



Victor Barns, Northampton Road, Brixworth, Northamptonshire Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Victor Barns, Northampton Road, Brixworth, Northamptonshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological trial trench evaluation of land at Victor Barns off Northampton Road, Brixworth, Northamptonshire between 12th-15th December 2017. The site is centred on NGR SP 7667 6911.

A total of 13 trial trenches were excavated revealing a single linear ditch aligned NW-SE and three or four probable quarries. The upper fills of the quarries produced a small range of artefacts dating from the 19th century. No datable material was encountered within the ditch although this is aligned parallel to one shown on the 1st edition OS map. It is most likely that the ditch was a former boundary related to the historic field arrangement.

The evaluation did not produce any evidence for activity at the site predating the post-medieval period.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Orion Heritage for commissioning this project and Liz Mordue who monitored the work on behalf of Northamptonshire County Council.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Steve Lawrence. The fieldwork was directed by Paul Murray, who was assisted by Richard Kevil. Survey and digitizing was carried out by Conan Parsons.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Orion Heritage to undertake a trial trench evaluation on land at Victor Barns, off Northampton Road, Brixworth, Northamptonshire.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref. DA/2013/0510 and variation DA/2015/1009). A formal brief was not issued and the scope of work was advised by Orion Heritage based upon a reasonable requirement to adequately evaluate the site. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced by OA and approved by Liz Mordue, Planning Archaeologist at Northamptonshire County Council, prior to commencing the fieldwork.
- 1.1.3 The fieldwork was completed between 12th-15th December 2016.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The proposed development area covers an approximately 2.6ha, triangular parcel of land located to the west of Northampton Road and approximately 600m to the south of Brixworth. The site is bounded to the south by Victor Barns and other buildings with a minor single carriageway road defining the western limit and cricket and tennis facilities to the east. The access to Victor Barns bisects the site from the eastern side. The site is centred on NGR SP 7667 6911 (Fig. 1).
- 1.2.2 At the time of the fieldwork the site comprised areas of maintained grass lawn and a storage yard enclosed by banks and mature hedges. The land slopes up between approximately 108-113m aOD (above Ordnance Datum) from south to north.
- 1.2.3 The underlying solid geology comprises Ironstone of the Northampton Sand Formation (BGS website data).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The following is a summary of information available online from the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record (HER) via the Heritage Gateway (current to July 2014) and recently excavated information from the development at Saxon Rise to the north-east of the site.
- 1.3.2 The HER lists a number of finds in the area, primarily of prehistoric flints, though the precise locations of individual artefacts are not certain. This includes a record of possible prehistoric activity or settlement that coincides with the southern limit of the site. Here a Neolithic flint axe and Bronze Age flintwork have been recovered.
- 1.3.3 A watching brief undertaken in 1990 to the east of the site when the Brixworth Bypass was constructed recorded late Iron Age and Roman features possibly indicative of a settlement. Most recently excavations have been undertaken at Saxon Rise, a residential development on the southern fringe of Brixworth, approximately 650m to the north-east of the site and east of Northampton Road. These excavations revealed evidence for late Bronze Age timber structures, Iron Age enclosures with associated

pennanular ditches, storage pits and a field system. Activity continued at this site until the 3rd century AD with crop drying ovens being arranged within the field boundaries.

- 1.3.4 Brixworth is perhaps best known for its Saxon church reputedly dating from c AD 680 and located 2.3km to the north of the site. However, earlier Saxon activity is recorded closer to the site at approximately 1km to the NNE within the current southern limit of the village. Excavation has revealed post-built structures and sunken-floored buildings dating to the 5th-6th century.

2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aim of the evaluation was to identify any archaeological remains and the potential impacts upon these. To do this the general aims were to:

- i. establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains,
- ii. determine and confirm the character of any remains present, without compromising any deposits that may merit detailed investigation or preservation,
- iii. determine or estimate the date range of any remains from artefacts or otherwise,
- iv. characterise any underlying archaeological strata down to undisturbed geology without significantly impacting upon significant younger (overlying) deposits where possible,
- v. determine the geo-archaeological and palaeo-environmental potential of any archaeological deposits encountered,
- vi. recover suitable materials for scientific dating where appropriate,
- vii. establish what archaeological remains/deposits may be affected by any proposed development,
- viii. make available the results of the investigation to inform subsequent mitigation strategies,
- ix. produce a factual report, full archive and HER data submission,
- x. disseminate the results of the investigation at a level appropriate to their importance.

2.2 Methodology and scope

2.2.1 The evaluation initially comprised ten trenches set out as defined within the WSI with a minor adjustment to the alignment of Trench 6 due to modern obstructions. The trenches were excavated with a five-tonne excavator fitted with a ditching bucket. Overburden was removed in level spits down to the level of significant archaeological remains or to natural subsoils/bedrock, whichever was encountered first. Following machine clearance of the non-archaeological horizons, all features were investigated by hand excavation and recorded. Backfilling was undertaken following a site visit by Liz Mordue.

2.2.2 Following the site monitoring meeting between William Bedford (Orion Heritage) and Liz Mordue it was agreed that a further three small trenches (Trenches 11-13) would be required to clarify the alignment of a ditch recorded in Trench 9 and to attempt to recover datable material from it. It was also agreed that additional slots through the ditch could be excavated by machine in careful spits for finds retrieval alone.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below, and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches which contained archaeological remains. Trenches lacking archaeological remains are not described in detail. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all the encountered deposits are presented in Appendix A.
- 3.1.2 No significant finds assemblages were encountered and a summary of the recovered material is presented below.
- 3.1.3 Context numbers reflect the trench numbers unless otherwise stated e.g. pit 102 is a feature within Trench 1, while ditch 304 is a feature within Trench 3.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 The soil sequence across the trenches was uniform. The Northampton Sand Formation geology was overlain by a thick humic layer of topsoil (Plate 1). Additional deposits of rubble debris and other construction materials were recorded across the upper limits of Trenches 6 and 7 relating to the use of this area as a storage yard (Plate 2).
- 3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good, and the trenches remained dry throughout. Archaeological features, where present, were well defined against the natural geology.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

- 3.3.1 Archaeological features were present in Trenches 9-13. A ditch, revealed in Trench 9, was further traced in Trenches 11-13. Modern quarrying was identified in Trench 10 and extended south to the north-east end of Trenches 11 and 12. Topsoil directly sealed all archaeological deposits.

3.4 Trench 9

- 3.4.1 Two features, a ditch (902) and a probable quarry (904), were recorded cut into the surface of the geological horizon encountered at approximately 110.8m aOD (Fig. 3 and Plate 3).
- 3.4.2 Ditch 902 was 1.92m wide and crossed the trench on a NE-SW alignment. Hand excavation of this revealed a uniform V-shaped profile that was 0.76m deep containing a single brown silty sand and stoney fill derived from the surrounding geology and soil deposits (Fig. 4, section 901 and Plate 4). This deposit produced a bovine femur and teeth as well as a number of poorly preserved undiagnostic bones (likely to be bovine).
- 3.4.3 The south-western edge of a probable quarry cut (904) was partly revealed in the north-east end of the trench (Fig. 3). Excavation of this feature to a depth of 0.5m revealed a profile with near-vertical sides containing a loose, mid brown silty sand deposit with ironstone inclusions similar to that recorded in ditch 902. This deposit produced a single body sherd (2g) from an English porcelain dish (ENPO) dated c 1800-1900 and a single fragment of post-medieval tile, probably from a pantile. The feature

was not excavated beyond 0.5m deep due to the probable depth of the feature and concerns over the safety and stability of this against the trench edge.

3.5 Trench 10

- 3.5.1 Trench 10 was positioned across a distinct hollow in the topography with the turf ground level height at the north-western end at 111.92m aOD. This dipped to a low point of 111.07m aOD across the southern part of the trench and could be seen rising beyond this limit. The hollow extended to the south-west for c 15m, generally corresponding with the probable quarry (904) recorded in Trench 9.
- 3.5.2 Three large features (1002, 1006, 1008) were recorded cut into the surface of the geological horizon encountered at approximately 110.1m aOD within the excavated trench (Fig. 3).
- 3.5.3 A substantial linear cut (1008) was identified crossing the central part of the trench on a NE-SW alignment corresponding very well with the probable quarry (904), located c 10m to the south-west. It was excavated to a depth of 0.7m (1.2m below ground level), which did not establish the full depth of the feature, although a near-vertical edge to the side of the feature was recorded similar to 904 (Fig. 5, section 1003). Three distinct fills were encountered within the excavated part (1009, 1010 and 1011). The lowest (1009) comprised soft, loose, mid grey humic soil (thickness not established) which appeared to represent a buried soil horizon. This produced a single, small rim sherd (1g) from a cream ware jug with banded slip decoration (CREA BAND). This fabric was in general production from c 1797-1830. The two sterile upper fills comprised variably stony, sandy silts.
- 3.5.4 A further large feature (1006) was revealed south of 1008. This was 4.6m wide, but only 0.5m deep, and broadly aligned NE-SW across the trench. This was infilled with a single sterile deposit (1007) that was machine-excavated and contained a density of large ironstone fragments. This deposit may represent rejected debris from localised quarrying (Fig. 5, section 1002).
- 3.5.5 A further probable quarry (1002) was partly revealed within the south-eastern end of the trench (Fig. 3 and Fig. 5, section 1001). This was excavated to a depth of 0.9m (1.3m below ground level) before work ceased due to the potential risk of collapse. Excavation was sufficient to reveal a steep-sided profile containing three distinct fills (1003, 1004 and 1005). The lowest fill (1003) comprised a deliberate backfill deposit of silt and ironstone. This was overlain by 1003 from which a fragment of wine bottle top was recovered that broadly dates from the 19th century. The upper fill (1005) was 0.44m thick and comprised loose, mid brown sandy silt containing small fragments of ironstone.

3.6 Trenches 11, 12 and 13

- 3.6.1 Trenches 11, 12 and 13 were targeted to trace the line of ditch 902 and attempt to recover datable material through additional machine excavation of the encountered fills.
- 3.6.2 The ditch was recorded in each trench (1102, 1202, 1302) without deviation from the NW-SE alignment recorded in Trench 9 (Figs 2 and 3). Machine-excavated sections

were completed to reveal the profiles of ditches 1102 and 1202, removing and investigating the fill deposits for finds recovery. Similar ditch profiles, dimensions and fill sequences were recorded in each ditch without notable variation to those of ditch 902 (Fig. 4, sections 1101 and 1201). However, the fill of ditch 1302 was not excavated due to the presence of substantial tree roots from retained mature trees within the adjacent boundary.

- 3.6.3 No datable finds were present within any of the excavated fills, although a few fragments of very poorly preserved undiagnostic animal bone was retrieved from each ditch along with poorly preserved remains of bovine femurs from ditches 1202 and 1302.
- 3.6.4 In addition to the ditches, a probable quarry (1204) was recorded within the western part of Trench 12 truncating the fill of ditch 1202. This was investigated to a depth of 0.8m before excavation ceased (1.2m below ground level). This had a near-vertical side and was filled with a loose, brown sandy silt containing ironstone fragments consistent with the other quarry features.

3.7 Finds

- 3.7.1 A fragment of bottle glass, pottery and a tile fragment of 19th century date were recovered from two of the three probable quarries within Trench 10 and from a probable quarry within Trench 9. Ditch 903, 1102, 1202, 1302 did not produce any datable finds, although animal bone was recovered from each of the fills. The animal bone was generally in poor condition and fragmented. The identifiable fragments were exclusively bovine. No butchery marks were noted.
- 3.7.2 All of the finds are of 19th-20th century origin and none are recommended for retaining as part of the permanent archive.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 4.1.1 Where archaeological features were encountered these were clearly visible in contrast to the geology indicating that this evaluation is a reliable representation of the true archaeological feature density and potential.
- 4.1.2 The probable quarry features identified within Trenches 9 and 10 were well defined, although only excavated to a safe maximum depth of 1.2m. Whilst it would have been preferable to fully investigate these features, the presence of modern artefacts within the upper part of the fill sequence indicated that these were not archaeologically significant and the results of the evaluation are unlikely to have been adversely affected by the limitations to excavation depth.
- 4.1.3 The evaluation was carried out in dry weather and no ground conditions were encountered that may have affected the results such as flooding.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

- 4.2.1 The evaluation results have addressed the aims set out in Section 2. The trench arrangement and density was sufficient to confirm that significant archaeological remains are unlikely to be present. It can also be suggested with reasonable confidence that the ditch and quarries encountered are likely to be of post-medieval origin. The absence of cultural material within these indicates that these are most likely to have been set with the agricultural landscape rather than in direct proximity to any contemporary occupation or settlement.

4.3 Interpretation

- 4.3.1 The NE-SW alignment of the ditch identified within Trenches 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 was clearly established, although no datable material was recovered. Neither this ditch nor any of the probable quarries appear on the 1st edition OS map or later versions. However, the alignment is broadly consistent with a parallel boundary indicated approximately 50m to the west running from the building complex toward the lane/road that borders the western side of the site. It is possible that the ditch recorded in the evaluation is a related boundary defining a narrow field before the opening up of larger agricultural units in the 19th century.
- 4.3.2 No record of the probable quarrying is made on the historic maps. These appear to have been very localised and small and may not have been relevant for mapping. However, the presence of a possible soil horizon within one of these does indicate that it was open for long enough for such a soil to develop. The deposits identified within the upper part of the quarries within Trenches 9 and 10 appear to represent their deliberate infilling in the 19th century to level the ground for more functional use.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench lacking archaeology. Consists of topsoil overlying geology of sandy silt with occasional fractured ironstone outcrops.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.40
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
101	Layer	-	0.40	Topsoil	-	-
102	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench lacking archaeology. Consists of topsoil overlying geology of sandy silt with occasional fractured ironstone outcrops.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.40
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
201	Layer	-	0.40	Topsoil	-	-
202	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

Trench 3						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench lacking archaeology. Consists of topsoil overlying geology of sandy silt with occasional fractured ironstone outcrops.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.40
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
301	Layer	-	0.40	Topsoil	-	-
302	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

Trench 4						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench lacking archaeology. Consists of topsoil overlying geology of sandy silt with occasional fractured ironstone outcrops.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.40
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
401	Layer	-	0.40	Topsoil	-	-
402	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

Trench 5						
General description					Orientation	NNE-SSW
Trench lacking archaeology. Consists of topsoil overlying geology of sandy silt with occasional fractured ironstone outcrops.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.40
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
501	Layer	-	0.40	Topsoil	-	-
502	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

Trench 6						
General description					Orientation	NNE-SSW
Trench lacking archaeology. Consists of topsoil overlying geology of sandy silt with occasional fractured ironstone outcrops.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Max. depth (m)	1
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
600	Layer	-	0.08	Mod surface	-	-
601	Layer	-	0.28	Modern leveling layer	-	-
602	Layer	-	0.38	Modern leveling layer	-	-
603	Layer	-	0.24	Modern leveling layer	-	-
604	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

Trench 7						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench lacking archaeology. Consists of topsoil overlying geology of sandy silt with occasional fractured ironstone outcrops.					Length (m)	28.6
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.83
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
700	Layer	-	0.08	Mod surface	-	-
701	Layer	-	0.08	Mod leveling layer	-	-
702	Layer	-	0.2	Mod leveling layer	-	-
703	Layer	-	0.1	Mod leveling/dump layer	-	-
704	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

Trench 8						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench lacking archaeology. Consists of topsoil overlying geology of sandy silt with occasional fractured ironstone outcrops.					Length (m)	26
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.40
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
801	Layer	-	0.40	Topsoil	-	-
802	Layer	-	0.30	Subsoil	-	-
803	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

Trench 9						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench contained an undated ditch aligned NW-SE, and a probable post-medieval quarry. General soil sequence comprises topsoil overlying geology of sandy silt with occasional fractured ironstone outcrops.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.40
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
900	Layer	-	0.10	Topsoil	-	-
901	Layer	-	0.30	Subsoil	-	-
902	Cut	1.9	0.72	Ditch aligned NW-SE	-	-
903	Fill	1.9	0.72	Fill of 902	Bone	-
904	Cut	-	0.4+	Quarry	-	-
905	Fill	-	0.4+	Fill of 904	Pottery	c1800-1900
906	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

Trench 10						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench contained three quarry features, two of which produced 19 th century artefacts. The geology comprised sandy silt with fractured ironstone outcrops overlain with topsoil.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.40
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1001	Layer	-	0.15	Topsoil	-	-
1002	Cut	3.5+	0.9+	Quarry	-	-
1003	Fill	1.3+	0.08+	Fill of 1002	-	-
1004	Fill	1.3+	0.36	Fill of 1002	Glass	19 th C
1005	Fill	3.1+	0.08+	Fill of 1002	-	-
1006	Cut	4.75	0.5	Quarry	-	-
1007	Fill	4.75	0.5	Fill of 1006	-	-
1008	Cut	3.25	0.7+	Quarry	-	-
1009	Fill	0.36+	0.1+	Fill of 1008	-	-
1010	Fill	0.74+	0.4	Fill of 1008	Pottery	19 th C
1011	Fill	3.25	0.2	Fill of 1008	-	-
1012	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

Trench 11						
General description					Orientation	NNE-SSW
Trench contained ditch (same as 902) aligned NW-SE. The geology comprised sandy silt with fractured ironstone outcrops overlain by a topsoil.					Length (m)	5
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.40
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1101	Layer	-	0.40	Topsoil	-	-
1102	Cut	1.3	0.7	Ditch aligned NW-SE	-	-
1103	Fill	1.3	0.7	Fill of 1102	Animal bone	-
1104	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

Trench 12						
General description					Orientation	NNE-SSW
Trench contained ditch (Same as 902) aligned NW-SE, which was cut by a quarry. The geology comprised sandy silt with fractured ironstone outcrops overlain by a topsoil.					Length (m)	5
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.40
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1201	Layer	-	0.40	Topsoil	-	-
1202	Cut	2.5	0.6	Ditch aligned NW-SE	-	-
1203	Fill	2.5	0.6	Fill of 1202	Animal bone	-
1204	Cut	1.6+	0.8+	Quarry	-	-
1205	Fill	1.6+	0.8+	Fill of 1204	-	-
1206	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

Trench 13						
General description					Orientation	NNE-SSW
Trench contained ditch (same as 902) aligned NW-SE. The geology comprised sandy silt with fractured ironstone outcrops overlain by a topsoil.					Length (m)	4
					Width (m)	1.5
					Avg. depth (m)	0.40
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1301	Layer	-	0.40	Topsoil	-	-
1302	Cut	2.0	-	Ditch aligned NW-SE	-	-
1303	Fill	2.0	-	Fill of 1302	Animal bone	-
1304	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY

Oxford Archaeology, 2016, Written Scheme of Investigation. Victors Barn, Northampton Rd, Brixworth, Northamptonshire. Unpublished document. December 2106

APPENDIX C**SITE SUMMARY DETAILS**

Site name:	Victor Barns, Northampton Road, Brixworth
Site code:	BRXVB 16
Grid Reference	SP 7667 6911
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	12 th -15 th December 2017
Summary of Results:	<p>Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological trial trench evaluation of land at Victor Barns off Northampton Road, Brixworth, Northamptonshire between 12th-15th December 2017. The site is centred on NGR SP 7667 6911.</p> <p>A total of 13 trial trenches were excavated revealing a single linear ditch aligned NW-SE and three or four probable quarries. The upper fills of the quarries produced a small range of artefacts dating from the 19th century. No datable material was encountered within the ditch although this is aligned parallel to one shown on the 1st edition OS map. It is most likely that the ditch was a former boundary related to the historic field arrangement.</p> <p>The evaluation did not produce any evidence for activity at the site predating the post-medieval period.</p>
Area of Site	Approximately 2.6ha
Location of archive:	<p>There is currently no receiving museum for Northamptonshire. The issue of an archive depository is currently being addressed by the County and one is expected to be open to accessions in 2017/18. Although responsibility for the archive ultimately lies with the client, Oxford Archaeology will hold the archive on their behalf for a period of five years, after which time (in the event that a suitable depository has not been secured) provision for further storage of the archive will be made in agreement with Oxford Archaeology, the client and Northamptonshire County Council.</p>
Northamptonshire HER UID:	ENN108550
Oasis id:	oxfordar1-274297



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Figure 1: Site location

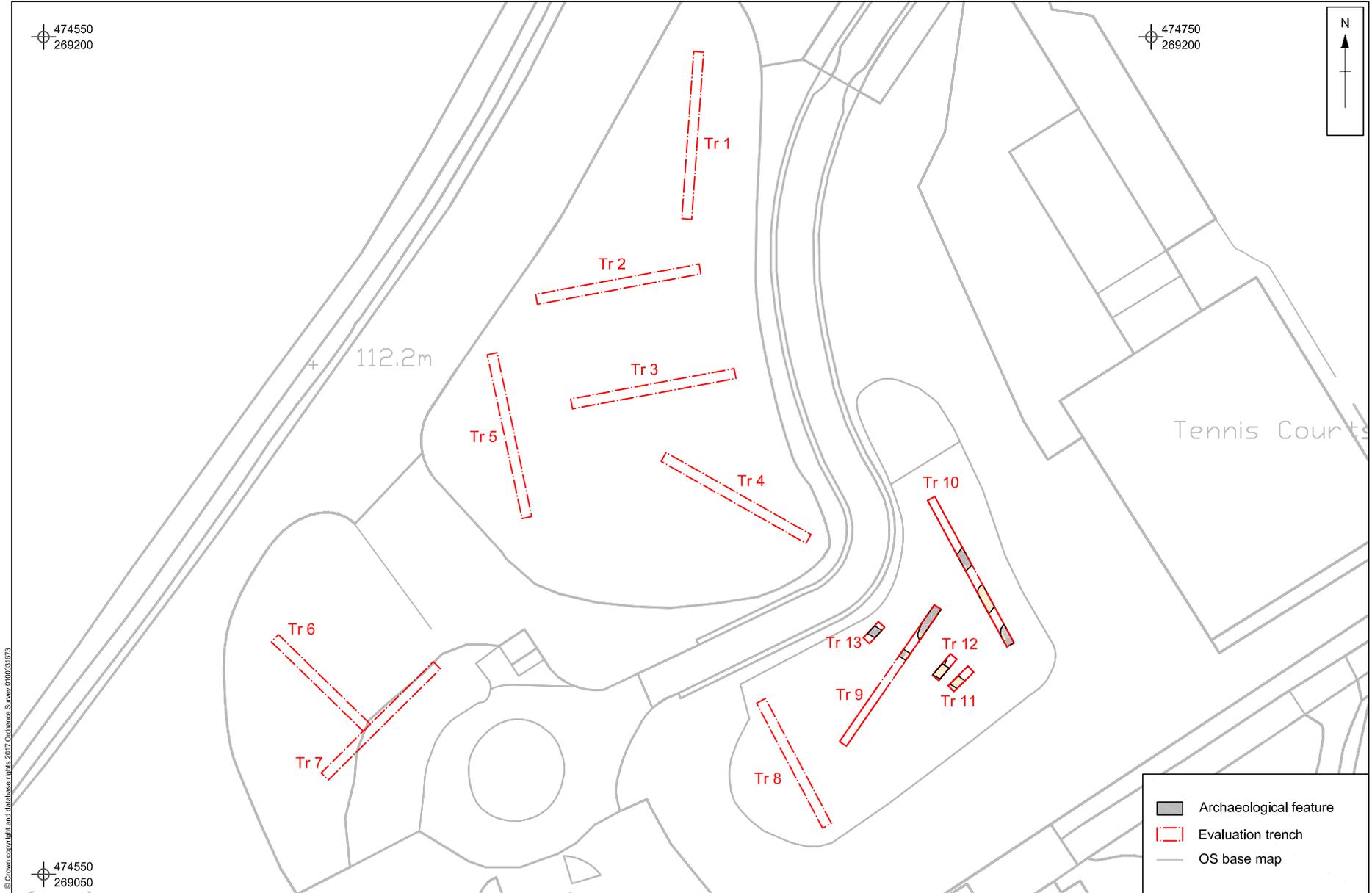


Figure 2: Trench location plan

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0 25 50
m
Scale at A4 1:1000

X:\b\BRXX\BEV_Vectors_Barn_Brixworth\010Geomatics\02 CAD\BRXX\BEV_Brixworth_221116.dwg(A4 Fig 3)BRXX\B16\BRXX\BEV_Vectors_Barn_Brixworth\steve.lawrence* 16 Jan 2017

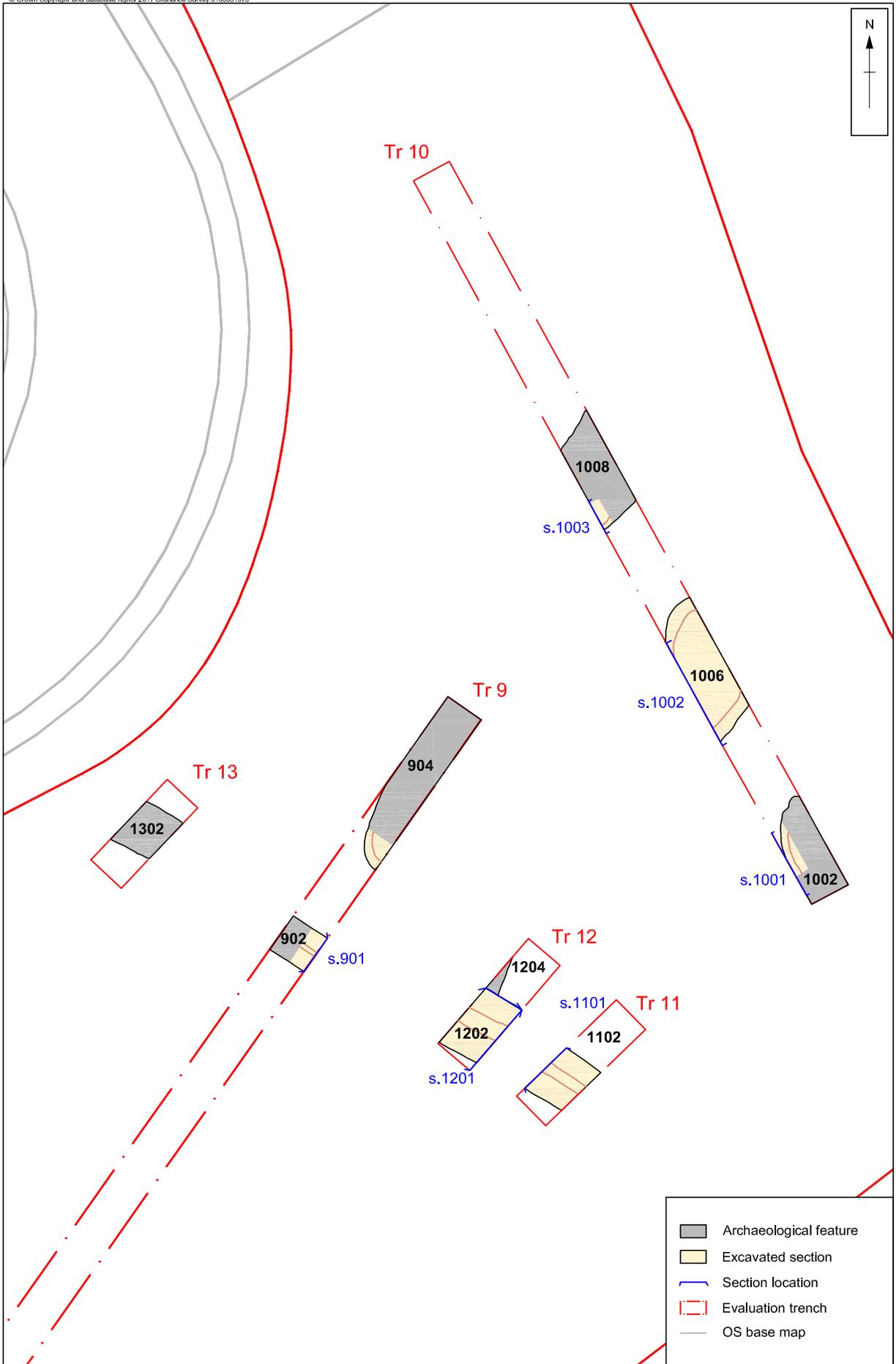


Figure 3: Trenches 9-13



Plate 3 Trench 9 view south-west



Plate 4 Trench 9 section 901



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