

South Hill Farm, Long Compton, Warwickshire

Archaeological Evaluation



understanding heritage matters

Report No 1111
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*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: South Hill Farm, Long Compton, Warwickshire

Commissioned by: Lighthouse Oxford Limited

Project Report No. 11/11

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation comprising a series of four trial trenches was undertaken on behalf of Lighthouse Oxford Limited in advance of a planning application for the redevelopment of the farm buildings which are located adjacent to cropmarks of unknown date. The farm buildings had evidently been terraced into the shoulder of the hillside but no archaeological deposits were encountered in the trenches and no finds were recovered.

1 Introduction

1.1 Planning permission is being sought from Stratford on Avon District Council for the redevelopment of South Hill Farm, Long Compton. The development site lies within an area of archaeological significance, and the developer has therefore been advised that the development can not take place without a suitable archaeological scheme of works.

1.2 Archaeology Warwickshire was commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation with the stated aim of understanding any archaeological deposits or materials that may be disturbed or destroyed by the development. The objectives were to locate, record and analyse archaeological materials and deposits and to disseminate the results in an appropriate format.

1.3 The evaluation was conducted in July 2011 and this report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under Site Code LC11.

2 Location

2.1 South Hill Farm is located on the southern edge of Warwickshire, overlooking the valley of the Nethercote Brook and the village of Long Compton. It is situated on the shoulder of a prominent ridge with a sharp, steep slope to the north and the land rising gradually to the south.

2.2 The underlying geology is a Jurassic formation of Middle Lias clays and silts capped by Ferruginous Sandstone and Oolitic Limestone which make up the remnant Marlestone Rock Bed (BGS 1963). Historically this rock was mined for iron ore, and the surrounding landscape is pockmarked by quarry pits.

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

PALAEOLITHIC AND MESOLITHIC (800,000 BC – 4000 BC)

3.1 There is only a single record for evidence of Palaeolithic or Mesolithic activity in the area of the proposed development. Warwickshire Historic Environment Record MWA 6041 records 'a tight cluster of snapped blades, two possible Microliths, one Mesolithic arrowhead and a few unbroken bladelets in the soil below a round barrow (MWA 2399 below).

NEOLITHIC AND EARLIER BRONZE AGE (4000 BC – 1500 BC)

3.2 Just over 1km to the east of the site lies the Rollright Stones (Lambrick 1988). This is a complex of megalithic and other monuments that straddle the border with Oxfordshire and probably represents a regionally important gathering place throughout the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods. The location is well-appointed for the construction and display of ceremonial monumental architecture. The Rollright Stone circle and the Whispering Knights portal dolmen lie over the border, whilst Warwickshire's only known standing stone, known as the King Stone (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record MWA 2394) was probably constructed to mark the location of a cemetery.

3.3 Excavations in the early 1980s recorded a round limestone cairn with a central cist (WMA 2395) with a large capstone. Traces of a probable funeral pyre and a child's tooth were found to the NW of the cairn. The charcoal produced a radiocarbon date of 1540 +/- 70bp. On the SW of the cairn a second cremation deposit was located. This was covered by a small mini-cairn of stone which produced a radiocarbon date of 1420 +/- 40bc. The mini-cairn had been extended to the NW and SW and this stone contained indeterminate Neolithic/Bronze Age sherds and a few fragments of cremated bone. Three hollows in the top of the cairn contained cremations, one possibly associated with Beaker sherds.

3.4 The 18th century antiquarian William Stukely described a barrow to the E of the King Stone, crossed by a dry-stone wall, which had stonework on its east side and this is clearly visible on air photographs (MWA 2398).

3.5 Another barrow first recorded by Stukeley (MWA 2399) was excavated in the early 1980s to reveal a central cremation pit dug into an earlier pit which contained traces of burnt stone. Other cremation deposits lay to the south of the barrow including an adult burial and an upturned collared urn with the remains of an infant. Charcoal from this feature had a radiocarbon date of 1370 +/- 90 bc. A further cremation associated with a post hole was dated to 1530 +/- 50 bc.

3.6 Stukeley described a further barrow (MWA 2397) which Thomas Fisher later illustrated showing two large stones and some lesser ones which suggest a megalithic barrow of Neolithic date, although excavation in the 1980s failed to confirm this.

3.7 Down-slope the evidence includes a polished stone axe from Barton-on-the-Heath which has been wrongly provenanced to Long Compton (MWA 2379).

LATER BRONZE AGE AND IRON AGE (1500 BC – AD 43)

3.8 An enclosure (MWA 5536), first recorded by Stukeley as an earthwork was partly excavated in the early 1980s to reveal grain storage pits, two cesspits an infant burial and animal skulls indicative of ritual deposits. The enclosure was formed by a substantial rock cut ditch and probably an internal wall. A double ditched trackway was aligned on the enclosure (MWA 3800).

ROMANO-BRITISH (AD 43 – 410)

3.9 There is some evidence for Roman period settlement on the hillside above the village in the form of pottery scatters (MWA 3801 and MWA 9552), and rectilinear cropmark enclosures at the latter site may represent a significant farmstead site (MWA 12196).

MEDIEVAL (410 – 1500)

3.10 An Anglo-Saxon cemetery (MWA 2396) has been identified from various finds reported by labourers in the 19th century. These included 'an urn of black clay' containing bits of burnt bone and the 'blade of an old razor' - probably an Anglo Saxon knife. A ribbed bronze annular brooch, found by the jaw of a skeleton, a ring the same size as the brooch, and seven glass beads. The labourers also recalled round flattish pieces of brass - possibly a saucer brooch. Skeletons were found on both sides of the road.

3.11 Medieval Long Compton (MWA 8968) can be traced as far as back Domesday (1086) when the manor was held by Geoffrey de Mandeville for the King. Before the conquest it was held by Asgar the Staller and a monastic legend has St Augustine performing a miracle in the church here, which implies that one such existed very much earlier as St Augustine lived in the 4th century AD. In 1086 Long Compton was a huge [settlement](#) and very valuable, with 30 [hides](#) and land for 20 ploughs, the lord being responsible for 25 slaves, 45 villagers with a priest, 13 smallholders and 2 men-at-arms with 10 ploughs. A license to hold a market on Mondays was granted 15th May 1231. The Holloway (MWA 2371) is named after a hollow way street of medieval date.

3.12 That much of the parish was under the plough in the medieval period is clear from the evidence left in the fields in the form of ridge and furrow (Fig 1).

POST-MEDIEVAL AND MODERN

3.13 At MWA 12159 aerial photographs taken in March 1944 by the US Air Force show about 300 individual vehicles or covered dumps of material stored in preparation for the invasion of Europe in June 1944.

3.14 Other aerial photographs show undated earthworks at MWA 4779, MWA 12198 and MWA 4780.

4 Trial Trenches

4.1 Four Trial Trenches were machine-dug with a 5-ton, 360 degree, mini-excavator. The trenches were positioned in order to gain an understanding of the potential effects of the redevelopment. This was particularly difficult with regard to the new house site which crosses the existing access route and is edged by a septic tank and power line. Trench 4 was therefore machined as close as possible to the proposed house footprint without impeding access.

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Description</i>
1	100	0.14m	Concrete Layer
1	101	0.05m	Layer (Yellowish brown clay loam)
1	102	N/A	Geological Natural (clay and limestone)
2	200	0.23m	Topsoil (Brown clay loam)
2	201	0.16m	Layer (Yellowish brown clay loam)
2	202	N/A	Geological Natural (clay and limestone)
3	300	0.12m	Topsoil (Brown clay loam)
3	301	0.07m	Layer (Brown clay loam)
3	302	N/A	Geological Natural (clay and limestone)
4	400	0.10m	Topsoil (Brown clay loam)
4	401	0.14m	Layer (Yellowish brown clay loam)
4	402	N/A	Geological Natural (clay and limestone)

5 Conclusions

5.1 No archaeological deposits or remains were recovered from the evaluation trenches. The thin layer of clay loam visible in all of the trenches (101, 201, 301, 401) seems likely to be remnant medieval plough soil, albeit heavily denuded on this high slope.

5.2 This evidence suggests that it is highly unlikely that any significant archaeological deposits will be disturbed by the proposed development.

Acknowledgements

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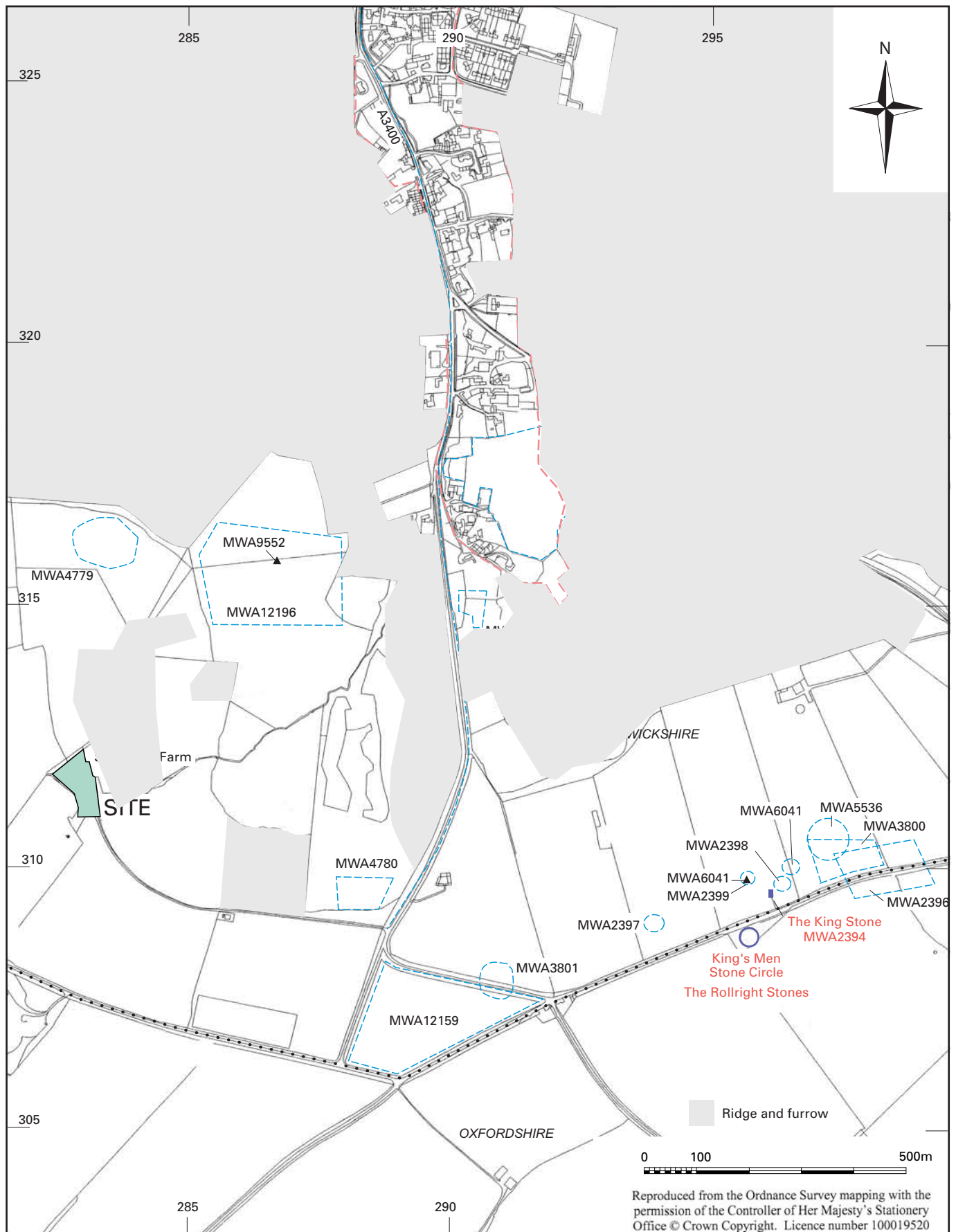


Fig 1: Location of site and archaeological background

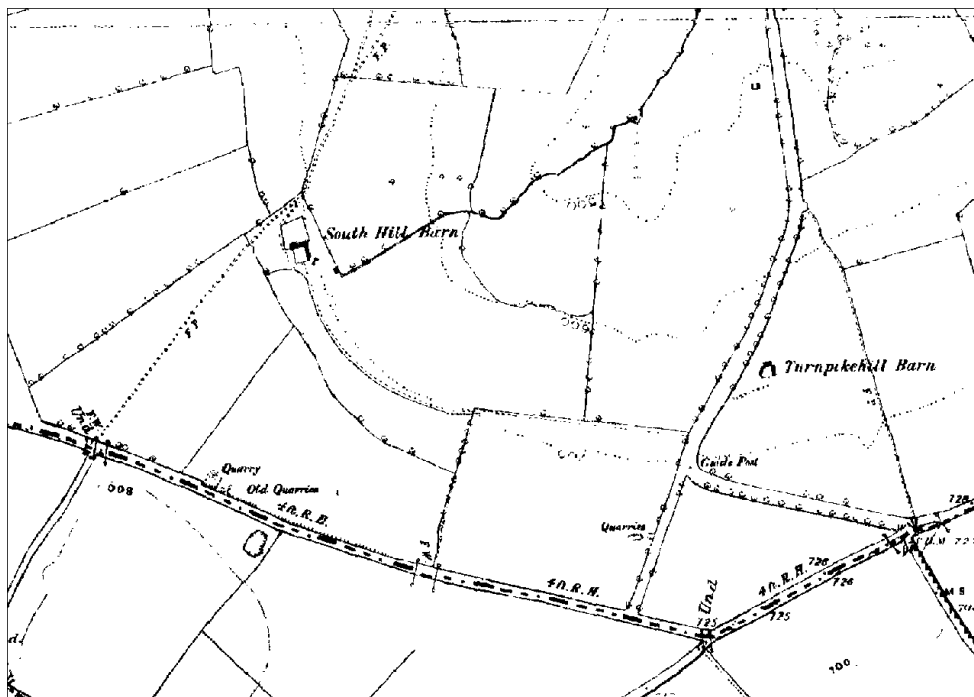


Fig 2: Detail from 1889 Ordnance Survey

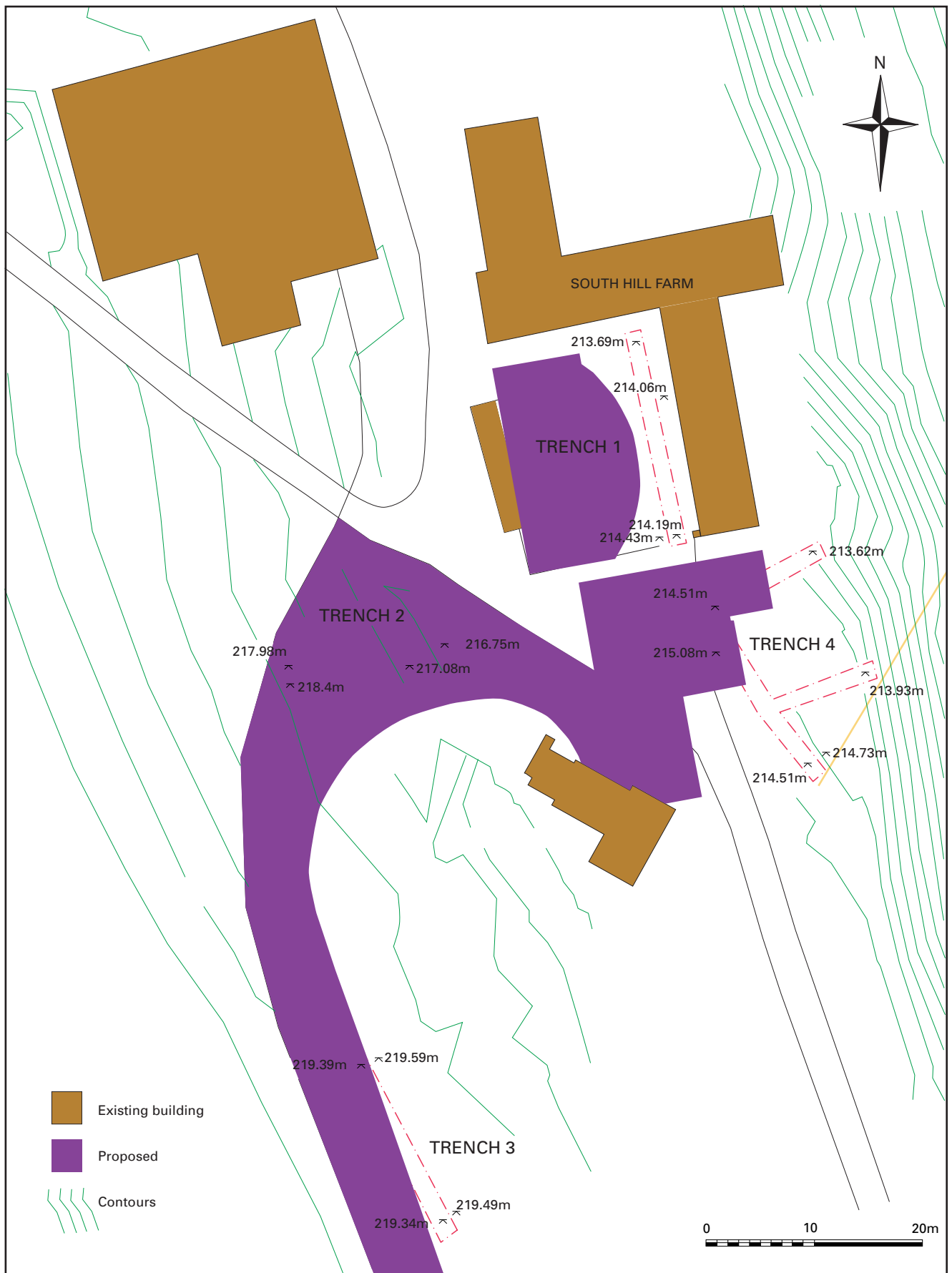


Fig 3: Location of trenches



Fig 4: Trench 1 viewed from the south



Fig 5: Trench 2 viewed from the west



Fig 6: Trench 3 viewed from the south



Fig 7: Trench 4 (south spur) viewed from the north-east



Fig 8: Trench 4 viewed from the south-east



Fig 9: Trench 4 (north spur) viewed from the north-east