

ARCHEAOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF AT
POOLHAY CLOSE,
ELDERSFIELD,
WORCESTERSHIRE

Simon Sworn

With a contribution by Alan Jacobs

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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Worcestershire County Council

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Project 2689
Report 1334
WSM 34223

Archaeological watching brief at Poolhay Close, Eldersfield, Worcestershire

Simon Sworn

Background information

<i>Client</i>	Severn Trent Water
<i>Site address</i>	Poolhay Close, Eldersfield, Worcestershire
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SO 8281 3083
<i>Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>	WSM 34223
<i>WCC curatorial reference</i>	P99A0347
<i>Brief</i>	HEAS 2005a
<i>Project design</i>	HEAS 2005b
<i>Project parameters</i>	IFA 1999

Previous archaeological work on the site

There has been no previous archaeological work undertaken on site.

Previous archaeological work on associated sites

There has been no archaeological fieldwork within the vicinity of the new treatment works. Although these works do not directly affect any known archaeological sites there are fields adjacent to the site called Black Ditch Ground and Black Ditch, marked on the 1843 Tithe Map (Fig 3). Fields containing the reference 'Black' often indicate the presence of Roman settlement sites. The archaeological watching brief was therefore carried out to mitigate any potential disturbance of significant archaeological deposits.

Geology and topography

The site lies on a level area of ground, located just to the west of Corse Lawn. The soils consist of reddish brown stoneless silty clay, overlain by dark brown, very slightly stony silty clay of the Worcester series (Beard *et al* 1986). Bands of blue-grey alluvial clay were also noted during the fieldwork.

Aims

The aim of the archaeological watching brief was to observe areas of ground disturbance associated with a Severn Trent Water scheme to construct a small sewage treatment works, comprising two settling tanks and a connecting sewer pipe. Observations, allied with the use of a metal detector, were carried out in order to entail a surface scatter survey, record archaeological deposits and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type.

Methods

General specification for field work	CAS 1995
Sources consulted	Sources cited by the SMR 1 st Edition OS Map 1884 Eldersfield Tithe Map 1843
Dates of fieldwork	28 th February-15 th April 2005
Area of deposits observed	c 1518m ² . Indicated on Fig 2

Dimensions of excavated areas observed

length 46m
width 33m
depth 1.9m (max)

Statement of confidence

Observation of the topsoil stripping for a new sewage treatment works was undertaken during and after machine excavation. Excavation was undertaken using a 360 degree tracked excavator using a 1.6m toothless bucket to a depth of 0.20m (1.90m for the settling tanks). The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean in the area of the settling tanks to observe any well-differentiated archaeological deposits. Throughout the rest of the works the topsoil was only partially stripped, leaving a thin layer of mixed topsoil and subsoil across the majority of the site. Access to the trench was possible throughout. Selected areas were cleaned by hand to confirm the depth and nature of the deposits present. All artefacts from the area of recording were retrieved by hand and retained in accordance with the service manual (CAS 1995 as amended). Access to, and visibility of the deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

Deposit description

Context	Type Colour Texture	Description	Date	Interpretation	Depth (below ground level)
100	Loose mid-dark brown silty loam	Occasional small sub- rounded pebbles	Modern	Topsoil	0-0.30m
101	Mid brown silty clay	Occasional small sub- rounded pebbles		Subsoil	0.30- 0.50m
102	Dark brown silty clay	Very occasional small gravels. Bands of blue- grey alluvial clay with patches of fluvial sand		Natural	0.50m+

Artefact analysis (by Alan Jacobs)

Artefact recovery policy

All artefacts from the area of salvage recording were retrieved by hand and retained in accordance with the service manual (CAS 1995 as amended).

Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined and a primary record was made on a Microsoft Access 2000 database. Artefacts were identified, quantified and dated and a *terminus post quem* date produced for each stratified context. Pottery was examined under x20 magnification and recorded by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by the service (Hurst and Rees 1992).

Artefactual analysis

The pottery assemblage retrieved from the excavated area consisted of just eleven sherds of pottery weighing 118g, and in addition fragments of tile, brick, metal objects and clay pipe stems were recovered. The group came from unstratified context 100, and could be dated from the medieval

period onwards (see Table 1). Level of preservation was generally varied with the majority of sherds displaying moderate levels of abrasion.

Material	Total	Weight (g)
Brick and tile	4	78
Iron objects	10	207
Copper object	1	6
Lead object	1	10
Tobacco pipe	1	1
Medieval pottery	1	2
Post-medieval pottery	7	113
Modern pottery	3	5

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

Discussion of the pottery

All sherds have been grouped and quantified according to fabric type (see Table 2). A total of two diagnostic form sherds were present and could be dated accordingly, the remaining sherds were datable by fabric type to the general period or production span. Where mentioned, all specific forms are referenced to the type series within the report for Deansway, Worcester (Bryant 2004).

The discussion below is a summary of the finds and associated location by period. Where possible, *terminus post quem* dates have been allocated and the importance of individual finds commented upon as necessary.

Fabric Number	Fabric name	Total sherds	Weight (g)
71	Medieval micaceous glazed ware	1	27
91	Post-medieval buff wares	6	86
150	Post-medieval Lingen/Deerfold ware	1	2
85	Modern stone china	3	5

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric

The pottery assemblage dates from the late medieval until the modern period. Only a single medieval fabric was recovered originating in Herefordshire and displaying evidence of considerable abrasion. The assemblage consists primarily of post-medieval fabrics of the 18th century and three sherds of modern date. A number of iron nails were recovered along with unidentifiable iron objects, a fragment of a modern copper alloy drawing compass and a single lead pistol shot. A single fragment of tobacco pipe was recovered along with four fragments of very abraded brick and tile, most probably dating to the post-medieval or modern periods.

Significance

The assemblage is too small to have any significance, particularly as no stratified material was recovered. Artefacts recovered merely represent residual material deposited from the end of the medieval to the modern period. The lack of more common Malvernian fabrics produced up to the middle of the 17th century is however, unusual given the proximity of the production centre at Hanley Castle.

Discussion

After the removal of topsoil and subsoil the underlying deposits were clearly exposed and observed to fulfil the requirements of the brief. There were clearly no archaeological structures, features or deposits visible within the area of works.

The lack of any visible archaeology on the site may partly be due to the nature of the works, the incomplete stripping of the topsoil over the majority of the site could have masked any underlying deposits. Though clearly observed deposits visible after complete topsoil stripping within the area of the settling tanks indicated no evidence of archaeological deposits. The lack of any artefactual evidence for any occupation within the recovered finds suggests that there was no archaeological activity present on the site or within the immediate vicinity.

In addition to no visible archaeological remains, extensive metal detecting produced no significant non-modern finds throughout the area of works.

Conclusions

The absence of any archaeological remains within the extent of the watching brief implies that this area of land has always been used essentially for agricultural or pastoral purposes.

The thin scattering of medieval and post-medieval pottery throughout the field is broadly consistent with a background scatter representing farming activity in the medieval and later periods. The occupation associated with this activity would be located elsewhere. The artefactual material would have been moved into surrounding fields as a result of concentrating domestic rubbish in midden heaps, which are subsequently spread about the arable fields. This practice is authenticated historically for the medieval period (Astill and Grant 1988).

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 Severn Trent Water at Poolhay Close, Eldersfield, Worcestershire (NGR ref SO 82813083; SMR ref WSM 34223). The watching brief was conducted during the removal of topsoil and the excavation of service trenches for the construction of a new sewerage treatment works and an associated fowl water pipe. The groundworks were observed, and revealed that there were no significant archaeological remains present. The examination of all recovered finds indicated that there is no evidence for significant on-site activity during the Roman through to the modern period. All finds from the medieval to modern period appear to be the result of manuring or the discard of general rubbish, implying a prolonged agricultural usage for this area.

Archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	7
Photographic records AS3	2
Digital photographs	30
Trench record sheets AS41	1
Drawings	1
Boxes of finds	1

The project archive is intended to be placed at: Worcestershire County Museum
Hartlebury Castle, Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ

telephone

01299 250416

Acknowledgements

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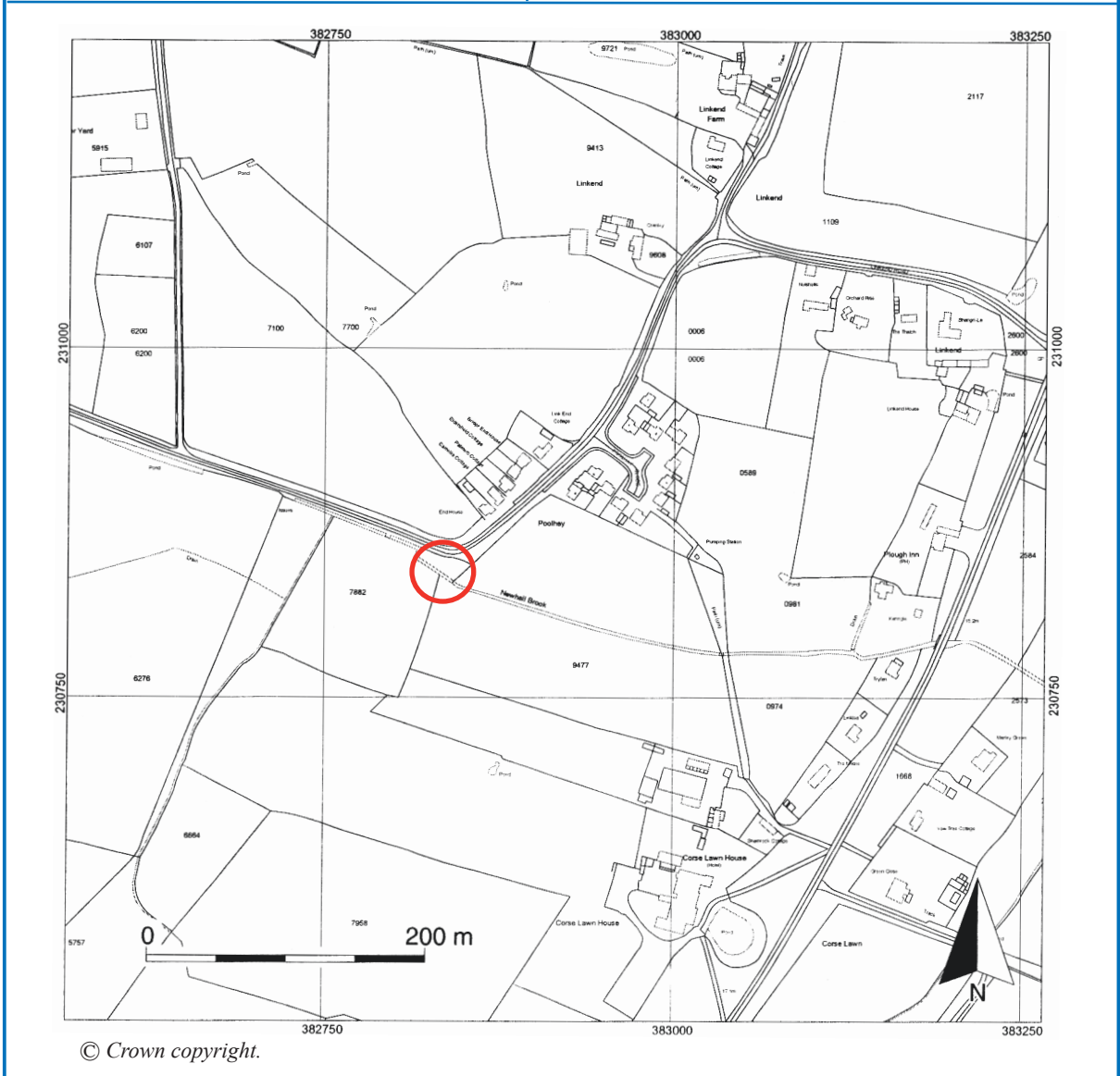
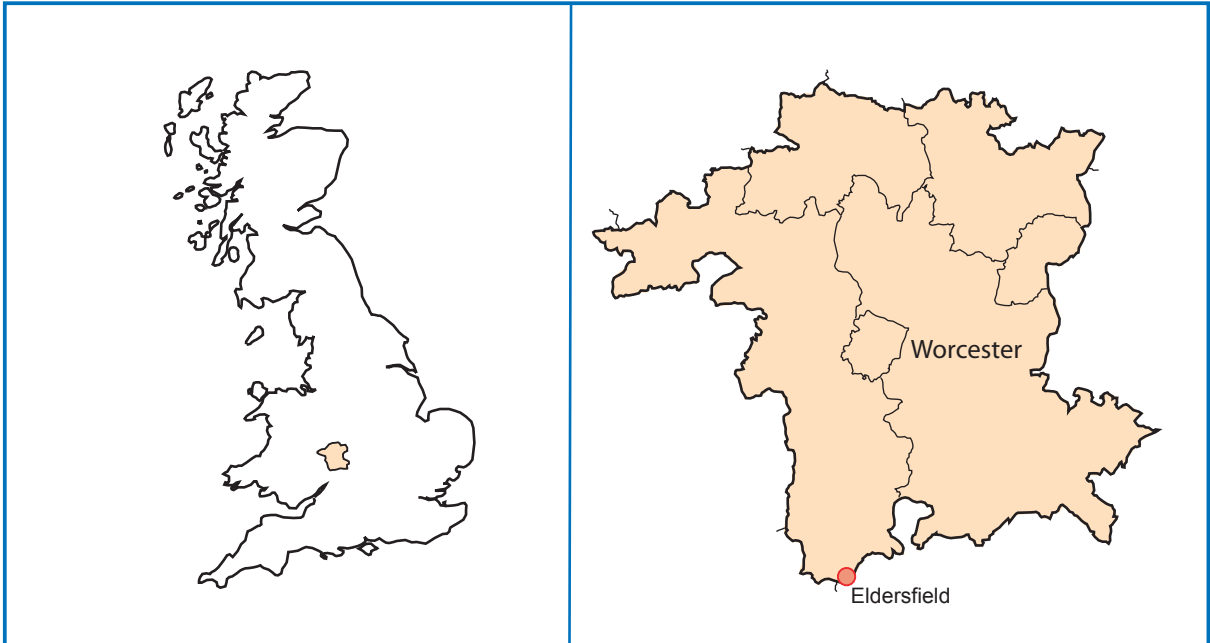
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Location of the site.

Figure 1

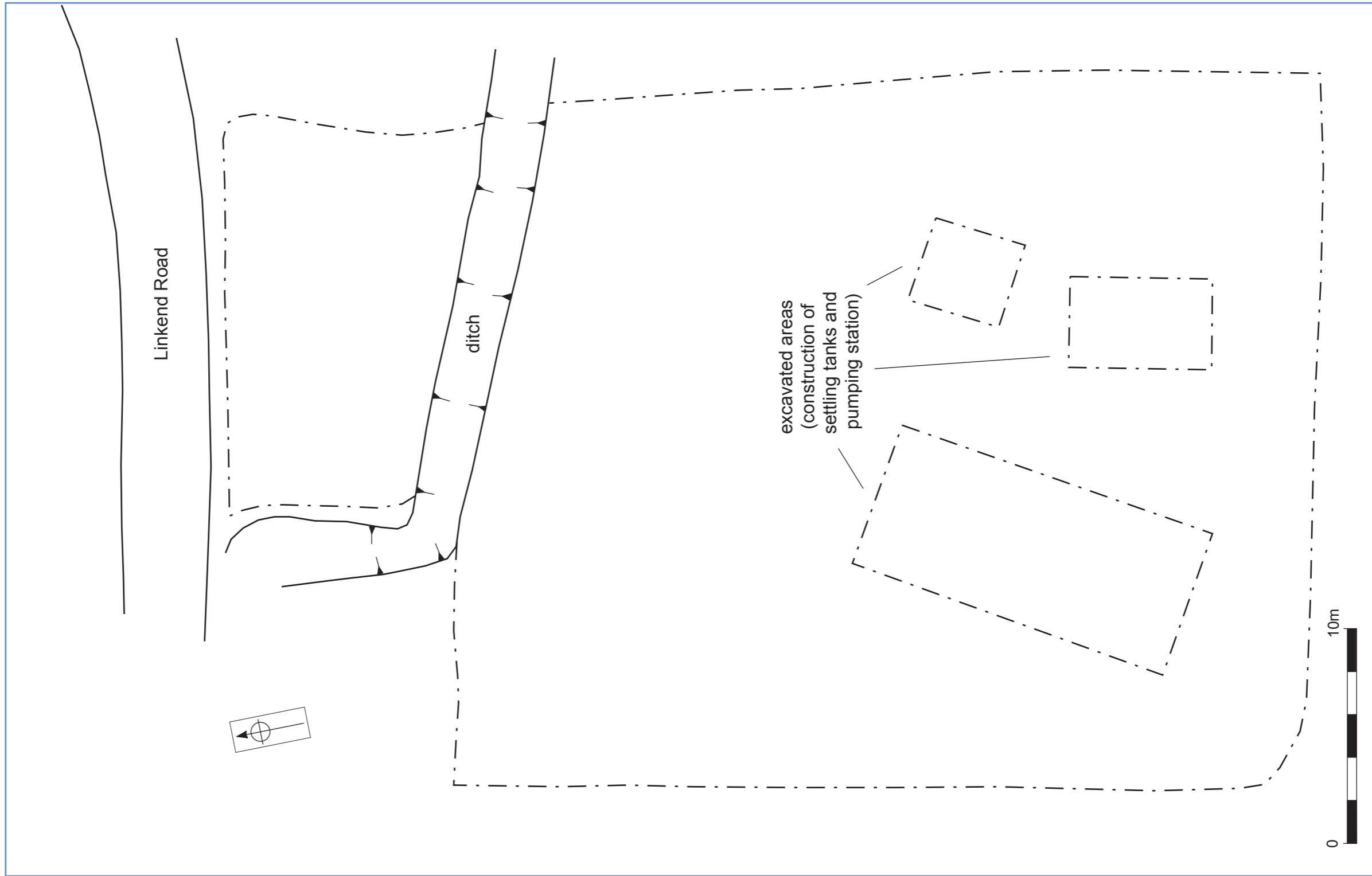


Figure 2: Location of settling tank and pumping station trenches

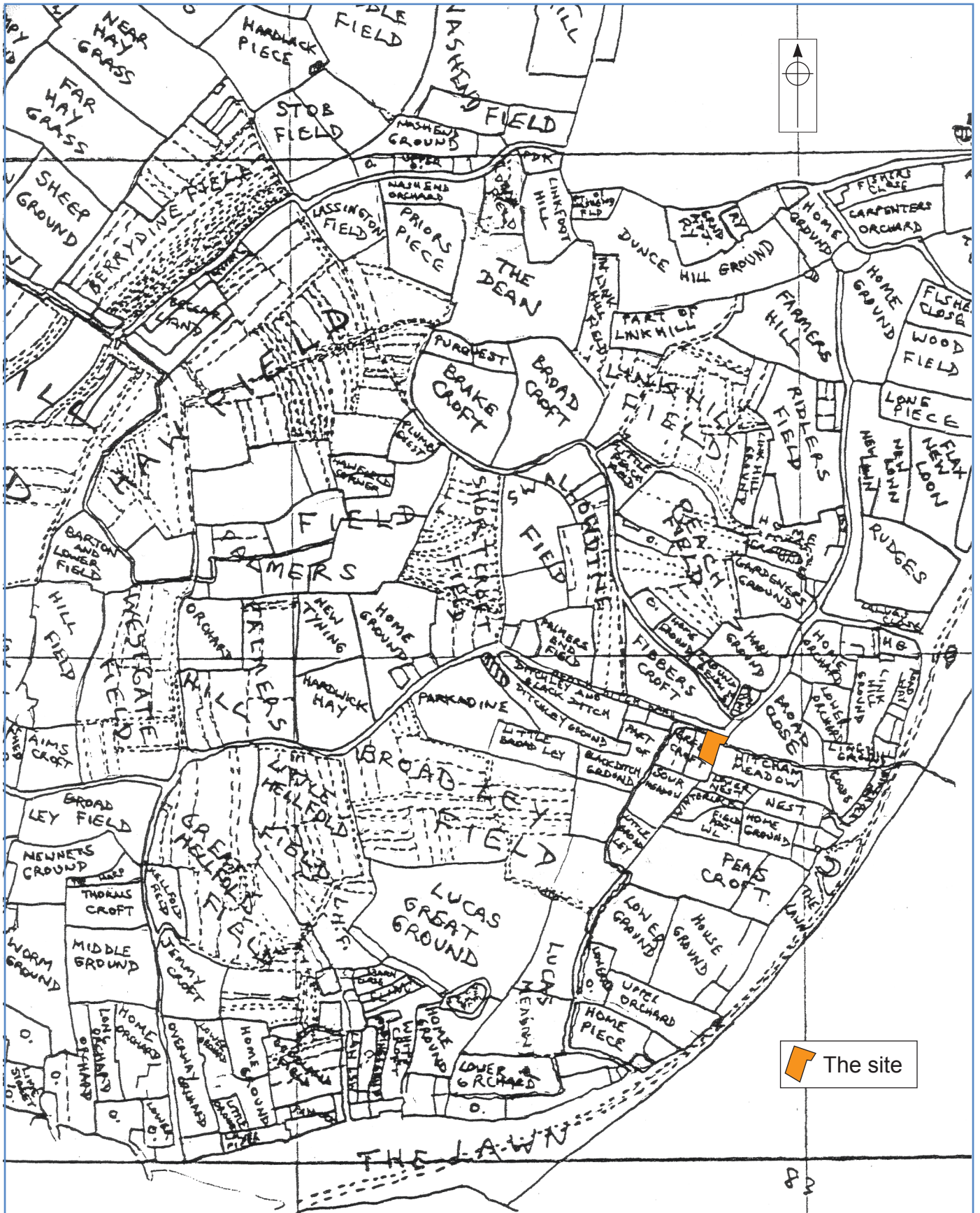


Figure 3: Extraction from Eldersfield tithe map 1843



Plate 1: The site prior to excavation, facing southeast



Plate 2: Stripped site with the location of the settling tanks being marked out, facing north



Plate 3: Machined excavation for settling tank, facing southwest