

**NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT**

Report No. 841

**An Archaeological Evaluation and Field Survey at  
Low Farm, Snakes Lane,  
Topcroft,  
Norfolk**

38091 TPC

Kenneth Penn

August 2003

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Local Authority No.076759

Fig.1 is based upon the Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 map with the permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office © Crown Copyright 'Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings' Norfolk County Council, County Hall, Norwich (07/08/2003). **Reference copy: no further copies to be made.**



Location: Low Farm, Snakes Lane, Topcroft (South Norfolk)  
Grid Ref: TM 27483 93469  
HER No.: 38091TPC  
Date of Fieldwork: 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> March 2003

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## **Summary**

*Eleven trenches were excavated over the footprint of a proposed fish lake and fieldwalking and metal-detecting carried out over the extent of the development field. Fieldwork revealed a thin scatter of prehistoric flints over the surface of the field and a scatter of medieval pottery (and three medieval silver coins) at the west end of the field. There was no evidence of Roman activity despite recorded Roman presence nearby.*

*Medieval habitation at the west end of the field, alongside Snakes Lane is indicated.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

The site lay in the north-east corner of Topcroft parish, between Kings Road and Snakes Lane, in a field some 300m x 100m in extent, in which a fishing lake was proposed to be built.

The field had been arable, with a surface of weeds and grass, well-weathered, except where corn had been grown, and this was bare well-weathered soil, ideal for fieldwalking.

This work was commissioned by Land and Sculpture Design Partnership for their client R&G Tidnam of Low Farm, Topcroft.

This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: DG 29/02/03) and a Method Statement prepared by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU Ref: JB 1549).

The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16 — Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

## **2.0 Geology and Topography**

The site lies at the heart of the East Anglian Boulder Clay plateau, a gently rolling landscape of heavy clays, where streams and rivers provided light gravel soils suitable for settlement.

The present site lies on the east-facing slopes of a minor interfluvium, overlooking two small streams, close to the site of a Roman villa. The site lies between the 30m and 35m contour.

### 3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The area of heavy clays was unattractive to early settlement and was probably well-wooded. Not until the Roman period was there settlement of any density. Some 250m to the south-east of the present site lies the remains of a Roman villa or similar establishment (HER 10194). Other finds nearby, in the field to the west, also testify to a Roman presence in the area:

HER 18437 Roman greyware sherds.

HER 19151 three Roman sherds.

HER 28489 two Roman coins, Roman objects (and an early Saxon brooch).

Other periods are represented by:

HER 15035 four flint flakes, prehistoric.

HER 18275 late medieval sherds.

HER 18836 three medieval sherds.

HER 36357 Some 700m to the east lies an extensive cropmark complex, including two ring-ditches, a square enclosure and various ditches. Neither the date nor function of this complex is known.

The archaeological evidence for the immediate area is completed by the evidence of post-medieval timber-framed farmhouses

Faden's map of 1797 is at too small a scale to show much detail, except that both Kings Road and Snakes Lane then existed, but with no evidence of buildings within the development field. Bryants map of 1826 shows the same picture, with the present road system then in place. The evidence points to a lack of settlement here in the last three hundred years.

### 4.0 Methodology

The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

The whole field was walked and metal-detected in 25 transects each measuring 20m, apart from transect 25 which was wider (Fig. 2). Finds were bagged and recorded according to the transect number.

The Brief required that ten trenches were opened, to provide a 5% sample of the area of the fishing lake. In the event, eleven trenches were opened, each 2.4m wide.

Machine excavation was carried out with a tracked 360° excavator using a toothless ditching bucket.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features, besides the surface, were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds, other than those which were obviously modern, were retained for inspection.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using the Norfolk Archaeological Unit's *pro forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales.

Due to the lack of suitable deposits, no environmental samples were taken.

Site conditions were good, with no rain and good light.

## 5.0 Results

Eleven trenches, 1-11, were opened, most of which were entirely devoid of archaeological finds and features. Four trenches contained features, as follows:

Trench 1	Shallow ditch/gully [33].
Trench 5	Small circular pit/posthole [31].
Trench 9	Recent field ditch [29]; the hedge which went with this ditch has been removed in the current development, but its remains and location were observed.
Trench 11	Ditch [26].

At the east end of the site was noted the remains of a WWII aeroplane crash site. Information from Paul Thrower of Long Stratton indicated that this was the known site of a Liberator that had crashed in 1944.

## 6.0 The Finds

### Field Walking Finds

by Lucy Talbot

Field walking produced thirty-six fragments of Roman, post medieval and modern building material (4.758kg). Two undated and unidentified pieces of material (0.016kg) were collected from context [14].

#### *Roman*

Two fragments of tegula (roof tile) weighing (0.310kg) were recovered from context [13], whilst eleven unidentified pieces of very abraded, poorly mixed fabric of Roman type (1.429kg, [13], [18] and [20]) were also collected.

#### *Post medieval*

This period provides the majority of the assemblage (2.977kg) and consists of brick (0.282kg, [12], [14], [18], [20]), pan tile (0.233kg, [12], [13], [16], [18], [20]) and pavement floor tile (2.452kg, [15], [19] and [21]). Two unidentified pieces (0.010kg) were collected from context [25].

#### *Modern*

A single fragment of modern faced brick (0.012kg) and one of breezeblock (0.014kg) were picked up from context [13].

### Small Finds

Eight small find numbers were allocated to silver, copper alloy and lead artefacts. The assemblage consists of three medieval silver coins (SF's1 and 2 [14] and SF3 [17], which require further identification, a medieval copper alloy strap loop (SF4, [13]) and a ring fitting (SF5, [14]). The lead artefacts recovered include two lead shot (SF6 [12]), an unidentified object (SF7, [14]), which requires further study and a pot mend (SF8, [14]).

#### *Objects of non-archaeological value*

This group includes a shapeless fragment of aluminium [12], two pieces of lead waste [14] and three copper alloy artefacts consisting of a domed button top [13], a modern horse harness plate and a tilt eyelet both from context [14].

## **6.1 Flint**

**by Sarah Bates**

### **The assemblage**

A total of 41 pieces of struck flint were recovered from the site. Most of the flints are small and many are thick chunky pieces struck by hard hammer. The size of the flints and the types of cortex suggest that a range of surface-collected pebbles and fragments of gravel were used as raw material. Several pieces have surfaces that were already patinated or abraded prior to its use.

One small abraded thermal fragment may have been deliberately struck or 'tested' as a core.

Thirty-three flakes are present. These are mostly small irregular pieces, many clearly struck by hard hammer. In a few cases it is possible that some pieces may have been deliberately retouched or utilised but this is uncertain due to the fact that most of the flint is edge-damaged to some degree. This is unsurprising considering the ploughsoil context in which it was found.

A few pieces have been retouched or utilised. These include an irregular hard hammer struck flake with its point used as a piercer [25], a small hard hammer struck flake with a protruding point retouched/utilised as a piercer and its right side retouched to a scraper [12], a small thick flake from a pebble with one edge abruptly retouched to a scraper [18] and three other retouched pieces [5], [24] and [19], the latter a small thermal fragment.

### **Discussion**

The nature of most of the flint, small irregular and hard hammer struck pieces, and the use of surface-collected flint as a raw material, suggests that it is likely to be of later prehistoric date (Later Neolithic to Iron Age). The flint is otherwise undiagnostic and cannot be dated more closely. It was recovered from the ploughsoil and clearly represents activity in the vicinity during the later prehistoric period. Possibly it originates from subsoil features which have been disturbed by agricultural activity.

## **7.0 Conclusions**

The work has indicated a lack of archaeological features in the area of the proposed fish lake, although the scatter of finds at the west end of the site, found in fieldwalking, points to medieval settlement along Snakes Lane here. Information from Paul Thrower and Mr R Tidnam indicates that this field had been metal-detected in the past.

Recommendations for future work based upon this report will be made by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.



### ***Acknowledgements***

The work was carried out by the writer, with the assistance of Gerry O'Dwyer and Paul Thrower (metal-detector). Finds analysis was undertaken by Richenda Goffin, Lucy Talbot and Adrian Marsden (coins). The report was edited by Jayne Bown and illustrated and produced by Maggie Foottit.



### **Appendix 1: Context Summary**

Contexts 1-11 are trenches 1-11

Contexts 12-25 are fieldwalking transects, west to east (see Fig. 2)

Contexts 26-34 are feature contexts, tabled below.

<b>Context</b>	<b>Trench</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Period</b>
26	11	C	Cut for ditch.	?post-medieval
27	11	D	Fill of 26. Grey brown sandy silt.	
28	11	D	Dark grey-brown topsoil.	
29	9	C	Cut for ditch.	Modern.
30	9	D		
31	5	C	Cut for small pit/posthole.	?recent
32	5	D	Fill of 31. Yellow silty clay.	
33	1	C	Cut for ditch/gully.	Medieval/ post-medieval ?
34	1	D		

## Appendix 2 Pottery by Context

Context	Fabric	Form	Quantity	Overall	
				Weight (kg)	Date
12	MCW	BODY	1	0.014	11th-14th C
12	MCW	BODY	29	0.131	11th-14th C
12	EMSW	BODY	1	0.005	11th-12th C
12	MCW	CP/JAR	1	0.017	11th-14th C
12	MCW	CP/JAR	2	0.021	11th-14th C
12	MCW	BOWL	2	0.045	11th-14th C
12	MCW	BOWL?	1	0.012	11th-14th C
12	MCW	BOWL	2	0.031	11th-14th C
13	MCW	BOWL	2	0.017	11th-14th C
13	MCW	BODY	31	0.115	11th-14th C
13	MCW	CP/JAR	1	0.007	11th-14th C
13	LMT/LEPM	CHAF	1	0.001	15th-16th C
13	MCW	CP/JAR	1	0.004	11th-14th C
13	MCW	BODY	2	0.006	11th-14th C
14	UPG	JUG	1	0.037	12th-14th C
14	MCW	CP/JAR	1	0.006	11th-14th C
14	MCW	BODY	13	0.059	11th-14th C
16	GRE	PIP/JAR	1	0.023	16th-18th C
16	MCW	CP/JAR	1	0.003	11th-14th C
16	MCW	BODY	2	0.009	11th-14th C
17	GRE	JUG	1	0.026	16th-18th C
17	MCW	BOWL	1	0.006	11th-14th C

### Fabric codes

EMSW

MCW

UPG

LMT

LEPM

GRE

### Form codes

CP/JAR

CHAF

### Fabrics

Early medieval sandwich ware

Medieval coarseware

Unprovenanced glazed ware

Late medieval transitional wares

Local early post-medieval ware

Glazed red earthenwares

### Forms

Cooking vessel/jar

Chafing dish

### **Appendix 3: Ceramic Building Material**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Form</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Weight (kg)</b>	<b>Period</b>
12	BRICK	2	0.019	PMED
12	PAN TILE	2	0.076	PMED
13	TEGULA	2	0.310	RB
13	UNIDENT	6	1.116	RB
13	PAN TILE	1	0.019	PMED
13	BRICK	1	0.012	MOD
13	BREEZE BLOCK	1	0.014	MOD
14	BRICK	2	0.052	PMED
14	UNIDENT	2	0.016	UNDATED
15	FLOOR TILE	1	0.769	PMED
16	PAN TILE	1	0.056	PMED
18	BRICK	1	0.183	PMED
18	PAN TILE	2	0.020	PMED
18	UNIDENT	2	0.113	RB
19	FLOOR TILE	1	0.145	PMED
20	BRICK	1	0.028	PMED
20	PAN TILE	2	0.062	PMED
20	UNIDENT	3	0.200	?RB
21	FLOOR TILE	1	1.538	PMED
25	UNIDENT	2	0.010	PMED
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>4.758</b>	

#### Appendix 4: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Quantity
12	MPOT	39
12	PCBM	4
12	LEAD SF6	2
12	ALUMINIUM	1
12	FLINT	3
13	MPOT	38
13	RCBM/ PCBM	11
13	COPPER ALLOY incl SF4	2
13	FLINT	3
14	MPOT	15
14	PCBM/ UNIDENT	4
14	SILVER SF's1&2	2
14	COPPER ALLOY incl SF5	3
14	LEAD SF's7&8	2
14	FLINT	4
15	PCBM	1
16	MPOT/ PPOT	4
16	PCBM	1
16	FLINT	5
17	MPOT/ PPOT	2
17	SILVER SF3	1
17	FLINT	1
18	RCBM/ PCBM	5
18	FLINT	6
19	PCBM	1
19	FLINT	1
20	RCBM/ PCBM	6
20	FLINT	7
21	PCBM	1
24	FLINT	6
25	PCBM	2
25	FLINT	6

**Key:**

MPOT	Medieval pottery (Late Saxon-medieval)
PPOT	Post medieval pottery
RCBM	Roman ceramic building material
PCBM	Post medieval ceramic building material

**Appendix 5: Small Finds**

Small Find	Context	Quantity	Material	Object Name	Description	Date
1	14	1	Silver	Coin	William I	MED
2	14	1	Silver	Coin	Edward ?	MED
3	17	1	Silver	Coin	Edward ?	MED
4	13	1	Copper alloy	Strap loop		MED
5	14	1	Copper alloy	Ring	Fitting	
6	12	2	Lead	Shot		PMED
7	14	1	Lead	Artefact		
8	14	1	Lead	Pot mend		

*List of objects of non-archaeological value*

Context	Quantity	Period	Material	Object Name	Description	Date
12	1	MOD	Aluminium	Waste	Fragment	MOD
13	1	MOD	Copper alloy	Button	Domed top	MOD
14	1	PMED	Copper alloy	Harness plate		PMED
14	1	MOD	Copper alloy	Eyelet		MOD
14	2		Lead	Waste		

### ***Appendix 6: Flints by Type***

<b>Type</b>	<b>Number</b>
Tested piece	1
Flake	33
Spall	1
Piercer/scrapper	1
Scraper	1
Piercer	1
Retouched flake	2
Retouched	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>

### ***Appendix 7: The flint by context***

<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Number</b>
5	Flake	3
5	Retouched flake	1
12	Piercer/scrapper	1
12	Flake	2
13	Flake	3
14	Flake	4
17	Flake	1
18	Flake	5
18	Scraper	1
19	Retouched	1
20	Flake	7
24	Flake	5
24	Retouched flake	1
25	Tested piece	1
25	Flake	3
25	Spall	1
25	Piercer	1



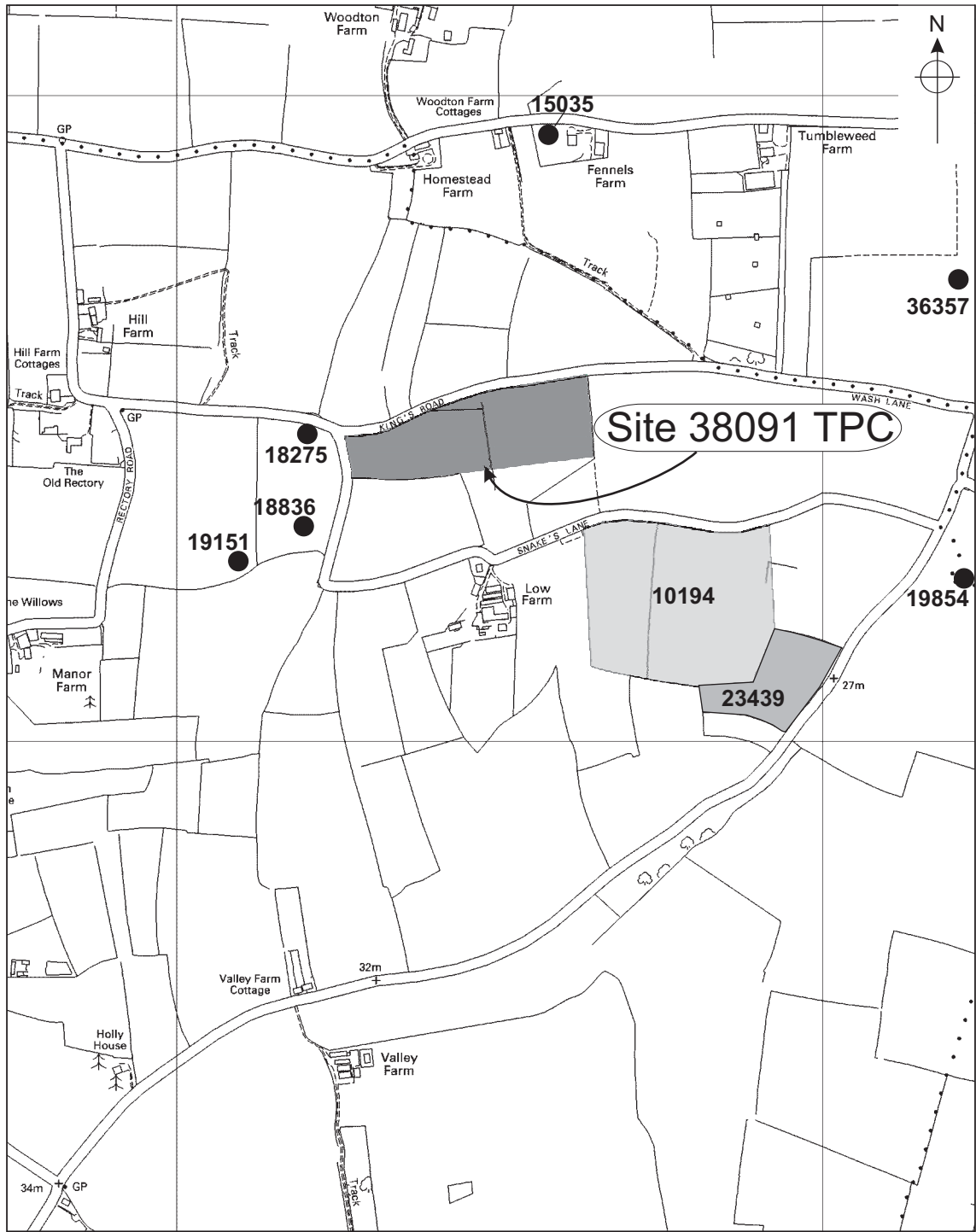


Figure 1. Site Location. Scale 1:10,000

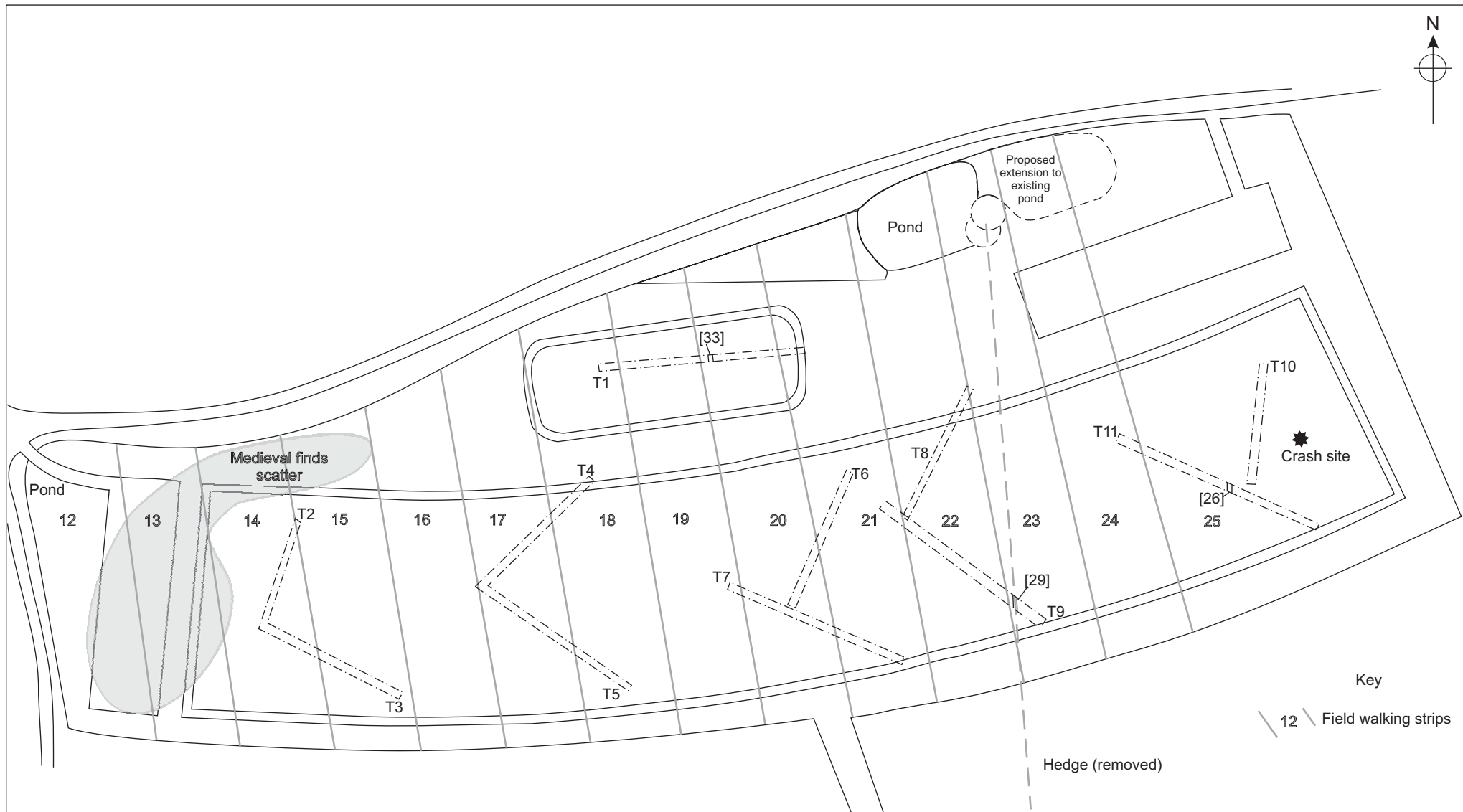


Figure 2. Location of Trenches 1 - 11. Scale 1:1250

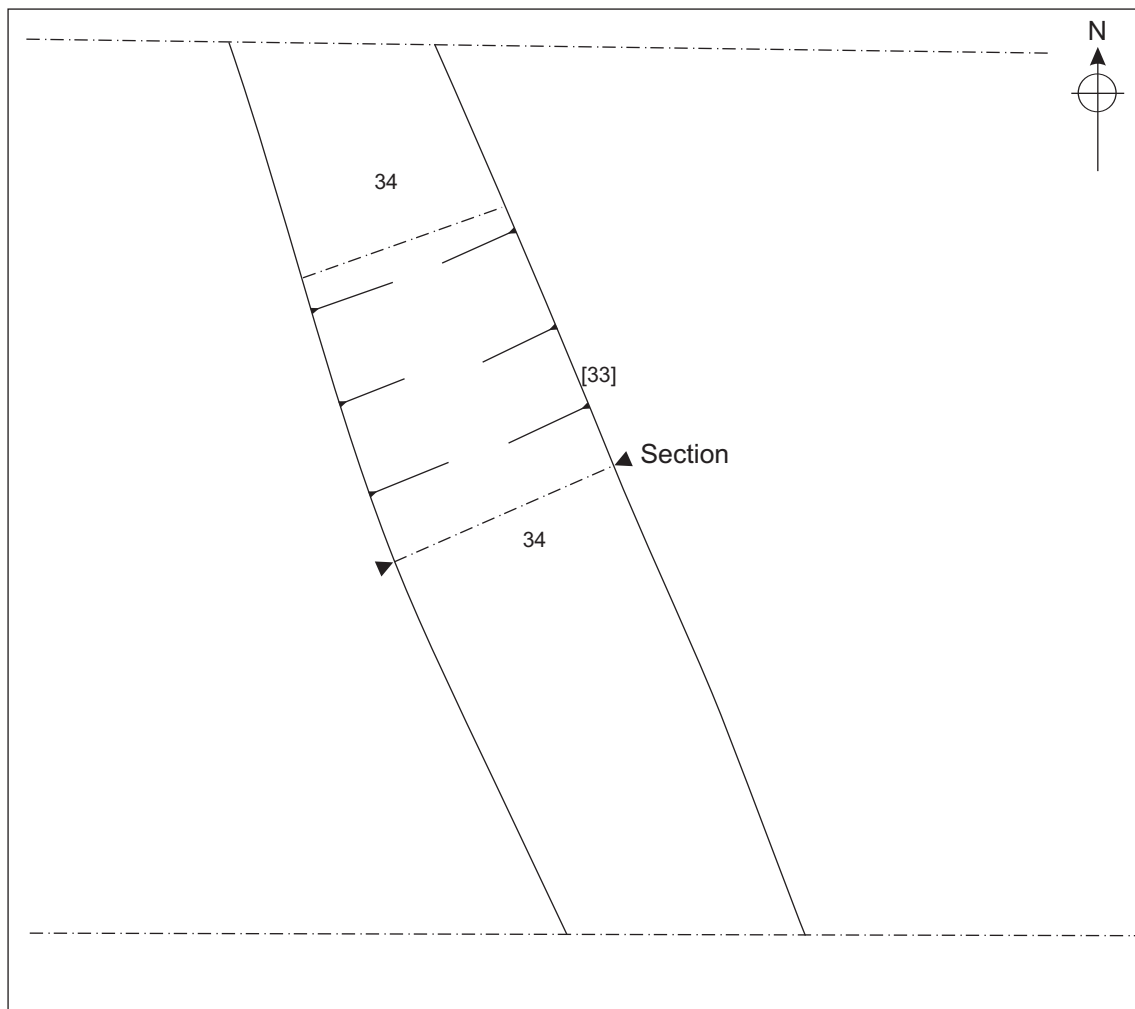
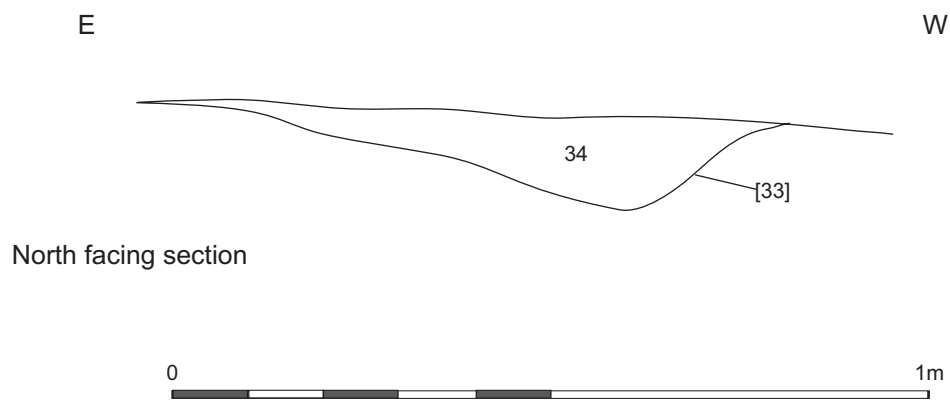
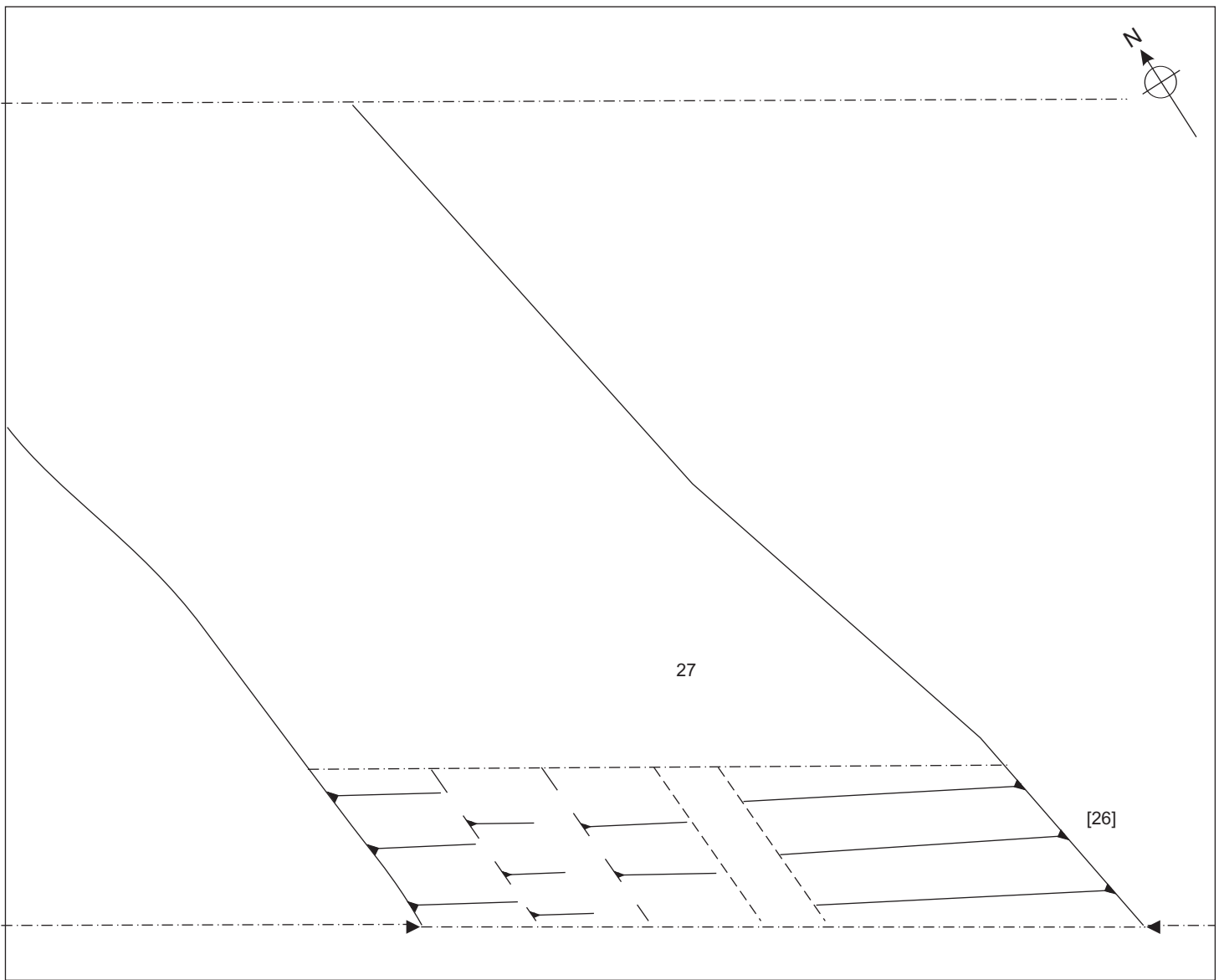


Figure 3. Ditch [33] in Trench 1, plan. Scale 1:20



North facing section

Figure 4. Ditch [33] in Trench 1, section. Scale 1:10



0 1m

Figure 5. Ditch [26] in Trench 11, plan. Scale 1:20

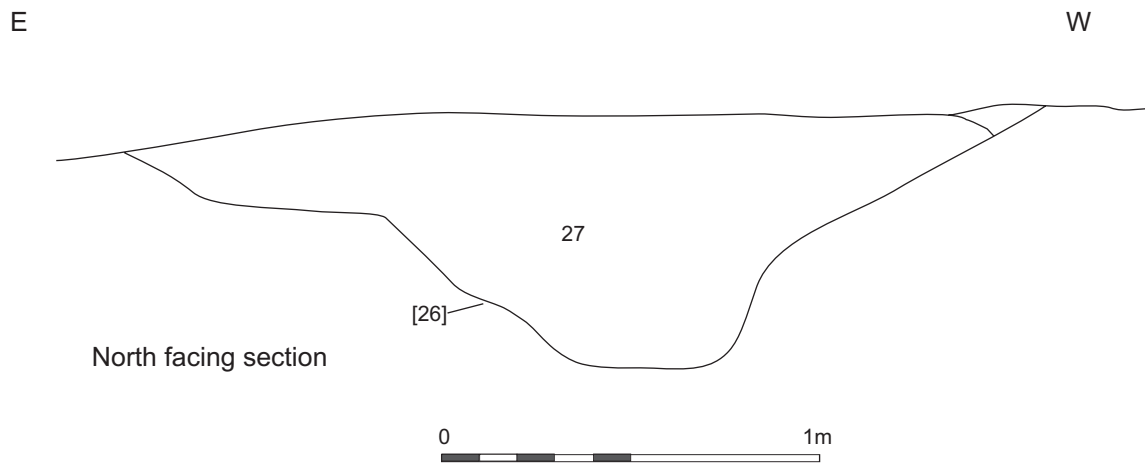


Figure 6. Ditch [26] in Trench 11, section. Scale 1:20