Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological evaluation at the site of the proposed new parsonage, Tattenhall, Cheshire

Northamptonshire Archaeology
2 Bolton House
Wootton Hall Park
Northampton NN4 8BE
t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822
e. sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk
w. www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk

Northamptonshire County Council

Paul Mason

Report 10/03

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STAFF

Project Manager	Paul Mason BA AIfA
Text	Paul Mason
Roman pottery	Anne Thompson
Post-medieval pottery	Iain Soden BA MIfA
Ceramic building material	Pat Chapman BA CMS AIfA
Environmental evidence	Karen Deighton MSc
Fieldwork	Robin Foard, Paul Mason, Laszlo Lichtenstein MA
Illustration	Amir Bassir BSc

QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signature	Date
Checked by	Pat Chapman		
Verified by	Paul Mason		
Approved by	Andy Chapman		

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Archaeological evaluation at the site of the proposed new parsonage, Tattenhall	
Short description	Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook a trial trench evaluation on land at Chester Road, Tattenhall on behalf the Chester Diocesan Board of Finance who propose to build a new parsonage on the site. A pit dated to the mid-late Roman period by a small assemblage of pottery contributes to a modest body of evidence for Roman occupation in the vicinity. A cluster of undated pits and postholes could also be of Roman date – one contained a large assemblage of charred cereal grains. All six trenches revealed post-medieval features across the site, including ditches which correspond to boundaries depicted on the tithe map of 1838.	
Project type	Evaluation (TAT09)	
Site status	Semi-rural	
Previous work	None	
Current Land use	Field/scrub	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type/ period	Roman/post-medieval	
Significant finds	Roman pottery	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Cheshire	
Site address	Chester Road, Tattenhall	
Study area (sq.m or ha)	*c* 1525 sq m	
OS Easting & Northing	348700 358650	
Height OD	*c* 36m OD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	Chester City Archaeologist	
Project Design originator	Gifford	
Director/Supervisor	Paul Mason	
Project Manager	Paul Mason (NA), Anne Thompson	
Sponsor or funding body	Chester Diocesan Board of Finance	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date/end date	December 2009	
ARCHIVES	Location	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	CHEGM 2009.144 Grosvenor Museum	Pottery, tile, bone, flots
Paper	CHEGM 2009.144 Grosvenor Museum	Site records, photographic, drawings
Digital	CHEGM 2009.144 Grosvenor Museum	Mapinfo GIS data, photographs
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title	Archaeological evaluation at the site of the proposed new parsonage, Tattenhall	
Serial title & volume	Northamptonshire Archaeology Report 10/03	
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT THE SITE OF THE PROPOSED NEW PARSONAGE, TATTENHALL, CHESTER

DECEMBER 2009

ABSTRACT

Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook a trial trench evaluation on land at Chester Road, Tattenhall on behalf the Chester Diocesan Board of Finance who propose to build a new parsonage on the site. A pit dated to the mid-late Roman period by a small assemblage of pottery contributes to a modest body of evidence for Roman occupation in the vicinity. A cluster of undated pits and postholes could also be of Roman date – one contained a large assemblage of charred cereal grains. All six trenches revealed post-medieval features across the site, including ditches which correspond to boundaries depicted on a tithe map of 1838.

1 INTRODUCTION

In December 2009 Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by Chester Diocesan Board of Finance, who were represented by archaeological consultant, Anne Thompson, to undertake a trial trench evaluation on land at Chester Road, Tattenhall, Cheshire (NGR 348700 358650, Fig 1). The work was undertaken as required by Chester City Archaeologist/CWaC to support a planning application for a development of a new parsonage for Church of St Alban.

The evaluation complied with a method statement formulated by Gifford (Thompson 2009) with the fieldwork being undertaken between 7th and 11th December 2009. Six trenches were excavated across the proposed development area (Fig 2).

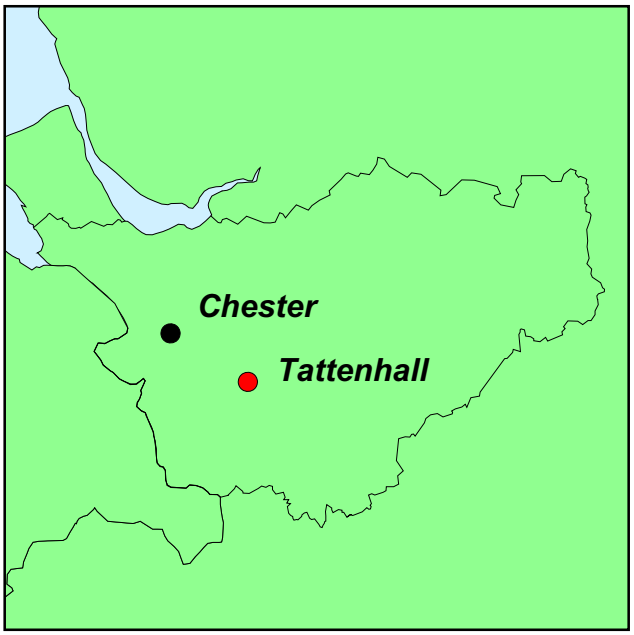
The site code TAT09 was allocated to the project and the accession number CHEGM 2009.144 issued by the Grosvenor Museum, Chester.

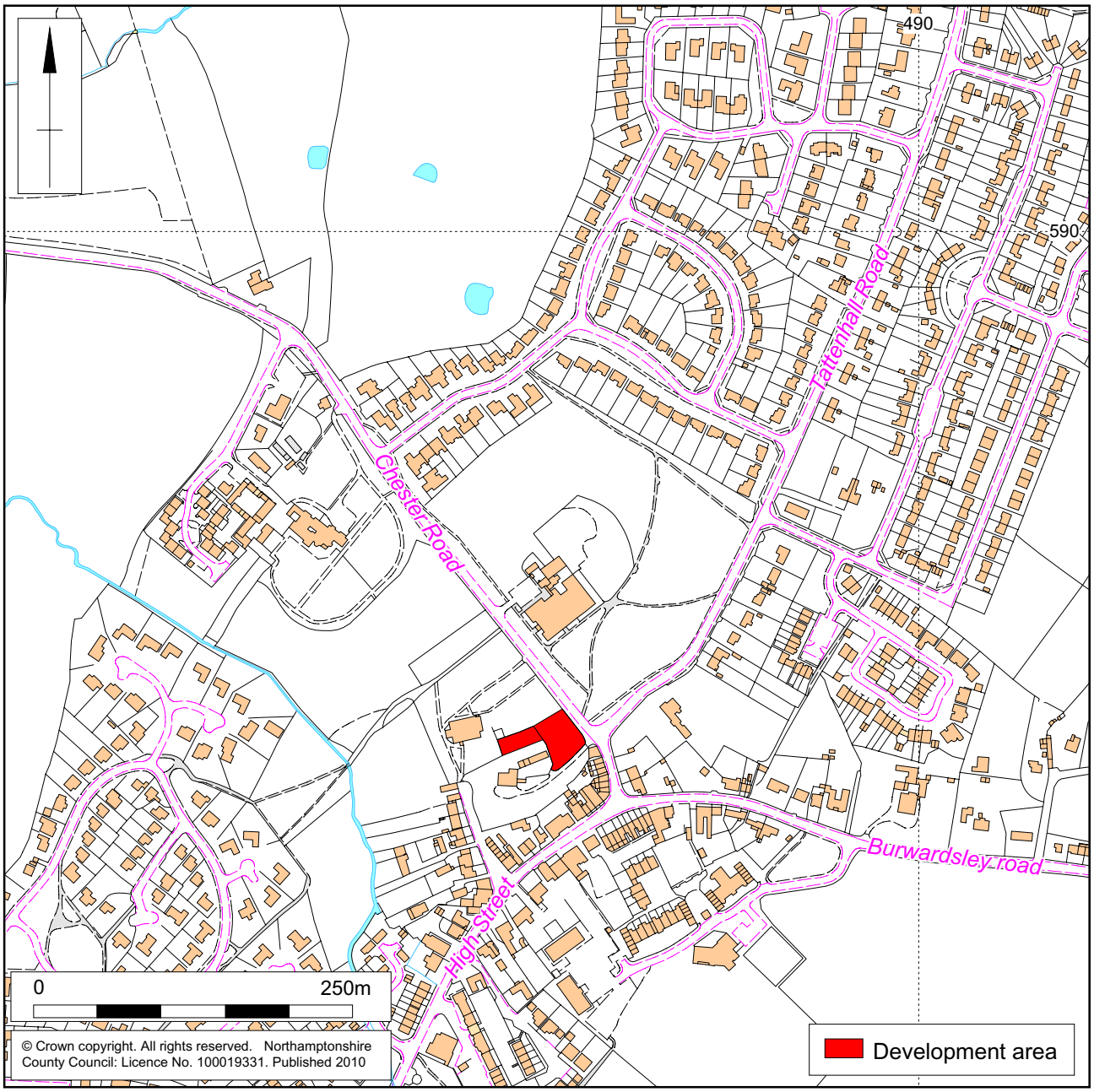
2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography and geology

Tattenhall lies eight miles to the south-east of Chester between the River Gowy and Golbourne Brook. The site is located *c* 60m to the south-east of the Church of St Alban and is bounded by the graveyard to the north and west, Chester Road to the east and the driveway leading to the Old Rectory to the south. At the time of excavation the eastern part of the site was a grassy field (Fig 3) and the remainder overgrown with shrubs and weeds (Fig 4); a line of saplings separating the two areas. The ground surface is irregular and lies at *c* 35-37mOD.

The geology is recorded as glacial till overlying Warwickshire Group mudstones, siltstones, coal, ironstone and ferricrete (www.bgs.ac.uk/Geoindex).





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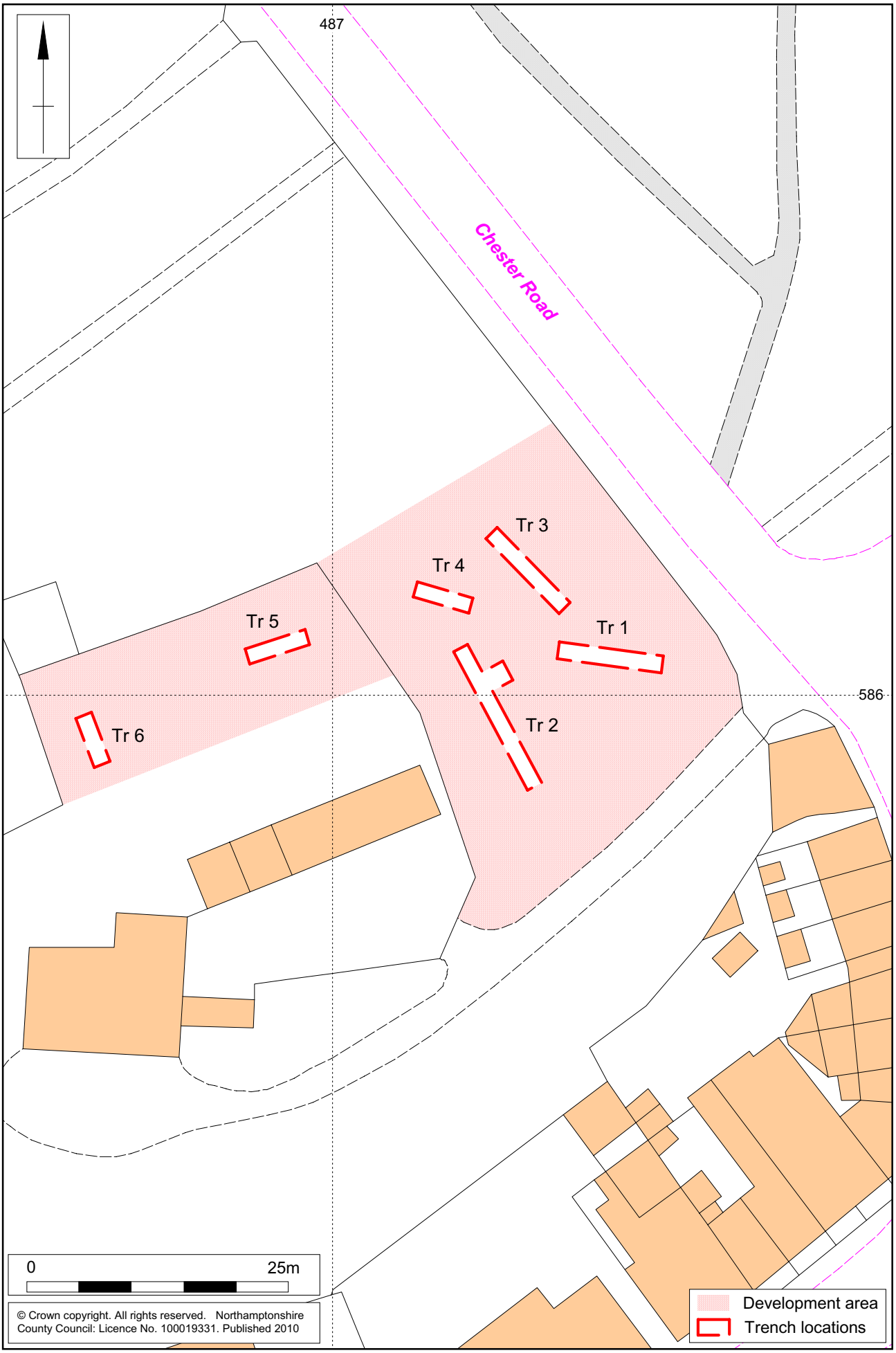
Site Location Fig 1



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Trench locations Fig 2

Pre-excavation view of the eastern part of the site, looking west Fig 3

Pre-excavation view of the western part of the site, looking west Fig 4

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

No previous archaeological work has been undertaken on the site itself. Much of the following summary of the site's historical and archaeological background is paraphrased from the method statement produced by Gifford (Thompson 2009).

Roman

In 1982, drainage work in the vicinity of the Church of St Alban exposed three sandstone blocks with painted plaster which are thought to be of Roman origin; sherds of pottery dating to the 2nd-4th centuries were also found (HER 2046). Two Roman coins were found at nearby Park School (HER 2346). Recent archaeological work in the graveyard has produced more Roman pottery, together with *in situ* stonework that appears to pre-date the medieval fabric of the church's north-east buttress (Cootes 2009), thus strengthening the argument for Roman occupation, perhaps a villa, in the vicinity of the site.

Medieval

Tattenhall, or *Tatenhale*, is recorded in the Domeday Book (1086) and the dedication of the parish church to St Alban is generally thought to indicate an early date. The first documentary reference to a church at Tattenhall appears in the Cartulary of St Weburgh's Abbey which suggests that it was present by 1101. The recent graveyard excavations have unearthed church fabric, pottery and encaustic floor tiles dating to the medieval period (ibid).

The main focus of the medieval village lies to the south of the church, with property boundaries along Church Bank and High Street retaining the character of burgage plots.

Post-medieval

Although the earliest map of Tattenhall dates to 1577 the first to show the village in any detail is the Tithe map of 1838. This indicates that the proposed development site was a garden orchard owned by the church (not illustrated).

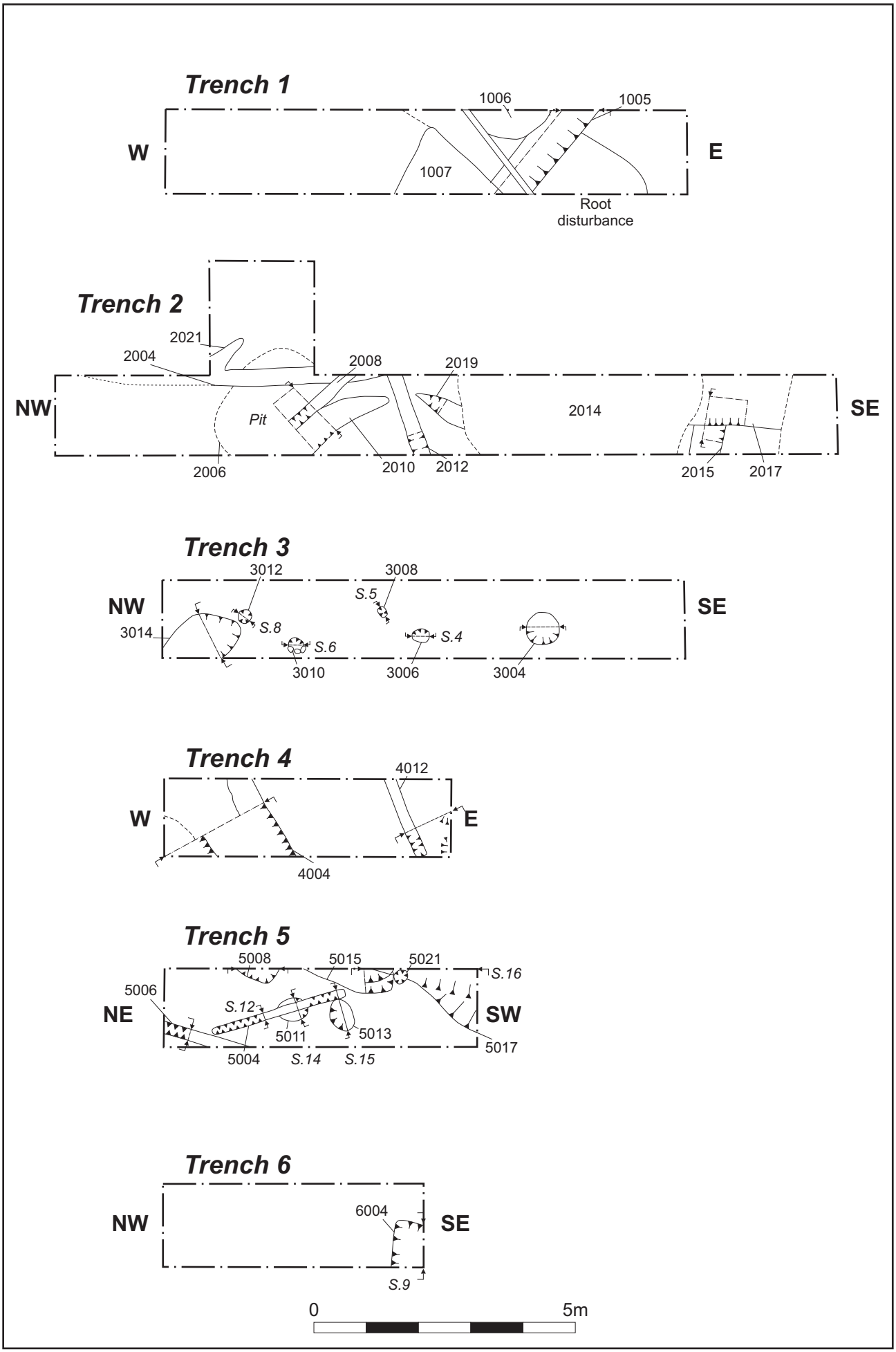
3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The method statement (Thompson 2009) defines the aim of the evaluation as follows

To determine the location, extent, nature, date, and quality of archaeological deposits/features within the site in order to determine what, if any, further archaeological works would be required as part of the development of the site.

The following objectives are stated:

- To record and characterise below ground deposits and the archaeological topography of the site
- To create full and proper records of all observed archaeological material
- To collect artefactual and ecofactual material as appropriate
- To prepare a report/archive of the results of the archaeological work and any consequent analytical work
- To take account of and inform local, regional and national research frameworks
- To further understand the history and development of human activity at the site and its immediate environs.



Plans of excavated trenches (1-6) Fig 5

4 METHODOLOGY

Six trenches were positioned across the site and tied into the Ordnance Survey using a Leica Total Station (Figs 2 and 5). All of the trenches were moved slightly from their pre-agreed locations due to constraints within the site - for the most part trees and thick shrubbery. Some were shortened; others were extended to achieve the required 53 linear metres presented in the method statement (Thompson 2009) and agreed with CWaC Archaeological Officer, Mark Leah.

Overburden was removed with a Volvo EC55 mechanical digger fitted with a 1.5m-wide toothless ditching bucket to expose the first significant archaeological level, or in the absence of archaeology, the geology. Cleaning of exposed surfaces and the excavation and recording of archaeological features progressed in accordance with the method statement (Thompson 2009) and in fulfilment of the standards set by the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (IfA 2008).

Finds were retained from all excavated features except those of clear late 19th/20th-century date which were recorded on context sheets and discarded on site. Representative samples of ceramic building material from a number of post-medieval features were retained for reporting.

Environmental samples were taken from suitable features following on-site discussion with the development control archaeologist.

Following the completion of the archaeological work the trenches were backfilled.

5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

5.1 General comments

The geology, a mid brown clay with orange and yellowish hues, was typically observed at depths of 0.30-0.45m below the modern ground surface, except in Trench 6 where deeper deposits of topsoil and subsoil were present and the geology lay at a depth of 0.60-0.65m. Subsoil, where present, was a thin and patchy clay loam rarely exceeding 0.20m thick. The clay loam topsoil, was 0.20-0.40m deep – the deeper deposits were noted in the western part of the site.

Constraints within the site necessitated the repositioning of most of the trenches. Trench 6 was shortened by 3m because of restricted working space. Trench 5 was extended by 1m and Trench 2 by 2m to compensate.

Archaeological features, mostly post-medieval, were present in all of the excavated trenches, however, a Roman pit was exposed in Trench 6 and pits and postholes of possible Roman date in Trench 3. Trench 5 contained features dated to the late medieval/post-medieval period.

5.2 Trench 1

Trench 1 (10m x 1.5m) was aligned east to west in the eastern part of the proposed development area (Figs 2 and 5). The geology (1003) was revealed at *c* 0.35-0.45m below the existing ground surface at *c* 35.65-35.90m OD. This was overlain by up to 0.20m of dark-brown clay loam subsoil (1002) and 0.30m of dark-grey sandy clay topsoil (2001). The ground exposed at the eastern end of the trench was heavily disturbed by tree roots. A layer of dark-grey silty loam (1007) containing modern pottery was present below the topsoil in the vicinity of a ceramic land drain (see below).

A 0.75m-wide, 0.40m deep ditch [1005] was aligned north-east to south-west in the

eastern end of the trench (Fig 6). It was filled with a light-grey brown clay (1004) containing 19th-century pottery, a single non-diagnostic fragment of 19th-century clay pipe stem, tile and a single fragment of animal bone. This was cut by a small pit [1006] and both were cut by a ceramic land drain.

Ditch [1004], looking north Fig 6

5.3 Trench 2

Trench 2 (15m x 1.5m with a 2m extension to the north-east) was aligned north north-west to south south-east in the central part of the proposed development area (Figs 2 and 5). The geology (2003) lay at a depth of *c* 0.40m below the existing ground surface at *c* 35.50-35.75m OD. Subsoil, a mid greyish-brown clay loam (2002) was only present at the northern end of the trench where it lay to a depth of 0.07m. This was overlain by a dark-greyish brown clay loam topsoil (2001), *c* 0.30m deep. A number of archaeological features were present.

Aligned north north-west to south south-east towards the northern end of the trench was a 0.20-0.30m-wide construction trench [2004] filled with roughly hewn pieces of red sandstone, broken bricks and large pebbles in a sandy clay matrix (2005) (Fig 7). This was probably a heavily-truncated foundation, with post-medieval pottery and nails lying directly over the surface of the sandstone. A probable south-westerly return [2012], even more severely truncated, was exposed to the south and a curving spread of sandstone and brick to the east [2021] may have been part of a structure.

Foundation trench [2004] was cut by a 0.20m-wide U-shaped gully [2008] which was aligned north-east to south-west in the centre of the trench. It was filled with greyish-brown clay (2009) containing fragments of sandstone. Gully [2008] had an unclear stratigraphic relationship with an adjacent shallow curvilinear feature [2010]. This curved into the centre of the trench from the west, terminating in its centre. It was filled

with greyish-brown clay (2011). To the south, gully [2019] may have formed an opposing arm; its fill (2020) was similar to (2011) – neither contained dating evidence.

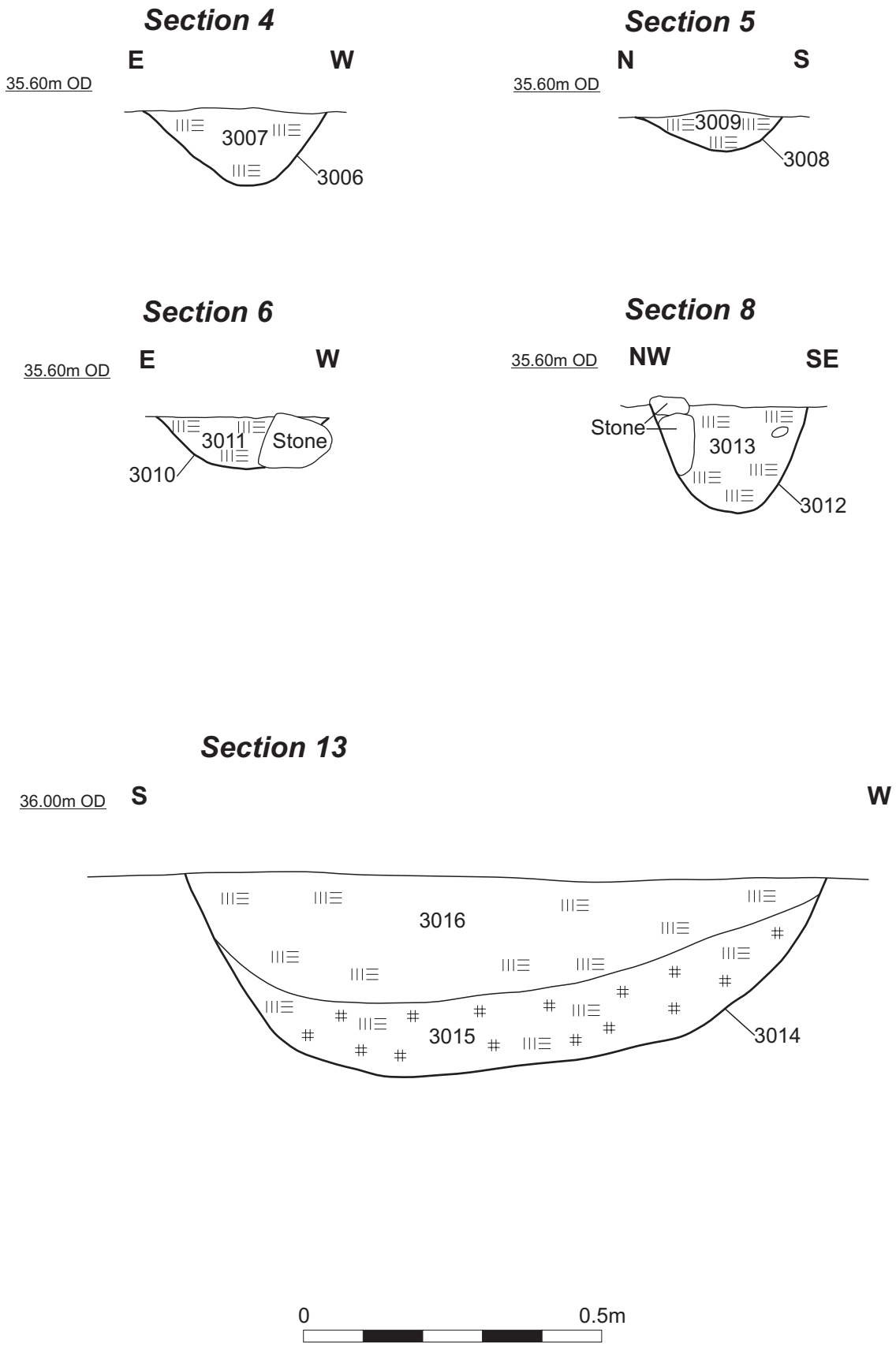
Wall foundation [2004], looking south Fig 7

Gully [2019] was truncated to the south by a large spread of crushed sandstone, fragments of mortar and dark loam (2014) compacted into the geology. Sherds of modern white earthenware pottery were found in association.

To the south of this spread of building material, and cut through the subsoil, were two intersecting gullies [2015] and [2017]. The earlier, [2015], was *c* 0.25m wide, 0.25m deep and aligned roughly east to west. It was filled with charcoal-flecked brown sandy clay (2016) containing 19th-century pottery. This was cut by gully [2017], 0.50m wide and 0.15m deep, and filled with material similar to that of the earlier gully. This feature extended beyond the southern end of the trench and was truncated to the north by the spread of debris (2014).

5.4 Trench 3

Trench 3 (10m x 1.5m) was aligned north-west to south-east in the north-eastern corner of the proposed development area (Figs 2 and 5). The geology (3003) was revealed at *c* 0.40m below the existing ground surface at *c* 35.45-35.55m OD. The subsoil, a mid greyish-brown clay loam (3002) was typically 0.10m thick and overlain by dark-greyish brown clay loam topsoil (3001), *c* 0.40m thick. A number of pits and postholes were present.



Sections of excavated features (4,5,6,8,13) Fig 8

Towards the southern end of the trench was a shallow, circular pit [3004] with a diameter of 0.70m. It was filled with reddish-brown sandy clay (3005) containing a single sherd of post-medieval glass jar, 19th-century pottery and a single goose bone. Close to the centre of the trench was a small, undated pit or posthole [3006] with a diameter of 0.30m (Fig 8, Section 4), filled with greyish-brown sandy clay (3007). A short distance to the north was a smaller oval posthole [3008] measuring 0.20m on its long axis (Fig 8, Section 5). Its fill was the same as (3007), but with the addition of two medium-sized pebbles that may have acted as packing stones.

Closer to the northern end of the trench were two more postholes, [3010] and [3012] (Fig 8, Sections 6 and 8; Fig 9). They had diameters of 0.25m and 0.20m respectively and were both filled with greyish-brown sandy clay (3011) and (3012). Each posthole had large pebbles compressed into their sides – almost certainly the remnants of post packing. The spatial relationship between these postholes and those already described to the south suggests that they may have defined a linear, north-south aligned feature such as a narrow path. No dating evidence was found in association.

Partially exposed at the northern end of the trench was a 1.05m-wide, 0.35m-deep, elongated pit [3014] (Fig 8, Section 13; Fig 10). Its primary fill was a 0.15m thick deposit of dark grey ash and clay (3015) suggestive of *in situ* burning. Fragments of highly fired clay were present and a soil sample <2> was found to contain a large quantity of charred cereal grains and weed seeds. This fill was sealed by a 0.20m deep deposit of reddish brown sandy clay (3016). The feature remains undated, but the leached-out character of the secondary fill, and those of the nearby postholes, suggests that they may be of some antiquity.

Postholes [3010] and [3012] and edge of pit [3014], looking north Fig 9

Pit [3014], looking west, showing charred-grain rich primary fill (3015)

Fig 10

5.5 Trench 4

Trench 4 (5m x 1.5m) was aligned north-west to south-east in the central part of the proposed development area (Figs 2 and 5). The geology (4003) was revealed at *c* 0.20-0.30m below the existing ground surface at *c* 35.35-35.50m OD. Subsoil was not present; instead a patchy spread of mid-brown clay loam containing fragmented ceramic building material and small pieces of coal (4002) formed the interface between geology and topsoil, a dark grey-clay loam (4001) with a typical thickness of 0.20m. A number of archaeological features were present.

Partially revealed at the north-west end of the trench was a large linear feature [4004] which is assumed to be part of a north to south aligned ditch exceeding 2m wide and *c* 0.40m deep (Fig 11). Its primary fill was a mid-brown clay (4005) containing fragmented pieces of red sandstone, some quite large, and broken hand-made bricks. This was overlain by a fill of more finely fragmented ceramic building material in a matrix of reddish-brown clay (4006). Along the eastern edge of the feature was a very distinct band of purple-brown clay and crushed sandstone (4007). These fills were re-cut by a 0.20m deep gully [4008] which in turn was filled with a dark-brown clay loam (4009) containing fragmented building material and a single sherd of modern white earthenware.

At the south-eastern end of the trench a similar arrangement of features were present. A partially exposed shallow linear feature [4010] was aligned north to south and filled with crushed and fragmented sandstone, ceramic building material and pebbles within a matrix of charcoal-flecked clay (4011). Pebbles and building material had been compacted into the geology around this feature. It was cut, on the same alignment, by a narrow linear gully [4012], 0.20m wide and 0.10m deep. This was filled with purple-brown sand, similar in character to fill (4007) of feature [4004]. Other than the fragments of brick, no dating evidence was retrieved.

Ditch [4004], looking north Fig 11

5.6 Trench 5

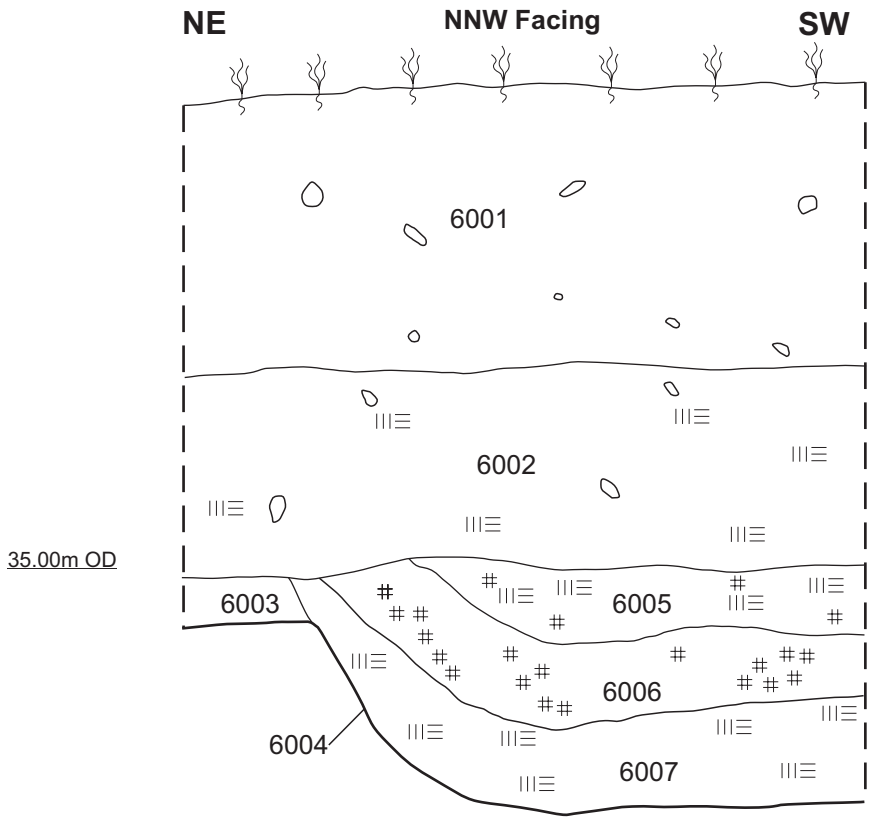
Trench 5 (6m x 1.5m) was aligned north-east to south-west in the central part of the proposed development area, a short distance to the west of the tree-line dividing the two plots of ground (Figs 2 and 5). The geology (5003) was *c* 0.40-0.50m below the existing ground surface at *c* 35.20-35.25m OD. The subsoil (5002) was a dark-grey brown sandy clay, 0.15-0.20m thick, and overlain by up to 0.35m of dark-grey sandy clay loam topsoil (5001). At the north-eastern end of the trench the ground had been disturbed and a dark loamy layer (5010), containing 19th-century pottery sherds, replaced the subsoil. A number of archaeological features were present.

Two of the stratigraphically earliest features were oval-shaped pits [5011] and [5013], located towards the centre of the trench. The former measured 0.50m on its long axis and 0.30m on its short; the latter 0.60m and 0.45m (Fig 12, Sections 14 and 15; Fig 13). Pit [5011] was only 0.06m deep and filled with charcoal-flecked, mid-greyish brown sandy clay (5012). Pit [5013] was 0.25m deep and filled with charcoal-flecked, mottled red and greyish-brown clay (5014). Neither contained dating evidence.

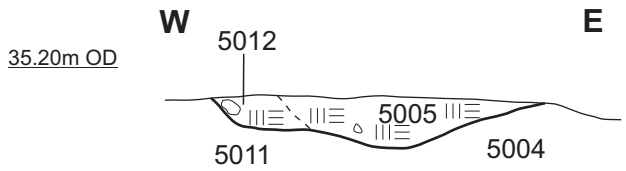
Both pits were cut by a north to south aligned gully or beam slot, [5004], which was 0.15-0.20m wide and 0.10m deep with a lens-shaped profile (Fig 12, Sections 14 and 15; Fig 13). Its fill was a charcoal-flecked, mid-grey clay (5005). At the northern end of the trench this feature was cut by a 0.25m-wide 'French'-style drain [5006] filled with fragmented sandstone (5007). The layer of dark loam (5010) was probably introduced when this feature was constructed.

To the east of gully/beam slot [5004], two pits were partially exposed along the edge of the trench (Fig 14). Pit [5008] was only 0.10m deep, sealed by the subsoil, and filled with mid-greyish brown clay (5009). To the south, pit [5015] was 0.22m deep and filled with light grey clay (5016) containing late medieval pottery. This too was sealed by subsoil

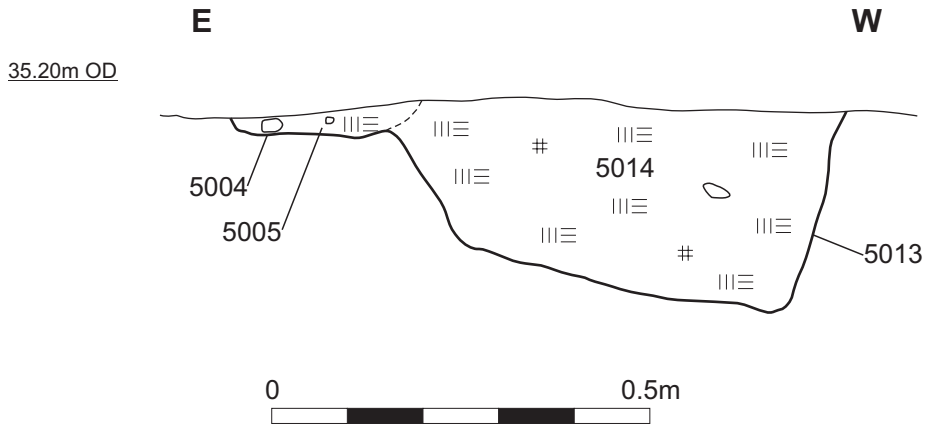
Section 9



Section 14



Section 15



Sections of excavated features (9,14,15) Fig12

Gully/beam slot [5004] and pit [5013], looking south Fig 13

Late medieval/post-medieval pit [5015] and pit/ditch [5017], looking east

Fig 14

- after being cut by another large pit, or perhaps a ditch [5017] which was partially revealed at the south-western end of the trench.

Pit, or east to west aligned ditch [5017], was at least 1m wide and 0.60m deep (Fig 14). Its primary fill was a 0.07m deep deposit of compact, brown sandy clay (5020), probably washed into the feature from its edges soon after cutting. This was overlain by a deeper deposit of light-greyish brown sandy clay (5019) containing fragments of charcoal and pottery dating to the late medieval period. Overlying this was a deposit of clay (5018). A posthole [5021] with a diameter of 0.10m was present against the northern edge of the feature but their relationship was unclear. Subsoil appeared to seal these features.

5.7 Trench 6

Trench 6 (5m x 1.5m) was aligned north north-west to south south-east in the extreme western edge of the proposed development area (Figs 2 and 5). The geology (6003) was revealed at *c* 0.55-0.65m below the existing ground surface at *c* 34.90m OD. The subsoil (6002), a dark-grey sandy clay was *c* 0.20m thick and overlain by up to 0.40m of very dark clay loam topsoil (6001). A single archaeological feature was present.

Partially revealed at the southern end of the trench was a pit [6004], at least 0.70m wide and *c* 0.35m deep (Fig 12' Section 9; Fig 15). Its primary fill was a compact orange-grey clay (6007), probably washed in from the edges of the freshly cut feature. This was overlain by a dark-grey silty clay (6006) containing fragments of charcoal, frequent pebbles and Roman pottery dating to the 2nd-4th centuries. A soil sample <1> produced a small quantity of charred cereal grains. The upper fill of the pit was a firm reddish-brown clay (6005) which also contained Roman sherds. This was sealed beneath the subsoil. No other features were present.

Roman pit [6004], looking south-east Fig 15

6 THE FINDS

6.1 Roman Pottery by Anne Thompson

All of the Roman ceramic material from the evaluation was recovered from the fills of one pit [6004] and comprised seven sherds with a total weight of 100g. The ceramic record sheet (Appendix 1) provides the detail on the individual sherds which comprised:

- a 3rd-4th-century Hartshill-Mancetter mortarium with hammer-head rim decorated with reeding (to which an orange-red slip had been applied)
- a 2nd-4th-century body sherd from a Black Burnished 1 cooking pot
- and sherds from a 2nd-4th-century Nene Valley colour coated vessel, probably a beaker, with white painted linear decoration (at least four lines extending from a central point, like a star)

The material represents domestic refuse and suggests a 3rd-4th century date for the pit fill. The mortarium was recovered from the tertiary fill (6005) of the pit [6004], whilst the BB1 and colour coated vessels were contained within the secondary fill (6006). The vessels have all been imported from other parts of Britain as part of the Roman military/trade network and are not rare in the North-West region - although they add further support to the presence of a Roman settlement in the vicinity of the evaluation site. The ceramic material is therefore of local significance and does not warrant detailed study and has the main function to provide dating for the pit fill. There are no research aims arising from the ceramic material and no publication is merited.

6.2 Medieval and post-medieval pottery by Iain Soden

A total of nine sherds of pottery were recovered, spanning the period *c*1400-*c*1900. They are as follows:

Context 1004 Sherd of 19th-century under-glaze transfer-printed earthenware (5g)

Context 2016 Sherd of early 19th-century Creamware jar (9g)

Context 3005 Sherd of 19th-century Blackware pancheon (28g)

Context 4009 Sherd of plain 19th-century white-glazed earthenware (3g)

Context 5007 Two sherds of early 19th-century Creamware (12g)

Context 5016 Sherd of unglazed late medieval or early post-medieval coarseware (6g)

Context 5016 Sherd of 15th-century Tudor Green-type ware (0.1g)

Context 5019 Sherd of late medieval unglazed coarseware (1.8g), (hard proto-stoneware feel but water-abraded). Perhaps 16th century

The above sherds are unremarkable, few having any indication of form. They carry no suggestion of any trends of refuse disposal and are so small an assemblage (as well as being predominantly tiny sherds), that their dating may be considered tentative. Due to their size the capacity for residuality is great.

6.3 Ceramic building material by Pat Chapman

This is a small collection of post-medieval brick/tile and undated fired clay fragments.

There is the end of one brick (1134g) from primary fill (4005) of ditch [4004]. It is *c* 110 wide by 70mm thick (4½ x 2¾ inches) but slightly bloated from being overfired, either during making or from usage.

A fragment of fired clay (67g) from fill (4011) of gully [4010] is 25mm thick and made

from red-brown fine silty clay with some calcareous inclusions. It is most likely to be a brick fragment. The six orange-brown sandy fragments (76g) from fill (1004) of post-medieval ditch [1005], fill (3005) of post-medieval ditch [3004], and fill (5005) of gully [5004] are probably the worn fragments of bricks as well.

The possible brick fragment (396g) from fill (4011) of gully [4010] is 56mm thick and made from hard fine sandy clay with occasional gravel up to 18mm long and fired to reddish-brown to black on one side. It is very worn with gravel inclusions up to 20mm standing proud of the surfaces, and could perhaps be a fragment of kiln furniture.

A floor tile sherd (104g) from fill (1004) of post-medieval ditch [1005], is 35mm thick with a chamfered edge and black salt glaze surfaces. It is made from coarse pink-brown clay with frequent flint and gravel inclusions.

The fired clay from primary fill (3015) of pit [3014] comprises twelve fragments (98g) of varying sizes, eleven black pieces and one pale buff to black.

Fuel

Four cinder fragments from (1004) weigh 2g; two bits of coal from (4002) weigh 6g.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

7.1 **Animal bone** by Karen Deighton

A total of 39g of animal was recovered from a possible Roman context and two post-medieval contexts. This material was assessed to determine the level of preservation, the species present, the potential to contribute to the understanding of the site and to inform on future collection strategies.

The material was scanned and identified to taxon where possible. The level of preservation and any modification was also noted.

Bone was heavily fragmented with a low level of surface abrasion. No evidence of canid gnawing or butchery was noted. Indeterminate burned bone was recovered from context (1004) the fill of a post-medieval ditch. The following species were present:

Table 1: Animal bone: species by context

Cut/fill	**1005/1004**	**3004/3005**	**5017/5019**
Feature	**Ditch**	**Pit**	**Pit**
Date	Post-medieval	Post-medieval	Post-medieval
Cattle			1
Goose		1	
Indeterminate	1		

Assessment has shown a small assemblage with little potential for further work. However, the presence of identifiable bone has been demonstrated which suggests that the collection of more bone from secure phaseable/dateable contexts, should further excavation take place, would at least provide an indication of the species present.

7.2 **The charred plant material** by Karen Deighton

Two 20-litre samples were collected by hand from two contexts: Roman pit fill (6006) and undated pit fill (3015). This material was assessed to determine the presence, nature and preservation of any ecofacts. The potential contribution to the understanding of the site was also considered.

The samples were processed using a modified siraf tank fitted with a 500-micron mesh and 250-micron flot sieve. The resulting flot was dried and sorted for ecofacts using a binocular microscope (10X magnification). Identifications were made with the aid of the author's small reference collection, the atlases Cappers et al(2006), Jacomet(2006) and Schoch et al(1988) and the SCRI website. Residues were also dried and scanned. The size of sample 2 made sub-sampling of the flot necessary (one eighth was examined) and estimates (given in brackets in Table 2) were consequently made.

Preservation was solely by charring. Fragmentation and abrasion were moderate. The following taxa were present:

Table 2: Taxa present in Samples 1 and 2

Common name	**Latin name**	**Sample 1 (6006)**	**Sample 2 (3015)**
Cereal grains			
Spelt	*Triticum spelta*		34(272)
Breadwheat	*Triticum aestivum*		116(928)
Hulled Barley	*Hordeum vulgare*		112(896)
Naked Barley	*Hordeum vulgare var nudum*		48(384)
Oat	*Avena sativa*		4(32)
Breadwheat/Naked Barley	*T.aestivum/H.vulgare*		2(16)
Cereal indet	*Cerealia*	8	
Chaff			
Emmer/Spelt	*T.dicocum/spelta*		1(1)
Breadwheat	*T.aestivum*		2(16)
Pulse			
Celtic bean			6(48)
Common /fodder Vetch	*Vicia cf villosa/sativa*		96(768)
Indet pulse		1	9(72)
Wild/weed			
Amphibious Bistort	*Persicaria amphibian*		28(224)
Sheep sorel	*Rumex acetosella*		8(64)
Stinking Mayweed	*Anthemis cotula*		22(176)
Nipplewort			13(104)
Fat hen	*Chenopodium album*		67(536)
/Daisy family	*Apicae/Asteracae*		13(104)
Wild Turnip family	*Brassica*		9(72)

Common name	Latin name	Sample 1 (6006)	Sample 2 (3015)
Cereal grains			
Spelt	*Triticum spelta*		34(272)
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Cereal indet	*Cerealia*	8	
Chaff			
Emmer/Spelt	*T.dicocum/spelta*		1(1)
Breadwheat	*T.aestivum*		2(16)
Pulse			
Pink family	*Caryophalaceae*		3(24)
Buttercup sp	*Ranunculus sp*		1(8)
Nutshell indet			2(16)
Charcoal			

Discussion

Sample 1 appears to be background, i.e. material washed or blown into the feature from activities taking place elsewhere. The mixed nature of Sample 2 and the presence of a large number of weeds could suggest cumulative rubbish disposal. Many of the wild taxa present are common crop weeds (e.g. fat hen, sheep sorrel).

A large number and wide range of taxa were preserved in Sample 2. However is it difficult to ascertain if this is exceptional for this site and Sample 1 is the norm with only two samples. However, both samples demonstrate a reasonable level of preservation, which suggests if further samples were collected from secure phaseable/dateable contexts during the course of any subsequent excavations statements could be made regarding the arable economy of the site.

Assessment has shown further work could be profitable.

8 CONCLUSIONS

The trial trench evaluation has shown that archaeological features are present across the proposed development area, although their nature and provenance remain for the most part obscure.

The earliest dated feature lay in the extreme western periphery of the site where a pit containing sherds of Roman pottery, probably domestic waste, was present in Trench 6. This enigmatic feature adds to the growing body of evidence for Roman occupation in close vicinity to the site, such as the recent discovery of Roman pottery and possible structural remains underlying the Church of St Alban, a mere 60m from the proposed development area (Cootes 2009).

Undated features of a form and character arguably in keeping with Roman occupation

were also found in Trenches 3 and 5. In the former these included a pit containing a rich deposit of charred grains and four small postholes which perhaps define a path or boundary of some description. The presence of spelt grains indicates that the pit must post-date the Bronze Age (Karen Deighton *pers comm*). In Trench 5 a gully and two pits were undated but could conceivably be of prehistoric/Roman date - although adjacent features containing late-medieval/post-medieval pottery would suggest that a later date is more likely.

Towards the centre of the site, in Trenches 2 and 4, were features of definite post-medieval date. Light foundation trenches backfilled with fragmented brick and sandstone rubble present in Trench 2 are clearly structural, yet no buildings appear on historic maps of the site. Spreads of building debris containing 19th-century pottery were found in close vicinity and are assumed to derive from this postulated structure. Further building materials, including red sandstone and brick were compacted into a pair of shallow parallel gullies or ditches in Trench 4. Their function also remains obscure.

Ditches in Trench 1, and perhaps Trench 5, would appear to correspond with the location and loose alignment of a boundary shown on the Tithe Map of 1838. The former contained 19th-century pottery, the later a single sherd of abraided late medieval coarseware.

Prior to the fieldwork commencing it was noted that the ill-defined boundaries of the churchyard raised the possibility of burials extending into the proposed development area. No evidence for this was revealed by the evaluation.

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Appendix 1: Roman pottery records

Context	Date	Fabric no.	Form no.	Glaze interior	Glaze exterior	Rim	Base	Handle	Spout	Body	Joins	Rim diam.	% Rim	No. of sherds	No. of vessels	Weight	Comment
6005	3rd – 4th	Hartshill-Mancetter	Mortarium with hammer-head rim			√					√	380	0.75	2	1	95g	Rim decorated with horizontal grooving (reeding) with orange paint
6006	2nd - 4th	BB1	Cooking pot							√				1	1	4g	
6006	2nd- 4th	Nene Valley colour coat	Beaker	Dark brown colour coat	Dark brown colour coat with white painted linear decoration					√	√			4	1	<1g	

Northamptonshire County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology

Northamptonshire Archaeology
2 Bolton House
Wootton Hall Park
Northampton NN4 8BE
t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822
e. sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk
w. www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk

Northamptonshire County Council