
Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological excavation
Watling Street Byway
Northamptonshire



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Report 05/050

Northamptonshire Archaeology

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**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY
FEBRUARY 2005**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION
WATLING STREET BYWAY,
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
FEBRUARY 2005**

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Contents

1	INTRODUCTION
2	ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND
3	OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY
4	THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE
5	DISCUSSION
	BIBLIOGRAPHY
	APPENDIX 1: TRENCH DESCRIPTION

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project title	Watling Street Byway.	
Short description	<i>NCCs Rights of Way carrying out remedial works involving clearance of vegetation. Two trenches excavated revealing a metalled road surface l</i>	
Project type	Trial Trenching	
Previous work	Report by Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (1981). Fieldwork and survey (RPS Clouston 1995). Fieldwork (NA 1995).	
Future work	Not known	
Monument type and period	Historic Routeway	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address		
Site Location	SP 5782 7152 and SP 5800 7123	
Northing		
Height OD	AOD	
PROJECT CREATOR		
Organisation	NCCs Right of Way	
Project brief originator	NCCs Historic Environment Team	
Project Design originator	NCCs Historic Environment Team	
Director/Supervisor	Christopher Jones	
Project Manager	Steve Parry	
Sponsor or funding body		
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	February 2005	
End date	February 2005	
ARCHIVES	(Accession no.)	Content
Physical		
Paper		Site records, Photographs /Slides Drawings/ Reports
Digital		CD ROM
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title		
Serial title & volume		
Author(s)		
Page numbers		
Date		

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Abstract

An archaeological recording action was carried by NA on behalf of NCCs RoW section in February 2005 out on a length of public byway to the west of crick, which was, part of Watling Street Roman Road (NGR:SP 5782 7152). Remains of a metalled road surface was revealed in both of the trenches excavated No dating evidence was present.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire County Councils Rights of Way Section (RoW) wished to carry out remedial works involving clearance of vegetation, over a c300m length of public byway to the west of Crick which forms part of the historic Watling Street (NGR: SP 5782 7152; Fig 1). NCC's Historic Environment Team advised that further information was required in order to assess the potential impact of the proposed remedial works on the surviving buried archaeological remains. It was therefore recommended that the Rights of Way Section commission a limited archaeological evaluation to provide sufficient information to enable an informed programme of works to be agreed. These works were urgently required in the interests of the safety of horse users and to reduce erosion of Watling Street.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Previous archaeological work

This part of Watling Street has been subject to reporting by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (RCHME 1981; 60, 206-210). Published fieldwork includes drawn sections across the line of the road and details as to how it ceased to be used as a main routeway (Brown 1978) together with fieldwork and conditions survey (RPS Clouston 1995b) undertaken during development of the adjoining DRIFT site from c1995. A trench excavated across the mid part of

Watling Street by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 1995 (NA 1995), some 300 metres north of the present evaluation site, confirmed that undated road metalling lay between 25-400mm below the modern ground surface. The excavation in 1995 of a single evaluation trench (trench III) which extended inside the western fenced boundary of the byway (RPS Clouston 1995a) recorded an undated ditch. In 1998 what appeared to be gravel road makeup layer was observed in (c0.30-0.50m) deep vehicle ruts prior to their repair (pers comm. G Cadman).

Topography and geology

The British Geological Survey has mapped the underlying surface geology as Middle Lias silts and clays with Lower Lias Clay.

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The main objective of the archaeological excavation, as defined in the Design Brief, was to determine whether significant archaeological remains, and in particular any relating to use of the historic routeway, survive within the uppermost 0.50m of the ground surface. Where such remains are encountered, their character, date and state of preservation and their depth below the modern ground surface were to be determined.

Fieldwork and Recording

All works were conducted in accordance with the *IFA Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Excavations (1994, revised 1999)* and the *Code of Conduct* of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1985, revised 2000).

Monitoring of the programme of fieldwork was carried out by Graham Cadman.

The modern topsoil and subsoil deposits were removed by a mini-digger, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, to reveal significant archaeological remains or, where these were absent, deposits to the maximum depth of estimated root disturbance of 500mm. This work was carried out at all times under archaeological supervision.

The character, composition and general depositional sequence of the site stratification were recorded on pro-forma sheets, with a unique context number being allocated to each distinct deposit and feature.

A full photographic record comprising both 35mm monochrome negatives, with associated prints, and colour transparencies was maintained.

All records completed during fieldwork have been compiled into a comprehensive and fully cross-referenced site archive.

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

Two trenches were excavated with a mini-digger with a toothless ditching bucket; both trenches were 1m wide and varied in size between 3.60m to 5m long (Fig 2).

Trench 1

The topsoil and subsoil was stripped to a maximum depth of 300mm. At a depth of 300mm a metalled road surface was found, comprised of large rounded pebbles and fragments of limestone compacted into a sandy clay. The surface (03) was located at the west end of the trench, and was still present at a depth of 500mm in an excavated section. The surface ran NW by SE across the trench and in the same direction as the present day Watling Street byway (Fig 3).

The main root disturbance was confined to a depth of 300mm. No dateable finds were present.

Trench 2

The topsoil and subsoil was stripped to a depth of 500mm to reveal the top of a metalled road surface (03) at the west end of the trench, comprising large pebbles compacted into a sandy clay matrix. At the east end of the trench a possible earthen bank was removed by machine but no layers or cuts were seen in the section to confirm this. The road surface was a continuation of the same surface found in trench 1 and was still running in a NW by SE direction (Fig 3).

The main root disturbance was confined to a depth of 200mm. No dateable finds were present.

5 DISCUSSION

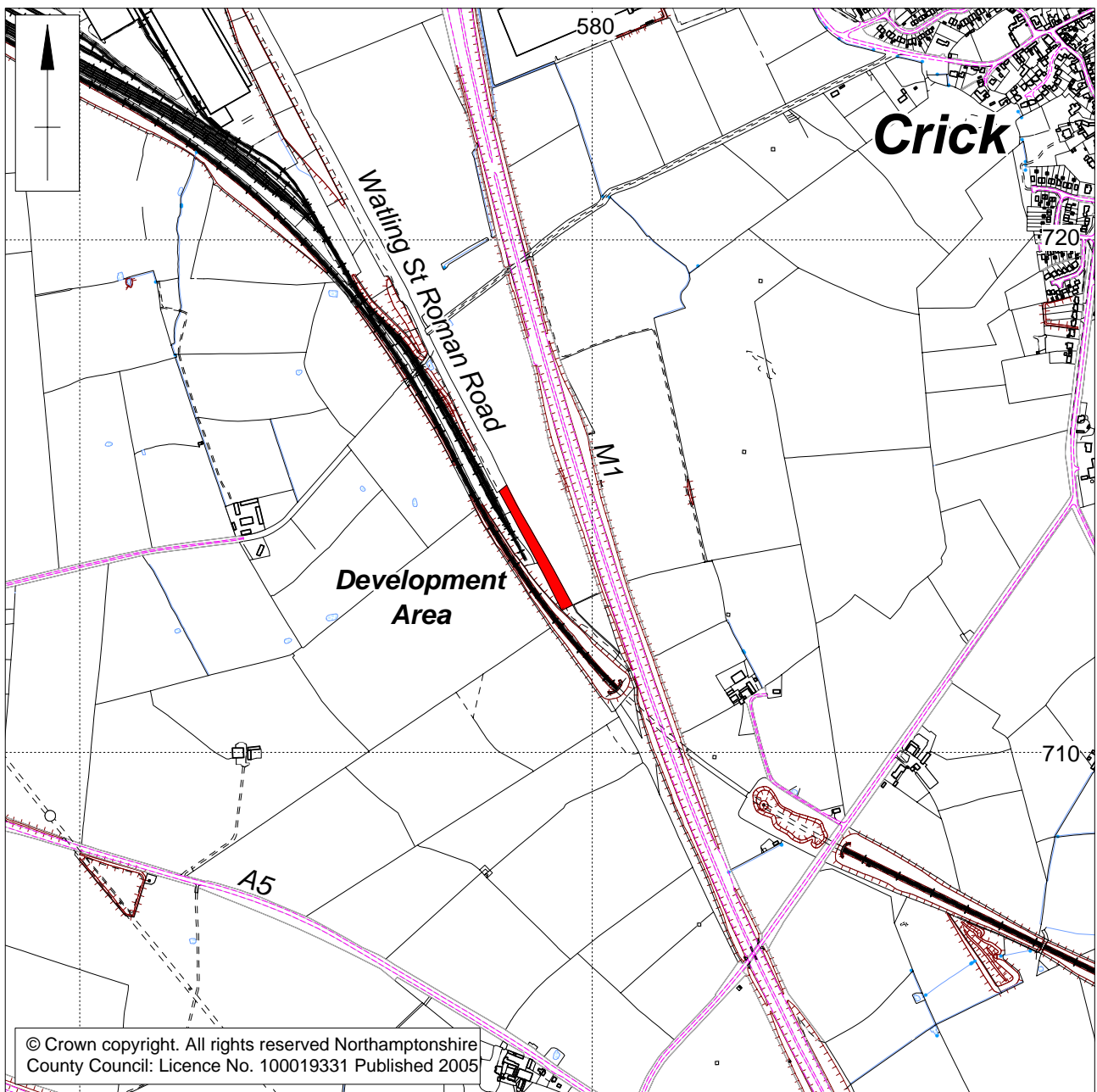
The two trenches revealed a undated road surface running in the same direction as the present Watling Street byway. The trenches confirmed the survival of the historic Roman road routeway under the present byway at a depth between 300mm – 500mm below current ground level. In both trenches only the one side of the road surface was seen, so the width of the surviving metalled road surface is unknown. No dating evidence was present.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Brown, A.E, 1978 Watling Street and the Gartree Road: some work on two Roman Roads in Northamptonshire, *Northamptonshire Archaeology*, **13**, 87-92
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- RPS Clouston (1995b) *DRIFT Watling Street: Conditions Survey. Survey commissioned from RPS Clouston by DIRFT*

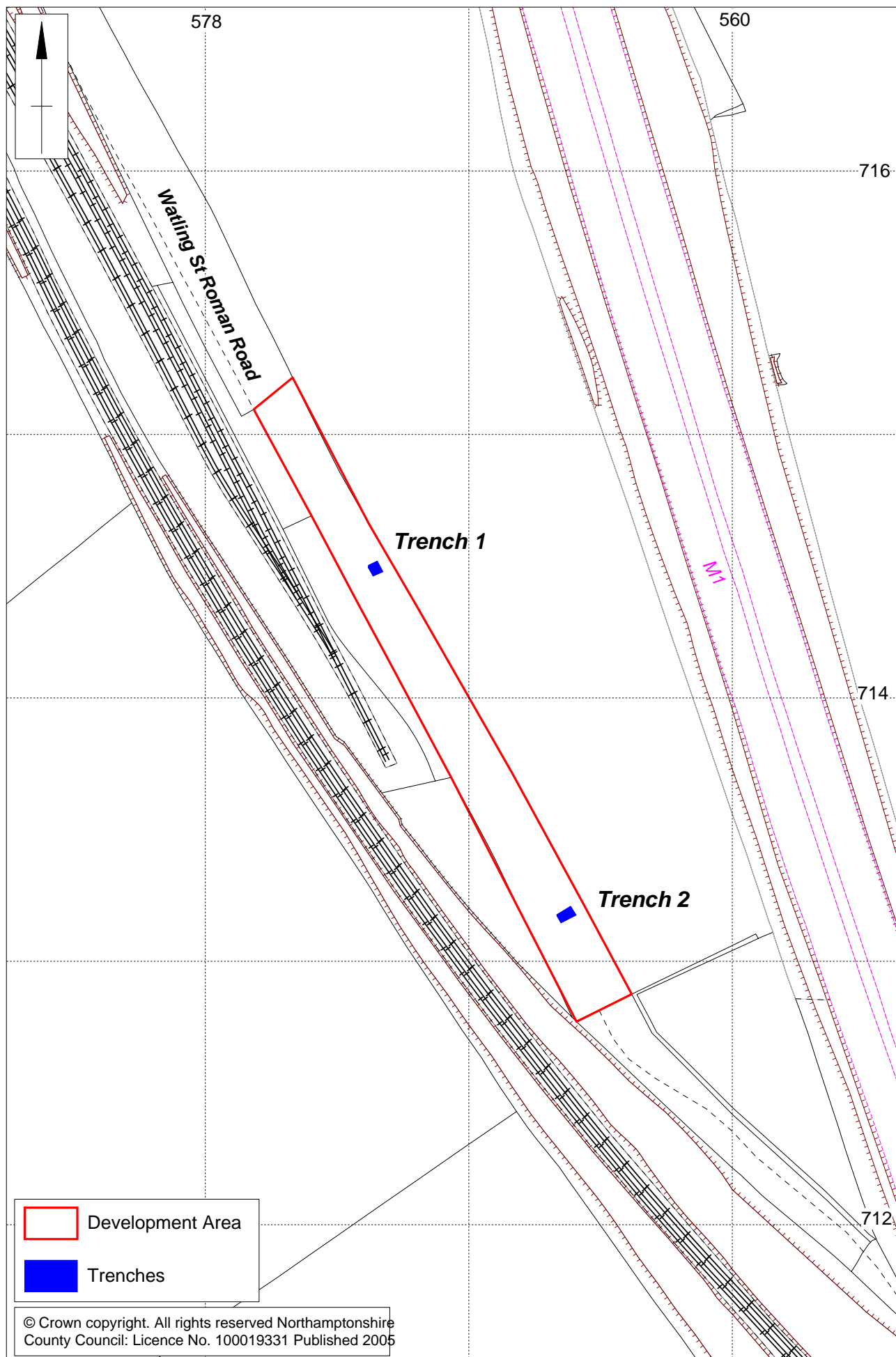
APPENDIX 1: TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

<i>Trench No and dimensions</i>	<i>feature Type</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>
1 3.60m x 1m	Topsoil	01	Dark Dark brown loamy soil Depth Depth 200mm to 300mm
	Sub-soil	02	Light brown silty clay . Depth 200mm
	Surface	03	Large pebbles, limestone fragments in sandy clay.
2 5m x 1m	Topsoil	01	Dark brown loamy soil Depth 200mm
	Subsoil	02	Light brown silty clay Depth 300mm
	Surface	03	Large pebbles compacted into sandy clay



Scale 1:12,500

Fig 1



Scale 1:2000

Fig 2