Northamptonshire County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology

Medieval activity
at Brown's Yard, North Street,
Burwell
Cambridgeshire
January 2004

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October 2006

Report 06/117

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NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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MEDIEVAL ACTIVITY AT BROWN'S YARD, NORTH STREET, BURWELL CAMBRIDGESHIRE

JANUARY 2004

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Brown's Yard, Burwell	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Between August 2003 and February 2004 Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an evaluation followed by open area excavation and further trenches on 0.8ha of development land at Brown's Yard, Burwell, on a plot of land at the corner of North Street and Wharf Lane. A series of parallel boundary ditches had its origins in the 12th-13th centuries AD. The archaeological evidence would suggest a progressive encroachment from the street frontage to the west. At the street frontage, there were two possible timber-framed buildings defined by narrow slots and postholes, which were possibly of medieval date, and certainly pre-dated the 17th century stone-built cottages that occupied the frontage until recently. Other features comprised inter-cutting pits and linear ditches dating from the late 12th to mid 16th-17th centuries. One of the post-medieval ditches appears to correspond to a ditch seen on 19th century maps. The archaeology on the site had been heavily truncated by modern disturbance in the form of rubbish pits, sunken fuel tanks and building foundations, most noticeable close to the frontage.	
Project type (eg DBA, evaluation etc)	Excavation	
Site status (none, NT, SAM etc)	none	
Previous work (SMR numbers etc)	Evaluation trenching	
Current Land use	Yards	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	No	
Monument type/ period	Medieval; post-medieval	
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	Medieval ditches and buildings	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Cambridgeshire	
Site address (including postcode)	Brown's Yard, Burwell	
Study area (sq.m or ha)		
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq. numbers)	NGR TL 58646 67263	
Height OD	5m a OD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Cambridgeshire County Council	
Project Design originator	CGMS	
Director/Supervisor	Ian Fisher	
Project Manager	Antony Walsh	
Sponsor or funding body	Twigden Homes Ltd	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	December 2003	
End date	January 2004	
ARCHIVES	**Location (Accession no.)**	**Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)**
Physical		
Paper		
Digital		
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Upublished client report (NA report)	
Title	Medieval activity at Brown's Yard, Burwell, Cambridgeshire	
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MEDIEVAL ACTIVITY AT BROWNS YARD, BURWELL CAMBRIDGESHIRE

ABSTRACT

Between August 2003 and February 2004 Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an evaluation followed by open area excavation and further trenches on 0.8ha of development land at Brown's Yard, Burwell, on a plot of land at the corner of North Street and Wharf Lane. A series of parallel boundary ditches had its origins in the 12th-13th centuries AD. The archaeological evidence would suggest a progressive encroachment from the street frontage to the west. At the street frontage, there were two possible timber-framed buildings defined by narrow slots and postholes, which were possibly of medieval date, and certainly pre-dated the 17th century stone-built cottages that occupied the frontage until recently. Other features comprised inter-cutting pits and linear ditches dating from the late 12th to mid 16th-17th centuries. One of the post-medieval ditches appears to correspond to a ditch seen on 19th century maps.

The archaeology on the site had been heavily truncated by modern disturbance in the form of rubbish pits, sunken fuel tanks and building foundations, most noticeable close to the frontage.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The circumstances leading to the excavation

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Twigden Homes Ltd to undertake an archaeological excavation, comprising open excavation and investigative trenching at Brown's Yard, Burwell, Cambridgeshire during December 2003 (NGR TL 58646 67263; Fig 1).

The work was undertaken in advance of proposed re-development of a former coal and fuel yard for residential housing on land occupying approximately 0.83ha, previously occupied by Browns of Burwell. Structures present on the former Brown's Yard included industrial buildings, vehicle inspection pits, subterranean fuel tanks and concrete yards supplied by numerous services. However, an archaeological trial trench evaluation undertaken during August 2003 showed that some archaeological remains had survived this truncation. Evidence of medieval ditches, pits and postholes, dating from the 12th to the 16th centuries, was found (NA 2003).

The work was undertaken to meet the requirements of a brief issued by the Development Control Archaeologist for Cambridgeshire County Council and in accordance with the specific requirements as issued by English Heritage (2001 and 1991) and the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1999).

1.2 Topography and geology

The proposed development site is located in the north-western part of the village of Burwell, Cambridgeshire, adjacent to the border of Suffolk. It is situated on the western side of North Street, one of the three main settlement areas within the village. The site is situated immediately to the east of a sinuous watercourse, known as The Weirs, on the fen edge on the outskirts of the Saxon town, close to the remains of a haven that was linked to the River Cam. The ground lies at approximately 5m above Ordnance Datum and rises gradually to the south-east and east.

The natural geology of the site comprised gleyic rendzinas of the Burwell series (once thick peat) over soft white weathered argillaceous chalk of the Lower Chalk (NA 2004). The excavated site covers c0.83 ha in total.

1.3 Archaeological background

The proposed development plot lies within an area rich in archaeological remains on the fen edge, an area long favoured for settlement, agriculture and industrial activity. Large quantities of stone tools dating to the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods have been found, but are concentrated to the east of Burwell (Hall 1996). A probable late Neolithic and early Bronze Age settlement lies in Hallard's Fen, where large numbers of flint and stone tools have been found. Bronze Age activity in the surrounding area is represented by a number of small hoards, a torc and, before they were largely ploughed out, many barrows, ring-ditches and other cropmarks, especially on the higher ground (ibid).

The site lies 250m south-east of a prehistoric and Romano-British site (SMR 8122-24), where late Neolithic and early Bronze Age activity was identified, along with Iron Age and Roman ditch systems. A hoard of fifteen bronze bowls dating to the 4th century AD was also recovered. There are many Roman remains in the general area and finds of pottery and various building materials are often made, including beneath the castle, indicating the presence of a substantial settlement in the vicinity.

Although no Saxon settlement remains have so far been found within the village, a Saxon cemetery, located north of the church, was found in c1885 near the village's clunch pits. At

least 137 inhumations of both sexes were discovered between 1885 and 1929, most during excavations conducted in 1925-1929. It is believed that Burwell originally developed between the 6th and 8th centuries along High Street, around the church. Between the 9th and 11th centuries settlement extended to the north, along High Street, perhaps focused on the former church of St Andrew, with 'greens' to the north and south.

Burwell was first recorded in 1060. The name means 'spring by the burg', although it is not clear what in the area would occasion the name of a burgh in the Saxon period, since the local topography has no dominant hills or spurs (Reaney 1943). Burwell was recorded as Burewelle in the Domesday Book, when it was held by the Abbott of Ramsey. Ramsey Abbey continued to hold the largest manorial desmesne in Burwell during the medieval period, with its main gains from wheat, dredge (a mixture of various grains including barley and oats) and malted barley (VCH 2002).

The medieval core of the village was centred in High Town near the two parish churches, and it is here that an uncompleted castle is located, built by King Stephen in the mid 12th century against Geoffrey de Mandeville (SMR 15418). It appears that part of the early settlement was destroyed during the construction of the castle, since excavations have revealed structural evidence, consisting of crofts and two houses, lying beneath it. The site itself is situated at some distance from the medieval core of Burwell.

North Street, the area in which Brown's Yard is located, is known to have been in existence since at least 1350 and it has been suggested that it may have been developed from the 13th century to provide access for the villagers to the water in order that they may deal in, or exploit by boat, locally-grown produce (VCH 2002). The expansion of the village, however, may have been due to increased population pressure at this time and appears to have been part of an unplanned growth. The expansion seems to have taken place over former strip fields, since the slightly sinuous route of North Street closely follows a parallel former headland and may have been itself a headland with strip fields either side.

During the 14th and 15th centuries the waterways were used to transport grain from Burwell to the monastic abbey at Ramsey c35km to the north-west. This reliance on waterborne transport resulted in a characteristic pattern of long, narrow closes leading west from North Street towards a series of weirs. Several of the private waterways led to a watercourse called Burwell Lode. The site is situated almost adjacent to Hythe Lane, which follows the line of a former public wharf, dating back to at least the 15th century, and which indicates its potential for commercial or domestic remains relating to riverside activity.

2 THE EXCAVATION AND RECORDING

2.1 Aims and objectives

The main objective of the excavation was to determine and understand the nature, function and character of the site in its cultural and environmental setting. The objectives, as stated in the project design (CgMs 2003), were as follows:

- *Determine the date and character of the Saxon and medieval activity at the site as suggested by the boundary features seen in Trenches 1 and 4 of the evaluation and the pits seen in Trenches 1, 3 and 5.*
- *Determine the date and character of the medieval activity at the site, particularly post-built structures and the various cut features*
- *Obtain a chronological sequence for the human activity on the site and place within its regional context(s).*

Topsoil was removed by machine under archaeological supervision to reveal the first significant archaeological layer or the natural substrate, depending on which was encountered first. Where necessary the archaeological surface was cleaned by hand. The site was planned at a scale of 1:100 and where necessary, complex features were planned at scales of between 1:10 and 1:50. All discrete features were sectioned and where they formed part of recognisable structures, contained deposits of particular value or significant artefactual or environmental assemblages, they were fully excavated. Approximately 5% of the length of each linear feature was sectioned, away from intersections with other features or deposits to obtain unmixed samples of material. This was increased to 20% where the features were associated with settlement, industrial activities or areas of specific activity.

A unique context number in a single continuous sequence was allocated to each distinct deposit and feature. Soil samples of a minimum 40*l* were taken from dateable contexts with a potential for the recovery of charcoal and carbonised plant remains. A full photographic record comprising both 35mm monochrome negatives, with associated prints, and colour transparencies was maintained.

All works were conducted in accordance with IFA *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Excavations* (1994, revised 2001) and the *Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists* (1985, revised 2000). In addition, all works complied with the guidelines detailed in *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2002). All procedures complied with the Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions

and Northamptonshire Archaeology Health and Safety at Work Guidelines. Monitoring of the programme of fieldwork was carried out by Cambridgeshire County Council.

2.2 Site Summary

A number of Neolithic and Bronze Age worked flints, including a barbed and tanged arrowhead, a blade and a possible burin, were found as residual items in later features, providing further evidence of a human presence in the area at this period. The recovery of two sherds of Roman pottery are probably representative of Roman activity in the general area and are not in themselves indicative of actual settlement on the site.

The recovery of Stamford and Thetford wares suggests that there may have been pre-conquest activity on the site, although both wares were still in use throughout the 11th century. The earliest archaeological features were a number of parallel, north-south aligned ditches clustered to the west of the site and dating to the 12th to 13th centuries (Fig 2). These may represent successive property boundaries or drainage ditches, indicating reclamation of the land for agricultural purposes. A possible structure to the north-east of the site, and the subsequent gullies which truncated it, were also dated to this first phase.

Phase 2/3 was represented by a pit to the north-east of the site (Fig 2). The primary fill contained a near-complete Ely ware jar and, together with other pottery, dated this first infilling of the pit to the 13th-14th centuries. The upper fill of the pit, however, contained pottery dating to the mid 15th-16th centuries.

Phase 3 consisted of two sinuous ditches situated in the eastern part of the site (Fig 3). A possible timber building, defined by a slot and a series of postholes, lay at the street frontage of the site. It was tentatively dated to the mid 15th-16th centuries. This building pre-dates the 17th century cottages that occupied the frontage until recently.

Due to the comparative scarcity of pottery and lack of stratigraphy on the site, some of the features have been placed in phases based on their spatial relationships. However, there are a number of features where even this was not possible and they have remained unphased.

2.3 The Medieval boundaries (12th to 13th Century)

A series of parallel ditches aligned north-east to south-west across the site were broadly dated to the 12th or 13th centuries (Figs 2 and 3). They were situated on an almost perpendicular axis to the current northern and southern boundaries of the site, indicating that the current layout of the plot mirrors the alignment of the early medieval closes. The ditches were generally steep-sided

with flat bases, measuring between 1.5-2.2m wide and 0.50-1.18m deep. The fills were composed of compacted mid grey silty clays. Only small quantities of 12th and 13th century pottery were found in the ditches, indicating their relative distance from occupation. Three of the ditches were traced throughout the whole width of the various excavation areas.

Ditch [1170] was traced for over 40m and was the most substantial of this group of ditches, becoming deeper and wider to the south; measuring up to 2.20m wide and 1.18m deep in a section to the south (Fig 3 and Fig 5, Section 1). The character of the fills did not vary greatly throughout its length, being generally composed of similar primary, and sometimes secondary, fills composed of pale or mid grey silty clays. At the southern limit of excavation the ditch appeared to be turning to the west. A similarly aligned ditch was found during the evaluation, also associated with a possible 12th century north-south aligned ditch ([405 and 409], Fig 3).

One of the western ditches exhibited evidence of a re-cut ([1174], Fig 3). It was steep-sided with a flat base, measured 1.95m wide and 0.67m deep, with a single fill composed of compact mid brown clay silt. This was largely truncated by re-cut [1247], with similar steep sides and flat base. It measured 1.58m wide and 0.56m deep. The primary fill was mid grey silty clay with pale grey chalky grey mottling, while the secondary fill was a compact mid grey clay silt and the upper fill was a moderately compact mid grey clay silt. Although several sherds of 12th century pottery were retrieved from the uppermost fill, the fills were mostly devoid of any artefacts.

A number of smaller gullies located in the western part of the site were similarly aligned and may belong in this early phase of activity; however, since they did not contain any pottery or other cultural artefacts, it has not been possible to positively date them.

To the east, there was a short section of north-east to south-west aligned ditch, dated to this phase by a single sherd of pottery ([1054], Fig 4). It was at least 1.80m wide and 0.33m deep. The surviving southern edge was fairly steep leading gradually to a concave, but irregular, base. The single fill was composed of fairly compact pale grey clay with no inclusions. The ditch had later been re-cut in phase 3 ([1052], Fig 4). Part of a possibly parallel ditch was found in Trench 6 to the south during the evaluation.

2.4 The medieval and later buildings (12th to 17th Century)

There was some evidence of settlement activity towards the frontage of the site, to the north-east. A shallow, broad pit ([1070], Fig 4 and Fig 5, Section 2), was at least 4.30m in diameter and 0.36m deep. The mid brown silty clay fills were banded with frequent deposits of natural, as well as small pieces of soft sandstone. The upper fill of the pit contained a fairly large

assemblage of pottery. Although it included a Stamford ware rim, most of the pottery dated to the 12th-13th centuries. Three parallel, south-east to north-west aligned slots were set around 2.50m apart and may represent sill-beam slots for a small building set just back from the frontage of North Street. The southernmost slot had steep, almost vertical sides and a flat base and measured 0.74m wide and 0.38m deep ([1083], Fig 4 and Fig 5, Section 2). The fill was soft darkish brown silty clay. The other two slots were largely truncated by later features but appeared morphologically similar ([1060 and 1068], Fig 5, Section 2).

The central slot was later truncated by a wide, shallow ditch which was 2.50m wide and at least 0.30m deep with steep sides and a flat base ([1066], Fig 4 and Fig 5, Section 2). This was in turn truncated by a very wide, shallow feature [1044]. A further narrow gully was located to the north ([1057], Fig 4 and Fig 5, Section 2). All the gullies and slots were aligned generally south-east to north-west and dated to the 12th-13th centuries, indicating a brief, but intensive, period of activity.

On the frontage of North Street to the south-east (Fig 4) was a single, heavily truncated, narrow and steep-sided slot measuring up to 13m long by up to 0.5m wide and 0.2m deep with fills of grey brown clay silt was located. A second slot, branching off at right angles, was also found in the evaluation. A number of largely truncated postholes, measuring up to 0.60m wide and 0.26m, were located to the south of the slot. Although no regular, structural form could be discerned it is likely that the postholes and the slot defined the plan of a building. It was dated to the 16th century by a single sherd of pottery from one of the postholes, but would have been demolished by the 17th century, when a series of buildings were constructed that were demolished only recently.

A small pit was found to the north of the slot in the evaluation ([720], Fig 4). The natural clay on the base of the pit had been heavily burnt to form a hardened surface, dark red to grey in colour. The pit was filled by a mixed, friable very light grey and patchy mid grey silty clay with a concentration of charcoal rich silt to the south. The burning may indicate that the pit held a hearth or small oven.

2.5 Later medieval and post-medieval features

A large pit located to the east of the northern building measured 2.52m long, 1.45m wide and 0.95m deep ([1146], Fig 4). The pit appeared to have been used as a rubbish or cess pit and contained one of the largest artefact assemblages on the site. The primary fill of the pit was 0.15m deep and was composed of loose reddish brown loam with occasional large pieces of clunch. Pottery from this fill was dated to the 13th or 14th centuries. The upper fill was a firm

mid grey silty clay with moderate sized pieces of clunch. The pottery assemblage dated the upper fill to the mid 15th-mid 16th centuries. Within the assemblage were two near complete Ely ware jars. The disparity in dates between the fills is unusual, especially given the large amounts of pottery recovered from the feature and may indicate a hiatus in occupation at the site where the pit was left open, before being finally backfilled. Certainly no other features from the 14th to mid 15th centuries were found on site.

Two ditches were dated to the mid 15th-16th centuries at the east end of the site. The northern ditch was aligned north-west to south-east and continued beyond the limit of excavation to the north-west ([1073], Fig 4). It measured up to 0.56m wide and only 0.10m deep and had a single fill made up of a firm mid grey clay. The southern ditch was aligned east to west ([1052], Fig 4). It appeared to be a re-cut of a ditch from an earlier phase, although only a short length of both ditches had survived. The ditch was 1.20m wide and 0.43m deep with shallow, irregular sides leading onto a concave base.

A large, irregular, north-east to south-west aligned ditch was located to the west of the site ([207], Fig 3). Excavated during the evaluation, it was up to 5.0m wide with a moderately steep east side and a flat base, 0.9m deep. Although the fill contained two sherds of 16th century pottery, a 19th century clay tobacco-pipe bowl was also recovered.

3 THE FINDS

3.1 The flint by Bill Boisimer

A total of twenty two pieces of flint were recovered as residual items in features of medieval or later date. This total included three pieces recovered from processing of the bulk soil samples. The remainder of the samples were devoid of either burnt or unburnt worked flint.

The raw material typically has a mottled bluish grey to white patina. The group contains two irregular shattered pieces and a possible core. The barbed and tanged arrowhead has had one barb snapped off and the blade has post-depositional damage along one edge. With the exception of the blade fragment, damage to the assemblage was relatively minor, being restricted to isolated small nicks. Four of the flints were burnt.

While this is a small group, the date range is likely to be late Neolithic to early Bronze Age.

3.2 The pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 191 sherds with a total weight of 7,081g. The estimated vessel equivalent (EVE), by summation of surviving rim sherd circumference was 4.12. All the pottery was Saxo-Norman or later, with the exception of two sherds of Romano-British material. The medieval assemblage is dominated by unglazed wares, particularly jars, and a small number of near-complete vessels were noted.

Fabric

The following were present:

F205: *Stamford Ware* (Kilmurry 1980). c.AD900-1200. Wheel-thrown. White, pink, buff or grey fabric, usually with sparse to dense quartz up to 0.5mm, occasional black or red ironstone up to 1mm. Often glazed with yellow, pale or sage green glaze. 1 sherd, 24g, EVE = 0.19.

F300: *Quartz and flint-tempered ware,*?medieval. Local? Reduced fabric, sparse to moderate sub-rounded quartz up to 0.5mm, rare to sparse angular white flint up to 1mm. Rare rounded calcareous material up to 1mm. 2 sherds, 57g, EVE = 0.

F301: *Chalk tempered ware*. ?Early medieval. Sparse angular chalk fragments up to 2mm, sparse sub-rounded quartz up to 0.5mm, moderate silver mica. 1 sherd, 22g, EVE = 0.15.

F302: *Ironstone ware,* ?medieval. Local? Sparse to moderate sub-angular black ironstone up to 1mm, moderate to dense sub-rounded quartz up to 0.5mm. Wheel finished. 69 sherds, 1,089g, EVE = 1.07.

F360: *Ely Ware*, mid 12th-15th century (Spoerry 2002). Generic name for a quartz sand and calcareous tempered group of pottery fabrics mainly manufactured in Ely, but also with a second possible source in the Hunts. Fenland. Jars, bowls and jugs dominate the assemblage. Earlier vessels hand-built and turntable finished, later vessel finer and usually wheel-thrown. Wide distribution, including King's Lynn, where it was originally identified as 'Grimston Software'.89 sherds, 5,113g, EVE = 2.65.

F328: *Grimston Ware:* 13th – 15th century (Leah 1994). Wheel-thrown. Dark grey sandy fabric, usually with grey surfaces, although orange-red and (less commonly) buff surfaces are known. Manufactured at the eponymous production centre near Kings Lynn, Norfolk. 2 sherds, 148g, EVE = 0.

F329: *Hedingham Ware*: Late 12th – 14th century. Fine orange micaceous glazed ware (McCarthy and Brooks 1988, 300-2). 8 sherds, 162g, EVE = 0.

F335: *Cambridgeshire Sgraffito Ware*. 14th – 15th century (McCarthy and Brooks 1988, 424-5). Fairly hard, smooth red fabric, outer surface of vessels covered in a white slip through which designs were incised to reveal the body clay, the whole covered in a yellow glaze which occasionally has green copper-spotting. Fairly common in Cambridgeshire, although the production source is as yet unknown. 1 sherd, 15g, EVE = 0.06.

F401: *Bourne 'D' Ware:* c. 1450-1637 (McCarthy and Brooks 1988, 409). Production as the 'A' ware. Fairly hard, smooth, brick-red fabric, often with a grey core. Some vessels have sparse calcitic inclusions up to 2mm. Full range of late medieval to early post-medieval vessel forms, jugs, pancheons, cisterns etc. Vessels often have a thin, patchy exterior white slip, over which a clear glaze had been applied. 1 sherd, 77g, EVE = 0.

F425: *Red Earthenware*, 16th – 19th century. Fine sandy earthenware, usually with a brown or green glaze, occurring in a range of utilitarian forms. Such 'country pottery' was first made in the 16th century, and in some areas continued in use until the 19th century. 9 sherds, 168g.
F420: *Westerwald/Cologne stoneware*. German import (Gaimster 1997). Hard, dense white fabric, usually decorated with cobalt blue slip. Later examples can have manganese purple slip. The ware was first produced c.1680 (Jennings 1981, 123-127), and is still in production today. 1 sherd, 17g, EVE = 0.
F1000: *Miscellaneous 19th and 20th century wares*. 5 sherds, 116g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type for the excavation is shown in Table 4. Each date should be regarded as a terminus post quem. The range of fabric types is fairly typical of this area of Cambridgeshire, and generally reflects the picture gained from the evaluation excavation (Table 5).

Chronology and occurrence

The data in Table 1 shows that the majority of the assemblage is medieval, and dates to before the 14th century. The presence of a Stamford ware rim, along with a single sherd of Thetford ware (Rogerson and Dallas 1984) from the evaluation excavation, suggests that there may have been pre-conquest activity at the site, although both ware types were still in use in the later 11th century.

There is a smaller amount of material dating to the late medieval and early post-medieval periods, but much of that is residual, and suggests that activity at the site was at an extremely low level by that time.

Table 1: Ceramic phase definitions and pottery occurrence per phase

Phase	*Date*	*Defining Wares*	*No*	*Wt*	*EVE*
CP1	?12th C	Medieval Coarsewares	27	493	0.23
CP2	L 12th – 13th C	Hedingham Ware	28	1029	0.73
CP3	13th - 14th C	Grimston Ware	79	4410	2.41
CP4	14th – M 15th C	Cambridge Sgraffito Ware	1	15	0.06
CP5	M 15th – M 16th C	Bourne 'D' Ware	39	766	0.75
CP6	M 16th – 17th C	Red Earthenwares	6	128	0

The data in Table 2 shows that the earlier medieval assemblage is dominated by coarsewares, and glazed wares such as Hedingham and Grimston are generally scarce. The assemblage is dominated by two near-complete Ely ware jars, and a large fragment of a large bowl in the same fabric. The two jars are heavily sooted, although there is no obvious signs of internal lime-scaling or residue.

Table 2: Pottery Occurrence by Major Fabric Type per Phase. Expressed as a percentage of the entire phase assemblage

Phase	*F300*	*F302*	*F360*	*F329*	*F328*	*F335*	*F401*	*F425*	*Total Wt*
CP1	9.7%	37.9%	47.9%	-	-	-	-	-	493g
CP2	0	9.0%	72.9%	15.7%	-	-	-	-	1029g
CP3	0	9.0%	87.7%	0	3.4%	-	-	-	4410g
CP4	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	0
CP5	0	53.9%	34.0%	0	0	2.0%	10.0%	-	766g
CP6	7.0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	93.0%	128g

The data in Table 3 generally reflects that in Tables 1 and 2. The assemblage is dominated by jars throughout the medieval period, with only the CP2 data showing a broader spread. This is fairly typical of patterns of medieval vessel consumption generally, although jugs tend to show a greater representation through time.

Table 3: Vessel occurrence per medieval phase, by EVE

Phase	*Jars*	*Bowls*	*Jugs*	*Other*	*Total EVE*
CP1	65.2%	34.8%	0	0	0.23
CP2	32.9%	41.1%	26.0%	0	0.73
CP3	100%	0	0	0	2.41
CP5	92.0%	0	8.0%	0	0.75
Total EVE	3.49	0.38	0.25	0	4.12

Table 4: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

	RB		*F205*		*F300*		*F301*		*F302*		*F360*		*F328*		*F329*		*F335*		*F401*		*F425*		*F420*		*19th*		
Context	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*Date*
1024									23	383	5	241	1	140													CP3
1035																					4	49	1	17	4	76	19thC?
1043											2	33															CP1
1046											3	22			1	4											CP2
1051																					2	59					CP6
1053											1	4															CP1
1058													1	6													CP2
1059																									1	40	19thC
1063									3	35																	CP1
1065											1	23															CP1
1067											6	68															CP1
1069											1	104															CP1
1071			1	24					7	79	5	85			4	113											CP2
1072																					2	20					CP6
1082											1	6															CP1
1087											1	2			1	37											CP2
1098					1	9															1	40					CP6
1115									6	36																	CP1
1125					1	48																					CP1
1144									21	413	16	261					1	15	1	77							CP5
1145									3	13	46	3625	1	8													CP3
1182							1	22																			CP1
1183									3	110	1	4															CP1
1191	2	73																									RB??
1200									2	14	1	641			1	2											CP2

	RB		*F205*		*F300*		*F301*		*F302*		*F360*		*F328*		*F329*		*F335*		*F401*		*F425*		*F420*		*19th*		
Context	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*Date*
Total	2	73	1	24	2	57	1	22	68	1083	90	5119	3	154	7	156	1	15	1	77	9	168	1	17	5	116	

Table 5: Pottery from the evaluation excavation, occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

	Thetford		*F300*		*F302*		*F360*		*F329*		*F425*		
Context	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*Date*
108			1	12									Med?
110					2	10			1	7			L12thC?
205							1	24					13thC?
208									1	94	1	41	16thC?
408									1	1			L12thC?
611	1	4					1	2					12thC?
706											1	19	16thC?
Total	1	4	1	12	2	10	2	26	3	102	2	60	

3.3 The other finds by Tora Hylton

The entire assemblage comprises nails and small undiagnostic fragments of iron. In total there are 11 objects, 4 were recovered from medieval deposits (1067, 1076, 1200) and 7 from 19th century deposits (1035, 1144). Two nails with square-sectioned shanks and flat sub-circular heads were recovered from medieval deposits (1067, 1076), both are incomplete and measure up to 35mm in length. In addition, there 2 undiagnostic rod fragments. Four nails and 3 small undiagnostic fragments were recovered from 19th century deposits. Two of the nails have large sub-circular heads with large shanks and may be studs.

4 THE FAUNAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

4.1 The animal bone by Karen Deighton

Method

A total of 2.6KG of animal bone were hand recovered from the excavation. These were scanned to determine the species present and state of preservation. Identifiable bones were noted (Table 6). Ageable and measurable bones (after Von Den Driesch 1976) were also noted (Table 7). Ageable elements included cheek tooth rows; bones where the state of fusion is apparent and neonatal bones. Hand collected bones had previously been washed.

Results

Preservation

Fragmentation was fairly heavy. A moderate proportion of fresh breaks were noted which probably occurred during excavation.

Bone surfaces were abraded. Five instances of canid gnawing were observed. No evidence of butchery were noted, this was possibly due to the poor surface condition of the material. No evidence of burning was noted.

Table 6: Identifiable bones by phase

Context	*Feature*	*Bos*	*Ovicaprid*	*Sus*	*Equus*	*Canis*	*Large ungulate*	*Small ungulate*	*Total*
1035	Ditch	3	2	2			1	3	11
1064	Pit	1					2		3
1071	Pit	1			1				2
1072	Ditch	1							1
1076	Pit			1					1
1103	Gully					1*			1
1125	Boundary Ditch	1							1
1144	Pit	1							1
1170	Boundary Ditch	5			1				6
1182	Boundary Ditch	5	1						6
1191	Boundary Ditch				1				1
1199	Boundary Ditch	1							1
1200	Boundary Ditch			1					1
1218	Boundary Ditch	1							1
Total		20	3	4	3	1	3	3	37

*Partial skeleton consisting of proximal humerii, scapulae, an ulna fragment, rib fragments and 2 vertebra.

Table 7: Number of ageable and measurable bones by taxa

Taxon	*Bos*	*Ovicaprid*	*Sus*	*Equus*	*Canis*
Ageable	5	1	2	2	1
Measurable		2	3	4	6

Discussion

The assemblage represents the major domesticates only (cattle, sheep/goat, pig, horse and dog). The small size of the assemblage restricts conclusions regarding the zooarchaeology of the site to the fact that a small range of domesticates were present.

4.2 The charred plant remains by Karen Deighton

Method

Forty-five (twenty litre) samples were hand collected from a range of features during the course of excavation. Five samples were duplicates. Analysis was undertaken to establish the nature, preservation and presence of ecofacts and their potential contribution to the understanding of the function and economy of the site.

Fourteen samples were selected for processing. Where samples were from different sections of the same ditch or were taken from adjacent features only one was selected for processing. Due to the heavy clay matrix and the difficulties this incurs for processing, only ten litres of each selected sample were processed. Processing for charred plant remains used a modified siraf tank fitted with a 500-micron mesh and flot sieve. For snails, 1 litre subsamples were washed over a stack of sieves (3.4mm-500 microns). The resulting flots were dried and analysed using a microscope (10x magnification). Residues were scanned. Any burnt flint present in the residues was also recorded.

Results

Preservation

Preservation of grains was by charring; these were much abraded making identification difficult. Charcoal was very fragmented. Fragmentation of molluscs was fairly moderate with 50-75 % complete or enough for identification.

Taxonomic distribution

Table 8: Ecofacts by sample and context

Sample	*Context*	*Feature*	*Volume*	*Molluscs*	*Charcoal*	*Cereal*	*Other*
3	1048	Pit	10	5		2	Sm.mammal
6	1148	Pit	10	4		+	
7	1153	Gully	10	6			
10	1157	Well	10	6			Indet wood fragments
13	1107	Vegetation hollow	10	6			Burnt flint
14	1108	Vegetation hollow	10	7			
15	1123	Boundary Ditch	10	6		1	
23	1163	Pit	10	6	+		
33	1208	Gully	10	7		+	
34	1189	Vegetation hollow	10	3			
39	1199	Boundary Ditch	10	7	2	+	
40	1197	Boundary Ditch	10	7			
42	1234	Pit	10	7			
43	1231	Pit	10	5			

Key
+=present, 1=1-10, 2=10-20, 3=20-30, 4=30-40, 5=40-50, 6=50-100, 7=100-200, 8=200-500, 9=500-1000, 10=1000+

Discussion

The cereal grains present in pit (1048) appeared to be barley (Hordeum sp), a staple crop for the medieval period (Table 8). The presence of the grains in a well would suggest refuse disposal of accidentally burned material after the well falls into disuse. Alternately with such low numbers of grains these could represent sweeping while the well is still in use.

The snail taxa present included the following land species Cochlicopa lubrica/lubricella, Vertigo pygmaea, Cepaea cf nemoralis, Ceciliodes asicula, Discus rotundatus, pos Carychium tridentatum, Clausilia bidentata and Helix aspersa (common garden snail). Fresh water species included Bithynia spp, Lymnaea spp, Planorbis spp., Ram's horn snails (Planorbis) and small bivalves (Valvata sp). Cursory molluscan analysis indicates a damp environment with water filled ditches. The Planorbids are often characteristic of slow flowing, well vegetated ditches.

C.tridentatum and *D.rotundatus* are both shade lovers. *C.tridentatum* prefers damp grassland and *D.rotundatus* likes damp herbage and ground litter. Again *C.bidentata* inhabits moist places amongst rocks and hedge banks. *H.aspersa, Cochlicopa spp* and *C.nemoralis* are all catholic in their habitat tolerances. Although *V.pygmaea* is characteristic of open country and dry calcareous grassland, it is also occasionally found in marshes.

5 DISCUSSION

The only evidence for prehistoric activity on the site was a small assemblage of worked flint, dated to the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age, found as residual artefacts in later contexts. There was little evidence for Saxon settlement on site, although the recovery of some possible sherds of Saxon pottery indicates that there may have been settlement in the vicinity.

Although the excavations at Browns Yard revealed only fragmentary remains of medieval and post-medieval occupation, they provide an important insight into the medieval expansion of the village beyond its core in High Town and the subsequent development of the area.

Prior to the excavation the initial development of settlement along North Street was thought to date from sometime in the 13th century. It was separated from the older part of the village by a distance of only 100 metres and it appears that Ramsey Abbey, the principle landholder in the area, allowed expansion of the village onto the open fields in North Field. The development occurred on either side of a track that lay parallel to, and followed the course of, a headland to the east. Indeed, it is possible that the track had itself originally been a headland (Taylor 1983). By 1351, the track had become known as North Street to the south and *Braddeye* or *Bradweye* (Broad Way) to the north (Franklin 2005).

Evidence from the excavation at Browns Yard, however, shows that there was some degree of settlement in this area from the 12th century at least and possibly back into the late Saxon period. The orientation of the boundaries and the location of the structures in relation to the modern property boundaries and road-line indicate that the track which was to become North Street had already been laid out. This extension of the village streets may have been to accommodate a growing population in the 12th and 13th century and is seen elsewhere in the country, the closest example probably being at Cottenham to the west, where the village expansion similarly appears to have taken place over former arable fields (Platt 2001). It has been suggested that the expansion at Cottenham began in the 'Norman period' (Ravensdale 1974).

Clearly if North Street was developed out of the open field system, the land to the east, at least, was dry enough to cultivate prior to the 12th century, even though it was probably the mid 13th century before any concerted effort was made to drain the fen edges. One of the projects that may have been undertaken during the 13th century was the construction of a watercourse that separated the land from the fen at the fen edge and which collected the water from the many small streams that meandered across the fen (Franklin 2005). Today the water course is known as the Catchwater for some of its course, and The Weirs for the remainder, which is the stream to the west of the site. This may be the stretch of water referred to as Wydewereswater in a

document of 1353 (ibid). The name may indicate that this was a faster flowing stretch of water where fish and eel traps could be placed.

The boundary ditches seen on the site may indicate that the development that had begun on North Street before the construction of The Weirs, and by extension The Hythe, represent an early attempt to drain the land sufficiently prior to the large-scale drainage. When The Weirs were constructed in the 13th century these ditches would have become redundant.

There appears to have been a hiatus in activity on the site between the mid 14th and 15th centuries, which may relate to a general recession that the economy of England experienced during this period. This has been ascribed to a number of factors but it seems to have been related to issues of overpopulation combined with a period of climatic downturn resulting in a number of poor harvests and, of course, the Black Death. Other instances of desertion and shrinkage have been noted at Stansted to the south, where three timber structures of 12th and 13th century date were abandoned in the 14th century (Glazebrook 1997) and at Oakington to the west, where a rise in the water-table during this period was seen as the reason for the desertion of the lower part of the village (Platt 2001).

The later, post-medieval ditches appear to have had their origins in the 15th-16th centuries, but map evidence suggests that at least one of the boundaries persisted into the 19th century (Figs 5 and 6). The curving ditch or fence shown to the north-east of the site on both the 1842 Tithe Map and the 1887 Ordnance Survey map appears to correlate neatly with the curvilinear ditch excavated on site. Since no later pottery was found in the fill of the ditch, it may have been replaced by a wall or fence after the 16th century. On the 1842 Tithe Map the boundary serves to divide the plot into two, with the northern plot consisting only of three buildings with a small back yard (plot 269 on map). The southern plot consists of the remaining frontage area, but extends back taking in the land immediately to the rear of plot 269. The probable north-south boundary ditch at the west of the site and from which 15th and 16th century pottery, as well as 19th century material, was found may correlate to the 19th century division also seen on the 1842 map.

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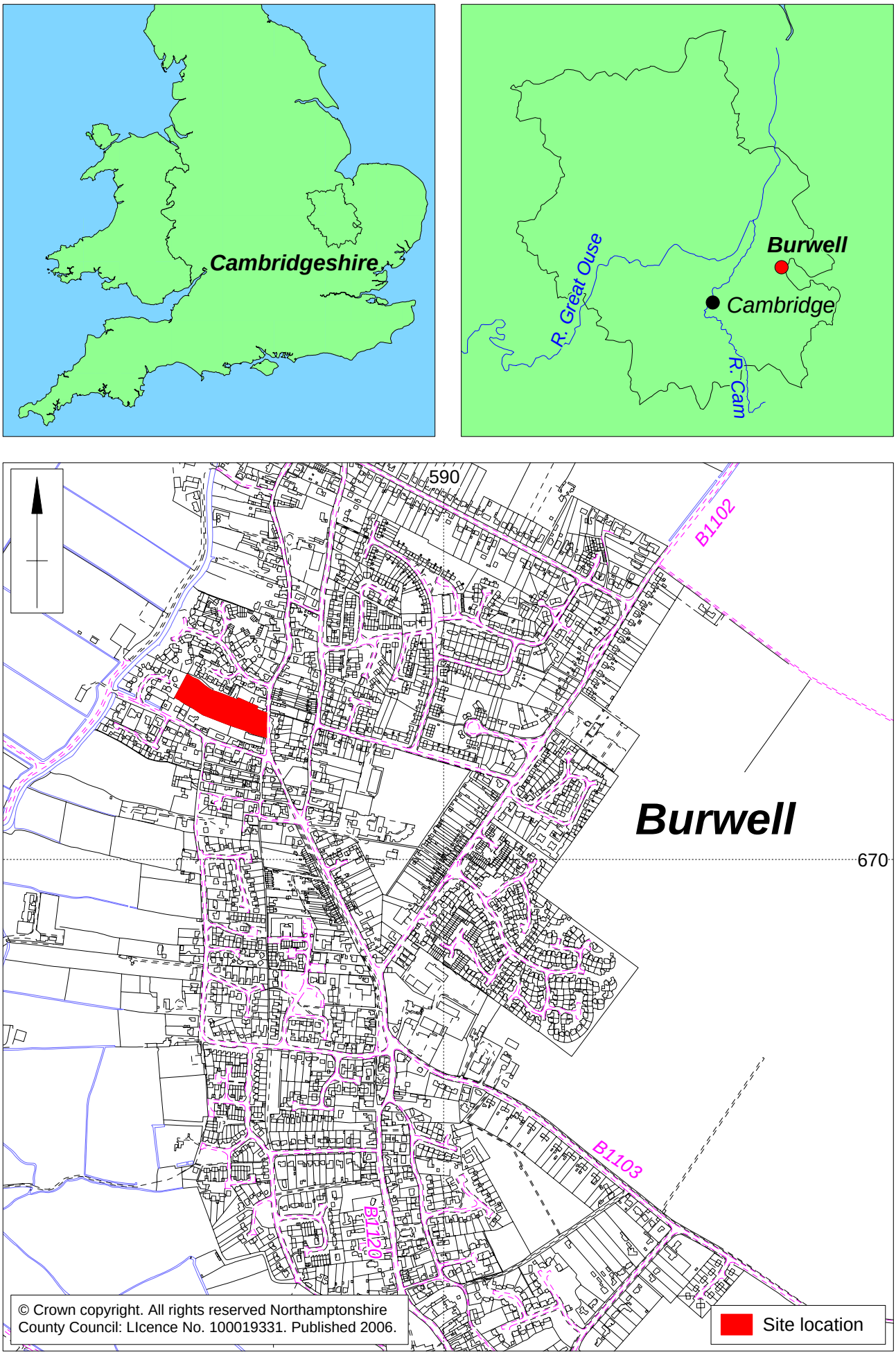
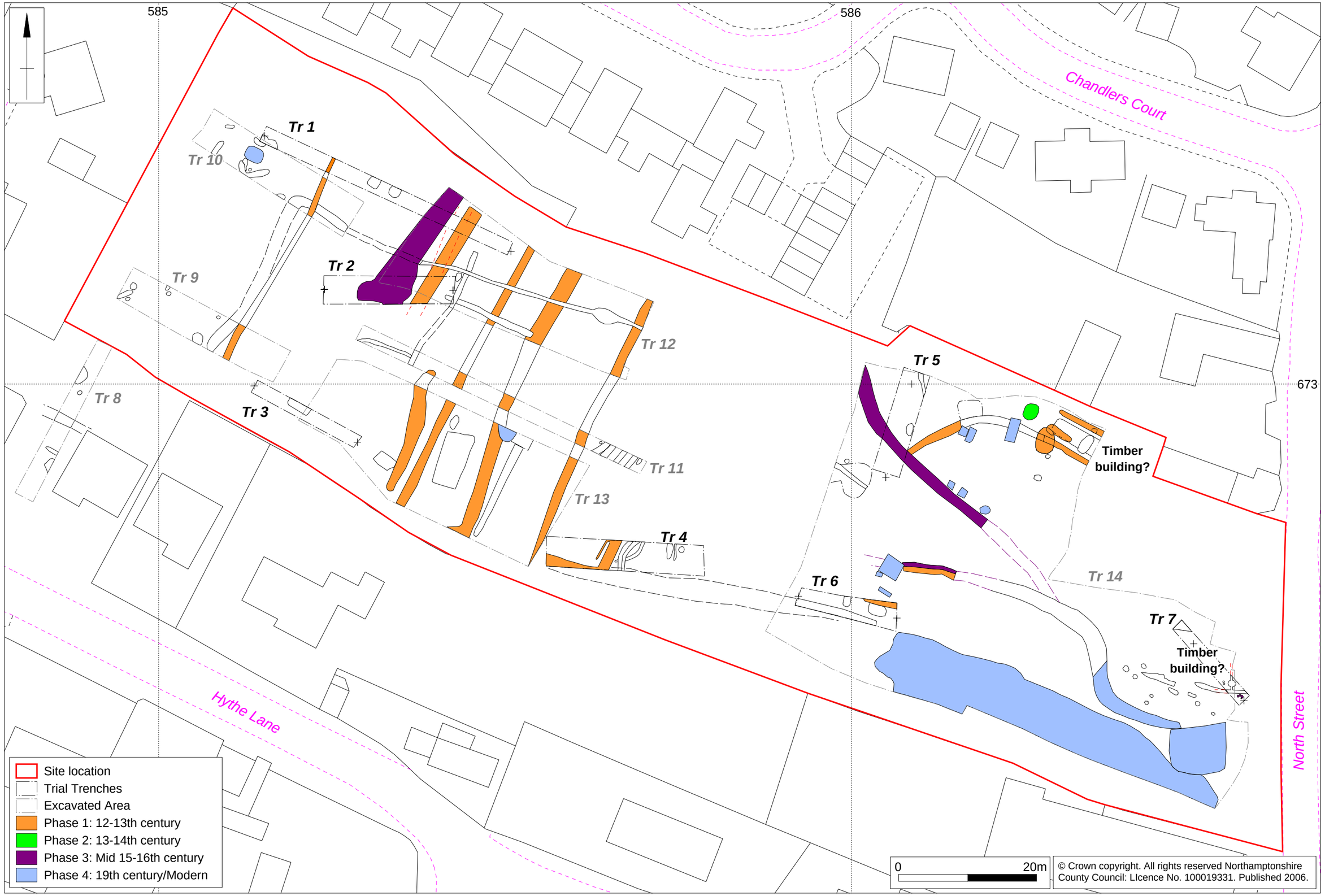
1887 First Edition Ordnance Survey map



Scale 1:10,000

Site Location Fig 1



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The excavated area with phases Fig 2

585

673

Tr 1

Tr 2

Tr 3

Tr 4

Tr 8

Tr 9

Tr 10

Tr 11

Tr 12

Tr 13

1150

1106

1174

1170

1132

1134

1136

1138

1140

1229

S.1

409

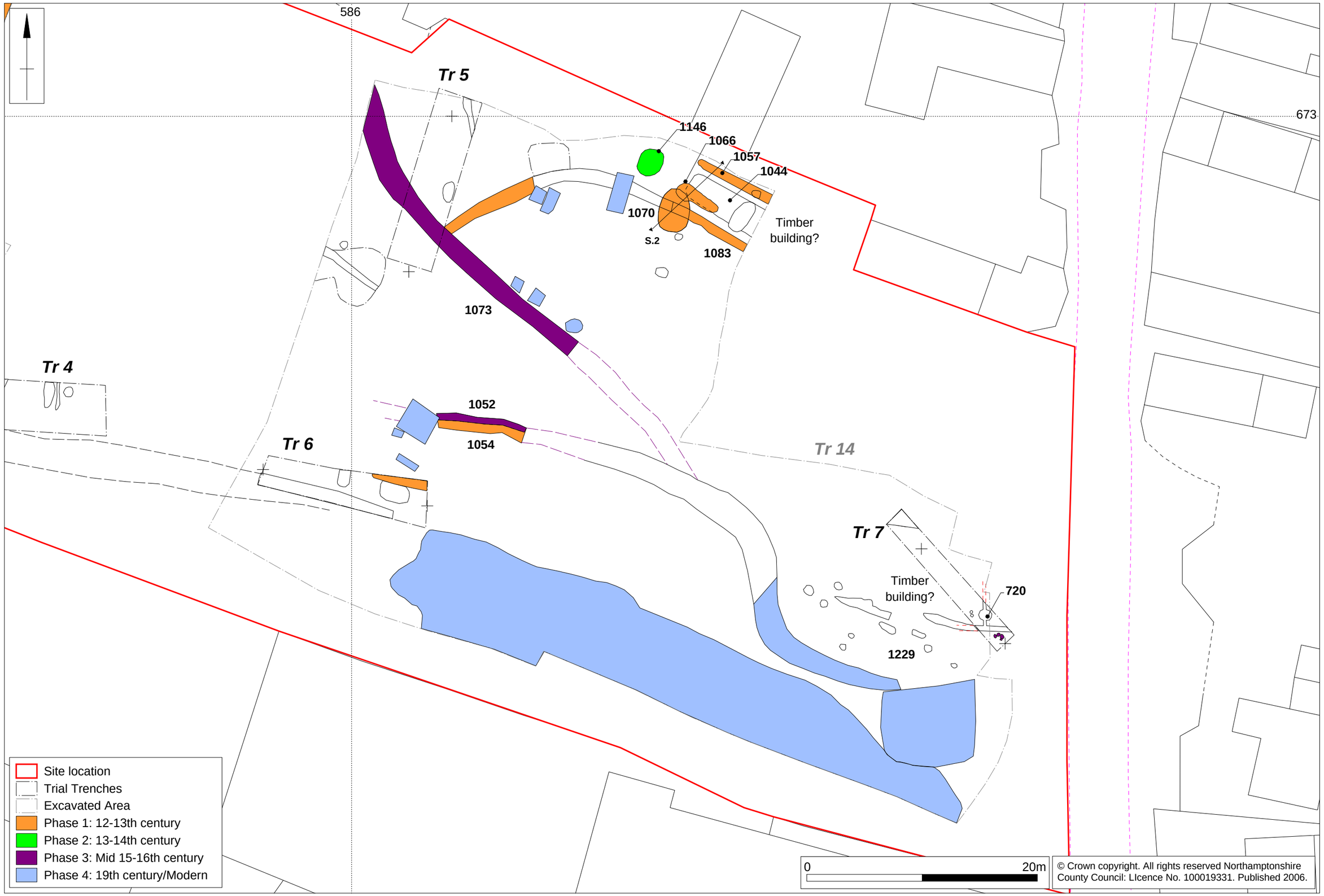
405

Site location
Trial Trenches
Excavated Area
Phase 1: 12-13th century
Phase 2: 13-14th century
Phase 3: Mid 15-16th century
Phase 4: 19th century/Modern

0 20m

Scale 1:300

The excavated area with contexts (West) Fig 3



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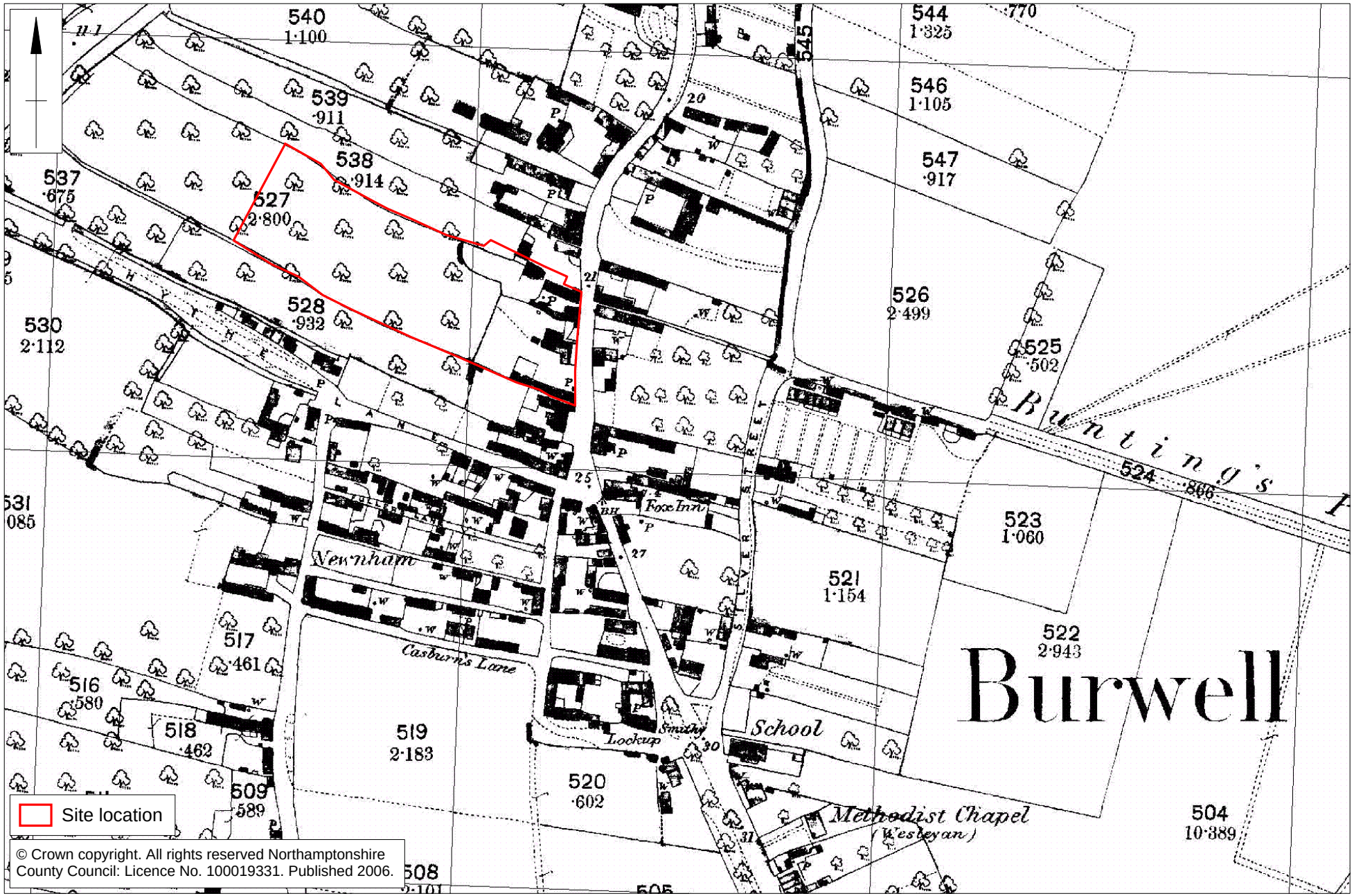
The excavated area with contexts (East) Fig 4

Scale 1:5000

1842 Tithe Map of Burwell

Fig 5



Scale 1:2500

1887 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map

Fig 6