



# Northamptonshire Archaeology

## An archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at Bretton Way, Peterborough Cambridgeshire



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**Northamptonshire  
County Council**

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Report 10/99

June 2010



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**OAS/S REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project name	Bretton Way, Peterborough	
Short description	<p>An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology during June 2010 prior to the construction of a neurological care unit on land at Bretton Way, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire.</p> <p>The evaluation identified a number of Roman ditches which produced pottery and coins dating to the 3rd to 4th centuries. Concrete strip foundations and modern drainage were found across the site</p>	
Project type	Trial Trenching	
Site status	None	
Previous work	Desk-based assessment (Dicks 2010)	
Current Land use	Wasteland	
Future work	Yes	
Monument type/ period	Roman ditches	
Significant finds	Roman coins (3 Cu alloy, 1 silver)	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Cambridgeshire	
Site address	Flaxland (off Bretton Way) Peterborough Cambridgeshire	
Area	1.5ha	
OS Easting & Northing	TF 160 007	
Height OD	20M	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	The Archaeological Advisor to Peterborough City Council	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Edmund Taylor	
Project Manager	Steve Parry (NA) Sally Dicks (CgMs)	
Sponsor or funding body	CgMs Consulting Ltd	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	June 2010	
End date	June 2010	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)</b>
Physical		Pot (43 sherds) SFs (5) tile (5 pieces) animal bone (3)
Paper		Pro-forma sheets (45) Colour slides (26) black and white contact prints (26)
Digital		Report text and figures, Digital photos (60)
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title	An archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at Bretton Way, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire	
Serial title & volume	Northamptonshire Archaeology Report 10/99	
Author(s)	Edmund Taylor	
Page numbers	17	
Date	24/6/10	

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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION  
ON LAND AT BRETTON WAY  
PETERBOROUGH, CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
JUNE 2010**

*Abstract*

*An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology during June 2010 prior to the construction of a neurological care unit on land at Bretton Way, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire.*

*The evaluation identified a number of Roman ditches which produced pottery and coins dating to the 3rd to 4th centuries. Concrete strip foundations and modern drainage were found across the site*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology during June 2010 prior to the construction of a neurological care unit and associated buildings on land at Bretton Way, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire (NGR TF 160 007, Fig 1). The work was undertaken on behalf of CgMs Consulting Ltd in response to a brief for archaeological trial evaluation issued by the Archaeological Advisor to Peterborough City Council. It followed an approved project design produced by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2010).

## **2 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Location and topography**

The area of proposed development is situated to the west of Bretton Way on the north-eastern fringe of Peterborough. It is bounded by Flaxland to the south, hedgerow and fields to the west and woodland to the north. The site occupies a 1.5ha area of rough ground which is level and lies at approximately 20m AOD. The underlying geology comprises Cornbrash limestone ([www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index))

### **2.2 Archaeological and historical background**

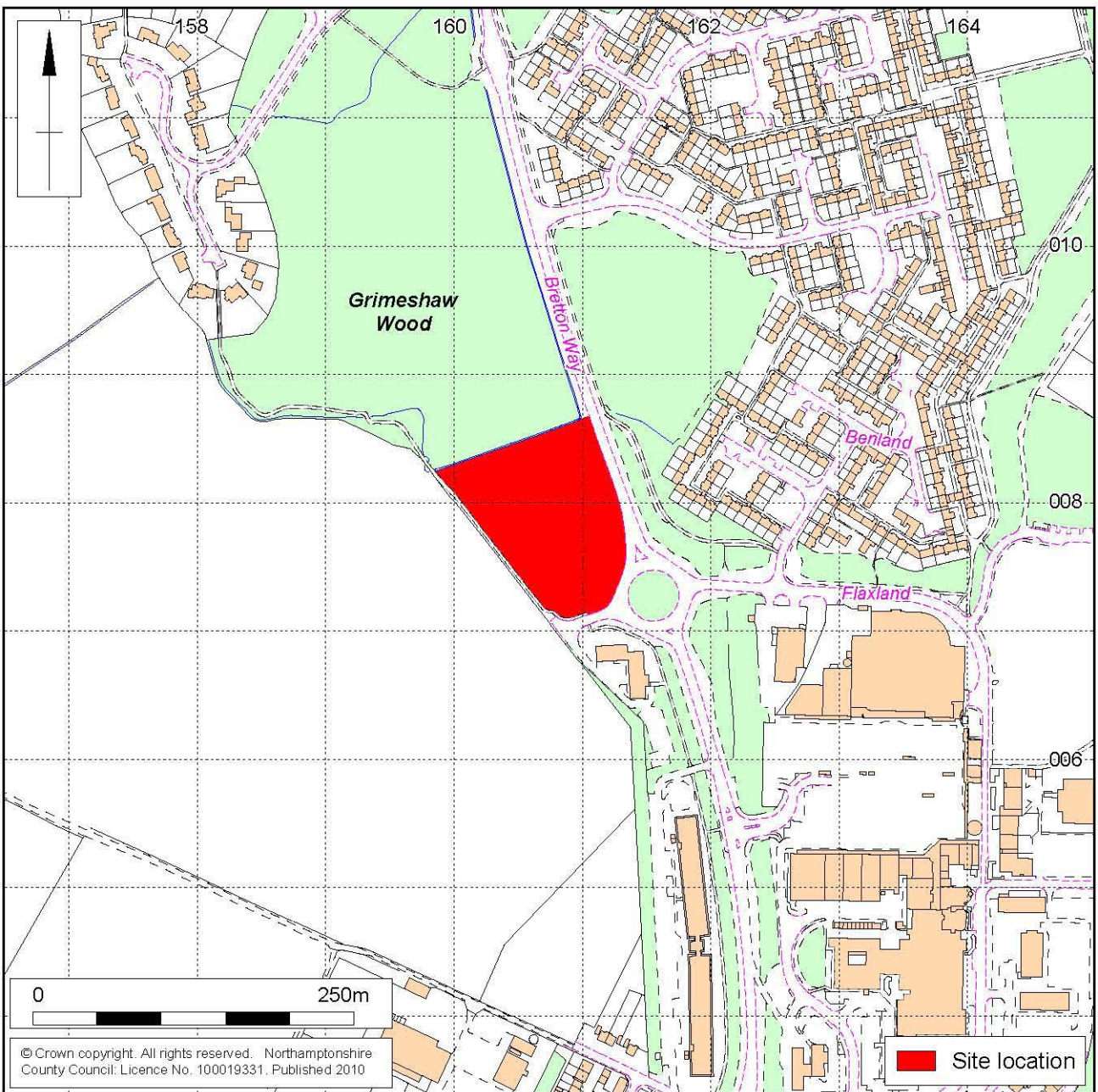
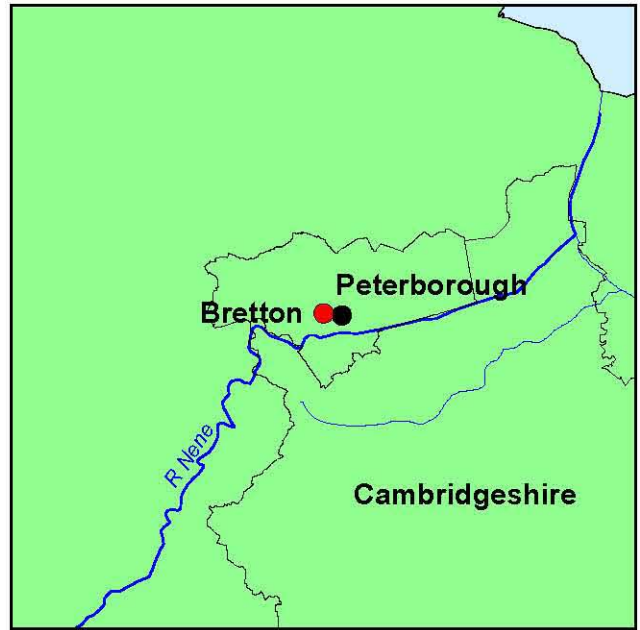
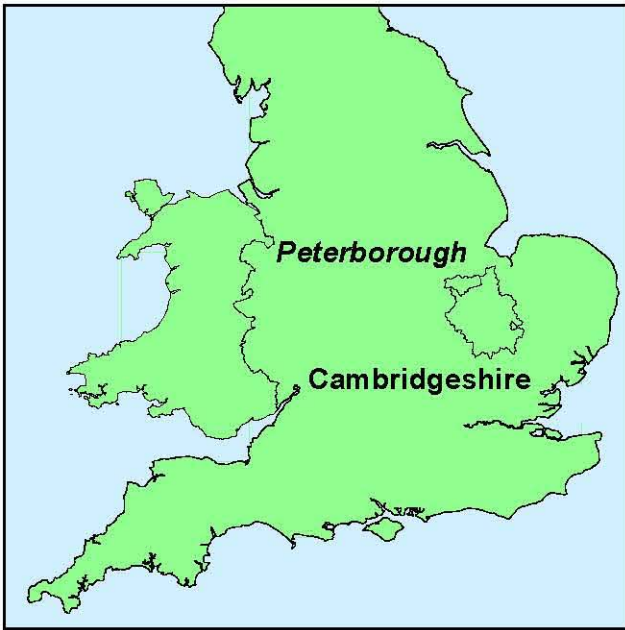
A Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) prepared by CgMs Consulting has examined in detail the archaeological and historical assets present within the proposed development area and a nominal 1km radius surrounding it (Dicks 2010).

The assessment established that the site has a moderate potential for the Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman periods while a low potential for all other periods.

Iron Age coins and Roman coins and pottery were found on the site during topsoil stripping in the early 1990s (HER 51164). Roman pottery was discovered from molehills on a low mound in the adjacent Grimeshaw Wood to the north of the application area (HER 51519).

Geotechnical investigations carried out on the site in 2004 identified up to 1.7m of made ground in the north-eastern part of the site, suggesting deep excavation had occurred here at some time.





Scale 1:5000

Site Location Fig 1

### 3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The aims of the evaluation were to:

- Establish the extent, depth, character, quality, function, state of preservation and date of any archaeological remains
- Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis
- Inform the design process for a suitable mitigation strategy

The fieldwork comprised the excavation of seven trenches measuring 25m long by 1.6m wide across the proposed development area. This produced a trench area of approximately 280m<sup>2</sup> (Fig 2). The trench layout was designed to avoid an area of known modern ground disturbance and a protected tree in the northern part of the site. Trenches were located using a Leica GPS system

Topsoil and subsoil were removed using a JCB-type excavator fitted with 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket under direct archaeological supervision. Excavation continued to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or where these were absent, the natural substrate. The topsoil was stacked separately from the subsoil and other deposits. The trenches were cleaned sufficiently to define features where necessary and planned at a scale of 1:50. Sections were drawn at 1:10 or 1:20 as appropriate and related to Ordnance Datum.

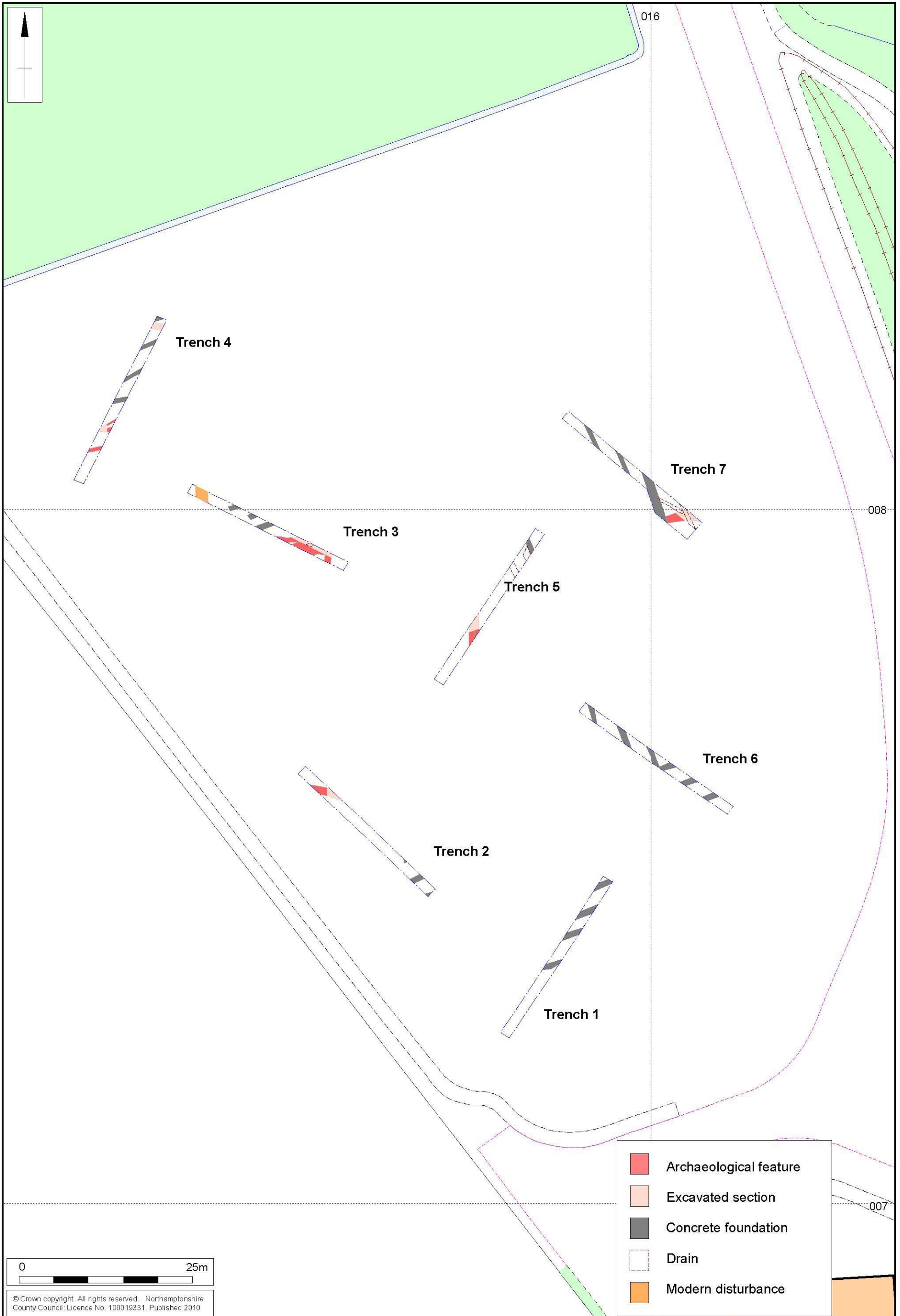
A photographic record in both black and white negative and colour slide was kept, with supplementary photographs in digital format. The written record used Northamptonshire Archaeology pro-forma sheets.

All works were conducted in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (1994, revised 2008) and the *Code of Conduct* of the Institute for Archaeologists (1985, revised 2010). In addition, all works complied with the guidelines detailed in *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003).

### 4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

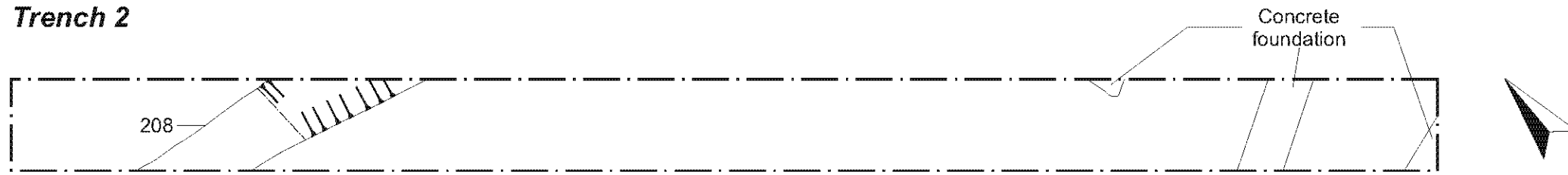
The natural substrate across the site comprised a mid orange-yellow limestone cornbrash which was encountered between 0.25m and 0.60m below the present ground surface. Archaeological remains were encountered in five of the seven trenches, which are described in detail below (Figs 2 and 3).

All of the trenches revealed modern disturbance in the form of drains and, most commonly, concrete strip foundations (Fig 4) which were generally 0.80m wide and truncated the natural substrate to a depth of up to 0.30m. The subsoil, which comprised a mid brown silty clay loam with frequent limestone fragments, had been truncated across the site and was absent in places. This was generally overlain by a very hard, compacted layer of limestone aggregate, between 0.15m and 0.30m thick. Where the subsoil was absent the limestone aggregate directly overlay the natural substrate. This underlay a thin topsoil comprising a dark brown clay loam, 0.10m to 0.20m thick.

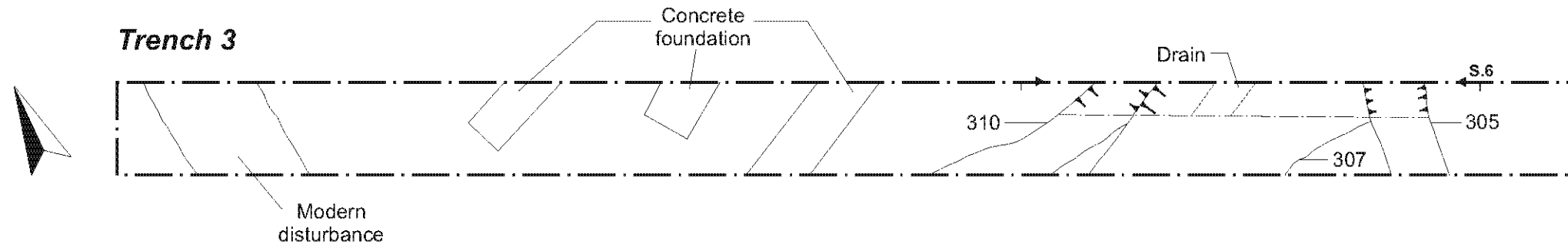




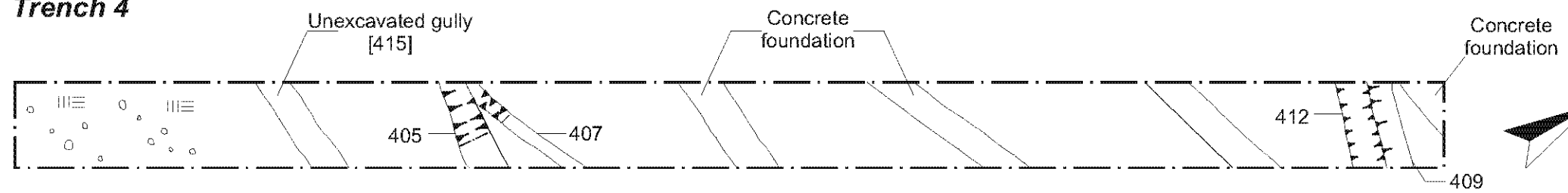
**Trench 2**



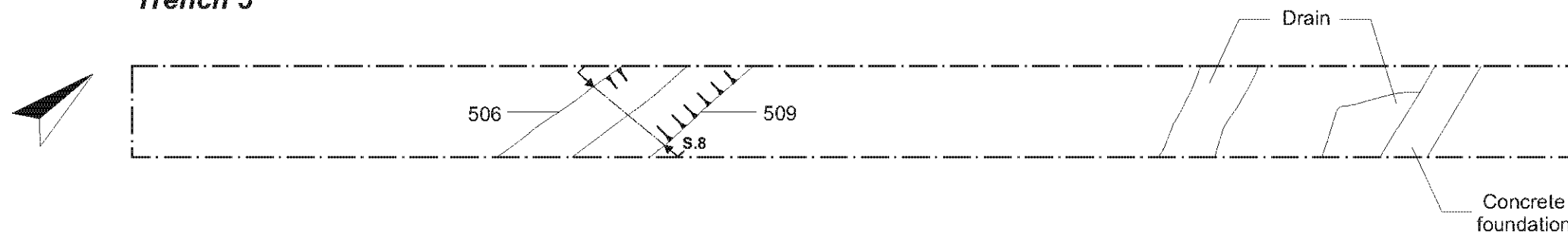
**Trench 3**



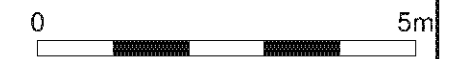
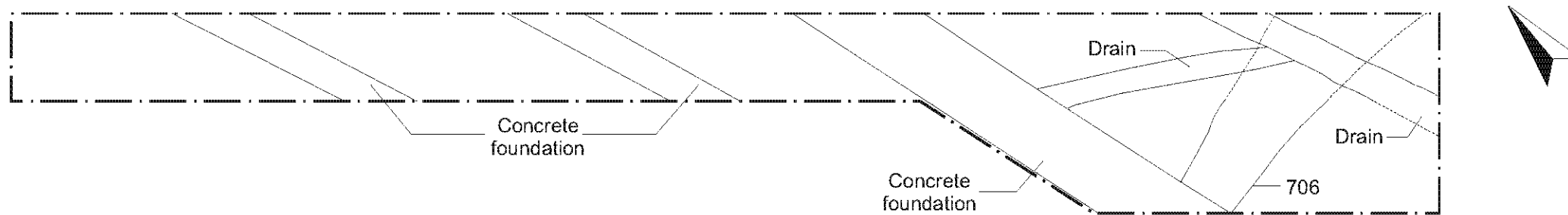
**Trench 4**



**Trench 5**



**Trench 7**





Concrete foundations in the southern end of Trench 1, looking east

Fig 4

#### 4.1 Trench 2

In the north-west end of this trench there was a ditch aligned east to west [208], which was 1.20m wide and 0.30m deep (Fig 3). The edges were slightly concave and sloped  $c45^\circ$  to a narrow concave base. The primary fill, (209), was 0.22m thick and comprised a mid orange-brown silty clay with frequent inclusions of angular limestone fragments and occasional small charcoal flecks. The upper fill (210), 0.08m thick, was similar but slightly darker in colour. Roman pottery dating to the 3rd to 4th centuries was retrieved from these contexts (see section 5.1). Overlying the ditch were layers of subsoil 0.10m thick, limestone aggregate 0.15m thick and topsoil 0.12m thick.

#### 4.2 Trench 3

In the south-east end of this trench there were three intercutting linear features (Figs 3, 5 and 6, section 6). The earliest of these was a ditch aligned east to west, [310] which was 0.80m wide, 0.50m deep with steeply sloping sides and a narrow concave base. The primary fill, (309) was 0.20m thick and comprised a dark orange/brown silty clay with occasional limestone fragments. The upper fill, (308) was 0.30m thick, comprised dark brown silt clay and contained pottery dating to the 3rd to 4th centuries. This was cut to the south-east by a broad, shallow ditch, [307] which was 2.50m wide and 0.20m deep with gently sloping edges and a broad flat base. This in turn was cut by ditch [305] which was similar in depth, 1.20 wide with steep edges and a flat base.

#### 4.3 Trench 4

At the north-east end of the trench there were two intercutting gullies aligned north-west to south-east (Fig 3). The earliest of these [412] was at least 0.75m wide, 0.45m



deep with steeply sloping straight sides and a broad flat base. The fills (413) and (414) comprised mid to dark grey-brown silty clay with occasional limestone fragments. This was cut to the north by a broader ditch, [409], which was 0.90m wide, 0.45m deep. The slightly concave edges sloped  $c45^\circ$  to a broad flat base and the fills (410) and (411) comprised light to mid greyish-brown silty clay with occasional limestone fragments. The northern edge was truncated by concrete foundations.

At the south-west end of the trench there was a narrow gully aligned south-west to north-east, [407]. This was 0.20m wide, 0.09m deep with gently sloping edges and filled with dark greyish-brown silty clay (408). It was cut to the south by an east to west aligned gully, [405], 0.60m wide, 0.20m deep with a similar fill (406).

Another gully also aligned east to west, [415], 1.00m wide, was not excavated.



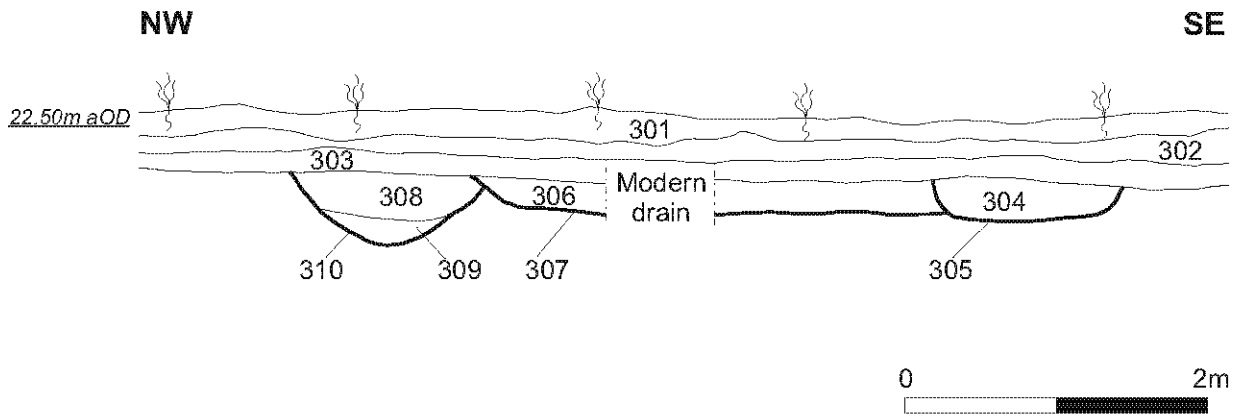
Trench 3, ditches [305], [307] and [310], looking east

Fig 5

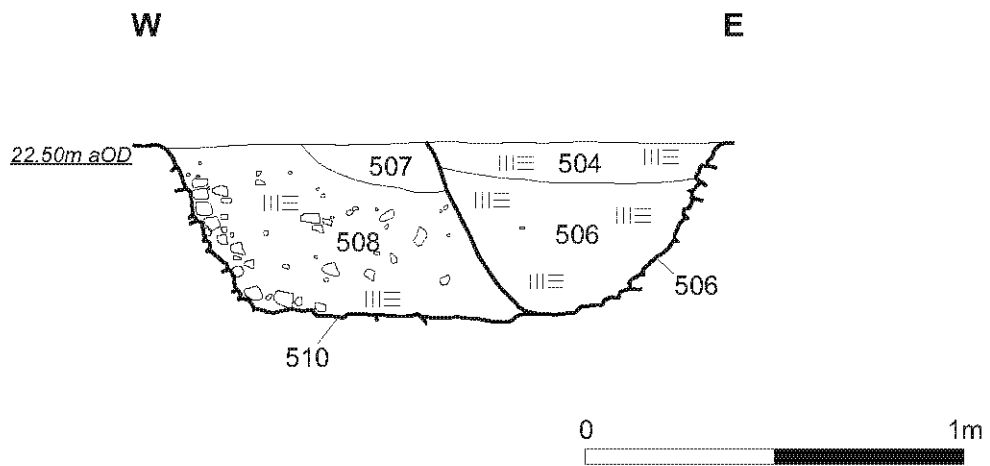
#### 4.4 Trench 5

In this trench there were two intercutting ditches aligned north to south, [509] and [506] (Figs 3 and 6, section 8). The earliest of these, [509] was at least 0.90m wide, 0.45m deep with steep straight sides and a broad flat base. The primary fill, (508), was 0.45m thick and comprised a mid grey-brown silty clay with abundant edge derived limestone fragments while the upper fill (507), 0.10m thick, comprised a light orange-brown silty clay. This was cut to the east by ditch [506], 0.80m wide, 0.45m deep with steeply sloping edges and a narrow. The primary fill (505), 0.35m thick, comprised a mid brown-orange silty clay with occasional charcoal flecking while the upper fill (504), 0.10m, comprised a dark brown-grey silty clay.

### Section 6, Trench 3



### Section 8, Trench 5



#### 4.5 Trench 7

At the south-east end of the trench there was a ditch aligned north-east to south-west, [706] which was 1.5m wide and 0.40m deep with gradual sloping edges and a broad, flat base (Fig 3). The primary fill (705) comprised a mid brown silty clay, 0.20m thick, the darker upper fill, (704) was also 0.20m thick. This undated feature was heavily truncated by modern drainage and concrete foundations

### 5 THE FINDS

#### 5.1 The pottery by Tora Hylton

The evaluation produced a small group of Roman pottery dated to the 3rd-4th centuries. In total, 45 sherds with a combined weight of 1.485kg were recovered from 11 individual deposits in Trenches 2, 3, 4 and 5. The largest percentage of pottery (42% by weight) was recovered from ditch 208, while smaller amounts were recovered from ditches [307], [310], [409] and [509] and gullies [305], [405] and [407]. The condition of the pottery is not always good, a number of sherds display signs of abrasion, suggesting that they had been lying around for some time prior to deposition; even so the assemblage has a relatively high mean sherd weight of 33g. The pottery was scanned by context and quantified by sherd count and weight. The quantified data was recorded together with details of the fabric and form. Where possible the fabrics have been coded according to the Nene Valley Research Committee Roman pottery fabric series (Perrin 1996).

The site lies close to an area renowned for pottery production (Lower Nene Valley), and as would be expected the assemblage is dominated by locally produced kitchen and tablewares in coarse and fine ware fabrics. Colour coated wares dominate the assemblage and make up 41% of the total by weight, identifiable forms include flanged bowls (cf Howe *et al* 1980, fig 7, 79), a shallow dish (ibid 1980, fig 7, 87) and a small rim sherd from the neck of a flagon (cf 980, fig 6, 67), all of which date to the 4th century. In addition there are two Mortaria rim sherds, both are examples of reeded rim bowls (Hartley & Perrin 1999, fig 78, M21, M25) in Fabrics 1 and 3 (ibid 1999, 199) with black slag trituration grits; the form dates to the 3rd-4th centuries.

Other fabrics include shell-gritted wares (30% by weight), represented by necked jars, together with small amounts of mainly undiagnostic greyware and oxidised sandy wares. No imports are present.

All the pottery derived from linear features in Trenches 2-5. No early Roman material is present. The assemblage is dominated by kitchen and tablewares manufactured in the Lower Nene Valley and dating to the 3rd/4th centuries.

#### 5.2 The small finds by Ian Meadows

##### *The coins*

SF1 (414) fill of [412] An irregular copper alloy coin 18mm diameter of 4th century date. Both faces were too corroded to observe any detail beyond the approximate outline of a bust of fourth century type.

SF2 (408) fill of [407] A copper alloy coin 8mm diameter. Both faces were too corroded to observe any detail however the size would suggest a 4th century date.



SF3 (408) fill of [407] A silver denarius 15mm diameter. The obverse legend is truncated but [ ]PIVS AVG is visible along with the bearded bust of Caracalla. The reverse also preserves only part of the legend [ ]COS III PP with the standing figure of Neptune. This issue would be between 208-213AD.

SF5 (413) fill of [412] A copper alloy coin 14mm diameter of the House of Constantine. The obverse bust was legible but the legend was lost with the erosion of the edge of the flan. The reverse was of GLORIA EXCERCITVS two soldier two standards type but again the legend was lost and the mint mark was illegible (330-5)

### ***Other Finds***

SF4 (406) fill of [405] Fragment of the head of a copper alloy stud 13mm diameter with the stump of the shaft.

(304) fill of [305]. An unnumbered shard 18 x 10mm of clear glass preserving a small part of one original surface. This surface was pitted possibly from wear but more likely from the removal of an oxidised surface, the other surfaces were probable fresh breaks. Whilst possibly Roman window glass, produced by pouring the molten glass onto a bed of sand, this piece is perhaps more likely to be recent as the colour would be surprising from the Roman period for window glass. A fragment of iron strip 17 x 30mm and 2-3mm thick of indeterminate function

### ***Discussion***

The coins here are too few to make meaningful comment on the site although most were of 4th century date and the only earlier issue was found in a context with a fourth century coin and is therefore clearly residual. The fine condition of the silver denarius (SF 3) would perhaps suggest it had been carefully curated, possibly for its bullion value, before ultimately ending up in the ground.

## **5.3 The Roman ceramic tile by Pat Chapman**

There are five sherds of roof tile, weighing 1.29kg, comprising one tegula, two imbrex and two bodysherds.

The tegula sherd, context (411) gully [409], is made in a hard red-brown shell-gritted fabric. The body is 15mm thick, while the flange is upright, 50mm high from the base, 20mm thick and with a flat top. The surviving corner has a cutaway, the notch which would link into the next tile. A study of flange cutaways has indicated a possibility of dating by form (Warry 2007). This cutaway is angled back before emerging vertically through the top of the flange, giving a suggested date range of AD 160-260.

The two curved imbrex sherds, from contexts (410) and (210) ditches [409] and [208], are 12-15mm thick and made with a fine, silty, slightly soft, orange clay with some tiny grog inclusions. Two bodysherds, from context (507) ditch [509], are made from the same fabric as the imbrex tile. They are 15-20mm thick, and are probably tegula sherds.

The one piece of fired clay, weighing 73g, made with a fine, silty, slightly soft, pale-brown clay with occasional grog. It is irregularly-shaped with no defining features.

#### 5.4 The animal bone by Karen Deighton

##### *Introduction*

A total of 48g of animal bone was collected from three contexts during the course of excavation. This material was assessed to determine the level of preservation, the taxa present, and the potential for further analysis and to inform on any future collection strategies.

##### *Method*

Identifiable bones were noted.

##### *Preservation*

Fragmentation and surface abrasion were at a high level. No evidence for canid gnawing, butchery or burning was noted.

##### *Taxa Present*

Only two fragments of animal bone could be identified to taxa: a male pig tusk from feature [307] and a fragment of possible cattle mandible from feature [310].

##### *Conclusion*

A very small, poorly preserved assemblage.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation has revealed a number of ditches and gullies dating to the 3rd to 4th centuries which may be part of an east-west, north-south aligned field system. Although these features are likely to have served the dual purposes of drainage and division in an agricultural context, settlement activity in the vicinity is attested by finds of coins, roof tile and possibly glass which were concentrated in the north-western part of the site.

Recent disturbance associated with the occupation of the site by temporary offices during the early nineties has impacted upon the archaeology present. The concrete strip foundations for these structures and associated drainage were encountered in every trench. It was evident that the site had been levelled, resulting in the truncation of the subsoil and in places the natural substrate.

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**APPENDIX: Pottery by fabric**

FABRIC TYPE (NVRC*)	CONTEXT NUMBER									
	209		210		304		306		308	
	No/Wg (g)		No/Wg (g)		No/Wg (g)		No/Wg (g)		No/Wg (g)	
<b>Roman Pottery</b>										
Greyware			1	7	1	2				
Lower Nene valley GW (LNVGW)			1	49	1	36				
Lower Nene valley CC (LNVCC)			1	338			1	23		
Misc. Colour coat			1	2						
Oxidised sandy ware							1	3		
Mortaria			1	77						
Shell-gritted ware (RSG)	1	77	5	78					1	51
<b>Total</b>	1	77	10	551	2	38	2	26	1	51

FABRIC TYPE (NVRC*)	CONTEXT NUMBER											
	406		408		410		411		507		508	
	No/Wg (g)		No/Wg (g)		No/Wg (g)		No/Wg (g)		No/Wg (g)		No/Wg (g)	
<b>Roman Pottery</b>												
Greyware					1	35	2	25				
Lower Nene valley GW(LNVGW)												
Lower Nene valley CC (LNVCC)	3	26	1	25	6	160	3	35	1	12		
Misc. Colour coat												
Oxidised sandy ware	2	16			1	16	1	1				
Mortaria					1	155						
Shell-gritted ware (RSG)	2	22					1	20			4	194
<b>Total</b>	7	64	1	25	9	366	7	81	1	12	4	194

\* Nene Valley Research Committee Roman Pottery Fabric Series



Northamptonshire County Council

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