

Archaeological Watching Brief at Barn 2 (Unit 3), Pottery Farm, Mucklow Hill, Halesowen, West Midlands



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Worcestershire Archaeology
Archive and Archaeology Service
The Hive, Sawmill Walk,
The Butts, Worcester
WR1 3PB

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Date: 3 February 2014
Author: Graham Arnold – garnold@worcestershire.gov.uk
Contributors: Dennis Williams and Shona Robson-Glyde
Illustrator: Carolyn Hunt
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Watching brief at Barn 2 (Unit 3), Pottery Farm, Mucklow Hill, Halesowen, West Midlands

Graham Arnold

Background information

<i>Client</i>	Neil Shepherd Design Ltd
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SO 97763 84701
<i>Planning authority</i>	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
<i>reference</i>	P09/1586
<i>Project design</i>	WA 2013
<i>Project parameters</i>	IfA 2012

This report relates to condition number 8 of the planning application (DMBC 2013) which cites that: "No works of construction, levels changes, re-grading or other site clearance or infrastructure works involving ground disturbance shall begin until the developer has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has first been submitted and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Such archaeological work shall comprise a suitably targeted watching brief with appropriate provision for archaeological investigation and recording and including subsequent analysis, reporting and archiving."

Previous archaeological work on the site

A desk-based assessment (DBA) has been completed for the site by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA; Connolly, 2013). No other previous intrusive archaeological work has been undertaken on site. The following is taken from the DBA:

Barn 2 is a brick and stone construction which stands on the northern edge of a former farm, known as Pottery Farm which lies to the east of Halesowen on the road between the town and Quinton and Birmingham. The barns of the farm are now derelict, but the 20th century farmhouse is inhabited, as is the original house to the farm, now called The Old House.

The barn itself is first depicted on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of the area. It is not depicted on the tithe map for the township of Hill, dated 1846, but it is thought from the style of its construction and form of bricks that it may have existed at this time.

Barn 2 is one of two surviving buildings which were formerly associated with a small pottery known as Bellevue Potteries which is first depicted on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1883 which depicts a linear set of buildings including two which are circular and likely to have been kilns. There is little available historic evidence for the pottery (although Dudley Records were not available at the time of the study).

The pottery was demolished by 1919 and the area where it formerly stood is now rough open ground. Barn 2 is currently derelict with a galvanised frontage into which wooden doors are set. The roof is shored with plastic sheeting. The bricks used to construct the upper part of the barn measure 9" x 4" x 2 1/2" and are thought to date to the mid 17th to early 18th century (pers comm Shona Robson-Glyde.).

Pottery Farm Holloway (HER ref 7077-MDD1131) runs westwards from close to the site of the proposed development and could have medieval origins.

Aims

The aim of the watching brief was to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible.

Methods

General specification for fieldwork

WA 2012

Sources consulted

Desk based assessment (Connolly 2013)

Sources cited by the HER

Cartographic sources used

1883 OS 1st Edition Worcestershire Sheet 5, plate 9, Scale 25" to 1 mile

1886-1890 Worcestershire, scale 1:10, 560

1903-1905 Worcestershire, scale 1:10,560

1904 Staffordshire, scale 1:10, 560

1919 Staffordshire, scale 1:2,500

1921 Staffordshire, scale 1:10, 560

1938-1946 Worcestershire, scale 1:10, 560

1955 Staffordshire, 1:2,500

Date(s) of fieldwork

18 December 2013 – 21 January 2014

Area of site

125m²

Sampling area sampled Indicated on Fig 2 + 3

Dimensions of excavated areas observed –

Underpinning Trenches length 7.00m max

width 0.50m

depth 1.00m max

Internal Ground reduction length 7.00m

width 4.60m

depth 0.30m

External ground reduction length 12.50m

width 10.00m

depth 1.40m

Access to or visibility of deposits

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken during hand excavation of deposits. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits, Access to deep trenches was not made for safety reasons.

Statement of confidence

Access to, and visibility of, deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved

Deposit description

A full description of the deposits is given in Appendix 1.

Discussion

A mixed friable floor surface of ash and metal slag was noted inside the barn (Trenches 1 and 2; 100/200). It was a maximum of 0.40m deep and was of post-medieval date (Fig 3, Plates 2 – 4). This lay directly onto the solid sandstone bedrock (101/201). In the areas that were reduced outside of the barn (Trenches 3 and 4; Fig 4, Plates 5 – 9) a mixed topsoil (300/400) containing porcelain and modern rubbish overlay a stoney silty clay (301/401) over natural sand and sandstone (302/402). The barn walls were observed to have been founded directly on the natural bedrock.

The small artefactual assemblage from this site comprised post-medieval brick, pottery and slag. 2½" thick brick from the building structure may date from the late 18th or early 19th centuries. 3" engineering brick recovered from the floor surface (200) is likely to be of later 19th century date. A roof tile fragment, 7" wide, also from the floor surface (100), could have a wider 17^h to 18th century date range. This tile was consistent with the roof tiles found scattered around the barn generally which is understood to have comprised the previous roof. Metal-working slag from the floor surface (200) contained fragments of limestone and was undiagnostic (pers comm Dennis Williams). The finds were discarded after analysis as they were considered to be of low significance.

Conclusions

No significant archaeology relating to earlier structures or the Bellevue Pottery to the north-east of the barn was encountered during the monitored groundworks. Only modern refuse and roof tile from the previous barn roof were found. This demonstrates that no remains of the pottery to the north exist in this location. There was also no direct evidence of activity relating to the medieval holloway located to the south-west of the property.

Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on behalf of Neil Shepherd Design Ltd at Barn 2, Pottery Farm, Mucklow Hill, Halesowen (NGR ref SO 97763 84701). Underpinning pits and ground reduction internally removed a floor surface containing frequent ash and metal slag with the natural sandstone geology below. Works surrounding the barn revealed modern topsoil with subsoil and natural sandstone geology at a maximum of 0.30m below the ground surface. No significant archaeology relating to the 19th century Bellevue pottery to the north-west or the medieval holloway to the south-west of the site was observed.

Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Neil Shepherd (Neil Shepherd Design Ltd) and Jayne Pilkington (Senior Conservation Officer, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council).

Bibliography

Connolly, E, 2013 *Desk based assessment of Barn 2 (Unit 3), Pottery Farm, Mucklow Hill, Halesowen, West Midlands*, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, P4245 unpublished report **2082**, dated 6 January 2014

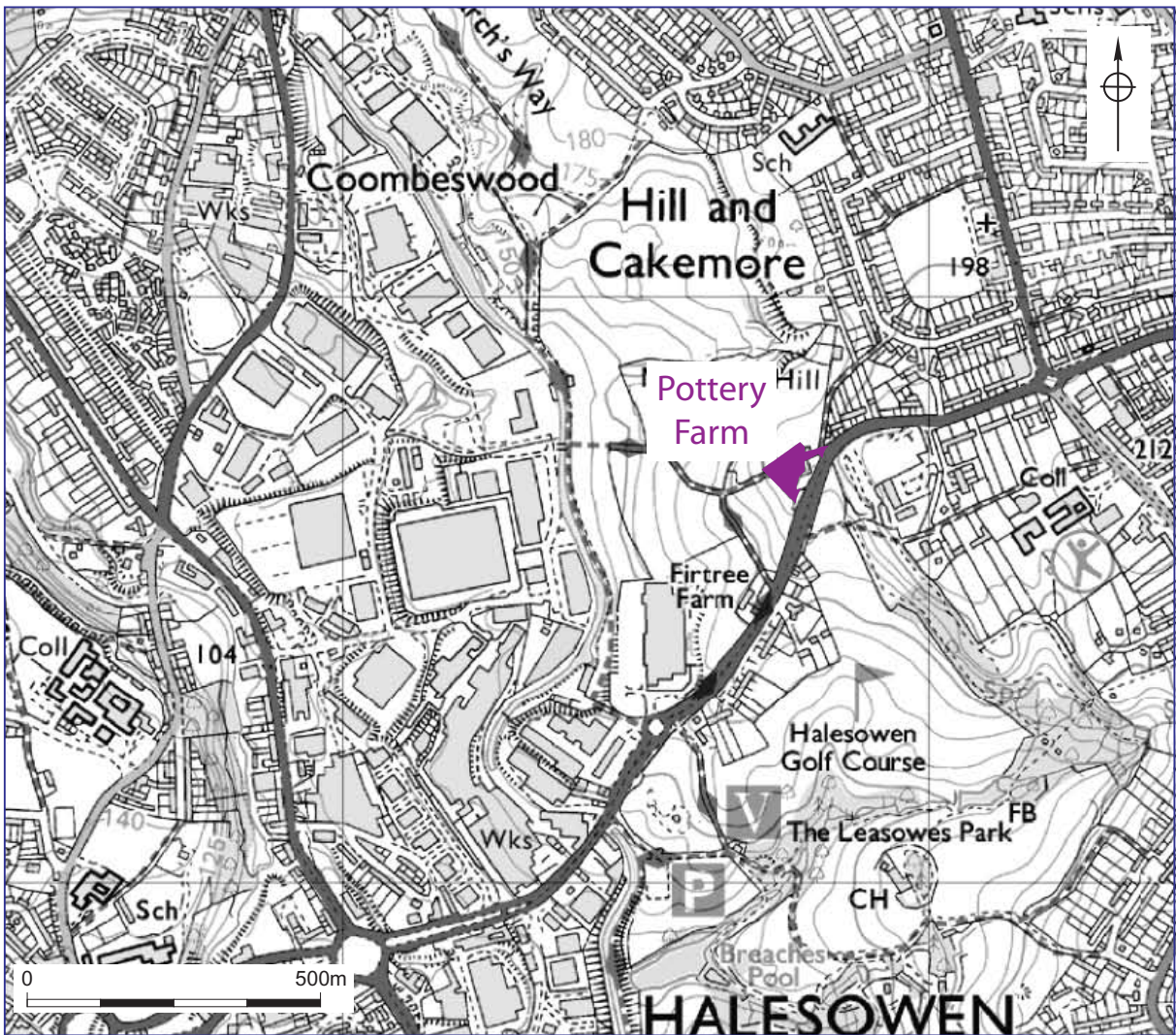
DMBC 2013 *Approved Planning Conditions*, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, dated 10 May 2013

IfA 2008 *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, Institute for Archaeologists

WA 2012 Manual of service practice, recording manual, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, report 1842

WA 2013 *Proposal for an archaeological watching brief at Pottery Farm, Mucklow Hill, Halesowen*, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 17 December 2013, P4245

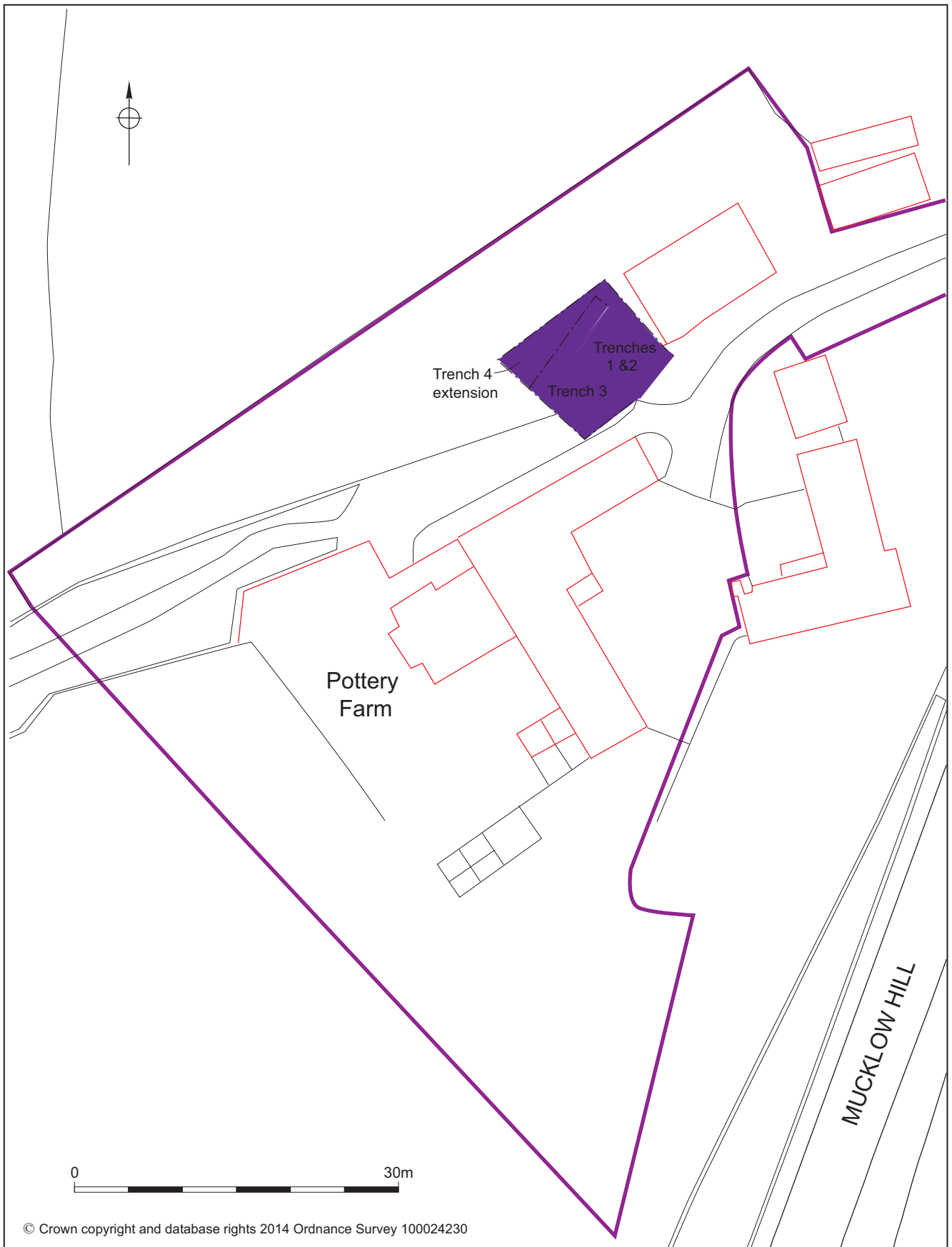
Figures



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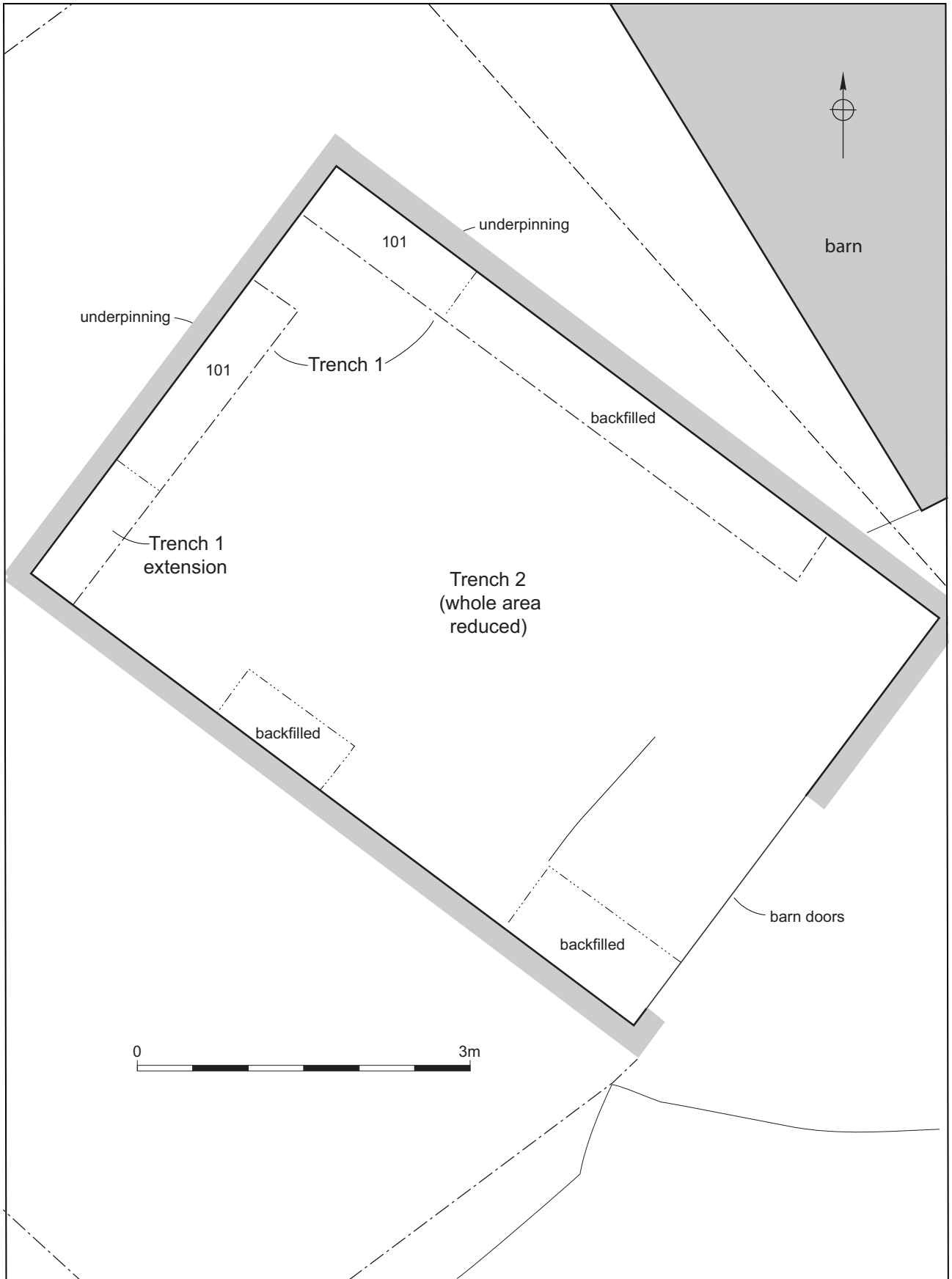
Location of the site

Figure 1



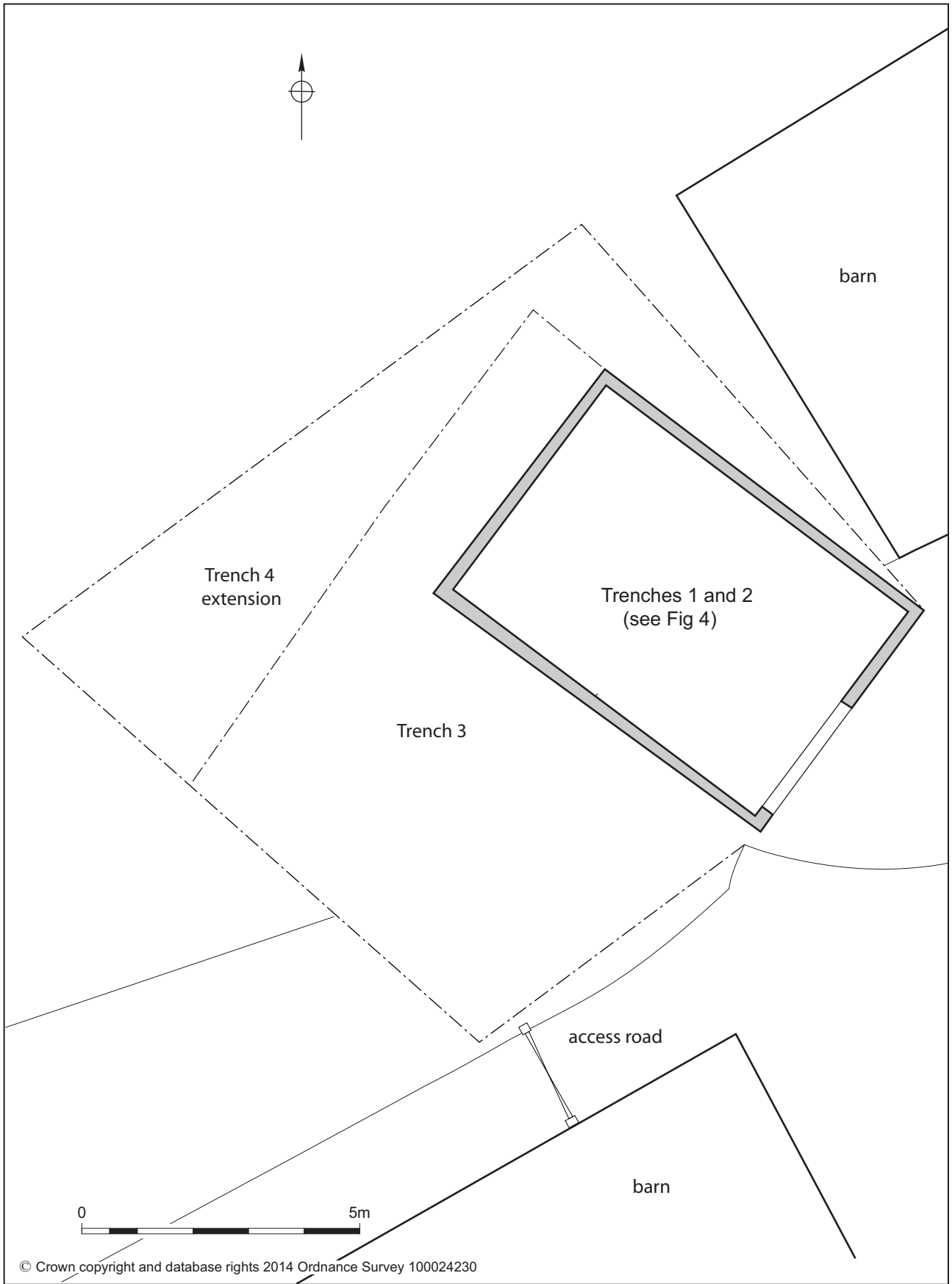
Trench location plan

Figure 2



Internal excavations monitored

Figure 3



External ground reduction area

Figure 4

Plates



Plate 1 Barn 2 Unit 3, looking north



Plate 2 Example of under-pinning trench. View north



Plate 3 Ashy floor surface with frequent metal slag



Plate 4 Floor surface removed for hardcore. View north-west



Plate 5 Bank to the south-west of barn reduced for car park. View north



Plate 6 South facing section of bank showing topsoil and natural geological strata.



Plate 7 North-east corner of barn with soil piled up against the wall. Included roof tile, glass, brick fragments and modern refuse. View south.



Plate 8 North-east corner of barn with soil piled up against the wall. Included roof tile, glass, brick fragments and modern refuse. View south.



Plate 9 Area around barn reduced to finished levels, looking East

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trenches 1 and 2

Site area: Internal works within barn Fig 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 6.80m Width: 4.60m Depth: 0.30 – 1.00m

Orientation: NW - SE

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100 / 200	Barn floor surface	Mixed dark brownish black friable silty clay with abundant ash and manure with frequent clinker and metal slag, brick fragments and occasional post medieval ceramics.	0.00 – 0.40m
101 / 201	Natural	Solid angular yellow, orange sandstone geology in a sandy matrix.	0.40m +

Trenches 3 and 4

Site area: External ground reduction Fig 3

Maximum dimensions: Length: 12.50m Width: 10.00m Depth: 1.40m max

Orientation: NE - SW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
300 / 400	Topsoil	Medium orange brown fine soft silt with frequent root action and worm sorting. Contains occasional medium flecks of charcoal, frequent tile and post-medieval ceramics with modern plastics.	0.00 – 0.30m
301 / 401	Subsoil	Medium orange friable silty clay. Frequent sandstone frags.	0.20 – 0.50m
302 / 402	Natural	Solid angular yellow, orange sandstone geology in a sandy matrix.	0.30m +

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

- 2 Field progress reports AS2
- 2 Photographic records AS3
- 141 Digital photographs
- 2 Scale drawings
- 4 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 Computer disk
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Wednesbury Museum and Art Gallery
Holyhead Road
Wednesbury
West Midlands, WS10 7DF
Tel. Wednesbury (0121) 558 2561