



Northamptonshire  
County Council

# Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological evaluation at  
Betts Farm, Padbury  
Buckinghamshire  
NGR: SP 72125 30775  
August 2008



C Simmonds and S Stratton  
August 2008  
Report 08/128  
Planning Application No: 07/02684  
Accession Code: AYBCM2008.126

## Northamptonshire Archaeology

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## QUALITY CONTROL

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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

|                           |  |                                      |
|---------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| <b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>    |  |                                      |
| Project title             | An Archaeological Evaluation at Betts Farm, Padbury, Buckinghamshire   |                                      |
| Short description         | An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on a 0.32ha parcel of land at Betts Farm, Padbury, Buckinghamshire. Three trenches were opened and natural clays, sands and gravels were exposed beneath the topsoil or modern hardcore surface. Several 19th century and undated archaeological features were investigated, including drains, ditches and gullies, postholes and a probable pit. Animal bone was retrieved from undated ditches in Trench 3. It is likely that the farmyard has undergone considerable truncation and alteration from the 19th century onwards. |                                      |
| Project type              | Field evaluation (NA Site Code: PAD 08)  |                                      |
| Previous work             | Desk based evaluation and earthwork survey (Ivens 2007)  |                                      |
| Future work               | Unknown  |                                      |
| Monument type and period  |  |                                      |
| Significant finds         | None   |                                      |
| <b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>   |  |                                      |
| County                    | Buckinghamshire  |                                      |
| Site address              | Betts Farm, Winslow Road, Padbury.   |                                      |
| Easting Northing          | 472125 230775  |                                      |
| Area                      | 0.32ha   |                                      |
| Height OD                 | 107m   |                                      |
| <b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>   |  |                                      |
| Organisation              | Northamptonshire Archaeology   |                                      |
| Project brief originator  | Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service  |                                      |
| Project Design originator | Archaeologica  |                                      |
| Director/Supervisor       | Carol Simmonds   |                                      |
| Project Manager           | Iain Soden   |                                      |
| Sponsor or funding body   | Archaeologica  |                                      |
| <b>PROJECT DATE</b>       |  |                                      |
| Start date                | August 2008  |                                      |
| End date                  | August 2008  |                                      |
| <b>ARCHIVES</b>           | <b>Location</b>  | <b>Content</b>                       |
| Physical                  | Site code: PAD 08<br>AYBCM2008.126   | 1 archive box containing animal bone |
| Paper                     | Site code: PAD 08<br>AYBCM2008.126   | 1 archive box                        |
| Digital                   | Site code: PAD 08<br>AYBCM2008.126   | 1 CD of site data                    |
| <b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>       |  |                                      |
| Title                     | An Archaeological Evaluation at Betts Farm, Padbury, Buckinghamshire   |                                      |
| Serial title & volume     | 08/128   |                                      |
| Author(s)                 | C Simmonds and S Stratton  |                                      |
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| Date                      | August 2008  |                                      |

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT**  
**BETTS FARM, PADBURY**  
**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**  
**AUGUST 2008**

*ABSTRACT*

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on a 0.32ha parcel of land at Betts Farm, Padbury, Buckinghamshire. Three trenches were opened and natural clays, sands and gravels were exposed beneath the topsoil or modern hardcore surface. Several 19th century and undated archaeological features were investigated, including drains, ditches and gullies, postholes and a probable pit. Animal bone was retrieved from undated ditches in Trench 3. It is likely that the farmyard has undergone considerable truncation and alteration from the 19th century onwards.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

A parcel of land covering an area of 0.32ha, at Betts Farm, Padbury, Buckinghamshire has been proposed for residential development, with associated access (Planning ref: 07/02684). Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Archaeologica to undertake an evaluation to determine whether archaeological remains survived within the proposed development area (Fig 1, site centred on NGR SP 72125 30775).

Previous archaeological work on the site comprised a desk-based assessment and earthwork survey undertaken by Archaeologica (Ivens 2007). It was concluded that the farmyard had occupied by a large house called 'The Parsonage' in the late 16th-century, leaving a housing platform as the only evidence of its former presence. From the 18th-century the site has been continually cleared and built on (farm buildings).

**2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

The village of Padbury, Buckinghamshire is situated on an rising area of ground to the east of Padbury Brook, a tributary of the River Great Ouse. The site covers approximately 0.32ha of land at Betts Farm on the eastern edge of the village. It is bounded to the south-west by the A413, Winslow Road, a farm track to the north and open fields to the east and south.

The site lies at an average height of 107m aOD in the area of the farmyard and falls to an average height of 103m aOD to the south.

The site is currently occupied by a farmyard with several standing farm buildings and a pasture field to the south. The area of the farmyard is characterised by a square platform. Earthworks relating to a medieval or post-medieval open field system lie within the southern part of the site. In particular, a south-west to north-east aligned bank with a shallow ditch to the south-east is of note as its south-western end falls within the area of the proposed access road. Ridge and furrow lie immediately to the south and in some of the adjoining fields to the east. Later activity comprises an open drain immediately to the north-west of Trench 3, extending to the edge of the farm buildings (Fig 2).

The geology comprises Boulder Clay overlying Peterborough mudstones, a Middle Jurassic rock of the Oxford Clay formation (BGS 2002). The Boulder Clay is overlain by calcereous clayey soils of the Hanslope Soil Association (SSEW 1983).

### 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The village of Padbury is of Saxon origin and developed from a poly-focal settlement. One focus appears to be St Mary's Church to the east, the other at Old End to the west (Radford 2007). Open field cultivation relating to the parish and the village still survives, as indicated by current aerial imaging (Fig 1). Previous archaeological work at Manor Farm immediately to the north of the site, indicated peripheral activity dating from the 13th to 15th centuries (AS&C 2005). Manor Farm is recorded as a possible location for the *capital messuage* or principal manor. Betts Farm is recorded as being the site of a grand house called The Parsonage in the 16th century. Since the 18th century the site has been given over to houses and closes, as shown on the 1795 enclosure map, as well as farming activity. It has been concluded that there was a likelihood of disturbance and truncation of features and the ground surface (Lisboa 2008).

The archaeological evaluation follows on from a desk-based evaluation and earthwork survey undertaken in 2007 by Archaeologica (Ivens 2007).

The current trial trenching work had the specific aims of:

- Defining the presence or absence of archaeological or environmental deposits within the application area
- Identifying the nature and extent of disturbance and intrusion on the site
- Establishing whether remains associated with medieval or later human occupation lie within the area.

### 4 METHODOLOGY

The locations of the trenches which have been related to Ordnance Survey, were plotted on the ground by surveying off buildings and known field boundaries using 50m tapes.

Three trenches, with a total length of 60m, were excavated to target earthwork anomalies or across accessible areas. Trenches 1 and 2 were located in the farmyard in the area of the proposed housing development and Trench 3 was located across the proposed access route (Fig 2). Trench 1 was originally 20m in length, however, owing to the presence of an overhead cable, the close proximity of the supporting pole and a water main the trench was reduced to a hand dug test pit. Trenches 2 and 3 were excavated using a mechanical digger fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket under continuous archaeological supervision. Mechanical excavation proceeded as far as the first significant archaeological layer far as the surface of the natural geology if no archaeology was present.

All archaeological deposits and artefacts encountered during the course of excavation were fully recorded. Recording followed standard Northamptonshire Archaeology procedures. All archaeological deposits were given individual context numbers and were described on *pro-forma* context sheets, including details of the context, relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds. All potential archaeological features were excavated where conditions allowed. The excavated area and spoil heaps were scanned with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval.

The trenches were planned at a scale of 1:50. Sections or profiles through features and areas of complex stratigraphy were drawn at a scale of 1:10 or at 1:20. All levels were related to

Ordnance Datum. A full photographic record comprising 35mm black and white negatives and colour transparencies, as well as digital photographs was maintained. The field data was compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing.

All works were carried out in accordance with IFA *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* (IFA 1994, revised 2001). Procedures complied with Northamptonshire County Council's Health and Safety policy and Northamptonshire Archaeology's Health and Safety at Work Guidelines (NA 2003).

## **5 RESULTS OF FIELDWORK**

Archaeological remains were found in all trenches either cutting into made-ground or into natural clays, sands and gravels. The features in Trenches 1 and 2 mainly comprised post-19th-century drainage and remnants of a fence post line. Trench 3 to the south had been placed over earthwork bank and ditch features, and encountered three undated linear features and an undated pit beneath later bank deposits (Fig 2). The 19th and 20th-century pottery and tile was noted but not retained after excavation.

A full summation of the context descriptions may be found in the Appendix.

### **5.1 Trench 1 (Fig 2, Plate 1)**

Trench 1, a hand dug test pit aligned south-east to north-west, measuring 1.7m by 1.0m by 0.73m deep. It was located in the north-west corner of the farmyard across a terraced slope, the ground sloping steeply for a distance of 1.6m from 107.07m aOD at the top of the terrace to 106.46m aOD on the modern farm track.

Natural orange sands (105) were encountered at 106.37m aOD.

Sealing this were layers of made-ground comprising compacted orange clay (104) and gravel (103).

Archaeological features comprised a modern posthole and a construction trench cut into layer (103). The circular posthole [106], in the north-western corner of the trench was 0.23m in diameter, 0.40m deep and was filled by (107). The construction trench [108] seen the south-eastern part of the trench was aligned north-east to south-west. It measured 0.20m wide and up to 0.19m deep. It is possible that the construction trench was cut for a demolished post-medieval wall which was located at the base of the slope.

Covering the made ground was a thin layer of dark clay loam (102) with a high gravel content, overlain by dark loamy topsoil (101).

### **5.2 Trench 2 (Fig 2, Plates 2-4)**

Trench 2, which was 'L' shaped, was located in the farmyard between two farm buildings and to the south of a water main. It was located on flat ground at 107.40m aOD and measured 25m south-east to north-west and 18.5m north-east to south-west. The trench width was 1.6m and the maximum depth was 0.23m.

Natural clays were found at 107.10m aOD, directly beneath modern hardcore and topsoil layers.

Cut into the natural was a network of modern stone-filled drains. Typically, they comprised

a linear cut [211, 215], the base of which was lined with flat unmortared limestone blocks (212, 217). This was overlain by backfill comprising clay and limestone rubble (214, 219). Welsh slate, typically found in England from the 19th century onwards was recorded in the backfill (Soden I C, pers comm). During the drains usage the stone lining silted up with an orange silty clay (213, 218).

Along the northern arm of Trench 2 was a line of postholes, on an east to west alignment. These varied in size and depth and were roughly spaced at 5m intervals. Typically, the postholes were circular in plan with vertical sides and filled with dark brownish grey silty clays. The only positive dating derived from fragments of modern ceramic pipe from posthole [203]/ (205). It is probable that posthole [106] in Trench 1 is part of the same alignment and are the remains of a modern fence line. Two further smaller, undated postholes [206, 226] were located at the eastern end of the trench.

All features were sealed by either a red London Brick hardcore (201), put down in the late 20th century, or at the far eastern end a subsoil (215) overlain by a topsoil made up of a dark brown silty loam (210).

### 5.3 Trench 3 (Figs 2 and 3, Plate 5)

Trench 3 was located across a bank and ditch earthwork, immediately north-west of surviving ridge and furrow. It was aligned north-west to south-east and measured 15m long and 1.6m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.86m. The top of the bank was at 105.22m aOD to the north-west and the ground to the south-east of the trench was at approximately 103.98m aOD (Table 1).

Natural horizons comprising clays and gravels sloped down from 104.54m aOD to 103.57m aOD, possibly indicating a natural contour of the ground level.

The archaeology comprised a number of ditches or pits sealed by later deposits. To the south of the ditch, perhaps the earliest feature was a shallow pit [304]. This was overlain by subsoil layer (302). To the north-west, under the bank, a shallow linear gully or furrow [314], which appeared to butt-end in the trench, was cut into natural substrate. Its fill (313) was cut by the stepped drainage or boundary ditch [312], which probably defined the end of the open field system to the south. This was overlain by layer (310) which may be a later levelling or buried soil layer. Cutting into this to the north-west was a linear ditch [309] with a single fill (308), which was aligned parallel to the drainage/boundary ditch [312] to the south-east.

Ditch [309] was overlain by two made-ground layers (307, 306) which may represent late bank deposits. These soils could have come from the up-cast from the open drain or from the more substantial ditch to the north. The layers and features were sealed by a subsoil layer (305), which may be the same as (302). The relationship between the subsoil layers was disturbed by a modern land drain trench which also truncated the south-eastern edge of ditch [312]. The trench was sealed by a layer of topsoil (301) measuring 0.30m thick. This was deeper across the ditch [312].

*Table 1: Depth of stratigraphy*

|                | <b>Thickness NW, bank (mOD base)</b> | <b>Thickness SE, ground (mOD base)</b> |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Topsoil        | 0.30m (105.22 - 104.92)              | 0.20m (103.98 – 103.78)                |
| Subsoil        | 0.38m (104.54)                       | 0.38m (103.40m)                        |
| Archaeology    | 0.66m (103.88)                       | 0.40m (102.00m)                        |
| Top of natural | 105.54 mOD                           | 103.57mOD                              |



## 6 **ANIMAL BONE** by Karen Deighton

Seventy-four grams of animal bone was collected by hand during the excavation. The material was examined to provide information on species, preservation and to shed light on the economy and function of the site

### ***Results***

#### Preservation

Fragmentation was moderate and appeared to be the result of old breaks. Canid gnawing was noted on two bone elements. A possible chopmark was noted on an ovicaprid radius.

#### The Taxa present

Context 313 fill of ditch

Ovicaprid (sheep/goat) proximal radius

Canid (dog) tibia and femur

Context 308 fill of ditch

Ovicaprid proximal tibia

Small ungulate (small hoofed mammal)

### ***Conclusion***

Unfortunately due to the paucity of material little can be said of the nature of the deposit or the animal economy of the site.

## 7 **CONCLUSIONS**

The archaeological evaluation was successful in identifying a substantially altered landscape which had been truncated and remodelled to create a platform for working farm buildings and associated drainage. The shallowness of the natural deposits and the lack of any build-up material indicate that the landscaping took place from the 19th century onwards. At some point in the modern period a fence line had been established defining or enclosing an area within the farmyard.

A pattern of earlier undated boundary and drainage features beneath the earthworks to the south indicate that some of the extant earthworks were much later than the open field system. It is possible that some of the features may also represent the closes and boundaries alluded to in the desk-based evaluation (Ivens 2007). No traces of the earlier manor or 16<sup>th</sup>-century parsonage were identified.

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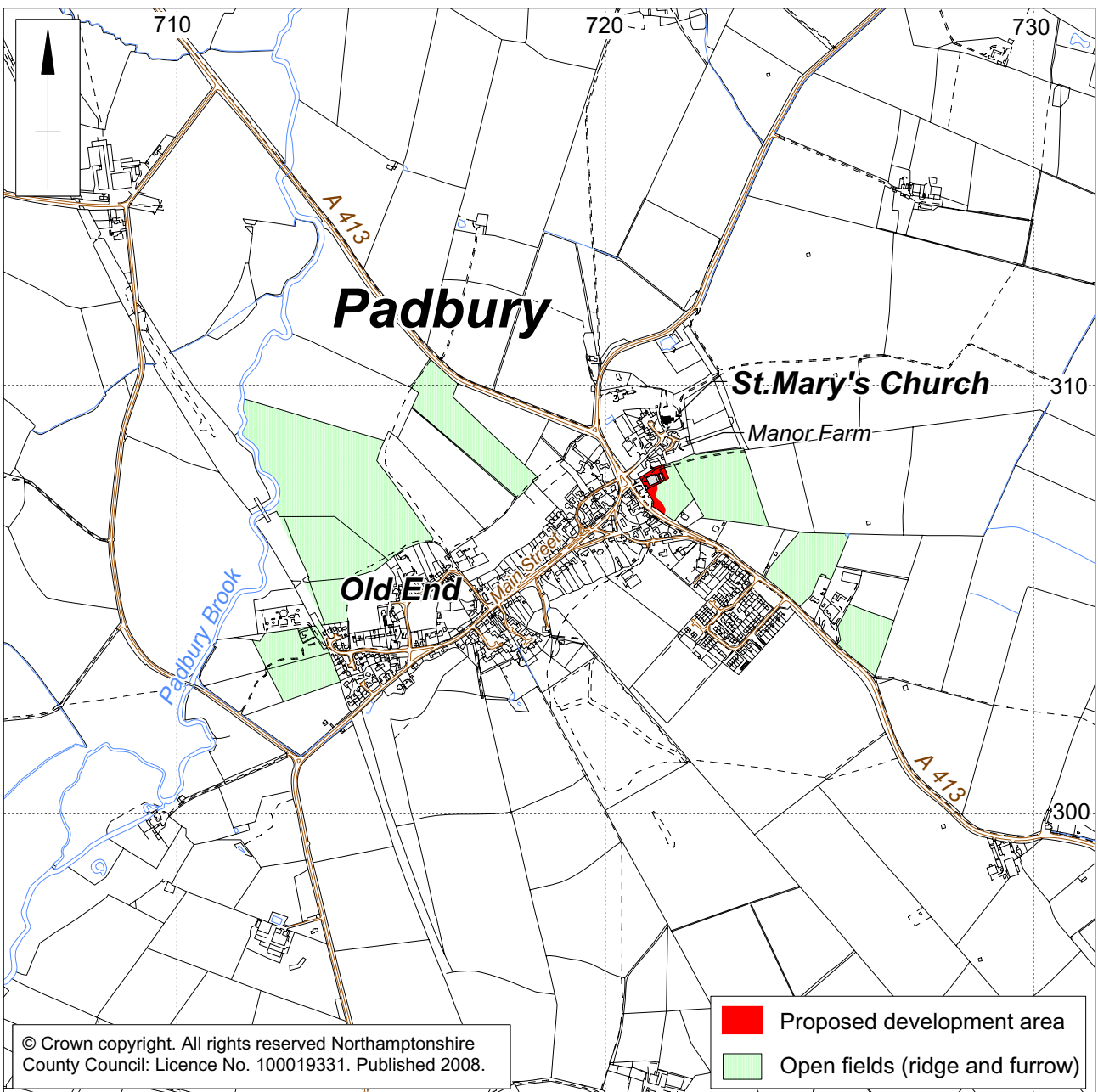
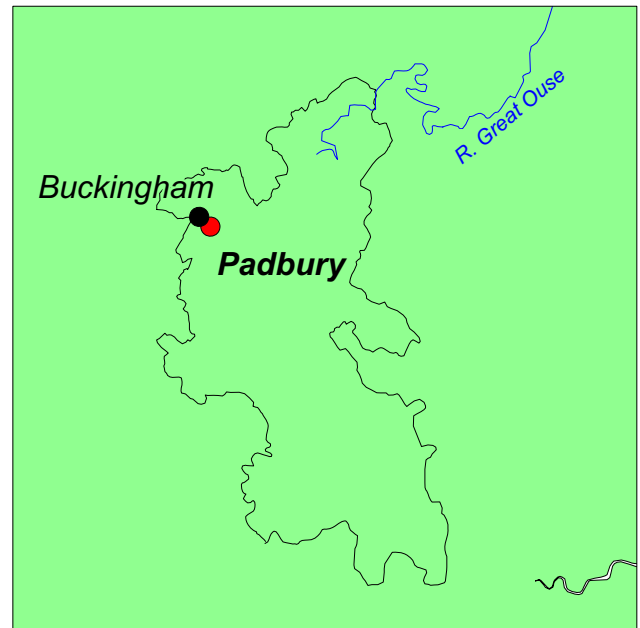
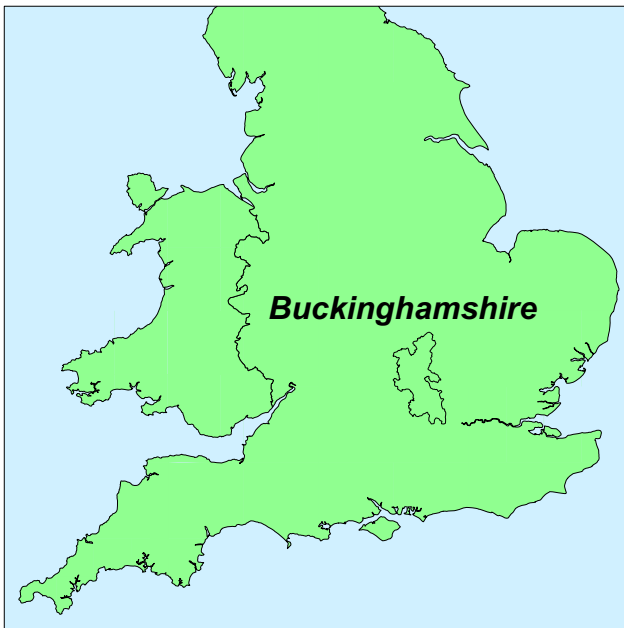
Flash Earth (aerial imaging: open fields shown on Figure 1) <http://www.flashearth.com>

**Appendix: Contexts Summary**

| Trench No | Context | Deposit Type          | Description  | Artefact types          |
|-----------|---------|-----------------------|--|-------------------------|
| <b>1</b>  | (101)   | Topsoil               | Friable dark blackish brown loam with poorly sorted coarse gravel, 0.24m thick   | Pot and tile fragments  |
|           | (102)   | Subsoil               | Firm dark blackish brown clay loam with poorly sorted coarse gravel, 0.09m thick   | Tile fragments          |
|           | (103)   | Layer                 | Compact dark orange sandy gravel, poorly sorted, 0.33m thick   | Tile fragments          |
|           | (104)   | Layer                 | Compact orange clay with a few sand and coarse gravel lenses, and small/medium angular stones, 0.33m thick               |                         |
|           | (105)   | Natural               | Loose dark orange sands, some iron panning   |                         |
|           | [106]   | Cut of Posthole       | Circular, near vertical sided posthole with flat base, 0.23m diameter, 0.40m deep  |                         |
|           | (107)   | Fill of 106           | Firm dark greyish brown clay with 30%medium gravel, 0.4m thick   |                         |
|           | [108]   | Cut                   | Linear cut with vertical sides and flat base, 1m long, 0.2m wide and 0.19m deep  |                         |
|           | (109)   | Fill of 108           | Compact light yellow orange sandy coarse gravel with flint inclusions, 0.19m thick                                       |                         |
| <b>2</b>  | (201)   | Layer                 | Compact red hardcore layer with brick inclusions, 0.23m deep   |                         |
|           | (202)   | Natural               | Firm yellow brown silty clay with chalk nodules, flint fragments and pebbles   |                         |
|           | (203)   | Cut of Posthole       | Sub/rectangular cut with vertical sides and flat base, 0.75m long, 0.6m wide and 0.52m deep                              |                         |
|           | (204)   | Secondary Fill of 203 | Loose dark brown/grey organic silty clay, 0.27m diameter, 0.52m deep   | Ceramic drain fragments |
|           | (205)   | Primary Fill of 203   | Firm yellow brown/grey silty clay, 5% small chalk nodules, 0.75m long, 0.6m wide and 0.25m deep                          |                         |
|           | [206]   | Cut of Posthole       | Circular posthole cut with vertical sides, south side has small step near base, flat base, 0.27m diameter and 0.28m deep |                         |
|           | (207)   | Fill of 206           | Firm dark grey/brown organic silty clay with occasional flint and chalk nodules, 0.27m diameter, 0.28m deep              |                         |
|           | [208]   | Cut of Posthole       | Circular cut of posthole, vertical sides and flat base, 0.32m diameter and 0.26m deep                                    |                         |
|           | (209)   | Fill of 208           | Firm dark brown/grey organic silty clay, occasional flint and chalk nodules, 0.32m diameter and 0.2m deep                |                         |

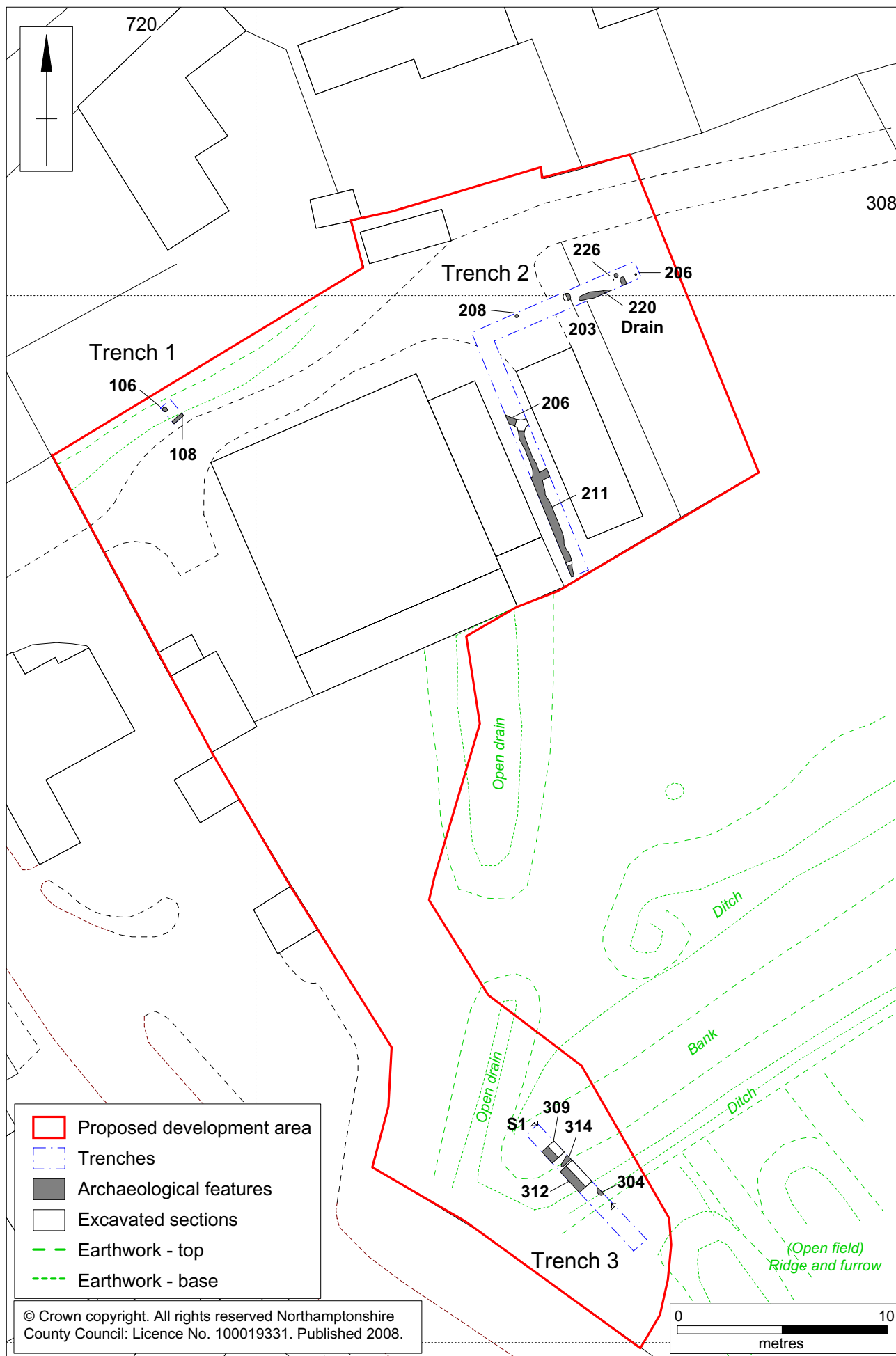
| Trench No | Context | Deposit Type    | Description   | Artefact types   |
|-----------|---------|-----------------|---|--|
|           | (210)   | Topsoil         | Loose dark brown silty loam with modern rubble, 0.3m deep   |  |
|           | [211]   | Cut of Drain    | Linear cut with vertical sides and flat base, 0.1m wide and 0.26m deep  |  |
|           | (212)   | Fill of 211     | Roughly dressed rectangular limestone blocks laid flat with no bonding, 16m long, 1m wide and 0.1m deep             |  |
|           | (213)   | Fill of 211     | Friable orange silty clay, 0.5m long, 0.46m wide and 0.11m deep   |  |
|           | (214)   | Fill of 211     | Firm dark bluish brown silty clay with <50% brick, tile, welsh slate and limestone fragments, 0.1m wide, 0.13m deep | Pottery (19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> century china) |
|           | (215)   | Subsoil         | Firm grey/brown silty clay with flint and chalk nodules, 0.18m deep   |  |
|           | [216]   | Cut of drain    | Same as 211, 2m long, 0.6m wide and 0.26m deep  |  |
|           | (217)   | Fill of 216     | Same as 212, 0.6m wide and 0.1m deep  |  |
|           | (218)   | Fill of 216     | Same as 213, 0.6m wide and 0.11m deep   |  |
|           | (219)   | Fill of 216     | Same as 214, 0.6m wide and 0.13m deep   |  |
|           | [220]   | Drain Cut       | Unexcavated linear cut for drain, 3m long 0.50m wide, east to west aligned  |  |
|           | (221)   | Fill of 220     | Firm dark blueish brown silty clay, occasional medium unshaped limestone fragments                                  |  |
|           | [222]   | Drain Cut       | Unexcavated linear cut for drain, 0.70m long, 0.50m wide, north to south aligned                                    |  |
|           | (223)   | Fill 222        | Firm dark blueish brown silty clay, occasional medium unshaped limestone fragments                                  |  |
|           | (224)   | Posthole cut    | Unexcavated circular 0.40m in diameter  |  |
|           | (225)   | Fill of 224     | Fill of 224, firm dark blue brown clay  |  |
|           | [226]   | Posthole cut    | Unexcavated circular 0.15m in diameter  |  |
|           | (227)   | Fill of 226     | Fill of 226, firm dark blue brown clay  |  |
|           | (P1)    | Post Hole Group | Postholes 203, 208 and 224. Modern fence line. Spaced 5m apart.   |  |
| 3         | (301)   | Topsoil         | Loose dark greyish brown loamy clay with frequent small stones, 0.3m thick  |  |
|           | (302)   | Subsoil         | Moderate/firm dark orange brown sandy clay with regular small stones, 0.38m thick                                   |  |

| Trench No | Context | Deposit Type        | Description  | Artefact types |
|-----------|---------|---------------------|--|----------------|
|           | (303)   | Fill of 304         | Moderate/firm mid grey/brown clay with occasional small rounded stones, 0.30m long, 1.8m wide and 0.28m deep   |                |
|           | [304]   | Cut of Pit          | Sub-circular possible pit cut, sides slope 35 degrees, flat base, 0.3m long, 1.8m wide and 0.28m deep          |                |
|           | (305)   | Subsoil             | Moderate/firm dark grey/brown loamy clay with regular small stones, 0.34m thick                                |                |
|           | (306)   | Layer               | Firm pale yellowish clay with regular chalk flecks, 1.6 m long, 1.5m wide and 0.18m thick                      |                |
|           | (307)   | Layer               | Firm blackish brown loamy clay with occasional small angular stones, 1.6m long, 1.9m wide and 0.3m deep        |                |
|           | (308)   | Fill of 309         | Moderate/firm mid brownish grey clay with occasional small stones, 0.66m deep                                  | Animal bone    |
|           | [309]   | Cut of Ditch        | Linear SW/NE orientated ditch cut, sides slope 45 degrees, concave rounded base, 1.88m wide and 0.66m deep     |                |
|           | (310)   | Layer               | Moderate/firm mid orange/brown sandy clay with rare small stones, 1m wide and 0.18m deep                       |                |
|           | (311)   | Fill of 312         | Moderate/firm mid brownish grey clay with occasional small angular stones, 2.3m wide and 0.4m deep             | Tile fragments |
|           | [312]   | Cut of Ditch        | Linear NE/SW aligned ditch cut with uneven/stepped sides and flat base, 2.3m wide and 0.4m deep                |                |
|           | (313)   | Fill of 314         | Moderate/firm mid orange brown sandy clay with rare small pebbles  | Animal bone    |
|           | [314]   | Cut of Gully/Furrow | Linear NE/SW aligned shallow gully cut with sides sloping 35 degrees and uneven base, 0.82m wide and 0.3m deep |                |
|           | (315)   | Natural             | Firm mid orange brown sandy clay with frequent gravels, and pale grey/brown clay with regular chalk pebbles    |                |
|           | [316]   | Cut of Land Drain   | Linear NE/SW aligned land drain cut, steep concave sides and flat base, 0.8m wide and 0.38m deep               |                |
|           | (317)   | Fill of 316         | Firm dark brown loamy clay with ceramic land drain   |                |



Scale 1:15,000

Site location Fig 1

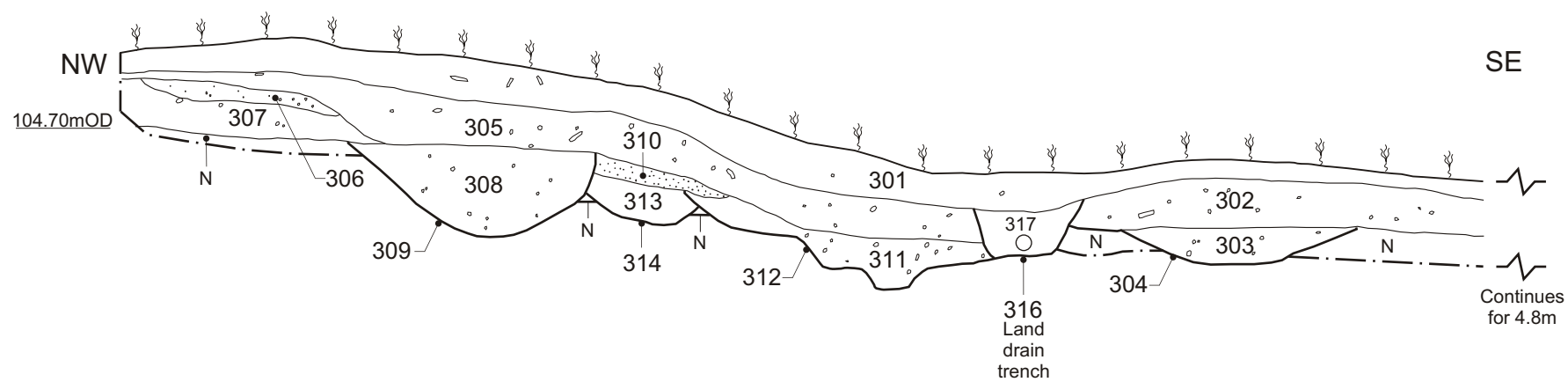


Scale 1:500

Trench locations and archaeological features

Fig 2

# *Trench 3, section 1*



[N] Natural

0 2m





Plate 5: General view of Trench 3, overlooking open field system, looking south-west





Plate 1: Hand dug test pit, Trench 1, looking north-east



Plate 2: General view of Trench 2, looking south-east





Plate 3: General view of south/north arm of Trench 2, with drain [211] in the foreground



Plate 4: Nineteenth-century drain [211], looking north