

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF AT
FOXHILL BARN,
HOLLANDS ROAD,
ECKINGTON,
WORCESTERSHIRE

Graham Arnold and Tom Vaughan

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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Project P3241
Report 1866
WSM 39867

Archaeological watching brief at Foxhill Barn, Hollands Road, Eckington, Worcestershire

Graham Arnold and Tom Vaughan

Background information

<i>Client</i>	Mr James Hutcheon
<i>Site address</i>	Foxhill Barn, Hollands Road, Eckington, Persnore, Worcestershire, WR10 3DF
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SO 9311 4072
<i>Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>	WSM 39867
<i>Planning authority reference</i>	Wychavon District Council W/03/0618
<i>Brief</i>	HEAS 2011a
<i>Project design</i>	HEAS 2011b
<i>Project parameters</i>	IfA 2008

Previous archaeological work on the site

There has been no previous below ground archaeological work undertaken on site.

The site is occupied by a post-medieval threshing barn and attached cattle shelter shed (Plate 1). The following summary is taken from the records made by Mike Glyde (Historic Environment Planning Officer, Worcestershire County Council) prior in 2003 and 2008 (WSM 32464):

Three bay threshing barn

Exterior - Gable elevations of small dressed limestone blocks, set on slightly projecting limestone plinth. Large limestone quoins. Four vertical ventilation slits in cruciform layout. Two S-shaped straps high on each corner of elevation. Other ironwork of indeterminate function.

East / west elevations - red brick with two (one above the other) pierced brick ventilation in diamond pattern, each side of threshing doors. Dressed limestone quoins key into brickwork. Limestone plinth on exterior only. Double doors not full height, with boarding across top ¼ of opening.

Roof - plain clay tile.

Interior - Gables are of dressed limestone to floor, East and west elevations are of brick, again to floor. Central bay has large blue lias flagstone floor. Delineated from other bays by former brick partition. Outer bays have earthen floor. One pair of King Post trusses.

Shelter shed on west side is of timber construction, much reused timber and not to high quality. Feeding byre runs along length of northern side. Assumed much later date than threshing barn.

Archaeological background and previous archaeological work on the site

The site lies within a landscape rich in archaeological remains, particularly of Iron Age, Roman and medieval date. The field surrounding the site to the south and east contains possible Iron Age occupation (WSM 33006), while Romano-British pottery has also been recovered (WSM 07281). The field 200m to the south contains a large rectangular ditched enclosure and other cropmark features, considered to be of Iron Age or Romano-British date (WSM 09781) which has been designated by English Heritage as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 33032). Metal detecting in a field to the east has recovered Roman and Celtic silver coins (WSM 27864, 32369 and 34282). Fieldwalking has recovered Romano-British pottery to the south of the threshing barn site. Medieval ridge and furrow is also present in the fields to the east and west of the site, within which medieval finds have been recovered.

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	CAS 1995 IfA 2008
Sources consulted	HER
Date(s) of fieldwork	17 May 2011
Sampling area sampled	c 75m ² . Indicated on Figs 2 and 3
Dimensions of excavated areas observed	
Trench 1: Site strip	length 13.95m width 5.50m depth c 0.75m
Trench 1: Foundation Trenches	length 37m width 0.45-0.60m depth 0.90-1.00m
Trenches 2 & 4: Soakaway test pits	length 0.30-0.50m width 0.50m max depth 0.80m
Trench 3: Service Trench	length 30m width 0.30m depth 0.75m

Access to or visibility of deposits

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken during/after machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits.

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

Trench 1

Context	Description	Interpretation	Depth (top and bottom of deposit, below ground level)
100	Moderately compact dark brown silt	Modern topsoil recently deposited	0 – 0.25m
101	Loose dark brown sandy silt with frequent roots and occasional charcoal	Relict topsoil with roots of former hedgerow, along north side of site	0 – 0.40m
102	Dark blackish grey pebbles, ironwork and patches of dark orangey yellow sands	Modern hardcore cattle shelter shed floor and yard; same as 304?	0 – 0.25m
103	Light yellowish brown clay with grey mottling, iron pan and patches of coarse orangey yellow sands	Modern made ground to level area of cattle shelter shed	0.10 – 0.40m
104	Light orangey yellow clay with occasional orange sandy gravels	Natural; same as 202 and 302	0.40m+
105	Light greyish blue clay	Natural; same as 303	0.70m+

106	Cut	Modern scarp/cut for hardcore gravel surface of yard 102	0 – 0.25m
107	Mid brown silty clay with frequent rooting	Tree throw along line of former hedgerow	0 – 0.60m
108	Irregular oval cut	Cut of tree throw	0 – 0.60m
109	Reddish orange sandy gravel within south side of trench; below 102	Levelling layer below cattle shelter shed	0.12 – 0.15m

Trenches 2 and 4

Context	Description	Interpretation	Depth (top and bottom of deposit, below ground level)
200	Turfed, moderately compact dark brown humic silty clay with frequent pebbles	Topsoil; same as 100 and 300	0 – 0.15m
201	Red sandy gravel	Subsoil	0.15 – 0.25m
202	Compact light yellowish orange sandy clay	Natural; same as 104 and 302	0.25m+

Trench 3

Context	Description	Interpretation	Depth (top and bottom of deposit, below ground level)
300	Turfed, loose light brown silty clay	Topsoil; same as 100 and 200	0 – 0.15m
301	Dark greyish black silt and gravels, frequent ceramic building material and tile	Modern hardcore surface; same as 102?	0.15 – 0.30m
302	Compact light yellowish orange sandy clay	Natural; same as 202	0.30 – 0.75m+
303	Light greyish blue clay	Natural; same as 105	c 0.70 – 1.00m+
304	Black hardcore and clinker	Modern yard surface of buildings on site; same as 102?	0.15 – 0.45m
305	0.25m diameter wooden fence post at entrance to farm yard	Modern fence post	0.10 – 0.75m
306	Cut for 305	Modern fence post	0.10 – 0.75m
307	Layer of loose rounded pebbles 0.05-0.10m in diameter, at entrance of farm yard	Modern road surfacing	0 – 0.30m

Discussion

During the excavations of the foundations (Trench 1; Figs 2 and 3; Plates 2-5, 7 and 8) natural sands and clays were found to be overlain by stone hardcore of an old yard surface and track and made ground from the demolition of the cattle shelter shed that was previously on site. The hardcore contained debris of 20th century date. A natural tree throw in the north-west corner of the foundations was also recorded (Plate 6).

The service trench (Trench 3) excavated to provide the electrical supply to the property also revealed evidence of the modern hardcore track and yard surface (Plates 11 and 12) and a modern fence post that had been removed recently at the entrance.

The small 0.50m square pits excavated for the two soakaways (Trenches 2 and 4) contained only topsoil, subsoil and natural sand (Plate 9).

Conclusions

No significant archaeological features, layers, structures or deposits were exposed nor finds recovered during monitoring of the groundworks. There was no evidence for the continuation of the Iron Age or Romano-British activity previously identified in the immediate vicinity.

The only archaeological features which were recorded related to the foundations, floor and yard surfaces of the former cattle shelter shed and farmyard. They appeared to be of 20th century date and directly overlay the natural matrix. It is therefore considered that any earlier remains which may have existed within the farm yard have been disturbed and largely removed by this activity.

A full undisturbed soil sequence was only revealed within the soakaway trenches beyond the yard area. These two trenches represent only a very small sample of the wider field. It is therefore not possible to state with any certainty whether or not the Iron Age or Romano-British activity does extend up to this northern side of the field.

Publication summary

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service 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 Mr James Hutcheon at Foxhill Barn, Hollands Road, Eckington, Worcestershire (NGR SO 9311 4072; HER ref WSM 39867). The site strip, foundations and associated service trenches for a single storey extension to the existing threshing barn and were monitored. The natural matrix was observed, directly below hardcore surfaces and made ground within the farm yard and below undisturbed subsoil beyond the extent of the farm yard. The hardcore layers, which contained 20th century debris, represented the foundations of the former cattle shelter shed and yard surfaces outside the barn. No significant archaeological finds or features were identified during the project although it was unclear if the Iron Age and Romano-British activity previously identified to the south and east extends into this area.

Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Mr James Hutcheon and Mr Mike Glyde (Historic Environment Planning Officer, Worcestershire County Council).

Bibliography

CAS 1995 (as amended) *Manual of Service practice: fieldwork recording manual*, County Archaeological Service, Hereford and Worcester County Council, report, **399**

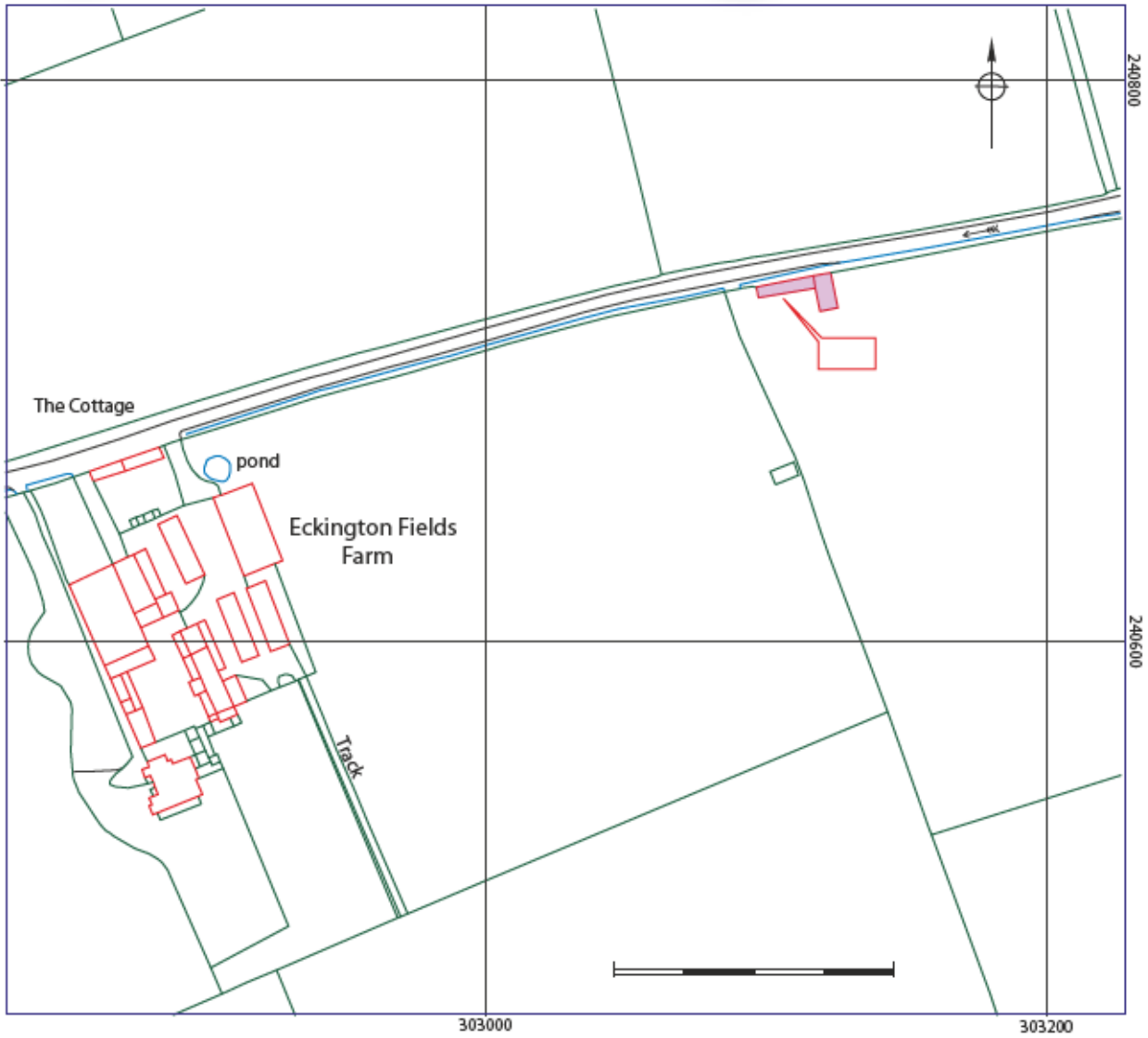
HEAS, 2008 *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire*, Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council unpublished document dated November 2008

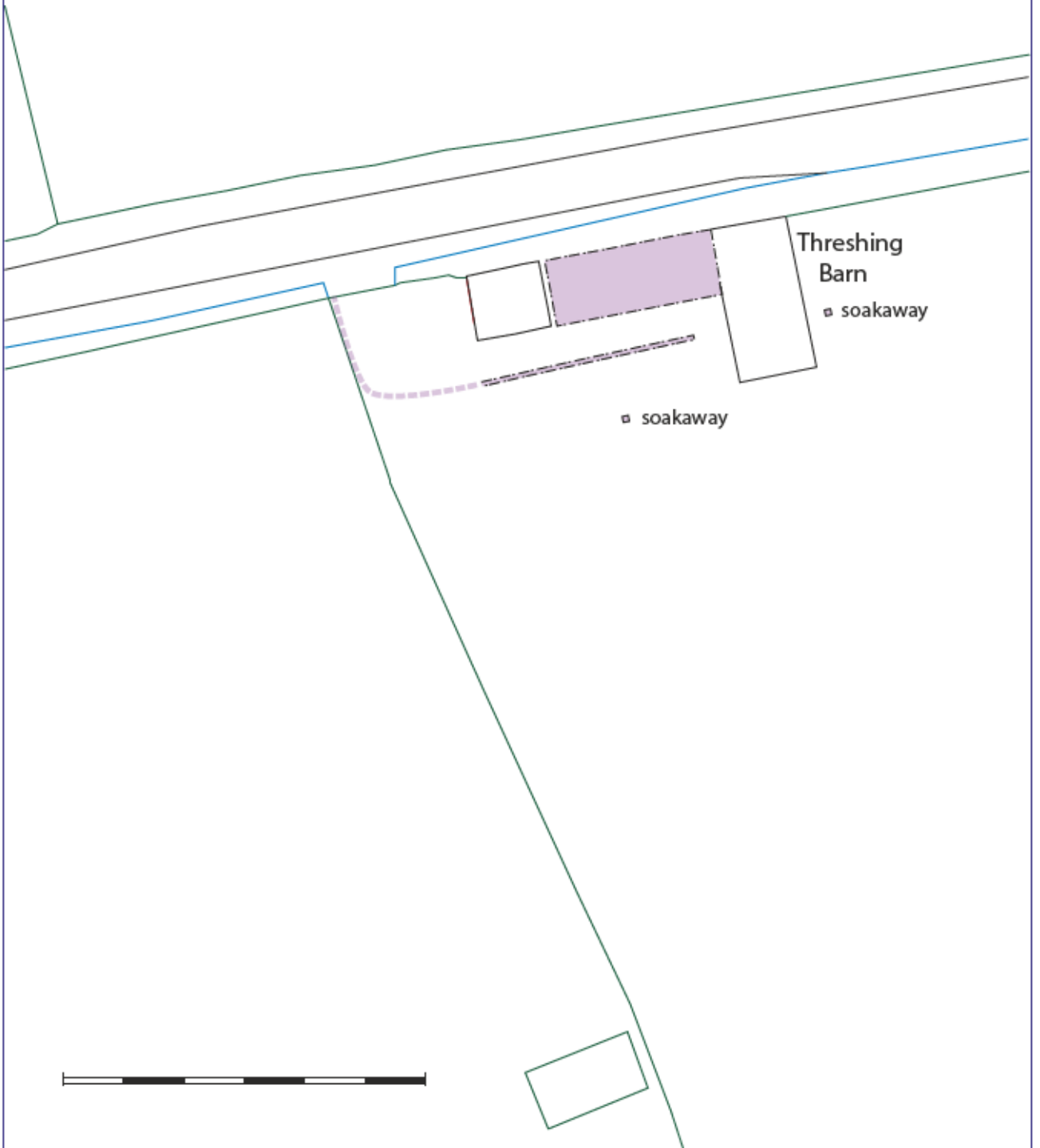
HEAS 2011a *Requirements for an archaeological watching brief at Foxhill Barn, Hollands Road, Eckington, Worcestershire*, Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council unpublished document dated 1 May 2011

HEAS 2011b *Proposal for an archaeological watching brief at Foxhill Barn, Hollands Road, Eckington, Worcestershire*, Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 4 May 2011, **P3241**

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

Figures

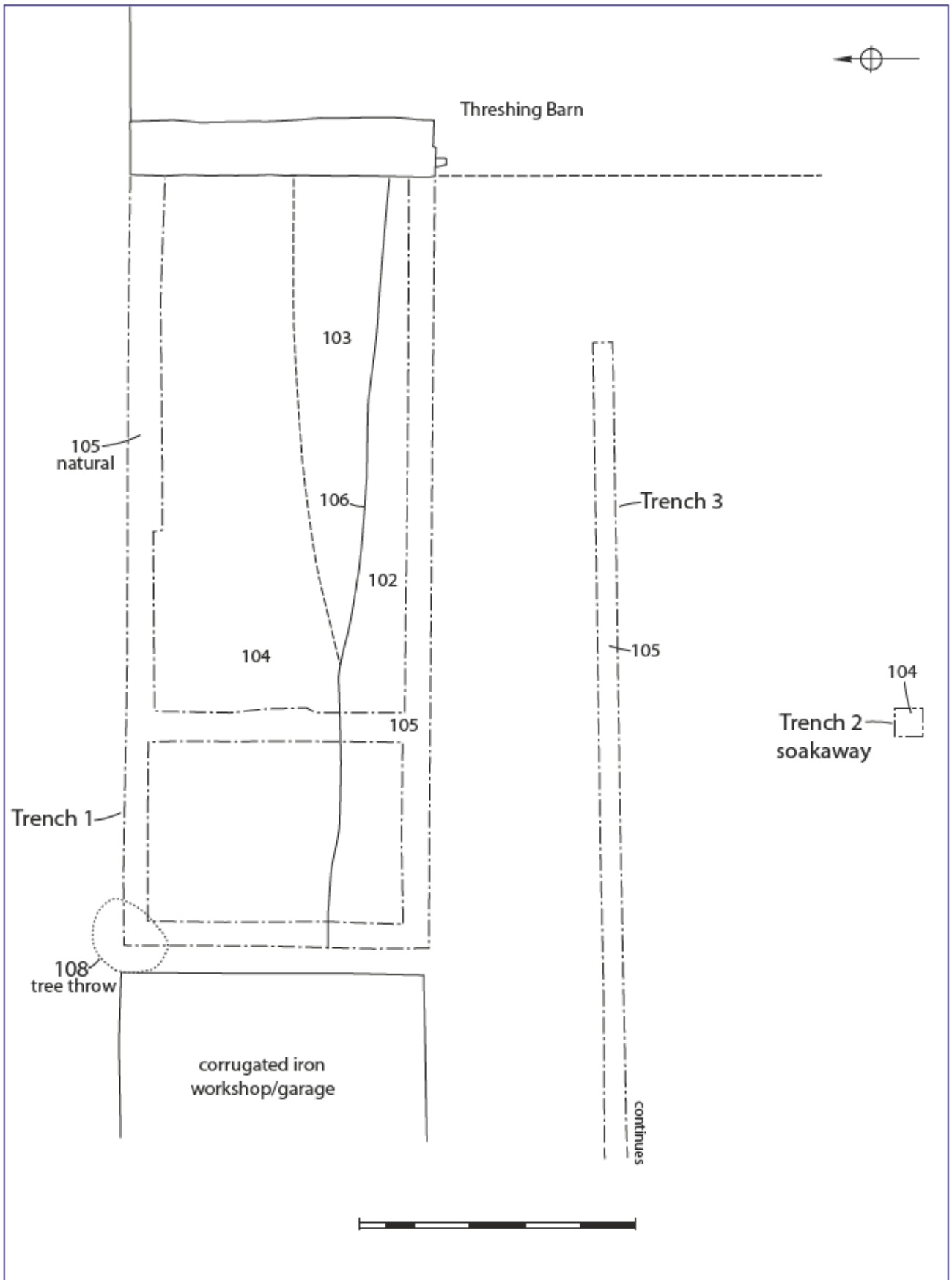




Threshing
Barn
▣ soakaway

▣ soakaway





Plates



Plate 1 The threshing barn and cattle shelter shed before cattle shed demolition, view north-east



Plate 2 Location for new building prior to excavations commencing, view north-east



Plate 3 Trench 1 topsoil strip, view east



Plate 4 Trench 1 topsoil strip, view west



Plate 5 Sample south facing section of foundation Trench 1 showing stratigraphy



Plate 6 Tree throw (108) and roots of former hedgerow (101) in north-west corner of Trench 1, view west



Plate 7 Trench 1 foundations complete, with hardcore surface (102) to the right, view east



Plate 8 North facing section of foundation Trench 1 showing gravel and hardcore yard surface above natural sands and clays



Plate 9 Example of one of the soakaway pits



Plate 10 Service Trench 3 during excavation, view north-west



Plate 11 Section of the Trench 3 showing spoil of hardcore and clinker layer / surface (304)



Plate 12 North facing section of Trench 3 showing modern pebble hardcore road surfacing (307) at entrance to the farm yard.

Appendix 1 Technical information

The archive (site code: WSM 39867)

The archive consists of:

4	Context records AS1
2	Field progress reports AS2
1	Photographic records AS3
50	Digital photographs
1	Drawing number catalogues AS4
3	Scale drawings
1	Context number catalogues AS5
2	Trench record sheets AS41
1	Computer disk
1	Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum
Museums Worcestershire
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416