

Roman Farming at Whilton Sewage and Water Treatment Works Whilton Nr. Daventry Northamptonshire



Excavation Report



June 2011

Client: Anglian Water

OA East Report No: 1264

OASIS No: oxfordar3-102710

NGR: SP 6205 6522

**Evidence of Roman Farming at Whilton Sewage and Water Treatment Works,
Whilton, Nr. Daventry, Northamptonshire**

Archaeological Investigation

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Report Date: June 2011

Report Number: 1264
Site Name: Land at Whilton STW
Date of Works: 18th May 2011 to 20th May 2011
Client Name: Anglian Water
Client Ref: 12168
Planning Ref: N/A
Grid Ref: SP 6205 6522
Site Code: XNNWST11
Finance Code: XNNWST11
Accession No: XNNWST11
Prepared by: Rob Atkins
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Date: June 2011
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Date: June 2011
Signed:

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Summary

Between the 18th and 20th May 2011, OA East conducted an archaeological excavation at the proposed extension to Whilton Sewage and Water Treatment site (SP 6205 6522). The excavation uncovered a series of parallel linear features from which Roman pottery was found. Investigation of the features proved them to be much more recent in date, probably late 20th century. The Roman pottery must therefore have derived from the topsoil and subsoil on the site implying the presence of Roman settlement near to the excavation area possibly located on higher ground beyond the development area to the north-west.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological excavation was conducted at the proposed extension to Whilton Sewage and Water Treatment site (SP 6205 6522; Fig. 1).
- 1.1.2 This work follows on from a previous archaeological evaluation comprising seven evaluation trenches (Atkins 2010). One of the trenches (T7) contained the remains of three shallow east to west ditches (5m apart) tentatively dated by a single Roman pottery sherd. These remains were thought to represent the south-eastern edge of a Roman settlement. The other evaluation trenches on lower parts of the site to the south found no pre-modern features (Trenches 1-6). The evaluation therefore concluded that there was potential for archaeological remains to survive on the higher ground within the development site where sludge tanks and a sludge tanker lay-by are proposed.
- 1.1.3 The excavation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by the Planning Department of Northamptonshire County Council (NCC 2010) and supplemented by a Specification prepared by OA East (Connor 2011). The Brief was written in response to a request by Anglian Water in compliance with their Code of Practice. Due to the potential for archaeological deposits on the site Northamptonshire County Council recommended that an archaeological excavation should be undertaken within the footprint of the ground works proposed on the higher ground of the site.
- 1.1.4 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The 1:250,000 Soils of England and Wales (map sheet 4) records the site as being within Stagnogleyic argillic brown earths.
- 1.2.2 The ground within the excavation area is near the base of a sub-rounded hill (Fig. 1). The ground rises substantially to the north-west beyond the site and just to the south-east there is a small lake. The excavation area was at a height of c.94 to 95m above Ordnance Datum.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 There are several known sites close by which have been recorded in the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record (NHER; Fig. 2):
- 442** Grand Junction Canal passes the site 350m to the west. This canal ran from Birmingham to London (137 miles). There are two listed post-medieval buildings along the canal close to the subject site.
- 895** *Bannaventa* (Whilton Lodge) a scheduled area is c.800m to the south-west of the subject site. This Roman town lies along Watling Street (which roughly follows the line of the present A5). A small town, of c.16-22ha in size, it was built on relatively high

ground at c.110mOD. The town developed from the middle to late 1st century AD, and was located roughly half way (c.12 miles) between Towcester (*Lactodorum*) and *Tripontium*.

925 Another Roman road ran from *Bannaventa* (Whilton Lodge) to the town of Duston (within present day Northampton), c.600m to the south of the subject site.

7134 Possible prehistoric activity (finds) has been recorded c.600m away at SP 61821 64628

7704 Early Saxon finds found at grid reference SP 6164, c.500m to the south of the site.

- 1.3.2 A full description of the documentary search can be found in the evaluation report (Atkins 2010) and is not repeated here.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The author would like to thank Anglian Water for funding the project especially Greg Parish and Christophe Demoulin for organising the works. Lesley-Ann Mather wrote the Brief and monitored the work for Northamptonshire County Council. Aileen Connor managed the project on behalf of OA East and the field work was carried out by Rob Atkins. The surveying was undertaken by Lucy Offord and Stephen Wadeson commented on the Roman pottery.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The main aim of the project was to preserve the archaeological evidence contained within the excavation area by record and to attempt a reconstruction of the history and use of the site. The excavation was conducted within the context of national, regional and local frameworks, in particular English Heritage (1991 and 1997) and Cooper (2006).
- 2.1.2 The site was thought to have most potential to contribute towards Roman research aims, in particular enhancing our knowledge of Roman Rural Landscapes in Northamptonshire and the relationship between rural and urban economies, given the location of the site close to the Roman town of Bannaventa to the west and major Roman roads to west (Watling Street) and south (between Duston and Bannaventa) (Fig. 2). These themes that are highlighted in the Regional Research Frameworks for the East Midlands and that might particularly be assisted by excavation of this site are *Agriculture and Settlement form and Landscape Organisation*.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The excavation area (35m by 25m) was tied into Ordnance Survey using a Leica 1200 GPS with Leica Smartnet on board. Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision using a tracked 360°-type excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. All deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Colour, digital and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant deposits. The excavation was carried out in good dry weather conditions.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Overview

3.1.1 The excavation area was 35m by 25m in size and was located to record the footprint of the proposed new sludge tanks and associated lay-by (Fig. 1). The modern overburden, between 0.6m and 0.95m thick, was removed by machine revealing a natural sub-soil which comprised an orange-brown clay silt. Cutting the natural sub-soil were twelve linear features all aligned roughly east to west and running adjacent to each other.

3.2 Description of Features

3.2.1 All the features were approximately the same size (between c.0.5m and 0.8m wide) and were up to 0.20m deep. They were filled with a mid to grey brown clay silt. Finds included modern artefacts such as plastic as well as five Roman pottery sherds, probably dating to the Early Roman period. Investigation of these features proved them to be modern.

3.3 Pottery by Stephen Wadeson

3.3.1 Five Roman coarse ware sherds (60g) were recovered from the features. They probably date to the Earlier Roman period, were wheel thrown but were undiagnostic body sherds in a quartz and organic temper.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 The excavation uncovered a series of modern linear features which may be wheel-ruts associated with the original landscaping and development of the site as a sewage treatment works. Within some of the ruts there were plastic pieces but also residual Roman pottery. The Roman material is likely to derive from manuring scatters implying a heavily farmed landscape surrounding a Roman settlement (farmstead) probably located on the higher ground to the north-west of the sewage treatment works.
- 4.1.2 This archaeological work suggests that a new previously unknown settlement may be located near to the development area. The Roman town of Bannaventa is just over 1km to the south-west and the putative settlement may have been a satellite farmstead supplying produce to the town.

APPENDIX A. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Atkins, R., 2010 *Roman ditches at Whilton sewage and water treatment works, Whilton, Nr. Daventry, Northamptonshire* Oxford Archaeology East report 1213 (unpublished)

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Cooper, N.J. (ed) 2006 *The Archaeology of the East Midlands: An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda* Leicester Archaeology Monographs No. 13 (University of Leicester: Bristol)

English Heritage 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd Edition

English Heritage 1997 *English Heritage archaeology division research agenda* (unpublished draft)

Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) 2010 Brief for a programme of archaeological excavation, recording, analysis and publication of land at Whilton STW, Northamptonshire dated 30th December 2010

APPENDIX B. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number	<input type="text" value="oxfordar3-102710"/>			
Project Name	<input type="text" value="Roman pottery at Whilton Sewage and Water Treatment Works, Whilton, Nr. Daventry, Northamptonshire"/>			
Project Dates (fieldwork)	Start	<input type="text" value="16-05-2011"/>	Finish	<input type="text" value="20-05-2011"/>
Previous Work (by OA East)	<input type="text" value="Yes"/>	Future Work	<input type="text" value="No"/>	

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	<input type="text" value="XNNWST11"/>	Planning App. No.	<input type="text" value="N/A"/>
HER No.	<input type="text" value="-"/>	Related HER/OASIS No.	<input type="text" value="-"/>

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt

Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Field Observation (periodic visits)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Record
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Full Excavation (100%)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Field Walking
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Recorded Observation	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Metal Detector Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pit Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Open-Area Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Watching Brief

Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="Select period..."/>	<input type="text" value="pottery"/>	<input type="text" value="Roman 43 to 410"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="Select period..."/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="Select period..."/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="Select period..."/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="Select period..."/>

Project Location

County	<input type="text" value="Northamptonshire"/>	Site Address (including postcode if possible)
District	<input type="text" value="Daventry"/>	<input type="text" value="Whilton Sewage Treatment Works,
Whilton
Nr. Daventry
Northamptonshire"/>
Parish	<input type="text" value="Whilton"/>	
HER	<input type="text" value="Northamptonshire County Council"/>	
Study Area	<input type="text" value="-"/>	National Grid Reference <input type="text" value="SP 6205 6522"/>

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	Northamptonshire County Council
Project Design Originator	Aileen Connor, Oxford Archaeology East
Project Manager	Aileen Connor
Supervisor	Rob Atkins

Project Archives

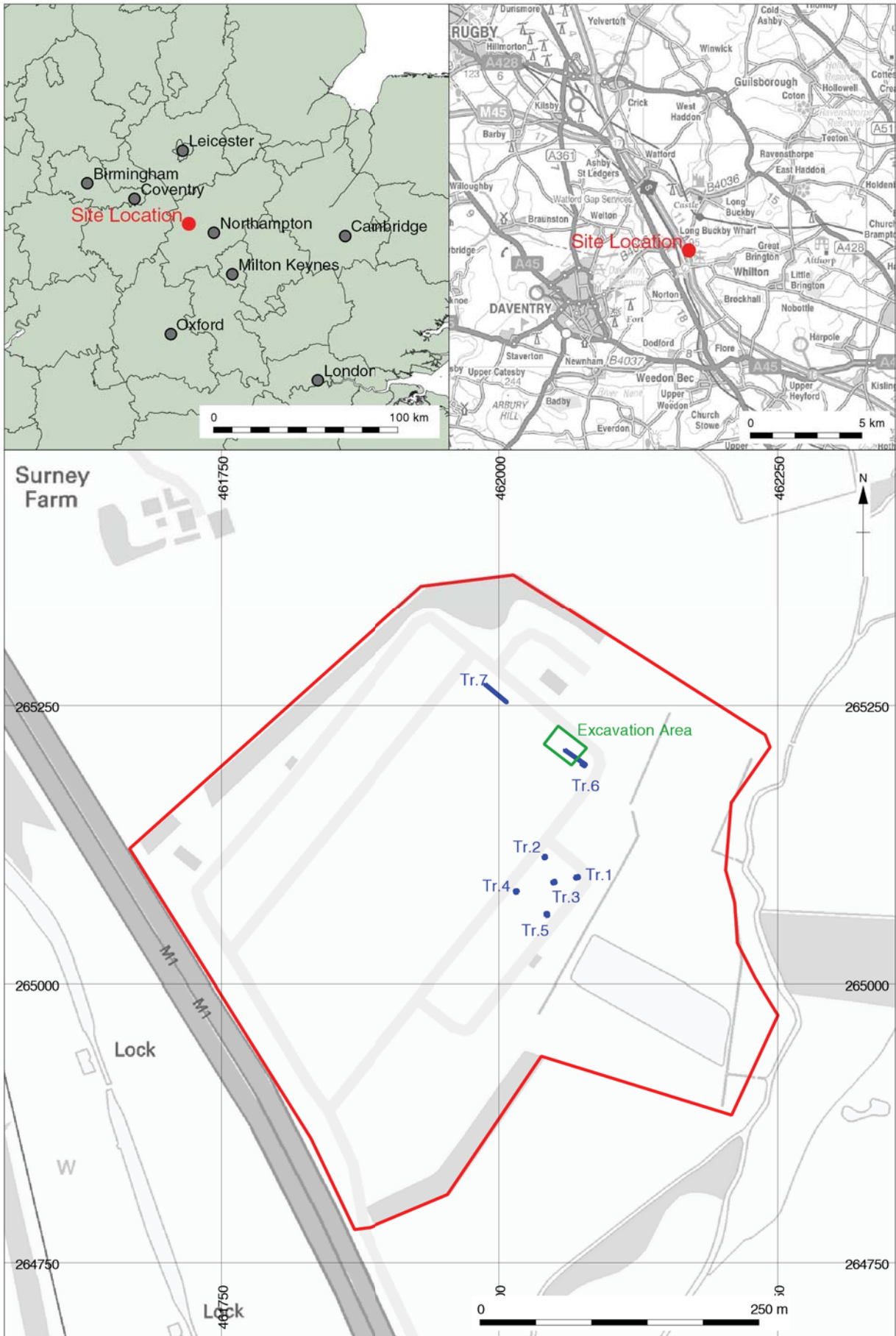
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OA East	OA East	OA East
XNNSWT11	XNNSWT11	XNNSWT11

Archive Contents/Media

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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Survey

Notes:



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Figure 1: Site location map showing the development area (outlined red), the evaluation trenches (blue) and the excavation area (outlined green)

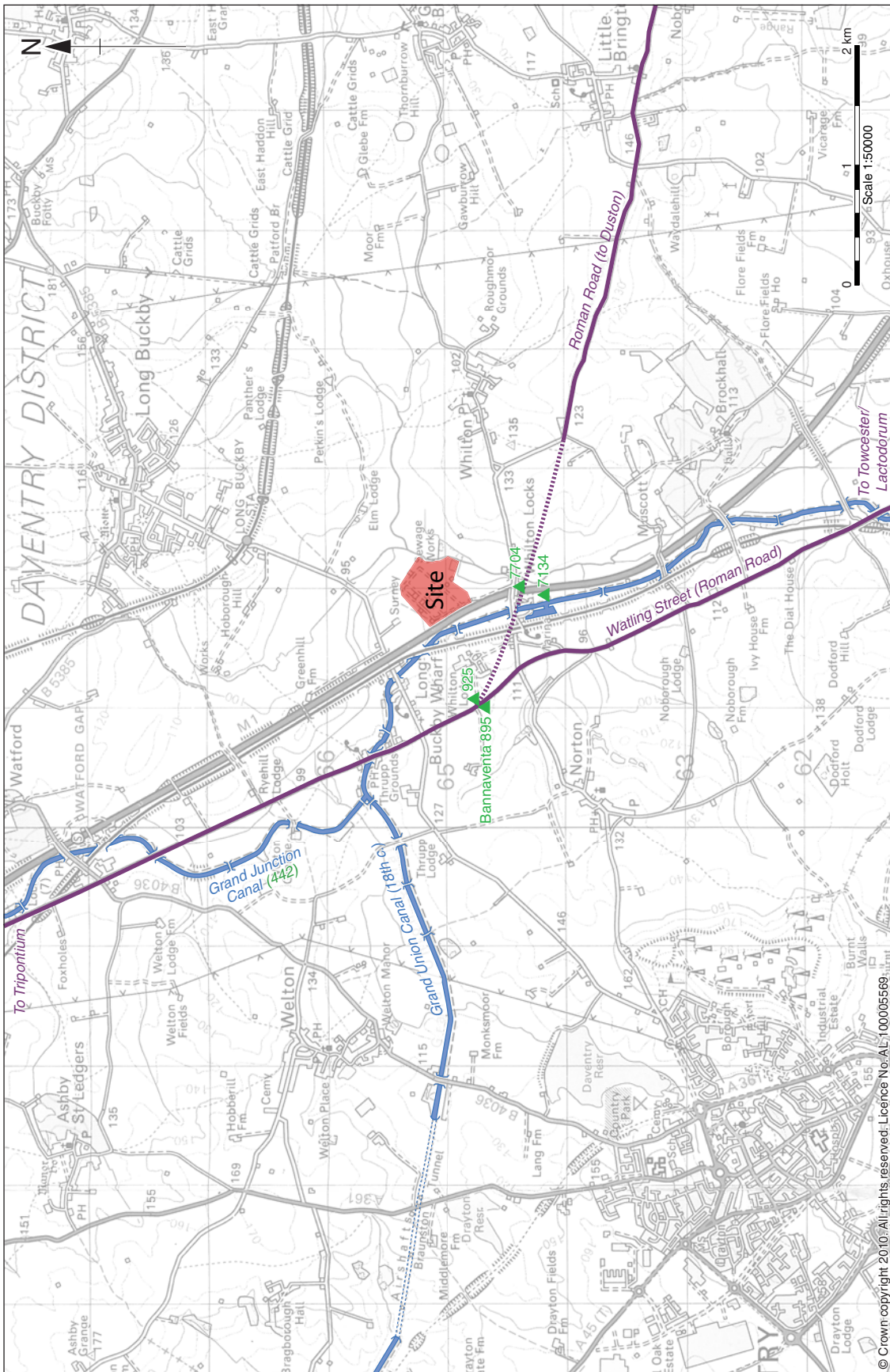


Figure 2: Site location (red) with HER data (green), canals (blue) and Roman roads (purple)



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