

Blackbird Cottage Whitacre Heath Warwickshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING



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Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1994
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*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: Blackbird Cottage watching brief
Commissioned by: Lisa Colclough
Site Code: WH19
Planning Reference: PAP/2018/0587
Planning Authority: North Warwickshire
National Grid Reference: SP 2258 9253
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SUMMARY

A programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken during the excavation of foundation trenches for a new extension to Blackbird Cottage, Bakehouse Lane, Whitacre Heath (Ref: PAP/2018/0587) on behalf of Lisa Colclough.

Substantial blocks of red sandstone were present and were likely to have been from the stone plinth of the former outbuilding, possibly contemporary with the cottages and shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1888. The single sherd of Midlands Blackware (1600 – 1800) found was contemporary with the occupation of Blackbird Cottage.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Planning permission and Listed Building consent was granted by North Warwickshire Borough Council for the removal of extensions and the construction of new extensions at Blackbird Cottage, Bakehouse Lane, Whitacre Heath (Ref: PAP/2018/0587). It was a condition of the planning permission that a programme of archaeological work was secured in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by the Planning Authority.
- 1.2 Archaeology Warwickshire were commissioned to undertake a watching brief in accordance with a WSI approved by the planning authority. This report presents the results of that work.
- 1.3 This document has been prepared in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief (2014). The archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under the site code WH19.

2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The application area is centred on National Grid Reference SP 2258 9253 in the village of Nether Whitacre, in the parish of the same name. The site is located on the eastern side of Bakehouse Lane, on the western edge of the village. The red line boundary of this application comprises the rear garden of Blackbird Cottage. Blackbird Cottage is one of a pair of 17th century cottages alongside its neighbour, Pear Tree Cottage to the south. The cottages are today Grade II listed structures in recognition of their importance.

- 2.2 The underlying bedrock geology of the site is Sidmouth Mudstone Formation – Mudstone Sedimentary Bedrock (British Geological Survey 2019).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 No Prehistoric or Roman archaeological remains have been found within the village.
- 3.2 At Domesday 3 ½ hides were accounted for under the name of Whitacre (VCH 1947, 251 – 255). Elements of the Parish Church of St. Giles (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record no. MWA 69) date from the medieval period. The tower is from the 16th century but the remainder of the building has no early features except for the jambs of the east window and sections of the rubble walling, which date from the 14th century.
- 3.3 A series of earthworks have been spotted recently on LiDar imagery approximately 850m to the north of the application site (MWA 19445). The earthworks are immediately south of Halloughton Grange. The principal feature is a moat although possible former ponds have also been identified. The site also shows on the 1945 and 2007 Google Earth images (earth.google.com). It is not known if the “grange” element of the place-name is significant.
- 3.4 The possible extent of the medieval settlement of Nether Whitacre has been plotted based on the extent showing on the Ordnance Survey mapping of 1888 (MWA 9549). The 1888 map shows Nether Whitacre as a thin settlement but with quite a complicated road pattern which suggests that there has been shrinkage (Fig 2). There are further small fields and little buildings to the west and south of the church.
- 3.5 Ridge and furrow surrounding the village relates to its former open fields and also helps to define the historic limits of the settlement (MWA 12027 – 33, 12040, 12042, 12043).
- 3.6 A possible windmill mound survives as an earthwork in fields 700m to the north-east of the application site atop Windmill Hill (MWA 70; EWA 1137).
- 3.7 Blackbird Cottage is one of a pair of 17th century cottages of timber framed construction with brick infill panels, a plain tile roof and brick ridge stacks, having some 20th century additions. Timber-framed cottages such as these are typically constructed on low stone walls or plinths. The cottage terrace is today a Grade II listed structure (National Heritage List for England no: 1034646).

- 3.8 The site of Hams Hall (now demolished) is located outside the search area, approximately two kilometres to the west of the application site (MWA 64, Not on Map 1). The original house was built in c.1768 and had an extensive park of approximately 120 acres which was contemporary with the rebuilding. The parkland was remodelled after 1836 to provide a setting of greater formality. Part of the eastern extend of this parkland encroaches within the search area (MWA 12547).
- 3.9 The grounds of Halloughton Hall, another now demolished former significant house also encroach within the search area. Part of the fringe planting around the dwelling, avened approach and parkland extends within the search area (MWA 12546).
- 3.10 Other features recorded within the search area shown on Fig 1 which are not described within the text:

MONUMENT	DESCRIPTION	DATE
MWA 10358	Farmstead - Church End Farm, Nether Whitacre	Imperial
MWA 12049	Abandoned rail track	Imperial
MWA 6568	Site of signal box west of Croxall Farm	Imperial
MWA 6571	Site of Smithy in Nether Whitacre	Imperial
MWA 12048	A complex of ditches, which appear to have been engineered to manage water flow across a large area defined by a loop of the River Tame are evident on aerial photographs.	Imperial
MWA 6569	Site of signal box north-east of Cottage Farm	Industrial
MWA 6572	Site of pound in Nether Whitacre	Industrial
MWA 75	An area of shrunken settlement, abandoned since the time of the Greenway Estate Map of 1854. Small fields and nine cottages are shown.	Imperial - Industrial
MWA 20068	Whitacre Heath Bridge – rock faced sandstone ashlar road bridge spanning the Stonebridge Railway	Industrial to Modern
MWA 12034	Water management in fields near Halloughton, Nether Whitacre	Undated

MWA 31171	The Old House, Hoggrill's End, Nether Whitacre	Post-medieval to modern
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3.11 Several archaeological interventions are recorded in the area:

EVENT	DESCRIPTION
EWA 6805	Negative archaeological evaluation at St Giles Church, Nether Whitacre
EWA 7831	Historic building assessment at Church End Farm, Nether Whitacre
EWA 9562	Site visit to site of Hams Hall park/ garden, Lea Marston by j Lovie c.1996
EWA 9000	English Heritage National Mapping Project
EWA 1141	Site visit to the shrunken settlement at Nether Whitacre Heath
EWA 11076	Building survey of Church End Farm, Nether Whitacre

CARTOGRAPHIC REGRESSION

- 3.12 The Ordnance Survey 1st edition mapping (1888 Landmark 2003a, Fig 2) identifies the outline of the two dwellings of Blackbird Cottage and Pear Tree Cottage and a small garden enclosure projecting to the rear. The garden of Blackbird Cottage is then part of a larger field, extending as far north as Deep Lane. A small building is identified at right angles to the dwelling at its northern end. The building is within the footprint of the proposed extension.
- 3.13 The 1955 Ordnance Survey National Grid 1st edition (Landmark 2003b) shows a larger detached outbuilding butting up to the rear wall of the garden enclosure and the garden of Blackbird Cottage has been extended further to the north. The small building shown on the earlier map is now gone.
- 3.14 The garden building is shown in more detail on the Nation Grid A5 edition (1957) (Landmark 2003c) as a long, narrow three unit structure. A very small detached outbuilding in the garden to the north of Blackbird Cottage is a new addition. No further features are shown abutting the rear wall of Blackbird Cottage.
- 3.15 Aerial photographs showing on Google Earth images (1999 – 2019) depict a flat roofed structure and hard standing to the rear of Blackbird Cottage within the footprint of the proposed new extension. A fairly substantial pond measuring approximately 8 x 5m appears on Google Earth (2007 – 2018) on the same alignment as the dwelling,

and set back from it by approximately 8m. The pond encroaches partly within the footprint of the proposed extension.

4 AIMS AND METHODS

- 4.1 The main aim of the work was to record any significant archaeological deposits revealed or disturbed by the development, to collate the fieldwork records into an archaeological archive and present the results of the fieldwork in this report for dissemination.
- 4.2 This report will describe and discuss the extent, character and dates of all archaeological remains exposed and place the results in their local contexts.
- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 An experienced archaeologist was present for each period of ground disturbance when notified by the client in accordance with WSI. Where potential archaeological deposits were encountered, the supervising archaeologist assessed and recorded them before they were disturbed.
- 4.5 The foundation trenches for the new extension were excavated by a machine using a toothless bucket to a depth of at least 0.8m or to the natural geology. Foundation trenches next to the extant buildings were hand dug. The eastern trenches were due to be excavated within the pond and with agreement from the planning archaeologist were not observed (Photo 1, Fig 3).

5 RESULTS

Geological Natural

- 5.1 The geological bedrock was reddish brown clay with occasional patches of grey clay (3), which was exposed at a depth of c. 0.7m below the current ground surface.
- 5.2 Overlying the natural was 0.4m to 0.65m of dark grey silty clay garden soil (2) with occasional fragments of brick, tile and in places sandstone blocks. A concentration of substantial sandstone blocks was recorded in the foundation trench (4, 5). The red sandstone blocks were found roughly in a line (NE/SW) although they were not continuous and were not thought to be structural (Fig 3). One block had a brick adhered to the base suggesting it was part of a demolished structure (Photo 2). A single sherd of Midlands Blackware pottery of 17th-19th century date, was retrieved from the garden soil.
- 5.3 A number of dressed sandstone blocks were also observed on the spoil heap from the initial surface clearance, and around the current pond (Photo 3). The householder was not aware of the origins of these stones as they were in-situ when she took ownership of the property.
- 5.4 Further sandstone blocks (7) were recorded in the SW corner of the foundation trench (Fig 3). They survived in the section only and therefore it was not possible to discern if they represented further demolition rubble or were part of a wall (Photo 4).

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 No significant finds or features were found in the foundation trenches. The sandstone blocks recorded in the trenches and around the garden may have been from the demolished outbuilding which is depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1888 (Figs 2, 3). No archaeological evidence pre-dating the 17th century was found as the single sherd of pottery recovered was contemporary with the occupation of the cottage.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Lisa Colclough for commissioning the work and John Robinson for monitoring the work on behalf of the planning authority.

REFERENCES

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Landmark 2003b Ordnance Survey National Grid 1st edition (1955) digital version

Landmark 2003c Ordnance Survey National Grid A5 edition (1957) digital version

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pp. 251 - 255. *British History Online* <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/warks/vol4/pp251-255#anchorn19> [accessed 2nd February 2019].



1: General view of trenches, looking north



2: Sandstone and brick rubble



3: Sandstone blocks adjacent to the pond



4: Sandstone blocks visible in section

APPENDICES

A List of contexts

Context	Description	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	Paving with sand base, and concrete slab in some areas		0.1 to 0.3	Modern ground surface covering area of new extension
2	Dark grey silty clay with broken tile, brick fragments and sandstone rubble		0.65	Garden soil
3	Reddish brown clay with some grey patches			Geological natural
4	Same as (5)			Demolition rubble
5	Sandstone blocks in the garden soil. Brick bonded to one of them	0.25	0.3	Demolition rubble
7	Two sandstone blocks (c. 0.27m l x 0.2m h), aligned perpendicular to house, 0.1m below ground surface. No bonding observed. Fragments of tile between them.	Not seen	0.18	Demolition rubble or wall?
8	Assumed cut for 7 if part of a structure.			Wall cut

B List of Finds

Context	Material	Quantity	Date/Comments
2	Pottery	1	Midlands black ware later tradition, 1600-1800, MB02.

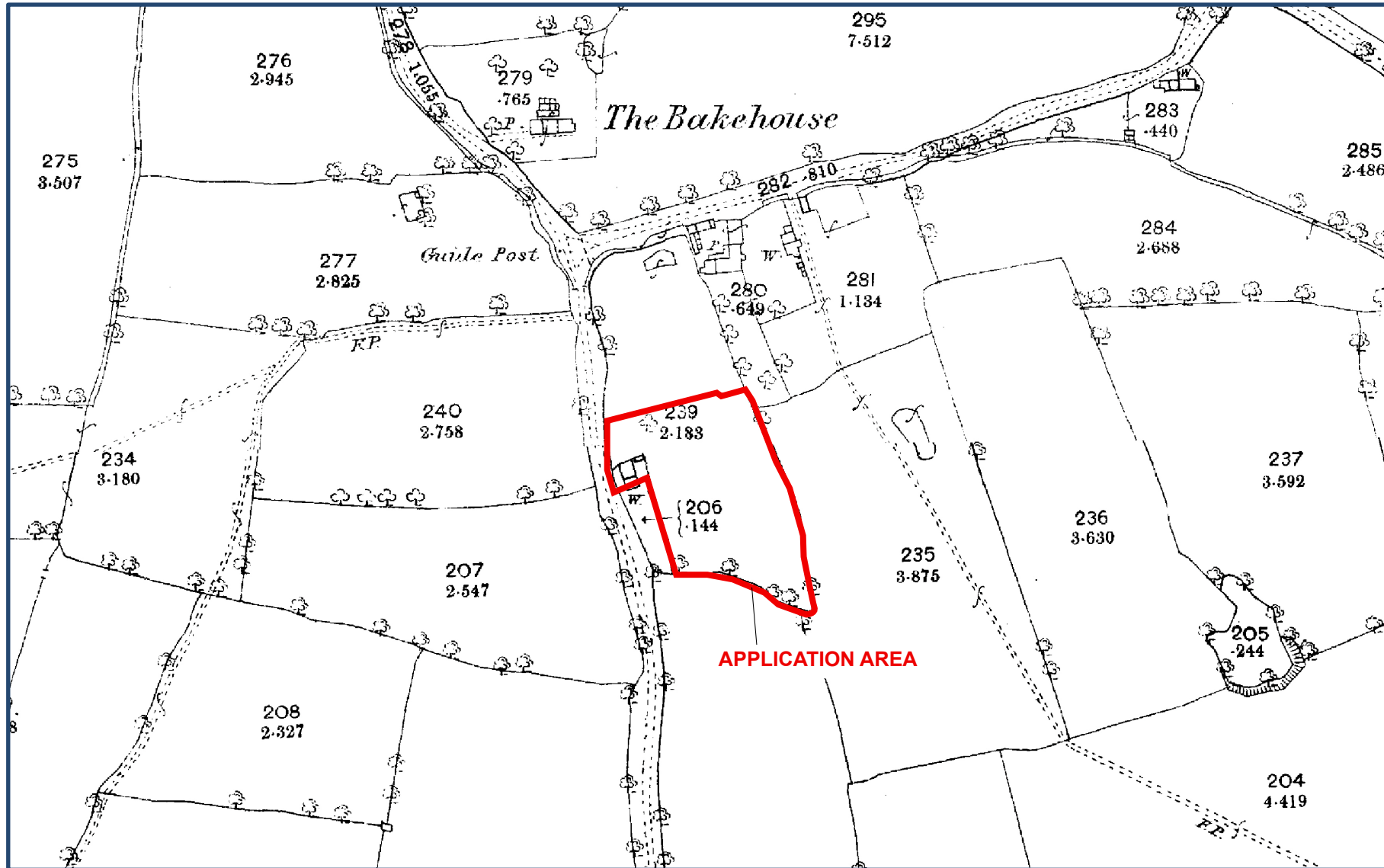
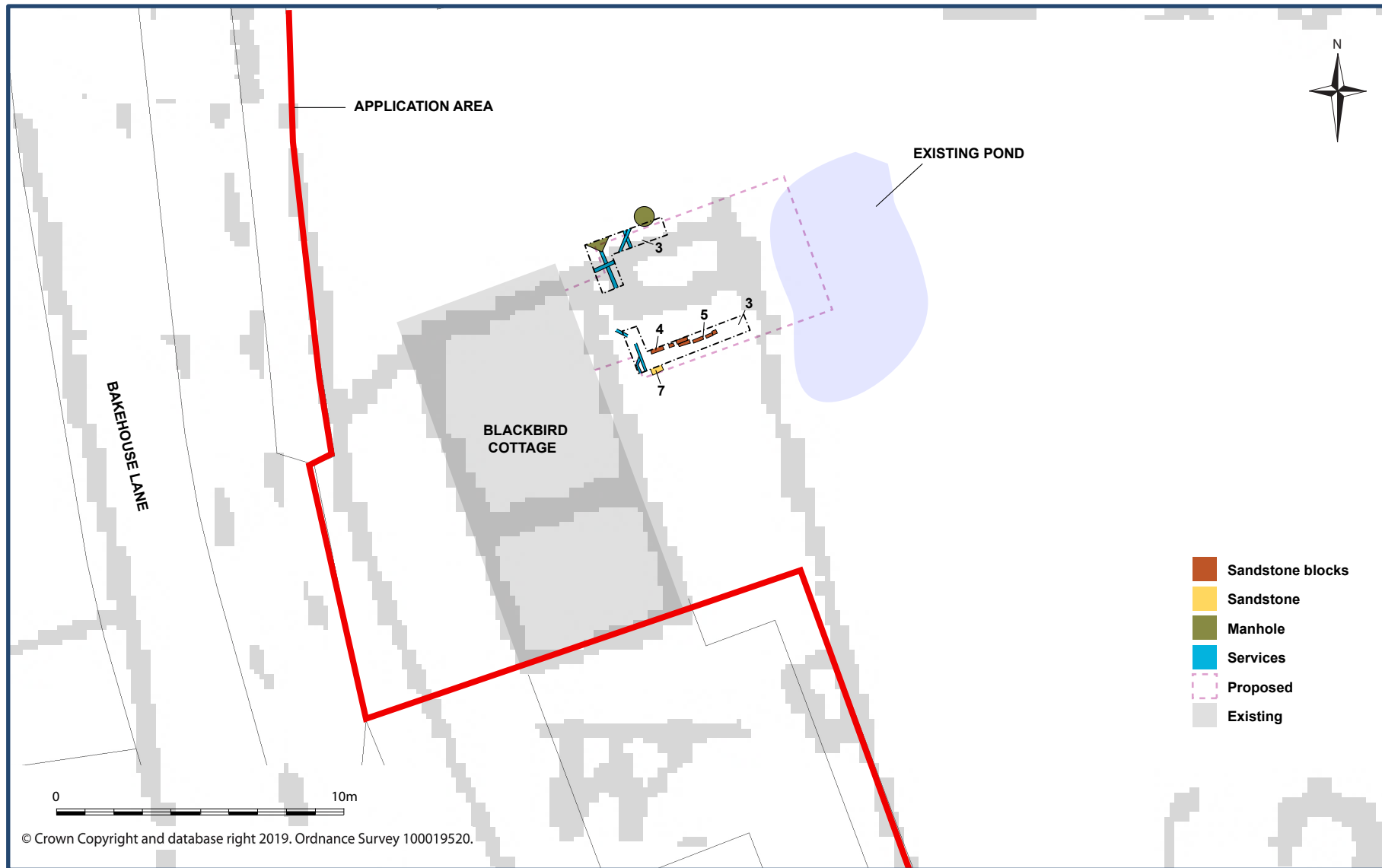


Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1888



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Fig 3: Location of groundworks observed