

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

AND WATCHING BRIEF

AT

ACORN HOUSE, EVESHAM ST,

ALCESTER, WARWICKSHIRE

NGR SP 08631 57186

On behalf of

AM Architectural Designs Ltd

APRIL 2015

REPORT FOR AM Architectural Designs Ltd
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Summary

Heritage Services carried out an archaeological excavation and following watching brief at Acorn House, Evesham Street, Alcester (NGR SP 08631 57186). Archaeological work was requested by the County archaeologist because Alcester is the known location of a Roman vicus. An initial evaluation was carried out by Archaeology Warwickshire, which demonstrated that archaeological remains were located on the site.

The results of the excavations and watching briefs when coupled to that of the earlier evaluation identified some ten phases of activity of which the six earliest were probably of a Roman date and the seventh possibly of a Roman date or slightly later. Phase 8 was post-medieval and those after of a later date associated with activity in and around Acorn House.

Phase 1 was associated with features of the 1st century or very early 2nd century, which appeared to be cut into the natural. These features included several linear cuts, two circular features, a posthole and a layer. Phase 2 was of the early to mid-2nd century AD and included layers along with two ditches or gullies that were noted in the evaluation. Phase 3 was of the mid to late 2nd century and included the foundation cuts of masonry structures along with walls constructed of ashlar grey-white to green sandstone blocks. There were also gravel deposits that could be surfaces, butting up around the walls. Phase 4 was of the late 2nd century and contained gravel surfaces and linear features along with a further foundation cut identified in the evaluation. Phase 5 was of the late 2nd century to the 3rd century and included layers. Phase 6 was of a late Roman date, which included walls identified in the evaluation and also two burials from that work. Phase 7 saw robbing of the earlier masonry walls either at the end of the Roman period or at some time in the medieval period. Phase 8 was of post-medieval layers. Phase 9 included Georgian, Regency or Victorian features from 1800-1900 that were associated with Acorn House. Phase 10 contained features of the modern period.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located at Acorn House, Evesham Street, Alcester, Warwickshire (NGR SP 08631 57186). Alcester is an historic parish, but there are some problematic indications concerning its origins and in the early medieval period it was probably attached to an adjacent parish, perhaps Kinwarton. The site was located in the historic Hundred of Ferncombe or Ferncumbe at the end of the 11th century (Morris 1976), and during the high medieval reorganisation of the county in the late 12th century was placed in the historic Hundred of Barlichway (Gover, Mawer et al. 1936, 193). The site was located in the historic County of Warwickshire at its foundation in the 10th century, and prior to this was located in the Kingdom of the Hwicce. During the Roman period the site probably lay in the Civitas territory of the Dobunni, and prior to that in the tribal territory of the Dobunni (Yeates 2008, 2009). Today the site is located in the modern County of Warwickshire and in the District of Stratford-on-Avon.

The site is bordered on the southeast side by the Evesham Road. To the northeast is the listed building of Acorn House. The development site is located in the former ground of this house. To the southwest and northwest there are areas of modern housing.

The site lies between 40m and 45m OD on the site of a river terrace near the confluence of the rivers Arrow and Alne.

The underlying geology is part of the Arden Sandstone Formation a series of Siltstone and Sandstone formed 217 to 229 million years ago in the Triassic Period (mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html). This bedrock is capped by superficial deposits classed as part of the Wasperton Sand and Gravel Member that was deposited in the Quaternary Period some 3million years ago.

1.2 Planning Background

Stratford-upon-Avon District Council granted planning permission for the erection of a single dwelling at Acorn House, Evesham Street, Alcester (ref. 13/00665/FUL and 14/01659/VARY). Due to the archaeological and historical importance of the surrounding area a condition was attached to the permission requiring a watching brief to be maintained during the course of building operations or construction works on the site. This was in line with NPPF (the planning policy current at the time) and other Local Planning policies.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The name Alcester was first documented in 1138 and has been given an etymology of Roman settlement on the River Alne (Gover, Mawer et al. 1936, 193-4), which incorporated the Old English word **ceaster**, a fort, invariably Roman and probably from the Latin word *castrum*. The name *Alauna* is recorded in the Ravenna and is considered to refer to the site of Alcester (Rivet and Smith 1979, 244), and to be the earliest form of the river-name and settlement name. Roman occupation has been observed at Alcester from the 17th century (VCH 1945, 8-22).

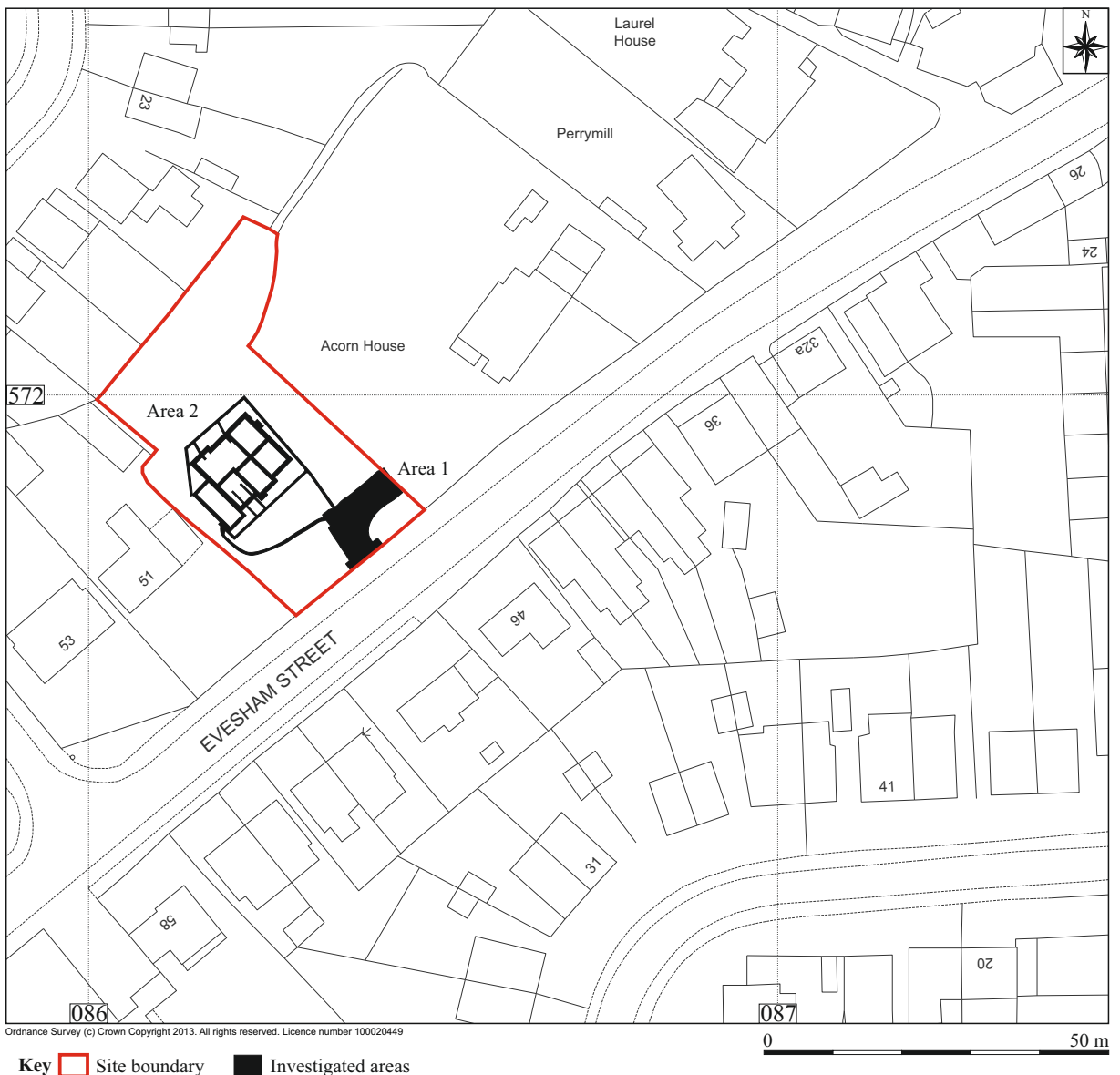
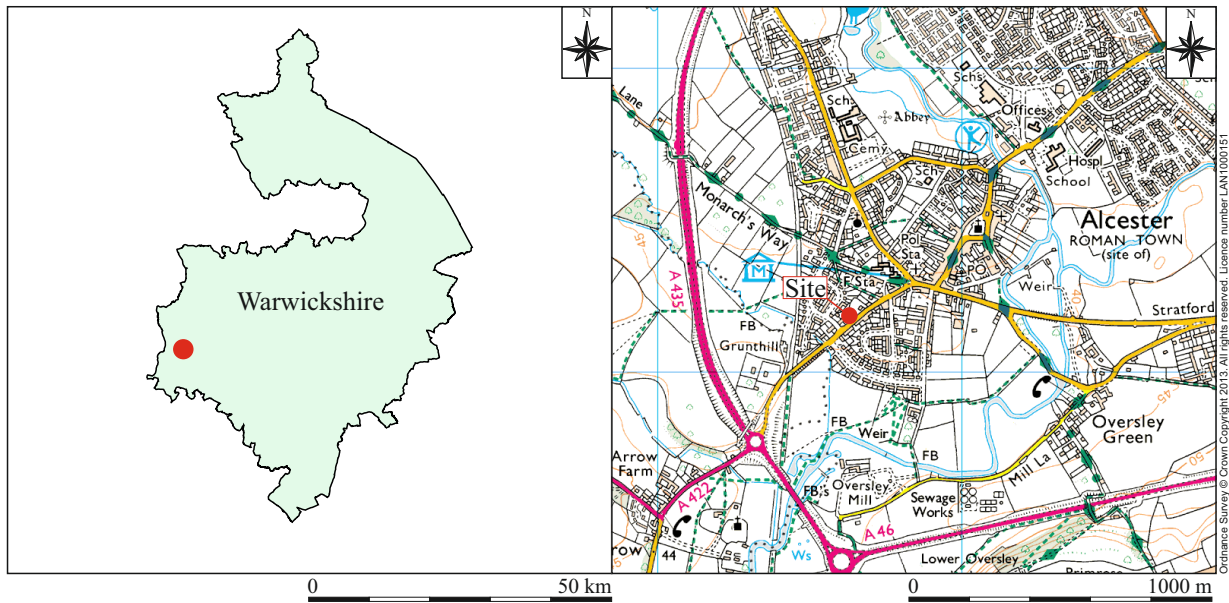


Figure 1: Site location

This is not the place to create a new synthesis of Roman Alcester, which has been produced in a series of three volumes in four publications. The most significant record and synthesis of Roman Alcester sets the town out into three main areas of activity. This was a defended circuit, an area of northern settlement and a southern extramural settlement, the last of which we are more concerned with here.

Information on the dating and location of the defences are primarily reliant on the Gateway Supermarket site excavated in 1985-6 and the Gas House Lane site excavated in 1989 (Cracknell 1996). This suggested that the earliest earthwork defence was a construction of AD 200 and that the stone wall was built AD 364.

The northern extramural activity is reliant on the following sites known as Baromix, Lloyds Bank, and the Explosion Site (Booth and Evans 2001). The Baromix site produced a high proportion of military metalwork, and thus it has been suggested that the northern extramural area contained a Roman fort established in the mid to late 1st century AD. The Explosion site is believed to lie outside the boundary of this fort but in close proximity to the defences. The Lloyds Bank and the Explosion Site produce evidence of settlement from the 1st to the 4th century. The Lloyds Bank site is actually located in the western suburbs, which will be discussed more fully below.

The southern extramural site known collectively as the Birch Abbey site takes its name from the oldest road in the area. The excavations across this area from 1964-66 (Mahany 1994), suggested that there were eight major development phases across the area from the mid-1st century AD to the late 4th century AD. The excavated areas were either given a designated letter or, where known, by the name of the main excavator. The features identified in this area included three roads labelled Street A, Street B and Street C. Over the whole chronological period of four centuries some 29 buildings have been identified, which were considered to be the best surviving structures in the area. In the 1st to 2nd century Area F contained a double ditched sub-square enclosure with an east entrance and a possible west entrance. In Area E-B there was a circular feature and in Areas D and H ditches. The remains of a settlement boundary ditch were recognised as a feature of the 2nd century AD. In many of the areas at this time a series of ditches and pits were recognised. For the 3rd century AD a number of features were recognised as being created in Areas F, E, D and H. Area F contained timber structures at this time. There was further late 3rd century AD activity recognised in Areas F and D. The 4th century had a series of large structures created in Areas F, D and G and also in Tomlinson and Hughes. The location of the watching brief lay adjacent to Areas F (to the north) and E (to the east). A synthesis of the southern extramural area (Cracknell and Mahany 1994) suggested that in the 1st century AD the area was on the periphery of an emerging town. A more significant discussion of Areas E and F (Cracknell and Mahany 1994, 253) stated that Area F was used for non-domestic activity although the evidence that it was used for religious activity was considered rather weak at the time of writing the reports. The area has produced two intaglios and a number of brooches, all of which could be considered votive in nature. A number of religious sites nationally have produced a paucity of votive finds and it should not be considered implausible that a religious site was located in Area A.

Excavations in the west part of Roman Alcester have been more limited. This area lies to the northwest of Evesham Street. That there was Roman activity in this area has been indicated by finds and excavations in Seggs Lane which runs east to west to the

north of the development site, and also more limited excavations along Evesham Street. The construction of the Railway Station and Railway Line in 1866 uncovered the remains of a Roman sarcophagus (Bloxham 1875, 35; Brodie and Wykeham Martin 1866, 44). The earliest finds in Seggs Lane are noted in 1930 in the reported recovery of Roman coins and pottery fragments (WHER 485). In 1930 in Evesham Street a rough stone floor of a Roman building was identified (Cracknell 1986, 1-62). Investigations in Seggs Lane in 1956 identified the remains of a Roman road laid on a clay surface (Hughes 1958, 10-18). Evidence indicated that the road was laid in the 2nd century. In 1958 Roman rubbish pits were identified in Evesham Street (WHER 491). Further Roman period activity was recorded in Seggs Lane in 1957-8 which saw Roman pottery recovered from Site N (WHER 489) with pits and a ditch identified at Site P (WHER 490). In 1975-6 excavations were carried out at Evesham Street where a number of features were noted. The earliest features were categorised as clay layers associated with occupation deposits, negative features, a circular hearth and a stone wall, all of which were dated to the 1st to 2nd century AD (Cracknell 1986, 1-62). Phase 2 on the site saw the laying of three gravel surfaces, which were disturbed by later ploughing activity. Roman occupation layers were also noted in Seggs Lane in 1978 (WHER 523). In 1982-3 at the Bell Inn a pit was identified under a gravel surface that was dated to the 2nd century AD (Cracknell 1986, 1-62). These features were cut by later graves of the 4th century AD. In 1983 at 34 Evesham Street a hollow or a ditch was noted along with a gravel surface of the 2nd century AD (Cracknell 1986, 1-62). Phase 2 saw the laying of two or more gravel surfaces which were associated with 19 coins of the 3rd to 4th centuries AD. In 1993 in Seggs Lane, Roman pits and a boundary ditch were noted that were dated to the 1st to 2nd centuries AD (WHER 7043; Burnham et al. 1994, 272; White 1993, 79-80). In 1995 in Seggs Lane 2nd century pottery was recovered (Burnham et al. 1996, 418; White 1995, 79). Observations in the footings of a building at 4-6 Evesham Street in 2001-2 noted part of the Roman west suburb. The features included Roman gravel surfaces, a boundary ditch, a pit and an oven (Watt 2002, 79). In 2003-4 the line of Ryknild Street was noted at the Grammar School along with two ditches interpreted as field boundaries and a roadside ditch (Burnham et al. 2004, 289; Burnham et al. 2005, 426).

An ecclesiastical council was held at a place called Alne c. 709 at a meeting at which the consecration of Evesham Abbey occurred (VCH 1945, 8-22). Land at Kinwarton is claimed to have been granted to Evesham Abbey in 708 by Cenred, King of Mercia (VCH 1945, 126-9). It is possible an ecclesiastical centre was established either at Kinwarton or Haselor at this time (Yeates 2006, iii.961-79), and that Alcester may have been connected to it (as there are a number of references that tie Alne, Kinwarton and Evesham Abbey together at an early date).

The manor of Alcester is not listed in the Domesday Book, but later evidence shows that it was part of the demesne of the Crown (VCH 1945, 8-22). Of the surrounding manors of Kinwarton, Haselor and Arrow, the last is listed as being held by the Bishop of Bayeux from the King, and Stephen from him (Morris 1976, 4.1). However, perhaps more importantly Upton that lies in the parish of Haselor is reported as a Royal manor (Morris 1976, 1.8) and was held by Albert the clerk, and that the manor had 3 hides, 10 villagers and perhaps also significantly 2 priests. The site of Upton is not known to have had a church other than this and it may be that the manor could refer to Haselor church or Alcester church.

Henry I granted the manor to Robert Cobet, and Reynold Cobet probably held the manor of Alcester prior to his death in 1175 (VCH 1945, 8-22). The crown held the manor from 1175 to 1190. Half of Alcester and Broom were held by Henry de la Penne from 1190-97. There was a mill in the manor of Alcester from 1241.

Alcester Abbey was a Benedictine monastery founded in 1138; the earliest charter for the abbey does not include the church of Alcester, nor is it in the confirmation charter of 1140 (VCH 1945, 8-22). By 1227 the church was granted to Cookhill Priory, while one of the chantries in the church was associated with the manor of Oversley. The parish church of Saint Mary the Virgin was transferred from the holdings of the abbey of Evesham to the bishop of Worcester in 1248 (VCH 1945. 126-9).

Burgage plots have been recognised as existing at Alcester from 1207 when there was an annual rent recorded for such sites (VCH 1945, 8-22). In 1275 Alcester was a parliamentary borough and recently after this date there is mention of a borough court.

Maps survive of the parish from the 18th century. These were viewed at the county record office but have not been reproduced here due to the rules of that establishment.

Henry Beighton's map of 1728 (CR 1316) shows buildings at the northeast end of Evesham Street and fields in the location of the development site on the northwest side of that road.

A map of 1752 (CR 1886/M9) shows Evesham Street with rows of buildings either side of the road at the northeast end, and extending to just beyond the road called Birch Abbey. On the northwest side of the Evesham Road the development site was located in fields that still appear to show strips of land indicative of an earlier layout of ridge and furrow. There is a curve or slight S shape to the probable agricultural lynchets suggesting that this feature may be of an early medieval origin. A further map of Alcester dated 1760 (DR 360/170) appears to be identical to that of the 1752 map and thus illustrates the same features.

Yates map of 1793 (MA1793), and presumably the same as the earliest production of the map in 1789 (MA1789), does not show any houses along the line of the Evesham Street. One has to presume at this time that the site is still under agricultural use.

The First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1: 2,500 dated 1887 (Warks 37.9) shows the garden of Acorn House taking on a different shape. This means that only part of the site is in the garden at that time, and that the main part of the site is in an adjacent field. The boundary of the garden extends in a strip across the Evesham Street frontage and thus across the development site.

The Second Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1: 2,500 dated 1905 (Warks 37.9) shows Acorn House, but the boundary of its property has a completely different design to that of the current day. This means that the eastern and southern part of the excavated site may have been in the garden, while the western and northern part in the area of the watching brief in an adjoining field to the Acorn House grounds.

The Third Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1: 2,500 dated 1938 (Warks 37.9) shows Acorn House garden as taking on nearly the form that it was by the time of the

development. The only difference being that the northwest part of the garden that was separated by a hedge line had still not been incorporated into the garden.

The Ordnance Survey map at 1: 2,500 dated 1971 still does not show the northwest part of the garden as part of the land attached to Acorn House. The northwest part of the Acorn House garden, which was triangular and lay between the two hedge lines had been added to the garden by 1975 when excavations took place on the site (Cracknell 1986, 53).

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To make a record of any significant archaeological remains that may exist in the area.

In particular:

- To record any evidence associated with the Roman occupation known in the area.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Warwickshire County Council Planning Archaeologist, the archaeological advisors to Stratford-upon-Avon District Council.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

A team of archaeologists were on site to excavate the foot print of the drive, under the supervision of a project officer, and an archaeologist(s) to carry out and monitor the watching briefs when necessary.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was also produced.

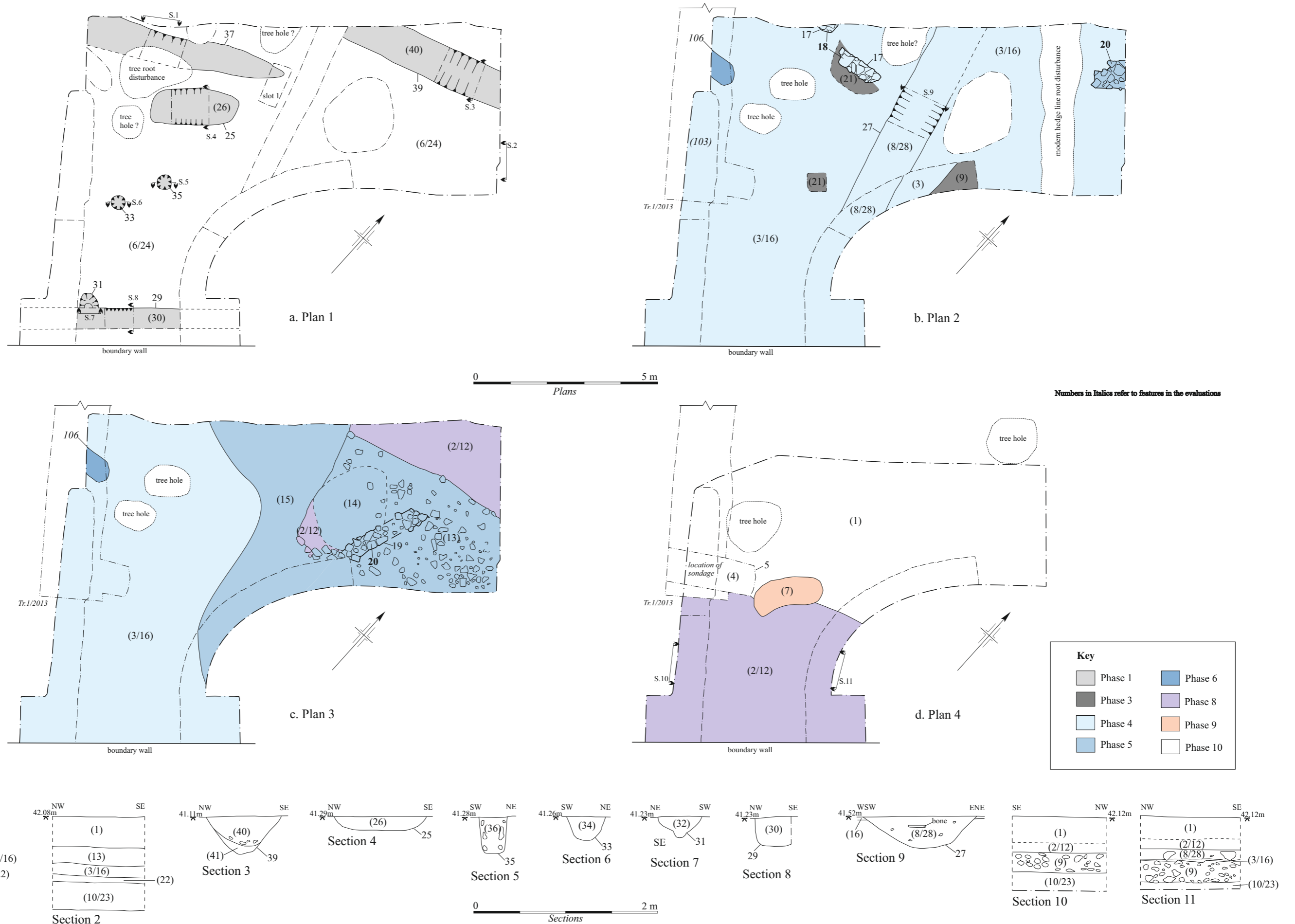


Figure 2: Plans and sections of Area 1

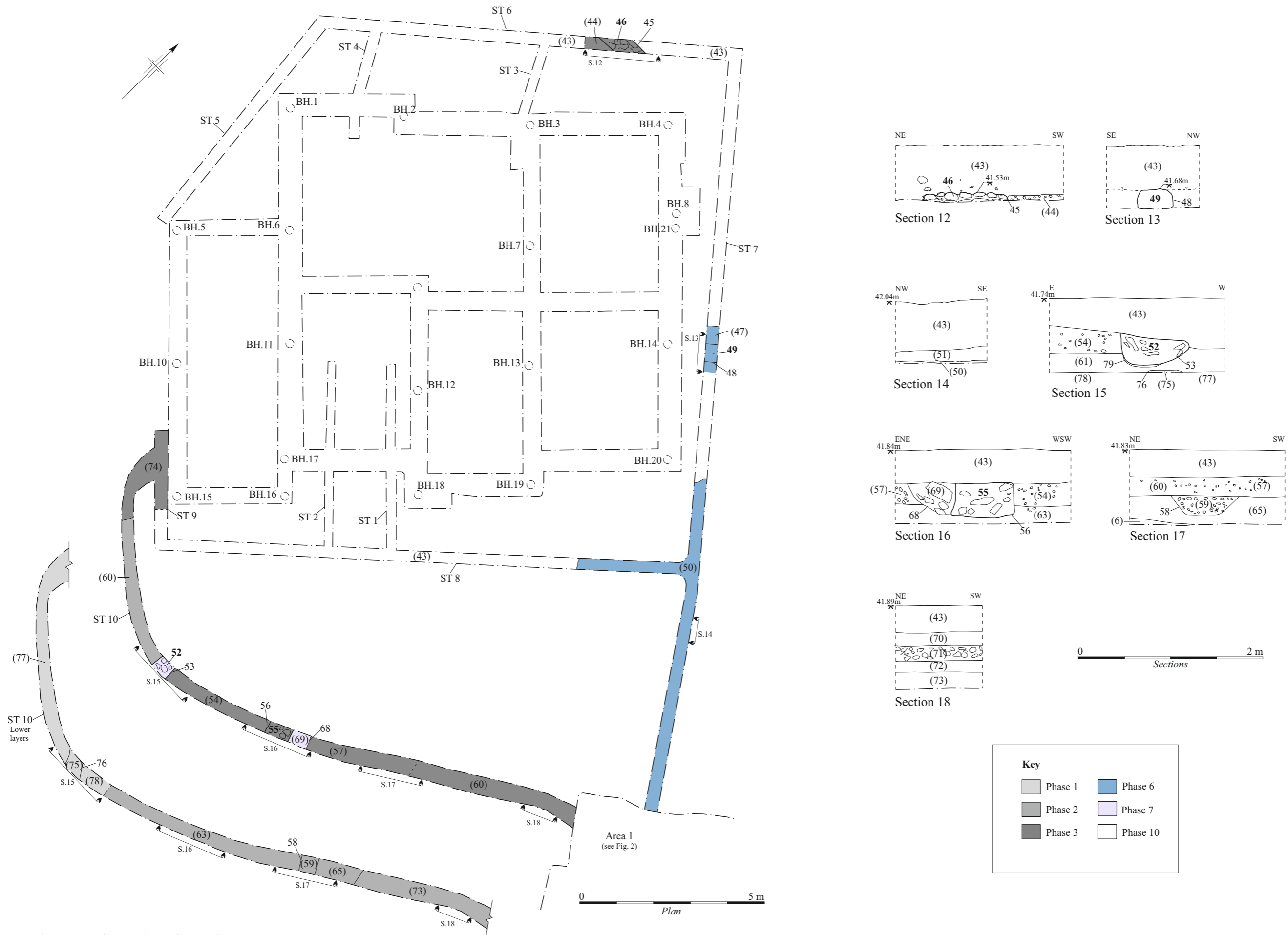


Figure 3: Plan and sections of Area 2

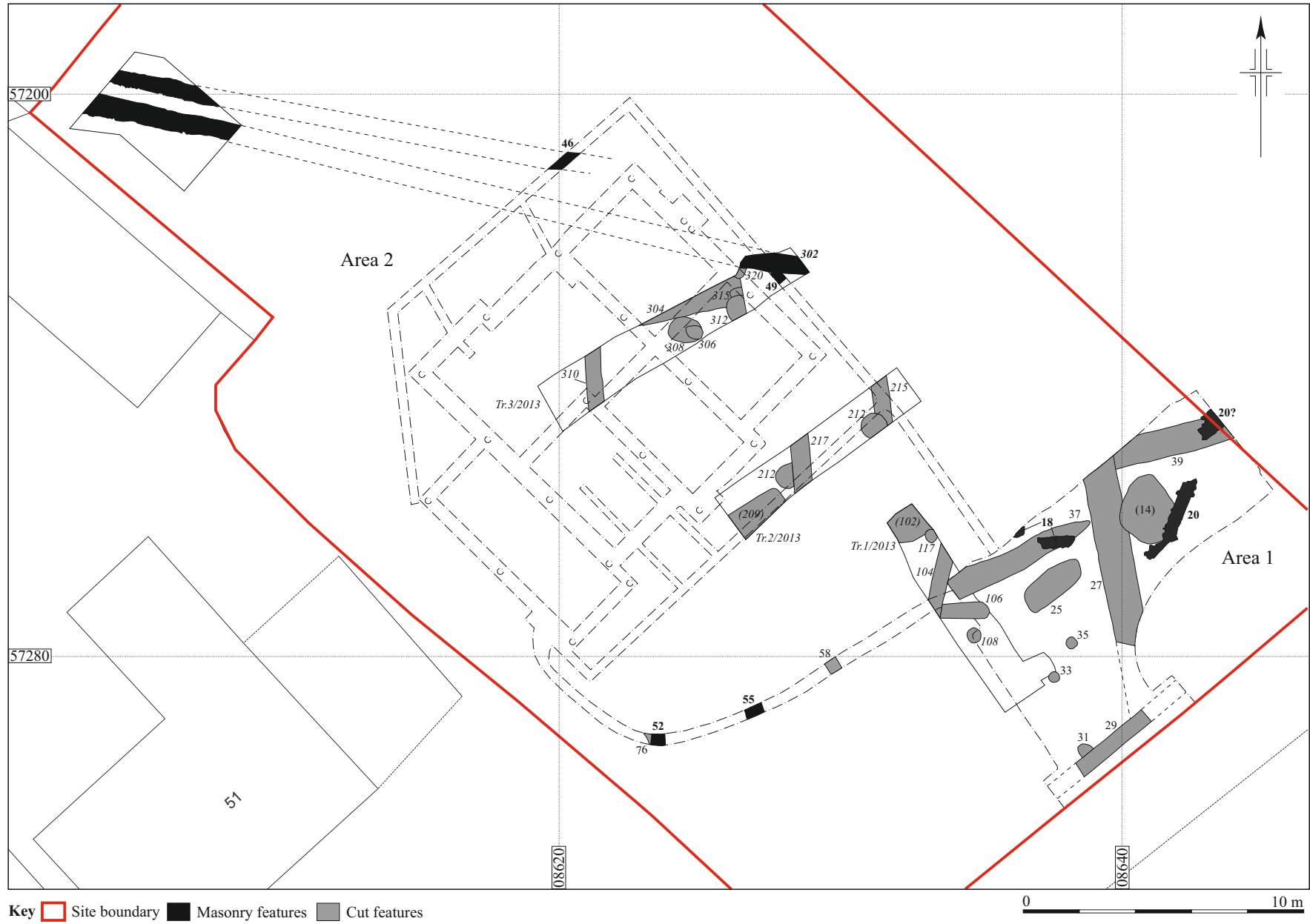


Figure 4: Location of masonry and cut features

4 RESULTS (Figures 2-4)

The subsequent description of the features is a product of an Evaluation at a pre-planning phase (Archaeology Warwickshire), an Excavation during the insertion of the access road, and a Watching Brief; the latter carried out for building foundations and the insertion of service trenches (Figs. 2-4). Numbers associated with the Excavation and Watching Brief commence at 1. Those associated with the Evaluation Trench 1 are numbered from 100, those with Trench 2 from 200 and those with Trench 3 from 300. The Evaluation features have been noted so that it can be integrated into the broader picture of what has happened on the development site in previous centuries. Some reconfiguration has occurred to the phases proposed in the Evaluation.

The natural was a mottled orange brown to pale grey clay sand with gravel inclusions. This was detected in all evaluation trenches. Trench 1 context (114) was an orange sand with grey mottling and gravel patches. This was layer (219) in Trench 2 and (317) in Trench 3.

4.1 Phase 1: Roman (1st century to early 2nd century)



Plate 1: General shot of excavated area for the entrance way

The earliest contexts were a group of features cut into the natural, some of which date to the later part of the 1st century AD and a few of the others to the early part of the 2nd century AD (Fig. 2 Plan 1, Fig. 3, plate 1). It should also be noticed that a number of features placed later in the stratigraphic sequence also contained pottery of this date; however, some of that material must be residual. The features that can be placed as part of phase 1 through stratigraphy and finds include the following.

Cut 25 was probably a linear feature measuring 0.1m wide and 0.15m deep, with shallow sloping sides and a flat base (Fig. 2 S4). Though this was thought to be a linear feature it is possible that it could also have been a pit. The fill (26) was a pale brown grey clay sand with sparse charcoal flecks and gravel inclusions. Context (26) contained Severn Valley ware of the 1st to 2nd century AD date.

Linear cut 29 was over 3m long and 0.5m wide, had a depth of 0.3m with steep sides and a flat base (Fig. 2 S8, plate 2). The ditch runs parallel to a road and is interpreted as a roadside ditch. The fill (30) was a mid-grey brown sand clay with some charcoal flecks. Context (30) contained Severn Valley ware of a general Roman date.



Plate 2: Cuts 29 and 31

31, truncated fill (30), was circular with a 0.4m diameter and a depth of 0.25. The sides were steep becoming rounded, and with a further break of slope forming a pointed base (Fig. 2 S7, plate 2). The fill (32) was a dark grey sand clay. The fill contained Baetian ware, Severn Valley ware, and grog-tempered ware of a 1st to 2nd century AD date.

Small pit/posthole 33 was of circular shape measuring 0.4m across and 0.25m deep with steep sides and a rounded base and was interpreted as the cut of a posthole (Fig. 2 S6). The fill (34) was a mid to dark grey sand clay. No pottery was recovered from his feature, but stratigraphically it has to be of a 1st to early 2nd century AD date.

The posthole cut 35 was a sub-circular feature measuring 0.3m across and 0.4m deep, with steep sides and a flat base (Fig. 2 S5). The fill (36) was a dark grey sand clay with gravel inclusions. The context (36) contained Severn Valley ware of the 1st to 2nd century AD.

Ditch/gulley 37 was about 5m long within the excavation area and 1m wide being up to 0.15m deep. The profile of the cut was shallow with a flat base. The fill (38) was a mid to dark grey sand clay with sporadic inclusions of charcoal flecks and some gravel. Context (38) contained Severn Valley ware of the 1st century AD.

Ditch 39 was straight measuring 4.4m long as seen and 0.85m wide and was 0.38m deep. The profile had a sharp break of slope with steep sides and a gradual rounded base (Fig. 2 S3, plate 3). It was orientated east-southeast to west-northwest. The lower fill (41) was a moderately compact pale grey silt of about 0.1m. The upper fill (40) was a loose mid-grey sand silt with occasional charcoal flecks and rounded stones measuring 4.4m by 0.85m and by 0.38m deep. The upper fill contained samian,

Severn Valley ware, grog-tempered ware, limestone tempered ware, and other fabrics, all of an early 2nd century date.



Plate 3: Cut 39

All of these initial cut features were sealed by layer (10/23/73).

The remains of a gully 215 were identified in Trench 2, which was 0.58m wide and 0.12m deep. The fill (216) was a dark grey silt loam. These were sealed by layer (207).

Deposit (77) was a compact black silt clay of an unknown depth. Deposit (78) was a similar black silt clay. These two deposits were probably part of the same layer but were noted at the limit of excavation in the service trench. The natural was not reached here. Linear cut 76 was some 0.4m across and appeared to truncate the earlier deposit (Fig. 3). The fill (75) was a compact red orange clay with gravel inclusions some 0.4m across. This feature may have been a foundation cut packed with material to support a sill-beam. Stratigraphically this context has to be of this date and was detected on the limit of excavation of the new service trench.

The above features were cut into the natural or were deposits laid over the top of the natural. The features with pottery were dated on the whole to the 1st to early 2nd centuries AD with ditch 39 being the latest feature that seems to be of an early 2nd century date. The majority of these features were pits, post-holes or gullies, however, in the new service trench a linear feature was noted that could be a gravel foundation packing that could represent the line of a beam-slot associated with a building.

4.2 Phase 2: Roman (early-mid 2nd century)

The layer (10/23) was a mid-brown grey sand clay with sparse charcoal flecks and had an average depth of 0.2m. Deposit (23) contained Severn Valley ware and grog tempered ware of the 1st to 2nd century AD. Layer (73) was a compact yellow grey silt clay 0.18m deep that was noted in the new service trench (Fig. 3). Although there was a slight variation in texture and colour it is likely that this was a continuation of deposit (10/23). Though the pottery from layer (23) was of a 1st to 2nd century date it

is apparent from the fills of cut 39, which had 2nd century AD pottery, that the deposit is of a early to mid 2nd century date stratigraphically. This has been interpreted as a relic soil horizon and if indeed this is the case then it is possible that the upper fills of cut 39 could have been truncated by digging or ploughing the soil horizon.

This deposit was identified in the Evaluation Trenches, though it was placed at a slightly earlier date and had been divided into two contexts. The lower context was layer (113) in Trench 1 that was described as a grey silt loam, and part of a relic soil horizon 0.13m deep. This was linked to layer (211) in Trench 2 and (303) in Trench 3. In the later the description was to a silt sand. This deposit occurred sporadically across the site.

The upper part of the layer included layer (112) in Trench 1 and (207) in Trench 2. Layer (112) contained early 2nd century pottery. Deposit (207) contained a sherd of 4th century pottery that was considered intrusive by a later service cut. Layer (207) sealed deposit (216) and layer (211).

Layer (61/63/65) was a compact black grey silt sand approximately 0.3m deep. This deposit could be seen to overlap layer (73) in the new service trench. Different numbers were given to different parts of this layer to obtain a rough idea of where exactly certain pottery types had been recovered from. Pottery specifically recovered from context (61) included samian and Severn Valley ware of the 1st to 2nd centuries AD. This pottery is therefore seen to date the layer as a whole. Pottery labelled (62) may have come from context (61), although due to the way the trench was excavated some of these sherds may have come from layers above. This pottery is dated from the late 2nd to the 3rd centuries. A significant amount of this pottery was Severn Valley ware, which is of a 2nd century date, which would fit the stratigraphic sequence. The pottery numbered (64) may have come from deposit (63) but due to the machining the exact provenance was not determined and here again some of the pottery may have been disturbed from other contexts. These sherds were given a general Roman date and thus a 2nd century date is also possible here. Pottery numbered (66) may have come from deposit (65) but the provenance for all could not be determined. A general 2nd or 3rd century AD is provided for these sherds. The pottery from (66) was also predominantly Severn Valley ware and this may also have been of a 2nd century date.

Linear cut 58 (Fig. 3 S17) was 0.55m wide and truncated (61/63/65). The fill (59) was a compact red brown sand with aggregate inclusions. Two sherds of samian numbered (67) probably came from deposit (59). The pot is dated to the 2nd century AD. This deposit may represent a rammed gravel foundation to support part of a sill-beam structure, if so the feature was short lived.

Layer (22) was a dark-grey brown deposit with considerable quantities of charcoal in patches (Fig. 2 S1-S2, plate 4). The context measured up to 0.1m thick. The layer contained Severn Valley ware and other pottery including grey rusticated wares, which date from the late 1st to the 2nd century AD. Layer (72) was a compact black silt clay with ash lenses and inclusions 0.12m deep (Fig. 3 S18). Though the deposits are not described exactly by the same description it is likely that they are probably variations of the same lens or deposit, and both are reported as containing significant quantities of charcoal. It may be that in the case of the later deposit (72) that this area contained significantly more charcoal. The layer could be a destruction layer. These deposits appeared to be the same as layer (111) in Trench 1 and (206) in Trench 2.

These layers were noted as containing significant amounts of charcoal. Layer (111) contained early 2nd century AD pottery.



Plate 4: Section 2 showing charcoal layer (22)

A series of fragmentary layers were also noted in Trench 2. The earliest of these was layer (209), a series of flat sandstone blocks mixed with gravel. Overlying (209) was layer (208) a grey brown sand loam layer. Layer (210) was a grey brown silt loam with flat sandstone additions that overlay deposit (206).

In Evaluation Trench 3 the remains of two ditches or gullies were noted cutting deposit (303). Gully 310 was orientated north to south being 0.6m across and 0.15m deep with steeply sloping sides and a rounded base. The fill (311) was a grey silt clay with dark grey mottling. The pottery recovered was of the late 1st century to early 2nd century AD. The second ditch 304 was over 1m wide and 0.23m deep. The fill (305) was a dark grey silt clay with charcoal flecks. This deposit produced one of the largest concentrations of pottery in the Evaluation and included Iron Age, but the latest was that associated with the early 2nd century AD.

4.3 Phase 3: Roman (mid-late 2nd century)

Phase 3 contained a number of 2nd century features (Fig. 2 P2, Fig. 3). The layer (9/21) was a compact grey brown sand gravel which overlay deposit (22/72/111). The colouration is similar to deposit (22), which it overlay, but there is no charcoal in the deposit (Fig. 2 S10-11). This was probably contemporary with layer (71) that was a compact grey silt clay with compact pebbles 0.16m deep (Fig. 3 S18). This may be part of a laid surface, perhaps an early surface near the stone structure or perhaps a residue of a surface associated with deposit (59).

Cut into layer (61/63/65) was the foundation cut 56 and 79 (Fig. 3 S15-S16). The linear cut 56 was 0.7m wide and 0.36m deep with vertical sides and a flat base. It contained masonry 55; yellow pitched stones at the base, and a grey-white to green sandstone above with stones measuring 240mm x 130mm x 150mm. This was a foundation and where it was still bonded it was with a pink yellow sand mortar. The feature survived to a depth of 0.36m and was 0.7m across. Linear cut 79 was a

foundation trench 0.7m wide and 0.3m deep with steep sides and a flat base. Though stone still lay along the wall line it was disturbed and is thus considered to be completely robbed.

An assumption that can be made concerning the alignment of these two cuts is that they probably formed a structure either of a rectangular or square nature. The compositions of the walls also indicate that there are similarities to be drawn between them. The foundations were shallow and on pitched hard clay blocks and the upper walls were of a green sandstone and well faced although not ashlar blocks.

Layer (57/60) was a compact grey black silt clay layer 0.36m deep with pebble inclusions. The pottery from deposit (57) dated from the 2nd century AD. These deposits appear to be part of a 2nd century feature or layer that was spread around the stone building and butted up to the walls. Layer (54) was a compact grey brown silt clay with pebble inclusions 0.3m deep. The pottery from this deposit dated to the 2nd century AD. This deposit appeared to be a similar laid deposit, but was inside the structure. If the structure was industrial in nature it is possible that this deposit could have acted as a floor surface. However, it is also feasible that the structure could have had an internal timber floor that no longer exists. No later Roman deposits were detected above the walls of the well-made stone structure so it is feasible that the building could have remained in use throughout the remainder of the Roman period and beyond. Such a stone structure is not developed for a short duration of time. Later features can be detected around it.

Immediately adjacent on the northwest side of the wall in cut 79 it was noted that the pebble or gravel surface had gone. However, layer (74) was a compact grey black silt clay with pebble inclusions approximately 0.3m deep. This appeared to be an extension of that surface. It is possible that the apparent break in this surface could have been caused by later agricultural activity, perhaps of the medieval period, but it was difficult to confirm this and it could even have been due to later activity in the garden.

Foundation cut 45 was a linear feature 0.56m wide and over 0.1m deep with vertical sides. The wall 46 was constructed of rough stone blocks measuring 340mm x 140mm x 80mm bonded with a yellow light brown sand mortar (Fig. 3 S12). The feature was orientated east to west and was the remains of a wall foundation. This feature was identified at the limit of excavation and thus it was not possible to ascertain exactly into which deposit the cut was made. Deposit (44) was a moderately compact dark grey clay silt with gravel inclusions. The area uncovered was 0.6m by 0.3m and the deposit was over 0.06m thick. The wall appears to line up with the northern one of two walls that were identified in excavations of 1975-6, and which were generally dated to the late 1st to 2nd century. The feature is placed here because of the evidence produced from that excavation.

Layer 208 in Evaluation Trench 2 is described as butting up to layers (205) and (204), however, the straight line as drawn on the section would imply that there is a potential cut here. A thin layer of mortar (205) which was 0.02m thick represented the lowest layer in this feature. Layer (204) was a grey brown sand loam some 0.14m deep.

Cut 202 was identified as a pit cut into layer (204) and (210) that was 0.4m deep and 0.94m in diameter. The fill (203) was a red brown sand loam with gravel inclusions.

Cut 212 was seen as a similar pit cutting into layer (208), and measuring 0.84m in diameter. The fill (214) was a red brown sand loam with gravel inclusions. Cut 220 was used to define the post-pipe in the back fill (214), although technically no cut took place. Deposit (213) was a grey brown sand loam, which was the decayed and infilled shadow where the rotted pipe had previously been placed. It is possible that these post-pits and posts could be associated with the earlier noted floor layers.

In Evaluation Trench 3 the remains of a further post-pit 308 could be recognised truncating deposit (305). This was 1.2m across and 0.92m deep. The fill (309) was a red brown silt clay with gravel packing. The post-pipe (306) was filled with a grey brown silt clay (307) and there were sandstone wedges for the timber post.

The remains of a further cut could also be seen also truncating the fill (305). The cut 320 was only just evident in the trench. The interim report suggested that it was a grave cut, but at present there is only initial evidence to show that it was a cut feature of an unknown purpose. The location of the feature would also indicate that it could have been truncated by foundation cut 318, and for this reason it is suggested that it is slightly earlier than in the Evaluation report.

4.4 Phase 4: Roman (late 2nd century AD)

Phase 4 contains a number of 2nd century features (Fig. 2 P2-3). Layer (3/16) was a loose red brown sand gravel covering an area 9m by 4.5m at the southwest end of the excavated area (Fig. 2 S1-S2, S11). The area contained signs of disturbance, which were later associated with the location of the Evaluation Trench 1. The Evaluation Trench 1 contained a layer (103) of hard packed gravel which was described as having a depth of 0.14m. Deposit (103) is considered to be the same deposit as (3/16).

Cutting this gravel surface were two postholes with cuts 108 and 117, and fills 110 and 119. These features were interpreted in the Evaluation report of being mid-2nd century but with no dating evidence.



Plate 5: Cut 27

Ditch cut 27 truncated layer (3/16) and had an unknown length and a width of 1.35m and a depth of 0.35m (Fig. 2 S9, plate 5). The sides of the cut were gradual. The fill (28) was a soft mid-grey sand silt with gravel inclusions (Fig. 2 S11). Context (28) contained Severn Valley ware, Midlands pink grog-tempered ware, grog tempered ware, limestone tempered ware and others and was dated to the late 2nd to 3rd century AD. Context (8) appears to be an extension of deposit (28).

The foundation cut 17 was part of a linear feature with vertical sides and a flat base that truncated layer (3/16). The wall 18 was a fragmentary feature in two recognisable parts constructed of rough sandstone blocks 220mm x 200mm x 80mm, orientated north-northeast and south-southwest. The overall dimensions of the wall were 1.3m by 0.4m wide and 0.15m deep.

4.5 Phase 5: Roman (late 2nd century to 3rd century)

Layer (15) was a moderately compact dark grey brown sand loam covering an area of 3.8m across that lies across the top of deposit (28). The context contained Severn Valley ware considered to be of a 2nd to 3rd century date (Fig. 2 P3). The feature to a large extent appeared to mask the top of deposit (28), the fill of ditch 27, and other adjacent areas that were destroyed.

Layer (13) covers layer (15), and was a compact grey brown silt clay with rubble inclusions of stone measuring 15mm x 15mm x 10mm and larger 25mm x 30mm x 16mm, which has been laid to form a metalled surface (Fig. 2 S2). Deposit (8) contained samian of the 2nd century AD. Deposit (13) contained Severn Valley ware and other pottery of the 2nd century AD.

The layer (14) also overlies deposit (15), and was a moderately compact dark grey brown sand loam containing patches of a light brown sand lime mortar. The deposit covered an area 2m by 1.9m. This deposit was interpreted as part of a demolition layer.

Linear cut 19 was a foundation trench for a wall that truncated layer (15). The wall 20, was also an apparent fragmentary feature in more than one part, was constructed of rough sandstone blocks 350mm x 220mm x 80mm, which formed the remains of a linear foundation orientated east-southeast to west-northwest. The overall dimensions of the wall were 2.2m long and 0.5m wide.

4.6 Phase 6: Roman (late Roman)

In Evaluation Trench 3 the remains of what were generally considered to be Late Roman features were noted. However, this interpretation may be problematic as a wall in that trench appears to line up with the southern wall that was excavated in 1975-6 and was at that time considered to be a feature of the 2nd century AD. The relevant features included a foundation cut 318. The wall 302 survived at some 0.25m below the present surface. Two courses of sandstone were visible, and it was made of medium sized, irregular sandstone rubble, with dressed faces. These features have to be associated with cut 48 a linear feature measuring 0.4m across and with a depth of 0.22m, with sharp vertical sides. Context 49 was part of a rough limestone wall with stones measuring 370mm x 280mm x 120mm, forming irregular coursing in a surviving foundation (Fig. 3 S13). The foundation cut was backfilled with fill (319) a

grey silt with red brown flecks. Deposit (47) was a medium compact light red brown sand silt some 1.2m across.

Layer (50) was a compact mid-grey sand clay with a depth of 0.04m (Fig. 3 S14). Layer (51) was a context of a medium compaction with a dark grey colour ash silt measuring 2.6m across and 0.16m deep.

Features identified in Trench 1 were attributed a 3rd to 4th centuries AD date. These included a single gully 106 that was 0.19m deep with steeply sloping sides (Fig. 2 P3). The fill (107) were a grey brown sand loam. A further feature was a deposit (102) that contained fragments of Arden sandstone and a number of pebbles that formed a surface. This was recognised in the excavation as an area of disturbance.

The remains of two burials were noted. The western end of grave cut 315 was partially revealed truncating the fill of ditch 304. This contained an *in situ* skull (314), thought to be that of a young adult. The grave fill (316) was a grey brown silt clay that also contained further bone. This grave fill (316) was truncated by the cut of a pit 312. The fill of this pit was 313 which contained the remains of an infant of about 12 months in age.

4.7 Phase 7: Late Roman or post-Roman

Linear feature 53 was a cut 0.7m wide and 0.3m deep with steep to vertical sides and a flat base (Fig. 3 S15). This overlay the foundation cut 79. Deposit (52) was a compact black silt clay with limestone and yellow sandstone with the lower layers pitched. This is probably part of a wall foundation that has been robbed or disturbed.

Linear cut 68 was located along the face of wall foundation 55. It is evidently a robber trench some 0.5m across and 0.36m deep with steep to vertical sides and a rounded base (Fig. 3 S16). The fill (69) was a moderately compact black silt clay with green sandstone inclusions. This sherd contained a piece of Severn Valley ware of a general Roman date. The sherd may not date the robbing but could be residual; there were significant Roman sherds disturbed from later contexts in deposits (2) and (1).

The indications are that at some time in either the later Roman period or in the post-Roman period (perhaps even as late as the medieval or post-medieval periods) the stone building of the mid-2nd century was partially robbed.

4.8 Phase 8: Post-Medieval

Layer (2/12) was a soft mid to dark brown clay silt with a humus element, and containing sub-angular to rounded stones 5 to 25mm across (Fig. 2 P4). This deposit was interpreted as an interface of the topsoil with the aggregate surface. Deposit (2) contained pieces of samian, Severn Valley ware, Dorset black burnished ware, other Roman fragments and a post-medieval sherd. These fragments were recovered from the southern part of the site. Context (12) contained the same pottery types but also had Midlands pink grog-tempered ware, Oxford colour coated wares, and a late medieval sherd.

Layer (70) was a compact grey silt clay with some pebble inclusions 0.15m deep (Fig. 3 S18). This deposit was probably a continuation of layer (2/12).

In Trench 1 deposit (101) was a grey brown sand loam, containing small gravel fragments measuring 0.25m thick. This contained Roman pottery and flat slate roof tiles of Arden stone. In Evaluation Trench 2 there was a layer (201) a grey brown sand loam, interpreted as a cultivation horizon. In Trench 3 layer (301) was a dark grey silt loam. These contexts are probably to be equated with those labelled (2/12/70) in the later Excavation and Watching Brief and in these cases not only was Roman pottery recovered but also post-medieval pottery also. This would indicate a longer drawn out process of accumulation and reworking of these soils, and implies that the suggested 3rd and 4th century AD date for their accumulation is too condensed a chronology.

4.9 Phase 9: Georgian, Regency and Victorian (1800-1900)

The following phases are associated with the time period that saw the construction of Acorn House c 1800 and the development of the garden (Fig. 2 P4).

In Evaluation Trench 1 the remains of a drain 104 was found aligned east to west across the trench. The cut was not numbered in the Evaluation Report. The drain contained brick walls with limestone capping. The capping stones were covered by a back fill (105) a grey brown sand loam.

Cut 42 was of an oval or a kidney shape measuring about 2m by 0.8m. The fill (7) was a compact grey brown silt sand with limestone rubble inclusions.

4.10 Phase 10: Modern

The line of a service trench 217 was noted in Evaluation Trench 2. This was a steep sided feature and was filled with (218) a brown sand loam with gravel inclusions.

Layer (1/43) was a loose to moderately compact black silt sand (Fig. 3). The topsoil in Evaluation Trench 1 was (100). The topsoil in Trench 2 was (200), and that in Trench 3 context (300).

The feature 5 and fill 4 was a linear feature that was the remains of the Trench 1 sondage. This was not appreciated initially as part of that trench because it lay outside of the excavated area

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery (*By Jane Timby*)

Introduction and methodology

The first stage of archaeological work resulted in a moderately small assemblage of 171 sherds of pottery, weighing c 3.4 kg to which can be added a further 116 sherds weighing 1626 g from the second stage of work. Most of the pieces date to the Roman period but there are 16 post-Roman sherds present and three fragments of ceramic building material (see Table 1).

Table 1: Pottery Table

Context	Roman										L Med	Pmed	Tot No	Tot Wt	Date	CBM
STAGE 1	samian	Batam	SVWOX	SVWRE	BB1	PNKGT	grog	limest	Oxf	other	All	All				
2	4	0	6	0	2	0	0	0	0	4	0	1	17	109	Pm/C2	
8	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	C2	
12	3	0	20	0	1	2	0	0	2	7	1	1	37	621	PM/C4	
13	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	5	121	C2	
15	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	12	175	C2/C3?	
22	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	6	62	lC1-eC2	
23	0	0	6	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	11	220	c1/C2?	
26	0	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	171	C1/C2	
28	0	0	4	4	0	1	1	1	0	5	0	0	16	227	lC2/C3	
30	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	Roman	
32	0	1	4	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	8	522	c1/C2?	
36	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	25	C1/C2	
38	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	108	C1	
40	1	0	13	18	0	0	2	6	0	2	0	0	42	987	eC2	
Sub- total	10	1	80	31	3	3	5	7	2	26	1	2	171	3358		
STAGE 2																
43	2	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	12	18	275	Ro/Pmed	
54	0	0	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	94	C2	
57	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	102	C2	
61	1	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	109	late C1-C2	
62	0	0	5	4	4	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	22	607	late C2-C3	

64	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	56	Roman	
66	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	5	45	C2/C3?	
67	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	6	C2	
69	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	12	Roman	
BH1	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	8	73	C1/C2	
BH2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	3	13	Pmed/Roman	
BH3	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	C2/C3?	
BH4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	7	Roman	1
BH5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	4	Roman	
BH6	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	13	Roman	
BH7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	Roman	1
BH8	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	Roman	
BH10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	Roman	
BH12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	14	Roman	
BH13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	10	Roman	
BH14	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	9	Roman	
BH15	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	8	44	C1/C2	1
BH16	0	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	12	47	C1/C2	
BH17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	?Roman	
BH19	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	36	C2/C3?	
us	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	30	mid-late C2	
Sub- total	10	0	51	13	5	0	0	0	0	35	0	13	116	1626		
TOTAL	20	1	131	44	8	3	5	7	2	61	1	15	287	4984		3

In general terms the sherds are quite well preserved with an average sherd size of 17.4 g. There are a few examples of multiple sherds from single vessels.

The submitted pottery was recovered from 23 individual contexts with the quantities ranging from single sherds up to a maximum of 42 sherds from (40). Additional material was recovered from 16 pileholes (Fig. 3 BH) and unstratified collection. Post-medieval/modern sherds were recovered from contexts (1), (4), (43) and BH2.

For the purposes of this assessment the material was scanned macroscopically and sorted into fabrics based on firing colour and inclusions (type, size and frequency) in the clay. The sorted fabrics were quantified by sherd count and weight and a note made of the forms present from the rim sherds. Known named traded Roman wares were coded using the National Roman fabric reference collection codes (codes in brackets) (Tomber and Dore 1998). Table 1 summarises the data for each context with a provisional spot date for the group.

Description of Roman assemblage

The assemblage comprises mainly local wares, in particular oxidised and reduced Severn Valley ware (SVW OX, SVW RE), accompanied by a range of other local, regional and a few continental vessels. Overall there appears to be material spanning the later 1st / early 2nd to later 3rd/4th centuries present.

Continental imports to the site include 20 sherds of samian, mostly from Central Gaul (Lezoux) (LEZ SA) but with at least one piece from Les-Martres-de-Veyre (MDV SA) and one probably from La Graufesenque. There is in addition a single sherd of Baetican (BAT AM) olive-oil amphorae imported from southern Spain.

The samian forms include cups Dragendorff (Drag.) form 33; bowl Drag. 37 and 81 and dishes Drag. 18, 31, and 79. Overall the percentage of samian sherds is quite high at 3.7% but not atypical for a small Romano-British town.

Regional imports include eight sherds of Dorset black burnished ware (DOR BB1) from Poole harbour; a probable Mancetter-Hartshill white-ware flagon (MAH WH); Oxfordshire colour-coated wares (OXF RS) and Midlands pink grog-tempered ware (PNK GT). The DOR BB1 features as jar sherds; one decorated with a right-angle lattice. The OXF RS includes a mortaria Young (1977) forms C97 and a dish, probably C47 both dating from the mid-3rd century onwards.

The assemblage is dominated by products of the Severn Valley industry which account for 64.6% by count (SVW OX; SVW RE). Wares include both handmade and wheel-made vessels, mainly oxidised but also grey reduced wares, several with an organic or grog temper. These latter wares are typical of the earlier phases of the industry and are largely from handmade storage jars. Forms include flared rim, cordon-necked jar, wide-mouthed pendant rim jars, an S-profile bowl, storage jar and a tankard.

Other fabrics of note present include four sherds of a well-fired grey rusticated ware from (22) and BH7 typical of the Flavio-Trajanic period; some grog-tempered wares, a shelly ware and a few limestone-tempered wares.

Roman chronology

The Roman pottery appears to demonstrate activity at the site from the later 1st or early 2nd century until the later 3rd or early 4th century. The main focus of occupation seems to lie in the 2nd-3rd centuries. The grog-tempered wares, limestone-tempered pieces and some of the Severn Valley wares could be 1st century. Most of the samian all dates to the 2nd century. The DOR BB1 and pink-grog-tempered wares are more likely to date to the later 2nd or 3rd centuries and the Oxfordshire wares to the later 3rd-4th century. The Severn Valley ware industry is a very long-lived ones and products spans the 1st to 4th centuries.

Post-Roman

Fifteen sherds of post-medieval date are present from contexts (2), (4), (43) and BH2 and a sherd of later medieval or early post-medieval date from (12).

Potential and further work

Alcester is the site of a Roman small town which has seen quite a lot of excavation over the years particularly the southern and northern extra-mural areas (Cracknell and Mahany 1994; Booth and Evans 2001). As might be expected the assemblage is dominated by local wares supplemented by a small, but fairly diverse range of imports. Most or all the pottery recorded here can probably be paralleled with existing reports and thus on ceramic grounds add little to the general picture of pottery supply. The significance of the assemblage thus lies in the context of the site and its location vis-à-vis previous investigations.

No further work is recommended unless further work takes place at the site in which case this assemblage should be taken into consideration.

5.2 Building material

Brick and tile

A relatively small assemblage of tile and brick was recovered from seven contexts. There were a mixture of fabrics and forms.

The majority of the tile and brick fabrics are probably Roman and would thus add to the general collections of Roman brick and tile from Alcester. The probable land drain fragment from context (2) is probably 19th century.

Table 2: Brick and tile

Cxt	No	Wt (g)	Fabric
1	2	62	Orange fabric with large inclusions. Pale yellow to yellow orange fabric with grey interior (tile: depth 15mm).
2	3	545	Red to a red grey fabric with grey to black interior and large inclusions (brick: depth 40mm). Red fabric with some large inclusions (tile: depth 17mm). Red fabric with frequent large inclusions (imbrex or more likely a land drain pipe: 16mm thick).
12	6	783	Fabrics a rich red with some showing grey interiors. All are probably parts of Roman tegulae although three are too fragmentary to be conclusive (tile depths variable from 20mm to 28mm). Two of the pieces contain indications of an upward projection on the side (greater side depth 45mm and width 23mm).
28	4	53	Two fragments with a red orange fabric with moderate inclusions, exterior light yellow to yellow grey. Other two fabrics a red orange colour with inclusions, one contains a rounded right angle profile (part of a tegulae).
43	7	189	Variety of fabrics. Orange fabrics (one an imbrex: 13mm deep). Five others are a deep red to magenta colour with moderate to large inclusions (tile: depth 30mm).
43	5	634	Three fragments of dark red sand fabrics. Three of the bricks are probably c 1800 and associated with the construction of Acorn House and wall (brick: depth 59mm). A further example is a light orange fabric with grey interior with one of a rectangular projection to form decoration along the ridge (late medieval to post-medieval tile: depth 16mm, 26mm including decorative ridge)
43	5	251	Four pieces of a dark red orange sand tile of various depths with moderate to large inclusions (c 1800 tile: depths 18mm and 12mm). There is a further lighter orange fragment.
54	1	183	Red orange fabric impregnated with frequent moderate to large inclusions (imbrex: 20mm depth)
66	5	370	Two fragments of an orange fabric with moderate inclusions (Roman tile). Red orange fabric with a lighter orange surface (tegulae: 22mm deep, to top of side uprights 44mm). Two lighter to mid orange fabric with moderate inclusions (imbrex: 18mm and 14mm).

Mortar and plaster

Some eight fragments of mortar were recovered from context (12) weighing 73g. The material was a white pink sand mortar with larger inclusions. Some two fragments of mortar were recovered from context (43) weighing 45g.

A piece of rough white plaster sandy with some moderate inclusions was recovered from context (43) weighing 31g.

5.3 Metal objects

Iron objects

All iron objects recovered from the site were handmade nails, probably of a Roman origin.

Table 3: Iron objects

Cxt	No	Wt (g)	Fabric
12	3	26	All handmade. 54mm lg, head 16mm dia, shaft 5mm x 4mm. 50mm lg, head 12mm dia, shaft 6mm x 5mm. 83mm lg, head 13mm x 10mm, shaft 6mm x 5mm.
13	1	6	Handmade: 65mm lg with 11mm head and 6mm x 4mm top of shaft
BH10	1	8	Handmade: 54mm lg, head 14mm x 12mm, shaft 7mm x 4mm
BH11	1	4	Handmade: 50mm lg, head 15mm x 9mm, shaft 5mm x 4mm
BH13	1	7	Handmade: 58mm lg, head 13mm across, shaft 5mm x 4mm

Copper alloy

A piece of copper alloy sheet was recovered from context (12). This had measurements of 27mm x 18mm x 1mm thick with corrosion and weighing <1g.

Copper alloy sheet is not a common find on Roman sites and invariably when it is recovered from British sites these normally are temple sites, for example plaques, lettering, or votive leaves for example. Occasionally copper sheeting can come from caskets associated with 1st century burials but this is normally in Southeast England.

5.4 Glass

Three pieces of vessel glass were recovered from the topsoil (43), which had a combined weight of 30g. All pieces came from the side of the vessel. One piece is new probably 20th century while the others have an older demeanour with degrading lead contents.

5.5 Animal Bone

Table 4: Animal bone

Cxt	No	Wt (g)	Fabric
2	3	64	Fragments of long bones
12	39	889	Long bones, pelvis, rib fragments, jaw bone, teeth
13	1	121	
15	1	5	
23	4	53	Long bone, rib, pelvis
28	8	1326	Mandible cattle (770g), long bones
32	1	3	Tooth
40	20	263	Mandible small, long bones, pelvis
43	2	43	Small scapula and bone fragment
52	3	5	Long bones (bird)
54	2	201	Large scapula and rib spinal connection part
57	1	6	Long bone (small animal)
61	3	95	Long bone fragment, rib fragment, boar tusk (indications of working)
62	2	36	Fragments from rounded wing of a pelvis
64	2	42	Cattle vertebrae
66	7	320	Long bones, skull fragments, mandible ovi-caprid
u/s	13	486	Long bone fragments, knuckle bones
BH14	1	7	Long bone fragment
BH16	1	<1	Bone fragment

A significant amount of bone was recovered from the site but most of it was extremely fragmentary.

The boar tusk from context (61) has some possible indications of working, although this is not conclusive. The piece weighs 23g and extends for 100mm x approximately 44mm. The length around the curl of the tusk is 138mm. The sides of the tusk at its broadest measure 20mm x 15mm x 10mm. At the narrow end of the tusk it would appear that part of the enamel or ivory has been cut or chipped away over a length of 0.35mm. No cut marks survive but the area has been polished. It is possible that the area was cut away and then polished, and at that point discarded because a split occurred in the enamel or ivory, or that the tusk may have been chipped and worn further by natural use.

The majority of the bone was probably from cattle and sheep, but there were indications of other possible animals with light weight long bones from birds, and a smaller mammal jaw. Many of the bones were too fragmentary to be identified and a considerable number had indications of being cut through butchery practices.

5.6 Burnt Stone

Two burnt stones were recovered from context 40 which weighed 30g. One of them was evidently a pot boiler cracked by heat.

6 DISCUSSION

The remains of a number of phases can be identified in the excavations at Acorn House on Evesham Street. The earliest pottery recovered from the excavations was during the Evaluation; these tend to indicate that there is early and even mid-1st century AD activity in the area. However, no specific feature could be directly associated with this activity. Having stated this there were one or two features that were dug into the bedrock that were not dated with material finds, it is thus that some of these features could be part of that activity. However, stratigraphically these features can only be considered to be part of the Phase 1 activity of the later 1st century AD to the very early 2nd century AD. The majority of these features are pits; however, on the western part of the site the remains of a possible sill-beam foundation was present. This activity is perhaps associated with an extramural settlement developing outside of a postulated fort that was claimed to have existed to the east of the site. That this area to the west of the fort should be associated with areas of extramural settlement should perhaps be expected as it lies between that postulated feature and Ryknild Street.

Phase 2 must have occurred in the early part of the 2nd century and contained what appeared to be a series of relic soil horizons and other features. One of the features was possibly that of a gravel foundation for a sill-beam. If these features are the gravel rammed foundations for timber structures then it is pointing to the possibility that structures of the 1st century and early 2nd century AD were created in timber. It has been suggested by Booth (Booth and Evans 2001) that buildings in Alcester were generally constructed in timber.

The most significant feature to be found on the site is a possible number of stone structures that were constructed in the middle of the 2nd century. Two walls were detected during the Watching Brief that appeared to run parallel to each other. These would appear to be two walls that were partially robbed and would indicate that stone structures were being built in the mid-2nd century AD. Where observed properly these structures had pitched but shallow stone foundations of a hard calcareous yellow stone that was probably recovered from bands within the clay. Above this pitched foundation the main part of the wall was constructed of a pale green sandstone block. The blocks on the outside had been dressed, if not to the point of being considered ashlar. Other walls can be recognised as running across the north side of the site. Though some floors have been identified it is possible to suggest that with some stone buildings there is little evidence of floor surfaces, which may indicate that there were wooden floors laid.

In the later part of the 2nd or the 3rd century it is possible to suggest that foundations filled with gravel are again apparent on the site. This may indicate that there are further timber structures being constructed by this time.

In the later part of the Roman period there is evidence of burials on the site, although this is limited; one possible adult burial and an infant burial in a pit. At present there is no indication that these burials are part of a larger cemetery although it is possible that they could be.

There is also evidence that the sandstone blocks which were well worked and placed on the outside of the 2nd century structures were robbed at an unknown date either in the later Roman period or even in the post-Roman period.

In the medieval and post-medieval period maps of the 18th century indicate that this area was under agricultural production. It is possible that certain features may be recognisable on the site and be associated with the course of furrows; however without seeing the larger extent of these features it is difficult to confirm this.

In the late 18th century and the 19th century there are indications of a further phase which is associated with the transformation of the site into a garden associated with Acorn House. Ordnance Survey maps indicate that the garden was not always the shape that it is now and has changed over time. Indeed, not all of the site was incorporated into the garden of Acorn House until the 20th century.

Certain deposits on the site are associated with the modern period.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

The project brief

Written scheme of investigation

The project report

The primary site record

Physical record

Finds

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred Warwickshire Museum.

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