



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological excavation at the site of the new
parsonage, Tattenhall, Cheshire
October 2011



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Report 11/238

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CHEGM 2009.144



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QUALITY CONTROL

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TATTENHALL, CHESTER ROAD

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project title	Archaeological excavation at the site of the new parsonage, Tattenhall, Cheshire, October 2011	
Short description	Following an earlier evaluation, Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook a programme of strip, map and record excavation on land at Chester Road, Tattenhall, on behalf of the Chester Diocesan Board of Finance, ahead of the construction of a new parsonage on the site. Further to evaluation, no additional Roman remains were uncovered. The area contained exclusively post-medieval, principally 19th-century remains. The area may have been rough ground at that date and the undulations had been smoothed out by the introduction of dumps of material into which drains were then laid.	
Project type	Excavation	
Previous work	Evaluation (Mason 2010)	
Future work	None	
Monument type and period	Post-medieval	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Cheshire	
Site address	Chester Road, Tattenhall	
Easting /Northing	SJ 48700 58650	
Area	1525sq m	
Height OD	c 36m	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	CWaCHistoric Environment Officer	
Project Design originator	Anne Thompson	
Director/Supervisor	Chris Jones (NA)	
Project Manager	Iain Soden (NA)	
Sponsor or funding body	Chester Diocesan Board of Finance	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	October 2011	
End date	October 2011	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	CHEGM 2009.144	Pottery, bottle glass, brick/tile, iron nails, slate
Paper	Grosvenor Museum	Site records, photographs, drawings
Digital		Mapinfo Plans, Word Report, photographs
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Title	Archaeological excavation at the site of the new parsonage, Tattenhall, Cheshire, October 2011	
Serial title &	11/238	
Author	Iain Soden	
Date	November 2011	

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION AT THE SITE OF THE
NEW PARSONAGE, TATTENHALL, CHESHIRE
OCTOBER 2011**

ABSTRACT

Following evaluation, Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook a strip, map and record excavation on land at Chester Road, Tattenhall, on behalf of the Chester Diocesan Board of Finance ahead of the construction of a new parsonage on the site. Further to evaluation, no additional Roman remains were found. The area contained exclusively post-medieval, principally 19th-century remains. It may have been rough ground at that date, and the undulations were smoothed out by the introduction of dumps of mixed material into which drains were then laid.

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 SJ 48700 58650, Fig 1). The work was undertaken as required by the CWaC Historic Environment Officer to support a planning application for the development of a new parsonage for the 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 (Mason 2010).

In October 2011 Northamptonshire Archaeology returned to excavate a selected area of the site, which was related to the proposed footprint of the new building. The work was in pursuance of a planning condition applied as a result of the evaluation.

The site code TCR11 was allocated to the project to distinguish it from the previous work, although the previous evaluation accession number (CHEGM 2009.144) issued by the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, continued to be used with the agreement of the museum.

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 site was overgrown grassland and slightly uneven. The ground surface is irregular and lies at c 35-37m OD.

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

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

Other than the foregoing evaluation, 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. The evaluation uncovered disparate Roman pits at the far west of the present site, with some further east arguable but not proven.

Medieval

Tattenhall, or *Tatenhale*, is recorded in the Domesday 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 Werburgh's Abbey which suggests that it was present by 1101. 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. No medieval features were uncovered by the evaluation.

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). Post-medieval features comprised the majority of the evaluation results, most notably in the area of the current excavations.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The method statement (Thompson 2009) best continues to define the ongoing aim of the fieldwork as follows:

- to determine the location, extent, nature, date, and quality of archaeological deposits/features within 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.

4 METHODOLOGY

Subsequent to the six trenches of the evaluation, a strip map and record was carried out on a selected site area, which took in all or part of four of the evaluation trenches, as agreed between Anne Thompson and the CWaC Historic Environment Officer, Mark Leah. The area formed an irregular trapezium in plan and measured c25m x c18m along its two longer sides. The subsumed evaluation trenches were all of Trenches 2 and 4 and very small portions of Trenches 1 and 3.

Overburden comprising topsoil and patches of a thin subsoil to a combined depth of up to 0.5m, were removed with a tracked 5-ton 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).

The site was planned at a scale of 1:100 scale and sections of excavated features were drawn at a scale of 1:10. Finds were retained from all excavated features. No features were present which warranted further environmental samples being taken. The site was signed off by agreement with the CWaC Historic Environment Officer at the end of ten days' fieldwork.

5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

5.1 General comments

The geology, a mid-brown clay with orange and yellowish hues, was exposed in places across the area - typically observed at depths of c0.4-0.5m below the modern ground surface.

Archaeological features, all post-medieval, were present across the area. It was clear that many of those 'features' recorded in evaluation trenches, were in fact parts of a wider picture of land-makeup, in which layers and dumps of 19th-century deposition, were interleaved with others as they in-filled uneven hollows in the ground. Few actually looked like pits or ditches when the whole could be seen.

Of those features previously recorded in Trenches 1 and 3, none were seen to extend into the current area. Of those in Trench 2, some at least are now known to relate to the wider layout of 19th-century drains, while those in Trench 4 do so wholly.

5.2 A late post-medieval yard

The roughly trapezoidal area of excavation measured 25m along its western side, 18m on the south, 18m on the east and 13m on the north (Figs 2, 3 and 4). All the features described below date from the 19th/ early 20th centuries.

Within this area the mechanical stripping of the site exposed the natural clay geology (1003), which was much disturbed so that its surface appeared mottled and churned

over, by patches of ash, charcoal, sand and brick rubble. These patches have not been individually detailed but appear to fill hollows and undulations in the natural. In places they merged to form a dark layer up to 200mm thick, laden with charcoal, loam and small rubble fragments (1036). On top of this toward the north-west corner of the site lay a thin mortar spread (1037) reminiscent of builders' trample.

Into the mixture of the natural and these hollows had been laid a series of mainly parallel and mostly very straight north-south aligned drains, [1020/1022, 1028, 1030, 1034]. They were mainly rubble (French) drains and drained north to south.

Along the western edge of the site was a short section of drain with larger holes dug where joints had been created [1038].

At right angles to all these lay three similar drains at opposite ends of the site, [1007] at the south east, [1040] and [1041] at the north and north -west]. The first was set within a wide shallow channel, cut into the natural clay [1005]. This seems to have been designed to act as a collector over a wide area to channel surface water to the central land drain, which comprised 12-inch long (305mm) ceramic sections. The channel above was backfilled with a friable dark loam, probably chosen for its permeability. This cut across the easternmost of the north-south drains [1020], indicating one of only two sequences on the site. The others were also west-east drains, also ceramic, which cut across another two of the north-south examples {1028 and 1034}. They appear to have drained east to west, towards the rectory where they may have emptied into a major collector. One seems to have drained towards Chester Road.

A group of postholes or small pits at around the middle of the site [1012, 1014, 1016 and 1018] may relate to others found earlier in evaluation Trench 3 (see Mason 2010). Although in all cases, both the current works and the evaluation, they appeared in pairs, and were consistently laid out, their configuration is not readily interpretable. They may be related to formal garden planting; one possibility would be the common use of two poles or stakes with a cross-batten to support a young or unsteady fruit tree (the site was an orchard).

At the south-west corner of the site lay the only vestige of a definite structure (Fig 5), which comprised principally a row of four sandstone blocks [1035]. This was located within an area which had been prepared by digging out a shallow scoop [1024] and backfilling with re-deposited clay, more sandy and malleable than the undisturbed natural geology. There is no evidence to suggest whether these stones were part of a larger stone structure or a dwarf wall supporting one of either brick or timber. They align in the simplest way with a range of brick outbuildings on the rectory plot adjacent to the west. The building seems to have been drained by the north-south land drain [1030], which was aligned on the remaining line of stone blocks before curving away north in a straight line.

The sandstone blocks rested within a foundation trench with three distinct fills, the finest graded at the bottom, the coarsest at the top (1031-33), all based on broken sandstone pieces and placed so as to perhaps aid drainage.

At the west end of the foundation lay a curiously-shaped cut, curved in plan, which seems to have supported something like a hard curved edge set into the ground (Fig 6). Its use has not been identified.

Two pits at the edge of the excavation represent the only concerted attempts at rubbish disposal [1010], fill (1008), and [1039] (unexcavated on the very western edge of the area). The former contained 19th-century material.

6 THE FINDS

6.1 Post-medieval pottery

No Roman or medieval pottery was present in the excavation. To add to the nine sherds of post-Roman pottery found in evaluation, a total of 84 sherds of additional pottery were recovered from the wider works, spanning the period c1700-c1900. They occur in seventeen types/fabrics or traditions and weigh a total of 1470g (Table 1).

With the exception of a single sherd of 15th-century Tudor-Green-type ware and an early stoneware sherd from the evaluation (both from the west of the site), this assemblage expands predictably on the post-medieval material found previously.

The pottery's appearance right across the site continues to carry no suggestion of any trends of refuse disposal but does suggest widespread use and patternless discard in the 19th century, possibly in relation to the rectory but not necessarily so. None is remarkable and could be found in any domestic pantry or kitchen during the 19th century. All are common on 19th century sites.

The origins of the pottery at this late date are likely to be numerous. Blackwares and red-bodied coarsewares, including two with yellow-firing slip trails, generally probably derive from the relatively local potteries at Buckley, Flintshire, from where material was exported to Chester since the 1400s and where 19 separate industries once flourished, the last closing in 1945 (Davey and Longworth 2006). The 18th and 19th centuries found most local ceramics industries under great pressure from the massive output of Staffordshire. With its tremendous canal links and a ready export trade out through Liverpool, Stoke on Trent's towns in particular spread their influence.

In the face of the rise of the Staffordshire industries a few potteries specialised and it is likely that the Nottingham Stoneware here (actually from a number of indistinguishable sites in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire) are products of such focussed successes. So too the Creamware, while well within Staffordshire's sphere, may be a Liverpool product, where they, pearlwares and blue shell-edged pearlwares continued despite commercial pressures (Hildyard 2005, 126). The mocha sherds may derive from perhaps either Wales or Burton upon Trent, where there was a major industry riding on the back of brewing (ibid 173-4).

The Westerwald stoneware has been a typical export of the Rhineland for almost three hundred years. The 'Steiners' and other drinking vessels have been popular souvenirs for travellers to Germany for much of that time. They are still made today in huge numbers.

Although now added to the material from evaluation, this remains a small assemblage and very fragmentary. It is typical of domestic refuse of the nineteenth century. None of the sherds have distinctive forms worthy of note and many are undiagnostic body sherds. The assemblage is not felt to have any further value for research purposes.

TATTENHALL, CHESTER ROAD

Table 1: Pottery by type and context and number/weight(g)

Context/type	Date	1004 layer	1008 pit [1010]	1009 pit [1010]	1011 Posthole	1013 Posthole	1015 Posthole	1017 Posthole	1019 Posthole	1021 drain	1023 Foundation	Total
Manganese mottled ware	1680-1740	-	-	-	1/16g	-	-	1/18g	-	-	-	2/34g
Westerwald stoneware	18th	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/20g	-	1/20g
Notts stoneware	18th century	1/6g	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/6g
Blackware	18th-19th centuries	2/68g	-	1/7g	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/4g	4/79g
Blackware pancheon	18th-19th centuries	-	4/284g	5/314g	-	-	1/3g	-	1/50g	-	-	11/651g
Creamware	1760-1800	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/4g	1/4g
Pearlware	1780-1820	-	-	-	-	1/3g	-	-	-	-	-	1/3g
Blue shell edged pearlware	1800-1820	-	1/13g	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/3g	2/16g
Mocha/joggled slipware	1830-50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2/11g	2/11g
Underglaze transfer printed earthenware	19th-20th centuries	5/23g	-	1/3g	1/1g	-	4/8g	-	1/5g	2/5g	2/14g	25/203g
White glazed earthenware	19th-20th centuries	12/137	-	6/88g	-	-	2/4g	-	-	2/4g	-	23/244g
Stoneware	19th-20th centuries	-	-	4/39g	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4/39g
blacking bottle	19th century	-	-	1/7g	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/7g
Misc salt glaze	19th century	-	-	1/7g	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/7g
Blue banded earthenware	20th century	1/46g	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/46g
Misc coarseware	19th century	2/73g	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2/73g
Unglazed flower pot	19th-20th centuries	-	-	1/14g	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/14g
Stoneware Marmalade jar	1870-1910	1/20g	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/20g
Total		24/373g	15/441g	19/472g	2/17g	1/3g	7/15g	2/29g	2/55g	5/29g	7/36g	84/1470g

6.2 Ceramic building material

Although some pieces of fragmentary ceramic building material were also retrieved, no further information was obtained than that detailed in the evaluation report (Mason 2010). Given the amount of drainage and importation of material, there is nothing to indicate that the fragments originate on the site or indeed on the rectory plot. Like the pottery they may have come from elsewhere.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The previous trial trench evaluation showed that archaeological features were present across the proposed development area, although their nature and provenance proved at the time for the most part obscure, despite some Roman at the west end of the site.

The area chosen for the strip map and record has identified that all of the features found in the eastern part of the site are of 19th or 20th-century creation. Any earlier material in either evaluation or subsequently is likely to be residual or imported with material used to level the ground. Roman material in evaluation derived from further west and it is likely that Roman remains in the vicinity are concentrated in that direction only, close to the church.

There is no evidence for this eastern part of the site having enjoyed any specific use before the 19th century. Vestiges of a building are too ephemeral to even begin to suggest a use for it. It is likely to have been built, stood, and been demolished in the period between the mapping episodes of 1838 and the Ordnance Survey 1st edition of 1872. Pottery from its construction indicates a date c1830-50 at the earliest and it is surmised that it had a function related to the cultivation of the orchard in which it stood. Improving the site's drainage appears to have been a major factor in the use of the plot for at least the last century and a half. During that period it seems to have gone through two periods of drainage attempts: the first mainly north-south (apart from the building remains which drained north towards the churchyard), at least partly replaced by a layout west-east, possibly when water-levels may have begun to affect the rear of properties to the south which expanded considerably between 1838 and 1872.

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 either the evaluation, or the wider excavation works.

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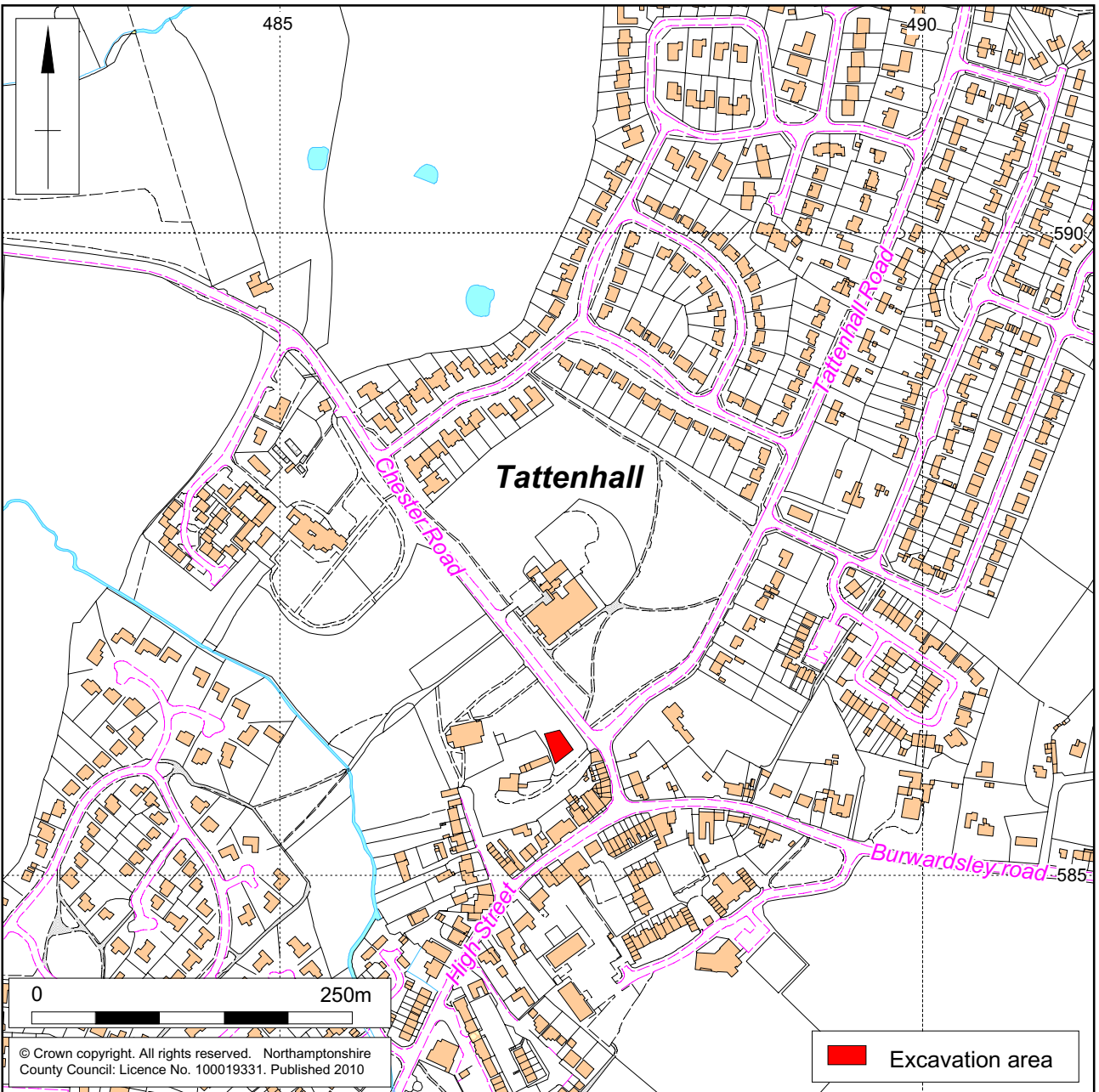
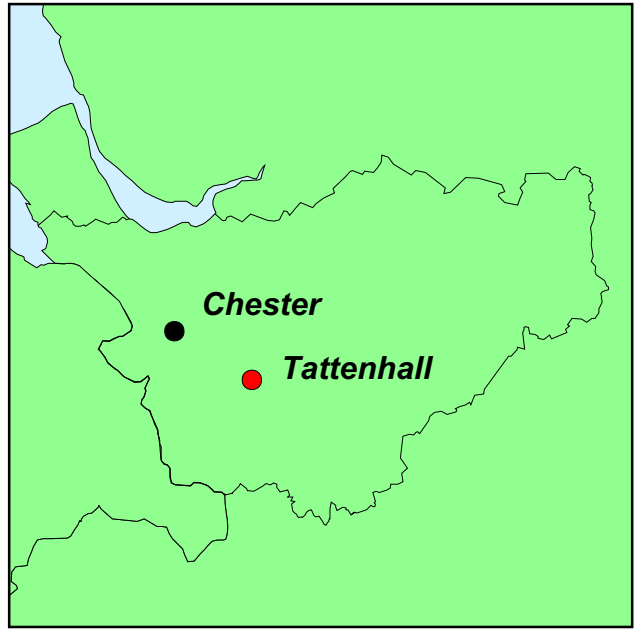
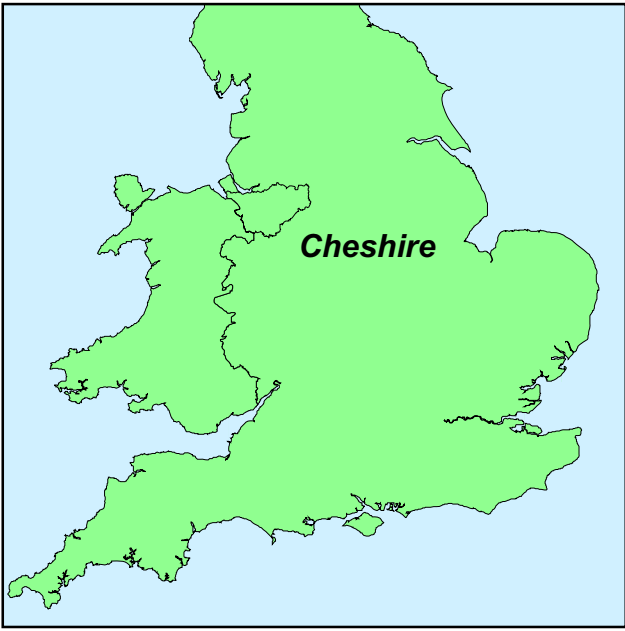
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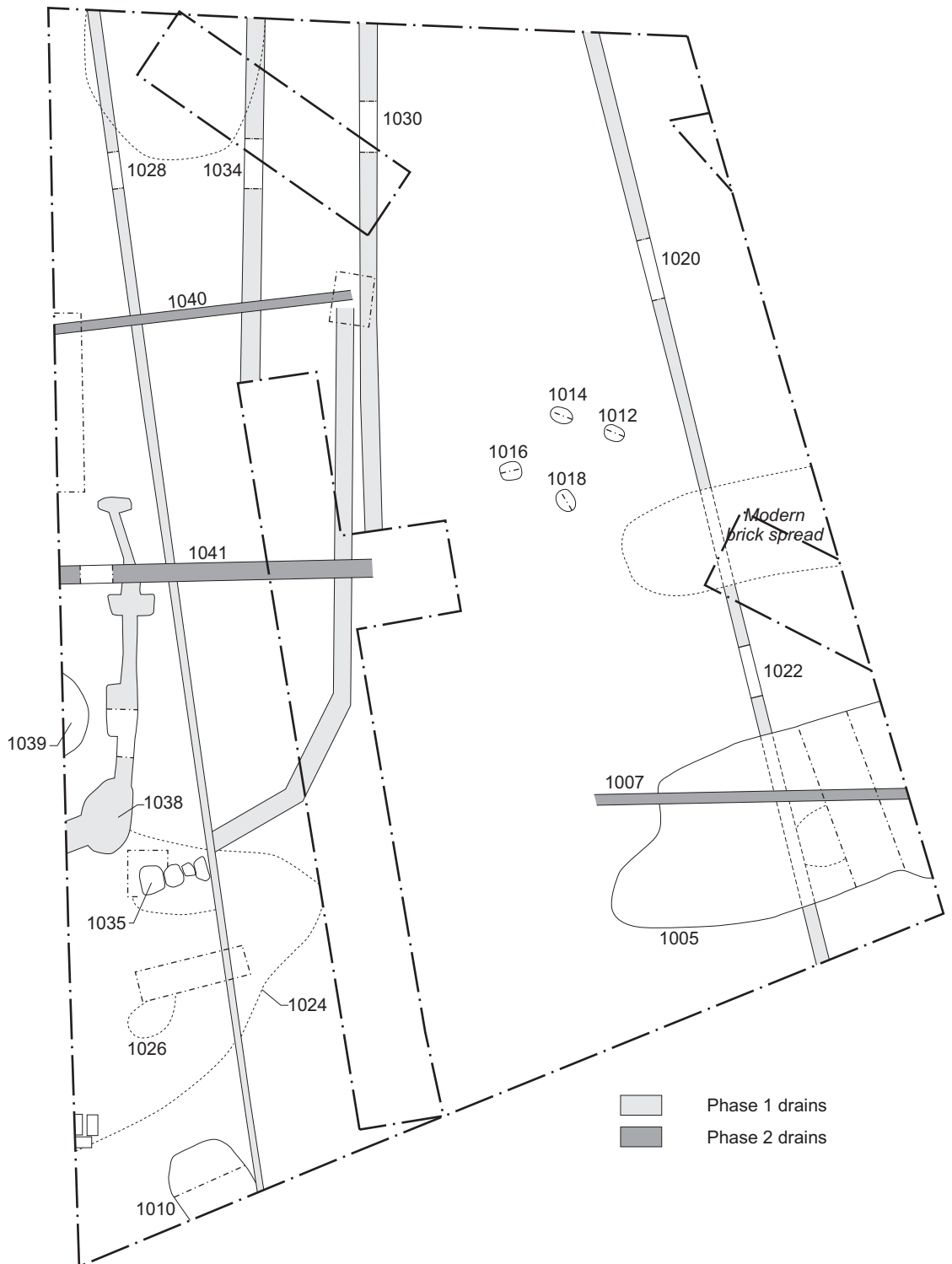
APPENDIX 1: TABLE OF CONTEXTS

Context	Context type	Description	Artefacts
1001	Layer	Black/brown loamy topsoil with frequent root intrusion	
1002	Layer	Brownish-red sandy clay subsoil	
1003	Natural geology	Reddish orange clay	
1004	Fill of 1005	Charcoal-rich black-flecked sandy clay with burning	
1005	Ditch	Shallow ditch acting as collector for drain 1007	
1006	Fill of 1007	Black/red dirty sandy clay for land drain, pieces of concrete included	
1007	Ceramic land drain		
1008	Secondary fill of 1010	Blackened sandy clay with pebbles, charcoal	Slate
1009	Primary fill of 1010	Similar to 1008 but browner soil matrix	
1010	Pit or ditch	Flat base.	
1011	Fill of 1012	Black silty clay	Modern pottery
1012	Posthole		
1013	Fill of 1014	Black silty clay	Modern Pottery
1014	Posthole		
1015	Fill of 1016	Black silty clay	Modern Pottery
1016	Posthole		
1017	Fill of 1018	Black silty clay	Modern Pottery
1018	Posthole		
1019	Fill of 1020	Black silty matrix with much stone	
1020	Drain; same as 1022		
1021	Fill of 1022	Black silty matrix with much stone	Modern pottery
1022	Cut for 1021	Drain; same as 1020	
1023	Fill of 1024	Red-brown sandy clay	
1024	Cut for 1023	Shallow, amorphous cut related to former structure	
1025	Fill of 1026	Burnt, black clay	
1026	Cut for 1025	Shallow cut related to 1024	
1027	Fill of 1028	Orange clay	
1028	Land drain		
1029	Fill of 1030	Sandy clay	
1030	Linear feature		
1031	Tertiary fill of 1034	Crushed sandstone	
1032	Secondary fill of 1034	Sandstone blocks	
1033	Primary fill of 1034	Silty, sandy clay	
1034	Foundation trench		
1035	Wall		
1036	Layer	Dark loam, charcoal and rubble	
1037	Layer	Mortar-rich trample	
1038	Land drain with pits for junctions		
1039	Pit (unexcavated)	at edge of excavation	
1040	Ceramic Land drain		



1:5000

Site Location Fig 1





General view of the site, looking south Fig 3



General view of the site, looking north-west Fig 4



The sandstone building remains [1035] Fig 5



Intricate cut related to the former building, its use unknown Fig 6



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