



Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological watching brief during water main
replacement works in Gold Street, Northampton
January – April 2009



Northamptonshire Archaeology

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Northamptonshire
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Report 10/17
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QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
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OAS/S REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	An archaeological watching brief during water main replacement works in Gold Street, Northampton	
Short description	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during water main replacement works in Gold Street, Northampton. One, possibly two, surfaces which may be the remnants of road surfaces were recorded sealed beneath clay deposits containing numerous small off-cuts of leather. These deposits are all undated. A brick drainage culvert of probable mid to late 19th century date was also recorded. This lay beneath and was cut by modern rubble deposits which were sealed beneath modern road surfaces. No other artefacts were present.	
Project type	Watching brief	
Site status	None	
Previous work	None	
Current Land use	Urban, public thoroughfare	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type/ period		
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	Gold Street, Northampton	
OS Easting & Northing	(Centred on) SP 752 604	
Study area (sq.m)	414m	
Height OD	66.8m aOD – c71.0m aOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator		
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	David J. Leigh Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project Manager	William A. Boismier Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Sponsor or funding body	Northamptonshire County Council Transport and Highways	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	January 2009	
End date	April 2009	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	Northamptonshire Archaeology (Museum to be assigned)	Ceramic building material (Bricks 108)
Paper	As above	Watching brief forms (31) Plan and section sheets (4) Colour slides (172) black and white contact prints (182) Digital photographs (402)
Digital	As above	Report text and figures

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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF DURING
WATER MAIN REPLACEMENT WORKS IN
GOLD STREET, NORTHAMPTON
JANUARY – APRIL 2009**

Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology during water main replacement works in Gold Street, Northampton. The work was undertaken on behalf of Northampton County Council, Transport and Highways. One, possibly two, surfaces that may be remnants of earlier roads were recorded. They were sealed beneath clay deposits containing numerous small off-cuts of leather. All of these deposits are undated. A brick drainage culvert of probable mid to late 19th century date was also recorded. This lay beneath and was cut by modern rubble deposits which in turn were sealed beneath modern road surfaces. No other artefacts were present.

1 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken between January and April 2009 during water main replacement works in Gold Street, Northampton (NGR SP 752 604; Figs 1-4,6 & 7). The work was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology on behalf of Northampton County Council, Transport and Highways and adhered to the procedural document MOrPHE issued by English Heritage (EH 2006) and the appropriate national standards and guidelines, as recommended by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008). The redevelopment groundworks were undertaken by MGWSP acting as contractors for Northamptonshire County Council. The redevelopment of Gold Street has included the widening of the footpaths as a component of the groundworks for the installation of a new water main.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and topography

Gold Street lies within the present day centre of Northampton on ground sloping down to the west. The street is a main thoroughfare within the commercial centre of the town. The geology has been mapped by The British Geological Survey of Great Britain as comprising predominantly Jurassic Ironstone, Northampton Sand with ironstone (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index.htm>).

2.2 Historical background

The town of Northampton, in common with many such economic centres, has seen its significance both ebb and flow through the centuries.

During the middle Saxon period a focus of settlement was centred on the area where St Peter's church now stands (Fig 3). Settlement was well established by the 8th century and may have formed a provincial or ecclesiastical administrative centre (Foard 1995). Excavations carried out adjacent to the present church located a large timber hall, dated to the 8th century, and later replaced in stone (Williams, Shaw and Denham 1985). This hall lay between the churches of St Peter and St Gregory, and the group of buildings has been interpreted as a possible ecclesiastical centre, a minster (Blair 1996).

During the 9th century Northampton fell under Danish control as part of the treaty between Alfred and Gunthrum cAD886, which fixed the boundary between Saxon England and the southern extent of the Danelaw (Williams 1982). The town was re-conquered in AD918 by King Edward the Elder, although it suffered repeated Danish aggression and in AD1010 the town was extensively sacked and burnt.

Before the end of the 10th century Northampton had been enclosed within a defensive circuit (Fig 3). A length of clay bank and the slot for a timber revetment has been excavated at Green Street (Chapman 1998-99), and this is believed to be part of a defensive circuit that to the east perhaps encompassed Bath Street, Silver Street, College Street and Kingswell Street (Lee 1953). To the east archaeological evidence is lacking and this hypothesis has been the subject of some debate (eg Welsh 2000). However, if the model is accepted then the implication is that the layout of the Saxon town comprised four principal streets: Horsemarket and Horseshoe Street running north to south, and Gold Street and Marefair running east to west. Gold Street is therefore potentially part of the earliest formal street layout within the town. Excavations on Chalk Lane Woolmonger Street and Kingswell Street (Williams and Shaw 1981, Soden 1999 and Brown 2008) have located late Saxon cellared buildings as well as other timber buildings and pits of settlement within the defended area.

Following the Norman Conquest and by the time of the Domesday Survey of 1086, the town of Northampton was regarded as a middle-sized county town with 40 burgesses. In the 12th century a castle was erected in the north-western quarter of the Saxon town (Williams and Shaw 1981), and it was a royal possession from the 12th to 16th

centuries (RCHME 1985). At the same time new town walls were constructed, taking in both the Saxon town and an extensive area to the east. The new town encompassed an area of approximately 100 hectares, and was only surpassed in size by London and Norwich (RCHME 1985). The focus for the town now lay to the east, the area around All Saints church and the market square, with Sheep Street, The Drapery and Bridge Street forming a major north-south axis. However, Gold Street and Marefair remained the major east-west route linking the centre of the town to the west gate.

Through the 12th and 13th centuries Northampton and its castle was a focus for royal visits, parliaments and other major events, perhaps most notably the trial of Thomas Becket in 1164. The succeeding centuries saw a decline in the status and economy of Northampton. Major fires in 1516 and 1675 saw the destruction of many of the towns buildings, and the dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century allied with royal retribution for Northampton's parliamentary stance during the Civil War added to the destruction of the medieval fabric of the town, although the town plan was recorded in the map produced by John Speed in 1610.

Northampton underwent a revival during the 18th and 19th centuries when it developed into a major centre for the production of footwear, although this industry has since diminished.

Gold Street has, therefore, been a main thoroughfare in Northampton since the middle Saxon period. The western end of the present day Gold Street lies at the junction with Horseshoe Street and Horsemarket, but originally the name also referred to Marefair, the name being changed in the later 18th century. As its name suggests the street once contained a number of goldsmith's workshops.

The earliest surviving cartographic depiction of Gold Street appears on John Speed's map of 1610, which shows it lined with tenements. Many of the present property divisions are thought to respect the burgage plots of the medieval town layout (Welsh 2006).

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The aims of the archaeological watching brief were to:

- ◆ Observe the groundworks connected with the water main replacement works and associated groundworks, and to record all archaeological deposits uncovered
- ◆ Determine the date, character, state of preservation and depth of any archaeological deposits observed and to retrieve all datable artefacts
- ◆ Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis

The fieldwork comprised the excavation of a service trench for the new water main. This involved the removal of the existing road surface across the full width of the carriageway along Gold Street followed by excavation down to the required depth. In consideration of public and commercial requirements the water main replacement work was carried out in three stages in order to reduce disruption. The groundworks were carried out using a combination of hand held power tools and 360° tracked mini-excavators fitted with toothed buckets. Three trenches were opened, the work in each being completed before the excavation of the next.

A photographic record in both black and white negative and colour slide was kept, with supplementary photographs in digital format. The written record used Northamptonshire Archaeology pro-forma sheets. The watching brief was carried out in accordance with *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological Watching Brief* (IfA 2008). Northamptonshire Archaeology standard Health and Safety Guidelines were followed and a full Risk Assessment was produced prior to the commencement of the archaeological investigation.

4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

4.1 Trench 1

The early deposits

Trench 1 (Figs 2, 5, 10, 11 & 23) extended approximately 78m from the western end of Gold Street at the junction with Horseshoe Street. It was 1.2m wide with a maximum depth of 2.10m below present ground level at the western end of the trench.

The natural substratum comprised compact reddish/brown ironstone which was present intermittently throughout the trench and was encountered at a depth of 1.5m below present ground level. This was overlain by a very compact deposit (1004), up to 0.15m

thick, made up of irregular fragments of ironstone, up to 150mm in diameter, with occasional small fragments of limestone (Fig 12). This was present throughout the trench, although cut through in several areas by modern deposits. A band of fragmentary river worn cobble stones, each a maximum of up to 100mm in diameter, mixed with an equal amount of irregular ironstone fragments lay above this. This deposit was a maximum of 110mm thick. These deposits can be interpreted as the truncated remains of a road surface.

Sealing these stony layers was a layer of compact mid to dark grey/blue clay (1005), up to 400mm thick, which contained numerous small off-cuts of leather and occasional fragments of animal bone. This was directly overlain by another layer of compact grey/blue clay (1013), up to 600mm thick, which contained occasional leather off-cuts.

The brick built culvert

Running along the length of the trench was a brick-built culvert (Figs 13, 14 & 24). This cut the clay layers and was set just above the level of the possible early cobbled road. It ran slightly obliquely to the trench line, entering from the centre of the western section at c65.4m aOD then crossing through the centre of the trench, exiting into the northern section of trench 3 at c69.5m aOD. This amounted to a fall of approximately 4.10m east to west, the corresponding fall of the street level over the same distance amounts to approximately 3.0m.

The culvert was constructed of red brick bonded with firm grey/white mortar. It had suffered some distortion in its form as a result of ground pressure and modern service groundwork and appeared to have been deliberately collapsed or dismantled for much of its length, as several stretches had been disassembled and the bricks stacked up within the void left by the culvert. A number of inlets comprising ceramic pipes, approximately 250mm in diameter, were noted entering the culvert at varying intervals.

The interior diameter along the horizontal axis was approximately 0.65m, while the vertical axis measured a maximum of 0.75m. Within the culvert at its eastern end, was a shallow fill of grey-brown silt loam (3002), up to 50mm thick. This was overlain by another shallow fill of pale grey/brown silt loam (3003), up to 50mm thick, containing occasional items of modern rubbish including plastic bottle tops and cigarette packets. Within the culvert at the western end of the trench was a grey-brown silt loam, up to 50mm thick, containing occasional small fragments of modern ceramic building material.

Overlying the culvert was a mixed modern deposit, grey-brown in colour, with a maximum thickness of 1.5m. This comprised numerous fragments of modern building material and concrete within a matrix of coarse silt loam. Sealing this was modern road surfacing, up to 300mm thick, comprising crushed modern hardcore sub-base and tarmac surfacing.

This stratigraphic sequence extended throughout trench 1 with the exception of a 5.0m section at the westernmost end where a distinctly different stratigraphic sequence was recorded (Fig 14). This comprised grey-brown sandy silt, up to 300mm thick, containing occasional irregular stones. This was overlain by clean pinkish white silt sand, up to 100mm thick. This in turn was overlain by clean pale grey/brown silt clay loam, up to 500mm thick, into which the lower half of the culvert was cut. Overlying this and sealing the culvert was grey/brown silt loam, up to 0.90m thick, containing numerous fragments of modern ceramic building material and small fragments of un-worked ironstone stone. Sealing this was modern road surfacing, up to 300mm thick, comprising crushed modern hardcore sub-base and tarmac surfacing.

At the request of local independent historian Alan Clark a section of the culvert was saved for future research each brick being individually numbered to allow for reconstruction should it be so required.

4.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 (Figs 2, 6, 15, & 16) extended from the eastern end of Gold Street at its junction with the Drapery and ran west for approximately 50m to the crossroad with Kingswell Street and College Street. It measured 1.60m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 2.0m at the eastern terminus and 1.72m at the western end of the trench.

The partial fragmentary remains of a possible road surface recorded in trench 1 were noted in the western end of the trench extending approximately 8m eastwards. This was overlain by mid to dark grey/blue clay, up to 200mm thick, containing occasional small fragments of animal bone. Sealing this were modern service pipes, comprising BT ducting and the present 20th-century cast iron water pipe which the current works are replacing. These were sealed by modern hardcore made up of crushed concrete and ceramic building material which was directly overlain by tarmac road surfacing.

Two apsidal-ended cellars were encountered side by side (Figs 6, 17 & 18) approximately 15m from the eastern end of the trench. They extended 0.72m into the trench from the southern section, approximately 4.5m from the frontage of the present buildings. They had been constructed of roughly cut limestone blocks bonded together with off-white mortar, the interior of the western cellar retaining a covering of whitewash. The upper part of each cellar had been rebuilt relatively recently using modern red bricks bonded with hard grey/white Portland cement. The apsidal end of the eastern cellar had been truncated and the cellar blocked off by a wall of modern red bricks. Each cellar was 1.40m wide and had been cut through by the existing cast iron water main. As the new water main is to pass through the line of the cellar limited demolition and reconstruction of the western cellar was undertaken. The western cellar currently functions as a store for a hairdressing business and the access remains open, whilst the eastern cellar belongs to a Jewellers.

4.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 (Figs 2, 5, 19 & 20) extended 80m westwards from the junction of Kingswell Street to St Peters Walk and linked trenches 1 and 2 after their completion. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 3.0m and was approximately 2.0m wide.

The stratigraphic sequence remained the same as that recorded in trench 1, although numerous large un-worked fragments of ironstone were noted within the modern hardcore directly beneath the modern road surface.

5 THE BRICKS FROM THE CULVERT by Pat Chapman

A total of 108 bricks were collected from a length of the culvert which was fully dismantled, and 105 of these have been examined. Two types of brick are present, distinct in length and width; a smaller reddish brick comprising just under a quarter of the assemblage and a larger brick more orange-brown in colour (Fig 21).

The 22 smaller bricks are typically orange-red-brown or mauve-brown in colour and generally better made. These bricks measure 190-195mm long by 90-95mm wide and 55-60mm thick (7½-7¾ inches x 3½-3¾ inches x 2⅛ - 2⅜ inches). This group includes one brick with a glazed finish on one surface (Fig 22) and a header. This brick could either have been a reuse from a demolished building or a discard from over-firing, as it is slightly distorted.

The remaining, slightly larger bricks are orange-brown in colour, varying in hue, often with large pieces of ironstone in the clay. These bricks are 200-225mm ($7\frac{7}{8}$ - $8\frac{5}{8}$ inches) long and 95-100mm ($3\frac{3}{4}$ -4 inches) wide. The thickness, at 55-60mm ($2\frac{1}{8}$ - $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches), is the same as the smaller brick. Both types are a little smaller than the typical bricks of the 18th and 19th centuries (Harley 1974, 76), perhaps an indication of local traditions in brick-making.

The fabric is local, typically a sandy clay with inclusions of gravel and ironstone, c 4mm in diameter, and occasionally grog, but also with larger chunks of ironstone and occasional calcareous inclusions between 15-35mm wide particularly in the larger bricks.

None of the bricks had been shaped to fit the curve of the culvert, instead they were laid in stretcher bond, creating the curve by using mortar up to 30mm thick on the outside edges to set the gap between the bricks in a V-shape. There is no frog in any of the bricks, even though these were common by this time, so there is no maker's name or trademark. A number of the bricks have a horizontal skintling mark along one stretcher. This is a ridge caused by the weight of the bricks, when stacked to dry. Another feature on a number of bricks is three broad indentations on one top surface, resembling three fingerprints, perhaps from moving the freshly moulded bricks.

Where mortar has survived it appears to be chiefly white lime and occasionally grey Portland cement, although some bricks seemed to have a mixture of both. Lime mortar, comprising lime and grit mixed with fine sand, had been used to bond bricks until the mid-19th century. The harder Portland cement was invented in 1824 but did not come into widespread use until the middle of the century because it was initially very costly (Park 2000). The use of Portland cement suggests that the construction of the culvert dates from around the mid to late 19th century when the cement had become more affordable and therefore widely used.

6 THE SITE ARCHIVE

The project has generated an archive comprising:

RECORD	NUMBER
Watching brief forms	31
Plan and section sheets	4
Sample bricks	108
Colour slides	172
Black and white contacts and negatives	182
Digital photographs	402

The archive will be held at Northamptonshire Archaeology until such time as a suitable depository has been appointed.

7 DISCUSSION

A compact ironstone/limestone deposit, perhaps a remnant of a former road surface was recorded during the course of the watching brief. However, no secure dating evidence was present. Lying directly above was a thin layer of fragmented cobble stones, which may be attributed to a subsequent resurfacing of the road.

Similar road construction was recorded during excavations at Green Street (Chapman 1998-99), which were datable to the late Saxon/Norman period. This comprised “two layers of heavily worn road metalling” constructed of small fragments of limestone and cobbles with an upper surface of larger ironstone and limestone fragments.

The road surface was sealed beneath a relatively thick layer of compact clay which contained numerous strips of leather which appeared to be off-cuts derived from leather working. As with the road surface there were no other associated finds to provide a date for the deposition of this material. The depth and homogenous nature of the deposit would suggest that it derives from a single event rather than the gradual accumulation of sediments and alluvium from water borne sources, such as the open sewers commonly to be found in medieval street layouts. Gold Street, along with a number of roads in Northampton, was widened after the fires of the 17th century and it may be that this material was connected with a raising of the street level during modifications to the road layout.

The cellars revealed at the eastern end of Gold Street would appear to be evidence of the widening of Gold Street that took place during the early 20th century. The cellars, which would have once been located beneath the tenements, now extend some way out from the frontage of the present buildings into the line of the modern road. Full recording of the cellars was outside the remit of the watching brief, however, a medieval vaulted cellar is still extant just to the south of All Saints in George Row and a future comparison with this may provide some indication as to the date of the Gold Street cellars.

The bricks taken from the fabric of the culvert revealed two distinct types. The smaller of the two would appear to be of probable 18th-century date whilst the larger would appear to date from the 19th century. This would suggest that the culvert is of 19th-century date re-using a percentage of earlier bricks in the construction, with the use of Portland Cement suggesting that this occurred no earlier than the mid-19th century.

Documentary sources held by the Northampton Record Office appear to support a late 19th century date. Borough Engineer records include thirteen specifications for drainage replacement works in the town between 1866 and 1891. Whilst none of the specifications refer directly to Gold Street an indication of the design of the new culvert is illustrated in the contract for that to be constructed in Freehold Street in 1884 reads "The contractor to take up the existing 18" barrel culvert in the street. The bricks of which if sound and good may after being well cleaned be re-used in the new culvert (no old pipe bricks will be allowed to be re-used)". It further goes on to state ..."The new culvert...oval in shape 3 feet in height 2 feet in width of a single brick ring 4½ inches wide set in lias lime mortar and cemented with Portland cement ¾ inches in thickness..". A further record survives which records an announcement issued on March 2nd 1779, regarding a meeting to be held at the Guildhall in Northampton to determine whether a tunnel or common sewer is required in Gold Street (Fig 25).

When the documentary sources are considered with the archaeological evidence, it is probable that the culvert recorded during the course of the watching brief was constructed during the 1866-91 drainage works in the town. As stated in the engineers schedule, two types of mortar were employed in its construction and whilst the dimensions recorded do not correspond exactly to that in the specification, the surviving sections of the culvert have been subject to some distortion due to the passage of time. Further, the smaller 18th-century bricks incorporated within the

construction would most likely have been re-used from the earlier culvert referred to in the 1779 document.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Northamptonshire Archaeology would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by May Gurney WSP during the course of the watching brief. Further thanks are extended to Councillor Jean Hawkins and to independent historians in Northampton, Jon Small, and Alan Clark, and Robert Moore, former keeper of Archaeology, Northampton Museum, for their interest and support during initial stages of the project. Northamptonshire Archaeology also acknowledges Dr Thomas Welsh, University of Northampton, for his comments and notes relating to medieval Gold Street.

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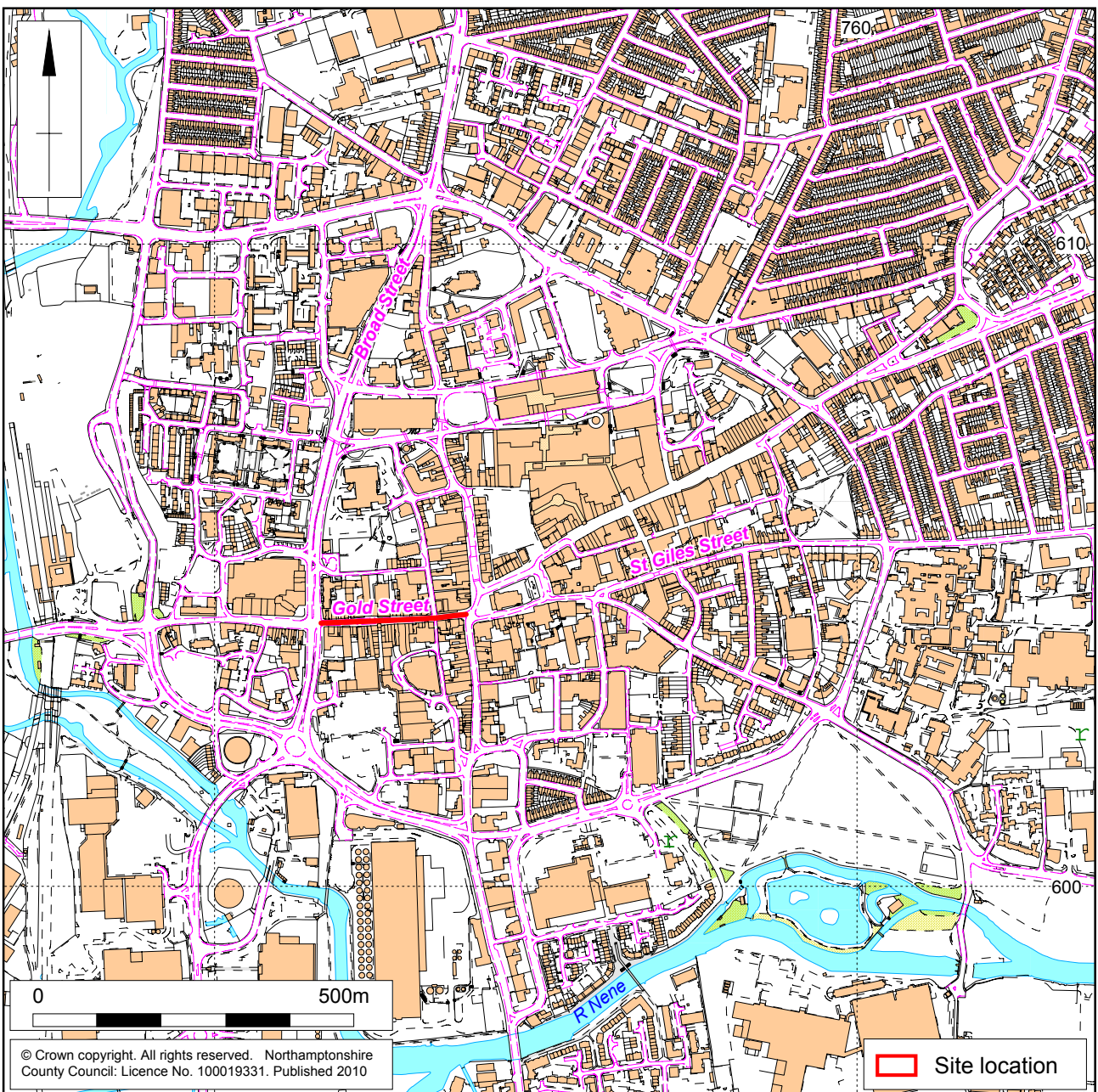
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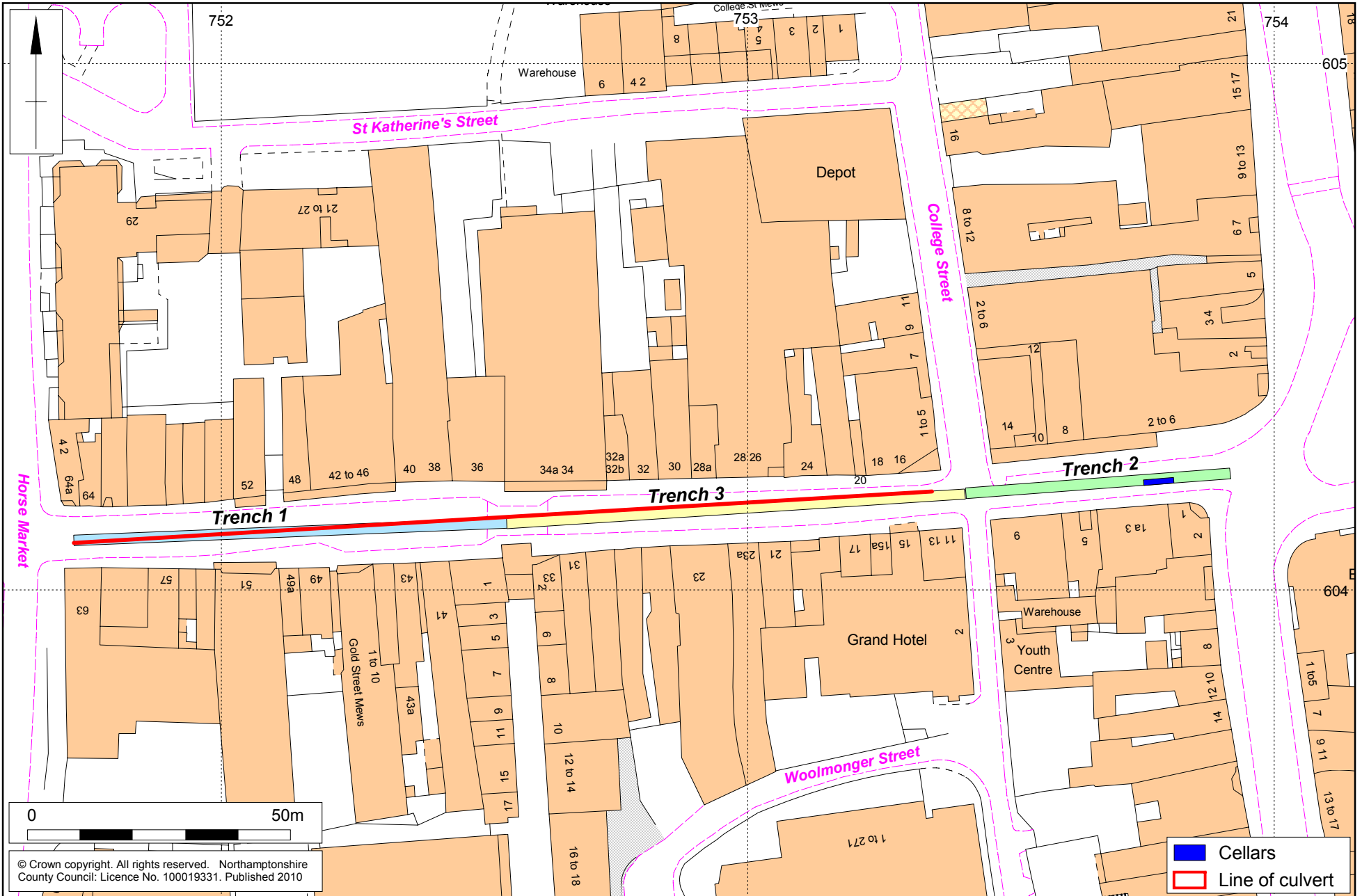
Scale 1:10,000

Site Location Fig 1

1:1000

Area of archaeological observation

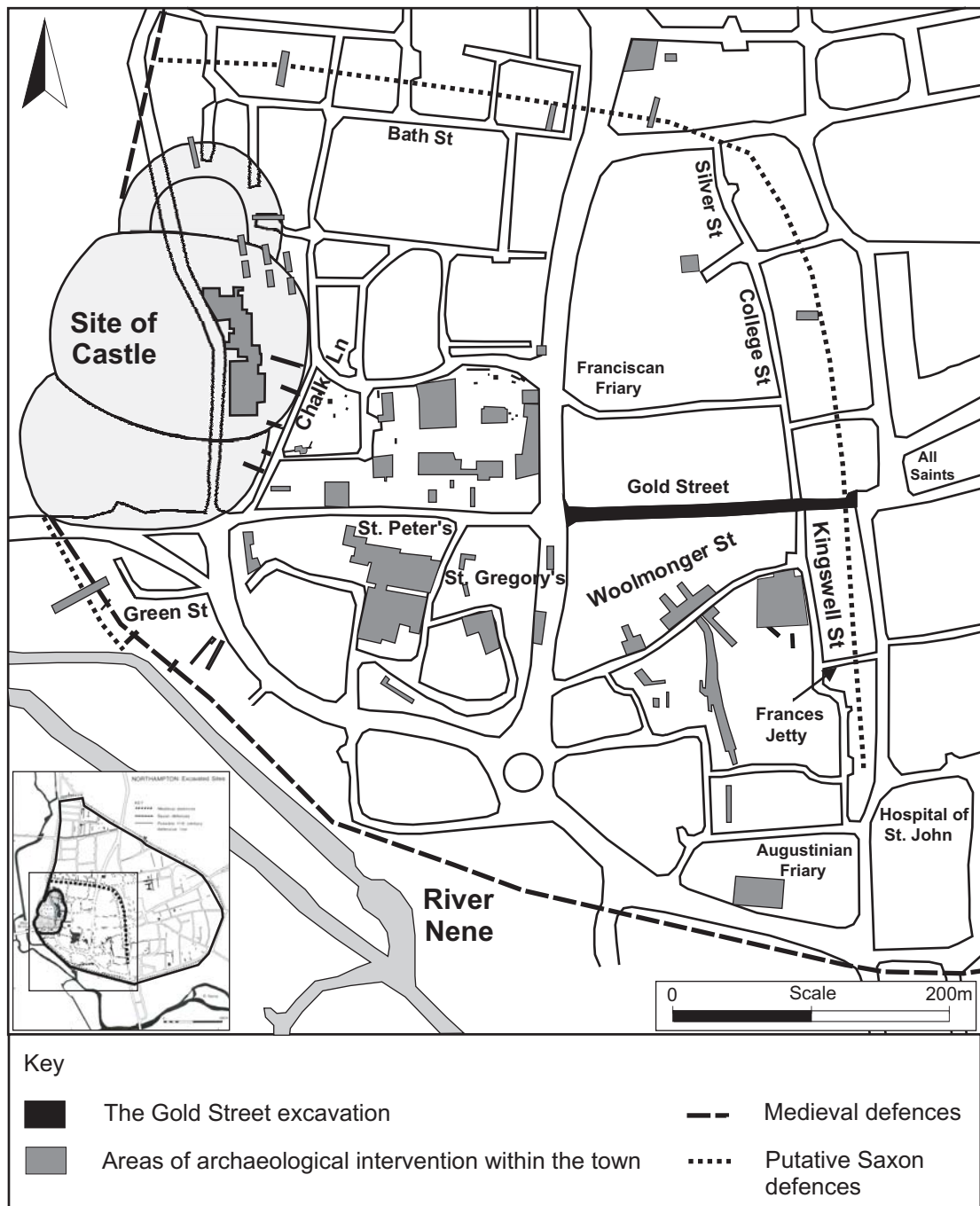
Fig 2



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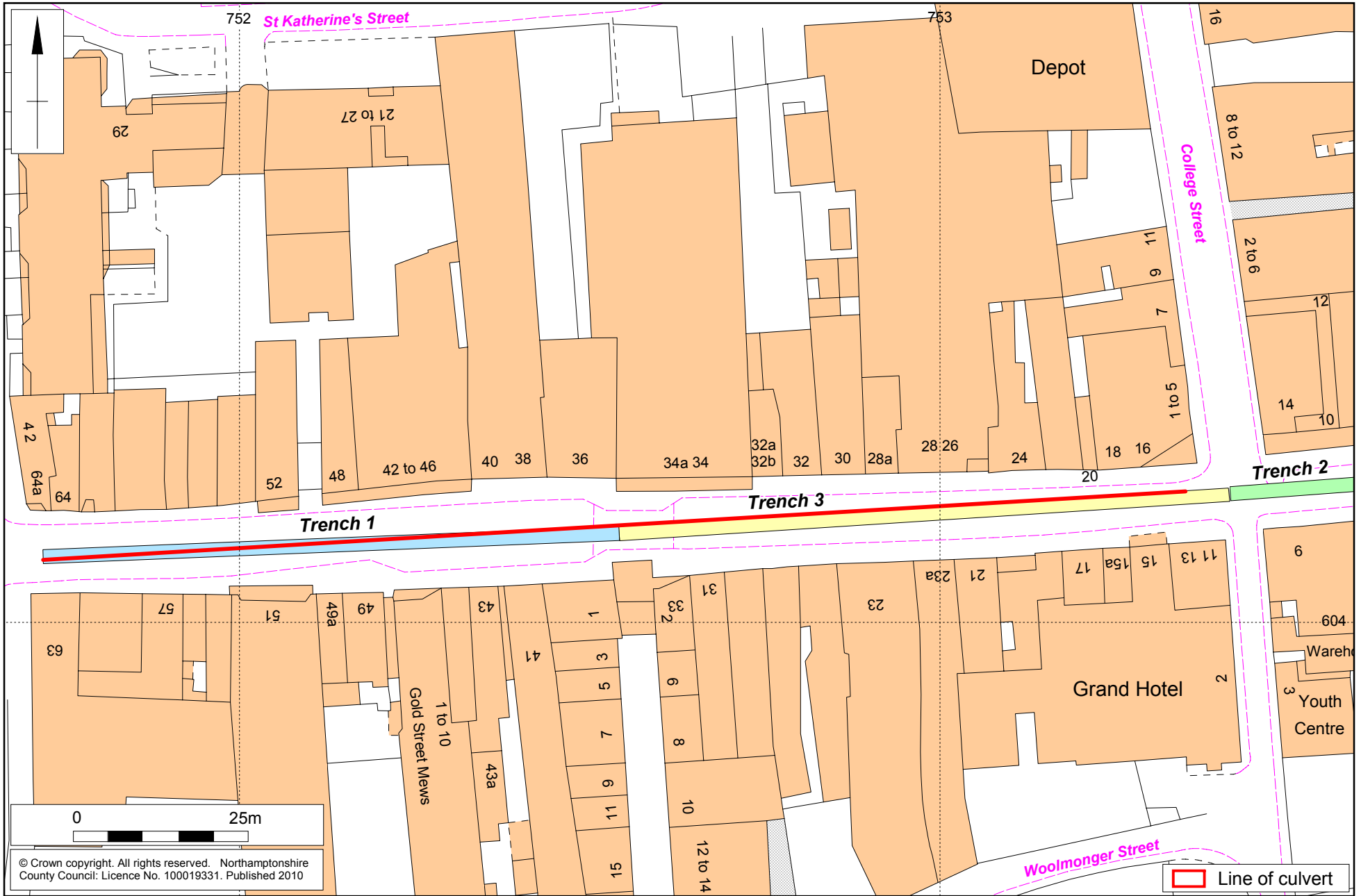
Map of Northampton showing the site and the Saxon and medieval defences Fig 3



Map of Northampton showing areas of archaeological intervention Fig 4

1:750

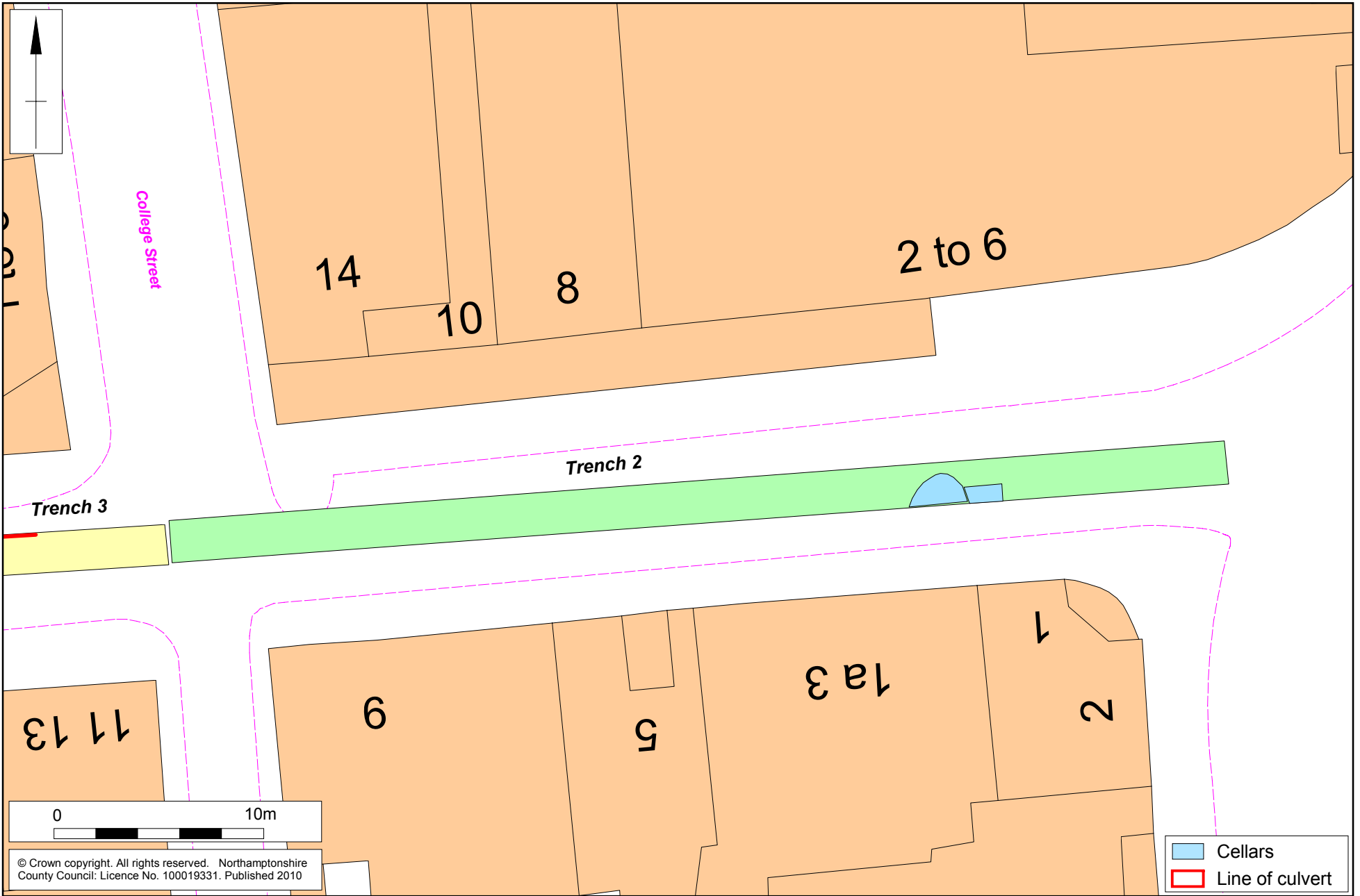
Line of culvert in Trenches 1 and 3 Fig 5



Scale 1:250

Trench 2 and the location of the cellars

Fig 6





General view of the groundworks, looking west Fig 7



General view of the groundworks, looking east Fig 8



All Saints Church Fig 9



Trench 1 during groundworks, looking east Fig 10



General view of trench 1, looking west Fig 11



The road surface in Trench 1, with the clay above Fig 12



General view of the culvert during recording Fig 13



The culvert in the western section of trench 1 Fig 14



General view of trench 2, looking west Fig 15



Trench 2, looking east Fig 16



The cellars revealed during groundworks Fig 17



The western cellar during the laying of the new water main Fig 18



General view of trench 3, looking east Fig 19



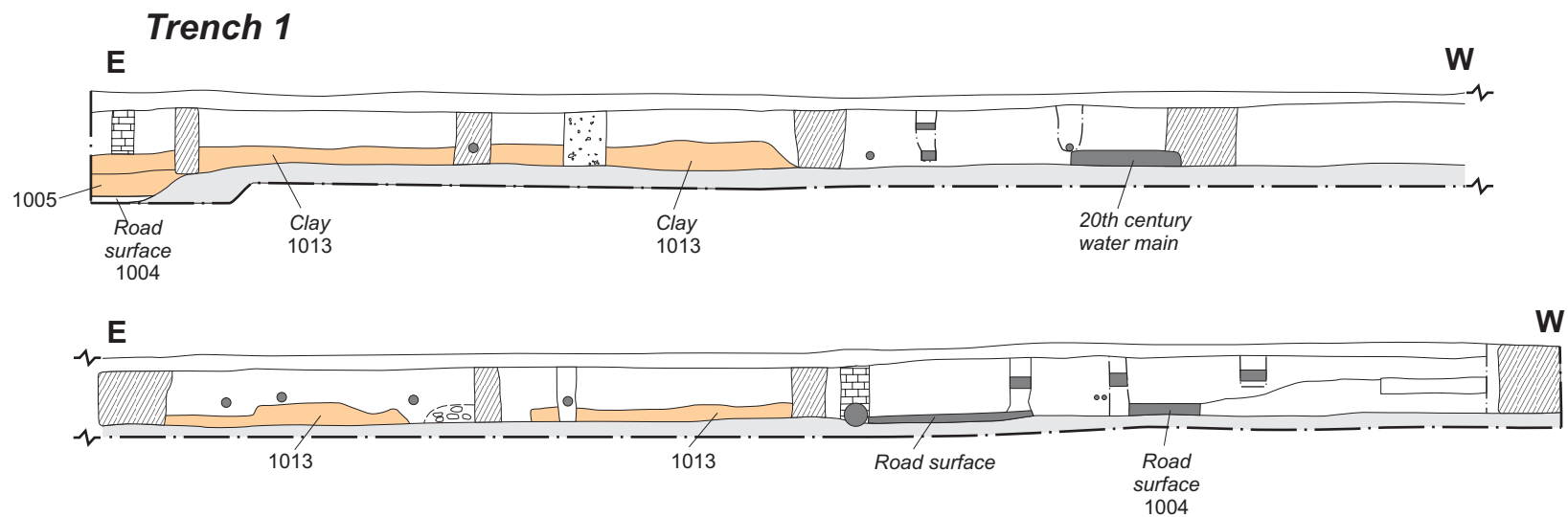
Trench 3, looking west Fig 20



The brick samples Fig 21



The glazed brick Fig 22

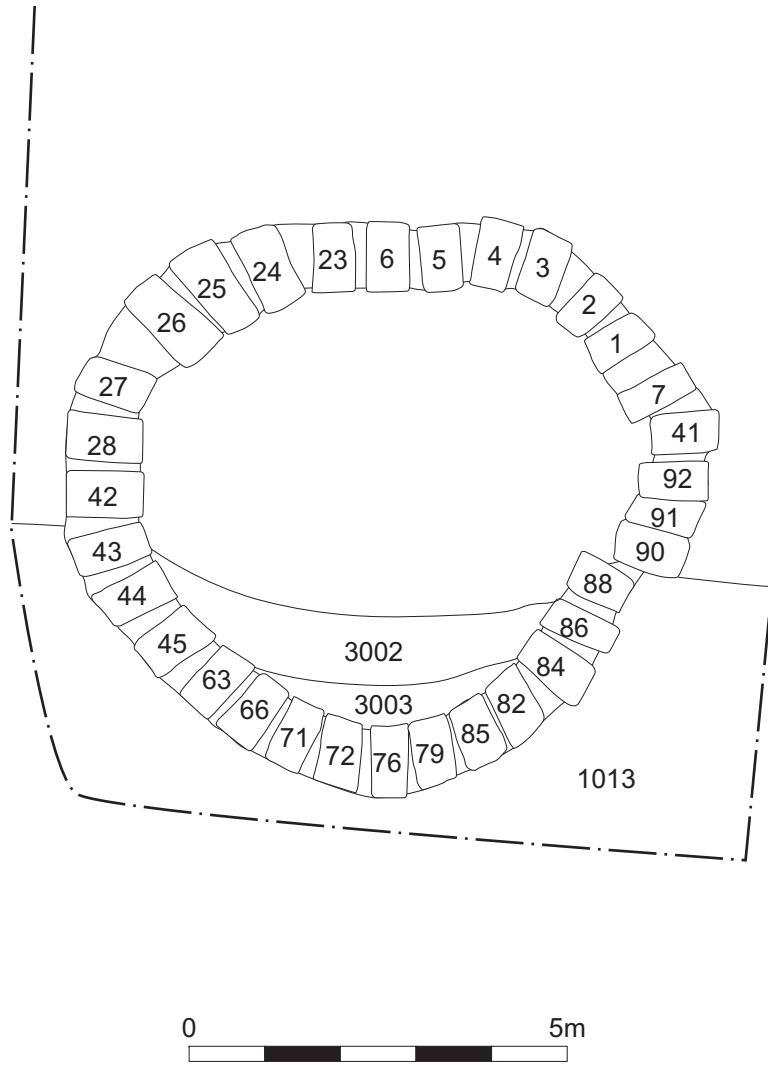


Horizontal scale - 1:200

- Cast water pipes/ Lead pipes
- ▨ Concrete blocks
- ▨ Modern concrete
- ▨ Clay layer



Section of brick built culvert Fig 24



Printed: 18. 3. 1779

NORTHAMPTON PAVING
THE Commissioners for Paving, Lighting, and
Watching, the Town of Northampton, are requested
to meet at the Guildhall of the said Town, on Tuesday next,
the 9th instant, at Eleven in the Forenoon, in order to de-
termine whether or not a TUNNEL, or COMMON-
SEWER, will be necessary in Gold-Street; and also upon
other particular Business respecting the Paving.
Any Persons desirous of supplying the Commissioners with
PAVING PENDLE, are desired to deliver their Proposals
for such Purpose at the next Meeting.
By Order of the Commissioners,
J. MARKHAM, Clerk
Northampton, March 2, 1779.



Northamptonshire County Council

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