Northamptonshire County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological watching brief

at

Thorpe Castle House

Thorpe Waterville, Northamptonshire

Anne Foard-Colby Cert Ed

March 2006

06/066

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REGISTERED IFA ORGANISATION

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

APRIL 2006

NGR TL 0220 8141

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT THORPE CASTLE HOUSE, THORPE WATERVILLE,

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

MARCH 2006

REPORT 06/066

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QUALITY CONTROL

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Checked by	PAT CHAPMAN		
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Approved by	ANDY CHAPMAN		

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project title	Thorpe Waterville, Thorpe Castle House	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief during the digging of a hole for a new septic tank. A series of infilling layers were observed. These and the location suggest the silting up and infilling of part of the south arm of the moat. Artefacts recovered from the layers included a sherd of medieval pottery, a glazed medieval roof tile and floor tile and a fragment of worked stone. Post-medieval window glass and stone roof tiles were also recovered. A 16th century copper alloy jetton was recovered from the topsoil.	
Project type (e.g. desk-based, field evaluation etc)	Watching Brief	
Previous work (reference to organisation or SMR numbers etc)	None	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)		
Monument type And period		
Significant finds (artefact type and period)		
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address (including postcode)	Thorpe Castle House, Thorpe Waterville, Northamptonshire	
Easting (use numerical 100km grid square no.)	50220	
Northing	28141	
Height OD	27m	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator		
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Anne Foard-Colby	
Project Manager	Iain Soden	
Sponsor or funding body	Sir Roger Martin	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	March 2006	
End date	March 2006	
ARCHIVES	**Location (Accession no.)**	**Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)**
Physical	NA	Pot, tile
Paper	NA	Site records
Digital	NA	Copy of report
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Title		
Serial title & volume		
Author(s)		
Page numbers		
Date		

Contents

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT THORPE CASTLE HOUSE, THORPE WATERVILLE,

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

MARCH 2006

ABSTRACT

Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief during the digging of a hole for a new septic tank. A series of infilling layers were observed in the pit which, together with the position of the pit close to the moat, suggest that these represent the silting up and infilling of part of that feature. Artefacts from the layers included a sherd of medieval pottery, a glazed medieval roof tile and floor tile and a fragment of worked stone. Post-medieval window glass and stone roof tiles were also recovered. A 16th century copper alloy jetton came from the topsoil.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief in March 2006 during the excavation of a hole for the installation of a new septic tank at Thorpe Castle House, Thorpe Waterville, Northamptonshire (NGR: TL 0220 8141; Fig 1).

The work was undertaken in order to fulfil Scheduled Monument Consent for the installation of the septic tank. The work met the requirements of the consent, which was dated 21st February 2006.

The purpose of the watching brief was to:

- Record the presence (or absence), depth of burial, date and character of remains at the location of the new septic tank and along the line of its services.
- Provide management information on the character, depths of burial and thickness of deposits for the future management of the archaeology of the Scheduled Ancient Monument. The work will act as a controlled evaluation, providing data for the immediate surrounding area.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Thorpe Castle House lies within a plot of land historically known as Thorpe Castle (NGR TL 0220 8141) in the village of Thorpe Waterville. The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (County Number NN136) and contains two listed buildings, Thorpe Castle House, a Grade II listed 17th century manor house and Castle Barn, a Grade I listed medieval hall (although with later alterations), together with adjacent castle earthworks.

Previous excavations on the site by Oundle School in 1929-30 revealed a rectangular building measuring approximately 18m x 11m with walls 3m thick and described at the time as a possible hall (Brown and Hadman 1976, 178). The records of this excavation have not survived and the whereabouts of this building and any recovered material artefacts is unknown.

The 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map (Fig 2) shows the rectangular moat with what appears to be an entrance into the moated enclosure from the east side.

3 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The site lies on ground gently sloping southwards, at approximately 27m aOD. The underlying geology consists of Cornbrash and Alluvuim and were mapped by the British Geological Survey (Sheet 171; Northampton 1989 edition).

4 METHODOLOGY

An initial watching brief was undertaken to observe the mechanical excavation of a hole for the installation of a new septic tank and an overflow pipe.

The hole for the septic tank measured 2.5m by 2.5m square, with a depth of 2.48m; the overflow trench to the west measured 4.8m long by 1m wide, with a maximum depth of 0.75m (Fig 3).

All works were carried out according to the Policy and Guidance for Archaeological Fieldwork Projects in Northamptonshire (NCCNH 1995). All procedures complied with the Northamptonshire Archaeology Health and Safety at Work Guidelines.

5 RESULTS OF FIELDWORK

Trench 1 was excavated for the new septic tank, Trench 2 to the west, for the overflow pipe from the septic tank to the water filled southern arm of the moat (Figs 3 & 4).

Trench 1

Natural blue-grey clay (114) was present at a depth of 2.25m below the modern ground surface (Fig 4, Section 1, Plate 1). It may represent the base of the original medieval moat. Overlying this was a layer of light brown/grey clay (113) with some limestone fragments. Its maximum thickness was *c*500mm and the layer sloped down from east to west. A layer of light to mid brown sandy clay (112) with occasional limestone fragments and a maximum thickness of *c*400mm overlay this. It had a horizontal profile. Overlying this was medium grey sandy silt (111) with some limestone fragments which had a maximum depth of *c*150mm. Above this was a light brown sandy clay (110) containing some limestone fragments and with a maximum thickness of *c*470mm. The last three layers represent infilling or silting of the moat

Layer (109) consisted of mid grey/brown sandy clay with some limestone fragments and half a glazed medieval floor tile, it had a maximum thickness of *c*400mm and sloped down from east to west. Overlying this was mid grey brown sandy clay (108) with considerable, various sized limestone fragments, occasional cobble stones, some gravel and a few fragments of animal bone. A piece of worked limestone and a glazed roof tile were recovered from this fill.

The remaining layers represent at least two more phases of moat cleaning. Layer (107) consisted of mid to dark brown and blue sandy clay with charcoal lumps and some gravel and limestone fragments. It was 100mm thick. Overlying this was mid blue grey clay (106) with very occasional limestone fragments, which was 140mm thick. This was overlain by mid to light grey brown sandy clay (105) with some limestone fragments, some of which were large with occasional brick fragments. The layer was 340mm thick. Mid grey/brown sandy loam (104) overlay this. It contained limestone fragments, some of which were large and possibly stone derived from walls, together with mortar lenses, and it was a maximum of 300mm thick. It was overlain by a layer of pale brown sand and lime mortar (103), 100mm thick. Layer (102), comprised light to mid grey brown sandy loam with considerable limestone fragments, including broken stone roof slates and brick fragments, mortar and 19th century pottery sherds. It was 350mm thick. Topsoil (101) overlay all layers and consisted of dark blue brown sandy loam with few small limestone fragments and

varied in thickness from 170mm to 220mm.

Trench 2

Layer (204) consisted of light grey brown sandy soil with lime mortar lumps and some limestone fragments, and was 280mm thick to the base of the trench. Light to mid grey brown sandy soil (202) contained building rubble which consisted of clay roof tile fragments, limestone pieces, lime plaster and mortar overlay layer (204). It was 300mm thick. Truncating this was mid to dark brown sandy loam (203) with pieces of limestone, probably from walls, and some gravel. The layer was 300mm thick. Overlying all was the same topsoil as in Trench 1. The layers equate closely with those in Trench 1.

6 THE FINDS

Table 1: Finds by context

Context no.	Artefact	Quantity
101	Copper alloy jetton	1
108	Glazed medieval roof tile	1
108	Moulded stone	1
108	Strip of window lead	1
108	Medieval pottery sherd	1
109	Glazed medieval floor tile	1
202	Glazed brick – post-medieval	1
202	19th century pottery sherds	3
204	Window glass pieces – post-medieval	3
204	19th century rim sherd	1

Building material

by Pat Chapman

There are four items comprising parts of a ceramic floor tile, a roof nib tile, a brick and part of a worked stone.

The surviving end of the floor tile from context (109), measures 133mm wide across the top, chamfered to 130mm and is 35mm thick. It is in a hard brick red fabric with an unworn yellow glaze on the upper surface.

The upper half of the nib tile from context (108) is crudely made, particularly the uneven edges, complete with thumb print on the upper left hand corner. The nib appears to have been removed, leaving the indentation from where the nib was pulled up and smoothed over, with the thumb groove in front. The upper surface is slightly reddish with a partially

streaked green glaze. It is made from sandy clay with calcareous inclusions, fired to a medium grey reduced core, which has laminated, with an orange surface. There is no sign of a peghole.

Only the end survives of the handmade glazed brick from context (202). The brick measures 100mm (4 inches) wide and 57mm (2¼ inches) thick. It has been overfired to a dark brown surface and dark grey reduced core. The overfired glaze varies from yellow, through green to black. The glaze indicates that the brick could either have been used internally, as part of a fire surround perhaps, or for external decoration.

The piece of worked limestone, from context (108), is 73mm thick and 135mm wide with a surviving length of 213mm. Both sides and one edge have been tooled and have traces of mortar or cement, but the other edge has been broken as has the bottom end. The floor and roof tile could be late medieval, while the glazed brick is probably later. This material could probably be dated to between the 15th to 18th centuries.

Other finds

A copper alloy jetton was recovered from the topsoil of Trench 1. Jettons or reckoning counters were coin like objects used in the calculation of accounts. They were used on a reckoning table or cloth also known as an abacus.

The jetton measures 22mm in diameter. One side has alternate three fleur de lys and three crowns surrounding a central flower and on the reverse a Reichsapfel which is a common depiction from Nuremburg. An inscription around the outer edge of the jetton identifies the maker as Kilianus Koch of Nuremburg who was manufacturing jettons in Nuremburg between 1587 and 1600.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The watching brief has found that no undisturbed archaeological horizons were present in the pit excavated for the new septic tank. However, the position of the pit close to the eastern arm of the moat and the observation of the layers which were revealed during the excavation, showing a series of westerly sloping tip lines towards the centre of this arm of the moat, suggest that the septic tank pit had been dug through previous infillings and 'silting up' of the moat.

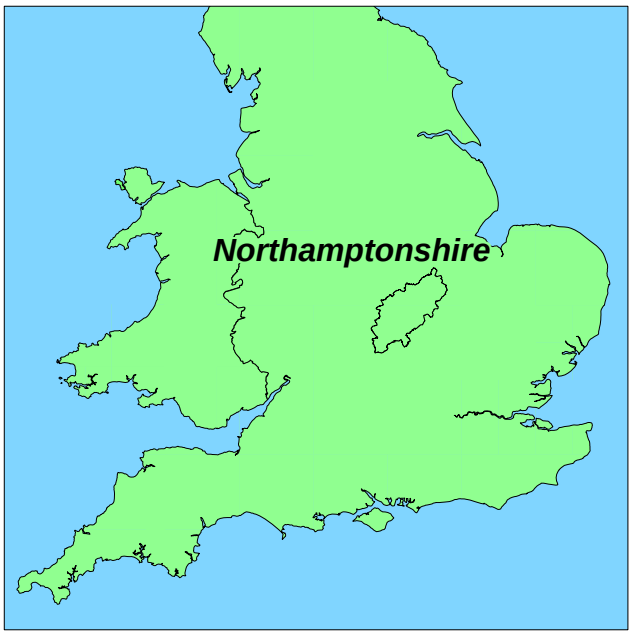
The infilling and silting of this arm of the moat had probably taken place in numerous episodes over many hundreds of years since the demolition of the castle. Artefacts recovered from the fills, included a sherd of medieval pottery, glazed floor tile, glazed roof tile and a fragment of worked stone. Post-medieval finds, including pottery, window glass and part of a glazed brick, were recovered from levels closer to the surface. A copper alloy jetton of the late 16th century was recovered from the topsoil.

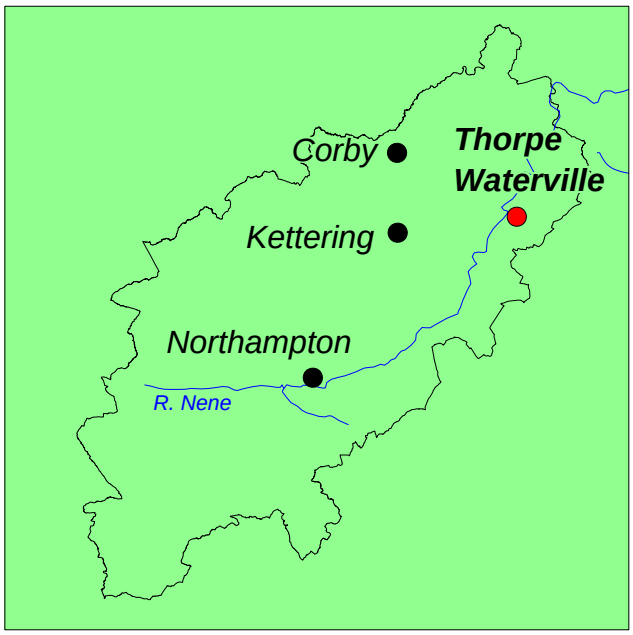
BIBLIOGRAPHY

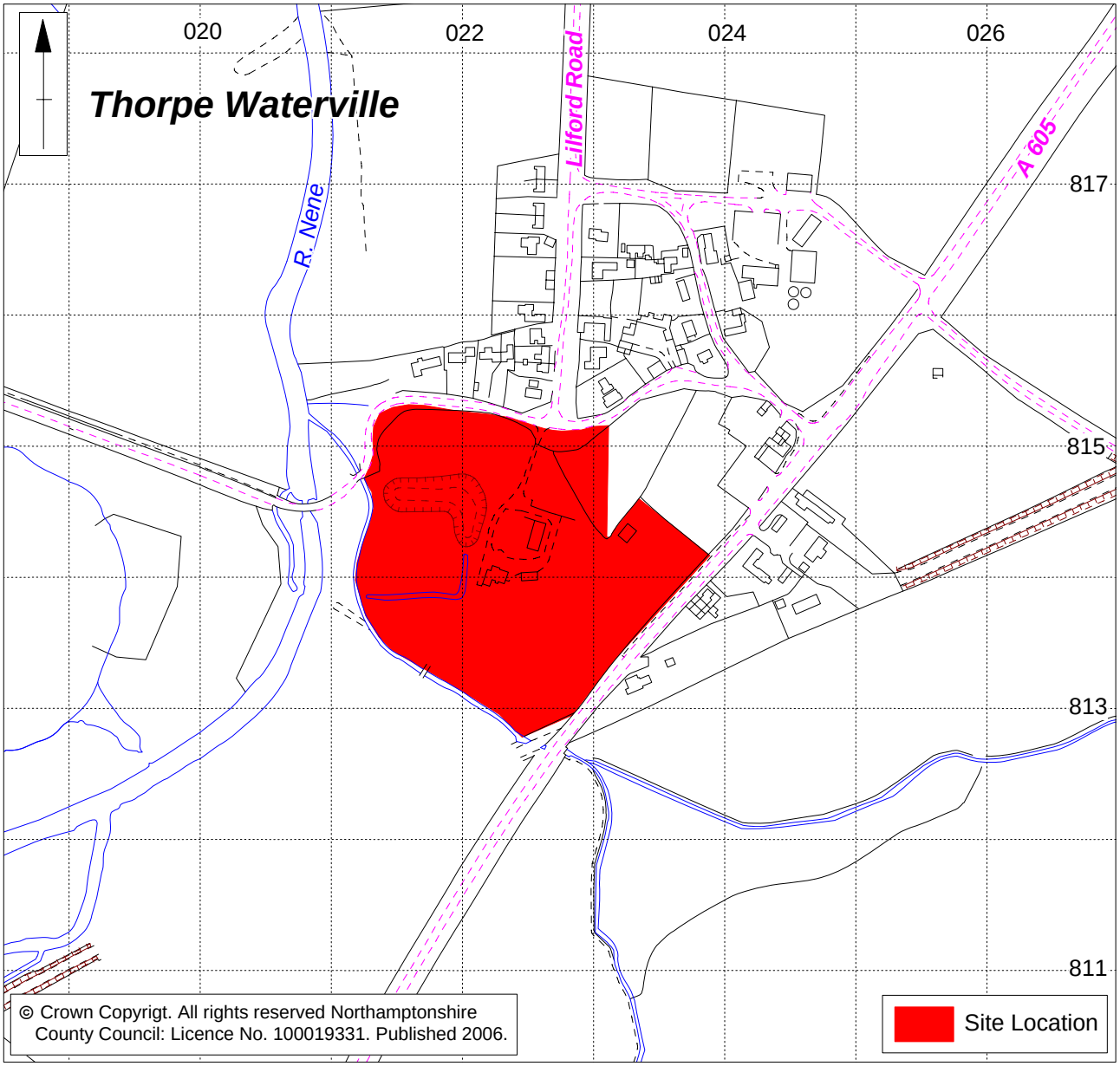
Brown, A E, and Hadman, J, 1976 Some forgotten Northamptonshire excavations, *Northamptonshire Archaeology*, **11**, 177-8

NCCNH 1995 *Policy and Guidance for Archaeological Fieldwork Projects in Northamptonshire*, Northamptonshire County Council, Northamptonshire Heritage

Northamptonshire Archaeology
Northamptonshire County Council April 2006

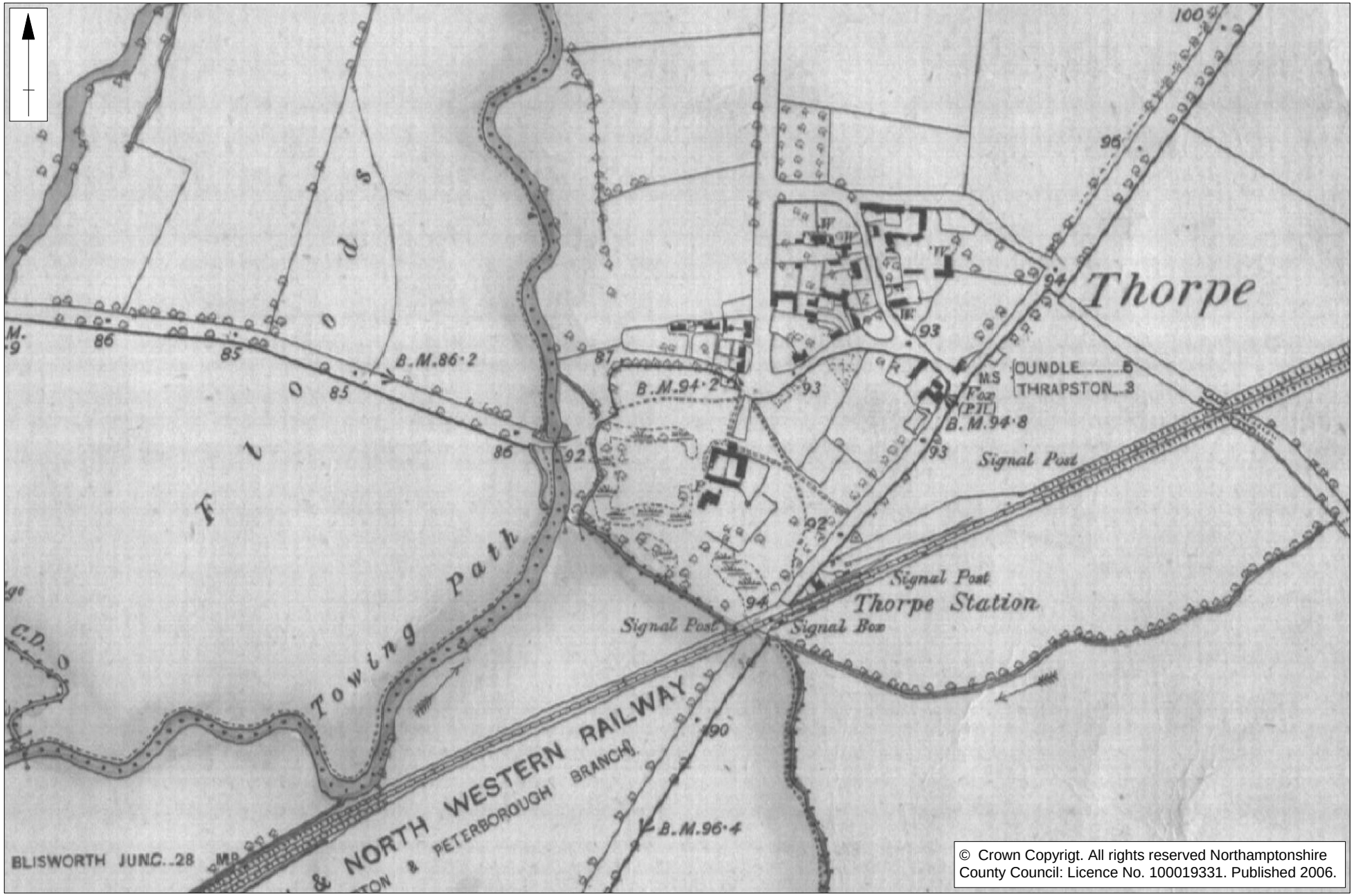




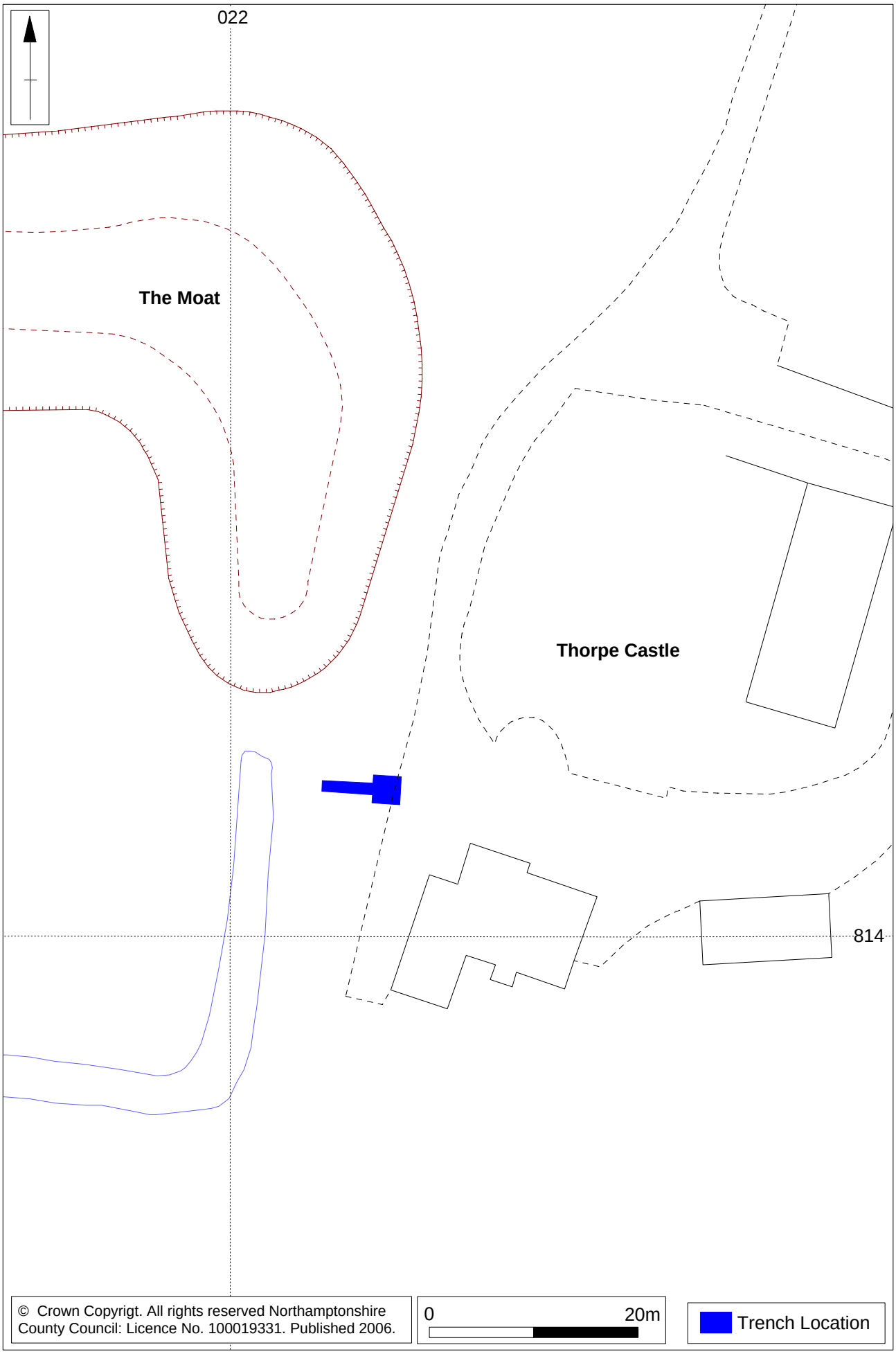


Scale 1:5000

Site Location Fig 1



1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1880's Fig 2



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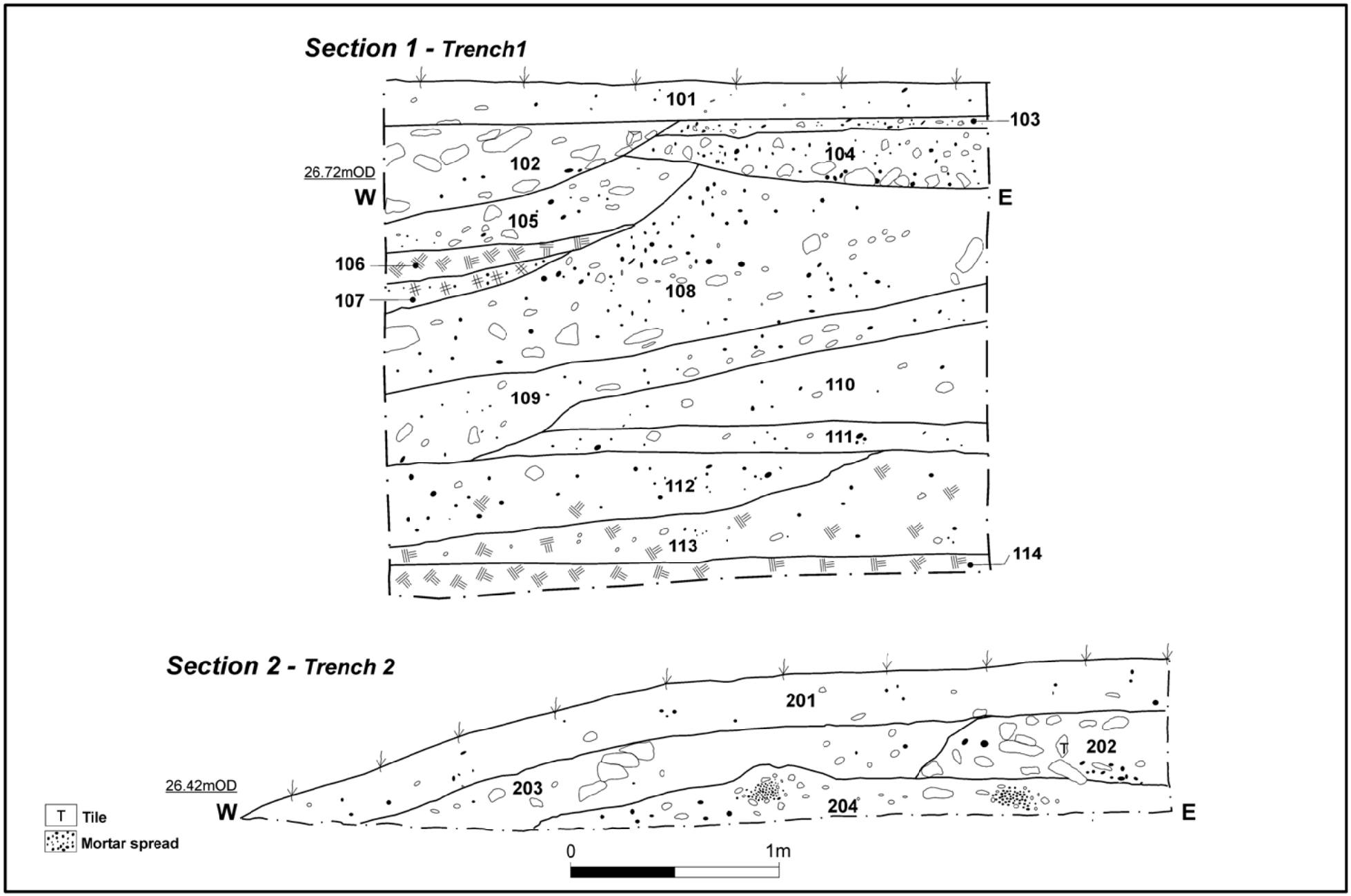
Trench Location Fig 3



Sections 1 - 2 Fig 4

Plate 1: Section 1, looking north