

Obelisk Farm, Tanworth-in-Arden, Warwickshire

Archaeological Evaluation



understanding heritage matters

Report No 1314
March 2013



*Working for
Warwickshire*

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| Project: | Obelisk Farm |
| Commissioned by: | Diane Hemming |
| Project Report No. | 1314 |
| Site Code: | TO13 |
| NGR: | SP 147 715 |
| Planning Reference: | 11/02366/FUL |
| Staff: | |
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| Report checked by: | Pete Thompson |
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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Obelisk Farm on behalf of the Hemming family, and in advance of the erection of a proposed wind turbine. A single trial trench was excavated in the marked-out footprint of the proposed turbine base, which lies adjacent to the Iron Age Hob's Ditch, however, the evaluation trench revealed nothing of archaeological significance.

1 Introduction

1.1 Planning permission is being sought for the erection of a single wind turbine measuring 30.5m to hub with three x 10m blades to power the existing farm at Obelisk Farm, Pound House Lane, Umberslade, Tanworth-in-Arden. Planning permission against application 11/02366/FUL was refused in 2012, but there are plans to re-submit the application. Archaeology (Projects) Warwickshire was commissioned to produce a Written Scheme of Investigation for a suitable programme of archaeological work at Obelisk Farm.

1.2 The proposed development lies within an area of significant archaeological potential, adjacent to the archaeological site of Hob's Ditch. There is therefore a potential for the proposed works to disturb archaeological deposits associated with the utilisation of this area from prehistoric times.

1.3 A Brief for an evaluation was prepared in October 2012. Archaeology (Projects) Warwickshire was commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the Planning Archaeologist. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under the site code TO13.

2 Location

2.1 The site is centred on map reference SP 147 715 on sloping ground. The underlying geology of the area is Mercia Mudstone (British Geological Society 1989).

3 Methodology

3.1 The principal aim of the project was to determine the presence or not of significant archaeological remains and assess the extent of any risk of damage or destruction from the proposed development on the site. Secondary objectives include communicating the results to appropriate local and regional audiences in an accessible format.

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. The fieldwork undertaken consisted of a programme of trial trenching, undertaken in accordance with Archaeology Warwickshire's Procedures Manual, the Codes and Guidance of the Institute for Archaeologists and the WCC Planning Archaeologists brief (dated August 2012).

3.3 A total of 6m length of trench was excavated measuring between 1.6m and 1.9m wide.

3.4 A photographic record of the excavation was produced. It contains monochrome prints as well as colour digital images of the trench and surrounding area.

4 Archaeological and historical background

Prehistoric

4.1 The area of the proposed wind turbine lies immediately adjacent to part of a prehistoric linear feature known as Hob's Ditch, or Hob Ditch (MWA 5610; Fig 1). The feature is Listed on the Scheduled Monuments at Risk Register (Appendix). The feature is probably a boundary ditch of Iron Age date and is visible on aerial photographs and Lidar. The bank stands approximately 1m high and the ditch lies to the east of the bank, but is barely visible.

Medieval

4.2 To the north-west of the farm is the site of a medieval manor house (MWA 1080). The manor was the home of the family of Fullwood or Fulwode. It was recorded in the reign of Henry II (1154-89) as Fulwode. Details of a manorial history exist. In 1396 the name Clay Hall first occurs and occurs as late as 1598. There is now no trace of the manor house, which stood in the field at Kemp's Green, now known as Andrew's Hill. In 1743 this field was known as Fullwoode's field. The house had presumably been demolished by that time. The foundations may occasionally be seen in dry summers. It was probably a substantial structure and had a private chapel for which a licence was granted in 1396. Further research suggests that the house was actually in Clay Hall Meadow in the parish of Tanworth. It is marked here on maps of 1695 and 1720 and recorded in the 1767 Tanworth perambulation.

4.3 A medieval chapel once stood to the north-west of the farm (MWA 993).

4.4 An Edward III penny (1344-51) was found by metal detectorists in 1989, to the south-east (MWA 9295).

4.5 Medieval ridge and furrow is evident on aerial photographs to the north of the farm (MWA 3920).

Post-medieval

4.6 The obelisk, from which Obelisk Farm gets its name, was erected in 1749 by Thomas Archer (1695-1768), the first Lord of Umberslade, and is a Grade II Listed Building (MWA 1085). No records remain to show why it was built, but it is generally believed that it commemorates Sir Thomas' elevation to the peerage in July 1747, or else it was merely an example of the prevailing craze for erecting such structures. The stone obelisk is surmounted by a ball and star and it must have formed part of the mid 18th century landscape of Umberslade Park. This replaced the more formal late 17th century landscape, in which smaller obelisks had been located close to the house.

4.7 A post-medieval mortuary chapel stands to the north-east of the farm, built in 1834. It is a small 'unpretending' edifice of brick, plastered over, consisting of a nave with four pointed arched windows on each side, a bell turret at the west end, under which is a small niche and a pointed arched doorway. There is also a small chancel. It was built on the site of the medieval chapel (MWA 993) and known as a Mortuary Chapel. It has been little used since 1880 and is now used only for funerals (MWA 5132).

4.8 A 20th-century garden lies to the south-east of the proposal site (MWA 13052). Nuthurst Grange (Lodge) garden, Nuthurst. Lovie reported a large 20th-century house, now a hotel, at time of his report (1996/7; EWA 9915). There is a formal terraced garden to the south planted with lavender.

4.9 The find of a commemorative tiny medalet of Garibaldi was made by a metal detector in 1989 (MWA 9294). This was made in France on his centenary in 1907. Other finds were made by metal detector in 1988: buttons, buckles, lead weight and a counterfeit shilling of George III.

4.10 The earliest detailed map of the area is the 1842 Tithe map (WRO CR328/24; Fig 2). This has a fine depiction of the obelisk and farm itself with the field boundaries and roads marked, but the Hob's Ditch is not indicated. Later mapping by the Ordnance Survey (1888-1916; Fig 3) shows a similar picture; one field boundary to the south of the proposed boundary has subsequently been removed.

4.11 Archaeological recording took place to the north of Obelisk Farm in 1997, when Midlands Electricity plc were replacing overhead power lines. No evidence for the manor house was recorded, but traces of medieval ridge and furrow were noted (EWA 9257).

5 Trial trench

5.1 A single trial trench, measuring 1.60-1.90m wide and 6m long, was excavated using a tracked excavator with a toothless ditching bucket in an area previously marked out by the client for the proposed turbine base (Figs 4-7). As requested by the Planning Archaeologist, the trench was laid out perpendicular to the Hob's Ditch.

5.2 The field slopes down to the south-east and the bank of the Hob's Ditch was clearly visible with differential vegetation growth on it (Figs 5-7); the ground beyond the bank drops off dramatically. A series of levels were taken across the feature to demonstrate the changes in level.

5.3 Natural geological clay (2) was recorded at a depth of 0.32m. The clay was brownish yellow and mixed with frequent small pebbles, with a clear horizon to the overlying topsoil. The topsoil (1) was a greyish brown clay loam with occasional small pebbles and fragments of modern ironwork. No archaeological features were recorded and no pre-modern finds were recorded.

6 Conclusions

6.1 No significant archaeological deposits or remains were discovered in the evaluation

trench. The evidence, including local topography and variable crop, suggested that the ditch is on the south-east side of the bank and that neither feature would be disturbed by excavation in this area.

Acknowledgements

Archaeology (Projects) Warwickshire would like to thank Diane Hemming for commissioning the work and for Edward Hemming for excavating the trench. Work on site was carried out by Rob Jones and Kevin Wright.

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Appendix:

Hob Ditch Earthwork, Tanworth-in-Arden, Stratford-on-Avon,
Warwickshire



Asset Type:

Scheduled Monument at Risk

Name: Hob Ditch Earthwork

Parish: Tanworth-in-Arden

District/London Borough: Stratford-on-Avon

County: Warwickshire

Parliamentary Constituency: Stratford-on-Avon

Region: West Midlands

Designation: Scheduled Monument

List Entry Number: 1005729

Condition: Generally unsatisfactory with major localised problems

Principal Vulnerability: Deterioration - in need of management

Trend: Declining

New Entry: No

Owner Type: Private

Contact: Principal Heritage at Risk Adviser 0121 625 682

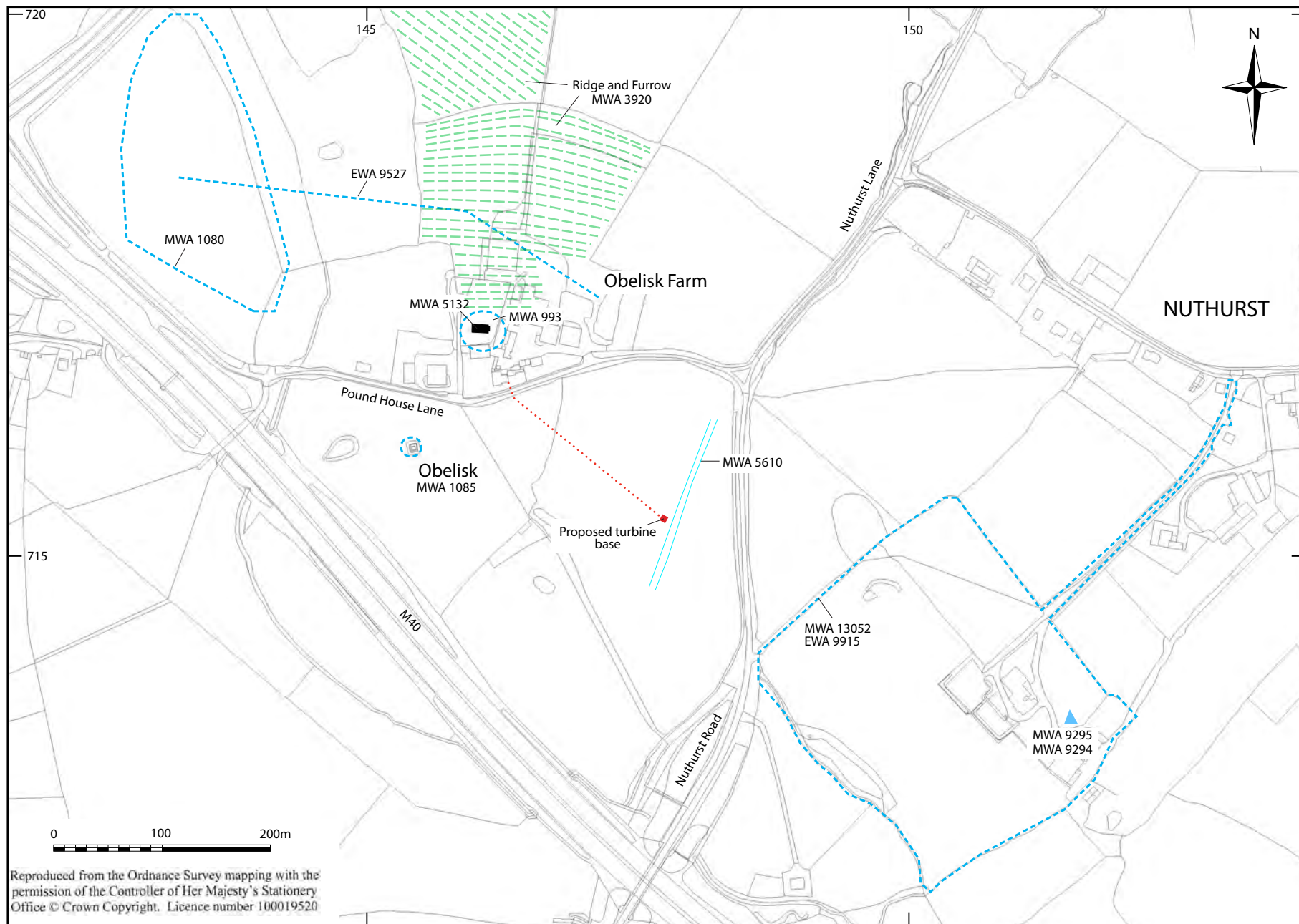


Fig 1: Site location



Fig 2: Detail of Obelisk Farm and field 39 in which turbine is proposed

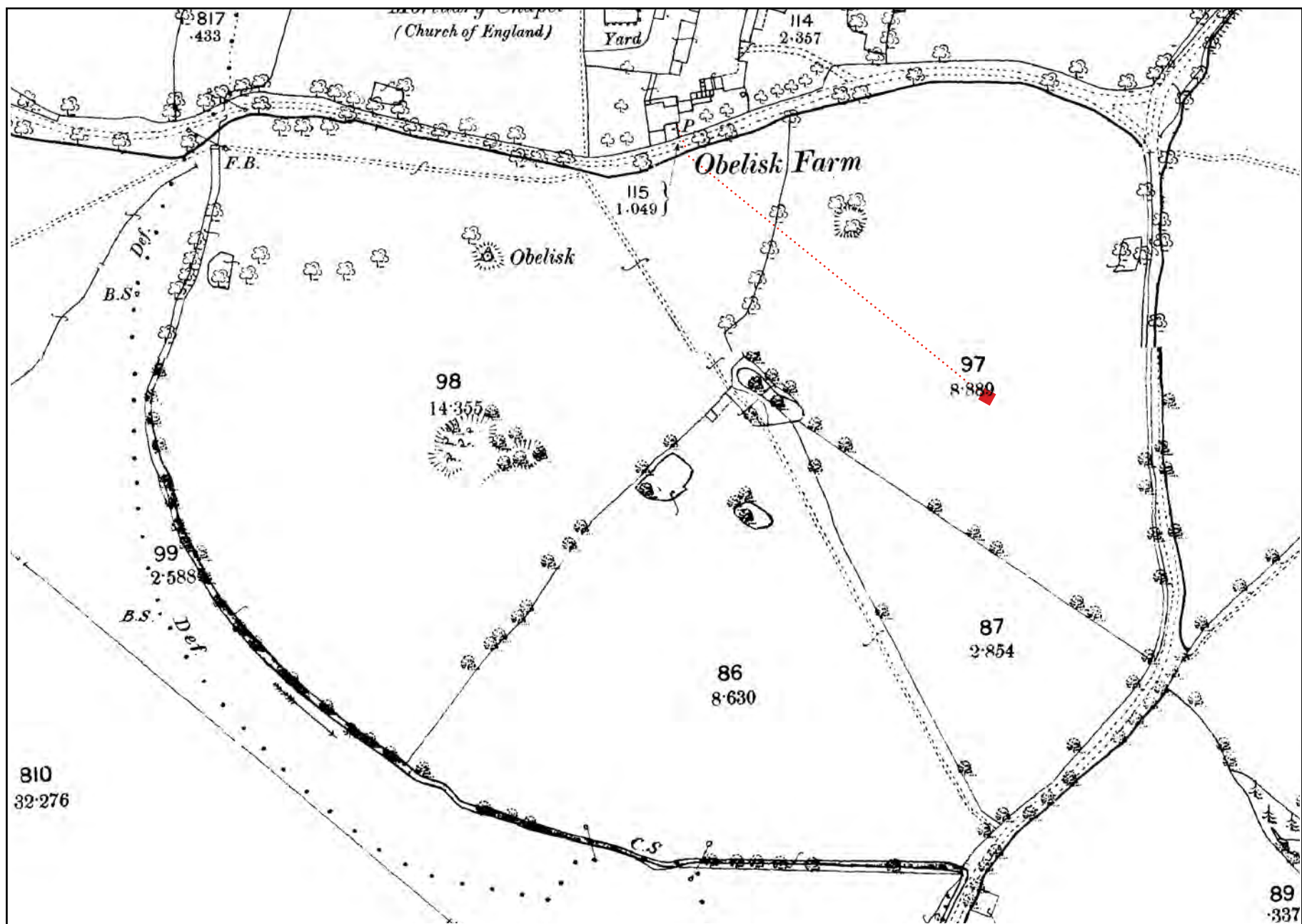


Fig 3: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887-1888

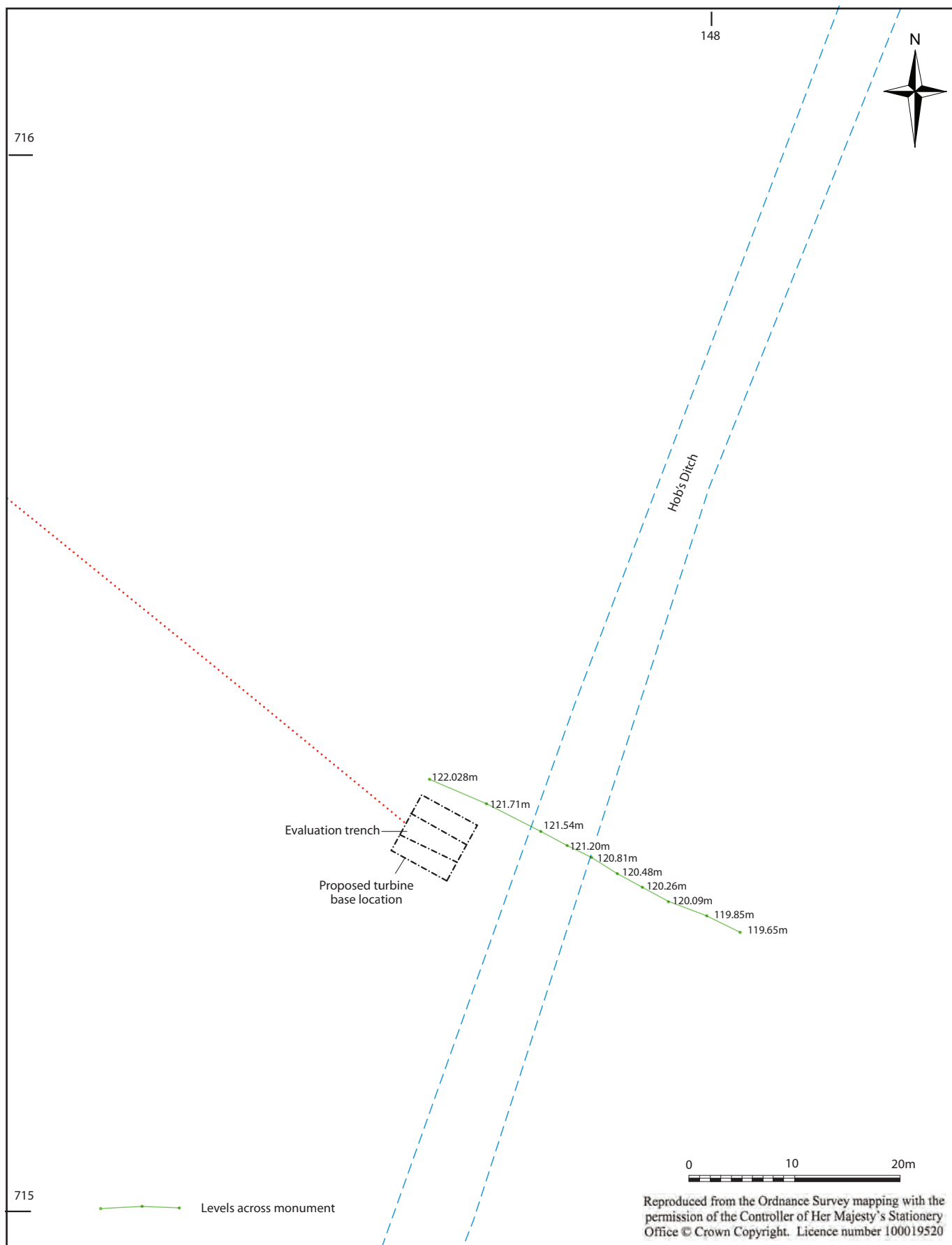


Fig 4: Location of trench in relation to Hob's Ditch



Fig. 5: Excavated trench with the Hob's Ditch bank to its rear, indicated by the differentiated vegetation growth



Fig 6: Relationship of excavated area to Hob's Ditch



Fig 7: Hob's Ditch in the mid-ground with the spoil from the trench beyond