



Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological trial trench evaluation of land at London Road, Whitchurch Shropshire

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	London Road, Whitchurch	
Short description	An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology during August 2010 on behalf of Terrace Hill (Whitchurch) Ltd. The site was located at London Road on the northern edge of Whitchurch, and comprised a parcel of land covering 3.5ha. At the time of evaluation the site was under pasture. Two trenches, totalling 30 linear metres, were excavated targeted on an area of potential Roman burials. No significant remains were encountered; the only archaeological feature was a boundary ditch from which a quantity of post-medieval pottery was recovered.	
Project type	Trial trenching	
Site status	None	
Previous work	Desk-based assessment (Turner and Richmond 2010)	
Current Land use	Pasture	
Future work	unknown	
Monument type/ period	Post-medieval boundary	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Shropshire	
Site address	London Road, Whitchurch	
Area	3.5ha	
OS Easting & Northing	354070 341950	
Height OD	99m	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Phoenix Consulting Archaeology Ltd	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Carol Simmonds	
Project Manager	Adam Yates	
Sponsor or funding body	Terrace Hill (Whitchurch) Ltd	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	August 2010	
End date	August 2010	
ARCHIVES	Location	Content
Physical	SHRMS:2010.0012	1 box of pottery
Paper	SHRMS:2010.0012	1 archive box of index sheets, context sheets, colour slides and black and white contact sheets
Digital	SHRMS:2010.0012	Pdf of report, digital photographs, dxf data
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Title	An Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation of land at London Road, Whitchurch, Shropshire	
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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION
OF LAND AT LONDON ROAD
WHITCHURCH, SHROPSHIRE
AUGUST 2010**

Abstract

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology during August 2010 on behalf of Terrace Hill (Whitchurch) Ltd. The site was located at London Road on the northern edge of Whitchurch and comprised a parcel of land covering 3.5ha. At the time of evaluation the site was under pasture. Two trenches, totalling 30 linear metres, were excavated targeted on an area of potential Roman burials. No significant remains were encountered; the only archaeological feature was a boundary ditch from which a quantity of post-medieval pottery was recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

During August 2010, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) on behalf of Terrace Hill (Whitchurch) Ltd at London Road, Whitchurch, Shropshire (NGR 354070 341950; Fig 1).

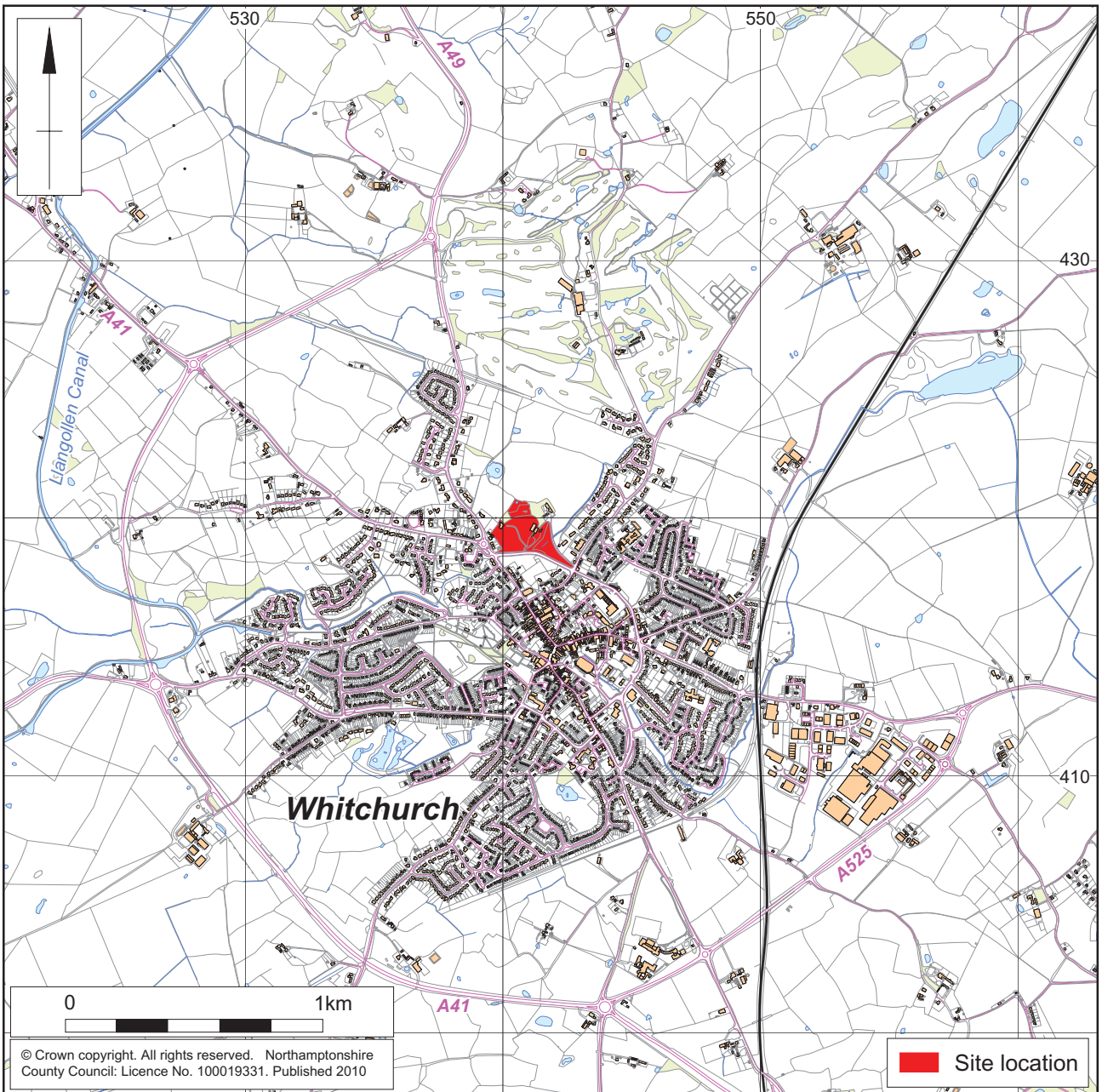
The site lies to the north of the town of Whitchurch immediately adjacent and to the south-west of a medieval moated site. To the west, after a roundabout was constructed in the 1920s, a series of burials or presumed Roman date were disturbed.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and topography

The application area, approximately 3.5ha in extent is located c0.4km to the north of Whitchurch town centre (Fig 1). The southern edge of the plot is bordered by London Road, the eastern and western edges by residential areas and to the north are fields. The small area of land where the trenches were placed was located to the north-east of the houses fronting on to London Road and Tarporley Road (Fig 2). Currently much of the site is pasture (Fig 3). The localised area of trenching ground is flat and at an approximate height of 99m above Ordnance Datum, but to the east of the trench area begins to slope sharply down to the south-east.

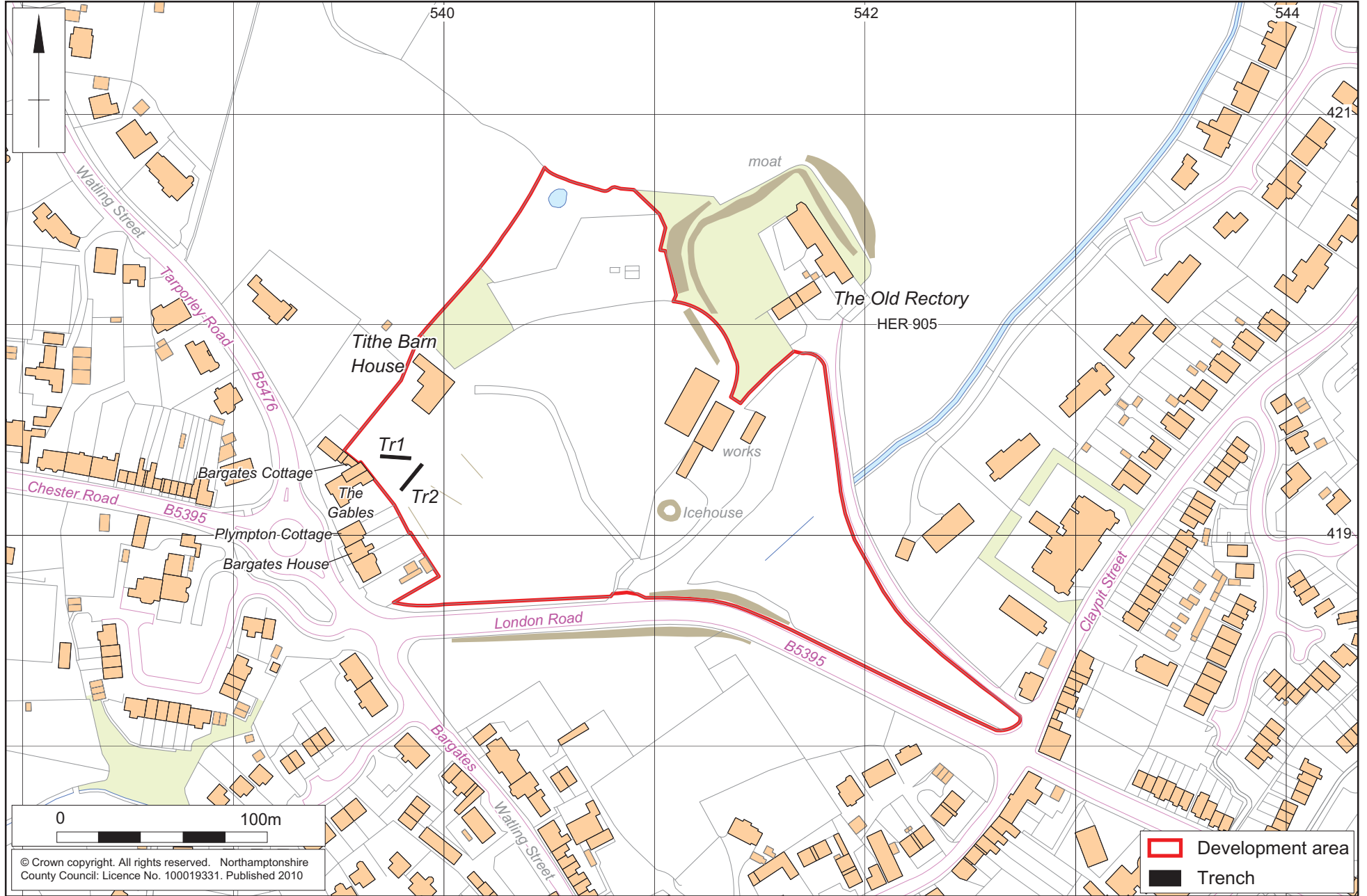
The geology is Triassic mudstone, siltstone and sandstone overlain by Diamicton tills (BGS GeolIndex <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/GeolIndex>). Geotechnical test pits have been excavated across the area, one of which was located in the area which was subject to evaluation (Fig 4). This was excavated to an approximate depth of 3m and found layers of made ground (David Salmon, pers comm).



Scale 1:25,000

Site location Fig 1

1:2500



Trial trench location Fig 2



General view of the site prior to excavation, looking south-west towards Bargates Cottage and The Gables Fig 3

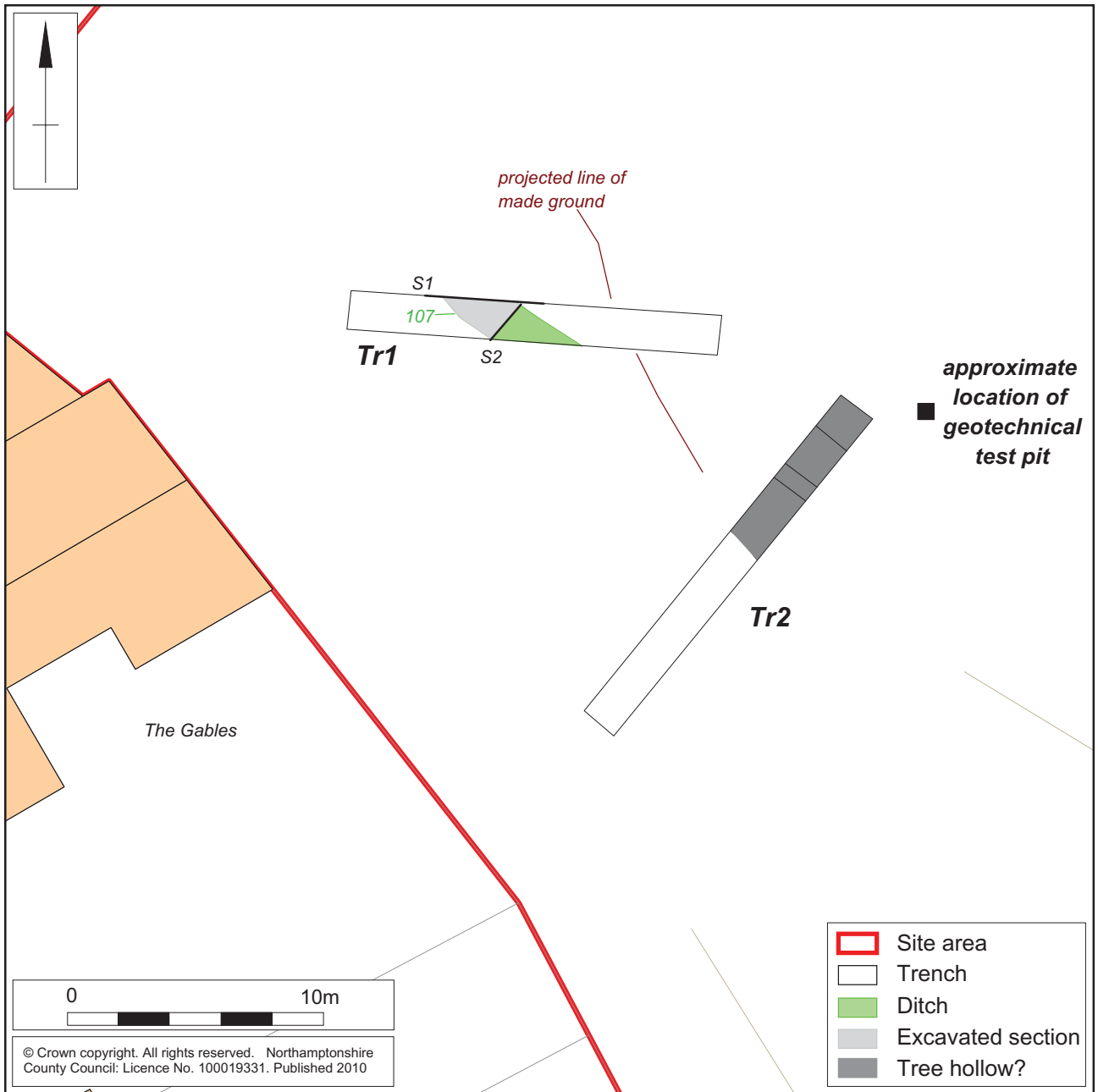
2.2 Archaeological and historical background

A full survey of the archaeological and historical background of the site can be found in the desk-based assessment (Turner and Richmond 2010).

The town of Whitchurch had a long history of settlement dating from at least the Roman period. The town of *Mediolanum*, situated on Watling Street, existed as a 1st-century AD fort and continued as a defended small town until the late 4th or 5th centuries. The core of the town was to the south-east of the site. The modern streets of Bargates and Tarporley Road follow the course of Watling Street and human remains are reported as having been found during the construction of the roundabout forming the junction between the two roads.

The core of the medieval town of Whitchurch was located on the site of the Roman settlement and although the earliest known remains date from the 11th century it is likely that there were Anglo-Saxon antecedents. Whitchurch also had a castle, founded in the late 11th century, the location of which is not entirely certain as no traces survive. Although there was likely to have been medieval settlement on Bargates and Claypit Street, the site itself probably formed part of the grounds of a moated site to the north (HER 905). In the mid 18th century The Old Rectory was within the moated site. The Old Rectory house is currently unoccupied but had extensive gardens and ancillary buildings including an Ice House. Historic maps dating from the 18th century suggest that the area investigated by the trial trenches was a garden. Maps dating from 1784 and 1791 show a dog-legged boundary in the area of evaluation (Fig 2).

A modern house, Tithe Barn House, was constructed in 2000. Archaeological evaluation took place in advance of its construction but did not find any archaeological features (Anon 1992; Turner and Richmond 2010).



1:250

The excavated features Fig 4

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

In order to assess the archaeological resource of the site, a programme of trial excavation was undertaken.

Trial trenching comprised the excavation of two trenches, each measuring 15m x 1.5m. This equated to a total of 30 linear metres of trenching (Figs 2 and 4). The trenches were located using a survey grade GPS (Leica System 1200) operating to an accuracy of +/- 0.05m.

Topsoil and subsoil were removed using a wheeled 180-degree excavator fitted with a 1.5m 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 and a comprehensive set of levels were taken across the site. The trenches and spoil were scanned using a metal detector.

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

All works were conducted in accordance with the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (1994, revised 2008) and *Code of Conduct* of the Institute for Archaeologists (1985, revised 2010), and the English Heritage document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE)* (2006). The archives will be prepared according to Archaeological Archives Forum (AAF) standards (2007).

4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

4.1 General sequence of deposits

The natural substrate, generally encountered between 0.4 and 0.9m below current ground surface, comprised orange sand or clayey sands with occasional patches of coarse gravel and clay. Subsoil comprised well-developed yellowish-brown clayey sand or a firm brown sand. Topsoil comprised a loose dark brown sandy loam.

4.2 Trench 1

Overlying the natural sand (103) at the eastern end of Trench 1, were two layers of made ground (Figs 5 and 6). The lower layer (105) was a loose reddish-brown sand which was overlain by a friable dark brown clayey sand (104) which was sealed by topsoil. The upper layer had fragments of brick, concrete and stone. This may be associated with the made ground observed in the geotechnical test pit (Fig 4).

Near the centre of the trench there was a ditch [107] that cut the subsoil layers (Fig 7). It was aligned north-west to south-east and measured 4.80m wide by 0.80m deep (Fig 8, sections 1 and 2). Its basal fill was dark brown silty sand (111), overlain by light grey fine sand (110). The ditch was recut [112] on the same alignment. It was 4.10m wide and 0.50m deep, initially filled by dark brown grey silty sand (109) which produced a range of post-medieval pottery. This was overlain by compact yellowish-brown coarse sand (108). This feature is on a similar alignment as one of the boundaries shown on the 1784 and 1791 plans.



General view of Trench 1, looking east Fig 5



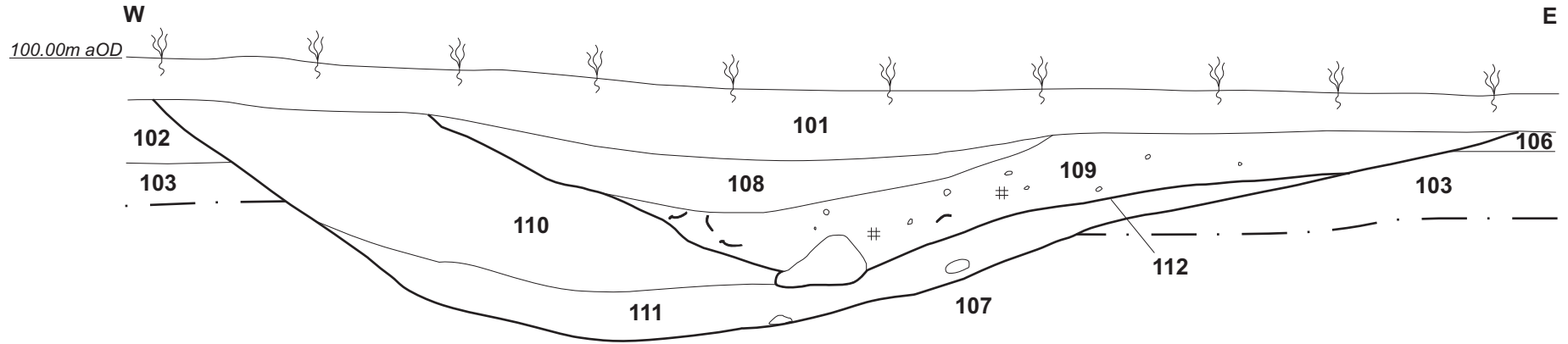
The made ground at the eastern end of Trench 1, looking north Fig 6



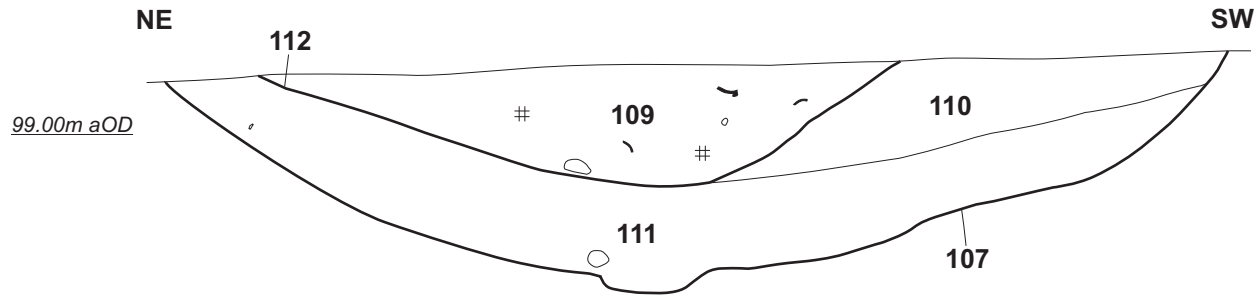
The boundary ditch, looking north-west Fig 7

Scale 1:25

Section 1, Trench 1



Section 2 Trench 1



~ pottery
charcoal

The post-medieval boundary ditch [107] and [112] Fig 8

4.3 Trench 2

The north-eastern end of Trench 2 had a modern backfilled tree hole [205] (Fig 9). The tree hole measured at least 0.6m deep. It was filled by humic dark brown clay (206) which contained substantial pieces of tree root, branches and concrete fragments. It was overlain by topsoil. The north-eastern end of Trench 2 was located less than 2m from the backfilled geo-technical test pit, and together with the made-ground it is likely that the area had been disturbed.



General view of Trench 2, looking north-east Fig 9

5 THE POTTERY by Iain Soden

A total of 70 sherds of largely later post-medieval to early modern pottery were recovered from context (109), the lower of two fills of a ditch [112], itself a re-cut of an earlier linear ditch [107].

The pottery was as follows:

- 1 sherd of Midland Purple ware (c1450-1700)
- 1 sherd of Nottingham stoneware (c1700-1800)
- 7 sherds of Midland blackware ?butterpot (c1700-1800)
- 5 sherds of Iron-glazed pancheon (c1800-1900)
- 4 sherds of Creamware (c1780-1830)
- 27 sherds of Underglaze blue transfer-printed earthenwares (c1800-1950), including a maker's mark (S)PODE
- 22 sherds of Plain white-glazed earthenware (c1800-1950)
- 2 sherds of Modern 'art pottery' (late 19th to early 20th centuries)
- 1 sherd of unglazed flower pot (18th-20th centuries)

The date of deposition of the assemblage is probably around 1900. It is of no particular value other than dating, being very fragmentary. It appears to represent kitchen/table waste. The single sherd of Midland Purple probably represents single-vessel survival since highly-fired vessels in this fabric were relatively robust. The assemblage is of no

intrinsic interest and discard should be considered if no further fieldwork is contemplated on the site.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The only feature encountered during the evaluation related to the post-medieval period and is represented by a recut boundary ditch. This ditch appears to match the alignment of a boundary on the historic maps of the 18th century. The quantity of pottery from the primary fill of the recut suggests a final backfill dating to the 20th century. The absence of any other archaeology, in particular that relating to the Roman town of *Mediolanum* and its hinterland, suggest that the site was located outside of any activity.

The made ground and infilled tree hole in Trenches 1 and 2 suggest that this part of the site has suffered from some disturbance.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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BGS GeoIndex <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/GeoIndex/>

Appendix 1: Concordance of contexts

Trench	Context	Description	Findings	Dimensions
1	101	Topsoil. Loose dark brown sandy loam with few small angular stones. Clear horizon		0-0.16m thick
	102	Subsoil. Friable yellow-brown clayey sand with few small angular stones. Clear horizons		0.4m thick
	103	Natural. Friable yellow-orange sand. Clear horizon		@ 99m aOD
	104	Make-up layer. Friable dark brown clayey sand. Few bricks, few small angular stones, medium to large stones, occasional small concrete fragments. Clear horizons		0.4m thick
	105	Make-up layer. Loose red-brown sand with few small sub-angular stones		0.3m thick
	106	Subsoil. Firm brown sand mixed with orange sand. Merging to clear		3m east to west and 0.25m thick
	107	Linear cut of boundary ditch aligned north-west to south-east, concave profile		4.8m wide and 0.8m deep
	108	Upper fill of recut ditch 112. Compact light yellow-brown coarse sands, with few small pebbles. Clear horizons		0.24m thick
	109	Lower fill of recut ditch 112. Firm dark brown-grey silty fine grained sand. Few small rounded pebbles, a single large sub-rounded stone in section, charcoal flecks. Clear horizons	Pottery	0.3m thick
	110	Upper fill of ditch 107. Friable light grey fine sand with few small stones. Clear horizons		0.5m thick
	111	Lower fill of ditch 107. Friable dark grey-brown silty sand with few small rounded stones. Clear horizons		0.2m thick
	112	Recut of boundary ditch aligned north-west to south-east, with concave profile. Filled by 108 and 109		4.1m wide, 0.5m deep
2	201	Topsoil. Loose dark brown sandy loam with few small angular stones and few small brick fragments. Clear horizon		0-0.2m thick
	202	Subsoil. Friable yellow-brown clayey sand with few small rounded cobbles and charcoal flecking. Cut by 205		0.3m thick
	203	Natural. Compact orange clayey sands with areas of coarse poorly sorted gravel. Clear horizon		@ 98.95m aOD
	204	Natural. Compact red clay. Clear horizons		@ 98.95m aOD

Trench	Context	Description	Finds	Dimensions
	205	Cut for modern tree bole/ hollow filled by 206. Not fully excavated due to remains of tree trunk and stump within fill which measured at least 1.5m long and 0.6m thick. Gradual sloping sides		@ least 0.6m deep
	206	Loose humic dark brown clay with brick, concrete, stone, tree roots and stumps, buried grass. Clear horizons		@ least 0.6m thick
	207	Subsoil? Firm orange-red sandy clay with few small brick fragments. Clear horizons		5m NE to SW and 0.2m thick



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