

Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological watching brief at
Tattenhoe Park, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire
November 2007



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Report 07/181

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project title	An Archaeological Watching Brief at Tattenhoe Park	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Ian Smith Construction Ltd to conduct an archaeological watching brief at Tattenhoe Bare Farm, Tattenhoe Park, Milton Keynes. The only archaeological feature observed was a ditch whose position and alignment suggested that it was an easterly continuation of a substantial boundary ditch previously investigated during the excavation of an adjacent Iron Age settlement in 2005.	
Project type (eg desk-based, field evaluation etc)	Watching brief	
Previous work (reference to organisation or SMR numbers etc)	Watching brief, Evaluation, Excavation	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	no	
Monument type and period	N/A	
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	Iron Age pottery	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Buckinghamshire	
Site address (including postcode)	Tattenhoe Bare Farm, Tattenhoe Park, Milton Keynes	
Grid ref (use numerical 100km grid square no.)	482433 233466	
Area	7030 sq m	
Height OD	113-117m OD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator		
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Paul Mason	
Project Manager	Adam Yates	
Sponsor or funding body	Ian Smith Construction Ltd	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	November 2007	
End date	November 2007	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		
Paper		
Digital		
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title	An Archaeological watching brief at Tattenhoe Park, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire	
Serial title & volume	Unpublished client report 7/181	
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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT TATTENHOE PARK, MILTON KEYNES, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NOVEMBER 2007**

Abstract

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Ian Smith Construction Ltd to conduct an archaeological watching brief at Tattenhoe Bare Farm, Tattenhoe Park, Milton Keynes. The only archaeological feature observed was a ditch whose position and alignment suggested that it was an easterly continuation of a substantial boundary ditch previously investigated during the excavation of an adjacent Iron Age settlement in 2005.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Ian Smith Construction Ltd to conduct an archaeological watching brief whilst ground was prepared for the laying of a school playing field at Tattenhoe Bare Farm, Tattenhoe Park, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 8243 3346, Fig 1, Plate 1). The fieldwork was undertaken on 6th-12th November 2007 as part of a wider series of works in advance of a 54 ha development by English Partnerships.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Archaeological background

In 2005 Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out a trial trenching and geophysics evaluation of the entire development area (Brown *et al* 2005) and identified four main areas of interest (Fig 1).

- Area A (into which the present study area originally fell) was an Iron Age settlement site at Tattenhoe Bare Farm in the north-west part of the site with some peripheral features, occupying an area of 6ha.
- Area B was a post-medieval farmstead known as Bottle House, occupying 0.1ha in the south-east part of the site
- Area C comprised two ditches in the south-west part of the site
- Area D comprising a scatter of features in the central part of the site.

Later in the year Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out a series of projects to investigate the archaeological resource present in Areas A, B, and C in accordance with a brief prepared by Milton Keynes Council. Excavations were carried out in April-September 2005 to investigate a middle Iron Age settlement in Area A, a post-medieval farmstead in Area B and a small ditch in Area C (Taylor 2005).

In 2006 Area D was the subject of an archaeological watching brief during which a single undated pit and a post-medieval deposit of coal were the only features observed (Field 2007).

2.2 Topography and geology

The development site is situated *c* 4.5km west of the centre of Milton Keynes and to the immediate south-east of Tattenhoe Bare Farm. It comprises pastureland situated on a gentle south-easterly slope (113m-117m OD). It is bounded to the north by a field boundary, to the east by the newly-lain Snellshall Street, to the south by the construction site for a new school (corresponding with Area D of the archaeological program) and to the west by the site of the 2005 open-area excavation.

The geology of the area is mapped as Oxford Clay and Kellaways Beds overlain by Boulder Clay and Morainic drift (www.bgs.ac.uk).

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of the watching brief was to record archaeological features exposed during the preparation of the ground in advance of development. The specific objectives for Area A of the site were, to establish the plan of the settlement, hut construction details, the period of occupation, the occupation activities on site, the floral and faunal resources, the dating of the Iron Age pottery fabrics and their continued use into Roman times.

The methodologies employed for the stripping of topsoil and subsequent reduction in ground level (grading from 0m to 1.20m in a westerly direction across the stripped area) were set by the developer as the site lay beyond the limits of the watching brief area specified in the original archaeological brief (Giggins 2005).

Observations were made whilst topsoil was stripped across the site using a combination of tracked excavators fitted with toothed ditching buckets and box scraper pulled behind a bulldozer. The natural gradient of the site was then rapidly levelled off by tracked excavator and bulldozer. It should be noted that such methodologies are not considered

favourable to the observation of archaeological features under the conditions of a 'normal' watching brief.

Excavation and recording of exposed archaeological features progressed in accordance with the approved written scheme of investigation for the wider program of works (NA 2005) and complied with the standards and guidelines set out by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1994).

4 RESULTS

The geology, a yellowish brown to grey Boulder Clay (5003), was overlain by *c* 0.20m of heavy clay subsoil. This was, in turn, overlain by a 0.20-0.30m deep, dark greyish-brown clay loam topsoil.

The only archaeological feature observed was a 3-4m wide ditch [5004/5011] aligned roughly east-west across the south-western part of the site (Fig 2, Plate 2). A 50m-long stretch of the ditch was exposed and two sections through it were recorded; one was machine-cut (Plate 3, Section 2), the other hand-dug (Plate 4, Section 1). The complete profile of the ditch was revealed by the machine cut section and visible in the baulk that formed the western edge of the site. The hand-dug section sampled only the lower fills of the feature.

In section [5011] the ditch was *c* 4m wide and 1m deep with sides angled at *c* 45° terminating in a flattish base (Fig 3; Section 2). Its lowest fills (5012), (5013) and (5014), comprising deposits of yellowish brown sandy clay, were probably weathered geology washed in from the sides of the ditch. Overlying this was a 0.40m-thick deposit of bluish grey silty clay (5015), sealed by a 0.20m-thick orange brown clay (5016) through which a shallow re-cut appeared to have been made [5008]. The re-cut was filled with a dark grey clay (5009) and a orange brown clay (5010); both were characteristic of deliberate backfilling. A ceramic land drain had been cut into fill (5009). No finds were retrieved from the ditch.

In section [5004] the upper 0.20m of the ditch had been truncated by machine; the remaining 0.80m of its profile was excavated by hand. Its sides were pitched at a similar angle to [5011] but its base was narrower resulting in a near 'V'-shaped profile (Fig 4; Section 1). The primary fill was a reddish brown silty clay with a dark grey organic mottle (5007) overlain by a mid-grey clay flecked with orange brown sand (5006), similar in appearance to fills (5015/5016). This was overlain by a charcoal flecked grey clay (5005)

containing the only dating evidence retrieved from the sections, two sherds of hand-built Iron Age pottery along with two amorphous fragments of fired clay.

5 THE POTTERY AND FIRED CLAY

By Andy Chapman

Two sherds of pottery, weighing 40g, came from context (5005), the fill of a linear boundary ditch associated with the settlement excavated in 2005.

Both sherds, which are probably from the same hand-built vessel, are 9mm thick and have a sandy fabric, containing fine quartz grains, but also containing voids that probably derive from the leaching of shell, which included pieces measuring up to 7mm. Both have a brown to light grey core and oxidised surfaces that vary from dark red to light brown.

These are plain body sherds that offer no diagnostic features to indicate a specific date, but they can be broadly attributed to the middle-late Iron Age, 4th-1st centuries BC.

Two irregular lumps of fired clay, weighing 25g, came from the same context. They are in a similar sandy fabric but also contain small pebbles of up to 6mm. They have a dark grey core and orange to light brown surfaces.

6 DISCUSSION

The only archaeological feature observed was a ditch whose position and alignment suggests that it is an easterly continuation of Ditch B6 of the 2005 excavation (Fig 2). This was previously interpreted as defining the northern boundary of the Iron Age settlement and it was postulated that it represents a pre-existing land boundary. Other examples of juxtaposed settlements and major land divisions have been observed at a number of Midland sites, including Swan Valley, Northampton, two of the settlements at the Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal, Northamptonshire and at Coton Park, Warwickshire (Taylor 2006, 6).

The evidence of the watching brief would appear to support this hypothesis as, although the ditch was present, there was no indication that the settlement extended into the site from its nucleus which lies to the south of Tattenhoe Bare Farm.

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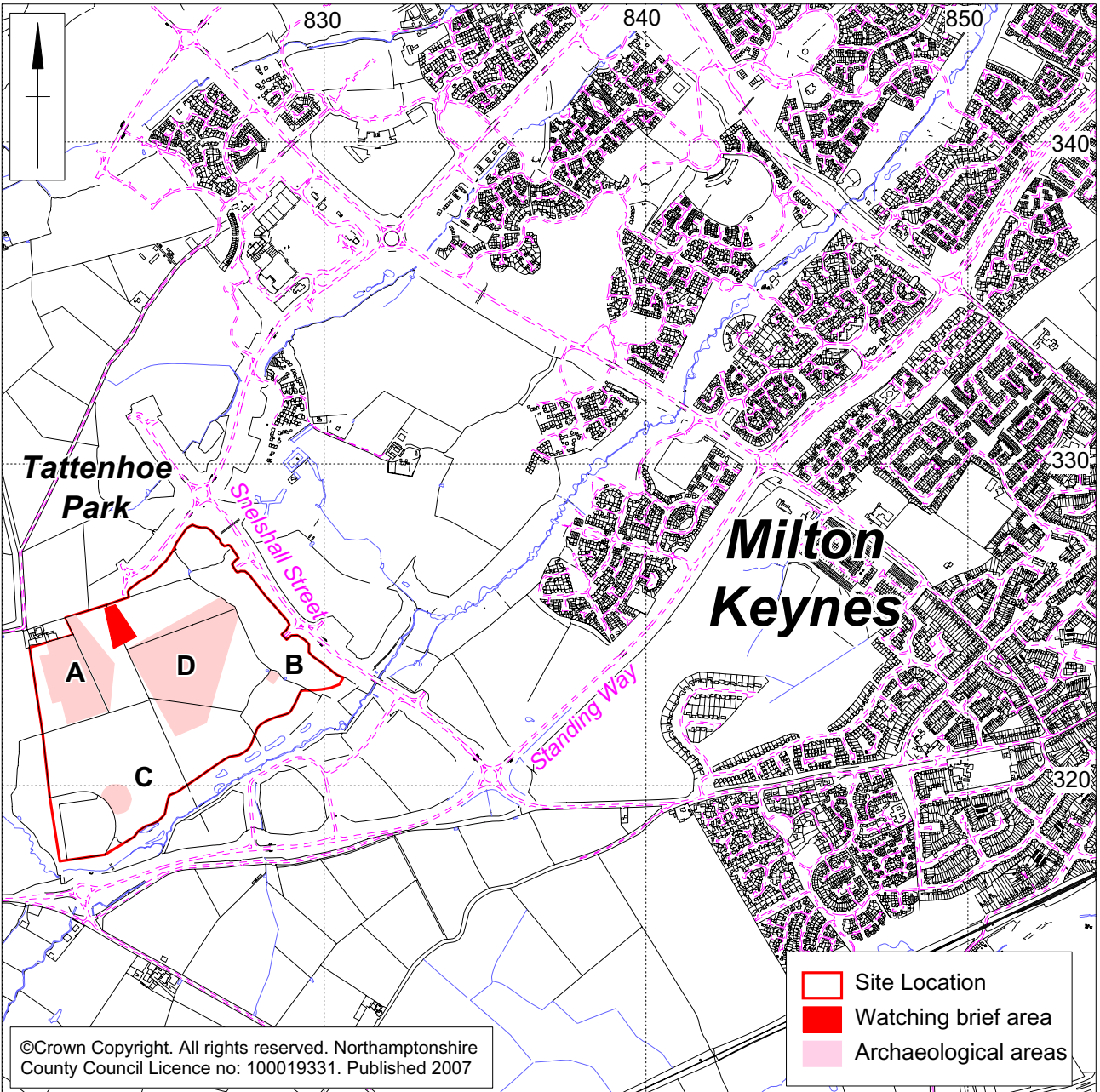
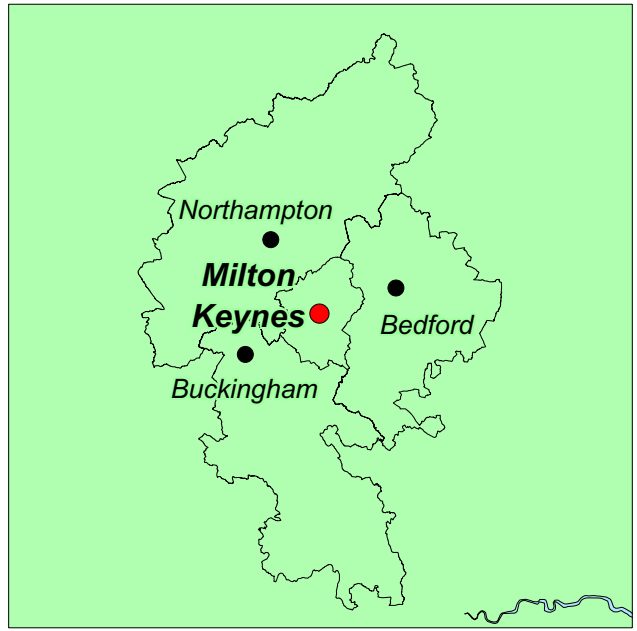
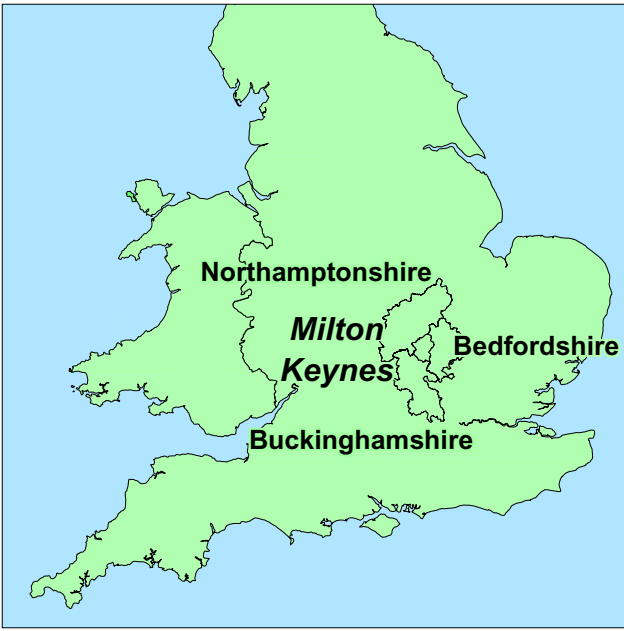
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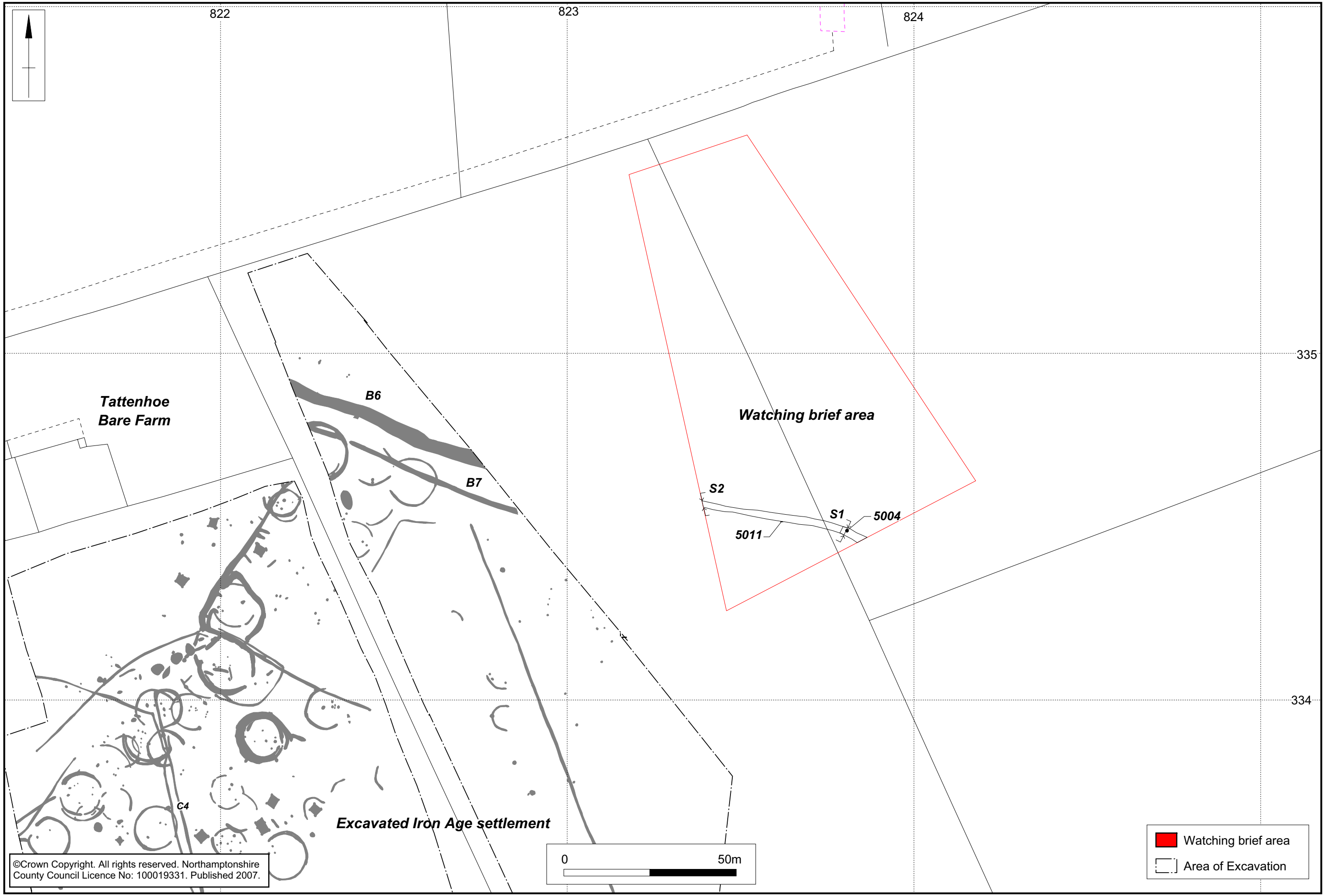
APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context Number	Context type	Description
(5001)	Topsoil	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam, max. 0.30m thick.
(5002)	Subsoil	Mid-brown clay loam, max. 0.20m thick.
(5003)	Geology	Yellowish brown to mid-grey Boulder Clay with patches of gravel and flint.
[5004]	Ditch	Lower profile of Iron Age ditch measuring 1.65m wide and 0.80m deep.
(5005)	Fill of [5004]	Mid-grey clay with frequent charcoal flecks. Sherds of Iron Age pottery and fragments of fired clay.
(5006)	Fill of [5004]	Compact mid-grey clay with orange brown sandy fleck.
(5007)	Fill of [5004]	Reddish brown silty clay with dark grey organic mottle.
[5008]	Ditch re-cut	Re-cut of [5011]. 3.2m wide and 0.50m deep.
(5009)	Fill of [5008]	Firm dark grey clay
(5010)	Fill of [5008]	Firm dark grey/orange brown clay
[5011]	Ditch	Westerly continuation of [5004]. 4m wide and 1m deep.
(5012)	Fill of [5011]	Friable yellow brown sandy clay
(5013)	Fill of [5011]	Friable yellow brown sandy clay and gravel
(5014)	Fill of [5011]	Orange brown clay
(5015)	Fill of [5011]	Bluish grey silty clay
(5016)	Fill of [5011]	Orange brown silty clay



Scale 1:20,000

Site Location Fig 1

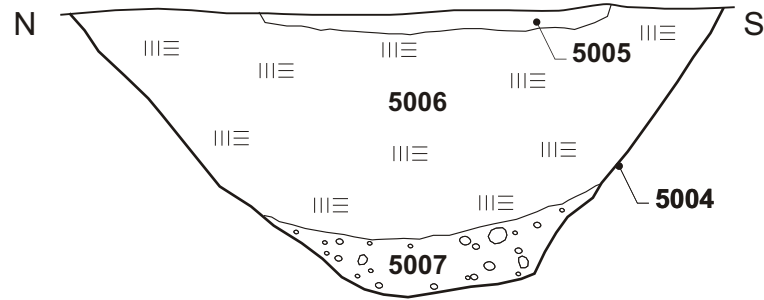


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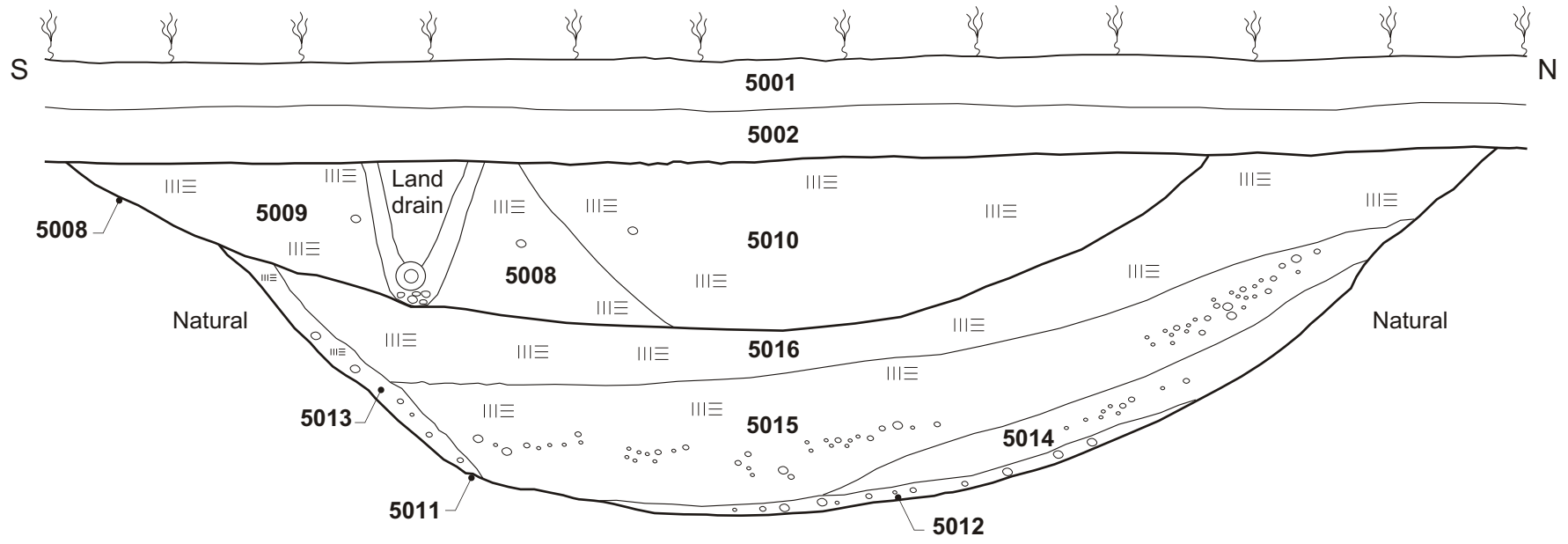
Scale 1:1000

Watching brief area and excavated Iron Age settlement Fig 2

Section 1



Section 2



||| Clay



Sections of boundary ditch [5004/5011] Fig 3



Plate 1: The watching brief area



Plate 2: Boundary ditch [5004/5011]



Plate 3: Section of ditch [5011], Section 2



Plate 4: Section of ditch [5004], Section 1