

**Programme of archaeological work  
at Spetchley Park,  
Spetchley Road,  
Worcestershire**

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WSM 55803

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# **Programme of archaeological work at Spetchley Park, Spetchley Road, Worcestershire**

## **Introduction**

A programme of archaeological work was carried out at Spetchley Park, Spetchley Road, Worcestershire (SO 8991 5380; Fig 1) at the request of Mr Edmund Hobday of Bea Landscape Design Ltd, on behalf of his client, the Spetchley Estate, according to a written scheme of investigation provided by Martin Cook BA MIfA and approved by Mike Glyde of Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service. The construction work involved the construction of a car park, Welcome Centre (visitor centre) various footpaths and drainage works.

The project was undertaken in order to

- Observe all ground-breaking activity and
- Provide a stratigraphic record and interpretation of deposits exposed by the groundworks, the extent and depth of the groundworks and a record of all finds and environmental material.

## **The documentary material**

### **Historic mapping**

The earliest available map was the Spetchley tithe map of 1839 (Fig 2.1). This shows that the site lies towards the northern side of a field then known as the Onions Meadow. At this time Spetchley Road lay a minimum of 15m from the site and up to 90m, due to a loop in the road, subsequently by-passed (probably in the 1970s). The boundary of the gardens of the Spetchley Estate lay 80-90m to the west of the site. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885 (Fig 2.2) shows nothing different, save that the belt of trees that currently exists to the west of the site had by this time become established. The 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map of 1904 (Fig 2.3) and the 5th edition Ordnance Survey map of 1954-63, which cannot be reproduced for reasons of copyright show no significant changes, save that the latter appears to show that the boundary of the garden has been extended to the west.

### **The Worcestershire Historic Environment Record**

In the immediate vicinity of the site the HER contains three records. These sites lie to the north of Spetchley Road and are: The Old Police House (WSM 40706) outbuilding, The Police House (WSM 40707), both of the 19th century AD and outside toilet, Old Police House (WSM 40708) which is undated.

In the surrounding area the principal site that the HER records is the registered park of Spetchley Park (WSM 28825) dating from the 17th century AD. This includes gardens, pleasure gardens, formal garden and kitchen garden (WSM 35184) of the 19th century AD. Components of the park and gardens include All Saints' Church (WSM 05524), Spetchley Hall (WSM 09598), summerhouse (The Root House; WSM 35821), stable block (WSM 35822), conservatory (WSM 35823), churchyard wall (WSM 40683), outbuilding (WSM 40721), and workers cottages (WSM 40722).

Other sites to the north of Spetchley Road are: dovecote, Home Farm (WSM 07742), St Ann's School (WSM 12673), stables and cart shed, Home Farm (WSM 33698), Old Rectory Cottage (WSM 40680), Home Farm (WSM 40684), The Cottage, The Common (WSM 40686), The Forge Smithy (WSM 40711), The Forge (WSM 40712), building behind St. Ann's School (WSM 40713), farm building (WSM 40714), Spetchley Park estate office (WSM 40715), outbuilding by Home Farm (WSM 40717), barn (WSM 40718), outbuilding (WSM 40719), and small outbuilding (WSM 40720).

To the east of the site, associated with the railway are: Bridge House (WSM 40698), outbuilding east of Yew Tree Cottage (WSM 40699), Yew Tree Cottage (WSM 40701), outbuilding, Yew Tree Cottage (WSM 40702), small outbuilding, Yew Tree Cottage (WSM 40703), small outbuilding, west of Bridge House (WSM 40704) and small building by railway (WSM 40705).

## **The Victoria County History**

Spetchley is a small parish about three miles east of Worcester (Willis-Bund 1971). Almost the whole of the south-west of the parish is included in Spetchley Park which is 196 acres in extent, of which 117 of which are in the deer park. The mansion at Spetchley Park is a house in the Grecian style of the early 19th century. The main road from Worcester to Alcester forms the northern boundary of the park and the chief street of the village. Agriculture is the only industry, the chief crops being wheat, barley and beans. The soil is various, the subsoil marl and clay. The present house was built in 1821.

The park at Spetchley was made or enlarged by Robert Berkeley, who in 1625 received licence to impark any part of the parish for deer, rabbits and pheasants. It extends into the parishes of Whittington and St Martin, Worcester.

## **The fieldwork**

### **General**

Fieldwork took place on the 13th, 15th, 16th, 20th, 21st, 22nd and 23rd January 2014. It comprised observation of all ground breaking activity with records (drawing and photographs) made as appropriate.

The entire area of construction (Fig 3.1) was stripped in two passes, the first to remove the topsoil and the second to bring the depth to formation level at approximately 0.3m to 0.4m beneath existing ground level. The only building to be constructed, the Welcome Centre, was to be built on piled footings due to its location amongst mature trees and only the topsoil was removed in this area.

### **Description and interpretation**

Ground reduction was carried out to a maximum depth of 0.4m beneath existing ground level. A typical section of the deposits was drawn (Fig 3.2; Section 1). The deposits comprised a mid-greyish brown silty loam (Context 001, topsoil); a mid-greyish brown clayey silt (Context 002, subsoil) and a light reddish-brown clay with abundant small to medium rounded pebbles (Context 003, natural subsoil).

A single class of feature was identified after the stripping. This comprised a number of roughly parallel, narrow linear features running approximately south-east to north-west (Fig 3.1). A section through one of these (Fig 3.2; Section 2) found that the cuts were vertically sided (Context 006). Two fills were identified; an upper fill of light reddish brown sandy clay (Context 005) and a lower fill of mid-grey brown sandy clay with occasional small, rounded pebbles (Context 004). The features could not be bottomed but were probed with a steel rod to a depth of a further 0.3m or so. Pottery and clay pipe from Context 004 was of later 18th century date. Given the generally waterlogged nature of this part of the field it is believed that these features are land drains.

### **The Finds**

The full finds report is included as Appendix 1

A total of three sherds of pottery and one fragment of clay pipe stem were retrieved from the excavated area, all from context 004. Level of preservation was good with very little abrasion evident.

The pottery appeared to come from a single vessel and was identified as creamware (fabric 84). This type of pottery can be dated the later 18th century and is known to have been produced locally in Kidderminster (D Williams pers comm).

The fragment of clay pipe stem was undiagnostic but likely to be of similar date to the pottery.

## **Depositional and post-depositional processes**

The site has produced little in the way of archaeological deposits, these being limited to a number of land drains running approximately south-east to north-west across the site. It is probable from the evidence of the tithe map that the site was under cultivation in the early to mid 19th century. About 100m to the south of the site there is evidence for degraded ridge and furrow, suggesting that

cultivation of this field might be significantly earlier still. It is unknown when the damage to the ridge and furrow occurred but the dating evidence from the land drains suggests that it could have been during the later 18th century. The identification of the farm to the north-west of the site as 'Home Farm' indicates that this was originally the farm associated with Spetchley Hall. The Ordnance Survey map of 1954-63 clearly shows that the ornamental Spetchley Park lay to the south and south-west of Spetchley Hall and that, with the exception of various coppices and isolated stands of trees, the area to the east, on which the development is situated, was devoted to pasture or agriculture. It is therefore felt that the paucity of archaeological deposits reflects the use to which the land has, historically, been put.

## **Summary**

A programme of archaeological work was carried out at Spetchley Park, Spetchley Road, Worcestershire during the construction of a car park, Welcome Centre (visitor centre) various footpaths and drainage works. The stripping of the site was observed to a depth of c 0.4m. A number of roughly parallel, narrow, linear cut features were recorded which were vertically or near-vertically sided, dating to the later 18th century. These were interpreted as land drains.

## **Bibliography**

Willis-Bund, J W, (ed) 1971 *The Victoria history of the counties of England: Worcestershire, III*

Hurst, J D, and Rees, H, 1992 Pottery fabrics; a multi-period series for the County of Hereford and Worcester, in S G Woodiwiss (ed), *Iron Age and Roman salt production and the medieval town of Droitwich*, CBA Res Rep, **81**, 200-9

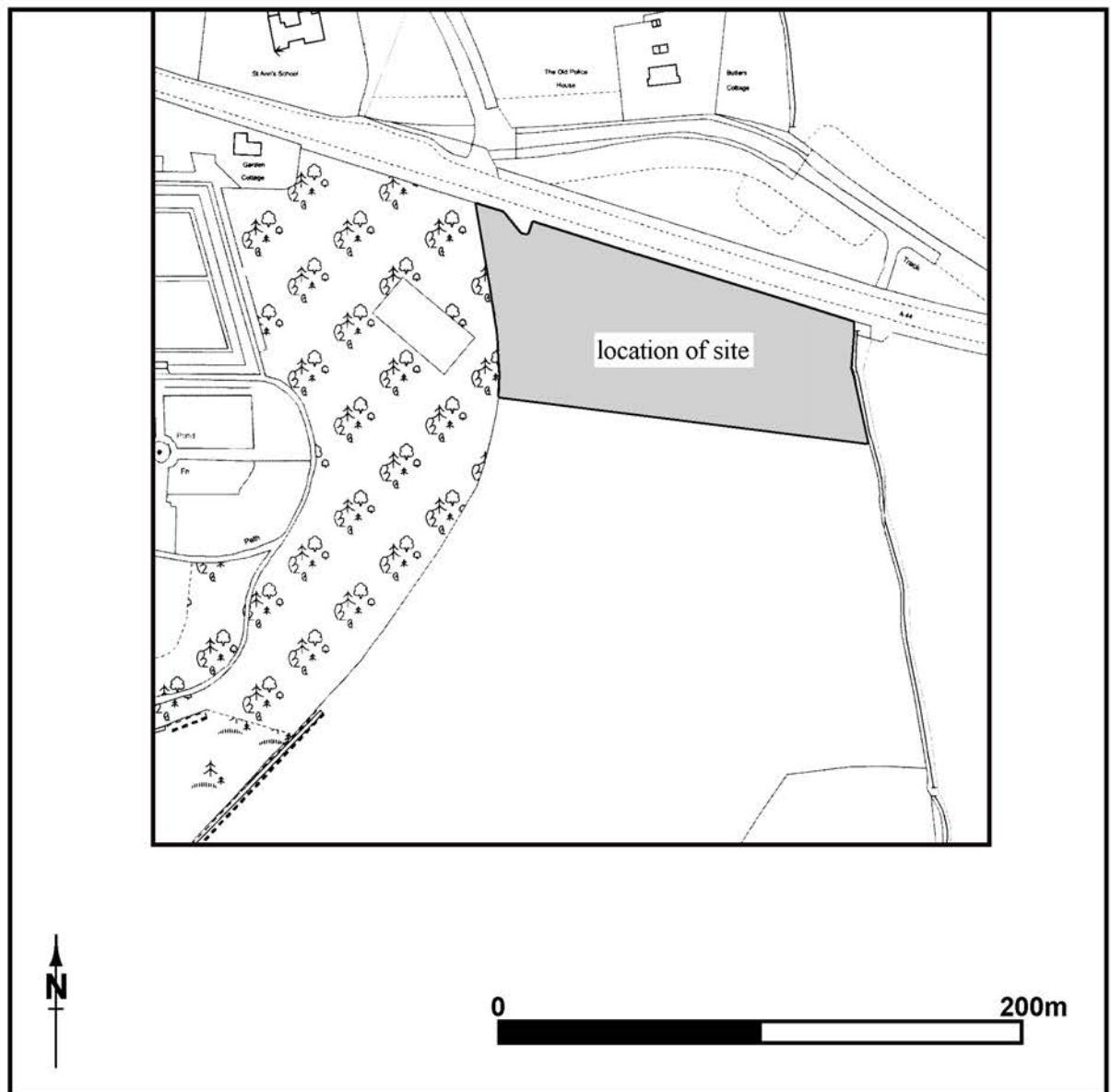
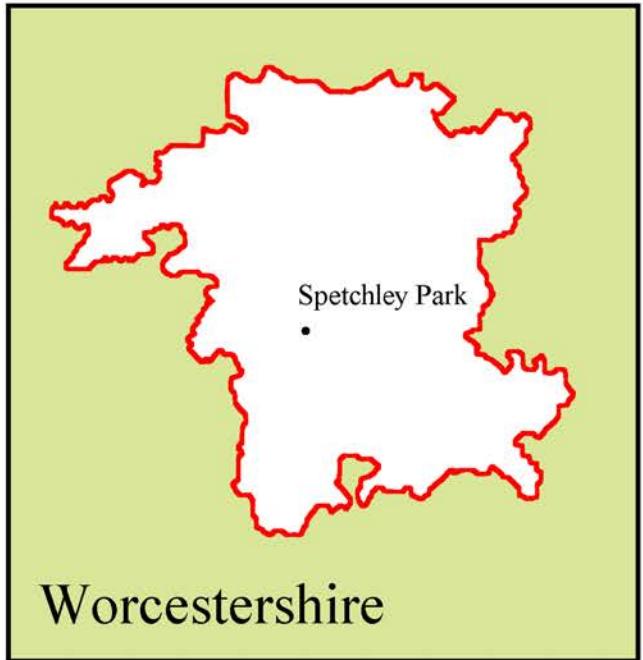
## **Acknowledgements**

The author would particularly like to thank Mr Edmund Hobday of Bea Landscape Design Ltd, Graham of Jager and his team, the client, the Spetchley Estate, and Mr Mike Glyde of Worcestershire Archives and Archaeology Service for their kind cooperation. Suzanne MacLeod provided assistance on site.

## **Archive**

The archive consists of:

- 1 Annotated scale drawing
- 1 DVD-ROM
- 1 Hard copy of the report



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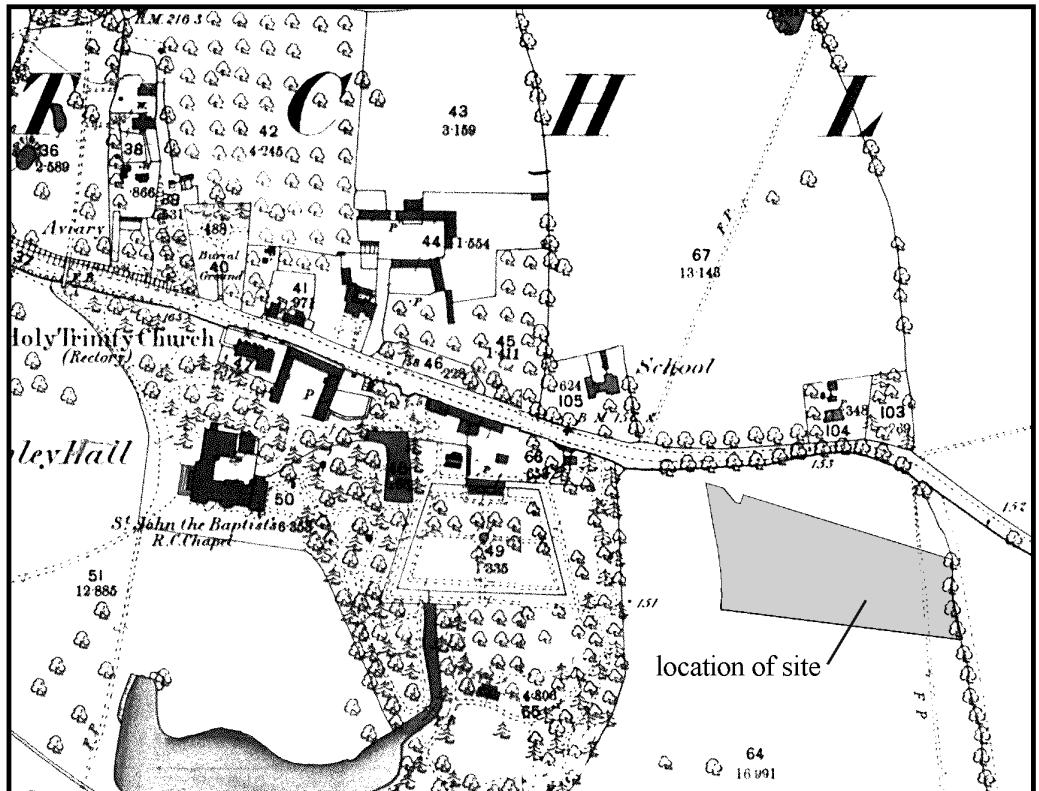
Fig 1: Location of site



not to scale



Fig 2.1: Spetchley tithe map; 1839

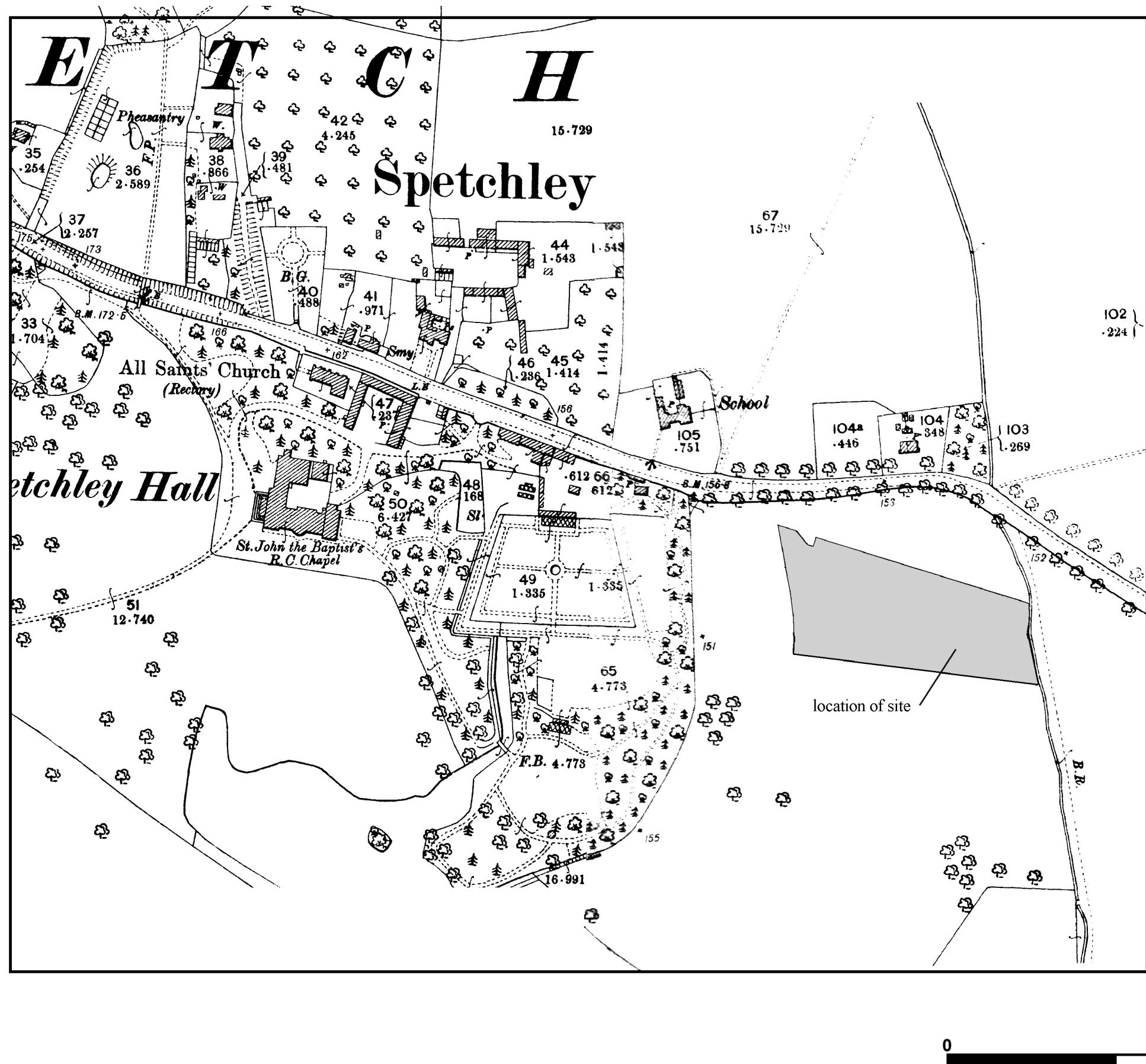


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Fig 2.2: Ordnance Survey map; 1885



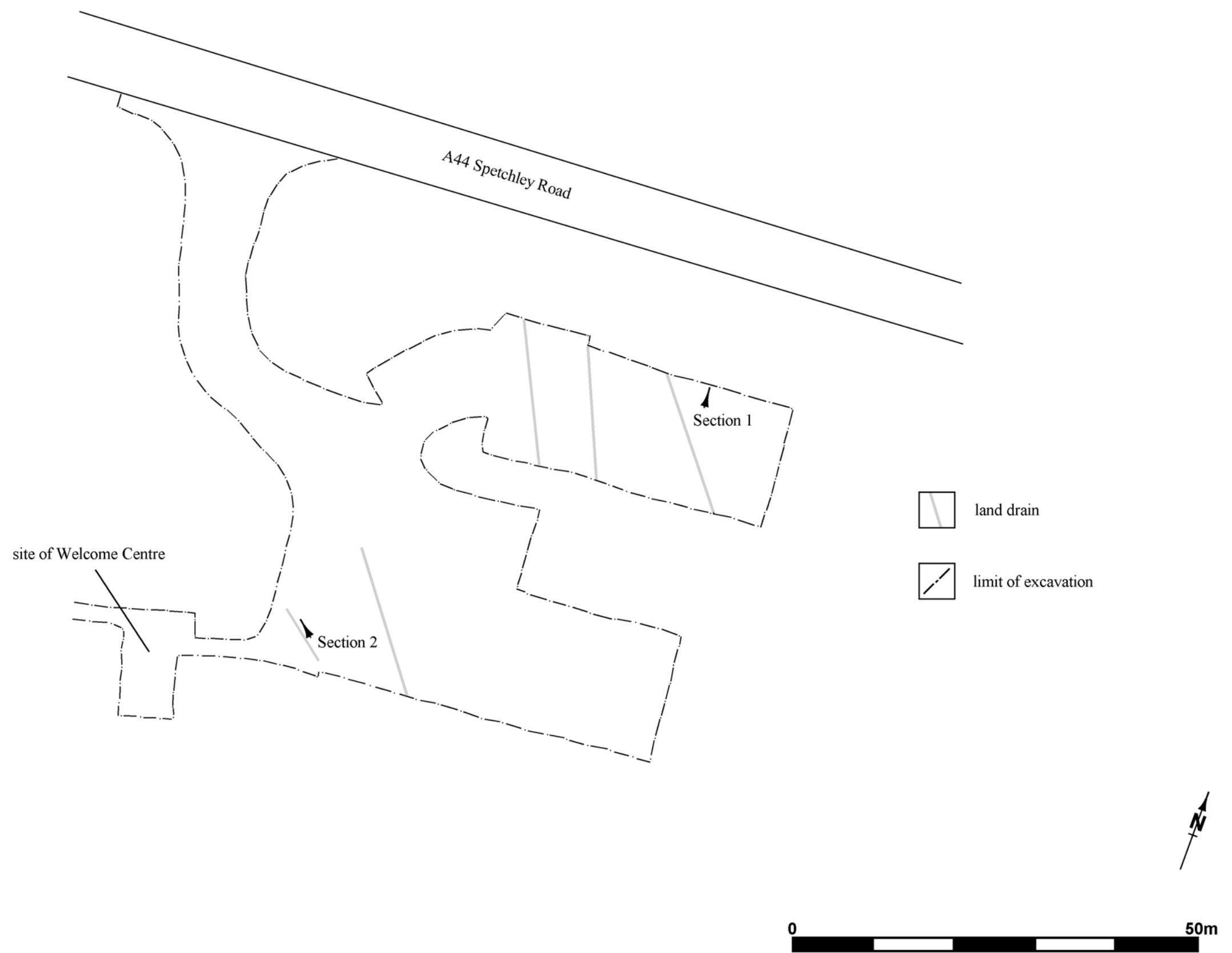


Fig 3.1: Location of recorded features

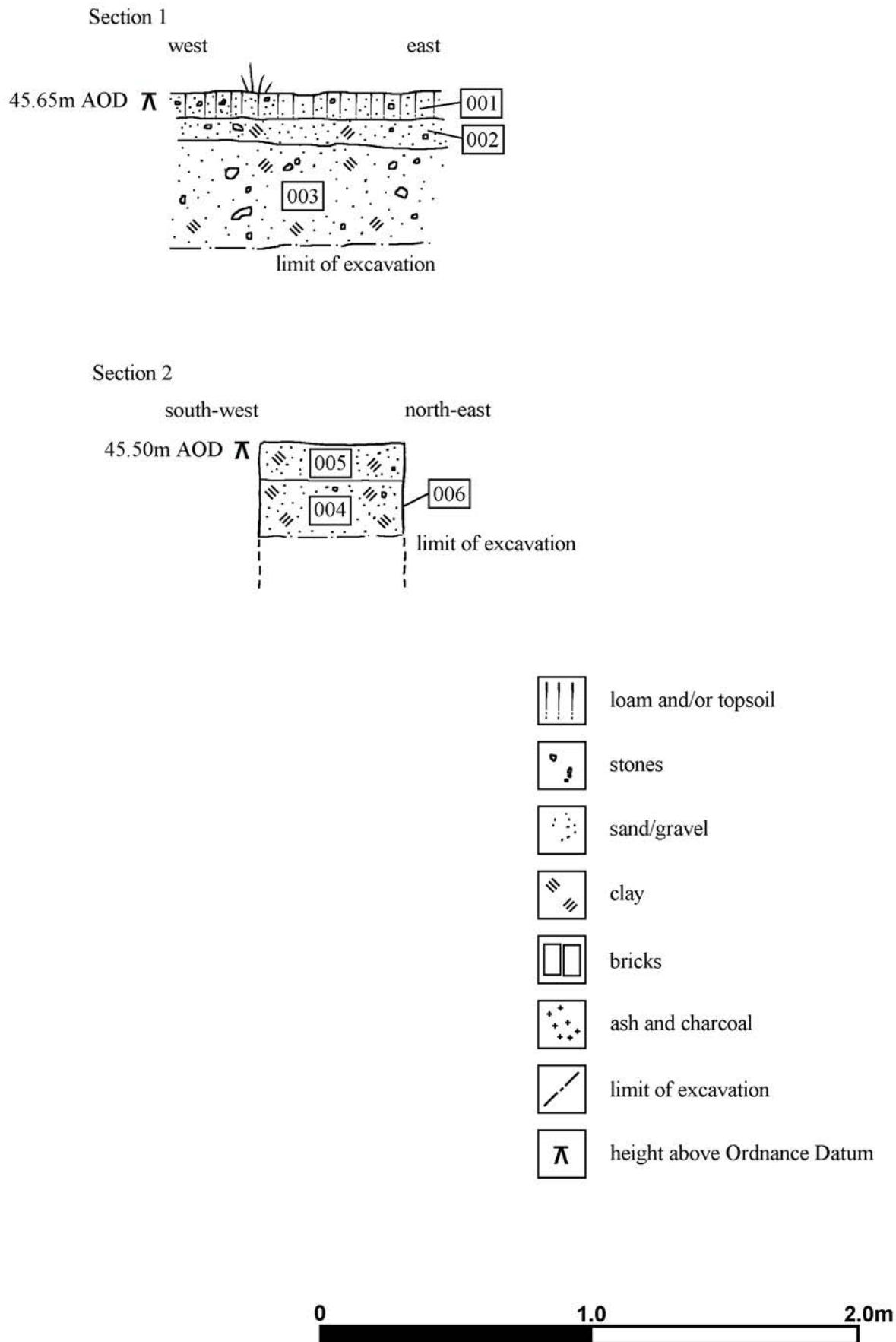


Fig 3.2: Sections



Fig 4: Stripping the entrance to the carpark



Fig 5: Section 1



Fig 6: Pile driving on the site of the Welcome Centre

## **Appendix 1: Finds report**

## **Artefact report for SP/14**

### **Artefactual analysis**

#### *Aims*

The brief required an assessment of the quantity, range and potential of artefactual material from excavation.

The aims of the finds assessment were:

- a) to identify, sort, spot date, and quantify all artefacts
- b) to describe the range of artefacts present
- c) to preliminarily assess the significance of the artefacts

### **Method of analysis**

All hand-retrieved pottery was examined. It was identified, quantified and dated to period. All information was recorded on a Microsoft Access 2003 database.

Pottery fabrics are referenced to the fabric reference series maintained by the Worcestershire County Council Archaeological Service (Hurst and Rees 1992).

### **Results of analysis**

A total of three sherds of pottery and one fragment of clay pipe stem were retrieved from the excavated area, all from context 004. Level of preservation was good with very little abrasion evident.

The pottery appeared to come from a single vessel and was identified as creamware (fabric 84). This type of pottery can be dated the later 18<sup>th</sup> century and is known to have been produced locally in Kidderminster (D Williams pers comm).

The fragment of clay pipe stem was undiagnostic but likely to be of similar date to the pottery.

### **Bibliography**

Hurst, J D, and Rees, H, 1992 Pottery fabrics; a multi-period series for the County of Hereford and Worcester, in S G Woodiwiss (ed), *Iron Age and Roman salt production and the medieval town of Droitwich*, CBA Res Rep, **81**, 200-9

### **Appendix 1: Tables**

Material	Total	Weight (g)
Pottery	3	3
Clay pipe	1	1

*Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage*