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MIDDLEMORE FARM,
DAVENTRY, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
MAY - SEPTEMBER 2002

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ABSTRACT

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology during groundworks in advance of residential development on land at Middlemore Farm, Daventry, Northamptonshire. A number of features datable to the Romano-British period were identified. These comprised pits and a rectangular gully.

1 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology between May and September 2002 on land at Middlemore Farm, Daventry, Northants, (NGR SP565 651; Fig 1).

The work was undertaken to meet the requirements outlined in a summary brief issued by Northamptonshire County Council Historic Environment Team.

The purpose of the watching brief was to determine whether there was Iron Age or Roman occupation on the site and to characterise any related remains.

2 FIELDWORK

2.1 LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

The development area is situated on the north side of Daventry. The ground is relatively flat at the extreme western side of the site before sloping down towards the reservoir at the south-east. At the north-east the ground slopes down towards the east.

Although the British Geological Survey has mapped the site as Boulder Clay, further work by the Northamptonshire County Council Environmental Services Laboratory refined the identification to Middle Lias Silts and Clays (ESL 1987, 1999). North of Middlemore Farm lies a cap of the Marlstone Rock Bed. The overlying material throughout is a heavy clay soil with chalk and flints. At the extreme south-west tip of Drayton reservoir lies a small area of alluvium around one of the feeder streams.

2.2 *ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND*

The development site lies 3km north-west of the major hillfort of Borough Hill and 5km west of the Roman Small Town of Bannaventa at Whilton Lodge.

Large areas of medieval field systems survived as ridge and furrow earthworks on aerial photographs of 1947. Small areas still survive around Middlemore Farm, but these are not considered significant enough to warrant any further archaeological work.

Archaeological fieldwalking carried out on and around the site in 1973 identified two small concentrations of Roman pottery (NGR SP 564 649 and SP 566 651) along with small quantities of prehistoric worked flint. Subsequent fieldwalking carried out as part of the evaluation, and centred on these grid references recovered further Roman, medieval and post-medieval pottery. No distinct concentrations indicative of buried 'sites' could be identified. In areas of grassland where fieldwalking was impossible geophysical survey was conducted. This failed to identify any significant anomalies suggestive of buried sites.

3 *THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE*

3.1 *METHODOLOGY*

Groundworks connected with the construction of access roads and drainage channels were undertaken within a 32 hectare development area. Topsoil was removed from areas of groundworks with a 360 mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The topsoil comprised a grey black humus layer 0.70m – 0.95m in depth. Beneath this lay a mid brown sandy loam sub-soil. This extended down to a depth of 0.25m across most of the site, with a maximum depth of 0.80m in the area of preserved ridge and furrow. The underlying natural was a grey brown clay with occasional pockets of gravel.

Excavation revealed a number of features of archaeological interest lying to the south of the farm buildings (Fig 2). These were cleaned by hand and a base plan produced at a scale of 1:20 (Fig 3). All features were sectioned and a photographic record was kept in colour transparency and black and white negative.

3.2 *THE PITS*

A sequence of intercutting pits was excavated. Pit [108] measured 1.20m in diameter by 0.48m deep, and was filled with a grey brown sandy loam (107). It was cut by a further pit [106], which was 0.95m in diameter by 0.80m deep. The primary fill (105) comprised a grey blue loamy clay

0.2m thick, and was overlain by a grey brown loam (104). This pit was cut by pit [103], which was 0.80m in diameter by 0.4m deep and was filled with grey brown loam (102).

3.3 *RECTANGULAR GULLY*

To the east of the pits, a shallow gully [112] 0.50m wide by 0.20m deep formed a rectangular enclosure measuring 6.0m by 3.0m. The gully had a fill of grey brown loam (111).

4 *THE FINDS*

4.1 *THE ROMAN POTTERY AND TILE*

The watching brief produced a late first to early second century domestic assemblage. A total of 75 individual sherds with a combined weight of 1.666kg were recovered from a series of pits and a ditch. There appears to be no distinction in the date of the material from individual features. The assemblage is represented by kitchen and storage wares in locally manufactured fabrics. Greywares and shell-gritted wares predominate, together with smaller quantities of grog-tempered, oxidised sandy wares and mortaria. Diagnostically early forms and fabrics are represented by channel rim jars (the predominant form) in grog-tempered and shell-gritted fabrics. Other forms include, necked and neckless jars with bead rims and shallow dishes with plain rims (dog dish) in greyware fabrics, an oxidised channel rim bowl and a rim sherd from a flanged mortaria bowl with pink quartz grits (Oxfordshire white ware - Tyres 1996, 129).

<i>FABRIC</i> <i>TYPE</i>	<i>CONTEXT</i>															
	102		104		107		109		111		113		115		U/S	
	No/Wg	No/Wg	No/Wg	No/Wg	No/Wg	No/Wg	No/Wg	No/Wg	No/Wg	No/Wg	No/Wg	No/Wg	No/Wg	No/Wg	No/Wg	
Greyware	4	168	2	58	21	380			7	214					6	29
Grog-tempered ware							1	25	1	70			7	109	1	11
Mortaria	1	9														
Oxidised Ware			2	71					4	32						
Soft Pink Grog					1	21										
Shell-gritted	3	49			1	15			8	270	5	135				
Total	8	226	4	129	23	416	1	25	20	586	5	135	7	109	7	40

Table 1: Roman pottery

In addition there are three fragments of ceramic tile, a tegulae in soft-pink-grog, a structural tile in buff coloured shell-gritted ware and an undiagnostic fragment in a sandy orange fabric.

4.2 *THE ANIMAL BONE*

Animal bone from five contexts, with a total weight of 2.7 kg, was scanned to gain an idea of the species present, the state of preservation and the potential for further analysis.

Preservation was reasonable with moderate fragmentation being largely the result of fresh breaks. Surface abrasion was infrequent. Occasional canid gnawing was noted. A concentration of material was recovered from fill (102) of pit [103].

The assemblage was dominated by cattle with a single horse femur and two neonatal sheep/goat metapodia. The bone elements present are largely limb bones.

A single pathology was noted: a misaligned mandibular third premolar. This was possibly congenital. The remains appear to be the result of domestic waste disposal. The small amount of evidence precludes any comprehensive statement on the animal economy of the site or the exact nature of carcass processing activity. The potential for further analysis is limited by the lack of material.

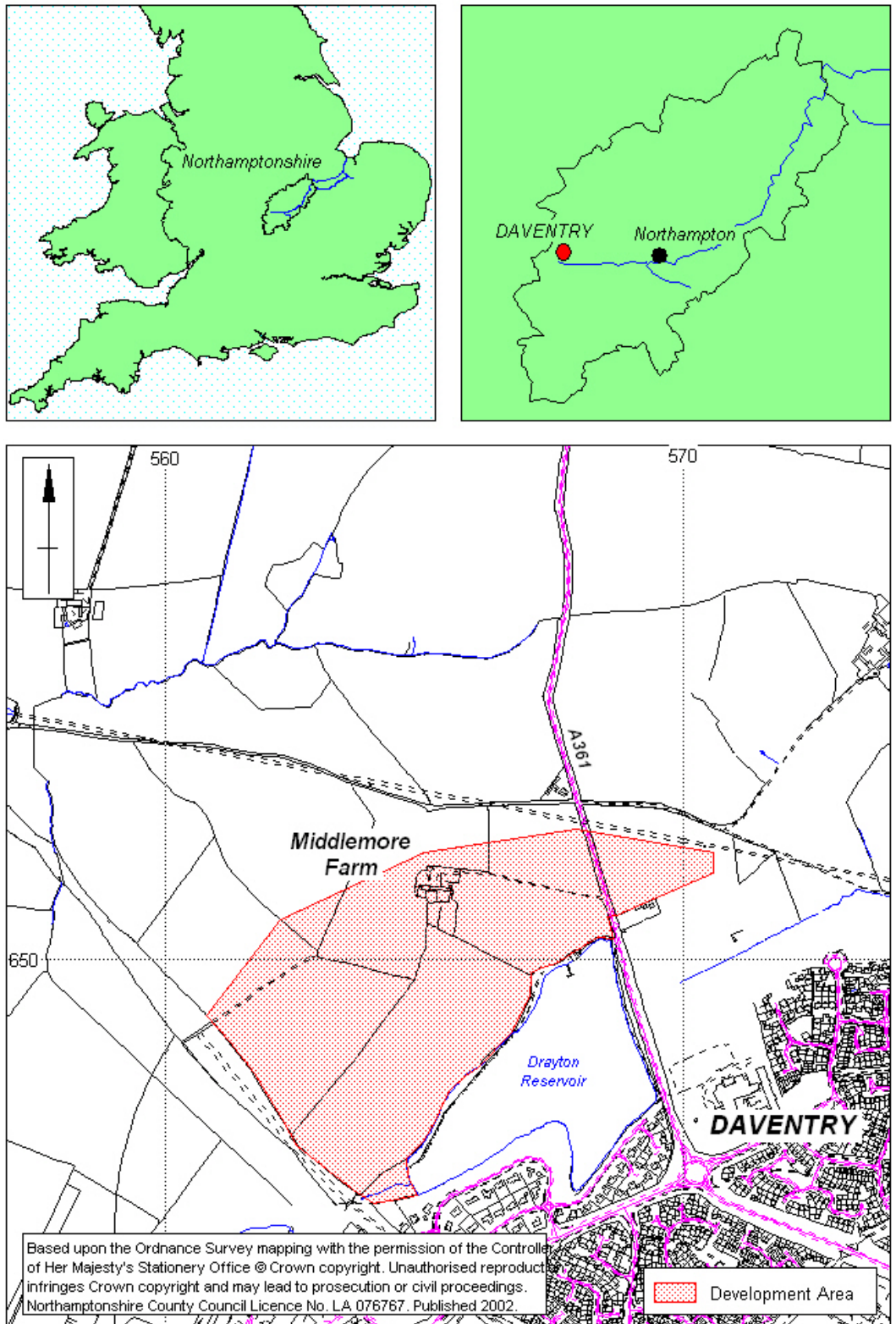
5 *DISCUSSION*

The watching brief carried out during the development of the site has provided further evidence for the nature and extent of activity of Roman date in this area of Daventry.

Previously the evidence had comprised finds of Roman pottery and a number of coins recovered during metal detecting. Both the pits and the gully have been dated to the late first to early second century but it is difficult to propose any interpretation of their function. All that can be stated is that the presence of such features would suggest that a settlement of the Romano-British period may be situated in the near vicinity.

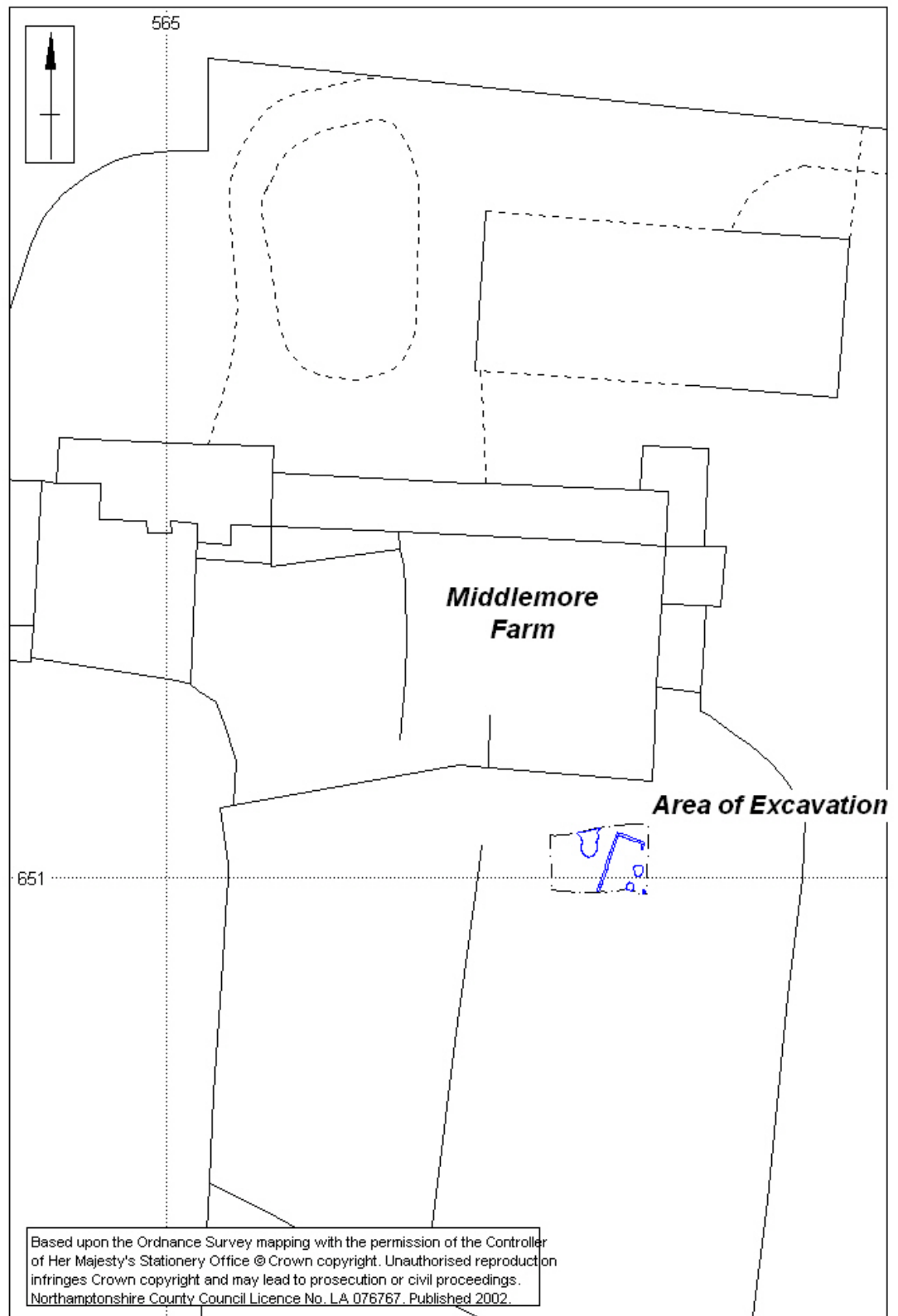
6 **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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Scale = 1:10,000

Fig. 1



Scale = 1:500

Fig. 2

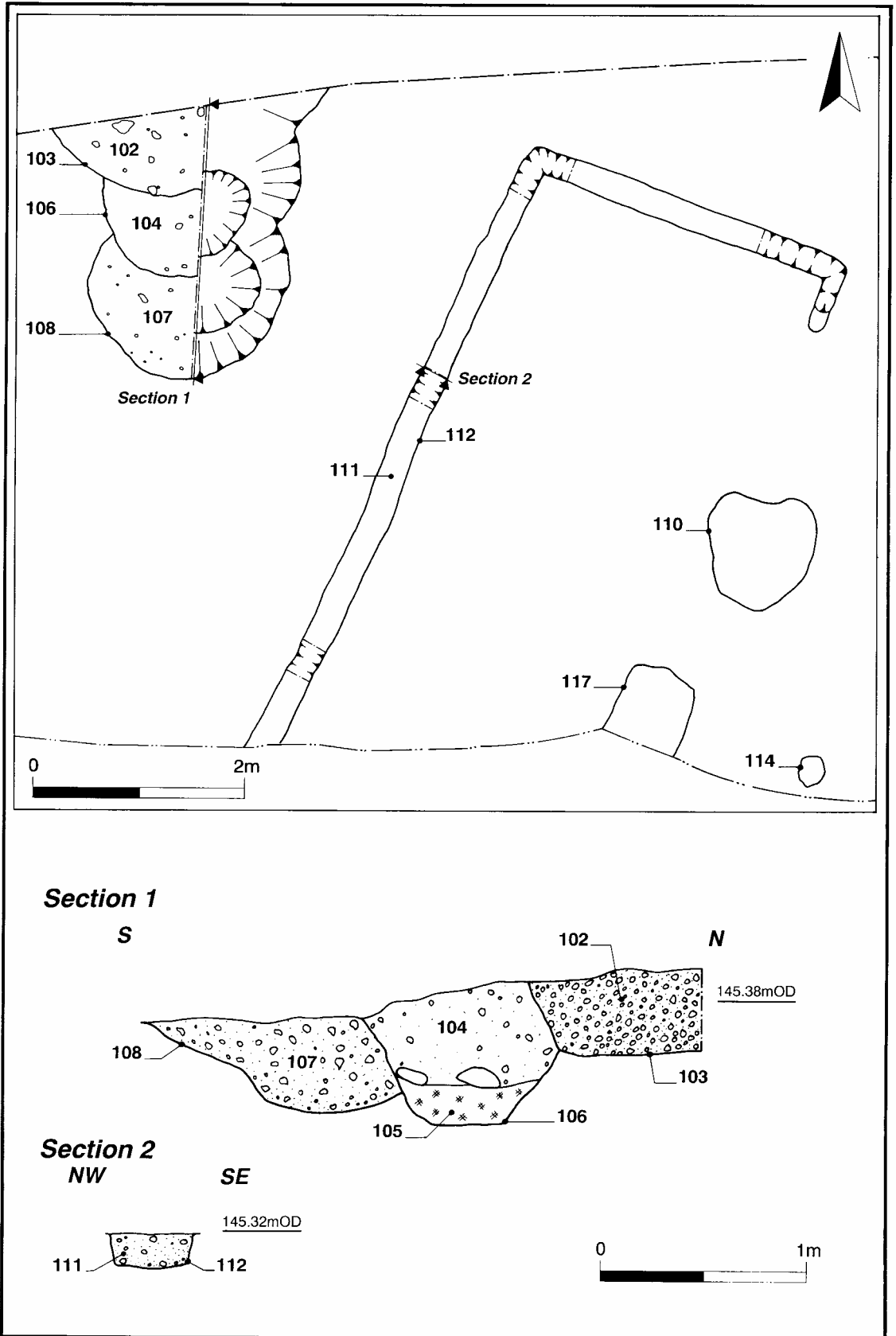


Fig. 3