



**Northamptonshire
County Council**

Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological evaluation (trial trenching)

At 18 Main Street, Mursley,
Buckinghamshire



Paul Mason

January 2005

Report 05/14

Northamptonshire Archaeology

2 Bolton House
Wootton Hall Park
Northampton NN4 8BE

w. www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk

t. 01604 700493/4

f. 01604 702822

e. sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk



**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY
JANUARY 2005**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (TRIAL TRENCHING) AT
18 MAIN STREET, MURSLEY, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
JANUARY 2005
Report 05/014**

STAFF

Project Manager Joe Prentice
Text Paul Mason BA
Fieldwork Paul Mason
 Carol Simmonds BA
Pottery Paul Blinkhorn Btech
Illustrations Jacqueline Harding BA, HND

QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by			
Verified by			
Approved by			

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project title	Mursley, 18 Main Street	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Davies and Co on behalf of Mrs A Hawes to carry out trial trenching at 18 Main Street, Mursley, Buckinghamshire. The project was designed to meet an archaeological brief issued by Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service in response to a planning application (04/01887) submitted by Mrs A Hawes for a residential development on the site. The fieldwork was conducted on the 5 th and 6 th of January 2005. The only evidence for early activity on the site was a pit of unknown function located close to the street frontage. It contained sherds of late Saxon/early medieval pottery in its primary fill.	
Project type	Evaluation	
Previous work (reference to organisation or SMR numbers etc)	N/A	
Future work	unknown	
Monument type and period	N/A	
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	N/A	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Buckinghamshire	
Site address (including postcode)	18 Main Street, Mursley	
Easting (use numerical 100km grid square no.)	40 4817	
Northing	20 2286	
Height OD		
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Northamptonshire Historic Environment Team	
Project Design originator	Joe Prentice	
Director/Supervisor	Joe Prentice/Paul Mason	
Project Manager	Joe Prentice	
Sponsor or funding body	Mrs A J Hawes	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	January 2005	
End date	January 2005	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		
Paper		
Digital		
BIBLIOGRAPHY		Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)
Title		
Serial title & volume		
Author(s)		
Page numbers		
Date		

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	1
3	OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY	2
4	THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE	3
5	THE FINDS	5
6	DISCUSSION	6
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	7
	APPENDICES	8
	A1: Contexts by trench	
	Tables	
	Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type	6
	Figures	
	Fig 1: Site location	
	Fig 2: Trench locations	
	Fig 3: Sections	

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (TRIAL TRENCHING)
(TRIAL TRENCHING) AT 18 MAIN STREET, MURSLEY, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
JANUARY 2005**

Abstract

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Davies and Co on behalf of Mrs A Hawes to carry out trial trenching at 18 Main Street, Mursley, Buckinghamshire. The project was designed to meet an archaeological brief issued by Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service in response to a planning application (04/01887) submitted by Mrs A Hawes for a residential development on the site. The fieldwork was conducted on the 5th and 6th of January 2005. The only evidence for early activity on the site was a pit of unknown function located close to the street frontage. Sherds of late Saxon/medieval pottery were present in its primary fill.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Davies and Co, on behalf of Mrs A Hawes, to conduct an archaeological field evaluation at 18 Main Street, Mursley, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 4817 2286, Fig 1). The project was designed to meet an archaeological brief issued by Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service in response to a planning application (04/01887) submitted by Mrs A Hawes for a residential development at 18 Main Street.

The site lies within the historic core of Mursley and is bounded by Main Street, the village's principal thoroughfare, to the west and by Manor Farm to the south. The village school lies to the north and paddocks are located to the east (Fig 2).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography and Geology

The site is currently occupied by a detached house set in landscaped gardens. A large ornamental pond is located in the south-west corner of the site and a disused swimming pool and a partially demolished animal pen are located to the immediate south-east of the house.

The local geology is boulder clay and morainic drift over Oxford Clay and Kellaways Beds (www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index.html).

2.2 Previous Work

The site lies within the historic core of the village of Mursely which was a medieval market village where markets and fairs were held from the thirteenth century. It is thought that Mursely aspired towards the status of a small town or borough although it is doubtful if this was ever achieved, and it was certainly not sustained.

The application site lies just off the main street frontage which may have been the focus of the settlement, and close to the Manor farm which might be on the site of the medieval manor with which the market was associated.

A previous desk-based assessment undertaken for the redevelopment of the neighbouring Manor Farm site, carried out by Fell and Zeepvat (2002) notes that the settlement pattern at Mursely has undergone considerable modification since the sixteenth century. The village has evolved from a medieval nucleated settlement, dominated by the east-west route linking Mursely with Salden, to a linear settlement with a north-south axis aligned along Main Street. The report considered the potential for medieval archaeology on the Manor Farm site to be high, with a moderate potential for Saxon remains and low probability of Roman and prehistoric.

A subsequent archaeological evaluation of the Manor Farm site was conducted in July 2003. No significant archaeology was found. The closest trench to the proposed development site was located c10m to the south where natural gravel lay undisturbed at a depth of 0.25m below the surface level. Other trenches demonstrated that the area on the corner of Main Street and Cook Street had been heavily disturbed (Wilson, 2003).

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The trial trenching aimed to gather sufficient information to generate a reliable predictive model of the extent, character, date, state of preservation and depth of burial of important archaeological remains within the area of study. The following specific objectives were identified:

- To establish whether the site lies within the Saxon core of the settlement
- To identify the presence or absence of medieval/post-medieval remains associated with the occupation along Main Street

- To determine the character of any remains. If buildings or boundaries are identified can they be related to manorial occupation, commercial/market activity or peasant occupation?
- To establish whether there evidence for re-planning in this area of the village for example in the thirteenth century when the market was established or in the post-medieval period?

In accordance with the archaeological brief issued by Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service trenches were positioned to test the street frontage (Trench 1 (N) and (S)) and another to run at right angles to the street to test for property boundaries (Trench 2). A further trench was located to the south-east of the house (Trench 3). The total length of trial trenching was 35m (Fig 2).

The fieldwork was undertaken on the 5th and 6th January 2005. A JCB mechanical digger was used to lift crazy paving in the vicinity of Trench 1 (S) and remove a concrete surface overlying part of Trench 3. A 1.83m (6ft) wide toothless ditching bucket was then fitted to excavate the trenches. Topsoil and modern made-up ground, where present, were removed under archaeological supervision to expose the surface of the underlying geology. Where potential archaeological features were identified, they were cleaned by hand and sampled to determine their date and character.

A site record was maintained using pro-forma Northamptonshire Archaeology sheets supplemented by trench plans (1:50), section drawings (1:10) and 35mm black and white negative and colour slide photography.

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

4.1 Trench 1

Trench 1, positioned to test the street frontage, was split into two 5m long sections either side of the driveway leading to the house (Figs 2). The natural geology (102), a reddish brown sand and gravel, was revealed at a level of c146.50m OD in both sections of the trench.

Southern section

In the southern section of the trench a pit [103] had been cut through the natural geology (Fig 3, section 1). Only part of the feature was visible protruding from the west side of the trench. It was sub-circular with a steep-sided profile and a maximum depth of 0.56m. Its

primary fill was a dark blue/grey clay loam flecked with charcoal (104) containing fragmented, unidentifiable animal bone, burned clay and three sherds of late Saxon/medieval pottery. A secondary fill of re-deposited natural gravel lay over this (107). The pit had been disturbed by tree roots resulting in damage to its sides and base.

Emerging from under the driveway in the southern section of Trench 1 was a spread of cobbles (105) lying over a bed of dark reddish brown clay loam and gravel (113). The cobbles had been robbed away to the south where the bedding layer was exposed and lay directly over the natural sand and gravel (102). Nothing was found to date the surface.

Overlying the pit and butting up against the robbed edge of the cobbles was a layer of mid-brown sandy clay loam mixed with gravel and fragmented flint (101). Its thickness was c0.20m. This was overlain by various modern deposits including garden soil and hardcore for a crazy paving surface. In places it was cut by modern footings associated with a large ornamental pond, walls and other garden features. A foul water drain was cut from the garden soil through the natural gravel at the southern end of the trench.

Northern section

To the north of the driveway the natural gravel was overlain by a layer of olive brown sandy clay loam with gravel and flint inclusions (108). It was similar in character to the layer (101) observed overlying the gravel in the southern section of the trench. It was c0.20m thick and contained occasional pockets of building material comprising post-medieval roof tile and undressed pieces of limestone. A single sherd of red earthenware pottery of seventeenth century date was also found in this layer. In the northern extreme of the trench it was cut by a shallow trench [109] filled with fragments of limestone, large pebbles and the occasional piece of brick (110). The feature ran on a rough north-west to south-east alignment into the western end of Trench 2. Another sherd of seventeenth century pottery was recovered from the fill. Up to 0.30m of dark greyish brown topsoil overlay the earlier deposits. Closer to the driveway, a narrow trench carrying water mains [111] ran east to west across the trench.

4.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was positioned at right angles to the street frontage to test for property boundaries (Fig 2). It joined Trench 1 (N) at its north-east corner and ran for 15m up slope towards the house. Natural sand and gravel was located up-slope at 147.42m and down-slope at 146.70m OD.

A linear feature made up of a series of inter-cutting gullies and pits protruded from the southern edge of the trench for its entire length. A box section dug to investigate the

junction of two components of this feature revealed a shallow gully [204] butting a sub-circular pit [206]. The gully was at least 1m wide and had a maximum depth of 0.30m (Fig 3, section 2). Its primary fill was a mix of re-deposited natural gravel and mid-brown sandy clay loam (211). This was overlain by a deposit of mid-brown sandy clay loam (205) from which a number of post-medieval pottery sherds were recovered. The adjacent pit [206] had an inverted bell-shaped profile with irregular edges (Fig 3, section 3). It was over 1m wide, at least 0.55m deep and was filled with a sandy clay loam mixed with re-deposited natural gravel (207). A circular posthole [110] had been cut through the top of the pit. It was filled with a friable dark greyish brown sandy loam (112) from which pieces of fence wire were retrieved.

At the western end of Trench 2 the linear feature was truncated by a stone and rubble-filled cut [208] – the northern end of which was observed in Trench 1 [109]. The linear feature did not continue to the west of this.

4.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was 10m long and located to the south-east of the house (Fig 2). Natural sand and gravel (303) was located *c*0.40m below the surface at 149.12 to 149.52m OD. The only features present were a pair of modern water pipes which once served the nearby swimming pool. They were cut into the natural geology through a *c*0.20m thick deposit of loam and gravel subsoil (302) which was overlain by *c*0.20m of loose sandy loam topsoil (301). At the eastern end of the trench a raft of concrete (306) was present in place of the topsoil – the remnants of a demolished animal pen.

5 THE FINDS

Pottery

by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 12 sherds with a total weight of 288g. The material was all post-medieval with the exception of a single group of three sherds of late 10th – 11th century date.

Most of the sherds were types which are well-known in the region, and were recorded using the coding system of the Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit type-series (e.g. Mynard and Zeepvat 1992; Zeepvat et al. 1994), as follows:

SNC1: St. Neots Ware. *c*AD900-1100. 2 sherds, 69g.

PM5: Trailed slip-ware. 17th century. 1 sherd, 131g.

PM8: Red Earthenware. 17th century. 6 sherds, 60g.

19th C: Miscellaneous 19th and 20th century wares. 2 sherds, 12g.

In addition, the following ware, not covered by the type-series, was also present:

COTS: Cotswolds-type ware: *circa* late 10th - early 13th century. Oxfordshire fabric OXAC (Mellor 1994). Slow-wheel made. Fairly hard, dark blue-grey to black fabric with moderate sub-rounded white pink and grey quartzite up to 1mm. Sparse to moderate calcareous material, including ooliths, up to 2mm. Rare haematite up to 1mm. Mainly 'barrel' jars with triangular rims or more shouldered examples with high everted rims, bases usually sagging. Probably manufactured at a number of sources in the Cotswolds region. 1 sherd, 16g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Context	SNC1		COTS		PM8		PM5		19thC		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
104	2	69	1	16							L10thC?
108					1	7					17thC?
110					1	5					17thC?
205					4	48	1	131	2	12	19thC
Total	2	69	1	16	6	60	1	131	2	12	

6 DISCUSSION

The only evidence for Saxon or medieval activity on the site was the pit [103] located close to the street frontage in the southern section of Trench 1. A loose *terminus post quem* for the filling of the pit is indicated by sherds of late Saxon/medieval pottery present in its primary fill (104). Little can be said with regard to its function. Only part of the feature, perhaps a quarter of its whole, was visible protruding from the edge of the trench. The pottery and few small fragments of animal bone present within the fill may point towards rubbish disposal but could just as likely have been deposited during an episode of

deliberate backfilling. There were no traces of organic material or silt at the bottom of the pit which may indicate that it was indeed deliberately backfilled soon after being dug.

The pit and much of the natural geology in the area investigated by Trench 1 was overlain by material which did not appear to have accumulated *in situ* (101), (108). This was particularly evident in the northern section of the trench where a layer containing seventeenth century pottery and pockets of post-medieval building material lay directly over the natural sand and gravel. This implies that any structural evidence relating to a medieval street frontage, unless cut deep into the natural geology, would have been removed prior to the deposition of post-medieval material.

The continuous, yet irregular series of features running parallel with the southern edge of Trench 2 looks very much like the remnant of a hedge line or ditch punctuated by tree boles and the occasional post. Local residents commented that a large part of the development site was formerly part of the farmyard belonging to neighbouring Manor Farm and cattle were driven along a track close to the location of Trench 2. It is plausible that a ditch or hedge may have run alongside this track.

In conclusion, whilst it remains a possibility that evidence for Saxon and medieval occupation may have been removed by later landscaping, another explanation for its absence is that the early settlement was focused elsewhere. Following evaluation of land at Manor Farm, Fell and Zeepvat (2002) concluded that Mursley's early nucleus may have been along the east-west route to Salden with expansion along Main Street being a later development. The results of this investigation are compatible with this theory.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Fell, P and Zeepvat, B, 2002 *Manor Farm, Main St, Mursley: An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment*, ASC Report

Mellor, M, 1994 'Oxford Pottery: A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region', *Oxoniensia* **59**, 17-217

Mynard, DC and Zeepvat RJ, 1992 *Great Linford*, Buckinghamshire Archaeol Soc Monog Ser **3**

Wilson, N, 2003 *Archaeological Evaluation: Manor Farm, Mursley, Buckinghamshire*, ASC Report

Zeepvat, RJ, Roberts, JS, and King, NA, 1994 *Caldecotte, Milton Keynes. Excavation and Fieldwork 1966-91*, Buckinghamshire Archaeol Soc Monog Ser **9**

Websites

(www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index.html)

APPENDICES

A1: Contexts by trench

Trench	Context Number	Description
1	101	Loam layer. 0.20m thick.
1	102	Natural limestone gravel.
1	103	Cut for pit projecting from edge of trench. 0.56m deep.
1	104	Dark grey clay loam primary fill of pit 103.
1	105	Cobbled surface.
1	106	Sandy clay loam garden soil. 0.30m thick.
1	107	Clay and gravel secondary fill of pit 103.
1	108	Olive/brown clay loam layer. 0.20m thick.
1	109	Irregular cut for feature curving south-east to north-west. Not excavated.
1	110	Rubble and pebble fill of 109.
1	111	Trench for water pipe
1	112	Loam fill of 111
1	113	Bedding layer for cobbled surface 105.
2	201	Sandy loam top/garden soil. 0.30-0.40m thick.
2	202	Natural limestone gravel.
2	203	Intermittent lens of mixed topsoil and natural gravel. Less than 0.10m thick.
2	204	Cut for linear feature protruding from edge of trench. 0.30m deep.
2	205	Secondary fill of linear 204.
2	206	Tree bole? Over 0.60m deep.
2	207	Mixed loam and gravel fill of 206.
2	208	Same as 109
2	209	Same as 110
2	210	Cut for posthole. 0.30m diameter. Not excavated.
2	211	Primary fill of linear feature 204.
2	212	Loam and gravel fill of posthole 210.
3	301	Sandy loam topsoil. c0.20m thick.
3	302	Loam subsoil. c0.20m thick.
3	303	Natural limestone gravel.
3	304	Cut for pipe trench.
3	305	Fill of pipe trench.
3	306	Cut for pipe trench.
3	307	Fill of pipe trench.

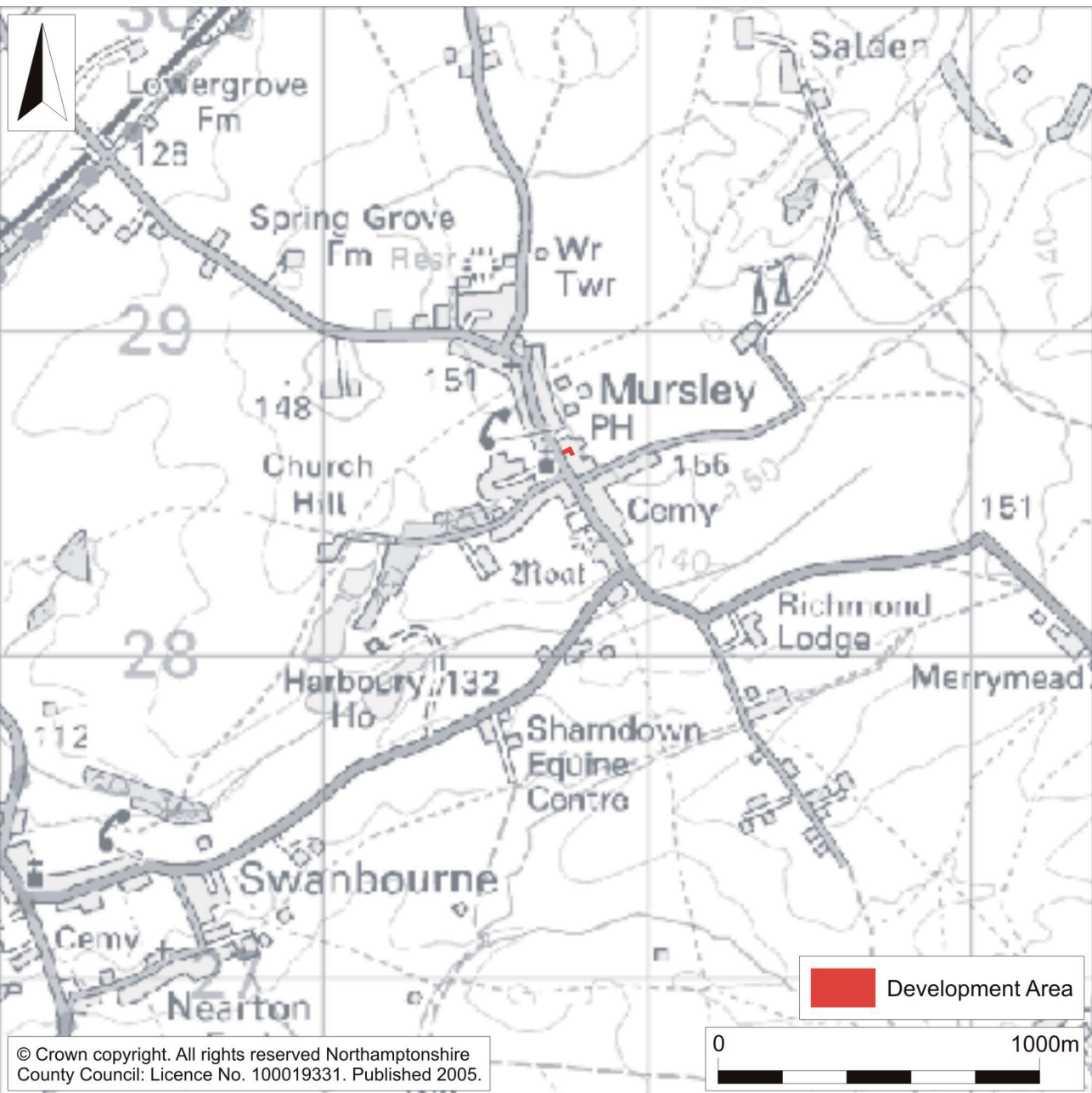
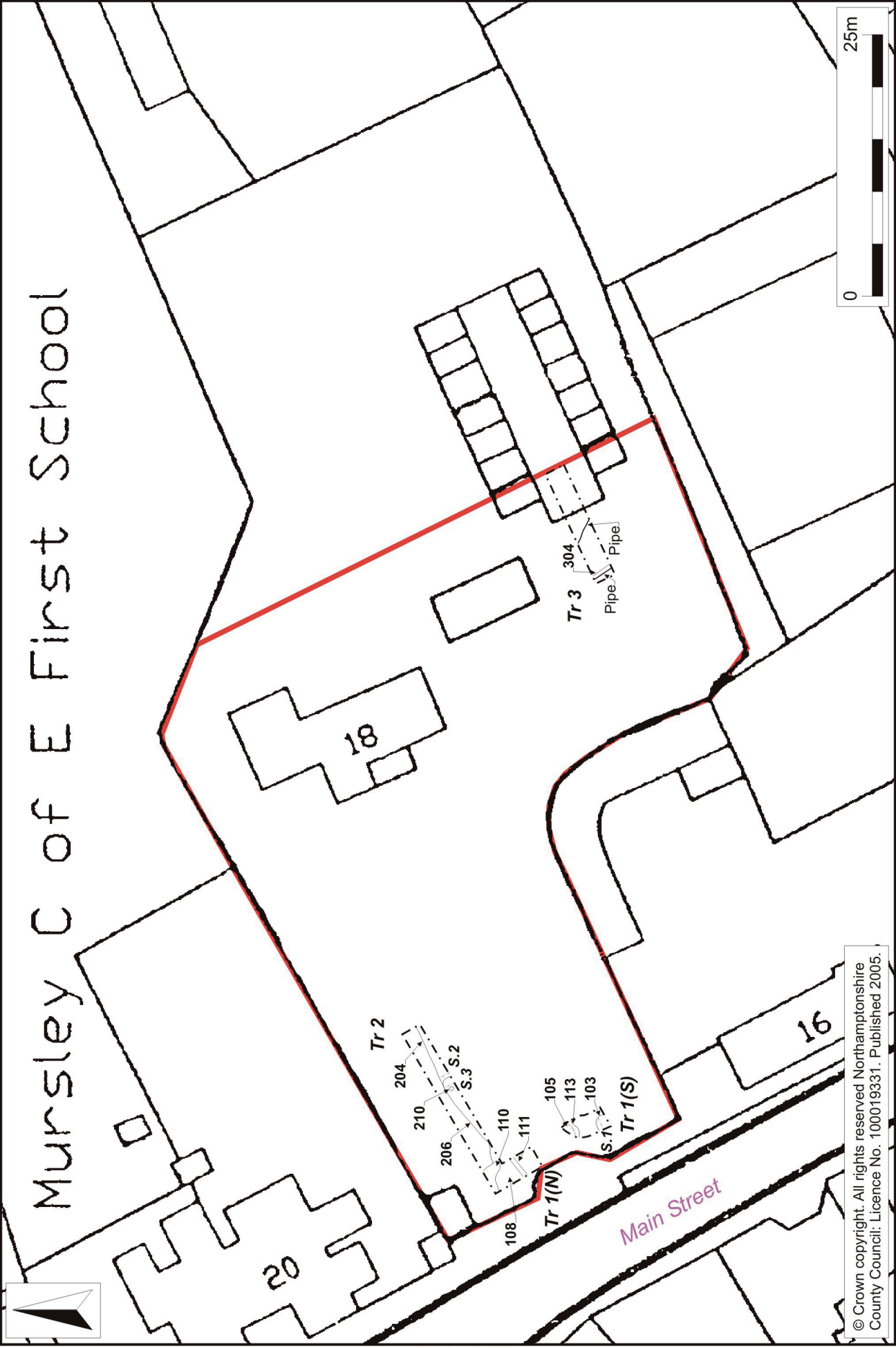


Fig. 1

Mursley C of E First School



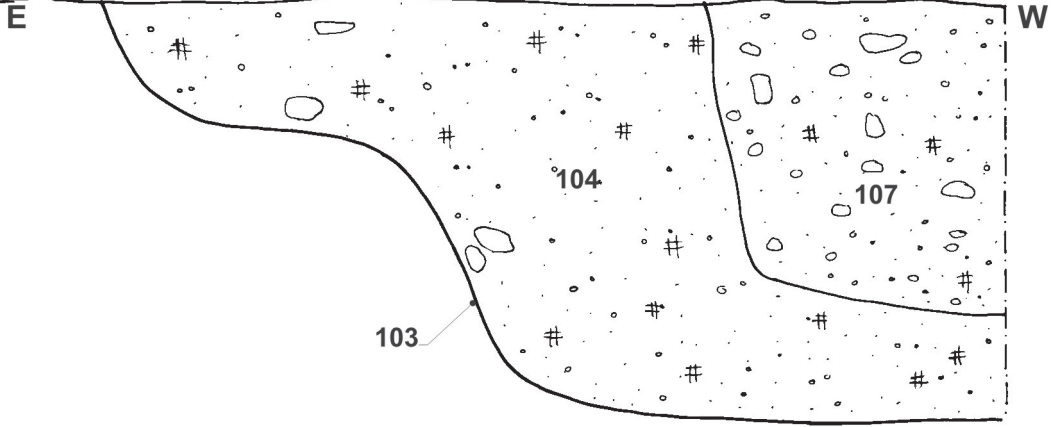
© Crown copyright. All rights reserved Northamptonshire County Council. Licence No. 100019331. Published 2005.

Scale 1:500

Fig. 2

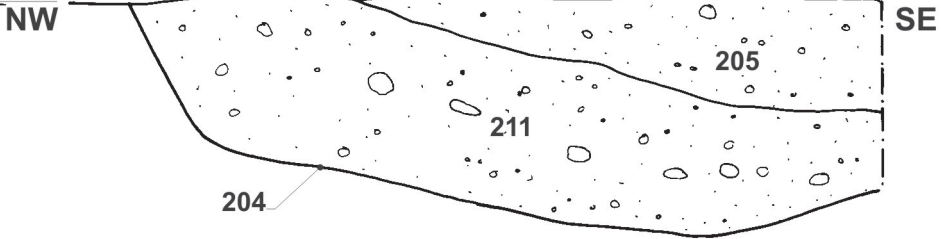
Section 1 - Trench 1(S)

146.42mOD



Section 2 - Trench 2

147.11mOD



Section 3 - Trench 2

147.07mOD

