

Report of Work under Archaeological Supervision and Control

Church Farm, Caston, Norfolk Construction of new cattle shed

NHER ENF 145635

Prepared for Hall and Sons (Caston) Ltd



**Sarah Bates, Report no. 46
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Contents

Summary

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Geology and topography
- 3.0 Archaeological and historical background
- 4.0 Methodology
- 5.0 Results
- 6.0 The finds
- 7.0 Conclusions

Acknowledgements

References

Appendix 1: OASIS form

Appendix 2: List of contexts

Illustrations

Frontispiece: Area of new cattle shed from the south-east, stanchion trenches visible

Fig. 1 Site location

Fig. 2 Plan showing areas of work

Plate 1 Trench 2

Plate 2 Trench 4

Plate 3 Trench 6

Plate 4 Trench 7

Plate 5 Trench 8

Plate 6 Trench 10

Plate 7 Trench 13

Plate 8 Trench 14

Plate 9 New cattle shed with soil stripped from part of area

Plate 10 New cattle shed and trench 15

Plate 11 Trench 15

Plate 12 Trench 16

Plate 13: Trench 19]

Plate 14: Trench 20

Plate 15: Trench 21

Project name	Church Farm
Parish	Caston
District	Breckland
Grid reference	TL 9593 9742
NHER reference	ENF 145635
Date of fieldwork	8th April and 11th June 2019
NCCES reference	CNF48494
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Summary

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during the construction of a new cattle shed at Caston Church Farm. Trenches dug for stanchion bases, water and electricity supplies and soakaways were observed and recorded. Natural sand was exposed in many of the trenches overlaid by varying depths of subsoil and topsoil. Close to existing farm buildings the service trenches ran across areas partly disturbed by previous drainage schemes.

The area within the new shed was stripped of some of its topsoil in order to provide a level floor but the depth of the removal was slight - only some slightly 'subsoily' sandy silt was patchily exposed in some places.

Nothing of archaeological interest was seen and no finds of interest were made.

1.0 Introduction

Church Farm is situated at the south edge of Caston village centre and is just to the south-west of the parish Church of the Holy Cross. The development area is at the south-east edge of the already existing barns, cattle sheds and farmyard TL 9593 9742 (Fig. 1, see front cover).

The work involved the excavation of trenches for the stanchion bases, scraping of some topsoil from the area within the new cattle shed and the provision of water and electricity supplies to the new building. Soakaways for rainwater from the new shed were also installed. The work was subject to planning permission which included requirements for archaeological work.

Archaeological work involved observing, and supervision of, the excavation of trenches and recording of the exposed deposits. The work accorded to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Sarah Bates to meet the requirements of an archaeological

brief set by Norfolk Historic Environment Service (NHES Brief for the Monitoring of Works under Archaeological Supervision and Control, CNF48494, Steve Hickling, 27/11/18).

The archaeological work was funded by the landowners and developers Hall and Sons (Caston) Ltd.

The photographic archive will, on completion of the project, be deposited with the Norfolk Historic Environment Record along with copies of this report. No site records are of a nature requiring deposition with Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service and no finds of interest were made. The OASIS form for the project is included below as Appendix 1.

2.0 Geology and topography

The underlying solid geology in the area of the site is chalk. This is overlaid by Lowestoft Formation chalky till and outwash sands and gravels of detrital origin formed and deposited by glacial action and meltwater (British Geological Survey 2017). The soils of the Breckland area which extends southwards are sandy and easily leached, but, also, easily worked; historically the area supported relatively low population densities but some significant settlements (Williamson 2005). The site lays at a height of between 40m and 45m OD (a bench mark on the north-west corner of the church is at 44.77m OD).

At the start of the work the area of the site was mainly within the southernmost area of the 'farmyard' – the area used for storing machinery and access to existing sheds and barns. The southern edge of the area had recently been under cultivation for cereal.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

Church Farm itself is recorded in the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) as a late 16th or early 17th-century house, with reused medieval stone traceries and quoins which, historically, it is thought may have originated from a pre-Dissolution hostel on the site or nearby. A report in the HER describes the gable-stack house in some detail and notes that some mouldings on some beams are early to mid-16th-century in type and that the west wing was added in the early 17th century (Rose 1985).

The NHER records undated cropmarks, recorded from aerial photographs, of trackways and enclosures in the field to the SW of Church Farm. In the same area, and extending across the large field to the south and east, metal detecting between 2004 and 2015 has led to the recovery of prehistoric worked flint including two Mesolithic blades, Late Saxon to post-medieval pottery, Roman, medieval and post-medieval coins and numerous other metal finds of Middle Saxon to post-medieval date. A Neolithic polished flint axe was found in the same field in 1950.

The NHER for Holy Cross Church records the chancel as dating from c. 1300 and the rest of the church as of 14th and 15th-century date with restorations during the 19th century. A major programme of repairs and improvements to the church (including rethatching, drainage works and connection to mains water) has recently been undertaken and the results of archaeological monitoring (by Sarah Bates, 2018) during these works will be reported on in due course.

Other sites and finds recorded in the NHER from within a 500m radius of the site include two intercutting ditches (possibly marking the edge of the former green) and sherds of Late Saxon pottery which were found about 150m to the NW during archaeological trial trenching in 1998. Three probable field boundary ditches and a pit, all dated by pottery to the medieval period, were recorded north of the church and immediately to the east of the Red Lion public house during archaeological monitoring of building work in 2013.

To the north, the base of a medieval stone cross stands on the village green and there is a record of human remains and (undated) pottery sherds being found immediately north of the cross during digging for water pipes in 1956. Human bones are also reported to have been found in the same area in the 1930s. A house with a 15th-century core and later additions stands about 250m WNW of the church, and various buildings of post-medieval date (16th-19th-century date), several of them timber-framed, are recorded within Caston village centre.

Metal detecting NE of the village between 2007 and 2016 also recovered prehistoric worked flint, Roman pottery, Late Iron Age, Roman, medieval and post-medieval coins, numerous other metal finds of Roman, Saxon, medieval and post-medieval date and some undated metalworking waste.

Aerial photographs from 1946 and 1988 and 19th-century maps map show the gradual extension of the farmyard into the field to the south with various barns and sheds being built in the area between the farmhouse and the present site (Norfolk County Council 2011).

Faden's map of Norfolk 1797 shows the built up area of the village then as almost entirely to the north-west of the church where the main part of the village remains. The map also shows an area to the north of this settlement as Caston Common (on the modern OS map 'Caston Common' is further away to the south-west, adjacent to the parish boundary with Stow Bedon).

4.0 Methodology

Archaeological monitoring aimed to observe and record the presence or absence, location, nature and date of any surviving archaeological deposits within the areas affected by the construction of the cattle shed.

The trenches were dug by machine by the landowners and contractors under archaeological control and supervision.

The location of the areas of work was recorded and trenches were assigned context numbers for the purpose of reference and description. *Pro forma* context sheets were used to record the excavated trenches, features and deposits.

Spoil heaps were metal detected and visually searched. No finds of archaeological significance were made. No deposits required sampling for environmental assessment.

Site conditions (weather, light and access) were good during digging the stanchion trenches. Rain occurred during the subsequent work but did not adversely affect the results of recording.

5.0 Results (Fig. 2, Plates 1-15)

The only 'context' numbers assigned were those allocated to Trenches 1-21 which are described below and shown in Figure 2 (Appendix 2).

Trenches for stanchion bases

Fourteen trenches were excavated (Fig. 2). Nothing of archaeological interest was seen in any of them. The dimensions of each trench and descriptions of soils encountered are summarised below.

Trench 1: 1.80 x 1.10m, 1.50m deep

Deposit	Thickness	Description
Topsoil	c. 0.50m	Brown very fine sandy silty loam, occasional small flints, firm but soft
Subsoil	c. 0.35m	Orange brown silty sand, occasional small flints
Natural subsoil	-	Yellowish orange fine sand, occasional/moderate flint gravel with v rare flint nodule

Trench 2: 1.70 x 1.210m, 1.40m deep (Plate 1)

Deposit	Thickness	Description
Topsoil	c. 0.50m	Brown very fine sandy silty loam, occasional small flints, firm but soft
Subsoil	c. 0.35m	Orange brown silty sand, occasional small flints
Natural subsoil	-	Yellowish orange fine sand, some cream/light yellow sand patches

Trench 3: 1.70 x 1.20m, <1.40m deep

Deposit	Thickness	Description
Topsoil	c. 0.50m	Brown very fine sandy silty loam, occasional small flints, firm but soft
Subsoil	c. 0.35m	Orange brown silty sand, occasional small flints
Natural subsoil	-	Brownish yellowish orange sand, occasional flint gravel

In the west side of trench 3 part of an existing soakaway was exposed. It extended partly into the excavated trench and to a depth of 0.75m. It comprised a trench containing brick rubble and overlaid/covered by a galvanised metal sheet.

Trench 4: 1.70 x 1.20m, <1.40m deep (Plate 2)

Deposit	Thickness	Description
Topsoil	c. 0.40m	Brown very fine sandy silty loam, occasional small flints, firm but soft
Subsoil	c. 0.45m	Orange brown silty sand, occasional small flints
Natural subsoil	-	Brownish yellowish orange sand, occasional/moderate fine flint gravel

Trench 5: 1.70 x 1.20m, <1.40m deep

Deposit	Thickness	Description
Topsoil	c. 0.40m	Brown very fine sandy silty loam, occasional small flints, firm but soft
Subsoil	c. 0.45m	Orange brown silty sand, moderate small flints, occasional medium flints
Natural subsoil	-	Yellowish orange sand, occasional flint gravel, very rare medium flint

Trench 6: 1.70 x 1.30m, 1.30m deep (Plate 3)

Deposit	Thickness	Description
Topsoil	c. 0.50m	Brown very fine sandy silty loam, occasional small flints, firm but soft
Subsoil	c. 0.60m	Orange brown silty sand, moderate small flints, occasional medium flints
Natural subsoil	-	Yellowish orange sand, rare small flints

Trench 7: 1.70 x 1.30m, <1.15m deep (Plate 4)

Deposit	Thickness	Description
Topsoil	c. 0.40m	Brown very fine sandy silty loam, occasional small flints, firm but soft
Subsoil	c. 0.55m	Orange brown silty sand, moderate small flints, occasional medium flints, becoming sandier with depth
Natural subsoil	-	Very clean yellowish sand, occasional flint gravel

There was a slightly browner more silty area in the north-facing section, its top at a depth of 0.50m and 0.45m in width, which was initially thought to be a possible feature of some kind. Hand-cleaning, however, revealed no clear interface between the different coloured deposits. The patchy soils may have been caused by animal burrowing.

Trench 8: 1.60 x 1.20m, 0.80m deep (Plate 5)

Deposit	Thickness	Description
Topsoil	c. 0.30m	Dark brown sandy loam, occasional small flints, rare medium flints
Upper subsoil	c. 0.50m	Brown silty sand, moderate small flints, occasional medium flints
Lower subsoil	c. 0.15m	Orange brown silty sand, moderate small flints, occasional medium flints
Natural subsoil	-	Very clean yellowish sand, occasional flint gravel

Trench 8 was within the area of recently cultivated field. The soil was darker-coloured and loamier. The upper subsoil represented deep ploughing.

Trench 9: 1.60 x 1.20m, 0.70-0.90m deep

Deposit	Thickness	Description
Topsoil	c. 0.35m	Dark brown fine sandy loam, occasional small flints, very rare medium flints
Subsoil	c. 0.40m	Brown silty sand, moderate small flints, occasional medium flints
Natural subsoil	-	Light brownish yellow sand (only just exposed in base of trench),

Trench 9 was situated at the junction of the cultivated field and the 'yard'/trackway.

Trench 10: 1.60 x 1.15m, <0.75m deep (Plate 6)

Deposit	Thickness	Description
Topsoil	c. 0.35m	Dark brown fine sandy loam, occasional small flints
Subsoil	c. 0.40m	Brown silty sand, moderate small flints, occasional medium flints
Natural subsoil	-	Light yellow brown sand only slightly exposed in base of trench

Trench 10 was situated at the junction of the cultivated field and the 'yard'/trackway. The trench was relatively shallow and mostly within the topsoil and upper part of brown subsoil.

Trench 11: 1.70 x 1.20m, <0.85m deep

Deposit	Thickness	Description
Topsoil	c. 0.40m	Dark brown sandy loam, occasional small flints
Upper subsoil	c. 0.30m	Brown silty sand, occasional small flints
Lower subsoil	c. 0.10m	Mottled brown and orangey yellow silty sand with some clayey patches
Natural subsoil	-	Light yellow brown sand with clay patches, only exposed in deeper patches in base of trench

Trench 11 was situated at the former field edge. Of note were the clayey patches within the natural subsoil in this trench.

Trench 12: 1.60 x 1.20m, 0.80-1.00m deep

Deposit	Thickness	Description
Topsoil	c. 0.40m	Dark brown sandy loam, occasional small flints
Upper subsoil	c. 0.30m	Brown fine silty sand, occasional small flints
Lower subsoil	c. 0.10m	Mottled brown and orangey yellow silty sand
Natural subsoil	-	Light yellow orange sand with moderate small flint gravel, only exposed in deeper areas at west side of trench

Trench 12 was situated between the edge of the field and a rougher overgrown area.

Trench 13: 1.60 x 1.10m, <0.95m deep (Plate 7)

Deposit	Thickness	Description
Topsoil	c. 0.35m	Dark brown sandy loam, occasional small flints
Upper subsoil	c. 0.45m	Dark brown fine silty sand, occasional small flints, only slightly lighter-coloured than topsoil
Lower subsoil	c. <0.15m	Yellowish orange brown silty sand
Natural subsoil	-	Orange mottled yellow sand occasional small flint gravel

Trench 13 was situated in an area of rough grass between entrance tracks to the field and the farmyard. The loamy topsoil and upper subsoil together were notably deep here.

Trench 14: 1.60 x 1.20m, 0.90-1.10m deep (Plate 8)

Deposit	Thickness	Description
Topsoil	c. 0.40m	Dark brown sandy loam, occasional small flints
Subsoil	< 0.50m	Brown and lighter orange brown fine silty sand, with, in its upper part, a concentration of quite large flints in S part of trench
Natural subsoil	-	Light yellow with orange patches, sand and occasional gravel patches. Notably more gravelly than in other trenches

A slightly browner area in the south-facing section was ill-defined and may have been the result of animal burrowing (Plate 8).

Area within the new cattle shed (Area 17)

Following construction of the cattle shed topsoil was scraped from across the area within it by the landowner and in the presence of the archaeologist (Fig. 2, Area 17, Plates 9 and 10). The natural slope of the ground meant that, to achieve the required level floor, more soil was removed (a maximum of 0.30m) from west side and south-west area while to the north-east no soil need removing.

The area was metal-detected during and after the soil removal but nothing of interest was found.

Service trenches

Trench 15

Trench 15 ran from an electricity supply at the existing barn to the north-west corner of the new cattle shed (Fig. 2, Plates 10 and 11). At least two existing drain pipes were encountered along its northern part; the ground had clearly been disturbed previously. Nothing of archaeological interest was seen.

Trench 16

Trench 16 ran from an existing water supply to a point at the north-west side of the new shed. It was 0.85-0.95m deep (Fig. 2, Plate 12). Light brownish yellow natural sand with occasional gravel patches was seen at a depth of about 0.60m. One existing drain was exposed. Nothing of archaeological interest was seen.

Soakaways

Trench 18

Trench 18 was positioned near the north-east corner of the area of the new shed (Fig. 2). It was 6.0 x 0.60m in size and 1.35m deep. Natural sand was exposed in the bottom of the trench overlaid by subsoil and topsoil (as Trench 14). Nothing of archaeological interest was seen.

Trench 19

Trench 19 was positioned to the north-west of the area of the new shed. It was 5.40 x 0.70m in size and 1.35m deep (Fig. 2, Plate 13). Natural sand was exposed in the bottom of the trench with occasional flints becoming larger with depth. The sand was overlaid by subsoil and topsoil (as Trench 2). Nothing of archaeological interest was seen.

Trench 20

Trench 20 was positioned near the south-east corner of the area of the new shed. It was 5.40 x 6.0 in size and 1.15m deep (Fig. 2, Plate 14). Fine yellowish orange natural sand included an area of large flints. Otherwise the deposits were similar to those seen in the other trenches and nothing of archaeological interest was seen.

Trench 21

Trench 21 was positioned near the south-west corner of the area of the new shed. It was 5.20 x 0.90m in size and 1.10m deep (Fig. 2, Plate 15). Natural orange sand with sparse fine gravel was exposed in the bottom of the trench overlaid by the subsoil and topsoil. Nothing of archaeological interest was seen.

6.0 The finds

The only finds made were a few metal fragments and items; modern farmyard debris which was found in small amounts during metal detecting. No finds were retained.

7.0 Conclusions

Undisturbed natural sand was reached in all of the trenches for the soakaways, in most of the trenches excavated for the stanchion bases and in some parts of the excavated service trenches.

The nature and depth of exposed subsoil and topsoil varied in different areas of the site. This related to partly to differential ploughing within the present, and former, areas of cultivation and, probably, to gradual erosion and/or compaction of soils within the area of the farmyard. In two of the stanchion base pits some probable evidence of animal burrowing was discernible.

In the trenches excavated for the water pipe and electricity cable some areas had been previously disturbed by drainage installations.

Within the area of the cattle shed only a shallow depth of topsoil was removed and, in its north-east part, none at all.

Nothing of archaeological interest was seen and no significant finds were made.

Acknowledgements

The archaeological work was commissioned and funded by Hall and Sons (Caston) Ltd. Thanks are due to Neil and Peter Hall and their family and colleagues for their help in facilitating the archaeological work.

Norfolk County Council Environment Service monitoring of the project was by Steve Hickling.

Archaeological site work and reporting was by Sarah Bates. The map used in Figure 1 was provided by the main contractor A.C. Bacon Engineering Ltd.

References:

British Geological Survey 2017	http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html
Norfolk County Council 2012	http://historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk
Williamson, T., 2005	'Soil Landscapes' in Ashwin, T. and Davison, A. <i>An Historical Atlas of Norfolk</i> (Third Edition)

Appendix 1

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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OASIS ID: sarahbat1-348390

Project details

Project name	New Cattle Shed, Caston Church Farm
Short description of the project	Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during the construction of a new cattle shed at Caston Church Farm. Trenches dug for stanchion bases, water and electricity supplies and soakaways were observed and recorded. Natural sand was exposed in many of the trenches overlaid by varying depths of subsoil and topsoil. Close to existing farm buildings the service trenches ran across areas partly disturbed by previous drainage schemes. The area within the new shed was stripped of some of its topsoil in order to provide a level floor but the depth of the removal was slight - only some slightly 'subsoily' sandy silt was patchily exposed in some places. Nothing of archaeological interest was seen and no finds of interest were made.
Project dates	Start: 08-04-2019 End: 11-06-2019
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	145635 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Current Land use	Cultivated Land 3 - Operations to a depth more than 0.25m
Monument type	N/A None
Significant Finds	N/A None
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""

Project location

Country	England
Site location	NORFOLK BRECKLAND CASTON Church Farm
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 9593 9742 52.538884989068 0.889439447498 52 32 19 N 000 53 21 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Sarah Bates
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Sarah Bates
Project director/manager	Sarah Bates

Project supervisor	Sarah Bates
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Hall and Sons (Caston) Ltd

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	NHER
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive Exists?	No

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Report of Work under Archaeological Supervision and Control, Church Farm, Caston, Norfolk, Construction of new cattle shed
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OASIS:

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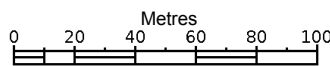
Appendix 2: List of contexts

Context	Type	Category	Description
1	Trench	Contractor's trench	trench for stanchion base, W side of new cattle shed
2	Trench	Contractor's trench	trench for stanchion base, W side of new cattle shed
3	Trench	Contractor's trench	trench for stanchion base, W side of new cattle shed
4	Trench	Contractor's trench	trench for stanchion base, W side of new cattle shed
5	Trench	Contractor's trench	trench for stanchion base, W side of new cattle shed
6	Trench	Contractor's trench	trench for stanchion base, W side of new cattle shed
7	Trench	Contractor's trench	trench for stanchion base, W side of new cattle shed
8	Trench	Contractor's trench	trench for stanchion base, E side of new cattle shed
9	Trench	Contractor's trench	trench for stanchion base, E side of new cattle shed
10	Trench	Contractor's trench	trench for stanchion base, E side of new cattle shed
11	Trench	Contractor's trench	trench for stanchion base, E side of new cattle shed
12	Trench	Contractor's trench	trench for stanchion base, E side of new cattle shed
13	Trench	Contractor's trench	trench for stanchion base, E side of new cattle shed
14	Trench	Contractor's trench	trench for stanchion base, E side of new cattle shed
15	Trench	Contractor's trench	trench for electricity supply cable
16	Trench	Contractor's trench	trench for water supply pipe
17	Trench	Contractor's trench	area within new cattle shed
18	Trench	Contractor's trench	trench for soakaway (NE corner of new cattle shed)
19	Trench	Contractor's trench	trench for soakaway (NW corner of new cattle shed)
20	Trench	Contractor's trench	trench for soakaway (SE corner of new cattle shed)
21	Trench	Contractor's trench	trench for soakaway (SW corner of new cattle shed)



Produced 20 Aug 2018 from the Ordnance Survey MasterMap (Topography) Database and incorporating surveyed revision available at this date.

The representation of a road, track or path is no evidence of a right of way. The representation of features as lines is no evidence of a property boundary.



1:2500



3, The Green, Caston, Attleborough
NR17 1DB

Supplied by: **Stanfords 20 Aug 2018**
Licence: © Crown Copyright and
database rights 2018 OS100035409
Order Licence Reference: OI1257133
Centre coordinates: 595896 297499

Fig. 1: Site location

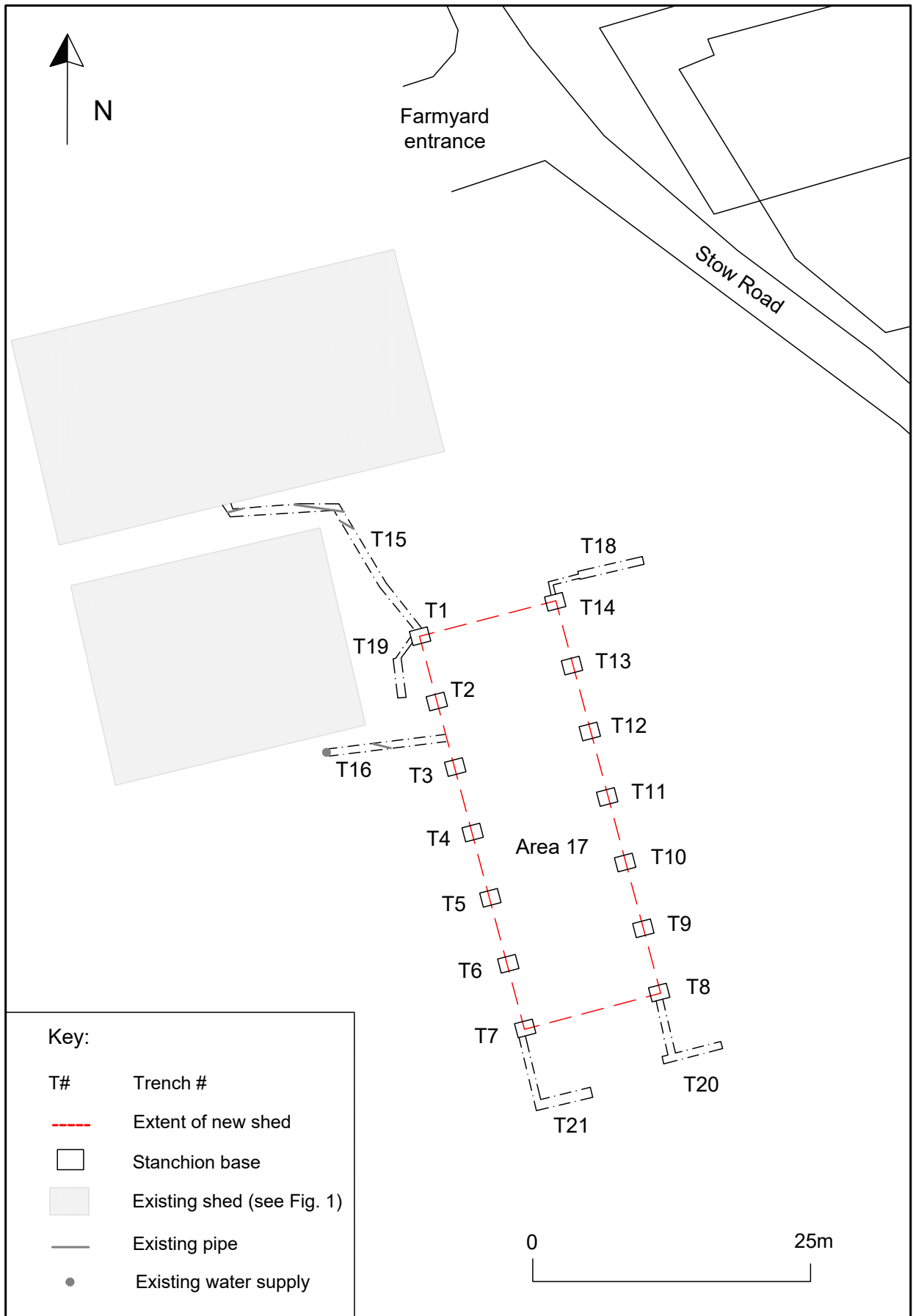


Fig. 2: Areas of work associated with new cattle shed (for location see Fig. 1). Scale 1:500



Plate 1: Trench 2, looking SSW, 1.5m scale



Plate 5: Trench 8, looking SSW, 1m scale



Plate 2: Trench 4, looking SSW, 1.5m scale



Plate 6: Trench 10, looking SSW, 1m scale



Plate 3: Trench 6, looking S, 1.5m scale



Plate 7: Trench 13, looking S, 1m scale



Plate 4: Trench 7, looking S, 1 scale



Plate 8: Trench 14, looking NNE, 0.5m scale



Plate 9: Area 17 within new cattle shed, looking NNW, 1m scale



Plate 11: Trench 15 between existing buildings, looking W, 0.5m scale



Plate 10: New cattle shed, trench 15 in foreground, looking SE, 1.5m scale



Plate12: Trench 16, looking W, 1m scale



Plate 14: Trench 20, looking W, 1m scale



Plate 13: Trench 19, looking N, 1m scale



Plate 15: Trench 21, looking W, 1m scale