



Nosterns Well

Netherton Lane, Netherton, Worcestershire

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Netherton Lane, Netherton, Worcestershire, WR10 3JG

Archaeological Recording

NGR: SO 99816 41380

Site code: neth19

HER activity no: WSM71562

OASIS ID: 110archa1-351054

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Front cover; the site during excavation, view to the north

SUMMARY

Archaeological recording was carried out during April and May 2019 at Nosterns Well, Netherton Lane, Netherton, Worcestershire to monitor construction of a menage. The Historic Environment Record (HER) has shown that the site lies historically in an area where there is evidence in the form of cropmarks interpreted as possible enclosures related to prehistoric or Romano-British settlement remains and a possible Saxon road is also recorded less than 40m from the development site. Excavation comprised a rectangular area measuring 30m x 60m and revealed the surface of the natural substrate throughout most of the area excavated. This exposed a single undated large linear ditch feature aligned east-west across the excavation. The ditch was about 3.5m wide and 0.30m deep terminating towards the west edge of the excavation. In the absence of any tithe or enclosure award maps, the earliest cartographic source available for the area is the OS 1884-5 survey and this shows that the ditch does not correspond with any historic field boundaries from this period suggesting that it is an earlier feature. An image from the aerial LiDAR survey clearly shows evidence of former boundaries within the surrounding area, but does not show the ditch feature recorded in the excavation. Given the evidence for cropmarks within the wider historic environment, the undated ditch feature has the potential to represent the remains of an earlier enclosure, possibly prehistoric or Romano-British, the terminus at the west end of the ditch suggesting a break which may reflect the position of a former entrance within the enclosure. The lack of any residual finds contemporary with these periods however, does not support this hypothesis.

Situated close to the excavation area is a former Outfarm (WSM51332) built during the mid-C19 as a regular courtyard L-plan. The site is also identified by the HER search as a bombing decoy site and in view of this a metal detecting survey was carried out across the site prior to the excavation, but no significant finds were made.

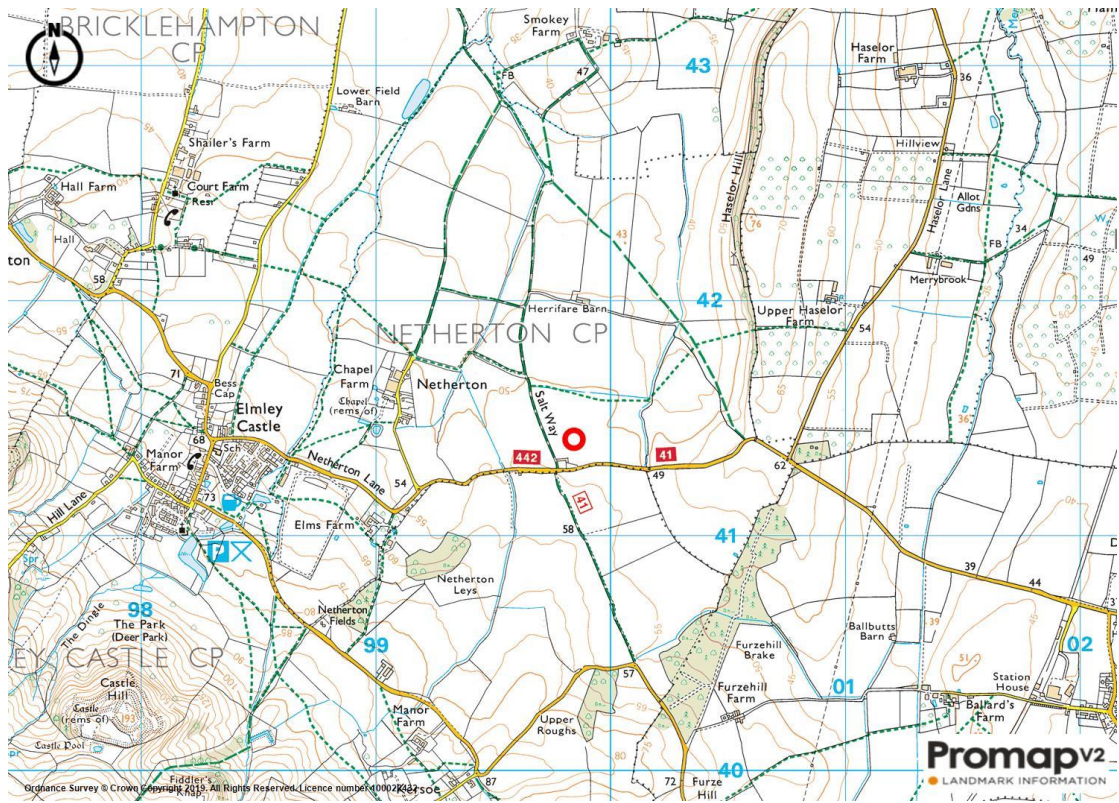


Fig. 1; site location (circled in red)

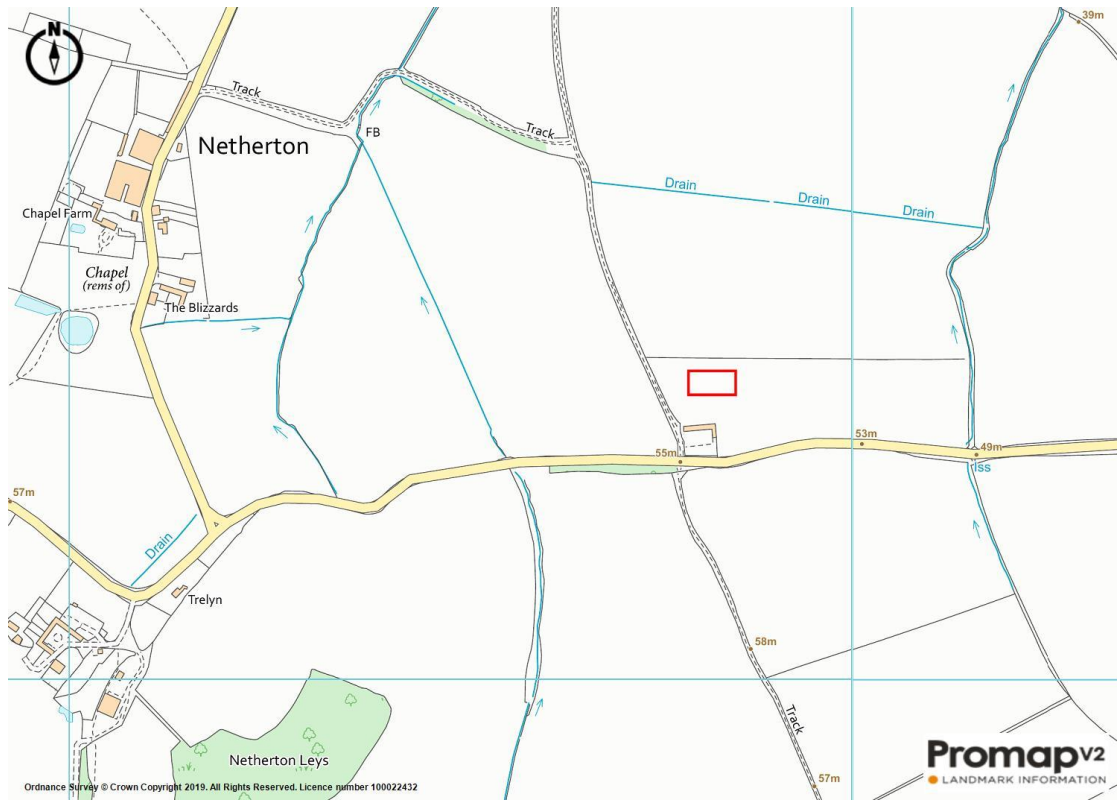


Fig. 2; area of study (outlined in red)

INTRODUCTION

Location and scope of works (Figs. 1 & 2)

This document details the results of archaeological recording ('watching brief') carried out during 30th April and 1st May 2019 at Nosterns Well, Netherton Lane, Netherton, Worcestershire, WR10 3JG at the request of the owner Mr Alan Morrison. Planning permission had been granted (planning Ref: 19/00142/FUL) for construction of a menage conditional on a programme of archaeological recording during groundworks. To the west of the proposed development lie undated cropmarks thought to be enclosures including a rectilinear enclosure suggested to be prehistoric have been identified less than 40m from the development area whilst an aerial photograph from 1999 also shows a faint cropmark within the development area. A possible Saxon road is recorded less than 40m from the development site. The site is also associated more recently within an area that was formerly identified as a bombing decoy site in WWII. It is therefore recognised that any groundworks associated with the development may disturb deposits of archaeological potential.

Geology and topography

Netherton is a hamlet currently with population of 50 living in 20 households and is part of the civil parish of Elmley Castle, Bricklehampton & Netherton in the Wychavon district of Worcestershire. It lies about a mile east from Elmley Castle and Evesham, the nearest town, is five miles East-North-East. To the south-west lies Bredon Hill. The hamlet contains the remains of a C12 chapel and is on the edge of the northern slopes of the Bredon Hill. The site lies at a height of about 50m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) and is represented by a rectangular plot amounting to 1,800m². The underlying geology is of undifferentiated head (BGS, 1974).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) had been consulted with a search carried out over a 500m radius centred on the site. This showed there are 5 archaeological activities and 15 monuments recorded within the search area. The search area sits within an area of rolling topography that rises gently up to

Bredon Hill in the west and is set on bedrock geology made up of mudstone and smaller deposits of sandstone. Superficial geology is made up of a large deposit of clay, silt, sand and gravel that is part of a larger area of fluvio-glacial drift derived from hill wash from Bredon Hill.

The surrounding region is made up of large, irregular fields as a result of field amalgamation, which historically were open fields in the medieval period. The land use is predominantly under arable cultivation. Settlement within this region is nucleated and confined to the villages of Netherpton and Ashton under Hill, with isolated farmsteads linked by a medieval road system. Within the search area there are no listed historic buildings and only one unlisted historic building. An English Heritage project to identify the Historic Farmsteads of Worcestershire has recorded one Outfarm (WSM51332) within the search area dating to the C19 (see Appendix 1). In addition to the built environment there are also monument records for the site of Neolithic to Iron Age enclosures (WSM09810 & WSM07690) identified as cropmarks to the north-west of the site, again to the north (WSM10858) and also to south (WSM30402). There are field systems of unknown date, a post Roman Holloway (WSM69372), a Saxon road (WSM30402) which runs north-south along the west edge of the site and medieval ridge and furrow (WSM05997, WSM05998, WSM37803, WSM37804, WSM37805, WSM37806, WSM37809 & WSM37810) predominantly situated to the west and south of the site. The site itself is associated with a Second World War bombing decoy area (WSM27414). Portable Antiquity Scheme finds are recorded within the search area and include Bronze Age stone beads, Iron Age coin, Roman coins and brooch. Archaeological investigations have also recovered artefacts including Saxon, medieval and Roman pottery and Roman coins. There have been some archaeological investigations within the search area which includes desk-based assessments, finds retrieval and watching brief.

RESULTS (Figs. 3-5)

Method and nature of the excavation

The objective of the archaeological recording will be to obtain an appropriate record of any archaeological deposits or finds disturbed or exposed during excavation of the site. The development comprised the excavation of a rectangular area measuring 60m x 30m and resulted in ground reduction involving the removal of the overlying relict subsoil and topsoil exposing the surface of the natural substrate.

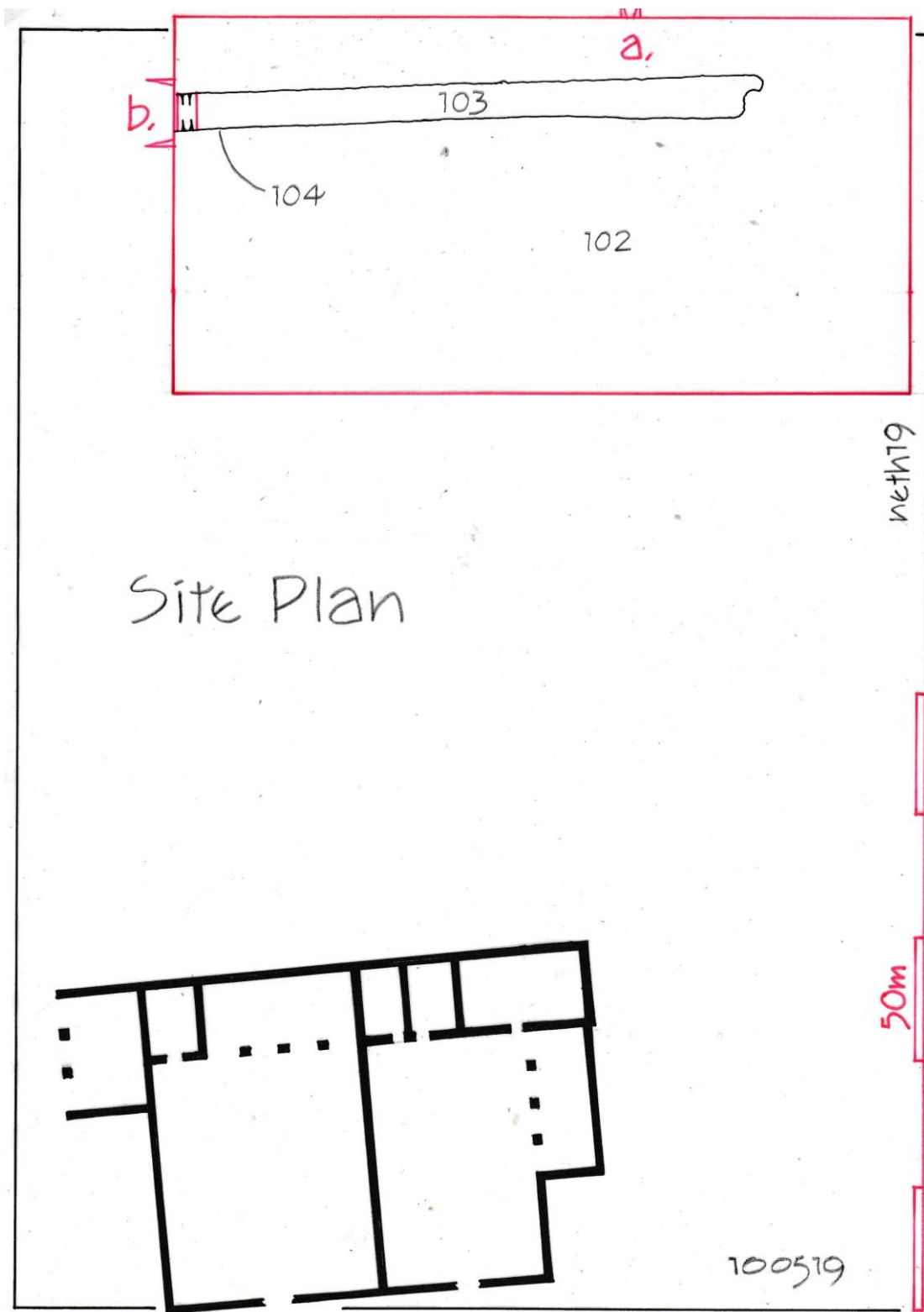


Fig. 3; trench location with plan of former C19 outfarm

Description of deposits

Excavation revealed the surface of the underlying geological (natural) substrate (102) throughout the excavation area at a level height of approx. 50.55m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) and which comprised a yellowish-brown gravel with frequent pockets of brown and blue Lias clay. Cut into the surface of this deposit on a north-east to south-west alignment for a distance of 46m was a single undated linear ditch feature (104) measuring 3.76m wide and 0.30m deep with gently sloping sides. It was filled by a single deposit (103) of brown sandy-silt with a component of small to medium rounded pebbles. The ditch terminated about 14m from the east edge of the excavation. Sealing the ditch fill and the natural substrate throughout the excavation to a depth of 0.15m was a homogenous layer (101) of a brown sandy and slightly clayey-silt. This was in turn overlain by a 0.20m layer of topsoil.

FINDS

Finds consisted of two small fragments of modern ceramic pipe retrieved from the interface between the natural substrate (102) and the overlying relict subsoil layer (101). These were not retained.

Environmental data

None of the deposits exposed during the excavation proved suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling.

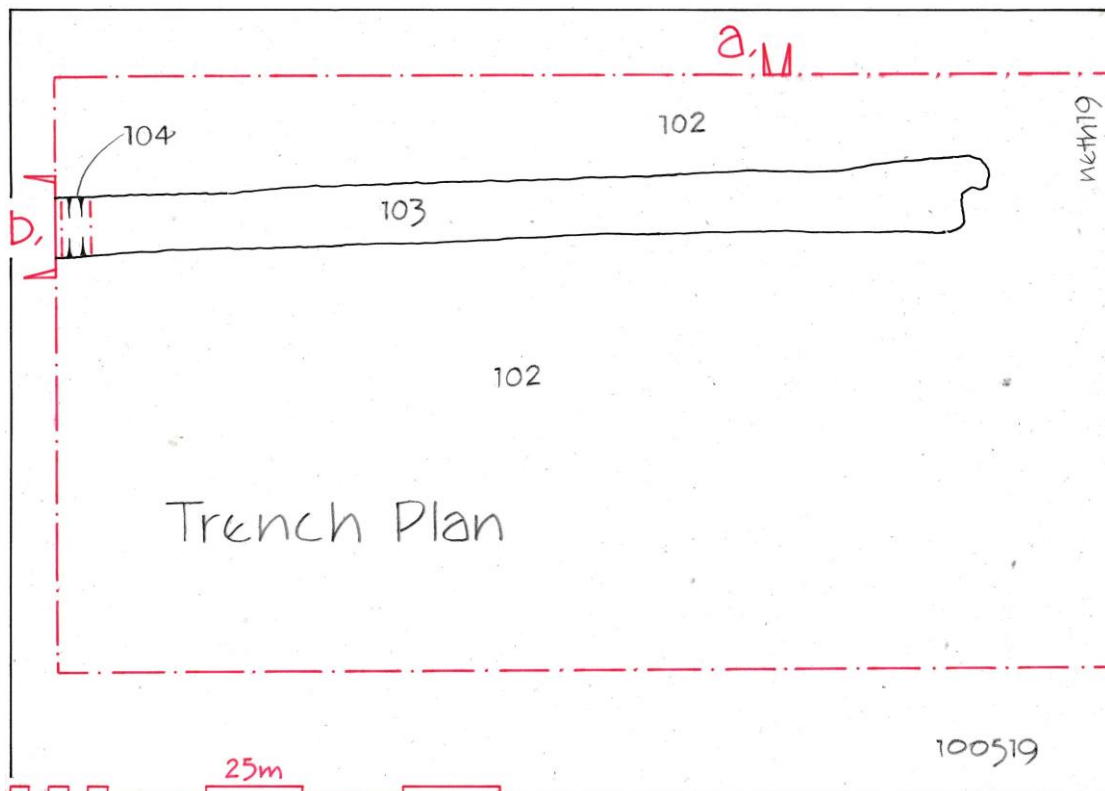


Fig. 4; detailed trench plan showing ditch feature 104

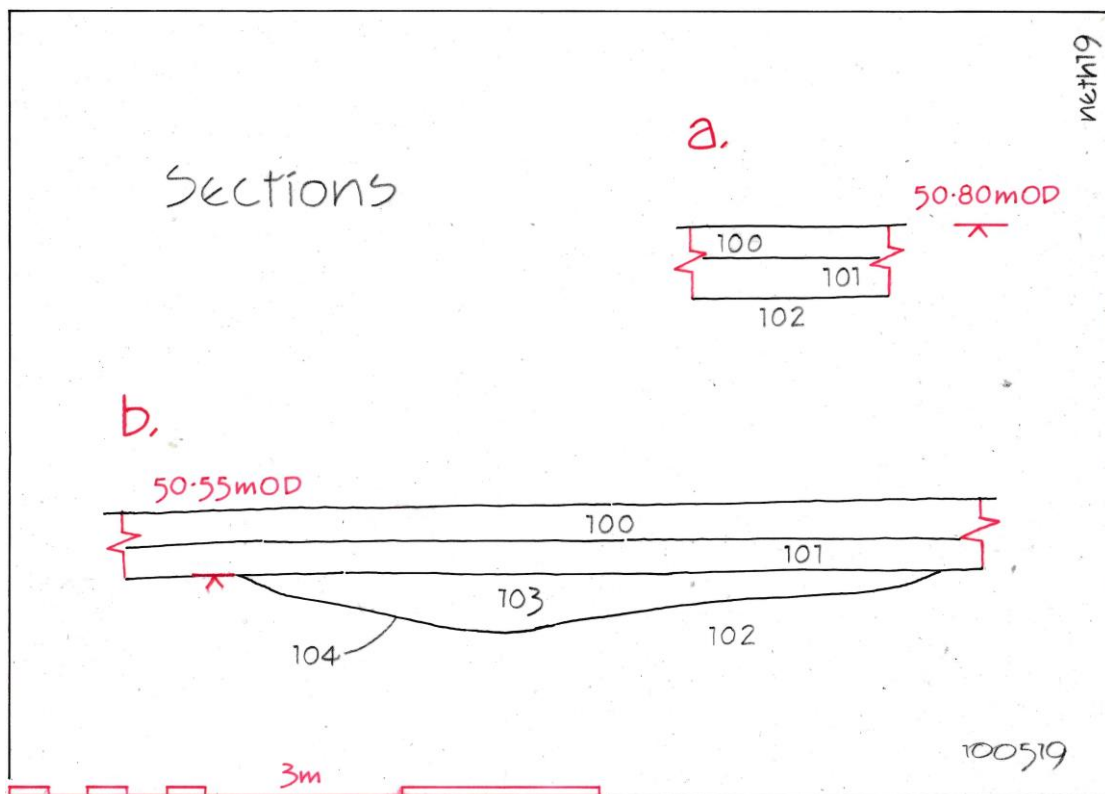


Fig. 5; sections of deposits

DISCUSSION (Fig. 6)

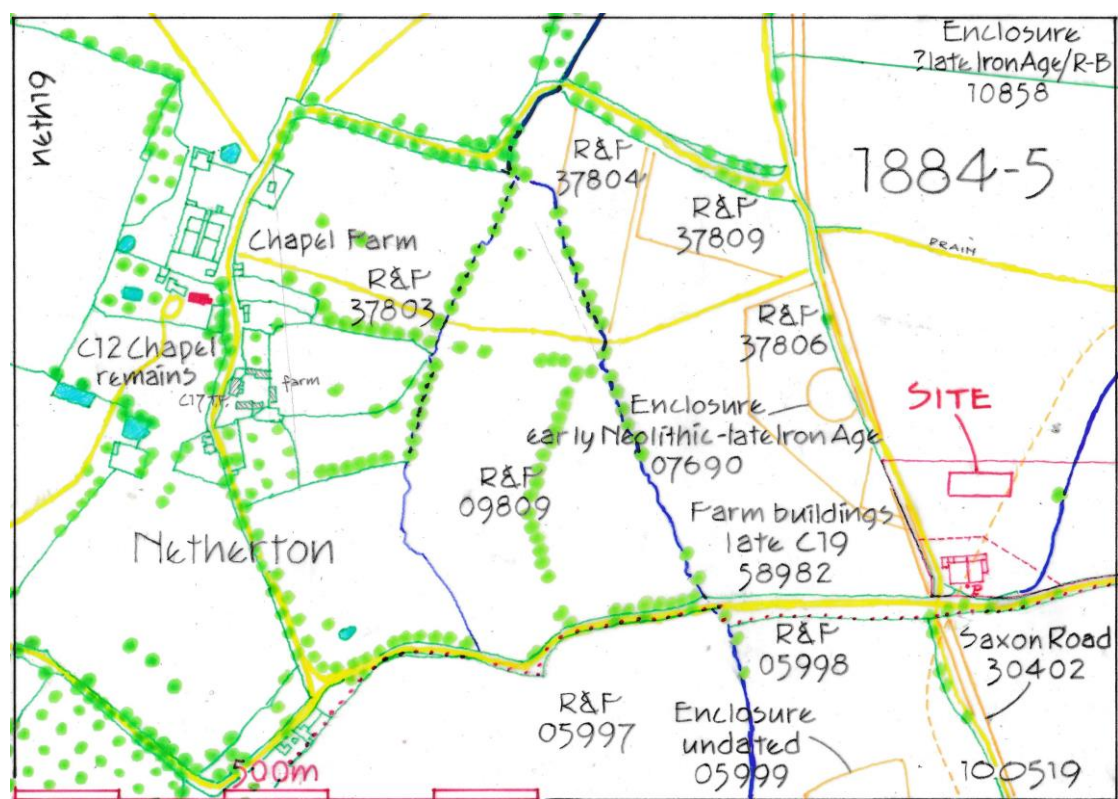


Fig. 6; Historic environment plan based on the OS First Edition 1884-5 showing main monuments including ridge & furrow.

The Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that the site lies within a landscape that appears to have been actively settled in the past. Near to the site are a series of undated cropmarks, which based on their morphology, are interpreted as settlement features dated anywhere from the early Neolithic to the Late Iron Age/Romano-British period. The siting of these settlements may be related to the local watercourses and the former ancient road aligned north-south across the western edge of the site. The presence of these potentially prehistoric features near to the road suggests that this route-way may have originated before the Saxon period.

Documentary sources show that a manorial settlement was established at Netherton during the Saxon period. The ultimate extent of this manor is defined by the outlying ridge and furrow which characterises the surrounding landscape stretching westwards at least up to the Saxon road. The manor is included with Crophorne in King Offa's supposed forged grant of 780 to the church of Worcester, and at the date of the Domesday Survey (1086) the church held Netherton. The manor was confirmed to the prior and convent by Bishop Simon in

1148. The manors of Cropthorne and Netherton seem to have been leased early in the C13 to William de Wetmora, for on his death in 1212 they returned to the prior. Chapels at Charlton and Netherton, which belonged to the church of Cropthorne, are mentioned in the C13. This seems to be the only reference to them in the records. Netherton chapel was in ruins in the middle of the C17 and some remains of it can still be seen in a farmhouse at Netherton. After the dissolution of the priory in 1539–40 the manor of Netherton was granted in 1542 to the Dean and Chapter of Worcester.

Archaeological recording was focussed on the area of the new horse riding arena approx. 40m west of the Saxon road where excavation work revealed a large east-west aligned linear undated ditch (104) which terminated towards the east end of the excavation area. In the absence of any tithe or enclosure award maps, the earliest cartographic source available for the area is the OS 1884-5 survey and this shows that the ditch does not correspond with any historic field boundaries from this period suggesting that it is an earlier feature. An image from the aerial LiDAR survey clearly shows evidence of former boundaries within the surrounding area, but does not show the ditch feature recorded in the excavation. Given the evidence for cropmarks within the wider historic environment, the undated ditch feature has the potential to represent the remains of an earlier enclosure, possibly prehistoric or Romano-British, the terminus at the west end of the ditch suggesting a break which may reflect the position of a former entrance within the enclosure. The lack of any residual finds contemporary with these periods however, does not support this hypothesis.

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Archive Location

A digital (pdf) copy of the report (referenced with OASIS) will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS).



Plate 1; area of excavation, view to the north



Plate 2; ditch feature 104, view to the east



Plate 3; ditch feature 104, view to the north-east



Plate 4; ditch feature 104, view to the south-west



Plate 5; section 1b across ditch feature 104, view to the west



Plate 6; section 1a



Plate 7; former C19 outfarm, front elevation, view to the north-west



Plate 8; former C19 outfarm, rear elevation

APPENDIX 1: OASIS

Project name	Nosterns Well Netherton Lane, Netherton, Worcestershire; Archaeological Recording
Project dates	Start: 30-04-2019 End: 01-05-2019
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	WSM71562 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	NETH19 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Grassland Heathland 2 - Undisturbed Grassland
Monument type	DITCH Uncertain
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	New designation (ESA, NP, SSSI)
Country	England
Site location	WORCESTERSHIRE WYCHAVON NETHERTON Nosterns Well, Netherton Lane
Postcode	WR10 3JG
Study area	1800 Square metres
Site coordinates	SO 99816 41380 52.070371324067 - 2.002684710301 52 04 13 N 002 00 09 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 50.55m Max: 50.55m
Name of Organisation	one ten archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	one ten archaeology
Project director/manager	sean cook
Project supervisor	sean cook
Type of sponsor/funding body	Landowner
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	OASIS
Paper Archive Exists?	No
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Nosterns Well Netherton Lane, Netherton, Worcestershire; Archaeological Recording
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Cook, S

Date	2019
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