

**Land off Banbury Lane
Middleton Cheney
Northamptonshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

for

Barwood Developments Limited

CA Project: 660049
CA Report: 12078

April 2012

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date	30 April 2012
issue	01

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SUMMARY

Project name:	Banbury Lane, Middleton Cheney
Location:	Banbury Lane, Middleton Cheney, Northamptonshire
NGR:	SP 4958 4243
Type:	Evaluation
Date:	April 2012
Site code:	BMY 12

In April 2012, an archaeological evaluation, comprising the excavation of three trial trenches, was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology on a block of farm land to the south of Banbury Lane, Middleton Cheney, Northamptonshire. The work, which was commissioned by Barwood Developments Limited, was carried out in advance of the proposed commercial development of the site.

Four ditches, which may have formed part of a pre-medieval ditch system, and a possible pit were recorded in the eastern half of the development area. Evidence was recovered from across the site for medieval or post-medieval ridge and furrow cultivation.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In April 2012, an archaeological evaluation, comprising the excavation of three trial trenches, was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology (CA) on farm land to the south of Banbury Lane, Middleton Cheney, Northamptonshire (site centred on NGR: SP 4958 4243; Fig. 1). The work, which was commissioned by Barwood Developments Limited, was carried out in advance of the proposed commercial development of the site (planning application ref. S/2010/0473/MAO).
- 1.2 The archaeological evaluation, which was requested by Liz Mordue, Northamptonshire County Council's Assistant Archaeological Advisor (NCCAAA), formed Stage 1 of the programme of archaeological works, as set out in the two-part brief issued by NCCAAA (2012a and b).
- 1.3 The project was undertaken in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by CA (2012), the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IfA 2008), and the English Heritage procedural documents *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (EH 1991) and the *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (EH 2006). The fieldwork was monitored by Liz Mordue, NCCAAA, with a site visit being made on 4 April 2012.

The site

- 1.4 The site is situated on the north-western outskirts of Middleton Cheney, approximately 500m to the north-north-west of the historic core of the village, in the north of the parish (Fig. 1). It is bounded by Banbury Lane (B4525) to the north, a petrol station to the east and farm land to the south and west. The site, which is generally level, at the 142m Ordnance Survey contour, is currently open pasture and covers an area of approximately 0.4 ha. The geology comprises Jurassic rocks of the Marlstone Rock Formation, which occurred within the site as brashy ferruginous limestone and ironstone in a brownish-orange clayey silt matrix (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex>).
- 1.5 A summary of the archaeological and historical background to the site is contained within the WSI. It highlights the presence of cropmark evidence for probable prehistoric settlement in the fields immediately to the south-west of the development area and on the north side of Banbury Lane. Evaluation of an area immediately to

the south-east of the proposed development, carried out by ASC in early 2012, revealed evidence for a cluster of undated postholes and two pits containing substantial quantities of Neolithic pottery.

Archaeological objectives

- 1.6 The objectives of the evaluation, as outlined in the brief (NCCAAA 2012b), were to:
- establish the location, date, nature and extent of activity or occupation on the development site,
 - establish the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits that may be present.

The results of the evaluation will assist NCCAAA in making an informed judgement on the significance of the archaeological resource and the likely impact upon it of the proposed development.

Methodology

- 1.7 The evaluation comprised the excavation and investigation of three trial trenches (55 linear metres) within the site, positioned in accordance with the approved trench plan (Fig. 2). The trenches were positioned to provide a reasonable overall coverage and sample of the site. The trenches were set out by tape from OS mapping data.
- 1.8 The trenches were excavated using a JCB-type mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.5m wide toothless ditching bucket. All machine excavation was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. Where archaeological deposits were encountered they were excavated by hand and recorded, in accordance with *Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual* (CA 2007).
- 1.9 Deposits were assessed for environmental potential, in accordance with *Technical Manual 2: The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites* (CA 2003) and *Environmental Archaeology: a guide to the theory and practice of methods from sampling and recovery to post excavation* (EH

2011). All artefacts recovered were processed in accordance with *Technical Manual 3: Treatment of Finds Immediately after Excavation* (CA 2010).

- 1.10 The archive and artefacts from the evaluation are currently held by CA at their offices in Milton Keynes. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner, the artefacts and the site archive will eventually be deposited in a county store, when this service is provided. A summary of information from this project will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

2. FIELDWORK RESULTS

2.1 Summary

All three trenches contained evidence for medieval/post-medieval ridge and furrow cultivation, with four furrows on a north-north-west to south-south-east orientation encountered across the site. Trench 2, located in the north-east corner of the site, also had a sequence of four undated ditches towards the northern end of the trench. Although undated the form and layout of the ditches, as well as the appearance of the fills, might indicate a pre-medieval date for their construction. An undated pit-like feature was recorded in Trench 3.

General stratigraphy

- 2.2 The geological substrate occurred as brashy ferruginous limestone and ironstone in a brownish-orange clayey silt matrix. The overlying subsoil was typically mid yellowish-brown clayey silt, varying in thickness between 0.09m and 0.11m. The topsoil, which was between 0.21m and 0.31m thick, was mid orangey-brown friable clayey silt.

Trench 1

- 2.3 Two plough furrows were recorded in Trench 1, on a north-north-west to south-south-east alignment (Fig. 2). The furrows were approximately 2.5m wide and spaced c. 9m apart. Furrow 102 was excavated and was recorded as having gradual sloping sides, a flattish base and a maximum depth of 0.29m. A sherd of 18th-century pottery (Ed McSloy pers. comm.) and a fragment of clay pipe stem were recovered from its upper fill (104).

Trench 2 (Fig. 3)

- 2.4 Ditch 203 was located in the northern half of the trench and oriented north-east to south-west, terminating at the south-west end. It measured over 6m in length, 0.9m in width and 0.41m in depth and had near vertical sides (where surviving), with a sharp break of slope to a flat base. Four deposits (204-7) were recorded in the ditch, all of which appear to have accumulated from the west side.
- 2.5 Ditch 203 terminated close to the northern edge of east to west oriented ditch 208. This feature was almost entirely truncated by later east to west oriented ditch 212, but its surviving profile had near vertical sides with a sharp break of slope to a flat base. It measured over 0.9m long by 0.5m wide by 0.14m deep. This ditch terminated within the trench at its east end and was very similar in form to ditch 203. The two ditches had no stratigraphic relationship and may have been contemporary, terminating at roughly the same spot.
- 2.6 Ditch 210 was located in the northern half of the trench where it cut through ditch 203. It was oriented north-north-east to south-south-west and was slightly irregular in plan; at its southern end it curved slightly to the south-west before being truncated by later east to west oriented ditch 212. It did not reappear to the south of ditch 212 and presumably continued to curve to the south-west beyond the limits of the trench. Measuring over 9m long by 0.55m wide by 0.19m deep, the ditch had gradual sides and a concave base.
- 2.7 The latest feature in the sequence was ditch 212, which cut ditch 210 and truncated all earlier features. It was oriented east to west, had steep sides and a concave base, and measured 0.97m wide by 0.28m deep.
- 2.8 There were no finds in any of these ditches and the deposits they contained were sandy and relatively sterile, so their date is uncertain. However, they were sealed by the subsoil, suggesting that they are probably medieval or earlier in date.
- 2.9 A furrow, 214, was located at the southern end of the trench and was oriented north-north-west to south-south-east. It was 0.95m wide and was on the same orientation as the furrows in Trenches 1 and 3; it may have been the continuation of plough furrow 302 in Trench 3.

Trench 3 (Fig. 4)

- 2.10 A small, undated pit-like feature, 304, was partly revealed near the centre of the trench (Fig. 4). It was roughly oval in plan, with steep sides and an irregular concave base, and measured 0.91m wide by over 0.9m long by 0.31m deep. The edges of the feature were fairly diffuse, suggesting that the feature may have been formed or modified by root action.
- 2.11 There were two furrows within the trench, on a north-north-west to south-south-east alignment. Furrow 302 continued to the north and was also recorded in Trench 2. Furrow 302 was shallow, with gradual sides and a flattish base, and measured 2.4m wide by 0.19m deep; furrow 306 had a similar profile but was only 1.5m wide and 0.13m deep.

3. DISCUSSION

- 3.1 The evaluation encountered the remains of medieval/post-medieval ridge and furrow cultivation across the site, and undated activity, possibly the remains of a pre-medieval ditch system, in the north-east corner of the site.
- 3.2 The ditches in Trench 2 are likely to be contemporaneous and they may have formed part of a ditch system. Their location and morphology suggests that they may be associated with the prehistoric enclosures/settlement observed in aerial photographs to the north of Banbury Lane, although this has not been supported by artefactual evidence. The alignment of the ditches also differed from the plough furrows and they were sealed by the mineralised medieval plough soil (subsoil), which tentatively supports a pre-medieval date.
- 3.3 The pit-like feature in Trench 3, which is also undated, may have been formed by human action, but its diffuse, somewhat irregular profile suggests that it may have been created, or modified, by root action. Its position would place it approximately 20m to the north-west of a series of undated postholes recorded in the evaluation carried out by ASC in early 2012. In isolation its function and significance is uncertain.
- 3.4 A series of four plough furrows, aligned north-north-west to south-south-east, were recorded across the three trenches. These features run perpendicular to Banbury

Lane and indicate that the area was under arable cultivation, probably from the medieval period into the post-medieval period.

4. CA PROJECT TEAM

The fieldwork was undertaken by Simon Carlyle, assisted by Liz Muldowney. The report was written by Liz Muldowney, the illustrations were prepared by Peter Moore. The archive has been compiled and prepared for deposition by Liz Muldowney. The project was managed for CA by Simon Carlyle.

5. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2012 Online resource at <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex.html> accessed 5 April 12

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2012 *Land at 9 Banbury Lane, Middleton Cheney, Northamptonshire; Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Investigation*

NCCAAA 2012a *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Investigation at Banbury Lane, Middleton Cheney, Northamptonshire* VI 27th March 2012

NCCAAA 2012b *Brief for the Archaeological Field Evaluation of Land at Banbury Lane, Middleton Cheney, Northamptonshire* VI 27th March 2012

APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS**Trench 1**

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
101	Natural	Firm mid brownish orange slightly sandy silt with frequent ironstone pebbles changing to light yellowish white laminated sandstone at base of features.	-	-	-	
102	Plough furrow	Linear cut, aligned north to south, with shallow gradual sides and a flattish base.	1.6+	2.6	0.31	Medieval/ Post-medieval
103	Fill of 102	Soft dark brownish grey silt with rare small limestone cobbles on base of cut.	-	-	0.11	
104	Fill of 102	Soft mid brown slightly clayey silt with frequent limestone pebbles. Contained a sherd of pottery and a clay pipe stem	-	-	0.17	
105	Plough furrow	Unexcavated linear furrow, aligned north to south.	1.5+	2.5	-	Medieval/ post-medieval
106	Fill of 105	Mid brown slightly clayey silt.	-	-	-	
107	Subsoil	Soft mid reddish brown silt with moderate ironstone pebbles.			0.16	
108	Topsoil	Soft friable slightly sandy silt.			0.54	

Trench 2

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
200	Topsoil	Mid orangey brown friable clay silt.	-	-	0.21	
201	Subsoil	Mid yellowy brown friable clay silt	-	-	0.09	
202	Natural	Mid brownish orange clay silt with frequent sandstone and ironstone fragments (small to medium).				
203	Ditch	Linear ditch cut, oriented north-east to south-west, terminating to the south-west.	1.1+	0.9+	0.41	Undated
204	Fill of 203	Mid orange brown friable clay silt with moderate iron pan and occasional charcoal flecks.	-	-	0.20	
205	Fill of 203	Mid yellowy brown friable clay silt with moderate small crushed sandstone fragments.	-	-	0.15	
206	Fill of 203	Light brownish yellow friable clay silt with moderate charcoal flecks.	-	-	0.11	
207	Fill of 203	Mid orangey grey friable sandy silt.	-	-	0.10	
208	Ditch	Linear ditch cut, oriented east to west with near vertical sides and a flattish base. Terminates within trench at its eastern end.	0.90+	0.50+	0.14	Undated
209	Fill of 208	Mid yellowy brown friable clay silt with moderate small iron pan concretions.	-	-	0.14	
210	Ditch	Irregular linear ditch cut, oriented north-north-east to south-south-west, with gradual sides and a concave base.	1.14+	0.55	0.19	Undated
211	Fill of 210	Mid orangey brown friable clay silt with moderate charcoal flecks.	-	-	0.19	
212	Ditch	Linear ditch cut, oriented east to west, with steep sides and a concave base.	1.5+	0.97	0.28	Undated
213	Fill of 212	Mid reddish brown friable clay silt with occasional charcoal flecks and moderate small sandstone fragments.	-	-	0.28	
214	Plough furrow	Unexcavated linear furrow, oriented north-north-west to south-south-east.	2.1+	0.95	-	Medieval/ Post-

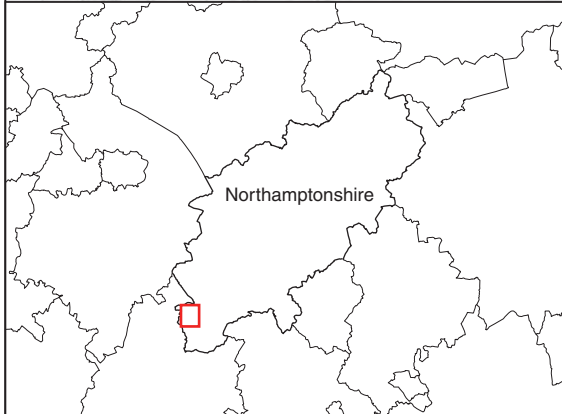
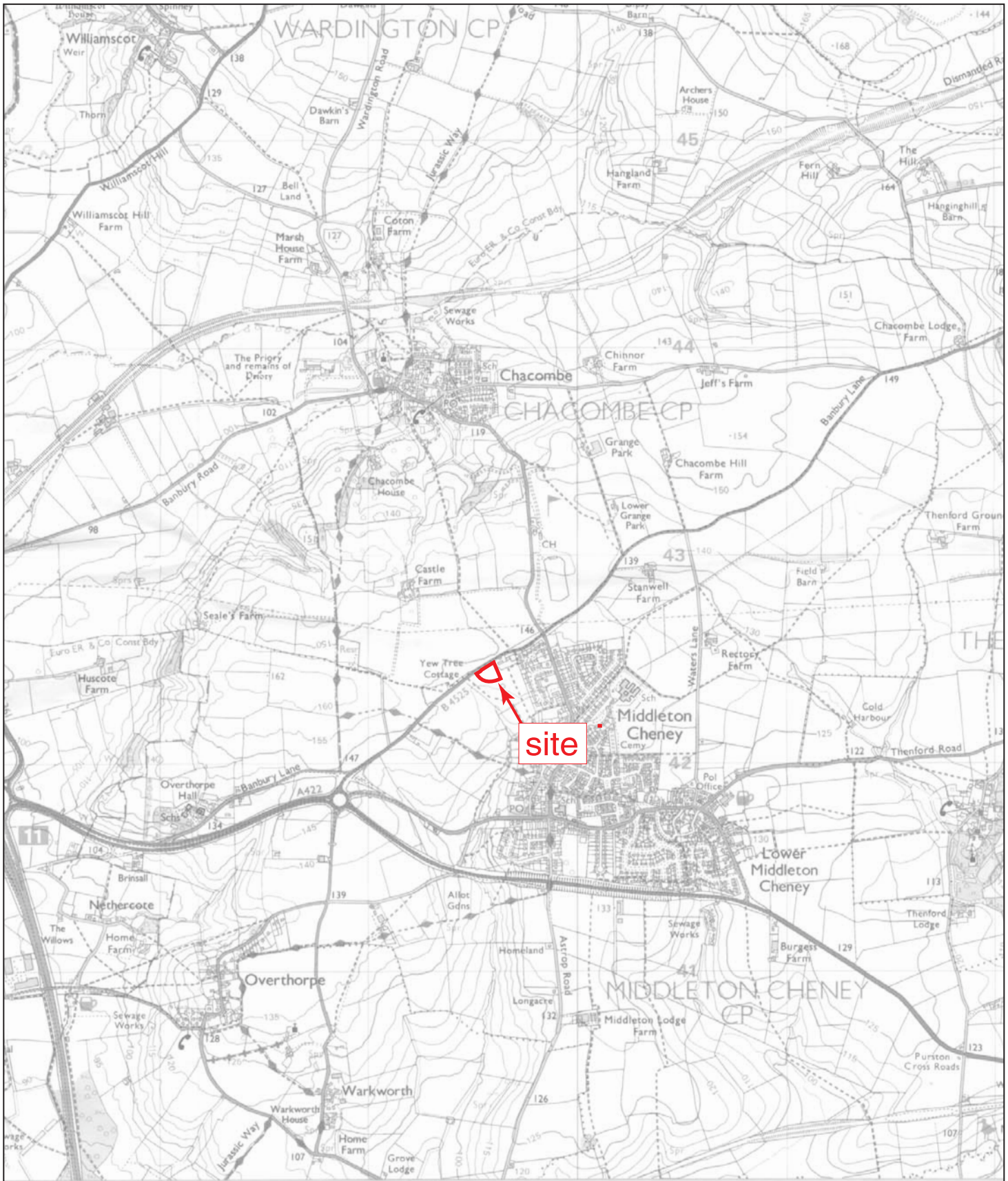
						medieval
215	Fill of 214	Dark grey brown clay silt.	-	-	-	

Trench 3

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
301	Natural	Firm mid brownish orange slightly sandy silt with frequent ironstone pebbles changing to light yellowish white laminated sandstone at base of features.	-	-	-	
302	Plough furrow	Linear furrow, oriented north-north-west to south-south-east, with shallow sides and a flattish base.	1.85+	2.4	0.19	Medieval/post-medieval
303	Fill of 302	Soft mid brown slightly clayey silt with frequent limestone pebbles.	-	-	0.19	
304	Pit??	Roughly oval pit, partially obscured by northern baulk, long axis oriented north-east to south-west. Steep concave sides with a concave base.	0.98+	0.91	0.31	Undated
305	Fill of 304	Soft mid to dark reddish brown slightly clayey silt with occasional limestone pebbles.	-	-	0.31	
306	Plough furrow	Linear furrow, oriented north-north-west to south-south-east, with shallow sides and a flattish base.	1.85+	1.5	0.13	Medieval/post-medieval
307	Fill of 306	Soft mid brown slightly clayey silt with frequent limestone pebbles.	-	-	0.13	
308	Subsoil	Soft mid reddish brown silt with moderate ironstone pebbles.	-	-	0.11	
309	Topsoil	Soft friable slightly sandy silt.	-	-	0.31	

APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Banbury Lane, Middleton Cheney	
Short description	Four ditches, which may have formed part of a pre-medieval ditch system, and a possible pit were recorded in the eastern half of the development area. Evidence was recovered from across the site for medieval or post-medieval ridge and furrow cultivation.	
Project dates	4 April 2012	
Project type	Field evaluation	
Previous work	None	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type	Undated ditches/ditch system	
Significant finds	18th-century pottery, clay pipe	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site location	Banbury Lane, Middleton Cheney, Northamptonshire	
Study area	0.4ha.	
Site co-ordinates	SP 4958 4243	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology (CA)	
Project Brief originator	Northamptonshire County Council	
Project Design (WSI) originator	CA	
Project Manager	Simon Carlyle (CA)	
Project Supervisor	Simon Carlyle (CA)	
PROJECT ARCHIVE		
	Accession no: n/a	Content
Physical		18th-century pottery, clay pipe
Paper		Site records
Digital	Northants HER	Report, digital photos
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2012 <i>Land at Banbury Lane, Middleton Cheney, Northamptonshire: Archaeological Evaluation</i> . CA typescript report 12078		



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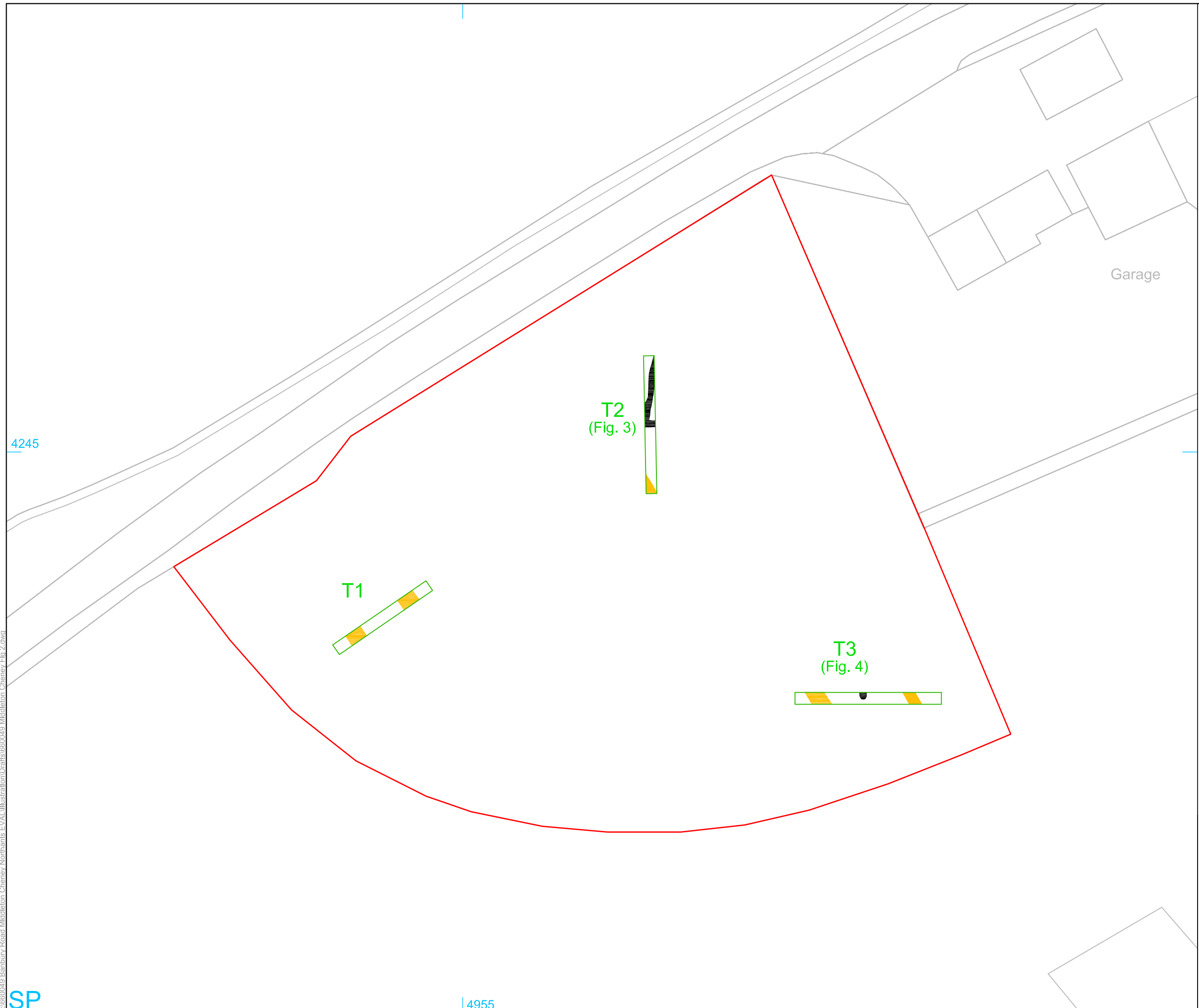
PROJECT TITLE
 Banbury Lane, Middleton Cheney
 Northamptonshire

FIGURE TITLE
 Site location plan

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PROJECT NO. 660049 DATE 19-4-2011
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 APPROVED BY PJM SCALE@A4 1:25,000

FIGURE NO.
1



- site
- evaluation trench
- archaeological feature
- furrow



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PROJECT TITLE
 Banbury Lane, Middleton Cheney
 Northamptonshire

FIGURE TITLE
 Trench location plan, showing
 archaeological features

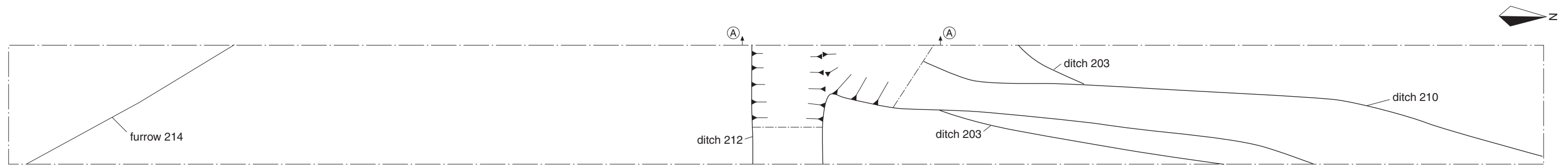
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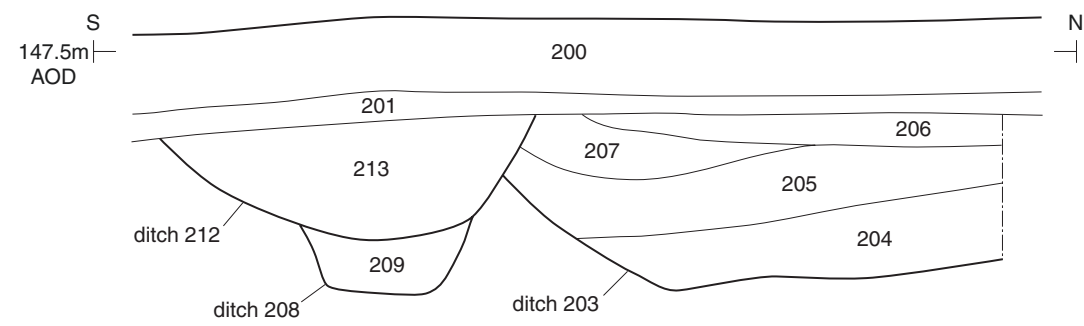


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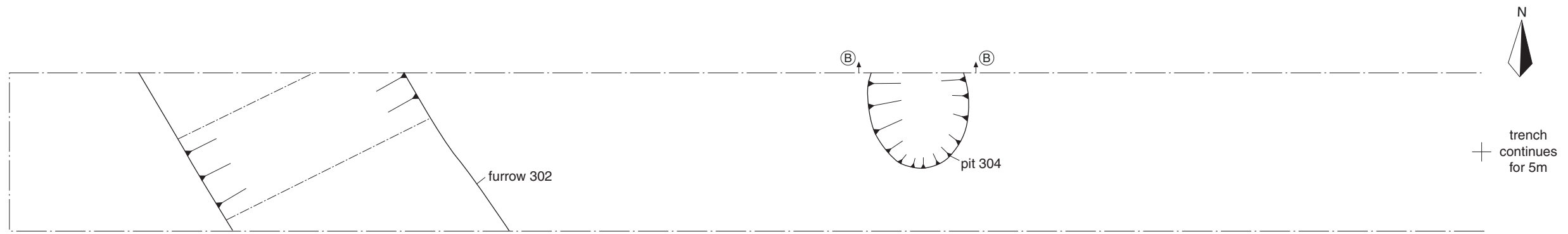
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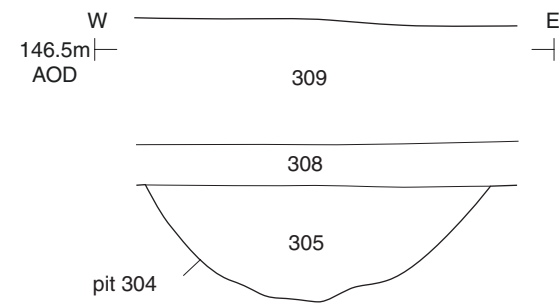
Section AA



Trench 2, ditches 203, 208 and 212, looking west (scale 1m)



Section BB



Trench 3, pit 304, looking north (scale 1m)