Hulton Heys, Cutacre, Little Hulton,

Bolton

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SUMMARY

Harworth Estates is developing proposals for a new Country Park at Little Hulton in the Metropolitan Borough of Bolton, Greater Manchester. Following a scheme of archaeological assessment, it was concluded that the Country Park development might damage or destroy potential below-ground archaeological remains associated with a recently demolished farmhouse, barn, and cartshed/stables at Hulton Heys (centred on SD 6999 04142). Documentary evidence suggests that this site might contain evidence for a late medieval farmstead and an early post-medieval farm, which is documented in the seventeenth century. An earlier examination of the recently demolished farm buildings suggests that these represent those buildings depicted on late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century mapping.

Given the historical significance of Hulton Heys, Oxford Archaeology North was commissioned by Harworth Estates to undertake an archaeological evaluation across the site. The aims and objectives of the evaluation were to determine the character and significance of any below-ground remains, and also to determine the need for any additional archaeological excavation in order to mitigate the impact of the proposed development. The work entailed the excavation of three evaluation trenches. These trenches were positioned across the recently demolished barn and cartshed/stables, and immediately west of the recently demolished farmhouse. The position and extent of these trenches was conditioned by the presence of great crested newts and Himalayan balsam.

The evaluation indicated that significant below-ground remains are present at this site. These include a potential unmortared stone wall and an early pebble and clay surface. These features appear to predate the buildings depicted on late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century mapping and, given the known history of the site, it is possible that they relate to late medieval or early post-medieval activity.

In addition to the potential early remains, the evaluation also demonstrated the survival of below-ground remains that represent elements of the farm's barn and cartshed/stables, which are depicted on nineteenth-century and later mapping. These remains include the brick footings of a probable mid-nineteenth-century wall, forming the northern exterior wall of the cartshed/stables, and later machine-made brick walls. These latter walls appear to relate to rebuilding and additions to both the cartshed/stables and barn during the later nineteenth or early twentieth century. The evaluation also indicated that a well-preserved stone-sett surface, forming the farmyard, lies between the farmhouse, barn, and cartshed/stables. This surface might potentially date to the late eighteenth or nineteenth century.

Given the presence of potential early remains, along with below-ground remains relating to later farm buildings, a further programme of archaeological excavation is recommended in order to mitigate the impact of the proposed development. This will probably entail a larger open-area excavation, although the scope and extent of further archaeological investigation will need to be carried out in accordance with an Updated Written Scheme of Investigation, which should be devised in consultation with the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxford Archaeology North would like to thank Chris Davidson of Harworth Estates for commissioning and supporting the project, and to Bill Mottram for his advice regarding ecological considerations. Thanks are also expressed to Norman Redhead, the Heritage Management Director with the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service, for his guidance and advice. OA North is also grateful to Dr Peter Arrowsmith for sharing his knowledge of the historical development of the site.

The evaluation trenching was directed by Graham Mottershead. The report was written by Graham Mottershead and Richard Gregory, and Mark Tidmarsh prepared the illustrations. The report was edited by Ian Miller, who was also responsible for project management.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

1.1.1 Harworth Estates is developing proposals for a new Country Park at Little Hulton in the Metropolitan Borough of Bolton, Greater Manchester. The proposals allow for the change of land use of part of a restored open-cast-coal-mining site to form a Country Park, which will include remodelled landform, the creation of new ponds, watercourses and a mix of habitats, together with public access routes and visitors' car-parking (Planning Application No 90552/13).

1.1.2 The application area has been the focus of several desk-based studies since the mid-1990s, which highlighted the archaeological interest of the area (*cf* OA North 2014). This was tested via intrusive archaeological investigation by OA North in advance of the development of a surface mining and tip reclamation facility by UK Coal. In the first instance, this comprised evaluation trenching that was carried out in 2005-06, which was followed by targeted excavation in 2006-08. The archaeological work yielded results of regional significance, which included the remains of a prehistoric round house, evidence for medieval iron smelting, elements of a late medieval minor hall, and early post-medieval farmsteads. However, the intrusive archaeological investigations carried out in 2005-08 did not examine a number of extant farms within the boundary of the application area, which at that date were still occupied and preserved from the open-cast scheme. Some of these farms became neglected and have since been demolished, although there is potential for buried remains of archaeological interest to survive, as several of the farms are thought to have been medieval or early post-medieval in origin.

1.1.3 In view of the archaeological background to the site, the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service (GMAAS), which provides archaeological advice to Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council, recommended that a condition was attached to the planning consent for the Country Park development that allowed for a programme of archaeological works. As part of this condition, it was recommended that the archaeological works should include archaeological investigation across those farmhouse sites that were excluded from the scheme of works carried out in 2005-08.

1.1.4 Initially, this investigation included a review of the 17 known farmhouse sites within the application area. This review indicated that ten of these sites had been destroyed by open-cast mining, and/or had been examined during the 2005-08 archaeological investigation, and therefore did not merit any further study. Of the remaining seven sites that occupy the County Park application area, six represent extant historic farmhouses and the remainder a farmhouse, Hulton Heys, which has recently been demolished to foundation level, and none had been subjected to investigation during the earlier scheme of archaeological work.

1.1.5 The seven sites were therefore subjected to an archaeological desk-based assessment. This assessment enabled OA North to produce an informed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) outlining those farmhouse sites which might be directly impacted on during the creation of the new Country Park.

1.1.6 Assessment of the sites concluded that the extant farmhouses sites would not be subjected to any direct impacts as part of the Country Park development. However, it concluded that the Country Park development might damage or destroy potential below-ground archaeological remains associated with the recently demolished farm buildings at Hulton Heys.

1.1.7 Given the potential impact on the archaeological remains at Hulton Heys, and based on its archaeological merits, the WSI recommended that an intrusive archaeological investigation should be completed at this site as an appropriate form of mitigation, In the first instance, this would comprise a programme of targeted evaluation trenching.

1.1.8 The evaluation aimed to establish the presence or absence of buried archaeological remains on the site and, if present, characterise the level of preservation and significance, and provide a good understanding of their potential. It was intended that this information would then be used to inform any further recommendations for archaeological investigation.

1.1.9 Following formal approval of the WSI by GMAAS, OA North implemented the required programme of evaluation trenching in October 2014. This report presents the results of the evaluation at Hulton Heys and includes recommendations for further archaeological investigation.

1.2 SITE LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

1.2.1 The wider application area (centred on SD 6995 0446) is situated immediately south of Salford Road (A6) and north of the railway line running between Manchester and Wigan (Plate 1). It is bounded to the west by a band of housing, running north from Atherton, and to the east by Wharton Lane (Fig 1). The ground level within falls from north to south, from *c* 120-90m aOD.

1.2.2 The solid geology of the study area comprises the Pennine Coal Measures Group of the Carboniferous, and a superficial geology of Devensian glacial till. Surface mining has been carried out extensively across the study area, although a central zone remains unaffected, together with smaller areas on the western side of Wharton Lane.

1.2.3 Within this area, the site of Hulton Heys (SD 6999 04142; Fig 1) is set within a rectangular enclosure, which is linked to Back Lane via a short trackway. Immediately north of the site is a small reservoir, two ponds lie a short distance to the north-west, whilst a well is present immediately to the south. Prior to the archaeological evaluation, the footprints of the demolished farm buildings were overlain by rubble.

1.2.4 This demolition debris included small-sized, hand-made bricks, together with machine-made bricks from Gadbury Brickworks, suggesting a date range spanning the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries. Stone-built foundations were also visible in the position of the former barn and cartshed.

1.2.5 The site was subject to stringent ecological considerations. In particular, the site of the demolished farmhouse has been identified as having high potential as a habitat for great crested newts. As such, the archaeological works were subject to close monitoring by the appointed ecologist to ensure that the newts were not harmed, or their habitat disturbed. During the course of the works, several great crested newts were identified, which precluded the excavation of the trenches to the full lengths proposed in the WSI. In addition, Himalayan balsam was present across parts of the study area, which presented a further constraint to the archaeological works. However, sufficient information was recovered from the excavated trenches to fulfil the stated aims and objectives of the project.

Plate 1: Aerial view across the study area

1.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.3.1 ***Introduction:*** the following section details the known history of Hulton Heys. This section draws upon, and summarises, the information contained in the recent desk-based assessment, and for a fuller treatment of the wider historical development of the study area, reference should be made to that report (Arrowsmith 2013).

1.3.2 ***Medieval:*** historically, Hulton Heys lay in the township of Middle Hulton, now in the Metropolitan Borough of Bolton, which originally formed one element of the medieval manor of Hulton (*op cit*, 6). The place-name Hulton is first documented in *c* 1200 as 'Hilton' (Ekwall 1922, 43). It has an Old English derivation, suggesting that an Anglo-Saxon settlement may have been present in this township. The distinguishing prefix 'Middle' is first documented in the sixteenth century, by which time the original manor of Hulton had long been divided into smaller parts (*ibid*).

1.3.3 Between 1195 and 1212 Hugh Putrell gave half a carucate in Hulton to Richard son of Elias de Worsley, the rent being 6s 8d. This grant would appear to represent those parts of the manor of Hulton, which later became the townships of Middle and Little Hulton (Farrer and Brownbill 1911a, 376-7; 1911b, 26). The de Worsley family held their share of Hulton until the early fifteenth century, after which they passed by marriage to the de Masseys.

1.3.4 There is documentary evidence that the de Worsleys had a hall in Hulton, although the location of this is unknown (Arrowsmith 2013, 6). There is also documentary evidence dating to 1296 for a mill in Hulton, at which the local tenants of the de Worsleys would have been obliged to take their corn and pay for it to be ground. Again the location of this site is not known (*ibid*).

1.3.5 Significantly, Hulton Heys may have contained a medieval farm, and therefore represents a comparatively early settlement within the manor of Hulton. The documentary evidence for this includes two grants of an enclosed parcel of land named Hulton Hey made in 1467 and 1484 by William de Massy and Geoffrey de Massy respectively. The 1484 grant gave the leases the right to build and marl on the ground, while de Massy undertook to maintain hedges and ditches (Farrer and Brownbill 1911b, 30). The reference to the right to build suggests that there may have been a farmstead at the site of Hulton Heys by the late fifteenth century.

1.3.6 ***Post-medieval and Industrial:*** from the post-medieval period onwards the documentary and cartographic evidence becomes more detailed. This allows greater insights into the landscape in which Hulton Heys was set. The general pattern that emerges is that the wider area contained a scattering of small farmsteads during this period. By the early eighteenth century part of the township was owned by the Duke of Bridgewater, whilst the remaining portion was owned by Thomas Arden Bagot (*op cit*, 7). There is also evidence that some tenants income from farming may have been supplemented on a regular basis by involvement in cottage industries. Principal among these was probably textile manufacture, which appears to have been an important source of income from the late sixteenth century onwards (*cf* Lunn 1953).

1.3.7 Coal mining was also important across the wider area from at least the sixteenth century, and in the eighteenth century Bagot leases reserved mining rights (GMAU 1991, 8). By the mid-nineteenth century, Ordnance Survey mapping shows numerous coal pits across the landscape such as those at Bank House Colliery and Wharton Colliery.

1.3.8 With regard to Hulton Heys, various details can be gleaned from the documentary and cartographic sources. The documentary evidence indicates that this farm may have been the tenement of John Mather listed in the 1674 marriage settlement of William Egerton (*cf* Arrowsmith 2013, 16). It was also documented in 1734, when it was leased by Egerton Bagot to Margaret Mather of Middle Hulton, widow (*ibid*). In 1792, the Reverend Walter Bagot leased the property to Thomas Eckersley of Middle Hulton, for ten years (*ibid*).

1.3.9 In terms of cartographic evidence, a farmhouse and barn are depicted at Hulton Heys on a *c* 1772 Bagot Estate plan, and these are also plotted on the 1849 Ordnance Survey (OS) map (Plate 2). An undated mid-nineteenth-century plan (MA L5/4/1/1-2) indicates by the time of this survey a cartshed and stables had also been erected, which directly adjoined the barn. The survey book accompanying this plan lists the farmstead as comprising 'House, Cottage, Outbuildings, Yard, Garden & Road', leased by William Newton (*ibid*). Census returns show two households at the farm in 1841-81, at which period the farmhouse appears to have comprised a main house and a cottage (Table 1). The farm complex is shown fully developed on the OS maps of 1893 (Plate 3).

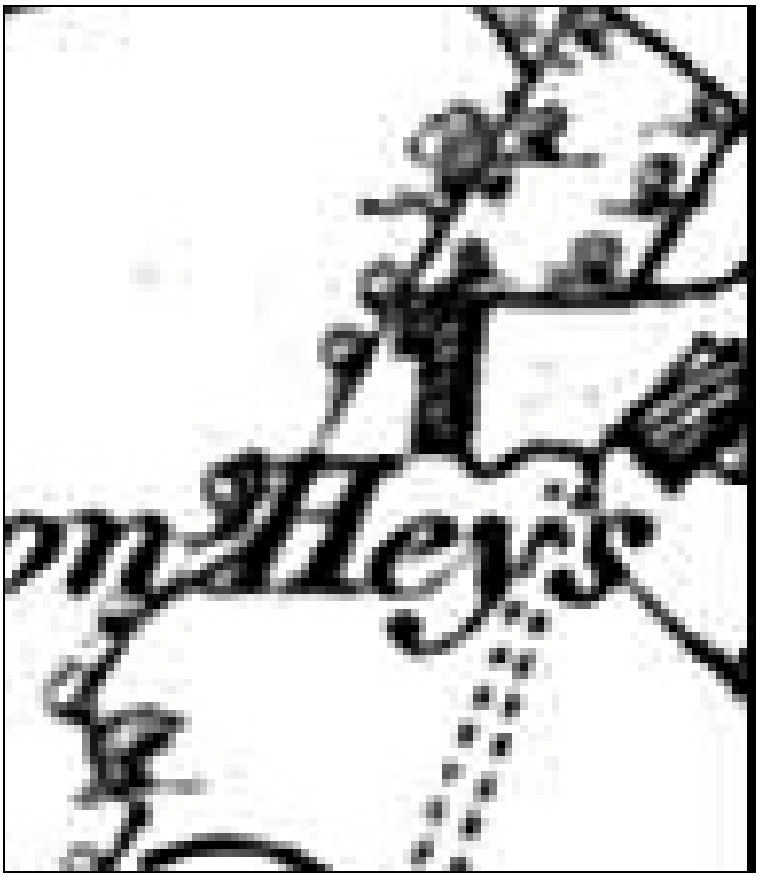

Plate 2: Hulton Heys as depicted on the 1849 OS 6":1mile map (Lancashire sheet 94)

Plate 3: Hulton Heys as depicted on the 1893 OS 25":1mile map

Year	Farmhouse	Head	Occupation
1841	Hilton Heyes	William Lomax	Farmer
		John Lomax	
		William Higson	Farmer
1851	Hilton Heyes	Margaret Lomax	Farmer of 42 acres
1861	Hilton Heyes	William Newton	Farmer of 23 acres
		Joseph Heathcoat	Coal miner
1871	Hulton Heys	Ralph Worthington	Farmer of 24 acres
	Hulton Heys Farm	William Newton	Farmer of 49 acres
1881	Hilton Heys Cottage	Unoccupied	
	Hulton Heys Farm	John Latham	Farmer of 22 acres
1891	Hulton Heyes Farm	James Lomax Farmer	
1901	Hulton Heys Farm	Charles Hopwood Farmer	

Table 1: Occupants of Hulton Heys in Census Returns of 1841-1901

1.3.10 The farmhouse, barn, and cartshed were extant until recently and were described in 1991 (*cf* Arrowsmith 2013, 16). The farmhouse, on the east side of the yard, was two-storeyed with ridge and gable chimneys, and with an outshut of one and two storeys to the rear. The front elevation was rendered, but other parts displayed early brickwork. This was almost certainly the house depicted on the *c* 1772 Bagot estate plan, complete with rear outshut. The barn, which is recognisable in plan on late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century mapping was aligned north/south on the west side of the yard. It was brick-built and had four bays with a cart door and opposed winnowing door in bay 2; bay 3 was a rebuild; bay 4, which included honeycomb brickwork, appeared to be an addition to the original structure. At right angles to bay 1, on the south side of the yard, was a brick-built cartshed and stables.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 EVALUATION

2.1.1 All work was carried out in accordance with the WSI (OA North 2014), and was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures provided by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), and generally accepted best practice. The evaluation comprised the excavation of three trial trenches (Trenches 1-3; Fig 2), which targeted the demolished footprints of the barn and cartshed/stables, and also an area immediately west of the farmhouse. The trenches were excavated by mechanical excavator and, where possible (*see below*), all archaeological deposits were cleaned manually to define their extent, nature, form and, where possible, date.

2.1.2 Following cleaning, all deposits, structures and feature were recorded stratigraphically, using a system adapted from that used by the Centre for Archaeology Service of English Heritage. Results of the evaluation were recorded on *pro-forma* context sheets, and a pictorial record (plans, sections and digital photography) was also generated in order to identify and illustrate individual features.

2.1.3 During the course of the evaluation, Trench 1 had to be abandoned after the excavation of the first 6m due to the presence of great crested newts. Trench 2 also had to be shortened from its original proposed length due to the discovery of Himalayan balsam at its northern end. In addition, it was only possible to partially clean this trench due to the presence of great crested newts. Similarly, due to the presence of great crested newts, the position of Trench 3 had to be moved further westwards. This meant that this trench lay immediately adjacent to a mound of rubble which covered the site of the farmhouse.

2.2 ARCHIVE

2.2.1 A full archive of the work has been prepared to a professional standard in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (2006) and the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage* (UKIC 1990). The archive will be deposited with Bolton Museum on completion of the project. In addition, a copy of the report will be forwarded to the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record (HER).

3. RESULTS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.3.1 Three evaluation trenches were excavated at the site of Hulton Heys Farm, Cutacre (Fig 2). Two large mounds of demolition rubble lay at the western and south-western sides of the site, whilst a reservoir was present in the vegetation to the north. These features surrounded a cobbled farmyard. The western mound covered the site of a former barn and stable/cartshed, whilst the south-west mound covered the site of the farmhouse.

3.2 TRENCH 1

3.2.1 This trench measured 6 x 2m, was oriented east/west, and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.80m. It lay at the northern edge of the western mound of rubble, which covered the site of the demolished barn and cartshed/ stable (Figs 2 and 3).

3.2.2 At the southern edge of the trench a machine-made brick wall (***101***) bonded with white mortar, was evident (Plate 4), which probably dates to the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. This wall was aligned east/west, extending for a distance of 3.8m, with a southerly return at its eastern end.

*Plate 4: Trench 6 general view, wall **101** on left, looking south-west*

3.2.3 The position of wall ***101*** indicates that it represents the northern wall of the former barn. Moreover, its location indicates that it formed the exterior wall of a later addition to the original late eighteenth-century barn, which was noted when the extant building was described in 1991 (bay 4; *Section 1.3.10*). At the western end of the wall was a stone block (***103***; Plate 5).

3.2.4 This possibly formed part of a wall foundation or was perhaps a threshold, denoting the position of a doorway at the end of the later addition to the barn. To the south of these features was a concrete floor surface (***102***), which was positioned within the interior of the later addition to the barn.

*Plate 5: Stone block **103**, looking south*

3.2.5 Outside of the footprint of the barn, three east/west-aligned drains were present which had been cut into the natural boulder clay (***107***). The central drain (***105***) comprised a ceramic pipe, whilst two linear cuts (***104*** and ***106***), filled with stone and brick fragments, marked the position of the other two adjacent drains.

3.3 TRENCH 2

3.3.1 This trench measured 12 x 2m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.12m. The trench lay at the eastern side of the western mound of rubble, which covered the demolished barn and stable (Figs 2 and 2).

3.3.2 The earliest remains encountered in this trench included a metalled surface and a stone wall. The metalled surface (***206***; Plate 6) consisted of very compact small pebbles of varying sizes, set into a layer of clay, and it may well represent an early floor or yard surface. It was very roughly made and lay partially below a later cobbled yard surface that was positioned to the north of the cartshed/stables.

3.3.3 The wall (***205***; Plate 7) was 0.87m wide and was orientated north/south. It comprised a stone-core foundation with no apparent mortar. Its composition and relationship to other features in the trench suggest that it might represent a comparatively early feature.

3.3.4 A later feature encountered in this trench was a stretch of brick walling (***203***; Plate 8). The fabric of the wall comprised hand-made bricks, bonded with white lime mortar, and was one header- and one stretcher-course wide. It had been cut into natural boulder clay (***207***), and appeared to be the foundation for the northern wall of the cartshed/stables. As such it probably dates to mid-nineteenth century (*Section 1.3.9*).

*Plate 6: Metalled surface **206** , looking west*

*Plate 7: Stone wall **205** (right) with brick structure **204** (left), looking north*

*Plate 8: Hand-made brick, wall **203**, looking west*

3.3.5 Later features and structures appear to have included a roughly built drain (***202***) composed of large sandstone blocks that ran across the centre of this trench. This drain was orientated north-east/south-west and it partially cut through the earlier metalled surface (***206***) and the also the stretch of handmade brick walling (***203***).

3.3.6 Other remains present in this trench included the north-eastern end of a 1.66m-wide brick structure (***204***), which ran from the south-western edge of Trench 2 (Plate 7). It was defined by a single-course wide machine-made brick wall, with internal stone flagging, and given its composition may date to the late nineteenth or twentieth century. A single stone flag also lay outside the structure to the north-east.

3.4 TRENCH 3

3.4.1 This trench measured 15m by 2m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.18m. It lay on the western side of the mound of rubble that covered the site of the farmhouse (Figs 2 and 3). Unfortunately, it could not be excavated into this rubble mound due to the presence of great crested newts (*Section 2.1.3*).

3.4.2 The earliest remains encountered in this trench included a patch of rough small pebbles that had been set into a layer of clay (***302***; Plate 9). This surface was similar to that encountered in Trench 2 (***206***; *Section 3.3.2*) and was probably contemporaneous.

*Plate 9: Cobbled surfaces **302**, **303** and **304**, with flags to left, looking south-west*

3.4.3 Later features were encountered across the main part of the trench and included a cobbled yard surface (Plates 9 and 10). This surface contained a north-east/south-west-aligned drainage run composed of large, 0.23 x 0.21m, stone sets. At the south-western end of the drainage run was a cast-iron grid (***306***). To the east and south of the drainage run was a surface of large stone sets (***305***), whilst to the west was a surface of smaller cobbles (***304***). These also extended to the north of ***305*** in a 0.68m-wide line boarded by larger narrow cobbles. To the east of this line of small cobbles was a surface of moderately sized cobbles (***303***) with stone flagging to the east, visible within a small extension to the trench edge. At the north end of the trench, the surfaces had been destroyed by an area of later disturbance (***301***).

3.4.4 To the south of cobbled surface ***305*** was a right-angled stretch of machine-made brick wall (***307***), bonded with hard dark cement (Plate 11). This was two-stretcher-courses wide and ran north from the southern trench edge, before turning to the west. This wall aligned with wall ***203*** in Trench 2 (*Section 3.3.3*) and it is possible that it represents a later rebuild of the eastern end of the stables/cartshed. To the west of this, within the building, was a floor surface (***308***) composed of large sets.

*Plate 10: Set surface **305** with grid **306** at the end of the drainage run, looking north-east*

*Plate 11: Brick wall **307** with set surface **308** in background, looking north-west*

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 SIGNIFICANCE

4.1.1 Although the evaluation at Hulton Heys encountered some difficulties due to the presence of great crested newts and Himalayan balsam, it still demonstrated that this site contains well-preserved below-ground remains of archaeological significance. Importantly, several features were encountered which may well predate the establishment of those buildings depicted on late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century mapping. These include a potential unmortared stone wall in Trench 2, and an early pebble and clay surface, which was identified in Trenches 2 and 3. Although these features were not associated with any dateable remains, given the known history of the site, it is possible that they may relate to late medieval or early post-medieval activity.

4.1.2 Aside from these potentially early remains, the evaluation also indicated that below-ground remains are present which form elements of the farm's barn and cartshed/stables, which are depicted on nineteenth-century and later mapping. These remains include the hand-made brick footings of a probable mid-nineteenth-century wall, in Trench 2, forming the northern exterior wall of the cartshed/stables and later machine-made brick walls in all three of the evaluation trenches. These latter walls appear to relate to rebuilding and additions to both the cartshed/stables and barn during the later nineteenth or twentieth century. In addition, the evaluation indicated that a well-preserved farmyard surface is present that lies between the farmhouse, barn, and cartshed/stables. This surface might date to the late eighteenth or nineteenth century.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.2.1 Given the presence of potential early remains, associated with a site that was seemingly occupied during the late medieval and early post-medieval periods, along with below-ground remains relating to later farm buildings, a further programme of archaeological excavation is recommended in order to mitigate the impact of the proposed development.

4.2.2 This might involve a larger open-area excavation across the site. However, any such work would be dependent on the environmental conditions at the site, given the known presence of great crested newts. Any further programme of archaeological investigation will need to be carried out in accordance with an Updated WSI, which should be devised in consultation with GMAAS.

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Plate 11: Brick wall **307** with set surface **308** in background, looking north-west

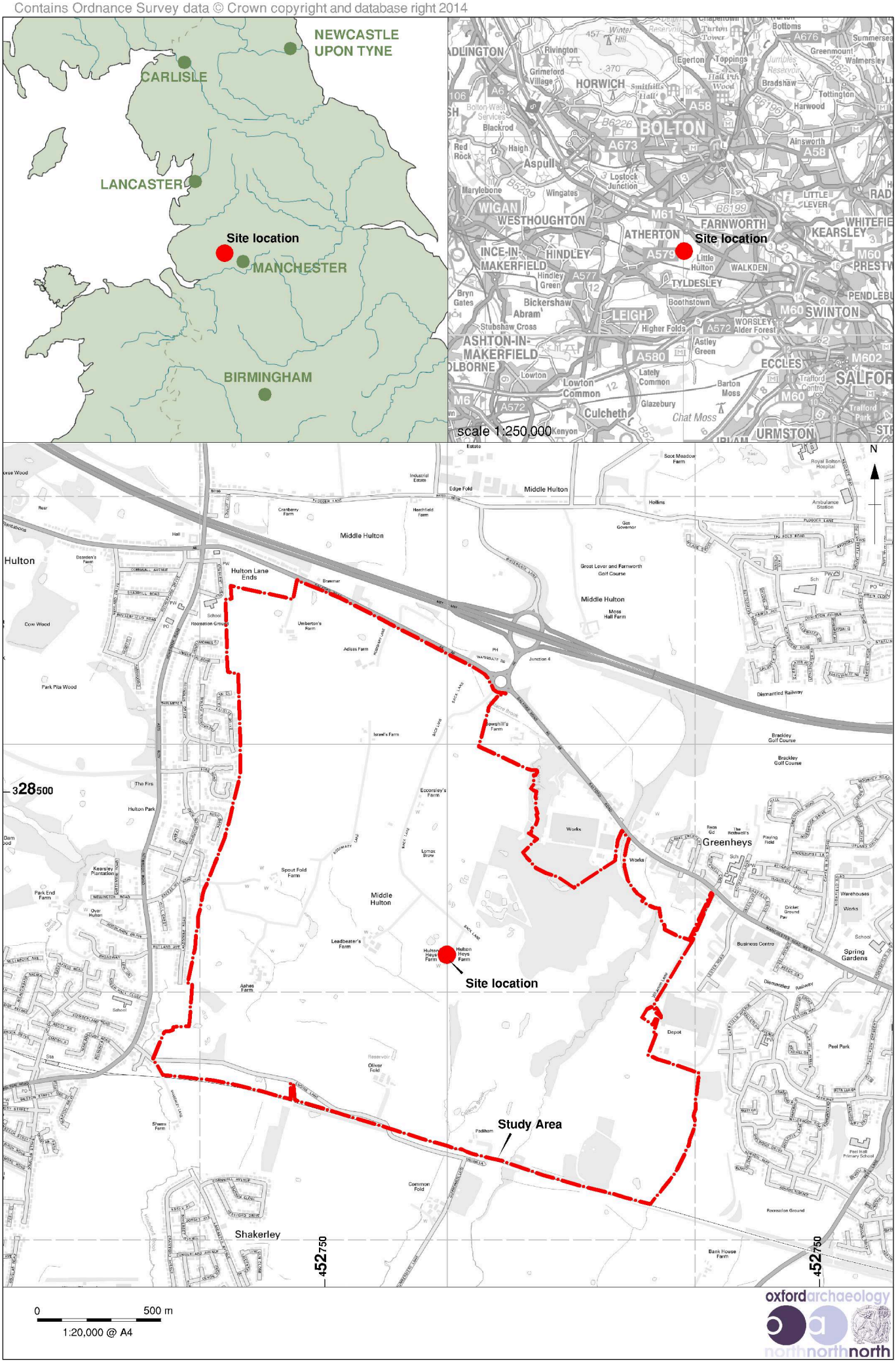

Figure 1: Site location

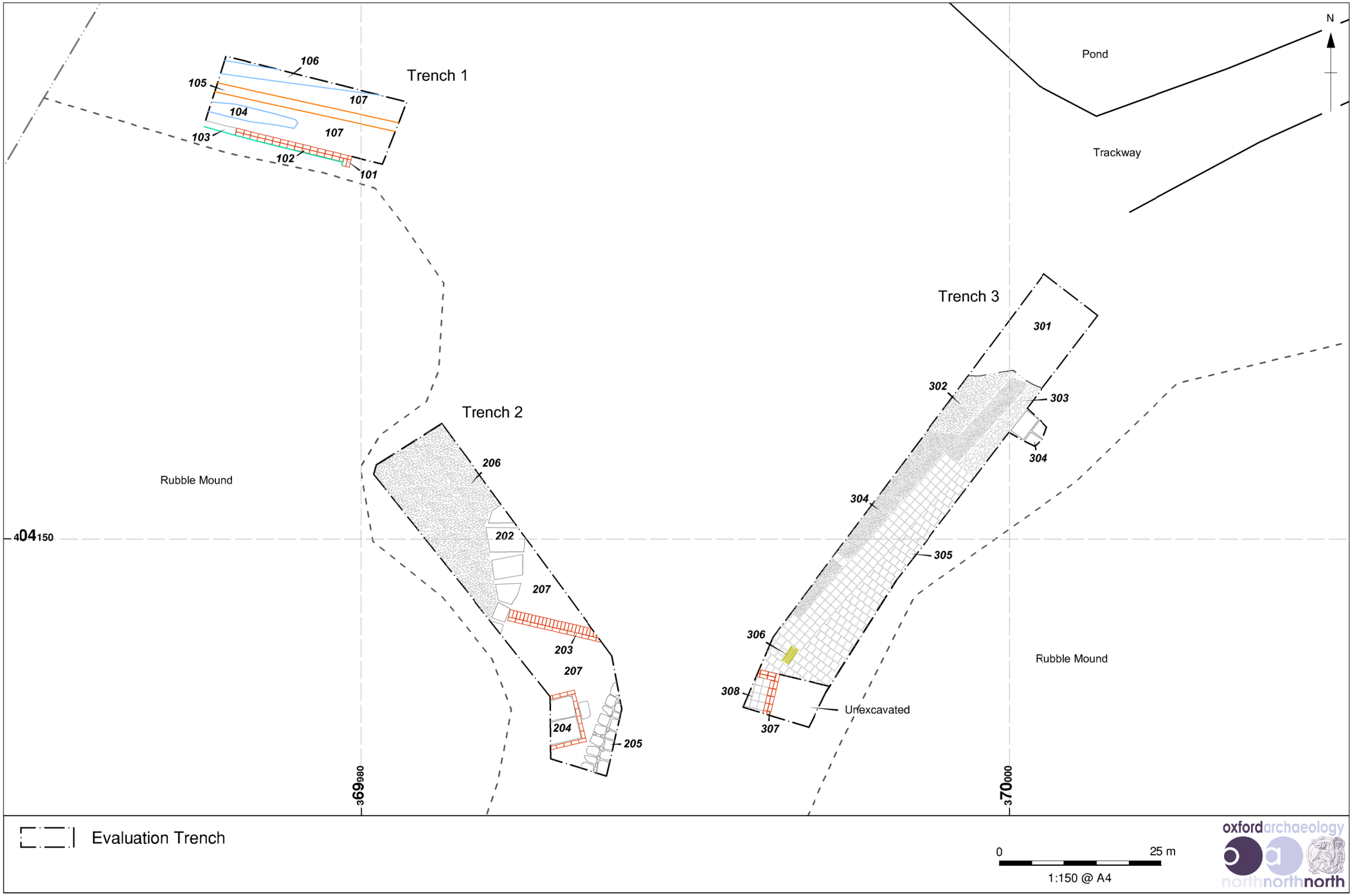

Figure 2: The evaluation trenches

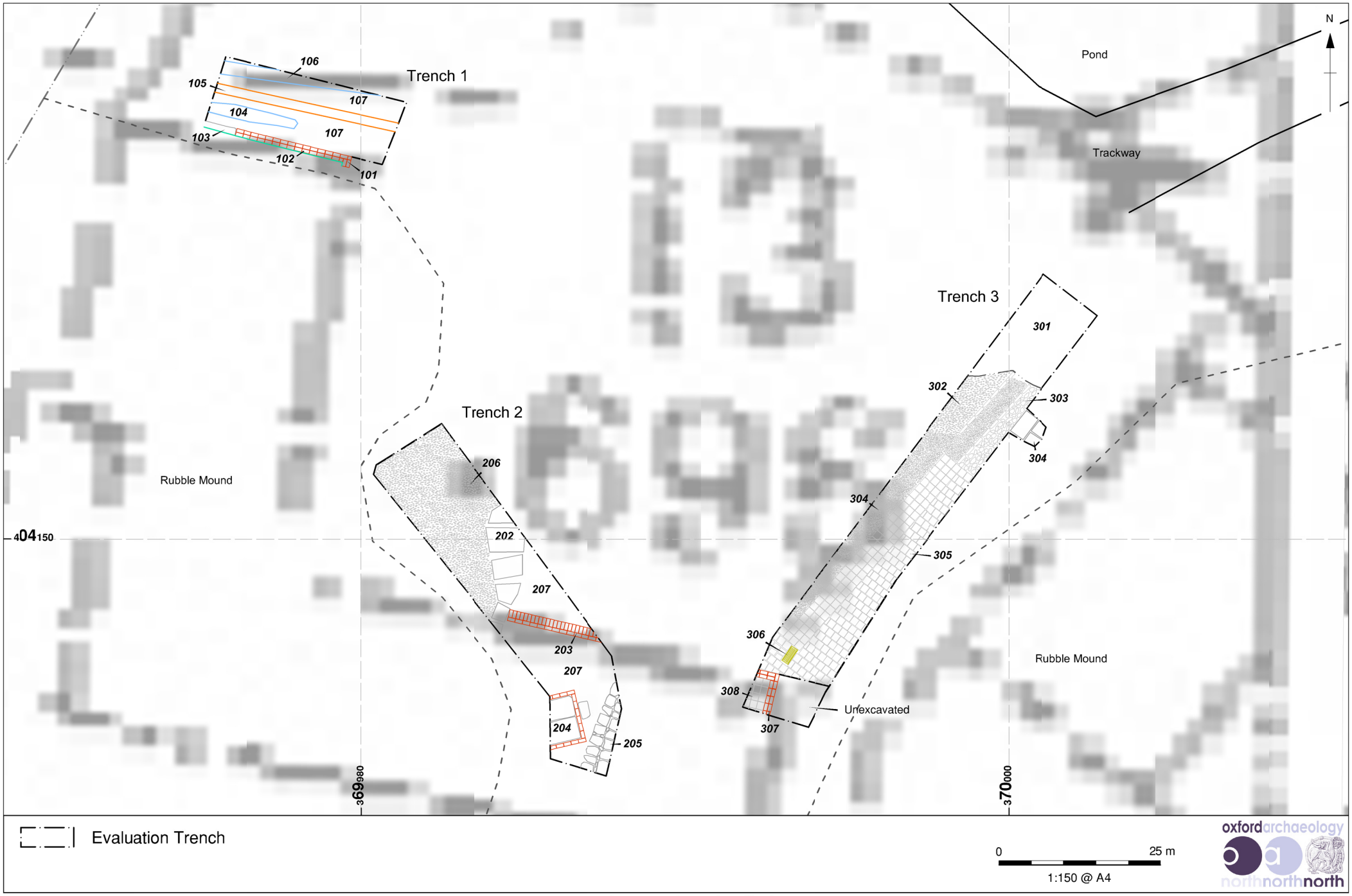

Figure 3: The evaluation trenches superimposed on the Ordnance Survey 25":1 mile map of 1893