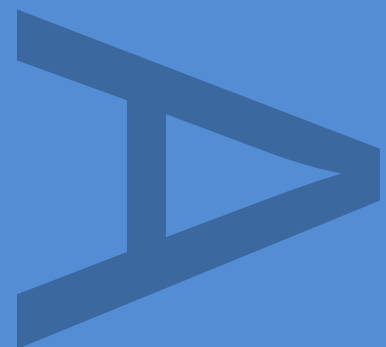


**LAND ADJACENT TO HOLWELL
ROAD, PIRTON**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION**

MAY 2011



PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

**Archaeological Evaluation at Holwell Road, Pirton,
Hertfordshire**

Site Code: HHRP11

HER Planning Reference: 22/11

Central National Grid Reference: TL 1514 3202

Written and Researched by Mark Hinman

Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, May 2011

Project Manager: Mark Hinman

Commissioning Client: K Monsma and J Walker

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April 2011

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DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

Site Name

Holwell Road, Pirton
Type of project
Archaeological Evaluation

QUALITY CONTROL

Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited Project Code			K2497
	Name & Title	Signature	Date
Text Prepared by:	M Hinman		31.4.11
Graphics Prepared by:	J Brown		31.4.11
Graphics Checked by:	J Brown		20.5.11
Project Manager Sign-off:	M Hinman		20.5.11

Revision No.	Date	Checked	Approved

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London
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	2
2	ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	3
3	METHOD STATEMENT	3
4	RESULTS	5
5	THE FINDS	6
6	INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS	7
7	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	8
8	REFERENCES	8
9	APPENDIX 1 – HER SUMMARY	11
10	APPENDIX 2 – OASIS FORM	12

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1 – Site Location

Figure 2 – Historic Environment Records

Figure 3 – Trench Location Plan

Figure 4 – Detail Plan and Sections of Ditch

Figure 4 – 1st Edition Ordnance Survey and
interpretive projection of ditch line

PLATES

1-6 trench detail

7 Ditch 12 detail

8 Ditch 19 detail

Abstract

This report details the results of a programme of archaeological evaluation undertaken during April 2011 on land adjacent to Holwell Road, Pirton (hereafter referred to as the Site). The project was commissioned by The Eades Hotwani Partnership (EHP) on behalf of Messers Walker in response to a condition identified by Andy Instone of the Historic Environment Unit at Hertfordshire County Council.

Conditions for trial trenching were good throughout the programme. Artefact densities were extremely low across the study area and consisted of a single fragment of poorly preserved animal bone recovered from the upper fill of the only archaeologically significant feature present on site, a ditch.

The ditch was identified in 2 of the 6 trenches and the projected line of the feature was found to be broadly in line with the north easterly continuation of Holwell Road and of similar alignment to other pre enclosure boundaries on the northern side of the village.

Although conclusive dating evidence was absent the nature of the ditch fills and the projected alignment were sufficient to indicate that this feature is certainly of pre 18th century origin and may tentatively be identified as a field boundary, perhaps of possible late Saxon or Medieval origin.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report details the working methods and results of an archaeological trial trenching programme on land adjacent to Holwell Road, Pirton, Herts undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (PCA) in response to a condition identified by Andy Instone of the Historic Environment Unit at Hertfordshire County Council. The fieldwork, undertaken during March 2011 was managed and directed by the author, Mark Hinman.
- 1.2 The purpose of the archaeological investigations is to inform the assumptions feeding in to the planning process. The evaluation exercise has sought to contribute to an understanding of the character date and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed development area.
- 1.3 The study area, centred on NGR TL 1514 3202 (Fig 1), covers approximately 0.35 hectares is currently in agricultural use and has been ploughed at regular intervals. The site is bordered on its south side by ploughed fields and to the north by Holwell Road. The land to the east of the site is open farmland and western border is defined by a fence line and domestic dwellings.
- 1.4 The bedrock geology of the site consists of chalk of the West Melbury Chalk Formation
- 1.5 The northern and western borders of Pirton form the county boundary with Bedfordshire and the village occupies an area of relatively low ground to the east of the Barton Hills. The current course of the Icknield Way passes less than 300m to the south of the proposed development. Topographically the site is relatively level and lies at approximately 67m OD.
- 1.6 The geology of the site consists of Oxford Clay and Kellaway Beds overlain by Chalky Till of the Hanslope Association.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The archaeological and historical background for the area is complex has been extensively documented previously.
- 2.2 Evidence of earlier prehistoric activity has been recorded in the west of the village including pottery ranging in date from the Neolithic to the Iron Age (c 3500BC-42AD). From the end of the Iron Age until the end of the Roman period test pitting has identified concentrations of activity in the vicinity of the moated Rectory and Burge End Farms on the western side of the village and a third focus to the east of Toot Hill which lies to the south east of the subject site. Pirton is mentioned in the Domesday Book as belonging to Ralph de Limesy and had a population of around 200 individuals. Pirton is today a nucleated village clustered around the church and adjacent earthwork remains of Toot Hill, a motte and bailey castle.
- 2.3 Although Pirton has a complex history no finds or records of note have previously been reported within the bounds of the site (Fig. 2).

3 METHOD STATEMENT

General

- 3.1 All archaeological works were undertaken within the bounds of the development area (Fig 3).
- 3.2 All archaeological works sought to minimise, as far as was reasonably practicable the impact of trial trenching to any crops planted within the study area.
- 3.3 All aspects of the programme were conducted in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologist's Code of Conduct, the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations (2008), and Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (EAA Occasional Paper 14).

3.4 Field techniques and recording are detailed within the PCA fieldwork induction manual, (Operations Manual I) by Joanna Taylor and Gary Brown 2009.

3.5 All features were investigated and recorded to provide an accurate evaluation of archaeological potential.

Desk Based Assessment

3.6 A desk based review was conducted prior to the commencement of fieldwork. The desk-based assessment consulted relevant information from the following:

- The County's HER
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- Local archaeological and historical societies web sites including the Pirton Landscape Project <http://pirtonproject.wordpress.com> and Pirton Local History group <http://www.pirtonhistory.org.uk>

Trial Trenching

3.7 Trial Trenching was carried out under archaeological supervision using a JCB fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Due to a prolonged spell of dry weather prior to fieldwork the ground was found to be extremely hard and it was not possible to use a 1.4m bucket as planned. A 1m wide bucket was substituted and occasional 2m wide trench sections were opened at intervals to compensate for the otherwise relatively narrow width of the trenches.

3.8 Six trenches of varying width totalling 114m in length were opened within the proposed development area (Fig 3).

- Trench 1, aligned east-west, length 35m, average depth 0.50m
- Trench 2, aligned north-south , length 20m, average depth 0.60m
- Trench 3, aligned north north west, east south east , length 25m, average depth 0.50m
- Trench 4, aligned north north east, east south east , length 25m, average depth 0.50m
- Trench 5, aligned north north west, east south east , length 5m, average depth 0.55m
- Trench 6, aligned east-west, length 4m, average depth 0.60m

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	2
2	ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	3
3	METHOD STATEMENT	3
4	RESULTS	5
5	THE FINDS	6
6	INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS	7
7	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	8
8	BIBLIOGRAPHY	Error!
	Bookmark not defined.	
9	APPENDIX 1 – FINDS LOCATIONS	11
10	APPENDIX 2 – OASIS FORM	12

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- Trench 4, aligned north north east, east south east , length 25m, average depth 0.50m
- Trench 5, aligned north north west, east south east , length 5m, average depth 0.55m
- Trench 6, aligned east-west, length 4m, average depth 0.60m

- 3.9 Exposed surfaces were cleaned by trowel as necessary in order to clarify located features and deposits. Trench spoil was scanned visually and with a metal detector to aid recovery of artefacts but was found to be devoid of finds.
- 3.10 All trenches were located using a Lieca 1200 GPS rover unit.

4 RESULTS

General

- 4.1 A total of six trenches of varying width totalling 114m in length were opened within the proposed development area.
- 4.2 Natural geological horizons consisting of clay and chalky till were encountered at depths of between 0.55m and 0.70m.
- 4.3 Topsoil (context 10) depths were relatively constant across the site generally varying from between 0.30m to 0.35m with the greatest depth of 0.45m recorded in Trench 6.
- 4.4 Subsoil (context 11) depths were relatively constant across the site generally varying from between 0.20m to 0.30m with the greatest depth of 0.40m recorded at the eastern end of Trench 1.
- 4.5 The only archaeologically significant feature present on site was a linear ditch. The same ditch was identified, excavated and recorded in 1m long slots within trenches 3 (cut no. 12) and 6 (cut no. 18).
- 4.6 Artefact densities were extremely low across the study area and consisted of a single fragment of poorly preserved animal bone recovered from the upper fill (17) of ditch cut 12.

The Ditch

- 4.7 The ditch present within trenches 3 and 6 was extremely similar in terms of general dimensions and infill sequence in each of the two excavated slots.

4.8 Within Trench 3 ditch cut 12 was 1.1m wide and 0.65m deep with steeply sloping sides tapering to a slightly concave base 0.25m wide. The ditch contained a total of five fills numbered sequentially from 13 (earliest) to 17 (latest).

- Primary fill 13 was a mid- light yellowish brown clay silt 80mm thick with no inclusions or finds which was derived as a result of weathering of the ditch sides.
- Fill 14 was a mid-light yellowish white chalky silty clay 50mm thick containing occasional flint gravel derived as a result of weathering of the ditch sides.
- Fill 15 was a mid brown clay silt 100mm thick with no inclusions or finds which had accumulated through weathering and lack of maintenance.
- Fill 16 was a mid brown clay silt 100mm thick with occasional inclusions of small angular flint gravel which had accumulated through weathering and lack of maintenance.
- Secondary fill 17 was a mid brown clay silt 320 thick with occasional inclusions of small angular flint gravel which had accumulated through lack of maintenance or abandonment. A single fragment of a large mammal bone, possibly a horse metatarsus was recovered from the fill.

4.9 Within Trench 6 ditch cut 18 was 1.03m wide and 0.60m deep with steeply sloping sides tapering to a slightly concave base 0.20m wide. The ditch contained a total of four fills numbered sequentially from 19 (earliest) to 22 (latest).

- Primary fill 19 was a mid- light yellowish brown clay silt 80mm thick with no inclusions or finds which was derived as a result of weathering of the ditch sides.
- Fill 20 was a mid brown clay silt 100mm thick with no inclusions or finds which had accumulated through weathering and lack of maintenance.
- Fill 21 was a mid brown clay silt 140mm thick with occasional inclusions of small angular flint gravel which had accumulated through weathering and lack of maintenance.
- Secondary fill 22 was a mid brown clay silt 300mm thick with occasional inclusions of small angular flint gravel which had accumulated through lack of maintenance or abandonment.

5 THE FINDS

Faunal Remains by Kevin Rielly

5.1 The only artefact recovered during the evaluation was the poorly preserved part of a limb bone from a large cattle-size animal tentatively identified as a possible horse metatarsus from upper fill 17 of ditch cut 12.

6 INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 One of the principal objectives of the archaeological evaluation exercise was to determine the presence or absence of archaeological activity within the site which is situated within an Area of Archaeological Significance.
- 6.2 In total only one cut feature was recorded as cutting into the natural geological deposits within the trenches. This feature contained a single fragment of animal bone. The relative lack of finds indicates a probable absence of settlement within the immediate vicinity and would support the interpretation of this feature as a field boundary.
- 6.3 The ditch identified in trenches 3 and 6 was on a north east / south westerly alignment and the projected line of the feature was found to be broadly in line with the north easterly continuation of Holwell Road.
- 6.4 The absence of dateable artefactual materials from the ditch was problematic but an examination of pre and post enclosure maps of the village did not identify any boundaries within the site on the projected alignment which would indicate infilling of the ditch would have occurred before 1880AD (Fig 5).
- 6.5 Examination of the first edition Ordnance survey map (1881-2, 1:2,500) highlighted other boundaries of similar alignment on the northern side of the village including Royal Oak Lane (formerly Deadhorse Lane) and a hedgerow boundary parallel and roughly 50m further to the west of the lane.

Conclusions

- 6.6 Although conclusive dating evidence was absent the nature of the ditch fills were sufficient to indicate that this feature may be identified as a field boundary of some antiquity.
- 6.7 Although the archaeological evidence was admittedly rather limited, if the projected alignment of this ditch is valid, then it might be tentatively suggested that perhaps these remains were part of one of what were once a series of related boundaries on the northern side of the village and of possible late Saxon or Medieval origin.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 7.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank The Eades Hotwani Partnership (EHP) on behalf of Messers Walker for commissioning this project, in response to a condition placed on the proposed development by Hertfordshire County Council. Thanks are also due to Andy Instone, Isobel Thompson and Stuart Bryant of the Historic Environment Unit at Hertfordshire County Council and Kieth Fitzpatrick Mathews of North Hertfordshire District Council's Archaeological Service for approving the project specification, supply of HER data and subsequent monitoring of the fieldwork.
- 7.2 The author would like to thank Nathalie Barratt for assistance with GPS survey, Kevin Rielly for identification of the animal bone, Josephine Brown for her work on the illustrations, Carena Lewis for supplying data on test pitting within the village and the Pirton Local History Group for hosting such a useful and informative web site.

8 REFERENCES

- Brown, G. and Taylor, J. 2009 PCA Fieldwork induction manual, (Operations Manual I)
- Brown, N. and Glazebrook, J. 2000 Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy East Anglian. Archaeol. Occ. Pap. 8
- Gurney, D. 2003 Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England East Anglian. Archaeol. Occ. Pap. 14

The first edition Ordnance survey map (1881-2, 1:2,500)

Web Sites consulted

Pirton Landscape Project <http://pirtonproject.wordpress.com>

Pirton Local History group <http://www.pirtonhistory.org.uk>

Access Cambridge Archaeology

<http://www.arch.cam.ac.uk/aca/pirton.html>



Trench 1 looking East



Trench 2 looking North



Trench 3 looking South



Trench 4 looking South

Plate 1-4



Trench 5 looking North West



Trench 6 looking North



Ditch Cut 12



Ditch Cut 18

9 APPENDIX 1 – HER SUMMARY

Site name and address: Land at Holwell Corner, Holwell Road ,Pirton		
County: Hertfordshire	District: Pirton	
Village/Town: Pirton	Parish: Pirton	
Planning application reference: n/a		
HER Enquiry reference: 22/11		
Client name, address, and tel. no.: Messrs J and A Walker		
Nature of application: Housing		
Present land use: Agricultural		
Size of application area:0.4ha	Size of area investigated:0.4ha	
NGR (to 8 figures): TL 1514 3202		
Site code (if applicable):HHRP11		
Site director/Organisation: Mark Hinman Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd		
Type of work Evaluation		
Date of work:	Start:27/04/11	Finish:28/04/11
Location of finds & site archive/Curating museum: North Herts		
Related HER Nos:	Periods represented: Med? Post Med	
Relevant previous summaries/reports		
<p>Summary of fieldwork results: <i>An archaeological evaluation undertaken during April 2011 on land adjacent to Holwell Road, Pirton. Six trenches, total length 114m were cut within an area of 0.4ha. Artefact densities were extremely low across the study area and consisted of a single fragment of poorly preserved animal bone from only archaeologically significant feature present on site, a field boundary ditch. The ditch was identified in 2 of the 6 trenches and the projected line of the feature was found to be broadly in line with the north easterly continuation of Holwell Road and of similar alignment to other pre enclosure boundaries on the northern side of the village.</i></p>		
Author of summary: M Hinman	Date of summary:20/05/11	

10 APPENDIX 2 – OASIS FORM

10.1 OASIS ID:

Project details

Project name Holwell Road, Pirton

Short description of the project *An archaeological evaluation undertaken during April 2011 on land adjacent to Holwell Road, Pirton. Six trenches, total length 114m were cut within an area of 0.4ha. Artefact densities were extremely low across the study area and consisted of a single fragment of poorly preserved animal bone from only archaeologically significant feature present on site, a field boundary ditch. The ditch was identified in 2 of the 6 trenches and the projected line of the feature was found to be broadly in line with the north easterly continuation of Holwell Road and of similar alignment to other pre enclosure boundaries on the northern side of the village.*

Project dates Start: 26-04-11 End: 27-04-2011

Previous/future work no

Any associated project reference codes HHRP11

Type of project Evaluation

Site status (other)	Area of Archaeological Significance
Current Land use	Other 15 - Other
Monument type	Uncertain
Significant Finds	Uncertain
Methods & techniques	Trial Trenching
Development type	medium-scale (e.g. houses, etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority – PPS5
Position in the planning process	Pre determination in support of application



Project location

Country	England
Site location	Pirton, Hertfordshire
Postcode	SG5 3QZ

Study area 0.4ha

Site coordinates TL 1514 3202

Height OD / Depth 68mod



Project creators

Name of Organisation PCA

Project brief originator Andy Instone, Hertfordshire Historic Environment Unit

Project design originator Mark Hinman

Project director/manager Mark Hinman

Project supervisor Mark Hinman

Type of sponsor/funding body Private Client



Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Local Museum
Physical Contents	Local Museum
Digital Archive recipient	Local Museum
Digital Contents	Local Museum
Digital Media available	'Spreadsheets','Survey','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Local Museum
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Correspondence','Photograph','Report','Section','Survey','Unpublished Text'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	

Author(s)/Editor(s) Mark Hinman

Date 20/05/11

Issuer or
publisher Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

Place of issue or
publication Stapleford

Entered by

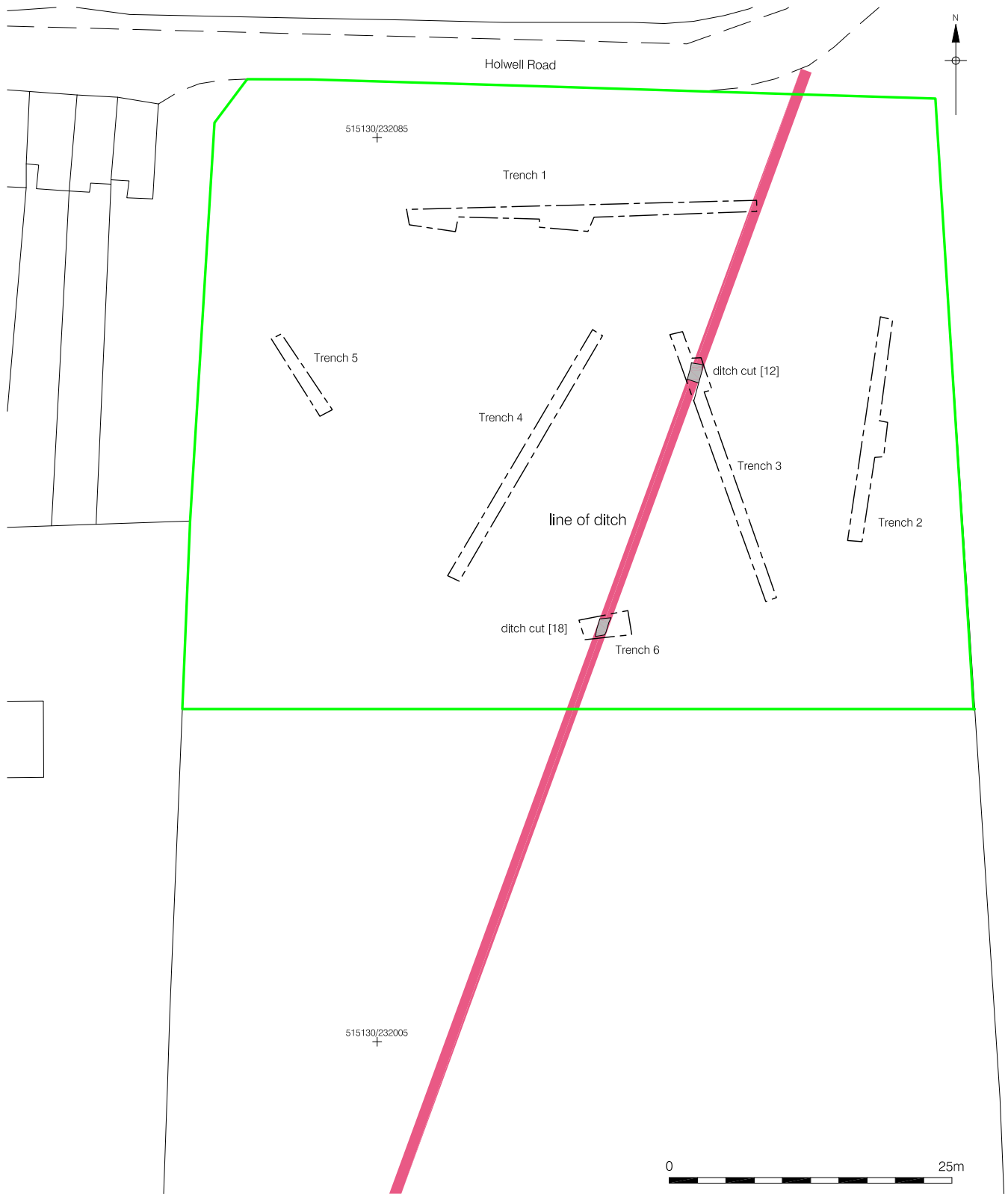
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Figure 1
 Site Location Plan
 1:25,000 at A4



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Figure 3
Trench Location Plan
1:500 at A4

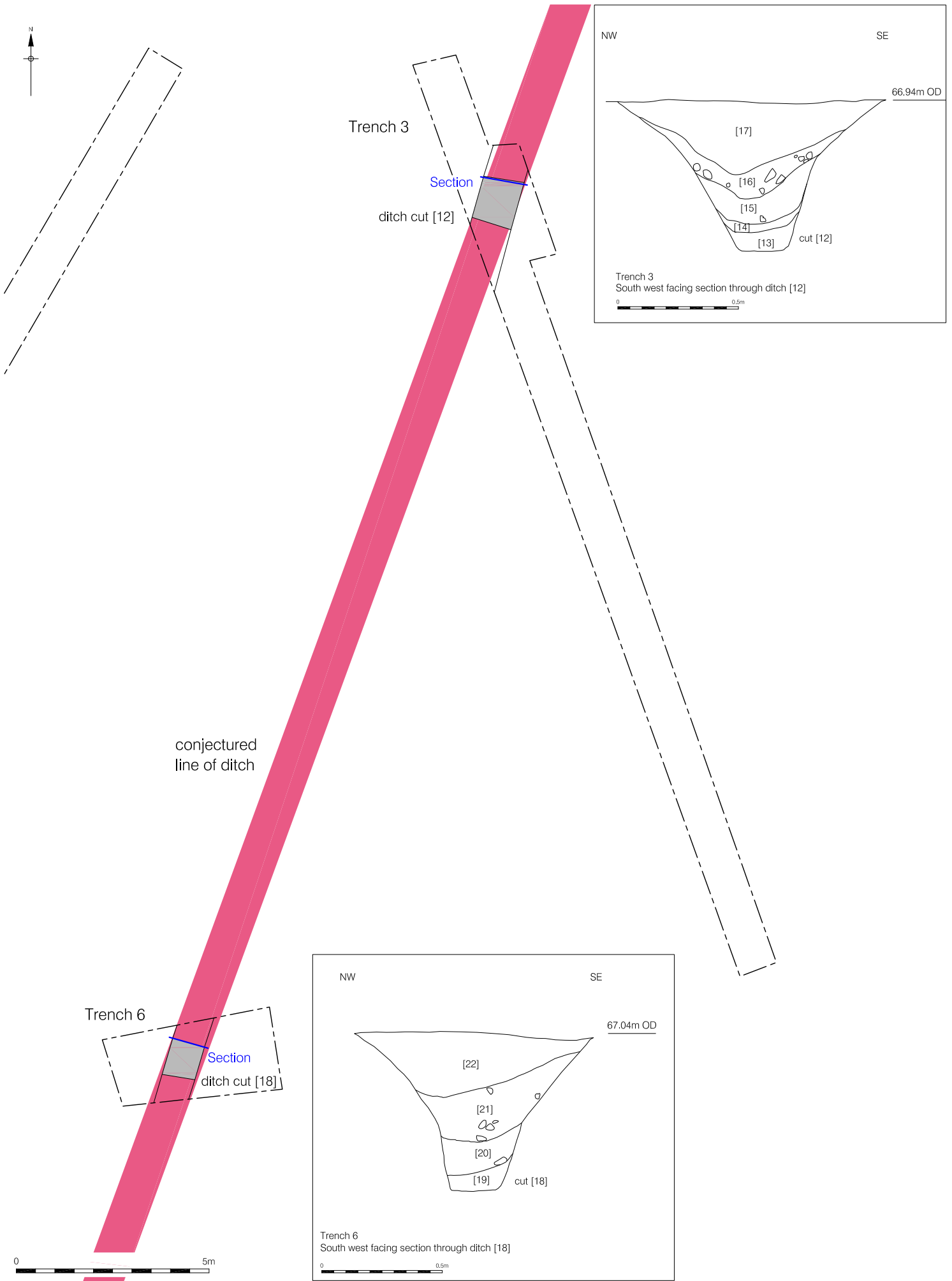


Figure 4
Plan of and sections through ditch
Plan: 1:125, Sections: 1:20, at A4

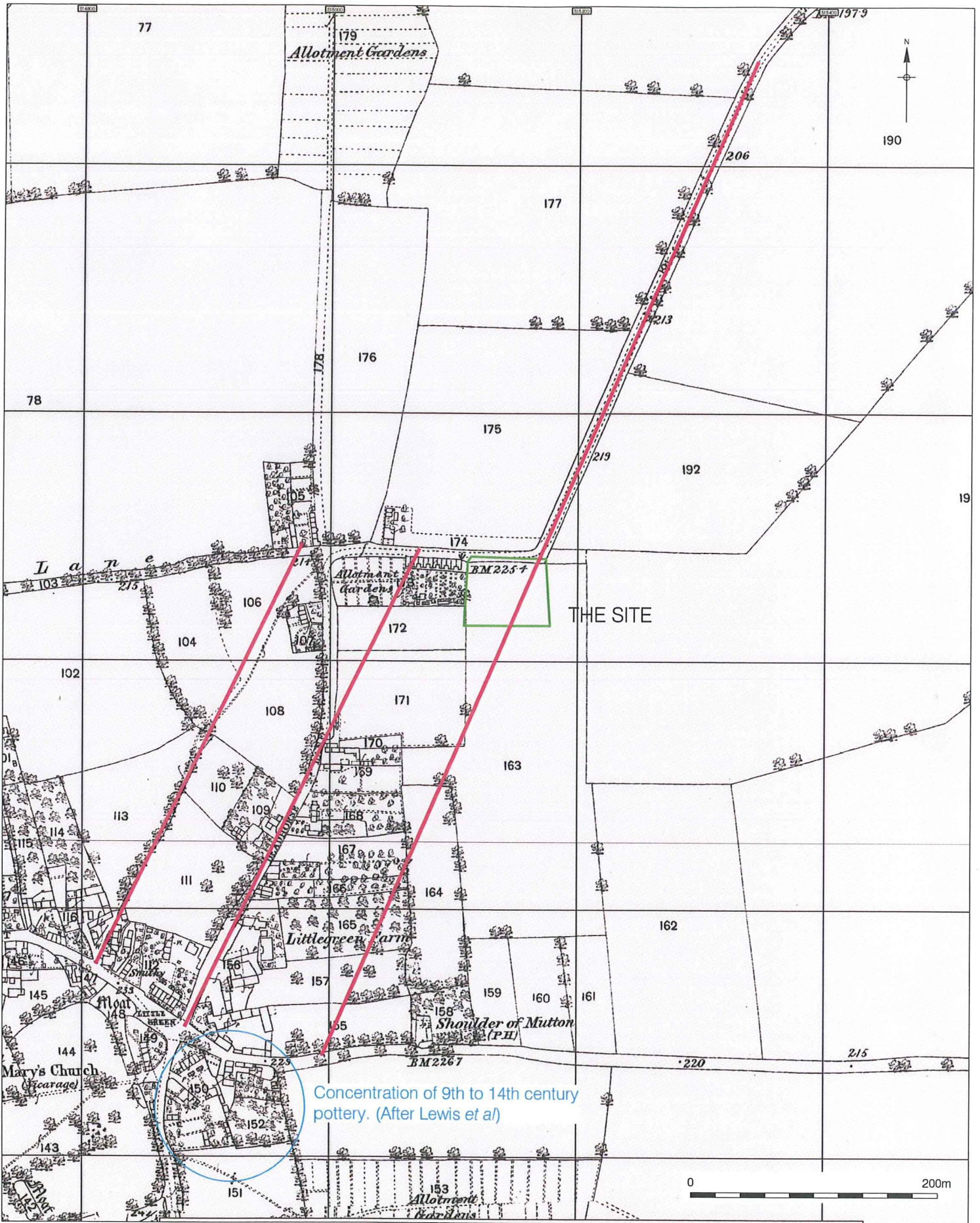


Figure 5
1st edition Ordnance Survey map, 1881-82, with ditch superimposed
1:2,000 at A4

PCA

PCA SOUTHERN

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