The Thatched Cottage Station Road, Theddingworth Leicestershire, LE17 6QS (NGR 466663, 285702)

Archaeological Investigation

Souterrain Project SOU22-785

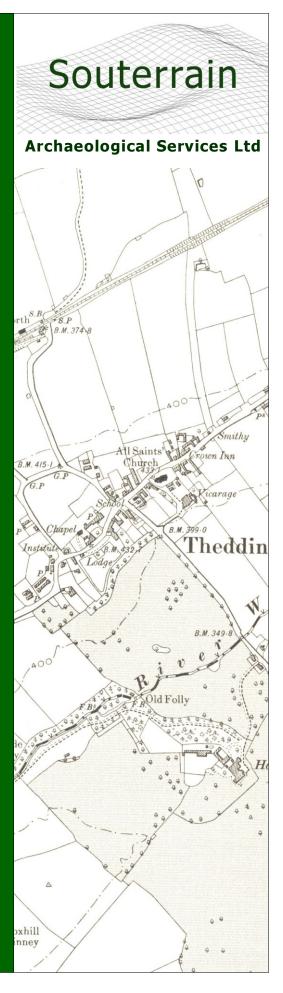


April 2022

Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd

for

Mr & Mrs Chaffer (Theddingworth, Leicestershire)



The Thatched Cottage Station Road, Theddingworth Leicestershire, LE17 6QS

(NGR 466663, 285702)

Archaeological Investigation

PLANNING APP. REF. 21/01031/FUL

SOUTERRAIN PROJECT: SOU21-785

April 2022

Produced for:

Mr & Mrs Chaffer

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CONTENTS

LIST	OF FIGURES	3
SUN	MMARY	4
PREFACE		5
1.	INTRODUCTION	6
2.	PLANNING BACKGROUND	6
3.	LOCATION & ASPECT OF THE APPLICATION SITE	7
4.	ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL The Prehistoric Period to Romano-British Periods The Medieval Settlement Archaeological Investigations	7 7 7 9
5.	RESEARCH AIMS Broad Objectives Specific Objectives	10 10 10
6.	INVESTIGATION RESULTS Fieldwork Approach & Methodology Observations	11 11 11
7.	CONCLUSIONS	11
8.	ARCHIVE & REPORT	12
9.	COPYRIGHT	12
10	REFERENCES	12

List of Figures

(Illustrations are at the end of the report)

- Figure 1 General Location of Application Site
- Figure 2 Location of the Application Site (red) and the new conservatory (in blue)
- Figure 3 Distribution of Sites and Monuments within the Study Area
- Figure 4 Distribution of Archaeological Events within the Study Area
- Figure 5 Extract of Ordnance Survey first edition 25" map of 1886 (surveyed 1884) showing approx. location of Application Site (red) and new conservatory (blue)
- Figure 6 Plan of the area of investigation with relative height, direction of photographs (in red) and location of Section 1
- Figure 7 Section 1

Summary

In January 2022 an archaeological investigation was carried out by Souterrain during groundwork for a rear conservatory at The Thatched Cottage, a grade II listed 16th century building in the village of Theddingworth, Leicestershire.

In view of the site's location in the historic core of the village, it was considered to have potential for buried remains pertaining to the origins and development of the medieval settlement. The report provides a précis of the historical and archaeological knowledge.

Ground reduction of the development footprint was followed by foundation trenching. Garden soil directly overlay the geological stratum, suggesting that ground reduction had taken place in the modern period. The topsoil was devoid of artefacts and no archaeological features were present.

The report provides an illustrative, photographic and descriptive account of the work.

Preface

All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd (Souterrain) cannot accept responsibility for errors of information or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of statements or opinions expressed in this document.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Keith Chaffer for his interest throughout the investigation and apologise to Jane for her disappointment at the lack of any finds!

Fieldwork & Report

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document presents an illustrated record of archaeological observations made during groundwork for a conservatory at the rear of The Thatched Cottage, Station Road, Theddingworth, Leicestershire LE17 6QS (hereafter 'the Application Site').
- 1.2 It has been prepared by Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd (Souterrain) for Mr & Mrs Chaffer (the Planning Applicant).
- 1.3 The archaeological investigation was carried out in accordance with a Condition attached to a planning permission.
- 1.4 The results of the investigation are to be available as a public-accessible record.

2. PLANNING BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Harborough District Council (HDC) Planning Permission No. 21/01031/FUL has been granted, subject to Conditions, on the 10th September 2021, for the *'Erection of an oak framed conservatory rear extension, replacement french doors to rear elevation and door relocation, at The Thatched Cottage, Station Road, Theddingworth'*. The proposed site layout is defined on the drawings by Richmond Oak, submitted with planning application¹.
- 2.2 Prior to the grant of planning permission, Leicestershire County Council's Senior Planning Archaeologist noted the archaeological potential of the site, viz: "The application lies between two areas of scheduled monuments of village earthworks. It is also part of a 16th/17th century building. Buried archaeological evidence, constituting one or more as yet unidentified heritage asset(s) (National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 16, paragraph 189-190 and Annex 2), spanning the period from the earliest evolution of the village to its more recent past can be expected within the development area. Consequently, there is a likelihood that buried archaeological remains will be affected by the development."².
- 2.3 Thus, in view of the archaeological sensitivity of the locality, Condition No. 4 of the Planning Permission requires an appropriate programme of archaeological mitigation work, which in this case is to be *Observation, Investigation, Recording*, during ground-work, followed by *Analysis & Publication* of the results.
- 2.4 The reason for the Condition is to ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, 2019).
- 2.5 Prior to the commencement of ground work a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Souterrain on behalf of the Planning Applicant (Souterrain, 2022) for the approval of the Senior Planning Archaeologist. The WSI was then endorsed by HDC's Planning Officer.

¹ Richmond Oak, drawings P01, P02 & P03

² Consultation Response letter, Archaeology, 21/01031/FUL, 22.06.2021

3. LOCATION & ASPECT OF THE APPLICATION SITE

- 3.1 Theddingworth is a small Leicestershire village in the civil parish of the same name. It is located in the south of the county, 5 miles west of Market Harborough and 2 miles northwest of Husbands Bosworth (Fig. 1). The village lies on the north bank of the river Welland, which forms the county border with Northamptonshire. The Application Site is located on the east side of Station Road just next to the junction with Main Street, within the Conservation Area of Theddingworth.
- 3.2 The Application Site (Fig. 2) is centred on National Grid Reference 466663, 285702. It is rectangular in shape, about 416 sq.m, and is presently occupied by a Grade II Listed Building (The Thatched Cottage) on the southwest corner and a modern outbuilding on the northwest corner. The ground height is around 131 m OD. The proposed area of ground disturbance (oak framed conservatory) is approximately 17.4 sq.m.
- 3.3 The underlying solid geology is mapped by the British Geological Survey as the Dyrham Formation and described as "pale to dark grey and greenish grey, silty and sandy mudstone, with interbeds of silt or very fine-grained sand (locally muddy or silty), weathering yellow. Variably micaceous. Impersistent beds or doggers of ferruginous limestone (some ooidal) and sandstone, which tend to occur at the top of sedimentary cycles. Sporadic large cementstone nodules"³.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

- 4.1 Based on various archaeological discoveries made in the environs of The Thatched Cottage, there was the possibility that the proposed development plot would also contain remains of archaeological interest.
- 4.2 In order to place the site into its broad archaeological and historical context, a summary of current knowledge is presented by broad period in this section. The Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER) is the primary source of archaeological information, with data drawn from a 500 m radius Study Area of the Application Site. Other sources include published and unpublished archaeological reports, *Victoria History of the Counties (VCH)*, and historic maps. Each discovery or site is cross-referenced numerically to location maps (Fig. 3 and 4). The HER UID for each HER record is shown in bold.

The Prehistoric Period to Romano-British Periods

4.3 There is no recorded evidence of the prehistoric or Roman periods in the Study Area.

The Medieval Settlement

4.4 The place name Theddingworth denotes a Saxon origin (Ekwall, 1981, 465). The earliest mention, *Tevlingorde or Tedingesworde*, is in the Domesday book of 1086, at which time it was a fairly substantial settlement with thirty-eight households spread over five estates, possibly between 150 to 100 persons in total (*c.f.* Powell-Smith, 2021), putting it in the largest 20% of settlements recorded. The record is also probably a reasonable indicator of the size of the pre-Conquest settlement. In 1086, the combined total of cultivable land appears to have been in excess of 12 ploughlands. Other resources included 18 ½ acres of meadow and two mills.

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³ British Geological Survey, http://www.bgs.ac.uk

- 4.5 The main landholder in 1086 was Earl Aubrey of Coucy with two estates. His largest had eighteen households (eight villagers and ten smallholders) and six ploughlands. The arable was worked by two oxen teams owned the men and another two teams on the demesne. His second estate was occupied by seven freemen who worked three ploughlands with a team and half. The other three estates, in order of size, were held by Earl Hugh of Chester (eight tenants): William Lovett (four tenants): Count Judith (one tenant). Nothing, however, is known about the layout and extent of either the estates or the *vill* of Theddingworth.
- It may be reasonably inferred that Theddingworth originated in the late Anglo-Saxon, during a period of widespread landscape reorganization, whereby dispersed settlements and farmsteads were brought together to be centralized around the church and manor house surrounded by a planned open field system (*c.f.*, Lewis 2006, 191, Edgeworth 2007, 93); the purpose of which was most probably to improve social cohesion and increase productivity. The HER provides a postulated extent of the historic settlement core (Fig. 3, **MLE9153**). Notably, the Application Site is situated within the historic core. The parish church of All Saint's is Theddingworth's oldest standing building, (Fig. 3, **MLE12883**), its earliest structural element stylistically dated to the 12th century (Lee & McKinley 1964), although a much earlier ecclesiastical foundation is not precluded. The ancient manorial focus (or foci) is not yet confirmed, although documentary evidence suggests the site of Home Farm as a likely contender (Fig. 3, **MLE2520**; **MLE12895**); the oldest standing buildings at Home Farm were erected in the early 18th century (Fig. 4, **ELE8594**).
- 4.7 The descent of the Theddingworth estates (or manors) and its tenants-in-chief is very convoluted and at times uncertain. They have been traced as far as reasonably possible by *VCH*. By the mid-12th century there were two major estates, one held by the Trussell family of Marston Trussell (Northants.), which was by then in the honour of Skipton (Yorks), the other held by the Abbot of Leicester and various lay tenants in the honour of Leicester. In the 13th century the Trussell property was fragmented and beyond the late 15th century it becomes obscure. By the 15th century much of the abbey's land was leased out to tenant farmers, including its grange and rectory. After the Dissolution all of its property at Theddingworth was granted to Sir Ralph Rowlett. This became known as the Manor of Theddingworth. In 1576 Rowlett's grandson and heir Sir Henry Goodyere sold it to William Brocas of Horton Hall (Bucks.), the latter who was also to acquire, by marriage, a major Theddingworth freehold.
- 4.8 It was with Brocas that the landscape of Theddingworth began to undergo major transformation. As early as the 15th century the manorial lords of southeast Leicestershire uplands began to radically alter the landscape, converting open arable land into enclosed fields of pasture not only their demesne land, but when and wherever possible engrossed their estates by extending control over common-field land and townships (Yelling 1977, 46-51). Rural depopulation in the region is commonly, though not always, attributable to these events. As lord of the manor between 1576 and 1601, Brocas carried out extensive, partial enclosure of Theddingworth parish, and by the late 1570s is understood to have owned about 80% of the township. Only the freeholders and a few tenants remained a hindrance to his engrossment.
- 4.9 In 1582, Brocas secured piecemeal extension of his enclosed lands and much greater control over seven of the freeholders, by means of supposedly generous exchange of lands and lease agreements (Yelling, 1977, 53). However, the three open common fields were still in existence in 1691 and the complete of enclosure Theddingworth was not to be until 1713:

enabled by agreement (i.e. without an Act of Parliament) by the, then lord of the manor, Sir Richard Newdigate and the freeholders.

- 4.10 The abandoned areas of the ancient settlement of Theddingworth survive as earthworks in two great areas on the north side of Main Street: now preserved as a scheduled monument (Fig. 3, **DLE 383)**⁴. One of the areas (c. 1.8 ha.) is located directly opposite the Application Site (**MLE18412**), the other (c. 5.5 ha.), 80 380 m to the north (**MLE2509**; **MLE18411**). Significantly, a detailed survey map of the parish was commissioned by Newdigate in 1696, this showing all of the houses in the village. Notably, the larger area of the scheduled earthworks contains a hollow-way bounded by closes and house platforms on either side, all of which were defunct and converted to pasture by 1696: quite possibly a shift in settlement brought about by William Brocas.
- 4.11 In the smaller scheduled area, more than thirteen homesteads depicted in 1696 were abandoned at some later date; the sites of which are now attested by earthworks, an archaeological survey of which was done in 1970. The land tax returns show there were still nine freeholders at Theddingworth in 1780 (Yelling 1977). In this period sheep farming appears to have been the mainstay of life with the majority of landowners being yeoman graziers. Documentary evidence reveal 40 households in the village in 1564, almost the same as five centuries earlier. In 1603 there were 205 parishioners recorded, and by the early 18th century 70 families (*op cit*. Lee & McKinley 1964), possibly 280 to 300 people. But by 1801, this had fallen to just 162. There was an increase to 269, but numbers steadily decline to around 200 by the turn of the 20th century.
- 4.12 The majority of the medieval open-field of cultivation strips (ridge and furrow) has since been ploughed out, though these were accurately recorded on the 1696 map and belowground remnants may be seen on aerial photographs. Indeed the sites of various elements of the medieval to post-medieval landscape have also been plotted approximately from historic mapping (Figure 3). These include the location of the former rectory (MLE2518), a tithe barn (MLE2517) and two windmills (MLE2511 & MLE2526), while a later mill is known from a map of 1779 (MLE2519). Curiously, aerial survey to the north of Peeble Hall recorded linear earthworks in the form of converging banks beneath ridge and furrow [MLE2513], but are possibly of geological origin.

Archaeological Investigations

4.13 To date, there have been no recorded finds of archaeological interest from the Application Site. Indeed, so far, there has been a dearth of archaeological discoveries in the historic village core of Theddingworth. This however, is likely to be reflection of the few controlled archaeological investigations rather than a genuine absence of archaeology. The earliest recorded observation appears to have been a brief note of a possible medieval circular stone dovecote at Beeches Farm (Fig. 3, MLE26246); c.260 W of the Application Site. The next recorded investigation was a watching brief undertaken by the parish warden in 2002 at a 2,700 sq.m two-house plot at Box Bush Farm, Main Street (350 m NNE), in which no archaeological deposits or finds were observed (Fig. 4, ELE9653). Six years later a new house plot (c. 500 sq.m) at Station Road (c. 100 m NW) was stripped ahead of development but revealed nothing more than 19th 20th rubbish (Fig. 4, ELE6486). The most tangible evidence of the medieval period thus far has been the discovery of part of a possible backfilled pond at Little Croft, Main Street in 2014 from which two sherds of 12th / 13th century pottery were recovered (Fig. 3, MLE21858, Fig. 4, ELE9348); c. 50 m NNE of the Application Site.

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⁴ Historic England list entry 1018836

Historic & Archaeological Interest of The Application Site

- 4.14 The Thatched Cottage is Theddingworth's oldest surviving dwelling; and now a listed building⁵. It is understood to date from the late 16th or early 17th century (Fig. 3, **MLE12886**). Timber-framed, with box-frame construction, it consists of three bays. The in-filled panels are rendered and the roof is thatched. The garden on the street frontage has a tall boundary wall, a section of which was attached to the cottage in 1730. Given the building's location almost central to the historic core of Theddingworth, there is the possibility that it was preceded by an earlier tenement.
- 4.15 There is only one other known standing building of comparable date in the village. This is 'The Cottage' (Fig. 3, **MLE12894**), 28 m away on the south side on Main Street, where a smaller 16th or 17th century timber-frame is concealed inside a 19th century brick skin and a slate roof. Other than this, most of the buildings in the historic core of the village date from the 18th and 19th centuries, built in brick red brick with slate roofs.
- 4.16 The Ordnance Survey 25" map of 1886 shows a near-rectangular rear outbuilding diagonal to the main range of buildings. Figure 5 shows the location of the building with the outline of the new conservatory super-imposed. The building was still present in 1952. Its function is uncertain, though a have been the 'small thatched outbuilding with mud walls in the yard' mentioned in 1964 observed by the VCH researchers (Lee & McKinley, 1964 op cit.).

5. RESEARCH AIMS

Broad Objectives

- 5.1 The broad objectives of the investigation were to:
 - establish the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation in the development site;
 - ii. establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
 - iii. recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions; this to be an intrinsic part of the investigation.

Specific Objectives

- 5.2 Given that the site is almost central to the historic core of Theddingworth a key objective was to identify and recover evidence that could contribute to understanding of the origin and development of the village (c.f. Lewis 2006, 212). Integral to this would be evidence of any specialized crafts or trades performed at the site in the medieval to post-medieval periods and environmental data that could imply changes and in animal husbandry, diet and living conditions (Monckton, 2006, 283). Equally important, ceramics recovered could augment our understanding of interaction between Theddingworth and towns and market areas (ibid. 212).
- 5.3 A site specific interest would be to recover evidence that might shed light on the function of the building that once stood in the rear yard (*ante*, 4.16).

⁵ Historic England list entry 1061496

6. INVESTIGATION RESULTS

Fieldwork Approach & Methodology

- 6.1 The archaeological fieldwork was carried out on the 27th of January 2022. The investigation was conducted with respect to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct and *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (rev. 2020), and with due regard to Health and Safety.
- 6.2 Ground reduction was undertaken by mechanical excavator fitted with a smooth-bladed ditching bucket and supervised throughout by an archaeologist. Excavated horizons and sections were inspected using hand tools.

Observations

Note: Photographs are prefixed by 'P'. The viewpoints are shown on Figure 6.

- 6.3 The weather and ground conditions were favourable to the investigation and archaeological visibility was good.
- The area of the proposed footprint (P1) was initially stripped of modern overburden and garden topsoil revealing what appeared to be the geological stratum around 131.97 m OD. This was disturbed in places by modern drainage runs (P2) in particular the ground below northwest side of the proposed building where an inspection chamber and conduits were located. Subsequent excavation of the foundation trenches confirmed that this comprised differential dipping bands of sands, sandy clay, gravelly calcareous clay and calcareous clay with abundant pieces of limestone (P3 to P5: Fig. 7 Section 1).
- 6.5 There was no subsoil above the geological stratum, the implication being that ground had been reduced in the past. The topsoil was devoid of artefacts of any period. There were no historic archaeological layers or features revealed.
- 6.6 The area of ground reduction was surveyed to Ordnance Survey National Grid co-ordinates and height datum using RTK differential GNSS. A digital photographic record was taken of the stratigraphy and more generally the nature of site and ground conditions.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 It was not possible for meaningful conclusions to be drawn with regard to historic land-use at the development site. There were no identifiable traces of any archaeology of earlier periods. Evidently, the area of the new extension had been reduced and modified, most likely in the modern period, with a thin layer of garden topsoil spread above it.

8. ARCHIVE & REPORT

- 8.1 The archive is intended as a public-accessible record: the report to be housed in the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record; the site record is to be held by Leicestershire County Council Museum Collections (Archive Accessions No. X.A6.2022). Copyright is retained by Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd from whom permission may be sought for reproduction.
- 8.2 The OASIS V (Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations: www.oasis.ac.uk) identification number for this project is **souterra1-505762**. All survey and photographic data is contained in this report.

9. COPYRIGHT

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- 9.3 A licence is to be granted to the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record for the use of all reports arising from projects for planning purposes. *Bona fide* research requests will be granted a licence upon written request to Souterrain Archaeological Services.

10. REFERENCES

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Yelling J A 1977. Common Field and Enclosure in England 1450-1850

Historic maps

1886 Ordnance Survey, Leicestershire, 25" sheet L.10

V.1. 12th April 2022

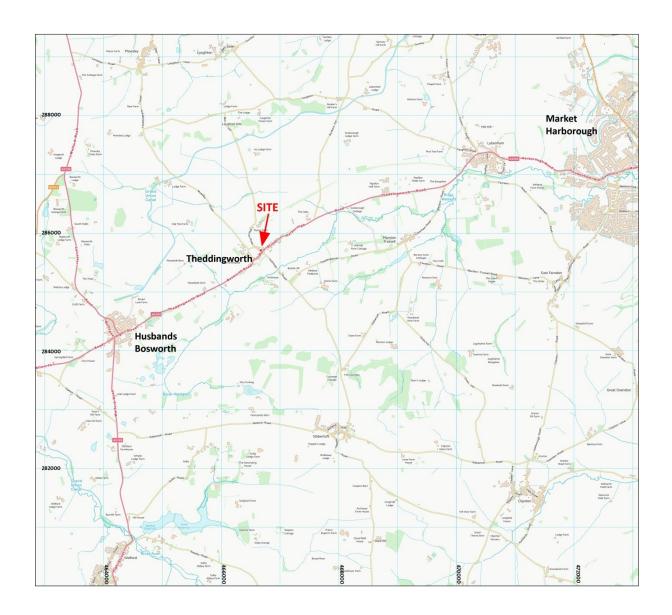


Figure 1: General Location of Application Site

(based on Ordnance Survey Open Data mapping 2022 © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 100015565)

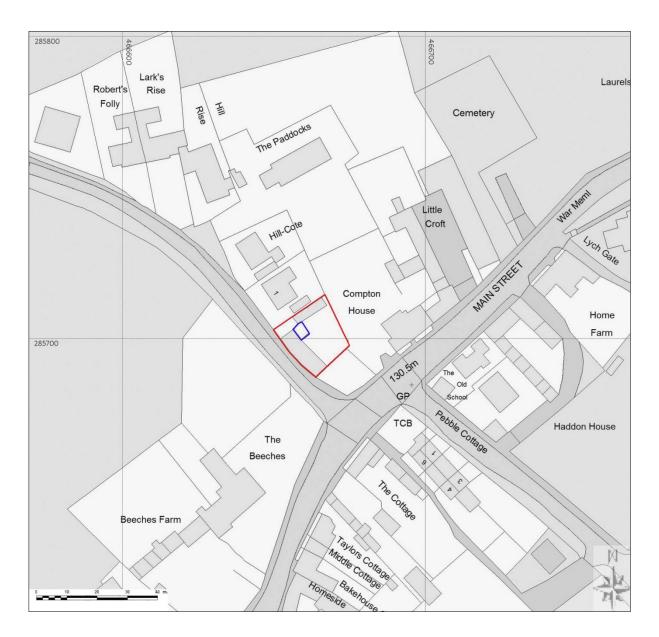


Figure 2: Location of the Application Site (red) and the new conservatory (in blue)

(based on Ordnance Survey mapping 2021 © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 100015565)

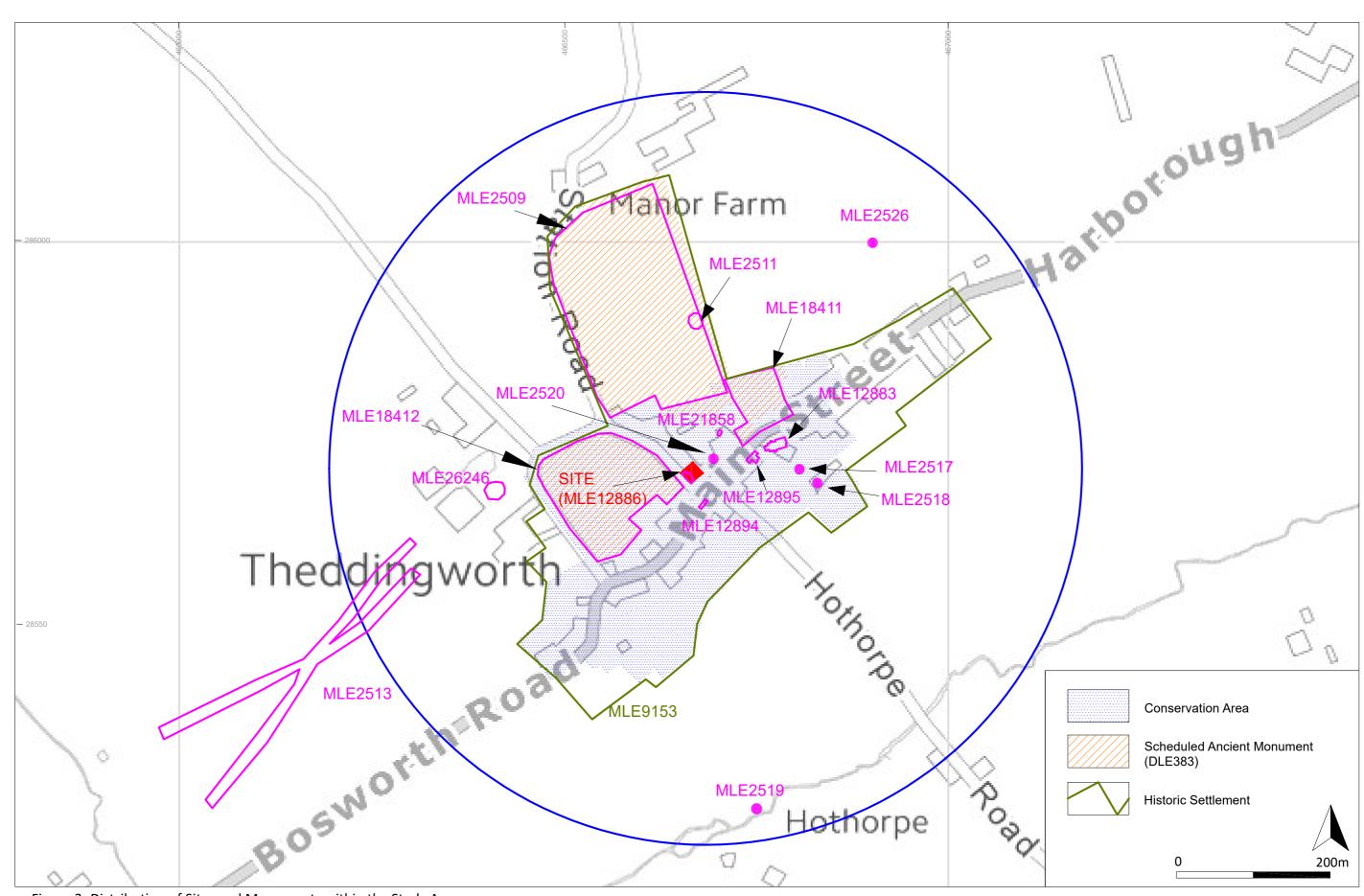


Figure 3: Distribution of Sites and Monuments within the Study Area



Figure 4: Distribution of Archaeological Events within the Study Area

Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd, April 2022

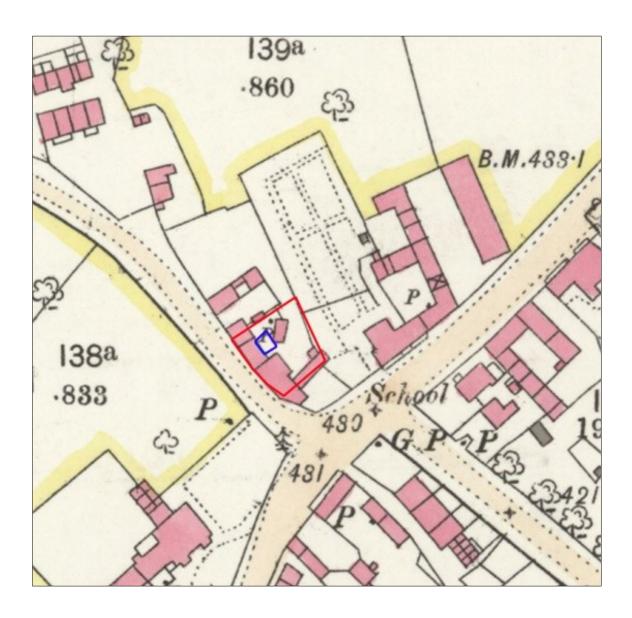


Figure 5: Extract of Ordnance Survey first edition 25" map of 1886 (surveyed 1884) showing approx. location of Application Site (red) and new conservatory (blue)

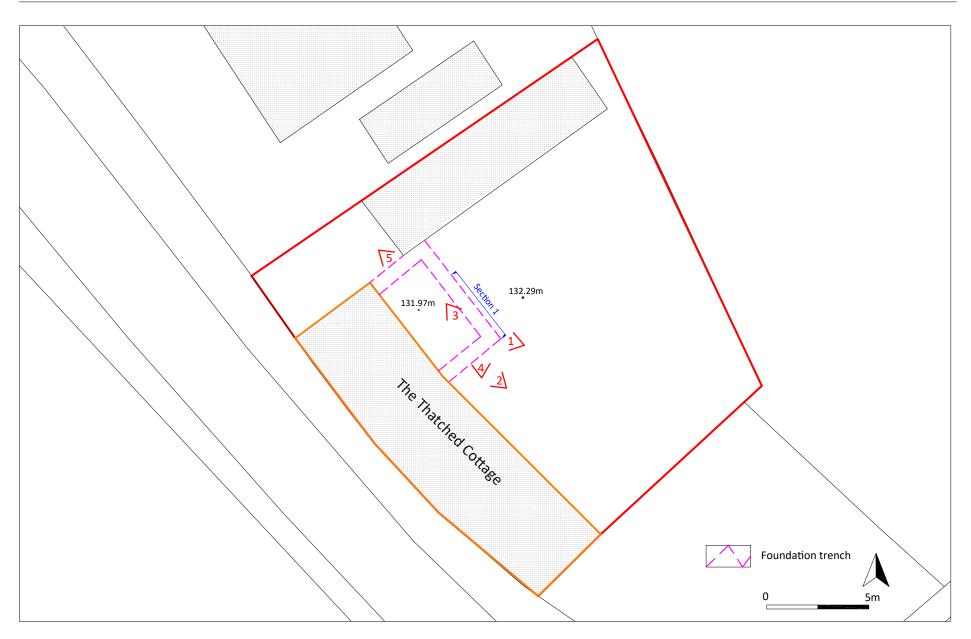


Figure 6: Plan of the area of investigation with relative heights, direction of photographs (in red) and location of Section 1

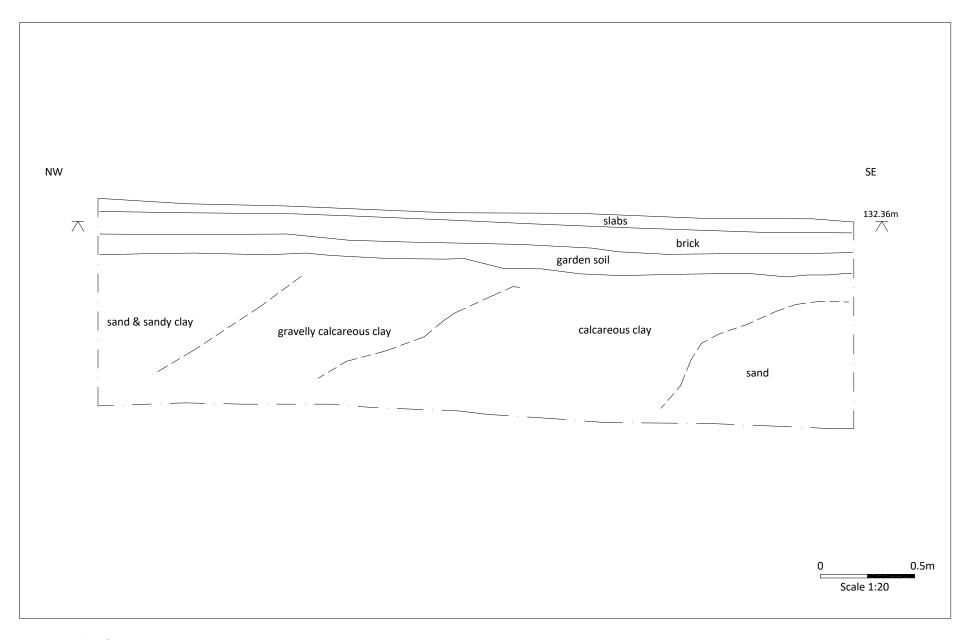


Figure 7: Section 1

Photographs



P1. Pre-excavation overview. Facing NW



P4. Over view of foundation trench (Section 1), facing SE



P2. Initial ground reduction throughout the new conservatory footprint. Facing NW



P5. Foundation trench (Section 1), facing SE



P3. Overview of foundation trench, facing SE

Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd, April 2022