



Northamptonshire  
County Council

# Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological evaluation of land at  
20A West Street, Olney, Milton Keynes

October 2008

SMR No: 1196      AYBCM: 2008.189



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October 2008

Report 08/179

## Northamptonshire Archaeology

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**QUALITY CONTROL**

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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project name	Archaeological evaluation of land at 20A West Street, Olney, Milton Keynes, October 2008	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology conducted a trial trench evaluation of land at 20A West Street, Olney, Milton Keynes, to the rear of 43 High Street, during October 2008. A total of 16m of linear trenches was excavated within the 675 sq.m development area. The trenches revealed a series of post-medieval pits cut into the natural clays. The whole development site had been heavily disturbed by modern dumping and levelling activities. A modern garden drain ran roughly east/west across the development area below the topsoil.	
Project type	Evaluation	
Site status	None	
Previous work	None	
Current Land use	Garden	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type/ period	Post-medieval	
Significant finds	None	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Milton Keynes	
Site address	20A West Street, Olney, Milton Keynes, MK46 5HR	
Study area (sq.m or ha)	675 sq.m	
OS Easting and Northing	Centred on SP 8875 5151	
Height OD	Approx 52m above OD	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originators	Nick Crank, Milton Keynes County Council	
Project Design originator	Susan Stratton/Iain Soden, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Susan Stratton, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project Manager	Iain Soden, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Sponsor or funding body	David Richbell	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	October 2008	
End date	October 2008	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Accession no.</b>	<b>Contents</b>
Physical	2008.189	Pottery, animal bone
Paper	2008.189	Site context record, plans, section drawings and photographic record
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<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF LAND  
AT 20A WEST STREET, OLNEY, MILTON KEYNES**

**OCTOBER 2008**

*ABSTRACT*

*Northamptonshire Archaeology conducted a trial trench evaluation of land at 20A West Street, Olney, to the rear of 43 High Street, in October 2008. A total of 16m of linear trenches were excavated within the 675 sq.m development area. The trenches revealed a series of post-medieval pits cut into the natural clays. The whole development site had been heavily disturbed by modern dumping and levelling activities. A modern garden drain ran roughly east/west across the development area below the topsoil.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned in October 2008 by David Richbell, to conduct trial trench evaluation at land at 20A West Street, Olney, Milton Keynes as a condition on the planning permission for the site (NGR: SP 8875 5151; Fig 1). The land had been proposed for a residential development and the aim of the evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of any archaeological remains which might be affected by the development. Work proceeded following a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by NA to meet a brief issued by the Milton Keynes Archaeology Officer (MKAO) (NA 2008; Crank 2008). The archaeological works consisted of two 8m long trenches located to target the proposed development's ground plan (Fig 2). The work carried a Milton Keynes-issued SMR event number of 1196.

The material archive will be prepared according to the *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage* (Walker 1990), *Standards in the care of archaeological collections* (MGC 1994) and the standards of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA), The fieldwork will be carried out to the standards required by English Heritage, the *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (IFA 1994; EH 1991; Gurney 2003). The archive will be deposited with the Buckinghamshire County Museum Service at the end of the project. A copy of the report will be submitted to MKAO for comment. A copy will be deposited with the Milton Keynes SMR following approval.

**2 BACKGROUND**

**2.1 Topography and geology**

The proposed development area is situated in the centre of the medieval planned town of Olney, between High Street and West Street. The site covers 675 sq.m of land to the rear of 43 High Street, previously forming the majority of the garden of that property and was originally the rear of the medieval burgage plot.

The site is bounded by similar burgage plots to the north and south, West Street to the west and the property of 43 High Street to the east. It is situated on level ground about 50m above OD. The geology of the site consists of River Terrace deposits ([www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex)).

## **2.2 Historical and archaeological background**

The name Olney derives from a 10th-century personal name meaning 'Olla's island'. A planned town was probably founded at Olney in the 12th or early 13th century (HAT 1998). The line of the present High Street with burgage type plots to either side preserves this form. This area between East Street and West Street, is designated as a Conservation Area ([www.miltonkeynescouncil.gov.uk/archaeology](http://www.miltonkeynescouncil.gov.uk/archaeology)).

The development site lies within Olney's medieval core, and is a typical long, thin burgage-type plot, part of the possible planned village. No previous archaeological investigation has occurred on the site, but significant medieval and post-medieval remains have been uncovered by recent archaeological investigations on two sites within 60m of the proposed development, at 33 and 51 High Street.

A series of 18th and 19th century listed buildings occupy the frontage of the High Street.

## **3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Objectives**

The objectives of the trial excavation were:

- To examine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of surviving archaeological remains by considering the nature of deposits and identifying those with the potential to provide useful and informative research data.
- To examine artefactual and ecofactual content of the site by sampling features and deposits using both hand collection and, if appropriate, sieved samples to detect fine residues, small faunal remains (fish, amphibian bones etc) and charred micro plant remains.
- To use illustrated records and level heights related to Ordnance Datum to compose a deposit model for the site and identify zones of importance.
- To define the presence or absence of archaeological or environmental deposits within the application area to inform the planning decision regarding the proposals for development.

### **3.2 Methodology**

Two trenches were opened across the development area, each trench measured 8m long by 1.6m wide (Fig 2). The trench locations targeted the proposed groundworks of the development, and were centrally located due to the narrow plot which did not allow much room for manoeuvre. The trenches were set out by surveying off buildings and known property boundaries using 30m tapes and later related to the Ordnance Survey.

All work was undertaken in accordance with the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act and the welfare policies of Northamptonshire County Council (NA 2003). A full search of buried services was conducted for the areas of intervention prior to commencement of the works and a CAT scan used during machine excavation. The site was already secured by a padlocked gate preventing public access.

Ground clearance was conducted using a mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket. Topsoil, subsoil and underlying modern layers were removed by machine under archaeological supervision. Mechanical excavation stopped at the surface of the

archaeological horizon or the natural substrate where features were absent. A process of hand excavation was employed for the excavation of all archaeological deposits.

Potential archaeological features were hand-cleaned, partially excavated and a site record was maintained. Recording followed standard NA guidelines. The area was cleaned, planned and features sampled sufficiently to determine their character and date, and to reveal the underlying sub-strate. All archaeological features and deposits were given separate context numbers. Deposits were described on *pro-forma* trench and context sheets to include details of the deposit or feature, its relationships, an interpretation and a check-list of associated finds. This field data was compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing.

A photographic record was maintained, comprising 35mm black and white negatives and colour transparencies. A digital record was maintained as a supplement to the main archive.

Significant archaeological features and layers were planned at 1:50 scale. Sections and profiles of features were drawn at scales of 1:10 or 1:20 as appropriate. The excavated area was surveyed and related to the Ordnance Survey Grid with spot heights for plans and sections recorded in relation to the height above Ordnance Datum.

## **4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE**

Archaeological remains were found in both trenches cutting into the natural substrate. The features in Trench 1 were modern remnants of a brick structure and subsequent robber trenches related to its removal. Trench 2 to the west uncovered several large pits containing post-medieval pottery, which were overlain by modern levelling deposits and a garden drain.

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

### **4.1 Trench 1**

The trench measured 8.0m long and was aligned roughly east – west. The natural substrate was encountered 0.58m below ground level. The trench revealed several modern pits cut through subsoil into the natural (Fig 3, Plate 1). A probable tree-throw was the only underlying feature.

#### ***Post-medieval layers***

The potentially earliest feature cutting the natural in Trench 1 was a probable tree-throw [108], 0.6m wide by 0.5m deep, aligned roughly east to west (Fig 3). It had irregular, undercutting sides and irregular uneven base. The fill comprised friable mid orangey-grey silty clay (107) with rare sub-angular stones up to 10mm in size. The tree-throw was overlain by subsoil (102) which was around 0.25m thick. It comprised firm yellowish grey/brown sandy clay with regular small rounded stones.

#### ***Modern layers***

Cutting the subsoil (102) and natural substrate were a series of modern pits (Fig 4, section 3). A wall foundation trench [106], was 0.1m deep, 0.48m wide and extended beyond the trench baulk to the north. It had near vertical sides and a flat even base. It contained a single course of bricks (105) 0.34m wide and 0.08m deep. The bricks were red, London Brick-made, laid flat (on bed) but with no bonding. The construction trench [106] was cut by a robber trench [116] 0.92m wide and 0.51m deep, with evenly sloping sides at around 50° and a flattish base. It was filled by a loose very dark grey with brown mottles sandy loam (104), with frequent small fragments of concrete.



Pit [110] was sub-rectangular in plan, again extending beyond the trench. It was roughly east – west aligned, 1.6m long and 0.48m deep with steep sided U-shaped profile. The base was lined by a layer of scrap metal (115) 0.02m deep. The pit was filled by a friable dark grey silty clay with regular sub-angular stone (109), 20mm – 80mm deep, which contained modern brick, ceramic and clay pipe fragments.

Pit [112] was sub-angular, approximately 0.3m wide and 0.5m deep with steep even sides and a slightly concave even base. It was filled by a friable mid grey and orange mottled silty clay (111) containing modern brick, ceramic and glass fragments. Pit [114] was only visible in section and did not extend to the natural substrate. It was 0.33m deep with steep even sloping sides and a flat base. It was filled by a friable dark blackish grey silty clay (113) with occasional brick fragments. The pits were overlain by topsoil (101), 0.45 – 0.6m thick. It comprised loose very dark grey loam with regular broken brick and medium-sized stone and occasional scrap metal.

## **4.2 Trench 2**

Trench 2 was 8m long and aligned roughly east – west. The natural substrate was encountered 0.65m below ground level. Excavation uncovered three large and one small pits [209, 211, 216, 217] containing post-medieval pottery cut into the natural substrate (Fig 3, cover plate). These were overlain by a series of modern levelling deposits up to concrete hard-standing for modern out-buildings (201). A modern garden drain [206] ran east – west underneath the topsoil.

### ***Post-medieval features***

The earliest feature, pit [217] extended beyond the edge of the trench to the south. It was sub-angular, approximately 1.6m wide and at least 0.34m deep (Fig 4, section 4). Its western side sloped evenly at 50° while its base was not fully excavated due to its relative depth and location directly beneath the trench section. It was filled by a loose light and mid grey mottled silty clay (214) with 70% angular limestone 50 – 150mm diameter.

The eastern side of [217] was cut by another pit [211], 0.62m deep, sub-rectangular with steep uneven sides and a slightly undulating base. It was filled by a friable mid brownish grey and orangey brown mottled clay (210) with large angular stones well sorted to 0.1m above the pit's base. It produced one sherd of 17th – 18th century pottery and occasional animal bone.

Pit [216] was not fully excavated due to its relative depth and proximity to the section. It was rectilinear with steep near vertical sides. It was filled by a loose mid grey silty clay loam (215) with occasional charcoal flecks, and regular small angular pebbles. It produced seven sherds of Midland Blackware dating to the 17th – 18th centuries.

A small pit [209] to the north of [211] was 0.66m long, 0.5m wide and 0.1m deep, oval east – west aligned with sides sloping evenly at 45°, undercut in some places by root disturbance. It was filled by a firm mid brownish grey clay (208) with small rounded pebbles. It produced occasional animal bone.

### ***Modern layers***

Overlying these pits was a series of modern levelling deposits. Above (210) was a firm orangey brown/grey mottled sandy clay (212) with rare small stones, 0.55m thick. It produced four sherds of post-medieval pottery and an 18th-century wine glass stem. Above this was a friable mid grey clay (213) with very frequent small pebbles. The layer slumped into [216], overlying (215), and forming a series of tip lines of orange sand and small angular limestone. To the eastern end of the trench was subsoil, 0.4m thick comprising firm dirty reddish grey/brown sandy silty clay (207) with rounded and sub-angular pebbles, flint and limestone fragments, and occasional charcoal and coke. It produced four sherds of pottery ranging in date from the 17th to 20th centuries.

Cut into (207) was a garden soak-away [206] 0.42m wide and 0.24m deep east – west aligned with vertical even sides and a flat base. It was filled by compact sub-angular limestone (205), approximately 100mm diameter, with voids between the stones. Above this was a 0.6m wide and 0.15m deep firm light grey/brown gritty gravel (204) with small rounded stones, crushed brick and flint fragments. On top of this was a 0.3m thick layer of firm black coke and ash (203). The topsoil extended above the levelling layers, comprising soft very dark grey silty loam (202), 0.4m thick, containing modern brick, glass and pottery fragments. This was overlain by pale grey concrete (201) approximately 0.2m thick.

## 5 THE FINDS

### 5.1 Pottery and other finds by Iain Soden

A total of 19 sherds of pottery was recovered, as follows:

*Table 1: Pottery sherds by type and context*

Context	Date (century)	104	204	207	210	212	215	Total
Transfer-printed earthenware	19th-20th	1		1				2
English Stoneware	19th -20th	1	1					2
Glazed red earthenware	18th -19th			2				2
Slipware	17th -18th			1				1
Unglazed earthenware	17th -18th				1			1
Midland Yellow ware	16th -17th					1		1
Tin-glazed earthenware	17th					1		1
Cistercian ware	16th					1		1
Nottingham stoneware	18th					1		1
Midland Blackware	17th -18th						7	7
<b>Total</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Context TPQ</b>		<b>C20</b>	<b>C20</b>	<b>C20</b>	<b>C18</b>	<b>C18</b>	<b>C18</b>	

The pottery attests occupation close to the site since the 16th or 17th centuries, although the levels of occurrence suggest that it did not reach a peak until much later. Faced with such small numbers of sherds, it would seem that occupation, probably domestic, was either not particularly intense, or deposition of rubbish was effected elsewhere. None of the pottery has any significance except for dating purposes. All the types are found on a variety of sites in the midlands.

In addition context 207 produced a clay tobacco-pipe bowl of 18th-century form, which was residual in that context, while context 212 produced a badly damaged wine glass stem, probably of 18th-century manufacture. It is in keeping with the pottery-derived date of that feature.

### 5.2 Animal bone by Karen Deighton

A total of ten pieces of animal bone were recovered from two contexts during the course of excavation.

#### **Preservation**

Fragmentation and abrasion were moderate. Evidence of canid gnawing was noted on two bone elements. A proximal cattle radius exhibited evidence of chopping which was possibly consistent with carcass dismemberment and marks on the posterior side of a cattle scapula could suggest filleting.

***Taxonomic distribution****Table 2: taxa by context*

<b>Context</b>	<b><i>Bos</i> (cattle)</b>	<b><i>Ovicaprid</i> (sheep/goat)</b>	<b>Large ungulate</b>	<b>Small ungulate</b>	<b>Total</b>
208	1	1	-	-	2
210	2	4	1	1	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>

Unfortunately the assemblage was too small for any statements to be made on the economy or animal husbandry associated with the site other than cattle and sheep/goat were involved.

## **6 SUMMARY**

The archaeological investigation uncovered few archaeological remains on the development site. No features relating to the site's probable medieval origins were present. If the plot is indeed a medieval burgrave plot, evidence for occupation is only supportable by a few finds from the 16th century onwards and, with confidence, only from the 18th century.

The earliest stratigraphic feature is a large pit containing limestone rubble. It is cut by another large pit which produced post-medieval pottery and animal bone. A similar large pit to the west and a smaller pit to the north may have been roughly contemporary.

The whole of the development area has been subjected to significant disturbance by modern scraping and dumping of levelling material. The earliest features survive at around 0.65m below ground level. There is evidence of a modern structure which has been robbed out in the centre of the development area. To the west a series of levelling layers have been deposited to create a platform for 20th-century out-buildings. A garden drain runs east – west across the area.

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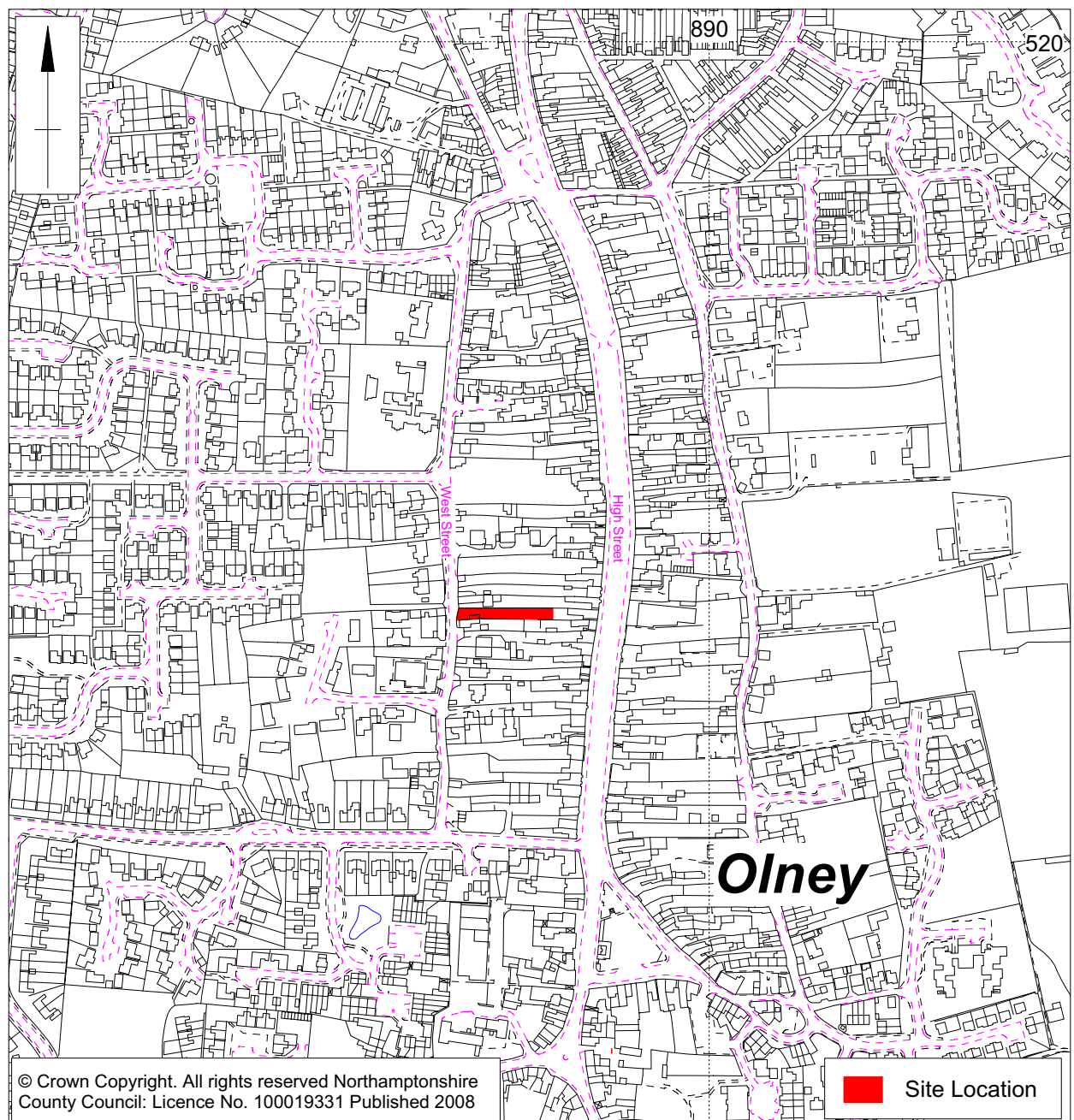
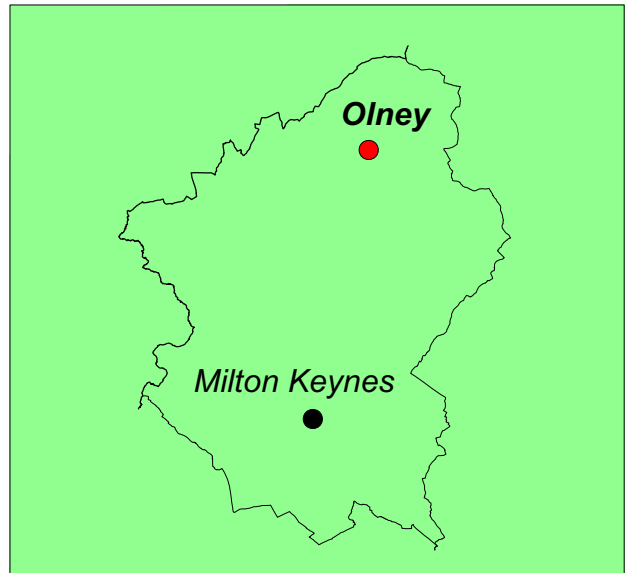
[www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex)

[www.miltonkeynescouncil.gov.uk/archaeology](http://www.miltonkeynescouncil.gov.uk/archaeology)

**Appendix: Contexts Summary**

Trench No	Context	Deposit Type	Description	Artefact types
<b>1</b>	(101)	Topsoil	Loose very dark grey silty loam containing bricks, broken stone and scrap, between 0.45-0.6m thick	
	(102)	Subsoil	Firm yellowish grey/brown sandy clay with regular small rounded stones, 0.25m thick	
	(103)	Natural	Firm mid orangey brown silty clay	
	(104)	Fill of 106	Loose very dark grey with brown pockets, sandy loam with concrete fragments	19th – 20th century pottery
	(105)	Masonry	Single un-bonded course of red London Brick	
	[106]	Cut of foundation trench	Rectangular cut with near vertical sides and flat base, 0.48m wide and 0.1m deep	
	(107)	Fill of 108	Friable mid orangey grey silty clay with rare small sub-angular stones	
	[108]	Cut of tree throw	Amorphous cut with irregular, undercut sides and uneven base, 0.5m deep	
	(109)	Fill of 110	Friable dark grey silty clay with regular small sub-angular stones and modern brick, 0.48m deep	Clay pipe
	[110]	Cut of pit	Sub-circular pit aligned east-west with steep regular sides and flattish base, 0.48m deep and 1.6m long	
	(111)	Fill of 112	Friable mid grey and orange mottled silty clay with modern brick glass and ceramics, 0.5m deep	
	[112]	Cut of pit	Sub-circular east- west aligned cut, steep sided, flat base, 0.5m deep	
	(113)	Fill of 114	Friable dark blackish grey silty clay with occasional modern brick fragments, 0.33m deep	
	[114]	Cut of pit	Steep sided flat based cut, not visible in plan, 1.24m wide and 0.33m deep	
	(115)	Fill of 110	Layer of scrap metal, 0.02m thick	
	[116]	Cut of robber trench	Cut not visible in plan, sides slope evenly at 50 degrees, flattish base, 0.92m wide and 0.51 m deep	
<b>2</b>	(201)	Layer	Compact pale grey concrete layer, 0.2m deep	
	(202)	Topsoil	Loose dark blackish grey silty loam with frequent medium sized stones and post-medieval debris, 0.4m deep	
	(203)	Layer	Firm very dark grey layer of ash and silt, 0.3m deep	
	(204)	Deposit	Firm light greyish brown gritty gravel, with rounded pebbles, crushed brick, broken flint and limestone, 0.6m wide and 0.15m deep	

Trench No	Context	Deposit Type	Description	Artefact types
	(205)	Fill of 206	Sub-angular limestone blocks about 0.1 by 0.1m, haphazardly deposited, 0.42m wide and 0.24m deep	
	[206]	Cut of garden drain	Linear east-west aligned cut with regular near vertical sides and flat even base, 0.42m wide and 0.24m deep	
	(207)	Layer/Subsoil	Firm reddish grey/brown sandy silty clay with regular fragments of charcoal, coke, flint, limestone and small pebbles, 0.4m deep	17th – 20th century pottery
	(208)	Fill of 209	Firm mid brownish grey clay with occasional small rounded stones, 0.1m deep	Animal bone
	[209]	Cut of pit	Oval east – west aligned pit, sides slope 45 degrees, undercut in places, base uneven, 0.66m long, 0.5m wide and 0.1m deep	
	(210)	Fill of 211	Moderate mid brownish grey with orangey brown mottles clay, rare large angular stones well sorted at base, 0.62m deep	17th – 18th century pottery, animal bone
	[211]	Cut of pit	Oval pit partially exposed, steep uneven sides and flattish slightly undulating base. 0.62m deep	
	(212)	Layer	Firm orangey brown/grey mottled sandy clay with rare small stones 0.35m deep	16th–18th century pottery, wine glass stem
	(213)	Layer	Friable mid grey clay with very frequent small pebbles and tip lines of sand and small angular stone	
	(214)	Layer	Friable mid grey silty clay with very frequent medium angular limestone	
	(215)	Layer	Friable mid grey silty clay loam, regular charcoal fragments and angular pebbles	17th – 18th century pottery
	[216]	Cut of pit	Rectilinear east-west aligned cut with steep side to east, base unexcavated	
	[217]	Cut of pit	Cut visible in section, sides slope 50 degrees, slightly uneven	
	(218)	Natural	Firm mid orangey brown silty clay	



Scale 1:5000

Site Location Fig 1

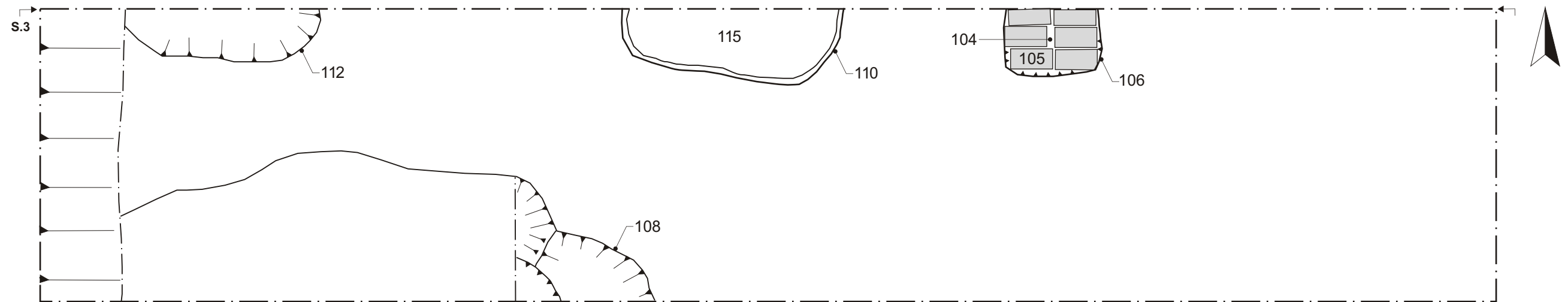


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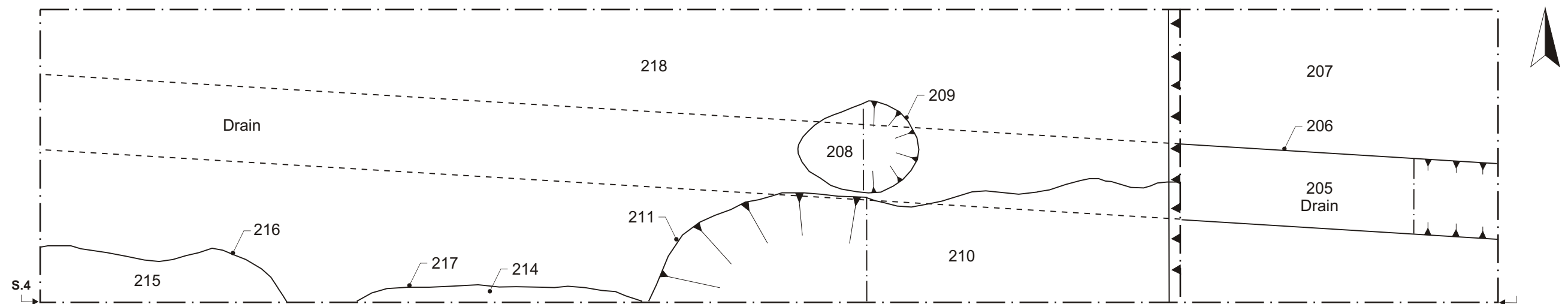
Trench Locations Fig 2



## Trench 1



## Trench 2

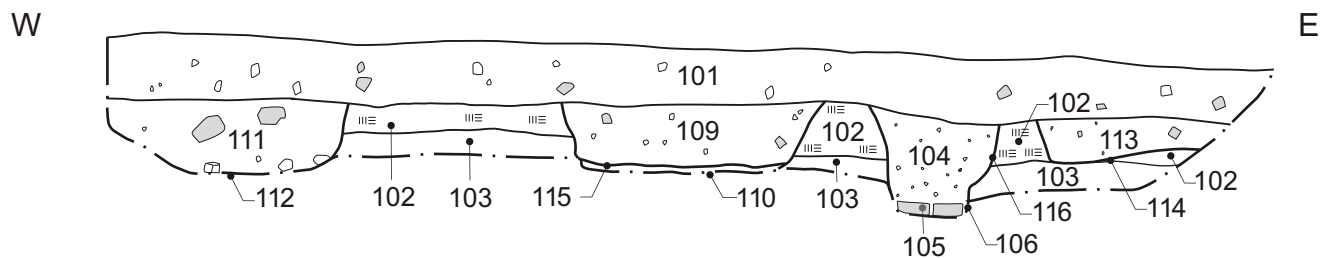


0 1m

Brick  
Continuation of drain  
removed after recording

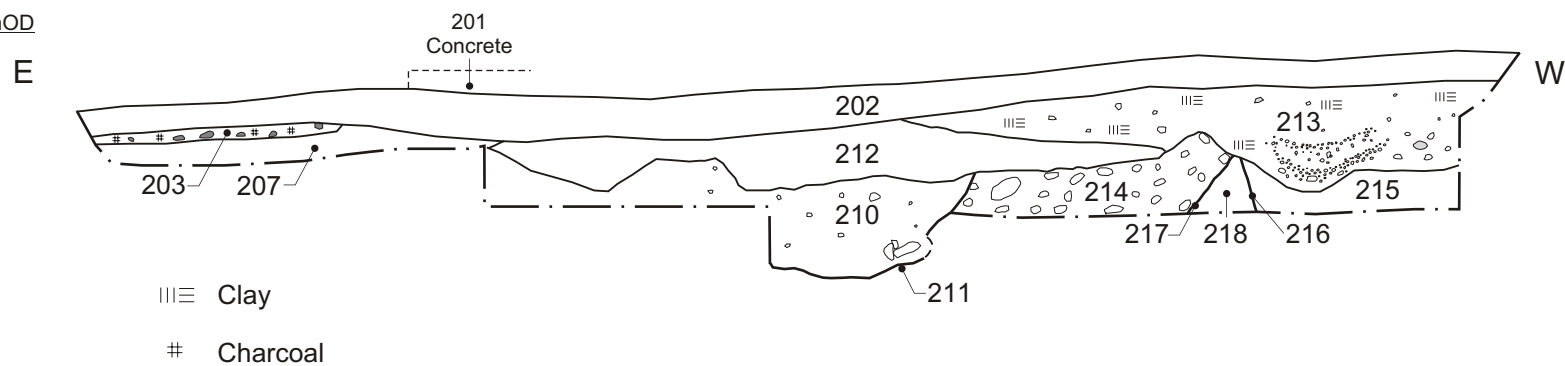
### Section 3, Trench 1

52.46 mOD



### Section 4, Trench 2

52.71 mOD



||| Clay  
# Charcoal

0 2m

Feature sections, trenches 1 and 2 Fig 4



Plate 1: Trench 1 post-excavation, looking west