

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EARTHWORK EVALUATION REPORT

Land holdings of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust at Upper Hollesley Common, Nr. Woodbridge, Suffolk

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION, EARTHWORK
SURVEY AND FEATURE MAPPING 2006

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The Authors would like to thank the staff of Suffolk Wildlife Trust for their co-operation, in particular David Mason. Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service funded this project which was directed and managed by William Fletcher. James Rolfe and William Fletcher carried out fieldwork and features were mapped and recorded by James Rolfe.

Summary

A map, aerial photographic and landscape survey was completed on land at Hollesley Common, owned and managed by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. This work identified previously unknown earthworks relating to two periods, firstly, sites relating to activity from the 1st and 2nd World Wars were seen to overlie earlier features of a medieval and post medieval date. This work was carried out as part of a project designed to provide an assessment of suitable methodologies for use in large area of forest and heathland. It was shown that archaeological sites could be identified and surveyed with enough accuracy to provide useful GIS base maps, which in turn can be used to risk assess conservation management and habitat creation work. The aim is to minimise potential conflicts of interest in future work and highlight the archaeological potential of such areas.

SMR information

Date of fieldwork: October 2006

Grid Reference: TM31204680

Funding body: Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service

Oasis reference Suffolk - 21428

Introduction

During heath creation work and after a fire in 2005 David Mason of Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT) identified a series of previously unknown archaeological earthwork features on Upper and Lower Hollesley Common. During a field visit by Edward Martin and William Fletcher, Conservation Officers from Suffolk County Council Archaeology Service (SCCAS), the issue of management and mapping of the features was raised as a concern. The ideal scenario would be to features map and survey the site to provide SWT with a map and a series of management options. A collaborative project was established with the view to identifying a methodology for mapping the areas and identifying 'best practise guidance' for future work in this reserve and for habitat creation and heath management projects elsewhere in Suffolk.

During 2005 and 2006 a number of field visits were made to the area by the authors at different times of the year, to photograph and map visible features. The archival material held by Suffolk County Council Archaeology Service was searched and in addition SWT kindly provided access to aerial photographic material in their possession.

For ease of interpretation each of the 3 areas will be discussed separately with its own section.

Methodology

Initially a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER), the county-based public archives held and maintained by the Archaeology Service. This revealed that a number of sites were known from the common but had only been recorded in the past as point based data. Other archives held by the service were also interrogated, including aerial photographic archives and historical maps. It was clear that none of the features recognised on the ground matched the current records and a ground-based survey was required. Earthworks were initially plotted from a series of aerial photographs dating between 1940 and 1945 on to the GIS system held as part of the counties HER. A site examination was then carried out to ascertain the nature, extent and survival of any earthworks located during this process, colloquially known as 'ground truthing'. A handheld GPS unit was used to map the extent of the earthworks, a digital camera was used to record the earthworks visually, with additional written notes as required. It is recognised that this methodology is unlikely to identify all the known features on the holding due in part to the time and funding limitations of the project. It is also understood that the accuracy of the survey is limited with the use of a hand held GPS. That said, this project was designed to provide a better picture of the extent and nature of the resource for both the archaeologist and the holding managers. Furthermore it was designed to test a methodology that could potentially be used as a cost-effective approach in the future on other holdings owned and managed by organisations such as the Wildlife Trust.

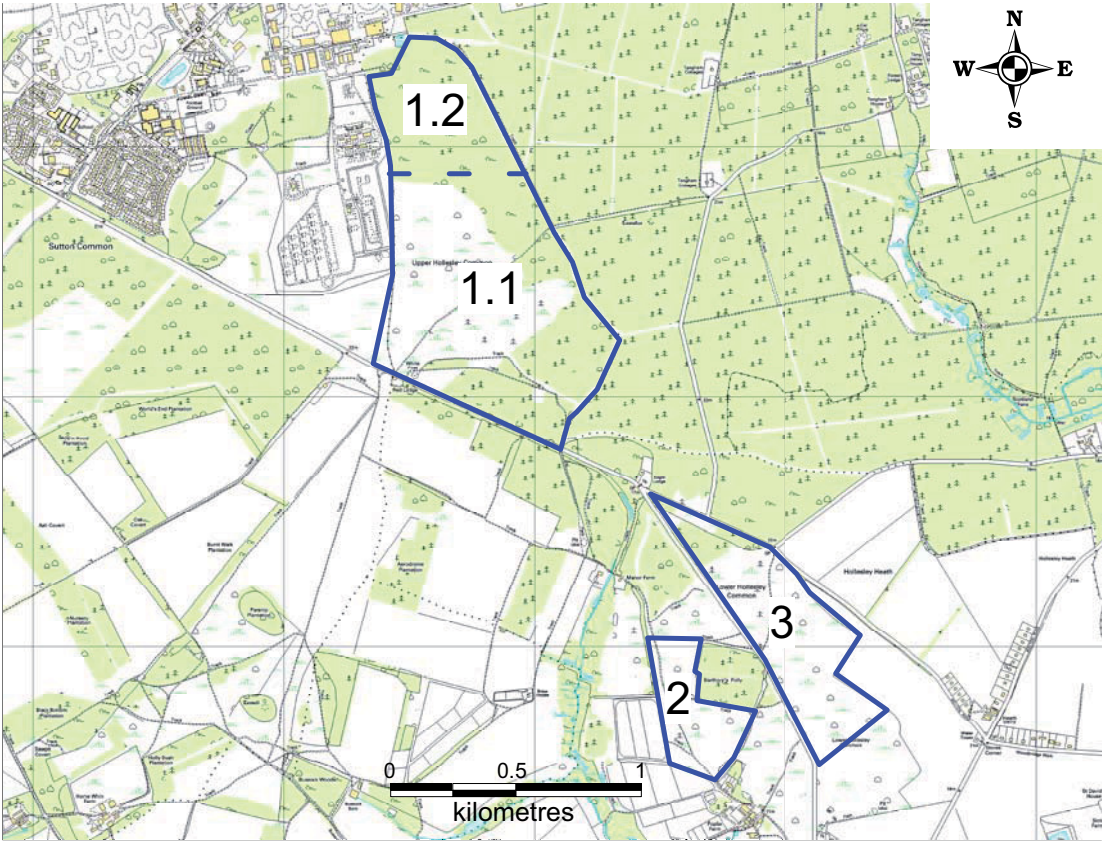
NB- Errors in the mapping of the feature are expected to within a 10m tolerance. The GPS unit for example is accurate to an average of 7m per point and the mapping from aerial photograph has an accuracy of 3m on average. However this is not a large problem given the size of the holding, and the relative size of some of the features. It is obvious which earthworks were seen on the aerial photographs and which they represent on the ground.

Results



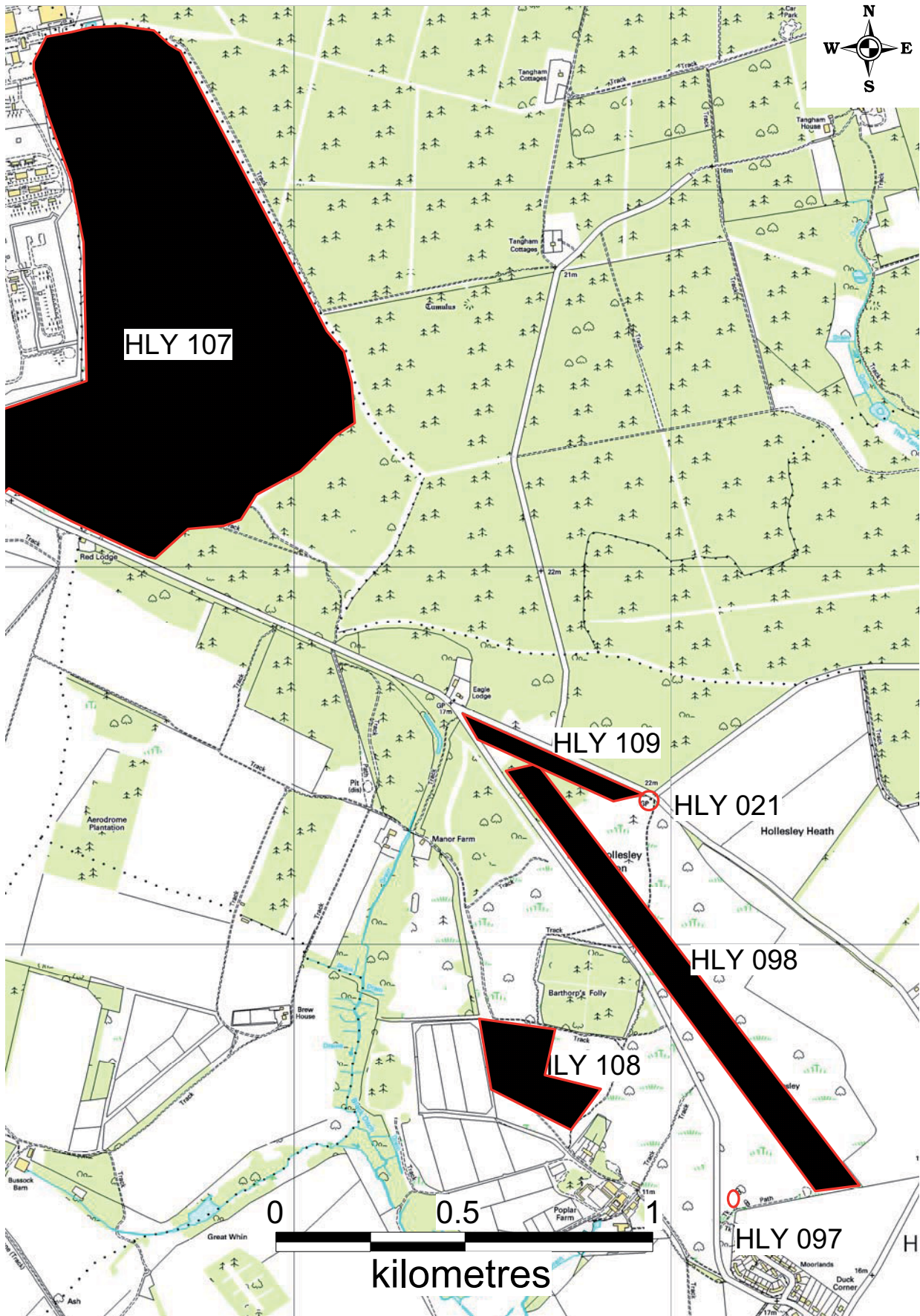
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Figure 1. Site location



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Figure 2. Areas Surveyed



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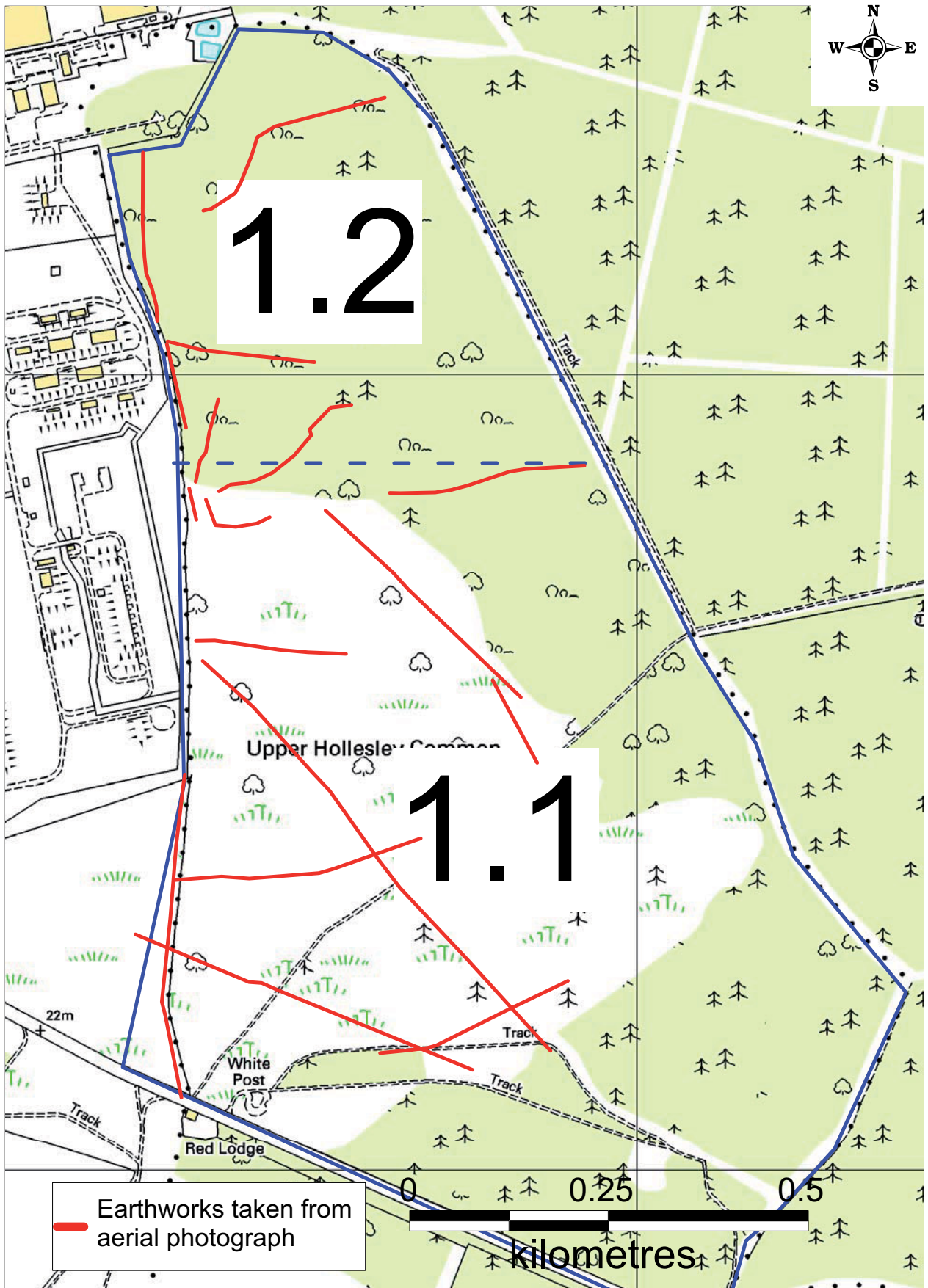
Figure 3. SMR entries within the survey areas

Area 1 (HLY 107)



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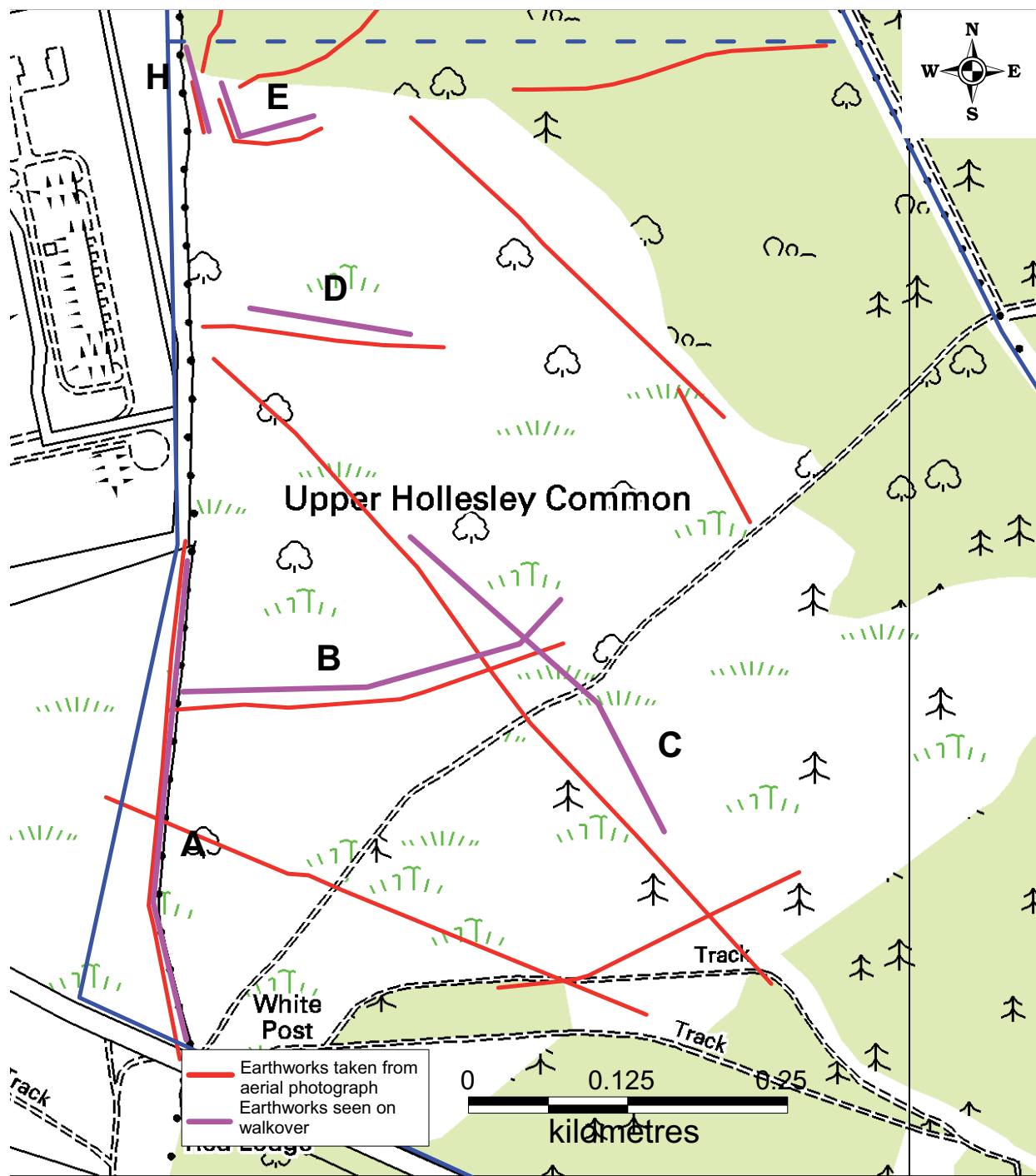
Figure 4. Aerial photograph of Area 1



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Figure 5. Earthworks plotted off the aerial photograph

Description of earthworks in area 1.1



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Figure 6. Area 1.1 earthworks

The vegetation in this area at the time of the walkover was bracken, heather and occasional patches of grass. The vegetation was mostly waist high and made it difficult to locate the earthworks.

A

This bank is approximately 380m long, 5m wide and between 0.5m – 1m high.



Figure 7. North end of A looking south



Figure 8. South end of A looking north-west

B

This bank is approximately 319m long, 4m wide at the west end and 0.5m high.



Figure 9. West end of B looking west



Figure 10. East end of B looking east

C

This bank is approximately 300m long, 4m wide and 0.3m high. It is visible where it crosses B and can just about be followed for approximately 200m to the north-west.



Figure 11. Middle of C looking north-west.

D

Bank approximately 130m long, 3m wide and between 0.3-0.6m high.



Figure 12. East end of D looking west



Figure 13. West end of D looking east

E

Right angle bank approximately 100m long 3m wide and 0.2-0.8m high.



Figure 14. E at south-east corner looking north-west.

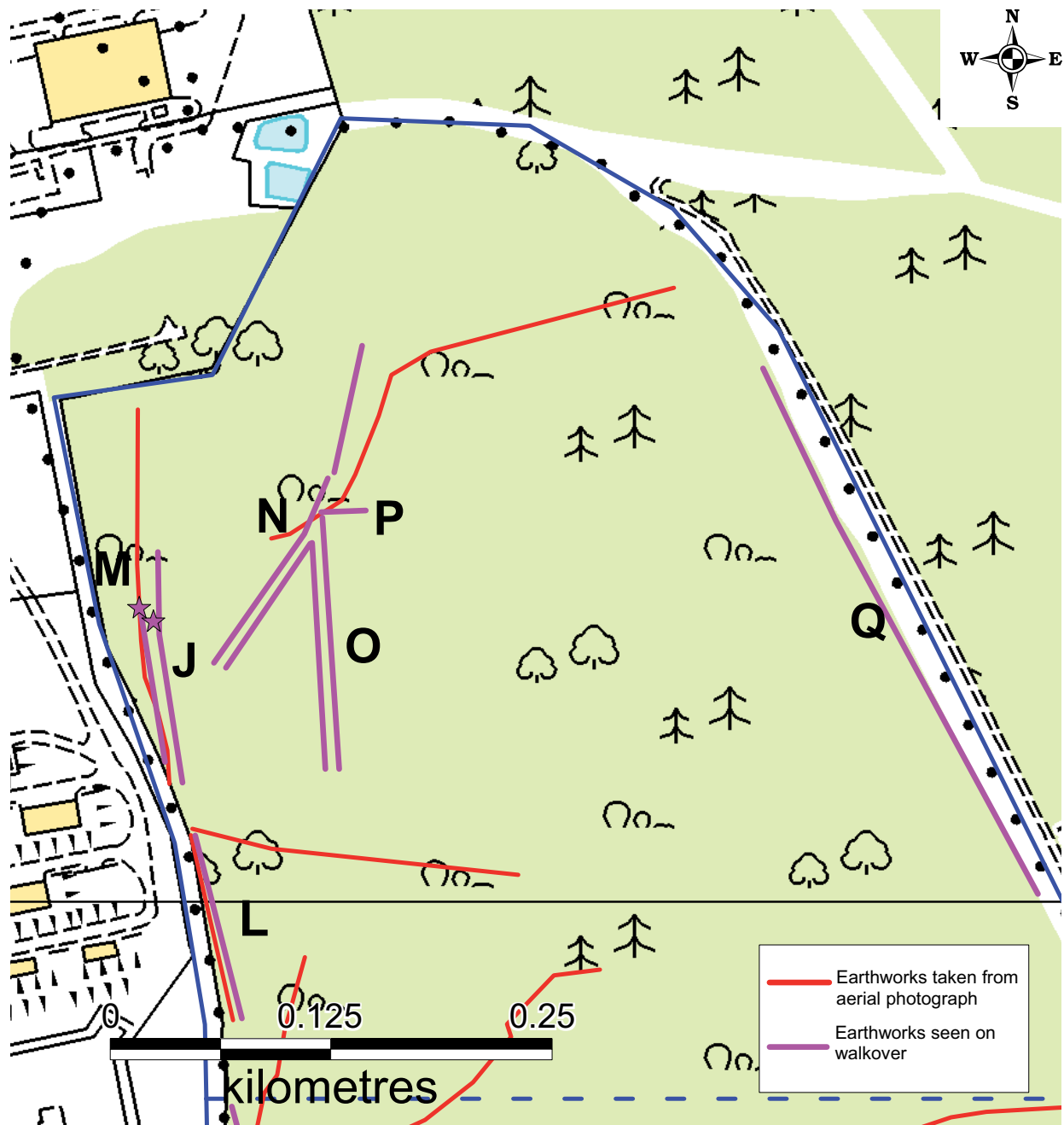
H

Bank approximately 75m long, 2m wide and 0.4m high.



Figure 15. North end of H looking south

Description of earthworks in area 1.2



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Figure 16. Area 1.2 earthworks

The vegetation cover in this area is bracken in the extreme southern area and becomes progressively denser woodland north and eastwards.

J and L

L is visible along the east side of the footpath and carries on to the north and forms J. L is approximately 100m long and J is approximately 130m long, both are 2-3m wide and 0.5m high.



Figure 17. Middle of L looking south.

M

M is to the west of and parallel to J, it comprises two banks approximately 100m long, 2m wide and 0.3m high, that are 4-5m apart forming a trackway. Between these two banks under the vegetation is a temporary metal road surface that runs for approximately 15m at the north end.



Figure 18. Metal road surface at M.

N, O and P.

N is two parallel banks that run for approximately 80m whereupon just the northern one continues for a further 120m. The trackway is 3m wide with a pronounced ditch to the north of the north bank. The banks are 2.5m wide and 0.5m high.

O is another trackway with the same dimensions as N and joins up to N and P at its northern end and runs roughly south for 140m.

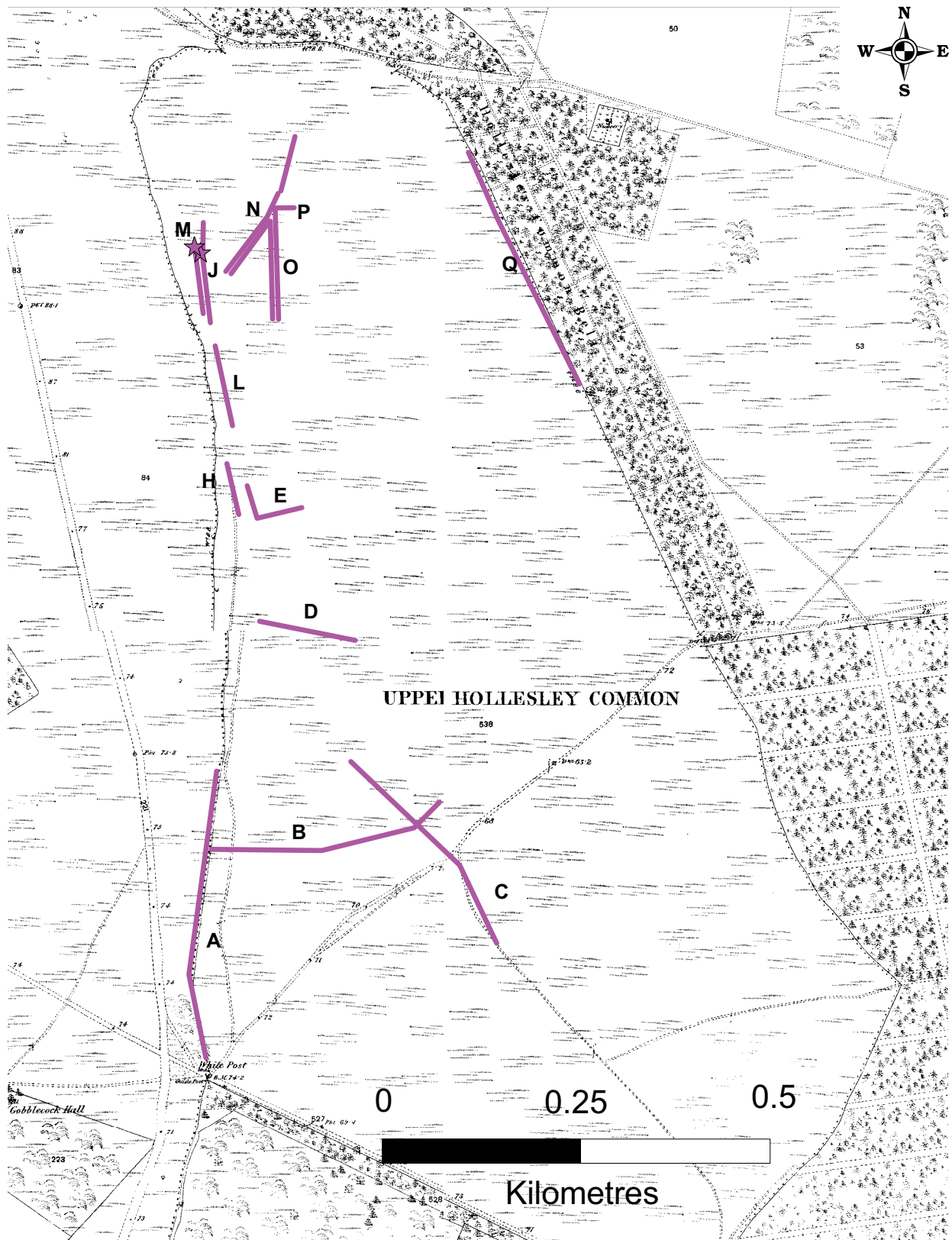
P is a single bank that joins N and O at its west end and runs east from this point for 25m.



Figure 19. Middle of N looking E with ditch.

Q

Bank approximately 340m long, 3m wide and 0.3m high. It runs parallel to the path and for the majority of its visible length it is covered with destumping waste material. (No picture is available, due to camera fault).

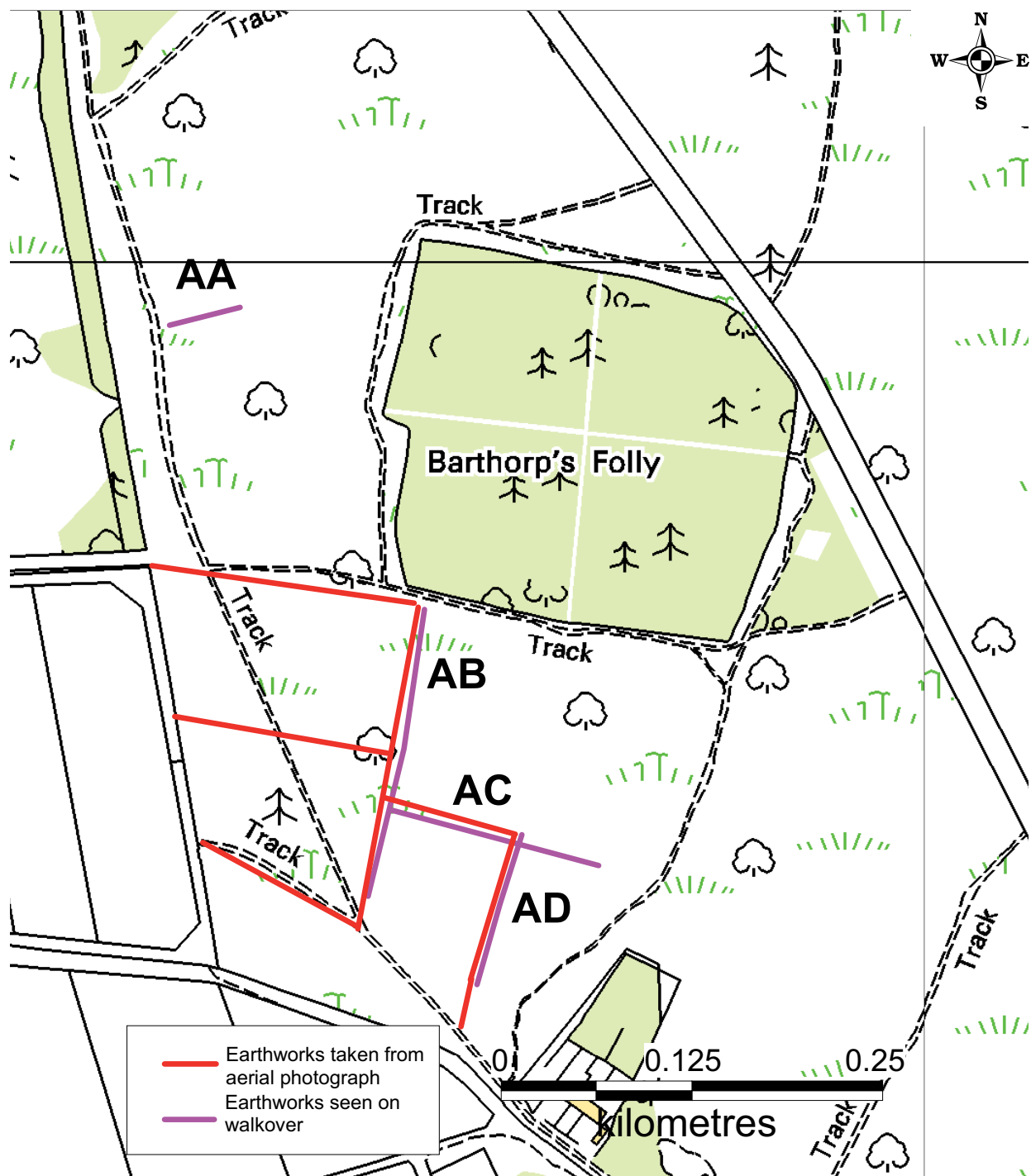


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Figure 20. Area 1, earthworks from the walkover survey and the 1st edition OS map 1880s.

As can be seen various earthworks A, C, H and Q are on boundaries or paths on the 1880s OS map.

Description of earthworks in Area 2 (HLY 108)



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Figure 21. Area 2 earthworks

Vegetation was variable between bracken heather and grass.

AA

AA is a bank approximately 50m long, 4m wide and 0.5m high.



Figure 22. Middle of AA looking west.

AB

This bank is approximately 200m long, 5-6m wide and 0.3-0.6m high.



Figure 23. North end of AB looking north.



Figure 24. South end of AB looking south.

AC

AC runs eastwards away from AB at a right angle. It is approximately 140m long 5m wide and 0.3-0.5m high.



Figure 25. West end of AC looking west.

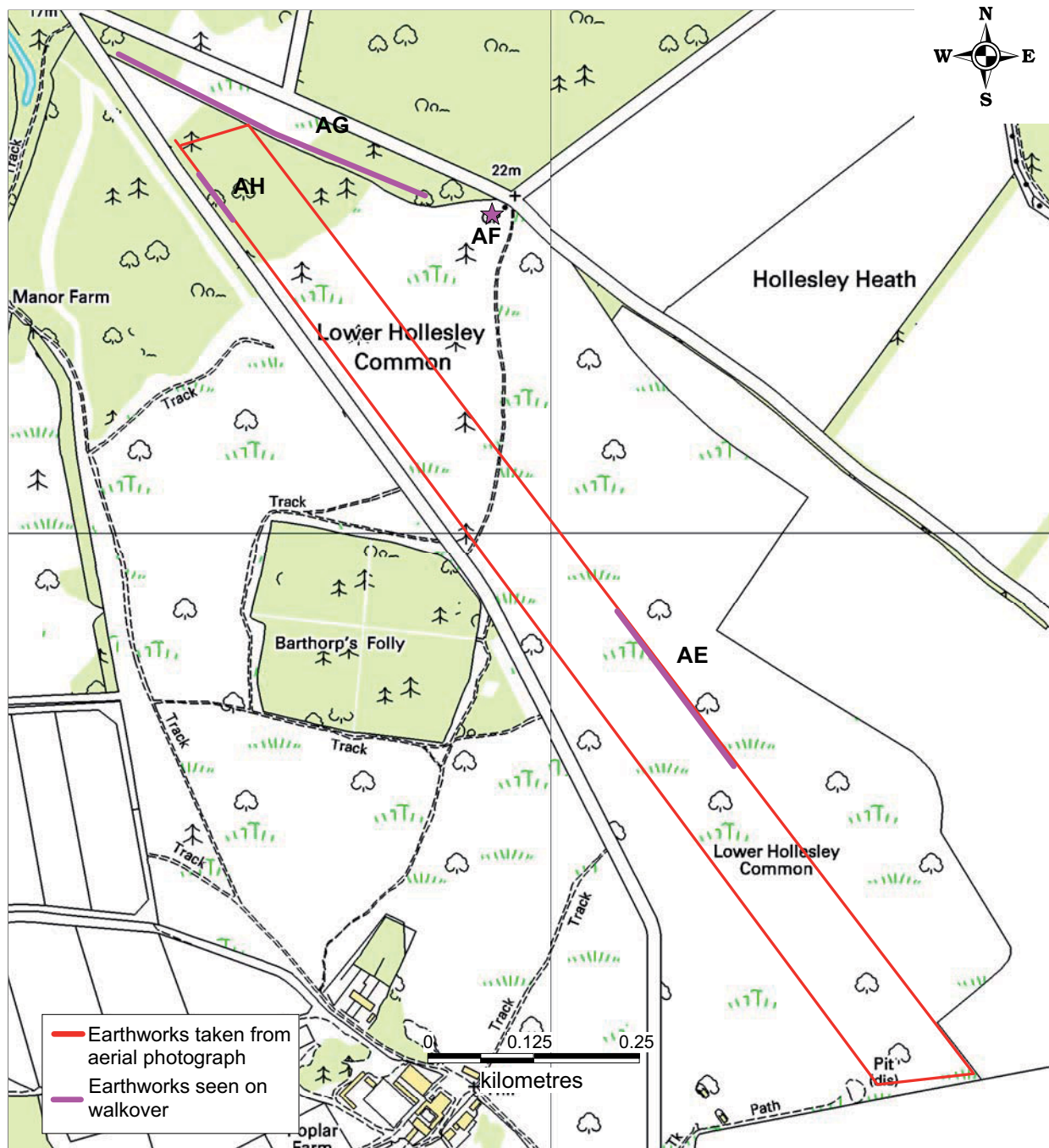
AD

AD starts about halfway along AC and is at right angles to it and parallel with AB. The bank is approximately 100m long, 4-5m wide and 0.2-0.3m high, the middle section is eroded down to 0.1m high.



Figure 26. South end AD looking south.

Area 3



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Figure 27. Area 3 earthworks

The vegetation cover over this area was mixed between rough grass, heather, gorse, bracken and woodland.

AE

AE is a bank forming the north-eastern side of the WWII dummy runway (HLY 098). The remains of the bank that are visible are approximately 230m long, 5m wide and 0.2m high.



Figure 28. Middle of AE looking south

AF

AF is a mound (HLY 021) approximately 20m long 5-10m wide and 1m high.



Figure 29. South side of AF looking north

AG

AG is a bank approximately 400m long, 1-2m wide by 0.2-0.4m high. It appears to be the boundary that is marked on the 1st edition OS 1880s map (see Fig. 32). It is part of the area including dole mounds recorded on the SMR as HLY 109.

AH

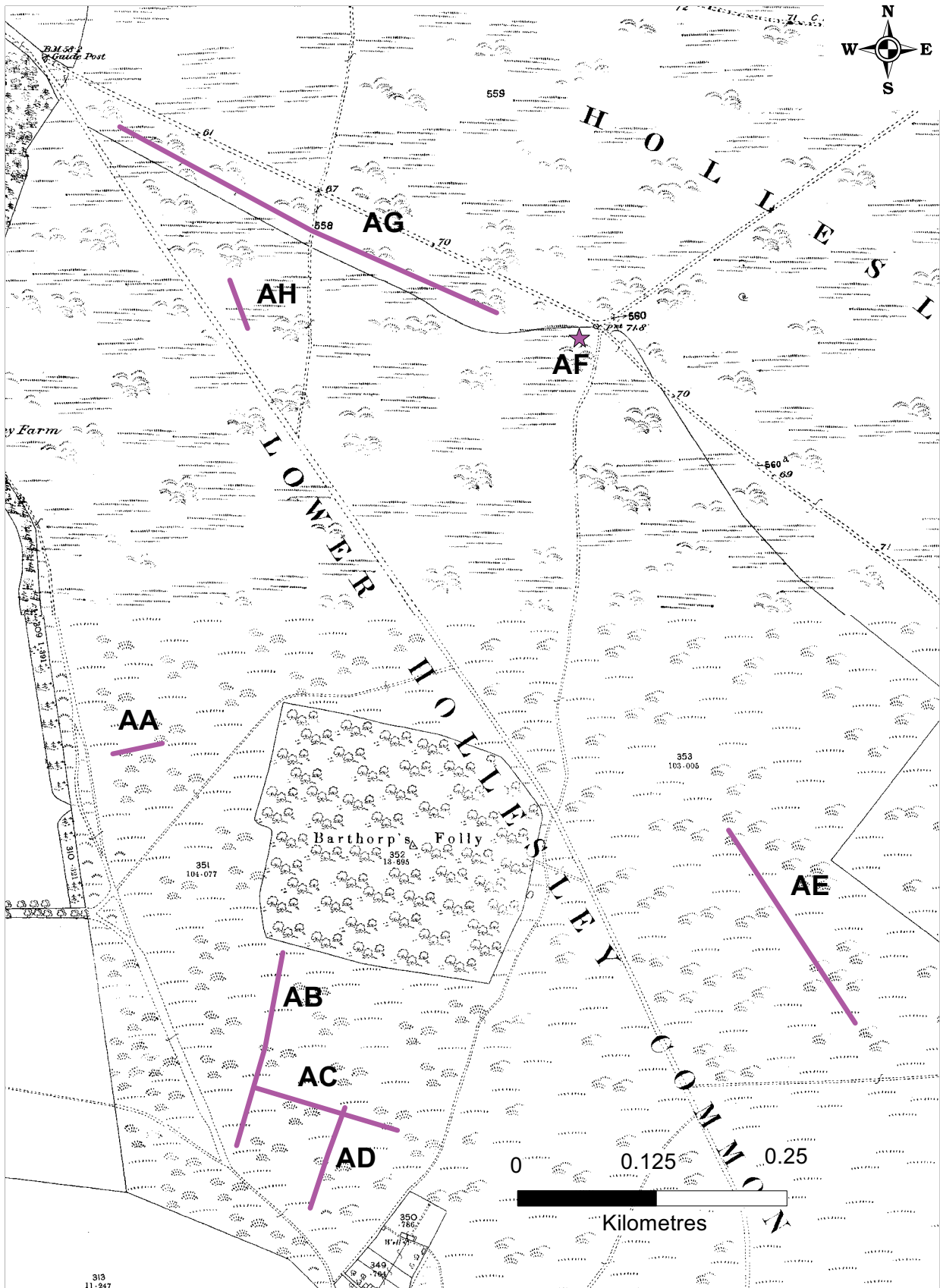
AH is a short stretch of the western bank of the WWII dummy runway. It is approximately 50m long, 1-2m wide and 0.1-0.3m high. No photo of this feature was taken as it was in dense bracken and tree cover.



Figure 30. East end of AG looking east



Figure 31. Middle of AG looking west.



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Figure 32. Area's 2 and 3, earthworks from the walkover survey, plotted on the 1st edition OS map 1880's.

Only the earthwork AG can be located on the 1880's OS map.

Discussion

Earthworks are very rare in Suffolk and East Anglia as a whole making up only approximately 2% of the known archaeological record. The survival of linear earthworks on this holding is exceptional, as with many areas of heath they have been scoured away, planted with forests, or ploughed out of existence. Earthworks of at least two periods are represented here. Firstly there is a medieval type field system of substantial earth banks and ditches, which underlies later features relating to military activity from the first and second world wars. No substantial documentary survey has been completed to back up this evidence and the date of these features is conjectural, but the survival of the earlier element is surprising as they have gone out of use by the time the Ordnance Survey were publishing the 1st edition maps in 1887 (Fig. 20 & 32). These features may relate to activities such as warrening or from a division of the common land into shares or parcels.

The second element is to be expected as the coast of Suffolk was heavily fortified, militarised and defended in both wars. The evidence on this holding is not just in the form of earthworks but from military structures such as pillboxes and gun emplacements. At least some of the earthworks belong to a dummy airfield, part of the ephemera that surrounded many large military bases or towns, which acted as a decoy to tempt the enemy away from more sensitive sites.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Features such as these are by their nature fragile and their survival unusual. Often it is the biodiversity or agricultural benefits of heaths that are championed, but here at least some physical man made reminders of the long cultural history can be seen. These are the evidence of the changing fortunes of the landscape particularly during different temporal and social periods. Organisations who own and manage this landscape need to recognise that there is a duty of care associated with the features and long-term sustainable management is the most favourable outcome.

Ideally management of the landscape should seek as far as possible to preserve the upstanding earthwork elements intact. This is made easier through identification and mapping. Therefore Best Practise Guidelines for the management of heaths should seek to

- Initially map and identify features on the ground through map and aerial photograph analysis.
- Complete a walkover survey and feature mapping exercise.
- Ensure that sensitive areas and features should be highlighted and identified in advance of work.
- Ensure that initial activity on the site for heath recreation and management such as ground clearance and deforestation should be risk assessed in relationship to the known archaeological resource and adapted where required.
- Provide archaeological risk assessment for ongoing management techniques.
- Activity around these areas which will compromise the integrity of the monuments should be restricted,
 - This includes ploughing, rotivation and other ground disturbance.
 - Restriction on the movement of heavy machinery.
 - Tree planting should be restricted and likewise the removal of woodland should be careful managed to ensure minimal damage to the features.

James Rolfe
William Fletcher
15th December 2006

Disclaimer

Any opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors.