

# Archaeological Investigations Ltd

## Littletons Tennis Club, South Littleton, Nr Evesham Worcestershire

*A Report of an  
Archaeological Watching Brief*



October 1999

Hereford Archaeology Series 423

Littletons Tennis Club  
South Littleton, Evesham,  
Worcestershire

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

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**October 1999**

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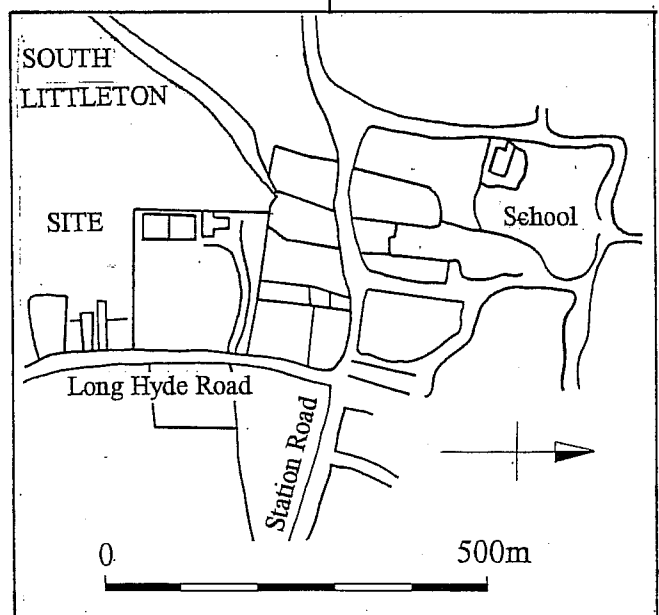
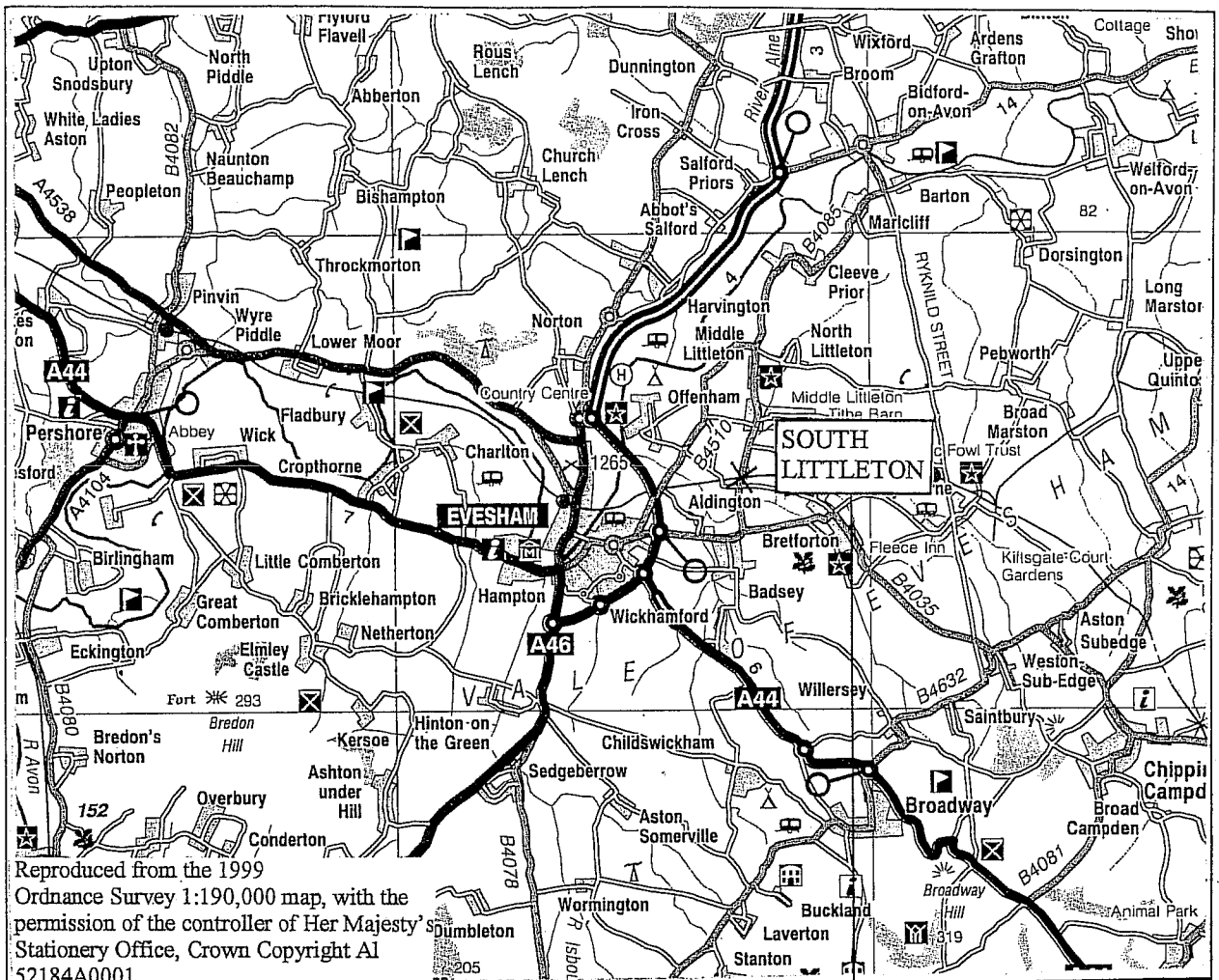


Fig 1. Site location.

# Littletons Tennis Club, Long Hyde Road, Near EVESHAM (NGR SO 0737 4619)

## *Archaeological Watching brief*

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### 1. Summary

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*A planning application was submitted by Kirkham Pryer on behalf of the Littletons Tennis Club, to Hereford and Worcester County Planning Authority for the addition of new tennis courts and a new pavilion at the Littletons tennis club, South Littleton near Evesham. Planning consent was given, with the condition that a scheme of archaeological works was agreed with the council's Planning Department in accordance with PPG16. It was agreed that an archaeologist should be present on site during the groundwork to conduct a watching brief and salvage recording.*

*Archaeological Investigations Ltd was commissioned to undertake the archaeological fieldwork which was carried out between 29/6/99 and 10/9/99.*

*The brief suggested there was a possibility of encountering Saxon remains on the site but no evidence of Saxon activity was present.*

*During the course of ground disturbance evidence for previous activity was encountered. A scalping/cobble path of post medieval or later date was recorded immediately below the turf line, this was within the area known to have been a P.O.W./refugee camp during the Second World War. A dump of empty ration tins was discovered to the north of this path.*

*Also underlying the topsoil, ridge and furrow was observed and recorded in plan. Little evidence was recovered that could date this agricultural activity, but the pottery suggests the late medieval to Post-medieval period. A copper pin of uncertain date was found at the interface between the topsoil and subsoil, immediately above the ridge and furrow.*

*Below the ridge and furrow was a layer of green clay and stone that contained no visible inclusions and appears to be a natural deposit. The clay and stone overlay a buried soil layer that contained Roman pottery, bone and charcoal which is interesting given the proximity of the Roman road in South Littleton. Below this layer all the deposits were natural, No evidence of the suspected Saxon occupation was present.*

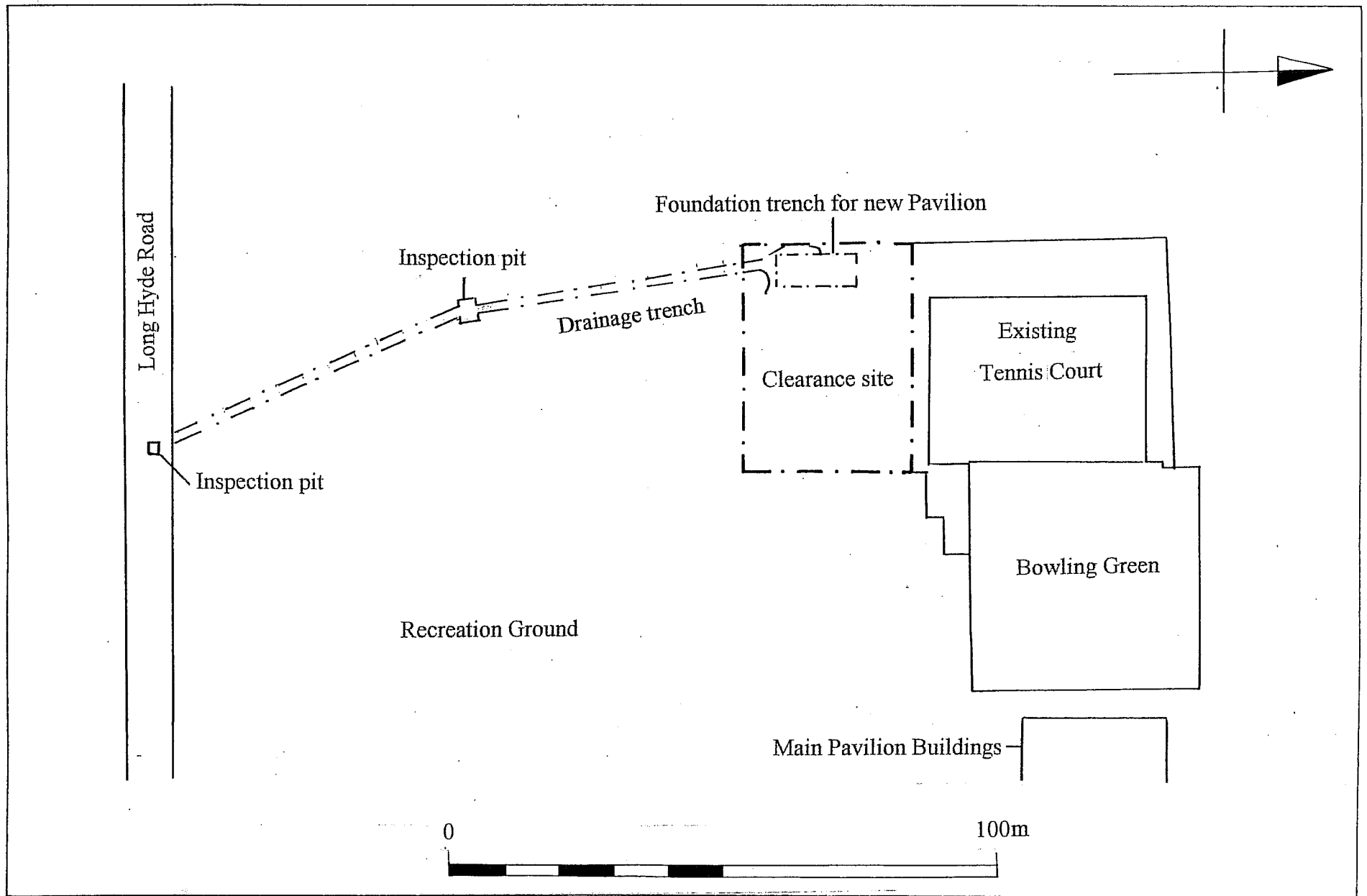


Figure 2. Trench location plan.

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## **2. Introduction.**

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A planning application was submitted by Kirkham Pryer on behalf of Littletons Tennis Club, to Hereford and Worcester County planning authority for the building of new tennis courts and a pavilion. Planning consent was given, with the condition that a scheme of archaeological works was agreed with the council's Planning Department in accordance with PPG16. It was required that an archaeologist should be present on site during the ground works (by Midland Building and Heating Services) to conduct a watching brief and salvage recording. The application proposed the levelling of the site, the construction of a new pavilion including new services and two additional tennis courts.

Archaeological Investigations Ltd was commissioned by Kirkham Pryer to carry out the work, which took place between 29/6/99 and 10/9/99.

The site itself is at the west side of South Littleton on recreation ground to the north of Long Hyde road (NGR SO 0737 4619). The site Ordnance Datum was taken from the architect's drawings.

The underlying geology consists of middle Lias clay and silt of the Jurassic period.

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## **3. Historical background.**

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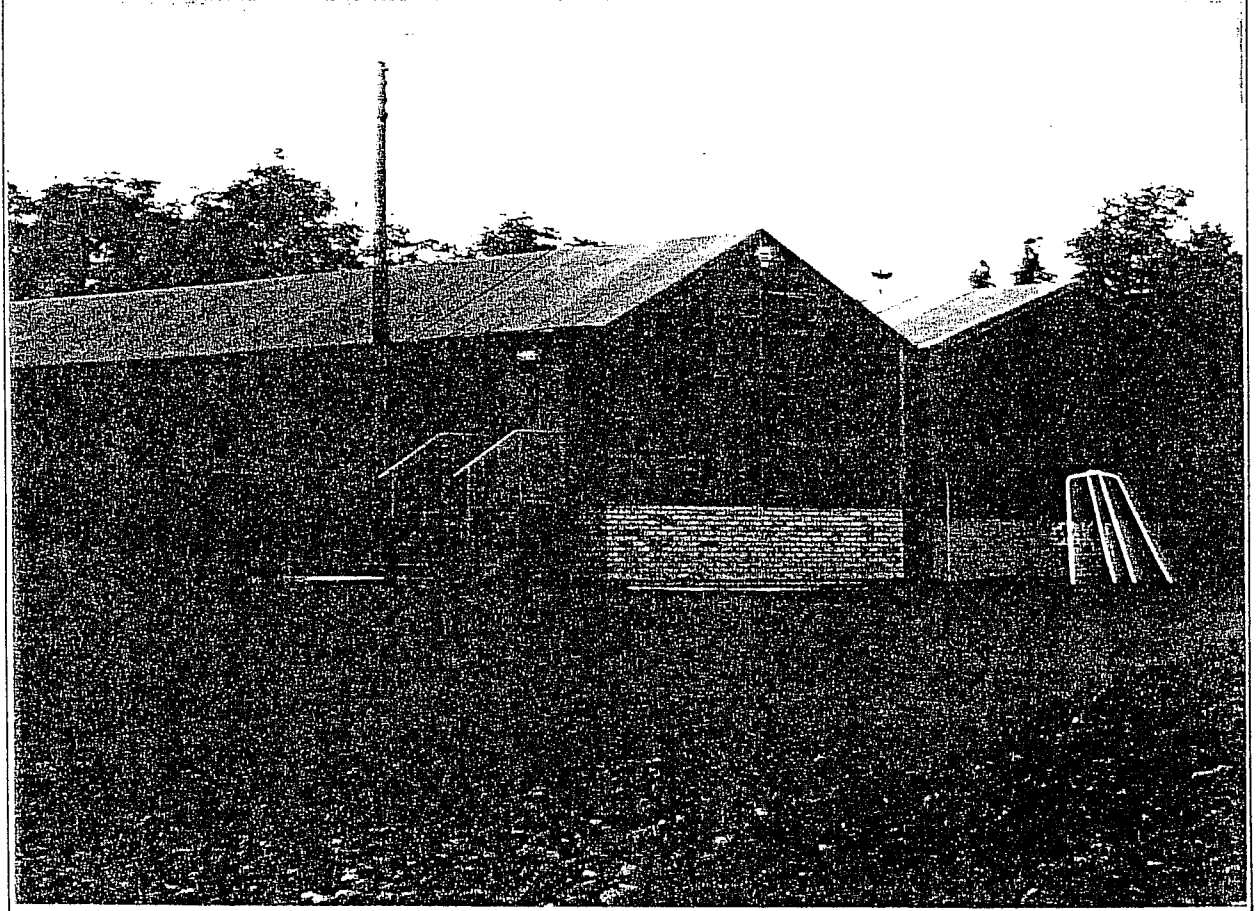
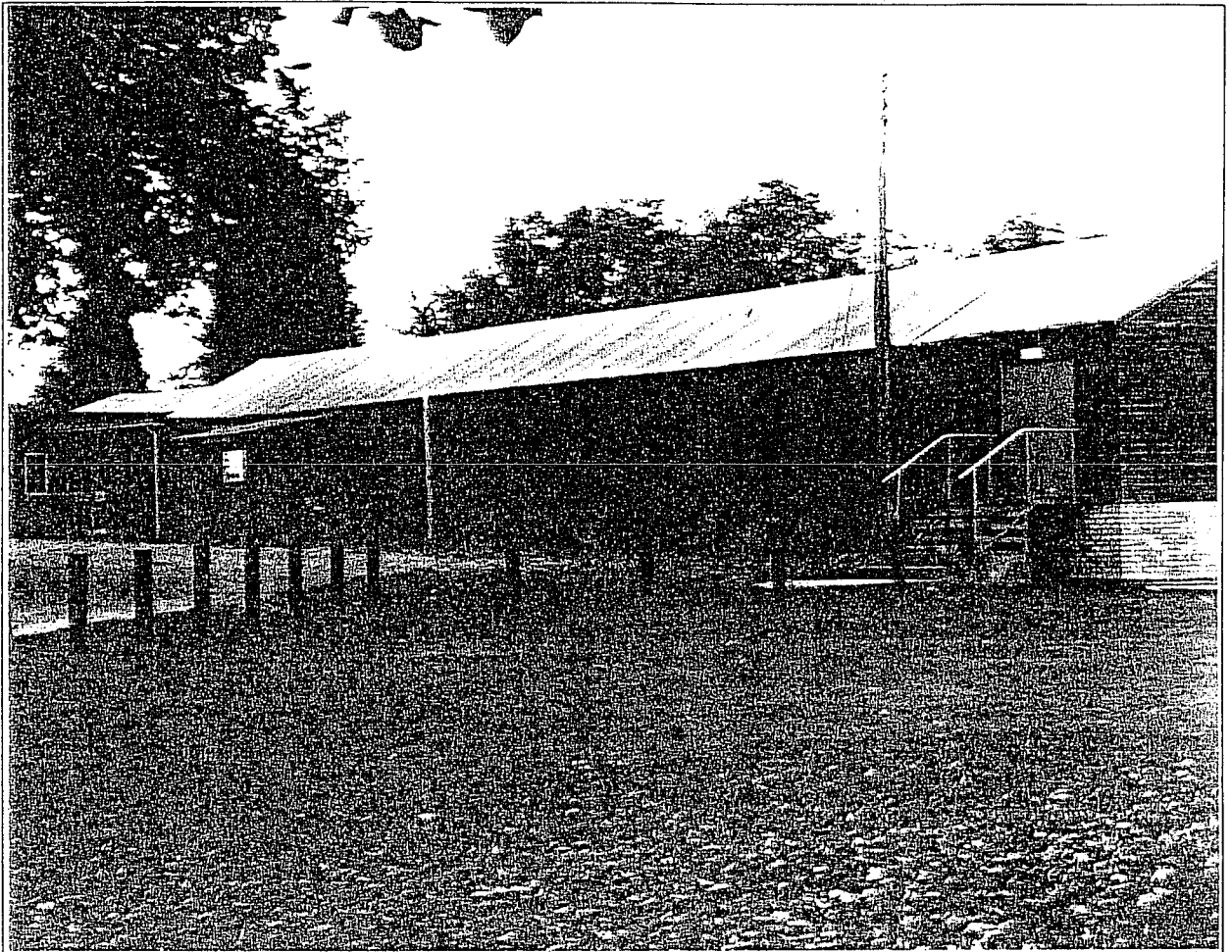
The extent to which archaeology had been preserved within the site was not previously known, but it was believed that evidence of Saxon occupation could have survived in or around the area.

During the Second World War, South Littleton had a land army hostel on this site that was put to use as a P O W camp (HWCM 27656). The camp is known to have held Italian prisoners, (Pers com Colin Jones, Defence of Britain section, Worcester County Archaeology Service). At the end of the war it was also used as a camp for Polish refugees.

What were presumably the remains of some of the camp buildings were found in the topsoil in the form of asbestos roofing and brick fragments.

Two huts built as part of the camp, were still standing on the recreation ground, in positions near the tennis court site till 1998, when they were demolished to be replaced by new buildings for the bowling club (Fig 2).

An SMR search identified a Roman Road running north-south about 300m to the east of the site.



P.O.W. Camp, South Littleton, Near Evesham.  
Two huts remaining until 1998.

HWCM 27656

Fig 2.

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#### **4. Aims and Objectives**

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The main aims and objectives of the archaeological project were to:

- a. establish the presence or absence of any archaeological deposits;
- b. to assess their nature, condition, significance and extent if present;
- c. and record them in the areas affected, by the proposed development.

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#### **5. Methodology**

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An archaeologist was present on site at all times during the excavation of the foundations, service trenches, and the levelling of the bank at the West End of the development area.

The archaeological work was tied into the Ordnance Survey Grid.

The excavation of trenches and stripping of topsoil was carried out by the on-site contractor, using a JCB with a toothless bucket under archaeological supervision. All archaeological features were cleaned by hand and planned at a scale of 1:20 or 1:200. A sketch section was drawn at 1:10 scale. Photographs were taken using colour print film following cleaning.

A sequence of context cards was used in conjunction with site notes. Registers for contexts, finds, samples and drawings were also kept.

All artefacts were recorded on-site and retained for further analysis.

The code of conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists was adhered to.

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#### **6. Results**

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##### **6.1 Nature of observations**

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##### **6.1.1 Topsoil strip and foundation trenches**

The site was stripped of topsoil over an area of 41.50m (east-west) x 34m (north-south). At the west end of this area the footings of the pavilion were dug. The foundation trenches measured 14.50m (north-south) x 6.20m (east-west) x 0.60m wide (Fig 3).

##### **6.1.2 Service trench**

A service trench was also excavated from the north to the south of site. The first 56m were aligned almost north to south, parallel to the dry stone wall at the rear of the site. Following this, a 2m square pit was dug to accommodate an inspection chamber. A



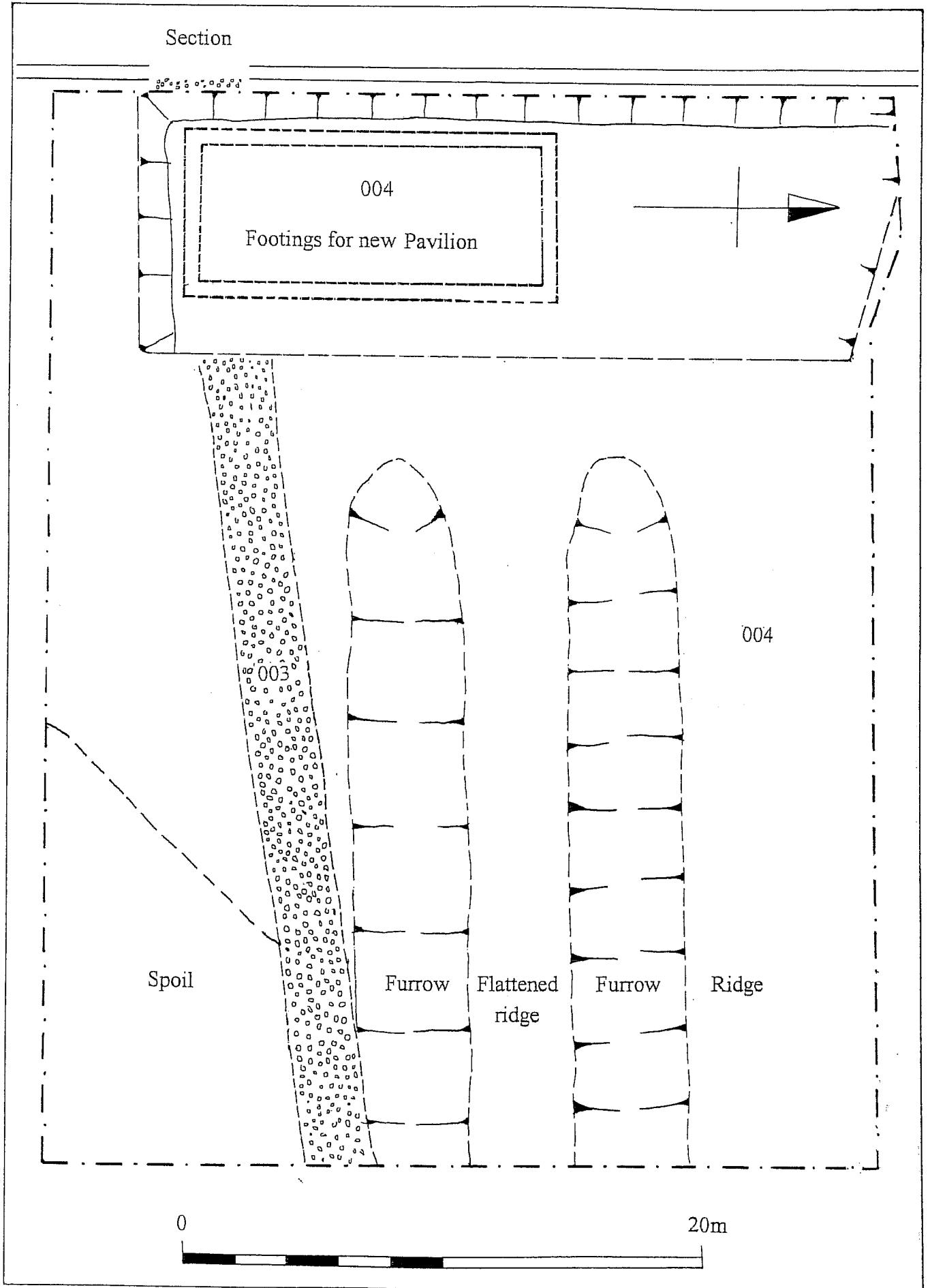


Fig 3. Area stripped for new tennis court, showing archaeological features.

further 56m of trench was dug on a southeastern alignment to the existing drains in Long Hyde road (Fig 4). The trench measured 114m long x 1.30m wide x 1.90m deep.

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## 6.2 Results of observations

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### 6.2.1 Topsoil

The topsoil (001), was a dark/mid-brown silt that varied in depth between 0.10m and c.0.40m. Within this was a large amount of asbestos roof and brick fragments as well as metal objects, pot, glass and some bone, all of which was modern.

### 6.2.2 Subsoil

Underlying the topsoil (001) was the subsoil (004). This averaged 0.40m deep and consisted of a mid/dark brown loamy silt with about 25% stone inclusion and rare inclusions of charcoal. Finds recovered from this layer were mostly late medieval/Post - medieval pottery. At the interface between 001 and 004 a copper pin was found (small find no. 1) that probably also dates to the Late medieval or Post-medieval period.

### 6.2.3 The Second World War

Some sparse evidence remained of the second world war P.O.W camp, a small dump of "tea ration" tins (015) were found to the north west of the site, where they had been buried just below the topsoil.

Next to the track (003), were the remains of a shallow, square pit that contained burned clothing remains and some burned tins. Other finds included building materials found in the topsoil, such as corrugated asbestos roofing sheet and brick, but it is only surmised that these materials were used in the construction of the camp buildings.

### 6.2.4 The track/road

Immediately under the topsoil was a track or road (003). This was constructed using angular stone with occasional cobbles, it was aligned southeast-northwest. The exposed length of track measured 41m long x 2.50m wide.

At the west end of the track was a 0.50m thick dry stone wall. The wall showed clear construction breaks at either side of the track, demonstrating a blocked entrance through which the track had originally passed. After the track went out of use the gap was blocked with masonry.

Pottery finds recovered from the track were all of post medieval to modern date, they were collected and assessed but not retained. The track overlay some Post-medieval ridge and furrow.

### 6.2.5 Ridge and Furrow

Underlying the topsoil and the track, ridge and furrow was identified (part of 004). This was aligned west to east and extended over the whole of the stripped area. The furrows

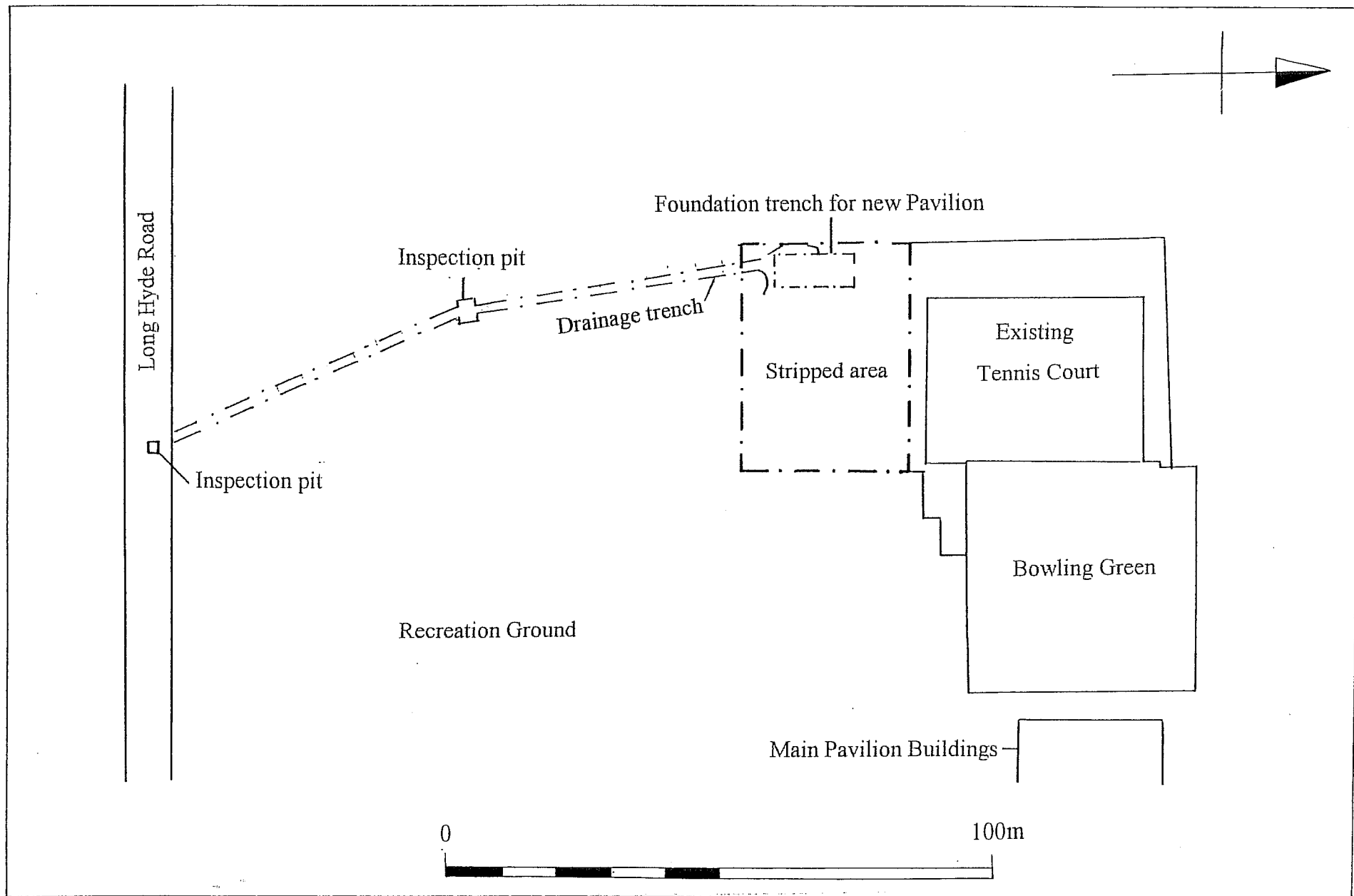


Fig 4. Trench location plan.

averaged 5m in width and the associated ridges were 4m wide and flat topped. The finds from within the layer (004) mostly comprised pottery from the 15<sup>th</sup> century to Post-medieval period (Fig 4).

#### *6.2.6 Green clay and stone*

Below 004, was a 0.15m-0.20m thick layer of fragmented green mud stone and green clay (007) that was possibly disturbed by ploughing in antiquity. The clay contained no inclusions except for fibrous roots and the deposit had the appearance of a natural layer. A sample of the clay (No 2) was retained for identification confirming it was a sub-soil, following which it was discarded.

#### *6.2.7 Roman Horizon*

Below the green stone and clay of layer 007 was an almost continuous layer of fairly well compacted, brown loamy, pebbly-clay (011), that was on average around 0.50m thick, the layer becomes less deep towards Long Hyde Road until it ends completely about 2m from the roads edge. A sample (No3) was taken of this deposit for environmental analysis; no biological or environmental material was recovered from the sample, implying the layer had been weathered and reworked in such a way as to destroy environmental evidence.

#### Roman Finds

From deposit 011 three pieces of Roman pottery were recovered including 1 piece of Samian ware and 2 pieces of Severn valley ware. Eight pieces of animal bone were also recovered from within the layer in a fairly eroded condition. Charcoal was also present as occasional flecks. No other finds were present within this layer and no features were present either cutting, or within the layer.

#### *6.2.8 Natural Layers*

Underlying 011 was an undisturbed natural mud stone layer (012) that had been stained a mottled orangey-green and was at least 0.30m thick. The stone overlay a deposit of natural clay.

Below the stone (012) was a 0.60m thick layer (013) of drab olive clay that was uniform in colour and texture. This clay was the same green colour as the clay in layer 007.

The lowest layer exposed during the excavation of the foundations was 014, which consisted of dark peat with soft shale stone, this deposit was only partly exposed during the trenching and it's depth and extent were not seen.

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## **7. Discussion**

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Above the layers of natural clays and stone, was a buried layer of loamy soil containing Roman pottery, charcoal and animal bones. No features were identified either as being within this layer or cutting it. The presence of pottery suggests Roman activity on the site

and may indicate occupation in the area, possibly associated with the Roman Road which runs to the east of the site. There were no features below or associated with this level.

The Roman layer was sealed by a thin spread of green clay and broken up sedimentary rock. It was not continuous but only occurred in patches across the site, possibly as a result of damage due to ploughing identified in the layer above.

Above the clay/stone layer, the remains of ridge and furrow ploughing were identified. Pottery evidence dating to the later medieval period and Post-medieval period was recovered from the layer.

Overlying the ridge and furrow was a track/road and pottery recovered from its surface suggests that it was in use in the later 19<sup>th</sup>/mid 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The dry stone wall still standing at the rear of the site has clearly visible construction breaks respecting the edges of the track. The space in the wall was filled in after the track went out of use.

The only other features present were a small rubbish dump composed mainly of empty tins, particularly "tea rations" and buried burned rubbish. These features probably relate to the presence of the camp dating to the Second World War.

Previously, finds dating to the Saxon period have been found in the vicinity. As a consequence it was thought that evidence of Saxon activity may possibly have been preserved on the proposed site of the new tennis courts, but none was found.

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## **8. Site archive**

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1. Site notebook, 8 pages
2. Colour photographs, 1 x 24 exp, 1 x 36 exp
3. Scale plans, 3
4. 14 context cards
5. 1 correspondence file
6. The finds
7. 5 Bags of pottery containing 56 sherds
8. 1 Small find, copper pin
9. 2 Bags of building material containing 8 pieces of brick, 1 piece of asbestos sheet
10. 3 Bags containing 13 pieces of bone
11. 2 Bags containing 19 pieces of glass
12. 1 Bag containing 10 aluminium ration tins
13. 5 Bags containing 16 assorted metal objects (fe +cu)
14. 1 Floatation sample
15. 1 floatation residue
16. Sketch section
17. A copy of this report
18. 1 Page of context register
19. 2 Pages of photographic register

20. 1 Page of samples register
21. 1 Page of general finds register
22. 1 Page of bone register
23. 1Page of building material register
24. 1Page of small finds register
25. 1 page of pottery register

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## 9. Bibliography

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- BGS            1990   Mid Wales & Marches Sheet 52 °N 04 °W   Scale 1:250 000  
(British Geological Survey).
- HWCC           1997   *Proposals for an archaeological project (watching brief) at  
recreation ground, Long Hyde Road, South Littleton. **HWCM  
25883.** (County Archaeological Service, Hereford and  
Worcestershire County Council).*
- HWCM 27656      P.O.W Camp, South Littleton, Nr Evesham, Two remaining huts.