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ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Central M40, Land at Overthorpe Road, Banbury,  
Phase 2, Northamptonshire Section**

**Archaeological Recording Action of  
former Munitions Works**

**by Garreth Davey**

**Site Code: ORB15/150**

**(SP 4750 3990)**

**Central M40, Land at Overthorpe Road, Banbury,  
Phase 2, Northamptonshire Section**

**An Archaeological Recording Action**

**For DB Symmetry**

by Garreth Davey

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code ORB  
15/150

**November 2017**

## Summary

**Site name:** Central M40, Land at Overthorpe Road, Banbury, Phase 2, Northants Section

**Grid reference:** SP 4750 3990

**Site activity:** Recording Action

**Date and duration of project:** 17th May to 30th June 2017

**Project manager:** Tim Dawson

**Site supervisor:** Garreth Davey

**Site code:** ORB 15/150

**Area of site:** 2 ha

**Summary of results:** The evaluation revealed the remaining foundations of the former munitions works on the site, however no further archaeological features were identified.

**Location of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Northamptonshire Archives Store in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 13.11.17 Steve Preston✓ 02.11.17
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# Central M40, Land at Overthorpe Road, Banbury, Phase 2, Northamptonshire Section: A Recording Action

by Garreth Davey

Report 15/150c

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological recording action carried out at land on Overthorpe Road, Banbury, part of the Central M40 Phase 2 development (SP 4750 3990) (Fig. 1). The development site, which comprises the construction of large industrial/commercial buildings straddles the boundary between Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire but this report relates only to work carried in the latter county. The work was commissioned by Mr Tim Webster of D B Symmetry, Grange Park Court, Roman Way, Northampton, NN4 5EA.

Planning permission (S/2014/0302/MAO) has been gained from South Northamptonshire District Council to erect new industrial units on the site. This consent is subject to a condition (7) relating to archaeology. A separate planning permission has been issued for that part of the site which lies within Oxfordshire.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. Evaluation trenching on the site had revealed little of archaeological interest in this area but did indicate the survival of some elements of a former (First World war) munitions factory. As a consequence of the possibility that these may be damaged or destroyed by groundworks, further fieldwork has been requested, in the form of excavation in the field to the south and a recording action in the area of the former munitions works. This report deals with the latter part of the works.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Liz Mordue of Northamptonshire County Council, advisers to the District on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Garreth Davey and Luis Esteves between 17th May and 30th July 2017 and the site code is ORB 15/150. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Northamptonshire archives store in due course.

## Location, topography and geology

The site is located on a parcel of land of c. 2 hectares, west of the M40 near Junction 11 and to the east of Banbury, Oxfordshire, though the land for this phase of works is in Northamptonshire (Fig. 1). The general

topography is uneven scrubland. The site is bounded by further development to the north and west, with a disused railway line immediately to the south and the M40 motorway to the east of the field. The river Cherwell is located 600m to the south. The underlying geology is mapped as Lower Lias clays (BGS 1982): this was confirmed during excavation works. The site lies at a height of *c.* 90m above Ordnance Datum.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the general location of the site has been highlighted in a desk-based assessment (Ford 2004). In summary, the site lies beyond the historic core of Banbury but within the general area where a medieval hospital once stood (Spital). Within Northamptonshire there lay the site of a First World War munitions factory, variously referred to as either Banbury or Warkworth (Cocroft 1999, fig. 6.21). Prior to the War in 1914, high explosive filling facilities existed at only three centres, and the site at Banbury/Warkworth was the first to be added to the list, a decision taken in 1915, with building work commencing early the following year, by Messrs Willett of Slone Square, London. The bulk of the factory is now on the eastern side of the M40 with some components originally present to the west of the road. The current site is located at the southern extreme of this large plant.

The desktop study was followed by evaluation trenching (Ford 2008) in the Oxfordshire section with a second evaluation and recording action taking place in the Northamptonshire section (McNicoll-Norbury 2014; Bray 2015). The trenching revealed little of archaeological interest. A few undated or post-medieval field boundaries were revealed along with a few sherds of medieval pottery and a single sherd of Roman pottery. The fieldwork in Northamptonshire revealed very few traces of the former munitions works (Bray 2015).

The field immediately to the south of the current area is part of the phase 2 development site intended for the location of a balancing pond, and was subject to geophysical survey which revealed an extensive spread of curvilinear and linear anomalies thought likely to represent an Iron Age occupation site (Constable 2015) which was confirmed during excavation works in 2017 (Sanchez, in prep.).

## **Objectives and Methodology**

The area of the former munitions works site was to be stripped of overburden under archaeological supervision by a 360° type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket to expose the archaeologically relevant horizon and the remains of the former works, with the aim of ‘preservation by record’.

The foundations and other munitions works features exposed were recorded in plan and by photograph with a summary written record, with provision for selective excavation where necessary to clarify features of special interest.

## **Results**

A number of concrete and brickwork foundations were exposed during the excavation works (Fig. 2). In general the structures consist of a concrete base approximately 0.5m wide with the main brick wall structures then centralized upon this. The brickwork is primarily laid as headers with facing stretchers using the running bond in most cases; however some structures have an extra English bond for the facing. A number of extra concrete support pads suggest that the larger buildings also had internal support structures or features. The buildings are generally widely spaced apart which is likely for safety reasons given the nature of production on site. The buildings in the main 'danger area' would all have been 'mounded', i.e., covered in earthen mounds, and often surrounded by trees, to absorb the impact of any accidental explosion. Each of the sets of features exposed can be identified on the 1922 National Filling Factory No 9 map (Fig. 3). The buildings identified are generally larger structures located on the outer extents of the southern complex. Based upon the details shown on the map, these buildings served primarily as storage areas.

### *Storage Buildings*

Only a small section of wall is present at location 11 to the north of the site. This was one of the larger magazines for filled shells. It was noted during excavation that this area had been significantly built up with made ground and while there was no evidence for when and why this had occurred it probably represents contemporary 'mounding'.

The largest of the buildings (2 and 3) survives primarily as concrete pads with linear concrete footings. This is recorded as an exploder store. To the east of this along the site boundary (6 and 8) is evidence for a further structure, likely a further storage unit used as an acid or sling storage area.

### *Other Buildings*

Smaller buildings identified include 1 which is an almost complete footprint with both concrete footings and brickwork remaining, which can be seen on mapping. A small outhouse, 5, located between 3 and 6 however is not present on the National Filling Factory No 9 Map. Given the size of these buildings, it is unlikely that these

were used for production or storage and instead it is likely that these were related to complex facilities or conveniences.

A quantity of glassware for food storage and drink bottles was recovered during the excavations surrounding building 7 and it is possible that this may have been a canteen area however it is unclear and these may have originated from the sites later use as a military training facility.

## **Conclusion**

The recording action identified the expected remaining brick and concrete foundations of the World War I munitions factory however there were no substantial remains identified above ground. The recorded foundations correlate with structures shown on the south-western extents of the 1922 National Filling Factory No 9 map. Some of the remaining foundations appear almost complete whilst others are only fragments of the former structures (Fig. 3). Where identifiable, the foundations here numbered 6, 8 and 11 all correspond with 'filled shell magazines'. None of the other buildings is identified on the 1922 map but foundations 2 and 3 appear to be a loading shed at the end of a railway siding and footing pads 4 may have mounted an internal track.

No other archaeological features were identified.

## **References**

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## APPENDIX 1. Feature Details

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Details</i>
1	Building Foundation	Modern	Brick footings.
2	Building Foundation	Modern	Concrete blocks and footings. <b>[PI. 1]</b>
3	Building Foundation	Modern	Concrete blocks and footings. <b>[PI. 2]</b>
4	Building Foundation	Modern	Brick footing blocks.
5	Building Foundation	Modern	Brick footings.
6	Building Foundation	Modern	Concrete footings, with brick courses remaining.
7	Building Foundation	Modern	Brick footings.
8	Building Foundation	Modern	Brick footings, with brick courses remaining.
9	Building Foundation	Modern	Brick footings.
10	Building Foundation	Modern	Brick footings. <b>[PI. 3]</b>
11	Building Foundation	Modern	Brick footings, with brick courses remaining.
12	Building Foundation	Modern	Brick footings. <b>[PI. 4]</b>
13	Building Foundation	Modern	Concrete footings.



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## Project details

Project name	Central M40, Land at Overthorpe Road, Banbury, Phase 2, Northamptonshire Section
Short description of the project	The evaluation revealed the remaining foundations of the former munitions works on the site, however no further archaeological features were identified.
Project dates	Start: 17-05-2017 End: 30-06-2017
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	ORB 15/150 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	S/201 4/0302/MAO - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Recording project
Current Land use	Cultivated Land 1 - Minimal cultivation
Monument type	MUNITIONS FACTORY Modern
Significant Finds	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Recorded Observation"
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

## Project location

Country	England
Site location	NORTHAMPTONSHIRE SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE MIDDLETON CHENEY Central M40, Land at Overthorpe Road, Banbury, Phase 2, Northamptonshire Section: A Recording Action
Postcode	OX17 2FD
Study area	2 Hectares
Site coordinates	SP 4750 3990 52.055026991796 -1.307169530039 52 03 18 N 001 18 25 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 90m Max: 90m

## Project creators

Name of Organisation	Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Project brief originator	Local Planning Authority (with/without advice from County/District Archaeologist)
Project design originator	Steve Ford
Project director/manager	Tim Dawson
Project supervisor	Garreth Davey
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	DB Symmetry

## Project archives

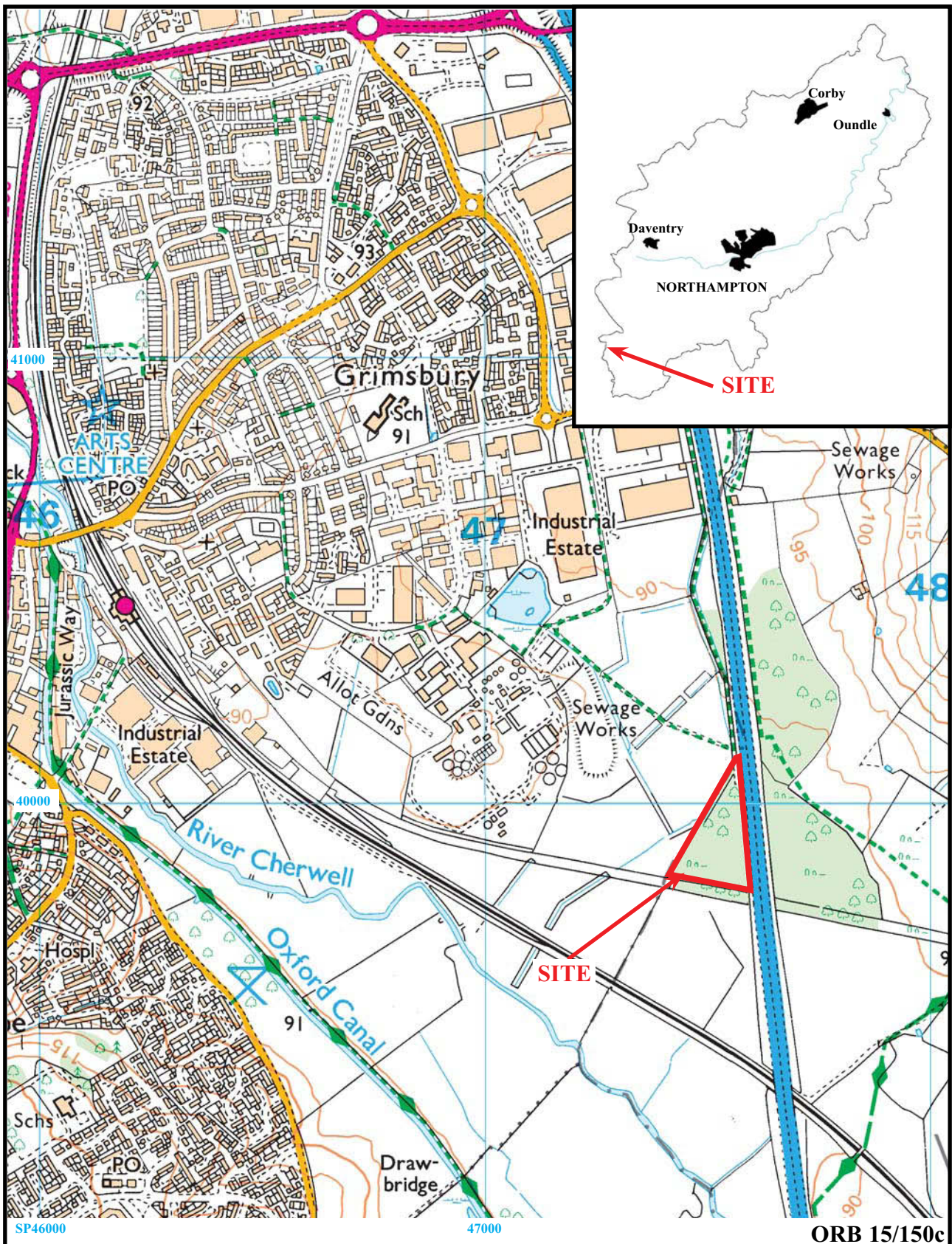
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive Exists?	No
Paper Archive recipient	Northamptonshire Archive Store
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic","other"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Miscellaneous Material","Photograph","Plan","Report"

## Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Central M40, Land at Overthorpe Road, Banbury, Phase 2, Northamptonshire Section; Archaeological recording action of former munitions works
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Davey, G.
Other bibliographic details	15/150c
Date	2017

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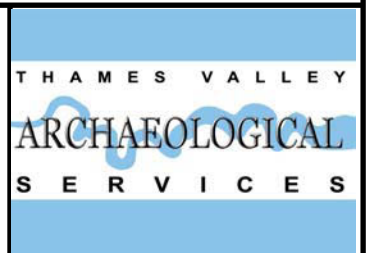
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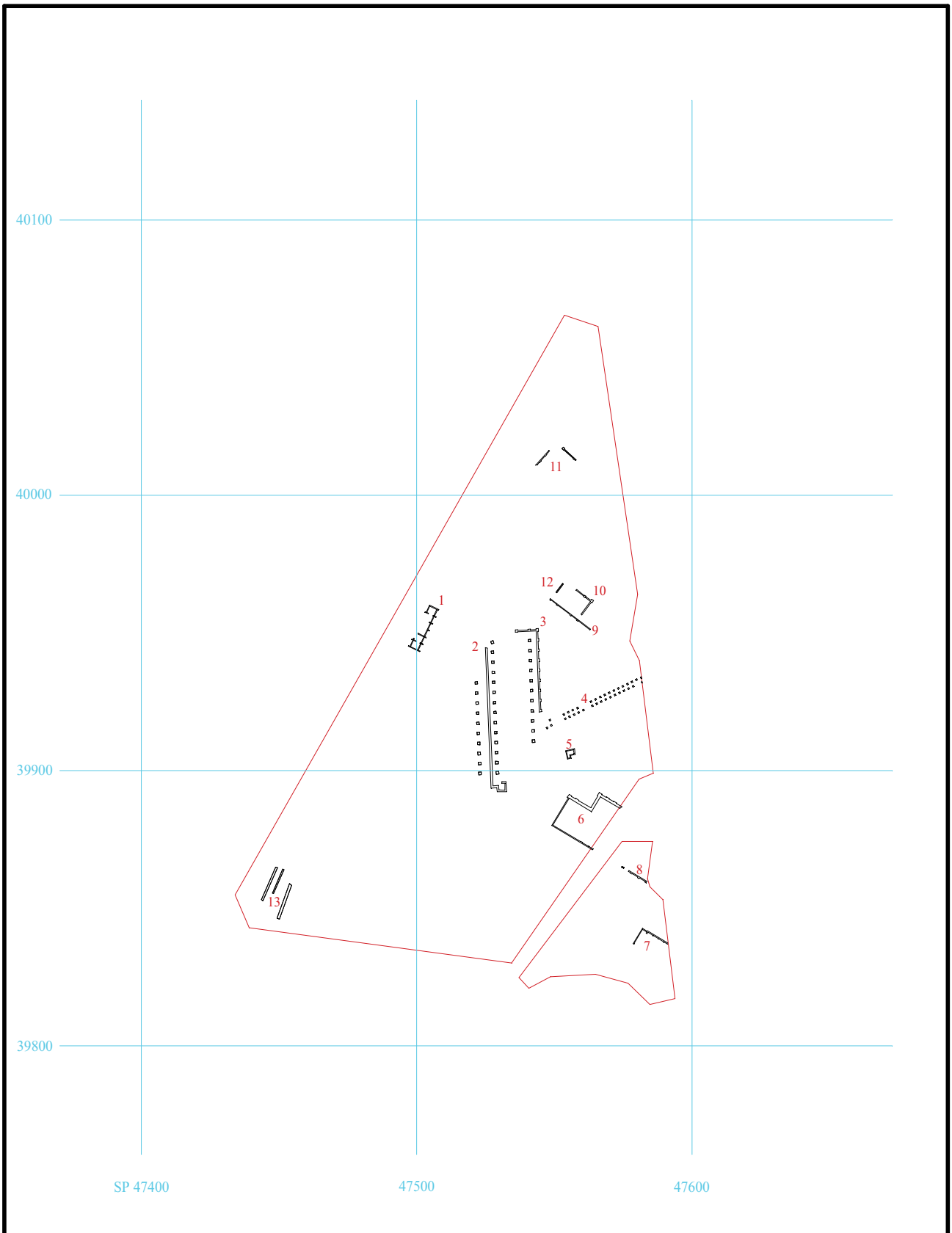


**Central M40, Overthorpe Road, Phase 2  
Northamptonshire Section, 2017  
Archaeological Recording Action**

Figure 1. Location of site in Northamptonshire and in relation to Banbury, Oxfordshire.

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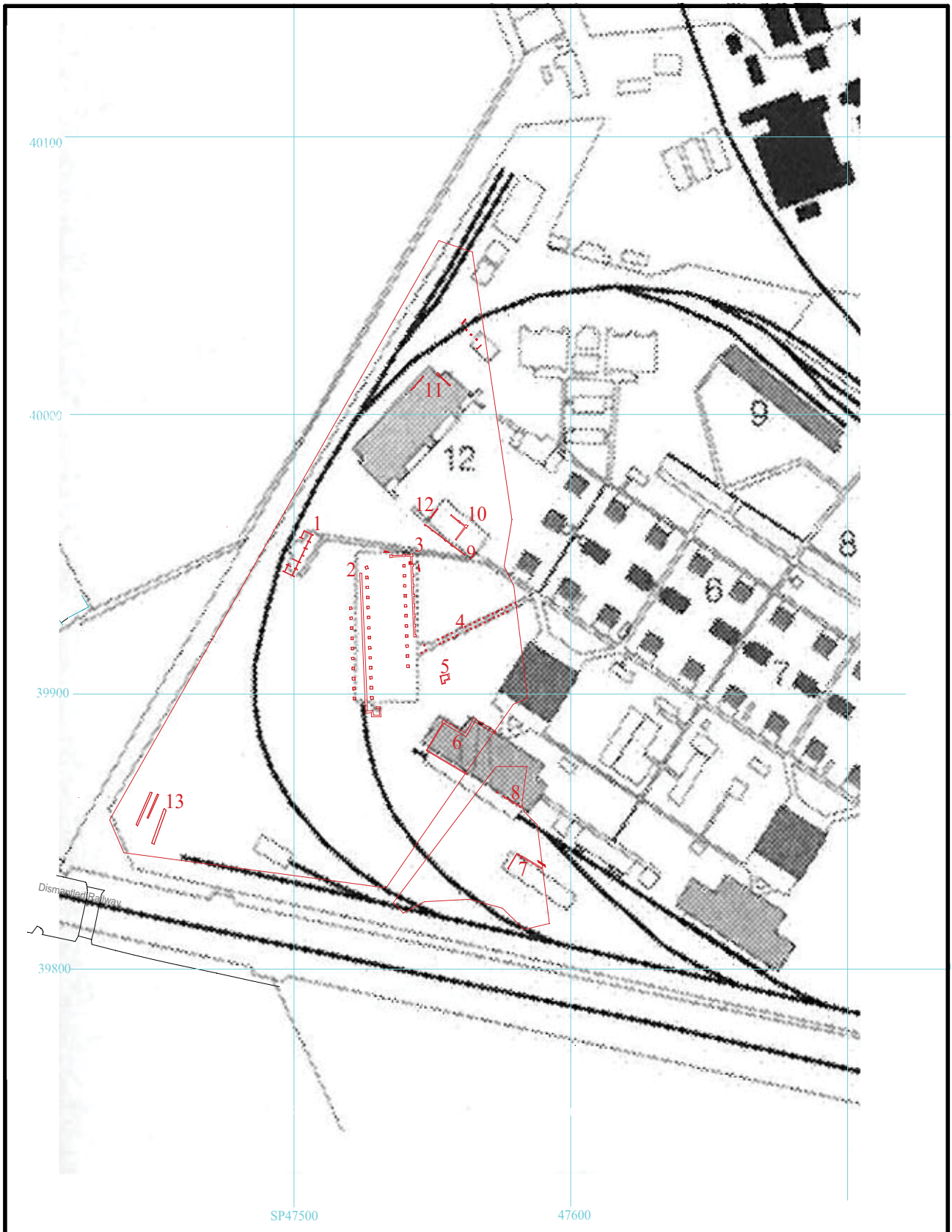
**Central M40, Overthorpe Road, Phase 2  
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Figure 2. Site plan.



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Figure 3. Recording foundations overlaid on 1922 map.



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Plate 1. Building 2, looking N, Scales: 2m and 1m.

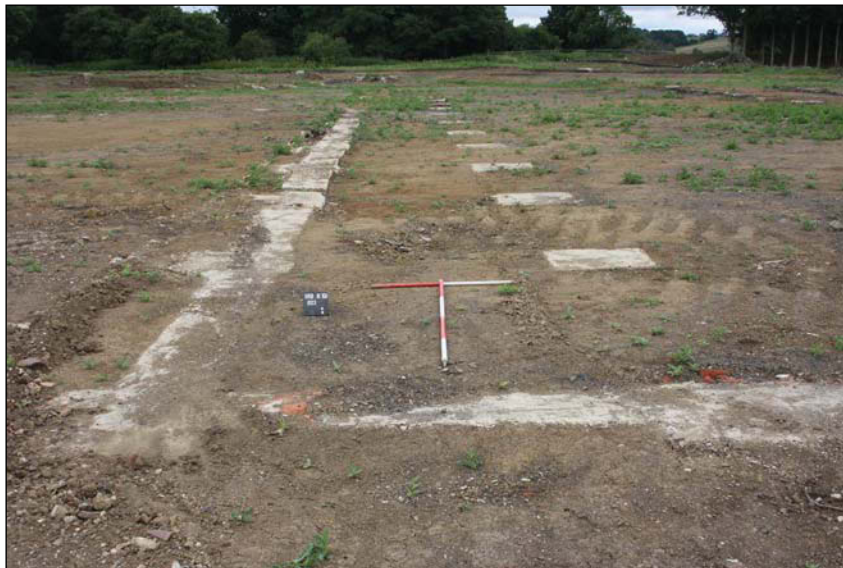


Plate 2. Building 3, looking south, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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**Central M40, Overthorpe Road, Phase 2**  
**Northamptonshire Section, 2017**  
**Archaeological Evaluation**  
Plates 1 and 2.







Plate 3. Building 10, looking east, Scales: 2m.



Plate 4. Building 12, looking east, Scales: 2m.

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Central M40, Overthorpe Road, Phase 2  
Northamptonshire Section, 2017  
Archaeological Evaluation  
Plates 3 and 4.

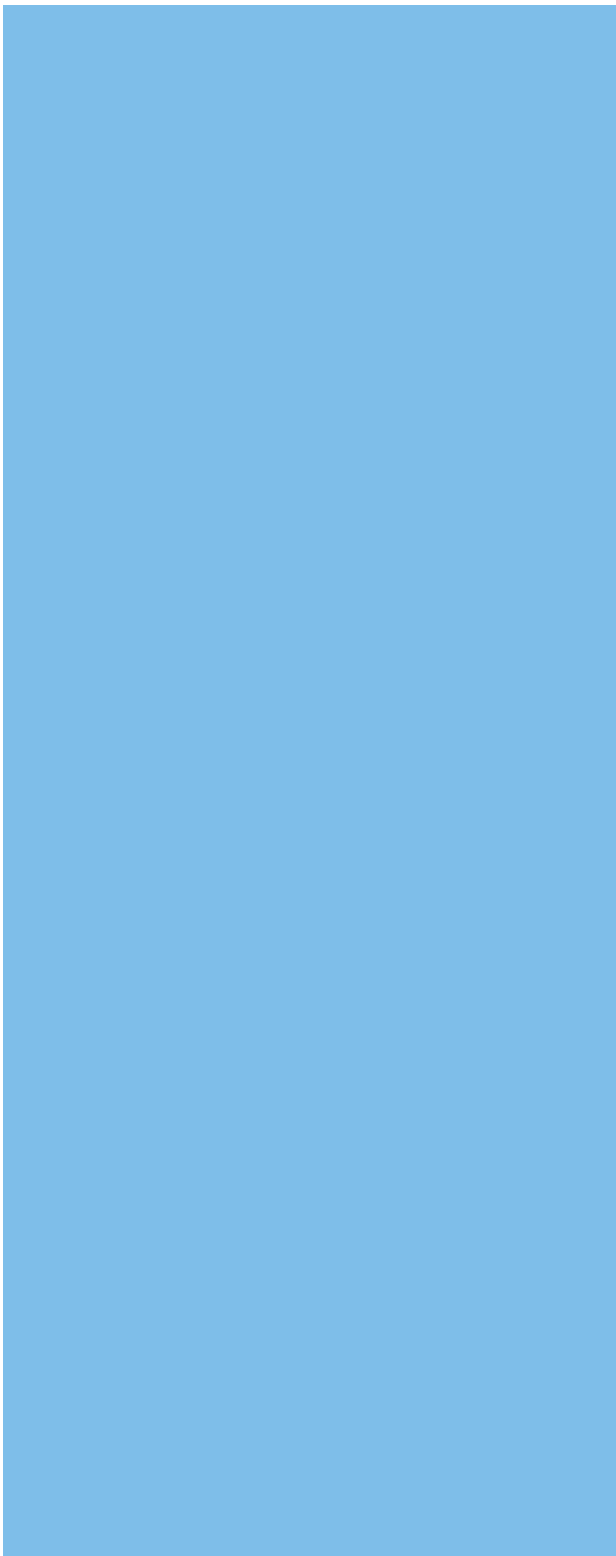
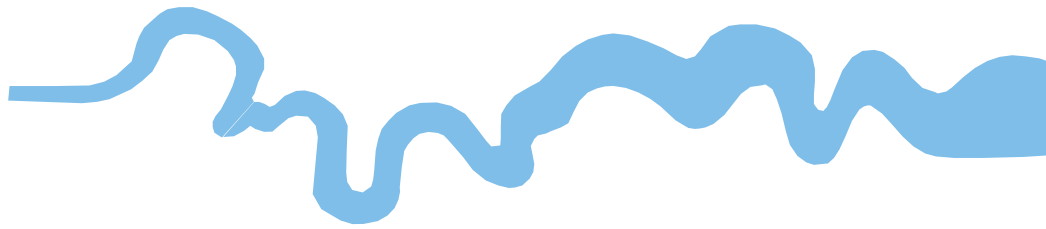


## TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43 AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	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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