

Longbridge Manor, Stratford Road, Warwick, Warwickshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION AND WATCHING BRIEF



understanding heritage matters

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*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: Longbridge Manor, Warwick

Commissioned by: Gary Plant of GFP Consultants Ltd on behalf of Forever Living Products (UK) Ltd.

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SUMMARY

An archaeological excavation and watching brief was carried out at Longbridge Manor, prior to the construction of a new area of car-parking. An early Bronze Age flint scraper was found along with a small group of medieval features that were dated by pottery to the 13th and early 14th centuries, which suggests they represented part of the medieval hamlet of Longbridge. A large ditch may have formed the boundary with the open fields whilst a pit and two gullies had a less certain function. The low yield of pottery and other finds tends to suggest that the areas examined lay some distance from medieval houses. The date range of the pottery may imply an early abandonment, perhaps during the first half of the 1300s. Given the hamlet still had up to ten houses in 1424 it is possible that these were concentrated on the northern side of the Stratford Road.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Warwick District Council for a single storey building with new parking areas at Longbridge Manor, Stratford Road, Warwick (W/11/0740). The development lies within the probable extent of a medieval hamlet and close to several possible archaeological sites which show as cropmarks on aerial photographs. Prior to planning permission being granted an archaeological evaluation took place which indicated that archaeological remains, possibly of Iron Age date, might survive on the site (Gethin 2012).

1.2 Archaeology Warwickshire were commissioned to undertake an excavation and watching brief in order to mitigate the impact of the development on any archaeological remains. The excavation was carried out in August 2012 and the subsequent watching brief in December 2014 and January 2015. This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under the site code WLM11.

2 SITE LOCATION

2.1 The application site lies at map reference SP 2680 6255 within the parish of Warwick (Fig 1). It lies on the south side of Stratford Road within the grounds of Longbridge Manor. The area investigated was to the west of the buildings in an area of garden lawn.

2.2 The underlying geology of the area is 2nd Terrace River Gravel although it also lies very close to deposits of Lower Lias clay (British Geological Survey 1974).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 A detailed historical report for Longbridge Manor has previously been compiled for Forever Living Products (UK) Ltd by noted local historian Dr Christine Hodgetts (2011). It is not necessary to add substantively to the existing report and only a relevant brief summary of the history of the site is given below.

3.2 In 1997 an archaeological evaluation (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record No EWA 9188) took place before the large hotel development to the south-west of the site. Several gullies were recorded and were dated to the Iron Age by pottery and associated fragments of fired clay (MWA 7947). A single pit (MWA 7948) was dated to the 13th century by pottery. Traces of medieval ridge and furrow ploughing were also recorded from one trench (MWA 7949). Despite the findings from the evaluation no further work was ever carried out on in this area.

3.3 Longbridge was formerly a medieval hamlet and it is almost certain that the houses that once existed on the north side of the Stratford Road represented a survival of some of the original medieval house plots (as can be seen on Ordnance Survey maps of late 19th and early 20th-century date). It is probable that medieval properties would also have existed on the south side of the road, now occupied by Longbridge Manor and its grounds and this was hinted at by the medieval pit found in the 1997 archaeological evaluation.

3.4 The house itself (MWA 1941) has been extended many times but contains timber-framed elements of a late 16th- or early 17th-century. The main frontage of the house can be dated on stylistic grounds to around 1690-1700 (Hodgetts 30-35). Despite its name the house was never actually a manor and has only been known as such since 1909 when a new owner changed the name from 'Longbridge House'.

3.5 The Baker map of 1786 depicts three ponds associated with the house. Hodgetts (2011, 36-40) assumes they are late 17th- or early 18th-century ornamental ponds, possibly associated with the major building work carried out on the house at that time. Only two survive on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map, a large circular pond on the east side of the house and a long rectangular pond south-west of the house (MWA 8124), which is now dry. The formal gardens of the house are also recorded on the Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (MWA 12908).

3.6 A number of other sites in the vicinity are shown on Fig 1:

MWA 7873	Findspot of Roman and possibly Iron Age pottery
MWA 7879	Findspot of four Roman coins of 2nd- to 4th-century date
MWA 7880	Findspot of 16th to 18th century coins
MWA 6425	Undated features showing as cropmarks
MWA 5516	A trackway showing as a cropmark
MWA 1921	A rectangular enclosure, known as a cursus, of Neolithic date (cropmarks)
MWA 5515	Bronze Age or Iron Age enclosures (cropmarks)
MWA 4685	A ring ditch, linear features and a trackway (cropmarks)
MWA 6377	A collection of 420 worked flints, probably Neolithic in date
MWA 6424	Part of an enclosure of uncertain date (cropmark)
MWA 6426	Part of an enclosure of uncertain date (cropmark)
MWA 5517	Undated linear cropmarks
MWA 5159	A trackway, possibly medieval (cropmark)
MWA 967	Two undated enclosures (cropmarks)
MWA 966	A complex of linear features and enclosures probably of prehistoric to Roman date

3.7 An archaeological evaluation carried out to the south-east of the site (EWA 9096) recorded parts of the trackway (MWA 5516) noted above. Three of the areas of cropmarks are protected as Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM 140, 141 and 142). The most recent evaluation on the site revealed evidence for 19th-century buildings, possibly glasshouses marked on the Ordnance Survey First Edition map and a possible, but undated, Iron Age gully.

4 AIMS AND METHODS

4.1 The archaeological programme was designed to identify, excavate and record, as far as possible, the nature of the archaeological resource disturbed by the development.

4.2 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 the excavation of a 15m x 16m area which expanded on the investigation in evaluation trench 3. The area was hand cleaned to expose archaeological deposits which were then excavated and recorded in accordance with normal archaeological procedure as defined in the Archaeology Warwickshire Procedures Manual (2011).

4.3 The subsequent car park and drainage excavations were the subject of a watching brief during the groundworks phase whereby an experienced archaeologist supervised the machine during ground reductions.

5 RESULTS

Excavation (New car park)

5.1 The ground was reduced by between 0.5 and 0.7m across the excavation area until geological natural of brownish-yellow sandy clay (20) was revealed. The natural was cut by several archaeological features.

MEDIEVAL

5.2 The principal feature on the site, ditch 8 (and 16), curved across much of the investigated area in a roughly east/south-west direction. Originally interpreted as two distinct features, pit 16, at the eastern edge of the site and an intercutting ditch (8), it later became clear that it was a single larger feature. The full section (Section I) excavated across the feature revealed it to be 4.98m wide and 0.55m deep with steeply sloping sides and a flat base. It was filled with grey silty clay (9 and 17) with brown mottling and gravel patches. Three sherds of 13th- to 14th-century pottery and four fragments of ceramic roof tile were recovered from fill 9, whilst six unidentifiable fragments of animal bone were recovered from fill 17.

5.3 To the north of the ditch two gullies (12 and 18) formed an 'L' shaped arrangement containing similar fills; although not uniform in shape they seem likely to be contemporary. Gully 12 was 0.36m-0.56m wide and 0.07m-0.14m deep with gently and steeply sloping sides and a flat and rounded base filled with grey silty clay (13) from which a single sherd of medieval pottery was recovered. Gully 18 extended north-south and was 0.74m wide, up to 0.07m deep and filled with (19), but no dating evidence was recovered.

5.4 On the northern edge of the excavated area, pit or gully terminal 4 was 1.53m wide and at least 1.4m long, although its northern side extended beyond the limits of the excavation, with a maximum depth of 0.54m. It was filled with dark grey silty clay (5) from which a few sherds of 13th- to 14th-century pottery were recovered. Several fragments of sheep molar teeth were also found in the fill.

5.5 Elongated pit 10 cut ditch fill 9 and was 2m long and up to 0.7m wide, with rounded ends. It had a maximum depth of 0.13m with gently sloping sides and a rounded base. It

was filled by a grey silty clay (11) from which three sherds of 13th-century pottery were recovered.

UNDATED

5.6 Ditch fill (9) was also cut by a circular posthole 14 which was 0.3m in diameter and 0.2m deep with steeply sloping sides and a rounded base. It was filled with grey silty clay (15) which contained a fragment of degraded animal bone.

5.7 In north-west corner of the area, a second posthole (6) was sub-rectangular in plan (0.64m long and 0.39m wide) with steeply sloping sides and a flat base a maximum of 0.07m deep. It was filled with dark grey silty clay (7) with occasional charcoal flecks.

POST MEDIEVAL AND MODERN

5.8 Overlying the cut features was a c.0.25m thick layer of greyish brown silty clay loam with occasional small pebbles (3). This was overlain by c.0.22m of brownish yellow sandy loam (2). These layers most likely related to horticultural activity post-dating the medieval period. Greyish brown sandy loam topsoil had formed to a depth of 0.25m across the area (1).

Watching Brief (New car park)

5.9 The area of the new car park was reduced by 0.4m using a 360° excavator with a toothless bucket. The removal of topsoil (2000) revealed a mixed deposit of sand and clay with industrial brick fragments (2004). The stripping did not penetrate down to significant archaeological deposits.

Watching Brief (Drainage trench)

5.10 A 0.45m wide drainage trench was excavated between the ornamental canal and the new car park. The trench was c.1.8m deep at the canal and 0.9m at the car park end. Geological natural grey silty sand and gravel (2003) was reached at a depth of between 0.7m and 1.8m below the current ground level. It was overlain by a layer of light greyish brown sandy clay (2002). This layer varied considerably in thickness, between 0.3m and 1m. It formed a bank at the southern edge of the site between the garden and the ornamental canal and was probably contemporary with it.

5.11 Overlying the landscaping layer (2002) was a 0.2–0.6m thick layer of strong brown sandy clay (2001). This layer may also have been related to landscaping. Brown sandy

loam topsoil had formed to a depth of 0.2m over the area (2000). No significant archaeological remains were revealed during the excavation of the drainage trench.

Watching Brief (Parking extension)

5.12 The car park immediately to the east of the main house was also extended during the last phase of groundworks. This involved excavating a strip of ground up to 5m wide down to the formation depths necessary for the car-park. Although a considerable depth of soil was removed very little geological natural (3002) was exposed. Overlying the natural was a layer of brownish grey silty loam soil (3001) which contained occasional sandstone fragments, brick and roof tile. Several sherds of pottery were also collected from this layer including 13th- to 14th century pottery, 17th/18th-century and early 19th-century sherds. The oldest item found during all the work was also found within this layer. It was a small flint scraper of probable early Bronze Age date (c 2500-1800 BC). This layer was overlaid by between 0.1m and 0.26m of topsoil (3000). The section along the edge of the existing car-park revealed 0.3m of modern make-up (3004), overlying layer 3001, which was covered by 0.1m of tarmac (3003).

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The earliest evidence for human interaction in the areas investigated came from the recovery of a flint scraper of probable early Bronze Age date (c.2500BC – 1800BC). Such finds are not necessarily indicative of settlement, but may be taken to imply that the landscape was visited in that period.

6.2 A small concentration of medieval features was exposed in the investigation area. The medieval pottery found had a date range of 13th to 14th century. These features are likely to represent part of the medieval hamlet of Longbridge and their presence on the south side of the Stratford Road suggests that the hamlet once extended along both sides of the road.

6.3 A principal ditch curving across the site may have been a boundary between properties or with the open field system whilst other minor features such as a gully terminal and an L-shaped gully arrangement and an elongated pit are less easy to ascribe a function. However these and perhaps the undated postholes would be consistent with an area of short-lived occupation some distance from the settlement foci.

6.4 It seems that the hamlet of Longbridge contained at least 10 houses in 1424

(Hodgetts 2011) when it is recorded in a rental of St Mary's College (part of Warwick's parish church). By 1545 only eight houses are mentioned as paying rents. This rate of decline may imply that the hamlet was shrinking in 1424, but there are no records to prove it. It is though interesting to note that the owners of Longbridge Manor, the Staunton family, gradually increased their landholdings within the hamlet by buying up smaller properties and amalgamating them with their own, particularly in the 16th-century.

6.5 In the evaluation phase a small gully (303 in Trench 3) was interpreted as possibly linked to Iron Age activity. This was due to the presence of a fragment of low-fired clay recovered from a grey sandy loam fill (304). The characteristics of such fills often result in them being considered of some antiquity having most likely been subjected to a long period of leaching which removes 'colour'. In addition 30 fragments of fired clay were found in Iron Age features in the archaeological evaluation just to the west of the site in 1997. However It would now be prudent to revise the original interpretation and consider the fired clay and the accompanying animal bone as more likely to be of medieval origin.

6.6 No further significant remains were revealed during the recent phases of work. This undoubtedly reflects the relatively shallow nature of the ground reduction required for the car park formation level, which did not impact on the level of any potential archaeological features. Elsewhere the narrowness of drainage trenches may have also precluded archaeological remains being revealed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES

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Gethin, B, 2012 *Longbridge Manor, Stratford Road, Warwick, Warwickshire, Archaeological Evaluation, Archaeology Warwickshire Report 1201.*

Hodgetts, C, 2011 *Longbridge Manor Historical Report, privately published.*

Ordnance Survey 1834 *First Edition one inch to one mile map, Sheet 51, Worcester.*

Ordnance Survey 1887 *First Edition 1:2500 map, Warwickshire Sheet 44.9.*

APPENDICES

A List of Contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>
1	Topsoil layer
2	Brownish yellow sandy loam layer
3	greyish brown silty clay loam layer
4	Ditch terminal
5	Fill (of 4)
6	Posthole
7	Posthole fill (of 6)
8	Ditch
9	Ditch fill (of 8)
10	Elongated pit
11	Fill (of 10)
12	Gully
13	Gully fill (of 12)
14	Posthole
15	Posthole fill (of 14)
16	Ditch
17	Ditch fill (of 16)
18	Gully
19	Gully fill
20	Geological natural
2000	Topsoil
2001	Layer
2002	Layer
2003	Geological natural
3000	Topsoil
3001	Layer
3002	Geological natural
3003	Modern tarmac
3004	Hardcore make-up for existing car-park

B List of Finds

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Comments</i>
2	Pottery	5	Warwickshire blackware x 2 (RS01) Warwickshire greyware x 1 (RS02) Oxidised rim sherd (SQ23) Sandy blackware (RS022) All 13th/14th century
5	Pottery	6	Chilvers Coton A x 1 (WW01) 13th century Warwickshire greyware x 2 (RS02) 14th/14thC Sandy quartz tempered x 3 (SQ)
5	Animal bone	3	fragments of sheep molar
9	Pottery	3	Warwickshire sandy greyware x 3 (RS021) 13th/14th century
9	Tile	4	Medieval, small fragments
11	Pottery	1	Chilvers Coton A x 3 (WW01) 13th century
13	Pottery	1	Sandy quartz tempered x 1 (SQ)
15	Animal bone	1	Small fragment of large mammal longbone
17	Animal bone	6	Small, unidentifiable fragments of longbone
3001	Pottery	13	Warwickshire blackware x 1 (RS01), Warwickshire greyware x 3 (RS02), 13th/14th century, Tin-glazed earthenware x 1 (TGE01), 17th/18th century, Creamware x 6, 1740-90, Midlands Blackware x 1 (MB02) 1600-1800, Mocha x 1 (MO) 1800-1830s
3001	Glass	1	Wine bottle fragment, 18th century
3001	Flint	1	Scraper, Bronze Age

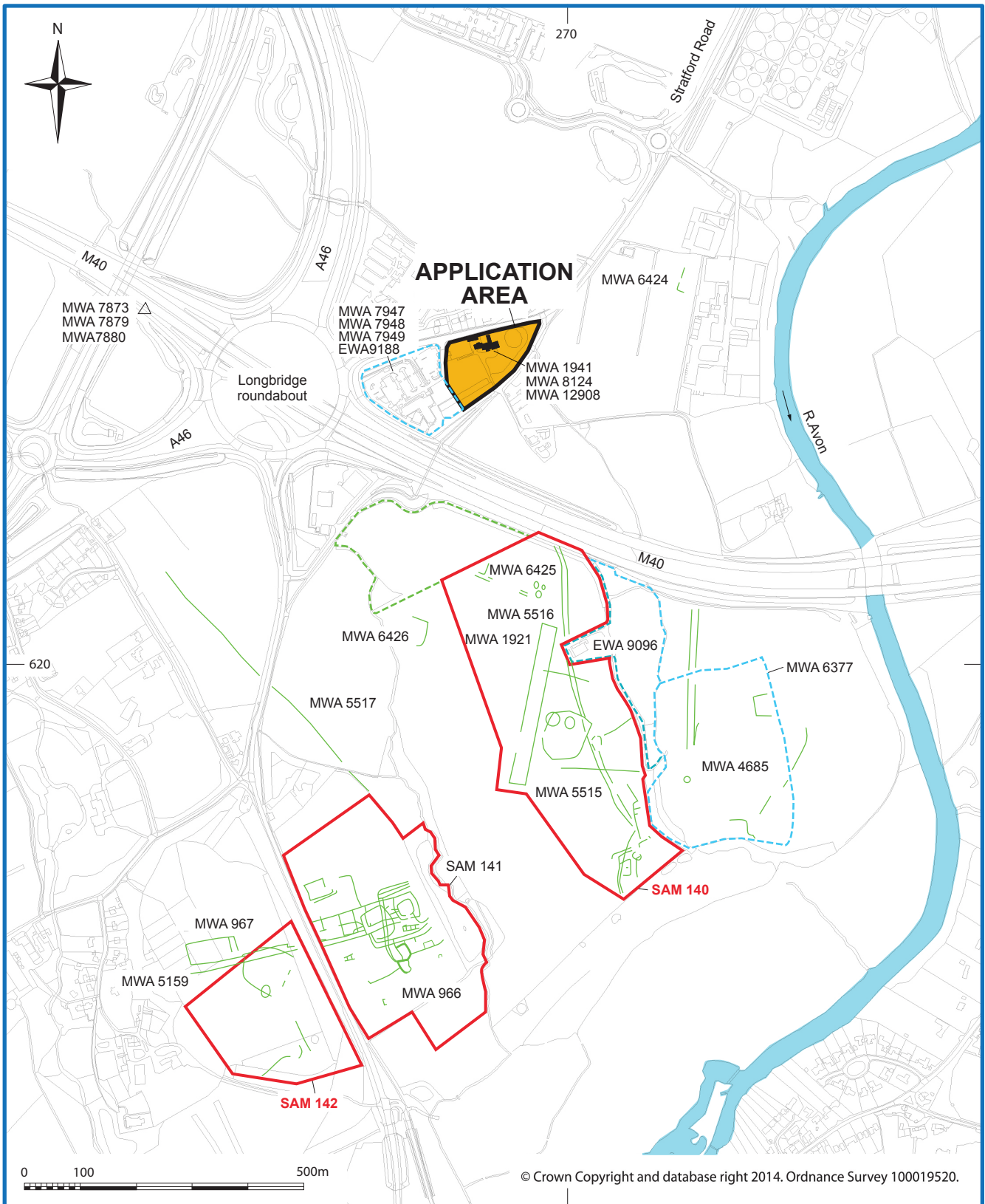


Fig 1: Site location

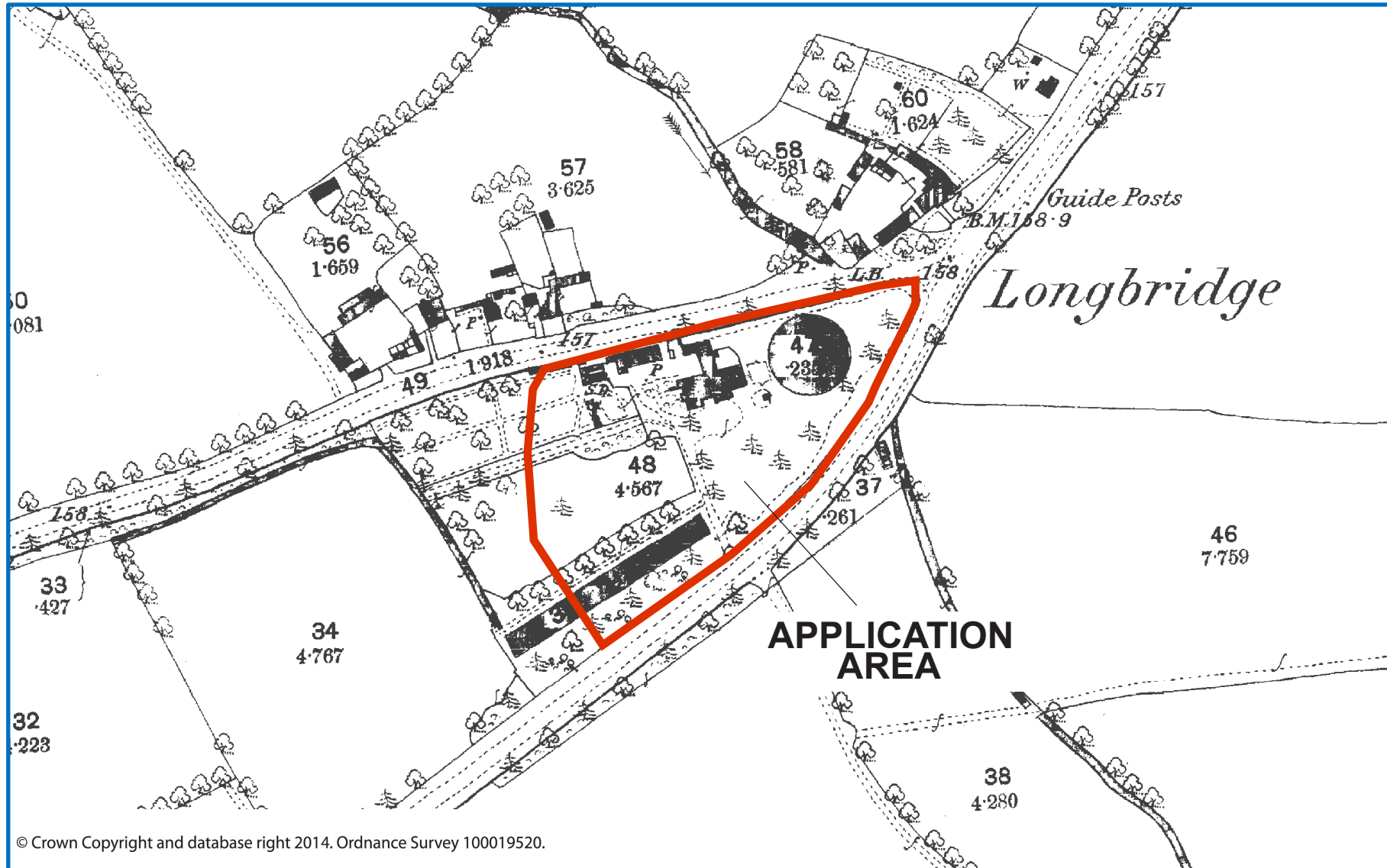


Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887

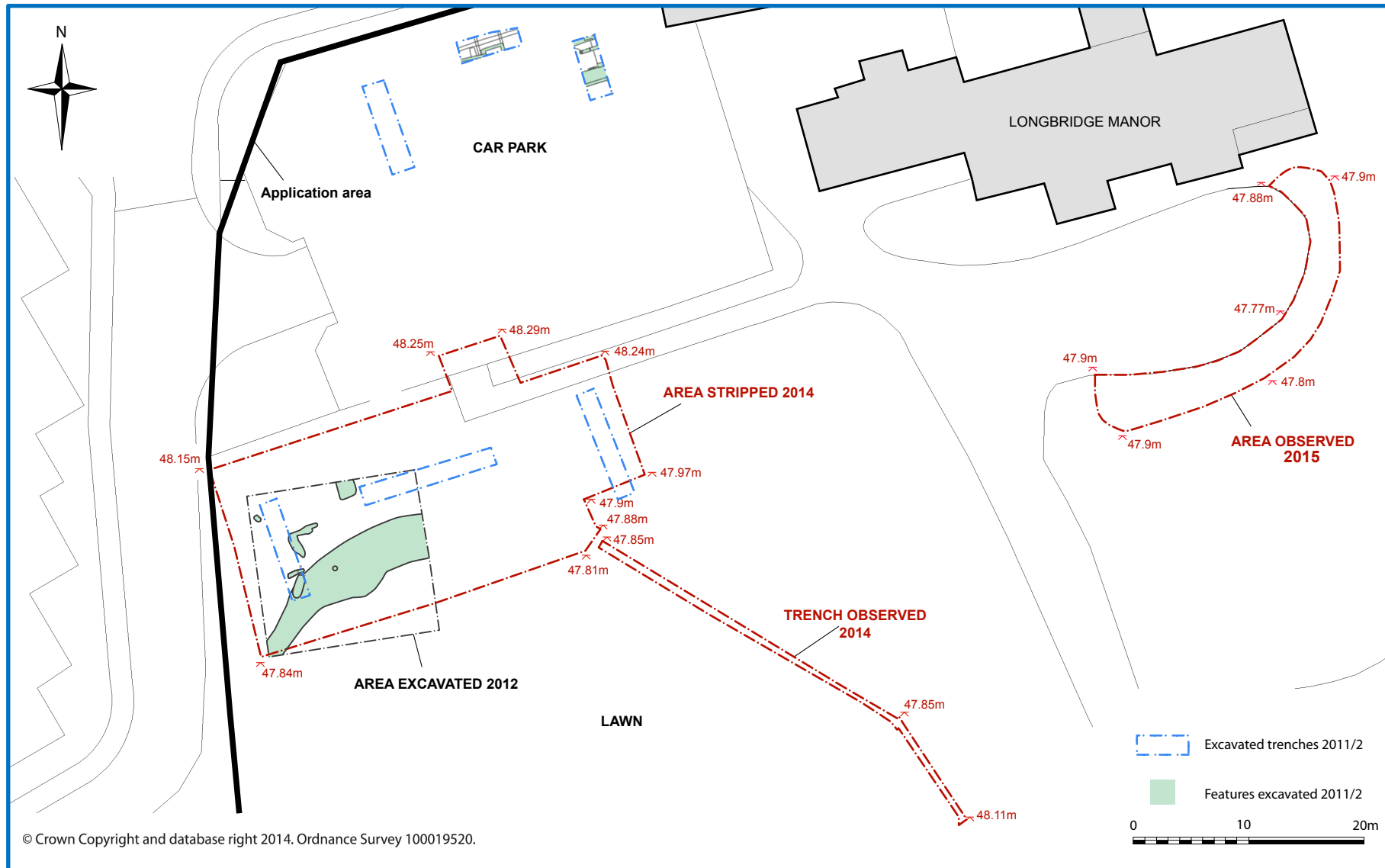


Fig 3: Location of all areas excavated, stripped and observed 2011-15

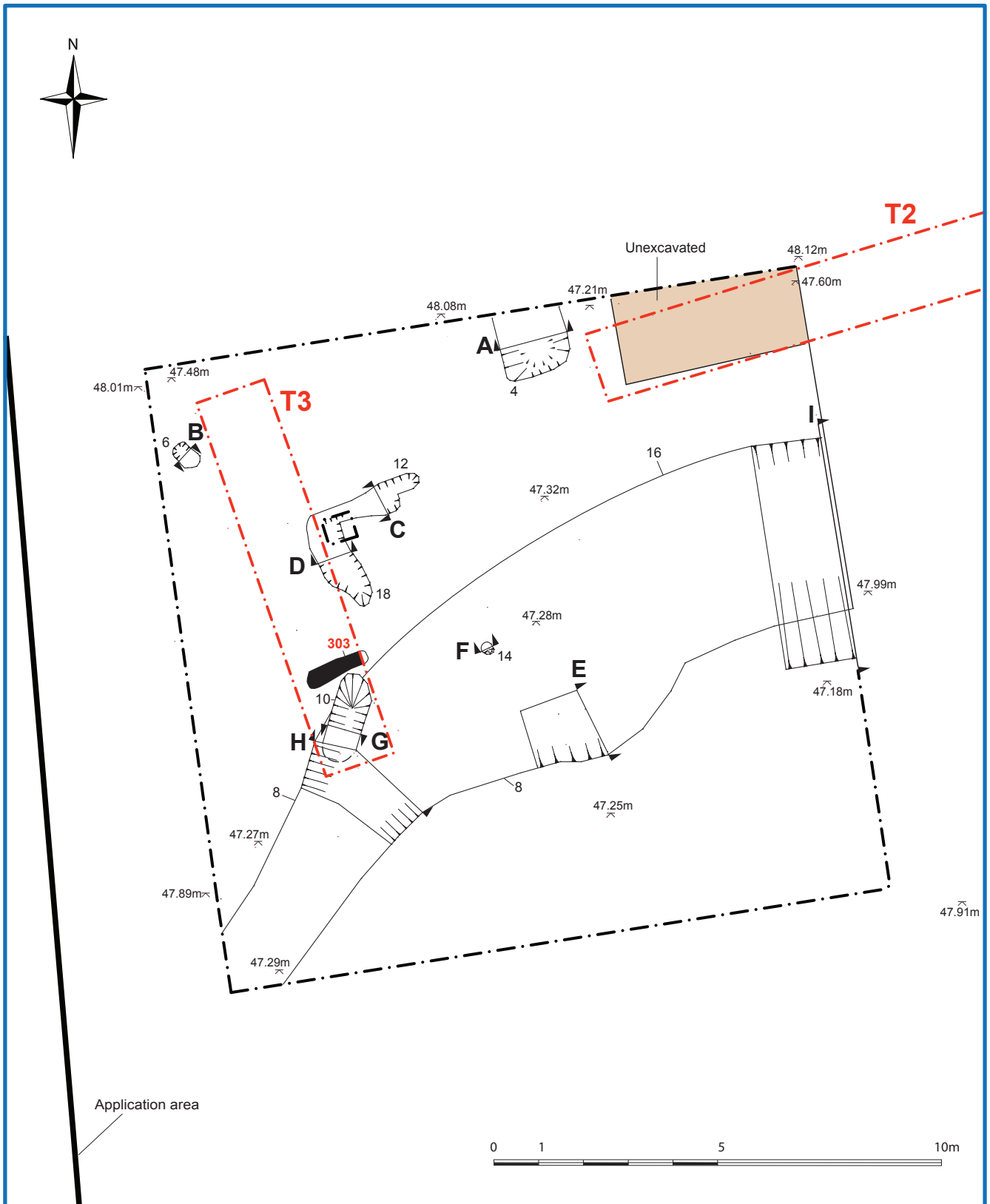


Fig 4: Area excavated 2012

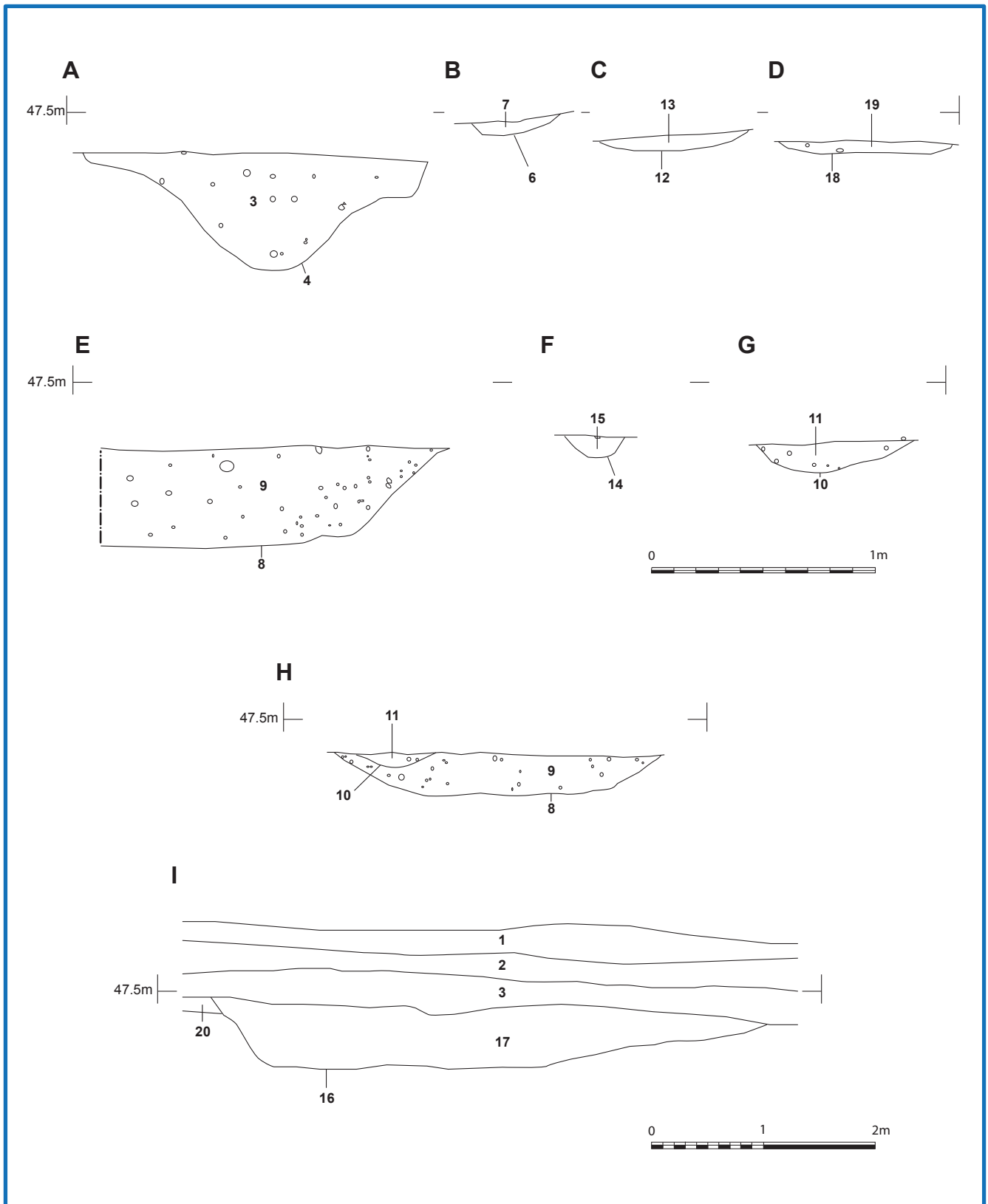


Fig 5: Sections A to I



Fig 6: General view of the excavation work being carried out on in 2012



Fig 7: Sections being excavated through medieval pits and ditches



Fig 8: Section across pit 4



Fig 9: Section across posthole 6

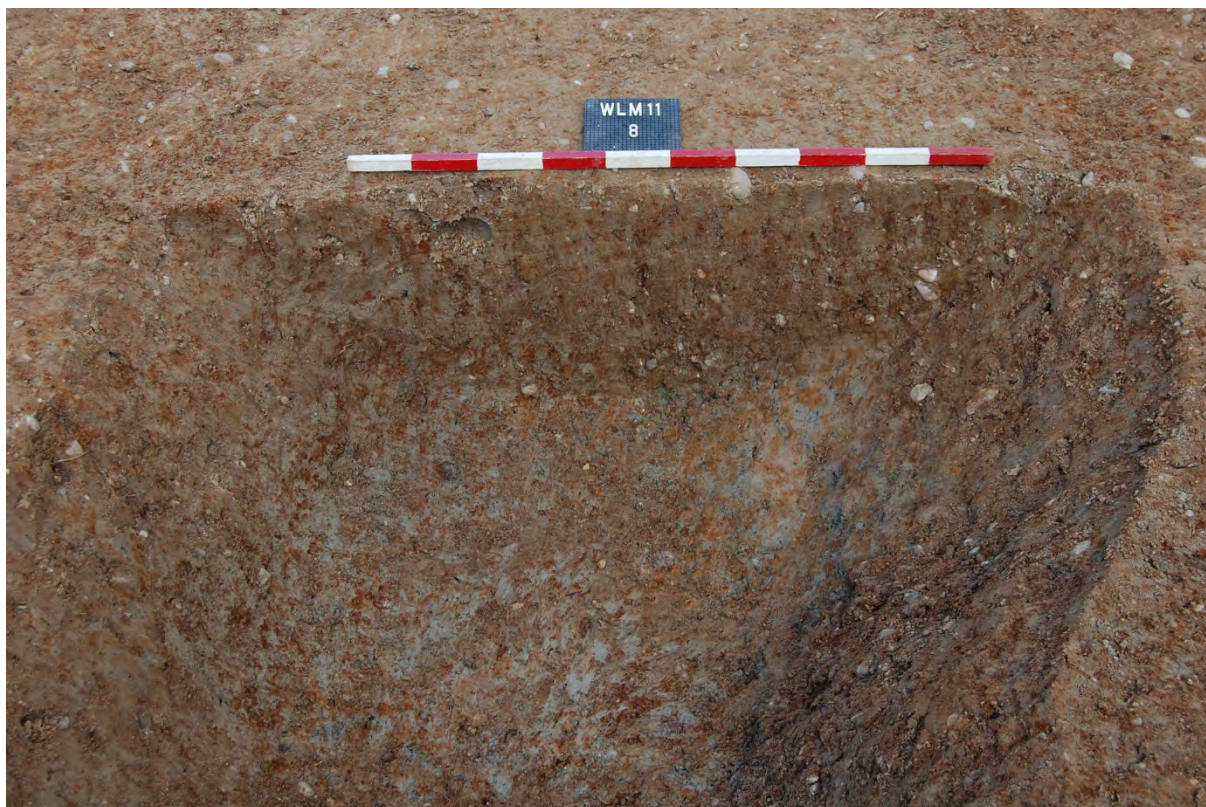


Fig 10: Section across ditch 8



Fig 11: Section across gully 10



Fig 12: Section across gully 12



Fig 13: Section across posthole 14



Fig 14: Section across ditch 16



Fig 15: Section across gully 18



Fig 16: New service trench cutting across the line of the 17th century ornamental canal



Fig 17: Part of the car-park extension showing its proximity to Longbridge Manor