



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological evaluation at Frog Hall Farm
Tattenhall, Cheshire
CHEGM:2010.30



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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Archaeological evaluation at Frog Hall Farm, Tattenhall, Cheshire	
Short description	In November 2010 Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook a trial trench evaluation on land at Frog Hall Farm, Tattenhall, Cheshire. A ditch located close to the existing farmhouse and containing a sherd of 19th-century pottery was the only archaeological feature revealed. Two sherds of unstratified Roman pottery recovered from topsoil deposits add to the growing body of evidence for Roman settlement somewhere in the vicinity of the village.	
Project type	Evaluation (FH10)	
Site status	Rural	
Previous work	Desk-based assessment	
Current Land use	Pasture, garden, farmyard	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type/ period	n/a	
Significant finds	Roman, medieval and post-medieval pottery	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Cheshire	
Site address	Frog Hall Farm, Tattenhall	
Study area	2.3ha	
OS Easting & Northing	348100 358500	
Height OD	27.5-29.5mOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	CWAC Development Control Archaeologist	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology/Anne Thompson	
Director/Supervisor	Paul Mason	
Project Manager	W A Boismier (NA), Anne Thompson (consultant)	
Sponsor or funding body	Seddon Homes Ltd	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date/end date	November 2010	
ARCHIVES		
	Acc No. CHEGM:2010.30	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	Northamptonshire Archaeology	Pottery, metalwork
Paper	Northamptonshire Archaeology	Site records, photographic, drawings
Digital	Northamptonshire Archaeology	Mapinfo GIS data, photographs
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
	Unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title	Archaeological evaluation at Frog Hall Farm, Tattenhall, Cheshire	
Serial title & volume	Northamptonshire Archaeology Report 10/199	
Author(s)	Paul Mason	
Page numbers	13	
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT FROG HALL FARM

TATTENHALL, CHESHIRE

NOVEMBER 2010

ABSTRACT

In November 2010 Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook a trial trench evaluation on land at Frog Hall Farm, Tattenhall, Cheshire. A ditch located close to the existing farmhouse and containing a sherd of 19th-century pottery was the only archaeological feature revealed. Two sherds of unstratified Roman pottery recovered from topsoil deposits add to the growing body of evidence for Roman settlement somewhere in the vicinity of the village.

1 INTRODUCTION

In November 2010 Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by Seddon Homes Ltd, to undertake a trial trench evaluation on land at Frog Hall Farm, Tattenhall, Cheshire (NGR 348100 358500, Fig 1). The work was undertaken at the request of Cheshire West and Chester Council's Development Control Officer to inform proposals for a residential home development.

The evaluation complied with a Written Scheme of Investigation formulated by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2010). It was undertaken 1-4th November 2010. A total of ten trenches were excavated across the proposed development area (Fig 2).

The site code FH10 was allocated to the project and the site archive will be deposited with the Grosvenor Museum, Chester (Accession Number: CHEGM:2010.30).

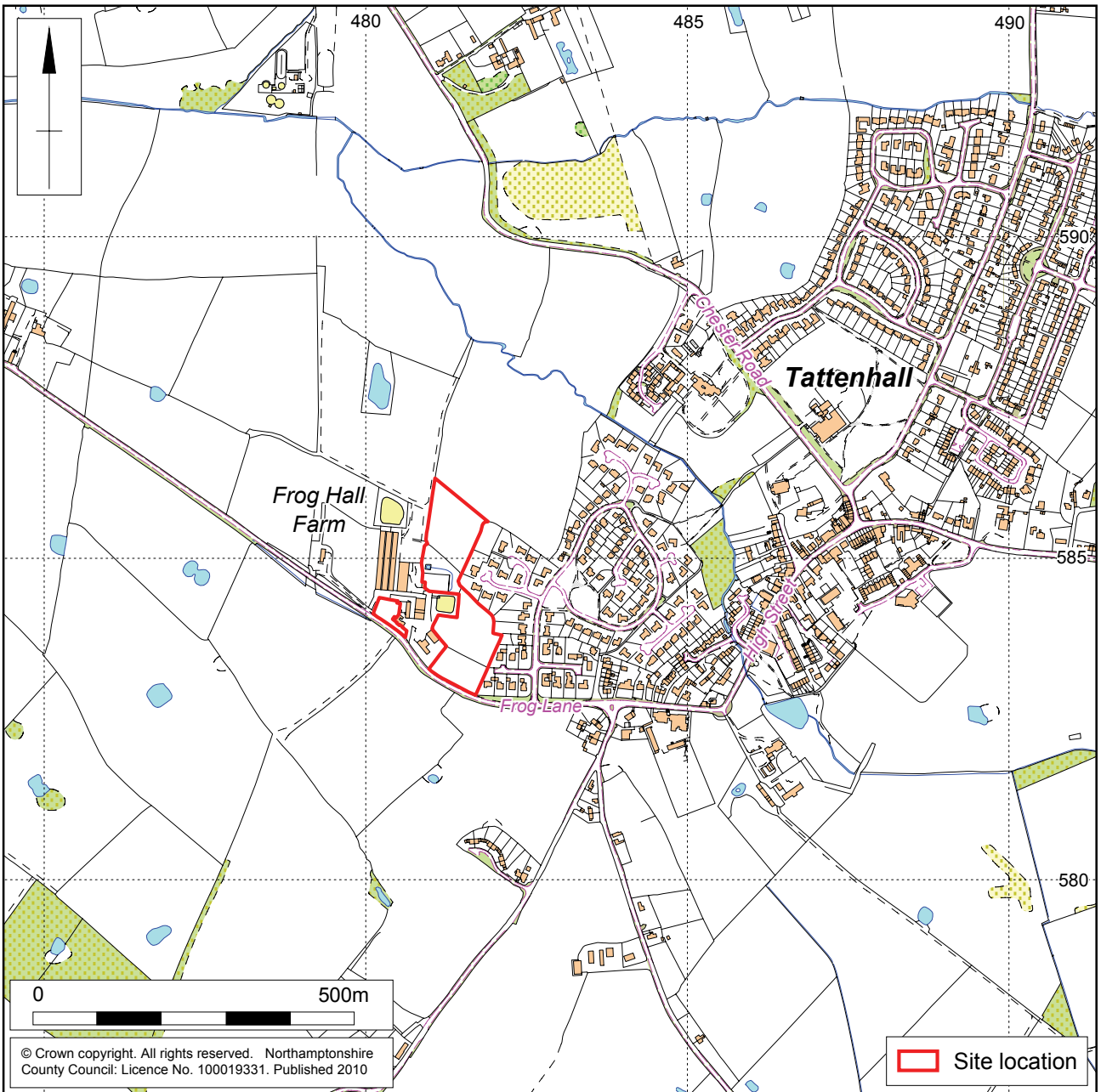
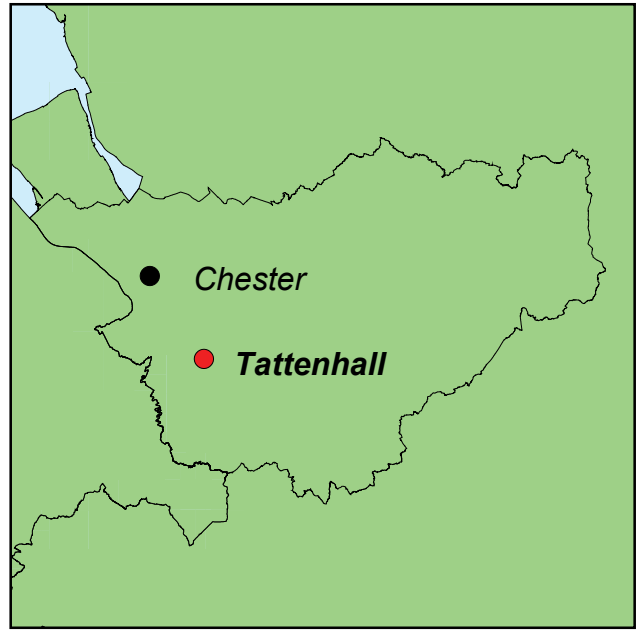
2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography and geology

Frog Hall Farm lies on the western periphery of the village of Tattenhall, Cheshire (NGR 348100 358500). The proposed development area (2.3ha) comprises a farmhouse and garden with associated outbuildings and pastureland spread over two fields (Fig 2-5). It is bounded by open fields to the north, Frog Lane to the south, village housing to the east and fields to the west.

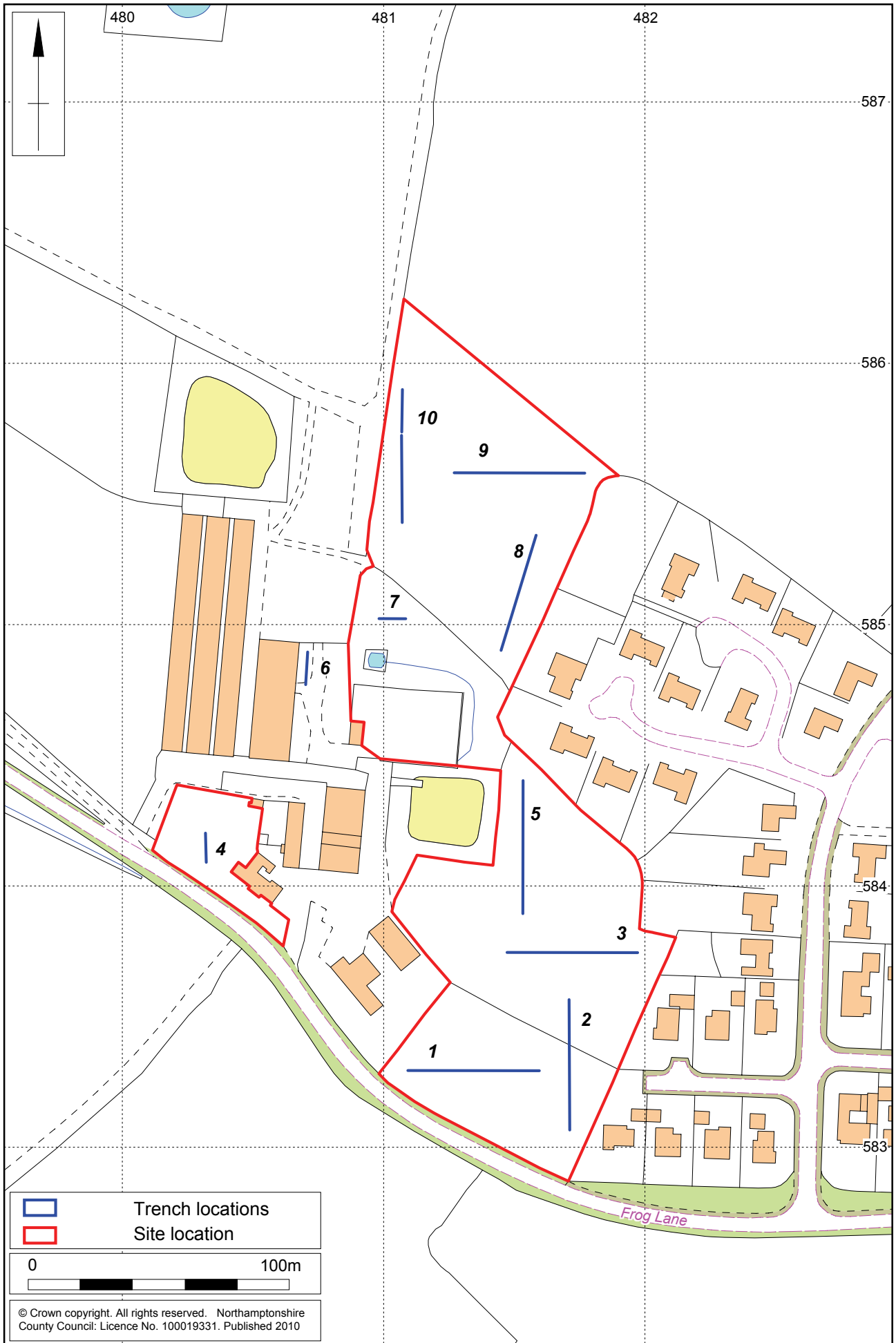
The land within the proposed development area is fairly flat, ranging between 27.5 and 29.5mOD.

The geology is recorded as Triassic Rocks (undifferentiated) – sandstone and conglomerate – overlain with Diamicton (www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex).



Scale 1:10,000

Site location Fig 1



Scale 1:2000

Trench location plan Fig 2

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View of south field, looking north-east

Fig 3



View of garden, looking west

Fig 4



View of north field, looking south

Fig 5

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The following summary of the site's historical/archaeological background is paraphrased from the desk-based assessment prepared by Gifford (2010).

Prehistoric

There is no evidence for prehistoric activity within the proposed development area, however, a pair of Iron Age/early Roman harness fittings was found by metal detector c 200m to the north of the site. Elsewhere in Tattenhall an early Bronze Age axe was found.

Roman

Other than the harness fittings, which may be of Roman date, coins and pottery have been found, supporting the supposition that a Roman settlement existed somewhere in Tattenhall, perhaps with its focus towards the site of the present church. No finds of this period have been found on the proposed development area.

Medieval

No medieval remains or finds are recorded within the proposed development area. A medieval dagger and purse fitting were found by metal detector c 100m to the south of the site. Tattenhall, or *Tatenhale*, is first recorded in the Domesday Book (1086).

Post-medieval

The original Frog Hall Farm was built in 1712 and first appears on Burdett's Map of Cheshire (1777). Apocryphal sources suggest that the original farmhouse was demolished prior to the construction of the existing house in the late 1950s.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Written Scheme of Investigation (NA 2010) defined the objective of the evaluation as follows:

The objective of the work is to gather information regarding the location, extent, nature and date of archaeological deposits/features within the site in order to appraise the impact of development proposals.

The specific aims were:

- To record and characterise below ground deposits and the archaeological topography of the site
- To create full and proper records of all observed archaeological material
- To collect artefactual and ecofactual material as appropriate
- To prepare a report/archive of the results of the archaeological work and any consequent analytical work
- To take account of and inform local, regional and national research frameworks
- To further understand the history and development of human activity at the site and its immediate environs.

4 METHODOLOGY

Ten trenches with a combined length of 381.5m (reduced from 400m due to constraints in the garden and yard) were surveyed into position using a Leica System 1200 GPS (Fig 2). The overburden was removed by tracked mechanical digger fitted with a 2m-wide toothless ditching buckets to expose the first significant archaeological level, or in the absence of archaeology, the geology. Cleaning of exposed surfaces, hand excavation and recording progressed in accordance with the methodologies set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (NA 2010) and in fulfilment of the standards set by the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (IfA 2008) and *Code of Conduct* (IfA 2010)

Following the completion of the work the trenches were backfilled with their up-cast.

5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

5.1 General comments

The geology across the site comprised a sandy clay of varied hue (orange/brown/yellow/grey) with frequent pockets of gravel and, in places, larger stones/cobbles. It typically lay 0.40-0.50m below the existing ground level. Where

exposed in the pasture fields (Trenches 1-3, 5, 8-10) the subsoil was a brown sandy clay loam, typically 0.20-0.30m thick. It was overlain by a similar thickness of dark brown sandy loam topsoil. Trench 7, in a small parcel of waste ground to the north of a pond, revealed a similar sequence of deposits. Trench 6, in the farmyard to the west of the pond, was cut through deposits of made ground (see below).

The only archaeological feature was exposed in Trench 4 which was in the farmhouse garden.

5.2 Trench 4

Trench 4 (10.5m) was aligned north to south in the garden to the west of the existing farmhouse (Figs 2, 6 and 7). The geology, an orange-brown sandy clay with grey mottles (4003) was revealed c 0.60m below the existing ground surface at 26.6-26.7mOD. It was overlain by c 0.25-0.40m of mid brown subsoil (4002) and 0.25-0.35m of dark brown sandy loam topsoil (4001).

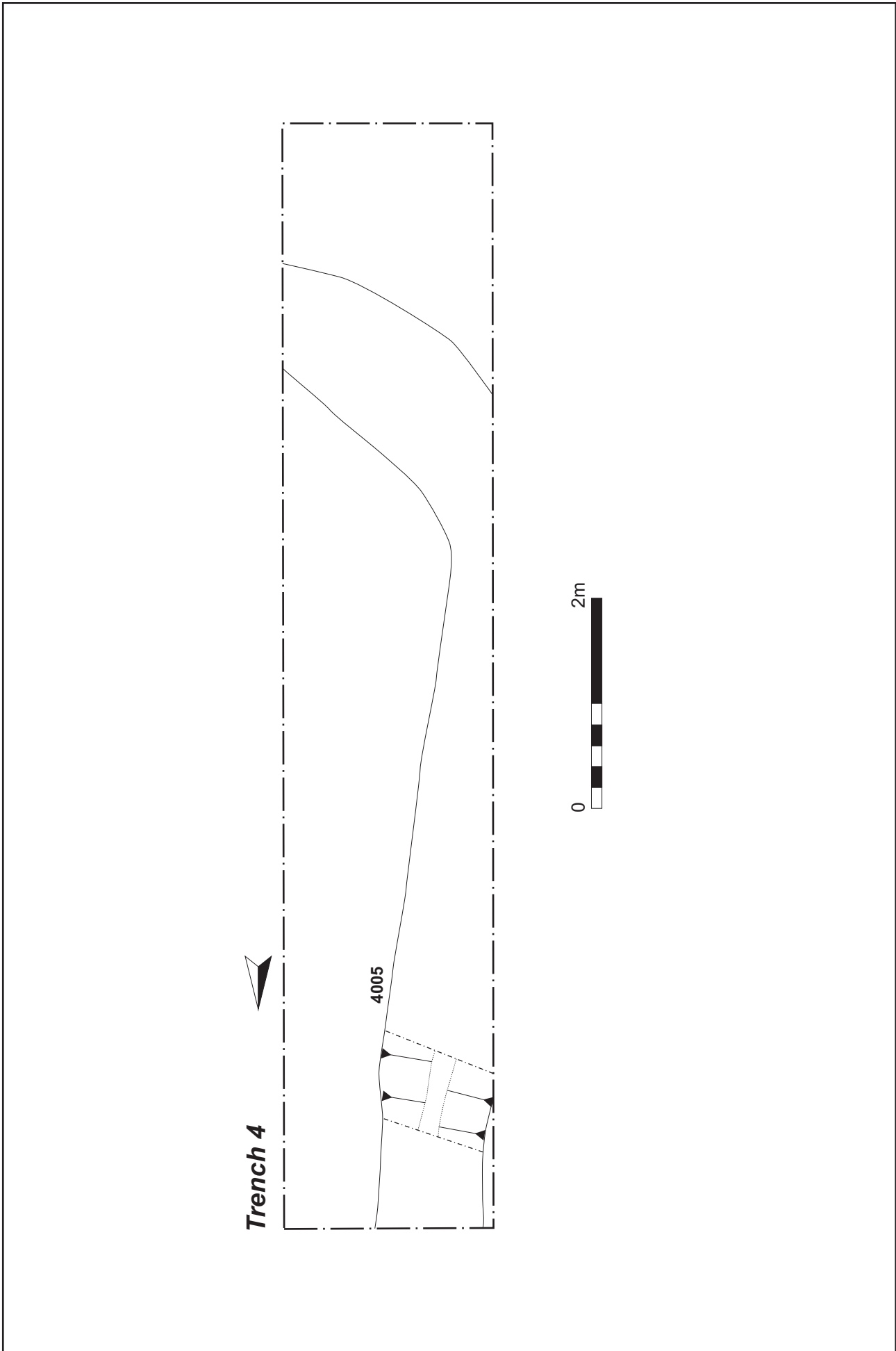
Cutting the subsoil and aligned along the western edge of the trench, was a 1.20m-wide curvilinear ditch [4005] that turned to the east at the southern end of the trench (Fig 6). It was filled with a light grey-brown sandy clay containing 19th-century pottery and a fragment of brick.

The soak-away for the existing house was uncovered against the edge of the trench at its southern end. Rapidly-rising water necessitated its partial backfilling (Fig 7 foreground).

5.3 Trench 6

Trench 6 (11m) was aligned north to south in the farmyard to the west of a small pond (Figs 2 and 8). The geology, an orange-grey-brown sandy clay with frequent gravel and cobbles (6004) was revealed c 1.0m below the existing ground surface at 28.25-28.45mOD. It was overlain by a yard surface comprising cobbles compacted into a deposit of grey sandy clay (6002). This was overlain by a dark brown loamy deposit (6003) which was buried beneath up to 1.05m of made ground comprising sandy clay, bricks and cobbles (6001).

The tenant farmer explained that the cobbled surface was buried in the 1960s when the ground was levelled prior to the construction of a nearby barn.



Scale 1:50

Plan of trench 4 Fig 6



View of Trench 4, showing post-medieval ditch [4005], looking north

Fig 7



View of Trench 6, showing yard surface, looking south

Fig 8

6 FINDS

6.1 Roman pottery by Anne Thompson

Two sherds of Cheshire Plain orange ware were recovered from the spoil of Trenches 3 and 10. The details of each sherd are recorded in the table below:

Table 1: Roman pottery

Context	Date	Fabric	Form	Body	Handle	No. of sherds	No. of vessels	Weight
Trench 3 – u/s	Late 1st-late 2nd century	Cheshire Plain orange ware		✓		1	1	7g
Trench 10 – u/s	Late 1st-late 2nd century	Cheshire Plain orange ware	Jar or small jug		✓ with single groove	1	1	11g

These two sherds represent material that was produced locally for domestic use in the late 1st to late 2nd centuries. The material is not rare in the North-West region, indeed it is common within the Cheshire Plain area, but it does add further support to the presence of a Roman settlement in the vicinity of Tattenhall, which to date has been suggested by a number of Roman period finds. However, given the extent of the Frog Hall evaluation and the recovery of only two Roman sherds it is unlikely that any Roman site lies in the immediate vicinity.

The ceramic material is therefore of local significance and does not warrant detailed study - there are no research aims arising and no publication is merited.

6.2 Medieval and post-medieval pottery by Iain Soden

A total of 24 sherds of post-medieval pottery and a single medieval sherd were recovered. One post-medieval fragment derives from a stratified context, while the remaining 24 are unstratified and come from the spoil heaps of five different trenches.

The pottery was represented by nine fabrics or types weighing 1090g (Table 2).

This small assemblage attests occupation or refuse disposal in very small quantities nearby since probably the first half of the 18th century. More material is derived from dairying or pantry/buttery-style storage than comes from table-waste. The dairying material survives as larger sherds simply because it is more robustly made. Most is probably a Staffordshire product. While pottery alone cannot be taken as an indicator of status, the utilitarian and common nature of the wares present here do not suggest any wealth is reflected amongst the former users.

There is clearly 20th-century material mixed in and so the deposits from which the material derives for the most part have probably been much disturbed until recent times.

The single sherd of medieval pottery, of a sandy oxidised fabric with a grey core, was once green-glazed on its exterior. However, it is very abraded by wind and rain and has lost 98% of its glaze, making closer identification and dating unreliable.

Table 2: Medieval and post-medieval pottery by trench, sherd count and weight (g)

Type & Context/ trench	Forms	Date	Tr 1	Tr 3	Tr 4	Tr 5	Tr 9	4004	Tot
Medieval sandy glazed ware	?jug	c 1250 - 1500					1/ 18g		1/ 18g
Manganese glazed earthenware	-	1680 - 1740	2/ 14g	1/ 2g					3/ 16g
Midland Blackware	-	18th			1/ 4g				1/ 4g
Black-glazed pancheon	Pancheon, butter pot	19th Cent	2/ 90g	4/ 100g	4/ 381g	2/ 153g		1/ 284g	13/ 837g
Creamware	?Saucer	18th Cent				2/ 4g			2/ 4g
English stoneware	Marmalade jar	19th Cent			1/ 32g				1/ 32g
Wall-tile	Kitchen/ bathroom tile	20th Cent		2/ 3g					2/ 3g
Underglaze Transfer-printed earthenware	-	19- 20th Cent			2/ 5g				2/ 5g
Total			4/ 104g	7/ 105g	8/ 422g	4/ 157g	1/ 18g	1/28 4g	25/ 1090 g

6.3 Other finds by Tora Hylton

During the evaluation 17 post-medieval/modern metal detector finds were recovered from unstratified topsoil deposits overlying Trenches 1-5, and 9-10. With the exception of a single iron horseshoe, the assemblage comprises 1 stud, 6 nails (ranging in length from 40-160mm), an oval chain link, lead offcuts, together with undiagnostic fragments of lead and iron. The assemblage is of little intrinsic interest.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Other than the ditch revealed in the garden of the farmhouse, the evaluation did not locate archaeological features within the proposed development area. The ditch, which contained 19th-century pottery, may be associated with original farmhouse, reportedly built hereabouts in 1712. Historic mapping of the site, however, shows only a garden planted with trees in this location (Gifford 2010).

Trench 6, located in the farmyard to the north of the farmhouse, revealed a yard surface that was buried when the adjacent barns were built in the 1960s.

Elsewhere, nothing was found to suggest the presence of buried archaeological remains. The small assemblage of unstratified pottery and metalwork collected from the spoil heaps is of little significance, being representative of the type of material found

across the country on rural fields located on the edge of settlements. However, the presence of two sherds of Roman pottery adds to the growing body of evidence for occupation of this period somewhere in the vicinity of Tattenhall.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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IfA 2008 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*, Institute for Archaeologists

IfA 2010 *Code of Conduct*, Institute for Archaeologists

NA 2010 *Written scheme of investigation for archaeological trial trench evaluation at Frog Hall Farm, Tattenhall, Cheshire*, Northamptonshire Archaeology

APPENDIX 1: Trench summaries

Trench No	Length	Depth of overburden	Comments
1	50m	Topsoil: 0.20m Subsoil: 0.20m Geology:29mOD	No archaeology
2	50m	Topsoil: 0.18-0.25m Subsoil: 0.15-0.30m Geology:28.95-2.30mOD	In-filled pond revealed at northern end of trench
3	50m	Topsoil: 0.18m Subsoil: 0.27-0.31m Geology: 29-29.45mOD	In-filled pond revealed in western part of trench
4	10.5m	Topsoil: 0.23-0.35m Subsoil: 0.24-0.38m Geology: 26.6-26.7mOD	Curvilinear post-medieval ditch [4005] aligned along trench before turning to east. House soak away revealed in south-eastern corner of trench
5	50m	Topsoil: 0.15-0.22m Subsoil: 0.28m Geology: 28.9-29.1mOD	No archaeology. Sandstone-capped modern drain aligned across centre of trench
6	11m	Topsoil: 0m Subsoil: 0m Geology: 28.25-28.45mOD	Original ground surface truncated. Cobbled yard surface lies directly over geology and buried beneath c 1m modern made ground
7	10m	Topsoil: 0.11-0.18m Subsoil: 0.30m Geology: 28mOD	No archaeology
8	50m	Topsoil: 0.20-0.25m Subsoil: 0.16-0.23m Geology: 28.5-28.25mOD	No archaeology
9	50m	Topsoil: 0.20m Subsoil: 0.30m Geology: 27.95-28.25mOD	No archaeology
10	50m	Topsoil: 0.30m Subsoil: 0m Geology:27.8-28mOD	No archaeology. Subsoil truncated by vehicle/animal traffic along edge of field



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