



**Northamptonshire
County Council**

Northamptonshire Archaeology

**Archaeological Field Evaluation
of Plot 8 Former TRW Site
Shirley, Solihull**

March 2006

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Report 06/63

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project title	An Archaeological Field Evaluation of Plot 8 Former TRW Site, Shirley, Solihull	
Short description (250 words maximum)	The earliest archaeological remains were the later medieval or post-medieval ridge and furrow, which were discernible as slight earthworks on the southern part of the site. The remains of Madam's Hill Farm were revealed, and comprised the footings of a probable brick building, yard walls and remnants of farmyard surfaces. The yard wall may have been preceded by a ditch. Some areas had been truncated by large pits and backfilled with demolition rubble and the entire area of the former farm was covered with a layer of demolition debris and redeposited soil. It is possible that the farm was established when the land was enclosed, probably in the late 18 th century.	
Project type (eg desk-based, field evaluation etc)	Trial trench evaluation	
Previous work (reference to organisation or SMR numbers etc)	Marches Archaeology 2005	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	Unknown	
Monument type and period	N/A	
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Warwickshire	
Site address (including postcode)	Former TRW Site, Dog Kennel Lane/Stratford Road, Shirley, Solihull	
Easting (use numerical 100km grid square no.)	21280	
Northing	47719	
Height OD	140m	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Warwickshire CC	
Project Design originator	Waterman CPM Ltd	
Director/Supervisor	Simon Carlyle, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project Manager	Antony Walsh, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Sponsor or funding body	Volkswagon Group United Kingdom Limited	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	29/3/06	
End date	31/3/06	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no. ECB 2175)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		
Digital		
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title	An Archaeological Field Evaluation of Plot 8 Former TRW Site, Shirley, Solihull	
Serial title and volume		
Author(s)	Simon Carlyle	
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION OF PLOT 8 FORMER TRW SITE SHIRLEY, SOLIHULL

Abstract

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology of Plot 8 on the former TRW site, between Stratford Road and Dog Kennel Lane, Shirley, Solihull. The earliest archaeological remains were the later medieval or post-medieval ridge and furrow, which were discernible as slight earthworks on the southern part of the site. The remains of Madam's Hill Farm were revealed, and comprised the footings of a probable brick building, yard walls and remnants of farmyard surfaces. The yard wall may have been preceded by a ditch. Some areas had been truncated by large pits and backfilled with demolition rubble and the entire area of the former farm was covered with a layer of demolition debris and redeposited soil. It is possible that the farm was established when the land was enclosed, probably in the late 18th century.

1 INTRODUCTION

In March 2006, an archaeological evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) of Plot 8 on the former TRW site, between Stratford Road and Dog Kennel Lane, Shirley, Solihull (site centred on NGR SP 1280 7719; Fig 1). The evaluation comprised the excavation of five trial trenches (150 linear metres) and the work was commissioned by Waterman CPM Ltd (WPCM), acting on behalf of clients.

The evaluation was carried out in order to fulfil the archaeological condition attached to the planning application for the development of a car showroom on the site (planning application no. 04/2519). The planning application was submitted to Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and the archaeological planning advice was provided by Warwickshire County Council (WCC).

The programme of archaeological investigation was designed and implemented to mitigate against the impact of the development on buried archaeological remains. The objectives of the evaluation were to gather sufficient information to establish the presence/absence, character, extent, state of preservation and date of any archaeological remains within the area of the proposed development.

Previously, an archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) had been prepared by WPCM (2004) and a field evaluation of an adjacent area to the north of Plot 8 had been carried out by Marches Archaeology (MA 2005).

The work was carried out in accordance with the specification produced by WPCM (2006) to the requirements of the brief issued by WCC (2006). The specification complied with Appendix 2 of *Management of Archaeological Projects* (EH 1991). This report details the results of the trial trench evaluation.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography and geology

The proposed development site (Plot 8) covered an area of *c* 1.2ha and lay in the south-east corner of a triangular block of land to the south of Shirley Heath, within the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull. Much of the land in this block has already been developed as a research park; the south-east corner is currently undeveloped and is maintained as open grassland with occasional trees. The site was bounded to the north-east by the A34 Stratford Road, to the east by a car showroom and to the south by Dog Kennel Lane. The ground, which was poorly drained, was generally flat and lay at approximately 140m AOD.

Soils on the site belonged to the Oak 1 (714b) soil association, consisting of slowly permeable fine loamy over clayey soils (SSEW 1983). The underlying drift geology comprised reddish till, probably belonging to the Wolston Series of sands and clays which were deposited in the ice-impounded Lake Harrison, which covered much of the Birmingham area during the Wolstonian glaciation. The quaternary deposits overlie Keuper Marl, a Permo-Triassic sediment (BGS 1987).

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

An archaeological desk-based assessment has been prepared by WCPM (2004). In brief, it demonstrated that there are no known archaeological sites within the boundary of the former TRW site, other than ridge and furrow earthworks and the site of Madam's Hill Farm, which is first shown on a map of 1794 and was probably demolished in the 1960s. The earliest buildings currently occupying the general site were built in the late 1960s.

Archaeological sites (medieval or earlier) in the wider area are similarly sparse, and consist of unconfirmed reports of a burnt-stone mound of possible Bronze Age date 0.9km to the south of the site (SMR 10999) and unspecified Roman finds 1.0km to the south-east (SMR 10818). It is likely that the area lay in the Forest of Arden in the Middle Ages and was only cleared in the late medieval or early post-medieval period, although the Anglo-Saxon place-name 'Shirley', which probably means 'bright clearing', suggests some settlement in the area in earlier medieval times. The narrow spacing between the furrows of the open field system, which survives as slight earthworks in the southern part of the development site, suggests it is probably late medieval or post-medieval in origin.

An archaeological evaluation carried out by Marches Archaeology in 2005, in the area surrounding the main building fronting on to Stratford Road to the north of Plot 8, found no significant archaeological remains.

3 EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

The trenches were excavated using a JCB-type mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching blade. The trenches, which were marked out prior to excavation, had been positioned in accordance with the trench location plan provided by WCPM (Fig 2). Two of the trenches (Trenches 2 and 4) had to be moved slightly to avoid trees.

All overburden was stripped under archaeological supervision, with the topsoil and subsoil stacked separately and adjacent to the trenches. Mechanical excavation proceeded to the top of the archaeological deposits, to the limits of safe working practice or to the natural substrate where no archaeology was encountered.

Archaeological excavation and recording followed the guidelines outlined in the NA *Archaeological Fieldwork Manual* (2003). Trenches containing archaeological remains were cleaned by hand, sufficient to define the features. Each feature or deposit was given a unique number consisting of the trench number and an individual context number (e.g. 1302, Trench 13, context 2). The details of each context were recorded on *pro-forma* sheets. The trenches were planned (scale 1:50) and section drawings were made at an appropriate scale (1:10 or 1:20). Levels, which were related to Ordnance Datum, were taken on the trenches at appropriate points, on section datum and on all major features. Trench locations were related to the OS National Grid. A photographic record was made of the evaluation, using both 35mm colour transparency and black and white negative film. The spoil heaps and features were scanned with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval. No suitable deposits were encountered for environmental sampling.

All works were carried out in accordance with the IFA *Code of Conduct* (1995, revised 2002) and the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IFA 1994, revised 2001). All procedures complied with Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions and Northamptonshire Archaeology Health and Safety at Work Guidelines.

The programme of trial trench evaluation was monitored by WCC. The archive will be deposited with the appropriate local institution. The guidelines of the Society of Museum Archaeologists (SMA 1993) will be followed in the preparation of the archive.

4 EXCAVATION RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

Five trenches of varying lengths were excavated (Fig 2). They were 1.8m wide and had a combined length of 150m (270m²). Trench 1 was 25m long, Trench 2 was 35m long, and Trenches 3-5 were 30m long. The wet weather and poor drainage caused flooding in Trenches 3-5, with water accumulating up to 0.3m in depth in places.

The natural substrate was a variable sediment of light to mid yellow or yellowish white sandy silt and clay, often with pebbles, with irregular bands and veins of brownish orange silty sand. There was little differentiation between the topsoil and subsoil, which comprised mid greyish brown slightly sandy organic silt, with the subsoil being slightly browner due to mineralization. The presence of ridge and furrow in the area indicates that they are developed arable soils. In undisturbed areas, the topsoil was approximately 0.25m thick and the subsoil varied in thickness between 0.20 and 0.35m.

A trench location plan is given in Figure 2 and detailed plans of Trenches 1 and 2 are given in Figure 3. A summary of the features in each trench is presented in Appendix 1. Context numbers for cut features and walls are in squared brackets; those of deposits are in parentheses.

4.2 Ridge and Furrow

Furrows were recorded in Trenches 3, 4 and 5, in the southern part of the evaluation area. They were aligned from east to west, were spaced approximately 6m apart and appeared as parallel linear bands of subsoil in the trenches. Excavation of several of the furrows showed that they were only several centimetres deep. The ridges were just discernible as low linear earthworks across this area. Narrow, straight furrows are related to the use of the horse as a form of traction, as opposed to the ox, which was generally used in the earlier medieval period and required a larger turning circle at the end of each furrow, resulting in widely spaced, S-shaped furrows (Rackham 1986, 167-180).

4.3 Late 18th/19th century farm and other features

The remains of Madam's Hill Farm were identified in Trenches 1 and 2, and comprised yard walls, the remains of cobbled and tarmac surfaces, part of a probable brick building and a deposit that may be either a layer of buried soil in a natural hollow or the fill of a possible ditch or borrow pit, immediately predating the yard wall.

At the south-east end of Trench 1 there was a T-junction between two brick walls [109]. These walls may be part of a farm building. The walls, which were constructed from unfrogged bricks and were bonded with lime mortar, were 0.36m wide and set in a shallow foundation trench [111]. Due to the poor condition of the walls, the type of bond could not be determined. Only two to three courses survived, and they were sealed by a layer of demolition debris (108) containing 19th century pottery sherds and glass fragments. A short length of lead pipe (81mm long with an external diameter of 9mm) found in the demolition layer was probably part of a 19th century gas lighting system.

In Trench 2 there were two parallel brick walls [205 and 212], probably yard walls, aligned from north-west to south-east and spaced *c* 26m apart. They were 0.23m wide and were set in narrow foundation trenches [207 and 214]; trench [207] was excavated and was shown to be 0.72m wide and 0.29m deep. The backfill of the trench (206) contained 19th century pottery sherds. The dimensions, fabric and method of construction of the walls were identical, suggesting that they belong to the same phase of building. The bricks used in their construction were the same as those used to construct the walls in Trench 1, and they were also bonded with lime mortar. The bond type was two headers and one stretcher.

Between the two walls and beneath layers of demolition debris and soil there were the remains of a tarmac surface (209) which overlay a cobbled surface (208). They are the remnants of former farmyard surfaces. The tarmac surface dates to the 20th century, but the cobbled surface, which consisted of a layer of rounded pebbles and small cobbles embedded in the surface of the natural sandy silts, may date to the development of the early farm in the late 18th/19th centuries.

To the south-west of wall [205], at the south-west end of Trench 2, there was a layer of mid grey clayey silt (204) containing moderate small to medium rounded cobbles (Fig 3, section 1). This layer, which was up to 0.33m thick, was gleyed by groundwater; excavation of this deposit was hampered by flooding and groundwater seepage at this end of the trench, suggesting that this has long been a naturally wet area. Several sherds of pottery and tile fragments recovered from this layer ranged in date from the later medieval period through to the 19th century. The level of the base of this deposit was approximately 0.3m below that of the surface of the natural substrate to the north-east

of the wall. Therefore, this deposit may be a buried soil filling a natural depression or the fill of a cut feature, such as a borrow pit or a broad, shallow ditch. It was not possible to determine if it was a natural or cut feature as the slope between the two levels in the natural substrate had been truncated by the insertion of a ceramic land drain in a c 1m wide trench [216]. The land drain was aligned from east-south-east to west-north-west and passed beneath wall [205], indicating that the wall post-dates the land drain.

A ditch [309] passing through the centre of Trench 3 was still visible on the surface as a landscape feature, and corresponds with the hedgerow shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1886. The upper fill of the ditch (308) contained dumps of clinker, ash and modern rubbish. Due to flooding, the ditch could not be excavated by hand, but it probably relates to the post-medieval enclosure of the earlier open field system.

At the north-west end of Trench 1 there was an irregular, shallow oval feature [107] interpreted as a vegetation hollow, and a small oval pit [105] that contained a relatively modern animal burial, either a small dog or a cat. The bone was not collected. This trench also contained a 19th century ceramic land drain, passing down the centre of the trench on a north-west to south-east alignment.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery by Iain Soden

A total of eight sherds (109g) of pottery was recovered. These have been matched to the Warwickshire County Type Series, or CTS (Ratkai and Soden, unpublished, 1998). These divide up as follows:

Context 108

2 body-sherds of creamware (late 18th or possibly early 19th-century) CTS: CRW
 1 sherd of underglaze blue transfer-printed earthenware (19th century) CTS: MGW

Context 204

1 rim sherd of Warwickshire reduced sandy greyware (14th century) CTS: RS type – possibly RS021
 1 base sherd of Midland Blackware tyg (17th century) CTS: MB01
 1 body sherd of pancheon-type vessel (19th century) CTS: MB02
 2 body sherds of underglaze transfer printed earthenware (19th century) CTS: MGW

Both contexts date from the 19th century. The earlier material is residual. An absence of earlier features suggests that the earlier material may not derive from close by but have been imported by previous earth-moving. This small assemblage contains no significant material.

5.2 Brick and tile by Pat Chapman

Three fragments (203g) of undiagnostic roof tile were recovered from deposit (204) at the south-west end of Trench 2. Two are corner fragments; one has an orangey red sandy fabric with grog-like inclusions, the other a reddish orange sandy fabric. The third fragment comes from the edge of a tile and has a less sandy fabric, with a pinkish red core and a pale buff orange surface.

A sample brick from wall [109] was collected. The brick has a red sandy fabric with no obvious inclusions and measures 235 by 110 by 70mm (9^{1/4} by 4 by 2^{3/4} inches). Traces of lime mortar adhere to the surfaces. The dimensions of the brick and the lack of a 'frog' indicate a 17th to 18th century date, consistent with the known record of the farm.

6 DISCUSSION

The evaluation supported the findings of the earlier field investigation to the north of Plot 8 and the conclusions of the desk-based assessment. There was no evidence for prehistoric or Roman activity on the site, and the earliest archaeological feature was the later medieval or early post-medieval ridge and furrow earthworks, remnants of the open field system that was in use prior to enclosure.

The remains of Madam's Hill Farm were revealed, and were shown to have been thoroughly razed, with brickwork only surviving up to three courses at the most. The footings of a probable building, yard walls and remnants of farmyard surfaces were identified. Some areas had been truncated by large pits and backfilled with demolition rubble and the entire area of the former farm was covered with a layer of demolition debris and redeposited soil. It is likely that the farm was established when the land was enclosed, probably in the late 18th century.

The deposit at the south-west end of Trench 2 may be a buried soil filling a natural depression, or perhaps the fill of a borrow pit or a broad, shallow ditch defining the boundary of the yard prior to the construction of the yard walls in the 19th century. The residual sherds found in the deposit may have been introduced to the site by manuring.

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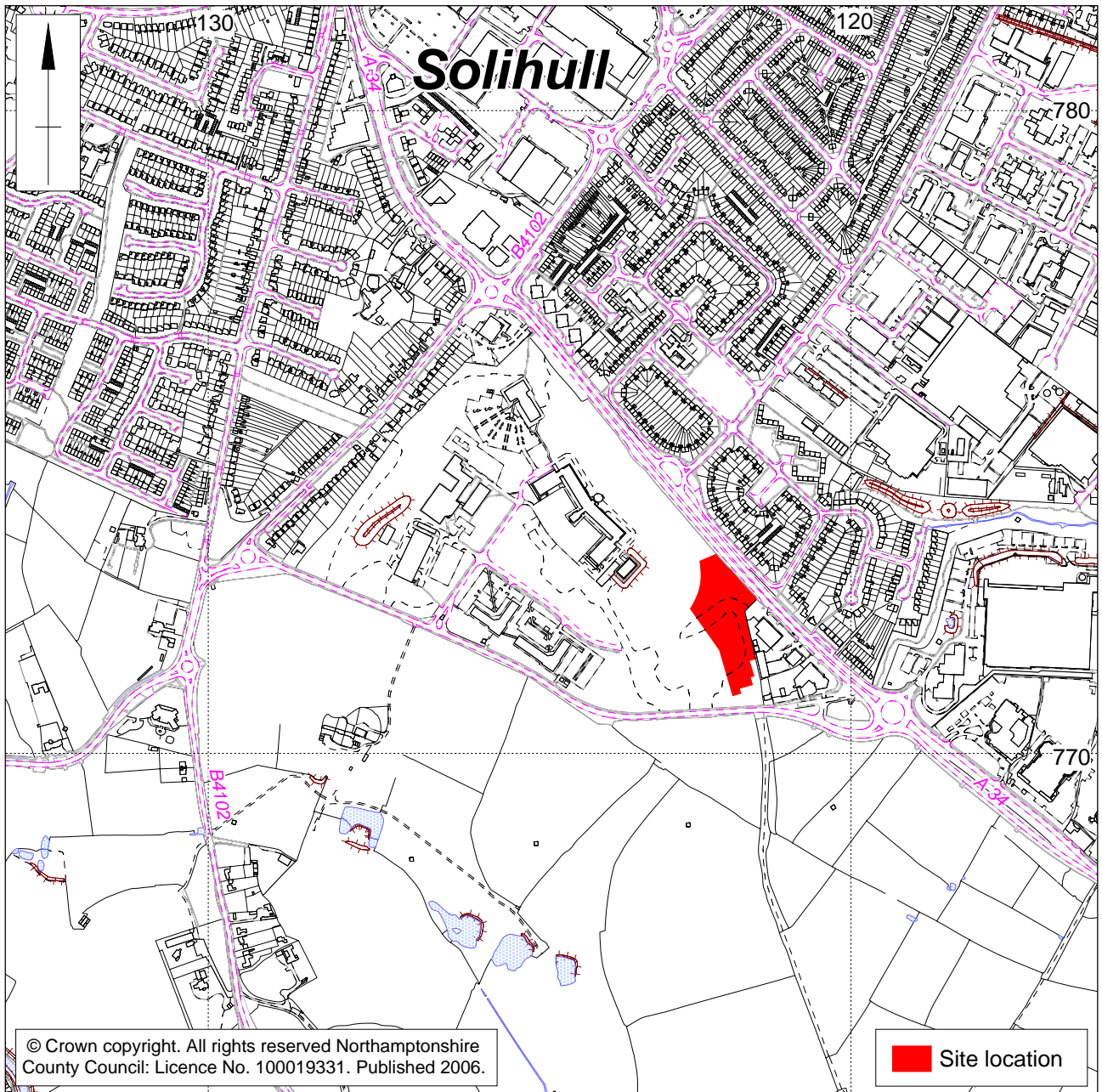
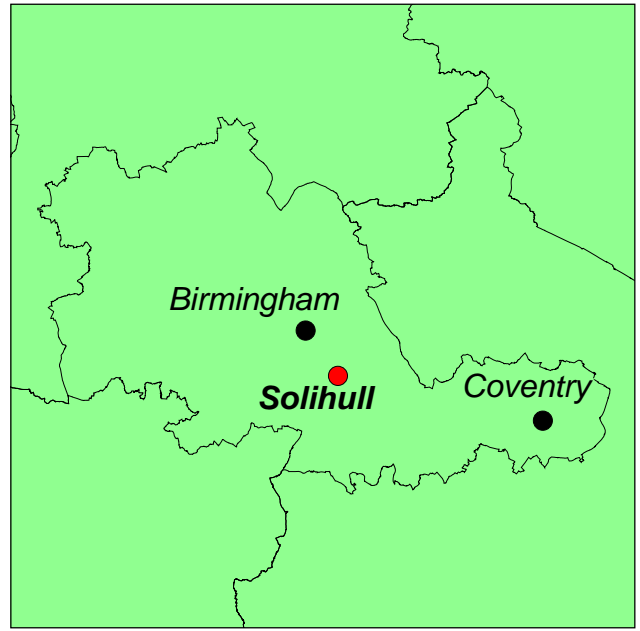
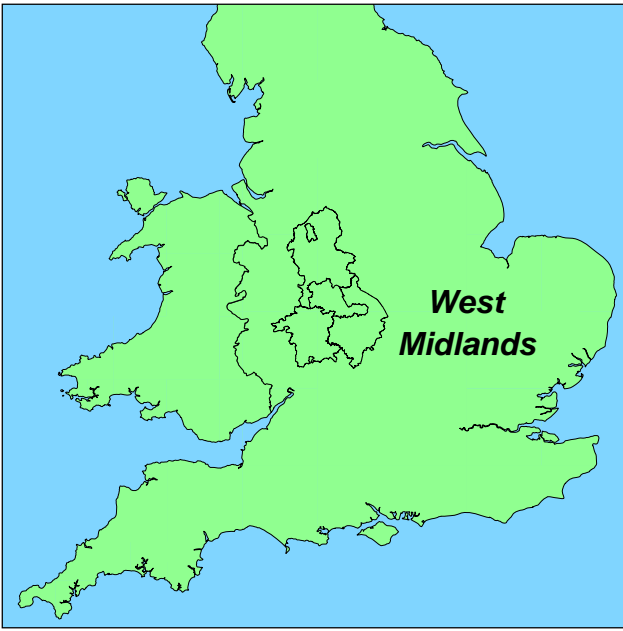
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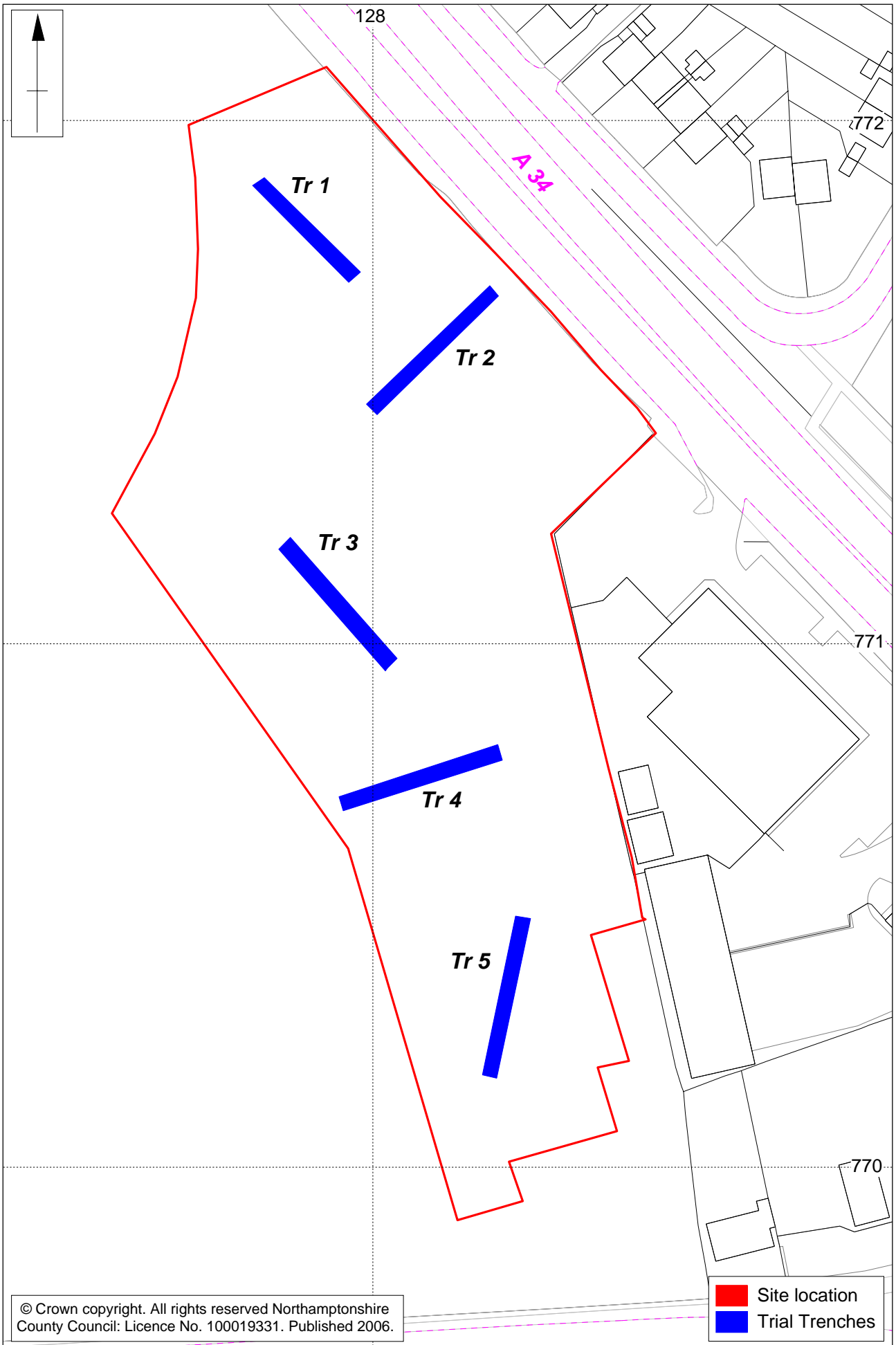
Maps

SSEW 1983, *Soils of Eastern England*, Soil Survey of England and Wales, Sheet 3, 1:250,000



Scale 1:10,000

Site Location Fig 1



Scale 1:1000

Locations of Trial Trenches Fig 2

APPENDIX 1

Summary of features

Abbreviations

P pottery; T tile; Pb lead; G glass; B bone.

Trench no.	Context no.	Feature type	Date	Finds
1	101	Topsoil	-	
	102	Subsoil	-	
	103	Natural substrate	-	
	104 [105]	Animal burial	Modern, 20 th century	G B
	106 [107]	Vegetation hollow	Undated	
	108	Demolition layer	Modern, 20 th century	P Pb
	[109]	Wall	Modern, 19 th century	
	110 [111]	Foundation trench	Modern, 19 th century	
	112 [113]	Pit	Modern, 20 th century	
2	201	Topsoil	-	
	202	Sand layer	Modern, 20 th century	
	203	Demolition layer	Modern, 20 th century	
	204	Layer?	Post-medieval/modern	P T
	[205]	Wall	Modern, 19 th century	
	206 [207]	Foundation trench	Modern, 19 th century	P
	208	Cobbled surface	Modern, 18 th /19 th century	
	209	Tarmac and sub-base	Modern, 20 th century	
	210	Natural substrate	-	
	211	Demolition layer	Modern, 20 th century	
	212	Wall	Modern, 19 th century	
	213 [214]	Foundation trench	Modern, 19 th century	
	3	301	Topsoil	-
302		Subsoil	-	
303		Natural substrate	-	
304 [305]		Furrow	Medieval	
306 [307]		Furrow	Medieval	
308 [309]		Ditch	Post-medieval/modern	
310		Demolition layer	Modern, 20 th century	
4		401	Topsoil	-
	402	Subsoil	-	
	403	Natural substrate	-	
	404 [405]	Furrow	Medieval	
	5	501	Topsoil	-

Trench no.	Context no.	Feature type	Date	Finds
	502	Subsoil	-	
	503	Natural substrate	-	
	504 [505]	Furrow	Medieval	
	506 [507]	Furrow	Medieval	
	508 [509]	Furrow	Medieval	
	510 [511]	Furrow	Medieval	
	512 [513]	Furrow	Medieval	