



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological evaluation on land at
Saint Thomas School playing field, Walpole Street
Chester, Cheshire.
May 2011



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Report 11/115

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project title	Archaeological Evaluation on land at St Thomas School of Canterbury Bluecoat CE Junior school, Walpole Street, Chester, Cheshire.	
Short description	<i>In May 2011, Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook a trial trench evaluation on land at St Thomas Junior School, Walpole Street, Chester, Cheshire. The trial trenching revealed layers of made-up ground, which has created the playing field at its current level. Pottery, glass, plastic and metal objects dating to the 19th – 20th centuries were retrieved from these layers but could not be related to any archaeological features. The trial trenching has established that these layers all derive from dumping in the 19th and 20th centuries</i>	
Project type	Trial trench evaluation	
Site status	-	
Previous work	Not known	
Current land use	Playing Field	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type/period	-	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Cheshire	
Site address	Walpole Street, Chester, Cheshire	
Study area	0.7 hectares	
OS Easting & Northing	SJ 3401 3671	
Height OD	18 - 19m OD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	Chester Historic Environment Officer	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Director/Supervisor	Jim Burke (NA)	
Project Manager	Paul Mason (NA)	
Sponsor or funding body	Tweed Nuttall Warburton	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	3rd May 2011	
End date	5th May 2011	
ARCHIVES	Location	Content
Physical	Project code: CST 11 Accession number: CHEGM 2011. 18.	
Paper		
Digital	The site finds are to be donated to the school. The site archive will be placed Cheshire West Museum.	
BIBLIOGRAPHY		Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION ON LAND AT
ST THOMAS SCHOOL OF CANTERBURY BLUECOAT CE JUNIOR SCHOOL,
WALPOLE STREET, CHESTER, CHESHIRE
MAY 2011**

ABSTRACT

In May 2011, Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook a trial trench evaluation on land at St Thomas Junior School, Walpole Street, Chester, Cheshire.

The trial trenching revealed layers of made-up ground, which has created the playing field at its current level. Pottery, glass, plastic and metal objects dating to the 19th – 20th centuries were retrieved from these layers but could not be related to any archaeological features. The trial trenching has established that these layers all derive from dumping in the 19th and 20th centuries.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Tweed Nuttall Warburton to undertake an archaeological trial trench evaluation on the school playing field at St Thomas of Canterbury Blue Coat Church of England Junior School, Chester (centred on NGR 340130 367107). The work was undertaken at the request of Chester Historic Environment Officer, Mike Morris, to inform the planning process.

2 BACKGROUND

St Thomas of Canterbury Blue Coat Church of England Junior School lies c0.5km north of the northern circuit of Chester city's Roman wall. The proposed development area comprises a grassed playing field (0.7ha), bounded by houses fronting Cheney Road to the north, Walpole Street to the south, Bouverie Street to the west and the current buildings of St Thomas and Victoria Infants school to the east. The current school buildings would be demolished and that part of the site would form the new playing field area.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of the work was 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 on any potential archaeological remains.

The specific aims were to:

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

4 TRIAL TRENCHING

4.1 Methodology

Ten trenches, each measuring 10m x 1.6m were laid using a Leica System 1200 GPS in locations agreed with the Historic Environment Officer (WSI, Northamptonshire Archaeology, 2011). The excavation of the final trench, Trench 8, was not undertaken, with the agreement of the Historic Environment Officer, given the uniformity of the results in the previous nine trenches. Turf was stripped and stockpiled for re-instatement, the stripped area exceeded the trenching to minimise the limit of damage to the playing field. The trenches were machine-excavated using a JCB 3ct fitted with a flat toothless bucket under continuous archaeological supervision. The topsoil and underlying layers were stockpiled on terram close to the trench to minimise damage around each trench. The trenches were excavated to expose the uppermost horizon of any archaeological remains or, where no archaeology was absent, the upper interface of geological deposits.

The trenches and the spoil were all subject to metal detection during excavation by suitably experienced archaeologists under archaeological supervision, in accordance with the *Guidelines for Metal Detecting on Archaeological Sites in Cheshire*.

4.2 General stratigraphy

The geology generally comprised Triassic Rocks (undifferentiated) – sandstone and conglomerate (www.bgs.ac.uk/Geoindex). This occurred as a silty mottled mid reddish-brown, sandy clay containing unsorted cobbles and stone with red sandstone fragments.

All of the nine trenches excavated had various depths of re-deposited levelling layers; this was more noticeable in depths at the northern part of the field which abuts the backyards of Cheyney Road. Land drains were noted in Trenches 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9.

No features of archaeological significance were encountered in any of the trenches.

4.3 Trenching results

There were no archaeological features. Modern made ground was encountered in all trenches, which comprised layers of dumping (Appendix 1), up to 0.5m in depth.

Trenching indicated that the land had been built up more in the north-eastern part of the evaluation area; this is reflected in the comparable street levels on all three sides of the playing field. The levels along a concrete path to the rear of the houses on Cheyney Road were around 17.4m OD, in comparison with 19.35m at Trench 1 for example, a height difference of some 1.97m. At the corner of Walpole Street and Bouverie Street on the same tarmac path the height was 18.2m OD, the surface level of the field between Trenches 7 and 9 had an average height at 19.8m OD, a difference of 1.6m.

Trench 1 (Figs 2, 3 and 4) showed the deepest levels of made up ground, and the staining on the natural from the primary silted dumping layer (Figs 3 and 4). Brick and tile retrieved from this layer date to the 19th and 20th centuries.

Trench 2 (Figs 2, 5 and 6) had a similar build up to Trench 1, with a clearer weathered natural and pottery from the primary dumping layer dating to the 19th and 20th centuries (Figs 5 and 6).

A single abraded sherd of Roman mortaria was recovered from made ground in Trench 4. Other finds included a buckle dated to c1550-1650 from made ground (406) in Trench 4 (Fig 7), and musket balls from Trenches 7 and 10. The remaining artefacts, mainly from the topsoil layer, included various denominations of British coinage, dating from 1907 to the present. Plastic and metal objects items retained are mainly from the dumping layers, and all date to the 19th and 20th centuries.

5 THE FINDS

5.1 Roman pottery by Tora Hylton

From Trench 4, an unstratified rim sherd from a mortarium manufactured from a fine sandy oxidized fabric, extremely abraded. Dating from the 2nd–3rd century and probably locally produced with a weight of 111g.

5.2 Medieval and post-medieval pottery by Iain Soden

A total of 74 sherds of stratified pottery were recovered from Trenches 1-7 and 9, weighing a total of 1345g (Table 1). In addition, a further eleven unstratified sherds were recovered from Trench 2, weighing 214g, while seventeen unstratified sherds came from Trench 4, weighing 612g (Table 2).

This is a group reflecting occupation primarily in the 19th century. While there are numerous earlier sherds present, back to the later medieval period, they are few in number and residual within later contexts. None are significant, other than to note that the variety of late 19th-century English stonewares includes a range of vessels found in a domestic pantry of mid-late 20th century, including marmalade jars, a ginger-beer or mineral water bottle, blacking bottle and rum jar. The flower pot includes one stamped with the well-known Nottinghamshire firm 'Sankeys', later Sankey and Bullwell. None of the material is of intrinsic interest.

Table 1: Quantification of medieval and post-medieval pottery (weight in g)

Context Type/ Production date	105	201	302	402	405	502	603	701	702	901	Total no/wt (g)
Context date	C19	C19	-	C18	C18	C19	C19	C19	C18	C19	
Medieval Coarseware (Medieval)	-	1/8	-	-	-	1/12	-	-	-	-	2/20
Cistercian ware (1450-1580)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/6	1/6
Midland purpleware (c1450-1700)	1/21	1/12	1/17			1/17	1/2	-	-	-	5/69
Midland Yellow ware (c1500-1700)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/5	-	-	-	1/5
Glazed red earthenware (c1550-1650)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/12	-	-	-	1/12
Midland Blackware (c1580-1800)	-	-	1/7	-	1/5	1/76	1/6	-	-	2/17	6/111
Slipware (c1680-1740)	-	-	-	-	-	-	3/33	-	1/33	-	4/66
Tin Glazed Earthenware (c1670-1750)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/7	-	1/7
Manganese glazed earthenware (c1680-1740)	-	-	1/4	1/4	-	-	-	-	-	1/8	3/16
White glazed earthenware (19th century)	4/36	-	2/6	-	-	2/20	3/7	1/11	-	1/5	13/85
Pancheon-type (19th century)	2/79	1/20	1/14	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/60	5/173
Unglazed flower pot (19th century)	3/66	3/22	-	-	-	2/30	1/10	-	-	1/6	10/ 134
Underglaze transfer-printed earthenware (19th century)	5/29	-	1/3	-	-	-	1/2	-	-	-	7/34
English stoneware (19th century)	10/ 177	-	1/28	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11/ 201
Sanitary wares & sewer pipe (19th-20th centuries)	2/ 284	-	-	-	-	-	2/ 122	-	-	-	4/406
Totals	27/ 692	6/ 62	8/ 79	1/ 4	1/ 5	7/ 155	14/ 199	1/ 11	2/ 40	7/ 104	74/ 1345

Table 2: Quantification of unstratified pottery

Type/Trench	Trench 2	Trench 4	Total
Medieval glazed ware	1/2g	-	1/2g
Midland Purple	1/14g	-	1/14g
Midland Black	3/36g	1/22g	4/58g
Slipware	1/2g	-	1/2g
Unglazed flower pot	1/26g	-	1/26g
Pancheon-type	1/107g	11/570g	12/677g
White-glazed earthenware	3/27g	5/20g	8/47g
Total	11/214g	17/612g	28/826g

The unstratified material collected adds nothing to the data gleaned from the stratified. The site generally is one which reflects 19th-century occupation and is a mixture of lowly domestic and gardening occupation, such as may be seen in many towns. Much of it is probably the result of casual loss augmented by kitchen/pantry clearances and the debris of the potting shed. Within ordinary domestic gardens much broken domestic pottery was added to horticultural wares for the purposes of 'crocking', to help drainage in flower-pots, a practice still promoted today.

5.3 Ceramic building material by Pat Chapman

With the exception of one roof tile sherd which has a broad medieval to post-medieval date, this is an assemblage of building material that dates to the 19th and 20th centuries.

Brick

A complete brick was taken as a sample of the many found on the site. It measures 214 x 100 x 75mm (8 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 4 x 3 inches). The fabric is a very hard red-brown clay with a highly fired finish. On one surface in a shallow frog with rounded corners is a castle symbol, on the reverse the frog is a very shallow wide rectangle (Fig 7). The brick came from the town of Buckley in Flintshire, some 15km west of Chester. It was made by the Castle Firebrick and Coal Company, formed in 1875 from the original Castle Brickworks established in 1866. The works finally closed down in 1970.

A brick fragment from Trench 4 is made from slightly friable red-brown sandy clay. Another fragment from context (701) comes from a modern brick.

Tile

Thirteen sherds comprise seven plain tiles and six glazed tiles, weighing 1412g (Table 3). The largest tile is six inches square and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick (152mm x 21mm) from context (105). It is made from, a hard reduced black fabric, and has a four-heart motif, two complete hearts surviving.

There are three floor tiles of the same type, plain, factory-made, from a bright orange-brown fabric. One from Trench 4 is 28mm thick and had been partially cut corner to corner to split into a triangle after firing; another tile, from context (105) is 18mm thick; and there is a fragment from Trench 2.

Six tiles have been glazed with plain colours and could have come from walls, furniture or fireplaces. Five are made from white clay, one from dark red-brown clay and they are typically 10mm thick. A rectangular tile from Trench 4 is 55mm wide (2 inches) with a

crimson glaze. Three sherds are white glazed, one on both sides, one has a layer of Portland cement, 9mm thick, adhering to it. One of the two fragments with yellow glaze was made with the red-brown fabric.

A possible roof tile shed dating from between the 14th to 18th centuries comes from context (105). It is 15mm thick and made from fine orange clay with a grey core and one surface fired to purple with a fragment of green glaze surviving. A small plain sherd made from dark red-brown clay and 15mm thick, and a very small sherd of machine-made roof tile come from Trench 4.

Table 3: Quantification of tile

Trench/context	No / wt (g)	description
1 / 105	4 / 1010	Black with hearts, floor, white glaze, roof
2 / u/s	2 / 37	Floor, white glaze both sides
4 / u/s	4 / 315	Floor, roof x 2, crimson glaze
9 / 901/ topsoil	3 / 50	2 yellow glaze, white glaze
Totals	13 / 1412	

Drains/pipes

Three fragments of land drains, weighing 338g, came from contexts (105), Trench 4 and (502). They all have a broad diameter, are machine-made, and 20th century in date.

Fired clay

A small slightly soft irregularly-shaped bright orange clay fragment came from Trench 4 and a small hard coarse sandy clay orange-brown fragment, irregularly-shaped from context (901), together weighing 24g.

5.4 Glass, plastic and rubber by Tora Hylton

The assemblage comprises fragments of wine and beer bottles, mainly from the 'Birkenhead Brewery Co'. One complete bottle from Trench 3 is marked with 'J.T. MILNE & SON, TARVIN ROAD, CHESTER'. Plastics from the re-deposited layers include a plastic toy aeroplane and there is a rubber handle from a bicycle hand pump.

Glass

<i>Trench 1, 105</i>	Two sherds from a green beer bottle marked with 'ERY Co L' – Brewery Co Ltd. Base marked with UGB (United Glass Bottle Manufacturers Limited).
<i>Trench 2, 201</i>	Two marbles, body sherd from bottle of green glass
<i>Trench 2, u/s</i>	Six sherds bottle glass, one from a beer bottle of brown glass, one from a wine bottle of green glass, three undiagnostic body sherds of clear glass, and one piece of window glass
<i>Trench 3, 302</i>	Five fragments: two beer bottles (brown/green) one marked with 'KENHEA' probably a bottle from the Birkenhead Brewery; base sherd from a clear glass bottle, one from a jar and one undiagnostic. Plus one complete bottle marked with 'J.T. MILNE & SON, TARVIN ROAD, CHESTER' – John Taylor Milne originating from the Bridge Inn. Tarvin Road.

<i>Trench 6, 603</i>	Two body sherds from bottles of green glass
<i>Trench 7, 701</i>	Two fragments – one brown beer bottle; one fragment of clear glass
<i>Trench 9, 901</i>	Two fragments – one brown beer bottle and neck from clear glass bottle

Plastic

<i>Trench 2, 201</i>	Three small undiagnostic pieces of plastic
<i>Trench 4, u/s</i>	Small fragment with fractured surfaces
<i>Trench 5, 502</i>	Pink aeroplane, child's toy
<i>Trench 9, 901</i>	Four fragments, including small fragment from a green Bandbox harmonica and one small fragment with a screw thread.

Rubber

<i>Trench 5, 502</i>	Rubber handle marked with Dover Exonite Reg'd , possibly from a bicycle pump.
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5.5 Clay tobacco-pipe by Tora Hylton

A small group of 18 clay tobacco-pipe fragments was recovered from seven trenches (1-4, 6-7, 9). Small numbers were recovered from topsoil/subsoil deposits or were unstratified. Stratified examples were located within Trench 1 (105) and Trench 6 (603).

The assemblage comprises four pipe-bowls and 14 stem fragments, which together span the mid-17th to 18th/early 19th centuries. All of the fragments display signs of abrasion, suggesting that they may have been lying around for some time prior to deposition.

Two bowls are sufficiently complete to enable dating, following Oswald's classification of bowl and foot/spur forms (1975, 37-41). The shape of the bowls indicate a date range of c1640-1740, Chronologically the earliest bowl form represented is Oswald's Type G5, dated 1640-60, it was recovered from Trench 4 and it is furnished with a partial line set just below the lip of the bowl, a common motif until c1710. The later example is represented by an Oswald Type G21, dated 1700-1740. Neither of the bowls preserves makers' marks.

Stem fragments measured up to c80mm in length and the bores range from 7/64ths to 4/64ths of an inch. Two fragments retain vestiges of moulded decoration or the makers' mark. One is decorated with an ornate scrolled motif, such motifs were common on clay tobacco-pipes from Chester, the roller stamps were engraved and the scrolled motif was combined with the makers mark (Oswald, 1979, 97). The other example is very small and therefore illegible.

Conclusion

This is a small group of well worn/abraded clay tobacco-pipe fragments which dates to the c17th-18th centuries.

Table 4: Quantification of clay tobacco-pipe

Trench & Context	1 105	1 U/S	2 U/S	3 302	4 U/S	6 603	7 701	9 901
Date (Oswalds Type)								
1640-60 (1)	-		-	-	1	-	-	-
1700-40 (1)	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bowl fragments	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Stems fragments	1	2	1	3	2	2	2	1

5.6 Ammunition by Jim Burke

Within the topsoil layer of Trench 4 (401) was a complete British 1933, 303 cartridge (Fig 8). This 303 British, or 7.7x56mmR, is a .311 inch calibre rifle and machine gun cartridge, first developed in Britain as a blackpowder round and was put into service in December 1888 for the Lee Metford rifle, later adapted to use a smokeless powder propellant. It was a standard British and Commonwealth military cartridge from 1889 until around the 1950s.

The cartridge has a body length of 780 mm, and a base diameter of 140 mm. The body of the cartridge showed some signs of corrosion. The cartridge had not been discharged, and has now been disposed of by Northamptonshire Police.

5.7 Metal detecting finds by Tora Hylton

The metal detection finds, are all from re-deposited layers and date to the 19th and 20th centuries. All the coinage is from topsoil layers. The collection of finds are mostly fragmented remains and undiagnostic. A broken copper alloy buckle frame (Fig 9), dating to the c1550-1650 was from a re-deposited layer in Trench 4.

<i>Trench 1, 105</i>	Nail, metal alloy. Spherical ball, iron. Diameter: 9mm
<i>Trench 1, u/s</i>	Elizabeth II pound coin, dated 1985 Leather strap, cut and shaped, possibly from a sandal. Date: Modern Harmonica, trade name Comet and manufactured by M. Hohner in Germany Length of twisted wire Nails, iron (x 8) Lead strip (65 x 5mm)
<i>Trench 2, 201</i>	Elizabeth II twenty pence piece, dated 1997 Elizabeth II penny piece (x 2), dated 1976 and 1984 Ring pull, fragment, metal alloy Light fitting connector/terminal
<i>Trench 2, u/s</i>	Iron chisel Iron sheet fragment plus unidentifiable object
<i>Trench 3, 301</i>	Copper alloy button George VI half penny, dated 1946 Elizabeth II penny piece (x2), dated 1988

<i>Trench 4, 401</i>	Copper alloy fitting Penny, completely illegible.
<i>Trench 4, 406</i>	Lead driblet Copper alloy buckle frame, incomplete half missing. Double looped oval buckle with pointed knob on outer edge of each loop. Date: c 1550-1650, (Fig 9).
<i>Trench 4, u/s</i>	Torso and arm from small metal alloy toy figure
<i>Trench 5, u/s</i>	George VI penny, dated 1939 Elizabeth II two penny piece, dated 1988 Elizabeth II penny piece (x2), one dated 1992, other illegible Pair iron scissors Fragment of sheet metal with curved profile Brass valve Iron rod fragments x 3 Unidentifiable object
<i>Trench 6, 601</i>	Elizabeth II two penny piece, dated 1983 Elizabeth II ten pence piece, dated 1995
<i>Trench 6, u/s</i>	Square nut with central perforation Iron nail Metal alloy bottle top Handle, scale tang type Iron pipe fragments (x 2)
<i>Trench 7, 701</i>	George VI half penny, dated 1941 George VI half penny, dated 1945 Elizabeth II, ten pence piece, dated 1969 Elizabeth II, one pence piece, dated 1971 One penny, illegible Half penny, illegible Small cylinder, metal alloy. Spike, iron.
<i>Trench 7, 702</i>	Fragment of lead alloy x 2 Ringed fitting, metal alloy Nail, iron Wire fitting (spiked), iron Lead shot (Dia: 19mm), size suggests that it would have been for use with a musket; impact marks on surface.
<i>Trench 9, 901</i>	Edward VII penny, dated 1907 George V penny, date not visible Elizabeth II, two pence piece (x 2), one dated 1971, other date not visible Collar/cylinder, copper alloy Lead, fragment 11.7gm

- Trench 10, 1001* Elizabeth II 20 pence piece, dated 1983
Cap, metal alloy.
Lead fragment
Undiagnostic fragment (x 2), metal alloy
- Trench 10, u/s* Lead shot (Dia: 18mm), size suggests that it would have been for use with a musket; impact marks on surface.
Elizabeth II, Shilling, dated 1958
Elizabeth II, two pence piece (x4) – 2 half cut
Elizabeth II, one pence piece (x4)
Rod with curved profile, iron
Rod fragment , iron (x 3)
Bottle cap, metal alloy
Label for Vodka bottle and chain
Rectangular iron plate, undiagnostic

6 DISCUSSION

No archaeological features were encountered within the evaluation area. Indeed the area has been subject to previous clearance and subsequently built up – it is postulated that the clearance and build up material may be associated with the construction of the current school building.

The extent of made-up ground was identified, which has created the levelled area currently used as a multi-functional school playing field.

All the finds that have been retrieved from the evaluation area are residual and within layers of dumping.

The pottery recovered from made up/dumping layers included finds ranging in date from a fragmented rim fragment of a 2nd-3rd-century Roman mortaria to 19th–20th century ceramics and plastics. Most of the metal items are from the same late period and still in everyday use, disposable metallic items (ring pull, bottle tops, tinfoil) were noted in most of the layers, but were not retrieved.

The coinage found in the evaluation area was scattered all over the playing field and is the result of an annual 'copper trail' event run by the school (Mrs McGurk, pers.comm.).

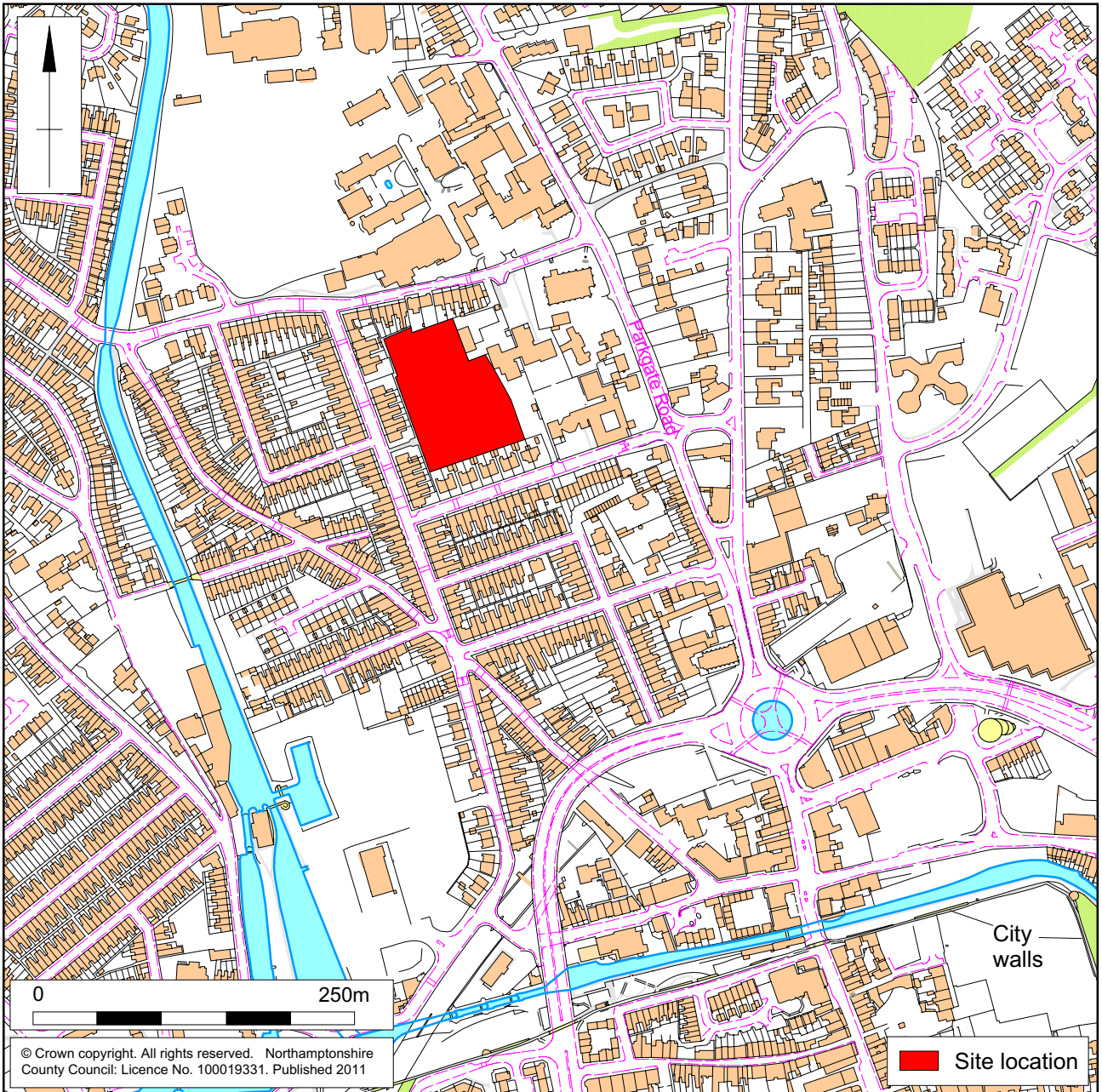
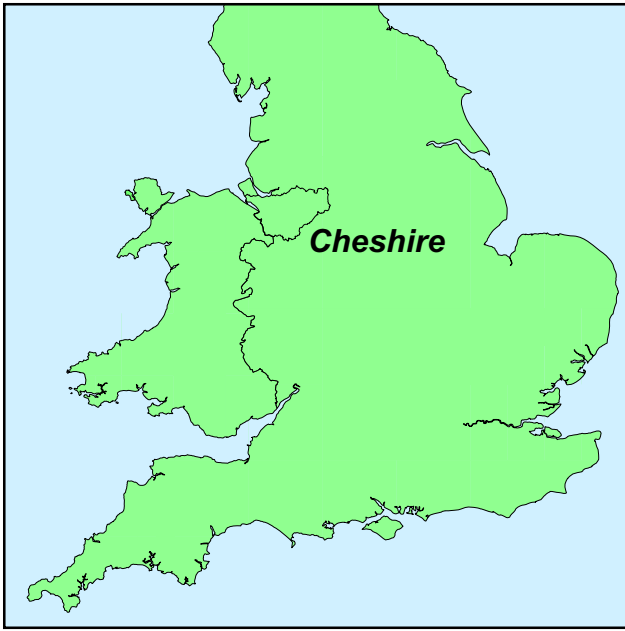
There are therefore no archaeological implications related to any future development within the playing field area of the site.

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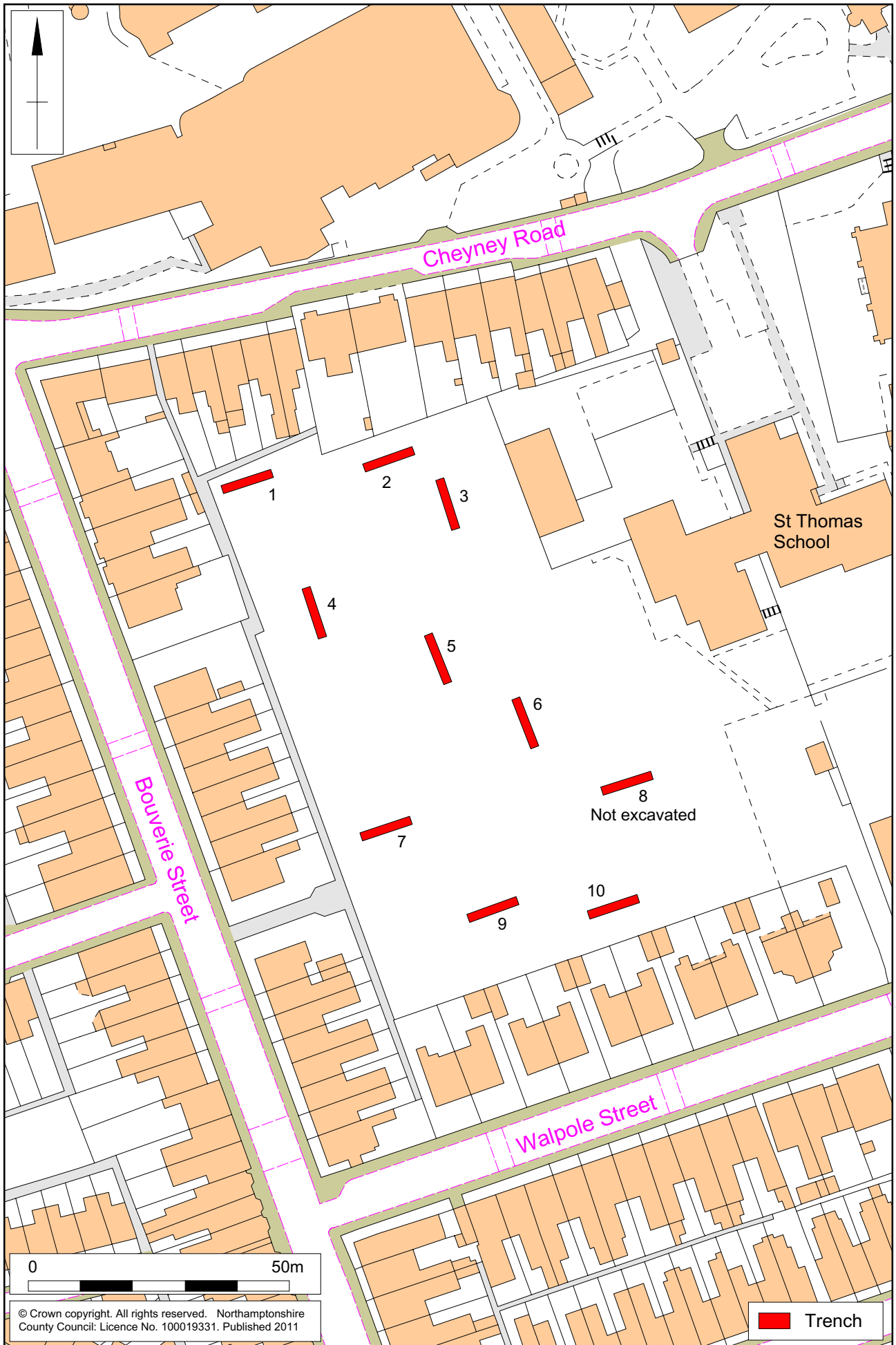
NA 2011 *Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological Trial trench evaluation at St Thomas School, Chester*, Northamptonshire Archaeology

Oswald, A, 1975 *Clay pipes for the Archaeologist*, British Archaeological Reports, **14**



Scale 1:5000

Site location Fig 1



1:1000

Trench layout Fig 2



Trench 1, general view, looking west Fig 3



Trench 1, section, looking north Fig 4



Trench 2, showing the weathered geology, looking south-west Fig 5



Trench 2, section, looking north-west Fig 6



Brick from the Castle and Firebrick Company

Fig 7



1933 British 303 Cartridge

Fig 8



Part of a double looped copper alloy buckle c1550-1650 Fig 9



Northamptonshire County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology



View of playing field before excavation, looking west

Northamptonshire Archaeology

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Northamptonshire
County Council