

Archaeological watching brief at Fibden Farm, Broad Alley Hampton Lovett, Worcestershire

Worcestershire Archaeology
for Robert Needham

May 2023



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FIBDEN FARM, BROAD ALLEY, HAMPTON LOVETT, WORCESTERSHIRE

Archaeological watching brief report



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SITE INFORMATION

Site name: Fibden Farm, Broad Alley, Hampton Lovett, Worcestershire
Local planning authority: Wychavon District Council
Planning reference: W/23/00013/CU
Central NGR: SO 89326 67330
Commissioning client: Robert Needham
WA project number: P6506
WA report number: 3136
HER reference: WSM 80023
Oasis reference: fieldsec1-515637
Museum accession number: -

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Version	Date	Author	Details	Approved by
1	26/05/2023	Graham Arnold	Draft for comment	Tom Vaughan

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Archaeological watching brief at Fibden Farm, Broad Alley, Hampton Lovett, Worcestershire

By Graham Arnold

Illustrations by Graham Arnold

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Fibden Farm, Broad Alley, Hampton Lovett, Worcestershire (NGR SO 89326 67330). It was commissioned by Robert Needham, the landowner, in advance of the installation of three camping pods. Planning permission has been granted subject to a programme of archaeological works.

The archaeological advisor to the local planning authority considered that the development had the potential to impact upon possible heritage assets. Previous metal detecting finds and investigations in the surrounding area of the site has identified Roman finds and settlement activity, including a Roman road.

Archaeological monitoring comprised the observation of a trench for drainage and services to supply the camping pods, from woodland, across a farmyard and into an adjacent pasture field.

The natural undisturbed substrate was observed throughout, 0.20-0.50m below the present ground surface, with a developed soil profile in the pasture field and the woodland. 20th century made ground deposits were observed directly overlying the natural sands in the farmyard, demonstrating that this area had been reduced to the natural previously. The only finds observed were machine made brick from dumping activity in the field and modern refuse in the farmyard.

No significant archaeological finds, features or deposits were observed during the groundworks, with no evidence of activity related to the Roman road or other activity in the area.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in May 2023 at Fibden Farm, Broad Alley, Hampton Lovett, Worcestershire (NGR SO 89326 67330). This comprised observation of a drainage pipe trench across the farmyard and into an adjacent pasture field during groundworks associated with the installation of three camping pods prior to construction. The project was commissioned by Richard Needham. Planning permission has been granted subject to a programme of archaeological works (planning reference W/23/00013/CU).

The archaeological advisor to the local planning authority considered that the development had the potential to impact upon possible heritage assets. Previous metal detecting finds and investigations in the surrounding area of the site has identified Roman finds and settlement activity, including a Roman road.

No brief was provided but a written scheme of investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2023) and approved by the Archaeology and Planning Advisor to Wychavon District Council. The watching brief also conforms to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in the *Standard and guidance: for an archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014a) and the *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2019).

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

Fibden Farm is located 2 km north-east of Hampton Lovett village and 1.5km south-east of Cutnall Green. Fibden farm is surrounded by farmland in arable and pasture use, with woodland to the east on the slope of the hill. It is on raised ground overlooking the surrounding area. It is fairly flat in the farmyard, at 74m AOD, steeply sloping and dropping down to around 64m AOD to the east and south.

The trench encompassed the farmyard, the woodland to the east and a pasture field grazed by horses and sheep in the south.

The underlying geology comprises bedrock of Sidmouth Mudstone formation with the ridge where the farm is located overlain by superficial deposits of sand and gravels of the Bushley Green Member (BGS 2023).

2 Archaeological and historical background

2.1 Introduction

Prior to fieldwork commencing, a search of the Worcestershire HER was completed, covering a search area of 1km radius around the site. A summary of this research is presented below.

2.2 Metal detecting finds

The Portable Antiquities Scheme has numerous finds recorded within the search area, including a Bronze Age spear, Iron Age to post medieval coins, Roman brooches, a medieval strap fitting and post-medieval tokens. A chance find of a concentration of Roman pottery was recovered south of the village of Elmbridge.

2.3 Roman

Archaeology in this region centres on below ground Roman archaeology, some of which is Scheduled, with the potential for more sites associated with the postulated Roman road between Droitwich and Greensforge (WSM30543). The road is listed on two Ordnance Survey maps, with

further evidence from aerial photographs and observations during road construction at Crutch Lane, Purshall Green and Broome.

2.4 Medieval and post-medieval

There is evidence of ridge and furrow in the surrounding area (WSM 46136) together with listed farm buildings, recorded during the Worcestershire Historic Farmsteads Characterisation Project (Hathaway et al 2012). This includes Fibden Farm (WSM52902) itself, listed on the Worcestershire HER as a partially extant 19th century unlisted farmstead with unconverted buildings, located within a farmstead cluster. The farmstead had a regular courtyard F-plan with additional, prominent detached elements to the main plan. The farmhouse is detached with the gable onto the yard. There has been significant loss (greater than 50%) of traditional buildings. Large modern sheds are also located on the site.

3 Project aims

The aims of the watching brief were to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible within the constraints of the groundworks.

4 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2023). Fieldwork monitoring the groundworks was undertaken on 10 May 2023

One single service trench, a maximum of 0.40m wide, 0.60m deep and a total of 110m in length amounting to 50m² in area, was excavated across the site, c 80m north to south, with a c 30m east to west spur. The location of the trench is indicated in Figure 2. The spot heights and existing services are recorded on Figure 3.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket. Subsequent excavation to clean up the sides and base of the trench was undertaken by hand. Known existing water services were located and hand excavated prior to the machine excavation of the trench (Plates 4 and 8).

Observation of excavated areas was undertaken during and after machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits, though any less clear may have not been identified. The base of the trench was cleaned by hand. The spoil was scanned for finds by eye and with a metal detector.

Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012) and trench and feature locations were surveyed using a GNSS device with an accuracy limit set at <0.04m and deposits were recorded on digitally on DiggIt archaeological recording software.

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was undertaken through the combination of artefactual and structural evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology.

A copy of the report will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) via OASIS for validation with the Worcestershire HER, in order to disseminate the results. Due to the negative results of the project no further archiving will take place.

5 Archaeological results

5.1 Trench description

The natural undisturbed substrate was observed throughout the trench at a depth of 0.20-0.50m below the present ground surface. It varied from sand on the brow of the hill at the centre of the site, clay and gravels to the east and some weathered mudstone to the south and east. A developed soil profile (topsoil 100, subsoil 101, natural deposits 102) was recorded in the pasture field to the south and in the woodland to the east, whilst the central farmyard had a modern made ground surface of hardcore and mixed refuse material, 104, with a thinner topsoil, 103, directly overlying the natural sand and gravels.

A selection of photographs showing the groundworks in progress and sample sections are included as Plates 1-12.

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
100	Topsoil in pastoral field and woodland	0.10 - 0.30	0.00	Colour: dark greyish brown. Composition: sandy clay. Compaction: moist, malleable. Inclusions: occasional modern bricks, concentrated towards w slope dumping.
101	Subsoil	0.20	0.30	Mid orangey brown sandy clay. Compaction: moist, malleable. Inclusions: moderate medium to large rounded spheroidal pebbles, evenly distributed.
102	Natural	-	0.20-0.50m	Colour: mid reddish orange. Composition: sand, gravels on farmyard and occasional clay marl to the southwest Compaction: dry, firm. Inclusions: frequent medium sub-rounded spheroidal gravels.
103	Topsoil within farmyard	0.10	0.00	Made ground hardcore yard track of trench 1. Colour: dark blackish brown. Composition: silty clay. Compaction: wet, malleable.
104	Made ground farmyard surface	0.10 - 0.30	0.00	Made ground of surfacing of yard consisting of Type 1 stone and tarmac, evenly distributed with frequent modern inclusions of concrete, breeze blocks and metalwork refuse.

Table 1: Summary context descriptions

6 Artefactual evidence

Recovery of artefacts was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). Spoil from the trench was scanned by eye and with a metal detector. In the event only modern machine-made bricks and modern metal debris were observed. These were not retained. No artefacts were identified which were considered to be suitable for analysis.

7 Environmental evidence

Environmental sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). Following discussion with the WA Senior Environmental Archaeologist it was considered that none of the deposits revealed were suitable for environmental analysis.

8 Discussion and conclusions

The natural undisturbed substrate was observed throughout, between 0.20-0.50m below the present ground surface, with a developed soil profile in the pasture field and the woodland. A 20th century modern made ground was observed directly overlying the natural sands in the farmyard, demonstrating that this area had been reduced to the natural previously. The only finds were machine made brick from dumping activity in the field and modern refuse in the farmyard.

No significant archaeological finds, features or deposits were observed during the groundworks, with no evidence of activity related to the Roman road or other activity in the area.

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Conditions were suitable in all of the trenches/areas to identify the presence or absence of archaeological features. It is considered that the nature, density and distribution of archaeological features provides an accurate characterisation of the development site as a whole.

9 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Graham Arnold, PCIfA, who also prepared the report and illustrations. The project was managed by Tom Vaughan, MCIfA.

10 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for the successful conclusion of this project: Robert Needham (Fibden Farm), and Aidan Smyth (Archaeology and Planning Advisor, Wychavon District Council).

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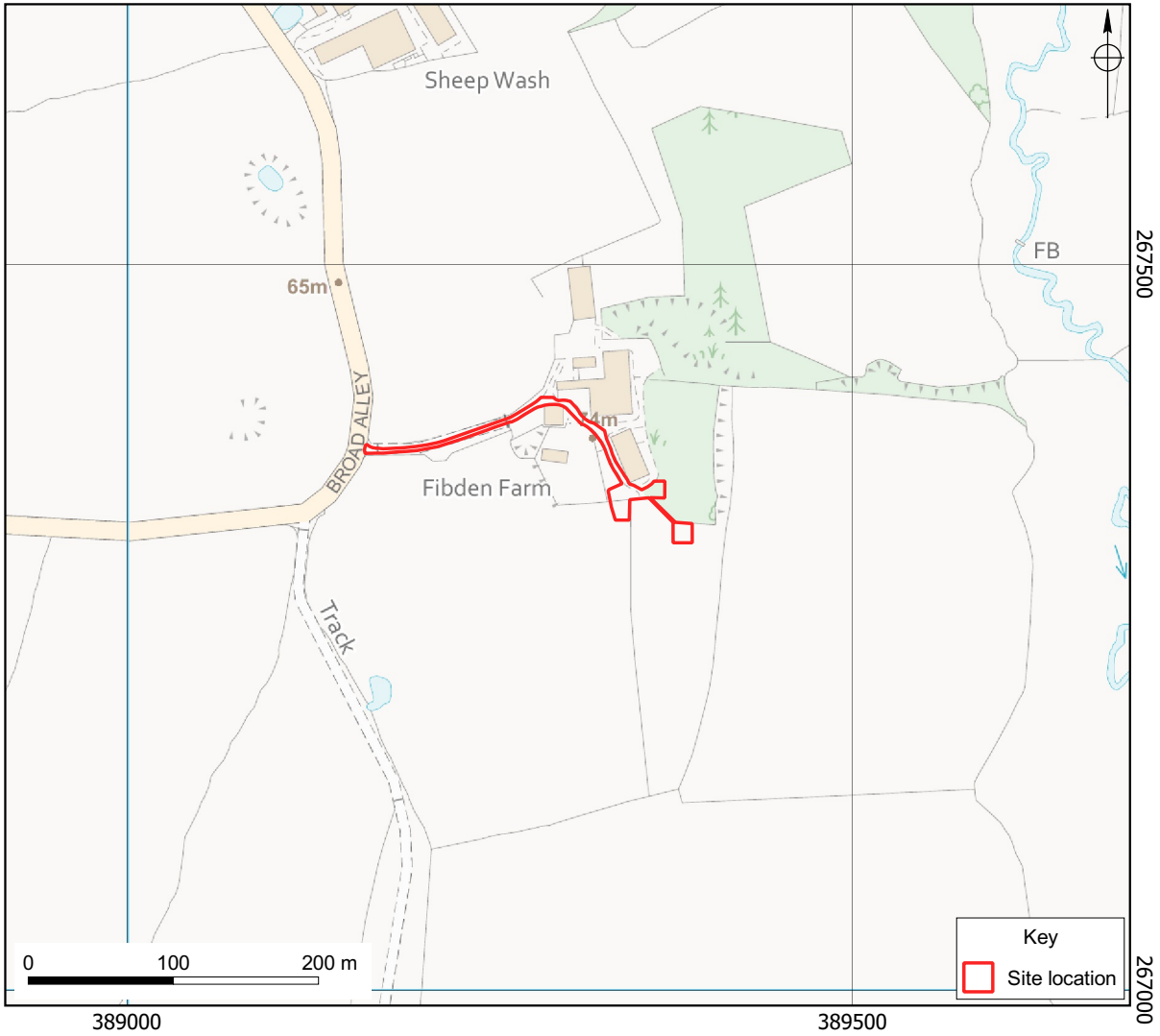
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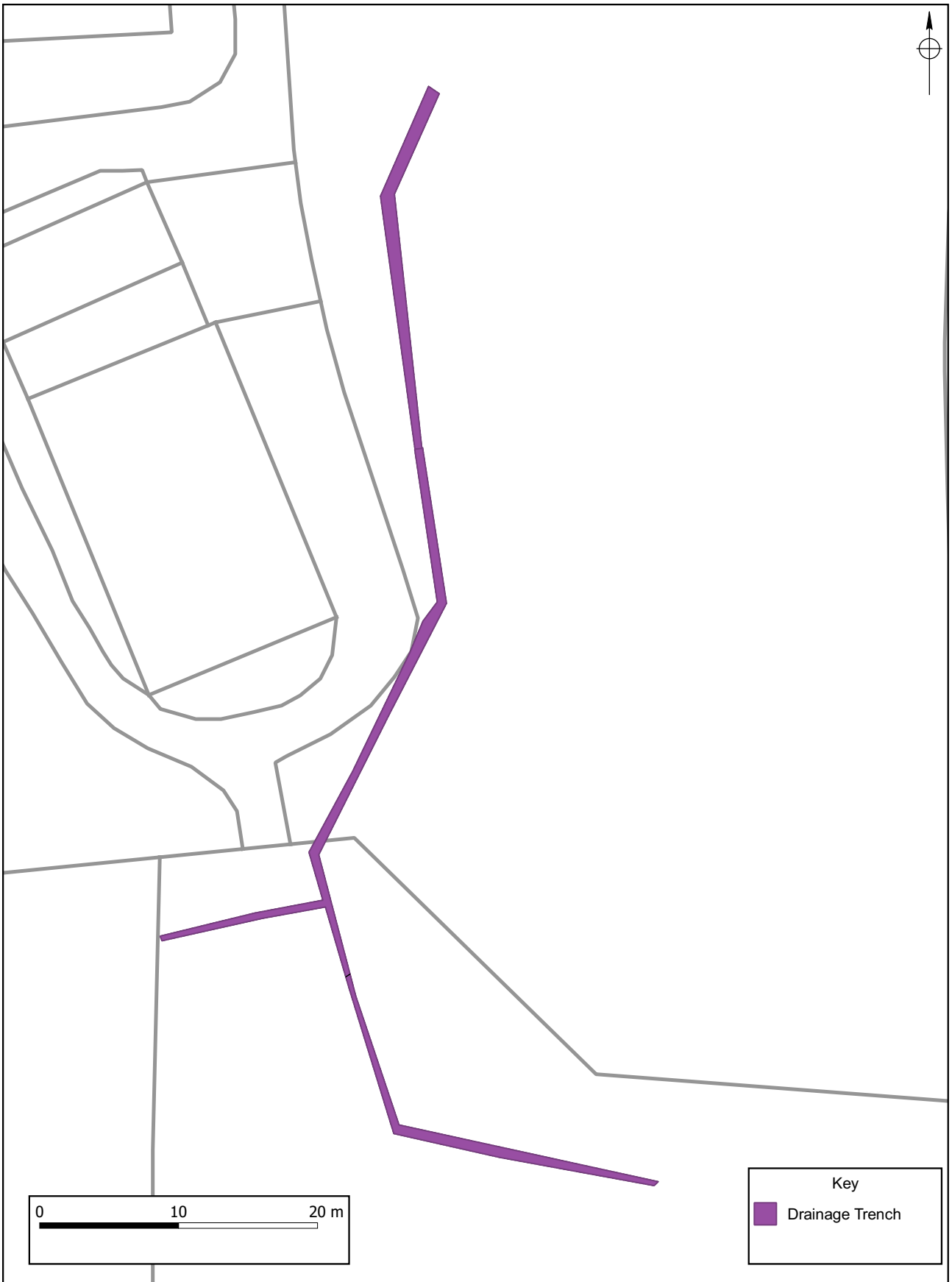
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Figures



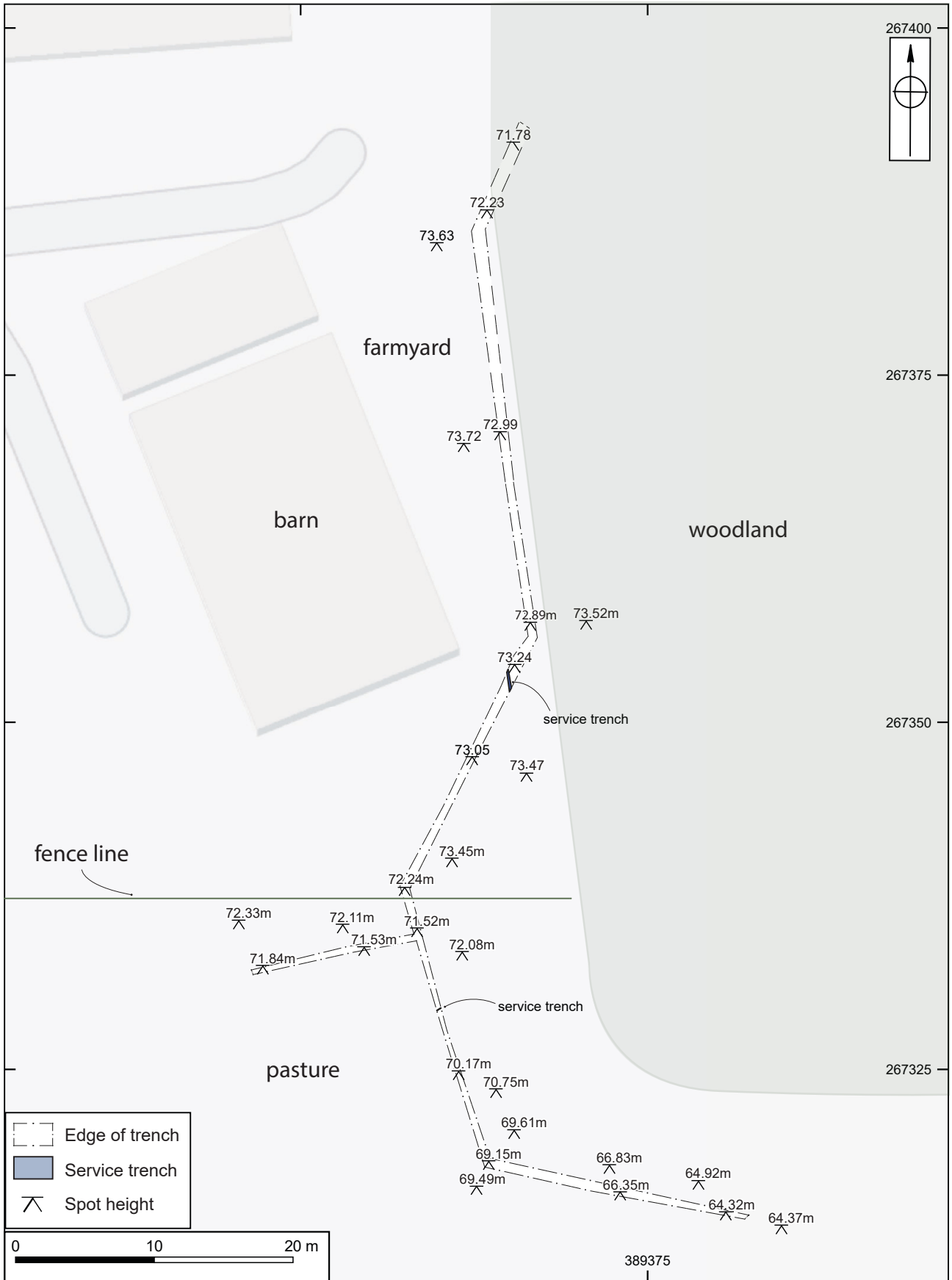
Location of the site

Figure 1



Excavated drainage trench location

Figure 2



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Trench 1 services and spot heights

Figure 3

Plates



Plate 1: Barn on site to the west of the trench, view north-east, no scales



Plate 2: Eastern arm of trench, view east, no scales



Plate 3: Sample section of soil profile, view north, 0.40m and 1m scales



Plate 4: Existing water pipe to animal trough in line of trench, hand excavated, view east, 0.40m scale



Plate 5: Trench, view north toward farmyard, 2x 1m scales



Plate 6: Western arm of trench, view east, 2x 1m scales



Plate 7: Western arm of trench showing modern track surface overlying natural, view south, 1m scale



Plate 8: Existing water pipe crossing farmyard, hand excavated prior to works, 0.4m scale



Plate 9: Trench crossing the farmyard, view north, no scales



Plate 10: Trench along edge of farmyard and into the woodland, view north, no scales



Plate 11: View east, modern surfacing of type 1 gravels, concrete and brick, directly overlying natural sand substrate, 1m scale



Plate 12: Trench from existing pipe to farmyard, view south-west, no scales

Appendix 1: Summary of project archive

TYPE	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	None
Paper	Context sheet, Diary (Field progress form)
Digital	Database, GIS, Images raster/digital photography , Spreadsheets, Survey, Text

**OASIS terminology*

A copy of the report will be deposited with ADS OASIS for validation with the Worcestershire HER, to disseminate the results. Due to the negative results of the project no further archiving will take place.

Appendix 2: Summary of data for HER

WSM 80023

No finds or environmental samples recovered during the investigations