

7 Ufton Fields, Ufton, Warwickshire

Archaeological Watching Brief



understanding heritage matters

Report No 1140
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*Working for
Warwickshire*

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief at 7 Ufton Fields, Ufton, within the area of the medieval village of Ufton recorded no archaeological features. A layer of soil contained several sherds of mid 18th to early 19th century pottery along with a fragment of glass bottle and a broken whetstone. These most likely derive from the existing row of cottages including no. 7. No finds or features associated with medieval occupation were recovered during this work, despite the site lying on a main street frontage within the village.

1 Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Stratford-upon-Avon District Council for a new sun room and garage (Planning Ref 11/00339/FUL) at 7 Ufton Fields, Ufton, Warwickshire. The site lies within the limits of the medieval settlement of Ufton. It was therefore a condition of planning permission required the applicant to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work to be carried out in conjunction with the development.

1.2 A programme of fieldwork, consisting of archaeological observation of soil stripping and foundation trenches in accordance with a brief prepared by the County Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the Planning Authority (July 2011), was commissioned from Archaeology (Projects) Warwickshire and carried out in December 2011 and this report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under the site code UF11.

2 Location

2.1 Ufton sits astride the main road between Warwick and Daventry and lies on top of a steep ridge part of Ufton Hill. The development site is located at map reference SP 3780 6205 on the west side of Ufton Fields, one of the main medieval streets of Ufton. The site was formerly occupied by garden and an existing garage.

2.2 The site is in the parish of Ufton and the underlying geology of the area is Boulder clay (British Geological Survey 1984).

3 Methodology

3.1 The watching brief was designed to observe any groundworks associated with the development and record as far as possible, the nature of the archaeological resource on the site.

3.2 The work undertaken involved the examination of early map evidence as well as records of archaeological remains in the area and local historical journals and other publications. Fieldwork involved an archaeologist being present during appropriate groundworks. An absence of archaeological remains revealed by the groundworks prompted a discussion with the Planning Archaeologist resulting in concluding the mitigation following the completion of a foundation trenches and soil stripping.

4 Archaeological and Historical Background

4.1 The earliest evidence for human activity in Ufton is a Bronze Age pit found during excavations at the south end of the village (Fig. 1; Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (HER) number MWA 8407; Jones 1997). These excavations also recorded sherds of Romano-British pottery, and a stray Roman coin of Magnentius (350-353) was found in 1958 on the eastern edge of the village (MWA 637). Although the major Roman road, the Fosse Way, lies 2km to the west of the village no Romano-British settlement has been identified at Ufton and these finds probably represent general background activity in the area.

4.2 The origins of the settlement at Ufton are likely to lie in the 10th and 11th centuries and possibly earlier. The manor is first mentioned in 1043 when Earl Leofric of Mercia granted it to the Priory at Coventry along with 14 other villas (VCH 1951, 245). By the time of the Domesday Book (1086) the manor of Ulchetone had a population that can be estimated at about 105 (VCH 1904, 305). Neither of these references demonstrates with certainty that there was a settlement in the area of the existing village but it is likely that the current site was occupied by the 12th century.

4.3 The earliest surviving structure, the church of St Michael in the centre of the village (MWA 804), dates from at least the early 13th century (VCH 1951, 246). A cross with a head of late 14th-century date is now positioned outside the south entrance to the church, though the head was unearthed in the churchyard in 1862 at which time the shaft was added (MWA 803). The original position of the cross is unknown, but it is likely to have always been sited in the vicinity of the church. Other evidence for early activity from the area of the church includes a child's stone coffin (MWA 809) and a medieval pot (MWA 625) recovered at different times from the churchyard, and the site of medieval/post-medieval stocks, now repaired, to the north-east of the church (MWA 826).

4.4 The extent of the medieval settlement of Ufton (MWA 9538) is shown on a map of 1695 (Fig. 2, Hewitt 1695) which depicts a series of elongated narrow properties stretching back at right angles from each side of Ufton Fields, until recently always known as Harbury Lane. At this time the underlying, roughly rectangular shape of the village can still clearly be seen. The properties are quite regular suggesting they may have been a planned rather than an organic development. The map is very interesting as it can be compared to modern aerial photos which clearly show that most of the hedges forming the edge of the village still exist and that many of the narrow medieval plots can be traced as earthworks in the fields to the rear of the current houses. The hedge lines, which marked the boundary of the village and its surrounding open fields, can also be seen to continue south of the village (beyond the bottom of Fig. 2). This is highly suggestive that the village once continued in this direction. The road, now known as Ufton Fields, takes a sharp turn to the west at the southern end of the village, but it is highly probable that in the medieval period it continued in a straight line to the south. It does continue some distance in that direction on the 1834 Ordnance Survey map and a public footpath still follows this route, eventually joining up with a dead end lane extending north out of Harbury. Two large irregular fields in the north-west of the village (marked 17 and 18 on the 1695 map), opposite the church, can be seen to be called Lesser Park and Great Park. The names might be indicative of the position of the medieval manor house. The existence of a large, roughly square, earthwork, shown on aerial photographs held by Warwickshire Museum, might be associated with such a possible manor site.

4.5 A row of cottages is shown on the 1695 map in roughly the correct location for the development site and it is possible that this actually depicts the site. It is therefore plausible

that the existing stone-built cottages date from before the map was drawn. At the south-eastern end of the village there is a larger property block, which may represent a consolidation of holdings in the later medieval period when the settlement was in decline, like most in the county. This block was owned by a 'Widow Taylor' and she appears to have been the largest landowner in the village at this time. Aerial photographs have shown that many of the medieval plots were later covered by ridge and furrow, suggesting that settlement here was returned to agriculture after abandonment, perhaps in the early 15th century (see paragraph 4.8).

4.6 Aerial photographs also show other plot boundaries, hollow ways and abandoned house platforms surviving as earthworks to the west of the current settlement (MWA 6224) while other earthworks may represent a medieval fishpond (MWA 6223).

4.7 The Tithe map of 1844 (Fig. 3, WRO CR569/2490) does show the existing house as part of the row of cottages that still exists today. By this time the medieval properties at the south end of the village had been absorbed into a system of larger fields and the old boundaries were no longer extant. The 1887 1st Edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map (Fig. 4) shows the cottages and marks a well immediately to the south of the current building work. The 1905 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map (Fig. 5) shows a similar plan.

4.8 In 1996-7 excavations were carried out in advance of a housing development on a site covering two medieval plots within the village, just to the south-east of the present development. Trial trenching by the Cotswold Archaeological Trust in 1996 (MWA 7542) was followed by an area excavation by the Warwickshire Museum (Jones 1997). The earliest medieval occupation dated to the 12th century and consisted of a number of enclosure ditches, probably associated with a timber building c.8-10m long, marked by a line of postholes. The area was rearranged, probably in the 13th century, and a house with stone footings was built at right angles to Ufton Fields, probably with an outbuilding to its south. Pottery evidence showed that the site remained in occupation until the early 15th century when it was abandoned.

4.9 Cruck House, to the south-east of the development site, is a Grade II Listed property (LBS Number 471132). The main house is a medieval building, dating back to the late 14th/early 15th century. It was remodelled in the 16th and 17th century and was extended in the late 17th or early 18th century.

4.10 A toll road, or turnpike, established in the post-medieval period, ran between Warwick and Northampton via Southam, passing through the village of Ufton (MWA 4804). The village shrank at the end of the medieval period but its continuing occupation in the post medieval period is indicated by finds such as a 16th-century coin found north of the church (MWA 5938), and the presence of several 17th-18th century buildings within the village. A blacksmith's forge (MWA 7091) was located to the north of the proposed development and is marked on the 19th-century maps (Ordnance Survey 1886, 1887).

4.11 A human skull of unknown date was uncovered 200m south of the church and churchyard. It was revealed when removing soil from the front of Colbourne House (MWA 5073), 150m north of the proposed development. The soil was redeposited and the skull had possibly originated from elsewhere.

4.12 Industrial activity is recorded to the north of the village during the 18th and 19th

centuries. A limekiln and earthworks associated with quarrying (MWA 828) are located 550m north of the site. A brick kiln (MWA 827, not shown on Fig. 1) and the site of post-medieval brickworks, located 600m from the proposed development (MWA 7090, not shown on Fig. 1) are also marked on 19th-century maps (Ordnance Survey 1886, 1887).

4.13 In 2007 observation of foundation trenches at Cruck House (EWA 9430), revealed the stone foundations of a 19th-century extension to the original 15th-century building. Below the foundations there was an earlier, stone and brick-lined pit, probably a post-medieval cess pit, although no precise dating evidence came from its fill.

4.14 In 2010 two small evaluation trenches were excavated at 2 Ufton Fields (EWA 9510). No remains associated with the medieval village were exposed although an 18th or 19th century yard surface was uncovered along with a single undated pit.

5 Watching Brief

Sun Room

5.1 Foundation trenches were excavated using a small tracked machine with a 0.6m toothless ditching bucket. The trenches (Fig. 6) were 0.6m wide and were excavated to a maximum depth of 1m. An area of concrete (1) outside the west end of the current lounge was also removed along with the bricks (2) that formed edging for it. The trenches were excavated 0.53m into a layer of red clay containing some gravel (5). This was the geological natural for the area. Above this was a 0.32m thick layer of reddish brown clay loam (4) which contained a few fragments of mid 18th to early 19th century pottery and glass and a broken whetstone. Above this was 0.15m of greyish brown clay loam topsoil (1). No features of archaeological significance were observed.

Garage

5.2 Trenches for the new garage (Fig. 6) were also 0.6m wide and up to 1m deep. They were excavated 0.49m into the geological natural (5) which was overlaid by 0.36m of clay loam layer (4). This was covered by 0.15m of topsoil (1), (Fig 8). A raft of concrete from the previous garage (6) was removed from the interior of the new garage before the trenches were excavated. No finds or features of archaeological significance were observed in this area.

6 Conclusions

6.1 No finds or features associated with medieval Ufton were recovered during this work, despite the site lying on a main street frontage within the village. The few finds recovered from the area of the sun room most likely represent rubbish from the house that has become mixed with the surrounding soil.

6.2 The cottages which include 7 Ufton Fields may have 17th century origins as they are visible on the 1695 map of Ufton, a map which is unusual in its age and quality for any village in Warwickshire. These cottages and some other buildings along the street frontage have 16th or 17th century origins and it is possible they occupy similar locations to the original medieval dwellings and that the land adjacent and to the rear of the houses was used for yards, gardens, outbuildings as well as rubbish disposal. No evidence for these activities

was revealed on site during the watching brief and this may be the result of truncation or removal of such evidence during previous building work or ground preparation.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix A: List of Finds

<i>Context</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date/Comments</i>
4	Pottery	1	Midlands blackware (MB 02)	1600-1800
4	Pottery	1	Stoneware	18th century
4	Pottery	1	Creamware	1740-1790
4	Pottery	7	Coarseware	18th Century
4	Shell	1	Oyster	
4	Stone	1	Whetstone	Fragment
4	Glass	1	Bottle base	18th Century

Appendix B: List of Contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1	Concrete Path	Modern
2	Blue brick edging	Modern
3	Topsoil	
4	Layer	
5	Natural	
6	Concrete raft	Modern

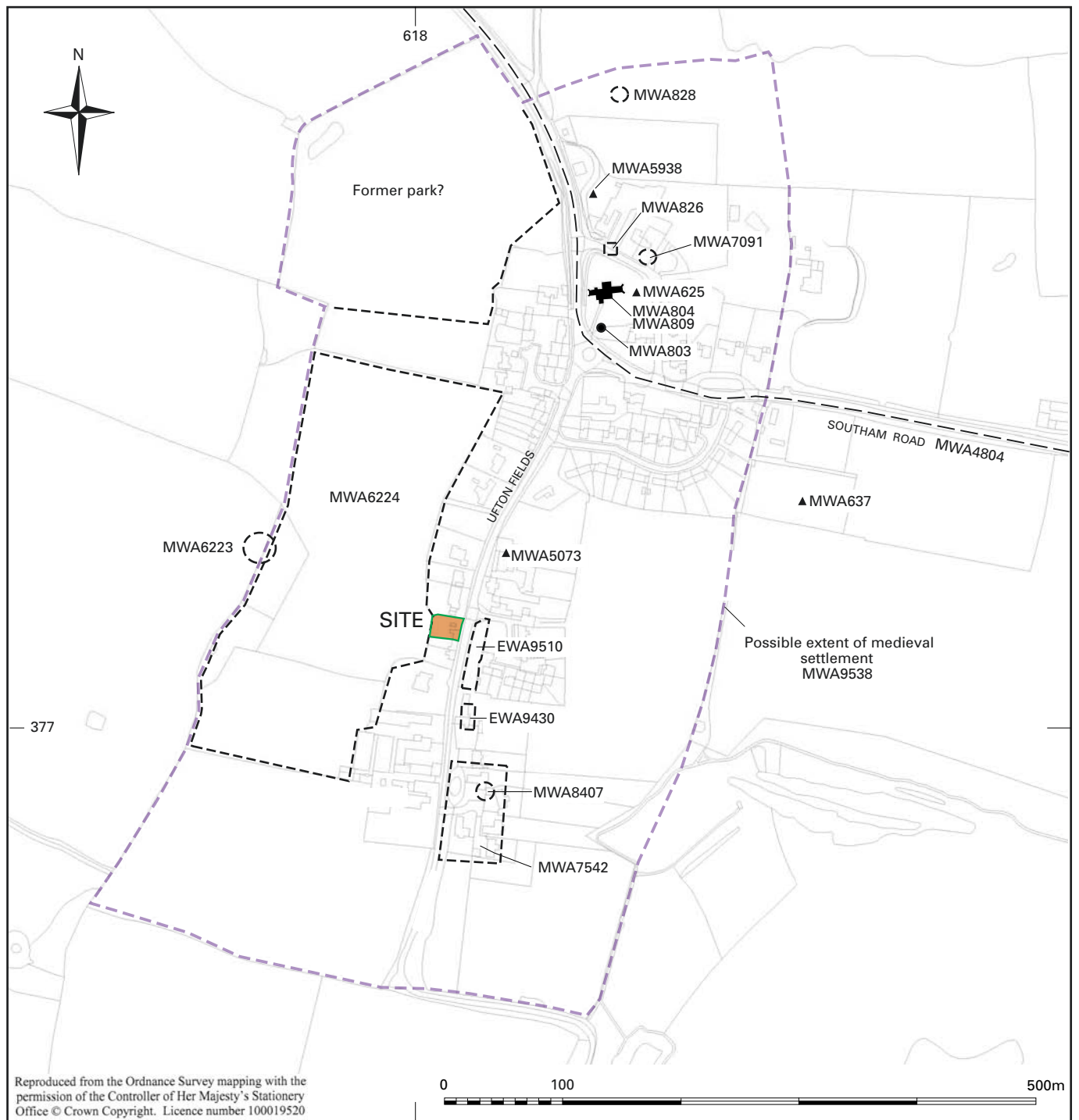


Fig. 1: Site location

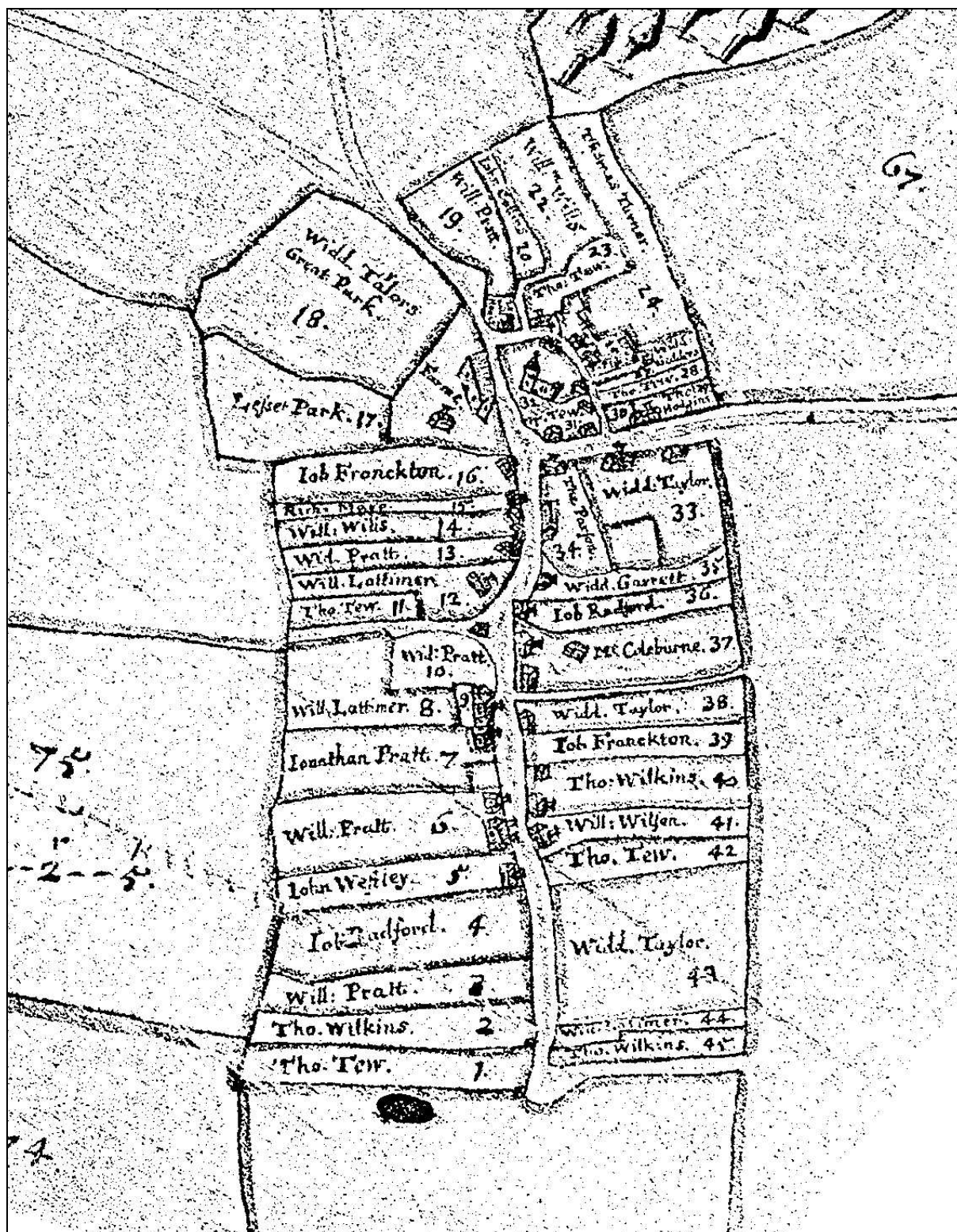


Fig. 2: Detail from T. Hewitt's *Plot of the Lordship of Ufton*, 1695

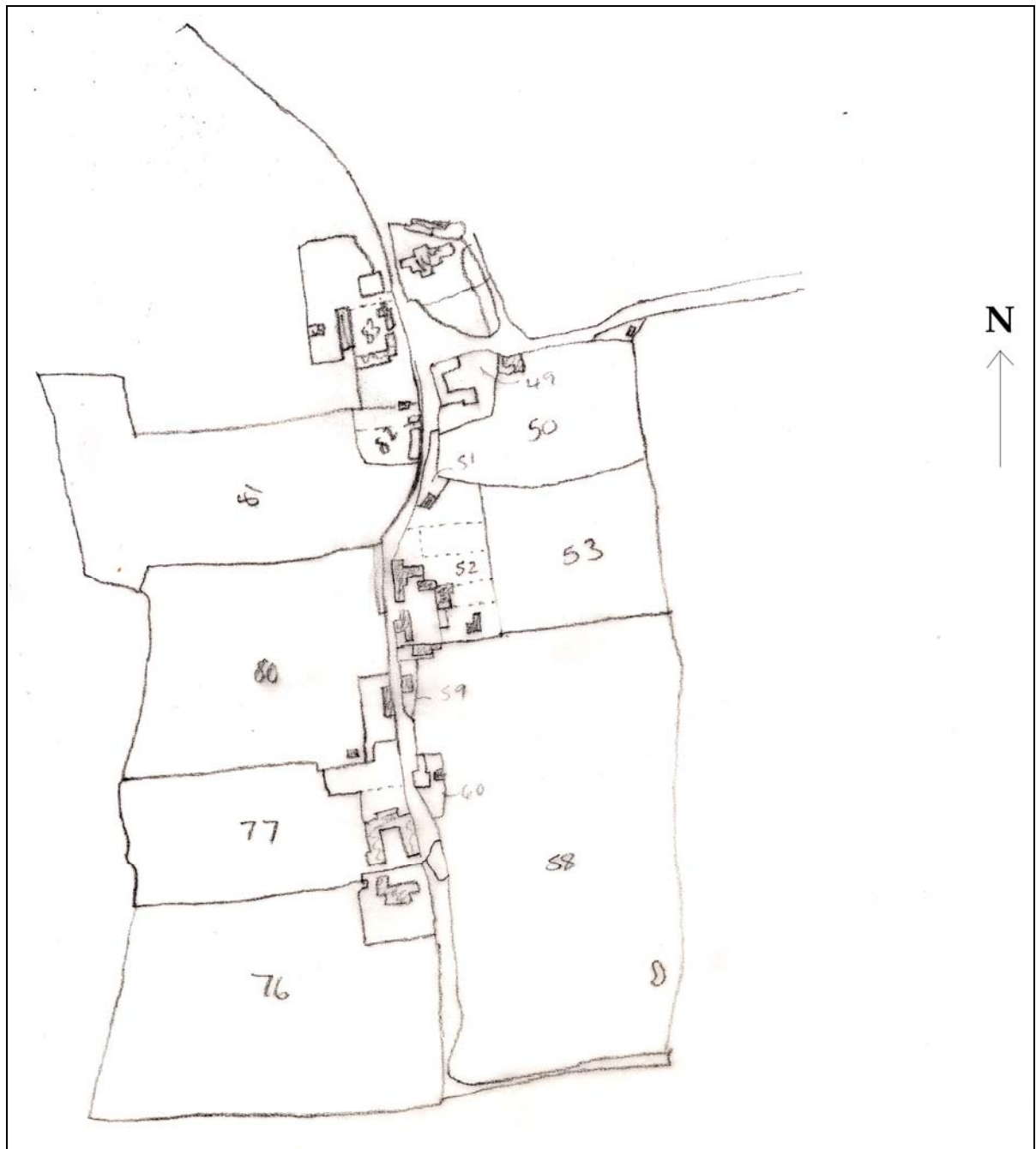


Fig. 3: Detail from the Tithe map of 1844 (after Dawson 1844)

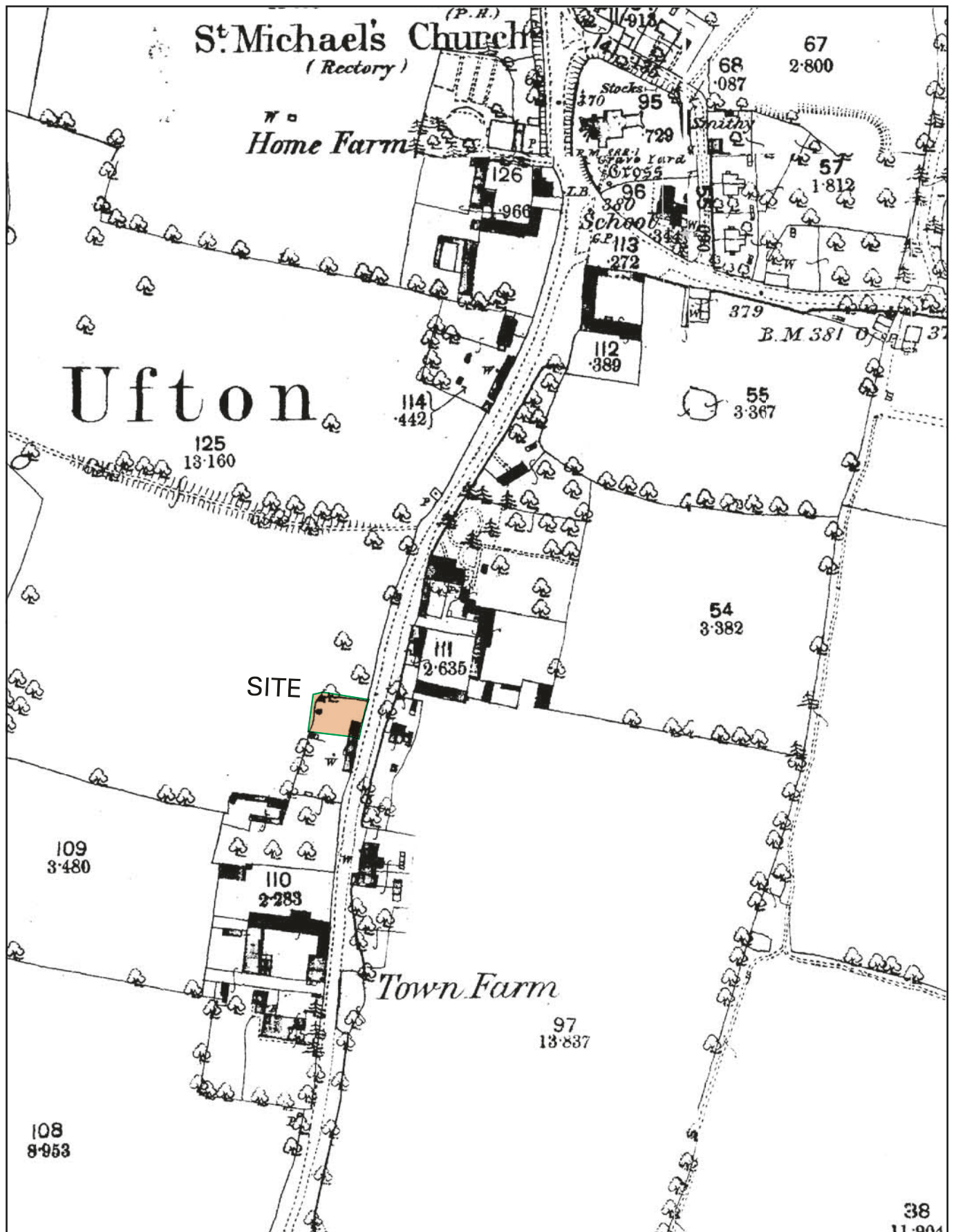


Fig 4: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map 1:2500 of 1887

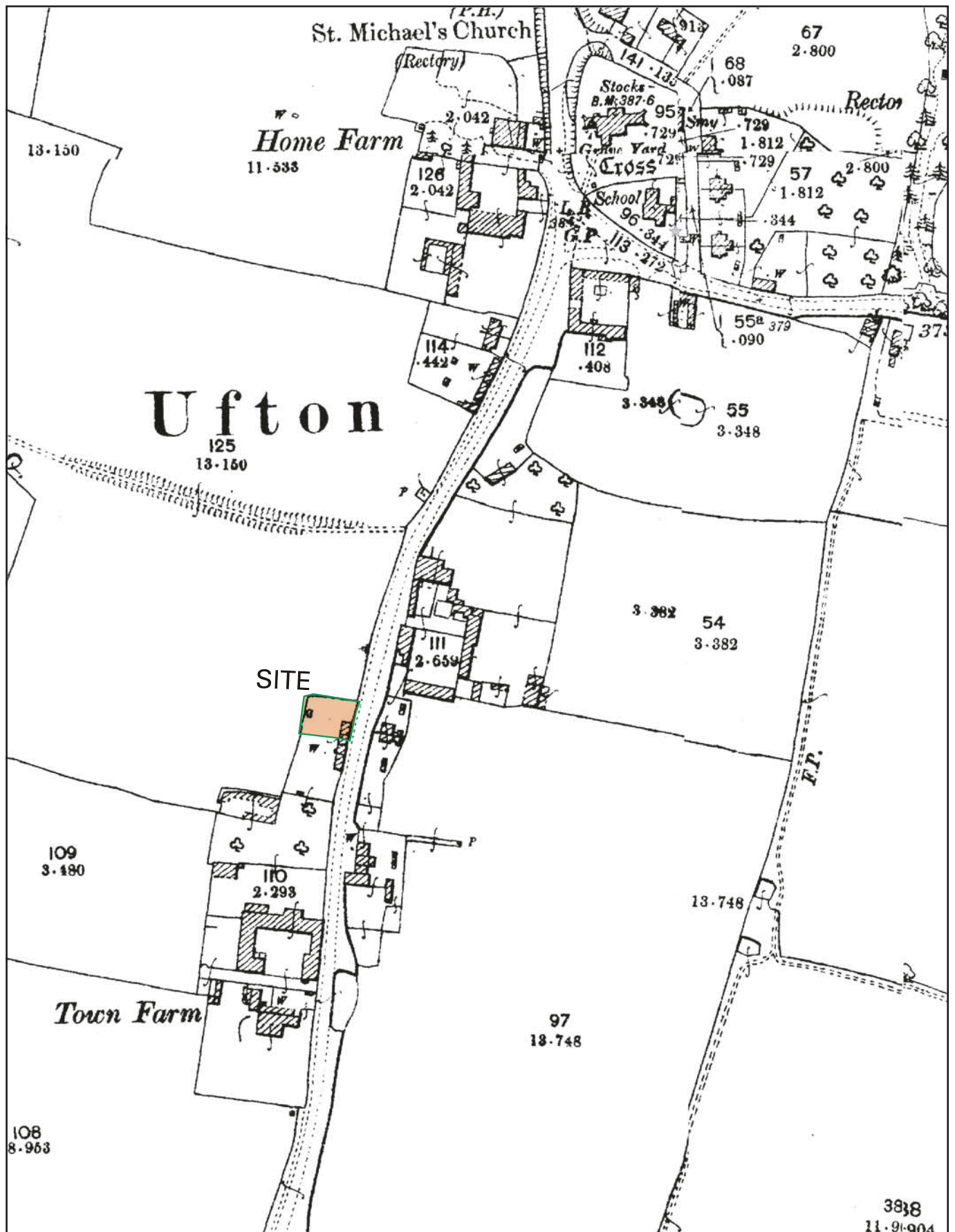


Fig 5: Detail from Second Edition Ordnance Survey map 1:2500 of 1905

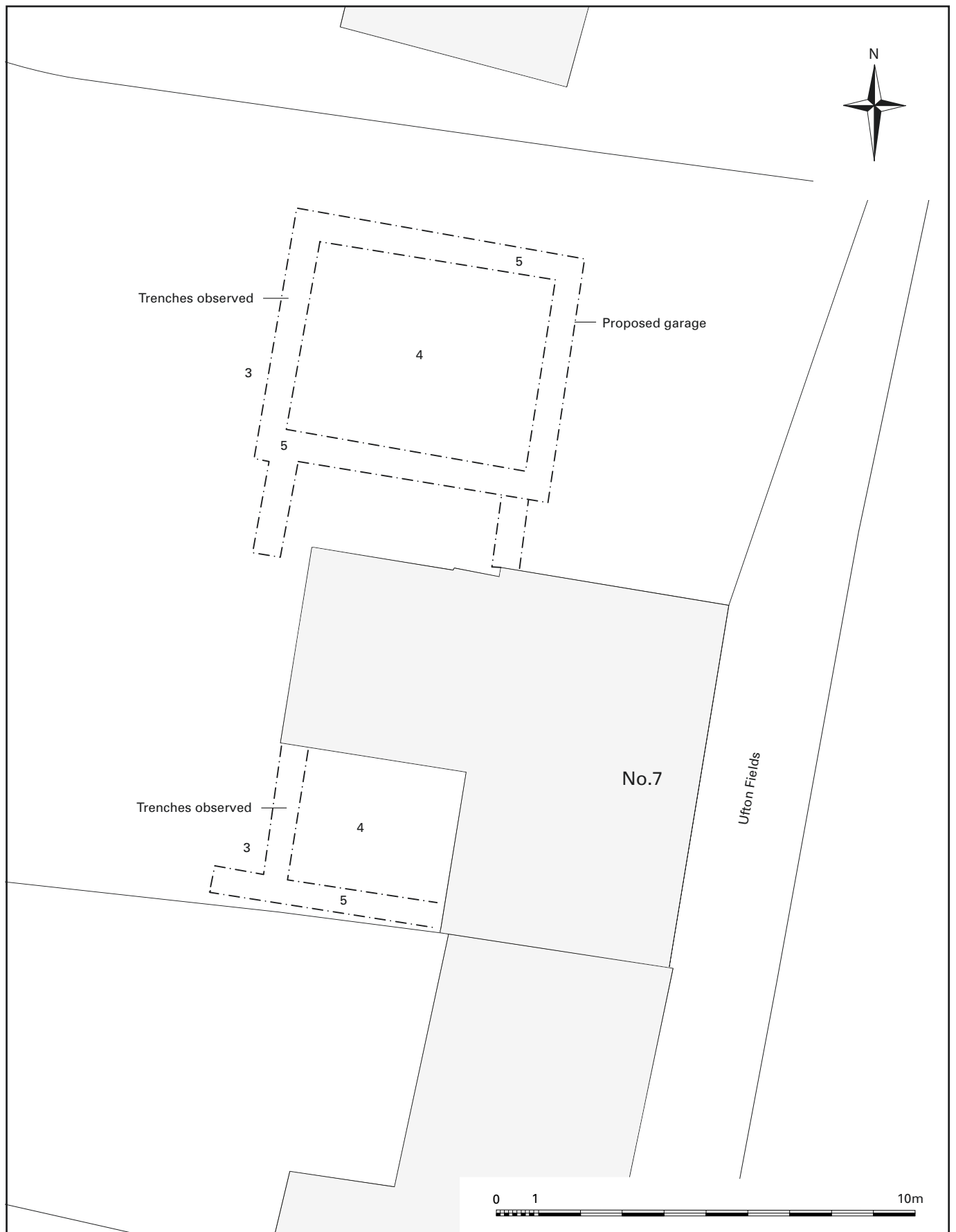


Fig 6: Area and trenches observed



Fig 7: Number 7 (right hand cottage) showing stone construction



Fig 8: Trenches being excavated for the new garage