

New Performing Arts Centre Rendcomb College Cirencester, Gloucs

ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION AND RECORDING



understanding heritage matters

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 16125

DECEMBER 2016



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: Performing Arts Centre
Commissioned by: Rendcomb College
Project Report No. 16125
Site Code: GRC15
Planning Reference: N/A
National Grid Reference: SP 01732 09858
Team:
Project Manager: Stuart Palmer MCI fA
Fieldwork: Bryn Gethin BA, Pete Thompson BA
Author: Pete Thompson BA
Illustrations: Candy Stevens
Report checked by: Stuart Palmer MCI fA
Date: December 2016
Report reference: Thompson, P, 2016 *New Performing Arts Centre, Rendcomb College, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, Archaeology Warwickshire Report 16125.*

Archaeology Warwickshire

Unit 9

Montague Road

Warwick

CV34 5LW

01926 412278

fieldarchaeology@warwickshire.gov.uk

www.warwickshire.gov.uk/archaeology

CONTENTS

	Page
Summary	2
1 Introduction	3
2 Site Location	4
3 Archaeological and Historical Background	5
4 Aims and Methods	7
5 Results	8
6 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn	9
7 Conclusions	12
Acknowledgements	14
References	15

APPENDICES

A List of Contexts	17
B List of Finds	19
C List of Samples and note	20
D Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type (by Paul Blinkhorn)	21

PHOTOGRAPHS

1 Area 1- topsoil stripping	22
2 Area 1 - Wall foundation 3	22
3 Area 2 -General view northwards with wall 10 in background	23
4 Wall 5	23
5 Wall 7	24
6 Section of ditch 20 looking east	24
7 Ditch 20 looking west	25
8 Enclosure ditch 20 with return in foreground	25
9 Pit 29	26

FIGURES

1 Location of application area and Historic Environment Information	
2 Location of areas observed and recorded, 1 to 3	
3 Area 1 – Wall foundation 3	
4 Area 2 – Wall foundations and associated remains, and section A	
5 Area 3 – Enclosure ditch 20 and associated remains, with sections A to D	

SUMMARY

A programme of archaeological recording was undertaken on behalf of the Governors of Rendcomb College during the construction phase of a new Performing Arts building. Several phases of observation were undertaken during the construction process.

In the proposed building footprint a possible Iron Age pit and several associated undated pits were revealed alongside a probable Roman enclosure ditch and an undated ditch and gully.

In an area designated for temporary spoil storage the topsoil removal partially revealed wall foundations for several buildings or structures outside the application area. Possible external surfaces and a gully were also encountered. This evidence may represent medieval settlement activity.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Cotswold District Council for the construction of a new Performing Arts Building and installation of replacement tennis courts at Rendcomb College, Rendcomb, Gloucestershire (Ref. 14/01805FUL). The proposed development site lies within an area of archaeological potential.

- 1.2 Archaeology Warwickshire were commissioned to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks phase of the development, in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the planning authority (March 2013) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief (2014).

- 1.3 The fieldwork was carried out between September and October 2015. This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored by Archaeology Warwickshire prior to deposition with the Corinium Museum under Site Code GRC15.

2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The site is centred on national grid reference SP 0190 0973, in the parish of Rendcomb, Gloucestershire in the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The college is to the east of the River Churn, a tributary of the Thames. The development covers an area formerly occupied by tennis courts within the grounds of Rendcomb College, a former Mansion House and part of the Rendcomb Conservation Area.

- 2.2 The underlying geology of the area is Salperton Limestone Formation (British Geological Survey 2015).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Rendcomb is a small parish and estate village according to the Victoria County History (VCH 1981). In 1086 just 39 people are recorded as living there. The Lords of the Manor of Rendcomb were in residence although details regarding the early manor house or other buildings is lacking. A number of dressed stones were found close to Rendcomb and may be of Roman date (HER 32439/32438), although they were more likely to have been from medieval or post-medieval Rendcomb.
- 3.2 The current church of St Peter (HER 8236) dates to the 16th century, but there was an earlier building on the site and the font is probably from this earlier church. There are a number of monuments in the churchyard which are Listed (HER 46679, 46676, 46677, 46678) and a restored cross which is Scheduled (HER 2062).
- 3.3 To the south of the development area ridge and furrow earthworks, remnants of medieval or post-medieval ploughing, are visible (HER 32686, 32685). A more extensive area of medieval and later cultivation earthworks in the form of lynchets extends to the east (HER 32687, 37294) and south (HER 32700). There is also a water meadow (HER 32691) and a series of former limestone quarries (HER 32690).
- 3.4 Rendcomb College was formerly Rendcomb Park which was created by P C Hardwick in 1863-1865 (HER 46681). The house sits in parkland dating to the 18th century and later (HER 22402). It includes formal gardens, some of which were in the Italianate style in keeping with the house and are designated as important (HER 27388). The balustraded terrace walls are Listed (HER 46682).
- 3.5 The Old Rectory is a 19th century Listed building to the north of the development site (HER 46680). Also on the estate are 17th – 19th century cottages and a Smithy (HER 46683, 46693), a French Renaissance style stable block (HER 46684), a sundial (HER 46685), a post office (HER 46690), a mill house (HER 46691), and two bridges (HER 46686, 46692), all of which are Listed. The remains of a ha-ha can be found to the south-east (HER 20823) and a sheep wash (HER 37873). On the estate a carved stone of probable 19th century date was found (HER 10757).
- 3.6 The road to Rendcomb was originally to the east of the current road (HER 21089). It is shown as curving around the main complex of estate buildings to the east on the

First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1883-4 (Landmark 2003). The site of the new building was a small field from this date.

4 AIMS AND METHODS

- 4.1 The main aim of the work was to record any archaeological remains revealed or disturbed by the development, to collate the records in an archaeological archive and present the significant aspects of the archive in a report for dissemination.
- 4.2 The secondary aim was to form an understanding of the remains recorded in terms of their character and date, and to place the evidence in its local and regional context.
- 4.3 The objective of the work was a programme of supervised excavation with archaeological recording to defined development formation levels, archaeological remains or the geological natural, whichever the higher.
- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 An experienced archaeologist was made available for each day of ground disturbance when notified by the client/ contractor in accordance with the approved written scheme of investigation and the requirements of the planning condition.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Groundworks were supervised and recorded in several areas related to the development:

- Area 1 - an area of initial access work ,
- Area 2 - an area designated by the client and contractors for the temporary storage of excavated soils
- Area 3 - the extended footprint of the proposed building (area 3).

5.2 Earth moving was undertaken by various sized mechanical excavators using toothless ditching buckets. The excavations were observed down to the required development formation level or to a level at which archaeological remains or natural geology were revealed.

Deposit sequence

5.3 Geological natural, where revealed, was generally the upper horizon of the Salperton Limestone Formation comprising 'rubbly' limestone fragments in a greyish clay matrix (27).

Deposit sequence summary

Deposit description	Area 1 Proposed building	Area 2 Acces s	Area 3 Soil storage	Thickness	Levels (aOD)	Interpretation
Dark grey brown clay loam	1, 29	1	4	0.1m- 0.25m	172.45m- 172.25m	Topsoil
Grey brown clay loam	2	2	8	> 0.1m	-	
Yellowish brown silty clay with limestone frags	-	-	11	0.3m- 0.38m	172.22m- 172.15m	Natural soil horizon
Fragmented limestone with clay matrix	27	-	-	-	172.53m- 171.65m	Geological natural
Limestone formation	28	-	-	-	-	Geological natural

Area 1 - Initial access road

- 5.4 An area was stripped under archaeological supervision in order to allow the construction of an access road and compound. An extensive layer (2) was partially removed. This was overlaid by a topsoil deposit (1) or remnants of make-up layers for the previously existing tennis court. A small assemblage of pottery dating from the 13th to 19th century was recovered from layer 2.
- 5.5 A 1.9m long and 0.9 m wide limestone foundation 3, was partially revealed at the southern limit of the area. The requisite ground reduction was not sufficient to fully expose the feature or any associated remains. However, this may have been part of a building close to the road frontage. The remains were subsequently covered by *terram* and a layer of sand and hardcore.

Area 2 - Spoil storage area

- 5.6 An area adjacent to the Headmasters House was designated for temporary storage of arisings from the main area strip and a maximum of 0.15m of turf and topsoil was removed. This was sufficient to reveal a variety of remains.

BUILDING REMAINS

- 5.7 A number of fragmentary masonry foundations were revealed. These were partially exposed and as no further ground reduction was required beyond turf removal they were recorded, without further excavation. No clear pattern or form was discernible, but at least one or two buildings could be surmised.

Wall foundation 5: a 0.8m long segment of wall was partially revealed. This comprised at least 3 roughly faced fragments of limestone with additional smaller limestone fragments forming a probable core. Two additional stones may have been the surviving remains of a return. The wall extended north to south, but may have formed the south-east corner of a possible building

Wall foundation 6: a 1.6m long segment of possible wall foundation which extended west to east with a suggestion of a northern return.. This was 0.5m wide and comprised of irregular shaped limestone fragments. This included four roughly faced stones which formed an eastern and southern face.

Wall foundation 7: a partially revealed wall foundation which extended west to east for 2m. It was comprised of three or four large, irregular limestone fragments which were roughly face on the southern side. Other smaller limestone fragments may be associated

which core fragments or collapse. The wall was approximately 0.5m to 0.6m wide. The relative position and alignment of the wall fragment suggests it could be related to walls 5 and 6.

Wall foundation 10: a less substantial wall than others revealed further north-east on the site. The wall was approximately 2m long and 0.3m wide and aligned roughly west to east. The wall was constructed of rough limestone fragments.

- 5.8 Several small patches of limestone fragments (14) at the northern end of the area extended for between 2m and 4m and were probably associated with wall foundations. These may have been remnants of metalled surfaces although no finds were recovered from them and it was not possible to discern if they were internal or external. Pottery recovered from the overlying deposit included 15 sherds of 12th to 16th century date, but also later 17th and 18th century types.
- 5.9 At the western end a shallow ditch or gully (16) aligned south-west to north-east was revealed. The extent of the feature became less distinct towards the south-western end and was not discernible further across the stripped area. No finds were recovered from the 0.1m deep fill (12).
- 5.10 Natural deposits were not revealed except perhaps at the base of a small sondage (11). Elsewhere, due to the sloping nature of the area, either some topsoil material remained undisturbed or the top of another extensive deposit (9) was revealed.
- 5.11 The remains were to be covered with a semi-permeable membrane to allow removal at a later date under the supervision of an archaeologist. However, in the event, no notification was forthcoming.

Area 3 - Proposed Building footprint

- 5.12 The footprint of the proposed building was reduced in shallow spits under the direct supervision of an archaeologist. This revealed a layer of geological natural comprised almost entirely of shattered limestone fragments (27). Deeper excavations in the central area showed that this layer overlaid natural bedrock. The layer was covered by an extensive layer of grey brown clay loam (2) and modern make-up deposit and surfacing (28).

- 5.13 At the north-eastern corner of the area, ditch 20 was 0.9m wide and at least 0.3m deep. It extended some 6m into the stripped area before turning west and extending for a further 24m before being truncated. The ditch had an irregular U-shaped profile and was filled by a brown silty clay with frequent limestone fragments (19). A single sherd of 11th-12th century pottery was recovered.
- 5.14 A second ditch to the south, (18), survived 0.25m wide and a maximum 0.1m deep, extending 15.5m north-west to south-east. The gully was filled with brown silty clay with frequent limestone fragments (17) and yielded two fragments of Roman pottery and a single sherd of 12th-16th century pottery.
- 5.15 At the southern limit of the area was a north to south aligned ditch 26, which was approximately 0.8m wide, although the western edge remained ill-defined and its full extent was unclear. It was filled with greyish brown silty clay with frequent limestone fragments (25), which yielded four sherds of 11th-12th century pottery.
- 5.16 Several pit-like features were also revealed within the stripped area; these included a sub-rectangular pit 22, 1.2m long and 1m wide, on the eastern edge of the site. The grey brown clay fill contained a fragment of roof slate which was not retained.
- 5.17 A small isolated circular pit 24 was revealed at the eastern end of the stripped area. The vestigial remains were 0.7m wide, but only 0.04m deep and the grey brown silty clay fill (23) contained no finds.
- 5.18 A roughly circular pit 29 was 0.6m wide, but survived only 0.06m deep. The brown silty clay fill (28) contained a single sherd of Iron Age pottery. A single worked flint flake was also recovered
- 5.19 The west end of the proposed building footprint coincided with the lower terraced tennis court: the ground level was already 0.8m lower in this area. None of the previously identified features extended into the western half of the area and had probably been truncated during the earlier terracing. The only identifiable features were two north-south aligned field drains.
- 5.20 The south-west corner contained dark grey silts (30) of a possible pond or depression. The deposits contained fragments of modern debris including concrete and *tarmac*.

6 POTTERY Paul Blinkhorn

- 6.1 The pottery assemblage comprised 84 sherds with a total weight of 1525g. It comprised a mixture of prehistoric, Romano-British, Saxo-Norman, medieval, and post-medieval wares.
- 6.2 The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Appendix D. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The Roman and later material was classified using the coding system of the Gloucester City type-series (eg. Vince 1984; Vince unpub.).

Iron Age

- 6.3 The Iron Age assemblage comprised 1 sherd weighing 24g, as follows:
IA: Sparse Shell. Sparse to moderate fossil shell fragments up to 5mm, most 3mm or less. Dark grey-brown, hand-built. Middle Iron Age.
- 6.4 The sherd is from the wall of a fairly large vessel, and is typical of the middle Iron Age tradition in the region (eg. Saville 1984, 168). It is in very good condition, and appears reliably stratified.

Romano-British

- 6.5 The Romano-British assemblage comprised 4 sherds with a total weight of 161g. It was all residual. The following wares were noted:
- TF2:** **Grog-tempered Ware**, 1st -early 2nd century. 1 sherd, 61g.
TF5: **Local Grey Ware**, 1st- 3rd century. 1 sherd, 7g.
TF11B: **Severn Valley Oxidized Ware**, 2nd -4th century. 1 sherd, 10g.
TF22: **Shell-tempered Ware**, 3rd-4th century. 1 sherd, 83g.
- 6.6 The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region. The pottery from context 17, despite being apparently residual, consists of two large and unworn sherds which have been subjected to very little transportation or abrasion, suggesting that it is possible that the medieval sherd from that feature may be intrusive.

Late Saxon and Later

- 6.7 The post-Roman assemblage comprised 79 sherds weighing 1340g. The following fabric types were noted:

- TF41B: Saxo-Norman Oolitic limestone Ware**, 11th-12th century. 14 sherds, 92g.
- TF44: Minety-type Ware**, early/mid12th -16th century. 22 sherds, 290g.
- TF52: Oxidized glazed Malvernian Ware**, 14th – early 17th century. 5 sherds, 31g.
- TF61: Staffordshire Black-Glazed Earthenwares**, 17th -18th century. 3 sherds, 222g.
- TF63: Flower Pots**, 19th -20th century. 12 sherds, 176g.
- TF71: White Earthenware**, 19th -20th century. 6 sherds, 102g
- TF74: Manganese Glazed Ware**, late 17th -18th century. 1 sherd, 2g.
- TF80: Ashton Keynes-type Earthenware**, 17th -18th century. 15 sherds, 415g.
- TF94: Westerwald/Cologne Stoneware**, 17th -18th century. 1 sherd, 10g.

- 6.8 The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region, and shows that there was activity at the site from the Saxo-Norman period onwards. Much of the pottery was residual. The range of medieval vessel forms is very typical, comprising mainly jars and jugs in wares from Cotswolds production centres. Developed, late medieval vessel forms were entirely absent, suggesting that there may have been an hiatus in activity during the late medieval period, but given that Minety-type Ware shows little change in the basic range of fabrics and forms during the production span, this cannot be advanced with confidence.
- 6.9 Most of the stratified pottery consists of small groups of small sherds which appear to be the product of secondary deposition.

7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Two concentrations of activity were recorded during the observation work. At the eastern end of the application area were the remains of an enclosure ditch associated with further ditches and several pits. There had previously been some truncation of archaeological remains particularly at the western end where virtually no features survived. At the eastern end the features often only just survived as ephemeral remains.

7.2 The recovered finds assemblage was not large and included residual finds, but it is possible to suggest activity from the Iron Age to the 17th century. The suggested phases of activity are somewhat uncertain due to the paucity of finds.

Iron Age

7.3 A single pit, which was partially truncated, represents evidence for Iron Age activity on the site. Several other isolated pits with similar characteristics remain undated, but may also be Iron Age in origin, although it is worth noting that only one sherd of Iron Age pottery was recorded during the work.

Roman

7.4 The enclosure ditch recorded within the proposed building footprint is possibly associated with Roman settlement or agricultural activity; however this is dated by just two sherds of 1st to 3rd century pottery. As no further finds were recovered from ditch the presence of a single sherd of medieval pottery has to be argued as intrusive to sustain this interpretation.

Medieval

7.5 The remains of several buildings and surfaces were partially revealed directly following the removal of turf in the area close to the Headmaster's House. These building remains may well be part of a medieval Rendcomb although none of the individual features provided secure dating material. The interpretation is thus derived from the nature of the revealed remains and the finds assemblage in overlying topsoil.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Rendcomb College for commissioning the work and to staff of Stepnell for their assistance during the work. Thanks also to Charles Parry, Gloucestershire County Council Archaeologist for his advice. The fieldwork was carried out by Bryn Gethin and Pete Thompson. Thanks also to Paul Blinkhorn who undertook the assessment of the pottery assemblage.

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APPENDICES

A List of contexts

Context	Description	Width (m)	Thickness (m)	Comment
1	Dark grey brown clay loam	-	0.2m -0.3m	Topsoil
2	Grey brown clay loam	-	0.15m-0.2m	
3	? Wall foundation			Sub-soil horizon
4	Turfline and topsoil horizon			Topsoil
5	Wall foundation			Building remains?
6	Wall foundation	0.5m		Building remains?
7	Wall foundation	Min 0.3m	-	Building remains?
8	Grey brown silty loam			Layer
9	Light grey brown silty clay	-	-	
10	Wall foundation			Building remains?
11	Light greyish silty clay with limestone fragments		unknown	Natural
12	Fill of gully 16			
13	Rubble with root disturbance			?Building debris
14	Layer /spread		Min 0.05m	? metallated surface
15	Wall foundation			Building
16	?gully	0.6m		Gully
17	Fill of 18			Ditch fill
18	Ditch	0.2m		
19	Fill of Ditch 20			
20	Ditch	0.9m		
21	Fill of pit 22			
22	Pit	1.2m		
23	Fill of pit 24			
24	?Pit	0.7m		
25	Fill of ?Ditch 26			
26	? Ditch	0.8m		
27	Fragmented Limestone and clay			Geological natural
28	Fill of pit			
29	Pit	0.5m		pit
30	Fill of depression / ?pond			

Context	Description	Width (m)	Thickness (m)	Comment
31	Fill of depression / ?pond	-	-	
32	Field drain	-	-	Modern
33	Limestone natural	-	-	Geological natural

B List of Finds

Context	Type	Quantity	Comments
1	Shell	1	Not retained
1	Clay pipe	1	Stem
1	Pottery	20	
2	Pottery	1	Severn Valley ware
2	Pottery	26	Medieval and post medieval
2	Cu Alloy	1	Ring: 34mm diameter, circular cross section
2	Cu Alloy	1	Plate: 55mm long, 19mm wide rectangular cross section, two rectangular slots
2	Ceramic	1	Furniture caster – not retained
2	Shell	1	Not retained
2	Clay pipe	2	Stem
4	Clay pipe	1	
4	Pottery	28	
17	Pottery	8	
19	Pottery	1	11th/12th century
21	Roof slate	1	Not retained
25	Pottery	5	
28	Flint	1	Flake with bulb of percussion
28	Pottery	1	
31	Pottery	1	

C List of Samples

Context	Type	Number	Comments
19	Ditch fill	1	Bulk sample taken on site from the fill ¹

¹Note: A bulk soil sample was taken from ditch 20 during the watching brief in order to test for the presence of any additional remains. Processing was undertaken at Archaeology Warwickshire offices using a floatation tank and sieving through a 300 micron mesh. This process demonstrated that the soil contained no significant evidence for charred plant remains. No evidence for waterlogged material was present.

D Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type (by Paul Blinkhorn)

Context	IA		TF2		TF5		TF11B		TF22		TF41B		TF40		TF44		TF52		TF61		TF80		TF94		TF74		TF63		TF71		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
1					1	7					8	46				18	3	19			3	76			1	2	1	66	1	6	U/S
2											1	20	1	4	4	46	1	6			3	33					11	110	5	96	U/S
4																201	1	6	3	222	9	306								U/S	
17			1	61					1	83						25														E/M12thC	
19											1	4																		11thC	
25											4	22																		11thC	
28	1	24																												MIA	
																							1	10							17thC
2 tennis court							1	10																							U/S
Total	1	24	1	61	1	7	1	10	1	83	14	92	1	4	22	290	5	31	3	222	15	415	1	10	1	2	12	176	6	102	



1. Area 1 topsoil stripping



2. Area 1 - Wall foundation 3



3. Area 2 General view northwards with wall 10 in background



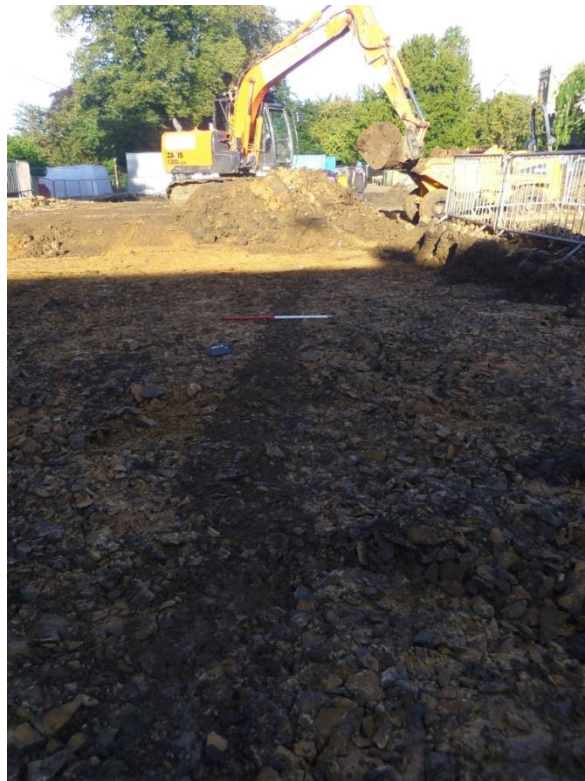
4. Wall 5



5. Wall 7



6. Section of ditch 20 looking east



7. Ditch 20 looking west



8. Enclosure ditch 20 with return in foreground



9. Pit 29

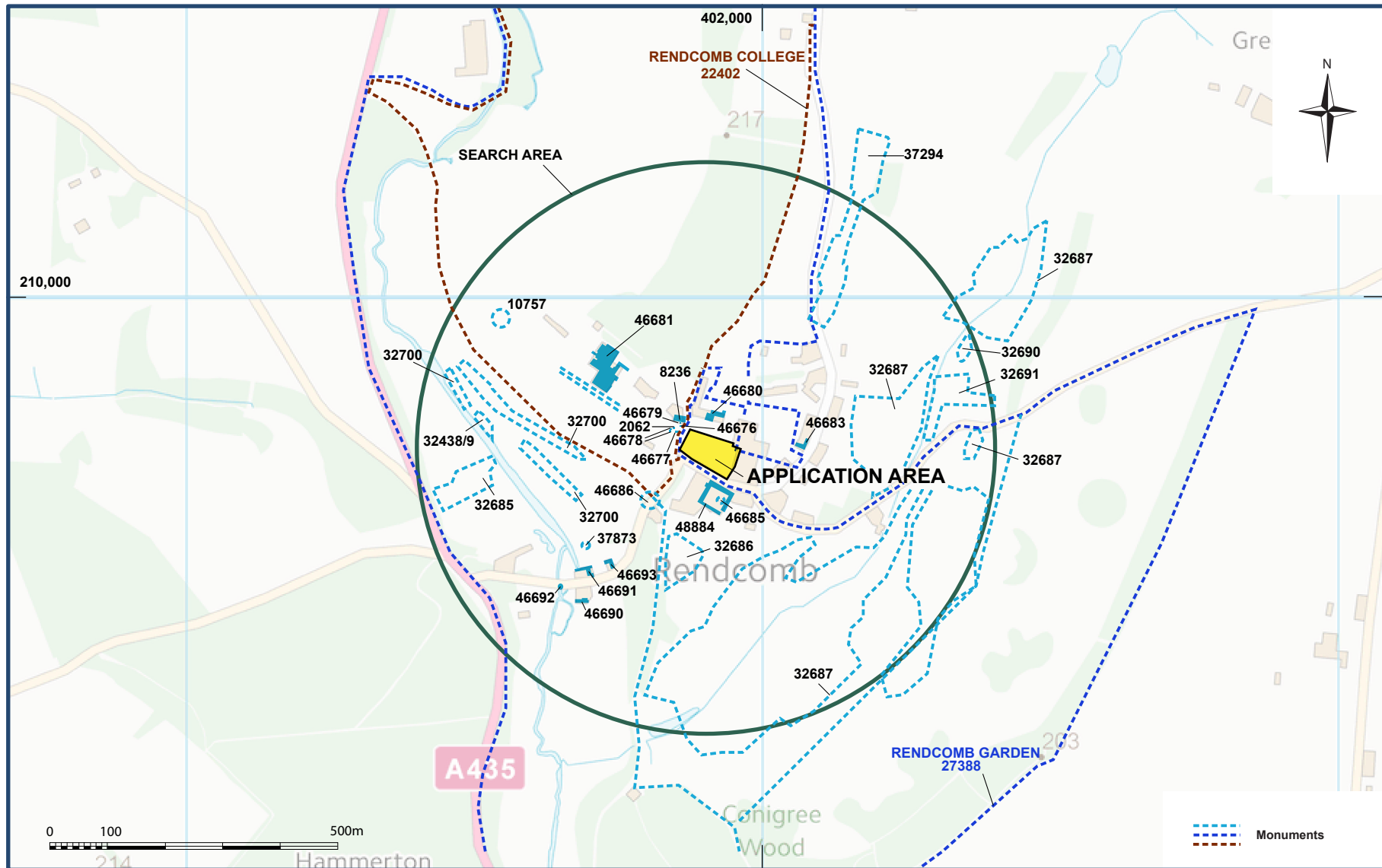


Fig 1: Location of application area and Hitsoric Environment Information

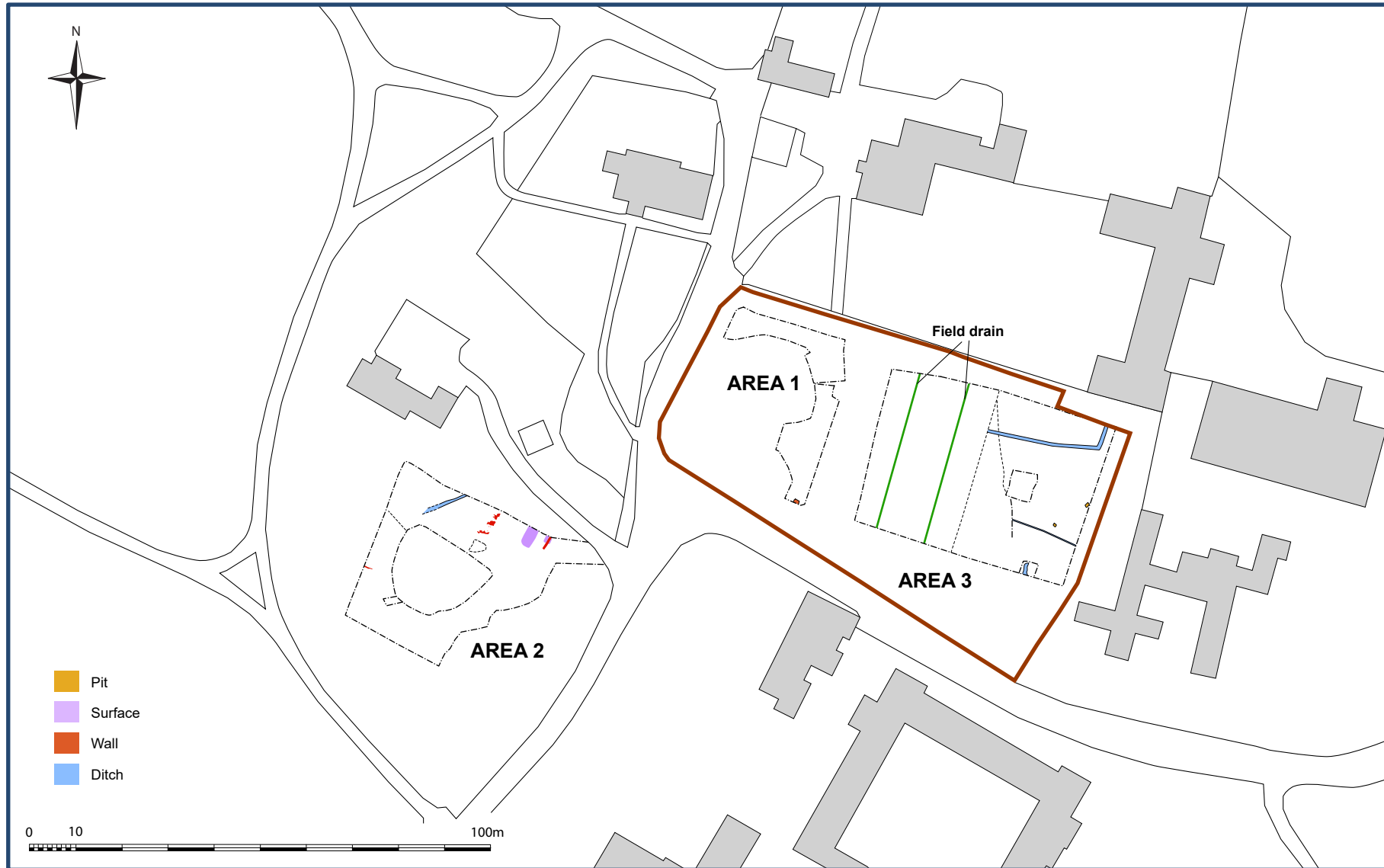


Fig 2: Location of areas observed and recorded, 1 to 3

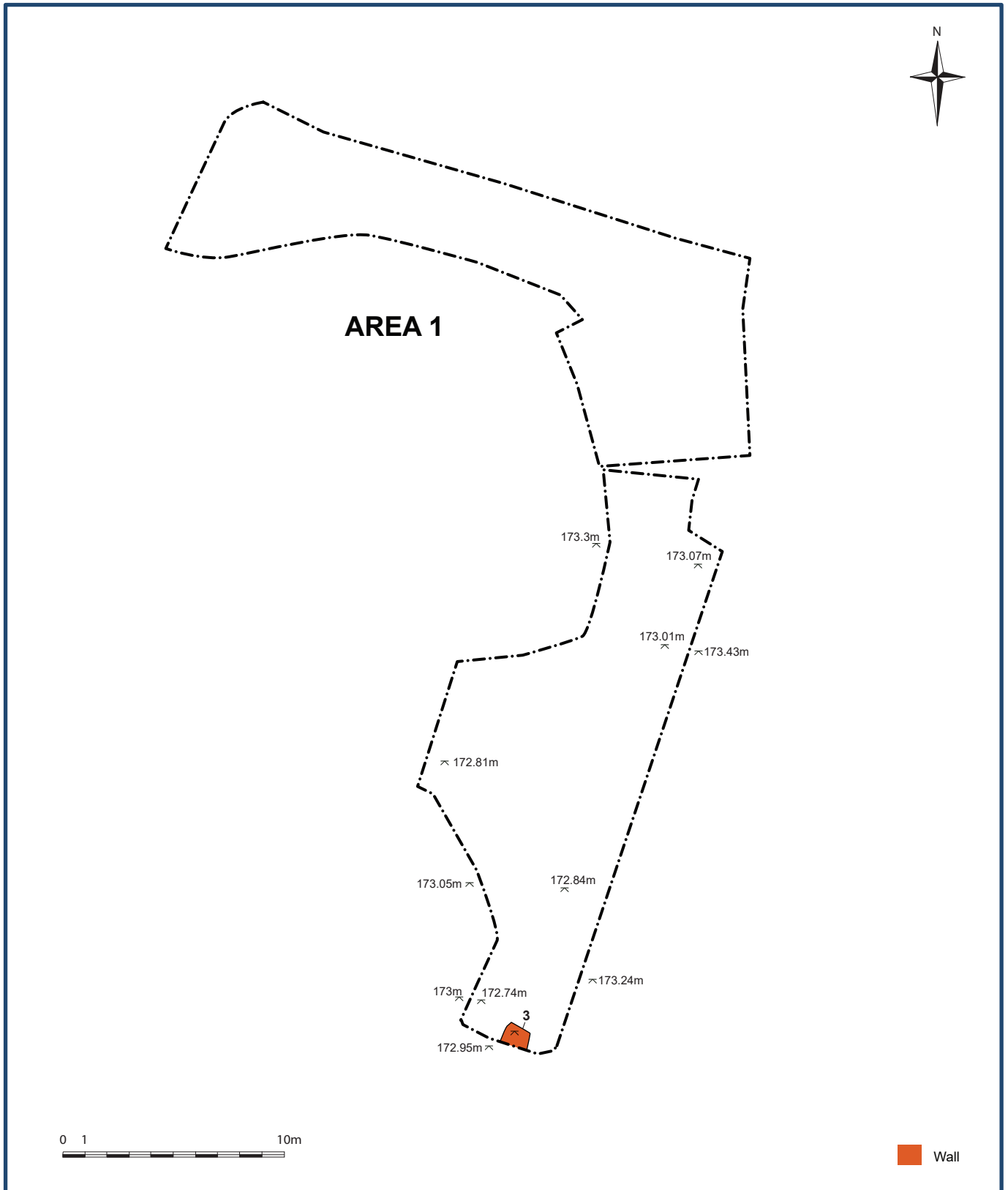


Fig 3: Area 1 - Wall foundation 3

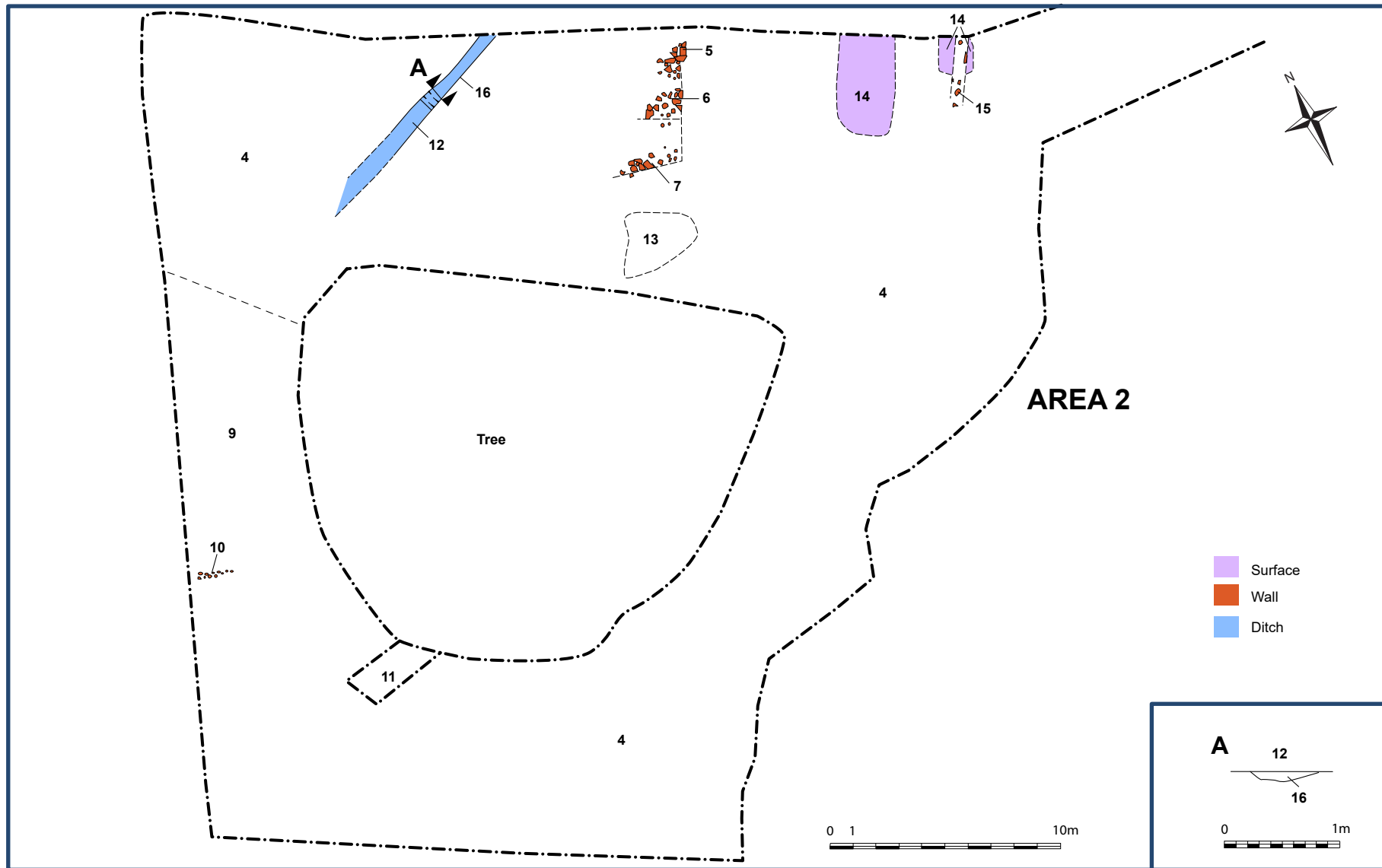


Fig 4: Area 2 - Wall foundations and associated remains, and section A

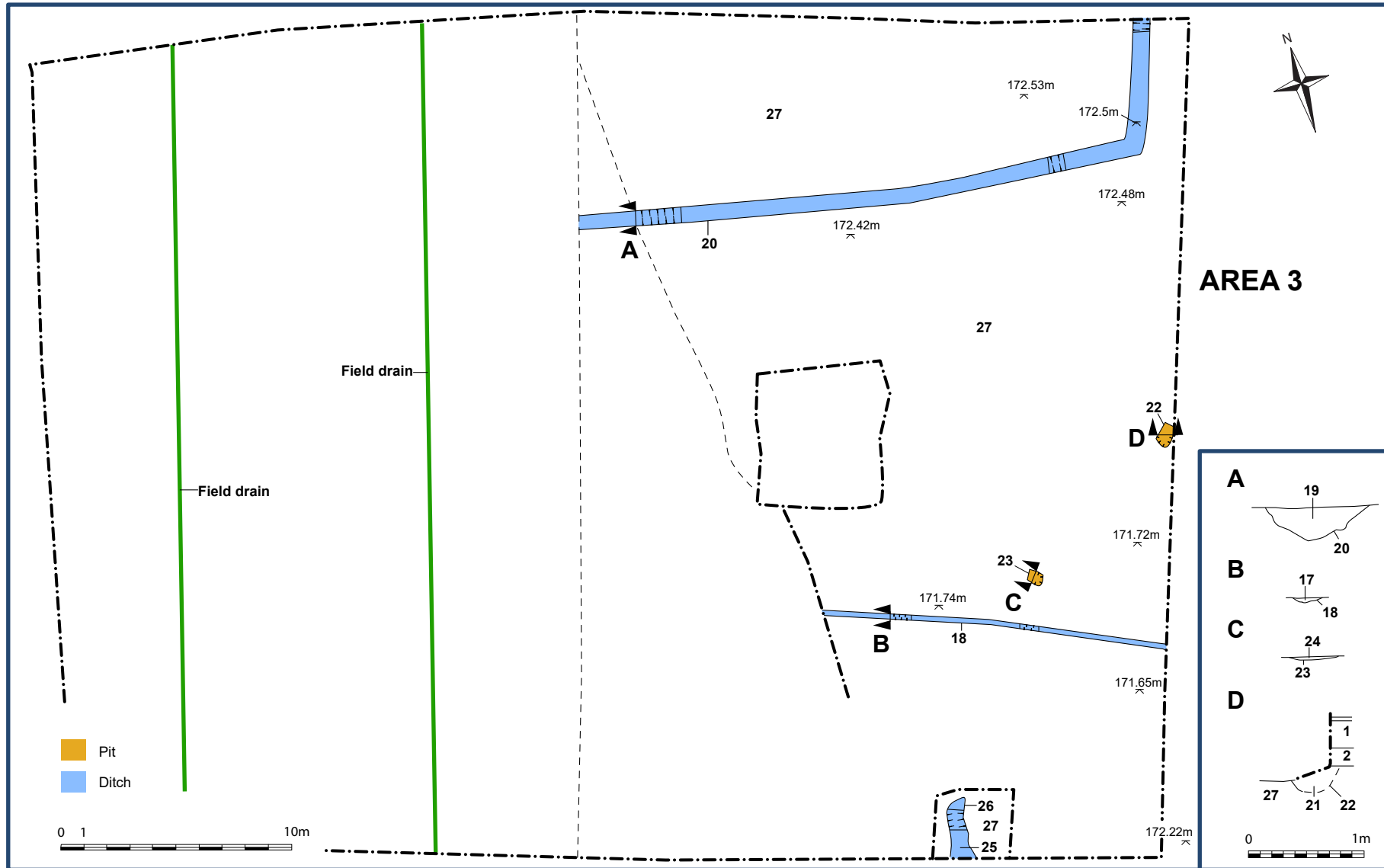


Fig 5: Area 3 - Enclosure ditch 20 and associated remains, with sections A to D