

Northamptonshire Archaeology

An Archaeological Evaluation at Airfield Farm,
Market Harborough, Leicestershire

X.A208.2005

December 2005 and April 2007



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August 2007

Report 07/126

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	An archaeological evaluation at Airfield Farm, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, December 2005 and April 2007	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out trial excavation on land adjacent to Airfield Farm, Market Harborough, on behalf of CgMs Consultants (formerly JSAC) Consultants acting for William Davis Ltd. Twenty-one trenches were proposed and seventeen excavated. Flooded trenches prevented full excavation. A geophysical survey indicated an enclosure with trackway. Fourteen features were located. Iron Age pottery was recovered from one feature.	
Project type (eg DBA, evaluation etc)	Evaluation	
Site status (none, NT, SAM etc)		
Previous work (SMR numbers etc)	None	
Current Land use	Arable	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	Yes	
Monument type/ period	Iron Age enclosure	
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	Iron Age pottery	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Leicestershire	
Site address	Airfield Farm, Market Harborough, Leicestershire	
Study area (sq.m or ha)	8ha	
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq. letter code)	SP 721 891	
Height OD	109 AOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Cgms (formally John Samuels Archaeological Consultants)	
Project Design originator		
Director/Supervisor	Ailsa Westgarth and Jason Clarke	
Project Manager	Adam Yates, Northamptonshire Archaeology Paul Gajos, CgMs	
Sponsor or funding body	William Davis Ltd	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	30/11/05	
End date	06/12/05	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	Leicestershire museums, arts and record service X.A205.2005	Pottery, animal bone and flint
Paper		
Digital		
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title	An archaeological evaluation at Airfield Farm, Market Harborough, Leicestershire	
Serial title & volume	07/126	
Author(s)	Ailsa Westgarth and Jason Clarke	
Page numbers		
Date	August 2007	

Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	Background	1
1.2	Location and geology	1
1.3	Archaeological background	1
2	METHODOLOGY	2
3	RESULTS	2
4	FINDS	3
4.1	Iron Age pottery by Andy Chapman	3
5	DISCUSSION	4
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	4

APPENDIX 1: Context Description

Figures

Figure 1: Site Location

Figure 2: Trenches overlying geophysical survey and excavated features

Figure 3: Plan of Trench 3

Plates

Plate 1: Trench 3, looking northwest

Plate 2: Postholes in Trench 3

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
AT AIRRFIELD FARM, MARKET HARBOROUGH
DECEMBER 2005 AND APRIL 2007

Abstract

Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out trial excavation on land adjacent to Airfield Farm, Market Harborough, on behalf of John Samuels Archaeological Consultants acting for William Davis Ltd. The evaluation confirmed the presence of an Iron Age enclosure, driveway and field systems indicated by geophysical survey.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Archaeological investigation comprising trial excavation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology for CgMs Consultants (formally JSAC) on behalf of William Davis Limited, on a plot of land north of Market Harborough. The trial evaluation met the requirements of the specification prepared by JSAC (Gajos: 2005) and agreed with Richard Clark (Leicestershire County Archaeologist).

The purpose of the trial excavation was to establish the survival, date, nature and extent of any archaeological remains within the area of the proposed development in order to inform the planning process.

1.2 Location and geology

The site is situated to the west of Harborough Road, as shown on Figure 1, and is centred on NGR SP 721 891. It covers an area of 8ha, and lies at an average height of approximately 109m AOD, sloping to the south, towards the poultry farm, which forms the southern site boundary (Fig 1). The underlying geology of the site is Jurassic and Cretaceous clay or mudstone overlain by Wickham 2 association comprising fine loamy over clayey soils (SSEW 1983: 711f). www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index.htm.

1.3 Archaeological background

An archaeological desk-based assessment of the site carried out in July 2004 found that there are no known sites within the proposed development area; however, this may be the results of no previous archaeological interventions (JSAC 1190/04/01).

There are no known Iron Age sites that have been located in the surrounding area; however, there is evidence for Roman occupation at Great Bowden and the area to the south-east of the proposed development.

A possible Anglo-Saxon cemetery has been identified on the north-west edge of modern Market Harborough to the south of the site, and both Great Bowden and Foxton are recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086AD. Aerial photographs show some areas of ridge and furrow across the site, which confirms medieval and/or post-medieval farming.

The site is on the edge of a disused World War II airfield, this phase of land use may have truncated any shallow archaeological features. However, an Air Ministry plan of the airfield shows that these fall outside the boundaries of the proposed development site.

A geophysical survey of the site was undertaken, following the recommendation of the County Archaeologist (GSB 2005/74). The results of this survey identified a large ditched enclosure with internal divisions, a ring ditch, several pits and other anomalies. A potential field system, probably associated with this complex, has been noted in the southern half of the site. A potential partial ring ditch has also been identified c100m to the north of the complex. Other archaeological-type anomalies and some significantly enhanced ploughing trends lie within a region of increased magnetic response and may indicate an area which once contained archaeological deposits that have been ploughed out. However, it is also possible that these anomalies are the remains of field drains, or the result of agricultural activity such as manuring to improve the soil.

2 METHODOLOGY

Twenty-one trenches totalling 830m were proposed within the development area (Fig 2). Trenches 1–3 were located in the southernmost field; trenches 4–14 were in the central field located over the enclosure and driveway indicated on the geophysical survey (Fig 2). Trenches 15–20 were located in the field north of the existing track.

Due to very wet weather, standing ground water and flooded trenches only 13 were excavated in 2005. The results of this evaluation were sufficient to determine the need for archaeological mitigation in the form of an open area excavation. The results of the 2005 evaluation have been summarised in an interim report (Westgarth 2005).

The remaining trenches outside the excavation, 3, 11-13 and 21 were excavated in April 2007. The methodology used in the 2005 was adhered to. The trenches incurred the same water problems experienced in 2005.

Topsoil, subsoil and overburden were removed until archaeologically sensitive deposits or natural horizons were revealed. A photographic record in black and white and colour slides of all trenches and features was completed where possible.

3 RESULTS

The general stratigraphy of the site comprised pale yellow orange and blue grey clay natural, overlain by mid brown red silty clay subsoil. Topsoil comprised dark red brown clay soil.

Trenches 3, 7, 9 and 10 contained linear ditches relating to the geophysical survey; however the rising water level prevented excavation and recording of the features in Trenches 7, 9 and 10. Trench 5 was partly excavated, no archaeology was visible, and however this may be a result of the rising water level creating poor visibility. Trenches 6, 8, 11-21 contained no archaeology and no evidence was found within these trenches to support the anomalies identified during the geophysical survey in this area.

3.1 Trench 3

Trench 3 (Figs 2 and 3, Plates 1 and 2) was positioned to correspond with a ditch of a possible driveway identified in the geophysical survey. Measuring 30m long by 2m wide, Trench 3 was aligned north-west to south-east. Natural clay (303) was encountered at a depth of 0.80m. A modern pit cutting the subsoil, a shallow gully and nine possible postholes were encountered cutting natural geology.

Gully [305]

Gully [305] was aligned east-west, measured 0.70m wide and 0.20m deep, and cut natural geology. The fill comprised mid brown grey silty clay (304); no finds were recovered from this feature.

Postholes [307]-[321]

Nine irregular shaped features were excavated and appear to be postholes (Plate 2). They were located to the south-west of the trench and formed no obvious structure. The trench was extended by 10sq m east and west of the postholes, but no further features were found.

3.2 Trench 7

Aligned north-west to south-east, Trench 7 measured 100m long and 2m wide. Natural geology, which comprised yellow orange clay (703), was encountered at a depth of 0.70m.

A linear ditch was located in the south of Trench 7 and contained mid red brown silty clay, similar to the subsoil deposits. This feature corresponded with the northern ditch of the driveway identified in the geophysical survey. A further linear contained a dark brown grey fill, and correlated with the curvilinear feature within the enclosure. Two very small pieces of pottery were found within this fill. Initial identification indicated an Iron Age date.

3.3 Trench 9

Aligned north-east to south-west, Trench 9 measured 50m long and 2m wide. Natural geology, which comprised yellow orange clay (903), was encountered at a depth of 0.55m.

A single linear feature aligned north-south was located in the west of Trench 9. It contained a dark grey silty clay fill. This feature was overlain by the topsoil and related to the curvilinear feature adjacent to the enclosure.

3.4 Trench 10

Aligned east-west, Trench 10 measured 50m long and 2m wide. Natural geology, which comprised yellow orange clay (1003), was encountered at a depth of 0.50m.

A possible north-south aligned ditch was located in the north-west of trench 10. It contained a pale yellow grey silty fill. This feature was overlain by the subsoil. It related to a small section of ditch indicated on the geophysical survey results as forming part of the enclosure.

4 FINDS

4.1 Iron Age Pottery by Andy Chapman

The fill of curvilinear feature [1005] in trench 10 contained seven small sherds, weighing 20g of hand-built pottery. The fabric is soft and contains voids from leached inclusions, possibly shell. The core and inner surface is grey-black and the external surface is orange-brown, but there are no other diagnostic features. The general character of the sherds suggests that they are most probably date to the Iron Age.

5 DISCUSSION

The trial trenching identified several of the anomalies shown on the geophysical survey. The features located appear shallow and truncated; however, the problems with rising water prevented further investigation of the character and date of the archaeology.

No evidence was found to suggest any use of the land during World War II.

The ditches located in trenches 7, 9, and 10 correlate with the geophysical survey; however, as the features remain unexcavated it is not possible to ascertain the level of truncation within the area. The further anomalies were not found during the evaluation; they may be the result of ploughed material within the subsoils. Land drains were located in every trench, which may also account for some of the anomalies.

Very little dating evidence was found, however, the pottery does suggest an Iron Age date for the enclosure.

Gully [305] appears to be on the alignment of a possible droveway identified in the geophysics survey, no finds were recovered to give any dating evidence.

The general stratigraphic sequence visible in the trenches was consistent with a rural area, the natural stratigraphy remaining largely undisturbed. The shallow nature of the subsoil is an indication of deep ploughing as confirmed by the land owner.

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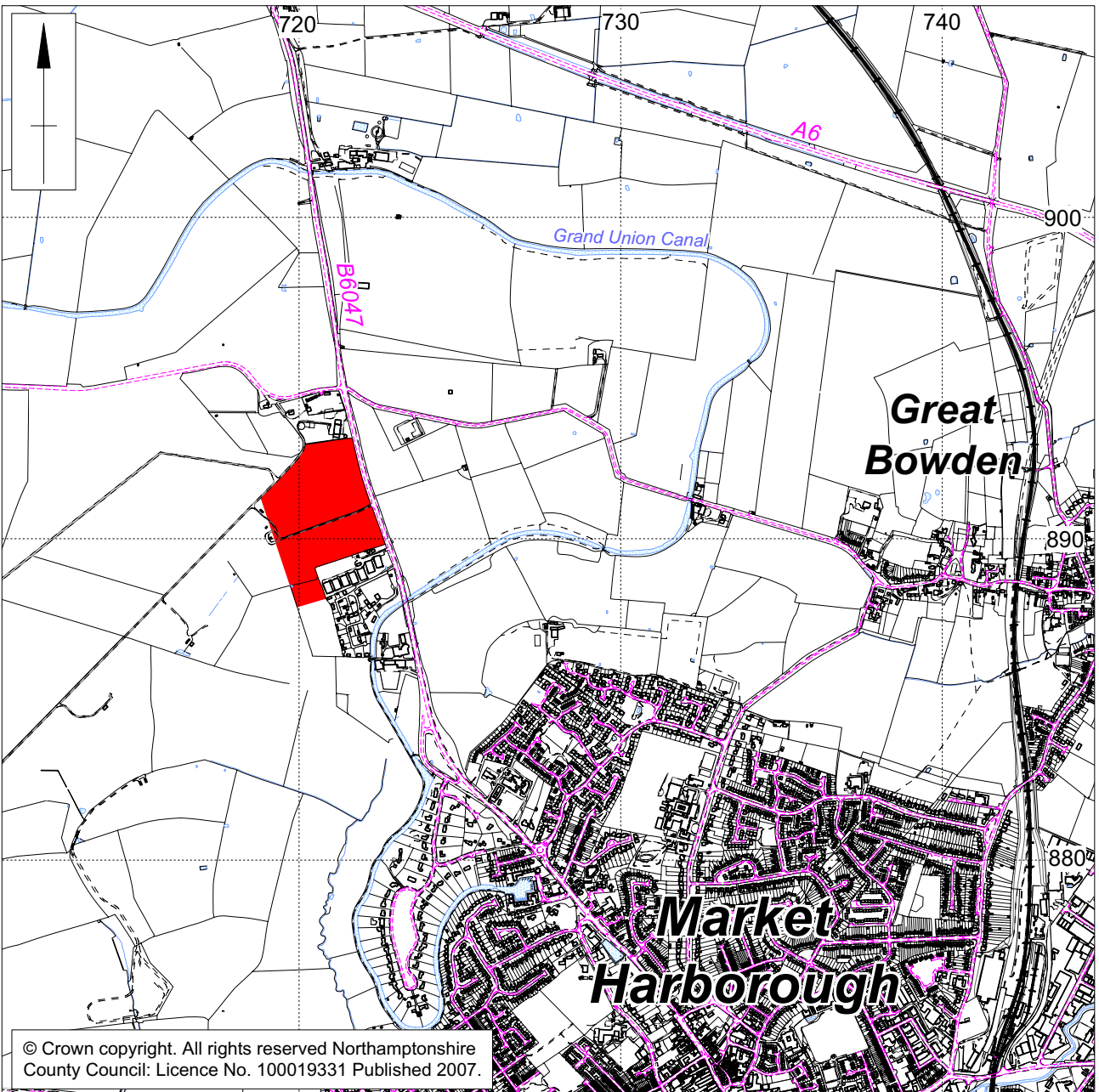
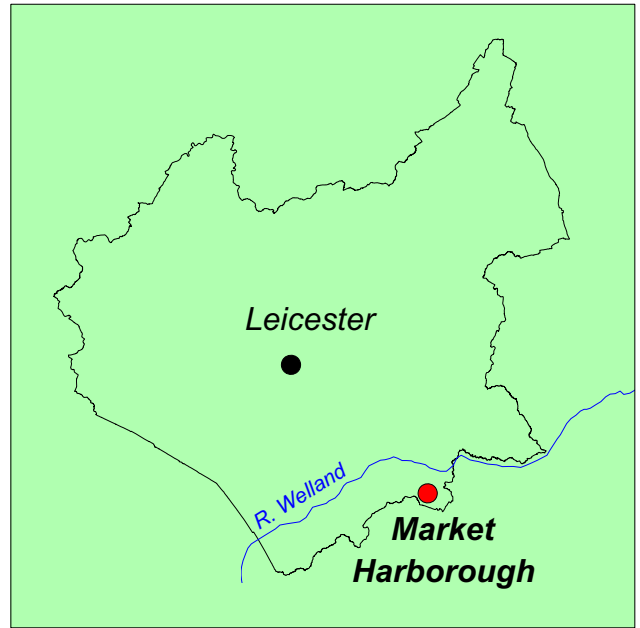
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APPENDIX 1: SITE DATA

Trench	Context	Deposit Type	Description	Artefact types
3	300	Layer	Mid grey brown silty clay, topsoil	
	301	Layer	Grey brown silty clay, subsoil	
	302	Layer	Grey brown silty clay, subsoil	
	303	Natural	Mid yellow brown clay, natural geology	
	304	Fill	Mid brown grey silty clay. Fill of [305]	
	305	Cut	U-shaped gully, aligned north-south. Filled by (304)	
	306	Fill	Mid brown grey silty clay. Fill of [307]	
	307	Cut	Cut of Posthole. Filled by (306)	
	308	Fill	Mid brown grey silty clay. Fill of [309]	
	309	Cut	Cut of Posthole. Filled by (308)	
	310	Fill	Mid brown grey silty clay. Fill of [310]	
	311	Cut	Cut of Posthole. Filled by (309)	
	312	Fill	Mid grey brown silty clay. Fill of [313]	
	313	Cut	Cut of Posthole. Filled by (312)	
	314	Fill	Mid grey brown silty clay	
	315	Cut	Cut of Posthole. Filled by (314)	
	316	Fill	Mid grey brown silty clay. Fill of [317]	
	317	Cut	Cut of Posthole. Filled by (316)	
	318	Fill	Mid grey brown silty clay. Fill of [319]	
	319	Cut	Cut of Post Hole. Filled by (318)	
	320	Fill	Mid grey sandy clay. Fill of [321]	
	321	Cut	Cut of Posthole. Filled by (320)	
	322	Fill	Upper fill of modern pit [324]	
	323	Fill	Primary fill of modern pit [323]	
	324	Cut	Cut of modern pit. Filled by (322) and (323)	
	325	Fill	Upper fill of modern pit [327]	
	326	Fill	Primary fill of modern pit [327]	
327	Cut	Cut of modern pit. Filled by (325) and (326)		

Airfield Farm, Market Harborough

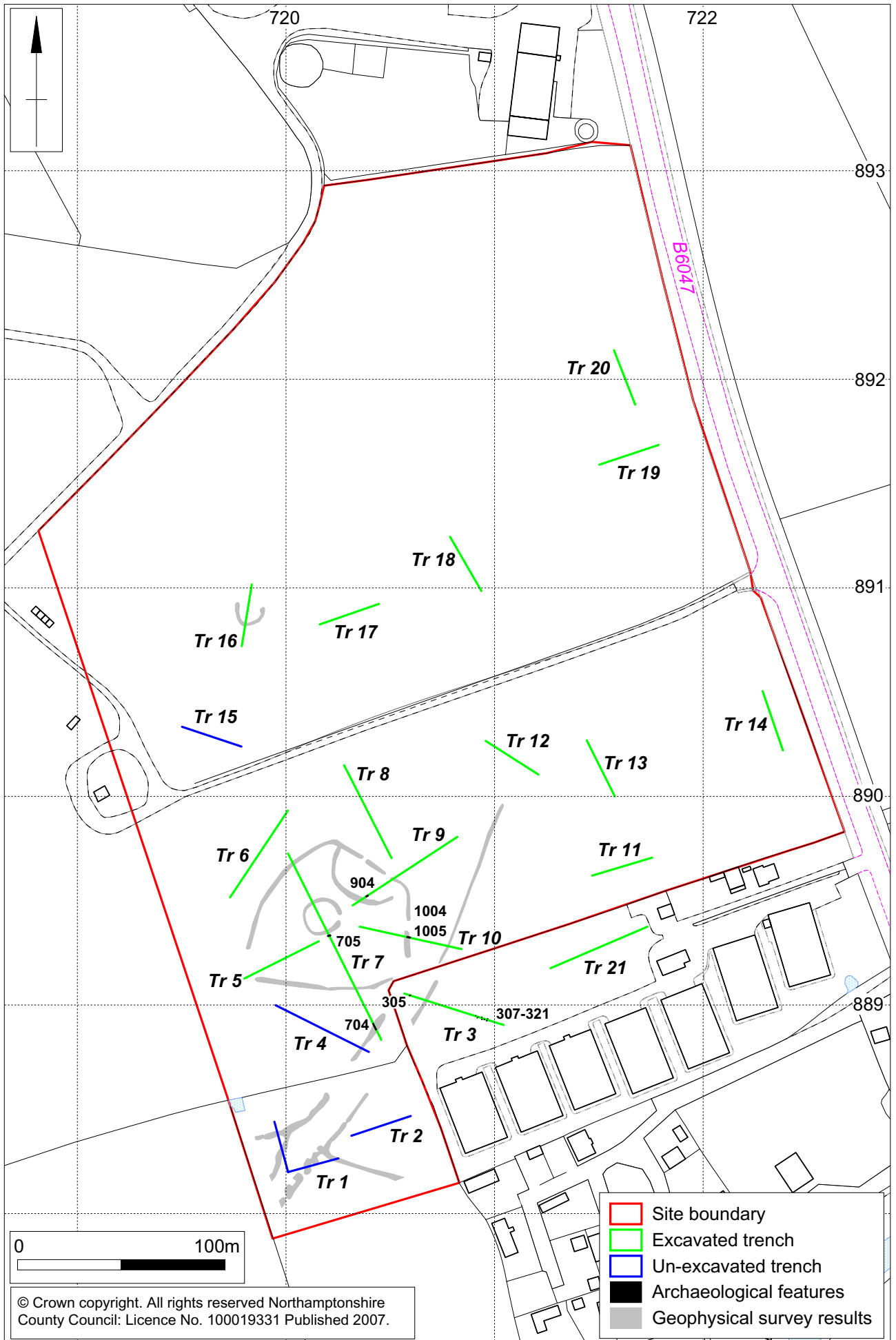
Trench	Context	Deposit Type	Description	Artefact types
7	701	Layer	Mid brown silty clay, topsoil	
	702	Layer	Brown silty clay, subsoil	
	703	Natural	Yellow orange clay, natural clay	
	704	Feature	Northeast-southwest aligned, mid orange brown silty clay, 5m wide linear. Unexcavated	
	705	Feature	Dark brown grey filled linear. Unexcavated.	
9		Feature	Linear seen but trench filled with water before excavated	
10	1001	Layer	Brown silty clay, topsoil	
	1002	Layer	Mid brown silty clay, subsoil	
	1003	Layer	Pale yellow orange silty clay, subsoil	
	1004	Feature	Mid brown grey silty clay, possible furrow	
	1005	Feature	Dark brown grey silty clay, curvilinear, cut by 1004	Iron Age pottery
11	1101	Layer	Mid grey brown silty clay, topsoil	
	1102	Layer	Mid orange brown silty clay, subsoil	
	1103	Natural	Orangy brown with light grey patches clay. Natural geology	
12	1201	Layer	Mid grey brown silty clay, topsoil	
	1202	Layer	Mid yellow brown silty clay, subsoil	
	1203	Natural	Light orangy brown clay. Natural geology	
13	1301	Layer	Mid grey brown silty clay. topsoil	
	1302	Layer	Mid yellow brown silty clay. subsoil	
	1303	Natural	Light yellow brown with grey patches clay. Natural geology	
21	2101	Layer	Mid grey brown silty clay. topsoil	
	2102	Layer	Grey brown clay. subsoil	
	2103	Layer	Yellowish brown clay. subsoil	
	2104	Natural	Mid yellow brown clay. Natural geology	



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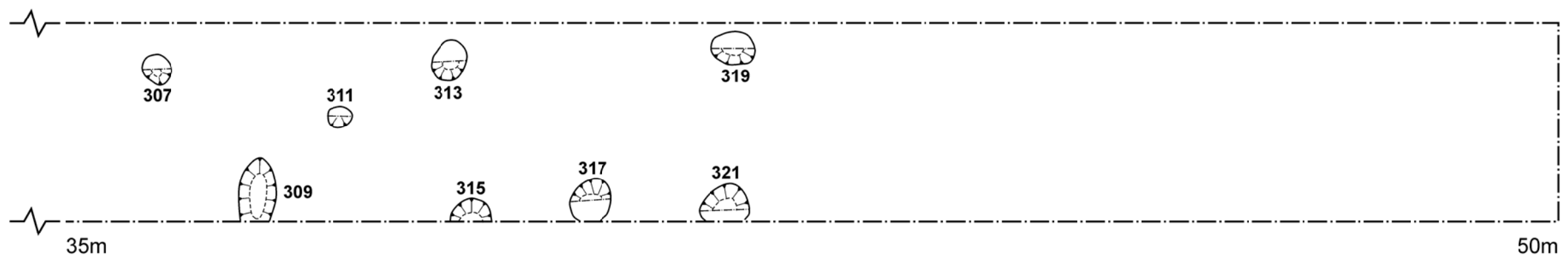
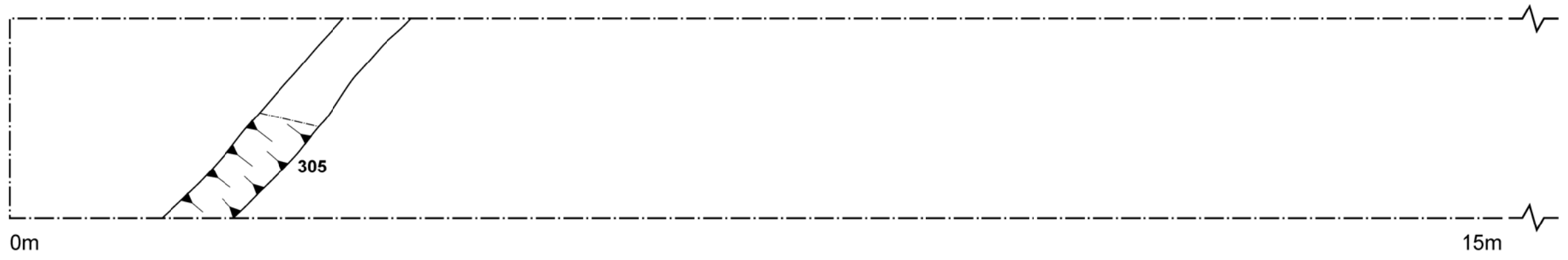
Scale 1:20,000

Site location Fig 1



Scale 1:2500 Trenches overlying geophysical survey and excavated features Fig 2

Trench 3



Plan of Trench 3 Fig 3



Plate 1: Trench 3, looking north-west



Plate 2: Postholes in Trench 3