

An archaeological evaluation at Straw Cottage, Main Street Todenham, Gloucestershire



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An archaeological evaluation at Straw Cottage, Main Street, Todenham, Gloucestershire

Andrew Walsh and Tom Vaughan

With contributions by C Jane Evans

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at the site of the proposed Straw Cottage, Main Street, Todenham, Gloucestershire (NGR SP 24363 36353). It was undertaken on behalf of Clive Webster, who intends to residential development of the site for which a planning application will be submitted.

The site is located on the northern side of the village, approximately 5.5km north-east of Moreton-in-Marsh. The site comprises an irregular shaped plot of land to the north-east of the church of St Thomas a Becket, and west of the former Manor Farm.

Two trenches were excavated, revealing two features of significance. An amorphous feature lay at c 0.50m below the ground surface and extended into the south-west boundary of the site. It contained fragments of pottery potential 10th to 14th century date, and a small quantity of animal bone. The full form and function are unclear. Toward the central north side of the site a north to south aligned ditch was recorded at c0.90m bgs. It contained a single tiny sherd of pottery of unknown date. The ditch does appear to be depicted on maps from 1885 onwards, and was sealed by a developed subsoil, so may be of an early date. Its function is unclear but is postulated to be agricultural. No other features, layers, structure or finds of archaeological significance were identified. Layers of stone and brick rubble noted below the topsoil toward the south-west corner of the site may relate to a track indicated on maps from 1902 to 1978.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at the site of the proposed Straw Cottage, Main Street, Todenham, Gloucestershire (Fig 1; NGR SP 24363 36353). It was commissioned by Clive Webster in advance of a proposed residential development for which a planning application will be submitted to Cotswold District Council (reference to be confirmed). The proposed development site is considered to include heritage assets and potential heritage assets, the significance of which may be affected by the application.

No specific brief was issued by Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service but the project conforms to the model *Brief for an Archaeological Field Evaluation* (GCC 2016), and to the requirements of the Gloucestershire County Council Archaeologist (pers comm Charles Parry, dated 16 March 2017). The project conforms to a written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2017). The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014a).

2 Aims

The aims of the project, as outlined in the WSI, are to:

- Determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits beyond reasonable doubt;
- Identify their location, nature date and preservation;
- Assess their significance
- Assess the likely impact of the proposed development.

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was led by Andrew Walsh (BSc; MSc; ACIfA; FSA Scot) who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2013 and has been practicing archaeology since 2004, assisted by Nina O'Hare (BA). The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan (BA; MSc). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc; PG Cert; MCIfA), and C Jane Evans (BA, MA, MCIfA) contributed the finds report.

3.2 Fieldwork strategy

A WSI has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2017). Fieldwork was undertaken on 18 April 2017. The WA project reference number and site code used for the archive is P5075. Two trenches, amounting to just over 45m² in area, were excavated over the site. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2. The trenches were positioned within the site avoiding existing site constraints (dumps of rubble, abandoned farm machinery and areas of dense overgrowth).

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under archaeological supervision using a 180° wheeled excavator, employing a toothless bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

3.3 Structural analysis

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

3.4 Artefact methodology, by C Jane Evans

The finds work reported here conforms to the following guidance: for finds work by ClfA (2014b), for archive creation by AAF (2011) and for museum deposition by SMA (1993).

3.4.1 Recovery policy

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012; appendix 2).

3.4.2 Method of analysis

The only finds were small quantities of animal bone and pottery. All hand-retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period where possible; however the pottery was very fragmentary making precise identification difficult. All information was recorded on a *pro forma* Access database.

The pottery and ceramic building material was examined under x20 magnification and referenced as appropriate by fabric type and form according to the Gloucestershire fabric type series.

3.5 Environmental archaeology methodology

3.5.1 Sampling policy

Sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

3.6 Statement of confidence in the methods and results

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

4 The application site

4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

The site is located on the northern side of the village of Todenham, approximately 5.5km north-east of Moreton-in-Marsh. The site is located in an irregular shaped plot of land to the north-east and east of the church of St Thomas a Becket. The underlying geology is mapped as Charmouth Mudstone Formation (BGS 2017), overlain by superficial deposits of Paxford Gravel Member (BGS 2017).

A historical background to the site is given in a heritage statement prepared by The Historic Environment Consultancy (2015). Todenham is a medieval village, recorded as early as the 9th century AD. Most of the records listed by the Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) in the vicinity of site relate to earthwork features considered to be of medieval and/or post-medieval date related to the changing settlement pattern of the village (e.g. HER7446), or built heritage features such as the church (HER45042) and manor (HER45079). No features are recorded on the site, although the National Mapping Programme has identified ridge and furrow on the site, orientated approximately north-east to south-west. Manor Farm lay immediately west of the site. It was demolished in the second half of the 20th century.

4.2 Current land-use

The site has appears to have been formerly in agricultural use, but has been unused for a number of years. It is currently overgrown with areas of dumped material and disused agricultural machinery.

5 Results

5.1 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figures 2 and 3, and Plates 1-5. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1. In both trenches the features were identified cut through the light orangey yellow gravel natural substrate.

5.1.1 Trench 1 (Plates 1-3)

At the south-west end of this trench an archaeological deposit was identified at c 0.50m below the ground surface (bgs). Excavation of a small slot in the deposit (104) yielded small sherds of pottery and animal bone. However it was truncated to the north-west by modern service trenches, so in order to gain a fuller understanding of the deposit the trench was extended as far as logistically possible to the south-west. This revealed that the deposit continued at least this far, although a small patch of natural gravel (103) was identified next to the north-west edge of the trench. An excavated slot revealed that the deposit was part of a cut feature (105), at least 0.3m in depth, with a straight north edge at c45°, although the base was not reached. Above feature (105) was a post-medieval/modern possible brick surface (106) and stone rubble layer (102) which may be associated with the former east to west track which lay along the southern edge of the site at this point, between Manor Farm to the west and the road to the south-east, as depicted on the Ordnance Survey maps between 1902 and 1978 (The Historic Environment Consultancy 2015, figs 13-17).

5.1.2 Trench 2 (Plates 4-5)

One ditch (208) was orientated approximately north to south across Trench 2. It measured 0.40m in depth and 1.11m in width, and was filled by a dark greyish brown clayey silt (207) which yielded one small sherd of pottery and a small amount of animal bone. The ditch was sealed by subsoil and a number of modern topsoil/garden deposits, at a depth of c 0.90m bgs.

A modern pit (206) containing brick and animal bone (not retained) was also identified within this trench.

5.2 Artefact analysis, by C Jane Evans

The artefactual assemblage recovered is summarised in Tables 1 and 2.

period	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight(g)
medieval?	ceramic	earthenware	pot	6	3
undated	ceramic	earthenware	pot	1	0.5
undated	bone	animal bone	fragment	7	81

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

5.2.1 Summary artefactual evidence

Pottery

The pottery was extremely fragmentary, with an average sherd weight of less than 1g, making precise identification very difficult.

A small slot in Trench 1 (104) produced six tiny sherds; two in an unglazed shell-tempered fabric and four in an unglazed sandy fabric. The shell-tempered ware could be medieval (cf Gloucestershire fabric TF45), dating broadly from the 10th/11th century to the 14th century. The

sherds in sandy ware were from a thin walled vessel and may also be medieval (cf Gloucestershire fabric TF42), although none of the sherds could be identified with any confidence.

The only other pottery came from the fill of a ditch in Trench 2 (207). This tiny sherd, also in a sandy fabric, had no surviving surfaces and could not therefore be dated.

context	material class	material subtype	object specific type	Count	weight(g)	period	start date	end date
104	ceramic	earthenware	Pot (shell)	4	2	medieval?	10th?	14th?
	ceramic	earthenware	Pot (sand)	2	1	medieval?		
	bone	animal bone	fragment	3	6	undated		
107	bone	animal bone	fragment	1	3	undated		
207	bone	animal bone	fragment	3	72	undated		
	ceramic	earthenware	pot	1	0.5	undated		

Table 2: Summary of context dating based on artefacts

Animal bone

A total of 81g (7 fragments) of animal bone was hand-collected during fieldwork. This is a small assemblage which included a cattle-sized vertebra and other small fragments. Little interpretation could be made from these remains, and demonstrate the low potential for recovery of animal bone, should further fieldwork take place.

context	material class	material subtype	count	weight(g)	Feature type	Period
104	bone	animal bone	3	6	slot	medieval
107	bone	animal bone	1	3	Amorphous feature	undated
207	bone	animal bone	3	72	ditch	undated

Table 3: Animal bone by context

5.3 Discard and retention

All finds could be considered for discard, following consultation with the receiving museum.

6 Synthesis

The archaeological evaluation has identified that a number of archaeological features survive on the site at c 0.50m bgs towards the south-west side of the site (Trench 1), and c 0.90m bgs towards the north side (Trench 2). The pottery recovered from the amorphous feature in Trench 1 potentially dates from the 10th – 14th centuries. Its full form and function were indeterminate, as it extended into the south-west boundary of the site. The single sherd recovered from the north to south aligned ditch in Trench 2 was undated. The ditch does not relate to any cartographic features

identified on maps from 1885 onwards (The Historic Environment Consultancy 2015, figs 13-17)., so it would appear to predate the later 19th century, while the presence of a developed subsoil overlying may indicate a much earlier date. An agricultural function may be postulated given the paucity of finds and charcoal.

The possible brick surface and stone rubble layer toward the south-west corner of the site may be associated with the former east to west aligned track which lay along the southern edge of the site at this point, between Manor Farm to the west and the road to the south-east, as depicted on Ordnance Survey maps between 1902 and 1978 (The Historic Environment Consultancy 2015, figs 13-17).

No other significant features, structures or finds were recovered from the site. The presence of a small quantity of possible medieval pottery and animal bone is not unexpected given the site location and history of the village. The very fragmentary nature of the assemblage, however, suggests that the site has not been intensively occupied, but has probably remained as peripheral or for agricultural use through to the modern period.

7 Significance

7.1 Nature and relative importance of the archaeological interest in the site

The archaeological features identified at the site comprise of the remains of a ditch (208 in Trench 2) and feature (105 in Trench 1). The pottery indicates the latter feature is medieval, although the finds are generally small and abraded suggesting that they are likely to have been subject to ploughing or other re-deposition processes. No evidence of any settlement activity, such as walls, beam slots, surfaces or postholes, were identified during the evaluation.

7.2 Physical extent of the archaeological interest in the site

Ditch 208 is located in the central north part of the site, at a depth of c 0.90m, close to the location of the proposed house. It is orientated approximately north to south. Feature 105 is located close to the south-western boundary of the site, at a depth of c 0.50m. No other archaeological features of significance were identified during the evaluation.

8 The impact of the development

The current proposals are for a single storey straw bale constructed house, located approximately where Trench 2 was excavated, with a driveway leading to the house from Main Street. The outline plans indicate that this area will be levelled to c 0.5m, with foundations of up to 1.0m in depth. These depths are therefore likely to impact upon the ditch, although conversations with the client indicate that geotechnical surveys are still to be undertaken so this may vary. Consultation will be required once the final foundation depths are established. A number of service trenches will be required and these also have the potential to impact upon potential archaeological features or deposits.

9 Recommendations

Once the final depths of the footing trenches, service trenches and groundworks associated with landscaping are established, consultation should be undertaken as to whether a watching brief is required to mitigate loss of archaeological assets, or if the features can be preserved *in situ*.

No further analysis of the current finds assemblage is recommended.

10 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on behalf of Clive Webster at the site of the proposed Straw Cottage, Main Street, Todenham, Gloucestershire (NGR SP 24363 36353).

The site is located on the northern side of the village, to the north-east of the church of St Thomas a Becket. Two trenches were excavated, revealing two features of significance. An amorphous feature lay at c 0.50m below the ground surface and extended into the south-west boundary of the site. It contained fragments of pottery potential 10th to 14th century date, and a small quantity of animal bone. The full form and function are unclear. Toward the central north side of the site a north to south aligned ditch was recorded at c0.90m bgs. It contained a single tiny sherd of pottery of unknown date. The ditch does appear to be depicted on maps from 1885 onwards, and was sealed by a developed subsoil, so may be of an early date. Its function is unclear but is postulated to be agricultural. No other features, layers, structure or finds of archaeological significance were identified. Layers of stone and brick rubble noted below the topsoil toward the south-west corner of the site may relate to a track indicated on maps from 1902 to 1978.

11 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Clive Webster (the client) and Charles Parry (Archaeologist, Gloucestershire County Council).

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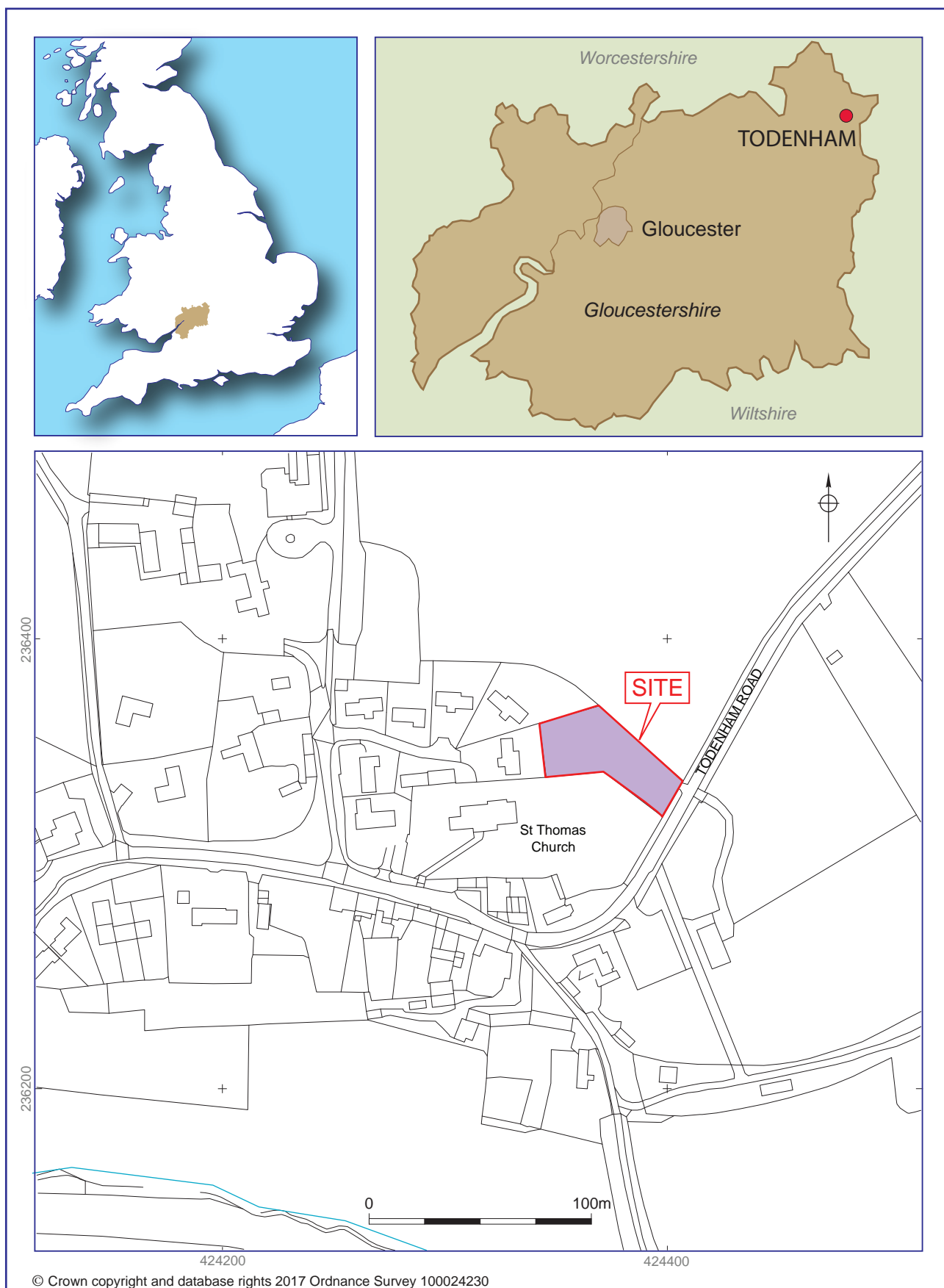
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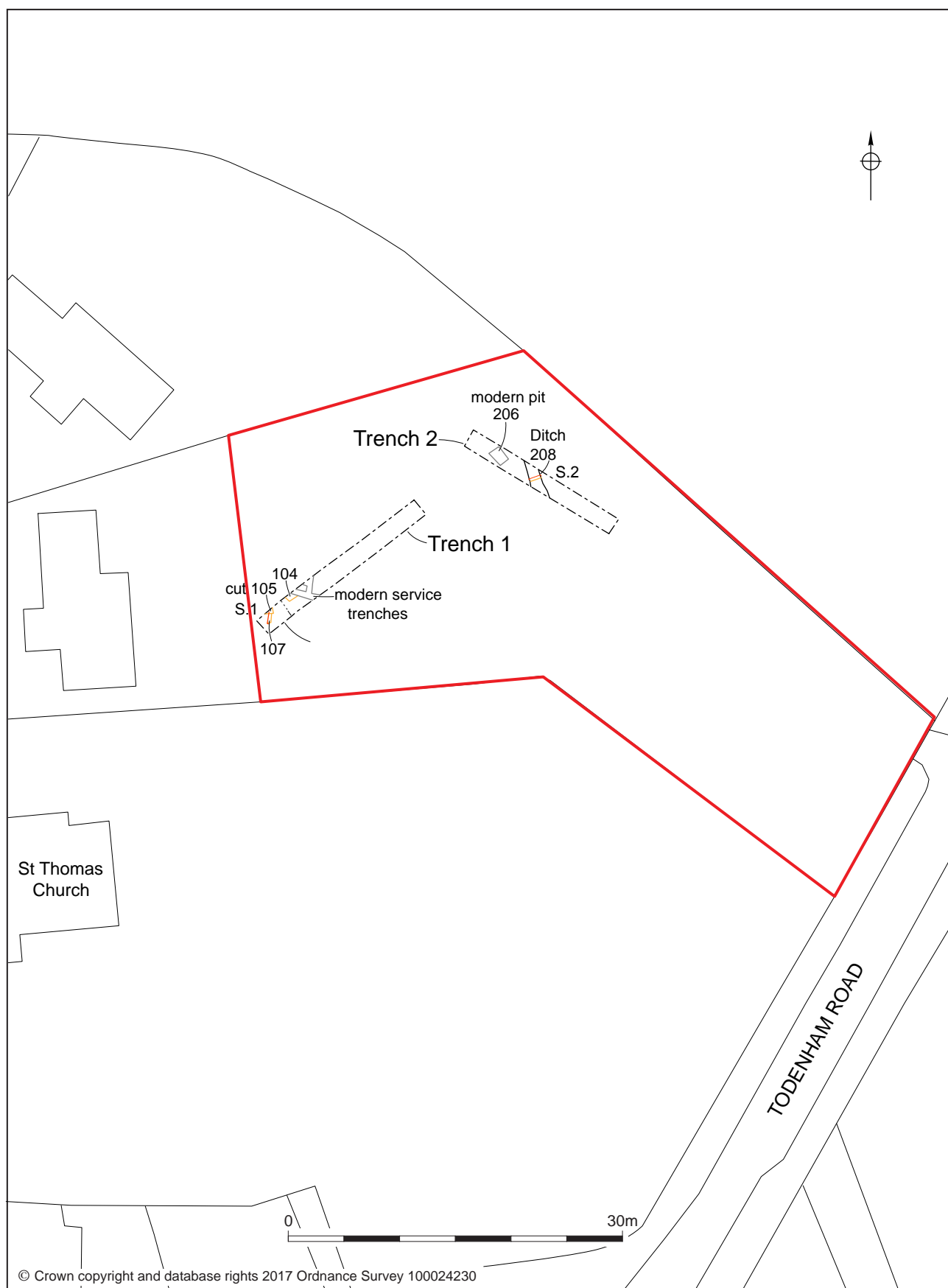
WA 2017 *Written scheme of investigation for an archaeological evaluation at Straw Cottage, Main Street, Todenham, Gloucestershire*, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document, revision 2, dated 7 April 2017, **P5075**

Figures



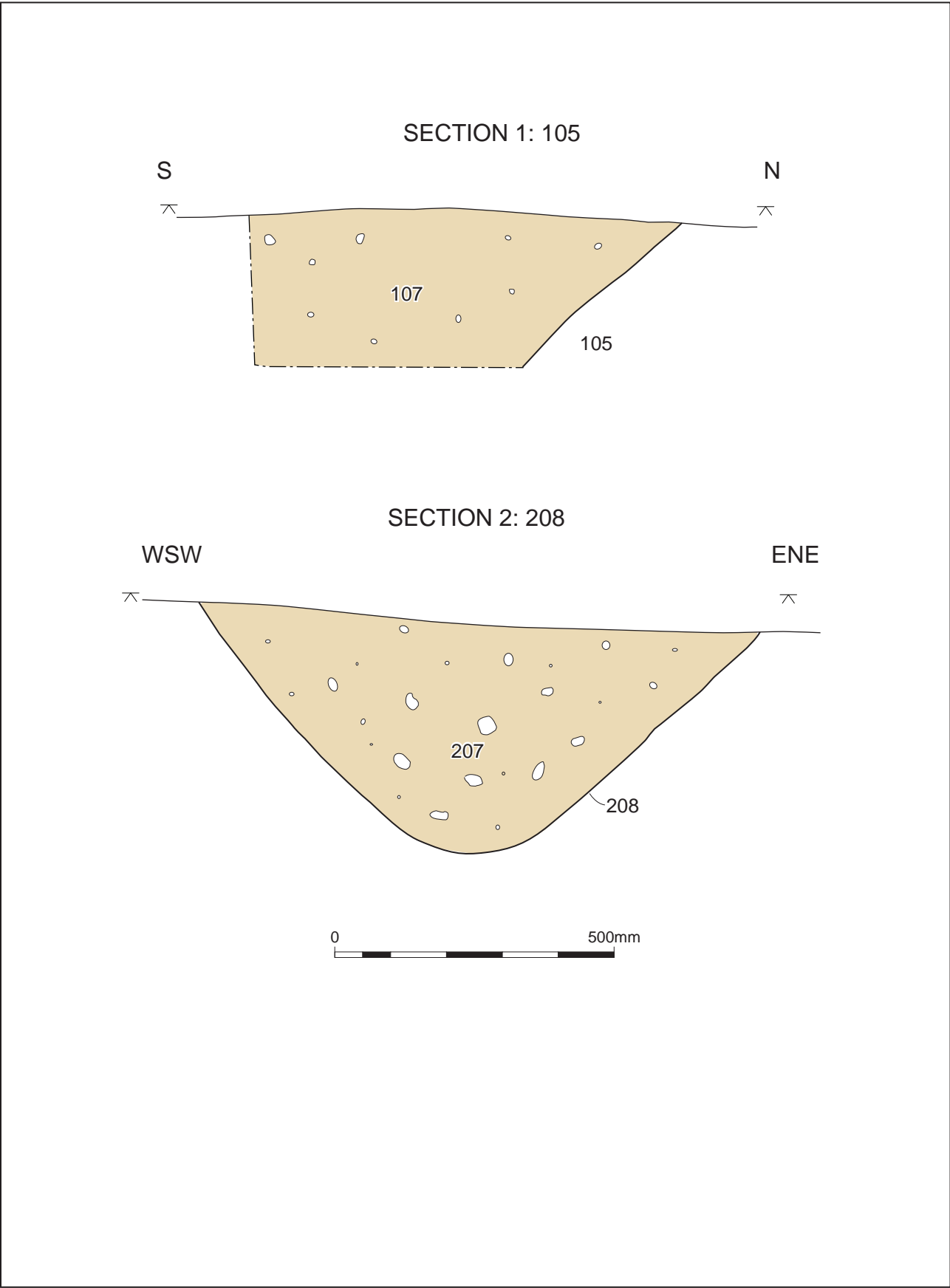
Location of the site

Figure 1



Trench location plan

Figure 2



Sections

Figure 3

Plates



Plate 1: Trench 1 general view north-east; 2x 1m scales



Plate 2: Trench 1, feature (105); in the foreground is the modern service trench; view south-west; 2x 1m scales



Plate 3: Trench 1 slot through feature (105); view west; 0.50m scale



Plate 4: Trench 2, general view north-west; 2x 1m scales



Plate 5: Ditch (208) in Trench 2; view north; 1m scale

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Main deposit descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 18m Width: 1.5m Depth: 0.5-0.65m

Orientation: north-east to south-west

Context	Type	Description	Context depth	Depth below ground level	Filled by	Fill of	Deposit description
100	Layer	Topsoil	0.3m	0.0-0.3m			Loose grey brown sandy silt
101	Layer	Subsoil	0.26m	0.3-0.6m			Compact reddish brown sandy silt
102	Layer	Demolition rubble	0.3m	0.2-0.5m			Stone rubble under topsoil
103	Layer	Natural		0.5m+			Light orange yellow gravel
104	Fill	Fill of feature 105				105	Dark grey brown sandy silt
105	Cut	Cut of amorphous feature	0.30m+		104 107		
106	Layer	Possible brick surface	c.0.15m	0.4-0.5m			Brick layer
107	Fill	Fill of feature 105	0.30m+			105	Same as 104

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 15m Width: 1.5m Depth: 0.83-1.22m

Orientation: north-west to south-east

Context	Type	Description	Context depth	Depth below ground level	Filled by	Fill of	Deposit description
200	Layer	Topsoil	0.2m	0.0-0.3m			Friable dark blackish-brown sandy silt
201	Layer	Re-deposited natural	0.13m	0.2-33m			Friable dark orangey brown sandy silt
202	Layer	Buried modern topsoil	0.22m	0.22-0.55m			Friable dark blackish brown sandy silt
203	Layer	Subsoil	0.38m	0.55-0.93m			Moderately compact mid orangey brown silty loam
204	Layer	Natural	n/a	0.79m+			Moderately loose mid brownish orange sandy gravel
205	Fill	Fill of modern pit 206	-			206	Dark brownish grey clayey silt
206	Cut	Cut of modern pit	-		205		
207	Fill	Fill of ditch 208	0.40m	c0.90m		208	Friable dark greyish brown clayey silt
208	Cut	Cut of ditch	0.40m	c0.90m	207		1.11m wide; >4m long; aligned north to south

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive (WA project code: P5075)

The archive consists of:

- | | |
|----|---|
| 25 | Digital photographs |
| 1 | Permatrace sheets of scale drawings |
| 1 | ARK (Archaeological Recording Kit) digital output |
| 1 | Box of finds |
| 1 | CD-Rom/DVDs |
| 1 | Copy of this report (bound hard copy) |

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Corinium Museum

Park Street

Cirencester

GL7 2BX

Tel: 01285 655 611
