study site, with a market place and Augustinian Friary. A scheduled Cistercian monastery of Merevale Abbey is located c.1.1km to the southwest of the Site.

2.3.3 The Site appears to have formed part of a large undeveloped agricultural landscape, with settlement clusters to the west at Whittington Farm and further to the east at The Mythe. This landscape was crossed by a network of roads: repairs to Fieldon Bridge, c.484m to the north of the Site, are recorded in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century and it is likely that Old Holly Lane and Sheepy Road formed part of this network. Tolls collected from Fieldon Bridge were awarded to the monks of Merevale Abbey.

### 2.4 Post-medieval and modern

2.4.1 Two windmills are recorded nearby, along with the Coventry Canal, associated basin and North Western Railway. There are a cluster of HER entries within the built-up area of Atherstone.

2.4.2 Maps of 1716 and 1763 show the Innage Brook and windmill to the northeast of the study site and demonstrate that the Site lies within one of three large fields which extend from Atherstone.

2.4.3 The Grendon Tithe map of 1850 gives more detail, showing that the Site as one of a series of enclosed fields to the east of Old Holly Lane. A cluster of buildings,



corresponding with Whittington Farm, lies to the west and Coventry Canal and Innage Brook are shown along with a pond.

- 2.4.4 The 1885-1888 Ordnance Survey shows no change to the Site. Alder Mill is shown to the northeast with its associated ponds, weir and sluice. The North Western railway has appeared.
- 2.4.5 By 1925 a track extends east from Old Holly Lane, leading to a newly constructed house. Additional structures have appeared here by 1955 which becomes a nursery by 1965-1967. Residential development is beginning to extend north along Sheepy Road.
- 2.4.6 By 1990-1992 there is now extensive residential development along Sheepy Road and industrial development to the west of this, which extends further west by 2006.

### 3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

#### 3.1 General

3.1.1 The general aims of the project are:

- *to record, as far as is reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains observed;*
- *to provide sufficient information to enable an informed decision to be made about the need for archaeological mitigation; and,*
- *to make available the results of the work.*

#### 3.2 Specific

3.2.1 A specific aim of the project is:

- *to determine if Saxon remains identified in excavation to the south extend into the proposed development area.*

### 4 FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

#### *General*

4.1.1 The evaluation was to comprise the excavation of ten trenches ranging between 25m and 50m in length and 2m in width (**Figure 1**). However, proposed Trenches 9 and 10 could not be accessed with a JCB and it was agreed with Anna Stocks that these could be excavated as part of a programme of works to be completed as a condition of consent.

#### *Machine excavation*

4.1.1 The location of all trenches was scanned using a CAT to check for uncharted services prior to excavation.

4.1.2 Topsoil or overburden was removed using a mechanical excavator (JCB 3XC) fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, working under the continuous direct supervision of a suitably experienced archaeologist. Topsoil was removed in a series of level spits down to the level of the upper archaeological horizon, or the level of the natural geology, whichever



was reached first. Topsoil and subsoil was stored separately at a safe distance from the edge of the trench (1m minimum). Trench 8 was excavated with a mini digger, due to its location within a residential garden.

#### 4.2 Monitoring

4.2.1 Monitoring was carried out by Anna Stocks (the Planning Archaeologist for Warwickshire County Council).

#### 4.3 Recording

4.3.1 All archaeological deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's pro forma recording system. This written record is hierarchically based and centred on the context record. Each context record fully describes the location, extent, composition and relationship of the subject and is be cross-referenced to all other assigned records. Context numbers used in the evaluation will not be repeated.

4.3.2 Each excavated context appears on at least one detailed plan at 1:50 or 1:20 scale and one section at 1:10 and co-ordinated on to the overall Site plan. A full photographic record was maintained consisting of 35mm monochrome prints and digital images. The photographic record illustrates both the detail and the general context of the principal features.

4.3.3 Surfaces were cleaned when necessary to allow inspection and to define the extent of archaeological features and deposits. Archaeological features were hand excavated but the complete excavation of features was not regarded as necessary for the evaluation, and care was taken not to compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits, which may be deemed suitable for preservation by record or preservation in situ. However, excavation was sufficient to understand and record the full stratigraphic sequence, down to naturally occurring deposits.

4.3.4 Written and drawn records were made of the stratigraphy within the trench, even if no archaeological deposits were identified. Full written and drawn records of all excavated contexts were made in accordance with best archaeological practice. Archaeological deposits, which were not excavated, were recorded to the maximum extent possible.

4.3.5 Records included overall Site plans. All archaeological features were related to the Ordnance Survey datum and to the National Grid. Survey was undertaken using a GPS system accurate to a 3-Dimensional positional accuracy of 20mm.

#### 4.4 Specialist strategies

##### *Artefact*

4.4.1 All finds were treated in accordance with relevant industry guidance (UKIC 2001; MGC 1992; English Heritage 2005, 2006b), and the requirements of Warwickshire County Council.

4.4.2 All artefacts from excavated contexts were retained (except unstratified modern material) and taken to Wessex Archaeology offices in Sheffield for further work. No finds from excavated contexts will be discarded without the express approval of the LPA archaeologist.

4.4.3 All artefacts were (as a minimum) washed, weighed, counted and identified. All artefacts were treated, in line with First Aid for Finds (Watkinson and Neal 1998).



- 4.4.4 All artefacts were recorded by context, with summary listing of artefacts by category to provide simple quantification. Artefacts were analysed and reported by specialists.
- 4.4.5 The location of all trenches was scanned using a CAT to check for uncharted services prior to excavation.

## 5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

### 5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 Eight out of ten planned trenches were excavated across the Site. Trenches 9 and 10 were not excavated due to access issues. Trenches 3, 4, 6 and 7 were moved to avoid detected services (**Figure 1**). Trench 8 was situated within the garden of housing associated with the nursery and was moved in order to avoid damage to the roots of trees within the garden.

### 5.2 Summary

- 5.2.1 Trenches 1, 2, 5 and 7 showed evidence of post-medieval agriculture represented by furrows, which were not excavated, along with field boundaries. Trenches 1 and 3 contained modern disturbance associated with now demolished sheds that had been used by the nursery. Trenches 4, 6 and 8 were archaeologically sterile (**Plate 1**). No evidence of Anglo Saxon occupation was discovered.

### 5.3 Post-medieval

- 5.3.1 Trenches 1 and 2 produced evidence of post-medieval furrows, while Trenches 5 and 7 (504, 704) (**Plates 2 and 3**), showed evidence of a field boundary probably one continuous feature running east to west (**Figure 3**).

### 5.4 Modern

- 5.4.1 Trenches 1 and 3 (**Plate 4**) showed modern interventions relating to sheds demolished by the current owners. Trench 7 had evidence of a hedgerow which is likely to have been removed within the last 50 years. Trench 5 contained evidence of a line of small tree bowls also related to the recent divisions of the field.
- 5.4.2 Trench 7 showed a modern land drain cutting post-medieval field boundary 704 (**Figure 3**).

## 6 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE

### 6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 Three pieces of ceramic building material (CBM) were recovered from two contexts, (504) and (704). All are fragments of post-medieval roof tile.



## 7 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

### 7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 No environmental samples were taken due to the lack of significant archaeology on Site.

## 8 DISCUSSION

### 8.1 Summary

8.1.1 Trenches 1, 2, 5 and 7 demonstrated evidence of post-medieval agriculture represented by furrows, along with associated field boundaries. Trenches 1 and 3 contained modern disturbance associated with now demolished sheds that had been used by the nursery. No evidence of Anglo Saxon occupation was discovered.

### 8.2 Conclusions

8.2.1 The results demonstrate a post medieval agricultural landscape but no significant archaeology was present within the trenches excavated.

## 9 STORAGE AND CURATION

### 9.1 Museum

9.1.1 It is recommended that the project archive resulting from the excavation be deposited with Warwickshire Museum. The Museum has agreed in principle to accept the project archive on completion of the project [**accession code T/1428**]. Deposition of any finds with the Museum will only be carried out with the full agreement of the landowner.

### 9.2 Preparation of archive

9.2.1 The complete site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics, artefacts, ecofacts and digital data, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by Warwickshire Museum, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; ClfA 2014d; Brown 2011; ADS 2013, UKIC 2001).

9.2.2 All archive elements will be marked with the **site/accession code**, and a full index will be prepared. The physical archive comprises the following:

- *01 files/document cases of paper records & A3/A4 graphics*

### 9.3 Discard policy

9.3.1 Wessex Archaeology follows the guidelines set out in Selection, Retention and Dispersal (Society of Museum Archaeologists 1993), which allows for the discard of selected artefact and ecofact categories which are not considered to warrant any future analysis. Any discard of artefacts will be fully documented in the project archive.

9.3.2 The discard of environmental remains and samples follows nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1993; 1995; English Heritage 2011).



9.4 **Security copy**

- 9.4.1 In line with current best practice (e.g. Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.





## 10 REFERENCES

### 10.1 Bibliography

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*Wessex Archaeology, 2015, Land off Old Holly Lane, Durno's Nursery, Atherstone,  
Warwickshire Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation  
Trenching. Unpublished report ref: T20086.01*



## 11 APPENDICES

### 11.1 Appendix 1: Context Index

	Grid	Dimensions: Max depth:
Context	Description	Depth (m)
100	Top soil – Dark brown - black clay loam. > 5% sub rounded stones, some rooting.	0 - 0.2
101	Natural - Mid pink – brown silty clay. 10% sub-rounded stones. Some rooting.	0.2 +
102	Cut of modern wheel rut.	0.35 – 0.54
103	Fill of modern wheel rut. Backfill.	0.35 – 0.54

	Grid	Dimensions: Max depth:
Context	Description	Depth (m)
200	Top soil – Dark brown - black clay loam. > 5% sub rounded stones, some rooting.	0 – 0.28
201	Natural - Mid pink – brown silty clay. 10% sub-rounded stones. Significant rooting. Regular furrows.	0.28 +

	Grid	Dimensions: Max depth:
Context	Description	Depth (m)
300	Top soil – Dark brown - black clay loam. > 5% sub rounded stones, some rooting.	0 – 0.28
301	Natural - Mid pink – brown silty clay. 10% sub-rounded stones. Modern cuts in southern end.	0.28 +

	Grid	Dimensions: Max depth:
Context	Description	Depth (m)
401	Top soil – Dark brown - black clay loam. > 5% sub rounded stones, some rooting.	0 – 0.45
402	Modern sooty black clinker layer in middle of trench 10% modern pottery likely plant pots.	0.3 – 0.4
403	Dark brown sandy layer probably related to the nurseries containing charcoal and plant pots.	0.2 – 0.55
404	Natural – Mid pink brown silty clay with some yellow brown sandier areas 15% sub-rounded stones.	0.45 +

	Grid	Dimensions: Max depth:
Context	Description	Depth (m)
501	Top soil – Dark brown - black clay loam. > 5% sub rounded stones, some rooting.	0 – 0.2
502	Natural - Mid pink – brown silty clay. 10% sub-rounded stones.	0.28 +
503	Cut of post medieval field boundary running east – west. Concave base with straight moderate sides. Cut by land drain	0.2 – 0.34
504	Fill of post medieval field boundary. Secondary colluvial/alluvial sandy clay mid greyish brown 15% sub rounded gravel.	0.2 – 0.34
505	Cut of north – south linear. Irregular base and straight moderate sides. Representing a previous hedgerow.	0.2 – 0.35



	<b>Grid</b>	<b>Dimensions: Max depth:</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>
506	Fill of hedgerow, mid yellowish orange sandy clay common sub rounded gravel	0.2 – 0.35

	<b>Grid</b>	<b>Dimensions: Max depth:</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>
601	Top soil – Dark brown - black clay loam. > 5% sub rounded stones, some rooting.	0 – 0.28
602	Natural - Mid pink – brown silty clay. 10% sub-rounded stones.	0.28 +

	<b>Grid</b>	<b>Dimensions: Max depth:</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>
701	Top soil – Dark brown - black clay loam. > 5% sub rounded stones, some rooting.	0- 0.3
702	Natural - Mid pink – brown silty clay. 5% charcoal	0.3+
703	Cut of post medieval ditch, running east west. Flat based with straight steep sides	0.3 – 0.57
704	Fill of post medieval ditch containing CBM. Mid brown sandy clay > 5% sub-rounded stones. Cut by 705	0.3 – 0.57
705	Cut of land drain	0.3 – 0.65
706	Backfill of land drain cut.	0.3 – 0.65

	<b>Grid</b>	<b>Dimensions: Max depth:</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>
801	Top soil – Dark brown - black clay loam. > 5% sub rounded stones, some rooting.	0 – 0.35
802	Natural - Mid pink – brown silty clay. 10% sub-rounded stones.	0.35+



## 11.2 Appendix 2: OASIS form

### OASIS ID: wessexar1-208068

#### Project details

Project name	Land off Old Holly Lane, Durno's Nursery, Atherstone, Warwickshire
Short description of the project	Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to carry out a programme of evaluation trenching on a parcel of land at Durno's Nursery between Old Holly Lane and Innage Brook, to the northwest of Atherstone, Warwickshire to determine an application for residential development. The proposed development was situated to the north of known Anglo Saxon features, identified during excavations in 2013. Following the production of a Desk-Based Assessment and discussions between Cathy Patrick (CgMs) and Anna Stocks (Warwickshire County Council) it was agreed that a programme of archaeological evaluation would be required to determine a full application. Eight trenches ranging between 25m and 50m in length and 2m in width were excavated across the site. Trenches 1, 2, 5 and 7 showed evidence of post-medieval agriculture represented by furrows, along with associated field boundaries. Trenches 1 and 3 contained modern disturbance associated with now demolished sheds that had been used by the nursery. No evidence of Anglo Saxon occupation was discovered. Proposed Trenches 9 and 10 could not be accessed with a JCB and it was agreed with Anna Stocks that these could be excavated as part of a programme of works to be completed as a condition of consent.
Project dates	Start: 23-03-2015 End: 27-03-2015
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	108610 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Current Land use	Plant Nursery and pasture
Monument type	FURROW Post Medieval
Monument type	FIELD BOUNDARY Post Medieval
Significant Finds	CBM Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Housing estate
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF
Position in the planning process	Pre-application

#### Project location

Country	England
Site location	WARWICKSHIRE NORTH WARWICKSHIRE ATHERSTONE Land off Old Holly Lane, Durno's Nursery
Study area	30.40 Hectares
Site coordinates	SP 30494 98921 52.5868806824 -1.54985407022 52 35 12 N 001 32 59 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 75.00m Max: 85.00m



### Project creators

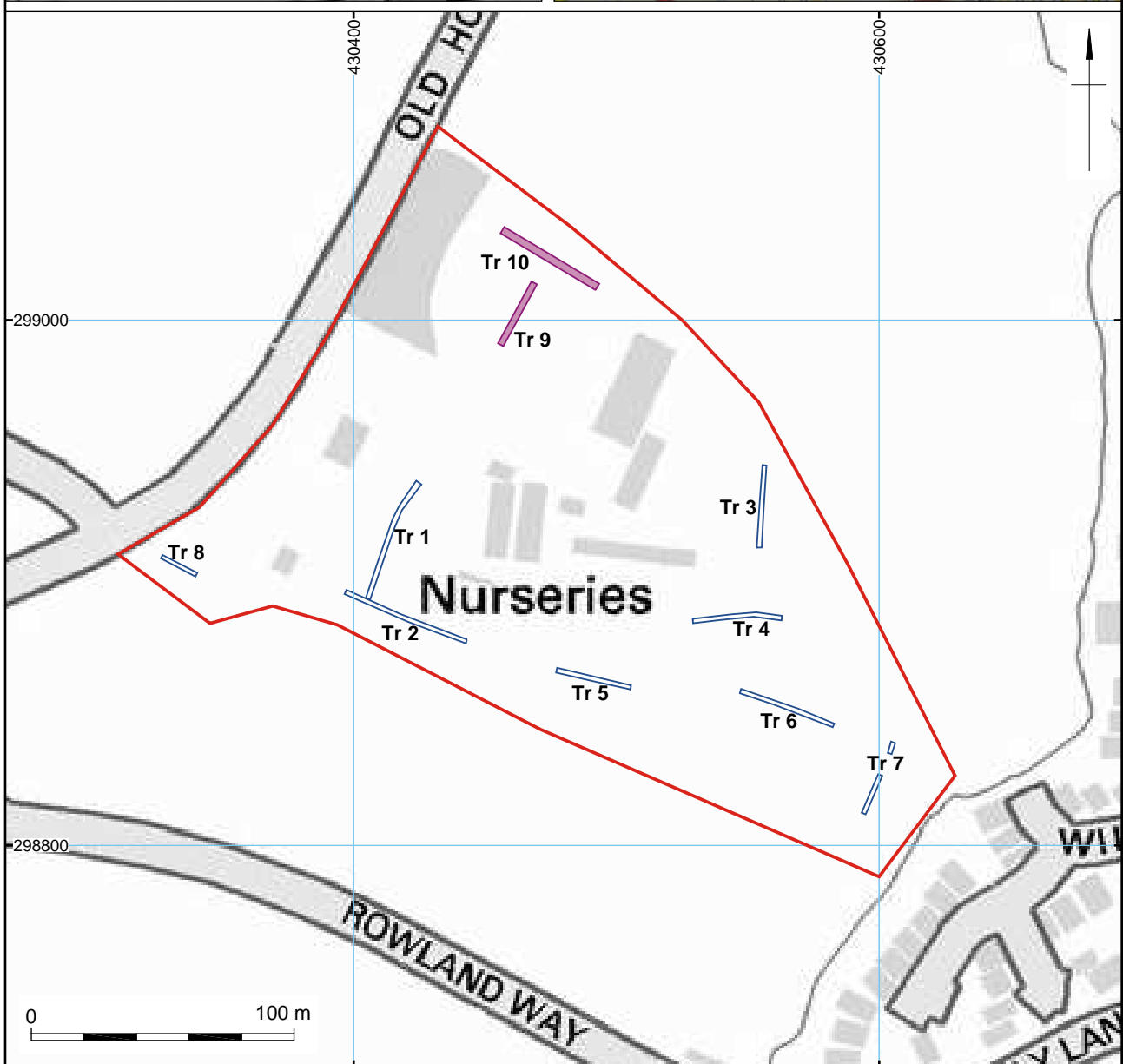
Name of Organisation	Wessex Archaeology
Project brief originator	CgMs Consulting Ltd.
Project design originator	Wessex Archaeology
Project director/manager	Chris Swales
Project supervisor	Martyn Cooper

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Warwickshire Museum
Digital Archive ID	T/1428
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Warwickshire Museum
Paper Archive ID	T/1428
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Diary","Photograph","Report","Section","Unpublished Text"

### Project bibliography 1

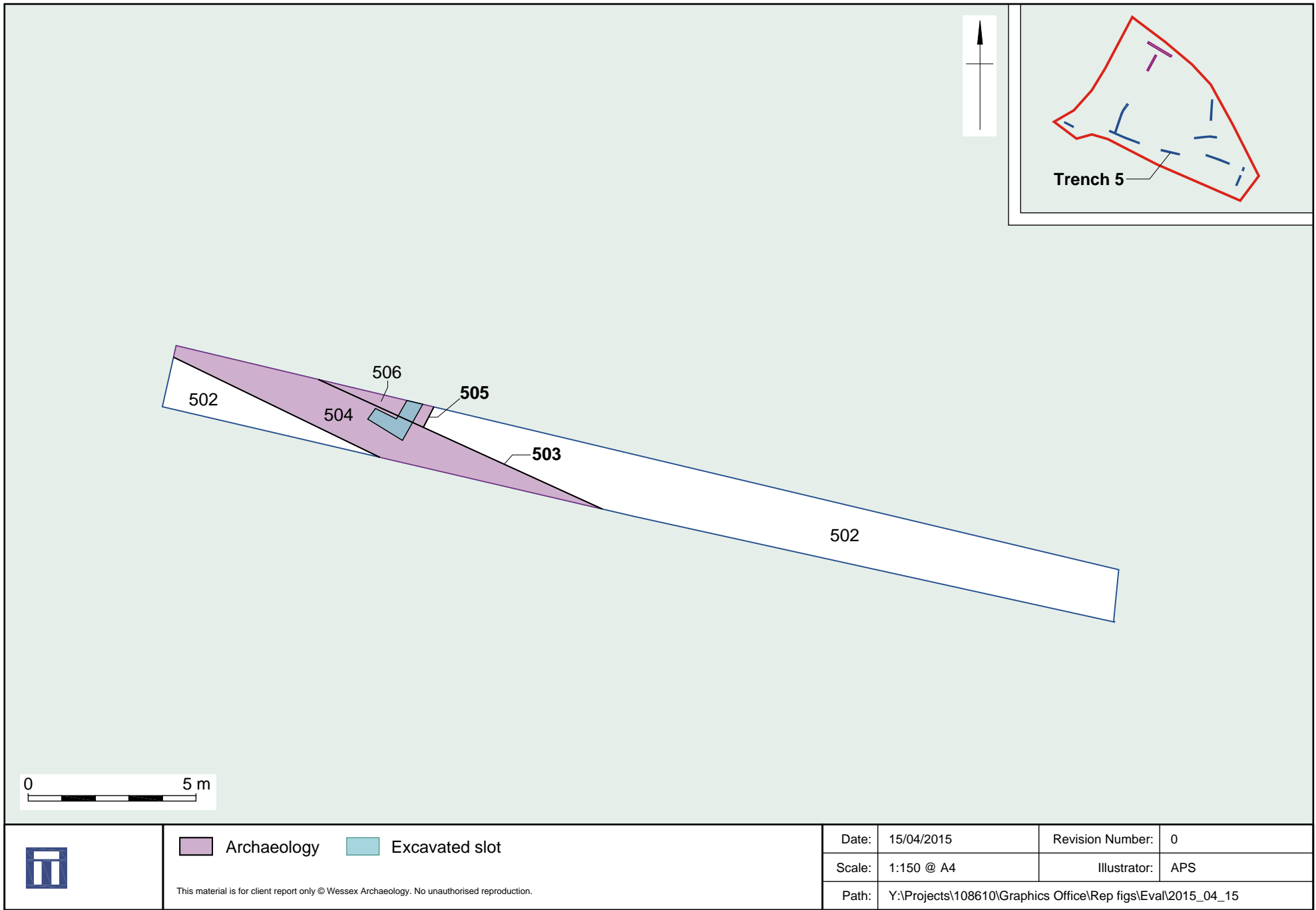
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Durno's Nursery, Atherstone, Warwickshire. Archaeological Evaluation Report
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Cooper, M. Swales, C.
Other bibliographic details	108610
Date	2015
Issuer or publisher	Wessex Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	Sheffield
Description	A4 comb bound report
Entered by	Alex Cassels (j.tibber@wessexarch.co.uk)
Entered on	15 April 2015



	Evaluation Area              Excavated trenches              Unexcavated trenches		
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Path:		Y:\Projects\108610\Graphics Office\Rep figs\Eval\2015_04_15	

Site and trench locations

Figure 1



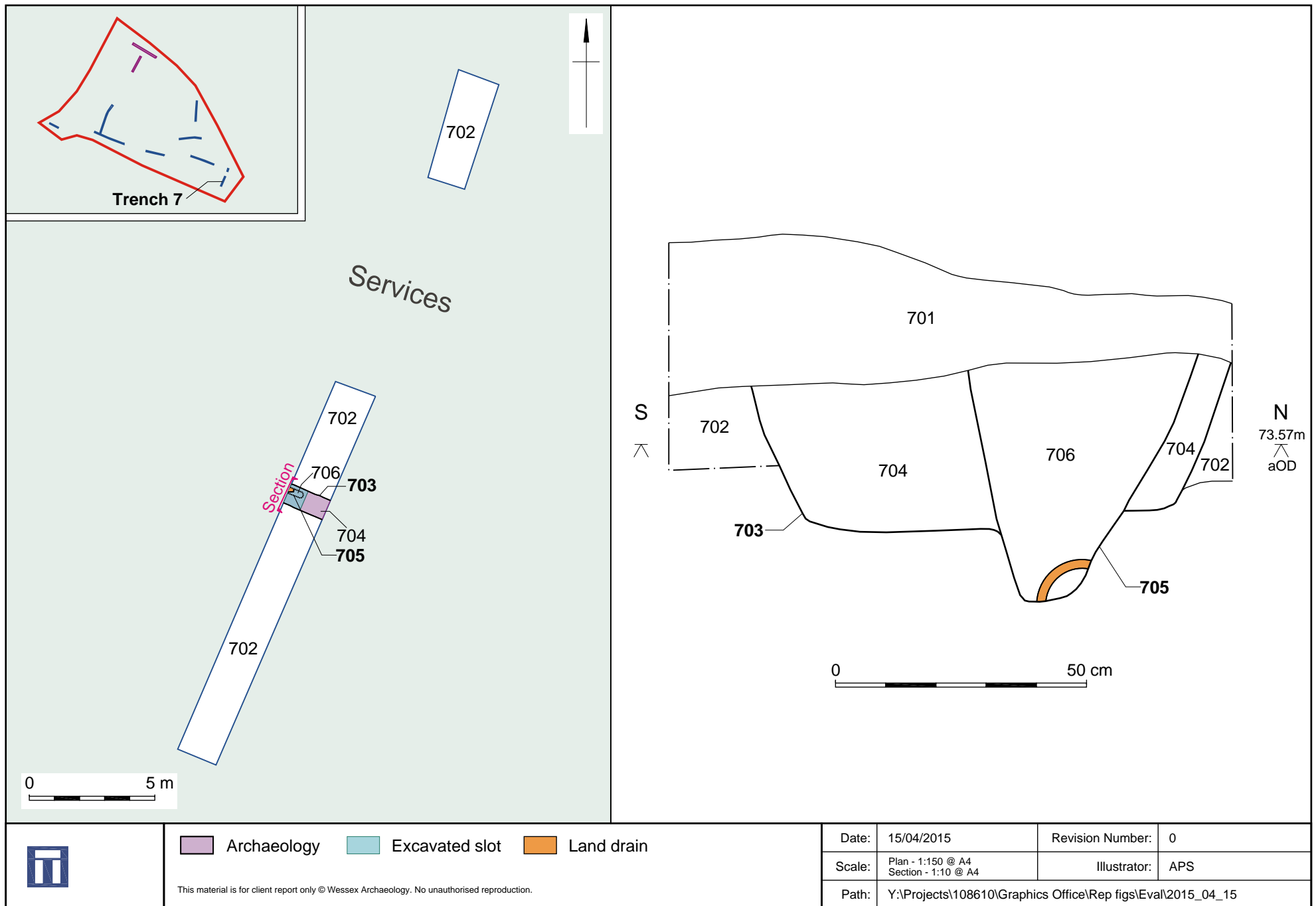
Archaeology
  Excavated slot

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Date:	15/04/2015	Revision Number:	0
Scale:	1:150 @ A4	Illustrator:	APS
Path:	Y:\Projects\108610\Graphics Office\Rep figs\Eval\2015_04_15		

Plan of **Trench 5**

Figure 2



Plan of **Trench 7**, and section of **704**

Figure 3





Plate 1: General shot of **Trench 8**



Plate 2: Detail shot of post-medieval ditch **504**


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Plate 3: Detail shot of post-medieval ditch **704**



Plate 4: General shot of **Trench 7**

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