

Nightingale Cottage White Ladies, Aston, Worcestershire.

A report on a watching brief and building survey.



April 2002

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SMR (WSM) 29789

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Nightingale cottage
White Ladies,
Aston,
Worcestershire.

(NGR SO 92395242)

A report on a watching brief and building survey.

1. Summary.

A planning application was submitted to Wychavon District Council on behalf of Mr & Mrs Jelfs through Nick Joyce, Architects. The application was with regard to planning for a two-storey extension with internal alterations to the existing facilities.

The development was considered likely to affect an archaeological site (WSM 29789) recorded on the County Sites and Monuments Record as a site of archaeological interest (SI 1988 no 1813). In line with PPG16 section 30, the planning authority was advised that a programme of archaeological work would be required, to include a watching brief and building survey.

The watching brief was necessary to fulfil the aims of the County Structure Plan (Hereford and Worcester County Council 1993; policy CTC5 and the district local plan, Wychavon District Local Plan, 1993, policy CB 18).

The area adjacent to the site contains potentially significant remains from prehistoric times through to the Anglo Saxon period (WSM 29789). Adjacent fields are known as "Burnt Ground" (WSM 29596) and "Great Ruins" (WSM 29598). A multi-phase farmstead (WSM 29792) and a probable ancient trackway (WSM 30702) runs past the house.

The house is a 17th century timber framed building with brick infill on a stone plinth (WSM 31073). A Victorian porch that stood at the East elevation was removed prior to excavation of new foundations.

Though there was good potential for finding archaeological deposits in this area, no finds or certain features of archaeological significance were encountered, except for a possible, undated ditch. The site work was done on the 28/2/2002.

2. Introduction.

The site lies at NGR SO 92395242 to the East of Worcester.

A planning application (ref W/01/0412-3) was submitted to Wychavon District Council on behalf of Mr & Mrs Jelfs through Nick Joyce, Architects. The application was with regard to planning for a two-storey extension with internal alterations to the existing facilities.

The development was considered likely to affect an archaeological site (WSM 29789) recorded on the County Sites and Monuments Record as a site of archaeological interest (SI 1988 no 1813). In line with PPG16 section 30, the planning authority was advised that a programme of archaeological work would be required, to include a watching brief and building survey.

The watching brief was necessary to fulfil the aims of the County Structure Plan (Hereford and Worcester County Council 1993; policy CTC5) and the district local plan, Wychavon District Local Plan, 1993, policy CB 18).

The area adjacent to the site contains potentially significant remains from prehistoric times through to the Anglo Saxon period (WSM 29789). Adjacent fields are known as "Burnt Ground" (WSM 29596) and "Great Ruins" (WSM 29598). A farmstead that may span the prehistoric to Saxon period is also indicated by finds in this area (WSM 29792). A probable ancient road or trackway (WSM 30702) runs past the house.

The house is a 17th century timber framed building with brick infill on a stone plinth (WSM 31073).

The underlying geology consists of clays, overlain by sand and gravel.

3. Historical Background.

An early Neolithic trackway has been identified (WSM 30702) close to the site that may have continued in use until around 1539 A.D.

The area has been associated with human occupation since the early Iron Age, as indicated by the multi-phase ancient settlement (WSM29789).

Local occupational evidence for the Roman period is plentiful, evidence for three potential centres of occupation exist here spanning from A.D 43 until the end of Roman occupation.

Other evidence of settlement suggests that occupation may have been continuous through the dark ages into the late Saxon period and on into the medieval period.

White Ladies Aston gets its name from the fact that it once belonged to the Cistercian priory of Whistones. The priory was located in the north suburbs of Worcester and it held a manor at Aston from the mid 13th century to the Dissolution.

The parish church, dedicated to St John the Baptist is partly Norman, with nave, chancel and a tall, weather boarded bell-turret and spire, standing on heavy timbers inside the nave. The construction of the tower suggests it was part of the constructional phase of the nave.

The nave has a simple Norman South doorway of which only the imposts are original. The chancel arch is described as "new" in Norman style and there are a few surviving Norman windows. Both nave and chancel were probably originally Norman, but many alterations have been made since then.

There is a moated farm nearby, which, is unsurprisingly called Moat Farm. The moat is believed to be medieval.

Medieval ridge and furrow is evident in the fields to the South-East of the church and a deserted medieval village which undoubtedly relates to it is also present.

There are two manor houses at White ladies; Aston Court, which dates to the medieval period, and the Vicarage, which dates from around 1540. There are also eight timber framed cottages, one of which dates from possibly as early as the 1550s, the others are probably after 1600 and likely after the civil war.

Local field names give clues to yet other settlements lying hidden, "Burnt Ground" and "Great Ruins" relate to Roman to early medieval settlements of pre 1065. "Black meadow" was a late Iron Age to early medieval settlement, also in decline by 1065.

Other than the sites identified above, odd scatters of artefacts have been located at several spots in the White Ladies area, some were found by metal detectorists and some were chance finds.

4. Aims and Objectives.

The project was considered likely to produce results of local archaeological importance.

The main aim of the programme was to adequately record archaeological features in the areas affected by the proposal.

The main objectives of the programme were to:

- a. Identify the date and nature of features being investigated.
- b. Assess the survival, quality, condition and relative significance of any archaeological features, deposits and structures within the study area.
- c. Produce a record of the features.

5. Methodology.

The relevant parts of the building were recorded photographically with scales, the East elevation of the property where the porch had been removed was the only part to be recorded before the new extension covered the scar over.

An archaeologist was present on site during the excavation of foundation trenches, which were excavated by the client using a mini digger under archaeological supervision.

Trench plans drawn on site at 1:50 scale and site notes were kept in a site diary, the notes and drawings are part of the archive.

The code of conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists was adhered to and the Requirements and Guidelines for Archaeological Projects In Worcestershire was consulted.

6. Results.

The East elevation was photographed using a 35mm SLR camera and colour film. The purpose of the photographs was to record the former position of the porch and the scar left by it after its removal.

The Victorian, brick porch had been dismantled just before the watching brief commenced. The photographs were also taken to record the structure of the timber building that had been obscured by the porch. A large number of the bricks recovered from the porch were what appear to be re-used Tudor bricks.

The areas affected by the development were the East elevation of the house, which was going to be at least partly obscured by the extension and an area of garden and former porch measuring approximately 7m (W-E) x 5m (N-S).

The excavation of the foundation trenches quickly revealed that the stone foundation of the house was only 0.40m below the present ground level.

The topsoil was rich, black garden soil that was 0.20m deep, within it were bits of white glazed pottery, brick and animal bones from domestic food processing

Underlying the topsoil there was a thin band (0.08m deep) of mixed grey-black, clay-sand and topsoil. Within this deposit there were fragments of brick, pot, pebbles, charcoal and some gravel. The finds within this layer were all post medieval in date, most probably 18th century and later. At this level against the footings of the house, chert cobbles and large pebbles were present, the first impression was that this was a laid surface but when a better view was afforded it was obvious that this was just a small pocket of natural sand, gravel and stones.

Several small pockets of similar stones in a matrix of rust red sand, with some clay occasionally mixed into it were present along the trenches. No finds were present in relation to any of these pockets of sand.

Underlying the grey sandy clay and intermittent patches of sand and stones was a deposit of dark, grey brown sand. The sand appeared to be filling the cross section of a ditch, but the "ditch" was not present on the opposite section and did not show up in any of the other trenches.

Within the sandy "fill" there was mixing with clay towards the bottom. Also within the sand deposit were occasional to rare flecks of charcoal. No finds were present within the deposit. The sand was fairly level at the top of the deposit, but at the bottom it undulated along the top of a rolling, mottled clay layer. At its deepest point, in the southernmost trench, which was against the East wall, the sand was 0.70m deep, rising to only a few centimetres below the surface at about 2m to the East.

Protruding towards the east from the bottom of the sand "fill", there was an almost vertical, linear bar of dark brown sand leading down into the clay layer below. The bar may have been a filled root channel or animal burrow, it could also have been the void left by a wooden stake. The possible feature was 0.10m in width and about 0.30m of its length was visible in section (Fig 3). No finds were present within it.

At the interface between the sand and clay layers, the clay was a varied mixture of colours including browns, greens and oranges.

Below its surface the colour was a much more uniform yellow-green colour. Towards the bottom of the 1m deep trench, the clay was becoming silvery and sandy in texture.

Within the clay were occasional pockets of the same chert cobbles and rusty sand as described above. No archaeological finds were present within the clay deposit.

7. Conclusion.

In conclusion it can be said that a potential ditch, cut into the natural clay, of indeterminate size and date was found, filled with sand that included traces of charcoal. Its further possible that a stake impression may have been preserved at the bottom of the cut.

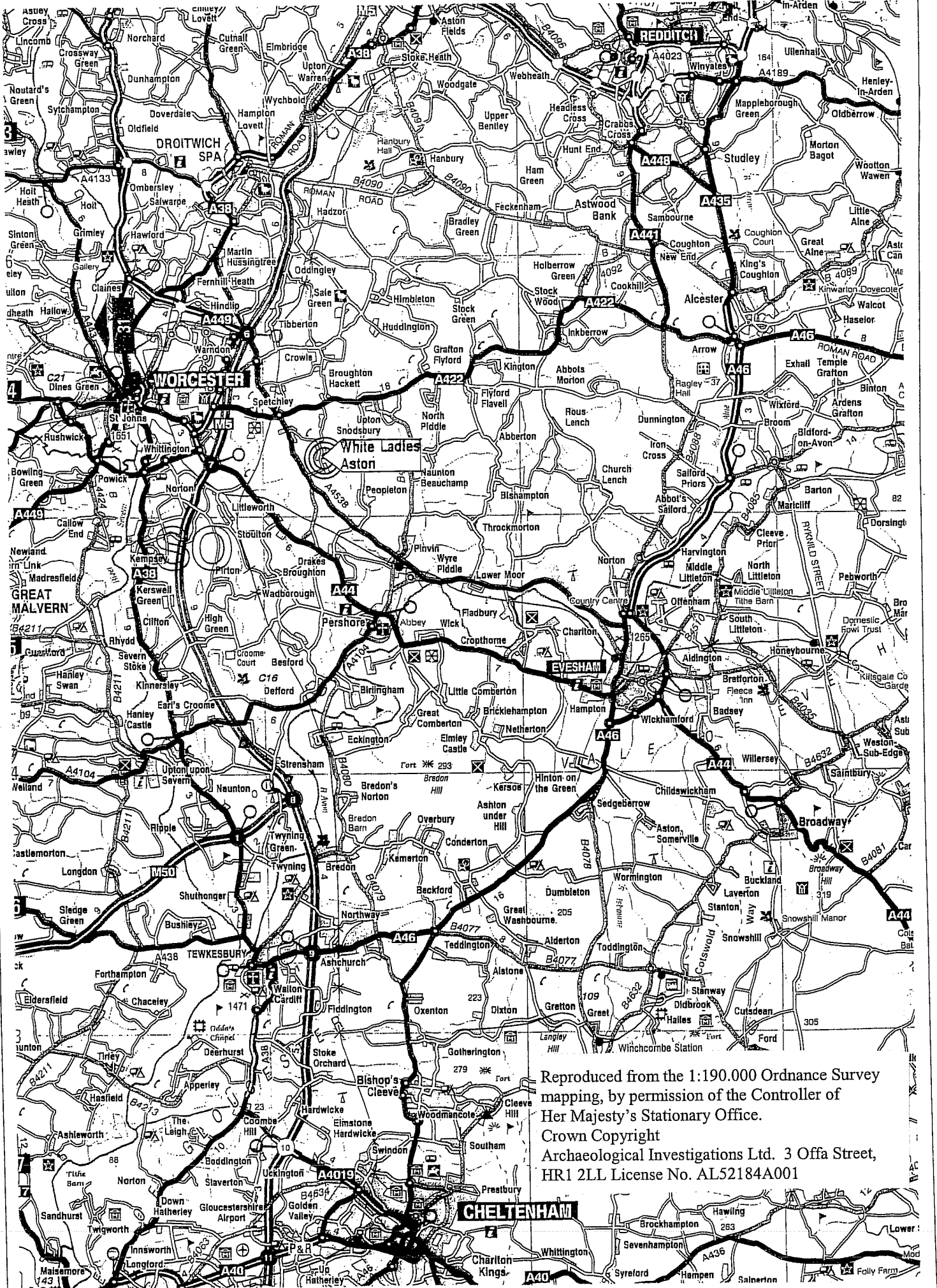
No archaeological artefacts were present either in the potential ditch or in the immediate area surrounding the cottage where trenches were excavated.

8. Site Archive.

1. The Sites and Monuments Record Search, consisting of 4 pages of known site locations and three maps showing the SMR numbers.
2. 4 pages of site note book notes, includes 1:50 plan of trenches.
3. 2 x Architects plans, of the standing building as was and proposed alterations.
4. 2 x Photographic registers.
5. 2 x 36 Exp colour films.
6. A copy of this report.

9. Bibliography.

- Pevsner, N. 1963. "The Buildings of England, Worcestershire". *Penguin*.
- Byron, B. 2002. "Nightingale Cottage, White Ladies, Aston, Worcestershire. *Project Design for archaeological watching brief*".
- Glyde, M. 2002. "Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief at Nightingale Cottage, White Ladies Aston, Worcestershire. *Worcestershire County Council*.
- Mee's, A. 1974. "The King's England, Worcestershire". *Hodder and Stoughton Ltd*.



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Figure 1. Site location plan

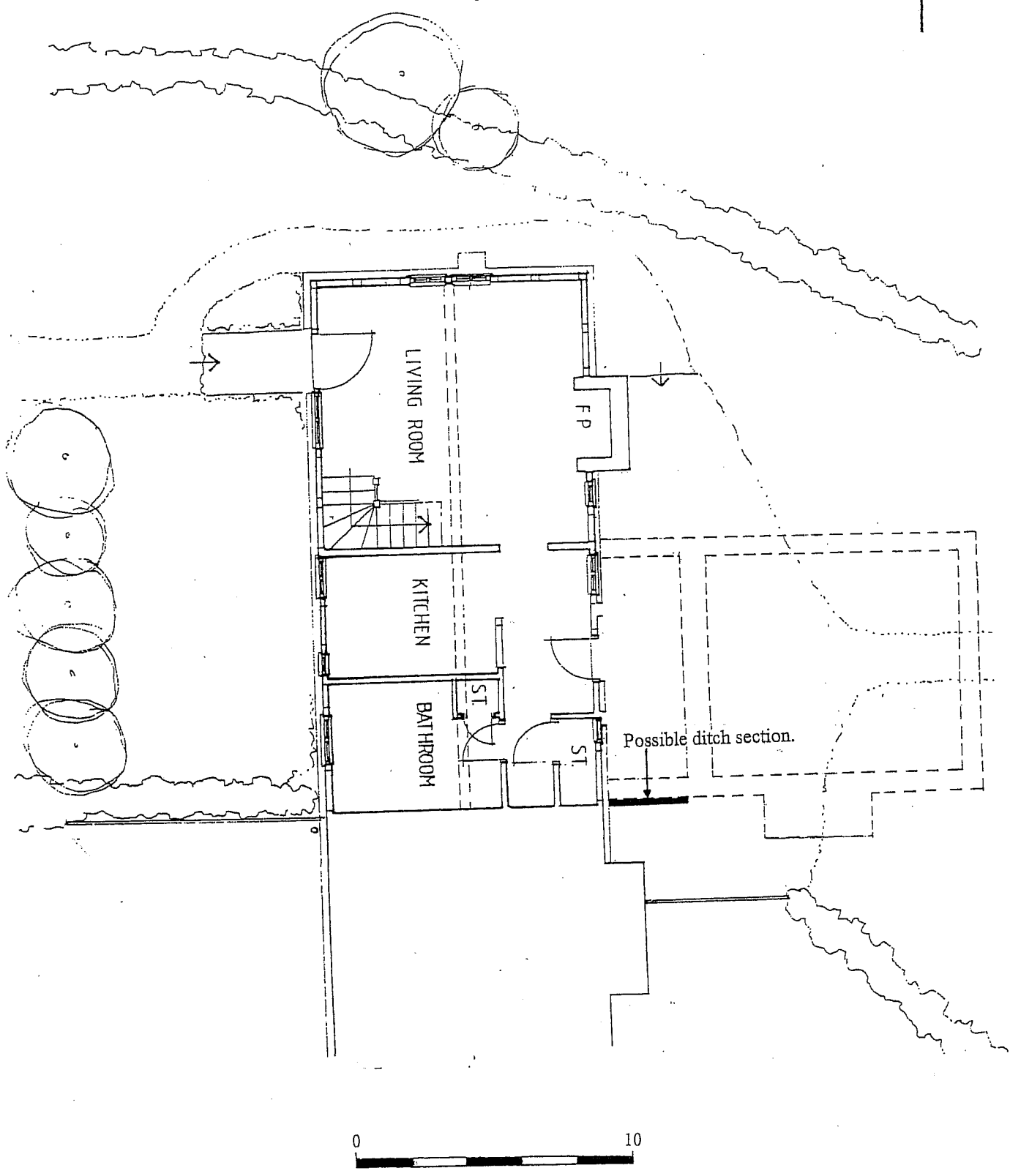


Fig 2. location Plan at 1:100 scale.

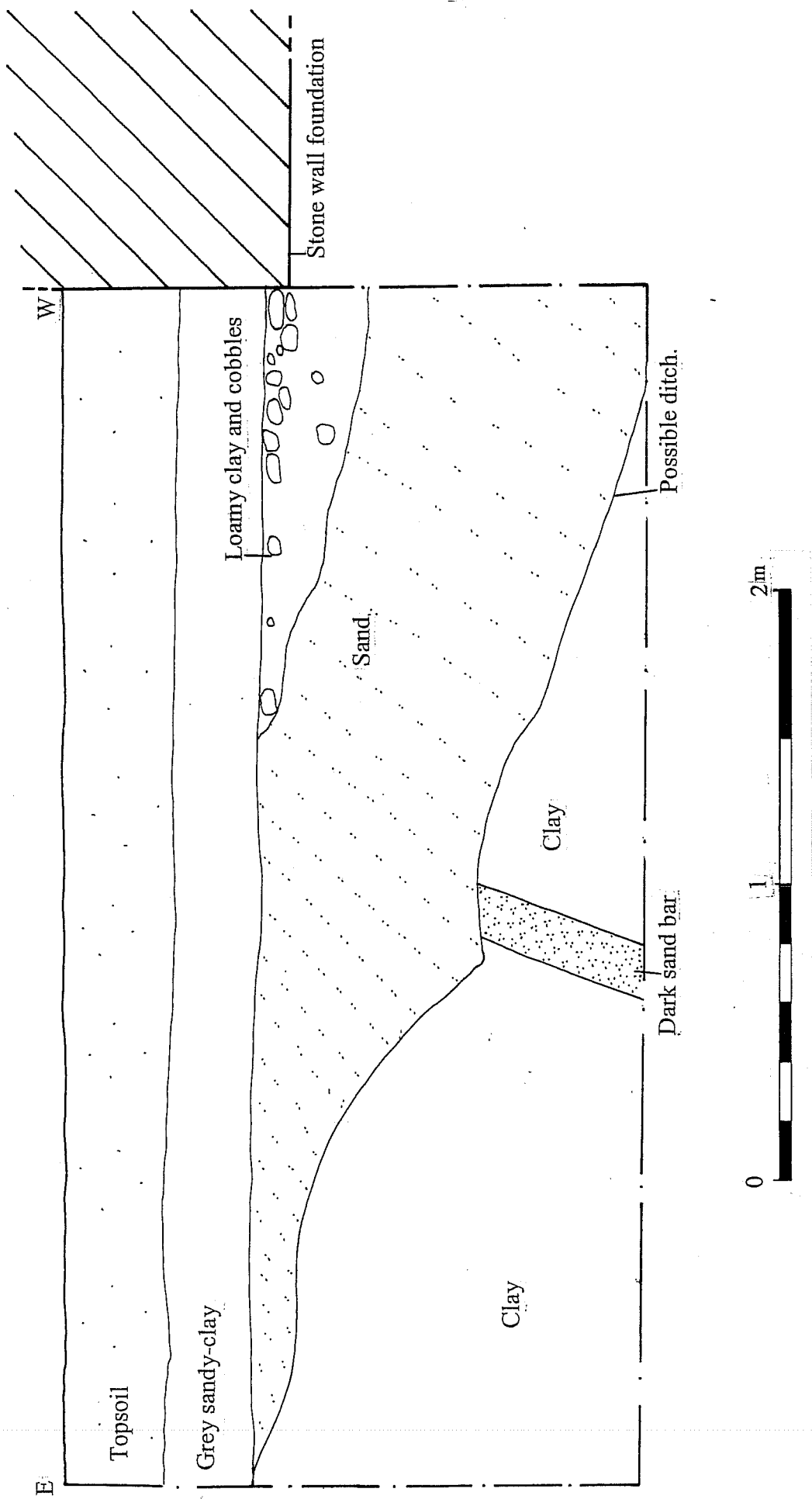
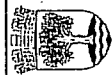


Fig 3. Possible ditch, Section at 1:10 scale.



SMR Ref Site Name

Monument Types

NGR

Area of Archaeological Interest

WSM29789 Iron Age, Romano British and Saxon and Medieval Occupation SETTLEMENT Early Iron Age to Post Medieval - 800 BC to 1900 AD SO92525224

WSM30702 Possible early road or routeway, White Ladies Aston. TRACKWAY Early Neolithic to Medieval - 4000 BC to 1539 AD SO92605236

Activity

WSM26959 Watching brief at the Church of St John the Baptist, White Ladies Aston (NEGATIVE RESULT) - to SO92215269

WSM27217 Field south of Aston Court Moat ARTEFACT SCATTER Post Medieval - 1651 AD to SO92655270

WSM30762 Watching brief at Manor Farm House, White Ladies Aston (NEGATIVE RESULT) Modern - to 2050 AD SO92465203

WSM31573 Watching brief at Nightingale Cottage, White Ladies Aston SO92395243

Building

SMR Ref	Site Name	Monument Types	NGR
WSM02953	St John the Baptist, White Ladies Aston	CHURCH COFFIN	SO92215270
WSM02958	Aston Court, White Ladies Aston	MANOR HOUSE	SO92555285
WSM02975	The Vicarage, White Ladies Aston	VICARAGE	SO92185249
WSM02983	17th century timber framed cottage, S of the church, White Ladies Aston	TIMBER FRAMED BUILDING	SO92205263
WSM02984	Revoked as duplicate record		SO92295266
WSM02984	17th century cottage, E of church, White Ladies Aston	TIMBER FRAMED BUILDING	SO92295266
WSM02985	17th century timber framed cottage, W of Moat Farm, White Ladies Aston	TIMBER FRAMED BUILDING	SO92265192
WSM02986	17th century timber framed cottage, W of Moat Farm, White Ladies Aston	TIMBER FRAMED BUILDING	SO92335193

LB

SMR Ref	Site Name	Monument Types	NGR
WSM02988	Laburnum Cottage, W of road, White Ladies Aston	TIMBER FRAMED BUILDING Post Medieval to Modern - 1600 AD to 2050 AD	SO92115217
WSM02989	Tandas Kennels, White Ladies Aston	TIMBER FRAMED BUILDING Post Medieval to Modern - 1550 AD? to 1960 AD?	SO92005200
WSM31073	Timber framed dwelling, White Ladies Aston	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE Post Medieval - 1600 AD to 1700 AD	SO92405242
LB	SO955W 5/847 II		
Find Spot			
WSM12162	Post medieval bell and salt bowl, White Ladies Aston	FINDSPOT Post Medieval - 1540 AD? to 1799 AD?	SO92185218
WSM12163	Romano British coins, Churchill Lane, White Ladies Aston	FINDSPOT Roman - 43 AD to 409 AD	SO92185218
Monument			
WSM02903	Moat, NE of Moat Farm, White Ladies Aston	MOAT Medieval to Post Medieval - 1066 AD to 1900 AD	SO92505205
WSM02990	17th century timber framed cottage, W of Tandas Kennels, White Ladies Aston	TIMBER FRAMED BUILDING Post Medieval to Modern - 1600 AD to 1960 AD?	SO92005200

SMR Ref	Site Name	Monument Types	NGR
WSM09769	R & F, SE of Church, White Ladies Aston	RIDGE AND FURROW Medieval - 1066 AD to 1539 AD	SO92405270
WSM12967	Deserted medieval village, White Ladies Aston	SHRUNKEN VILLAGE Medieval - 1066 AD to 1539 AD	SO92155257
WSM29790	Roman settlement focus, White Ladies Aston	SETTLEMENT Roman - 43 AD to 199 AD	SO92795290
WSM29791	Roman settlement focus, White Ladies Aston	SETTLEMENT Roman - 200 AD to 399 AD	SO92785242
WSM29792	Roman to post-Roman settlement focus, White Ladies Aston	SETTLEMENT Roman to Early Medieval/Dark Age - 400 AD to 699 AD	SO92515238

Place Name

WSM29596	Burnt Ground place name, White Ladies Aston	SETTLEMENT Roman to Early Medieval/Dark Age - 43 AD to 1065 AD	SO92515248
WSM29597	Black Meadow place name, White Ladies Aston	SETTLEMENT Late Iron Age to Early Medieval/Dark Age - 100 BC to 1065 AD	SO92785227
WSM29598	Great Ruins place name, White Ladies Aston	SETTLEMENT Roman to Early Medieval/Dark Age - 43 AD to 1065 AD	SO92725243



Sites and Monuments Record Search

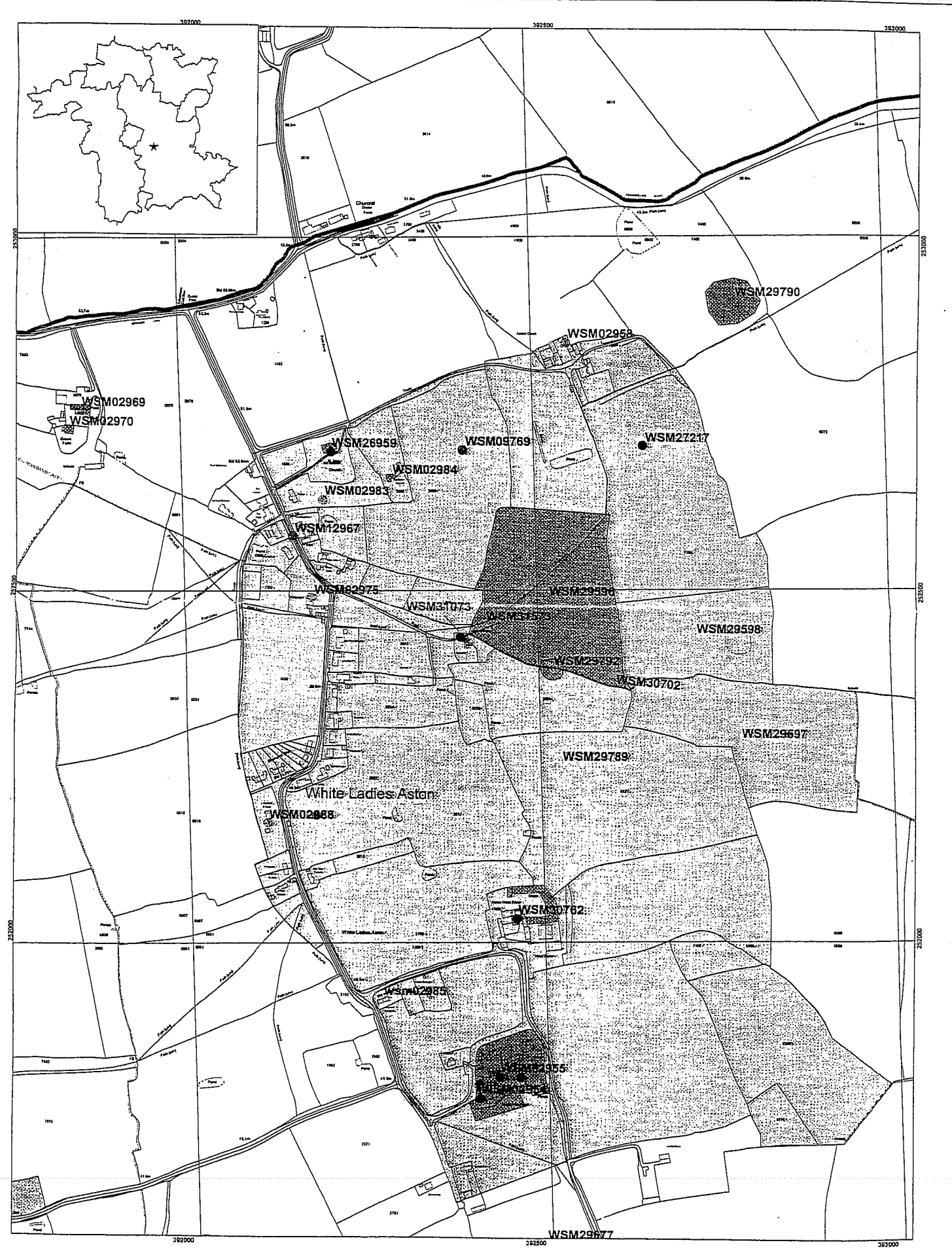
500metres around Nightingale Cottage

Compiled by the Information and Records Section on 18 March 2002

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Scale 1:10,000



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