Northamptonshire County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology

A Romano-British Settlement at West Haddon,

Northamptonshire

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	A Romano-British Settlement at West Haddon, Northamptonshire	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an open area excavation and series of watching briefs in advance and during construction of the West Haddon Bypass scheme, Northamptonshire. Field survey and subsequent trail trenching undertaken in 1997/8 had demonstrated the survival of archaeological remains relating to a Romano-British settlement located to the south-east of Village Farm. An area of c 0.9 hectares was initially subjected to full archaeological excavation prior to construction commencing, with a further c 0.15 hectares being excavated as a result of discoveries during the watching brief. The earliest evidence for occupation of the site was a circular ditched enclosure and a larger irregular enclosure defined by a sinuous gully. Both of these features are thought to be Iron Age and predate the establishment of a Romano-British settlement which comprised a series of sub-rectangular enclosures set out either side of a trackway. The excavation examined parts of three such enclosures together with associated features and a section of the trackway. The evidence indicates a rural settlement of modest status whose economy was based upon grain cultivation. The settlement appears to have been established in the mid-1st century and reached its zenith in the 2nd to 3rd centuries before being abandoned by the early 4th century.	
Project type (eg DBA, evaluation etc)	Excavation and watching brief	
Site status (none, NT, SAM etc)	N/A	
Previous work (SMR numbers etc)	Field survey and subsequent trail trenching in 1997/8, by Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Current Land use	A428 West Haddon Bypass	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	None	
Monument type/ period	Iron Age, Romano-British	
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	Iron Age and Roman pottery, millstone fragment, Colchester derivative brooch	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address (including postcode)	North of village	
Study area (sq.m or ha)		
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq. numbers)	462840/272430	
Height OD	c 180m OD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Atkins Heritage	
Project Design originator	NCC	
Director/Supervisor	Paul Mason	
Project Manager	Adam Yates	
Sponsor or funding body	Atkins Heritage/NCC	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	February 2005	
End date	June 2005	
ARCHIVES	**Location (Accession no.)**	**Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)**
Physical		
Paper		

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A ROMANO-BRITISH SETTLEMENT AT WEST HADDON,

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

2005

Abstract

Field survey and subsequent trail trenching undertaken in 1997/8 had identified archaeological remains relating to an early Romano-British settlement located to the south-east of Village Farm (NGR SP 6284 7243). In February 2005 Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Atkins Heritage to undertake an open area excavation of this settlement and a further series of watching briefs in conjunction with the West Haddon Bypass road scheme. Excavation commenced on 28 February 2005 with watching briefs continuing until early June. An area of c 0.9 hectares was initially subjected to full archaeological excavation prior to construction commencing with a further c 0.15 hectares being excavated as a result of the watching brief.

The earliest evidence of occupation was a large ring ditch subsequently truncated by a sinuous gully which appears to define a large enclosure of probable Iron Age date. These features were overlain by the Romano-British settlement which comprised of a series of sub-rectangular enclosures set out either side of a trackway. Evidence for a small rectangular timber building, possible roundhouses, stock pens and a flue feeding a corn-drier or similar feature was found. The track-side settlement dates from the late 1st century, reached its zenith in the late 2nd and had been abandoned by the mid 4th century.

1 INTRODUCTION

On 21 February 2005 Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Atkins Heritage, on behalf of their client Northamptonshire County Council, to undertake the archaeological excavation of a Romano-British settlement prior to the construction of the West Haddon Bypass (A428). The site lay to the north of the existing village centred on NGR SP 6284 7243 (Fig 1). The presence of archaeological remains had previously been established by a programme of geophysical survey (Chapman & Masters 1998) and a trial trench evaluation (Atkins 1998). A programme of watching briefs was also required to monitor subsequent ground-works over the remaining route of the bypass.

The initial phase of archaeological excavation, comprising a 0.9 hectare strip of road easement to the south of Village Farm, lasted for nine weeks between 28 February and 29 April 2005. A second phase of excavation, comprising *c* 0.15 hectares, was generated as a result of a watching brief conducted in the field adjacent to the eastern end of the earlier excavation. This took place between 16-27 May 2005.

Intermittent watching briefs were undertaken on the remainder of road corridor between 3

May and 14 June 2005, however, the potential for observing archaeological features was severely limited by the methodologies employed by the road contractors. As a result of this work two residual flints were retrieved and a Victorian midden was observed to the east of the open area excavation.

2 BACKGROUND

Archaeological and historical background (Fig 2)

Prehistoric

Clear evidence for occupation pre-dating the Iron Age is sparse in this part of Northamptonshire. A possible prehistoric barrow, known as Oster Hill, was identified by the county antiquarian Bridges in *c* 1720 (RCHME 1981, 97). It is thought to have been located close to Torkington Lodge, *c* 1km to the south-east of West Haddon. No trace of this earthwork survives.

The field-walking survey of 1998 produced a small quantity of sparsely scattered worked flint from fields to the east of the site. Bronze Age flint scatters were found in fields lying *c* 600m to the north-west of the site by Mr D N Hall (SMR 1091/0/0 & 1092/0/0).

A number of undated cropmarks identified by aerial photography have been loosely assigned to the prehistoric period. Two possible rectangular ditched enclosures and a linear feature are located *c* 1.3km west of the site in fields adjoining the existing A428 (SMR 5745/0/1). Further away, larger groupings of crop-marks indicate the presence of settlements to the south between Long Buckby and East Haddon (*c* 4.5-5.5km) and to the north between Elkington and Cold Ashby (*c* 5km).

The principal prehistoric monument of western Northamptonshire is the multivallate hillfort of Borough Hill located *c* 10km south-west of the site near Daventry. It is thought to date to the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age (Kidd 2002, 5). Another, smaller hillfort has recently been identified *c* 4.7km east of the site at Guilsborough (SMR 1124). Here the defences of a denuded univallate fort of the late 1st century BC were the focus of an archaeological evaluation in 1989 and subsequently surveyed by RCHME in 1993 (Pattison & Oswald 1994). The same fortification was described by a local naturalist and antiquarian, J Morton, in 1712,

'*The form of it is really that of the more common Roman camps, an oblong square. The shortest sides run North and South. It seems to have been fenced with only a single*

Entrenchment, but that a broad and deep one. 'Tis call'd the Burrows, whence some derive the name of the Town' (Morton 1712, 524)

The only extensively excavated Iron Age settlements within the locality are near to Crick 5-6km to the west of the site. Here three areas of intensive Iron Age occupation were excavated in advance of developments at the Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal (DIRFT). At Long Dole/Covert Farm two separate campaigns of excavation revealed a large Iron Age settlement (Chapman 1994, Woodward and Hughes 1998). Some evidence for late Bronze Age and early Roman occupation was also found. To the south a complex of enclosures containing roundhouses and a series of linear boundaries of middle Iron Age date were found at the Crick Hotel site (Foundations Archaeology 1999). West of here, at the Lodge, an unenclosed group of over twenty ring ditches was found with associated pottery indicating occupation into the 1st century AD (Chapman 1994, 4)

Roman

The site lies *c* 5.25km west of Watling Street and *c* 8km north north-east of the small town of *Bannaventa* through which the Roman road passed. To the north north-west lay *Tripontium* (*c* 11km) another small Roman town on Watling Street. Both sites have been the focus of recent campaigns of excavation (Dix and Taylor 1988, Lucas 2005).

Apart from the findings of the 1998 evaluations, evidence for Roman activity in West Haddon is limited to spot finds. Morton (1712) mentions a cremation urn and coins found in the village,

'*In digging of a well at the West End of West Haddon, was found a Roman urn, whose Mouth was cover'd with a flat Stone. Within were Ashes. In opening the Ground to lay the foundations of Mr Watkins House in that Town, they met with one or two pieces of Roman money*' (Morton 1712, 530)

A bronze coin was also found in the churchyard of All Saints Church in *c* 1863 (SMR1088/0/2) and another, of Antoninus Pius (AD 138-161), close by in 1990 (SMR1088/0/0).

The closest Roman site to be extensively excavated was lies adjacent to the Iron Age settlement at The Lodge, Crick. Here a complex system of linear ditches and sub-rectangular plots are thought to date from the 1st to late 2nd/early 3rd centuries (Chapman *pers comm.*). Also near Crick a hitherto undiscovered 'Roman Station' is marked on an OS plan of *c* 1817 in vicinity of Crack Hill, *c* 3.5km from the site (SMR9097).

Elsewhere the evidence for Roman occupation is, at best, patchy. Some of the undated

crop-marks in the vicinity may be of Roman origin including a configuration of ditches and enclosures lying *c* 4.5 km north of the site at Elkington. Scatters of Roman pottery have also been collected in this vicinity (SMR1060/0/0). Evidence for pottery production including kiln furniture, sherds dating to the 1st and 2nd centuries, hearths and a cobbled surface have been found *c* 4.7km to the south near Cotton End, Long Buckby (RCHME 1981, 131). Undated cropmarks lie only 0.5km to the west of the kiln site.

Medieval

Three entries appear in the Domesday Book (1086) for West Haddon. The Abbey of Coventry held two hides of land worth 20s worked by four villagers, two small holders and four freemen. William of Peverall held 1½ virgates of land in West Haddon as part of his manor at Coton and Gunfrid of Chocques held one virgate (Morris 1976).

The place name 'Haddon' is thought to derive from the Saxon '*haeth*' meaning heathland and '*dun*' meaning hill. The close proximity of two villages named Haddon (West and East) led to the locative prefixes being attached in 13th century. Prior to this a single place-name is listed as Edone or Hadone (1086) and Haddun (1185) (Whynne-Hammond 1994, 68)

The earliest surviving building in the village is All Saints Church whose arcades and south doorway date to the 13th century, however, the font is Norman *c* 1120 (Pevsner 1973, 457).

Previous archaeological work

A desk-based assessment and geophysical survey of land along the West Haddon bypass corridor was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 1997/8 (Chapman and Masters 1998). It concluded that there was 'no existing evidence for the presence of pre-medieval archaeological sites within the proposed road corridor'. The only evidence for buried archaeology was ridge and furrow relating to the medieval open field system. A field-walking survey produced only small quantities of worked flint and Roman/medieval pottery. A metal detector reconnaissance found nothing pre-dating the medieval period. The geophysical survey, however, indicated the presence of an extensive settlement to the south-east of Village Farm comprising a sinuous track-way flanked by sub-rectangular enclosures and a small number of potential structures (Fig 3).

Subsequent trial trenching by Northamptonshire Archaeology, undertaken in 1998,

confirmed these results and identified other features including ditches, pits, postholes and stakeholes (Atkins 1998). The settlement was assigned to the early Romano-British period (mid-1st to mid-2nd century) on the basis of the pottery assemblage.

In September 2003 a watching brief was undertaken whilst geotechnical test pits were excavated in the vicinity of the settlement (Thorne 2004). Archaeological deposits were not encountered.

Topography and Geology

The village of West Haddon is situated approximately 12.5km east south-east of Rugby and 17km north-west of Northampton on the A428. The West Haddon bypass curves east to west through agricultural land to the north of the village over a distance of 3.4km. At the western end of the bypass the original A428 lies at 148m OD. To the east, the land subject to full excavation occupies the summit and eastern slope of a plateau (183m OD). Further east the road corridor transects a valley (176m OD) before rising again in the vicinity of the Guilsborough Road. From here it steadily descends before meeting the A428 Northampton Road (170m OD)

In the vicinity of the open area excavation, as across much of the corridor, the geology comprises glacial sands and gravels with localised outcrops of ironstone overlying Upper and Middle lias (http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index.htm). The sands and gravel are replaced by boulder clay in the vicinity of the Guilsborough Road.

3 OBJECTIVES

The aim of the excavation was 'to preserve by record the early Roman settlement prior to the construction of the West Haddon Bypass' (Atkins Heritage 2005, 2). The following research objectives were also identified:

- To examine the chronology of the settlement establishment and development
- To examine the economic base of the settlement (in comparison with other settlements in the Nene Valley)
- To determine if there is evidence for specialised agriculture as developed in the late medieval/post-medieval period in this part of north-west Northamptonshire
- To examine the cultural affinities of the settlement (in comparison with sites in the

Nene Valley and the wider region)

In addition, the written scheme of investigation prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (Yates 2005) drew further relevant research themes and priorities from recommendations made by the East Midlands Regional Research Frameworks Project (Taylor 2002). These included:

- The context of conquest and geography of administration
- Rural society and economy
- Religion, social status and identity

4 METHODOLOGY

The topsoil and subsoil (where present) were removed by a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket to reveal archaeological features cut into the natural substratum. A metal detector survey was undertaken at an early stage of the fieldwork to pre-empt unauthorised detecting.

As all but the largest features quickly became obscured by wind blown or waterborne sand, a methodology of cleaning, excavating and planning individual 20m *tranches* of the site was employed. All discrete features were sectioned except where they contained significant artefact/environmental assemblages where they were fully excavated. Ditches and gullies, which formed the bulk of feature types, were sectioned both away from and at intersections (where present) to establish stratigraphic relationships. Environmental samples were taken following specialist advice.

5 EXCAVATION RESULTS

Summary of the site chronology

As a result of the excavation, six broad phases of activity have been identified which span the Iron Age through to the post-medieval period. The principal archaeological features and dates for each period are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of site chronology

Period	Evidence
Mid-late Iron Age?	A small enclosure defined by a ring ditch
Late Iron Age – early Roman	A large enclosure defined by a sinuous gully. Further ditches/gullies and pits may be evidence for stock control and structural remains
Roman (late 1st to mid 3rd century AD)	Sub-rectangular enclosures arranged along a central trackway. Ditches, gullies, pits and postholes within may relate to structures and a possible corn drier. Smaller peripheral enclosures may be stock pens. Evidence for outlying field boundaries and droveway(s)
Roman (later 3rd century)	Ditches/gullies superimposed over the earlier 'grid' system may be evidence of later Roman stock control and the reorganisation of agricultural boundaries
Abandonment (4th century)	A spread of domestic waste overlying later Roman features
Later land use (medieval-modern)	Ridge and furrow, field boundaries, a Victorian midden, 20th century plough furrows, modern services

The Iron Age enclosure (Fig 4)

The southern section of what is assumed to be a circular enclosure was located towards the western end of the excavated area, due south of Village Farm. This enclosure (E1) was defined by a 'U'-shaped gully with a typical width of 0.70m – 0.90m and a depth of up to 0.50m (Fig 7, section 169). It enclosed an area of approximately 20m in diameter and incorporated a *c* 5m wide, south-facing entrance. The gully was filled with a mid to dark orange brown sand. The only finds retrieved were a residual flint blade or awl of possible Mesolithic date (SF18) and a single cattle tooth. The tooth was submitted for AMS dating but was found to contain exogenous carbon components which would have compromised the accuracy of the results. The process was abandoned leaving the enclosure undated; however, it remains the stratigraphically earliest feature present.

The late Iron Age / early Roman enclosure (Figs 5 and 6)

A sinuous gully that looped into the middle of the site is thought to have defined the southern perimeter of a large, irregular enclosure (E2). The gully's profile varied from the near vertical to a gentle 'U' shape, was up to 1.1m wide and 0.40m deep (Fig 7, section 170). It enclosed an area which measured a minimum distance of 75m east to west. A south-west facing gap in the perimeter measuring *c* 2.5m wide formed an entrance. A linear geophysical anomaly located to the south of this gap may have formed the boundary of a field or droveway (Atkins 1998). It is evident that the enclosure also had a south-east facing entrance that was later blocked by the insertion of a 0.70m wide gully [379]. Prior to blocking the entrance measured *c* 5m wide and was flanked by a pair of shallow ditches (DG 1) which defined a funnel-shaped approach to the enclosure. Another gully [427] positioned in front of the entrance may have formed part of a gateway or partial barrier. The only dating evidence retrieved from these features was two Neolithic waste flakes from the perimeter gully of E2 which are thought to be residual and two sherds of Roman pottery dating to the late 1st to 2nd century from DG1 (436) which were probably introduced by later back-filling. The geophysical survey failed to locate this enclosure to the north of the excavated area.

A series of gullies and pits were cradled within the south-west perimeter of E2 defining a small 'D'- shaped enclosure (E3). The gullies were typically 0.40m deep and up to 1.2m wide (Fig 7, section 152). They enclosed an area of *c* 10m x 9m and between them were three distinct gaps, each of which may have formed an entrance. There was no evidence for domestic or industrial activity within. The enclosing gullies appeared to have been deliberately back-filled with very clean grey and reddish brown mottled sand. No artifactual or culturally derived material was found in the fills.

Among the small number of additional features occupying the interior of E2 was a narrow gully [592] whose alignment mirrored that of the western perimeter gully. It may have formed part of an internal division, respecting the position of E3 and hugging the western side of the enclosure. Closer to eastern perimeter of the enclosure was a *c* 2.20m long irregular depression [439] filled with burned sand, ash and charcoal (438). Its location corresponds with that of a burned pit found in Trench 2 (TT2) of the 1998 evaluation. The fill of the feature contained sherds of early Romano-British pottery and was interpreted as a hearth (Atkins 1998, 5.6). South-west of this, adjacent to the southern boundary of the enclosure were three postholes (PHG1), found in close association but without obvious function.

A few undated linear features and pits ranged around the periphery of E2 are also thought to be contemporary based upon their stratigraphic relationships with the enclosure gully.

In the extreme north-east corner of the site two large inter-cutting pits (PG1) had been severely truncated by Phase 3 features (Fig 14, section 268). Prior to this they had been deliberately back-filled with sand containing mid 1st-early 2nd century pottery sherds. Based upon their stratigraphic relationship with later Roman features, it is probable that they are contemporary with E2.

The Roman trackway and enclosure system (late 1st - mid 3rd century AD) (Fig 8)

The Romano-British settlement is characterised by a series of sub-rectangular enclosures set out either side of a central trackway that sweeps into the site from the south-west and kinks slightly before dipping away to the south-east. The principal components of the settlement were identified by the geophysical survey (Chapman and Masters 1998). The excavation revealed part of the trackway and associated field boundaries, cut a swathe through the northern range of enclosures and exposed features to the north-east of the settlement.

The trackway and associated ditches/gullies *(Fig 9)*

Entering the site in its south-west corner was a wide curvi-linear feature flanked by ditches (DG2) whose position corresponded with that of the track-way identified by the geophysical survey (*ibid*). The trackway itself had a maximum width of 5.60m, a depth of up to 0.50m and was filled with a mid-brown sand (Fig 14, section 1). Its morphology indicated that it was a worn-away hollow rather than a deliberately cut feature, no evidence of metalling was present. To the east the feature narrowed and split into two separate gullies connected by a thin spit of sand. It also changed alignment, curving to the south-east where it broadened once more before disappearing beyond the excavated area. Two sherds of pottery dating to the mid-2nd-3rd century were found in its fill.

To the south of the trackway and mirroring its alignment was a ditch with an average width of 1m and depth of up to 0.40m. Pottery contemporary with the sherds retrieved from the trackway was present in the sandy fill of this feature (572). The same ditch was identified by both the geophysical survey and the trial trench evaluation where a succession of re-cut gullies were found in TT4 (Atkins 1998, 5.25). It appears that this ditch defined both the southern edge of the trackway and the northern boundary of the

adjoining series of enclosures. Within the current excavation area a number of contemporary subsidiary gullies joined the ditch from the south.

To the north of the trackway a second ditch, again located by both of the earlier surveys, was aligned east-west, measured *c* 0.80m in width and had a depth of up to 0.60m. To the east, in TT4 of the evaluation, this ditch had been re-cut forming a boundary measuring *c* 2m in width. No dating evidence was retrieved from either intervention; however, the alignment of the ditch suggests that it was deliberately positioned to avoid the south-west corner of the earlier enclosure (E2). This may infer that the earlier enclosure was still a prominent feature in the landscape when the trackway and flanking ditches were set out.

Set out at right angles from the north side of the trackway were two gullies, some 65m apart, that may have enclosed an agricultural field or pasture. The eastern gully was aligned in parallel with the perimeter of the western sub-rectangular enclosure. An unoccupied 5m wide gap between the two linear features may have been a path or drove-way leading northwards from the main trackway.

The western enclosure *(Fig 10)*

Two parallel ditches, spaced almost 40m apart, defined the boundaries of the western sub-rectangular enclosure (E4). The northern and southern boundary ditches were located by geophysical survey (Chapman and Masters 1998) and targeted by the trial trench evaluation (Atkins 1998), which identified a circular ditched feature, possibly a roundhouse in its south-east corner, outside the excavated area.

The western ditch was up to 2.5m wide and 1m deep and had a 'V'-shaped profile with a cleaning slot in its base. It had been re-cut on at least two occasions and contained pottery post-dating the early 2nd century throughout its sand-derived fills (Fig 14, section 143). The opposing (eastern) ditch was up to 3.5m wide and 1.10m deep and had been re-cut three times with such vigor that it is better considered as four separate ditches (Fig 15, section 4), proceeding chronologically westward. Towards the northern edge of the site the original ditch profile remained isolated from the successive re-cuts (Fig 14, section 102). The fills of the ditches were of similar character to those of the western boundary and produced pottery post-dating the late 1st century. Two pieces of Millstone grit, both thought to have derived from millstones, were found in the fill of the final re-cut (401).

The enclosure contained a small number of features which shared their alignment with the perimeter ditches. They included a group of gullies and pits in the north-west corner (DG3) and two narrow gullies towards the centre (DG4). The most westerly of these two

gullies contained pottery contemporary with that found in the boundary ditches. Its southern extremity was cut by a pit [374] that contained a number of sherds of mid-2nd-3rd century AD date.

The central enclosure *(Fig 11)*

This trapezoid-shaped enclosure (E5) shared its western boundary with E4 and measured a maximum of *c* 45m on its east-west axis and *c* 40m on its north-south axis. The ditches defining its northern and eastern perimeter were partially revealed by the excavation and the geophysical survey located its southern boundary flanking the track-way.

The northern enclosure ditch had been re-cut on numerous occasions, moving the boundary progressively northwards (Fig 15, section 60). The resultant linear feature had a width averaging *c* 2.20m and a depth of up to 0.85m. Where pottery was present in the sandy ditch fills it consistently post-dated the mid 2nd century. The final re-cut contained pottery of the mid 3rd century (106). Pottery was retrieved in far greater quantity in this part of the site than the area to the west.

The original northern ditch turned sharply southward to define the eastern side of the enclosure. At the southern end of the excavated area this split into two shallow, diverging gullies which also appeared in the trial trench evaluation.

A rectangular structure

In the north-east corner of the enclosure a series of inter-cutting gullies or beam slots defined a small rectangular structure (S1) (Fig 11 & 12, Plate 1). Its interior measured *c* 4m on its east-west axis and *c* 6m on the north-south. A *c* 0.65m wide gap in its perimeter formed a south-facing entrance. To the immediate south was a cluster of three postholes (PHG2) which may have formed part of a gate or porch-type structure. Three inward facing postholes were incorporated into the western side of the structure and another occupied its north-eastern corner. Within its interior a shallow gully [113] was positioned slightly north-west of centre. A circular pit [159] was joined to the eastern side of the structure by a narrow contemporary gully [156]. A third pit [109] occupied its north-east corner and another [115] was attached to the exterior of its eastern side.

Both pits and gullies were filled with orange to grayish brown sand with very few inclusions other than the occasional fragment of ironstone. Environmental and material evidence was sparse and did little to elucidate the function of the structure. Where pottery was present it was predominantly of a 2nd century date. No animal bone was recovered although poor levels of preservation may explain its absence. A soil sample taken from

gully [156] was found to contain a small quantity of charred cereal grains, charcoal and a black porous 'cokey' material. The latter is thought to derive from the processing of cereals at high temperatures; however, the small size of the assemblage is thought to indicate secondary deposition. The only other evidence for burning in the vicinity was found in the fill of pit [109] that contained fragments of charred clay.

Following advice from Northamptonshire Archaeology's palaeoenvironmental consultant, Dr Helen Keeley, the potential of samples taken for phosphate analysis was thought to be negated by the nature of the sandy geology and by contamination caused by intensive grazing of cattle and badger 'activity' on the site.

Pit/posthole group

In the north-west corner of the enclosure was a group of seven large postholes or pits (PG2). Five were arranged in a roughly circular configuration around two of the smaller pits. Their diameters ranged from 0.45m to 1.50m and depths from 0.20m to 0.45m. Each was filled with yellowish brown sand. Roman pottery spanning the 2nd to 3rd centuries was present and a group of three nails preserving traces of wood was found in one of them [335]. It is possible that these pits supported timbers for a circular structure with a central post.

Entrance to a roundhouse?

South of PG2 two opposing gullies curved out of the edge of the excavated area and terminated forming a 1.5m wide gap (S2). The gullies were up to 0.40m deep and 1m wide and the eastern arm had two postholes set into its base. Two more postholes were offset from each gully terminus and another smaller one was located just inside the eastern arm. No dating evidence was found in the fill of these features whose configuration resembles an entrance, perhaps leading into a structure or small enclosure. The geophysical survey did not, however, locate such a feature in this vicinity.

A corn drier?

To the south-west of S1, protruding into the site from the edge of the excavation, was a narrow flue-like feature [274] whose sides were constructed from large cobbles and a block of ironstone (Plate 2). Intense heat had discoloured the stones, as well as the sand at their base and burned material was spread over the surrounding area. The deposit within the flue was primarily composed of burned sand and clay and produced a few sherds of late 1st-2nd century pottery. The burned area north of the flue overlay a small pit [265] which contained late Iron Age/early Roman pottery, charred chaff and cereal grains and the black, highly fired porous material. The density of the cereal macrofossils was

suggestive of parching waste. It would appear that the flue was feeding something located outside the area of excavation, undetected by the geophysical survey, perhaps a corn drier.

Structure north-east of enclosure?

Located just outside the north-east corner of the central enclosure were a series of ditches and gullies that may have defined a structure (S3). The northern portion of this structure was not detected by the geophysical survey. A principal ditch, measuring up to 1.40m wide and 0.70m deep, was partially encircled by two gullies. The east-west axis of the interior measured *c* 7m and contained two smaller gullies with opposing north and south termini which may have been associated with an entrance.

A copper alloy brooch of Colchester derivative (SF7), dating to *c* 80AD, was found in the fill of the inner ditch (Plate 3). Pottery recovered from the gullies was largely undiagnostic but where datable it was of a 2nd-4th century date.

The eastern enclosure *(Fig 11)*

The eastern and central enclosures were spaced *c* 30m apart. In this gap were a number of ditches and gullies (DG5) whose north-south alignment mirrored that of the settlement. Trench 7 of the trial evaluation had previously examined these features and five sherds of greyware were recovered from the fills of re-cut gullies. The only pottery retrieved from this area during the full excavation came from a re-cut gully located close to the eastern side of the central enclosure. The original gully contained sherds of late 1st-3rd century date and the re-cuts had sherds dating through to the mid 3rd-4th centuries. The general lack of pottery and uniform north-south alignment of the features is suggestive of an unoccupied area, perhaps a small crop field or pasture.

The only part of the eastern enclosure (E6) falling within the excavated area was its extreme north-west corner which was defined by two shallow inter-cutting ditches. The rest of its perimeter was identified by the geophysical survey. A wide trench carrying a modern water supply pipe had removed the western side of the enclosure. The survey also located an angular anomaly in its south-east corner, thought to be a possible structure. Trial trenching (TT8) confirmed the presence of a group of undated gullies in this vicinity (Atkins 1998, 5.45).

Features north-east of eastern enclosure *(Fig 13)*

North and north-east of E6 and undetected by the geophysical survey were a complex

series of ditches, gullies and pits which may have defined up to four smaller enclosed or partially enclosed areas.

Enclosure 7 (E7)

This lay to the north of E6. Its southern side appears to have been defined by the northern boundary of E6 as indicated by the geophysics survey. A double gully with a parallel alignment was located in the excavated area *c* 17.5m to the north. The eastern side of E7, an apparent continuation of the eastern side of E6, was formed by a *c* 1.25m wide ditch with a depth of up to 0.45m. Undiagnostic pottery was present in the fill of this ditch. A curving gully was dug at a later date to join the north and east sides of the enclosure.

Enclosure 8 (E8)

Adjoining the north-east side of E7 was the southern half of another potential enclosure. A curving gully, attached to a projection of the eastern side of E7, enclosed an area with an internal diameter of 8m. A large posthole was centrally located within this area. To the west a double gully joined the northern boundary of E7, effectively 'boxing in' the sub-circular enclosure. Access to E8 appears to have been provided by a gap towards the north-eastern corner of E7. The only diagnostic pottery recovered from this area came from the curving gully and dates to the 2nd century.

Enclosure 9 (E9)

Adjacent to E7 and E8 a square enclosure (*c* 10m square) was defined by a complex series of inter-cutting gullies. A large oval pit measuring 2.8m x 1.35m x 0.38m was placed centrally within the enclosure and an unusual north-east-facing entrance was formed by an angled gully attached to the southern perimeter. This gully terminated in a barb-shaped configuration of pits. The opposing arm of the entrance terminated in a similar fashion. Located between the two was an 'L'-shaped posthole. Pottery with dates ranging from the late Iron Age/early post-conquest through to the late 3rd/early 4th centuries was recovered from the sandy fills of these features.

Enclosure 10 (E10)

Ditches that were set out at right angles from the northern side of E9 suggested the presence of a further square enclosure. Both were *c* 1.1m wide and *c* 0.40m deep. A single sherd of late 3rd/4th century pottery was present in the fill of the eastern ditch. A gully looped into the interior of the enclosed area and terminated close to the edge of excavation.

A stone surface (850)

Close to the southern side of E9, was a shallow depression overlain by a stone surface (850). The surface lay against the edge of the excavation and evidently continued southwards. All of the stones, which were flat but irregularly shaped, had been laid horizontally. Very few were the local ironstone; some were slabs of oolitic limestone and another was a piece of millstone grit from an upper millstone (Plate 4).

A boundary ditch (DG6)

Three parallel gullies were aligned east-west in the extreme north-eastern corner of the site. They had been cut through the top of the backfilled late Iron Age/early Roman pits (PG2) and contained undiagnostic Roman pottery. A south-easterly continuation of this boundary was suggested by the geophysical survey.

Modifications to the enclosure system (later 3rd century AD) (Fig 16)

Towards the centre of the site a number of features, mainly gullies, were aligned north-west to south-east in marked contrast to the principal axis of the settlement. Two of these gullies formed a funnel-shaped configuration towards the eastern side of E4, cutting earlier features (DG7). A small quantity of late 2nd-3rd century pottery sherds were found in the terminus of the northern gully.

Bisecting the neighbouring enclosure (E5) was a substantial ditch aligned north-west to south-east. South-west of this was an irregular configuration of gullies (DG8) connected to the ditch by a longer gully (Fig 15, section 100). A small number of sherds from 2nd-4th century wares were found in these features. The earlier sherds were abraded and probably the product of secondary deposition.

To the north-east of the ditch was a sinuous gully which terminated at the northern perimeter of the Phase 3 enclosure. Together with the ditch, it appeared to form a funnel-shaped arrangement (DG9) similar to that observed to the west.

To the south of E4/E5, outside the excavated area, the geophysical survey identified a number of linear and curvi-linear anomalies which might be associated with this phase of activity.

Abandonment of the enclosure system (4th century AD) (Fig 18)

Overlying the southern arm of E9 and the stone surface (850) was a large spread of organic, domestic and mineral-derived debris (830). Its sandy loam matrix contained a considerable number of large pebbles and was comparatively rich in finds. Material recovered from this deposit included pottery dating to the late 3rd/mid 4th century, three iron objects and a modest assemblage of animal bone, notable for its presence on a site with very poor levels of bone survival. Soil sampled from this deposit produced small quantities of charred grain and chaff, weeds, charcoal and the black 'cokey' material noted elsewhere.

The stratigraphic relationship of this to late 1st-mid 3rd century features, its debris content and the late date of the pottery suggests that it was deposited during or after the abandonment of the settlement.

Later land use (Fig 19)

Towards the western end of the excavated area two undated gullies were aligned roughly north-south. Similar features were identified by the geophysical survey and survive as earthworks in the fields to the south of the excavation. They relate to ploughing undertaken during World War II (Chapman & Masters 1998, 3.9.5)

Seven oval/circular pits were present measuring up to 2.10m in diameter and with depths varying between 0.10 and 0.95m deep. Their profiles were similar - near-vertical sides giving away to flat/shallow concave bases. Their configuration suggested that they had been dug around the 20th century plough furrows. Nothing was found within them. They were probably dug to extract sand.

It was noted that the principal modern field boundary and the largest of the later 3rd century ditches (DG9) shared the same north-west to south-east alignment and were positioned within a few metres of each other. While it is possible that this boundary has been extant for some seventeen centuries it may alternatively reflect a much later reuse of the earlier topographical feature.

Pockets of ridge and furrow were also present, most notably at the eastern end of the site. Further east, outside of the excavated area, a Victorian midden was disturbed as topsoil was stripped by the road contractors.

6 FINDS

The worked flint by Yvonne Bianca Wolframm

Composition of assemblage

The artefacts were knapped from flint. The colour of the majority of the flint is light grey to dark grey, has a semi-transparent appearance and is fine textured. Some flint can be relatively transparent. The flint surfaces with surviving cortex (grey in colour) show evidence of heavy rolling.

The assemblage consists of 35 artefacts. There is one core, and one core rejuvenation flake. Also there are eight waste flakes, two waste blades, three utilised flakes and two utilised blades. Furthermore there are nine flakes and blades that have been miscellaneously retouched and three flakes and blades are notched. The tools in the assemblage consist of three scrapers and one possible awl. There is one flint that shows thermal alteration and finally one shattered fragment (Table 2).

The worked flints were recovered from features of all phases of the site's occupation with a third of the artefacts from the subsoil or un-stratified contexts. It is suggested that the artefacts are therefore residual.

Table 2: General composition of flint assemblage

Category of flint	Total number
Cores	1
Core rejuvenation flakes	1
Waste flakes	8
Waste blades	2
Utilised flakes	3
Utilised blades	2
Miscellaneous retouched	9
Notched flakes /blades	3
Scrapers	3
Awl	1
Burnt flint	1
Shattered pieces	1
Total	35

Discussion

The colour of the flint and the cortex characteristics indicate that the raw material is of the local drift or river flint. There is no direct evidence whether any raw material was brought in. The quality of the raw material is on the whole good; there are some flaws in the raw

material.

There are two cores and two core fragments. These artefacts show that long narrow blades were produced alongside flakes, generally in a systematic manner. There is evidence of core preparation and long term use of the cores through the rejuvenation flake, but the cores were not exhausted. There are a number of flakes and blades that have been used without any modification; utilisation is evident through the edge damage. Also there are a number flakes and blades that have some miscellaneous retouch and notching, these artefacts also show edge damage through use. The miscellaneous retouch is generally systematic, but generally over small areas. However, there is one exception. A blade has extensive retouch down one side and the distal end.

The tools comprise three scrapers and an awl. One of the scrapers is elongated and one is rounded. They have deliberate retouch to shape the scrapers on the proximal end of a flake. The edge damage indicates heavy utilisation. The third scraper has a little miscellaneous retouch and edge damage on the distal end of the flake possibly indicating one time short term use. A few of the miscellaneous retouch blades show possible signs having been used in a manner of a knife. One of the cores is heavily thermally damaged, apparent through the crazing on the proximal and distal ends. Otherwise there is no evidence of thermal alteration of flints on the site. The patination of a few artefacts is probably a natural occurrence. The flakes and blades were knapped with both a soft hammer and a hard hammer. A few of the waste flakes are heavily damaged around the striking platform.

The size of the assemblage does not allow for definite dating. However, it can be suggested that the lithic assemblage shows a Neolithic component in the form of the end scrapers and blades. The possible awl is common in the Mesolithic. This artefact can suggest a mixed assemblage or point the assemblage to an early Neolithic date.

A catalogue is retained in the site archive.

The late Iron Age and Roman pottery by A R Fawcett

Introduction

Through interpretation of the ceramic record, this report provides a date range for activity on the site as well as a socio-economic statement. To enable comparison with sites of a similar nature in Northamptonshire and neighbouring counties, the fabric codes are based upon a style developed by Going (1987) and further enhanced by Tomber & Dore (1998).

Form matches are taken from a number of regional sites for instance, Towcester (Symonds 1980) and Bannaventa (MacRobert 1988), other influential assemblages such as Causeway Lane (Clark 1999) and Verulamium (Wilson 1984) are used as and when necessary.

All of the pottery has been examined at x20 vision. Specific detail such as unsourced coarseware division and detailed fabric division can be found in the site archive. A full record of fabrics encountered on the site is listed below.

Fabrics

LGF SA La Graufesenque samian ware

LMV SA Les Martres-de-Veyre samian ware

LEZ SA 2 Lezoux samian ware (category 2)

UNS SA Unsourced samian ware

KOL CC Cologne colour coated ware

LNV CC Lower Nene Valley colour coated ware

OXF RS Oxford red/brown slipped ware, OXF WS Oxford white slipped ware

LNV WH Lower Nene Valley white ware

MAN WH Mancetter-Hartshill white ware

OXF WH Oxford white ware

VER WH Verulamium region white ware

UNS WH Unsourced white ware

UNS OX Unsourced oxidised ware

LNV RE Lower Nene Valley reduced ware

DOR BB1 Dorset black burnished ware category 1

UNS BB Unsourced black burnished ware

BSW Black surfaced/Romanising grey wares

GRS Unsourced sandy grey wares

HAD RE 1 Hadham reduced ware category 1

HAR SH 2 ‘Harrold’ shell tempered ware

UNS SH Unsourced shell tempered wares

PNK GT Pink grog tempered ware

SOB GT Southern British grog tempered wares

UNS GC Unsourced grog and calcite tempered ware

UNS GS Unsourced grog and sand tempered ware

UNS SO Unsourced sand and organic tempered ware

BAT AM 1 Baetican amphorae fabric category 1.

Discussion

A total of 940 sherds weighing 13,445g with a r.eve (rim estimated vessel equivalent) of 10.53 were recorded from the excavation and a further 309 sherds with a weight of 3692g and a total r.eve of 3.20 were recovered at the evaluation stage. Overall the pottery condition varies between abraded and slightly abraded, although the vast majority falls within the former category. The average sherd weight of 13.5g is low when taking into account the inclusion of storage jar fabrics.

Both the evaluation and excavation stage ceramics suffer from the same problems in terms of dating. Firstly the low percentage of diagnostic data, much of which is only identifiable by its general form. Secondly, the virtual absence of finewares through all dated phases of activity means that dating often has to fall back on combinations of mostly unsourced long-lived coarsewares. Furthermore a large percentage of contexts contain only small numbers of sherds, which alongside their condition and those problems already pointed out, means that most are considered not well dated.

Late Iron Age to c AD70 (173, 264, 763, 773, 775, 799, 805, 841: 25 @ 282g, 0.11).

As the above figures suggest pre-Roman and immediate post Roman activity is barely recognisable as nearly all of these fills hold single figure sherd counts. Activity in this period was also found to be negligible at the evaluation stage by Mackreth (1998, 6). All of the fabrics here straddle the conquest period (SOB GT and UNS SH being the main types) but do not occur in sufficient numbers to be confident of a date either side. Nevertheless fragments of a G1-1 platter (Thompson 1982) and a carinated cup (Thompson 1982: E1-2) indicate some minimal activity during this period.

Mid to late 1st/early 2nd century AD (2/2, 2/4, 3/2, 781, 856: 163 @ 1779g, 2.19).

This grouping is not very well dated and is identified solely by fabric combinations and a

small number of jars. Indeed it may be that most of these contexts are placed towards the end of the date range, however, they help to demonstrate an increase in land use.

The fabrics encountered at this juncture are the locally produced BSW, GRS and UNS SH. The form suite is dominated by jars, mostly in the channel rim style, a variety of which can be seen at Bannaventa (MacRobert 1988) and Towcester (Symonds 1980). Of interest in 3/2 is a small BSW jar/beaker in the style of Towcester 27 (Symonds 1980) and Baldock 422/5 (Stead & Rigby 1986). The only vessel from this context, it displays slanted shoulders, grooving and a worn lattice pattern (Fig 20:1).

Early to mid 2nd century AD (3/4, 3/8, 39; 41 @ 374g, 0.10)

Only three contexts are dated to this phase, however, 3/4 contains one of the few sherds of samian on the site. This is a Drg18/31 dish in the central Gaulish fabric LEZ SA 2. Thereafter the only other dating clue to this being a distinct phase in its own right is the presence of MAN WH mortaria sherds, displaying early grit arrangements. The remaining fabrics are again BSW, GRS, and UNS SH.

Mid to later 2nd century AD (185, 400, 51 @ 541g 0.86)

This period sees a slightly more diverse ceramic supply, with small amounts of pottery arriving from Dorset (DOR BB 1), Verulamium (VER WH), the Lower Nene Valley (LNV RE) and the introduction of the relatively local PNK GT. With the exception of one triangular rimmed dish and a number of unidentifiable jars, the only form of note occurs in 183. The channel rim jar style is quite common; nonetheless this one shows a slight variation to most in published examples (Fig 20:2). It is in BSW and has a well-defined grooved rim, a distinct shoulder line and fine rilling on the body. Unfortunately this is the only vessel within the context; two similar types can be seen at Towcester dated from the early to later 2nd century AD (Symonds 1980: No's 90/91).

2nd century AD

A large number of contexts are dated within this period but cannot be defined within it. The fabric trends are the same as outlined above, local versions and the introduction in very small percentages of regional fabrics.

The form assemblage remains very restricted, composed of mainly jars (channel rimmed and necked with everted rims) with an occasional dish and a single two handled flagon (the handles are missing). One unusual jar type in context 185 is noted (this fill possibly holds some earlier dated pottery, although the majority is dated to the 2nd century AD). The fabric is GRS and is constructed of ill-sorted dense quartz, with sparse calcite (see

below for further comment on this fabric). The form has two cordons on the neck and a groove at the girth, no direct match can be found for this form (Fig 20:3).

Mid/late 2nd to early/mid 3rd century AD (23, 65, 98, 204, 244: 55 @ 897g, 0.91)

This phase is represented by only a small number of contexts as few can accurately be placed within it. Nonetheless the largest numbers of fills on the site occur from around the mid 2nd century, to an undefined period in the 3rd century AD (these date ranges being generated by long-lived non-diagnostic coarsewares).

Little changes in the fabric range except for DOR BB 1 being a little more consistent and one instance of KOL CC in the form of rough cast beaker body sherds. The main unsourced fabric contribution is GRS, thereafter PNK GT and UNS BB.

The form assemblage is equally unchangeable with jars being the dominant form followed by a small number of plain-rimmed dishes and mortaria.

Two forms of note arise from the broadly dated 373, the first in PNK GT is a typical jar associated with this fabric. Related examples are noted at Bannaventa (MacRobert 1988: 101) and Causeway Lane (Clark 1999: 166/343). The surface is lumpy and pinky-orange in colour; grooves, vertical combing and fine rilling can also be observed on the outer surface.

The second is a necked jar in the style of Verulamium 2278 (Wilson 1984) with a single cordon at the widest point. The fabric (GRS) in medium grey consists of ill sorted quartz, sparse black iron ore and common fine silver mica.

Finally in 116 a flat-rimmed dish occurs in GRS. The fabric is made up of abundant, dense and fairly well sorted quartz (not dissimilar to VER WH in view), with sparse calcite (or voids) and black iron ore. The form itself has parallels at Verulamium (Wilson 1984: No2553) and Durobrivae (Perrin 1999: 73/5).

Late 3rd to 4th century AD (75, 106, 704, 709, 710, 830, 835, 153 @ 2469g, 2.27)

Late contexts are recorded consistently across the site although the preponderance of pottery is found in 830. This period witnesses a dramatic change in ceramic supply in line with the 'factory' style rural kilns that are in use during the late 3rd to 4th century AD (see table below). GRS and HAR SH dominate the assemblage and although Lower Nene Valley products are present, they are nowhere near the numbers one would expect at this stage in the Roman period. Certainly at *Bannaventa* around this period LNV CC was around the 5% mark in weight (MacRobert 1988, 326). Equally none of the Hadham fabrics are present either, a major supplier in this part of the Roman era. However, again at *Bannaventa* there was a small contribution of Hadham wares to the late assemblages

(MacRobert 1988, 330). Indeed this site appears to be drawing on pottery kilns from the south and south-westerly direction, no doubt wares finding their way up to markets via the Roman road junction at Towcester. Nevertheless one must consider that the size of this late assemblage may not be sufficient to mirror the true ceramic trends of this phase.

Table 3: *Late 3rd to 4th century pottery*

FABRIC	SHERD No	%	WEIGHT	%	R.EVE	%
LNV CC	1	0.5	1g	Present	-	-
OXF RS	7	5	224g	9	0.27	12
OXF WS	6	4	45g	2	0.08	3
LNV WH	2	1.5	44g	2	0.02	1
OXF WH	1	0.5	35g	1.5	0.09	4
UNS OX	3	1.5	26g	1	0.13	5
DOR BB 1	5	3.5	200g	8	0.28	12
UNS BB	15	10	203g	8	0.02	1
BSW	1	0.5	8g	0.5	0.07	3
GRS	72	48	1269g	51	0.77	33
PNK GT	2	1.5	70g	3	-	-
HAR SH 2	35	23.5	337g	14	0.60	26
Total	150		2462g		2.33	

Although this is a fairly small collection of pottery, the form range again shows little diversification from the previous phases. Bead rimmed jars are the most frequent, followed by plain rimmed dishes, thereafter two flanged types are noted, two bowls and finally three mortaria (with the exception of one the mortaria are too abraded for an accurate identification). The bowl in OXF WS has previously been recorded at *Bannaventa* (Symonds 1980: 49) and at Baldock (Stead & Rigby 1986: 829).

Two forms with no direct match are worthy of comment, firstly a HAR SH 2 jar from 75. A typical late jar product of these kilns in a thin walled fabric covered in fine rilling (Fig 20:7). The rim is undercut and vessels in this style can be seen from Durobrivae (Perrin 1999: 444) and from Harrold itself (Brown 1994: 300). The second is a DOR BB 1 dish in 830 (Fig 20:8) this is from the largest and best dated context on the site (in ceramic terms). However, is not a classic version of the BB1 fabric and indeed may be a local copy. This dilemma was also encountered at *Bannaventa*, as some of the local copies are very good (MacRobert 1988, 324). The wavy line decoration is often seen on late Hadham products (Fawcett forthcoming) and a comparable type can be seen at Baldock (Stead & Rigby 1986: 790).

Conclusion

The pottery as a whole through all phases (in both fabric and form) represents low status rural activity that gradually increases in intensity throughout the 2nd century AD. Activity continues during the 3rd century though it is difficult to ascertain if a gap occurred, due to the lack of independent ceramic dating evidence. At Towcester, a 'ceramic' decline was detected at the end of the 2nd and into at least the early 3rd century AD (Symonds 1980, 98). Unquestionably by the late 3rd and into the early and perhaps the mid 4th land use at West Haddon continued and possibly picked up again, after a potential decline in the early to mid 3rd century AD. As we have seen it is this final period at West Haddon that demonstrates the most variety in terms of fabric and form, at least in comparison with the earlier phases.

Undoubtedly the site's geographical position and status dictated the direction from which the majority of pottery was drawn, in terms of regional imports. The lower Nene Valley greywares for instance, as Mackreth pointed out were exported into the Fens and through the Wash area (1998, 5) and the location of this site is too far from the source for these to have any real impact on the pottery record (Cooper, pers comm).

However, locally produced ceramics were the mainstay of the site throughout its occupation, and the recording of these is perhaps the sites most useful contribution. Nevertheless, it is unfortunate that there are few forms to allocate to these fabrics as well as some kind of dating sequence.

The fabrics can be put into three main groups, the first occurs in oxidised, reduced, white as well as variations in-between. It is a coarse fabric with abundant tightly packed though mostly ill sorted quartz (in the Verulamium style), the only other inclusions of note are sparse calcite or small but very irregular voids and sparse black iron ore.

The second is undoubtedly related and seems more frequent in the later assemblages (reduced and occasionally oxidised), a dense fine to medium quartz matrix (often high fired), again with sparse black iron ore and sparse to common silver mica.

The third and final composition is one that more than likely drew its inspiration from the Lower Nene Valley industry (in both fabric and form). In grey colours there is much variation in this style and probably accounted for some of the medium to lighter types in fabric 3 (Mackreth 1998, 5). Essentially, it generally has a silty background with common ill sorted quartz. This occurs with common black iron ore, sparse calcite and often, common silver mica, which is especially noticeable on the surfaces (matrix or lighter coloured clay pellets are often present as either sparse or common).

Other Roman finds by Ian Meadows and Tora Hylton

Seventeen metallic objects were recovered from Roman contexts across the site. The only closely dateable item is a copper alloy brooch of Colchester derivative form (SF7, 200). This example has a moulding at the end of each wing and at the end of the foot. The back arch has a ribbed ridge extending back from the spring head about half the length of the bow. This example is of a type dating to the early post conquest period *c* 80AD.

The only other copper alloy object is a now incomplete fitting (SF2, 170). The piece comprises two incurved arms, the ends of both of which are broken but may originally have joined to make a loop. The arms have a tapering oval cross section that flattened towards the base. Both arms rise from a flat oval with central 5mm piecing. The oval is 15mm wide and along both its edges it bears denticulations. The underside of the oval and both the arms are otherwise plain. It is possible this piece was a handle or similar mount, the patina would suggest some antiquity but no direct parallel could be found.

Also present is a badly corroded iron object which was X-rayed to aid identification (SF8, 204). Although broken and now in three pieces, the X-ray suggested that originally the complete iron object would have resembled a link from a chain, but with an opening at one end and a nail at the other, presumably to facilitate its attachment to another object. The fitting has been manufactured from a parallel-sided rectangular-sectioned strip (8 x 3mm), which has been forged to form a sub-rectangular object with two small rectangular loops attached to either side of the long axis. It is difficult to ascertain the true nature of the fitting, it may be a guide for reins.

The other small finds comprise fourteen iron objects, mainly nails. A full catalogue is retained in the site archive.

The querns by Andy Chapman

Three pieces of Millstone Grit indicate the use of millstones nearby, most probably in an animal-powered mill.

A single large fragment, from context (850), stone layer, is from an upper millstone (Plate 4). It measures 340mm by 260mm, but has been reused so that all the present edges are rounded and smoothed from this secondary use. However, the dimensions indicate that is has come from a millstone at least *c* 800mm in diameter. The stone is 55-60mm thick

with both surfaces bearing dimpled tool marks, although only the concave grinding surface is worn through use.

The other two pieces of Millstone Grit are from context (400), fill of ditch [401]. One piece is from the circumference of an upper stone 700mm in diameter and 45-53mm thick, so this too appears to be from a millstone. The other piece is an irregular, worn fragment of Millstone Grit, but again from a stone not less than 55m thick, and so probably a millstone.

In addition, two very small abraded fragments of lava, from context (831), fill of pit [832], indicate the use of lava querns, with the stone imported from the Eifel region of Germany.

The ceramic building material by Pat Chapman

Roof tile

There are three small fragments of tile. One of these is a flange from a *tegula* roof tile from context (833), fill of gully [834]. The external depth is 55mm, which is slightly more than average, while the internal depth is 45mm, suggesting that this tile had a thinner body, at 10mm thick, and taller flange at 55mm, than usual as the body is typically at least 20mm thick (Ward 1999, 15). The fabric is a soft silty clay with some organic and occasional flint inclusions, fired to a pink surface and dark grey core.

The remaining two small pieces are body sherds from context (63), fill of ditch [64] and (400), fill of ditch [401] are made from a sandier fabric with occasional gravel inclusions, fired to red, the surface of (63) being black.

Fired clay

The assemblage comprised 148 fragments weighing 1181g from nine contexts. The largest fragments measure 40mm by 40mm by 30mm with many being smaller.

The majority, 122 fragments weighing 745g, come from two contexts, (108) fill of pit [109] and (264) fill of pit [265]. They are characterised by flat fragments *c* 40 by 30mm and 8mm thick or smaller made from a hard fired silty clay. One side is flat, smooth and black with occasional stem impressions, while the underside is rough and red. The fragments from (120), (235), (244), fills of ditches/gullies are grey white and very hard having been exposed to considerable heat. The remaining few fragments are friable red amorphous pieces. The fragments are most likely to have come from types of structure.

The animal bone by Stephanie Vann

The condition of the bone is generally poor with significant amounts of taphonomic damage such as erosion and weathering. A significant proportion of the material is unidentifiable because of its fragmentary and eroded condition. There is no evidence for butchery, although there is a single example of burnt bone. There are also no examples of pathology present.

Of the identifiable material, all belongs to the main common domesticates. Ovicaprids (sheep/goat) are represented by a distal humerus from context (1) and a tooth from context (67). Cattle and horse are mainly represented by teeth, although some fragments of bone are also likely to belong to cattle as well. As these teeth are all loose it is not possible to create an age profile of any of the individual animals represented in the assemblage. However, it is worth noting that, with the exception of the ovicaprid tooth, the teeth generally show very little wear, suggesting that these were relatively immature animals at the time of their death.

The majority of the material belongs to the Romano-British settlement. The exceptions to this are context (607), belonging, potentially, to the Iron Age, and (830), which belongs to the abandonment phase. Whilst it is true that the small size and poor preservation of the assemblage make it difficult to draw any significant conclusions, there is nothing about the assemblage that is in any way extraordinary for one of this period. Sheep/goat and cattle are regularly exploited throughout the Iron Age and Romano-British periods, as is the horse, albeit not generally in the same numbers as ovicaprids or cattle (Maltby 1981).

The slaughter of cattle at a relatively immature age is a pattern seen on other sites of this period, such as Dragonby in Lincolnshire where approximately half of the cattle in both the Iron Age and the 1st to 3rd century AD had been slaughtered when mature, with the rest killed at a range of ages including some that were very young. This is also seen in the early Roman period at Silchester and also at Waveden, both of which display an increase in the proportion of juvenile cattle slaughtered at the site during the early Roman period (Grant 2004).

A full catalogue is retained in the site archive.

The charred plant macrofossils and other remains by Val Fryer

Introduction

Samples for the extraction of the plant macrofossil assemblages were taken from across the excavated area, and seven were submitted for assessment.

Methods

The samples were bulk floated by Northamptonshire Archaeology, and the flots were collected in a 500 micron mesh sieve. The dried flots were scanned under a binocular microscope at magnifications up to x16, and the plant macrofossils and other remains noted are listed on Table 3. Nomenclature within the table follows Stace (1997). All plant remains were charred. Modern contaminants, including fibrous roots and seeds, were present throughout.

Table 4: The charred plant macrofossils and other remains

Sample No.	11	7	8	9	10	12	15
Context No.	373	510	264	21	23	156	830
Feature type	Pit	Ditch	Pit	Ditch	Ditch	Ditch	Deposit
Cereals							
Avena sp. (grains)	x				xcf	x	
Hordeum sp. (grains)		xcf		xcf	x		x
Triticum sp. (grains)		x	x	x		x	x
(spikelet bases)						x	
(rachis internodes)			x		x		
T. spelta L. (glume bases)			xx	x	xx	x	
Cereal indet. (grains)			xx	x	xx	x	x
Herbs							
Bromus sp.						x	
Chenopodium album L.					x		
Fallopia convolvulus (L.)A.Love			x		x		x
Persicaria maculosa/lapathifolia			x				
Plantago lanceolata L.					x		
Small Poaceae indet.							x
Large Poaceae indet.					x	x	
Raphanus raphanistrum L.					x		
Rumex sp.						xcf	
Scleranthus annuus L.					x		
Spergula arvensis L.					x		
Stellaria graminea L.					x		
Vicia/Lathyrus sp.	x				x		
Wetland plants							
Carex sp.				x	x		

Other plant macrofossils							
Charcoal <2mm	xx	x	xx	xx	x	x	xx
Charcoal >2mm	x	x		x	x	x	x
Charred root/stem	x	x			x	x	x
Ericaceae indet. (stem)				xcf			
Indet.seeds			x		x	x	x
Indet.tubers			x		xx		
Freshwater obligate molluscs							
Armiger crista	x	x					
Other materials							
Black porous 'cokey' material			xx	x		x	x
Black tarry material				x			x
Bone					xx		
Small coal frags.		x					
Sample volume (litres)							
Volume of flot (litres)	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1
% flot sorted	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Key to Table x = 1 – 10 specimens xx = 10 – 100 specimens

Results

Plant macrofossils

Cereal grains/chaff and seeds of common weeds and wetland plants are present at low to moderate densities in all seven samples. Preservation is moderately good, although some grains, particularly those within samples 8 and 10, were severely puffed and distorted, probably as a result of combustion at very high temperatures.

Oat (*Avena sp*.), barley (*Hordeum sp*.) and wheat (*Triticum sp*.) grains are present. The wheat grains are predominantly of an elongated 'drop-form' type typical of spelt (*T. spelta*), and spelt glume bases are also noted within four of the assemblages (samples 8, 9, 10 and 12).

Weed seeds are generally quite rare, and frequently occur as single specimens within an assemblage. Most are of common segetal species including brome (*Bromus sp*.), fat hen (*Chenopodium album*), black bindweed (*Fallopia convolvulus*), indeterminate grasses (*Poaceae*), wild radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum*), knawel (*Scleranthus annuus*), corn spurrey (*Spergula arvensis*) and vetch/vetchling (*Vicia/Lathyrus sp*.). The sedge (*Carex sp*.) nutlets from samples 9 and 10 are the sole wetland plant macrofossils recorded.

Charcoal fragments are common or abundant in all samples. Other plant macrofossils include pieces of charred root/stem and indeterminate tubers. A single possible fragment of heather (*Ericaceae*) stem is present in sample 9.

Mollusc shells

Mollusc shells are exceedingly rare, being recorded from only two assemblages (samples 7 and 11). However, all are of the freshwater obligate species *Armiger crista*, which is commonly found in ponds or other small bodies of water.

Other materials

A very limited range of other material types was present. The fragments of black porous and tarry material are probable residues of the combustion of organic remains (including cereal grains) at very high temperatures. Bone fragments are common within sample 10, and small pieces of coal were recovered from sample 7.

Discussion

All but one of the samples are from contexts associated with the occupation of the Romano-British settlement. Sample 11 is from the fill of pit [373]. The assemblage is very small, containing only charcoal, a single oat grain, a vetch/vetchling seed and a solitary mollusc shell. The low density of material recorded precludes the identification of any specific function associated with the pit, and it would appear most likely that the assemblage is largely derived from scattered or wind-blown refuse.

Samples 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 are from pit and ditch fills. Although small (<0.1 litres in volume) the composition of the assemblages is relatively uniform, and it would appear most likely that the material has a common source. Chaff elements are quite common, and along with the weed seeds and cereal grains, this may indicate that the assemblages are derived from cereal processing waste, possibly the winnowings from an early stage of the processing. The high density of severely charred grains within samples 8 and 10 may also be indicative of the presence of parching waste.

The assemblage from the abandonment phase (sample 15), from the possible midden deposit (830), is essentially similar to those from the occupation contexts, and may have a similar origin.

Conclusions

In summary, the assemblages would appear to be primarily derived from small quantities of burnt cereal processing waste. As the density of material recorded is so small, it seems very unlikely that primary waste deposits are represented, and it is far more likely that the assemblages are indicative of scattered or wind-blown refuse which has accidentally been incorporated within contemporary feature fills across the excavated area.

7 DISCUSSION

Chronology, development and decline

The principal components of the small Romano-British settlement, identified by previous field surveys (Chapman and Masters 1998, Atkins 1998), have been corroborated and further clarified. It is evident that the basic plan of the settlement, based on a pseudo-grid system respecting the line of the trackway, was super-imposed over the remnants of earlier occupation. The focal point of this sat at the western side of the site where a large ring ditch was truncated by a sinuous enclosure gully. A 'D'-shaped configuration of gullies and pits attached to the southern side of the latter may have defined a structure, although an absence of finds would appear to preclude a domestic function. The funnel-shaped gullies leading to the large enclosure may be indicative of stock management. The dating of these features, which represent two separate phases of activity, remains ambiguous, however, a late Iron Age date is favoured. Only small quantities of Neolithic flint work (assumed to be residual) and a few sherds of early Romano-British pottery were present. Both were probably introduced by episodes of back-filling associated with the setting out of the later settlement.

An Iron Age parallel for these features exists within the locality at Covert Farm, Crick (Woodward and Hughes 1998). One element of the densely occupied Iron Age settlement, a 'D'-shaped enclosure of similar proportion to that at West Haddon, incorporated a ring-ditch into its southern perimeter. Pottery from these features dated through to the late Iron Age (*ibid*, 8).

The spatial relationship of the trackway and early enclosure suggests that they were, if only for a brief period, contemporary features in the landscape. It is along the trackway that the later plots were subsequently arranged. Ceramic dating suggests that this began at the eastern end of the site, perhaps by the late 1st century. The early 2nd century saw an organic westward expansion along the trackway, the variation in size and shape of the enclosures seemingly at odds with a campaign of deliberate planning. The earlier enclosure system was lost beneath this new order. Whether the focal point of Roman activity was deliberately shifted away from an abandoned Iron Age site or whether there was a degree of continuity remains unknown. Again a parallel exists at Crick, where Iron Age ditches were aligned beneath the periphery of the Romano-British settlement at The Lodge (Chapman 1994, 4).

Occupation of the site reached its zenith in the mid 2nd to early 3rd centuries by which time

a series of enclosures had developed either side of a track-way. Within these plots were features including pits, gullies and post-holes some of which were evidently components of structures. A group of smaller enclosures, perhaps animal pens or small paddocks, were clustered around the exterior of the north-eastern enclosure. Either side of the settlement were ditches and gullies that presumably defined the boundaries of field systems.

By the mid-3rd to early 4th century the focal point of occupation appears to have retracted to the east end of the site. The integrity of the western and central enclosures was compromised by the insertion of a number of linear features whose north-west to south-east alignment pays scant regard to the regularity of the former 'grid' pattern. These features, like the earlier funnel-shaped gullies, may relate to the control of livestock.

The eastern enclosure and the cluster of smaller plots attached to it, can therefore be viewed as the nucleus of the settlement. The evidence seems to suggest that by the mid 3rd century a single farmstead in this location was imposing a comparatively haphazard regime of land organisation over the former settlement enclosures to the west. The geophysical anomaly thought to be a structure in the south-east corner of E6 may have been the domestic centre of this activity.

By the mid 4th century this reordered landscape had been abandoned. A clue to the nature of this abandonment is suggested by the late 3rd/4th century ceramic assemblage which indicates an upturn rather than a decline in pottery consumption. This suggests an abrupt abandonment of the settlement rather than a slow decline linked perhaps to a lengthy period of economic stagnation.

Architecture

The only unequivocal structural evidence related to a small rectangular building located in the corner of the central enclosure. Its sides were defined by a configuration of gullies and postholes defining an interior space measuring *c* 6m x 4m. Within this were three small pits, one of which was attached to a shallow linear feature. There was no evidence for stone or ceramic building material and no suggestion of a floor surface. The gullies may have functioned as beam slots for a timber frame.

Nothing was found to elucidate the function of the building. Pottery, retrieved in modest quantities, dated to the 2nd-4th centuries. There was no evidence for a hearth or any form of heat assisted industry. Although material indicative of cereal processing was extracted

from soil samples taken from an associated feature, the small size of the assemblage precludes this activity taking place *in situ*.

Morris (1979) discusses the nature of small rectangular buildings of the Roman period labeling them, '*…even more of an all purpose shed than the aisled buildings*' (66). Grain and fodder were often stored in such buildings which Morris describes as,

'*Small rectangular or square rooms with floors raised slightly above ground level to create air space beneath and supported on offsets in the lower part of the walls, or on specially built inner walls*' (34).

The absence of a floor surface and the presence of inward projecting postholes could be evidence of such an arrangement. Other functions may include the penning of livestock, although the entrance to the building, measuring only 0.60m wide, would have restricted the movement of larger animals. A sheep or pig pen cannot be ruled out.

Such rectangular buildings, along with larger aisled structures are thought to have become the dominant form of rural architecture in lowland Britain, gradually replacing the roundhouse from the 2nd century onwards (Hingley 1989, 31). It is possible that the structure located by geophysical survey in the south-east corner of the eastern enclosure falls into this category. At West Haddon there was evidence for a roundhouse contemporary with the track-side settlement in the western enclosure and perhaps the central enclosure. Hanley (2000) suggests that the 3rd and 4th century presence of roundhouses may be indicative of low status.

Economy, cultural identity and regional context

The excavated evidence indicates a settlement, little more than a hamlet, with an extremely modest economy based upon the cultivation of grain. In the Roman period this forms the economic backbone of rural settlements throughout Northamptonshire, however, evidence suggests that the agrarian regime at West Haddon was far less productive than more densely populated areas of the county such as the Nene Valley. In contrast to the west of the county the Nene Valley has been the subject of extensive archaeological scrutiny revealing a thriving rural economy based upon mixed farming. Projects such as the Raunds Survey (Parry 2006) have identified numerous settlements set within an '*intensively exploited landscape'* (81). The manuring of agricultural fields resulted in scatters of pottery being deposited over much of the land between the farmsteads, hamlets and villages. The high intensity farming which this denotes is thought

to suggest either the presence of a large local population or increased crop production for sale in a market economy (*ibid* 273)

The economic situation in the vicinity of Roman West Haddon appears to have been one of stark contrast. The cultivated fields attached to the settlement do not appear to have been extensive. Spreads of contemporary pottery, indicative of manuring, have not been found in any quantity, despite field walking surveys being conducted at the evaluation stage of the project and independently by amateur enthusiasts.

Unfortunately the poor preservation of animal bone has made it difficult to ascertain the degree to which animal husbandry may have contributed to the economy. Some exploitation of cattle, horse and sheep/goat is indicated by teeth found in a handful of contexts and perhaps by an iron rein fitting. There is no evidence to suggest that specialised forms of agriculture were practiced such as the viticulture identified at Roman Wollaston (Brown and Meadows 2000, 492).

Pottery does not appear to have been produced in the settlement nor was it consumed in great quantity by its occupants. Certainly evidence for coarse local wares far outstrips that of fine wares imported from greater distances. A possible source for the local products may be the kiln site at Long Buckby whereas the imported wares probably reached the site via Watling Street and the small town of *Bannaventa*. The suffix *venta* is thought to denote 'market field' or 'market centre' (Jones and Mattingly 1991, 42).

The settlement also lacks evidence for any form of craftsmanship or industry. Despite plentiful supplies of local ironstone, there was no evidence for iron working as found at other Roman sites in the county such as Silverstone, the Welland Valley, Harringworth, Wakerley, Laxton and Ashton (Taylor and Flitcroft 2004, 76). Nor was there evidence for religious practice or any indication of how the occupants of the settlement disposed of their dead.

The overall impression given is that of a modest hamlet practicing subsistence farming. This lowly status may, to a degree, be attributed to its geographical location. West Haddon lies towards the central western side of Northamptonshire, a region that even today is primarily rural in aspect and given over to large tracts of pasture. In the Roman period this area corresponded with the territorial frontier of the Catuvellaunian *civitas* whose capital at St Albans (*Verulamium*) lay over 75km away to the south-east.

Although the exact boundaries of the *civitates* remain unknown, the neighbouring Corieltauvian *civitas*, with its capital at Leicester (*Ratae*), could only have been a few kilometres to the north of the settlement as Tripontium was a Corieltauvian town.

Watling Street has been suggested as the possible demarcation line and also the territorial frontier of the Dobunni to the west (Branigan 1987, 28; Todd 1991, 15). It is thus probable that the hamlet at West Haddon shared more cultural and economic traits with similarly sized frontier settlements either side of the former tribal boundaries than it did with the intensively farmed and comparatively sophisticated heartland of its own *civitas* - to which it was, in effect, a backwater.

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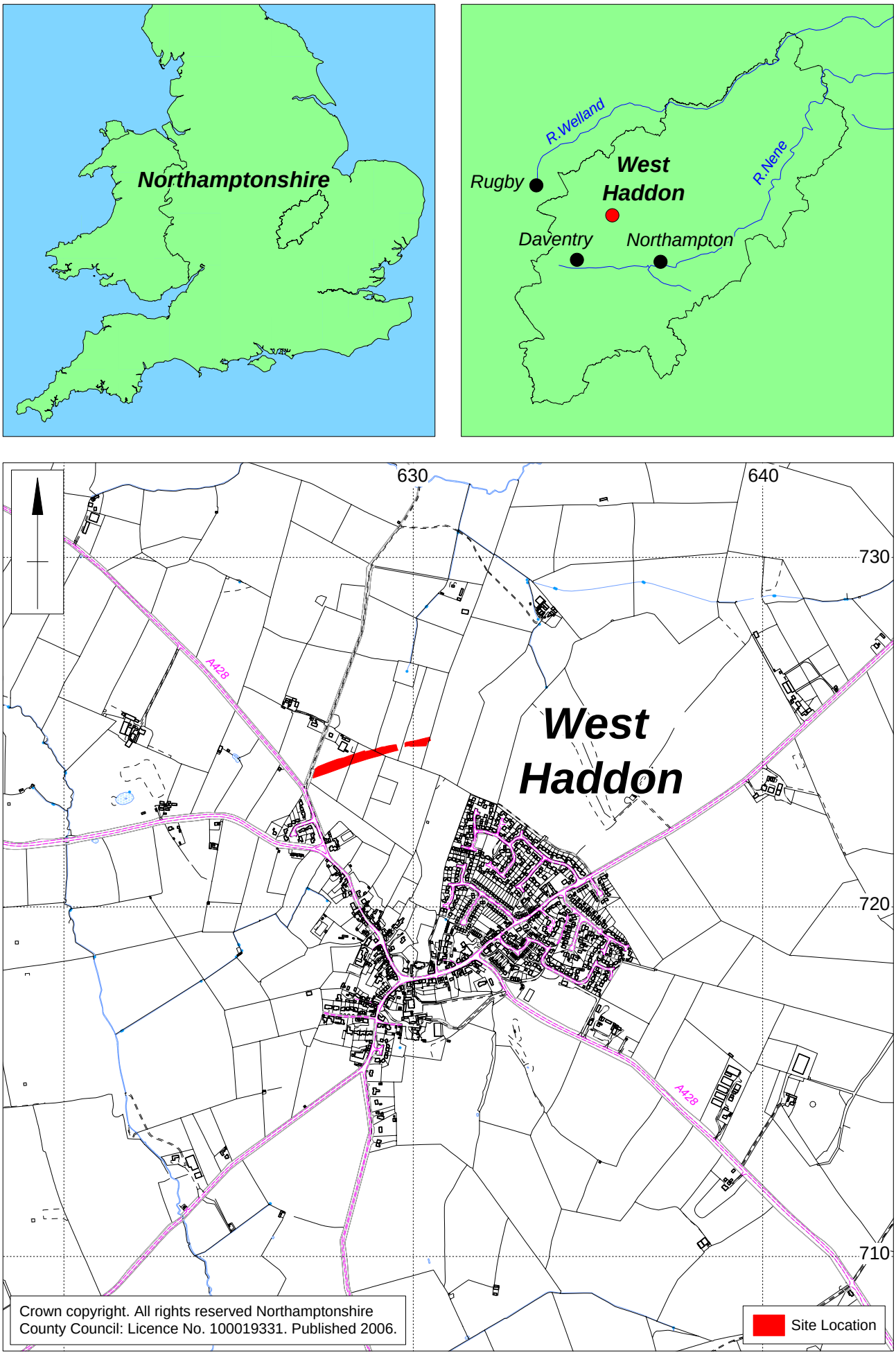
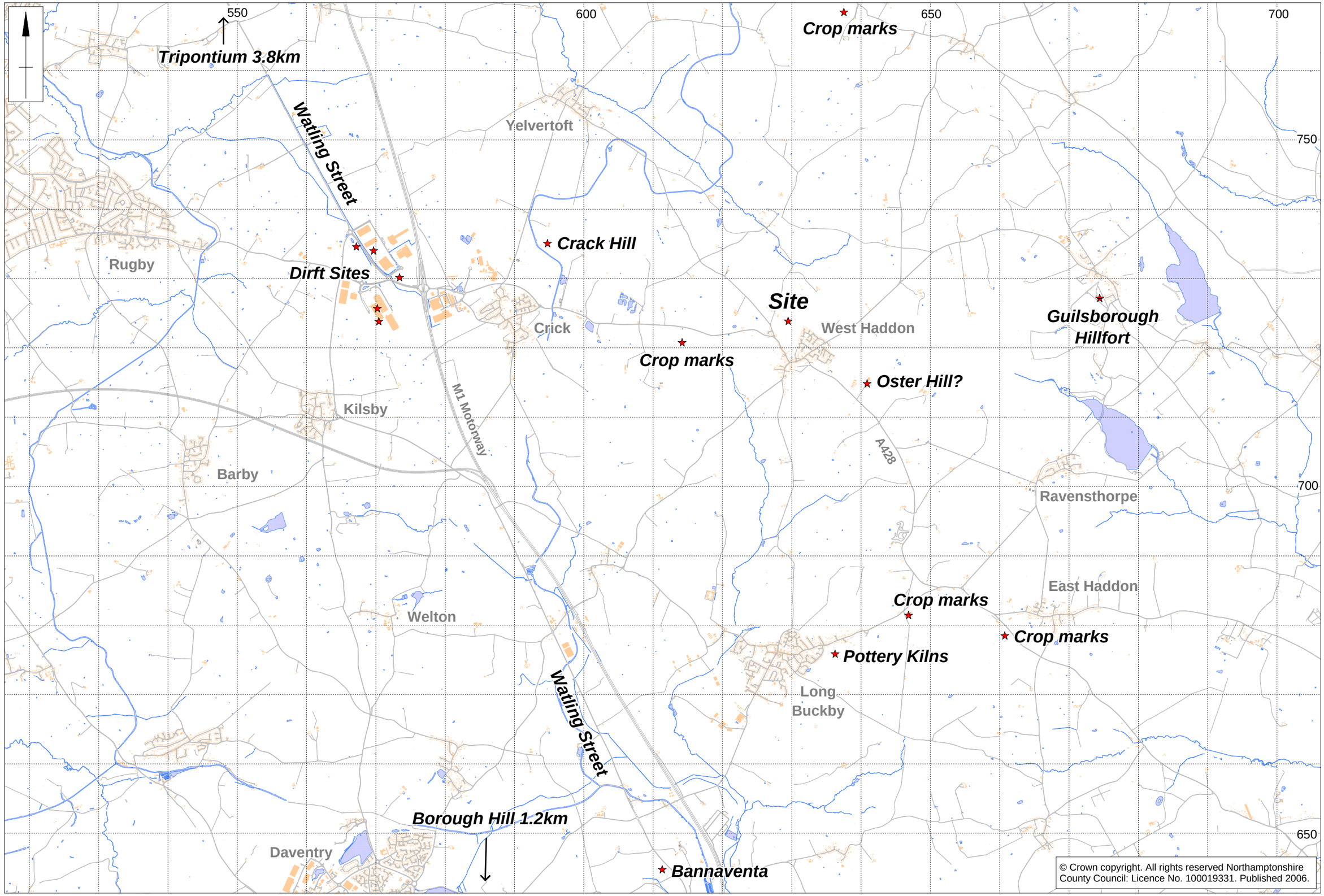


Scale 1:15,000

Site Location Fig 1



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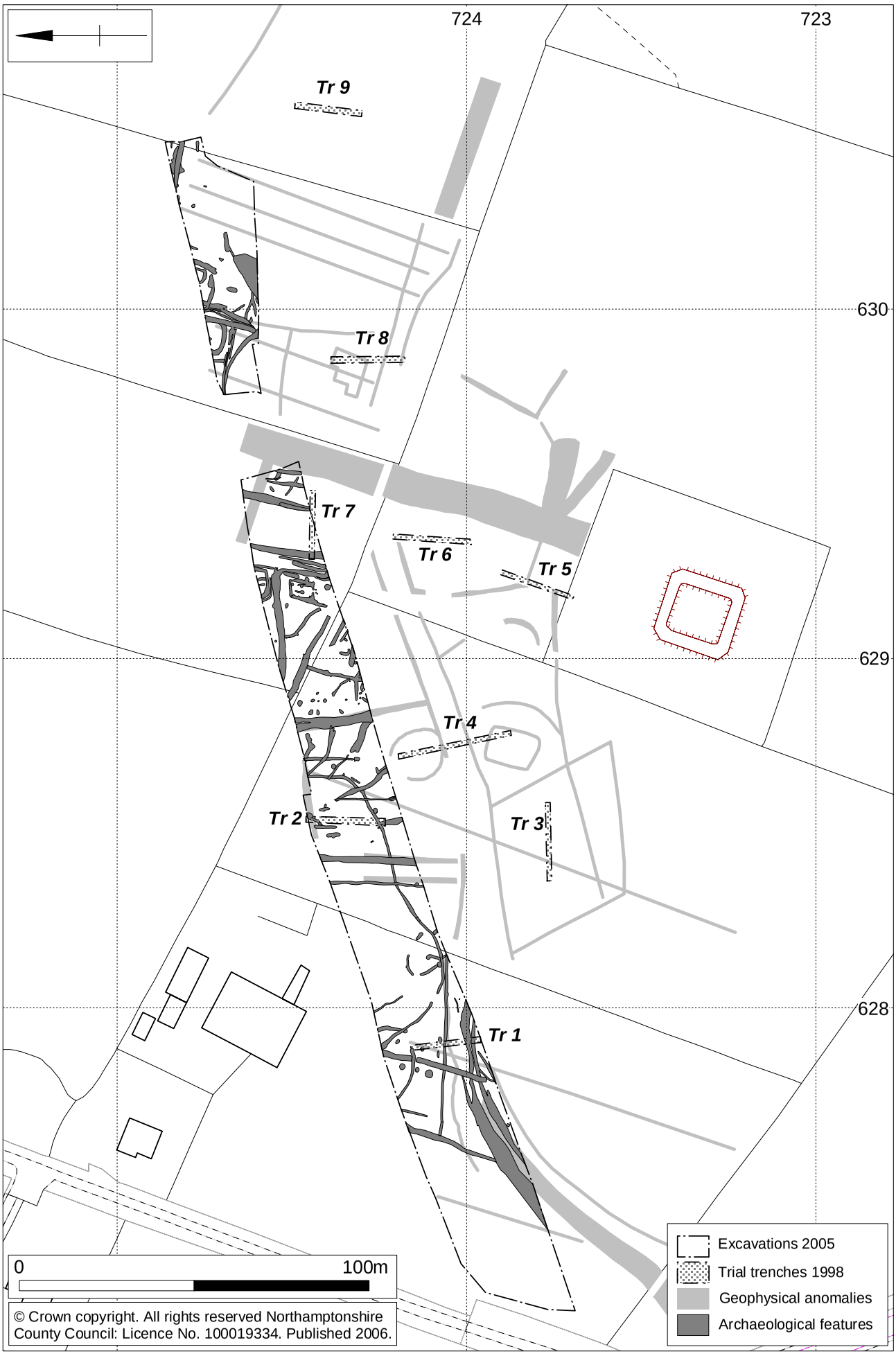
Archaeological sites mentioned in text Fig 2



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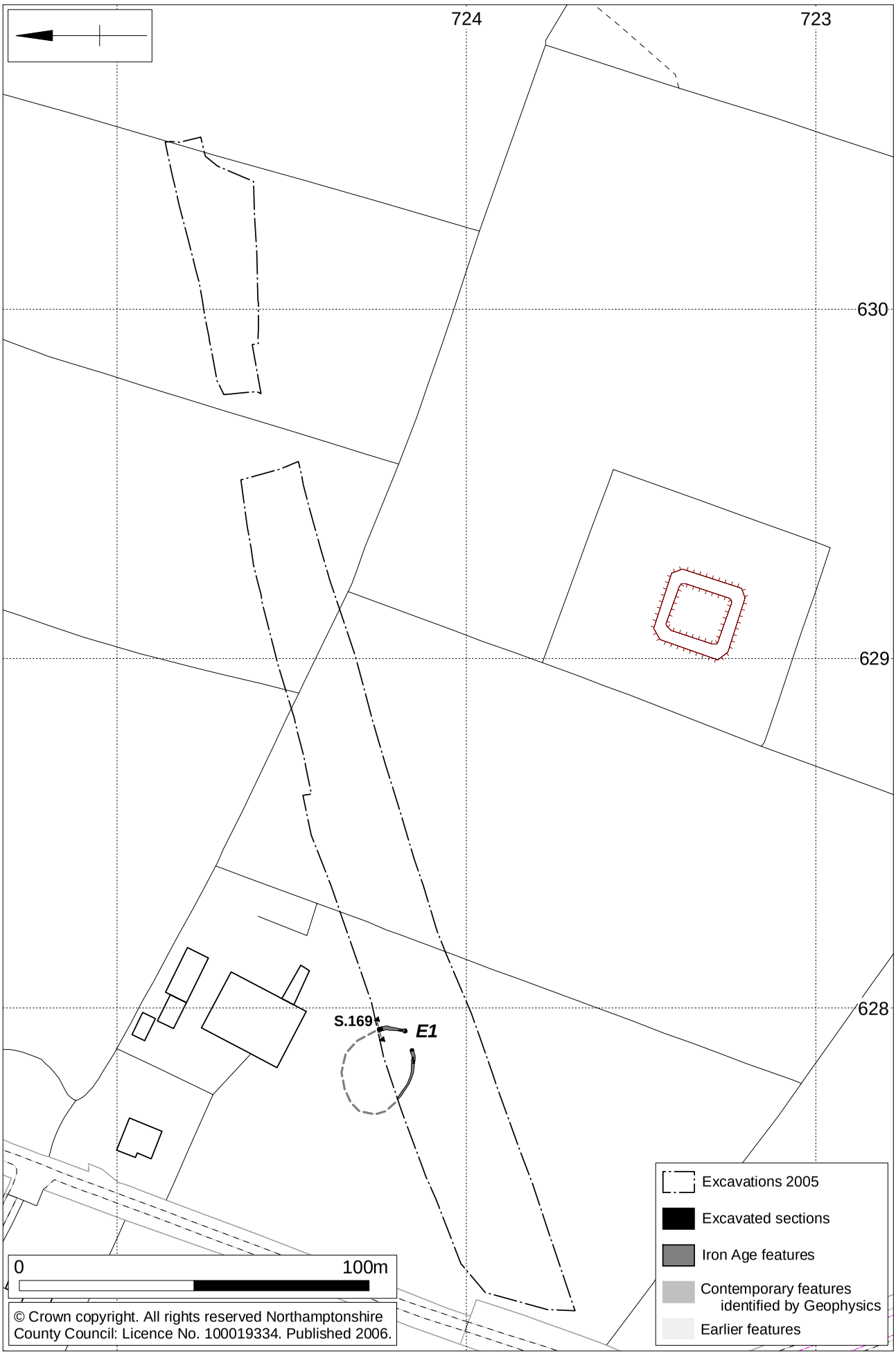
Scale 1:1500

General Site Plan Fig 3



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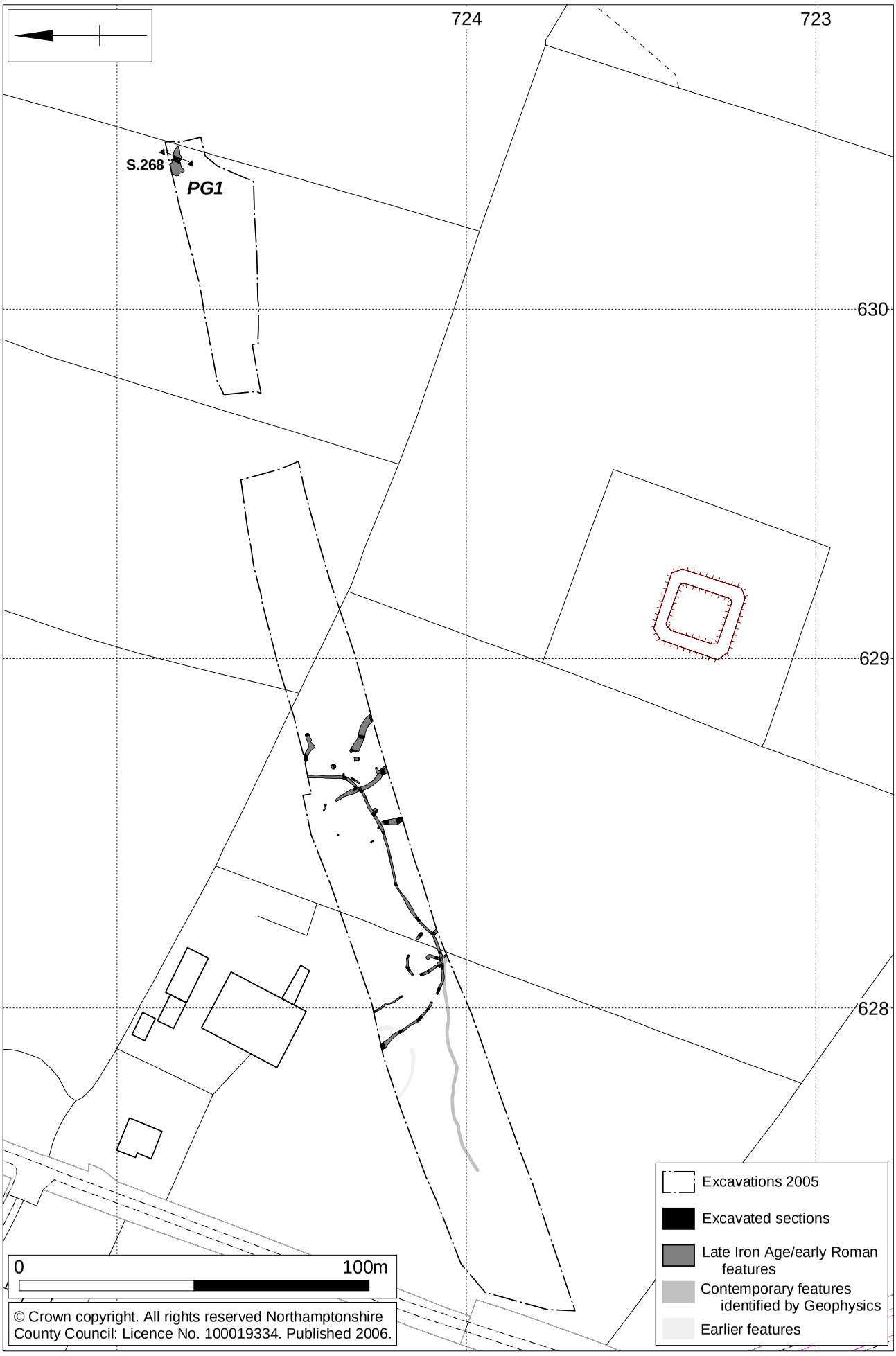
Scale 1:1500

General plan of the Iron Age enclosure Fig 4



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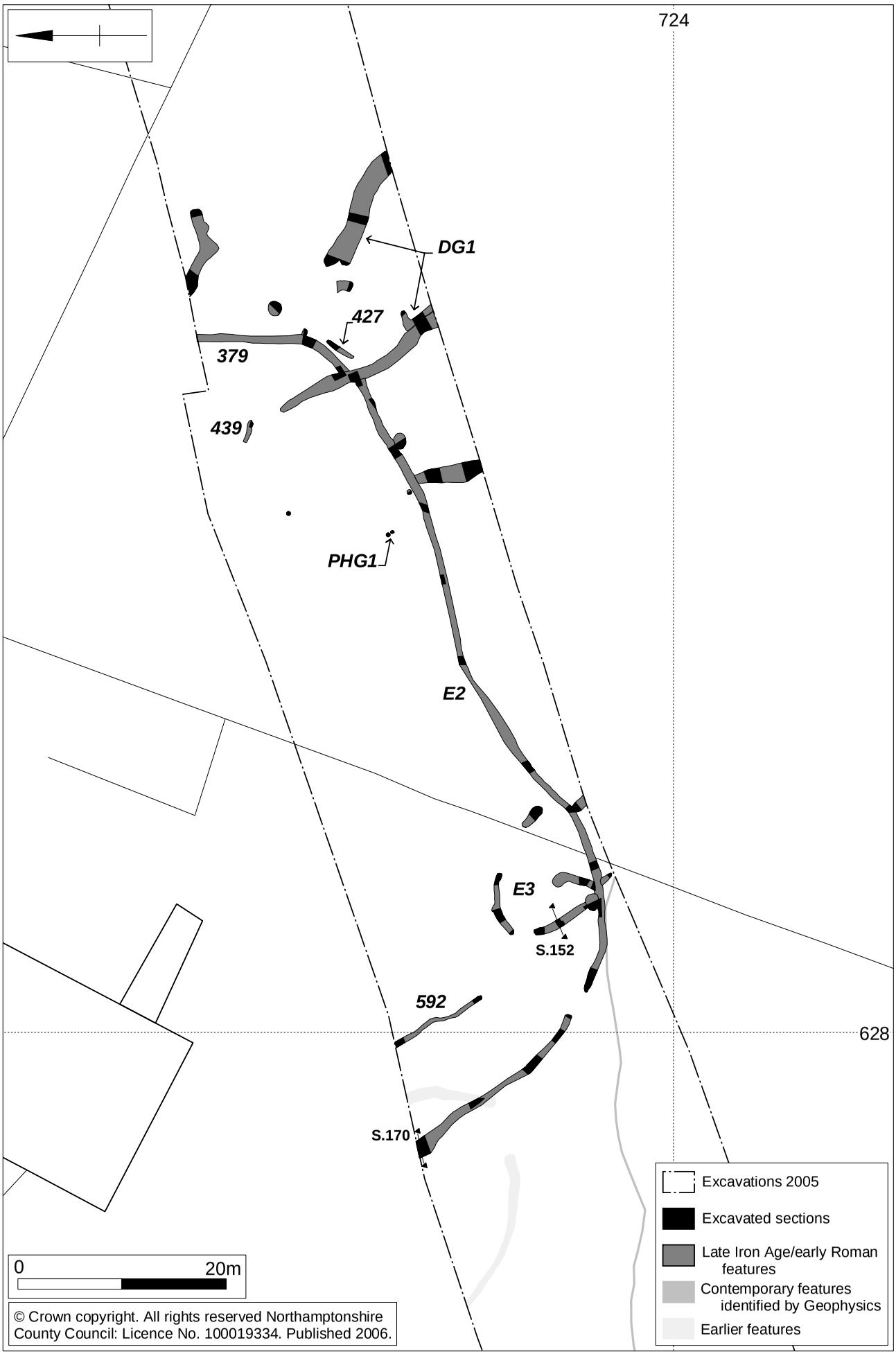
Scale 1:1500

General plan of late Iron Age/early Roman features Fig 5



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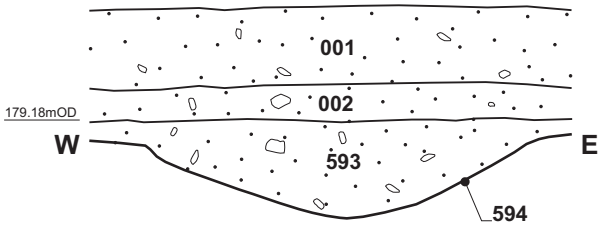
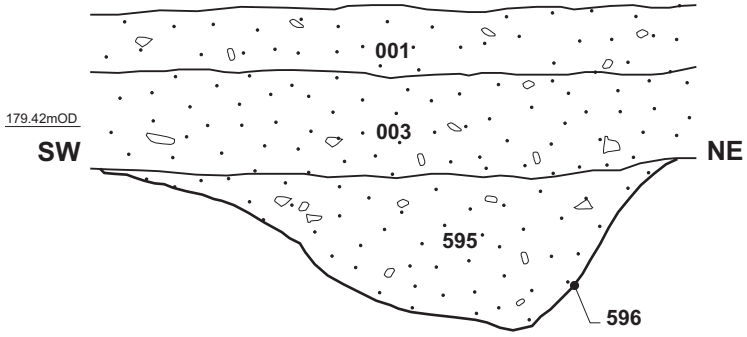
Scale 1:500

Plan of late Iron Age/early Roman features Fig 6

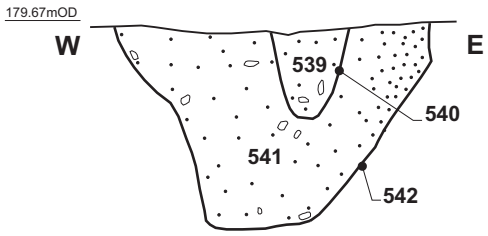
Section 169 - Iron Age enclosure
Enclosure Ditch (E1)



Section 170 - Late Iron Age/early Roman enclosure
Enclosure Ditch (E2)



Section 152 - Late Iron Age/early Roman enclosure
Enclosure Ditch (E3)



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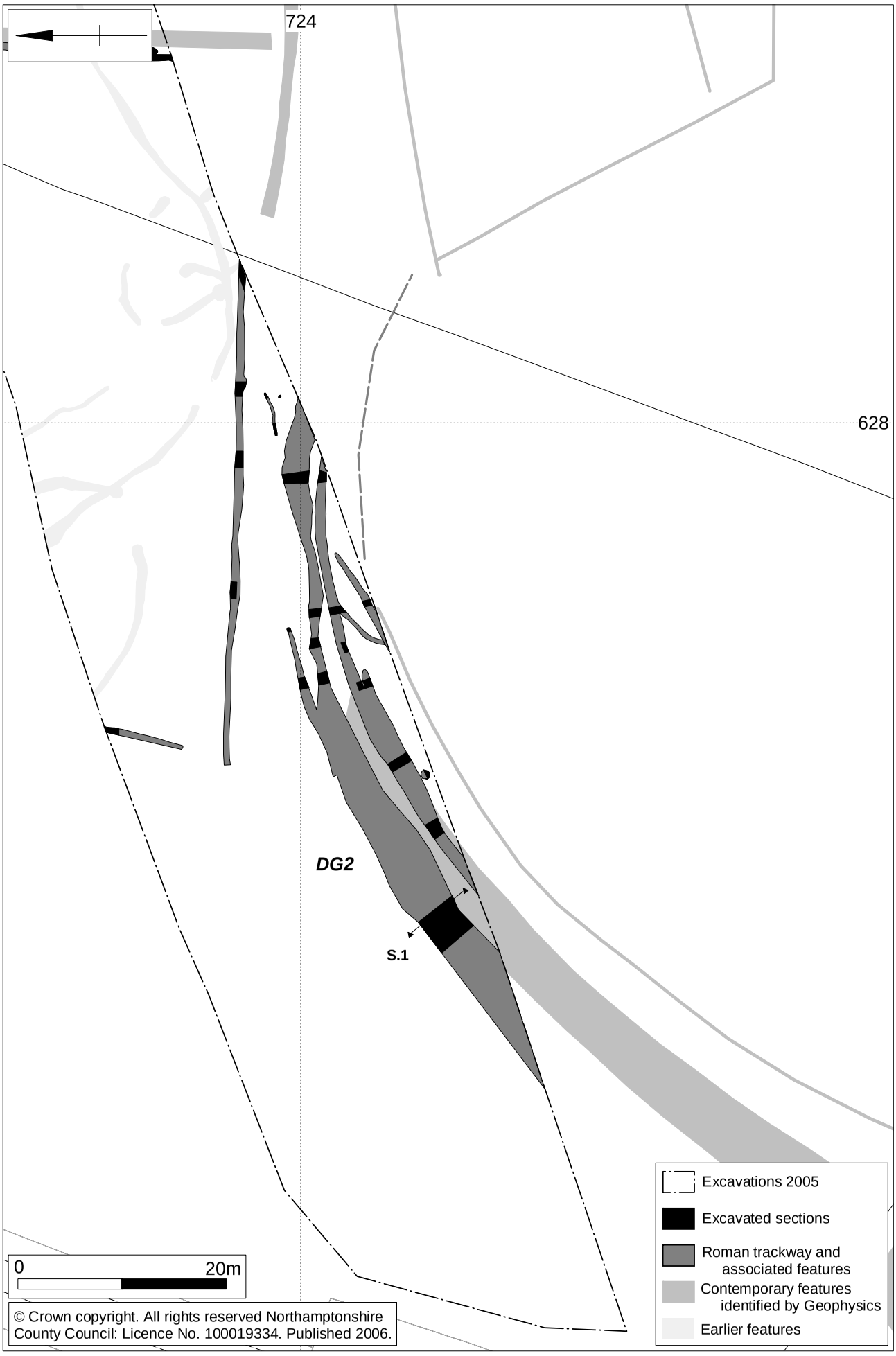
Scale 1:1500

General plan of Roman trackway and enclosure system Fig 8



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Scale 1:500

Plan of Roman trackway and associated features Fig 9

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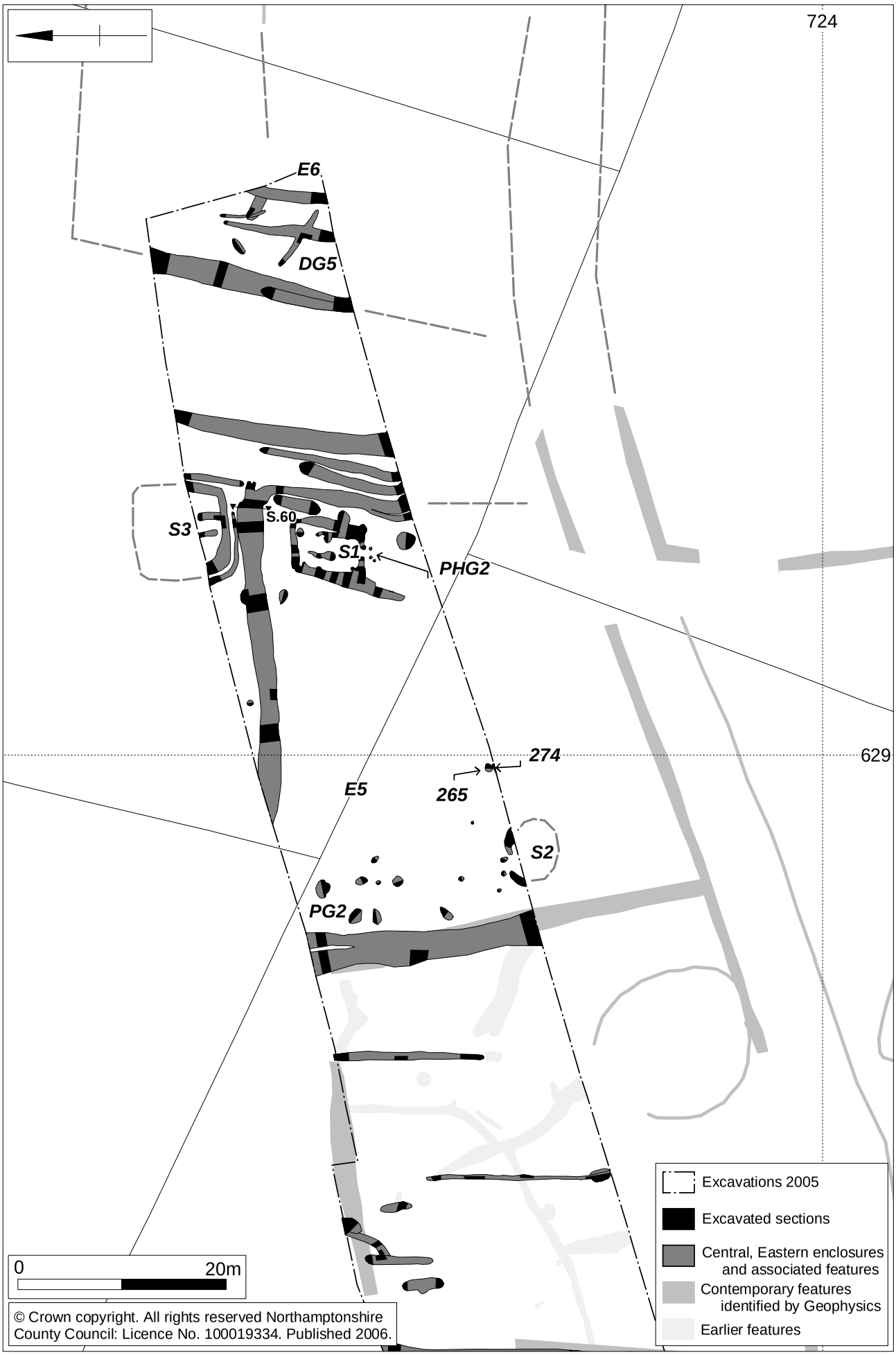
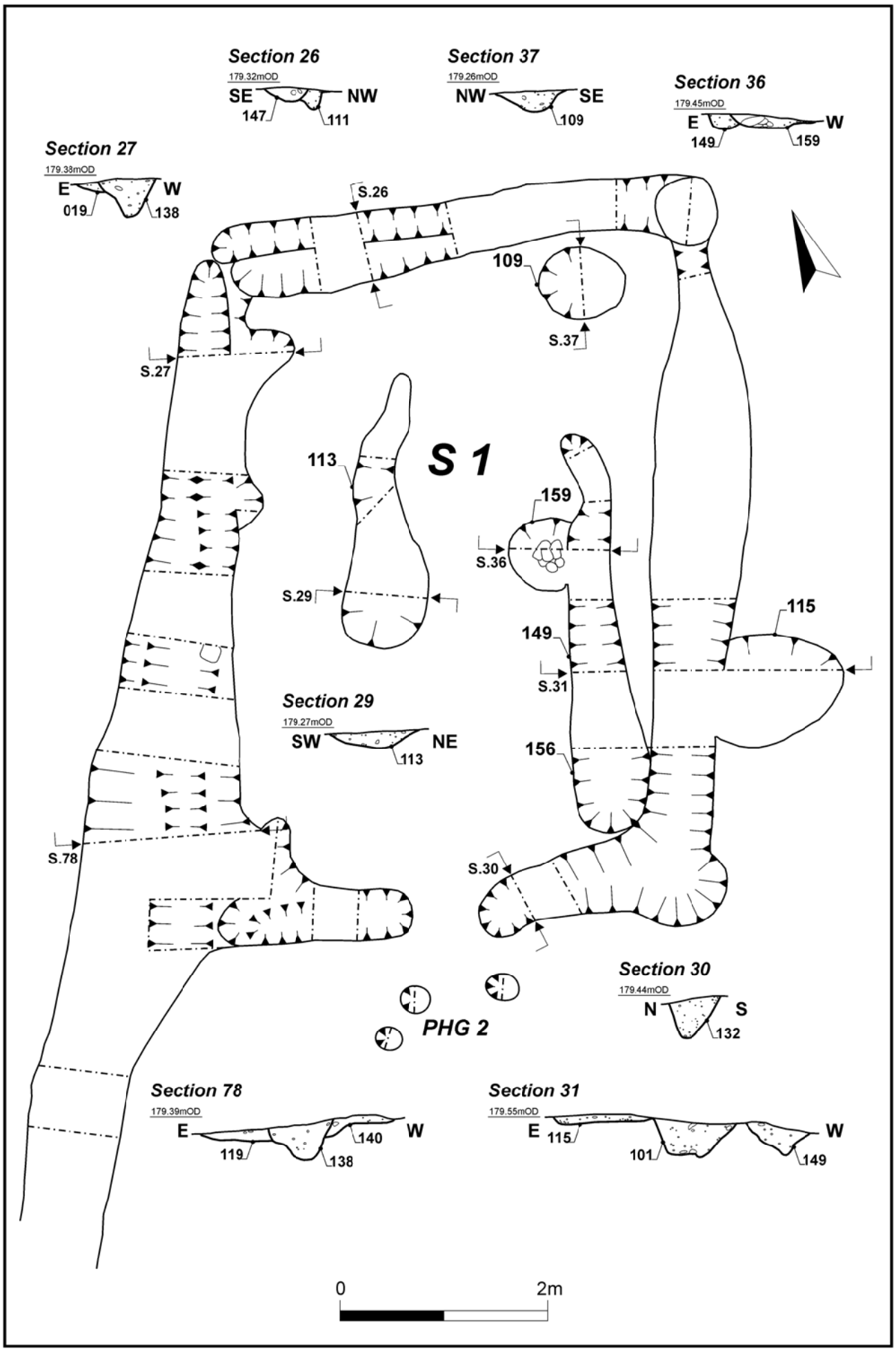
Scale 1:500

Plan of western enclosure and associated features Fig 10



Scale 1:500 Plan of the central and eastern enclosures and associated features Fig 11



Plan & Sections of Rectangular Structure (S1) Fig 12

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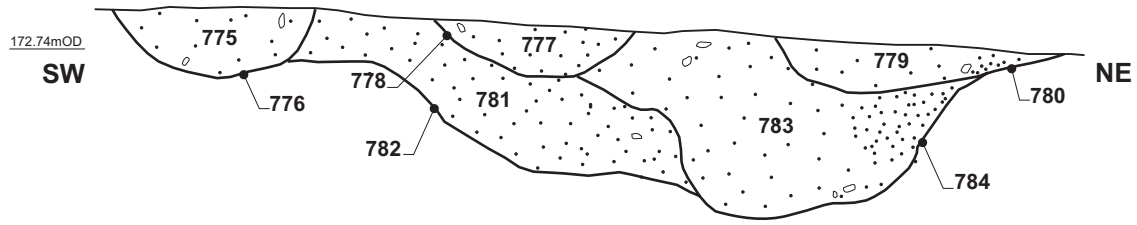
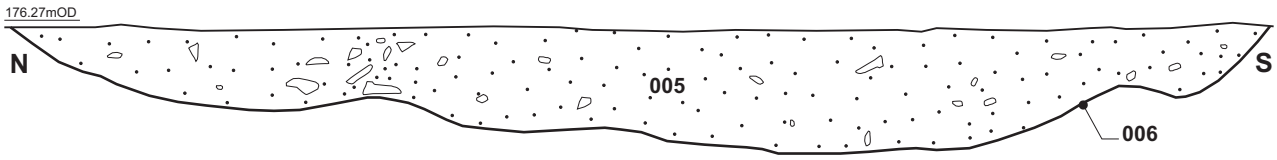
Scale 1:500

Plan of features to north-east of settlement Fig 13

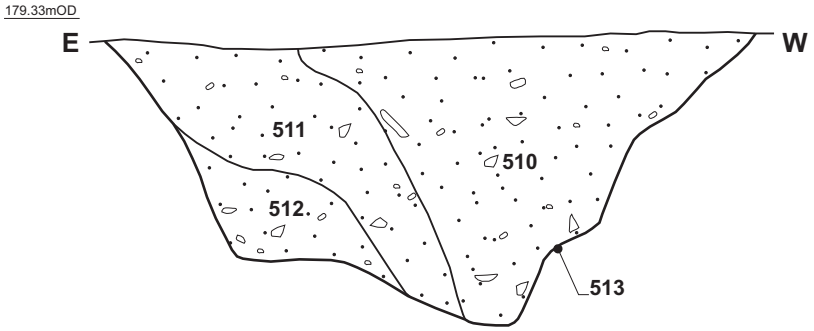
Section 268 - Pits and Gullies (PG1/DG6)



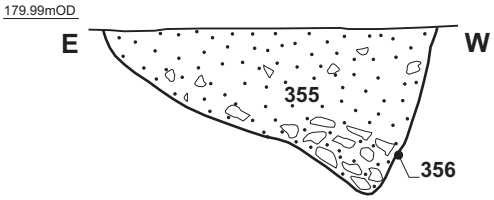
Section 1 - Trackway (DG2)



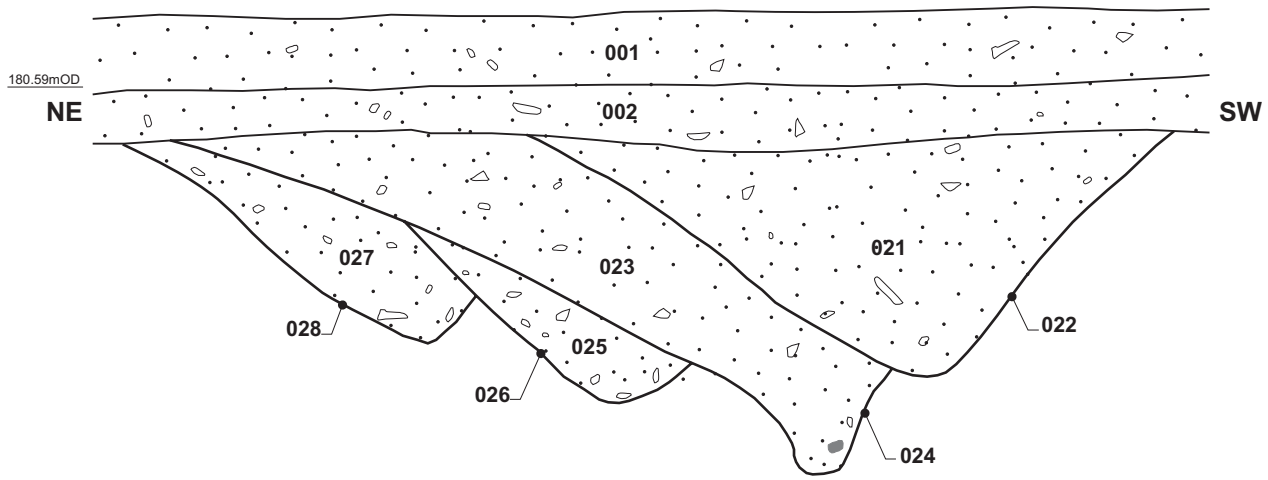
Section 143 - Enclosure Ditch (E4)



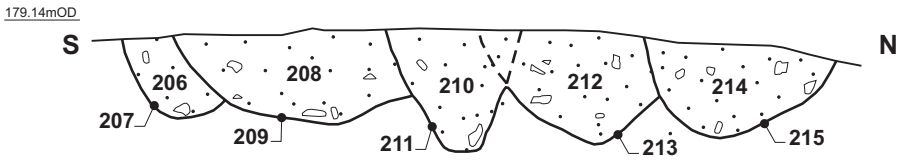
Section 102 - Enclosure Ditch (E4/E5)



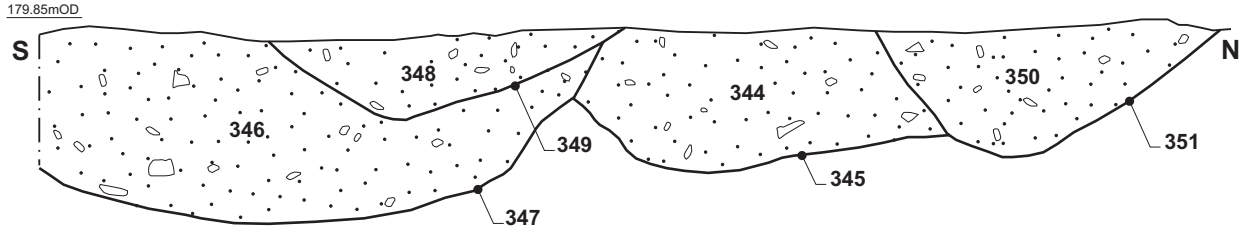
Section 4 - Enclosure Ditches (E4/E5)

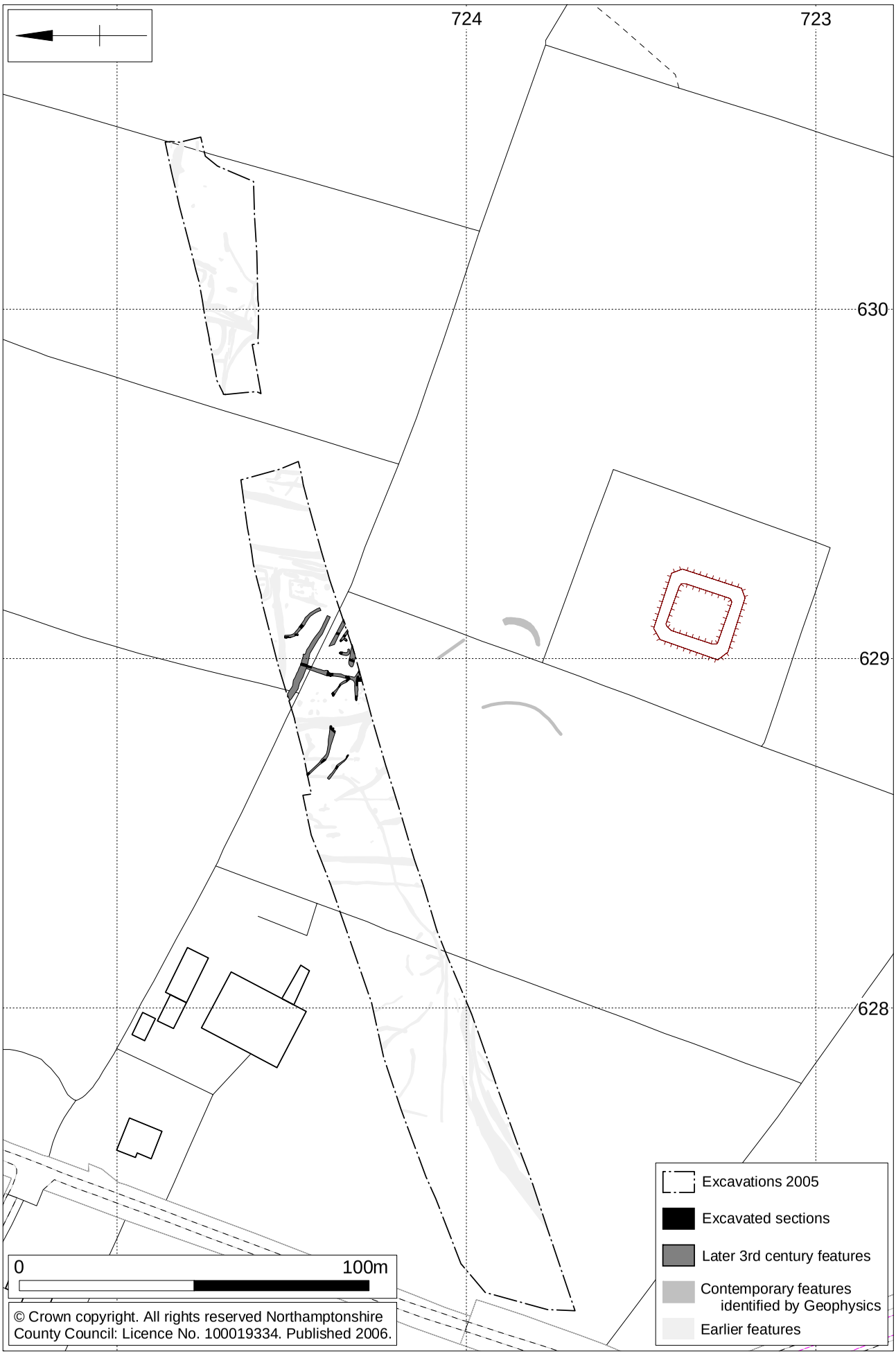


Section 60 - Enclosure Gullies (E5)



Section 100 - Ditches (DG8/DG9)





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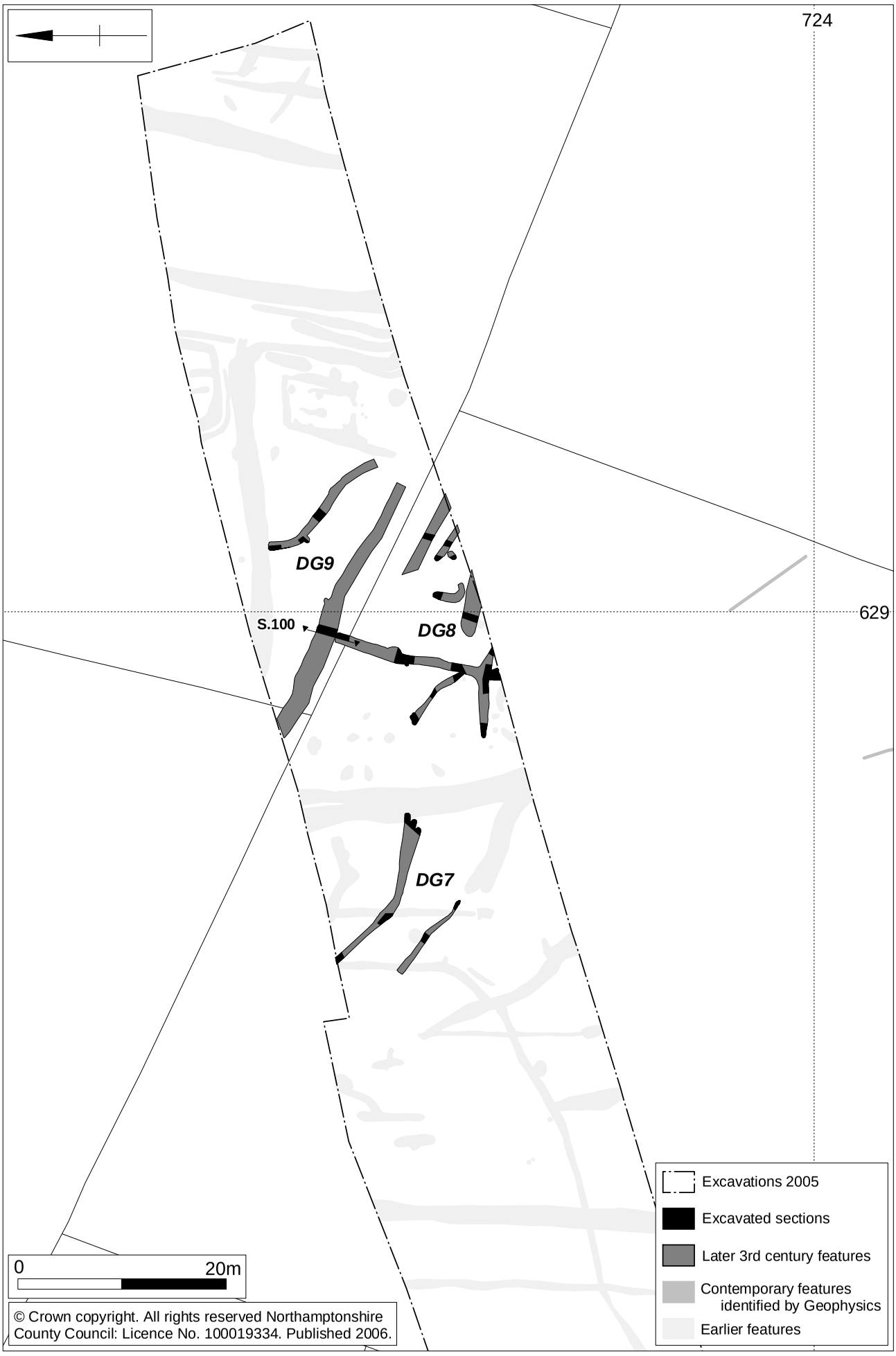
Scale 1:1500

General plan of later 3rd century features Fig 16



Scale 1:500

Plan of later 3rd century features Fig 17

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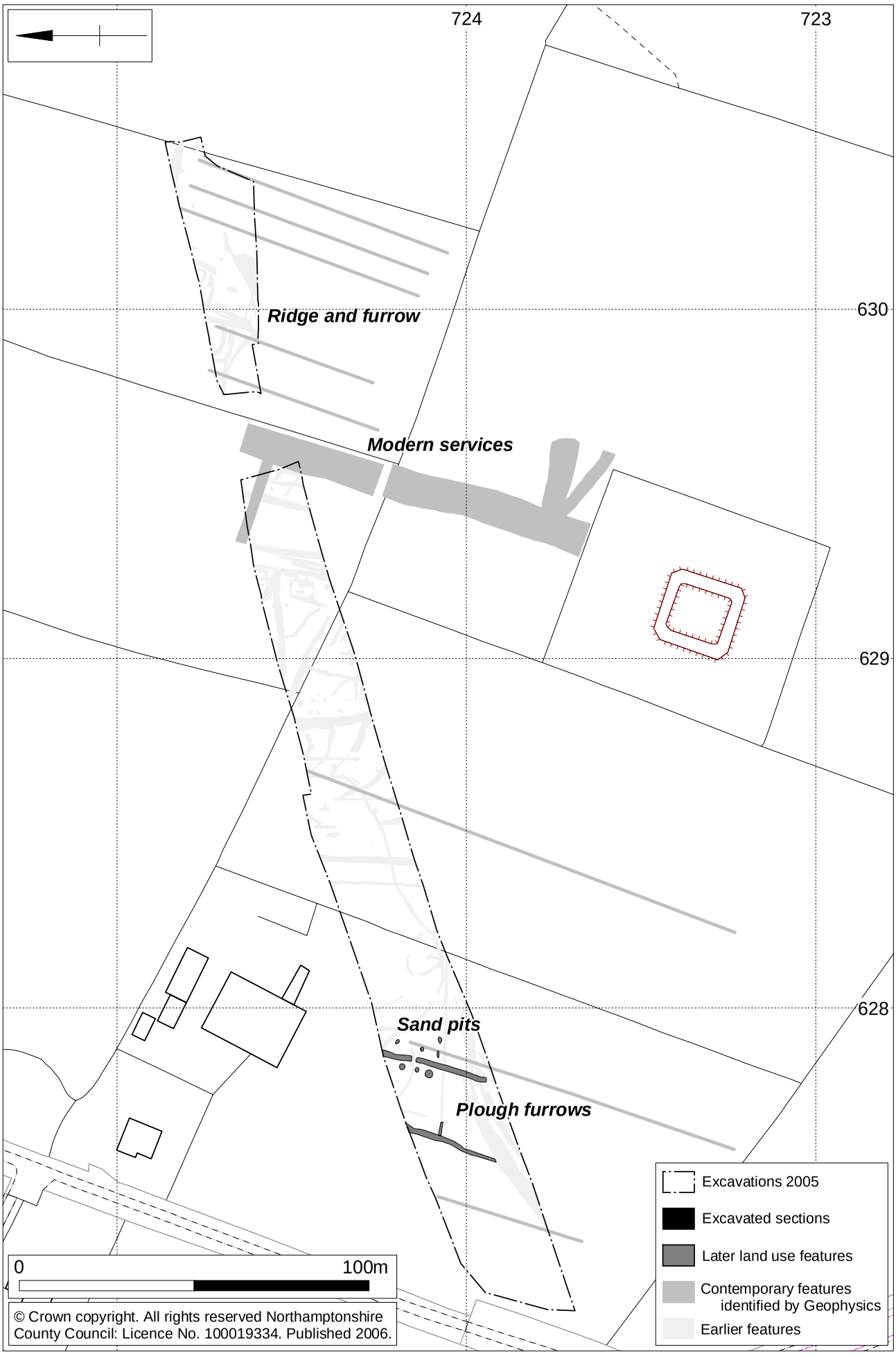
Scale 1:1500

Plan showing abandonment deposit Fig 18



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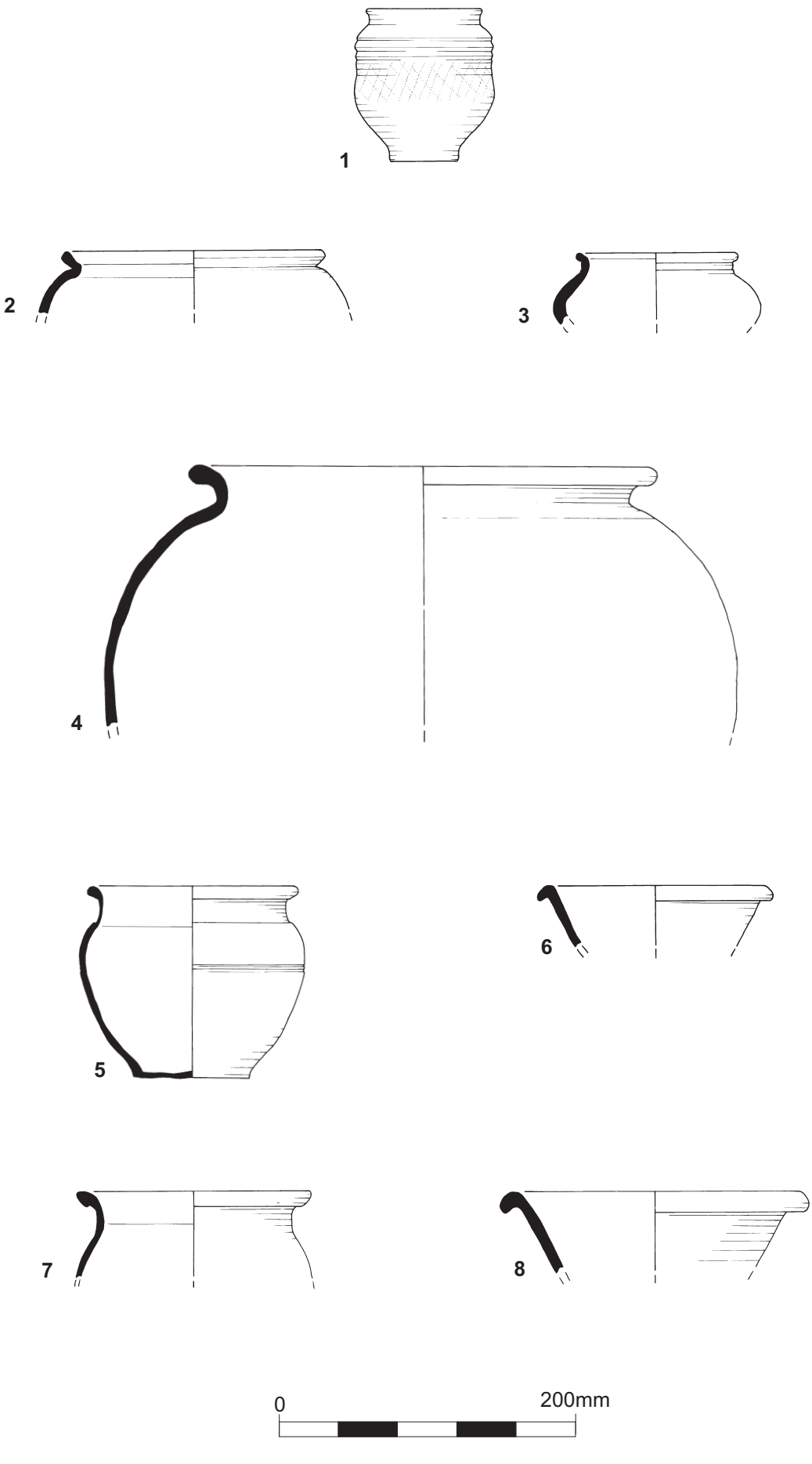
Scale 1:1500

General plan showing later land use Fig 19



Pottery Fig 20

Plate 1: Excavation of Rectangular Structure (***S1***).

Plate 2: Flue leading to Corndrier?

Plate 3: Brooch *c* 80 AD.

Plate 4: Fragment of upper millstone reused in surface (850).

Plate 5: Abandonment deposit (830).