



Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological evaluation of boundary walls at Towles Pastures, Castle Donington Leicestershire



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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS report form

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Towles Pastures, Castle Donington, Leicestershire	
Short description	An archaeological evaluation and assessment was carried out on stone boundary walls on a plot of land at Towles Pastures, Castle Donington, Leicestershire. The central dividing wall was constructed of stone and in places a foundation trench had been cut and packed with reddish-brown clay. The date of the wall is uncertain but it probably dates to the 19th century. There was no evidence for a pre-existing boundary, although a small gully was encountered at the western end of the wall, running parallel and to the south of the wall. The wall had been extensively patched, repaired and repointed over the years, with the last major repairs probably being carried out in the 1950s or 60s. With the exception of two residual sherds of 18th-century pottery, there were no finds from the site pre-dating the 19th century. There was little evidence for walls associated with the former building on the north side of the dividing wall, as shown on old Ordnance Survey maps up until the 1960s. However, the remains of possible floor surfaces associated with the building were revealed.	
Project type	Evaluation/assessment	
Site status	None	
Previous work	None	
Current land use	Rough grassland/grazing	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type/ period	-	
Significant finds	-	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Leicestershire	
Site address	Castle Donington	
OS Easting & Northing	4443 3272	
Area	0.5ha	
Height OD	70m	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	-	
Project Design originator	Mike Dawson (CgMs)	
Director/Supervisor	Yvonne Wolfram-Murray	
Project Manager	Simon Carlyle (NA)	
Sponsor or funding body	CgMs	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	12/7/10	
End date	22/7/10	
ARCHIVES	Location	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
	Accession no. X.A120.2010	
Physical		Pottery and tile (1 box)
Paper		Site records and related documents (1small archive box)
Digital		Digital photographs, digital report copies
BIBLIOGRAPHY		Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)
Title	An archaeological evaluation of boundary walls at Towles Pastures, Castle Donington, Leicestershire	
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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF BOUNDARY WALLS AT
TOWLES PASTURES, CASTLE DONINGTON
LEICESTERSHIRE**

JULY 2010

Abstract

In July 2010, Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation and assessment of stone boundary walls on a plot of land at Towles Pastures, Castle Donington, Leicestershire. The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd, acting on behalf of David Wilson Homes, who are seeking to develop the land for housing. The central dividing wall was constructed of stone and in places a foundation trench had been cut and packed with reddish-brown clay. The date of the wall is uncertain but it probably dates to the 19th century. There was no evidence for a pre-existing boundary, although a small gully was encountered at the western end of the wall, running parallel and to the south of the wall. The wall had been extensively patched, repaired and repointed over the years, with the last major repairs probably being carried out in the 1950s or 60s. With the exception of two residual sherds of 18th-century pottery, there were no finds from the site pre-dating the 19th century. There was little evidence for walls associated with the former building on the north side of the dividing wall, as shown on old Ordnance Survey maps up until the 1960s. However, the remains of possible floor surfaces associated with the building were revealed.

1 INTRODUCTION

In July 2010, Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) carried out an archaeological evaluation of a stone boundary wall dividing two plots of land at Towles Pastures, Castle Donington, Leicestershire (site centred on NGR: SK 443 272; Fig 1). An assessment was also made of the boundary walls surrounding the northern plot. The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd (CgMs), acting on behalf of David Wilson Homes, who have advanced proposals for the residential development of the land.

A desk-based assessment and an accompanying supporting statement specific to the wall was prepared by CgMs (Dawson 2010a and b respectively), which suggested that the dividing wall dated to the 19th century at the earliest. However, subsequent discussions with the Leicestershire County Council Historic and Natural Environment Team (LCCHNET) led to their assertion that the wall, or at least its foundations, may be earlier as the dividing wall is allegedly shown on an 18th-century Inclosure Award map. They have suggested that the wall may date back to the medieval period.

To clarify the age of the wall and assess its method of construction, it was decided that prior to any other archaeological works, the wall should be investigated further. The work commenced with the removal by contractors of the trees and ivy covering the wall, under the supervision of an archaeologist, on the 12th and 13th July 2010. No significant damage occurred to the wall; the occasional tree stump or ivy trunk had to remain in place so as not to affect its stability.

Once the wall had been cleared of vegetation, a site meeting was held on the 14th July 2010, with Myk Flitcroft (CgMs), Richard Clark (LCCHNET) and a representative from David Wilson Homes in attendance. Yvonne Wolfram-Murray, Project Supervisor for NA, was also present at the meeting. It was decided that a 1.5m by 5m machine-excavated trial trench should be excavated across the line of the dividing wall at a point where the wall had already collapsed and that three hand-excavated test pits, measuring 1.5m north-south by 2m east-west, should be dug against the wall at key points to investigate the foundations. In addition, a photographic record and annotated plan of the dividing wall and north and west walls was required to show notable parts of the wall relating to its construction and character. All works complied with the requirements of the written scheme of investigation issued by CgMs (Dawson 2010c).

This report, which presents the results of the evaluation, has been prepared in accordance with Appendix 4 of the English Heritage procedural document *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (EH 1991), relevant sections of *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (EH 2006a), and appropriate national standards and guidelines, as recommended by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA).

2 SITE BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography and geology

The proposed development area is located c 0.5km to the south-west of Castle Donington town centre and comprises a roughly rectangular block of land measuring approximately 110m east to west by 45m north to south (0.5ha). The site is divided into halves along its length by a stone wall, the western end of which has collapsed and been robbed of its facing stones. The northern half of the site was formerly woodland, that has now been cleared leaving rough grassland; the southern half is being used as a paddock for grazing horses. The site lies at c 70m above Ordnance Datum.

The underlying bedrock comprises Triassic rocks of the Mercian Mudstone Group, which are dominated by mudstones but also include beds of siltstone and sandstone. The soil on the site is sandy loam.

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The historical and archaeological background of the site has been presented in detail in the desk-based assessment prepared by CgMs (Dawson 2010a). To summarize, there are no known sites of archaeological interest within the development area, although there is some potential for the presence of Iron Age, Roman, medieval and post-medieval remains. The wall extending down the centre of the site is believed to date to the 19th century, but could be earlier. Map evidence indicates a small building, possibly a farm building such as a barn, near the centre of the site; this was built in the 19th century and was demolished in the late 20th century. No previous archaeological work has been carried out on the site.

3 METHODOLOGY

The test pits and trial trench were positioned in the agreed locations and surveyed using hand tapes. The test pits were hand-excavated down to the base of the foundations of the wall. The trial trench was excavated under archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked mini-digger fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The topsoil and subsoil were removed to reveal a cross-section through the wall at a point where the wall had already collapsed.

Sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10 and all levels were related to Ordnance Survey Datum. A base plan, at a scale of 1:250, was annotated with information relating to the construction of the wall.

Artefacts were collected by hand and retained, receiving appropriate care prior to removal from site (Watkinson and Neal 1998). Unstratified animal bones were not collected. All finds have been boxed by material type.

A photographic record of the project was maintained using 35mm black and white negative and colour transparency film, supplemented with digital images. All records were compiled during fieldwork into a comprehensive and fully cross-referenced site archive.

The project was overseen by Myk Flitcroft (CgMs), acting on behalf of David Wilson Homes, who was responsible for liaison with the curatorial authority (LCCHNET). All works were conducted in accordance with the *IfA Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (1994, revised 2008) and the *Code of Conduct* of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1985, revised 2009). The recording of the standing walls followed the guidelines outlined in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (EH 2006b).

4 EVALUATION RESULTS

4.1 Test Pit 1

Test Pit 1 was positioned on one of the joints apparent on the northern side of the wall (Figs 2 and 4). The joint's location is thought to coincide with the junction between the boundary wall and the side wall of a now-demolished building, shown in roughly this location on Ordnance Survey maps up to the 1960s.

The foundations of the wall lay 0.75m below ground level on the northern side of the wall; ground level was approximately 0.35m lower on its southern side. There was no clear evidence for a foundation trench at this point in the wall and the foundations rested on sandstone bedrock. The joint in the wall extended down to the base of the foundations and different construction techniques were evident on either side of the joint. On the east side of the joint the foundation courses were constructed of sandstone rubble; to the west the first course consisted of large sandstone slabs or blocks, on which the rubble courses were built. The latter technique was noted in the other test pits and the machine-excavated trench. There was no evidence of any walls associated with the former building.

Abutting the wall was a layer of subsoil, approximately 0.3m thick, comprising mid brown sandy clay (105) with fine to coarse sandstone pebbles (Fig 3, Section 4). This was overlain by a thin, compacted layer of sandy fine gravel (104) and light brown sandy clay (103) with a combined thickness of 0.06m; this may be the remains of a floor surface associated with the former building. Within layer 103 there was a patch of burnt clay and charcoal (102) containing a fragment of purple-black tile bearing the letters '...AL..' and sherds of 19th-century pottery. The possible floor surface was covered with a layer of topsoil and brick rubble (101), mixed with pieces of rusty ironwork. Fragments of roof tile and sherds of 19th- and early 20th-century pottery and glass were recovered from this layer.

4.2 Test Pit 2

Positioned on the northern side of the wall, Test Pit 2 was located approximately half way between the site of the former building and the western end of the wall (Figs 2 and 5). The base of the foundations was encountered at a depth of 0.50m below the ground surface, resting directly on the bedrock, which comprised sandstone and gritty mid yellowish-brown clay (203). The first course consisted of large sandstone slabs or blocks, which protruded approximately 0.2m from the upper courses of the wall. The upper foundation courses consisted of three to four courses of sandstone rubble, on top of which the main body of the wall was constructed.

Abutting the foundations was a layer of subsoil, up to 0.2m thick, which comprised mid brown sandy clay (202) with frequent fine to coarse sandstone pebbles. The topsoil consisted of dark brownish-grey sandy organic loam (201) and contained fragments of modern window glass and sherds of modern red earthenware, mostly from flower pots.

4.3 Test Pit 3

Test Pit 3 was excavated against the south side of the wall, towards its eastern end. The base of the foundations lay 0.38m below the ground surface and rested on a deposit of reddish-brown sandy clay (304) that appeared to fill a shallow construction trench [305], similar to that encountered in Trench 1 (see Section 4.4 below). The construction of the foundation courses was identical to that encountered in Test Pit 2, although the slabs forming the first course were flush with the upper courses of the wall on this side.

The foundation trench cut the subsoil, which consisted of mid orangey-brown sandy clay (303) with frequent sandstone pebbles and contained small fragments of roof tile, charcoal flecks and sherds of 19th-century pottery. This was overlain by a layer of dark orangey-brown clayey sand (302) mixed with brick and stone rubble. This deposit is probably made-ground or a dump of waste soil; it contained sherds of 19th-century pottery, fragments of clay pipe stem, the bone handle of a table knife and the base of a glass beer bottle. The thin topsoil (301), which was up to 0.10m thick, was similar to that recorded in Test Pit 2.

4.4 Trench 1

The trench was excavated across the line of the boundary wall at its western end (Fig 2 and 7).

On the south side of the wall the natural substrate was sandstone, which in places had decayed to light yellowish-brown silty sandy clay (404); on the north side there was a layer of light bluish-yellow sandy clay (403) that appeared to overlie the sandstone. The latter may be redeposited natural or past land use may have altered the ground level in some way.

Overlying the natural substrate was subsoil, comprising mid orangey-brown sandy clay (402) with frequent sandstone pebbles (Fig 3, Section 3). On the south side of the wall this was c 0.10m thick, on the north side c 0.18m thick. The subsoil was cut by the foundation trench for the wall, [406]; this was 0.6m wide and 0.3m deep and had vertical sides and a flat base. It was packed with clean reddish-brown sandy clay (405) and contained occasional sandstone pebbles and small cobbles. The foundation courses of the wall, 409, comprising large stone slabs overlain by rubble courses, lay directly on top of this deposit.

A small gully, [408], ran parallel and 1.4m to the south of the wall; this had a V-shaped profile, measured 0.4m wide by 0.26m deep and cut the subsoil. It was filled with reddish-brown sandy clay (407) with frequent sandstone pebbles.

4.5 The boundary walls

The general construction of the wall consisted of roughly-dressed facing stones on either side, with a mortar and rubble core; the faces of the wall were linked with occasional large slabs passing through the centre of the wall, to provide added stability (Fig 3, Section 5). The general appearance of the wall in elevation consisted of thin slabs near the base with larger stones blocks in the middle and several courses of flat stones on top. The wall was topped with long, flat, roughly-dressed coping stones.

The wall was originally constructed from sandstone blocks of varying sizes, ranging from 0.36m by 0.09m up to 1.13m by 0.71m. The original bonding material was lime mortar, which could be seen in the foundations and the centre of the wall.

The wall had been patched and repaired on many occasions over the years, with more recent repairs bonded with cement (Fig 5). Extensive re-pointing of the wall also possibly obscures the date of construction of parts of the wall. The wall was patched with several types of brick, measuring 0.10m by 0.22m or 0.06m by 0.20m; the brick may have been re-used from the now demolished building that had once abutted the northern side of the wall.

The assessment of the north and west walls revealed that the west wall and dividing wall are of one construction (Fig 6). The general nature of the walls is similar, having been constructed of sandstone with occasional brick repairs.

The north wall is largely of brick construction, with a part of it having been replaced by a wooden fence. The wall reverts to stone and mortar near Key House and its construction is very similar to the central dividing wall, with similar coping stones.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery by Iain Soden

A small assemblage of pottery, comprising 45 sherds and weighing 0.9kg, was recovered from the topsoil (101 and 201), subsoil (302 and 303) and a buried floor layer (102). The majority of the pottery dates to the second half of the 19th century, although there were two sherds that date to the 18th century. The assemblage is summarized by context in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of pottery assemblage by context

Fabric	Context				
	101	102	201 no (g)	302	303
Nottingham stoneware 1700-1800	1 (7)	7 (46)			
Midland Blackware pancheon	2 (48)		2 (53)	2 (316)	2 (44)
Church Gresley-type stoneware				4 (51)	1 (13)
Underglazed blue transfer printed earthenware		1 (6)		3 (34)	
Manganese mottled stoneware 1680-1740	1 (5)				
Mocha 1830-50	1 (5)				
Lambeth/Doulton stoneware	2 (23)				
Stoneware blacking bottle	1 (14)				
Flower pot	4 (52)	1 (7)	10 (156)		
Total	12 (154)	9 (60)	12 (209)	9 (401)	3 (57)

5.2 Glass by Simon Carlyle

Three fragments of bottle glass were recovered from a layer (302) in Test Pit 3. The first fragment is of clear glass and comes from the side of a small bottle, possibly an ointment bottle, bearing the letters 'SPOO...'. Parts of two horizontal lines beneath the letters are probably gradation marks, suggesting that the word is 'SPOONS' or 'SPOONFULS'. The bottle would have been approximately 30mm wide on this face.

The second fragment is the base of a beer bottle, with a diameter of 70mm, manufactured from dark green glass. The bottle is machine-manufactured and around the bottom has the words 'CAVENDISH BRIDGE' and on the base 'C.S & C^o L^d 3510'. The bottle probably comes from the former Cavendish Bridge Brewery, near Shardlow, only a few miles north of Castle Donington, and dates to the late 19th or the first half of the 20th century.

The other fragment is part of the base of a brown glass bottle of a similar size to the green bottle. The surfaces are slightly iridescent and the bottle appears to be slightly older, perhaps dating to the second half of the 19th century.

In addition, seven fragments of 20th-century window glass (3mm float) were recovered from the topsoil in Test Pit 2. The glass has been machine-produced and has slightly stippled surfaces.

5.3 Ceramic building material by Pat Chapman

There are seven ceramic tile sherds, weighing 528g. These are all roof tile fragments, six from flat tiles and one pantile sherd. Four of the flat tile sherds, from contexts (102, 201 and 302), are 15mm thick and made from hard fine red-brown clay. The other sherds, one unstratified and the other from layer (102), are 11mm thick and have been fired to purple and the surface has a metallic sheen; the sherd from (102) bears the letters ‘...AL...’ The pantile sherd, from context (101), is 13mm thick and made from hard slightly coarse brownish-red clay.

There are two brick fragments, weighing 342g. One fragment, from the topsoil (101), is 56mm (2 inches) thick and has been over-fired to purple with a black metallic finish; it has a stamped, deeply-indented lattice design, and was probably manufactured for use in a path or courtyard. The brick from context (201) is plain and red-brown.

The flat tile sherds broadly date from the 15th to 19th centuries, while the pantile probably dates from the 18th century in the Midlands. The bricks are all of late 19th- to 20th-century date.

5.4 Small finds by Tora Hylton

Three small finds were recovered from the site. From the topsoil (101) in Test Pit 1 came a modern brass strap-buckle, comprising a pressed plate with two narrow slots arranged side-by-side for the strap to pass through. The slots measure 39mm long by 13mm wide and the buckle measures 50mm long by 38mm wide. Two small finds were recovered from layer (302) in Test Pit 3, the bone handle of a table knife, which probably dates to the 19th century, and a fragment of rusted iron, possibly from a piece of machinery.

6 DISCUSSION

The date of the original construction of the stone wall remains uncertain as there was no artefactual dating evidence in the foundation trench and the deposits on either side of the wall had been disturbed by the roots of vegetation and other activity. Finds recovered from these deposits in the vicinity of the former building largely dated to the 19th or 20th centuries, although two sherds of 18th-century pottery were also recovered. Where encountered, the foundation trench cut the subsoil, suggesting a relatively late, probably 19th-century date for the wall. However, the Enclosure Map of 1779 shows a boundary that corresponds with the line of the wall, so the wall may date to at least the late 18th century or it may be later and have replaced a hedge or other type of boundary (Fig 10).

The evaluation has shown that the stone wall had been patched and repaired on many occasions since it was first constructed and that part of it had been

demolished and partly robbed. A large part of the north wall had been replaced with a brick wall or wooden fence.

There was little evidence for walls associated with the former building on the north side of the dividing wall, as shown on old Ordnance Survey maps up until the 1960s. However, the joints apparent in the wall did coincide with the site of the building and the remains of possible floor surfaces containing 19th-century artefacts were revealed. It is possible that the building may have been a lean-to and was partly made of timber, with its roof resting on the dividing wall, which would have been raised to provide an adequate pitch and headroom.

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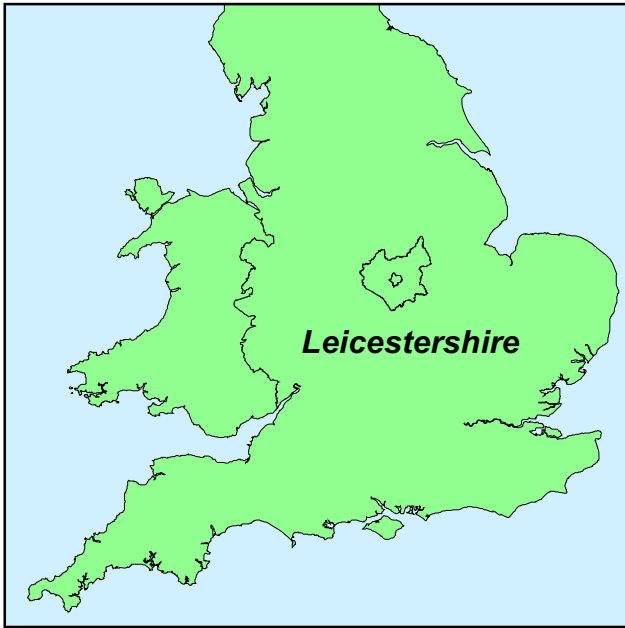
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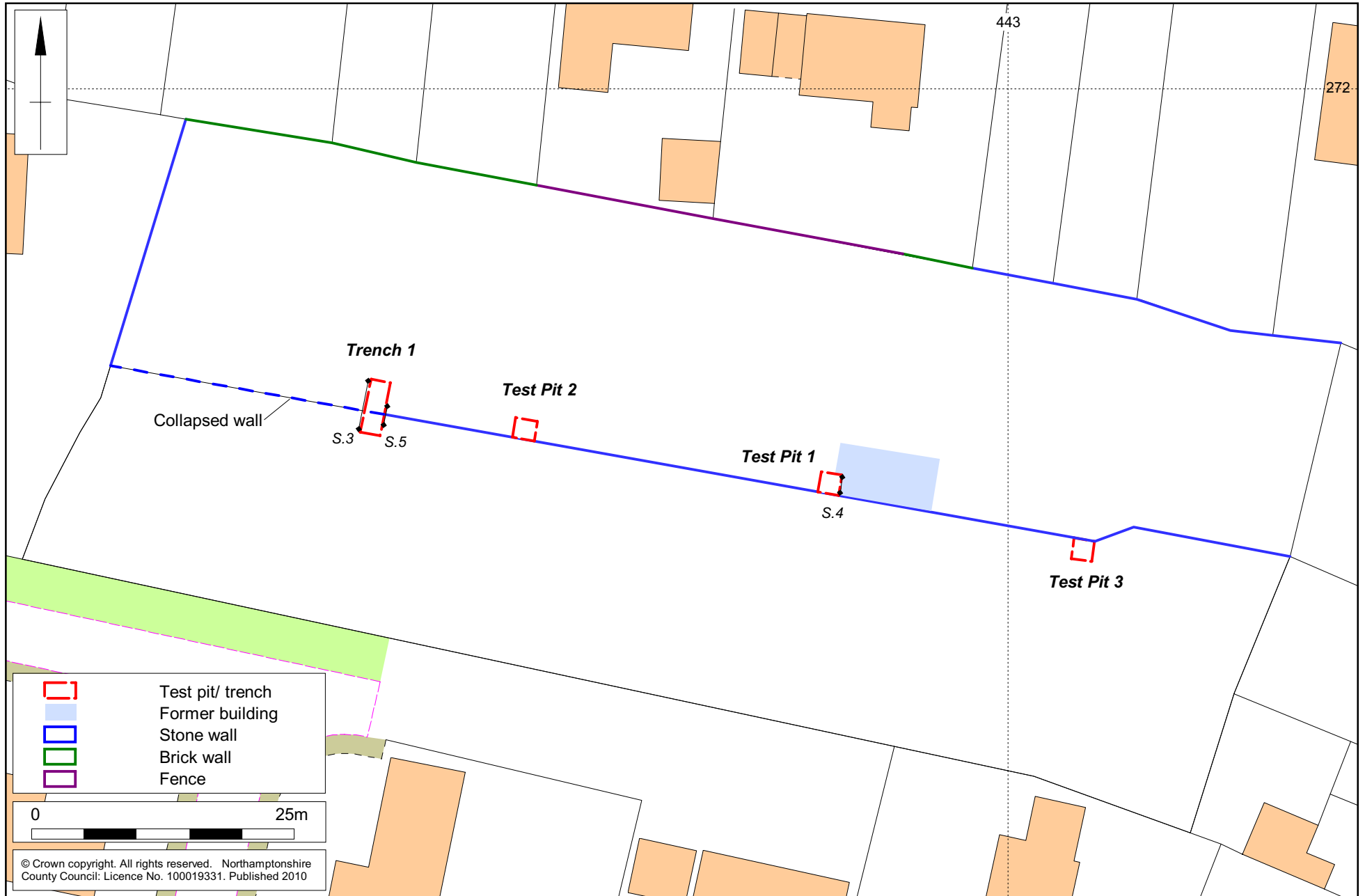
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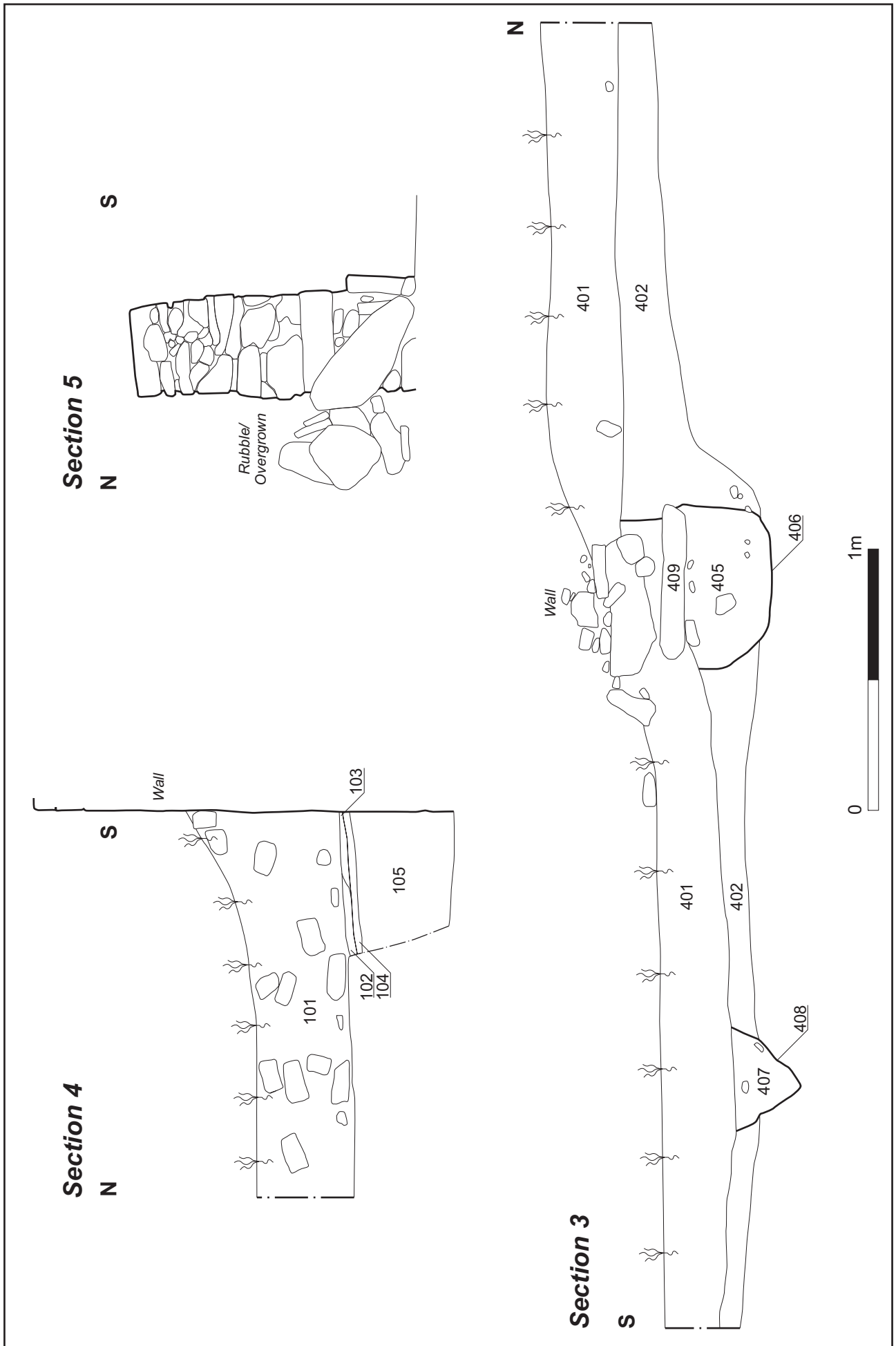
Scale 1:10,000

Site location Fig 1



Scale 1:500

Plan showing location of test pits and trench Fig 2



Scale 1:20

Sections Fig 3



The wall foundations exposed in Test Pit 1, looking south Fig 4



The wall foundations exposed in Test Pit 2, looking south Fig 5



The wall foundations exposed in Test Pit 3, looking north Fig 6



Trench 1, base of wall and foundation trench [406], looking west Fig 7






Change of brick to stone in northern wall, looking north Fig 8




Corner of central and western boundary wall, looking west Fig 9

Additional information:

-  Site Boundary
-  1779 Enclosure Map Outline



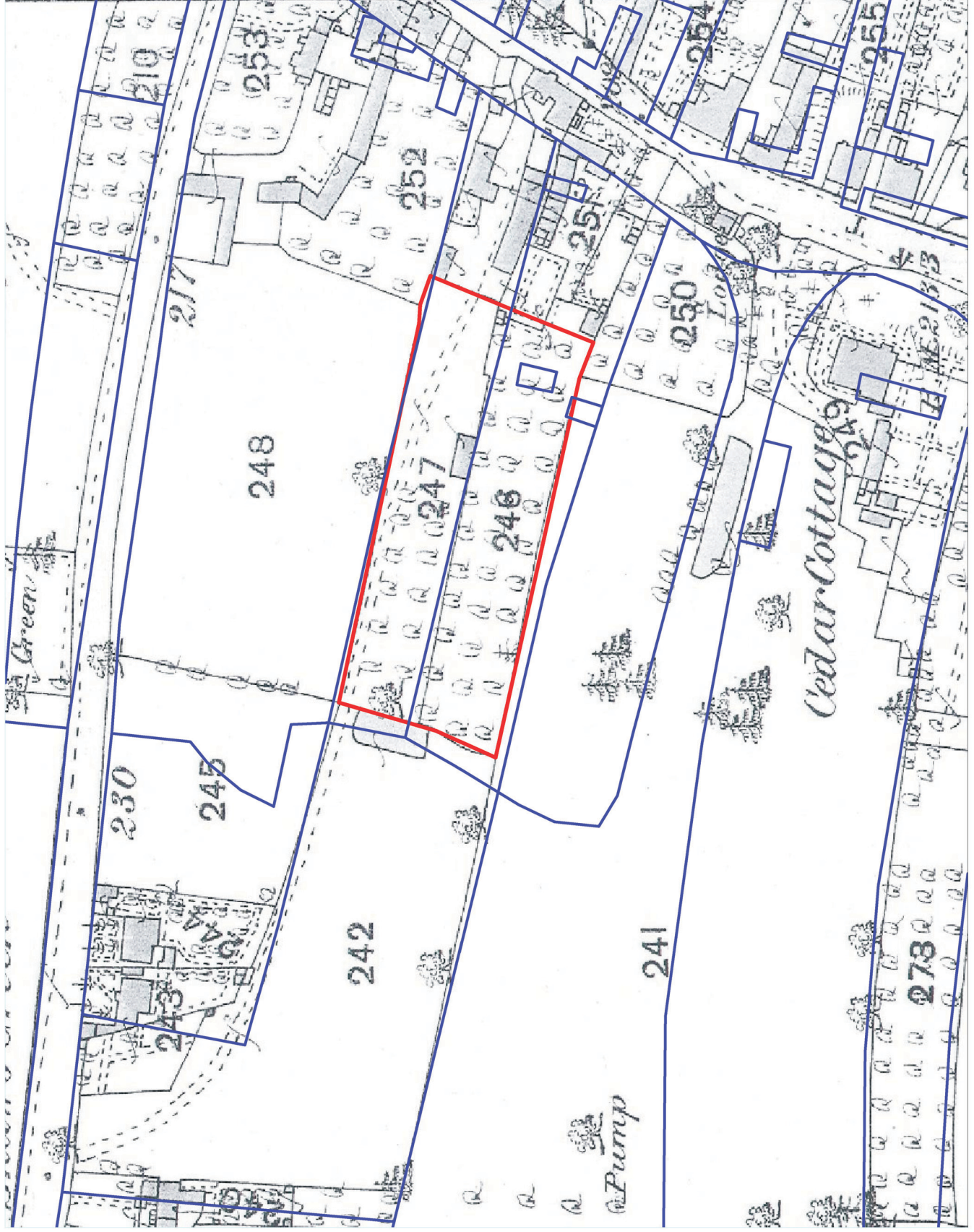
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Overlay of 1779 Enclosure Map and 1st Edition OS with site boundary Fig 10



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