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**Stow Park Farm, Stow,  
Lincolnshire: An  
Archaeological Desk-  
Based Assessment**

*Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit*



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**Stow Park Farm, Stow, Lincolnshire:  
An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment**

by  
Melissa Conway

*For further information please contact:*  
Simon Buteux or Iain Ferris (Directors)  
Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
The University of Birmingham  
Edgbaston  
Birmingham B15 2TT  
Tel: 0121 414 5513  
Fax: 0121 414 5516  
E-Mail: [BUFAU@bham.ac.uk](mailto:BUFAU@bham.ac.uk)  
Web Address: <http://www.bufau.bham.ac.uk>  
PN. 837

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## **Stow Park Farm, Stow, Lincolnshire: An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment**

### **Summary**

*An archaeological assessment was carried out on the site of proposed hydrocarbon exploration near Stow Park Farm, Stow, Lincolnshire (NGR SK 8630/8030); this comprised a desk-based assessment and a walkover survey of the Study Area. The aim of the assessment was to identify and determine the survival and significance of archaeological remains within the Study Area, in order to consider and identify any further archaeological work that might be required ahead of development. The assessment suggests that the potential for the survival of archaeology of several periods, particularly the Romano-British period, within the Study Area is quite high and that evaluation work might be required at the site.*

### **1.0 Introduction**

This assessment was carried out by BUFAU in September 2001 and was commissioned by Cirque Energy (UK) Ltd., in connection with an application for planning permission to carry out hydrocarbon exploration works at Stow Park Farm, Stow, Lincolnshire (NGR SK8630/8030). This report outlines the findings of the desk-based assessment, which sought to establish the archaeological potential of the site and to look at the impact that the proposed development would have upon the site. This assessment was carried out in accordance with the procedures outlined by Lincolnshire County Council in the *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: A Manual of Archaeological Practice* (LCC, 1997) and the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA, 1999).

### **2.0 Location**

The village of Stow is situated in an area of low-lying, undulating land on the eastern fringes of the Trent Valley, within West Lindsey district. The site itself lies on the eastern side of a shallow, gently sloping valley, just over 2km southwest of Stow village (Figure 1). The extent of the Site is shown on Figure 2. The Site includes both the 1.05 hectare site for which planning permission is currently being sought and the adjoining land to the south (c.0.6ha in area) which constitutes a possible additional site for exploration (Figure 2). The Site lies near the centre of the medieval hunting park of Stow Park (Figure 3). Jim Bonnor, Senior Built Environment Officer for Lincolnshire County Council, issued an informal brief for this assessment and stated that an area of 1km around the site also be looked at in detail; the extent of this area, hereafter referred to as the Study Area, is shown on Figure 3.

### **3.0 Planning Background**

Cirque Energy (UK) Ltd. have made an application to Lincolnshire County Council for planning permission to undertake hydrocarbon exploration works on this site. The County Council, following advice from its Built Environment Team, has requested that a desk-based assessment of the site's archaeological potential be produced in order to better inform the processing of this planning application.

### **4.0 Objectives**

The chief aim of this assessment was to examine the archaeological potential and significance of the Site and the Study Area, in terms of identifying the presence or absence of archaeological sites or deposits within the bounds of both the Site and the Study Area.

### **5.0 Method**

The following sources were consulted in order to assess the archaeological importance of the Study Area;

- Records, aerial photographs and RCHME National Mapping Programme overlays held by the Lincolnshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)
- historic maps and documents held by the Lincolnshire Archives Office (LAO)
- cartographic evidence
- published and unpublished secondary sources

A walkover survey of the Site and immediately adjacent areas was also conducted as part of this assessment. If further work on the Site is required a comparison of the aerial photographs held by the Lincolnshire SMR and those held by the National Monuments Record in Swindon may prove beneficial.

## **6.0 The Study Area: Historical and Archaeological Background**

### **6.1 Geology and Topography**

Stow parish lies 13km north-west of Lincoln and straddles parts of two river valleys. The Study Area lies in the western section of the parish; lying on the southern side of a shallow western draining valley within an area of gently undulating land to the east of the River Trent (Figure 3). The underlying drift geology of the parish as a whole is quite varied; comprising clays, gravels, tills and alluvium. The Study Area itself lies on an extensive spread of lower lias clay and limestone which gives rise to very heavy clay soils on the site.

## 6.2 Archaeological and Historical Context

### *Prehistoric*

The majority of evidence for prehistoric settlement in Lincolnshire as a whole is derived from cropmarks and stray finds of prehistoric material. The Study Area lies within an area of Lincolnshire where cropmarks of any date are scarce, due to the presence of soils unfavourable to cropmark production (Boutwood, 1998, Figure 7). Evidence for prehistoric activity, if not actually settlement, does, however, exist in this area. A relatively dense cluster of finds of Neolithic stone axes is located between the rivers Till and Trent, one of these findspots is located in the Study Area (see section 7.2) but the others lie outside of the Study Area (May, 1993, 10-11), suggesting considerable activity, perhaps even settlement activity, in the area during the Neolithic period.

Evidence of activity in subsequent periods is poorly attested in the Study Area. The available evidence suggests that West Lindsey, like the majority of Lincolnshire, was densely settled and exploited by the later Iron Age (Everson *et al.*, 1991, 6). There is, however, no conclusive material evidence for this within the Study Area.

### *Roman*

West Lindsey in the Roman period seems to have been densely settled and farmed like the majority of lowland Britain (Everson *et al.*, 1991, 6 and Whitwell, 1993, 14-15). The Study Area is only 13km from the Roman city of Lincoln and lies within an area of considerable known Roman activity. A main Roman road – the A1500 Till Bridge Lane – runs through the Study Area linked to Ermine Street at Lincoln and running to York via the small town of *Segelocum* (Littleborough, Nottinghamshire) which lies 3km east-northeast of the Study Area. The Study Area also lies close to a main route of waterborne communication and trade, the Foss Dyke – a Roman canal which joined Lincoln with the River Trent at Torksey – which lies 2km to the south of the Study Area (Figure 1).

Evidence of high-status settlement exists in Stow and the surrounding parishes. A villa is known at Sturton by Stow and further high-status rural settlement is likely in the area as Roman building material has been found at several locations in Stow and the surrounding parishes (Whitwell;1993, 14-15).

Industry is also documented in the parishes adjacent to the Study Area. Three pottery kilns are known within 5km of the Study Area but this is hardly surprising considering the clayey soils and geology found throughout this area (Whitwell;1993, 14-15).

### *Post-Roman to Norman Conquest*

Very little material evidence for Saxon or Danish settlement exists in Lincolnshire, despite the fact that such settlement is well attested by documentary and place name evidence. The area around the Study Area has yielded a concentration of finds of middle-

Saxon pottery and coins, suggesting considerable Saxon activity in the area. Some of the coins were found in Stow parish itself, but unfortunately the exact location of these finds is unknown, so it is not possible to tell if they came from within the Study Area.

The majority of villages in West Lindsey seem to have been established in some form by the time of the Norman conquest. The village of Torksey lies at the junction of the Foss Dyke and the Trent and, as such, seems to have functioned as an important river trading centre in the late Saxon period (Everson *et al.*, 1991, 3). Late Saxon activity is also seen at the village of Stow. An abbey, dedicated to St. Mary, was founded at Stow at the beginning of the eleventh century. This foundation does not seem to have fared well and was almost deserted by the time of the Norman conquest (VCH; 1988, 118).

### *Medieval*

The Medieval villages in this part of West Lindsey seem to have grown out of the settlements established in the late Saxon period. Many of them flourished and continued to thrive into the Post-Medieval period – Gainsborough and Torksey, for example, grew to become important centres of river trade throughout the medieval period. The village at Stow grew up following the failure of the abbey established there in the late Saxon period. The abbey at Stow became part of the diocese of Lincoln in the early twelfth century (VCH; 1988, 118) and a large village grew up around the former minister church. By the later twelfth century Stow had become the centre of one of the smallest archdeaconries of the diocese, and the Bishop of Lincoln had established a palace at Stow by this time. The palace lay in the west of the parish and the palace moat and associated fishponds survive as earthworks within the Study Area and have been accorded Scheduled Ancient Monument status (Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 22678 see Figure 4). The palace was set within an empaled deer park, the origin of the name Stow Park Farm. It is unclear when the park was created, though it is first recorded in the twelfth century, was enlarged by royal licence in 1330 and is mentioned in documents until the eighteenth century (Everson *et al.*, 1991, 185 and Way, 1997, 205). The park was enclosed by an earthen bank and pale; parts of the eastern and western portion of the circuit survive as earthworks and have been accorded Scheduled Ancient Monument status (Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 22678). Stow Park was one of many medieval deer parks in this part of Lincolnshire. Large monastic farms also existed close to the Study Area. Three granges, at Marton, Brampton and Saxilby, exist within 2km of the Study Area.

Stow and adjacent villages were affected by depopulation in the late Medieval period. The Medieval settlements at Stow Park and Coates were deserted and the village of Stow contracted in the late Medieval period. It is unclear why this occurred, but it could perhaps have been as a result of the Black Death.

### *Post-Medieval*

The area surrounding the Study Area seems to have been subjected to more and more intense agriculture as the Post-Medieval period progressed. Stow was enclosed by act of

parliament in the later eighteenth century. The fields created by this enclosure were used mainly for arable farming (Russell & Bennet, 1993, 82-3). Stow Park became disparked at the end of the eighteenth century and its lands were divided up into three main farms. It is probable that the disparkment of Stow Park was part of the parliamentary enclosure of the parish. The Enclosure Award for the parish does not survive, so it is impossible to be certain of this.

The Foss Dyke, to the south of the Study Area, was revived in the later seventeenth century and served again as an important waterway for trade to Lincoln.

The Great Northern and Great Eastern Joint Railway was cut through the Wider Study Area in the 1870s and a station was constructed where the railway line crosses Till Bridge Lane at Stow Park (Figure 3).

Small-scale brick making was carried out just outside the Study Area. A brick pit is recorded in the field at the extreme southwest corner of the former Stow Park area on both the parish Tithe map (1838) and the first edition Ordnance Survey map of the area (1890).

## 7.0 Results

### 7.1 The Site

The SMR has only one record for the Site itself.

SMR No. 52441

Findspot

Various finds of Roman date including second- and third-century coins, a ring, a bronze strap-end and brooch fragments

SK 8630/8030

The aerial photographs and aerial photograph plots held by Lincolnshire SMR showed no cropmarks within the Site.

No useful information about the Site was gained from the historical maps and documents held by the LAO. The Tithe Award for Stow (1838) records the field in which the Site lies as arable and that it is named *Clerk and Hobbing Hill*. This name seems to be a reference to the 'tussocky' nature of the grass that grew there (Field, 1972, 105).

The Site was visited in late September 2001 and a walkover survey was carried out on the field which contains the Site and on the immediately adjacent fields. At present, the Site lies in a pasture field which is home to a dairy herd. According to the owner and occupier of the farm, Simon Barker, this field has not been ploughed since he took over the farm over twenty years ago. (Plates 1 and 2). The field consists of grass, with frequent patches of nettles and weeds, but none of these patches looks as if they are



related to buried archaeological features. No earthworks are present in the field. The soil within this field and the adjacent fields is very heavy and clayey. Occasional molehills were encountered within the Site. These were examined to see if any finds had been brought to the surface by burrowing but no finds were located.

The fields immediately east of the Site were under grass and yielded no relevant archaeological information. The field to the north of the Site had recently been ploughed. Limited fieldwalking was carried out within this field to assess the nature and date of any exposed artefactual material. The ploughsoil of the northern field contained a large amount of man-made material, much of it appearing to be ploughed-out field drain fragments. There was also a large quantity of brick and tile within the field. The ploughsoil in the northern field also contained large amounts of slag which may be derived from iron working (Lynne Bevan, pers. comm.). The slag may be derived from iron-working nearby. It could, however, represent material incorporated into the ploughsoil by other means.

## 7.2 The Study Area

Nine sites recorded on the Lincolnshire SMR lie outside the Site but within the Study Area, dating from the Neolithic to the Medieval period.

### PREHISTORIC:

SMR No. 52435

Findspot

Neolithic polished stone axe

SK 8655/8113

### ROMAN:

SMR No. 52442

Findspot

Copper alloy finger ring

SK 8620/8040

SMR No. 52453

Findspot

Various Roman finds, including second- and third-century coins, glass beads and samian pottery

SK 8630/7990

SMR No. 50575

Road

Roman Road to York

SK 8710/8100 (grid reference at Stow Park)

MEDIEVAL:

SMR No.50403

Artefact scatter

Various Medieval finds, including a jetton, coins, a heraldic badge and a seal matrix

SK 8657/8108

SMR No.52447

Ridge and furrow

Probably related to deserted medieval settlement of Stow Park

SK 8623/8136

SMR No. 52443

Cropmarks

Enclosures of settlement associated with Bishop's Palace, they lie within the scheduled area of the palace site

SK 8655/8100

SMR No. 54199

Earthworks

Remains of moated site of Bishop's Palace and associated monumental fishponds; legally protected (with remaining parts of Stow Park deer park earthwork boundary) as a Scheduled Ancient Monument – No. 22678

SK 8660/8090

SMR No. 50148

Earthworks, field boundaries

Boundary of Stow Park deer park; surviving earthworks on east and west sides of the park are protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument – No. 22678

SK 8640/7980

A search of the aerial photographs and aerial photograph plots, including the National Mapping Programme overlays produced by RCHME, failed to yield any further sites or further information on any of the sites listed above.

The SMR parish file for Stow also records that five Anglo-Saxon coins, dating to the early eighth century and mid-ninth century, have been found in the parish, but the precise location of these finds is, unfortunately, unknown. The fact that any Saxon coinage has been found at all suggests Saxon activity, perhaps settlement, within this area.

Examination of historic maps and documents held by the LAO, including the Stow Parish Tithe award and map and the first edition Ordnance Survey map of the area, did not produce much further evidence for archaeological sites in the area. The majority of field names recorded in the Tithe Award (1838) were mainly derived from the area's previous

status as a deer park. Several fields had names relating to wooded areas and parkland such as *Wood Close* and *Lawn Close*. The name of the field highlighted on Figure 5 is of considerable interest. The Tithe award records it as Small Coin Field and this may be taken as an indication that Roman or Saxon coins were commonly ploughed up in that field in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

## 8.0 Discussion

As can be seen from the information outlined, above the Site lies within a Study Area which contains archaeological finds of all periods. Roman activity is known from within and immediately outside the Site (Figure 3). The character of the Roman finds from the Site and the Study Area – pottery, personal ornaments and coins – is not suggestive of finds derived from accidental loss, rather the finds suggest the presence of a settlement site in this area. The presence of samian pottery amongst the known finds suggests that the settlement could be high-status. The fact that no traces of a settlement, or any other features, are visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs does not mean that no site survives in the Study Area. It merely reflects the general unsuitability of the soils within the Study Area for cropmark production. The potential that a Roman settlement of some kind lies within the Study Area is, therefore, quite high. Definite material evidence of Roman settlement in this part of Lincolnshire is not plentiful, so any deposits which may lie within the Site could be considered significant in local and regional terms.

The Site lies within the bounds of a medieval hunting park belonging to the Bishops of Lincoln and it should be borne in mind that evidence for the medieval land use of the area, and perhaps even structures, may be preserved within the Site.

There is no evidence for activity of other periods directly within the Site. This may largely reflect the fact that little systematic fieldwork has been carried out within Stow Parish and much that we currently know is derived from chance finds and surviving earthworks. The possibility of the presence of archaeological features and deposits within the Site from other periods must not be discounted.

The Site lies within a former deer park and this has implications for the presence and survival of below-ground archaeological deposits. Stow Park existed as a preserve of grassland and woodland from the early Medieval period until just over two hundred years ago. Over this time the land within it will probably not have been ploughed and, additionally, the Site has not been subject to ploughing for the last twenty years. The Site has only been used for arable farming for a maximum of two hundred years. Buried archaeological deposits may well survive better in this area than in other similar cases.

## **9.0 Conclusions**

This assessment has demonstrated that the Site has a high likelihood of containing well preserved archaeological deposits. Any preserved deposits within the Site will probably be Roman in date, although it is possible that medieval deposits could also be present. It is not possible, on the grounds of the evidence available at present, to assess the extent of buried archaeological deposits on the Site. The nature and extent of archaeological deposits on the Site could be further clarified by either geophysical survey, evaluation work or a combination of the two methods. Any decision on the requirement of or nature of further work rests with Jim Bonnor, Senior Built Environment Officer of Lincolnshire County Council.

## **Acknowledgements**

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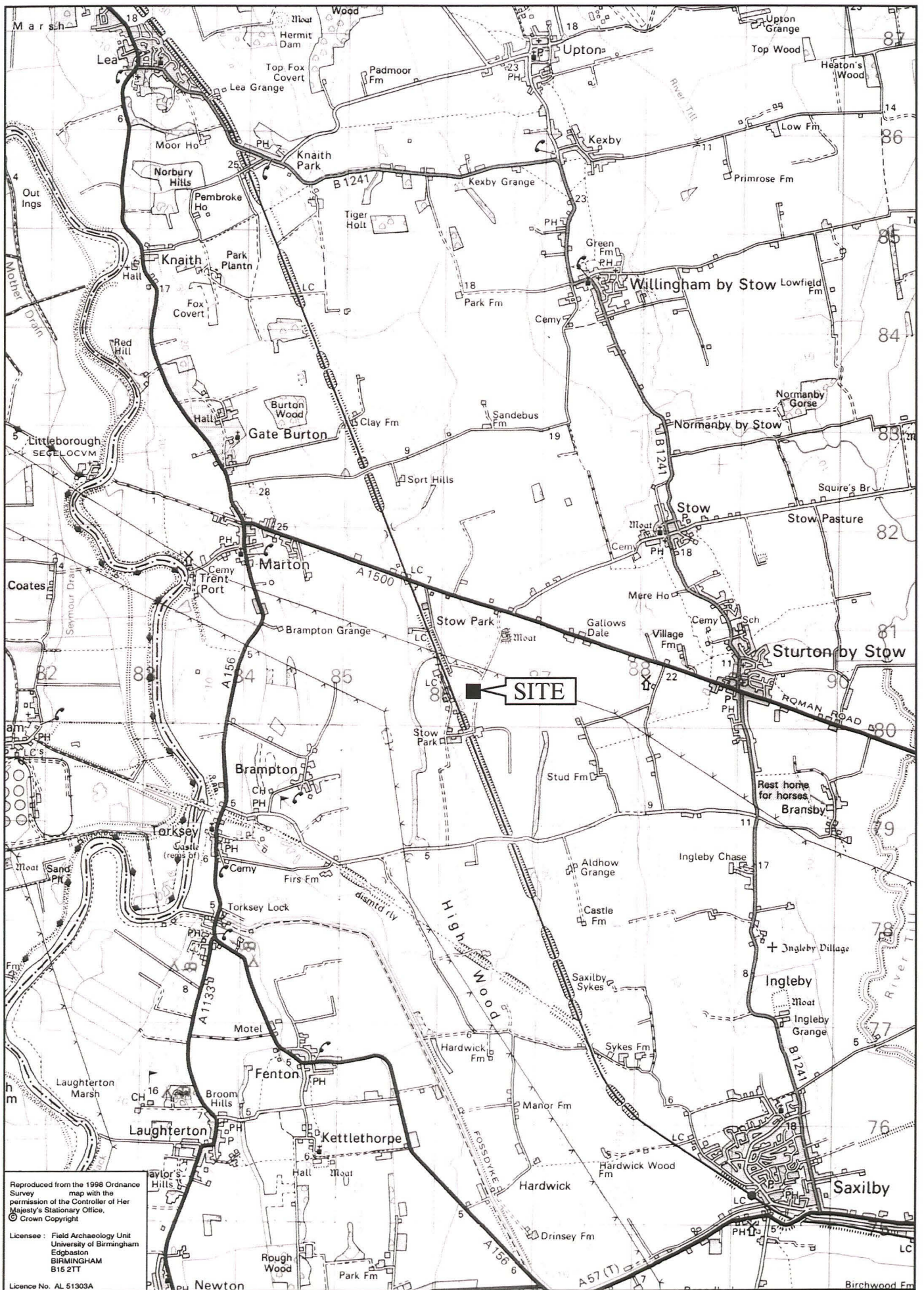
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Ordnance Survey Current Edition 1:10,000



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Fig.1

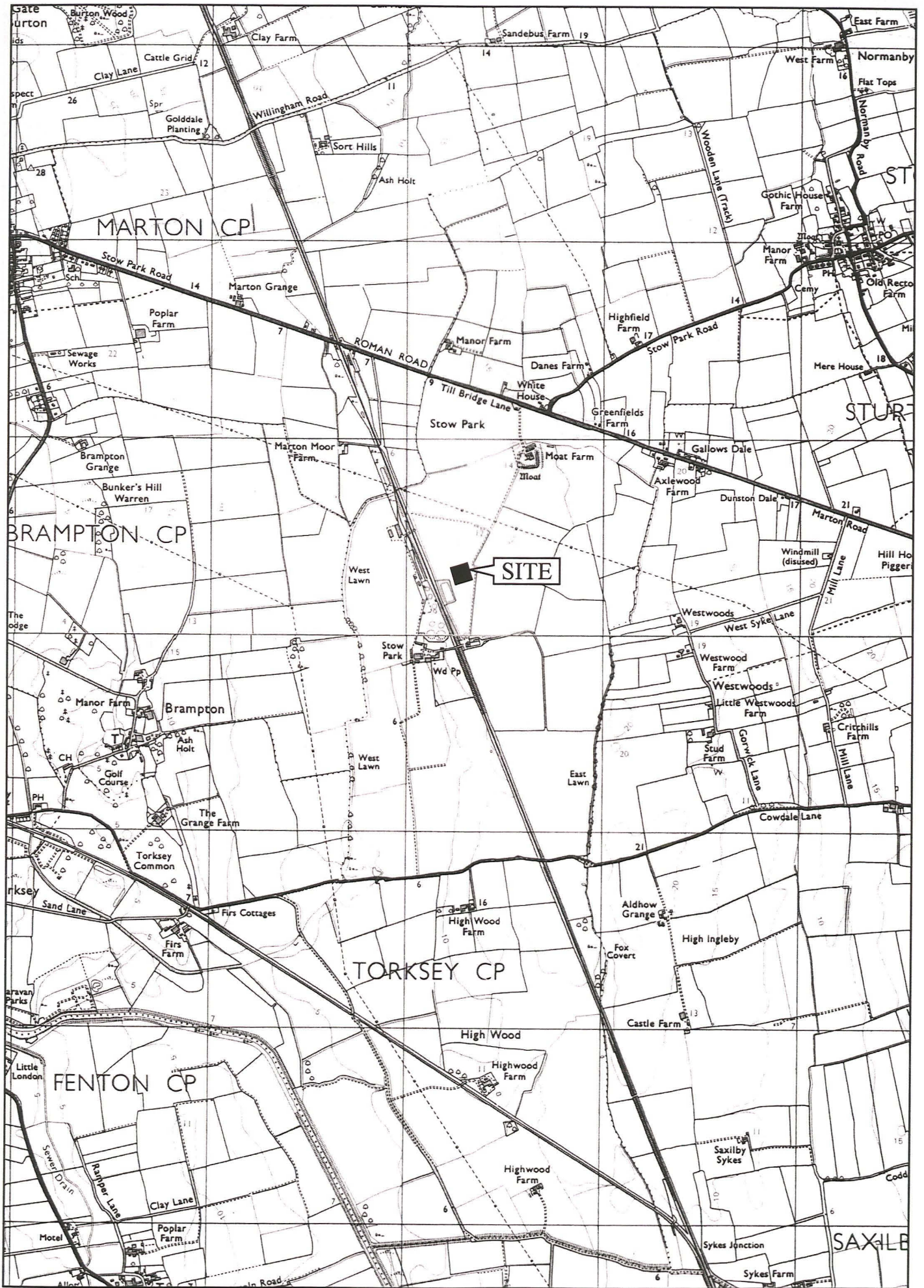


Fig.2

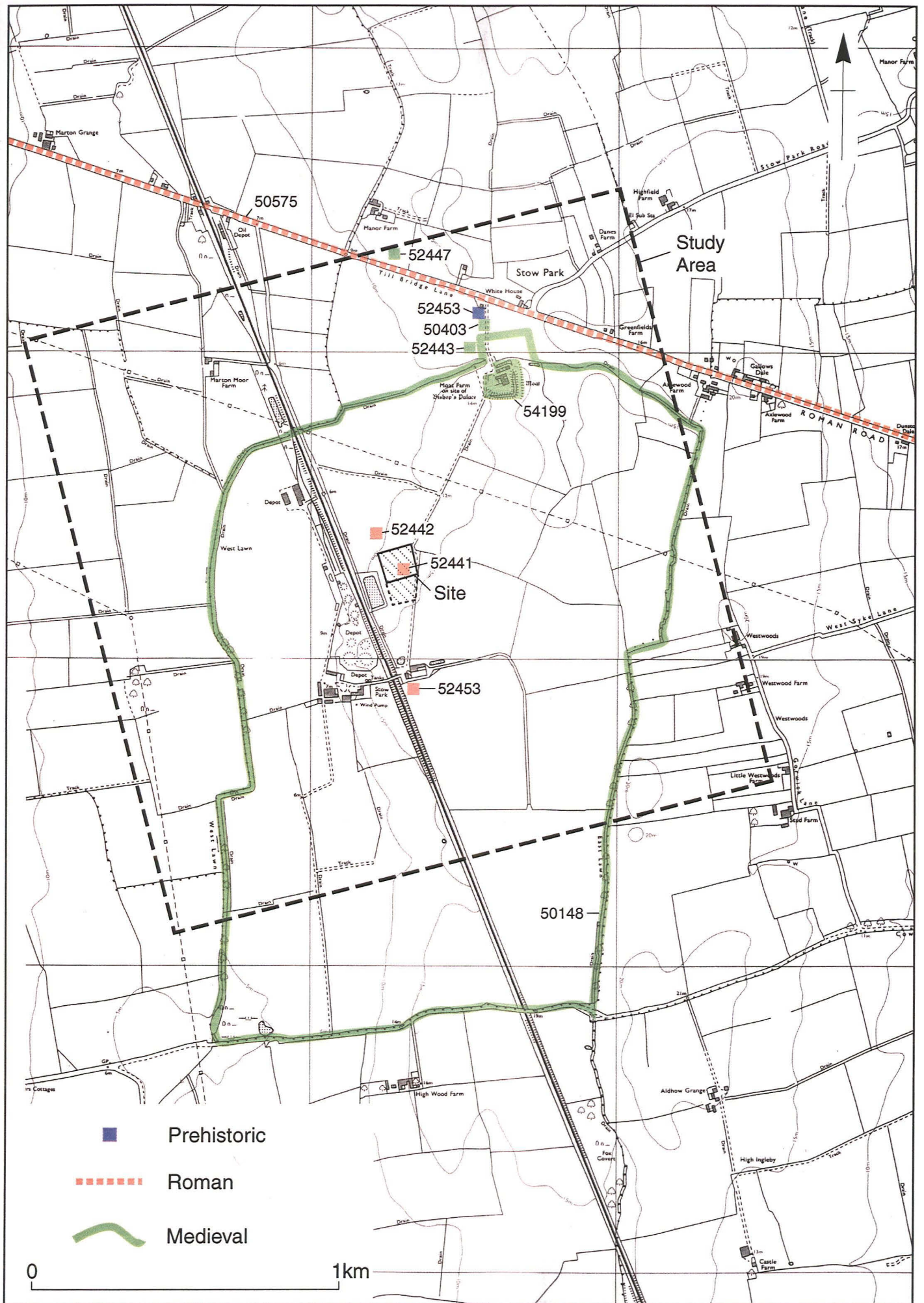


Fig.3





Fig.4

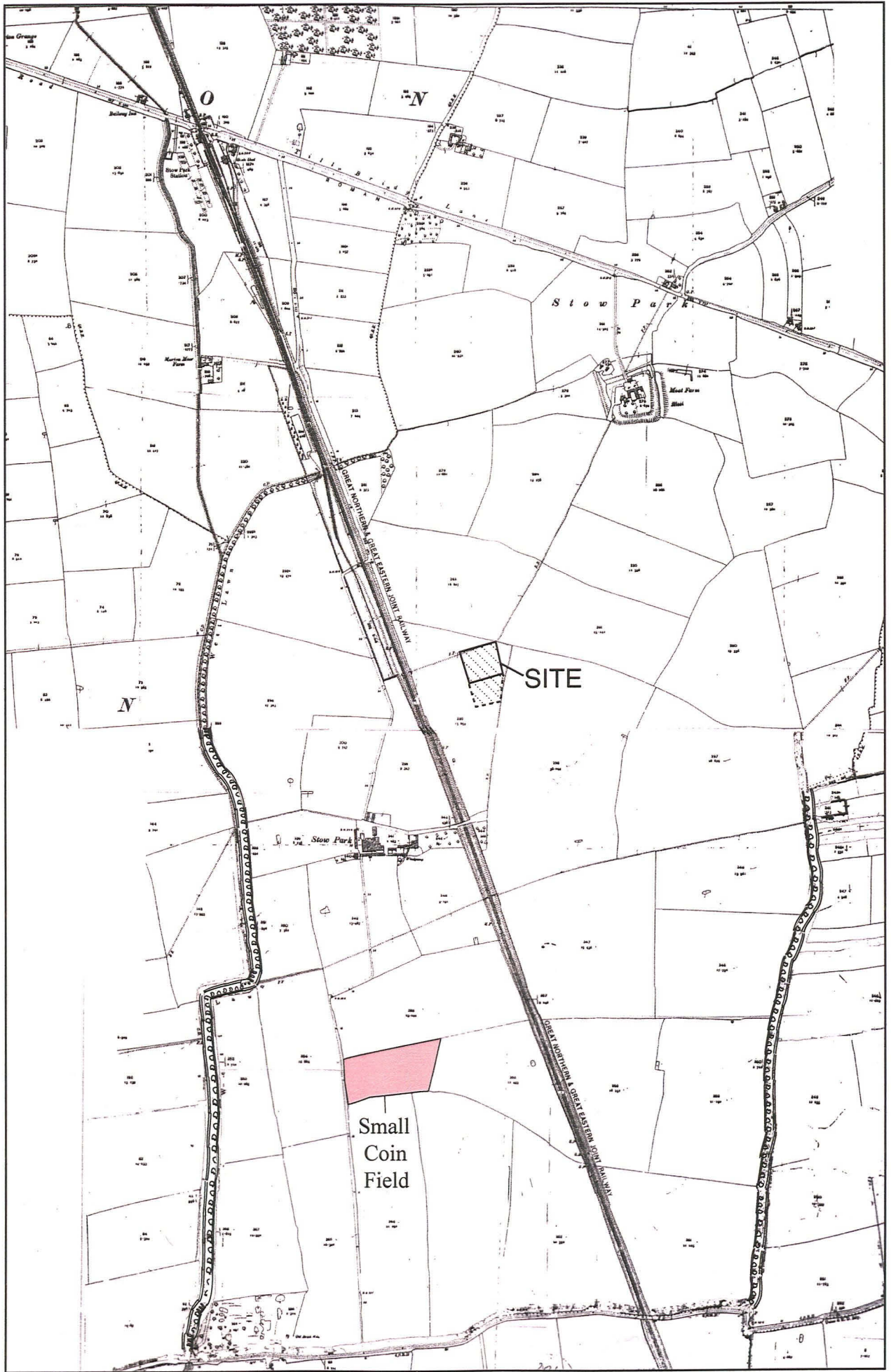


Fig.5



Plate 1



Plate 2