

# Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological evaluation of land off Harry Weston  
Road, Binley, Coventry  
April 2007



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April 2007

Report 07/64

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### **QUALITY CONTROL**

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## OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Archaeological evaluation of land off Harry Weston Road, Binley, Coventry	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology conducted an archaeological evaluation comprising a historic environment assessment and trial excavation on land off Harry Weston Road, Binley, Coventry in April 2007. Pockets of localised archaeology included a gully and pit whose location corresponded with that of a small building depicted on an estate map of 1746. Elsewhere were undated gullies, an associated posthole and a crude hearth containing a single sherd of medieval pottery and a large quantity of charred cereal grains.	
Project type	Evaluation	
Site status		
Previous work		
Current Land use	Waste	
Future work	Strip, map and record	
Monument type/ period	Medieval	
Significant finds		
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Coventry	
Site address (including postcode)	Land off Harry Weston Road, Binley	
Study area (sq.m or ha)	1083sq m	
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq. letter code)	SP 3786 7851	
Height OD	81m	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Coventry County Council	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Paul Mason	
Project Manager	Paul Mason	
Sponsor or funding body	DL Property and Development Strategies	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	2/4/07	
End date	5/4/07	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		
Paper		
Digital		
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title	Archaeological evaluation of land off Harry Weston Road, Binley, Coventry	
Serial title & volume	NA Report 07/64	
Author(s)	Paul Mason	
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF LAND OFF HARRY WESTON ROAD,  
BINLEY, COVENTRY**

**APRIL 2007**

*ABSTRACT*

*Northamptonshire Archaeology conducted an archaeological evaluation comprising a historic environment assessment and trial excavation on land off Harry Weston Road, Binley, Coventry in April 2007. Pockets of localised archaeology included a gully and pit whose location corresponded with that of a small building depicted on an estate map of 1746. Elsewhere were undated gullies, an associated posthole and a crude hearth containing a single sherd of medieval pottery and a large quantity of charred cereal grains.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

In April 2007 Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook an historic environment assessment and trial trench evaluation on behalf of DL Property and Development Strategies (DLPDS) on approximately 1100sqm of waste ground off Harry Weston Road, Binley, Coventry Northamptonshire (centre: NGR SP 3786 7851, Fig 1). The work was conducted in accordance with a written scheme of investigation prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (Mason 2007) which was approved by Coventry City Council. The trial excavation was undertaken from 2 -5 April 2007.

The project was undertaken at the request Coventry City Council's Planning Archaeologist in response to an application for commercial development of the site.

**2 BACKGROUND**

**2.1 Planning background**

Pettifer Estates, in partnership with DLPDS, have applied for planning permission for the erection of a two-storey office development with landscaping on the site (Application 53784)

**2.2 Archaeological background**

No previous archaeological work has been undertaken.

**2.3 Topography and geology**

The site lies to the east of the River Sowe on flat land at c 81m OD. It is bounded to the north and west by Brinklow Road, to the east by the Harry Weston Road business development and to the south by the Binley Park Inn and its grounds. It is currently an open expanse of waste ground

through which pass two public rights of way.

The geology of the area is mapped as Triassic Mudstones overlain by glacial sand and gravel ([www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk)).

### **3 OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the work are defined in a brief prepared by Coventry City Council's Planning Archaeologist as:

- To prepare a detailed assessment of the development site's historical and archaeological potential
- To identify evidence for the survival of buried archaeological remains on the site that may be threatened by the development
- To determine the depth of burial, character, date, extent and state of preservation of any such remains
- To recover evidence of the medieval and post-medieval settlement of Binley

## **4 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT**

### **4.1 Documentary sources**

Binley is listed in the Domesday Book (1086) as land belonging to Coventry Church and was comprised of the following:

*'3 Hides. Land for 8 ploughs. In Lordship 1 plough; 4 slaves; 10 villagers and 6 small holders with 5 ploughs. Meadow, 8 acres; woodland ½ league long and 1 furlong wide. Value before 1066 and now 60s. Aldith wife of Gruffydd held this land. The abbot bought it from Osbern son of Richard.'* (Plaister 1976, 238)

The place-name 'Binley' may derive from the Saxon leah meaning 'woodland clearing'. An alternative definition could be 'island' and as Binley is located on a loop in the River Sowe it has been suggested that the name may translate as 'Billa's well-watered land' (Poulton-Smith 1996, 29).

The medieval period saw a large part of the manor pass from St Mary's Priory to the Abbot of nearby Combe Abbey. Following the Dissolution of 1539 the manor passed to Mary, Duchess of Richmond and her descendents (VCH, 1951).

### **4.2 Historic maps**

The earliest available map is the Binley Craven Estate Map of 1746 which shows the area

corresponding with the site to be an agricultural field with two small buildings in its south-west corner set within a looping enclosure (Fig 2). This plot of land appears to be located at the centre of the settlement opposite the parish church. By 1778 the buildings had disappeared as evidenced by the Craven Estate Map of that time (not illustrated). The topography of the site remains unchanged in 1887 when it was surveyed for the 1st edition 25" Ordnance Survey map (Fig 3).

#### 4.3 Historic environment records (Fig 4)

A search of Coventry's Sites and Monuments Records database was made within a 500m radius of the site producing fifteen records which are detailed in Table 1. None are located within the application site.

**Table 1: Historic environment data**

SMR No	Description
MCT60	Find spot. Coin of Elizabeth I.
MCT147	Ex situ field boundary stone inscribed with date 1663.
MCT160	Site of Binley Mill (medieval/post-medieval).
MCT189	Site of Binley Grange windmill (medieval).
MCT287	'Rosedale' listed post-medieval building.
MCT539	Site of former post-medieval pound.
MCT586	Ridge and furrow.
MCT672	Church of St Bartholomew. 18th century.
MCT673	Vicarage. 16th century.
MCT683	Grade II listed building. 17th century.
MCT694	Grade II listed building. 16th century.
MCT705	Grade II listed building. 16th century.
MCT716	Grade II listed building. 16th century.
MCT733	The Old Grammar School. 1879.
MCT740	Ridge and furrow.

## 5 TRIAL EXCAVATION

### 5.1 Methodology

Three 40m long trenches and two 25m long trenches were laid out over the proposed development area using a Leica Total Station. Slight adjustments were made to the positioning of some of the trenches in order to avoid public right of ways that crossed the site. They were then excavated using a JCB 3CX digger fitted with a 1.6m-wide ditching bucket. Subsoil and topsoil, where present, were removed to expose the upper strata of geology and stored separately. Final trench positions were re-surveyed in relation to the Ordnance Survey.

Once opened, hand excavation and recording of trenches progressed in accordance with the approved written scheme of investigation (Mason 2007). Following the completion of the archaeological work the trenches were backfilled.

### 5.2 Results

#### *Trench 1*

Trench 1 (25m x 1.6m) was aligned roughly east-west in the south-west corner of the site where it targeted the position of the building depicted on the Craven Estate Map of 1746. The geology, patchy orange and grey sand (107), lay 0.65-0.75m below the surface (79.8-80.1m OD). It was overlain by 0.65-0.75m of dark grey sandy loam topsoil (101).

Cutting the geology at the western end of the trench was part of a 0.3m-deep pit [104] filled with a grey sand (103) containing a single sherd of 13th-century pottery (Fig 5 and Fig 6, Section 1). A short distance to the east a 0.8m-wide gully [106] cut across the trench on a north-south alignment (Fig 6, Section 2). It was 0.35m deep and filled with dark grey sandy loam (105) that again contained a single sherd of pottery of the 12th -14th centuries. At the extreme eastern end of the trench a large clay-filled depression had been cut through the topsoil. Pottery found within the depression included 19th-20th century fabrics.

#### *Trench 2*

Trench 2 (25m x 1.6m) was aligned north-west to south-east towards the western edge of the site. The geology, a mottled orange and dark grey sand (203), lay 0.8-1.0m below the ground surface (79.7-80.25m OD). It was overlain by 0.5-0.65m of dark grey sandy loam topsoil (202) and 0.25-0.30m of light greyish brown sandy loam overburden (201). There were no archaeological features.

#### *Trench 3*

Trench 3 (34m x 1.6m) was aligned north-west to south-east in the north-western part of the site.



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The geology, a mottled orange and dark grey sand (303), lay 0.85-1.0m below the ground surface (80-80.5m OD). It was overlain by up to 1m of dark grey sandy loam topsoil (302) and 0.25m of light greyish brown sandy loam overburden (301). There were no archaeological features.

#### ***Trench 4***

Trench 4 (40m x 1.6m) was aligned north-east to south-west in the centre of the site. The geology, a yellow/mottled orange and dark grey sand (403), lay 0.70-1.0m below the ground surface (c 80.6m OD). It was overlain by 0.5-0.8m of dark grey sandy loam topsoil (402) and 0.20-0.25m of light greyish brown sandy loam overburden (401).

At the north-eastern end of the trench the geology was cut by an irregular-shaped pit [404] measuring some 2m in width (Fig 5). Its base had been lined with reddish brown clay (405) which had a central depression filled with burned material (408) that was partially enclosed with heat damaged stones (Plate 1). A single sherd of Coventry A ware pottery was found within the burned deposit and a sample was taken producing a large quantity of charred cereal grains. There were no other archaeological features in the trench.

#### ***Trench 5***

Trench 5 (40m x 1.6m) was aligned north-west to south-east towards the south-eastern corner of the site. An unexcavated 5m-wide gap was left at its centre where a public right of way crossed the site. The geology, an orange brown sand and gravel (502), lay up to 0.85m below the ground surface (c 80.35-80.55m OD). It was overlain by 0.85m of dark grey sandy loam topsoil (501) with thin deposits of light greyish brown sandy loam overburden (510) at the north-western end of the trench.

Cutting the geology at the south-eastern end of the trench were a pair of intersecting gullies [503] and [506] which appeared to form a near right angle (Fig 5, Plate 2). Opposing the intersection of the gullies was a 0.15m-deep posthole [508] (Fig 6, Section 5). Gully [503] was 0.65m wide, 0.28m deep and filled with yellow brown sand (504) and a mid-grey sand (505) (Fig 6, Section 3). Gully [506] was 0.85m wide, 0.16m deep and filled with a dark grey brown sandy loam (507) (Fig 6, Section 4). No dating evidence was recovered from these features. The rest of the trench was blank.

## **6 THE FINDS**

### **6.1 Pottery by Iain Soden**

The evaluation produced three sherds of pottery, all medieval. They are as follows:

**Table 2: Pottery assemblage**

Context	Type	CTS designation	Date
Pit 103	Nuneaton A ware	WW01	c 1250-1300
Gully 105	Coventry A ware	Sq type	c 1100-1400
Hearth 408	Coventry A ware	Sq type	c 1100-1400

Such small numbers of sherds are rarely conclusive but the broad dating seems consistent of background occupation near the site, most likely in the 13th century. None of the sherds is diagnostic, being all body sherds. All three have sooting derived from use in cooking processes while that from the hearth is more heavily burnt, commensurate with its prolonged exposure to harsh surroundings.

Previously the nearest group of pottery of this date was recovered from the de Herneford family and Coombe Abbey's moated site at Ernesford Grange 1971-3 (Soden 1988). This produced much larger quantities of these types, where remains were dated c 1250- c 1350.

## 6.2 Charred plant remains by Karen Deighton

### *Method*

A single sample was collected from the fill of a medieval hearth (408) during the course of excavation. This sample was processed by manual flotation the flot being retained on a 500micron sieve. The resulting flot was dried and a sub sample (due to the large amounts of charred plant material collected) examined with a microscope (10X magnification). The residue was dried and scanned for ecofacts

### *Results*

Preservation was exclusively by charring and the condition was excellent. The large quantities of charred cereal grain (290g; 5% sub sample contained approximately 900-1,000 grains) appeared to be predominantly hulled barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) with occasional naked barley (*H. vulgare nar nudum*).

### *Discussion*

The nature of the deposit suggests the hearth could have been used for crop drying or parching. The fact the sample appears to be largely barley grains could suggest an activity associated with malting. It is unclear if the sample is the result of a single burning episode or cumulative firing.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

The results of the evaluation indicate that localised pockets of archaeology are present within the site but are not densely grouped. In its south-west corner a single gully and pit were present, their location corresponding with the site of a small structure depicted on the Craven Estate map of 1746. Both features contained single sherds of medieval pottery. The gully could, conceivably, have functioned as a beam slot for a timber structural element. It should be noted, however, that there was no trace of a residual floor surface, nor deposits of building debris such as mortar, masonry fragments or wattle that are usually found in the vicinity of demolished structures of the medieval/early post-medieval period.

On the western edge of the site the hearth found in Trench 4 again appeared to be an isolated feature. It too contained a single sherd of medieval pottery along with a large quantity of charred cereal grain. It has been suggested that preponderance of barley may be indicative of malting in the near vicinity. This observation is perhaps a valid one - a public house has stood adjacent to the site since at least the late 19th century when The Craven Arms appears on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1887. Buildings exhibiting a similar morphology are represented on the earlier estate map (1746).

In the south-east part of the site a pair of undated gullies and an associated posthole may be structural in nature, perhaps the remnants of a timber-built agricultural feature such as a livestock pen or small enclosure.

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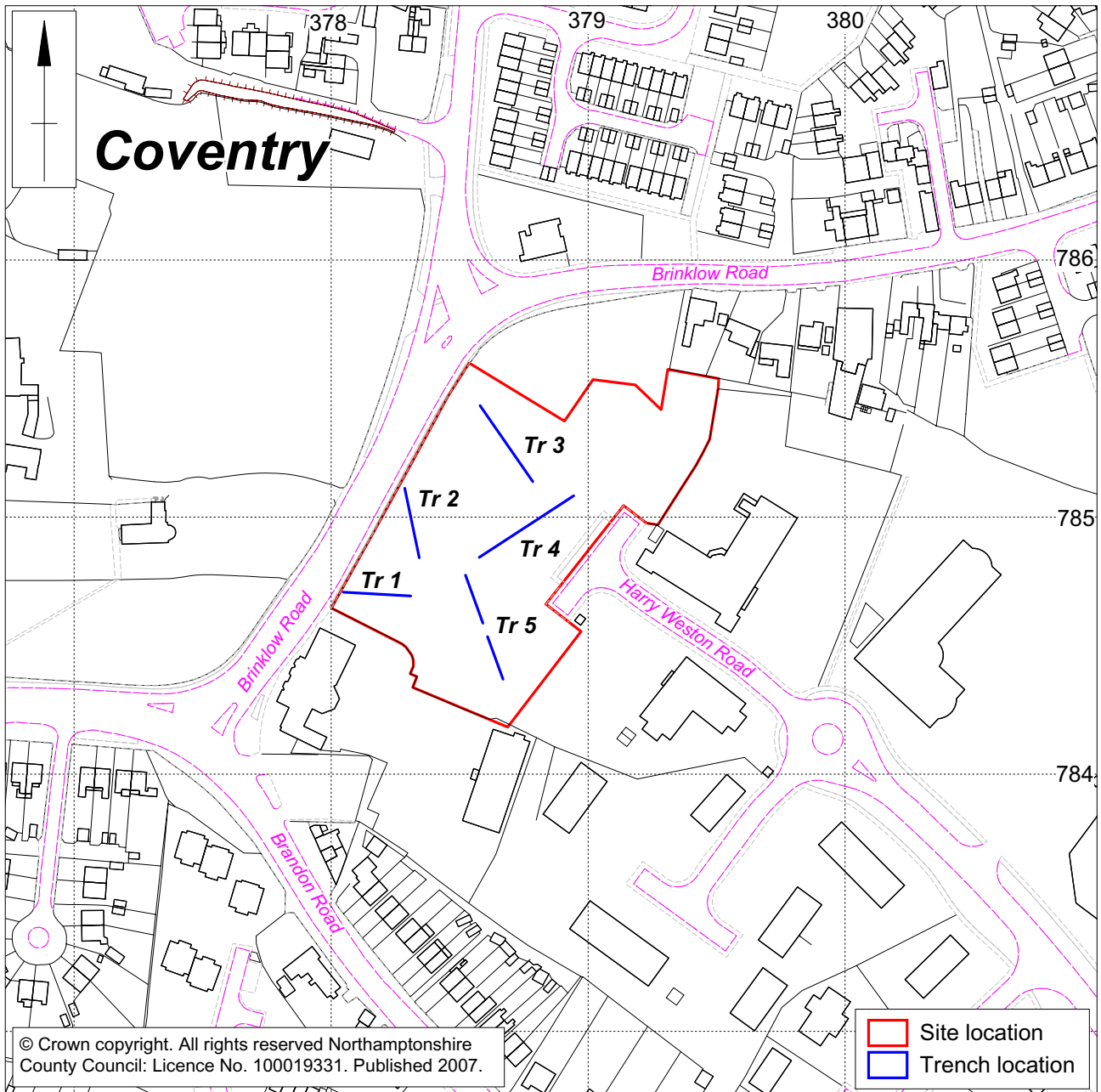
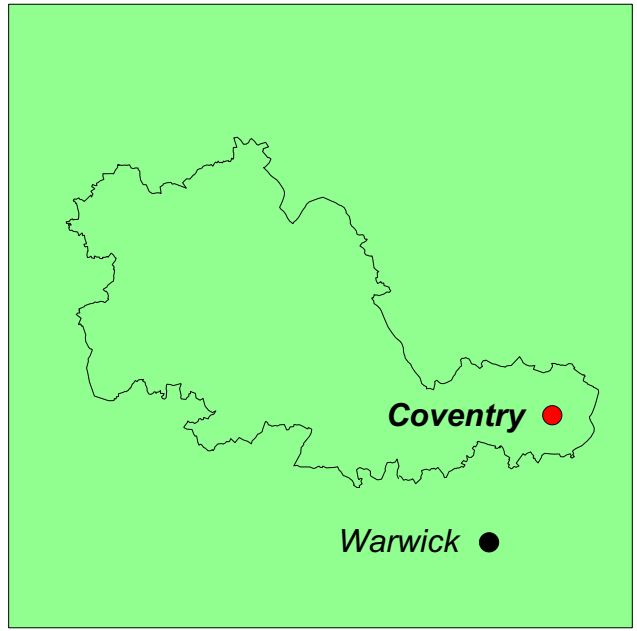
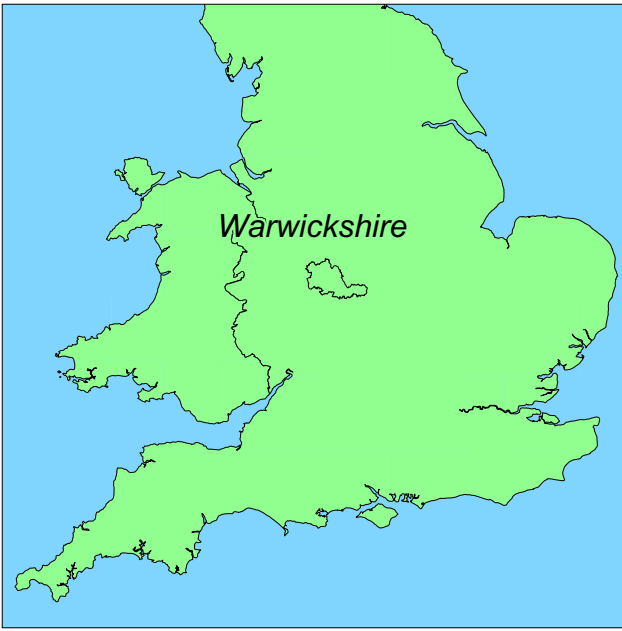
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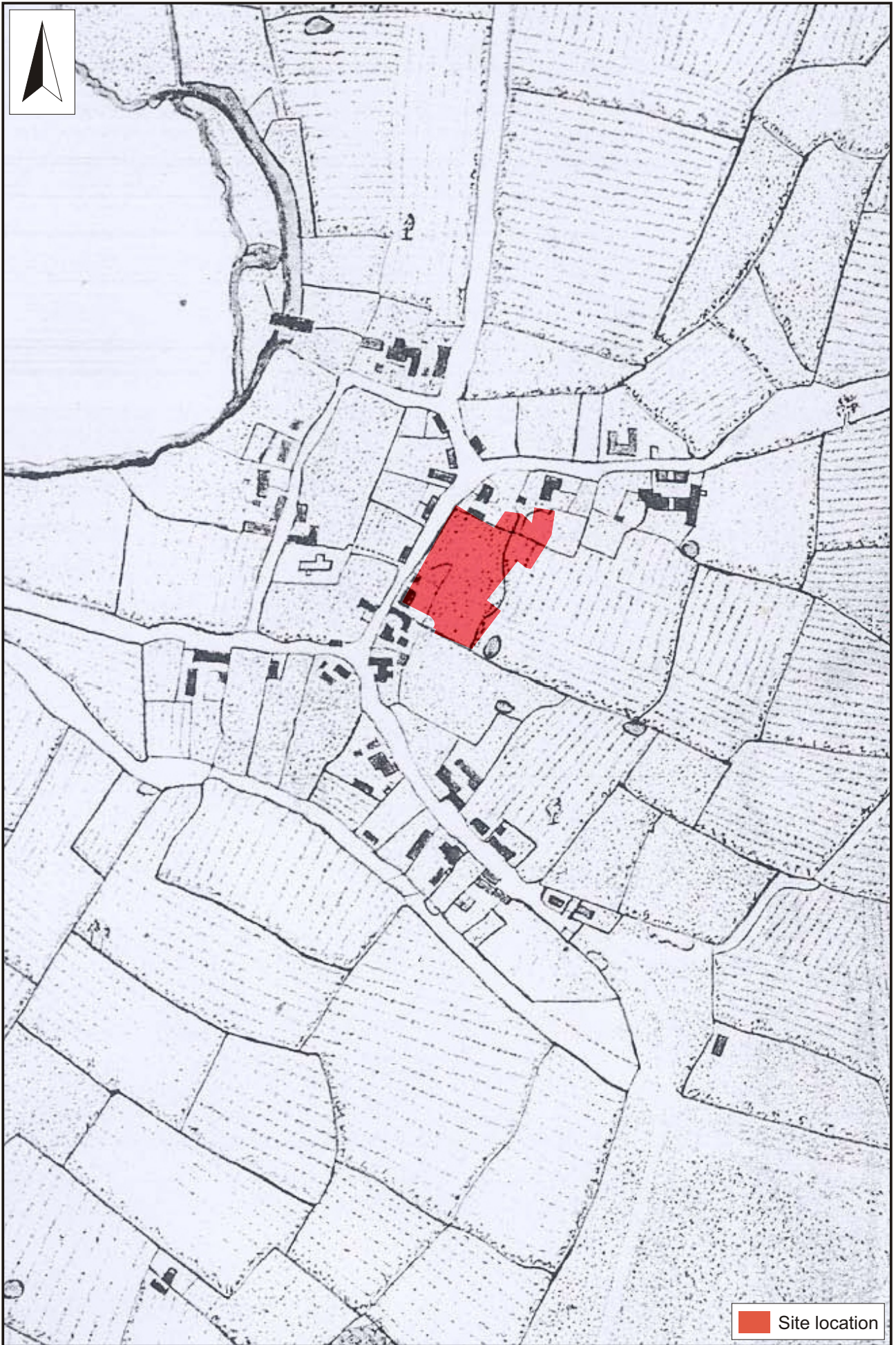
**APPENDIX 1****Appendix 1: Context descriptions**

Trench	Context	Context type	Description
1	101	Topsoil	Dark grey sandy loam, 0.65-0.75m
	102	Subsoil	Not present
	103	Fill of 104	Grey sand, medieval pottery
	104	Pit	0.3m deep
	105	Fill of 106	Dark grey sandy loam, medieval pottery
	106	Gully	0.8m wide, 0.35m deep
	107	Geology	Mottled orange/grey sand
2	201	Topsoil	Dark grey sandy loam, 0.5-0.65m
	202	Overburden	Light grey sandy loam, 0.25-0.3m
	203	Geology	Mottled orange/grey sand
3	301	Overburden	Light grey sandy loam, 0.25m
	302	Topsoil	Dark grey sandy loam, 0.85-1m
	303	Geology	Yellow/mottled orange/grey sand
4	401	Overburden	Light grey brown sandy loam, 0.2-0.25m
	402	Topsoil	Dark grey sandy loam, 0.5-0.8m
	403	Geology	Mottled orange/grey sand
	404	Pit	2m wide
	405	Fill of 404	Clay lining
	406	Hearth	Formed in 405
	407	Stone lining	Partial lining around 407
	408	Fill of 407	Ash containing medieval pottery and charred grains
	409	Fill of 104	Sandy loam
5	501	Topsoil	Dark grey sandy loam, 0.85m
	502	Geology	Orange brown sand and gravel
	503	Gully	0.65m wide, 0.28m deep
	504	Fill of 503	Yellow brown sand
	505	Fill of 503	Mid-grey sand
	506	Gully	0.85m wide, 0.16m deep
	507	Fill of 506	Dark grey sandy loam
	508	Posthole	0.15m deep
	509	Fill of 508	Mid-grey sand



Scale 1:2500

Site location Fig 1



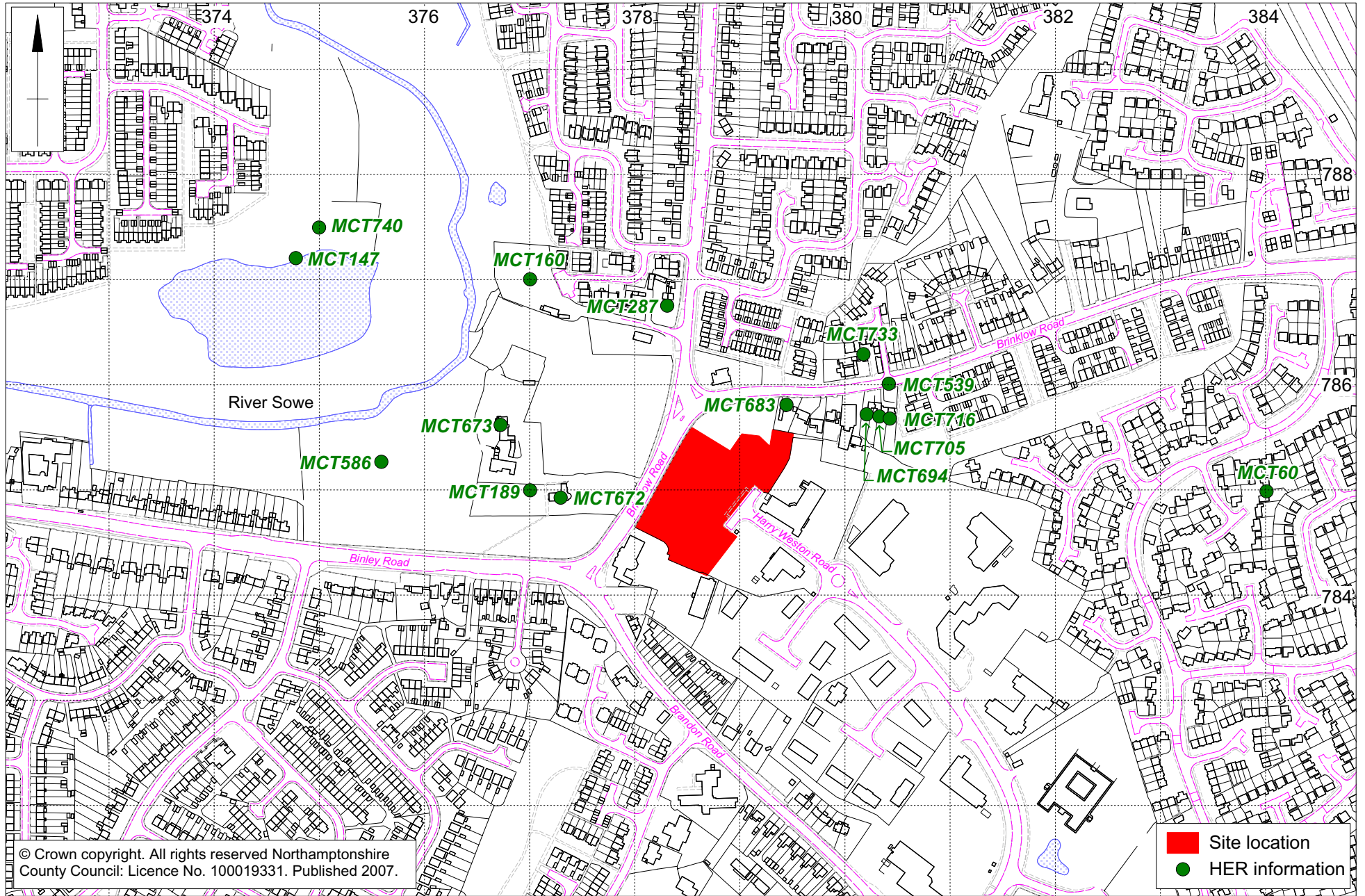
Binley Craven Estate Map 1746 Fig 2



1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1887 Fig 3

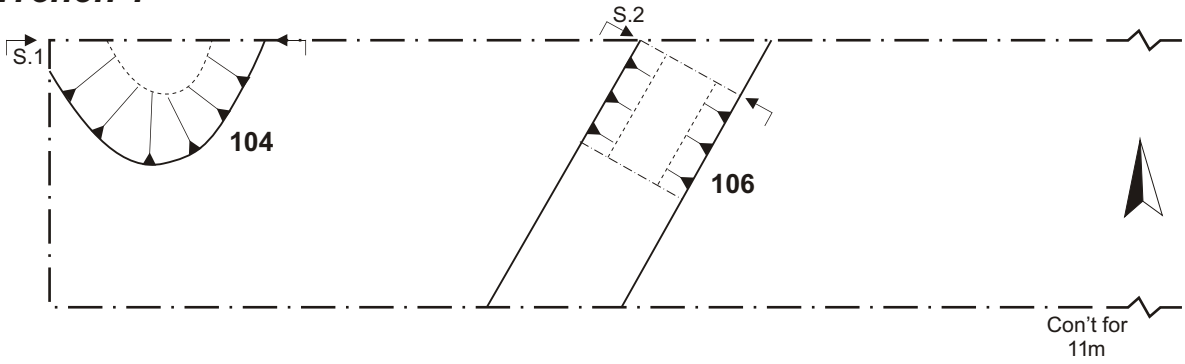


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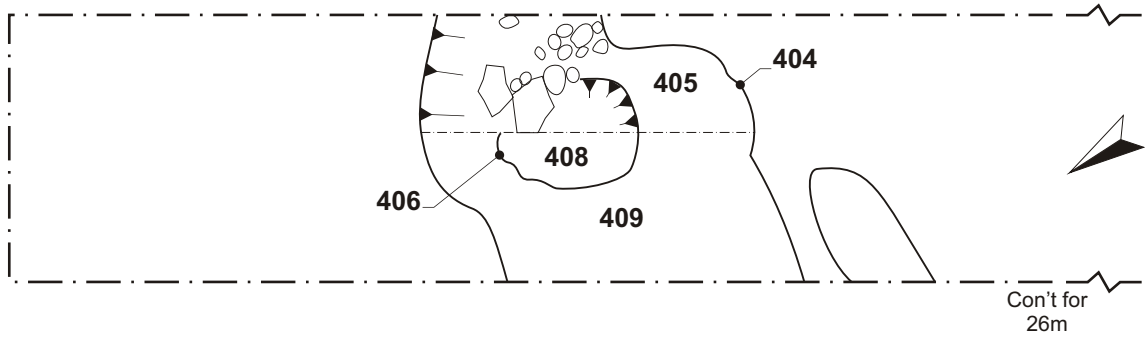


HER information Fig 4

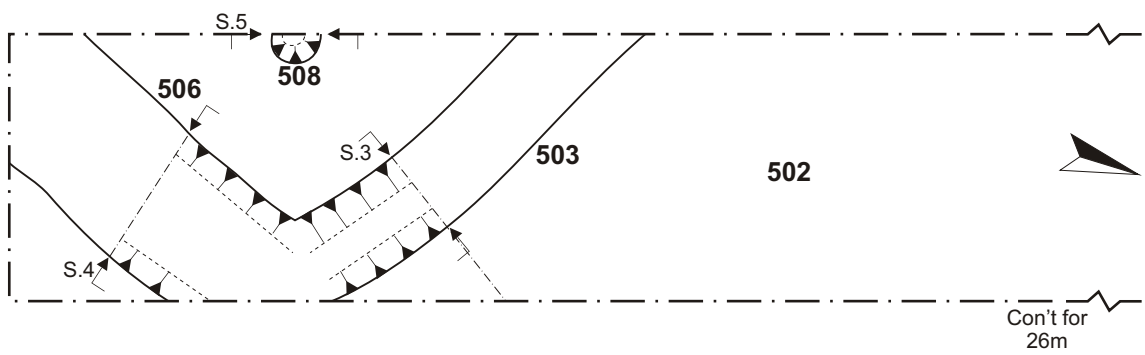
**Trench 1**



**Trench 4**

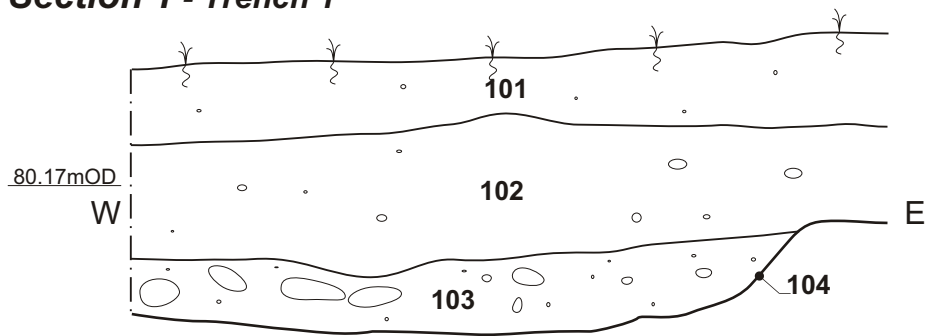


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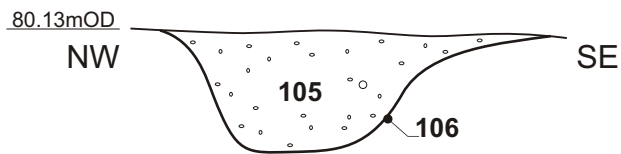


Plans of Trenches 1, 4 and 5 Fig 5

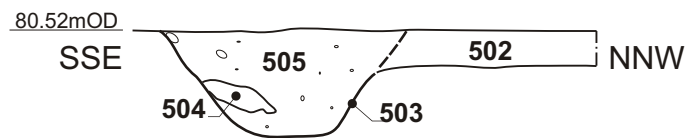
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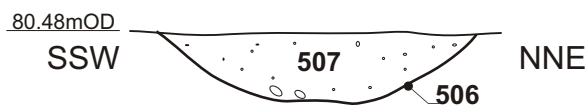
**Section 2 - Trench 1**



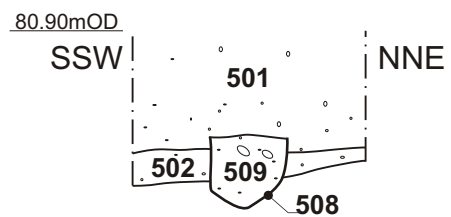
**Section 3 - Trench 5**



**Section 4 - Trench 5**



**Section 5 - Trench 5**



Sections Fig 6



Plate 1: Hearth [404]



Plate 2: Features [503], [506], [508]