

# Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological evaluation  
on land off Gidding Road  
Sawtry  
Cambridgeshire  
February 2008



Christopher Jones

March 2008

Report 08/44

**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY**  
**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**MARCH 2008**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**  
**ON LAND OFF GIDDING ROAD, SAWTRY**  
**CAMBRIDGESHIRE**  
**FEBURARY 2008**

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**QUALITY CONTROL**

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## OASIS REPORT FORM

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project title	Archaeological Evaluation on land off Gidding Road, Sawtry, Cambridgeshire	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation on land off Gidding Road, Sawtry. The trial trenching consisted of 35 trenches which revealed one archaeological feature this comprised a large ditch, which produced a small amount of Roman pottery. The remaining trenches were devoid of archaeological deposits.	
Project type	Field Evaluation (Site Code: SGR 08)	
Previous work	Phoenix Consulting 2007, Desk-Based Assessment	
Current Land Use	Rough pasture	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	Yes	
Monument type And period	Roman and Medieval	
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	Pottery, Roman.	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Cambridgeshire	
Site address	Gilling road Sawtry	
Study Area	9ha	
OS Easting & Northing	TL16408335	
Height OD	15 AOD	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Phoenix Consulting	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Chris Jones Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project Manager	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Sponsor or funding body	Fox Land and Property	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	February 2008	
End date	February 2008	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no.)</b>	<b>Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)</b>
Physical		Pottery, animal bone
Paper		1 File
Digital		Text files, MapInfo figures, photographs
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
Title		
Serial title & volume	8/44	
Author(s)		
Page numbers		
Date		

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**  
**ON LAND OFF GIDDING ROAD, SAWTRY**  
**CAMBRIDGESHIRE**  
**FEBURARY 2008**

***ABSTRACT***

*Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned to carry out an archaeological evaluation on land off Gidding Road Sawtry, Cambridgeshire. The evaluation comprised thirty five trenches across the proposed development area of c9ha. A single trench contained a ditch which produced a small amount of Roman pottery. The remaining trenches were all devoid of archaeological deposits.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Fox Land and Property are preparing a planning application for residential development on land off Gidding Road, Sawtry, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 1640 8335) (Fig 1). The proposed application site covers an area of approximately 9ha and currently comprises three fields of rough pasture, a small paddock, and a small plot of land fronting onto Gidding Road.

Following an archaeological desk-based assessment of the site by Phoenix Consulting (Phoenix Consulting 2007) the Cambridgeshire Planning Archaeologist advised that a programme of archaeological trial trenching should take place, in order to further inform the planning application. Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned to undertake these works. This fieldwork started in early February 2008.

**2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

The village of Sawtry straddles the western side of the A1 motorway and is situated approximately equidistant between Peterborough and Huntingdon, at an approximate height of 15m AOD. The village lies on the edge of the Cambridgeshire Fens.

Gidding Road forms the northern boundary of the application site, which is on the western edge of the village, with houses to the east, a stream to the south and fields to the west.

The site lies on an area of Oxford Clay, on gently sloping ground, falling to the east towards Sawtry Fen. To the west the land rises steeply onto the Boulder Clay Plateau. Above this geology, soils of Hanslope Association (411d) have formed, which are characterised as Typical Calcareous Pelosols being slowly permeable and clay-rich.

**Geological Report by Steve Critchley**

The solid geology consists of mudstone and clays of the Peterborough Member of the Oxford Clay Formation, a part of the Middle Jurassic Ancholme Group. These have been extensively decalcified and weathered to an orange brown at outcrop. Most exposures have been affected to varying degrees by late Pleistocene periglacial processes in the form of cryoturbation involutions and minor ice wedge infills. Remnant areas of coarse sandy glacio- fluvial gravels, with abundant rounded quartzite and rounded- irregular flint clasts were observed in several of the trenches cut in the northern portion of the site. These had also suffered cryoturbated with the underlying clays indicating a late glacial deposition and subsequent periglacial erosion.

**3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

The settlement of Sawtry lies alongside the Roman Ermine Street, a major communications link between the provincial capital of London (*Londinium*), Castor (near Peterborough) and the urban centre of Lincoln (*Lindum Colonia*).

Sawtry itself came into existence as a village in the late Saxon period and is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1088 as *Saltrede*.

The archaeological desk based assessment indicated that there were no recorded archaeological sites within the area. There are, however, a few archaeological sites within a radius of 0.5km around the application area, the nearest of these being Roman and medieval remains in the vicinity of Toft Hill (approximately 1km to the north-east). Probable medieval cultivation strips (ridge and furrow) have been noted to the west of the site.

**4 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

The specific objectives of the trial trenching were to define the character, quality, extent

and significance of the archaeological remains to inform mitigation.

In total, thirty-five trenches were excavated. Twenty-nine trenches were 50m long by 2m wide and six were 20m long by 2m wide (Fig 2).

The topsoil was stacked separately from the subsoil as the mechanical excavator revealed either archaeological remains or, where these were absent the natural substrate. All trenches and spoil heaps were scanned with a metal detector.

The trenches were located relative to Ordnance Survey using a Leica 1200 GPS system with level heights related to Ordnance Datum.

All potential archaeological features were examined by hand excavation. Standard Northamptonshire Archaeology recording procedures were employed. Trenches containing archaeology were planned at 1:100 while all sections were recorded at 1:10 or 1:20.

All works were carried out according to the policy & guidance for archaeological fieldwork projects in Northamptonshire (NCCNH 1995). All procedures complied with the Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions and Northamptonshire Archaeology Health and Safety at Work Guidelines (NA 2003).

## **5 RESULTS OF FIELDWORK**

The trenches were excavated with a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket operating under direct supervision and control of a qualified archaeologist.

Thirty-four of the thirty-five trenches excavated had no archaeological features or finds. They were all excavated to the underlying geology which comprised light grey clay and coarse orange sandy gravel. The subsoil was largely consistent across the site, consisting of firm light brown clay at an average depth of 30m. The average depth of topsoil was 20m and consisted of brown clay loam which varied little across the site. Trenches 4, 6, 41 and 42 were heavily disturbed by modern rubble which reinforced the levelling and deposition of hardcore across the northern part of the development area noted during an early site visit.

Only one trench, trench 15, contained any archaeology (Fig 3 and 4). The trench was 50m x 20m, 0.56m deep and aligned east west with a light grey clay natural. A ditch 4.20m wide by 1.20m deep, aligned north-west by south-east across the trench, was excavated by hand to the natural clay [1506]. A small amount of Roman pottery and a fragment of



rotary quern were recovered from the secondary fill (1504) grey silt clay which overlaid (1505) the light grey orange clay of the primary fill. The ditch [1506] had symmetrical sides sloping steeply down to a flat base cutting through the natural clay and seemed to run north-west by south-east. Trenches 38, 39 and 40 were excavated to pick up the direction of the ditch, unfortunately no further evidence of the ditch was found (Fig 3).

## 6 THE FINDS

### **Pottery** by Tora Hylton

Five sherds of pottery weighing 0.048kg and dating from the late Iron Age to early Roman period were recovered from trench 15 ditch [1506], fill (1504). Late Iron Age/early Roman pottery is represented by two undiagnostic body sherds in a hard-fired, gritty (quartz-tempered) black fabric, from a hand made vessel and a rim sherd from a grog-tempered jar. Later pottery is represented by two rim sherds from a Dragendorf type 18/31 Samian bowl, a form which dates to *c* AD 100-150 (Webster 1996, fig 21).

### **Quern** by Andy Chapman

There is a single fragment from context (1504). This comprises part of the circumference of an upper stone from a rotary quern in Millstone Grit. The stone is *c* 400mm in diameter, and the fragment is 45mm thick at the circumference. The grinding surface is worn, with traces of shallow dimples surviving. On both the upper surface and the circumference there are dimpled tool marks. The stone is evidently from a flat upper stone typical of one form of quern dating to the Roman period.

### **An assessment of animal bone** by Karen Deighton

#### ***Introduction***

There were 184g of animal bone from the fill (1504) of Roman ditch [1506]. The material was assessed in order to ascertain the species present, the level of preservation and potential contribution to the understanding of the site.

#### ***Method***

The material was examined using standard zooarchaeological methods.

#### ***Results***

Fragmentation was fairly heavy with only splinters of long bone recovered. Evidence of both fresh and old breaks was noted. Surface condition was reasonable. No evidence for

butchery or burning was observed and a single instance of canid gnawing was noted.

Two bone fragments and a maxillary tooth were identified as Bos (cattle). Two remaining fragments of bone could only be assigned to a large ungulate (large hoofed mammal) category.

### ***Discussion***

Unfortunately, very little can be said of the animal economy of the site (beyond mentioning that cattle were present) due to the lack of material.

Identification of bone is at a reasonable level which suggests, should more material be collected during the course of any further excavation, statements could be made regarding the range of animals present at the site.

## **An assessment of soil samples                      by Karen Deighton**

### ***Introduction***

Two 20 litre samples were collected by hand from the primary and secondary fills of the Roman ditch [1506]. These were assessed to establish the presence/absence of ecofacts, the nature of ecofacts, level of preservation and the potential contribution to the understanding of the site.

### ***Method***

The samples were processed using a modified siraf tank fitted with a 250micron mesh and flot sieve. The resulting flots were dried and analysed using a microscope (10x magnification).

### ***Results***

Sample 1 (context 1504) proved to be sterile.

Sample 2 (context 1505) produced approximately 100 Planorbis sp (fresh water snails). The molluscs were well preserved with little evidence of fragmentation or abrasion of shells.

### ***Discussion***

The presence of planorbids suggests the ditch [1506] contained water during some part of its history. Little more can be said of the environment or economy of the site due to the paucity of finds.

The low level of ecofacts recovered suggests further work would be of limited value. Further sampling, should future excavation take place, could be limited to contexts where ecofacts are visible.

**7 DISCUSSION**

The excavation of thirty-five trenches across the development area showed no major archaeology, no medieval ridge and furrow and no evidence which may have related to known settlements to the east and north.

Trench 15, on the north-east side of the area, revealed a single Roman ditch with associated Roman pottery and quern fragment. Trenches 38, 39 and 40 were excavated to reveal the extent of this feature. Unfortunately no further evidence was found. It is therefore possible that the feature only extends a short distance beyond trench 15, and is perhaps an elongated pit rather than a ditch. It could relate to now lost archaeological features to the east where the 1970's Westfield Road housing estate now sits. The remaining thirty-four trenches were devoid of archaeological deposits.

The north end of the site area next to Gidding road, has a number of dilapidated barns and storage structures and the excavation of trenches 4, 6, 41 and 42 has confirmed that the area has been disturbed by levelling and deposition of hardcore, and any archaeology that may have been present has now been destroyed.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

SSEW 1983 *Soils of Eastern England*. Soil Survey of England and Wales 1:250,000 map, sheet 4.

Phoenix Consulting 2007 *Archaeological Desk Based assessment, Land off Gidding Road, Sawtry, Cambridgeshire*, Phoenix Consulting Archaeology Ltd, **PC 296a**

Webster P. 1996 , *Roman Samian Pottery in Britain*, Practical Handbooks in Archaeology, **No 13**

IFA 1995 *Code of Conduct and Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Evaluation*, Institute of Field Archaeologists

8 APPENDIX 1: SITE DATA

Trench No	Context	Deposit Type	Description	Artefact types
4	401	Topsoil	Modern brick, concrete, stone, hardcore layer 0.49m	
	402	Natural	Firm light grey clay, 0.33m	
	403	Natural	Grey clay mixed with sandy gravel.	
6	601	Topsoil	Hardcore layer, modern brick, concrete and stone 0.55m	
	602	Natural	Grey clay and sandy gravel	
7	701	Topsoil	Firm dark brown clay loam 0.12m	
	702	Subsoil	Firm light brown compacted clay 0.26m	
	703	Natural	Firm blue-grey clay, patches of sandy gravel	
	704	layer	Dark band of clay. Modern disturbance	
	705	Fill	Firm dark grey clay 0.22m	
	706	Cut	Shallow hollow flat base per glacial erosion	
8	801	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.16m	
	802	Subsoil	Light brown sandy clay 0.27	
	803	Natural	Firm light grey clay orange sandy gravel	
11	1101	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.10m	
	1102	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.26m	
	1103	Natural	Light grey clay	
	1104	Natural	Orange sandy gravel	
12	1201	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.32m	
	1202	Natural	Orange sandy gravel 0.20m	
	1203	Natural	Light grey clay	
13	1301	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.15m	
	1302	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.34m	
	1303	Natural	Light grey clay sandy gravel	
14	1401	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.13m	
	1402	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.27m	
	1404	Natural	Light grey clay	
	1405	Natural	Orange sandy gravel	
15	1501	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.12m	
	1502	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.34m	
	1503	Natural	Light grey clay orange sandy gravel	
	1504	Fill	Secondary fill of 1506. mid grey silt clay isolated small stones 0.59m	RB Pottery. Quern
	1505	Fill	Primary fill of 1506. light grey orange silt sand clay 0.50m	
	1506	Cut	Linear Roman ditch NW-SE 1.20m	
	1507	Subsoil	Light brown clay. Same as 1502	
16	1601	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.13m	
	1602	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.20m	
	1603	Natural	Orange sandy gravel 0.14m	
	1604	Natural	Light grey clay	
17	1701	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.13m	
	1702	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.36m	
	1703	Natural	Orange sandy gravel 0.20m	
	1704	Natural	Light grey clay	
18	1801	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.11m	
	1802	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.29m	
	1803	Natural	Orange sandy gravel 0.25m	
	1804	Natural	Same as 1803	
	1805	Natural	Light grey clay	
19	1901	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.11m	
	1902	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.24m	
	1903	Natural	Light grey clay	
20	2001	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.10m	
	2002	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.20m	
	2003	Natural	Light grey clay	

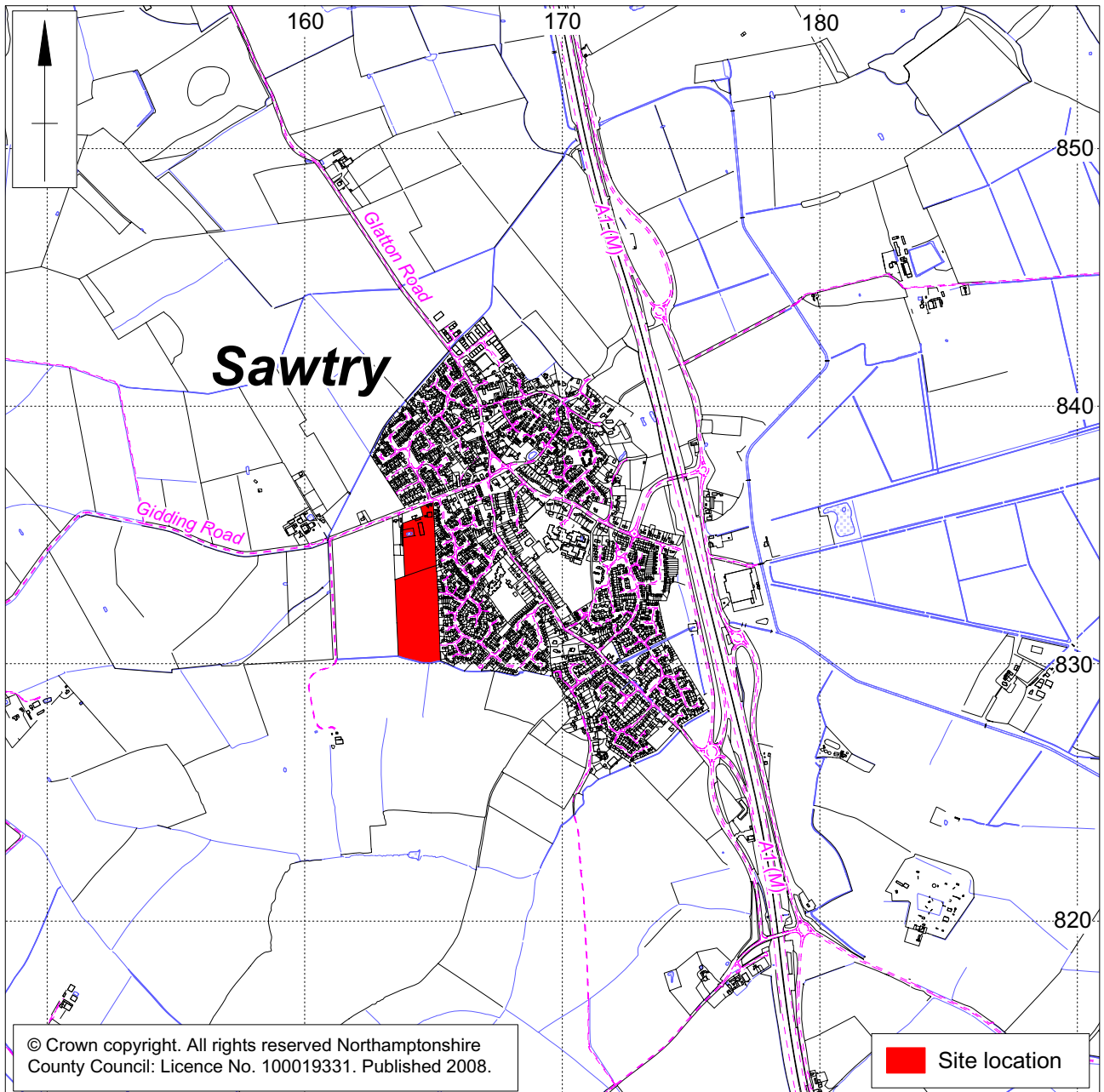
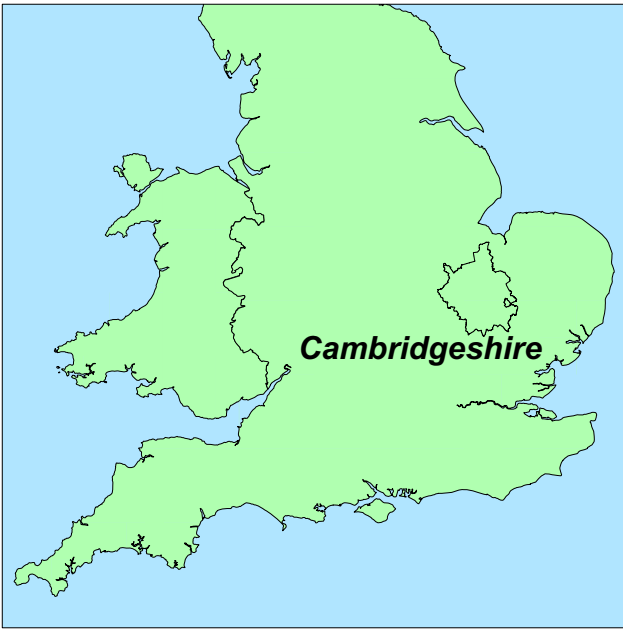
## Archaeological Evaluation Sawtry

Trench No	Context	Deposit Type	Description	Artefact types
21	2101	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.20m	
	2102	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.19m	
	2103	Natural	Orange sandy gravel 0.17m	
	2104	Natural	Light grey clay	
22	2201	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.12m	
	2202	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.24m	
	2203	Natural	Light grey clay	
	2204	Natural	Orange sandy gravel. Overlies 2203	
23	2301	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.30m	
	2302	Natural	Light grey clay patches of orange sandy gravel	
24	2401	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.37m	
	2402	Natural	Light grey clay	
25	2501	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.10m	
	2502	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.24m	
	2503	Natural	Light grey clay	
26	2601	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.08m	
	2602	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.20m	
	2603	Natural	Light grey clay	
27	2701	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.12m	
	2702	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.18m	
	2703	Natural	Light grey clay	
28	2801	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.06m	
	2802	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.22m	
	2803	Natural	Orange sandy gravel 0.21m	
	2804	Natural	Light grey clay	
29	2901	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.12m	
	2902	Natural	Orange sandy gravel 0.33m	
	2903	Natural	Light grey clay	
30	3001	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.31m	
	3002	Natural	Light grey clay	
31	3101	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.38m	
	3102	Natural	Light grey clay orange sandy gravel	
32	3201	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.33m	
	3202	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.18m	
	3203	Natural	Orange sandy gravel 0.24m	
	3204	Natural	Light grey clay	
33	3301	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.31m	
	3302	Natural	Light grey clay orange sandy gravel	
34	3401	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.29m	
	3402	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.23m	
	3403	Natural	Orange sandy gravel 0.21m	
	3404	Natural	Light grey clay	
35	3501	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.34m	
	3502	Natural	Orange sandy gravel 0.25m	
	3503	Natural	Light grey clay	
36	3601	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.33m	
	3602	Natural	Orange sandy gravel 0.12m	
	3603	Natural	Light grey clay	
38	3801	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.30m	
	3802	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.15m	
	3803	Natural	Light grey clay	
39	3901	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.32m	
	3902	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.22m	
	3903	Natural	Light grey clay	
40	4001	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam 0.27m	
	4002	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.25m	
	4003	Natural	Light grey clay orange sandy gravel	
41	4101	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam modern backfilled rubble 0.30m	
	4102	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.15m	
	4103	Natural	Orange sandy gravel	

## Archaeological Evaluation Sawtry

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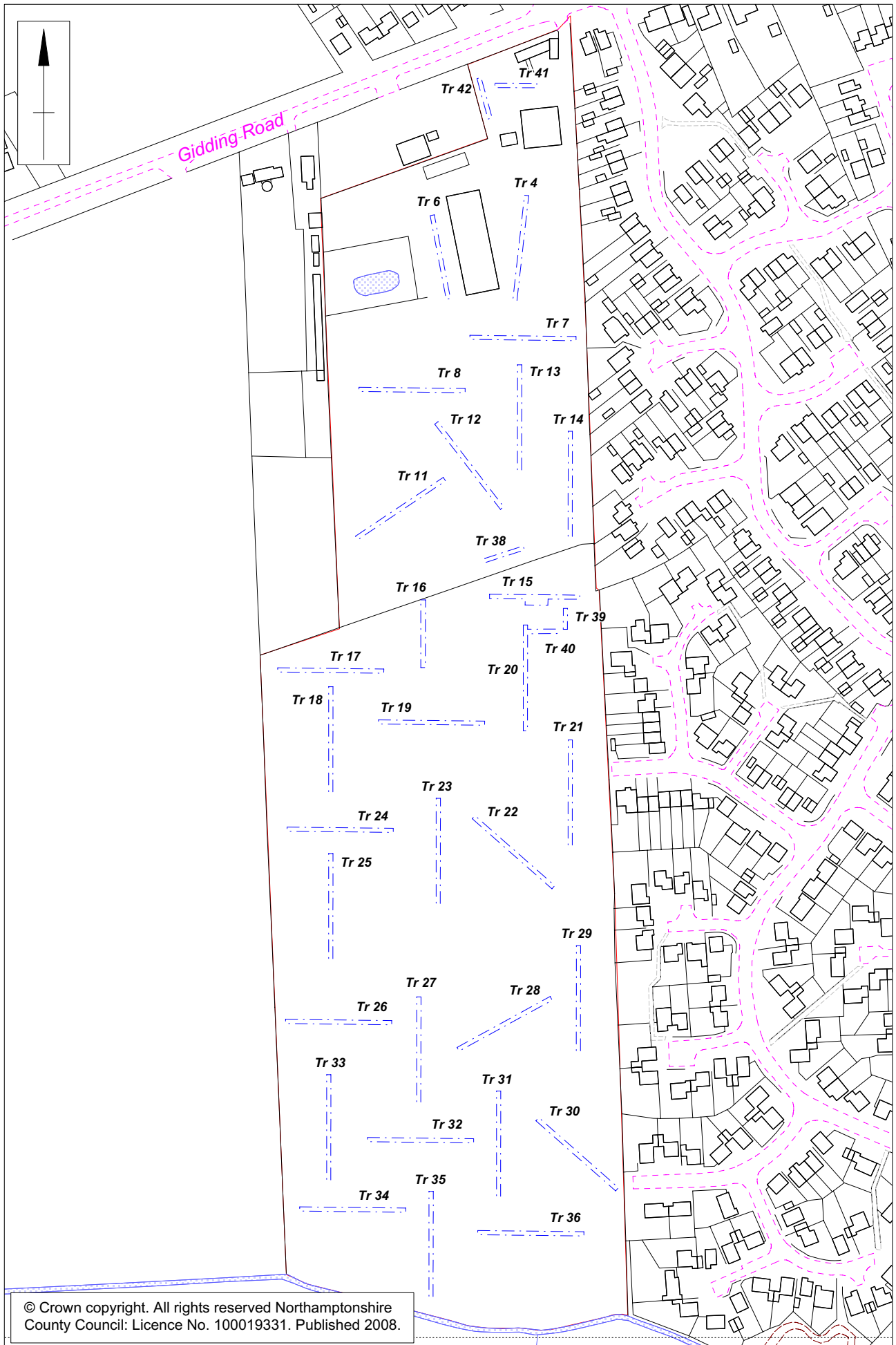
Trench No	Context	Deposit Type	Description	Artefact types
42	4201	Topsoil	Dark brown clay loam modern backfilled rubble 0.39m	
	4202	Subsoil	Light brown clay 0.29m	
	4203	Natural	Light grey clay orange sandy gravel	



Scale 1:2500

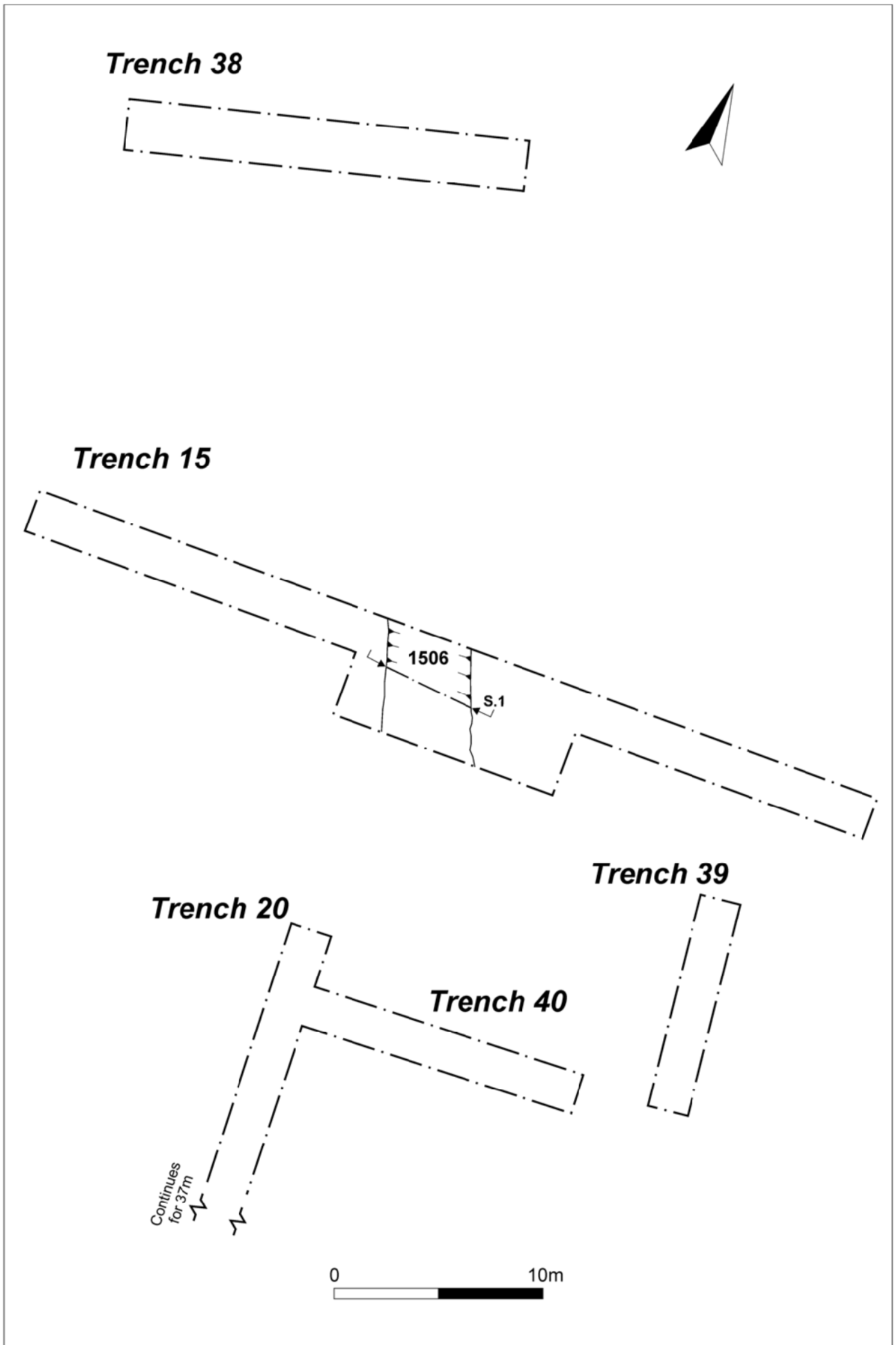
Site location Fig 1





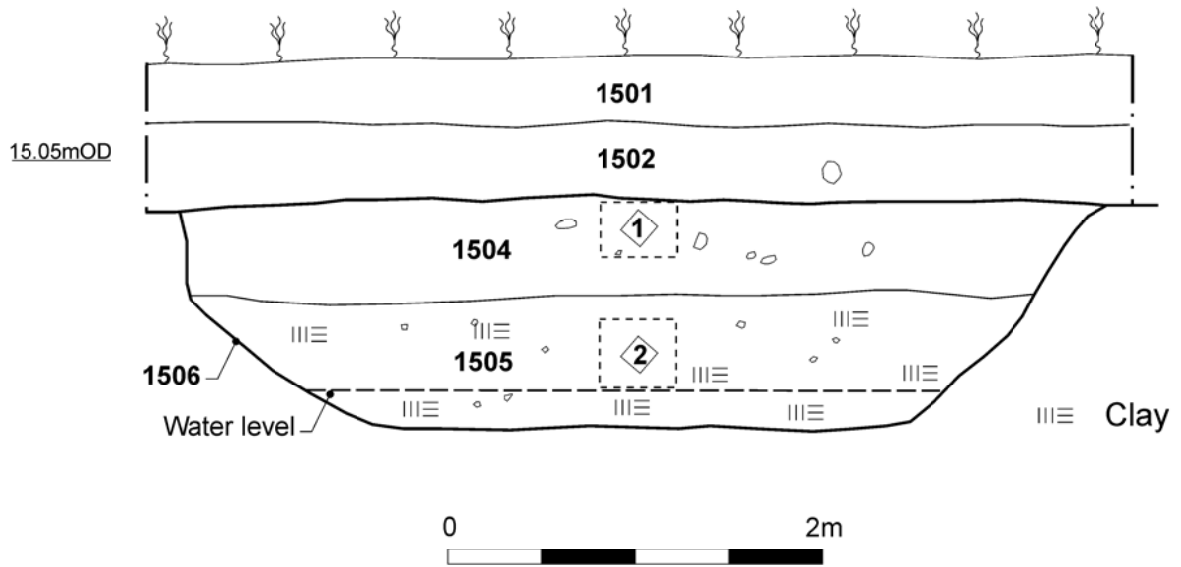
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Trench locations Fig 2



Trenches 15, 20, 38, 39 and 40 Fig 3

# Section 1



Trench 15, section 1 Fig 4