

Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological Trial Excavation
at
3 Corby Road, Stanion
Northamptonshire
October 2006



Anne Foard-Colby

November 2006

Report 06/149

Northamptonshire Archaeology

2 Bolton House
Wootton Hall Park

Northampton NN4 8BE

t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822

e. sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk

w. www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk



STAFF

Project Manager Mark Holmes MA
Fieldwork Anne Foard-Colby Cert Ed
 Miranda Haigh BA
Text Anne Foard-Colby
Pottery Paul Blinkhorn BTech
Illustrations Hale Moharramzadeh BA MA

QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	P CHAPMAN		30/10/06
Verified by	M HOLMES		30/10/06
Approved by	A CHAPMAN		01/11/06

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project title	Archaeological Trial Excavation at 3 Corby Road, Stanion, Northamptonshire	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out archaeological trial excavation on 0.03ha of land at 3 Corby Road, Stanion, Northamptonshire. The four trenches revealed evidence of medieval occupation in the form of shallow pits, gullies and postholes. Pottery from the site suggests a 13th century date for the majority of features.	
Project type (e.g. desk-based, field evaluation etc)	Trial trenching	
Previous work (reference to organisation or SMR numbers etc)	Geophysical survey by Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	Unknown	
Monument type And period	Medieval	
Significant finds (artefact type and period)		
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address (including postcode)	3 Corby Road, Stanion	
Easting (use numerical 100km grid square no.)	491420	
Northing	286970	
Height OD	84.5m	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	NCCHET	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Anne Foard-Colby	
Project Manager	Mark Holmes (NA), Mike Dawson (CgMs)	
Sponsor or funding body	Mr & Mrs V Bright	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	5 th October 2006	
End date	6 th October 2006	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	NA	Pottery
Paper	NA	Record sheets, plans, sections
Digital		
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Title		
Serial title & volume		
Author(s)		
Page numbers		
Date		

Contents

1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 OBJECTIVES	1
3 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY	1
4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	2
5 FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY	2
6 RESULTS OF FIELDWORK	2
7 THE FINDS	6
8 DISCUSSION	7

BIBLIOGRAPHY

TABLES

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

FIGURES

Fig 1: Site location, 1:10,000

Fig 2: Trench location, 1:200

Fig 3: Trench plans 1 – 4, 1:75

Fig 4: Sections 1- 8, 1:20

PLATES

Frontispiece: Ordnance Survey, 2" surveyors edition 1814

Plate 1: Site prior to excavation, facing west

Plate 2: Trench 1, pit [105], looking north

Plate 3: Trench 4, gully [407], postholes [417, 419, 423] and slot [421], looking south

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL EXCAVATION

AT

3 CORBY ROAD, STANION

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

OCTOBER 2006

ABSTRACT

Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out archaeological trial excavation on 0.03ha of land at 3 Corby Road, Stanion, Northamptonshire, prior to development of a single residential building. Four evaluation trenches totalling 36.5m in length revealed evidence of medieval occupation in the form of shallow pits, gullies and postholes. Pottery from the site suggests a 13th century date for the majority of features.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology, commissioned by CgMs Consulting acting on behalf of their clients Mr & Mrs V Bright, carried out archaeological trial excavation during October 2006 at 3 Corby Road, Stanion, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 9142 8697, Fig 1).

The work was undertaken as part of a planning condition applied by Corby District Council to an application for the construction of a single dwelling at the site (planning application: 06/00308/DPA). The work followed the requirements of a brief issued by Northamptonshire County Council Historic Environment Team (NCCHET nd).

2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the trial trenching were to provide information on the presence or absence, extent, degree of survival and depth of burial of archaeological deposits and features sufficient to inform planning requirements. In particular, evidence related to Stanion's medieval pottery industry was sought.

3 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The site covers an area of approximately 0.03ha and is a rectangular shaped plot situated on Corby Road (Plate 1). The topography of the site is generally flat but at the north falls away to Corby Road. Outside the development area, the site slopes down steeply to the east and west. The land lies at c 84.5m AOD. At the time of the excavation, the area had been subject to some

degree of ground clearance, although the land surface was covered by a carpet of weeds.

The British Geological Survey has mapped the development area as Grantham Formation sandstone, siltstone and mudstones (BGS 2004). However, the trial trenching results suggest that glacial Boulder Clay may extend into the area.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies within Stanion village, the location of an important medieval pottery industry. Kilns and related features associated with this industry have previously been found in the vicinity of the proposed development area. Across the Corby Road, to the north of the site, medieval pits containing pottery wasters from nearby kilns were uncovered during excavation, prior to development (NA 2004).

5 FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

Four trial trenches, measuring between 6m - 17m in length were excavated under continuous archaeological supervision using a mechanical digger fitted with a toothless ditching bucket (Fig 2).

In all trenches mechanical excavation proceeded as far as the surface of the natural into which all archaeological features were cut.

All potential archaeological features were examined by hand excavation and standard Northamptonshire Archaeology excavation and recording procedures were employed throughout. All works were carried out accordance with Northamptonshire County Council's *Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological Work in Northamptonshire* and the *Code of Conduct, Standards, Guidelines and Practices of the Institute of Field Archaeologists* (IFA 2002).

6 RESULTS OF FIELDWORK

The natural geology comprised light yellow-brown clay with patches of limestone. Soil stratification was consistent throughout the excavation with a thin mid brown clayey loam subsoil overlying the natural and sealing all archaeological features. The subsoil was in turn overlaid by a very dark brown loamy topsoil which appeared to represent a cultivated garden soil. Some denudation of this topsoil may have taken place due to site clearance activity prior to the excavation.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was 6m in length and was aligned north-south (Fig 3). The natural clay geology (103) was encountered at a maximum depth of 0.80m below the modern ground surface. The subsoil (102) was only approximately 0.10m thick here and was overlain by garden soil (101) with a maximum depth of 0.30m. The trench contained a single posthole and a pit. The latter was partially truncated by a 19th or 20th century pit which had been cut down through the subsoil.

The pit [105] was cut into the natural clay geology (Fig 4; Section 1, Plate 2). It was 1.1m wide and 0.2m deep and continued eastwards beyond the limit of excavation. It had a broad 'U'-shaped profile with steep sides and a flat base, and was filled with a dark brown silty clay loam, with patches of light yellow clay (104). Eleven sherds of medieval pottery dating from the 13th century, a fragment of glazed medieval roof tile and two fragments of animal bone were recovered from the fill. Some of the pottery assemblage comprises wasters. The fragmentary animal bone was not identifiable and consequently has not been retained in archive. Although its form suggests a pit, it is possible that the feature may alternatively represent the butt end of a ditch or gully aligned east to west.

The posthole [108] lay to the north of pit [105] and was 0.36m deep with a diameter of 0.30m (Fig 4; Section 2). It had vertical sides with a slightly rounded base. The lower fill consisted of dark silty clay loam with occasional small limestone fragments (106). The upper fill, was a dark brown silty clay loam with patches of orange clay and two large pieces of limestone, possibly packing stones.

Trench 2

Trench 2 measured 6.5m long and was aligned north-south (Fig 3). The natural geology, light yellow brown clay (203), was encountered at a depth of 0.36m. It was overlain by the mid brown subsoil (202) which was 0.10m thick. The topsoil in this trench had a maximum depth of 0.30m.

Two modern features were cut through the subsoil; a late 19th or early 20th century rubbish pit containing modern ceramics and clinker as well as an assemblage of residual medieval pottery and a loosely backfilled hand dug pit, possibly a test pit. No other features were present in the trench.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was 7m long and was aligned north to south (Fig 3). The light yellow brown natural clay was encountered at a depth of 0.34m. The overlying mid brown subsoil was approximately 0.1m thick whilst the topsoil had a maximum thickness of 0.30m.

No features were present in the trench.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was 17m long and aligned east – west, parallel with the Corby Road (Fig 3). The natural geology was encountered at a depth of 0.38m (404). Here, it comprised a mid brown clay with very frequent limestone pieces, possibly representing a change in the underlying geology. The overlying mid brown subsoil (202) was approximately 0.10m thick whilst the overlying dark brown garden soil (201) had a maximum thickness of 0.30m.

A number of archaeological features were present in the trench. They comprised a pit, four gullies, four postholes and a possible slot.

Pit [405], measured 1.30m long, 0.85m wide and was 0.10m deep (Fig 4; Section 3). Its sides were shallow and it had a flat base. The fill was dark grey black, silty clay with limestone fragments and occasional charcoal flecks (404). Twenty-eight sherds of medieval pottery, some with unusual decoration, were recovered from the pit.

Gully [407] was aligned north to south. It measured 0.30m wide and 0.11m deep and had a shallow concave profile (Fig 4; Section 4). Its fill (406) consisted of mottled grey/brown and yellow clay with occasional small limestone fragments. Four sherds of medieval pottery, one being a waster, were recovered.

Posthole [411] measured 0.28m wide and 0.17m deep with vertical sides and flat base (Fig 4; Section 7). Its fill (410) was mid brown silty clay with small limestone pieces. It contained two larger limestone pieces, possibly representing packing, and a small animal bone fragment (not retained in archive).

Gully [413] was aligned north-east to south-west and measured 0.50m wide and 0.08m deep, with shallow sides and an irregular base. Its fill (412) consisted of mid brown silty clay with occasional small limestone fragments, which contained five sherds of medieval pottery.

Gully [415] measured 0.75m wide but narrowed at its northern end, possibly suggesting it was terminating around this point (Fig 4; Section 6). It had a concave profile and was only 0.1m deep. Its fill (414) consisted of mid orange/brown silty clay with small limestone pieces which produced three sherds of medieval pottery.

Posthole [423] measured 0.2m diameter and 0.20m deep with steep sides and flat base (Fig 4; Section 8). Its fill (422) consisted of grey and yellow mottled silty clay with pieces of burnt daub and medieval pottery.

Slot [421] was cut by gully [409] (Fig 4; Section 5). It measured approximately 1.8m long and 0.28m wide to the edge of excavation. It was 0.18m deep with gently sloping north side. Its fill (420) was mid yellow brown silty clay with some burnt limestone fragments. The slot was also cut through at its eastern end by posthole [419].

Posthole [419] was ovoid in shape and measured 0.50m wide and 0.18m deep, with steep sides and a concave base (Fig 4; Section 5). Its fill (418) consisted of mid brown silty clay with two faced limestone fragments used as packing stones. Medieval pottery was recovered from the fill along with a heavily corroded iron object which may be a pair of scissors. This has been sent for X-ray to aid identification. The posthole cut through the fill of slot [421].

Gully [409] was on a similar alignment but was slightly wider and deeper than gully [407] (Fig 4; Section 5). It measured 0.60m wide and 0.18m deep and had a concave profile. The fill (408) consisted of mottled mid brown and orange silty clay with small limestone fragments. Two pieces of fired clay and four sherds of medieval pottery were recovered. A single 19th century sherd of pottery was also present, but this is thought to be intrusive. The gully was cut by later posthole [417].

Posthole [417] had a diameter of 0.30m and was 0.18m deep with a steep-sided and flat-based profile (Fig 4; Section 5). Its fill (416) consisted of mottled grey/brown and orange silty clay with some small limestone pieces and a large faced limestone packing stone. It cut through the fill of earlier gully [409]

7 THE FINDS

Medieval Pottery

by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 66 sherds with a total weight of 874g. It mainly consisted of medieval glazed Stanion ware, with some evidence for pottery production in the immediate vicinity of the site.

Fabric

The pottery was quantified using the chronology and coding system of the Northamptonshire County Ceramic Type-Series (CTS), as follows:

F319: Lyveden/Stanon 'A' ware, AD1150-1400. 1 sherd, 6g.

F320: Lyveden/Stanon 'B' ware, AD1225-1400. 62 sherds, 848g.

F407: Red Earthenwares, AD1550+. 1 sherd, 4g.

F1000: Miscellaneous 19th – 20th century wares. 2 sherds, 16g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

The village of Stanion is a well-known medieval pottery production centre, and a number of kilns have been excavated over the years, including in the vicinity of this excavation. Despite this, there is very little Stanion ware from this site which can be said with certainty to be kiln waste. A single small sherd from context (406), the fill of a gully, shows evidence of spalling, and the same is true of three or four sherds from contexts (104), (404) and (414).

However, a quantity of burnt daub (320g) was recovered from context (422). This shows evidence of curvature, and appears to be part of a dome-roof from a structure, although it is uncertain whether it originally came from a pottery kiln or from another structure such as a domestic oven. It is thickly sooted on one side, and was obviously heated during its lifetime. A curved fragment of either a roof tile or kiln prop also occurred in context (422).

The Stanion ware assemblage is of some interest, as there are a number of sherds with unusual decoration. For example, a jug handle from (422) is decorated with 'T'-shaped comb-stabbing on the thumb-groove, and has floral stamps on the edges. A large body sherd from a glazed jug from context (404) has rouletted applied strips. This decorative technique is

known on jugs which have been decorated with strips of white-firing clay, but are very rare on applied strips which are the same as the body clay.

Overall, there appears to be a ‘background noise’ of evidence of pottery production amongst this assemblage, but to it is difficult to ascertain if a kiln or other evidence of such activity is likely to be present at the site.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Context	Feature	F319		F320		F407		F1000		Date	Comment
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt		
104	105			11	152					13thC	Wasters
204	205			5	77	1	4	1	9	20thC	
404	405	1	6	27	399					13thC	
406	407			4	40					13thC	Waster
408	409			4	53			1	7	19thC	
412	413			5	38					M14thC?	
414	415			3	12					13thC	
418	419			1	2					13thC	
422	423			2	75					13thC	
Total		1	6	62	848	1	4	2	16		

8 DISCUSSION

A small collection of archaeological features comprising postholes, gullies and a slot were located immediately at the south of the Corby Road. The features suggest structural activity, however, the form and nature of any such structure, could not be determined.

Pottery from the features mainly comprised Lyveden/Stanion wares, suggesting a 13th century or later date. Although the pottery assemblage contained some wasters and possible remains of kiln or oven debris, the quantity recovered does not appear significant enough to suggest pottery production in the immediate development area. It may instead merely reflect the general background detritus from the village’s pottery industry which appears to have been principally located to the north of the Corby Road (NA 2004).

The structural features revealed in trench 4, are located 5m away from the present Corby Road. This short distance would appear to preclude the existence of a substantially sized structure fronting onto the road. This raises the possibility that the Corby Road itself either did not exist at the time or that its present size does not accurately reflect its medieval predecessor.

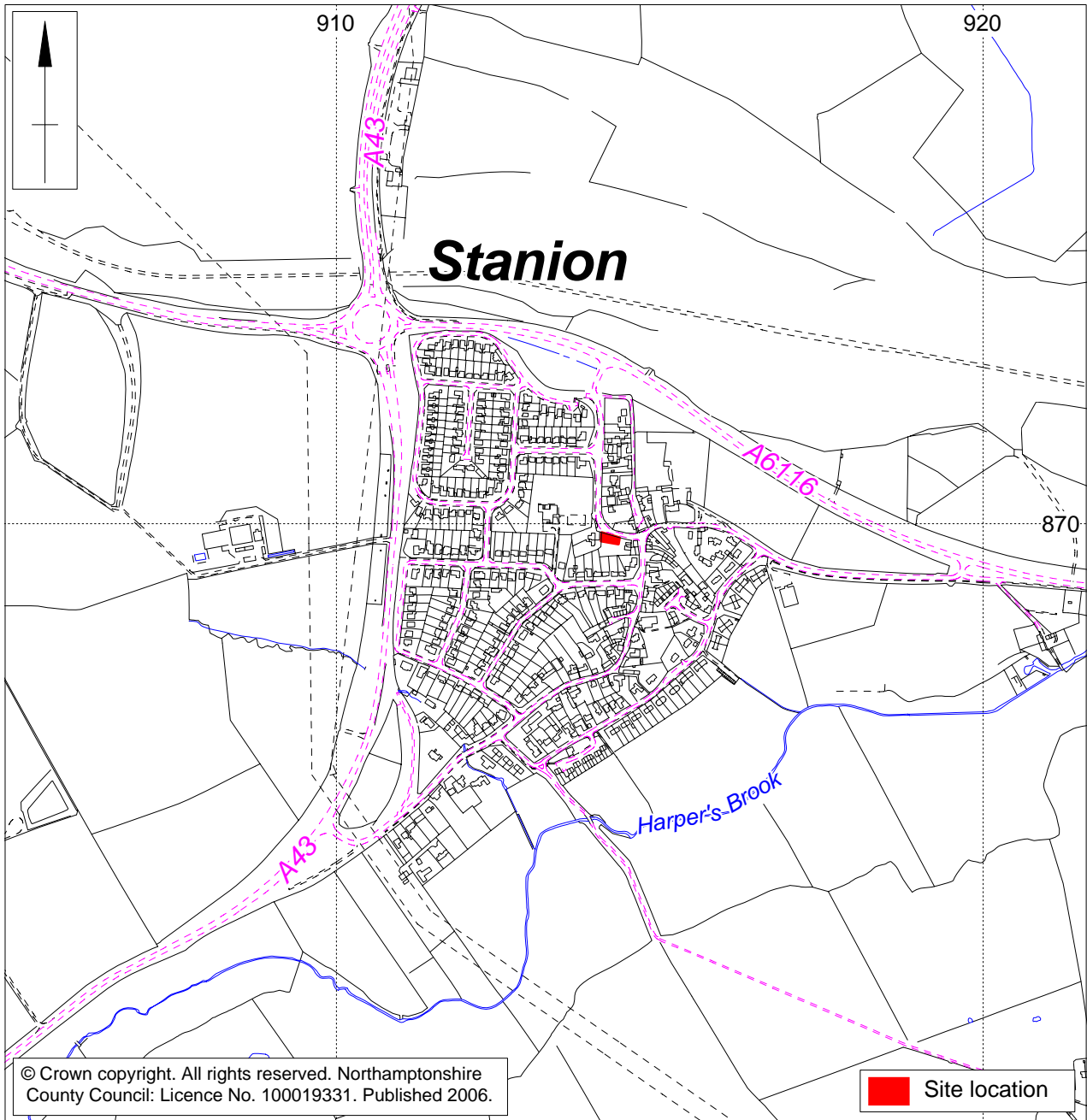
BIBLIOGRAPHY

BGS 2003 1:50000 Scale British Geological Survey Digital Data EW171 Kettering, Bedrock Geology and Superficial Deposits, version 1.05

NA 2004 *Archaeological excavation of pottery waster pits at 2 Corby Road, Stanion*, Northamptonshire Archaeology, interim report

NA 2006 *Specification for Archaeological Trial Excavation at 3 Corby Road, Stanion*, Northamptonshire, Northamptonshire Archaeology

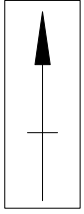
NCCHET nd *Site at 3 Corby Road Stanion Brief for Archaeological Excavation*, Northamptonshire County Council, Historic Environment Team



Scale 1:10,000

Site location Fig 1

Scale 1:200



Corby Road

Tr 4

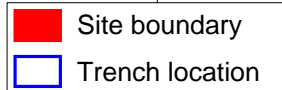
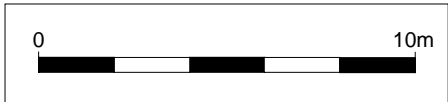
Tr 3

Tr 2

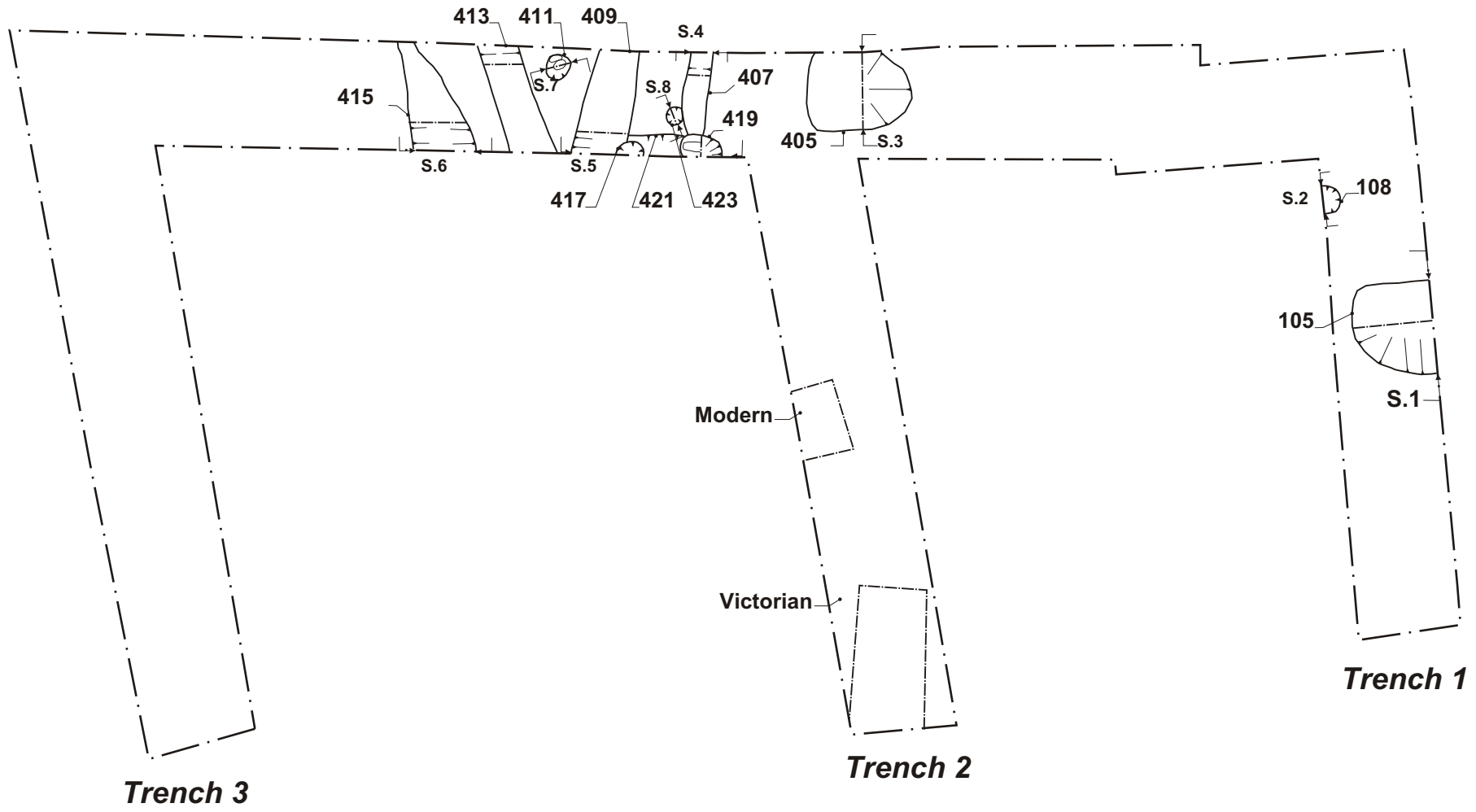
Tr 1

Trench location Fig 2

© Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Northamptonshire County Council: Licence No. 100019331. Published 2006.



Trench 4



Trench 1

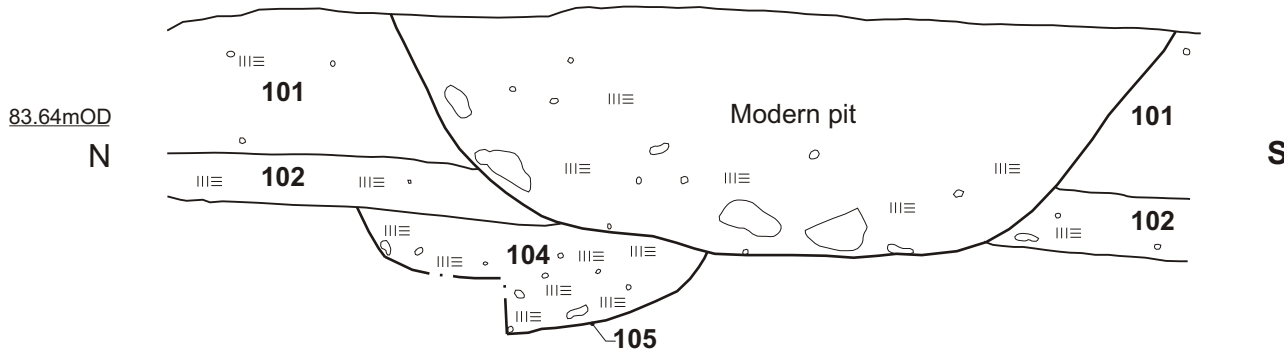
Trench 2

Trench 3

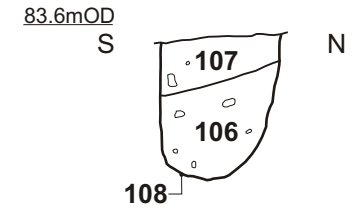


Trench Plans 1-4 Fig 3

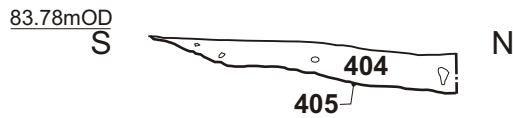
Section 1 - Trench 1



Section 2 - Trench 1



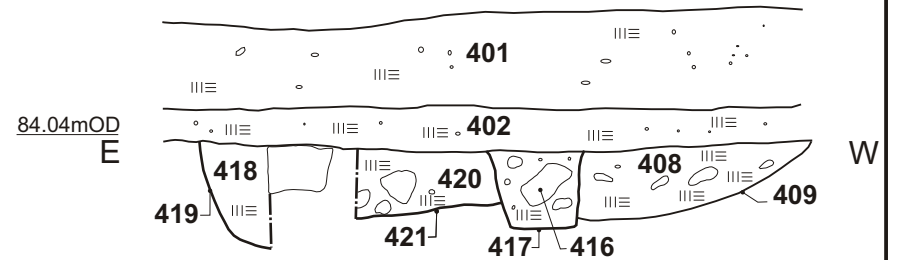
Section 3 - Trench 4



Section 4 - Trench 4



Section 5 - Trench 4



Section 7 - Trench 4



Section 6 - Trench 4



Section 8 - Trench 4



Clay



Plate 1: Site prior to excavation, facing west.



Plate 2: Pit [105], facing north.



Plate 3: Gully [407], Postholes [417, 419, 423], and slot [421], facing south.