

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Proposed Baptist Church, Northampton Road,
Towcester, Northamptonshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Susan Porter

Site Code: NRT14/241

(SP6936 4928)

Proposed Baptist Church, Northampton Road, Towcester, Northamptonshire

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Tove Valley Baptist Fellowship**

by Susan Porter

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code NRT 14/241

March 2015

Summary

Site name: Proposed Baptist Church, Northampton Road , Towcester, Northamptonshire

Grid reference: SP 6936 4928

Site activity: Archaeological evaluation

Date and duration of project: 24th–25th February 2015

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Susan Porter

Site code: NRT 14/241

Area of site: 0.93ha

Summary of results: The evaluation has revealed a number of deposits certainly and probably of archaeological interest. Dating evidence was sparse but two features are most likely to be of Early Iron Age date. The deposits appear to represent the presence of an area of prehistoric occupation on the site.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited in a Northamptonshire archives store in due course.

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 10.03.15
	Steve Preston✓ 10.03.15

Proposed Baptist Church, Northampton Road, Towcester, Northamptonshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Susan Porter

Report 14/241

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at the proposed Baptist Church, Northampton Road, Towcester, Northamptonshire, centred on NGR SP6936 4928 (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Jeremy Binley, for Tove Valley Baptist Fellowship, 3 Cedar Close, Towcester, Northamptonshire, NN12 6BH.

Planning permission (S/2012/0044/MAF) has been gained from South Northamptonshire Council for the construction of a new Baptist Church and community centre on a 0.93ha parcel of land at Northampton Road, Towcester. The consent includes a condition (10) which requires information from field evaluation to assess the archaeological potential of the site and allow for the impact of the development to be mitigated, if necessary.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by MS Liz Mordue, County Archaeologist for Northamptonshire. The fieldwork was undertaken by Susan Porter and Daniel Strachan on 24th and 25th February 2015 and the site code is NRT 14/241. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited in a Northamptonshire archive store in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the north east of the centre of Towcester and comprises a 0.93ha parcel of unmanaged scrub and grassland, bounded by Northampton Road to the east with residential housing to the north and west and trees along the southern boundary (Fig. 1). The site lies at *c.* 87m above Ordnance Datum, rising slightly to the north-east, and the underlying geology is recorded as Boulder Clay (BGS 1969). The Broad Water stream, a tributary of the river Tove, passes close to the site to the south.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location within the hinterland of the Roman town of *Lactodorum*, which is modern day Towcester (Taylor *et al.* 2002; Cooper 2006). The Roman town, which may

have had Iron Age origins, lies over 0.5km to the south west but with the Roman cemetery complex and field system slightly closer. Finds and sites of other periods recorded nearby in the county Historic Environment Record are relatively few, but medieval fields, in the form of ridge and furrow are well represented, and there are medieval manorial earthworks to the south-east.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development. This work was to be carried out in a manner that did not compromise the integrity of any such archaeological features or deposits which warrant preservation in-situ or would be better excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

The specific research aims of this project were:

- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period were present;
- to determine if any prehistoric occupation or landscape features were present on the site; and
- to determine if there were later prehistoric, Roman, Saxon or medieval deposits present on the site.

It was proposed to dig 9 trenches, 20m long and 1.6m wide (3% of the site area). The trenches could be subdivided, or moved should logistical constraints such as unexpected buried services or protected trees be encountered. A contingency of 20m of trench was included should it be necessary to clarify initial results.

Topsoil and other overburden was to be removed using a JCB type machine equipped with toothless ditching bucket in order to expose archaeologically sensitive levels under constant archaeological supervision. Where archaeological features were present these areas were hand cleaned and excavated.

Results

All 9 trenches were dug as intended (Fig. 3). They ranged in length from 19.40m to 23m and in depth from 0.52m to 0.70m. Spoil heaps were monitored for finds. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. The excavated features are summarized in Appendix 2.

Trench 1 (Figs 3, 4 and 5)

Trench 1 was aligned NW–SE and was 19.80m long and 0.58m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.15m of topsoil and 0.23m mid orange grey silty clay subsoil overlying mid-dark orangey grey sandy clay natural geology. Two undated gullies (1 and 2) were recorded (Figs 4 and 5) both aligned due west–east towards the

centre of the trench. Gully 1 was 0.80m wide and 0.28m deep and filled with soft mid greyish brown silty clay (52). Gully 2 lay parallel to gully 1 and was 0.46m wide and 0.15m in depth, filled with similar soft mid greyish brown silty clay (53). No finds were recovered from either gully.

Trench 2 (Figs 3, 4 and 5; Pl. 4)

Trench 2 was aligned NNE–SSW and was 19.40m long and 0.52m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.15m of topsoil and 0.23m of subsoil overlying natural geology. An undated gully (3) aligned almost west–east was recorded which was 0.77m wide and 0.27m deep and filled with soft mid brownish grey sandy clay (54). No finds were recovered.

Trench 3 (Figs 3, 4 and 5; Pls 1 and 5)

Trench 3 was aligned NNE–SSW and was 21.90m long and 0.62m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.29m of topsoil and 0.28m of subsoil overlying natural geology. An undated gully (4), likely to be the continuation of gully 3 in Trench 2, was recorded which was 0.58m wide and 0.29m deep and filled with soft mid brownish grey sandy clay (55) from which no finds were recovered. At the northern end of the trench an elongated pit or possible ditch terminus (5) containing thirteen sherds of Iron Age pottery was recorded. It was 1.20m wide and 0.24m deep filled with soft very dark grey silty clay (56) with 60% burnt material and charcoal inclusions. At the southern end of the trench a posthole (6) was recorded measuring 0.60m in diameter and 0.22m in depth. It contained a single fill (57) comprising soft mid brown grey sandy clay. Seven small sherds of Iron Age pottery were recovered from environmental sampling of the latter.

Trench 4 (Figs 3, 4, and 5, Pls 2 and 6)

Trench 4 was aligned NW–SE and was 21.20m long and 0.54m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.16m of topsoil and 0.23m of subsoil overlying natural geology. An undated gully (7) aligned roughly north–south was recorded which was 0.60m wide and 0.25m deep and filled with soft mid brownish grey sandy clay (58) from which no finds were recovered. A possible second feature was investigated but was found to be a variation in the natural geology.

Trench 5 (Fig. 3)

Trench 5 was aligned roughly north - south and was 19.90m long and 0.55m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.29m of topsoil and 0.20m of subsoil overlying natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed and no finds were recovered, however the trench was subject to rapid flooding.

Trench 6 (Fig. 3)

Trench 6 was aligned NNW–SSE and was 21m long and 0.68m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.44m of topsoil and 0.21m of subsoil overlying natural geology. A possible pit was investigated but found to be a tree hollow, no deposits of archaeological interest were observed and no finds were recovered.

Trench 7 (Figs 3, 4 and 5)

Trench 7 was aligned roughly north–south and was 23m long and 0.70m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.24m of topsoil and 0.43m of subsoil overlying natural geology. An undated pit (9) was recorded which was 0.75m in diameter and 0.27m deep and filled with soft light-mid orangey grey sandy clay (60) from which no finds were recovered. A possible gully was investigated and found to be of natural origin.

Trench 8 (Figs 3, 4 and 5)

Trench 8 was aligned east–west and was 20.50m long and 0.70m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.30m of topsoil and 0.29m of subsoil overlying natural geology. Undated gully (11), aligned approximately north–south, was 0.51m wide and 0.22m deep and filled with firm mid orange grey sandy clay (62) with large stone inclusions, from which no finds were recovered. To the east of gully 11, posthole 10 was oval in plan, 0.45m long and 0.25m wide and 0.16m in depth filled with soft mid brownish grey sandy clay (61) from which no finds were recovered. Four other possible gullies were investigated but were observed to be cut from above the subsoil and were considered modern in date.

Trench 9 (Figs 3, 4 and 5. Pl. 3)

Trench 9 was aligned north east - south west and was 20.90m long and 0.59m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of topsoil and 0.34m mid orange grey silty clay subsoil overlying mid-dark orangey grey sandy clay natural geology. An undated gully (8) was recorded aligned north–south, which was 0.60m wide and 0.16m deep, with 'V' shaped base and filled with soft mid brownish grey sandy clay (59) from which no finds were recovered.

Finds

Prehistoric Pottery and Fired Clay by Frances Raymond

Two features in Trench 3 produced a few fragments of prehistoric pottery in local fabrics (Appendix 3). The sherds from posthole 6 are accompanied by two heavily rolled fragments of fired clay (2g) that could have been from pottery vessels or other artefacts. The largest sherd from pit 5 is in fresh condition and is made from clay incorporating sparse fragments of limestone and fossil shell with medium grade grog tempering. The heavily

abraded sherds from the samples are in contrasting wares containing limestone and/or fossil shell. The assemblages include two simple, upright rims, one rounded and the other bevelled.

Although this material is clearly of prehistoric origin, the date is uncertain with such limited stylistic evidence. The character of the grog tempered sherd and the rims are consistent with an Early Bronze Age date, but a later origin in the Earliest or Early Iron Age between approximately 800 and 350 BC is equally possible.

Animal Bone by Danielle Milbank

Two small fragments of animal bone, weighing 11g, were recovered from a sieved soil sample (1) from pit 5 (56). These comprise two fragments of medium-sized animal long bone, possibly derived from the metatarsal or metacarpal bone of a cervid (sheep/goat or deer) (Hillson 1992). No evidence of butchery was present. No other information could be retrieved from the fragmented remains.

Burnt Clay by Susan Porter

Three fragments of burnt clay were recovered from environmental sampling of posthole (6). The fragments were between 5–11mm in size with a combined weight of just 1g and no distinguishing features.

Charred plant remains by Susan Porter

Two samples of 10L and 20L each were taken from features 5 (56) and 6 (57) and were floated and wet sieved using a 0.25mm mesh. A total of 52g of charcoal was recovered from Iron Age pit 5, although no seeds or other plant remains were visible within the flot. The second flot from posthole (6) produced a few small fragments of charcoal only.

Conclusion

The evaluation revealed several certain and probable archaeological features. Only two of these provided artefactual dating evidence, suggesting that they were probably of Early Iron Age date, possibly earlier. The remaining seven linear features on site yielded no finds and are undated. Although the site lies 0.5km from the centre of the Roman town no finds or deposits of confirmed Roman date were observed on the site

The result of this field evaluation suggests a potential for archaeological remains within the area of the proposed new development. The features recorded on the site seem concentrated to the west and south of the site (Fig. 3), whilst the linear features have potential to extend beyond the area of proposed development.

References

- BGS, 1969, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 202, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Cooper, N J (ed), 2006, *The Archaeology of the East Midlands: an archaeological resource assessment and research agenda*
- Hillson, S, 1992, *Mammal Bones and Teeth*, Institute of Archaeology, London
- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
- Taylor, J, Foard, G, Laughton, J, Steadman, S and Ballinger, J 2002, *Towcester, Northamptonshire Extensive Urban Survey*, English Heritage/ Northamptonshire County Council, Northampton

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at south or west end

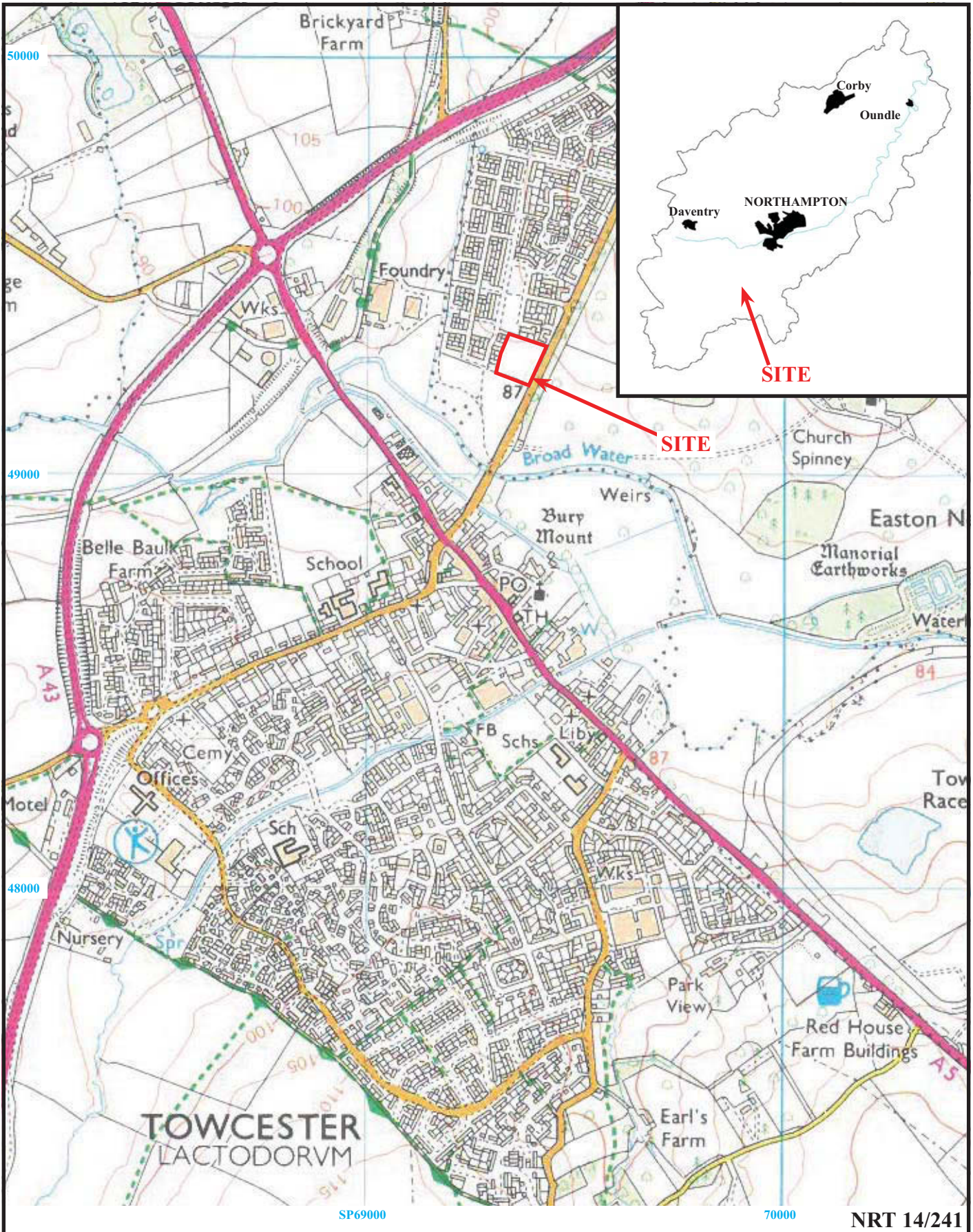
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	19.80	1.60	0.58	0-0.15m topsoil, 0.15-0.38m mid orange grey silty clay subsoil, 0.38+m mid-dark orangey grey sandy clay natural geology. Undated gullies 1 and 2.
2	19.40	1.60	0.52	0-0.15m topsoil, 0.15-0.38m mid orange grey silty clay subsoil, 0.38+m natural geology. Gully 3. [Pl. 4]
3	21.90	1.60	0.62	0-0.29m topsoil, 0.29-0.57m mid orange grey silty clay subsoil, 0.57+m natural geology. Undated gully 4, Iron Age pit 5 and posthole 6; [Pls 1 and 5]
4	21.20	1.60	0.54	0-0.16m topsoil, 0.16-0.39m mid orange grey silty clay subsoil, 0.39+m natural geology. Gully 7. [Pls 2 and 6]
5	19.90	1.60	0.55	0-0.29m topsoil, 0.29-0.49m mid orange grey silty clay subsoil, 0.49m+ natural geology.
6	21.00	1.60	0.68	0-0.44m topsoil, 0.44-0.65m mid orange grey silty clay subsoil, 0.65+m natural geology.
7	23.00	1.60	0.70	0-0.24m topsoil, 0.24-0.67m mid orange grey silty clay subsoil, 0.67+m. Pit 9.
8	20.50	1.60	0.70	0-0.30m topsoil, 0.30-0.59m mid orange grey silty clay subsoil, 0.59+m natural geology. Gully 11 and pit 10.
9	20.90	1.60	0.59	0-0.20m topsoil, 0.20-0.54m mid orange grey silty clay, 0.54+m mid-dark orangey grey sandy clay natural geology. Gully 8. [Pl. 3]

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	1	52	Gully	Undated	None
1	2	53	Gully	Undated	None
2	3	54	Gully	Undated	None
3	4	55	Gully	Undated	None
3	5	56	Pit	Early Iron Age	Pottery
3	6	57	Posthole	Early Iron Age	Pottery
4	7	58	Gully	Undated	None
9	8	59	Gully	Undated	None
7	9	60	Pit	Undated	None
8	10	61	Posthole	Undated	None
8	11	62	Gully	Undated	None

APPENDIX 3: Pottery Catalogue

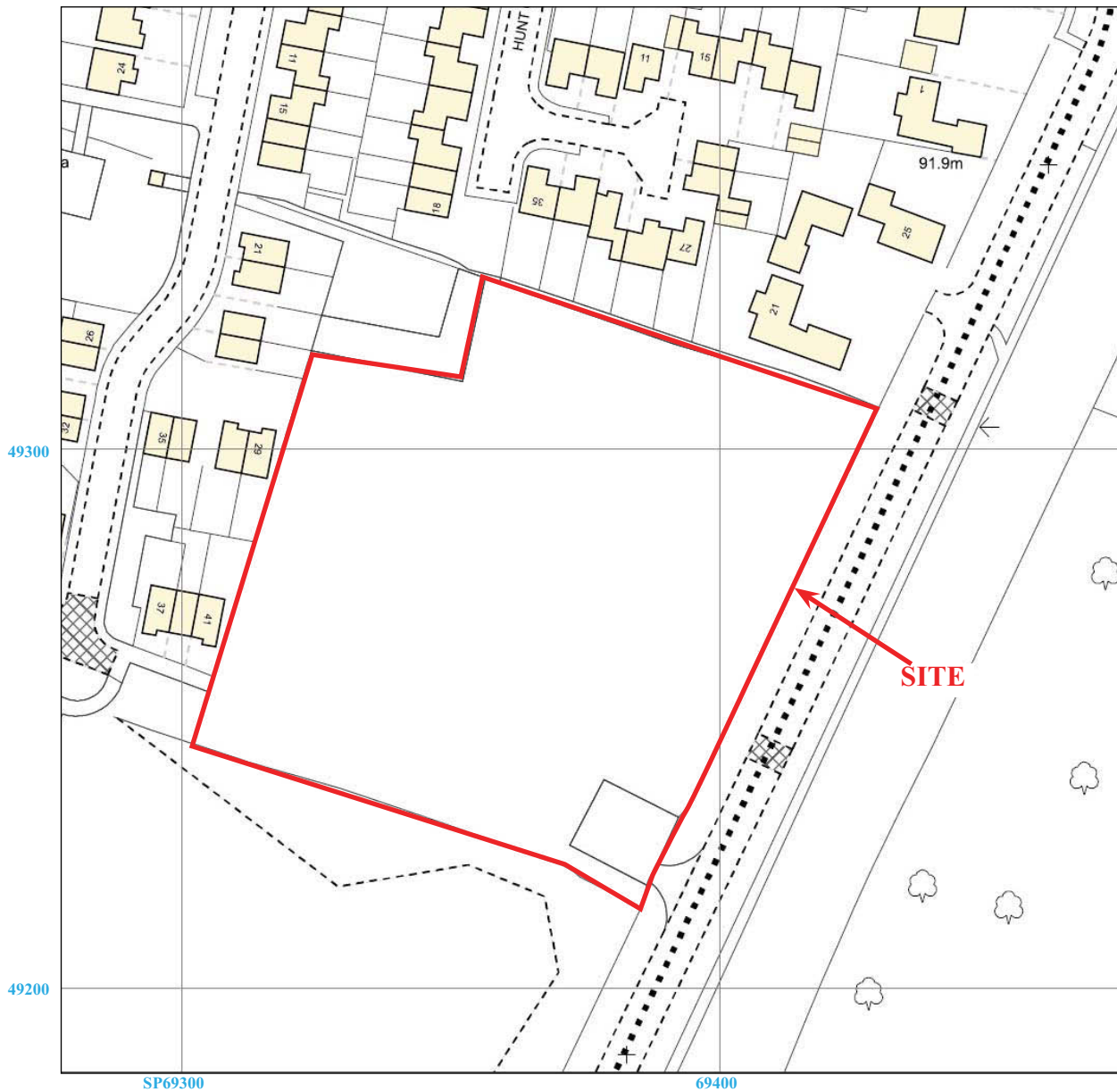
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Dep.</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Fabric</i>
3	5	56	-	1	15	Wall sherd	Grog tempered
3	5	56	1	3	3	Rim and wall fragments	Limestone and fossil shell
3	5	56	1	9	8	Split wall fragments	Fossil shell
3	6	57	2	5	3	Rim and split wall fragments	Limestone and fossil shell
3	6	57	2	2	2	Split wall fragments	Fossil shell



**Land at Northampton Road, Towcester,
Northamptonshire, 2015
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Figure 1. Location of site within Towcester and Northamptonshire.

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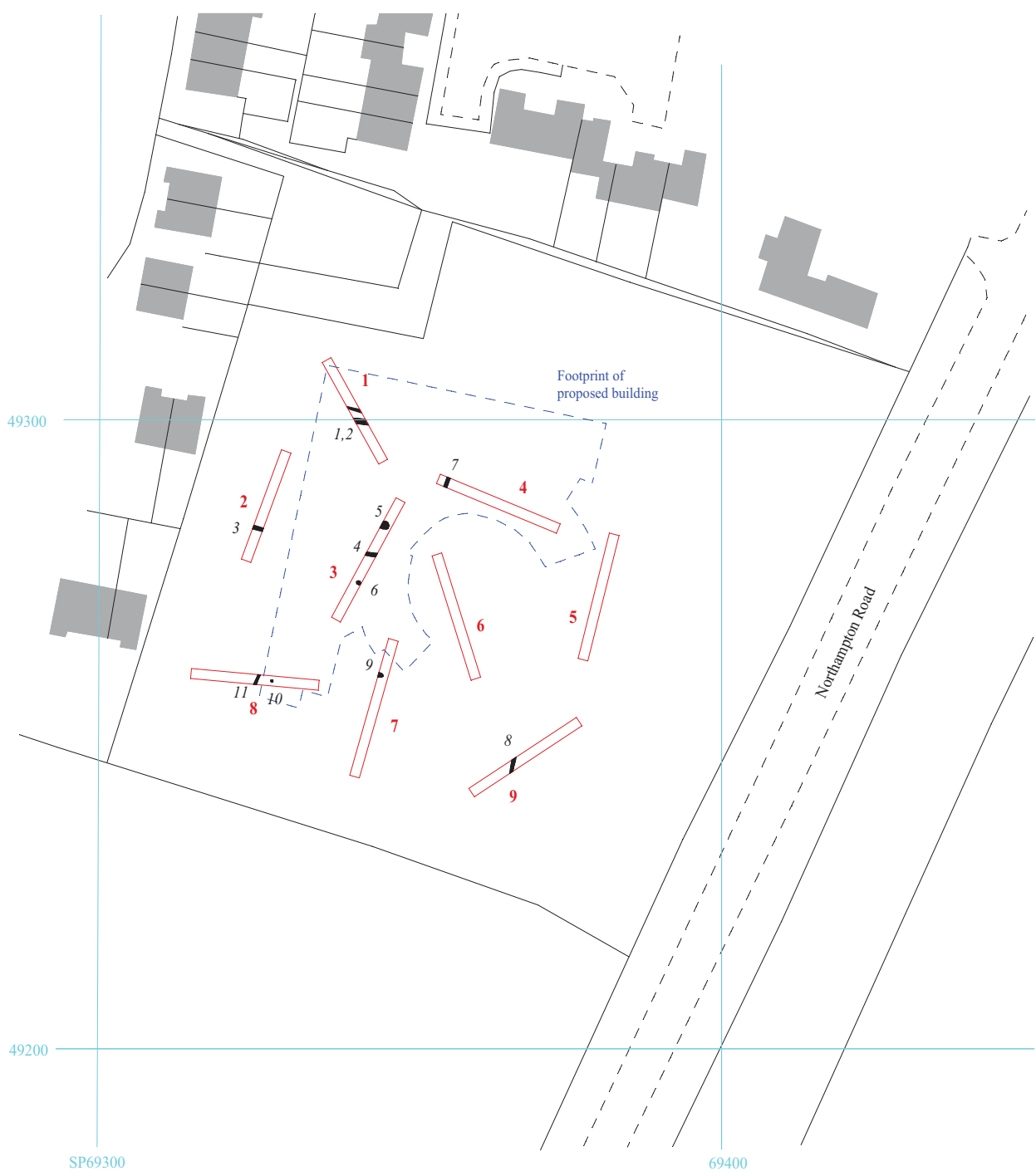


**Land at Northampton Road, Towcester,
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Northampton Road.

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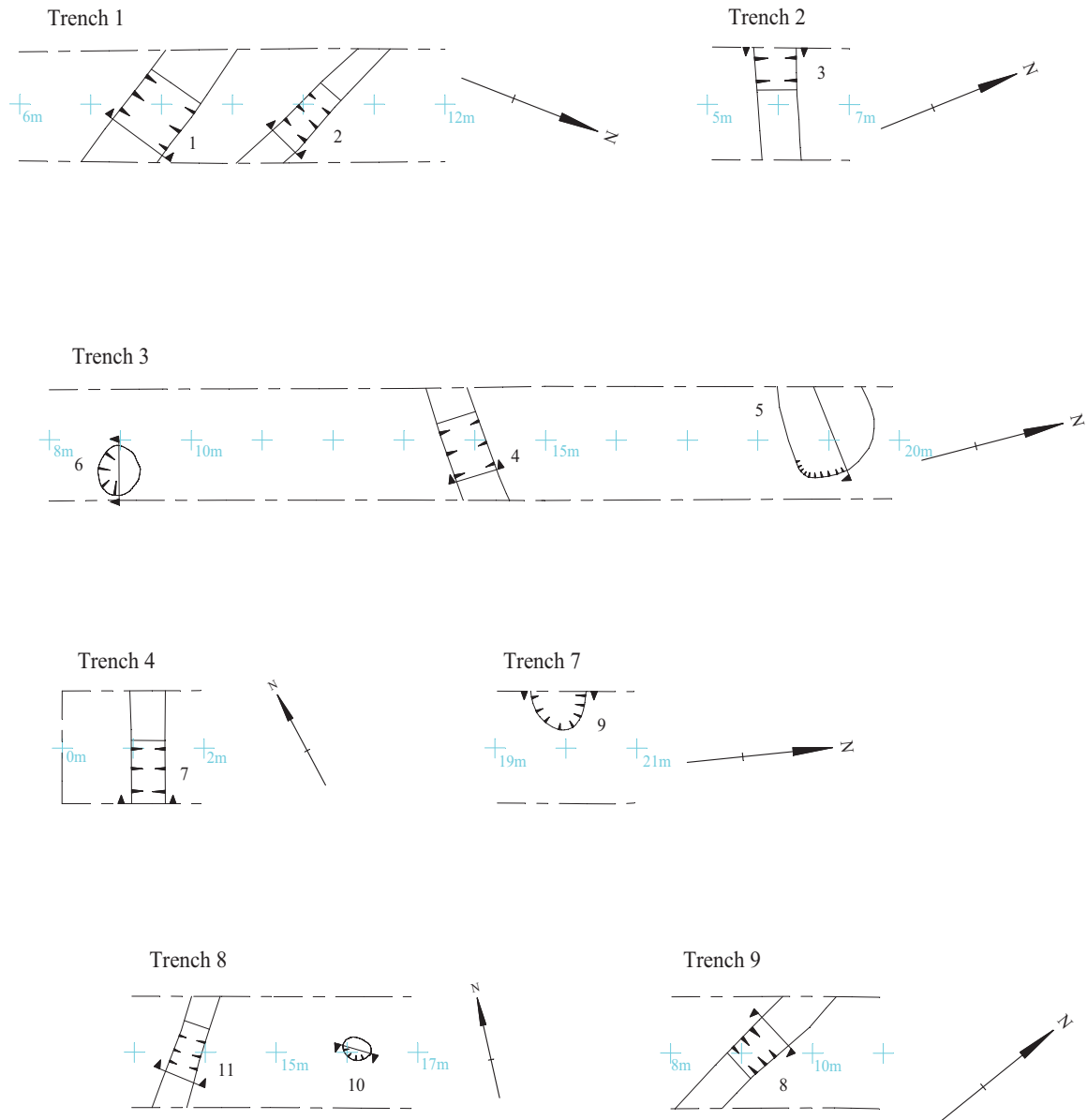
NRT 14/241



**Land at Northampton Road,
Towcester, Northamptonshire, 2015
Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 3. Location of trenches and features.

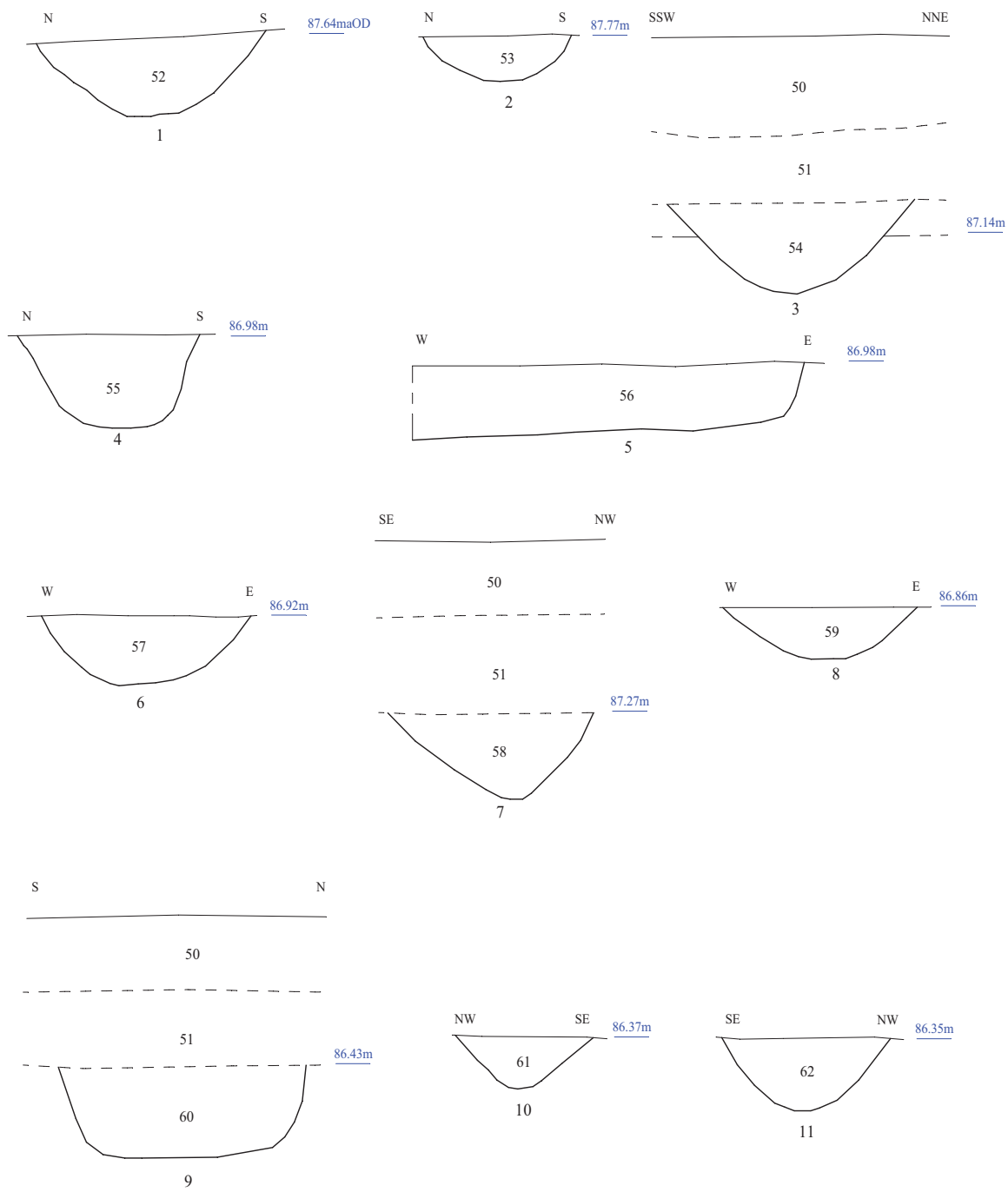




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Figure 4. Detail of trenches.





86.35m OD

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Figure 5. Sections.





Plate 1. Trench 3, looking north, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 2. Trench 4, looking east, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.

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Plates 1 - 2.**

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Plate 3. Trench 9, looking south west, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 4. Trench 2, Gully 3 looking north, Scales: horizontal 1m, vertical 0.3m.

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**Land at Northampton Road, Towcester,
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Plates 3 - 4.**

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Plate 5. Trench 3, pit 5, looking north, Scales: 1m and 0.3m.



Plate 6. Trench 4, gully 7, looking south, Scales: 0.5m and 0.3m.

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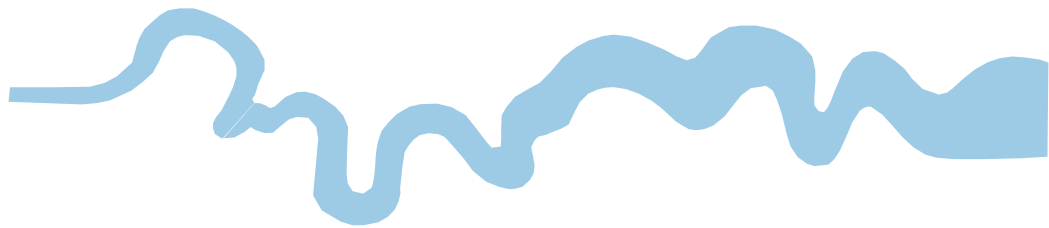
**Land at Northampton Road, Towcester,
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Archaeological Evaluation
Plates 5- 6.**

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TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
Iron Age _____	BC/AD 750 BC
Bronze Age: Late -----	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle -----	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early -----	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC





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