Northamptonshire County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology

Watching brief for canopy walkway tower foundations at Salcey Forest Northamptonshire August 2005

Pat Chapman

October 2005

Report 05/119

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QUALITY CONTROL

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Checked and approved by	Andy Chapman		

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Watching brief for canopy walkway tower foundations at Salcey Forest, Northamptonshire	
Short description (250 words maximum)	A watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology, on behalf of the Forestry Commission, during the excavation of the foundation trenches for six steel towers for a canopy walkway through a section of Salcey Forest. However, no archaeological features or artefacts were found.	
Project type (eg DBA, evaluation etc)	Watching brief	
Site status (none, NT, SAM etc)		
Previous work (SMR numbers etc)	Earthwork Survey, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Current Land use	Forest open to public	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	No	
Monument type/ period	Medieval/post-medieval enclosures	
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address (including postcode)	Salcey Forest	
Study area (sq.m or ha)		
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq. numbers)	2805 4515	
Height OD	128m aOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Graham Cadman NCC Environment Team	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Carol Simmonds	
Project Manager	Anthony Maull	
Sponsor or funding body	Forestry Commission	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	August 2005	
End date	October 2005	
ARCHIVES	**Location (Accession no.)**	**Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)**
Physical		
Paper		
Digital		
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title		
Serial title & volume		
Author(s)		
Page numbers		
Date		

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WATCHING BRIEF FOR CANOPY WALKWAY TOWER FOUNDATIONS AT SALCEY FOREST, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

AUGUST 2005

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Abstract

A watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in Salcey Forest, Northamptonshire, on behalf of the Forestry Commission. Pairs of foundation trenches for six steel towers were excavated for the erection of a canopy walkway through a section of the forest in an area of earthworks. However, the walkway did not impact on the features and no archaeological remains or artefacts were found.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by the Forestry Commission to undertake a watching brief ahead of the building of a canopy walkway in the area of Hazel Copse at Salcey Forest, Northamptonshire (NGR: SP 805 515, Fig 1). The original proposal for the canopied walkway was of thirteen steel towers supporting a walkway rising through the trees on a path around two sides of a ride. This was revised, however, to six steel towers on the southern side of the ride, with the route of the canopy walkway being redirected following the pre-emptive Earthwork Survey by Northamptonshire Archaeology (Simmonds 2005), in order to avoid impacting on the earthworks (Figs 3 and 4).

The forest is on level ground at 128m aOD. The geology is Boulder Clay with mixed ironstone and flint (BGS 1969).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

An archaeological survey undertaken in 1996 (Hall 1996) identified a series of earthwork features initially found in the area known as Three Bridges Quarter. The features were interpreted as a series of substantial medieval banks for clearings reserved for deer dated to the late Saxon to later Norman periods, medieval coppice banks and ditches used to manage the forest for deer hunting and timber growth dated to 1568 though in existence by the 13th century, and a series of ponds.

A recent earthwork survey was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 2005 as a first stage of work in relation to the proposed walkway (Simmonds 2005). The earliest network of banks and ditches created three enclosures (Fig 2). Rectangular Enclosure 1 to the west shares a common boundary with Enclosure 2 to the north, both lying within Enclosure 3. Five coppice bank and ditch enclosures were identified, cutting across the earlier enclosures. There are also 19th century drainage ditches defining the rides which have become the modern paths and trackways, as well as other ditches, one of which appears to link Enclosure 3 to one of the ponds. These latter are probably natural hollows.

3 OBJECTIVES

The watching brief comprised observation of the machine excavations of the foundation trenches for the towers in the canopy walkway area (NA 2005). Two levels of archaeological observation were defined. A low key archaeological watching brief on the tower foundations was undertaken where they avoided the earthworks recorded during 2005, in order to identify any unexpected discoveries. A more intensive detailed watching brief took place where the ground works had the possibility to impact on the recorded earthworks.

This would have included:

- recording the structure and profile of any exposed earthwork sections as none are known to have been previously recorded in the vicinity
- Recover dating evidence bearing on construction, use or abandonment of the archaeological earthworks.

Provision had also been made for:

- Radiocarbon dating any suitable material recovered from secure contexts
- Pollen and macro-fossil assessment.

4 THE WATCHING BRIEF

Each of the six tower foundations were observed during or immediately after excavation during August 2005. Each foundation trench was excavated by a 360° excavator fitted with a toothed ditching bucket. The numbering of the foundation trenches follows the developer's plan (Fig 4).

None of the trenches intersected any of the earthwork features. In all cases the trenches cut through the topsoil and into the natural boulder clay.

The Tower 8 foundations comprised a 5m square with a central baulk 2.5m square and *c* 1m deep. The foundations of the remaining five towers comprised two parallel trenches 1.10m wide forming a square 5m wide and varying between 0.60m to 1.40m deep, separated by a central baulk (Figs 3 and 4). These foundations were filled with concrete to secure the frame of the base for the steel superstructure of the towers (Plate 2).

The natural boulder clay varied between the foundations. At Tower 13 in the south-west it comprised a clean compact brown to grey brown clay from 0.40m thick to the base of the trench 0.60m deep, with small rounded calcareous pebbles in the clay towards the bottom of the trench (Plate 1). Orange sand, probably from the Northampton Sand geology showed through in the base. From Towers 12 to 8 the frequency of the calcareous pebbles increased (Plate 3). The deeper clay also included some large flint nodules and occasional waterworn pebbles up to 200mm long. At Tower 11 there were also some small inlcusions of blue tenacious clay. The patches of orange sand also increased in frequency and size in the foundations of Towers 8 – 10 (Plate 4).

It would appear that the glacial boulder clays had transported the calcareous pebbles and large flint nodules from elsewhere as well as becoming mixed with the local sand geology.

The topsoil was consistent in all the trenches and comprised a shallow dark loam between 0.12m and 0.40m deep.

5 CONCLUSION

The final positioning of the canopy walkway towers meant that they avoided the recorded earthworks and no new features were discovered. The exposed natural revealed local Northampton Sands mixed in with the boulder clays, together with imported flint nodules and calcareous pebbles.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BGS 1969 *Towcester, Solid and Drift, Sheet 202*, British Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales)

NA 2005 *Project design for archaeological watching brief at Salcey Forest, Salcey, Northamptonshire*, Northamptonshire Archaeology

Simmonds, C, 2005 *Archaeological Earthwork Survey at Salcey Forest, Northamptonshire, April 2005*, Northamptonshire Archaeology Report 05/84

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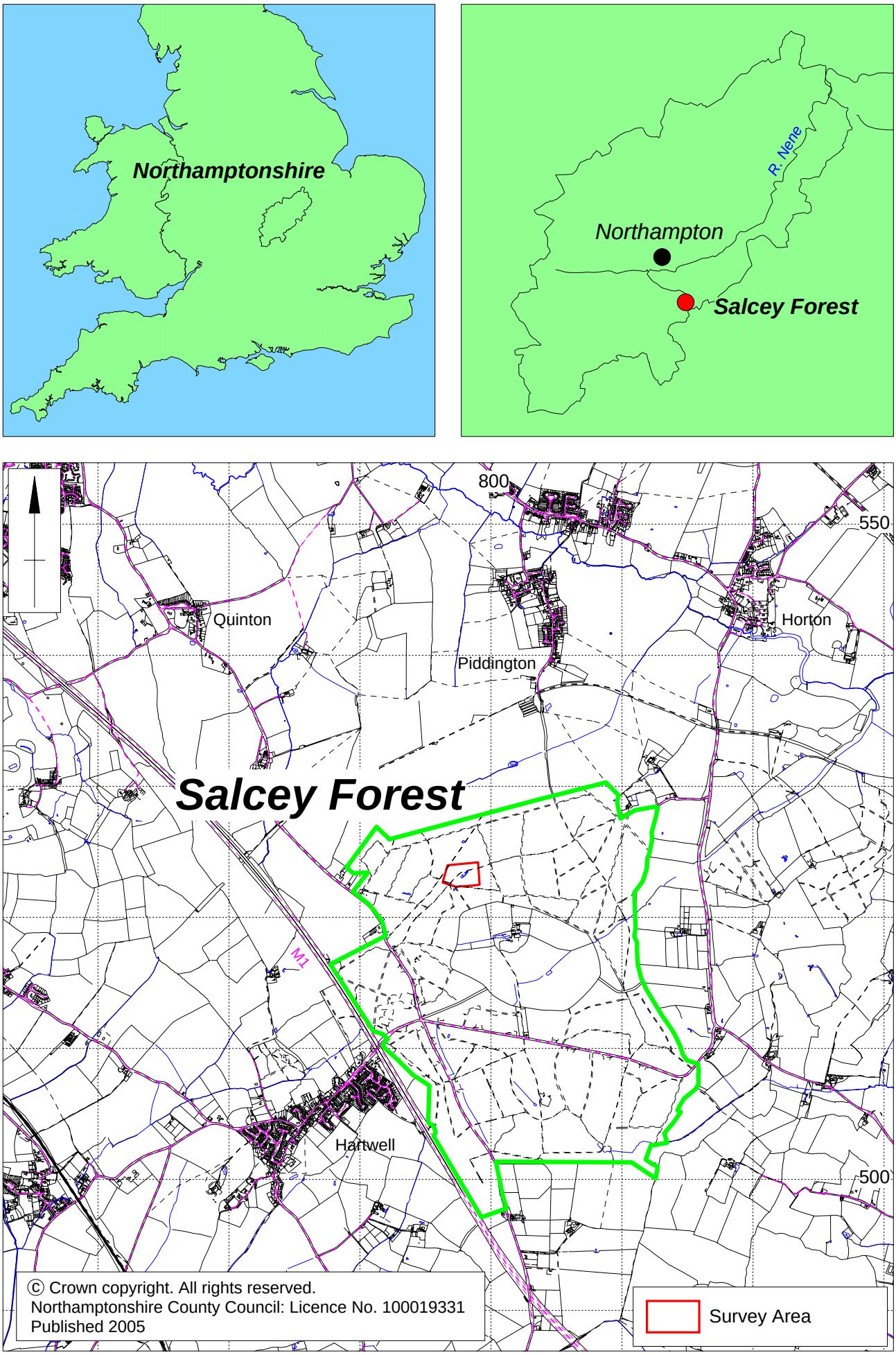

Scale 1:4000

Fig. 1

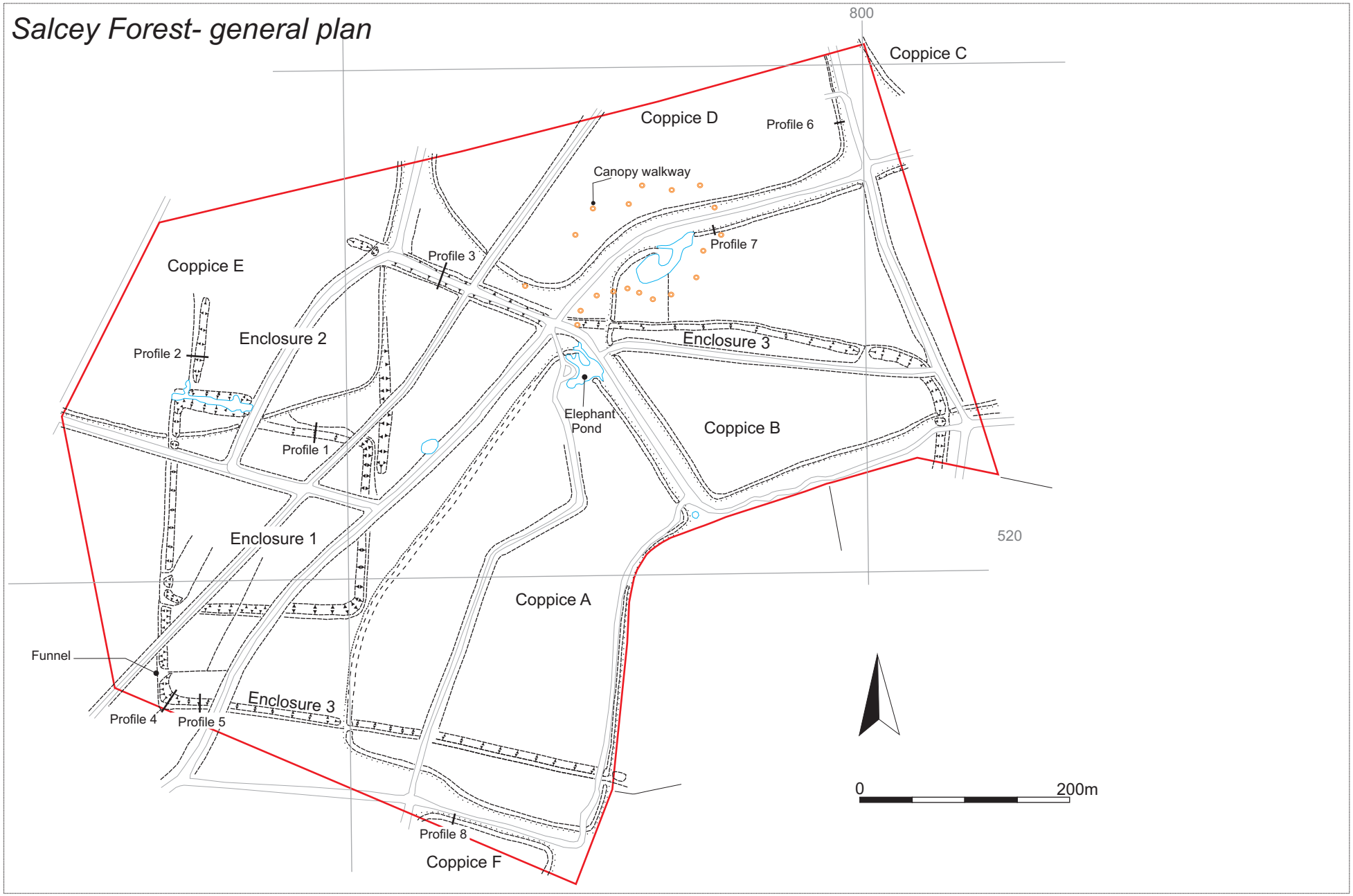
Salcey Forest- general plan
800
520
Coppice C
Coppice D
Profile 6
Canopy walkway
Profile 7
Profile 3
Coppice E
Profile 2
Enclosure 2
Enclosure 3
Elephant Pond
Coppice B
Profile 1
Enclosure 1
Coppice A
Funnel
Enclosure 3
Profile 4
Profile 5
Profile 8
Coppice F
0
200m

Fig. 2

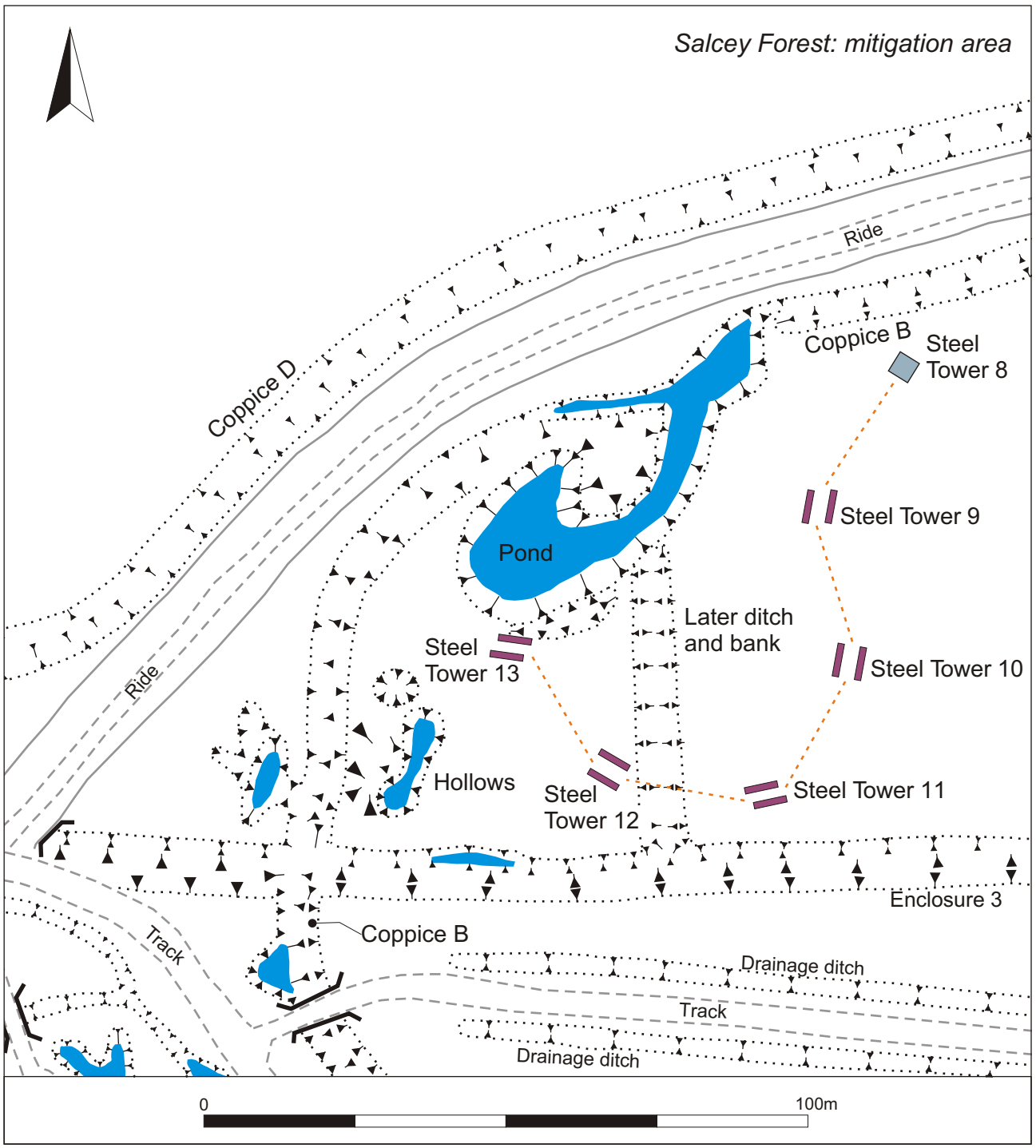
Salcey Forest: mitigation area
Ride
Coppice D
Coppice B
Steel
Tower 8
Steel Tower 9
Pond
Later ditch
and bank
Steel
Tower 13
Steel Tower 10
Ride
Hollows
Steel
Tower 12
Steel Tower 11
Enclosure 3
Coppice B
Track
Drainage ditch
Track
Drainage ditch
0
100m

Fig. 3

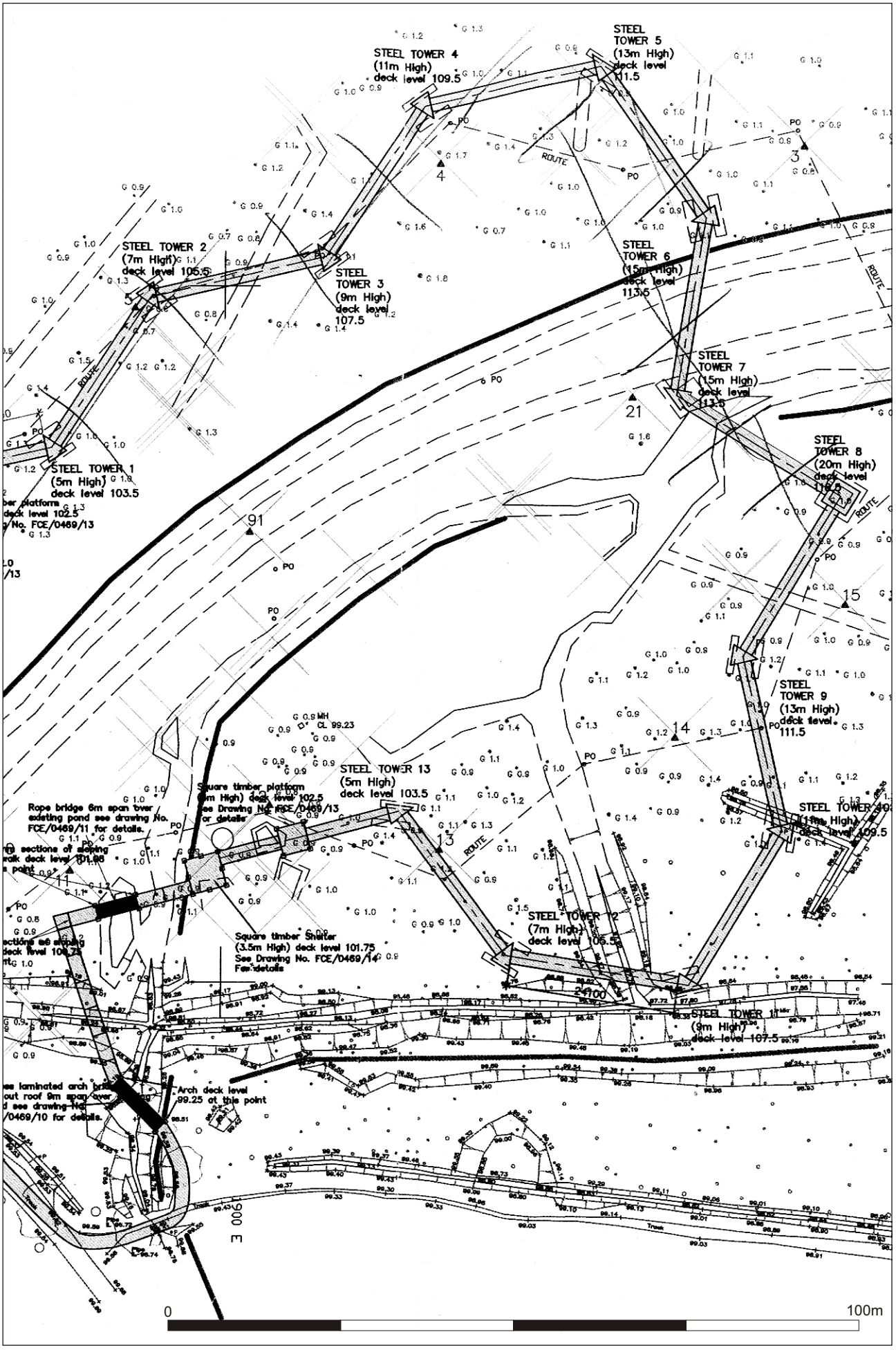
STEEL TOWER 4
(11m High)
deck level 109.5
STEEL TOWER 5
(13m High)
deck level 111.5
STEEL TOWER 2
(7m High)
deck level 105.5
STEEL TOWER 3
(9m High)
deck level 107.5
STEEL TOWER 6
(15m High)
deck level 113.5
STEEL TOWER 7
(15m High)
deck level 113.5
STEEL TOWER 1
(5m High)
deck level 103.5
STEEL TOWER 8
(20m High)
deck level 116.5
STEEL TOWER 9
(13m High)
deck level 111.5
STEEL TOWER 13
(5m High)
deck level 103.5
Square timber platform
(9m High) deck level 102.5
See Drawing No. FCE/0469/13
for details
Rope bridge 6m span over
existing pond see drawing No.
FCE/0469/11 for details.
Square timber Shelter
(3.5m High) deck level 101.75
See Drawing No. FCE/0469/14
for details
STEEL TOWER 12
(7m High)
deck level 105.5
STEEL TOWER 11
(9m High)
deck level 107.5
Arch deck level
99.25 at this point
ROUTE
PO
0
100m

Fig. 4

Plate 1: Foundation for Tower 13

Plate 2: Steel base for tower concreted in, Tower 13

Plate 3: South side of foundation trench, Tower 11

Plate 4: Natural deposits in foundation trench, Tower 10