

**Archaeological watching brief
at Cockshoot Farm,
Wichenford
Worcestershire**

WSM 41753

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Introduction

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Cockshoot Farm, Wichenford, Worcestershire (WSM 41753; SO 7782 6162; Fig 1) at the request of Mr Hopkins, according to a brief provided by Worcestershire County Archaeology Service (planning ref MH/04/1494). This was undertaken during the excavation of footings for a garage (Fig 7).

Brief background to the site

Documentary research took place on 21st October 2009 at Worcestershire County Record Office and the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record.

The map evidence

The earliest available map was the Wichenford tithe map of 1838 (Fig 2.1). This shows a cluster of irregularly-shaped fields in the location of Cockshoot Farm. The Ordnance Survey maps of 1903 and 1927 (Fig 2.2) show the existing buildings substantially in their current configuration. However, both maps show a large pond to the north of the farmhouse, running approximately west-north west to east-south-east. Although no longer an obvious feature on the ground, the area where this pond is indicated floods at times of heavy rain (pers comm Mr Hopkins). This point will be returned to below.

Information from Worcestershire Historic Environment Record

A considerable quantity of work has been carried out at Cockshoot Farm and its immediate surroundings.

The farmhouse (WSM 08028) is a Grade II listed building of the 17th century, altered in the early 18th century and 19th century with some 20th century fenestration. It is part timber-framed with brick infill, part brick, concrete tiled roofs, external brick chimney to left side elevation and ridge stack to main part. It is of the hall and cross-wing type plan, the hall range being on an east-west axis with a cross-wing at the east end.

It is associated with a park and garden (WSM 28899) dating between 1700 and 1838. A plan in Worcestershire Record Office (CRO 6134/44) shows 'The Park' (20 acres), 'the further Park field' (7 acres) and 'the nearest Park' (7 acres) all just north west of the house. The most detailed of several simple maps shows an enclosure on the south side with a fence dividing this in two with an orchard (?) as the outer part with a gate or steps leading to an avenue to the Martley road described as 'the Front Walk'. The plan has two 'new proposed walk(s)' radiating south-west and south-east. Much of the detail on plan may not have been carried into effect but the intention was for the walks to be bordered by elms (front), limes (east), chestnut (west) and apple ('Back front Walk in ye Vinayd').

The present house dates from the 15th to the 18th centuries and is on the site of a major residence of the Washbournes that had a moat, drawbridge and gatehouse (Lockett 1997). A moat with corner bastions is still shown on the 1st edition of the Ordnance Survey 1 inch map in 1828. It no doubt had gardens too and a formal garden has been re-established this century.

A square soil mark of a broad (10m) ditch with a possible internal bank is shown on an aerial photograph (WSM 31074). It is around 70m across, with a total width of around 90m. It is thought that this may be a ploughed out moat, or an earlier enclosure. It is also visible on the 1999 vertical coverage.

In 2003 a geophysical survey was undertaken by ArchaeoPhysica (Roseveare and Roseveare 2003) to confirm the existence of a rectangular enclosure but no magnetic geophysical evidence was found (WSM 32958).

An excavation (WSM 33828; Miller 2004) at Cockshoot Farm in September 2004 was carried out to investigate a cropmark visible in aerial photographs to the south-west of the present site. The excavation found a ditch of probable 13th century date indicating that there was a focus of activity here in the 13th and 14th centuries. This had ceased by the 18th century. This interpretation is consistent with documentary evidence for a holding at Cocscute in Wichenford around 1230. It is also consistent with topographical evidence for a moat around Cockshoot Farm, although this may have been a later development.

A rectangular enclosure on the same site as that noted above (Miller 2004) and the remains of ridge and furrow (WSM 37575, 37576 and 37577) were identified by another geophysical survey around Cockshoot Farm (Sabin 2004)

Analysis

The fieldwork

Fieldwork took place on the 24th October 2009. The area of the garage (Fig 3) was first stripped to a depth of c 100mm. The footings were then excavated to a depth of c 1.00m on the western side, diminishing to c 0.5m on the east. Only brief descriptions of the deposits are given here. Full descriptions of the contexts are given in Appendix 1.

Beneath the topsoil (context 001) and a layer of modern building rubble (context 002), presumably associated with the conversion of the adjacent farm buildings to domestic accommodation, were two comparatively modern features: a pit (context 009) and a service trench (context 006). The latter, cut by the footings trench at an extreme acute angle, appears much wider in the section (Fig 4) than was actually the case.

Of greatest interest, though, was the deposit (context 010) that both of these features cut. This was an extensive layer of medium grey-brown sandy clay. Its extent to the west could not be determined as it lay beyond the footprint of the garage. Its limit to the east may be inferred by its absence from the eastern end of Section 1 (Figs 3, 4 and 6, where the natural subsoil (context 011), surviving at a high level, precluded its continuation.

The finds

No finds were recovered from the excavations.

Discussion

A composite plan was constructed from the 1838 Wichenford tithe map and the early 20th century Ordnance Survey mapping (Fig 5). It was assumed that the pond to the north of the building currently known as Cockshoot Farm Cottage (Fig 3), shown on the early Ordnance Survey mapping, was a surviving remnant of the former moated site. It was felt that this area's tendency to flood at times of significant rainfall was a factor in support of this conclusion. This project has identified the position of a deposit (context 010), likely to be a ditch fill, to the west of Cockshoot Farm Cottage. It is possible to construct a ditched circuit of rather irregular form around Cockshoot Farm Cottage using a combination of the elements described above (Fig 5; solid blue line). It is possible to construct a more regular circuit if the existing property boundaries are followed, rather than incorporating the information from the tithe map (Fig 5; dashed blue line).

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Cockshoot Farm, Wichenford, Worcestershire during excavations of footings for a garage. The watching brief identified a deposit which was likely to be a ditch fill and, combined with map evidence, this was believed to be the western side of a moat which formerly encircled the building now known as Cockshoot Farm Cottage.

Bibliography

Lockett, Richard, 1997, *A survey of historic parks and gardens in Worcestershire, Hereford and Worcester Gardens Trust*, 262

Miller, D, 2004 *Archaeological excavation at Cockshoot Farm, Wichenford, Worcestershire*, Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, **1310**

Roseveare, M J, and Roseveare, A C K, 2003 *Caesium magnetometer survey of soil and cropmark site on behalf of The Wichenford Local Heritage Group at Cockshoot, Wichenford*, ArchaeoPhysica report. 20031; WR9616

Sabin, David, 2004. *Geophysical survey report. Cockshoot Farm, Wichenford, Worcestershire*, Stratascan. J 1920.

Acknowledgements

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Archive

The archive consists of

- 1 Annotated scale drawing
- 1 CD-ROM

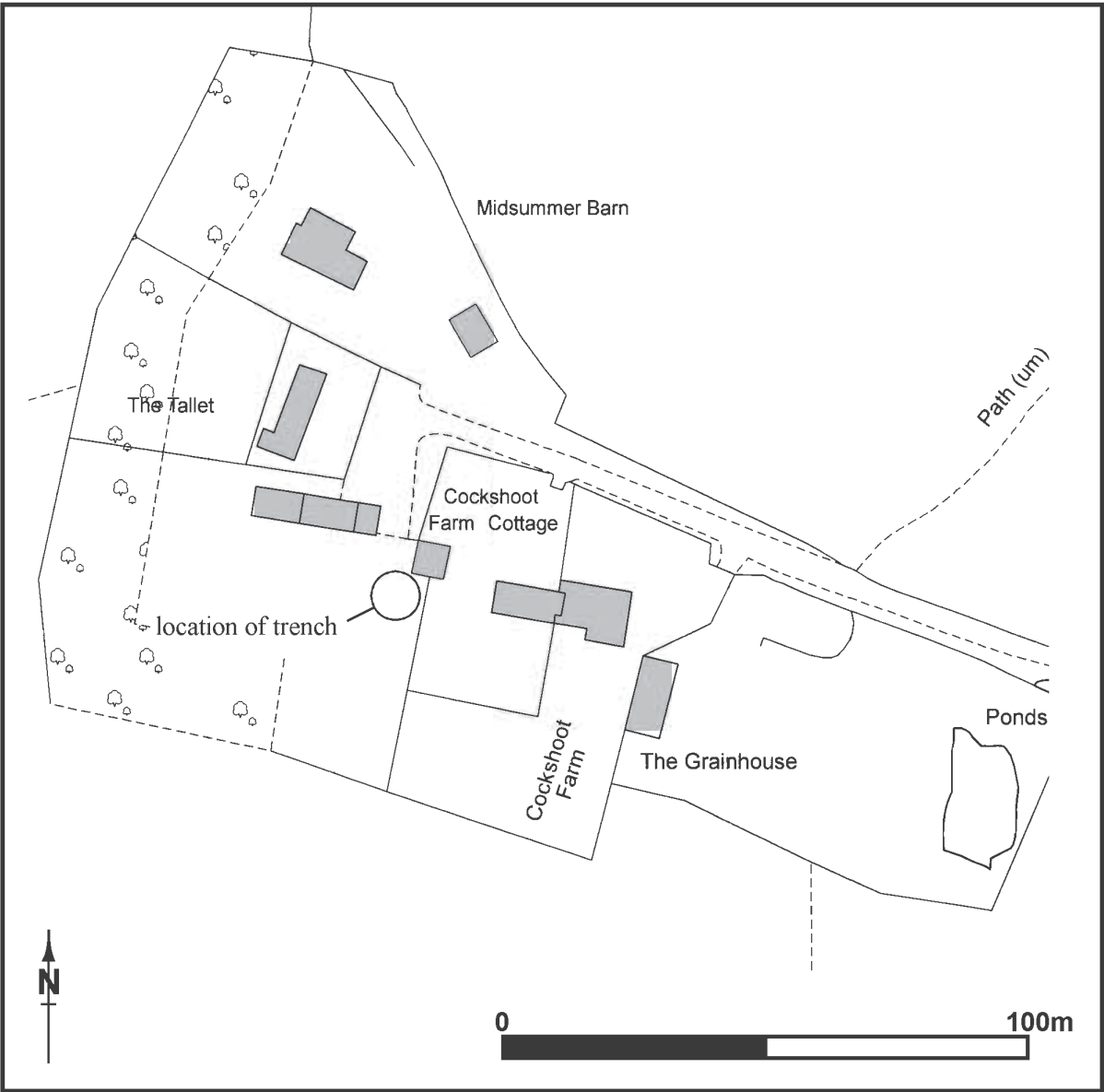
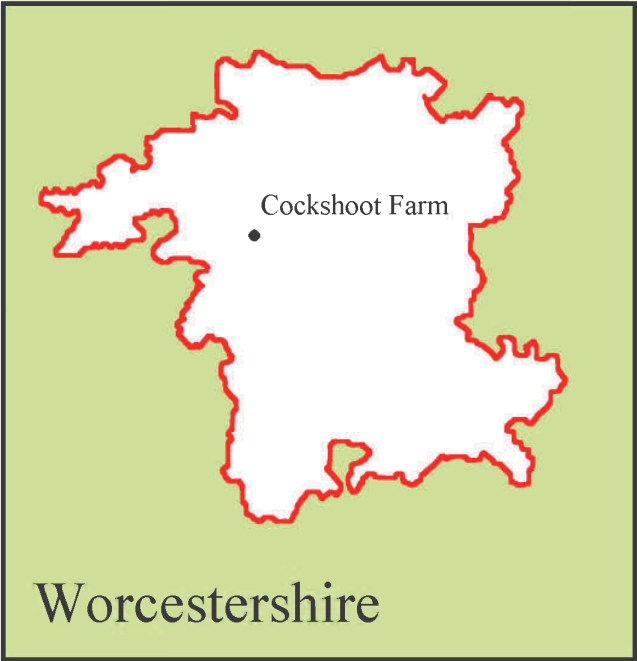


Fig 1: Location of site

1838 Wichenford tithe

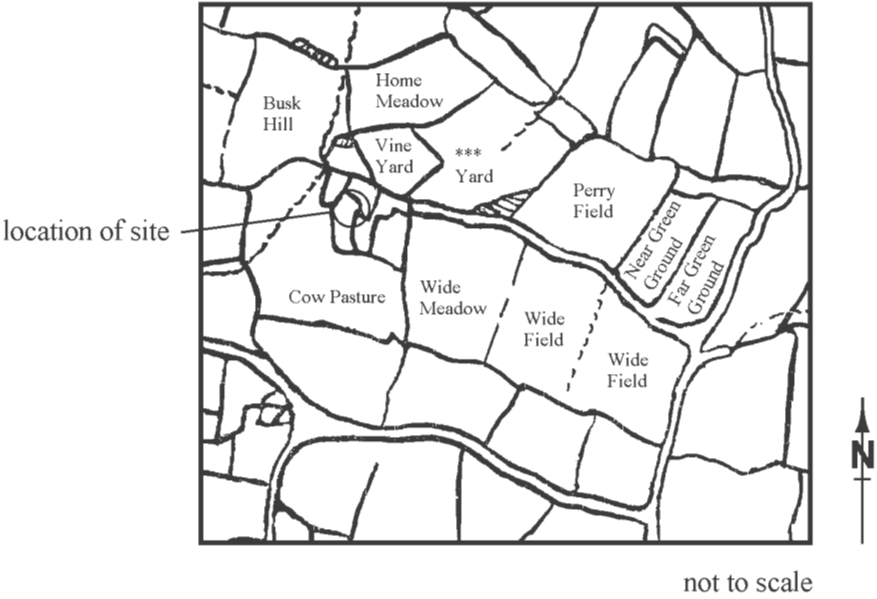
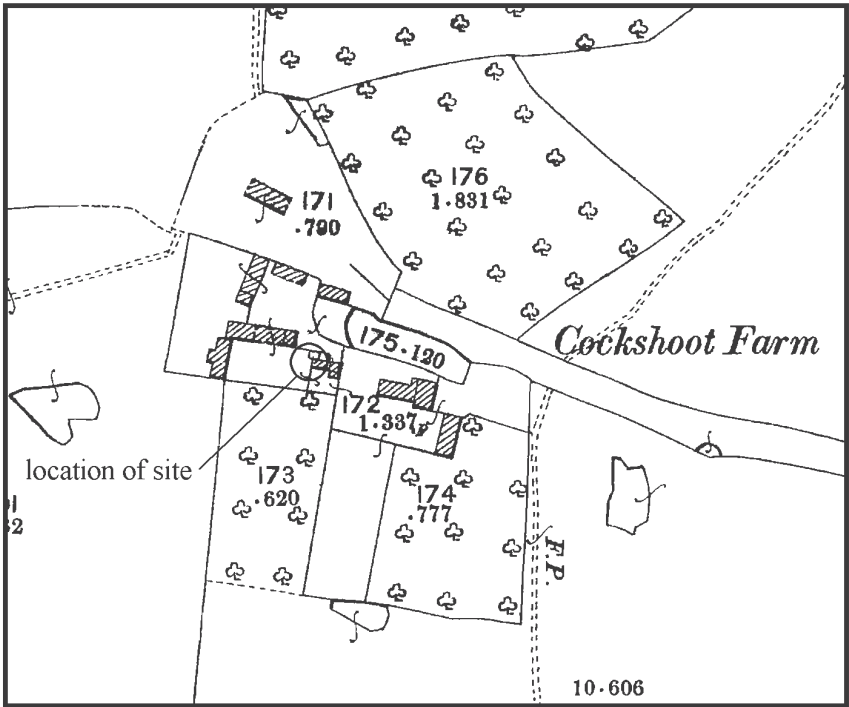


Fig 2.1 Historic mapping

1903



1927

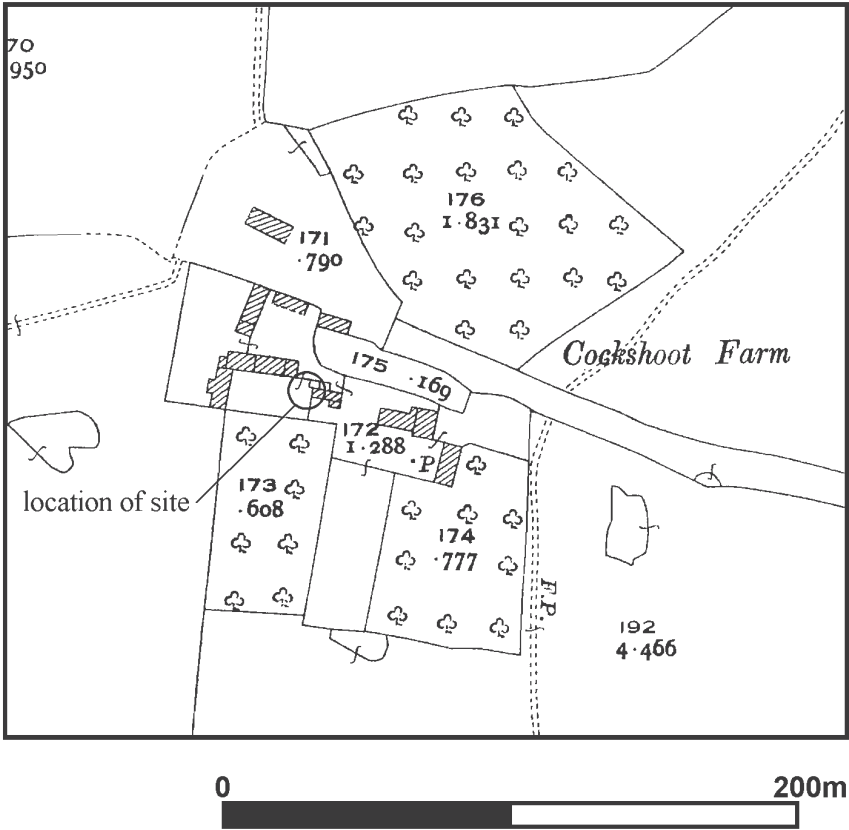


Fig 2.2 Historic mapping

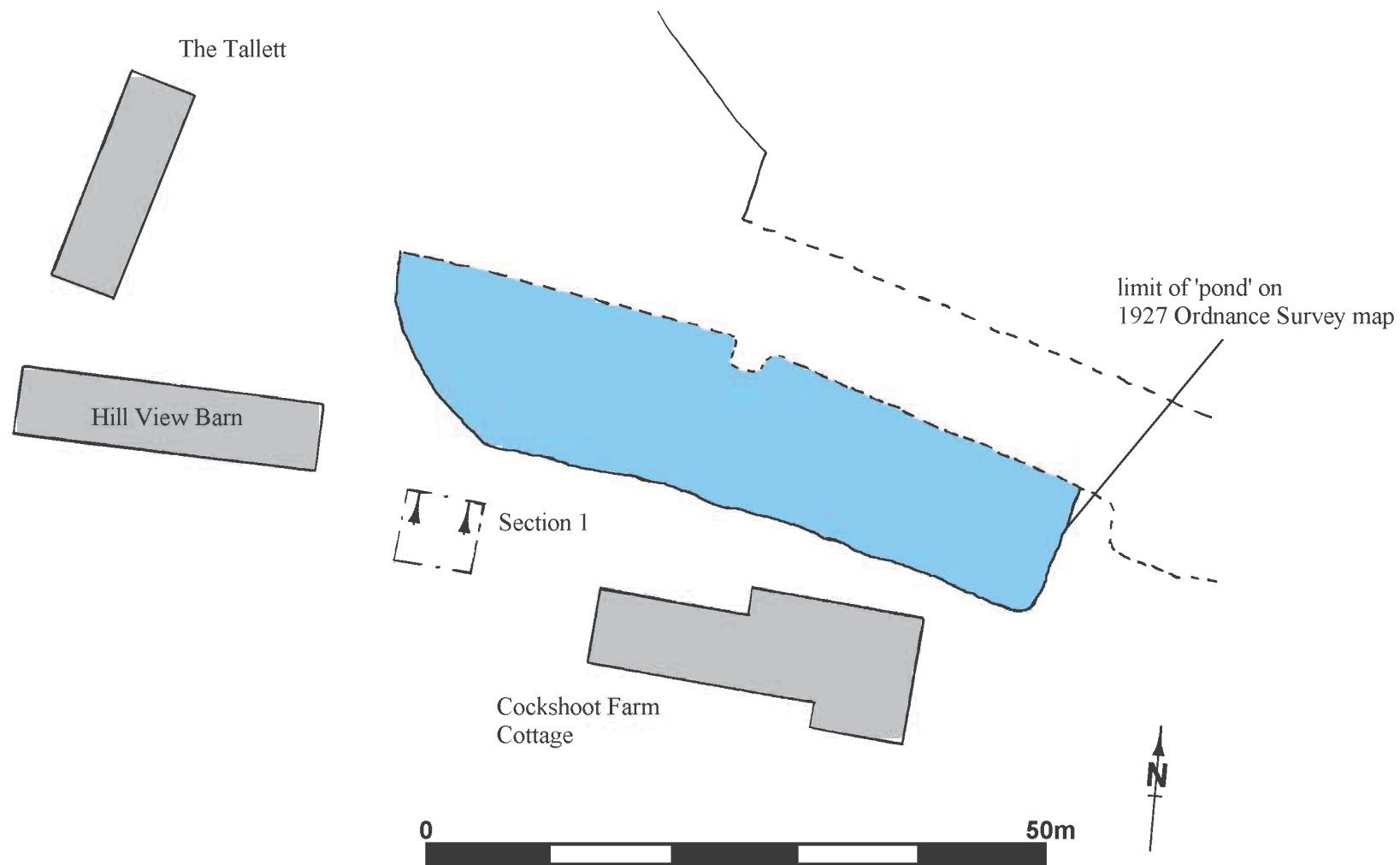


Fig 3: Location of trench

Section 1

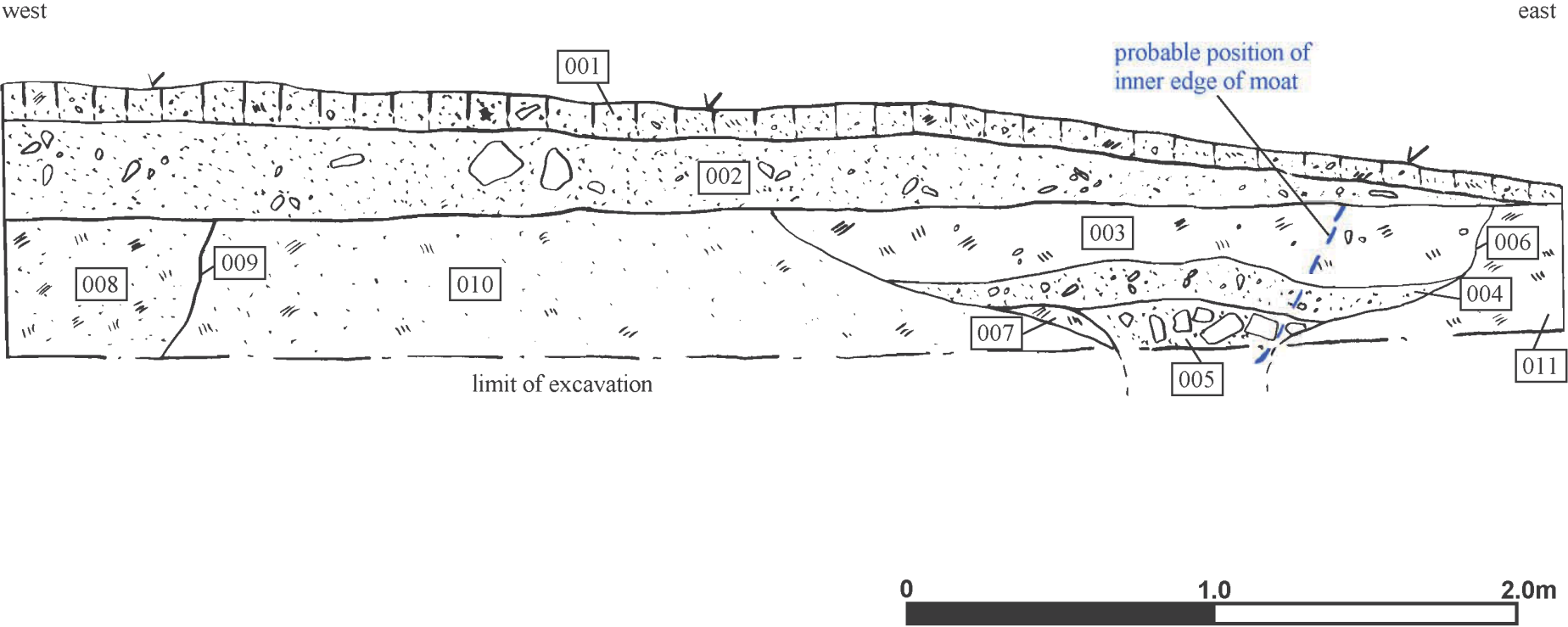


Fig 4: Recorded section

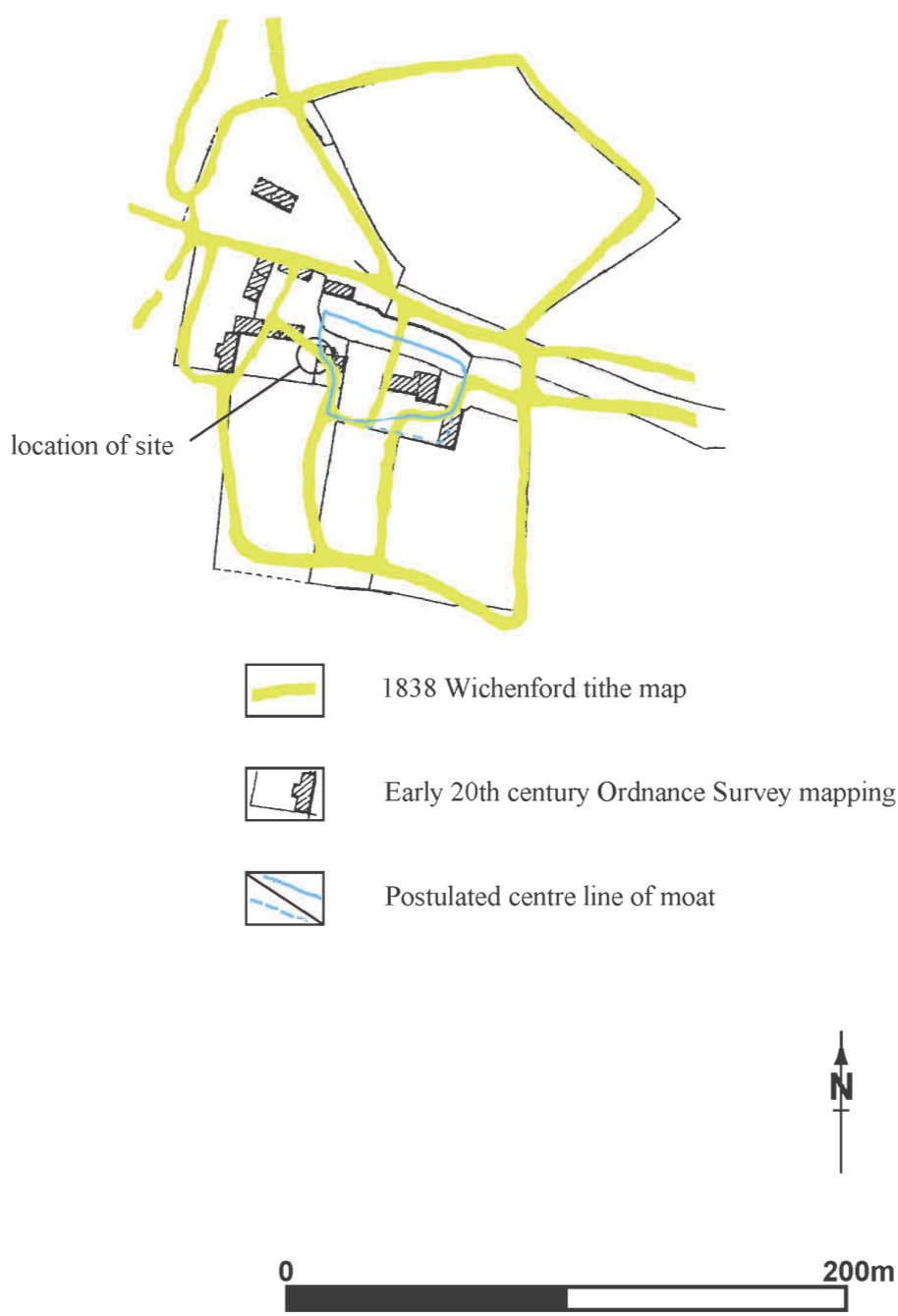


Fig 5: Postulated position of moat



Fig 6: Section 1



Fig 7: General view of site looking south-west

Appendix 1: List of the contexts

Context number	Description	Interpretation
001	Dark Grey brown sandy loam	Topsoil
002	Very dark grey, almost black, sandy gravel	Modern leveling material
003	Light reddy brown slightly sandy clay	Fill of 006
004	Medium grey brown sandy clay with brick and tile fragments	Fill of 006
005	Brick and tile rubble	Fill of 006
006	Cut	Modern pipe trench - cuts 010 and 011
007	Light grey sandy clay	Fill of 006
008	Very slightly sandy grey clay	Fill of 009
009	Cut	Modern rubbish pit - cuts 010
010	Medium grey brown sandy clay	Fill of moat
011	Mid reddy brown clay	Natural subsoil