

Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological evaluation at Lyng Hall School
Blackberry Lane
Coventry
February 2008



Danny McAree

June 2008

Report 08/105

STAFF

Project Manager	Iain Soden BA MIFA
Fieldwork	Danny McAree MA MBA PG Dip PIFA Adrian Adams Tim Upson-Smith
Text	Danny McAree
Pottery	Iain Soden BA MIFA
Ceramic building materials	Pat Chapman BA CMS AIFA
Illustrations	Jacqueline Harding BA HND Carol Simmonds MA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Northamptonshire Archaeology gratefully acknowledges the wartime recollections of local residents Mary Temple and John Gartland who provided help regarding the wartime military use of the site. The account by Alan Edgson (www.historiccoventry.co.uk) is also acknowledged.

QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	P Chapman		4.6.08
Verified by	I Soden		4.6.08
Approved by	S Parry		12.6.08

LYNG HALL SCHOOL, COVENTRY

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Lyng Hall School, Blackberry Lane, Coventry	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out trial trench excavation at Lyng Hall school, Blackberry Lane, Coventry. Sixteen trenches totalling 850m in length by 1.7m wide were excavated under archaeological supervision. The site had been extensively terraced for the construction of school buildings and sports facilities. Occasional traces of World War Two military occupation were noted. No other substantive archaeological remains were present.	
Project type	Trial Trench Evaluation	
Site status	Site of school buildings, sports field, car parking	
Previous work	None	
Current Land use	Waste	
Future work	None	
Monument type/ period	Traces of World War Two military enclosure	
Significant finds		
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Coventry	
Site address (including postcode)	Lyng Hall School, Blackberry Lane, Coventry	
Study area (sq.m or ha)	6ha	
OS Easting & Northing	SP 3634 8081	
Height OD	84m	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Coventry County Council	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Danny McAree	
Project Manager	Iain Soden	
Sponsor or funding body	City Development Directorate, Coventry City Council	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	25th February 2008	
End date	29th February 2008	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		16 trench reports, 16 plans, 72 photographs, 72 slides, digital photographs. 1 box of finds.
Paper		Site records. Drawings. Report
Digital		Digital report with illustrations.
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title	Archaeological evaluation of land at Lyng Hall School, Blackberry Lane, Coventry	
Serial title & volume	NA Report 08/105	
Author(s)	Danny McAree	
Page numbers	19	
Date	June 2008	

CONTENTS

- 1 INTRODUCTION**
- 2 BACKGROUND**
 - 2.1 Planning background
 - 2.2 Archaeological background
 - 2.3 Topography and geology
- 3 OBJECTIVES**
- 4 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT**
 - 4.1 Documentary sources
 - 4.2 Historic maps
 - 4.3 Historic Environment Records
- 5 TRIAL TRENCHING**
 - 5.1 Methodology
 - 5.2 Results
- 6 THE FINDS**
 - 6.1 Pottery by Iain Soden
 - 6.2 Ceramic building materials by Pat Chapman
- 7 CONCLUSIONS**
- BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Appendices

Appendix 1: Context descriptions

Tables

Table 1: Pottery assemblage

Figures

Fig 1: Site location

Fig 2: Plan of Trenches 1-16

Plates

Frontispiece: Aerial photograph of site

Plate 1: Aerial photograph of site *circa* 1946

Plate 2: Aerial photograph of site *circa* 2004

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT LYNG HALL SCHOOL

BLACKBERRY LANE, COVENTRY

FEBRUARY 2008

ABSTRACT

Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out trial trench excavation at Lyng Hall school, Blackberry Lane, Coventry. Sixteen trenches totalling 850m in length by 1.7m wide were excavated under archaeological supervision. The site had been extensively terraced for the construction of school buildings and sports facilities. Occasional traces of World War Two military occupation were noted. No other substantive archaeological remains were present.

1 INTRODUCTION

In February 2008 Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook an Historic Environment Record assessment and trial trench evaluation on behalf of City Development Directorate, Coventry City Council on six hectares of land at Lyng Hall School, Blackberry Lane, Coventry (NGR: SP 3634 8081; Fig 1). The work was conducted in accordance with a written scheme of investigation prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (McAree 2008) and approved by Coventry City Council. The fieldwork was undertaken between 25 -29 February 2008.

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

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Planning background

City Development Directorate, Coventry City Council propose to develop the land for housing, access roads and landscaping.

2.2 Archaeological background

No previous archaeological work has been undertaken.

2.3 Topography and geology

The site lies to the south east of the River Sowe on rising land at *c* 82m OD rising to 84m at the west of the site. It is bounded to the north by Blackberry Lane, to the east by housing along Wyken Croft, to the south by housing along Armscott Road and to the west by Lyng Hall School and its grounds.

Much of the north and west is obscured by concrete foundations for classrooms, hardstanding for playgrounds, paths, tennis courts and cricket nets. The site had been extensively terraced to provide level areas for buildings and for the school running track which occupies much of the central part of the site.

The geology of the area is mapped as Permian and Triassic Mudstones and Bromsgrove sandstone overlain by glacial till including Bunter and Keuper clays intermixed with sands and gravel along the river valleys (www.bgs.ac.uk).

3 OBJECTIVES

The general 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 Wyken

The site specific objectives were:

- To recover evidence of pre-medieval land use
- To recover evidence of the medieval and post-medieval settlement of Wyken
- To recover evidence of the wartime use of the site

4 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT

4.1 Documentary sources

The place name 'Wyken' is of uncertain origin. It may derive from the Saxon '*wic*' meaning possibly a dairy or specialised farm, from Old English '*wiken*' meaning a dwelling, or from '*wike*' meaning a bend in the river. The location of the historic parish church of St Mary Magdalene at the tip of a large bend in the River Sowe may give some weight to the latter attribution.

Wyken is not listed in the Domesday Survey of 1086. It is first mentioned in the early 12th

century when it is recorded as one of the chapelries on the estates of the earls of Chester granted to Coventry Priory.

In the later 12th century, the Prior both granted and leased lands to the newly established monastery at Combe Abbey.

The earliest known tenants of the estate were members of the Bruton (or Bret) family who also held a mill at Wyken in the late 12th and 13th centuries. Their successors, the Langleys and the Frevilles held the estate until 1596.

In 1596, extravagance forced Sir Francis Willoughby, a descendant of the Frevilles, to sell the estate to the Green family, formerly estate tenants, who held the estate until the 18th century when, upon the death of Henry Green, the estate passed to his grandson, William Craven, of Combe Abbey, who inherited the title Baron Craven in 1764.

The Craven family (from 1801, the Earls Craven) remained the principal landowners of Wyken until after the First World War, after which time the land was acquired by Coventry Corporation for housing.

The estate appears to have always been rural and agricultural in nature. In 1279 there were 23 tenants or households, 15 taxpayers in 1327, 11 taxpayers in 1524, and 24 households in 1563.

There is no firm documentary evidence or surviving cartographic indication of a nucleated medieval village or settlement on the estate. The present church of St Mary Magdalene is located on a low spur of higher ground overlooking Wyken Bridge. The oldest surviving fabric of the church dates from the 12th century, the date at which Wyken is first recorded in the documentary sources. It is highly probable that the church was built to serve the settlement that had developed adjacent to the crossing of the River Sowe immediately to the north.

The settlement is likely to have clustered around the church and the paths, from Caludon and Wyken Grange (now the roads known as Wyken Croft and Torcross Avenue) which met near the church. The continuation of Wyken Croft northwards past the church towards Henley was joined by Blackberry Lane just south of Wyken Bridge. The lay-out of the church, Wyken Bridge, and the paths around them, when compared with that of the modern Ansty Road (formerly Sowe road) suggests that the former were the more ancient.

References to *Wyken Field* or *Wyken Fields*, to agriculture, and to selions and headlands indicate that the fields there were open in the 13th and 14th centuries. The grazing arrangements indicate a three-year rotation, but there is no surviving evidence of the location and layout of the three large fields (VCH).

The last reference to medieval field systems in the fields of Wyken was in 1479. A tenement and

yardland, then consisting, not of arable, but of pasture and meadow, was mentioned in 1650. By 1778 most of Wyken was divided into five compact farms (including the development site) held by copyhold tenure. There were also, in addition to Lord Clifford of Caludon, two freeholders and three smallholders.

Apart from the spread of coal working on the northern part of Wyken, the farms remained almost unchanged until after the First World War.

As early as 1778, there was no evidence that there was ever a village or hamlet around the church, any putative early village or settlement had long since disappeared. The only households recorded in the rural parish were twelve or thirteen houses concentrated at the five farms forming the estate at Wyken. There were one or two households on Wyken Green and another at the pound on Henley Road. Thereafter Wyken was encroached upon by development and housing extending out from Coventry, into which it was finally incorporated in 1931.

During the war years 1939-1945, the open ground between Torcross Avenue and Blackberry Lane to the south and east of Harris's Farm (the development site) was used as the site for anti aircraft artillery emplacements and barrage balloons (pers comm Mary Templar, John Gartland, Alan Edgson). These were positioned to defend the strategically important Morris engineering works to the west.

It is not known from which unit the anti-aircraft guns were deployed, however, the barrage balloons would have formed part of either the 916 or 917 (County of Warwick) Squadrons. Both units formed part of No 31 Balloon Barrage Group based in Birmingham. Between 1939 and 1944 both units were deployed in Coventry.

916 Squadron was initially deployed with 3 flights, each of 8 balloons, by 1940 they had 32 balloons. They were later reformed for 'Anti-diver' operations. 917 Squadron probably remained in Coventry until 1944. They only ever had 3 flights of 8 balloons. Each balloon required two NCOs and ten enlisted men to operate them. Normal deployment of such balloons was from a vehicle, mounted with a winch, used to raise and lower the balloon as necessary and to provide transport and storage for the balloon when not in use.

The military encampment also overlooked the strategic Wyken Bridge and a gun emplacement was sited to the east of the site adjacent to Wyken Croft to cover the approaches along the road to the bridge. The anti aircraft guns were sited in emplacements to the south and west of the military enclosure close to Torcross Avenue. The barrage balloons with the winches, trailers and anchorage points were located to the south and east of Harris's Farm in the general location of the 1950s Lyng Hall school running track.

Three or four wooden barrack blocks were located on the site with a perimeter fence of chain link fencing supported on concrete posts and topped by barbed wire forming an enclosure around the site. There was a kitchen and a mess hall as well as toilets and ablutions in wooden hutments on the site.

In the latter years of the war, the site activity was reduced with at least some of the artillery being relocated elsewhere. By 1944, most of the site had been vacated by the military. An aerial photograph of *c* 1946 shows the site cleared of military occupation (Plate 1, courtesy of Coventry HER).

Lyng Hall school was built in 1955 on the south of Blackberry Lane on lands that once formed part of Harris's Farm at Wyken Green. The brick farmhouse was retained. The building dates from 1830, and the ancillary farm buildings were altered and restored and were used as part of the school. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the school was rebuilt to the west and the original school buildings demolished.

The new site has been partitioned off from the old site and sports ground which now forms the proposed development area. The Harris Farm buildings have been retained at the north-west corner of the proposed development area (Fig 1, Plate 2).

4.2 Historic maps

There are no inclosure or tithe maps of the Wyken parish. The earliest available map is the 1888 1st edition 25" Ordnance Survey map which shows the area as an agricultural field with the buildings of Harris's Farm in its north-west corner. This plot of land is located about 100m to the west of the church of St Mary Magdelene and the putative settlement of medieval Wyken.

4.3 Historic environment records

A search of Coventry's Sites and Monuments Records database was made within a 500m radius of the site producing over 64 records with locations plotted on the modern digital mapping of the area. None of this data adds to the documentary and historical research above.

5 TRIAL EXCAVATION

5.1 Methodology

All trenches were located following on site discussion and agreement between Chris Patrick, Planning Archaeologist, Coventry City Council and Danny McAree, Senior Project Supervisor, Northamptonshire Archaeology.

The trenches were excavated using a 360° tracked excavator fitted with a 1.7m-wide toothless 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 using a Leica GPS survey instrument.

Once opened, hand excavation and recording of trenches progressed in accordance with the approved written scheme of investigation (McAree 2008). Following the completion of the archaeological work the trenches were backfilled.

5.2 Results

The natural subsoil exposed across the site was orange-red sandy clay banded with ribbons of stiff red/pink silt clays and ribbons of coarse red and yellow sands and gravel up to 15mm. There were occasional patches or lenses of predominantly yellow, but occasionally pink, fine soft sand.

Trench 1

Trench 1 (50m x 1.7m, Fig 2) was aligned roughly north-east to south-west along the northern boundary of the site adjacent to Blackberry Lane. The natural was exposed 0.7m-0.8m deep along the length of the trench.

About 21m from the west end of the trench, a shallow gully [107] aligned roughly north-south cut across the trench and cut through furrow [110]. It was 0.7m wide and 0.4m deep with steeply sloping sides to a dished base. It was filled with re-deposited mixed sandy clay subsoil and topsoil (108) from its excavation mixed with fragments of broken brick and modern cement concrete. There were no other finds from this feature.

Cutting the natural up to 0.15m deep and 4-5m wide and aligned roughly north-west to south-east were the truncated remains of four furrows [109-112] from earlier agricultural ploughing regimes. There were no finds from these features.

The natural was overlain and blended with orange-grey sandy clay subsoil (106) which survived up to 0.25m deep. The subsoil blended with a dark grey/brown sandy clay loam (104) up to 0.2m deep, which appears to have been a truncated buried soil.

In the central part of the trench, this layer was missing and was replaced by a layer of back ash and clinker (105) which extended 5m along the length of the trench and up to 0.25m deep. Both layers were sealed below a dump of mixed stiff red clay, builders/demolition debris and coarse sands and gravel (102) varying between 0.25m deep at the west of the trench and 0.4m deep at the east. This was covered by modern brown sandy clay loam topsoil (101) varying in thickness between 0.15 and 0.25 along the length of the trench.

Trench 2

Trench 2 (56m x 1.7m, Fig 2) was aligned roughly north-south and perpendicular to the northern edge of the site. The natural (203), lay 0.4m-1.05m below the modern ground surface, being deeper towards the north.

At the north of the trench, in the end 8-9m, the natural sloped away at about 30° towards the road. It was overlain by orange/grey subsoil (210) only 0.15m deep below a grey-brown sandy clay loam buried soil (211) that only survived 0.15-0.2m deep. This had been worn down into a long shallow hollow [208], 1.9m wide at the surface of the buried topsoil and sloping to a rounded base 0.8m wide and 0.3m deep at the base. In the soil surface of the hollow (209), there were frequent/abundant rounded river pebbles, broken brick, tile and fragments of concrete and tarmac. Finds included 19th and 20th-century bottle glass and 1960s plastic food packaging and aluminium drinks cans.

Cutting the natural 28m from the southern end of the trench was a linear cut [204] 0.2m wide and 0.2m deep and aligned roughly east-west across the trench. It contained the re-deposited upcast from its excavation (205) and a modern earthenware land drain. Vestigial traces of three furrows (206-208) up to 0.15m deep and 0.4m wide and aligned roughly north-west to south-east cut across the trench. There were no other archaeological features or finds.

The natural was overlain by 0.25m-deep dump of mixed sandy clay (202) containing coarse red sand and gravel up to 20mm, occasional fragments of broken brick, roofing tile, modern concrete and tarmac. It was sealed below dark brown sandy clay loam topsoil (201) that averaged 0.15m deep along the length of the trench.

Trench 3

Trench 3 (54m x 1.7m, Fig 2) was aligned north-west to south-east in the north-east part of the site. The natural lay 0.55-0.65m below the modern ground surface, dipping slightly to the north. At about 13m from the northern end of the trench, a straight line of three postholes [304], [306], [308] was aligned roughly north-south across the trench. They were all about 0.3m in diameter and up to 0.3m deep.

They were located at 4.5m intervals and all contained the base of a steel reinforced concrete fence post set into modern cement concrete (305), (307), (309). In each case the post had been broken off and the steel reinforcing cut by bolt croppers. There were no other archaeological features.

There was no subsoil, the natural was sealed below a mixed layer of orange-red sandy clay (302) varying between 0.25-0.35m deep along the trench and containing occasional fragments of builders or demolition debris and occasional lenses or patches of coarse orange sand and gravel. It was overlain by up to 0.25m of dark grey brown sandy loam topsoil (301).

Trench 4

Trench 4 (40m x 1.9m, Fig 2) was aligned north-east to south-west in the eastern-half of the site. The natural at the east lay 0.4m below the present ground surface and up to 1.3m deep to the west.

At about 20m from the east of the trench, a large artificial terrace had been created rising 1.3m to the west creating a level area for the construction of the 1950s school running track.

Beneath the top soil surface of the track area, a compact edge to the terrace platform had been created by dumping huge quantities of demolition material, including concrete blocks 18"x12"x9" many still bonded with hard grey portland cement. Locking many blocks together was cast concrete and steel reinforcement indicating whole sections of an original structure had been pushed or dragged into this position. The integrity and size of these constructional fragments indicates they are unlikely to have been moved or transported any great distance. Mixed in with this heavy rubble layer were fragmentary sheets of corrugated iron, electrical conduit, broken sanitary ware and brickwork. The only datable finds were fragments of utilitarian white and patterned earthenwares of the 20th century, aluminium drinks cans and plastic food wrappers.

The natural to the east was overlain by a dump of orange-red sandy clay (403) up to 0.3m deep and rising towards the centre of the trench. It contained frequent fragments of broken brick, concrete, together with lenses of gravel, cinders and occasional pieces of tarmac. This was sealed below a layer of brown-grey sandy clay loam topsoil (401) up to 0.2m deep

At the west of the trench, the natural was sealed below an orange-grey sandy clay subsoil (405) up to 0.2m deep which supported a truncated brown-grey sandy clay loam topsoil (404) only 0.05-0.1m deep. Build up layer (403) sealed this soil up to 1m deep to the west.

Immediately west of the edge of the artificial terrace, the topsoil was cut by a wide shallow trench [406] 5m wide and 0.3m deep containing a compacted layer of red coarse sand (407) 0.1m deep supporting an 0.2m deep layer of compacted black clinker (408) which had originally formed the surface of the school running track.

Trench 5

Trench 5 (55m x 1.7m, Fig 2) was in the central-east of the site and aligned slightly north-west to south-east at right angles to the southern site boundary. The natural was exposed 0.7m below the modern ground surface and exhibited a natural slope from west and south-west to the east and north-east towards the River Sowe.

At about 4m from the north end of the trench, a sub-circular pit [517] was partially exposed along the western edge of the trench. It was about 0.8m in diameter and 0.3m deep with steeply sloping sides and a dished base.

It was filled with the re-deposited upcast from its excavation (516) and contained fragments of broken brick and tile. About 5m further south, sub-rectangular pit [507] was partially exposed in the east of the trench. It was 1.5m long, 0.7m wide and 0.25m deep with steep sides sloping to a flat base. It was filled with the re-deposited upcast from its excavation (506) containing fragments of broken brick, tile, concrete and a length of plastic dpc sheeting.

At about 13m further south, a sub-rectangular pit [509] was exposed 2.3m along the edge of the trench, and extended 1.8m into the trench but was only 0.1m deep. It was filled with dirty red-grey sandy clay lam containing frequent broken roof tile and several corroded iron nails.

At 1m further south, but on the western edge of the trench, pit [511] was 0.4m in diameter and 0.1m deep. It was filled with concrete packing (512) for a wooden (4"square) fence post. Cutting this pit to the south was pit [513] 0.45m in diameter and 0.15m deep. It contained cement packing (512) for a concrete fence post.

At about 10m further to the south, trench [515] was 0.2m wide and 0.2m deep and aligned east-west across the trench. It was filled with the re-deposited upcast from its excavation (514) and a red terracotta land drain.

The natural surfaces blended with orange-grey sandy clay subsoil (504) up to 0.15m deep which supported a truncated brown-grey sandy clay loam topsoil (503) only 0.15m deep. This was sealed below a layer of orange-red sandy clay (502) containing fragments of demolition debris and 20th-century plastics and drinks cans.

Trench 6

Trench 6 (52m x 1.7m, Fig 2) was located in the south-east of the site and aligned slightly north-west to south-east at right angles to the southern boundary. The natural was exposed between 0.3m deep at the north to 0.5m at the south of the trench.

At about 13m from the south of the trench, aligned roughly east to west across the trench, a machine cut trench [605] was 2m wide and 0.2m deep. It contained the re-deposited upcast from its excavation (606) mixed with modern builders debris and plastic.

At the north the trench, a 0.4m deep layer of red sandy clay (602) containing mixed builders or demolition debris sealed the natural clay. At about 15m to the south, there was a shallow natural dip taking the natural up to 0.9m below the modern ground surface. Within this natural dip the natural clay blended with orange-grey sandy clay subsoil (604) up to 0.15m deep which supported brown-grey sandy clay loam topsoil (603) only 0.1m-0.15m deep. This was sealed below a layer of dirty red-orange sandy clay (607) packed almost solid with brick, brick fragments, clinker and coarse red sand. This formed a lens 7m long, 0.5m thick and very compact. It formed a straight line extension to the cul-de-sac roadway to the east.

The brick types included both plain and frogged bricks, all machine cut and bearing impressed makers marks. Brickmakers noted include “H & B WORKS, LONGFORD COVENTRY”, “FB & T CO LTD, LONGFORD”, “WEBSTERS BRICK WORKS LTD, COVENTRY”.

The layer of sandy clay (602) observed at the north end of the trench extended across this brick layer and sealed the natural across the remainder of the trench. Covering this layer was a 0.15m deep layer of brown sandy clay loam topsoil (601).

Trench 7

Trench 7 (55m x 1.7m, Fig 2) was located at the south-east of the site and aligned north-west to south-east. The natural was exposed 0.55m deep at the west of the trench, sloping to 1m deep at the east.

Cutting the natural at the west of the site was a trench [703] 0.3m wide and 0.15m deep, containing re-deposited red sandy clay (704) and two lead-sheathed copper cables aligned east-west along the trench.

There was no subsoil, a layer of red sandy clay (702) containing frequent fragments of brick, roof tile, concrete and other modern detritus sealed the natural along the length of the trench. This varied between 0.35m deep at the west of the trench to 0.8m at the east. Where the trench cut across the edge of the raised platform supporting the running track, the build up layer (702) contained a dump of brick and concrete up to 2.5m wide and 0.8m deep forming a compact edge to the artificial terrace. This layer was covered by brown sandy clay loam topsoil (701) up to 0.2m deep along the length of the trench.

Cutting both the topsoil (701) and the build up layer (702) at the east of the trench was a wide shallow trench [705], 5m wide and 0.3m deep, containing a compacted layer of red coarse sand (706) 0.1m deep supporting an 0.2m deep layer of compacted black clinker (707) which had formed the surface of the school running track.

Trench 8

Trench 8 (65m x 1.7m, Fig 2) was located in the south-east of the site and aligned slightly north-east to south-west, parallel to the southern boundary. The natural was exposed between 0.3m deep at the east and 0.85m at the west of the trench.

At about 13m from the east end of the excavation, a land drain [813] 0.2m wide and 0.15m deep was aligned roughly north-south across the trench. It contained re-deposited upcast (814) and machine pressed terracotta land drains.

About 2m further west, a dump of demolition debris [804] 2.5m wide and 0.5m deep formed the outer edge of the base for the running track and sports area.

About 27m further west, a pit [807] 0.2m wide and steeply sloping 40° sides to a flat base 0.3m deep extended across the trench. It was filled with mixed re-deposited upcast (808) from its excavation containing broken bricks, concrete and roofing tile. Only 3m further west, a sub circular pit [805] was exposed 3m long and 0.3m deep on the south of the trench. It had shallow sides sloping to a broad flat base and was filled with re-deposited sandy clay (806) and mixed demolition debris.

Sealing the natural to the west and extending over the terrace-edge dump of hardcore, a layer of red sandy clay (802) containing fragments of demolition debris varied in depth from 0.7m in the west to 0.2m over the track edge. This was overlain by a layer of dark brown sandy clay loam (801) varying between 0.1m on the artificial terrace and terrace edge to 0.3m deep to the east of the raised platform where there was no subsoil or build up layer but the topsoil directly sealed the underlying natural clay.

Cutting the topsoil (801) and the build up layer (802) along the edge of the artificial terrace, was a wide shallow trench [811] 5m wide and 0.3m deep containing a compacted layer of black clinker (812) which had formed the surface of the running track.

Only 0.5m to the west a modern machine cut trench [809], was 0.2m wide and 0.25m deep, cut through the topsoil (801) and levelling layer (802). It contained a modern plastic field drain and redeposited upcast (810) from its excavation.

Trench 9

Trench 9 (57m x 1.7m, Fig 2) was located along the southern edge of the site and aligned slightly north-east to south-west. The natural was exposed about 0.55m deep along the length of the trench.

About 10m from the north end of the trench, a machine-cut pit [905] was aligned roughly north-west to south-east across the trench. The pit was 2m wide and 0.2m deep. Traces of the toothed machine bucket used for its excavation were observed in the base of the pit.

It was filled with a mix of re-deposited red sandy clay (906) mixed with demolition debris. At 3m to the south and located along the east edge of the trench, a circular pit [907] was 0.6m deep and 0.4m in diameter and filled with poured concrete (908) supporting a 3" box section steel tube. The metal tube had been truncated at the upper level of the concrete.

The natural was covered by a dump of red sandy clay (902) up to 0.4m in depth along the length of the trench. This was overlain by brown sandy clay loam topsoil (901).

Cutting the topsoil (901) and build up layer (902) about 10m to the south of the concrete block was a shallow excavation [909] aligned north-south across the trench. This was 1.2m wide and 0.3m deep.

It retained timber edgings around a layer of red sand (910) up to 0.1m deep supporting 0.2m layer of compact black cinders (911). This appeared to be a run-up track for a jump pit within the central part of the running track. At the south of the trench, a similar feature [912] was 5m wide and contained a 0.3m deep layer of compact black cinders (913) which formed part of the running track.

Trench 10

Trench 10 (40m x 1.7m., Fig 2) was located on a raised terrace at the south-west of the site and aligned north-west to south-east parallel to the disused tennis courts. The natural was exposed at about 0.5m below current ground level along the length of the trench.

Cutting the natural 2m from the south of the trench was a modern machine cut trench [1003], 0.2m wide and 0.15m deep, containing re-deposited upcast (1004) and a terracotta land drain.

The natural blended with grey-orange brown sandy clay subsoil (1002) that leached lighter at its base. There was no original topsoil but a re-deposited brown sandy clay loam (1001) sealed the subsoil up to 0.2m deep along the length of the trench.

There were no other archaeological features in this trench.

Trench 11

Trench 11 (68m x 1.7m, Fig 2) was located in the western-half of the site and aligned roughly east to west parallel to the north side of the old school tennis courts. The trench was on an area of raised ground bounded by mature trees and which appeared to mark the original contours of the land around the school buildings and sports field. There were no cut features in this trench.

The natural was exposed at 0.45m deep at the west end of the trench and at 0.55m at the east. The natural was sealed by grey-orange/red sandy clay subsoil (1102) varying between 0.2m-0.3m along the length of the trench. This was covered by re-deposited brown sandy clay loam (1101) up to 0.3m deep. At the east, the trench was extended over the steep slope down to the running track. It was clear that the slope was purely artificial with no original topsoil or subsoil and only a thin covering of re-deposited topsoil (1101) forming the modern ground surface.

Trench 12

Trench 12 (53m x 1.7m, Fig 2) was located at the west of the site and aligned roughly north-east to south-west. It was positioned on the same area of raised ground as Trench 11 and bounded by mature trees and school paths which appeared to mark some of the original contours of the hill upon which the school had been built. The natural was exposed at about 0.45m deep along the length of the trench.

At the west of the trench, concrete floor (1218) had formed part of one of the earlier school buildings. This was flanked to the east by a tarmac path (1218) 1.5m wide and retained to the east by concrete edging (1217) in a construction trench [1216].

At about 6m from the west end of the trench and at 8m centres thereafter, three machine cut trenches [1214], [1210] and [1208] were all 0.2m wide and 0.2m deep aligned east-west across the trench. They all contained re-deposited upcast (1215), (1211), (1209) and red clay land drains.

About 13m from the west end of the trench, a machine-cut trench [1212] was aligned north-west to south-east across the trench. It was 0.3m deep and 0.25m deep and contained re-deposited upcast (1213) sealing a modern electric cable packed in pea gravel. About 16m further east, another machine cut trench [1206] was aligned almost north-south across the trench. This was 0.3m wide and 0.25m deep and contained re-deposited upcast (1207) and an older electric cable.

At 11m from the east end of the trench, ditch [1204] was aligned north-west to south-east across the trench. It was 2.1m wide and 0.15m deep with shallow sloping sides to a flat base. It was filled with grey-brown sandy clay loam containing fragments of brick, roof tile and concrete.

Trench 13

Trench 13 (46m x 1.7m, Fig 2) was located in the centre of the site and aligned north-east to south-west. The natural clay was exposed at about 0.45m deep along the length of the trench.

At about 4m from the north of the excavation a linear trench [1304], 4m wide and 0.3m deep, was aligned roughly east-west across the evaluation trench. It was filled with grey-brown mixed sandy clay and loam (1304) containing concrete, broken roof tile, some fragments of clear bottle glass, and a single red brick measuring 7 $\frac{1}{8}$ " long, 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ " wide, and 2" thick.

About 15m to the south, a pit [1306] was partly exposed along the west of the trench. It was 1.5m in diameter and 0.4m deep and filled with mixed red sandy clay and loam (1307) containing modern concrete, roof tile and broken brick stamped "WEBSTERS BRICK WORKS LTD, COVENTRY".

The natural blended with a grey-red subsoil (1302) that survived up to 0.1m- 0.15m deep along the trench. This was covered in a layer of brown sandy clay loam topsoil (1301) up to 0.3m deep.

Trench 14

Trench 14 (55m x 1.7m, Fig 2) was located in the north-east of the site and aligned roughly east-west. The natural was exposed at about 0.85m deep along the length of the trench.

An irregular feature [1404], 3m from the west of the trench was a tree bole. At about 12m from the west end of the trench, pit [1405] was oval, 0.7m long, 0.6m wide and 0.25m deep. It had near vertical sides to a dished base.

It was filled with modern cement concrete (1406) holding the remains of a 4" square reinforced concrete fence post.

About 17m further east, an irregular, sub-circular pit [1407] was exposed 9m along the north side of the trench tapering to 4.7m at the south. It had shallow 30° sides sloping to a broad flat base. It was filled with mixed re-deposited upcast (1408) containing mixed demolition/building debris and 20th-century plastic food wrappers and drinks cans.

About 3m to the east, pit [1409] was 0.8m wide and extended 0.6m from the north side of the trench. It was 0.3m deep with steep 60° sides sloping to a dished base. It was filled with mixed re-deposited brown sandy clay and loam (1410). There were no finds.

The natural was overlain and blended with grey-orange/brown sandy clay that leached lighter towards the base. It varied in depth from 0.15m-0.2m along the length of the trench.

It was sealed below a layer of stiff red/orange silt clay (1402) containing brick, roof tile, clinker and occasional concrete. This varied between 0.2m-0.3m deep along the length of the trench. This was overlaid by brown sandy clay loam topsoil (1401) between 0.2m-0.3m across the whole trench.

Trench 15

Trench 15 (50m x 1.7m, Fig 2) was located at the north-west of the site adjacent to the road frontage on Blackberry Lane. It was positioned to intersect with the northern corner of Trench 2. The natural was exposed at 1.05m below the current ground surface at the west of the trench rising to 0.4m deep to the east.

At about 21m from the west of the trench, a pit [1506] was 0.65m in diameter, 0.25m deep, with steeply sloping sides to a slightly dished base. It was filled with grey brown sandy clay and sandy clay loam (1505). A further 10m to the east, partially exposed along the south of the trench pit [1508] was 0.9m long and extended 0.7m into the trench. It had steep sides sloping to a dished base 0.3m deep. It was filled with grey-brown sandy clay (1507) containing a single fragment of corroded copper wire and occasional fragments of broken roof tile and brick.

About 6m further south, pit [1510] was 0.7m in diameter, with steeply sloping sides to a dished base 0.3m deep. It was filled with grey-brown sandy clay (1509) containing occasional fragments of broken brick, roof tile and a chunk of concrete.

The natural blended with grey brown sandy clay (1502) varying between 0.2m-0.3m along the length of the trench. This was overlain by brown sandy clay loam topsoil (1501) up to 0.35m deep.

Trench 16

Trench 16 (18m x 1.7m, Fig 2) was located at the north-west corner of the site and aligned roughly north-south.

At about 7m from the north end of the trench, a machine-cut trench [1604] was 0.25m wide and 0.2m deep. It was filled with re-deposited upcast (1605) containing a yellow plastic gas pipe. About 4m further south a machine cut trench [1606] was 0.25m wide and 0.3m deep. It contained re-deposited upcast (1607) and a plastic sheathed electrical cable.

A further 4m south, machine cut trench [1608] was 0.4m wide, 0.6m deep and contained re-deposited upcast (1609) sealing a 5” salt-glaze sewer pipe.

Cutting the southern edge of this trench and extending beyond the limitation of excavation to the east, sub-rectangular pit [1610] was exposed 1.3m long and 1.1m wide with vertical sides and a flat base 0.4m deep. It contained re-deposited upcast (1611) containing modern builders’ debris and 20th-century plastic food wrappings and drinks cans.

About 3m further south, machine cut trench [1612] was 0.4m wide and 0.3m deep. It was filled with re-deposited upcast from its excavation and contained a 2” blue plastic water main.

The natural blended with a truncated grey/brown sandy clay subsoil (1602) which survived up to 0.15m deep along the length of the trench. It was overlain by dark brown sandy clay loam topsoil up to 0.35m deep.

6 THE FINDS

6.1 Pottery by Iain Soden

The evaluation produced five sherds of pottery, all post-medieval to modern. They are as follows:

Table 2: Pottery assemblage

Context	Type	CTS designation	Date
U/s	Midland Black	MB02	18th century
205	Unglazed earthenware	MGW	19th-20th centuries
1205	Midland Black	MB02	18th century
1405	Pancheon	MGW	19th century

This is not a significant assemblage. Such small numbers of sherds are rarely conclusive but the broad dating is in accordance with the presence of a nearby later post-medieval and modern farm. None of the sherds is diagnostic, being all body sherds. As such most pottery was probably maddened and scattered subsequently on the fields in a manuring regime.

6.2 Ceramic building material by Pat Chapman BA CMS AIFA

Ceramic tile

This is a small assemblage of eight small tile sherds, weighing 431g. They are predominantly roof tile fragments, 15mm thick where measurable, differing in the hardness of the fabric, which is moderately fine clay with some small stone inclusions. Two sherds are slightly curved, from contexts (509) and (1506), the sherd from the latter context is probably from a drainpipe.

The sherd from context (307) differs from the rest in that it is made from a hard fine pink fabric with frequent inclusions up to 5mm and the surfaces are very smooth with almost a polished finish. It is slightly curved, and the top is corrugated, varying between 15mm and 18mm thick with 15mm between the peaks, and between the troughs.

These fragments could be medieval to post-medieval in origin, apart from the sherd from (307) which is fairly modern, all probably residual.

Brick

This brick remnant, from context (1305), is 118mm wide and 45mm thick (4½ x 1¾ inches). The fabric is coarse, very hard and brick red, the sides and top are reasonably smooth, while the bottom is slightly rough. The dimensions of the brick could indicate any manufacturing date between the 14th and 17th centuries, but as an individual item, very little can be deduced from its presence.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The results of the evaluation indicate that truncation of the original surfaces and levels had taken place across the site.

The excavated evidence indicates that topsoil and subsoil had been machine stripped across most of the site prior to construction. Only where natural hollows left the existing land surface below the general site-strip level did the original topsoil and subsoil survive. Elsewhere, the upper soil was removed together with elements of the underlying natural clays and gravel.

There were no pre-modern features present.

The higher ground in the west and south-west had been levelled and terraced to the north and east. One terrace had been occupied by the early school buildings in the centre of the site immediately south and east of Harris Farm. Another level terrace had been created in the south-west of the site where the school tennis courts had been located. To the south and east of these two areas, a substantial 'step' had been excavated up to 1.2m deep to the level of the sports field and running track that occupied much of the central and southern part of the site.

The north, east and south-east part of the track had to be built up as the original ground surface had sloped down to the north and east. Substantial volumes of brick and concrete hardcore had been dumped to form a compact outer 'rim' within which re-deposited subsoil and natural sandy clays were dumped to create a level artificial terrace for the running track. This build up layer was extended over the hardcore revetment and extended out on all sides around the running track terrace burying the lower natural clays up to 0.4m deep in places.

The entire site had later received a top dressing of about 0.2m of topsoil that formed the basis for the grass surfaces of the school grounds and sports field.

The dominant features uncovered were postholes up to 0.5m in diameter and containing concrete that had supported timber or concrete fence posts. These may relate to the Second World War occupation of the site where fencing around the military installations is attested.

Associated with this occupation and extending into the early post war period were numerous pits varying in size from 1m-9m in length. All of these features contained evidence of broken roof tiles, bricks, concrete and in most cases, plastic food wrappings and tin cans or drinks containers. It seems highly likely that some relate to the immediate post-war clearance of the military structures on the site, and the remainder to the later levelling and terracing for the building of Lyng Hall school in the early 1950s.

At the east of the site, in Trench 4, substantial elements of a reinforced concrete and concrete-block structure formed part of the revetting around the school running track. Associated with this material were corrugated iron, electrical conduit pipe and fragments of electrical cable. Much of this material is highly likely to represent part of a substantial structure or structures.

A cable trench in Trench 8 contained lead sheathed electric cables. These heavy duty cables were not normally used in domestic households and would normally be associated with commercial or industrial use.

At the east of the site, in Trench 6, a substantial layer of hardcore formed a compact surface across the trench. It was located directly in line with the end of the cul-de-sac immediately to the west and marks the access to the builders' compound used during the construction of the houses at this point on Wyken Croft. Almost certainly the rubbish pits uncovered in this part of the evaluation also relate to this phase of activity.

At the north of the site, at the northern end of Trench 2, a distinct hollow way was uncovered. The 1887 Ordnance Survey mapping of the area indicates a footpath extending across the site from the medieval church of St Mary Magdalene in the east and exiting onto Blackberry Lane at this point. It seems highly probable that the continued use of the path or track had worn a hollow into the underlying soil creating the unusual profile observed in the trench. This attribution is supported by the presence of substantial quantities of gravel, broken brick and small hardcore in the topsoil over this feature, perhaps indicating attempts to ‘metal’ the surface of the path, which would have been treacherous in inclement weather, on the natural slope down to the road.

The military occupation of the site in the 1940s comprised mainly wooden barrack blocks with concrete ammunition bunkers. Two local residents could not confirm whether the artillery were in concrete emplacements but remembered sandbags around the weapons pits. They remembered balloons anchored on lorries with winches attached. The tether from the balloon had to be ‘earthed’ to a metal stake as lightning strikes could destroy the trailer and injure operators.

The substantial re-modelling of the land surfaces for the erection of the new school and the construction of the sports field, running track and playing field had removed most traces of any earlier activity. Only deeply cut postholes and the cutting of 20th-century rubbish pits survived the truncation of the earlier land surfaces.

Only at the north of the site adjacent to Blackberry Lane where the original land surface survived under later build up material was there evidence for ridge and furrow cultivation.

If elements of the early settlement at Wyken do survive, they are most likely to be found in the immediate vicinity of the church 100m to the east.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Deidowicz, G, 2003 *A guide to the buildings of Coventry*, Tempus Publishing Limited
- Jaguar Cars, 2001 *Coventry Memories*, True North Books Limited
- McAree, D F, 2008 *Written scheme of investigation for archaeological evaluation on land at Lyng Hall School, Blackberry Lane, Coventry*, Northamptonshire Archaeology
- McGrory, D, 1993 *Coventry, History and Guide*, Alan Sutton Publishing
- McGrory, D, 1994 *Coventry in Old Photographs*, Alan Sutton Publishing
- McGrory, D, 2003a *A history of Coventry*, Phillimore and Company Limited
- McGrory, D, 2003b *The illustrated history of Coventry's suburbs*, The Breedon Books Publishing Company
- Plaister, J, 1976 *Domesday Book: Warwickshire* **23**
- Poulton-Smith, A, 1996 *Warwickshire Place Names*
- Rylatt, M, and Montes, M, 1998 *A harvest of history, the life and works of J. B. Shelton MBE*, J.B. Shelton Memorial lecture publication
- Soden, I, 1988 *Coventry: Excavations at Ernesford Grange 1971-73*, Cov Mus Monog Report **4**
- Soden, I, 2005 *Coventry: The Hidden History*, Tempus
- VCH 1969 *The Victoria County History of the County of Warwick*, **8**

Websites

imagesofengland.org
ads.ahds.ac.uk
bgs.ac.uk
british-history.ac.uk
wyken.com
Coventry.gov.uk

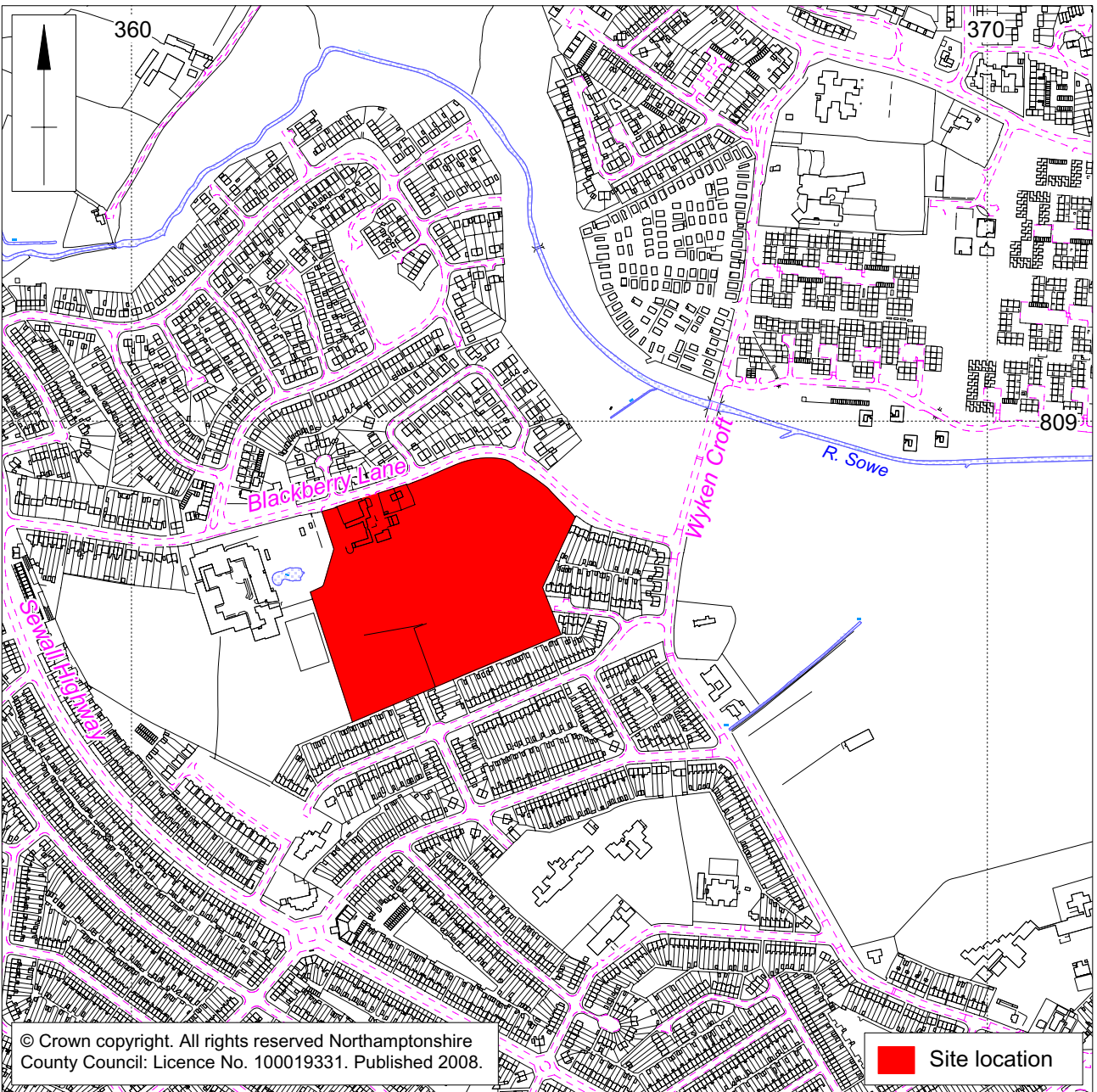
APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench	Context	Description
1	101	Topsoil
	102	Made ground
	103	Natural
	104	Buried top soil
	105	Ash and clinker
	106	Subsoil
	107	Furrow
	108	Furrow
	109	Furrow
	110	Furrow
	111	Furrow
2	201	Topsoil
	202	Subsoil
	203	Natural
	204	Furrow
	205	Furrow
	206	Furrow
	207	Furrow
	208	Track hollow
	209	Fill of 208
3	301	Topsoil
	302	Subsoil
	303	Natural
	304	Posthole
	305	Fill of 304
	306	Posthole
	307	Fill of 306
	308	Posthole
	309	Fill 308
4	401	Topsoil
	402	Running track
	403	Make up layer
	404	Buried soil
	405	Natural
5	501	Topsoil
	502	Make up layer
	503	Buried soil
	504	Subsoil
	505	Natural
	506	Fill of 507
	507	Pit cut
	508	Pit
	509	Fill of 508
	510	Fill of 511
	511	Posthole
512	Fill of 513	
513	Posthole	

6	601	Topsoil
---	-----	---------

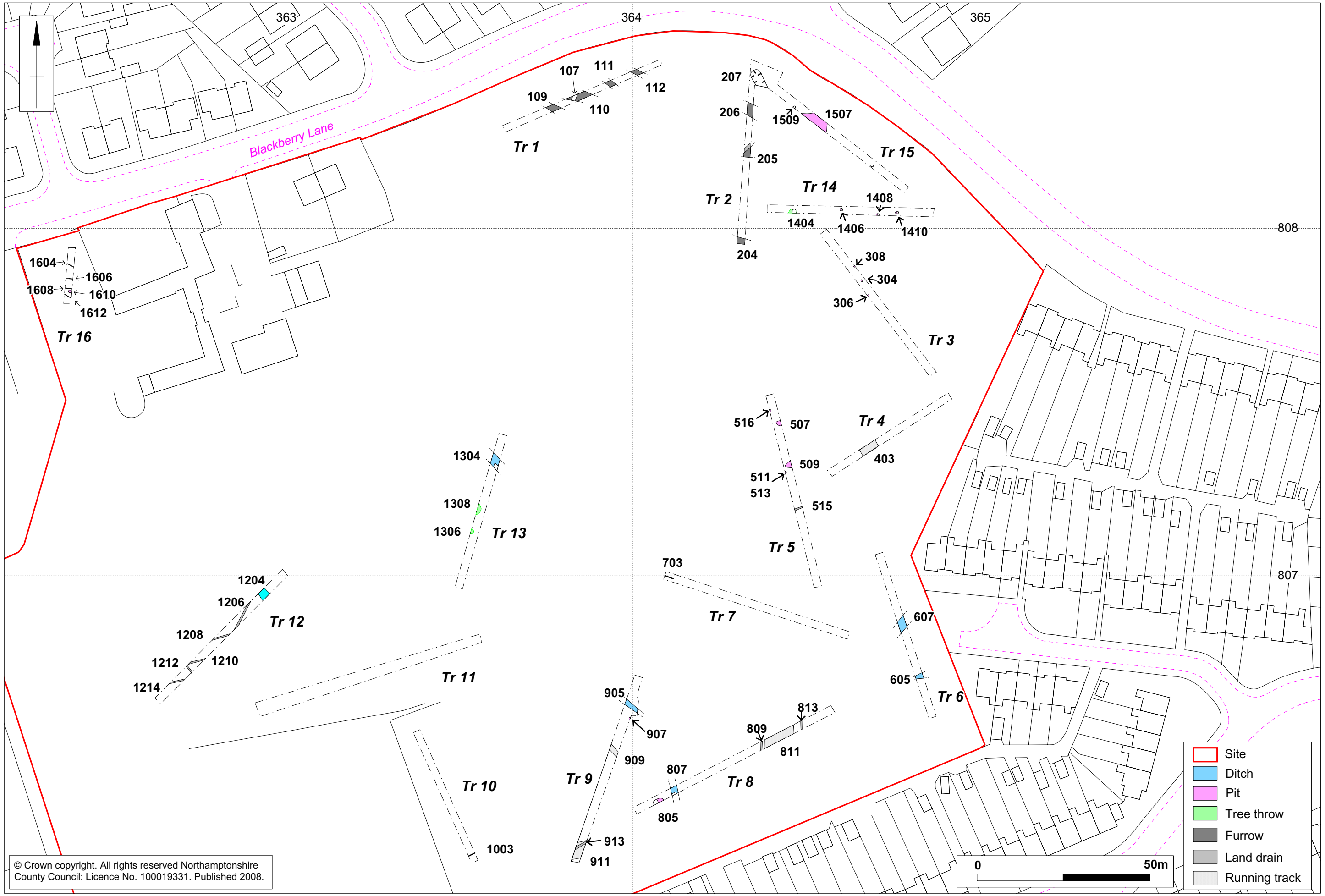
	602	Make up layer
	603	Buried soil
	604	Subsoil
7	701	Topsoil
	702	Subsoil
	703	Natural
	704	Make up layer
	705	Running track
8	801	Topsoil
	802	Subsoil
	803	Natural
	804	Running track
	805	Pit
	806	Fill of 805
	807	Pit
	808	Fill of 807
	809	Land drain trench
	810	Fill of 809
	811	Land drain trench
	812	Fill of 811
	813	Land drain trench
	814	Fill of 813
9	901	Topsoil
	902	Subsoil
	903	Natural
	904	Running track
	905	Trench cut
	906	Fill of 905
10	1001	Topsoil
	1002	Subsoil
	1003	Natural
11	1101	Topsoil
	1102	Subsoil
	1103	Natural
12	1201	Topsoil
	1202	Subsoil
	1203	Natural
	1204	Ditch cut
	1205	Fill of 1204
	1206	Cable trench cut
	1207	Fill of 1206
	1208	Land drain trench
	1209	Fill of 1209
	1210	Land drain trench
	1211	Fill of 1210
	1212	Cable trench cut
	1213	Fill of 1212
	1214	Construction cut
	1215	Pathway in 1214
	1216	Construction cut
	1217	Concrete edging in 1216
	1218	Concrete floor
13	1301	Topsoil

	1302	Subsoil
	1303	Natural
	1304	Trench cut
	1305	Fill of 1305
	1306	Pit cut
	1307	Fill of 1306
14	1401	Topsoil
	1402	Subsoil
	1403	Natural
	1404	Tree bole
	1405	Fill of 1406
	1406	Pit cut
	1407	Fill of 1408
	1408	Pit cut
	1409	Fill of 1410
	1410	Pit cut
15	1501	Topsoil
	1502	Make up layer
	1503	Subsoil
	1504	Natural
	1505	Pit cut
	1506	Fill of 1506
	1507	Pit cut
	1508	Fill of 1507
	1509	Pit cut
	1510	Fill of 1509
16	1601	Topsoil
	1602	Subsoil
	1603	Natural
	1604	Pipe trench
	1605	Fill of 1604
	1606	Cable trench
	1607	Fill of 1606
	1608	Pipe trench
	1609	Fill of 1608
	1610	Pit cut
	1611	Fill of 1610
	1612	Pipe trench
	1613	Fill of 1612



Scale 1:7500

Site location Fig 1



© Crown copyright. All rights reserved Northamptonshire County Council: Licence No. 100019331. Published 2008.

Scale 1:1000

Trench layout Fig 2



Plate 1: Aerial photograph of site *c.* 1946



Plate 2: Aerial photograph of site *c.* 2005