



Northamptonshire
County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology

An Archaeological Watching Brief

at 113 Bury Road, Thetford,

Norfolk

August 2007

50547 THD



Tim Upson-Smith

September 2007

Report 07/130



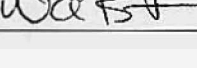
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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	An Archaeological Watching Brief at 113 Bury Road, Thetford, Norfolk	
Short description (250 words maximum)	A Watching Brief was undertaken during the excavation of 9 test pits carried out for environmental assessment on land adjacent to a former gasworks. The watching brief recovered a small amount of human remains, two sherds of late Saxon pottery, some animal bone and metal working debris. The remains appear to date to the late Saxon period and are consistent with the land occupying part of the former cemetery of St Edmund's Church, although this has not been confirmed.	
Project type	Watching Brief	
Site status (none, NT, SAM etc)	none	
Previous work (SMR numbers etc)	Archaeological Investigation 1957, HER reference 1022-MNF1022; DBA Atkins Heritage 2007	
Current Land use	Residential garden	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	unknown	
Monument type/ period	Early Medieval-Saxon	
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	Human bones, late Saxon pottery	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Norfolk	
Site address	113 Bury Road, Thetford, Norfolk	
Study area (sq.m or ha)	0.073 ha	
OS Easting & Northing	TL8695 8250	
Height OD	-	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Atkins Heritage	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Tim Upson-Smith	
Project Manager	Andy Mudd for Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Sponsor or funding body	Atkins Heritage for National Grid Property Holdings Ltd	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	7 August 2007	
End date	8 August 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	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	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 113 Bury Road, Thetford, Norfolk	
Serial title & volume	2007/130	
Author(s)	Tim Upson-Smith	
Date	September 2007	

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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT 113 BURY ROAD, THETFORD,

NORFOLK

50547 THD

Abstract

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Atkins Heritage to carry out archaeological monitoring (Watching Brief) during the excavation of test pits undertaken for the purposes of environmental assessment on land adjacent to a former gasworks. The watching brief recovered a small amount of human remains, two sherds of late Saxon pottery, some animal bone and metal working debris.

The remains appear to date to the late Saxon period and are consistent with the garden occupying part of the former cemetery of St Edmund's Church, although this has not been confirmed.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by Atkins Heritage to carry out archaeological monitoring (Watching Brief) during the excavation of test pits undertaken for the purposes of environmental assessment on land adjacent to a former gasworks.

The works were undertaken in the garden of 113 Bury Road, a residential property covering about 0.073 ha, adjacent to a former gasworks off Bury Road, Thetford which form part of the site under investigation (NGR TL8695 8250) (Fig 1).

The work was undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (NA 2007), which was approved by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, in response to a Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief issued by Atkins Heritage (Atkins Heritage 2007), which outlined the purpose, justification and scope of the works.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography and geology

The former gasworks site lies in a predominantly residential area within the town of Thetford on the south side of the Little Ouse River. The site as a whole is split into four land-use plots owned by National Grid Property Holdings Ltd. The works to which this report refers are limited to the grounds of the residential property, 113

Bury Road, in the north-west of the site (Fig 2).

The geology consists of Valley Gravels. Previous investigations indicate that these are overlain in places by considerable deposits of made ground (Atkins Heritage Brief, para. 3.1.2).

2.2 Archaeological background

A desk-based study of the site and surrounding area was undertaken by Atkins Heritage and included in the Brief (Atkins Heritage 2007, Section 4). This considered the records held in the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) and included Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.

The site is located within an archaeologically important area. Immediately to the north, south and west of the site are the locations of St Etheldred's Church and other Saxon settlement remains protected as a Scheduled Monument (1022-MNF1022). Within the wider area are other sites and finds, principally relating to the Saxon town and Norman castle (Atkins Heritage Brief, Appendix 1). The town centre is a designated Conservation Area and contains several Listed Buildings.

There is a record of a human burial from the garden where the present works were carried out. Archaeological investigations in 1957 within the northern part of the former gasworks site revealed evidence of a church building of possible Saxon date, thought to be St Edmund's Church (5868-MNF5868). Five human burials were recorded which were believed to predate the church. Further disturbed human remains, animal bones and pottery have come to light during works on the site in the 1960s and 1970s. Geotechnical investigations by Atkins Environment in 2006 suggested that there was the potential for archaeological remains to survive below the made ground.

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Objectives

The overall objective of the archaeological monitoring was to enable a record to be made of any archaeological features and deposits of significance which were brought to light as a result of the test pits.

In particular, the watching brief focused on examining any features relating to the Saxon church and associated remains known from previous interventions on the site.

3.2 Methodology

Atkins Environment excavated the test pits using normal hand-held tools on the 7th - 8th August 2007.

NA staff observed the excavations and undertook sufficient exploratory examination in order to understand the nature of the deposits being excavated. Where archaeological deposits and features were encountered they were recorded *in situ*.

Recording was on Northamptonshire Archaeology pro-forma Watching Brief Record Forms. Individual test pits were recorded by context on Northamptonshire Archaeology Trial Trench Log Sheets and Standard Context Record Sheets. The photographic record comprised monochrome and colour film, together with digital images as appropriate.

4 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

The watching brief was carried out over a period of two days, in August 2007, to view the excavation of nine test pits (Fig 2). The test pits were 0.26m in diameter by up to 1m deep. In the following description the test pits are logged in stratigraphic order from the base up (see also Context Inventory, below).

Test Pit 1 exposed 0.7m of a dark brown sandy loam (102), which contained a single oyster shell, some small bone fragments and a small quantity of slag. This was overlain by 0.2m of dark brown orange sandy loam topsoil (101).

Test Pit 2 (Plate 1) was only excavated to a depth of 0.7m due to a large smooth stone (203) which extended beyond the limits of the test pit. This was overlain by 0.4m of a dark brown sandy loam (202). This was overlain by 0.2m of dark brown orange sandy loam topsoil (201).

Test Pit 3 exposed 0.4m of a dark brown sandy loam (303), which contained a number of small flints and some gravel. This was overlain by a 0.3m thick layer of a similar soil which contained less flint and gravel (302). This was overlain by 0.3m of dark brown orange sandy loam topsoil (301).

Test Pit 4 (Plate 2) exposed 0.1m of a dark orange brown sandy loam (404), which contained rounded gravel and a small piece of animal bone. This was overlain by a 0.3m thick layer of a dark brown sandy loam which contained mortar flecks and fragments of chalk blocks (403). This was overlain by 0.3m of a similar soil without the mortar and chalk (402). This was overlain by 0.3m of dark brown orange sandy

loam topsoil (401).

Test Pit 5 was only excavated to a depth of 0.8m due to a mortar/concrete surface (503) which extended beyond the limits of the test pit. This was overlain by 0.5m of a dark brown sandy loam (502). This was overlain by 0.3m of dark brown orange sandy loam topsoil (501).

Test Pit 6 exposed a 0.88m thick layer of a dark brown sandy loam (603), which contained infrequent flint and mortar fragments. This was overlain by a 0.06m thick concrete base (602), which in turn was overlain by 0.06m of tarmac (601).

Test Pit 7 (Plate 3) exposed 0.4m of a dark brown sandy loam (703) containing some fragments of human bone (See 5.2) and a single pottery rim sherd (See 5.1). This was overlain by 0.4m of dark brown ashy soil (702) which contained slag fragments and was contaminated, so no further investigation of this layer was undertaken. This was overlain by 0.2m of dark brown orange sandy loam topsoil (701).

Test Pit 8 (Plate 4) exposed a 0.8m thick layer of a dark brown/black sandy loam (803), which contained infrequent flint and mortar fragments a single rim sherd was also recovered from this layer. This was overlain by a 0.1m thick layer of mixed gravel and flint (802), which in turn was overlain by 0.1m of tarmac (801).

Test Pit 9 was an extra pit dug to see how far the contamination observed in Test Pit 7 extended and it was only excavated to a depth of 0.5m. It exposed a 0.3m layer of a dark brown sandy loam (902), which contained some small bone fragments; this was overlain by 0.2m of dark brown orange sandy loam topsoil (901).

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

Two sherds of pottery weighing 21 grams and 22 grams respectively were recovered from two contexts (703 and 803). Both sherds were Thetford Ware rim sherds dating to the late 10th century or early 11th century.

5.2 Bone by Karen Deighton

Animal Bone

A small quantity of bone and an oyster shell were recovered from a range of contexts during the course of the watching brief. This material was assessed to determine the species present, level of preservation and potential to contribute to the understanding

of the site.

Results

Fragmentation was moderate and largely the result of old breaks. The surface of the bones displayed a low level of abrasion which can probably be attributed to soil conditions. A single instance of canid gnawing was noted on material from context 803. No evidence for butchery or burning was noted.

Animal species present

Table 1: Animal bone and mollusca

Context	<i>Bos/cattle</i>	<i>Ovicaprid/Sheep/goat</i>	<i>Ostrea Edulis/Oyster</i>	indeterminate
102			1	3
404		1		
803		1		
902	1			2
Total	1	2	1	5

Human bone

Context 703 produced a small amount of human bone. They are the remains of one or more adults, including a number of rib fragments, 3 lumbar vertebra and 7 hand bones (3 metacarpals, 1 carpal, 1 first phalange, 2 second phalanges). It is likely, due to the survival of the first and second phalanges, that the remains are from an *in situ* burial, although given the small excavation window this cannot be proven at this time.

5.3 Metalworking debris by Andy Chapman

Two contexts produced small quantities of metalworking debris weighing 430g.

Context 502 contained a single “cake” of vesicular slag, 70mm in diameter and weighing 280g, which may be a smithing hearth base from a charcoal-fuelled hearth.

Context 102 contained two small pieces of metalworking slag weighing 150g. One piece is light and vesicular and undiagnostic, but has probably come from a coke fuelled hearth or furnace. The other piece is dense with a fluid surface, as is typically of smelting tap slag. If this slag has come from a coke-fuelled hearth or furnace, it would suggest a post-medieval date, and it could either be indicative of local metalworking or may have come to the site as industrial hard-core, a use often made of the considerable quantities of debris produced by the post-medieval iron industry.

6 CONCLUSION

Two of the deposits (703 and 803) encountered during the watching brief may be dated to the late 10th or early 11th century from the pottery which they contained. The pottery sherd in Test Pit 7 was recovered from the same deposit as part of a possibly *in situ* human burial, which suggests that these remains date to the late 10th or early 11th century, although it could be later. No further investigations could be carried out in Test Pit 7 due to health and safety issues.

The Norfolk HER records that a burial was found in the garden of 113 Bury Road and assumed to be associated with the Church of St Edmund, which is believed to be located on the site of the former gasworks immediately the south and east of the garden. It is possible therefore that the human remains found during the watching brief are associated with an early medieval cemetery which may also relate to the church, although this relationship has yet to be confirmed.

Test Pit 5 encountered a concrete or mortar surface at a depth of 0.8m, but it was not possible to determine what this related to from the small diameter of the test pit. It was thought by the excavator that it may indicate the position of a modern service trench.

The watching brief has demonstrated that, despite their small diameter, the test pits have shown that there is potential for surviving archaeological remains within the garden of 113 Bury Road, Thetford.

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CONTEXT INVENTORY

Test Pit	Context	Depth mm	Description	Finds
Test Pit 1	101	0-200	dark brown-orange sandy loam	
	102	200-900	dark brown sandy loam	1 oyster shell fragment and 3 indeterminate bone fragments
Test Pit 2	201	0-200	dark brown-orange sandy loam	
	202	200-600	dark brown sandy loam	
	203	-	stone	
Test Pit 3	301	0-300	dark brown-orange sandy loam	
	302	300-600	dark brown sandy loam	
	303	600-1000	stony dark brown sandy loam	
Test Pit 4	401	0-300	dark brown-orange sandy loam	
	402	300-600	dark brown sandy loam	
	403	600-900	dark brown sandy loam with mortar flecks	
	404	900-1000	dark orange-brown sandy loam	1 ovicaprid bone fragment
Test Pit 5	501	0-300	dark brown-orange sandy loam	
	502	300-800	dark brown sandy loam	
	503	-	?concrete surface	
Test Pit 6	601	0-60	tarmac	
	602	60-120	concrete base	
	603	120-1000	dark brown sandy loam	
Test Pit 7	701	0-200	dark brown-orange sandy loam	
	702	200-600	dark brown ashy soil	
	703	600-1000	dark brown sandy loam	Human bone fragments and one pottery sherd
Test Pit 8	801	0-100	tarmac	
	802	100-200	gravel and flint	
	803	200-1000	dark brown/black sandy loam	One pottery sherd and one ovicaprid bone fragment
Test Pit 9	901	0-200	dark brown-orange sandy loam	

Bury Road Thetford

	902	200-500	dark brown sandy loam	1 bos bone fragment and two indeterminate bone fragments
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Plate 1: Test Pit 2

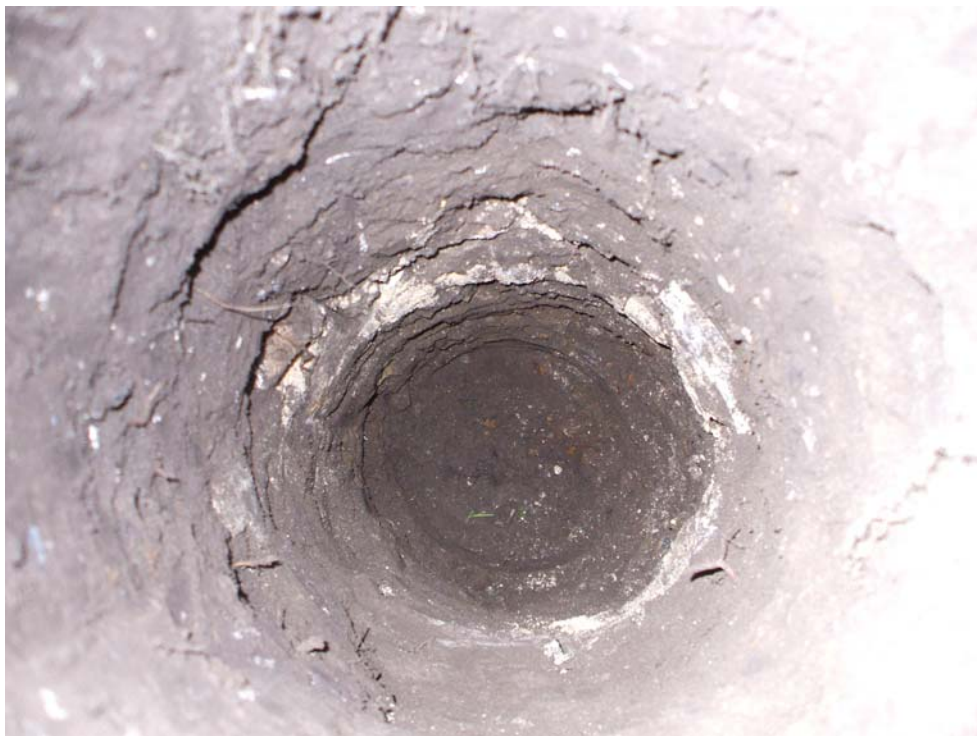


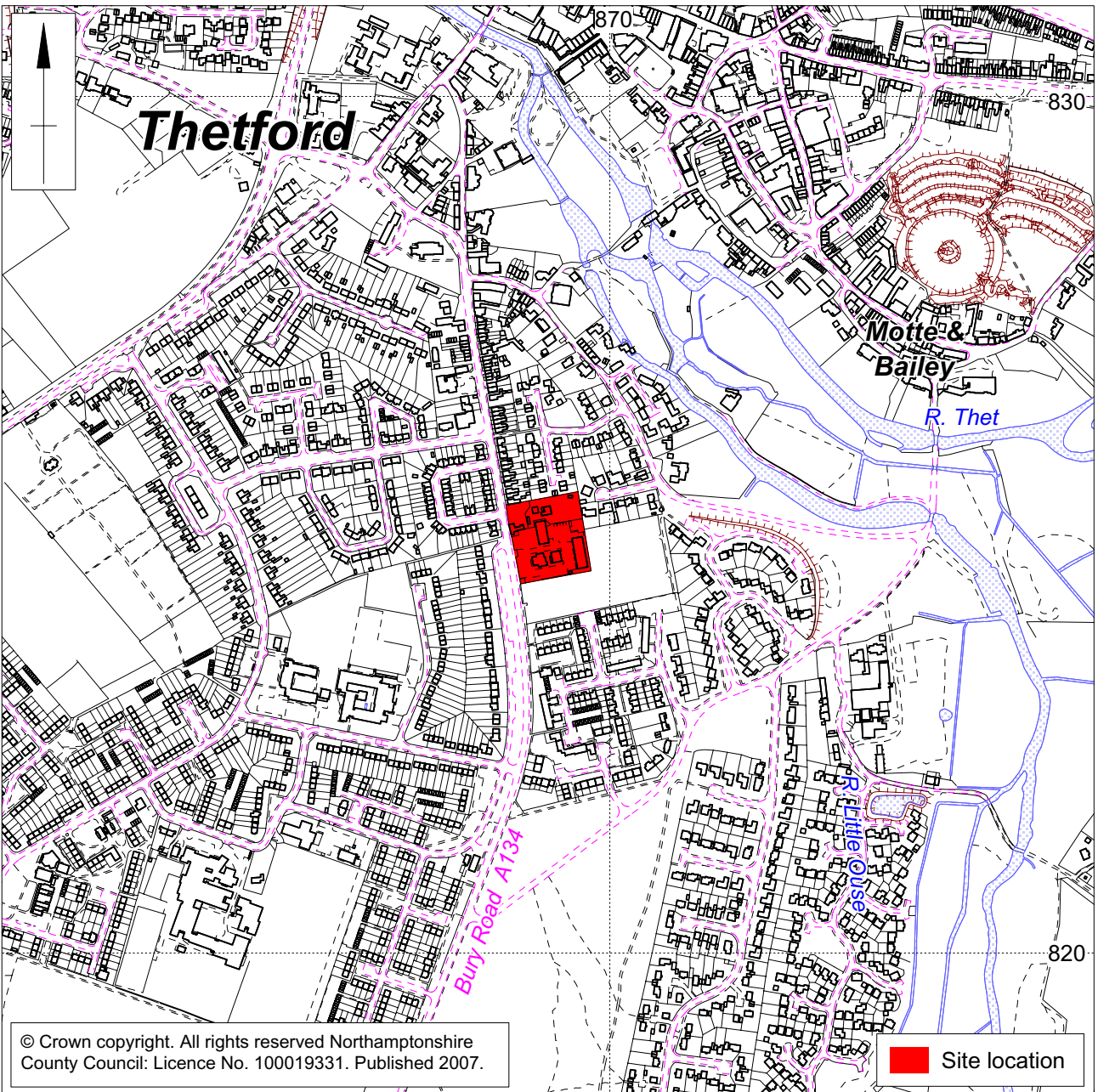
Plate 2: Test Pit 4



Plate 3: Test Pit 7

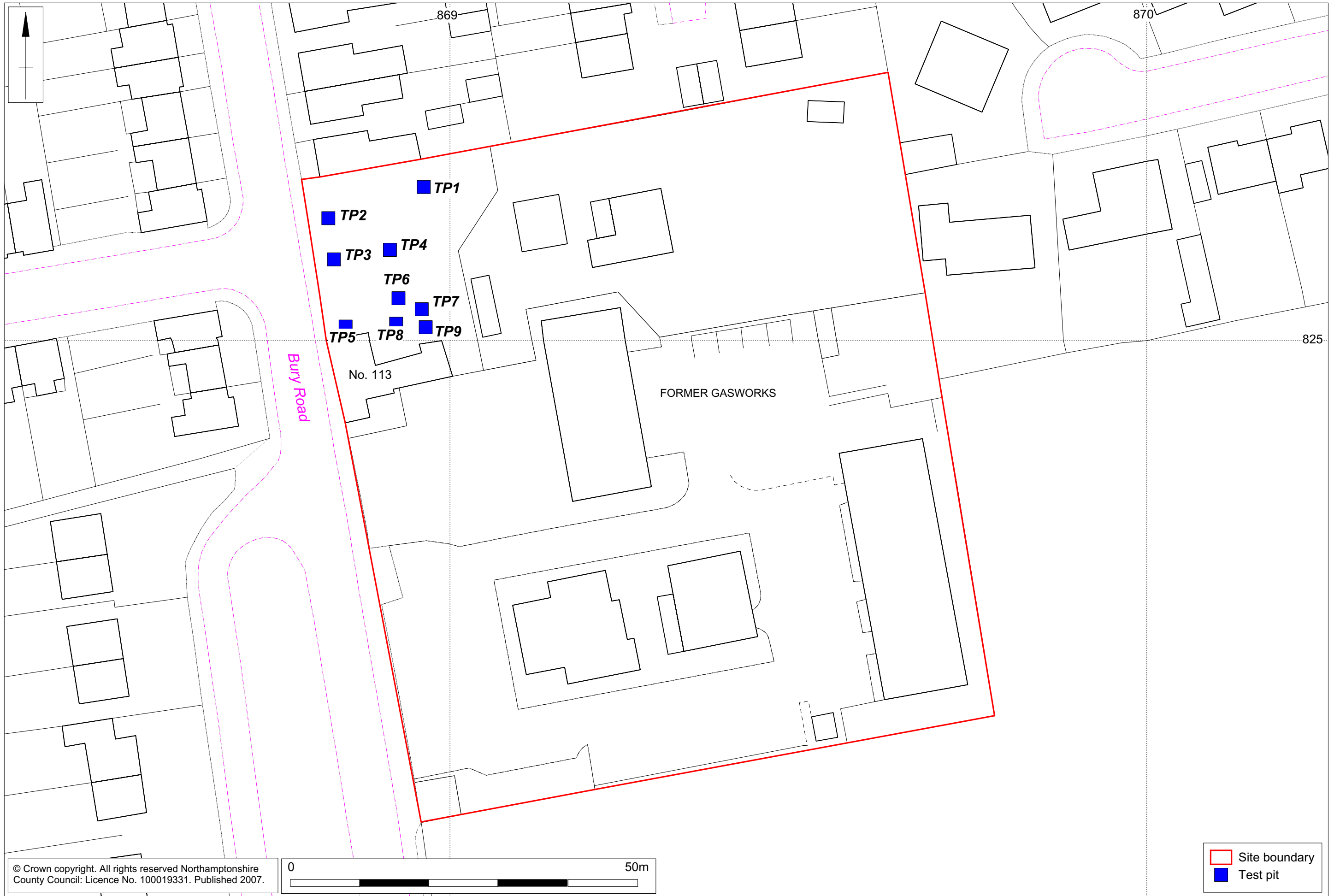


Plate 4: Test Pit 8



Scale 1:7,500

Site location Fig 1



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Scale 1:500 at A3

Test pit locations Fig 2