



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Earthwork survey of a bank adjacent to the
north-east edge of Lawn Wood, Newton Linford,
Leicestershire



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Northamptonshire
County Council

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Report 10/115

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**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY
JULY 2010**

**EARTHWORK SURVEY OF A BANK
ADJACENT TO THE NORTH-EAST EDGE OF
LAWN WOOD, NEWTOWN LINFORD
LEICESTERSHIRE
SEPTEMBER 2009/MAY 2010
X.A153.2009**

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Earthwork survey of a bank adjacent to the north-east edge of Lawn Wood, Newtown Linford, Leicestershire, September 2009 and May 2010	
Short description (250 words maximum)	A survey, by Northamptonshire Archaeology, of the linear monument that has survived variously as a ditch, bank and ditch or wall and ditch, along the north-east edge of Lawn Wood was carried out using a total station theodolite. It revealed significant variation in the preservation of the monument probably as a result of post-medieval degradation through non-maintenance. In places the monument survived as little more than a slight hollow but at its southern end it was more substantial. Unfortunately at both ends and for a section in its centre the monument could not be surveyed owing to vegetation cover or extant buildings.	
Project type (eg DBA, evaluation etc)	Earthwork survey	
Site status (none, NT, SAM etc)	None	
Previous work (SMR numbers etc)	MLE2785	
Current Land use	Woodland	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	Unknown	
Monument type/ period	?medieval woodbank	
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	N/A	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Leicestershire	
Site address (including postcode)	Lawn Wood, Newtown Linford, LE6 0AB	
Study area (sq.m or ha)	0.7km long	
OS Easting & Northing	SK 512 098	
Height OD	140m AOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Andrew Joseph's Ltd	
Project Design originator	Ian Meadows	
Director/Supervisor	Adrian Burrows, Carol Simmonds	
Project Manager	Ian Meadows	
Sponsor or funding body	Midland Quarry Products	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	14 July 2009	
End date	26 May 2010	
ARCHIVE	Location/Accession No	Content
Paper	X.A153.2009	
Digital	X.A153.2009	
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Title	unpublished client report (NA report)	
	Earthwork survey of a bank adjacent to the north-east edge of Lawn Wood, Newtown Linford, Leicestershire	
Serial title & volume	10/115	
Author(s)	Ian Meadows	

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**EARTHWORK SURVEY
OF A BANK ADJACENT TO THE NORTH-EAST EDGE OF LAWN WOOD
NEWTOWN LINFORD, LEICESTERSHIRE**

Abstract

A survey, by Northamptonshire Archaeology, of the linear monument (MLE2785) that has survived variously as a ditch, bank and ditch or wall and ditch, along the north-eastern edge of Lawn Wood was carried out using a total station theodolite. It revealed significant variation in the preservation of the monument, probably as a result of post-medieval degradation through non-maintenance. In places the monument survived as little more than a slight hollow but at its southern end it was more substantial. Unfortunately, at both ends and for a section in its centre the monument could not be surveyed owing to vegetation cover or extant buildings.

1 INTRODUCTION

Midland Quarry Products, through Andrew Josephs Ltd, commissioned Northamptonshire Archaeology to accurately locate and survey the earthwork woodbank that defines the north-eastern edge of Lawn Wood, Newtown Linford (NGR: SK 512 098, Fig 1).

The work was to inform an appropriate mitigation strategy for the site's context in a proposed landscaping scheme. Unfortunately the timing of the survey, July 2009 and May 2010, meant that there was a well developed ground cover of trees, holly bushes and bracken which not only hampered access to the monument, but in certain parts made observation impossible. In fact, neither its northern or southern ends were observed in July 2009 as at both points the monument extended into areas of dense vegetation, in consequence the site was revisited in May 2010 to complete the survey.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and geology

The study area is located at about 140m AOD on a mixture of Jurassic Lias and Triassic mudstone and conglomerate geology. It comprises a linear earthwork running along the north-eastern edge of Lawn Wood, part of an extensively wooded landscape to the south and east of Newtown Linford.

2.2 Historical background

It is believed that Lawn Wood may have formed part of the larger extent of Bradgate Park, as suggested by some authors (eg Squires and Humphrey 1986) as it lies between the present Bradgate Park and Groby Park. This is just to the south of the area of medieval open fields associated with Newtown Linford, which probably came into existence as a daughter settlement at some stage in the 13th century; therefore its open fields would not have been an impediment to the earlier park.

The area of the original core of Bradgate Park has been identified on the ground by earthworks of the former pale, where it survives, and by the edges of the medieval cultivation (*op cit*). The park was expanded beyond this point in the 16th century by Thomas Grey but largely to the east. Medieval parks are, however, often more extensive than just the core, sometimes extending over many hectares beyond.

The Domesday Book records extensive woodland in Groby, but it is not possible to identify discrete parcels that may still survive. It was also unfortunate that the area was not covered by the 12th-century Leicestershire survey. In the inheritance of William de Ferrers, four parks are mentioned in his lands at Groby, one was definitely Bradgate and it may indicate that the broader park was composed of dissociated elements. In the *Inquisition Post-Mortem* of William de Ferrers in 1288 (Farnham 1930) the areas of wood are described as providing pasture and pannage and certainly the name Lawn Wood would suggest sparse trees or open woodland such as might be present in an area that was grazed.

The earliest map identified of the study area to include Lawn Wood was an 18th-century map of Groby manor (Plan of Groby Manor in the county of Leicestershire by Bailey LRO DG20/Ma/132/1). It does not appear on the approximately contemporary plan of Bradgate (DG20/Ma/42/1). On the plan of Groby manor the form of the edge of Lawn Wood being studied was apparently the same as it is now, this unchanging nature of the boundary was repeated through the early editions of the Ordnance Survey maps 1835 to 1908 (Figs 2-4). The wood in these earlier maps was divided into two parts, Lawn Wood and Old Wood and most of the surveyed earthwork relates to the edge of Old Wood not Lawn Wood. Of note is the fact that the track shown on the Groby manor plan as forming the division between the two parcels is no longer in use and would appear to have ceased to function by the time of the Ordnance Survey.

2.3 Historic Environment Record information

Relevant information from the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) was provided by Helen Wells (Table 1; Fig 5).

In addition to a large number of historic buildings within Newtown Linford, and the remains of the kennels and stables associated with the former Bradgate House, many of the entries relate to either stray finds or unexcavated cropmarks or soil marks.

The entry for the woodbank, the subject of the current study (MLE2785), refer to the variations in its form, such as the localised occurrence of a drystone wall, and refer to banks which the present survey identified as very slight undulations. However, it should be borne in mind that the complete length was not available for survey owing to areas of dense undergrowth.

Table 1: Summary of Historic Environment Record entries

HER No.	NGR (SK)	Monument description
MLE734	517 100	Newtown Linford village
MLE755	511 102	Circular soil mark
MLE2755	5080 0903	<i>Stywodeshaye</i> in 1343 is referred to, possibly referring to a dwelling
MLE2756	507 090	Bradgate House erected in 1856
MLE2765	516 089	Cropmark of possible Bronze Age ring ditch (?barrow)
MLE2767	510 099	Undated circular enclosure 20m diameter
MLE2779	Cntr 51 08	Grobby Park (not illus)
MLE2785	510 098	Wood bank at Lawn Wood
MLE6107	515 101	Mid-late Saxon gilt bronze fitting
MLE 6546	50470 10129	Upper stone of a late Iron Age beehive quern
MLE7340	514 099	Copper alloy spoon of 16th/17th-century date
MLE7756	514 099	Roman brooch 50-150AD
MLE9139	514 104	Part of silver penny 1279+
MLE10194	515 100	Medieval Ceylonese coin
MLE17126	507 092	Stables and kennels to Bradgate House built 1856

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of the survey was to accurately locate the earthwork and produce a series of representative profiles across its line at points selected as typical of the range of preservation conditions encountered, or where variations in its form or character occurred. In addition to the location of the woodbank, the tops and bottoms of slopes were surveyed, as far as is possible, to demonstrate the form of the surviving earthworks

The survey was undertaken using a Leica TCR 307 Total Station, positioned from control points established by Leica System 1200 GPS to an accuracy of +/- 20mm to Ordnance Survey National Grid and Datum. At a number of locations during the survey the lines of sight were interrupted by vegetation. The results have been plotted using Mapinfo and hachure plans and profiles have been generated from this data. (Fig 6).

4 THE SURVEY

In places, dense and impenetrable undergrowth made locating, identifying and surveying the features impossible.

This was particularly true of the extreme north-western and south-eastern ends of the monument where its line was in places lost in vegetation and lines of sight were difficult to achieve. In the central part of the survey area the monument was also obscured by farm buildings and vegetation.

4.1 Western area

The most north-westerly portion of the monument (Fig 7) is characterised by a shallow ditch, between 1.50-2.0m wide. At its western end it turns a 90-degree corner to run at least 20m south (Fig 8, Profile 52), at which point it is 0.4m deep but its course further south was obscured by vegetation. To the east of this corner the monument was intermittently traced for the next 130m as a flared ditch, 2m wide and about 0.7m deep (Fig 8, Profiles 50 & 51). A length of 40m could not be surveyed owing to a dense growth of self-set holly trees. At the eastern end of this length the monument doglegs north and then east again.

After the dogleg the monument on its north-east side is intermittently a slight bank surmounted by a low stone wall (Fig 9, Profile 1). Further to the south-east, there is no wall and the monument is a shallow splayed ditch 1.5m wide and 0.2m deep (Fig 9, Profile 3) with only the slightest evidence for an external bank. The ditch increases in size to 2.25m wide and 0.6m deep further to the south-east (Fig 10, Profile 5) where it is a flared V-shape, but the evidence for a bank became ever more equivocal. Unfortunately, the next 150m adjacent to the farm were obscured and could not be surveyed.

4.2 Central area

The profile to the immediate east of the farm is a flared V-shape 2.4m wide and 0.6m deep (Fig 11 & 10, Profile 6) with a suggestion of an external bank, however, it could be as much the natural lie of the land.

Over the next 40m (Fig 11) the profile changes to a flat-bottomed U-shape, 3.0m wide and over 1.0m deep (Fig 12, Profile 8). The cut has changed in profile to a U-shape with a flared top by the next section (Fig 12, Profile 10). At both points the cut of the ditch follows the contour, producing the effect of an external bank by isolating the break of slope. The cut is 1.7m deep and 1.2m wide in its lowest part and flares to 3.1m wide at the surface.

Although at various points rock was seen projecting from the cut of the ditch, at no stage was an area of the original cut surface exposed. However, it is likely that the feature was largely cut into the natural rock. For the rest of this section of its course the monument comprises a flared U-shaped ditch just under 3.0m wide at the top and between 1.3 and 1.7m deep (Fig 13, Profiles 11 & 12) following just above the break of slope to create the appearance of a bank.

4.3 Eastern area

For the next 100m of its length the feature could not be observed owing to a substantial growth self set holly trees.

Where it was again possible to survey, a length of 25m was recorded, with the monument comprising a linear hollow 2m wide and about 0.4m deep (Fig 14 & Fig 13 Profile 53). This length of the monument could be traced to a right-angled corner where it turned to run north-east, at this point there was an area of irregular disturbance which may have been the result of a tree throw or limited quarrying.

The monument continued north-eastwards for a further 110m to a hollow adjacent to the brook. At this point the inner southern edge of the ditch was surmounted by a short length of bank and the opposite side by a drystone wall (Fig 15). In this area the monument had a very wide slack profile about 2m wide and up to 0.2m deep (Fig 14 & Fig 13 Profile 54).

The drystone wall was traced to the stream where it stopped, but appeared to continue on the opposite bank. The ditch shallowed to about 0.1m and turned to run south-east for 20m before swinging round to run east to the stream where it ended (Fig 16). A short 2m interruption in the course of this part of the shallow ditch may reflect either a deliberate break in its course or just localised infilling.

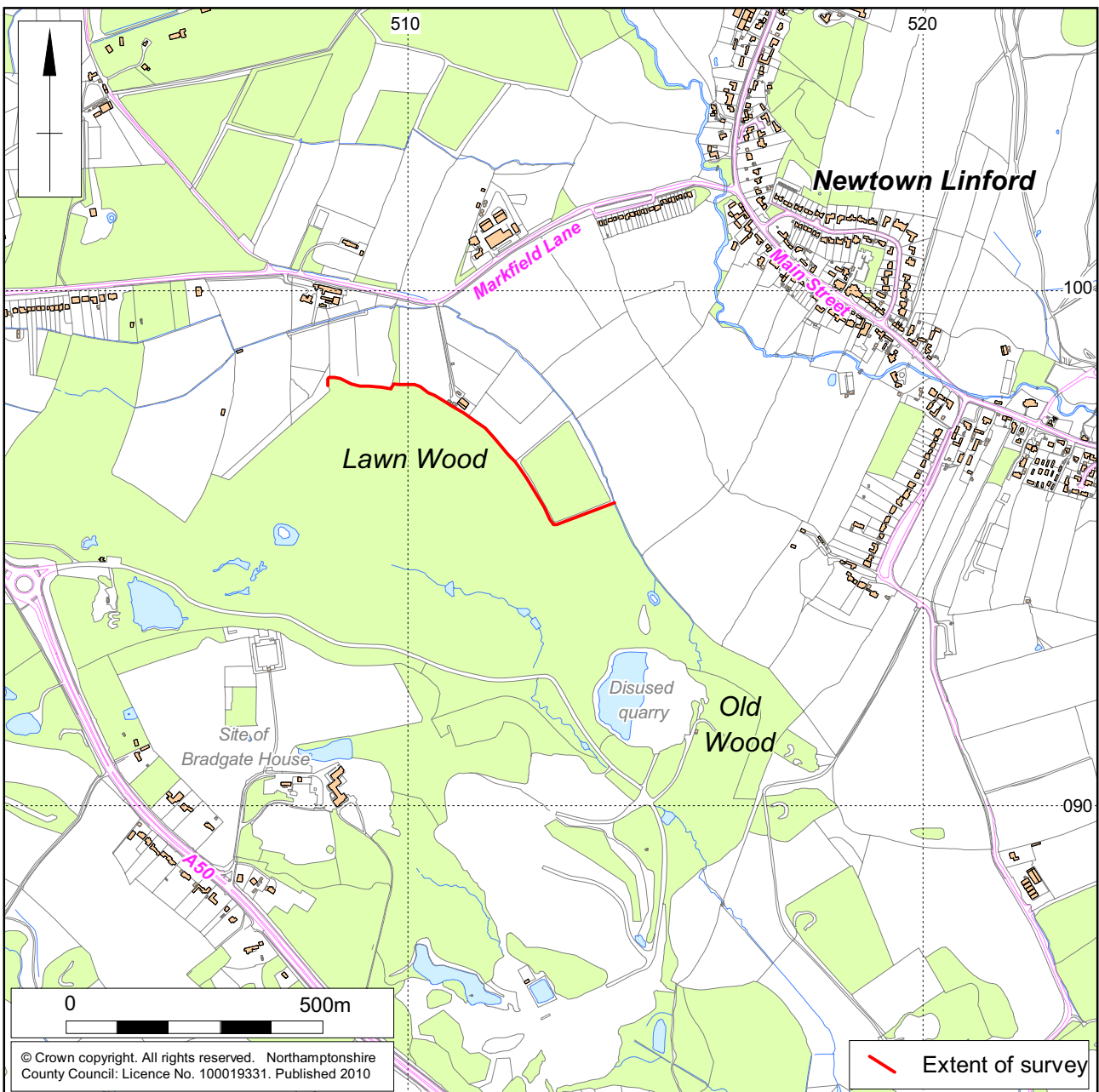
5 DISCUSSION

Earthworks associated with areas of woodland are generally related either to the definition of its edges, its subdivision into economic units or its use as part of a hunting landscape in the form of a deer pale. The current feature does not have the characteristic morphology of a deer pale; they are generally of a form to let deer in but not out, so one would expect the presence of a substantial bank on one side of the ditch (Figs 17 & 18). The earthwork did not have such a feature and, owing to its position on a slope that generally dipped away from the wood, its position would impede deer accessing the woodland. Indeed the external bank, at least in the southern part, may be the product of the excavated ditch isolating a thin strip of ground just above the break of slope rather than the deposition of any upcast material.

The current feature is therefore likely to have been a wood bank defining a parcel of woodland. For almost its whole surveyed length the bank lay on or at the top of the natural slope, to the south-west of the ditch. Although not dated by documentary or map sources it could originally have been constructed during the medieval period, probably around 1250, when the woodland would have been intensively managed (Rackham 1976, 69-71) although wood banks did continue to be erected until the 19th century (*op cit* 117). Wood banks generally comprised a ditch with a bank on the wood side, unfortunately in this case there was little evidence for an internal bank associated with the ditch, perhaps reflecting a high degree of erosional degradation, although it is equally possible that upcast which could have formed a bank may either have been spread more widely or removed as usable stone.

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- Squires, A, and Humphrey, W, 1986 *The medieval parks of Charnwood forest*



Scale 1:12,500

Site Location Fig 1

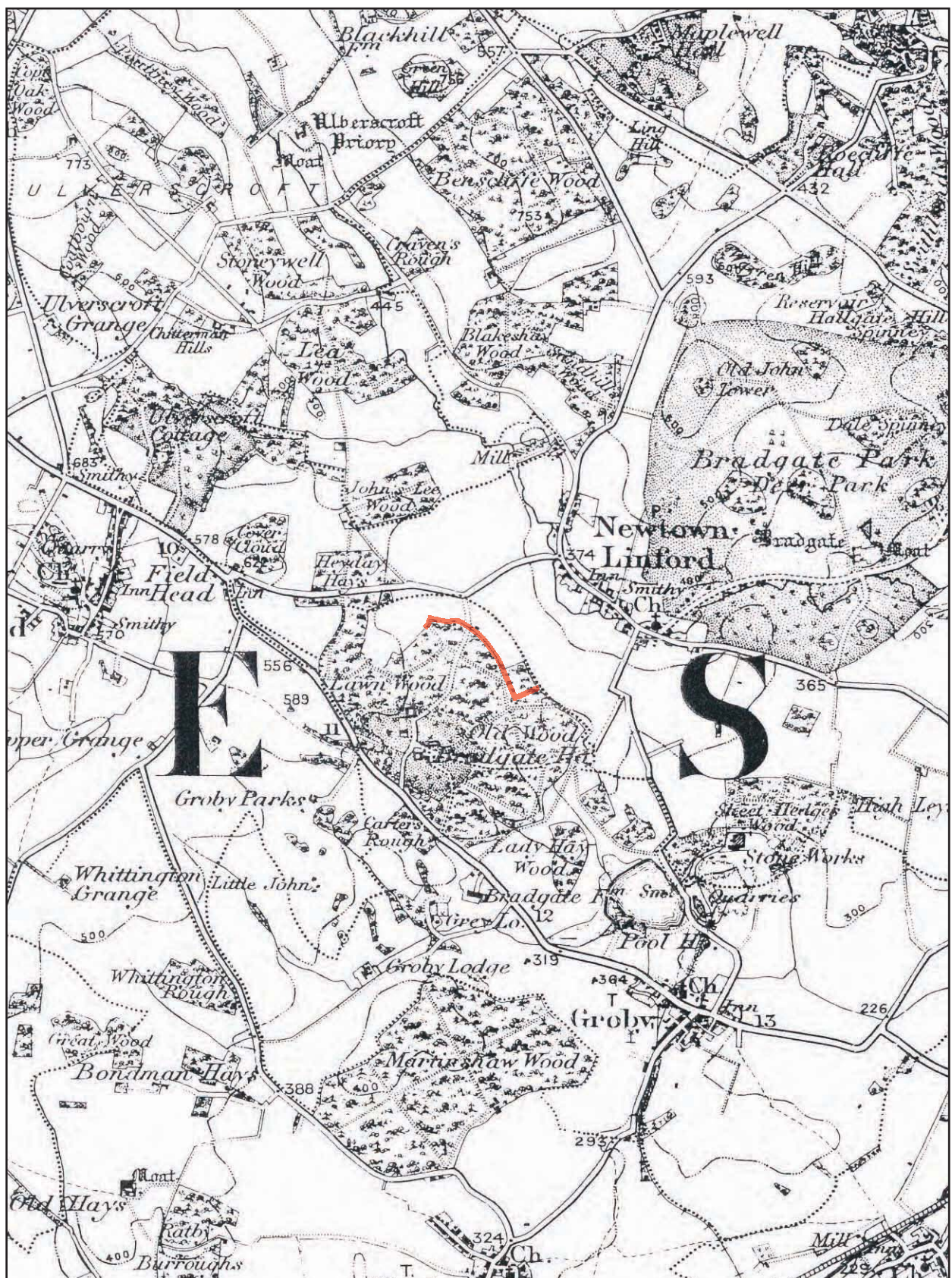


1st edition Ordnance Survey 1 inch map of 1835 Fig 2



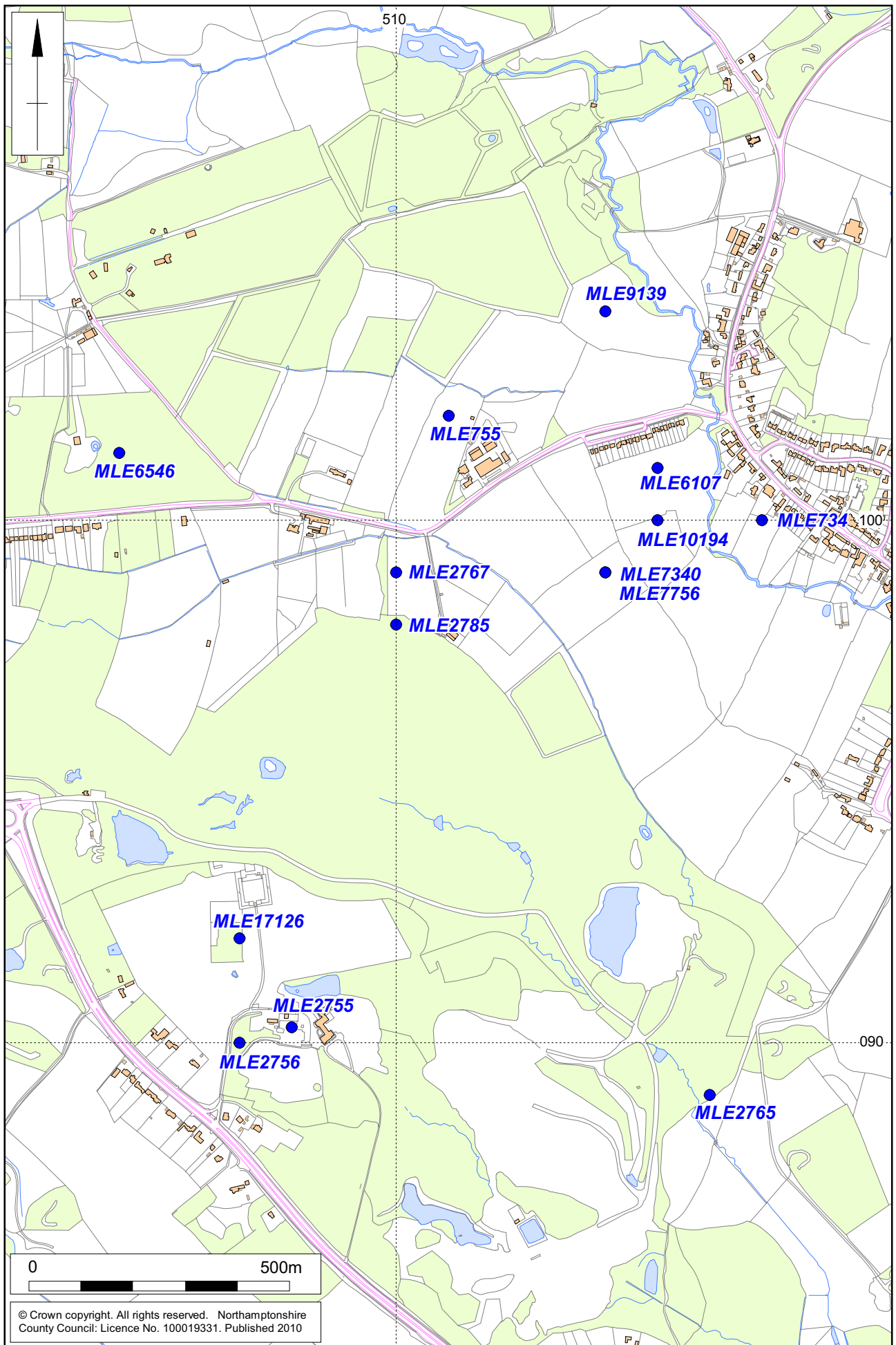
Extent of survey

2nd edition Ordnance Survey 1 inch map of 1899 Fig 3



Extent of survey

3rd edition Ordnance Survey 1 inch map of 1908 Fig 4



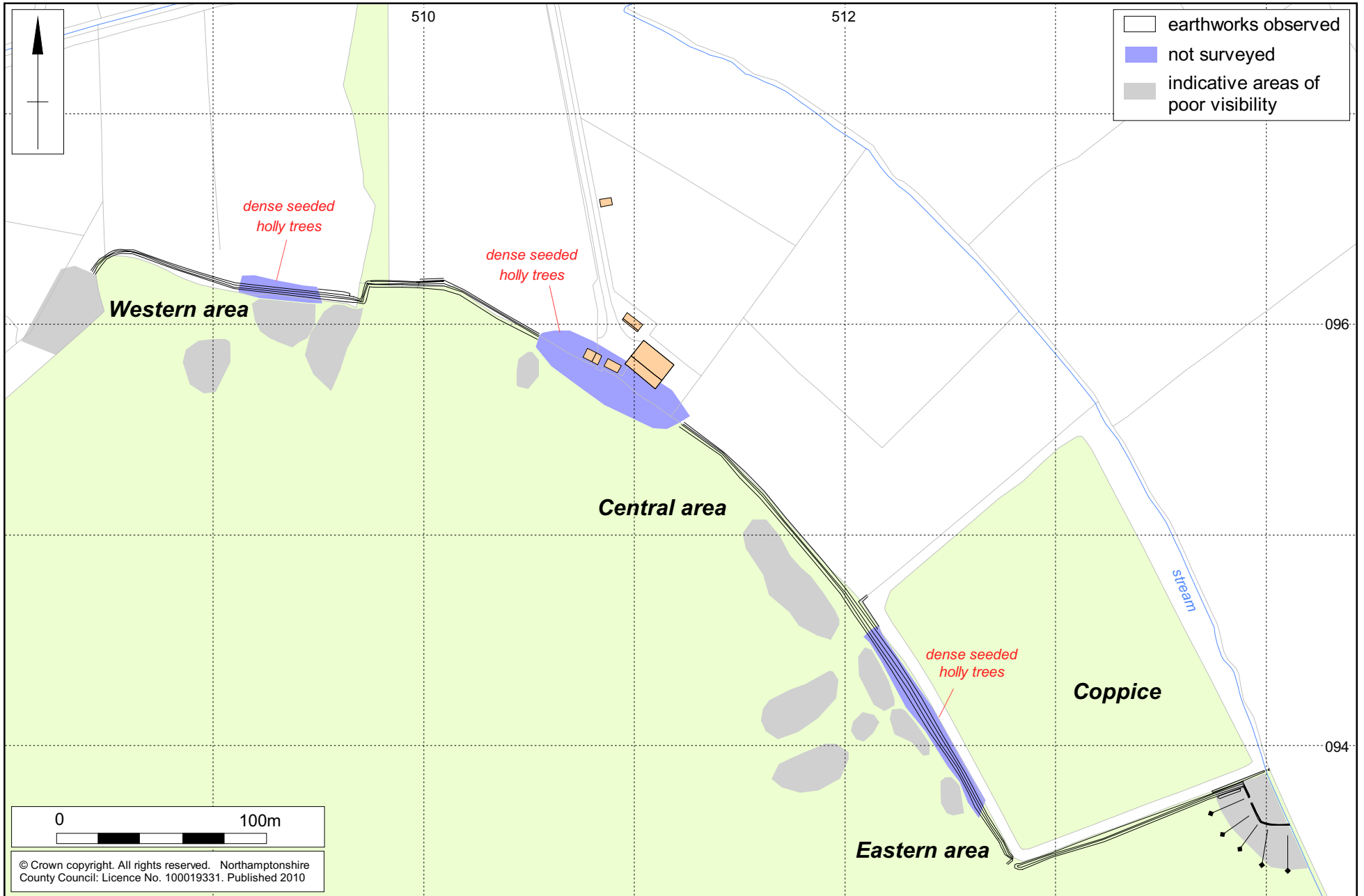
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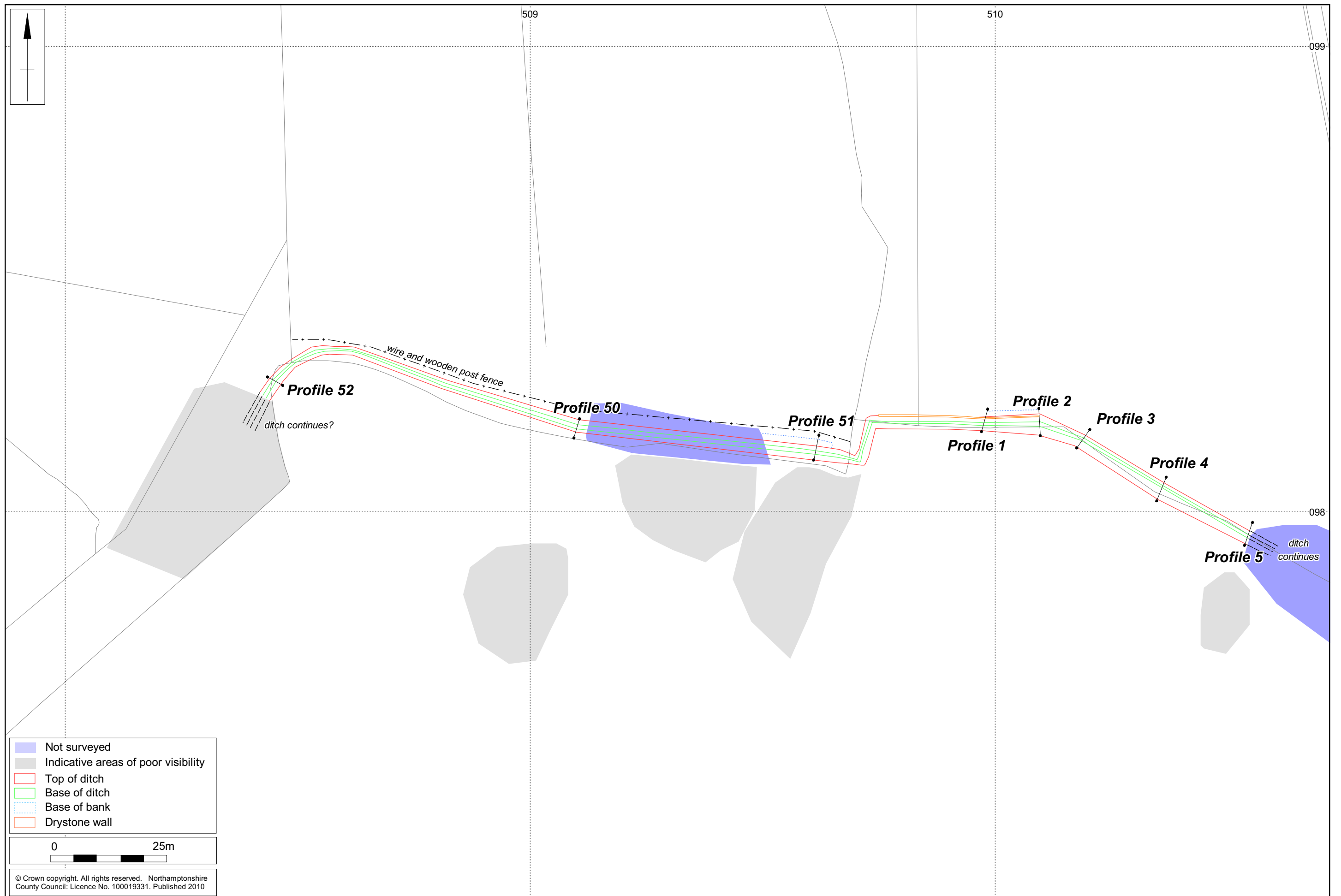
Historic Environment Record (HER) entries Fig 5

Scale 1:2500

Areas surveyed and indicative areas of poor visibility

Fig 6

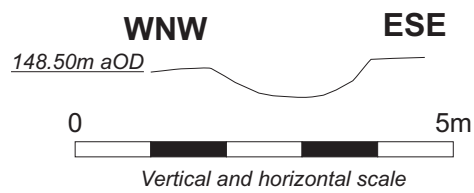




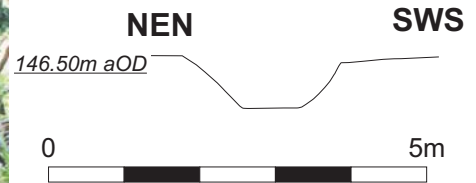
Scale 1:750

Earthwork survey of Western area showing location of profiles Fig 7

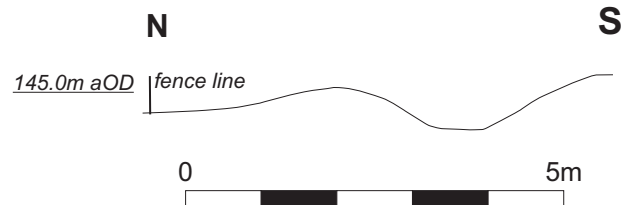
Western Area, Profile 52



Western Area, Profile 50

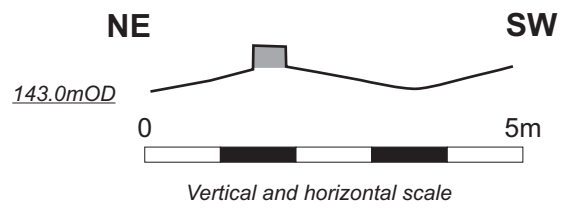


Western Area, Profile 51

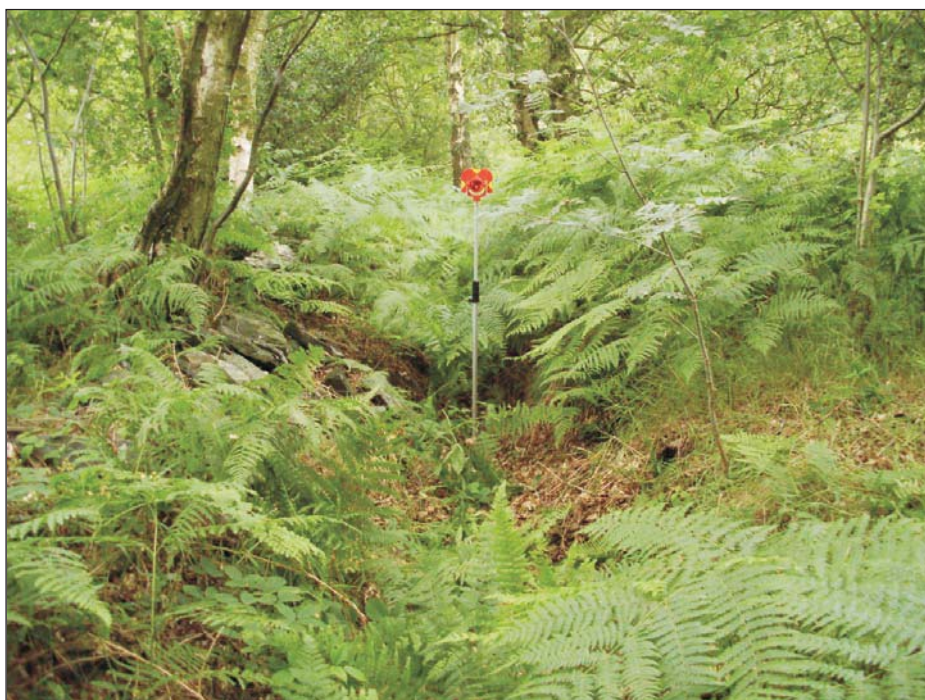


Profiles 50-52 and views of earthwork Fig 8

Western Area, Profile 1

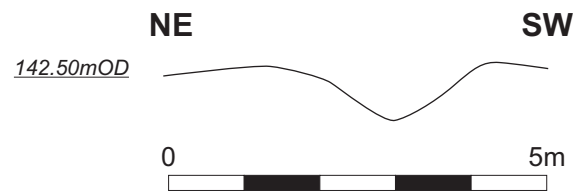


Western Area, Profile 3



Profiles 1 & 3 and views of earthwork Fig 9

Western Area, Profile 5



Central Area, Profile 6

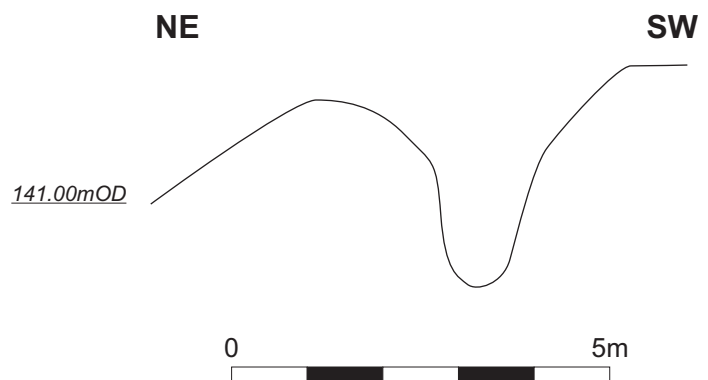


Profiles 5 & 6 and views of earthwork Fig 10

Central Area, Profile 8

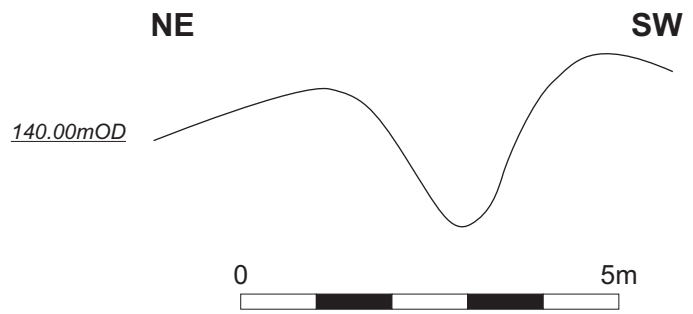


Central Area, Profile 10

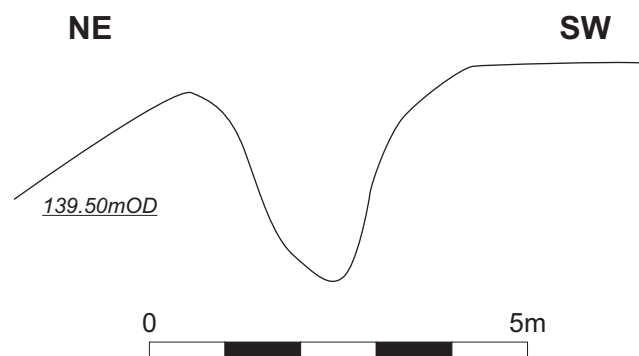


Profiles 8 & 10 and views of earthwork Fig 12

Central Area, Profile 11



Central Area, Profile 12



Eastern Area, Profile 53

NE SW
137m aOD

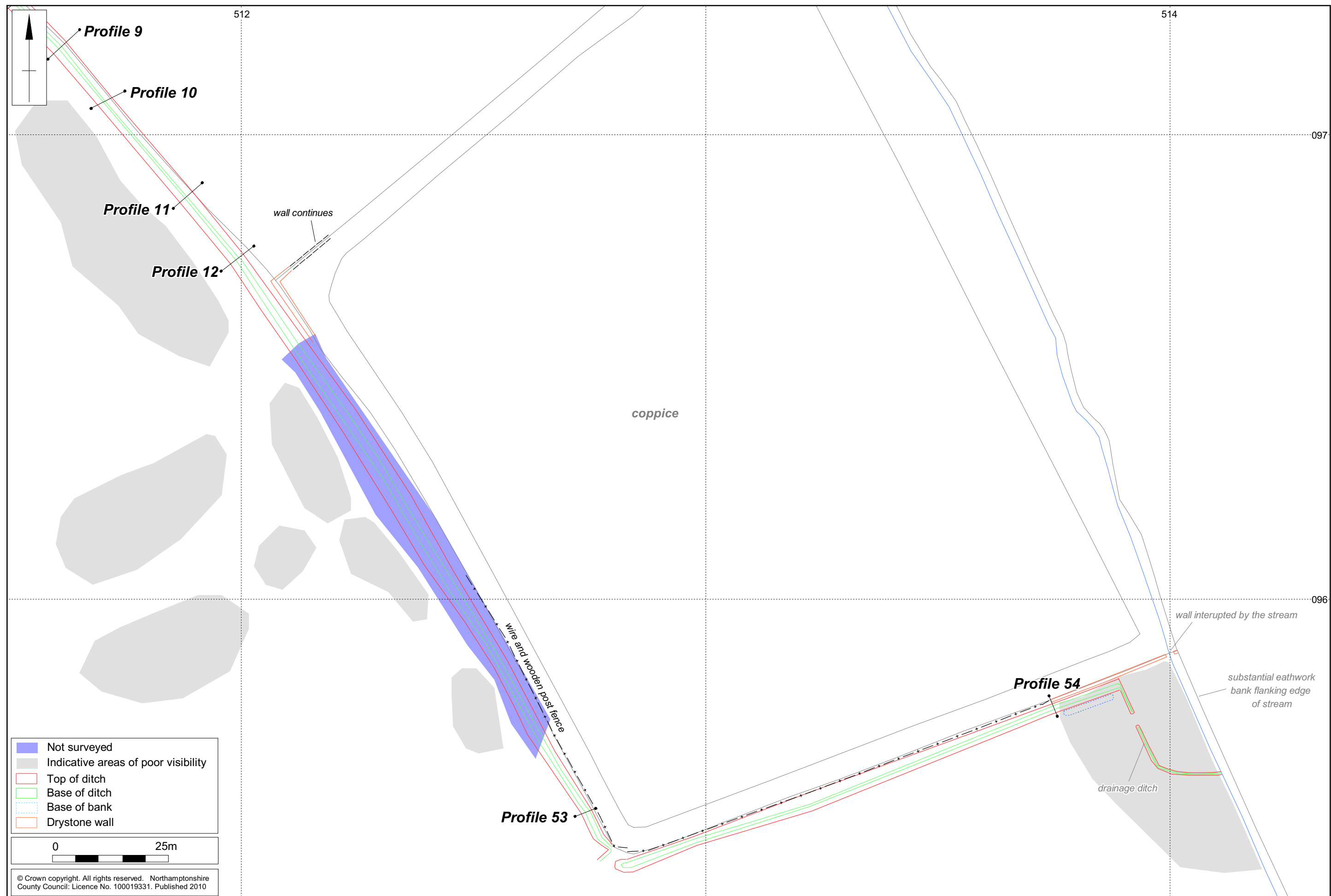
0 5m

Eastern Area, Profile 54

NW SE
130.50m aOD



Profiles 11 & 12, 53 & 54 and views of earthwork Fig 13



Scale 1:750

Earthwork survey of Eastern area showing location of profiles Fig 14



Looking north towards dry stone wall Fig 15



Stream and enbankment looking north-west Fig 16







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