



# **Heatley Weir, Warburton, GREATER MANCHESTER**

## **Archaeological Evaluation**



**Oxford Archaeology North**

November 2008

**Royal Haskoning UK Ltd**

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## SUMMARY

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In October 2008, Royal Haskoning UK Ltd, acting on behalf of the Environment Agency, commissioned Oxford Archaeology North to carry out a programme of archaeological evaluation of land adjacent to the River Bollin near Warburton, Greater Manchester (centred on SJ 7030 8870). The evaluation was required to establish the presence or absence of any buried remains of archaeological interest prior to the construction of a fish passage creating a diversion around Heatley Weir.

The site of Heatley Weir lies within an area of known archaeological potential forming part of the water management for Warburton Mill, which occupied the west bank of the River Bollin. The former corn mill has been recorded as a site of archaeological interest, with traces of the mill building dating to the fourteenth century. Warburton Mill is also mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086, although it is possible that this earlier mill occupied a different site.

The archaeological evaluation comprised the excavation of a single trench, measuring 19.5m long and 1.8m wide. No archaeological deposits or features were encountered in the excavated trench, the simple stratigraphic sequence comprising the natural clay geology and topsoil. It is concluded that the construction of the proposed fish passage will not have any impact on any sub-surface archaeological resource of the area.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) would like to thank Jamie Gardiner, of Royal Haskoning UK Ltd, and Philip Catherall, of the Environment Agency, for commissioning and supporting the project.

The evaluation was directed by Sean McPhillips, who was assisted by Will Gardner. The report was compiled by Sean McPhillips, and Marie Rowland produced the illustrations. The report was edited by Ian Miller, who was also responsible for project management.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 In October 2008, Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was requested by J Gardiner, of Royal Haskoning UK Ltd, acting on behalf of The Environment Agency, to carry out an archaeological evaluation of land adjacent to the River Bollin at Warburton Mill near Heatley, in the borough of Trafford, Greater Manchester (centred on SJ 7030 8870). The evaluation was required to assess the presence, extent, character, date and significance of any buried archaeological remains within the footprint of a proposed fish passage that will create a diversion around Heatley Weir. In particular, the evaluation was intended to establish the presence or absence of any remains pertaining to a corn mill, which is documented to have occupied a site in the locale since the medieval period; an entry for the mill is held on the Cheshire Historic Environment Record (HER no 2596). The evaluation was carried out in October 2008, and conformed to a specification detailed in a project design that was agreed and approved by the Environment Agency and the archaeological curator for Greater Manchester (*Appendix 1*).

### 1.2 SITE LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 1.2.1 The study area is located on the north-eastern bank of the River Bollin, a short distance to the north of Heatley (Fig 1). The River Bollin in this area forms the boundary between the counties of Cheshire and Greater Manchester; Heatley is in Cheshire, but the study area lies within Greater Manchester, forming part of the parish of Warburton, and the borough of Trafford. The evaluation trench was placed in a field adjacent to a weir across the River Bollin. The field is bounded by the River Bollin to the south, and the A6144 to the west (Plate 1).



Plate 1: Aerial view of the study area

- 1.2.2 In broad terms, Heatley is situated within a region classified as the Mersey Valley, a distinctive river-valley landscape focusing on the Mersey, its estuary and associated tributaries. The topography of the region is defined largely by its generally low-lying, low relief topography (Countryside Commission 1998, 141). Heatley, however, lies on a ridge of hills across North Cheshire, which falls sharply northwards towards the flat floodplain of the river Mersey.
- 1.2.3 The solid geology of the area comprises Permo-triassic sandstone, which was formed some 220 million years ago. The surface geology thus consists principally of superficial deposits, which includes a mantle of glacial boulder clay with pockets of sand and gravel (Hains and Horton 1975).

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## 2. METHODOLOGY

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### 2.1 EVALUATION TRENCH

- 2.1.1 A single trench, measuring 19.5m long and 1.8m wide, was excavated across the route of the proposed fish passage (Fig 2). The uppermost level of the trench was excavated by a machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, thereafter the excavation of other remains, was undertaken manually.
- 2.1.2 All information was recorded stratigraphically with accompanying documentation (plans, sections and both colour slide and black and white print photographs, both of individual contexts and overall site shots from standard view points). Photography was undertaken with 35mm cameras on archivable black-and-white print film, as well as colour transparency, all frames including a visible, graduated metric scale. Digital photography was used extensively throughout the course of the fieldwork for presentation purposes. Photographic records were also maintained on special photographic *pro-forma* sheets.

### 2.2 FINDS

- 2.2.1 Finds' recovery and sampling programmes were carried out in accordance with best practice (following current Institute of Field Archaeologists guidelines), and subject to expert advice in order to minimise deterioration. No artefacts recovered from the evaluation trench were retained.

### 2.3 ARCHIVE

- 2.3.1 The results of all archaeological work carried out will form the basis for a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (*Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition, 1991). The original record archive of project will be deposited with the Greater Manchester County Record Office.
- 2.3.2 The Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) online database *Online Access to index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) will be completed as part of the archiving phase of the project.



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### 3. BACKGROUND

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#### 3.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1.1 **Introduction:** a summary historical background is presented in order to place the study area into a wider context.
- 3.1.2 **Prehistoric period:** some limited evidence for human activity in the area during the prehistoric period has been provided by several chance finds, including a flint blade and six Mesolithic tools (Nevell 1997). However, there is no firm evidence for actual settlement in the area during the prehistoric period.
- 3.1.3 **Roman period (AD 43-410):** evidence for activity in the area during the Roman period is similarly derived largely from chance finds. In particular, several Roman coins, broaches, and a bracelet have been discovered in recent years (*ibid*). The concentration of Roman artefacts in the area provided the rationale for Time Team to carry out an archaeological investigation in Warburton in September 2006. It was concluded from this investigation that there had been a Romano-British farmstead at Warbuton, indicated by the discovery of strip lynchets. The presence of Roman finds was interpreted as rubbish, mixed in with manure, to be spread on the crops.
- 3.1.4 **Medieval:** prior to the Norman Conquest of 1066, the area was controlled by the Anglo-Saxon thegn Aelfward (Warburton 1970). The Anglo-Saxon origins of Warburton are indicated by place-name evidence; the suffix 'ton' may be translated from Old English to mean a settlement or farmstead.
- 3.1.5 It is possible that the parish church, dedicated to Saint Werburgh, is of Anglo-Saxon origin, although it is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. The Domesday Survey does, however, provide the earliest documentary reference to Warburton, mentioning the two manors of Warburton; the manors were united by the late twelfth century (Nevell 1997). The Domesday Survey also mentions a corn mill at Warburton, although its precise location is not given. The first documented evidence of a church in Warburton was in a deed of 1187, when it was a chapel of ease for the parish of Lymm. Warburton is also the site of a medieval priory, near the Church of St Werburgh; the priory was annexed to Cockersand Abbey in 1271 (Wilson 1876). In addition to the reference in Domesday, a mill at Warburton is mentioned in a deed dated 1469, which states that the de Lymms gave half a mill to the de Warburtons.
- 3.1.6 Warburton grew as an agricultural town during the medieval period, and it remained almost untouched by the Industrial Revolution; this is reflected in the population change between 1801 and 1901, dropping from 466 to 403, with little variation at a time when the rest of Trafford was expanding rapidly.
- 3.1.7 **Post-medieval:** at some point during the post-medieval period, the corn mill was rebuilt on the south-east bank of the River Bollin. This large mill is marked by name on the earliest published surveys of Cheshire, including

Burdett's map of 1777, and Bryant's map of 1831. The mill was equipped originally with two waterwheels, one intended for high water and the second for normal conditions. In 1905, a turbine was installed, and was renewed in 1935 (Morris 1968). The mill was converted for residential use in recent years (Plates 2 and 3).



*Plate 2: Recent view of Warburton Mill, following conversion to residential properties*



*Plate 3: Heatley Weir, and the gable end of Warburton Mill*



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## 4. EVALUATION RESULTS

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

- 4.1.1 A single trench, placed some 10m east of the river bank and measuring 19.5m long and 1.8m wide, was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.2m (Fig 2). It was aligned broadly north-east/south-west, within the footprint of the proposed fish passage (Plate 4).



*Plate 4: View of the trench during excavation*

- 4.1.2 It had been suggested that the land surrounding the eastern side of the river comprised made-ground, measuring up to 1.5m thick, although no evidence for this was encountered within the trench or across the outlying field. However, large amounts of rubble and concrete were located along the eastern side of the weir (Plate 5), contained by the present river bank, which may have been dumped during the construction, or subsequent repair, of the weir. The raised bank of the river, which is presumably artificial and systematically modified as a response to the threat of flooding, was not excavated as part of the archaeological evaluation.



*Plate 5: View of concrete rubble on the eastern side of the river, north-east of the weir*

## 4.2 RESULTS

- 4.2.1 A homogeneous deposit of light brown clay, containing few coarse components, was exposed at a depth of 0.4m beneath the modern ground surface (Plate 6). This deposit was clearly of natural origin, representing the drift geology. Limited excavation was carried out to a depth of 1.2m at the north-eastern end of the trench to confirm that the clay was an undisturbed layer (Plate 7), and that it did not represent the deposition of material associated with the remodelling of the raised river bank.
- 4.2.2 The natural clay was cut by two ceramic land drains, which were located at the north-eastern and south-western ends of the trench at depths of 0.8m and 1m respectively (Fig 3). No other features of archaeological interest were present within the trench.
- 4.2.3 The natural clay and the ceramic land drains were overlain by a deposit of dark grey-brown, slightly humic, silty-clay. This layer had a uniform thickness of 0.35m, representing the topsoil. Several small fragments of twentieth-century pottery, and part of a plastic doll, were recovered from the topsoil; these were of no archaeological interest, and have not been retained.





*Plate 6: View of the excavated trench*



*Plate 7: View of the north-west-facing section at the north-eastern end of the trench*

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## 5. CONCLUSION

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### 5.1 CONCLUSION

- 5.1.1 The results obtained from the archaeological evaluation have confirmed that the proposed route of the fish passage does not contain any archaeological remains. Whilst this does not preclude the possibility that remains of archaeological significance may survive in the vicinity, it is concluded that the construction of the fish passage will not have an impact on any sub-surface archaeological resource of the area.
- 5.1.2 It is not envisaged that any further archaeological work in association with the proposed fish passage will be required.

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## 6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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### CARTOGRAPHIC SOURCES

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Bryant, A, 1831 *Map of the County Palatine of Chester*

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## APPENDIX 1: PROJECT DESIGN

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October 2008

Oxford  
Archaeology  
North

### HEATLEY WEIR, WARBURTON, GREATER MANCHESTER



### ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION PROJECT DESIGN

#### ***Proposals***

*The following project design is offered in response to a request from J Gardiner, of Royal Haskoning UK Ltd, for an archaeological evaluation in advance of the construction of a fish passage on the River Bollin at Heatley, Greater Manchester.*



## 1 BACKGROUND

### 1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF PROJECT

1.1.1 In October 2008, Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was requested by J Gardiner, of Royal Haskoning UK Ltd, acting on behalf of The Environment Agency, to submit a costed project design for an archaeological evaluation of land adjacent to the River Bollin at Heatley, in the borough of Trafford, Greater Manchester (centred on SJ 7030 8870). The evaluation aims to assess the presence, extent, character, date and significance of any buried archaeological remains that may survive within the footprint of a proposed fish passage that will create a diversion around Heatley Weir. The fish passage necessitates the excavation of a narrow channel across a short section of the field immediately to the east of the weir.

1.1.2 Heatley Weir formed part of the water-management system for Warburton Mill, which occupies a site on the west bank of the River Bollin (Figure 1), within the county of Cheshire. Warburton Mill is entered on the Cheshire Historic Environment Record (HER) as a site of archaeological interest, and a Warburton Mill is also recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086. Whilst records of the present mill building may be traced back to the fourteenth century, it remains possible that the mill mentioned in the Domesday Survey occupied a different site. Indeed, the possibility that this early mill was on the eastern bank of the River Bollin, within the route of the proposed fish passage, cannot be discounted.

### 1.2 OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY

1.2.1 Oxford Archaeology has over 30 years of experience in professional archaeology, and can provide a professional and cost effective service. We are the largest employer of archaeologists in the country (we currently have more than 300 members of staff) and can thus deploy considerable resources with extensive experience to deal with any archaeological obligations you or your clients may have. We have offices in Lancaster, Cambridge and Oxford, trading as OA North, OA East, and OA South respectively, enabling us to provide a truly nationwide service. Watching briefs, evaluations and excavations have taken place within the planning process, to fulfil the requirements of clients and planning authorities, to very rigorous timetables.

1.2.2 OA North has the professional expertise and resources to undertake the project detailed below to a high level of quality and efficiency. OA North is **an Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) registered organisation, registration number 17**, and all its members of staff operate subject to the IFA Code of Conduct.

## **2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **2.1 ACADEMIC AIMS**

2.1.1 The main research aim of the investigation will be to establish the presence or absence of any buried remains of archaeological interest within the route of the proposed fish passage. Should any such remains prove to be present, then the evaluation will seek to characterise their character, extent, level of preservation, and significance. The results from the evaluation will provide information as to whether further investigation is required prior to the construction of the fish passage. The required stages to achieve these ends are as follows:

- to excavate a single trench along the route of the proposed fish passage;
- to produce a written report that will assess the significance of the data generated by the above fieldwork programme within a local and regional context;
- to facilitate the implementation of a strategy that will take account of the archaeological resource of the site in the final design proposals, and satisfy the requirements of the curatorial archaeologist.

### 3 METHOD STATEMENT

3.1 The following work programme is submitted in line with the aims and objectives summarised above.

#### 3.2 FIELDWORK

3.2.1 The evaluation trench will establish the presence or absence of any previously unknown archaeological deposits and, if established, will then test their date, nature, depth and quality of preservation. The site will be investigated via a single trench, placed in the position of the proposed fish passage (Figure 1). The trench will have a maximum total length of 30m, and a minimum width of 1.8m, although may be stepped out for Health and Safety reasons if deep stratigraphy is encountered; the trench will not be continued into the raised embankment that flanks the river.

3.2.2 Excavation of the uppermost levels of modern overburden/demolition material will be undertaken by a machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket to the top of the first significant archaeological level. The work will be supervised by a suitably experienced archaeologist. Spoil from the excavation will be stored adjacent to the trench, and will be backfilled upon completion of the archaeological works.

3.2.3 Machine excavation will then be used to define carefully the extent of any surviving foundations, floors, and other remains. Thereafter, all remains will be cleaned manually, using either hoes, shovel scraping, and/or trowels depending on the subsoil conditions, to define their extent, nature, form and, where possible, date. All features of archaeological interest will be investigated and recorded. Any investigation of intact archaeological deposits will be exclusively manual. Selected pits and postholes will normally only be half-sectioned, linear features will be subject to no more than a 10% sample, and extensive layers will, where possible, be sampled by partial rather than complete removal. It is hoped that in terms of the vertical stratigraphy, maximum information retrieval will be achieved through the examination of sections of cut features.

3.2.4 All information identified in the course of the site works will be recorded stratigraphically, using a system adapted from that used by the Centre for Archaeology Service of English Heritage, with sufficient pictorial record (plans, sections and both black and white and colour photographs) to identify and illustrate individual features.

3.2.5 Results of the evaluation will be recorded on *pro-forma* context sheets. The site archive will include both a photographic record and accurate large-scale plans and sections at an appropriate scale (1:50 and 1:20). All artefacts and ecofacts will be recorded using the same system, and will be handled and stored according to standard practice (following current Institute of Field Archaeologists guidelines) in order to minimise deterioration.

3.2.6 A full and detailed photographic record of individual contexts will be maintained and similarly general views from standard view points of the

overall site at all stages of the evaluation will be generated. Photography will be undertaken using 35mm cameras on archivable black and white print film as well as colour transparency, and all frames will include a visible, graduated metric scale. Extensive use of digital photography will also be undertaken throughout the course of the fieldwork for presentation purposes. Photographs records will be maintained on special photographic *pro-forma* sheets.

- 3.2.7 ***Finds policy:*** all finds will be exposed, lifted, cleaned, bagged and boxed in accordance with the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC) *First Aid For Finds*, 1998 (new edition). All identified finds and artefacts will be retained, although certain classes of building material can sometimes be discarded after recording if an appropriate sample is retained.
- 3.2.8 ***Environmental Sampling:*** environmental samples (bulk samples of 30 litres volume, to be sub-sampled at a later stage) will be collected from stratified undisturbed deposits and will particularly target negative features (gullies, pits and ditches). An assessment of the environmental potential of the site will be undertaken through the examination of suitable deposits by the in-house palaeoecological specialist, who will examine the potential for further analysis. The assessment would include soil pollen analysis and the retrieval of charred plant macrofossils and land molluscs from former dry-land palaeosols and cut features. In addition, the samples would be assessed for plant macrofossils, insect, molluscs and pollen from waterlogged deposits. The costs for the palaeoecological assessment are defined as a contingency and will only be called into effect if good deposits are identified and will be subject to the agreement of archaeological curator and the client.
- 3.2.9 ***Treasure:*** any gold and silver artefacts recovered during the course of the evaluation will be removed to a safe place and reported to the local Coroner according to the procedures relating to the Treasure Act, 1996. Where removal cannot take place on the same working day as discovery, suitable security will be employed to protect the finds from theft.
- 3.2.10 ***Human Remains:*** any human remains uncovered will be left *in situ*, covered and protected. No further investigation will continue beyond that required to establish the date and character of the burial. If removal is essential, the exhumation of any funerary remains will require the provision of a Home Office license, under section 25 of the Burial Act of 1857. An application will be made by OA North for the study area on discovery of any such remains and the removal will be carried out with due care and sensitivity under the environmental health regulations.
- 3.2.11 ***Reinstatement:*** it is understood that there will be no requirement for reinstatement of the ground beyond backfilling. The ground will be backfilled, and the ground will be roughly graded with the machine.

### 3.3 ARCHIVE PREPARATION AND REPORT PRODUCTION

- 3.3.1 **Archive:** the results of all archaeological work carried out will form the basis for a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (*Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition, 1991). The project archive represents the collation and indexing of all the data and material gathered during the course of the project. It will include summary processing and analysis of all features, finds, or palaeoenvironmental data recovered during fieldwork, which will be catalogued by context.
- 3.3.2 The deposition of a properly ordered and indexed project archive in an appropriate repository is considered an essential and integral element of all archaeological projects by the IFA in that organisation's code of conduct. OA North conforms to best practice in the preparation of project archives for long-term storage. This archive will be provided in the English Heritage Centre for Archaeology format and a synthesis will be submitted to the Greater Manchester SMR (the index to the archive and a copy of the report). OA North practice is to deposit the original record archive of projects with the appropriate County Record Office.
- 3.3.3 The deposition and disposal of any artefacts recovered in the evaluation will be agreed with the legal owner and an appropriate recipient museum..
- 3.3.4 Except for items subject to the Treasure Act, all artefacts found during the course of the project will be donated to the receiving museum.
- 3.3.5 **Report:** a draft copy of a written synthetic report will be forwarded to the archaeological curator for comment and approval. Thereafter, one bound and one unbound copy of the report will be submitted to the client, and a further three copies submitted to the Greater Manchester SMR within eight weeks of completion. The report will include:
- a site location plan related to the national grid;
  - the dates on which the fieldwork was undertaken;
  - a concise, non-technical summary of the results;
  - a description of the methodology employed, work undertaken and results obtained;
  - plans and sections at an appropriate scale showing the location and position of deposits and finds located;
  - a list of and dates for any finds recovered, and a description and interpretation of the deposits identified;
  - an assessment of the likely impact of the proposed fish passage on areas of known and predicted archaeology;
  - a copy of this project design, and indications of any agreed departure from that design.

3.3.6 The Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) online database project *Online Access to index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) will be completed as part of the archiving phase of the project.

3.3.7 **Confidentiality:** the final report is designed as a document for the specific use of the client, and should be treated as such; it is not suitable for publication as an academic report, or otherwise, without amendment or revision. Any requirement to revise or reorder the material for submission or presentation to third parties beyond the project brief and project design, or for any other explicit purpose, can be fulfilled, but will require separate discussion and funding.

### 3.4 OTHER MATTERS

3.4.1 **Health and Safety:** OA North provides a Health and Safety Statement for all projects and maintains a Unit Safety policy; further details are presented in *Appendix 1*. All site procedures are in accordance with the guidance set out in the Health and Safety Manual compiled by the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers (1997). A written risk assessment will be undertaken in advance of project commencement and copies will be made available on request to all interested parties. OA North uses a CAT-Scan device prior to any excavation to test for services as a matter of course, and will pay particular attention to the service information supplied by the Client. All OA North staff will be equipped with hard hats, safety boots, and high-visibility jackets.

3.4.2 **Contingencies:** the costings have not allowed for the installation of secure fencing. OA North can supply and erect appropriate fencing if required, although this will be subject to additional costing.

3.4.3 **Insurance:** the insurance in respect of claims for personal injury to or the death of any person under a contract of service with the unit and arising out of an in the course of such person's employment shall comply with the employers' liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969 and any statutory orders made there under. For all other claims to cover the liability of OA North, in respect of personal injury or damage to property by negligence of OA North or any of its employees, there applies the insurance cover of £2m for any one occurrence or series of occurrences arising out of one event.

## 4 WORK TIMETABLE

- 4.1 A two-day period should be allowed to excavate, record and backfill the evaluation trench.
- 4.2 A report will be submitted within six weeks of the completion of the fieldwork.

## 5 STAFFING PROPOSALS

- 5.1 The project will be under the overall charge of **Ian Miller BA FSA** (OA North Senior Project Manager) to whom all correspondence should be addressed.
- 5.2 The evaluation will be undertaken by **Sean McPhillips** (OA North Project Officer). Sean has considerable experience of archaeological evaluations and excavations, and has directed numerous such projects throughout the North West. Sean will be assisted by at least one technician, although extra staff can be called upon if required.
- 5.3 Assessment of the finds from the evaluation will be undertaken by OA North's in-house finds specialist **Christine Howard-Davis** (OA North Finds Manager). Christine acts as OA North's in-house finds specialist, and has an extensive knowledge of all finds of all periods from archaeological sites in northern England.
- 5.4 Assessment of any palaeoenvironmental samples will be undertaken by, or under the auspices of **Elizabeth Huckerby MSc** (OA North Project Officer). Elizabeth has extensive knowledge of the palaeoecology of the North West through her work on the English Heritage-funded North West Wetlands Survey.

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## ILLUSTRATIONS

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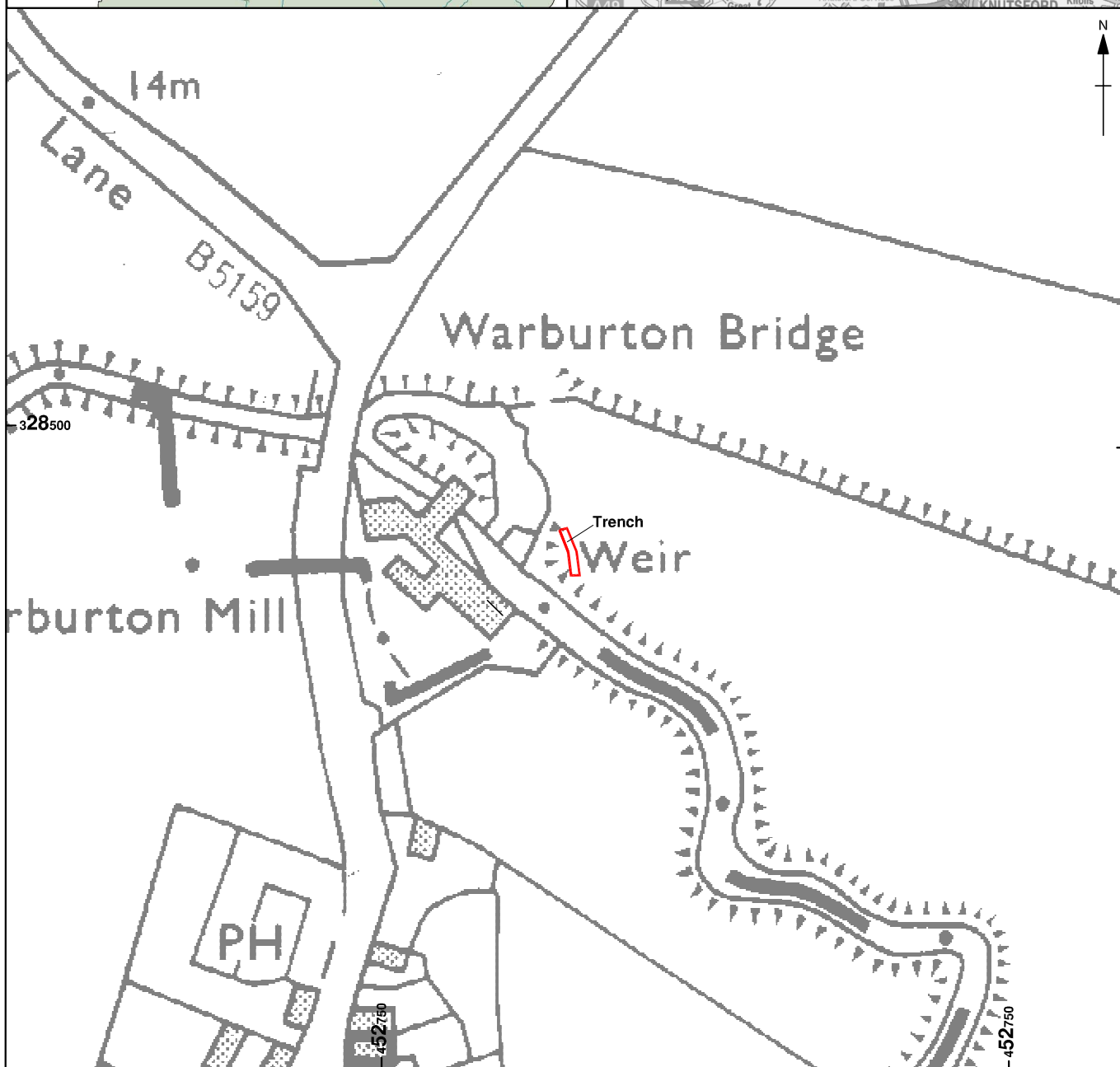
### LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Site location

Figure 2: Trench location plan, superimposed on the 1910 Ordnance Survey map

Figure 3: North-west-facing section of the trench





Based upon the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office ©Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Oxford Archaeology Licence No. AL 100005569 (2008).

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Figure 1: Site location

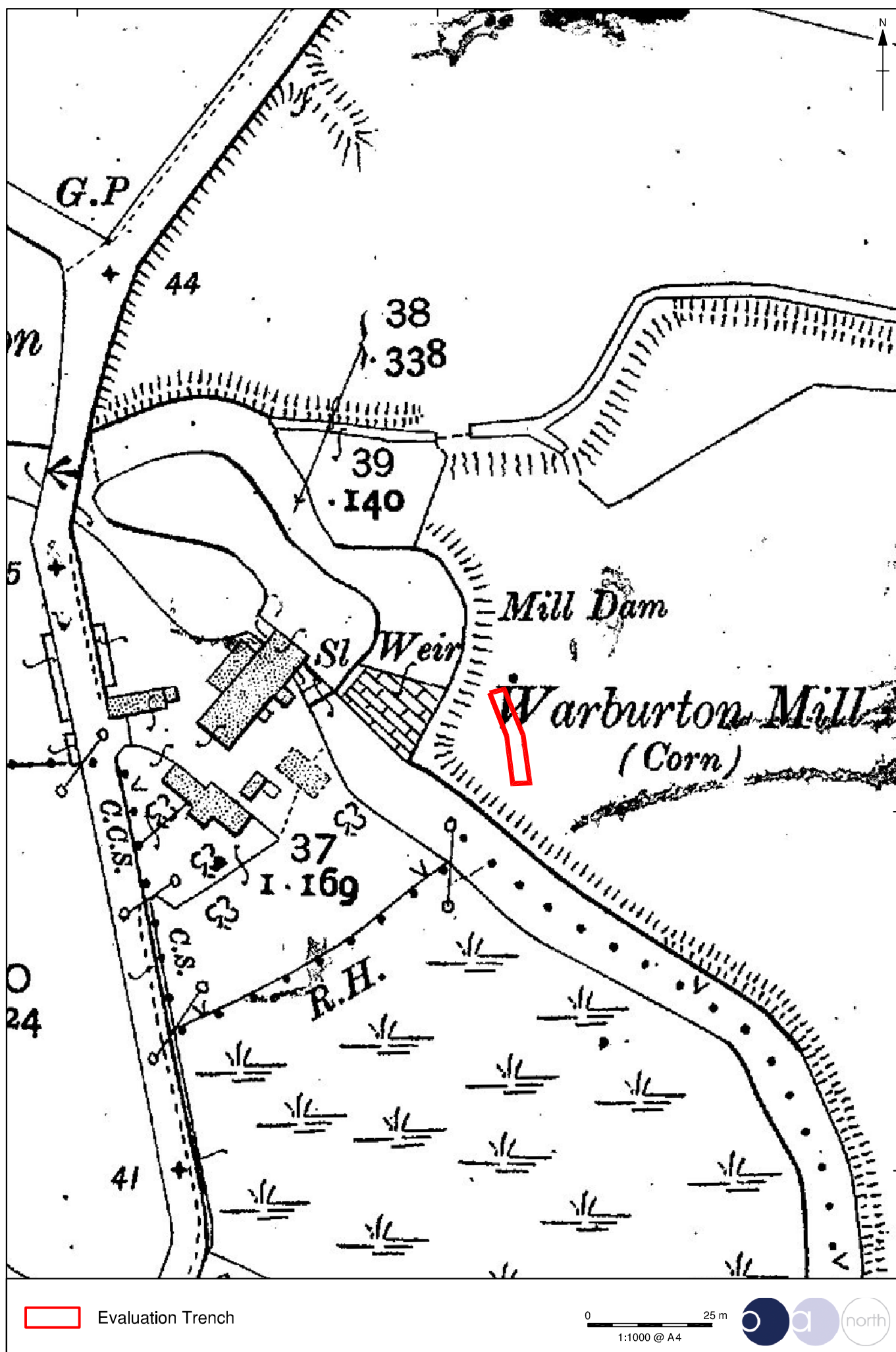


Figure 2: Trench location superimposed on the Ordnance Survey map of 1910

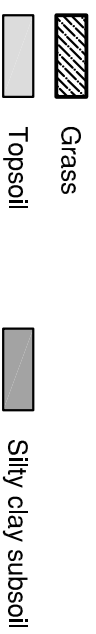
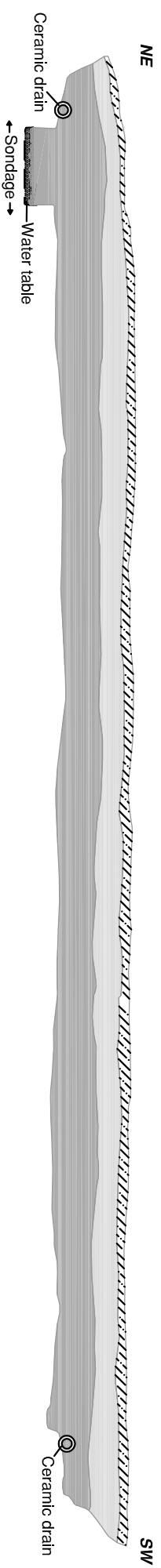


Figure 3: North-west-facing section of the trench