

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF AT 52 MAIN STREET,
SEDGEBERROW,
WORCESTERSHIRE

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Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

9th September 2005

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Project 2710
Report 1358
WSM 34311

Archaeological watching brief at 52 Main Street, Sedgeberrow, Worcestershire

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Background information

Planning background

The watching brief was required as a condition of planning consent for an extension to the rear of 52 Main Street, Sedgeberrow (HEAS 2005a). Information held in the Worcestershire Historical Environment Record suggested that significant archaeological remains might be present on the site, and that these might be affected by the development. The watching brief was necessary to ensure that such remains were properly recorded and interpreted.

Topographical, archaeological, and historical background

The site consists of a plot behind a 19th century cottage on the north side of Main Street (Fig 1). At the time of the fieldwork, the ground was fairly level, and covered with grass and scrub vegetation. The geology of the area consists of Jurassic clays covered by patches of Devensian “drift” (British Geological Survey 1975). The soils of the area are calcareous stony clays (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1986).

Archaeological remains found in and around Sedgeberrow show that the area has been settled since the late Iron Age, if not earlier. Remains of Iron Age and Roman activity have been found to the south of Main Street, within 60m of the site (Buteux 2000), and a few finds of prehistoric, Roman, and medieval date were recovered during a recent watching brief immediately to the east (Mercian Archaeology 2004). Isolated finds of medieval date have been recovered elsewhere, and post-medieval finds are widespread and abundant. With regard to historic buildings, the village contains a medieval church and several houses of 17th and 18th century date. The rest of the buildings are modern.

Documentary evidence shows that an estate at Sedgeberrow existed by 777, and was broadly co-terminous with the present parish boundary (Hooke 1990). The manor of Sedgeberrow is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086, in Lay Subsidy Rolls of the 13th and 14th centuries, and in manorial and parish archives dating from the late 16th century. In addition, the village is shown on a series of maps dating back to 1813. Some of the tenements shown on these maps are thought to be of medieval origin, including a row along the north side of Main Street (WSM 28860).

According to these maps, in 1813, the site formed a plot attached to the east end of this row (Anon 1813). At this time, the plot was longer than at present, and contained two buildings, one in the position of the present cottage, and the other to the east. By 1883, the present cottage had been built, as had a smaller building at the far end of the plot (OS 1883). The land to the west was then an orchard. No major changes are evident on maps published in 1938 and 1955, but sometime between 1955 and the present, the plot was shortened, and all buildings except the cottage were demolished (OS 1938 and 1955).

Aims

The overall aim of the watching brief was to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site” (IFA 2001, 2). More specifically, the watching brief aimed to record and interpret any archaeological remains exposed by the development, and to disseminate the results.

Methods

Before the fieldwork started, existing information relating to the site was compiled and assessed. This included records from the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record, and other

documentary sources held by the Service. The comprehensive nature of these sources made further research at the Worcestershire Record Office unnecessary.

During the fieldwork, all deposits exposed by the groundworks were observed, and where necessary cleaned and partially excavated by hand. Drawn, written, and photographic records were compiled according to standard Service practice (CAS 1995).

After the fieldwork, the artefacts were examined and recorded on a Microsoft Access 2000 database. Pottery was examined under x20 magnification and recorded by fabric type and form. Illustrations were prepared from original drawings using an Adobe Illustrator software package.

In the final analysis, the conclusions drawn from the various types of evidence were co-ordinated and synthesised.

Results

Stratigraphy

The groundworks afforded only limited windows into the stratigraphy of the site. Only part of the site was reduced to natural deposits, as shown on Figure 2 and Plate 1. In this area, around 0.20m of dark greyish brown silt loam (context 101) overlay subsoil of similar composition and depth (context 102). The majority of the artefacts described below came from these contexts. Natural deposits consisted of light brownish yellow silty sand with frequent small gravels (context 113). Their colour, composition, and compaction suggest a localised spread of Devensian “drift”. The foundation trenches excavated after the ground reduction showed that these deposits were around 0.90m deep, overlying greenish grey silty clay (context 114).

Five features were found during the ground reduction, stratified between the subsoil and natural deposits. Two of these features were directly adjacent, and had the appearance of small postholes (Fig 2, contexts 104 and 106; Plate 2), but are most probably of periglacial origin, in view of their homogenous fills, and their geological context. The other features were superimposed (Fig 3; Plate 2), and appeared to consist of another posthole (context 112), cut by a linear feature (context 108), which in turn was cut by an irregular pit (context 110). However, only the latest feature (context 110) is definitely archaeological, as it was filled with a mixture of subsoil and natural deposits, and contained a securely stratified sherd of post-medieval pottery. By contrast, the other features had homogenous fills, and contained no artefacts, charcoal, or other inclusions.

The interpretation of the latest feature is uncertain: it seems too small to be have been dug for extracting subsoil or gravel, for burying refuse. It is also too shallow and irregular to have served as an earthfast foundation for a structure or container. Given these problems, it seems most likely that the feature was dug to remove a small tree or shrub.

Artefacts (Alan Jacobs)

The artefacts are tabulated and discussed below. The pottery is referenced to the type series within the report for Deansway, Worcester (Bryant 2004). Individual finds are commented upon as necessary.

Material	Total	Weight (g)
Medieval pottery	1	7
Post-medieval pottery	9	49
Modern pottery	30	135
Sewer pipe	4	243
Glass vessel	5	52
Glass window	4	13
Iron objects	3	54
Tobacco pipe	3	4
Total	59	557

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage

Medieval pottery

One sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from the topsoil (context 100). This was a sherd of Malvernian glazed ware (fabric 69). Due to the coarse glaze on this sherd, it is most probably of medieval date.

Fabric number	Fabric name	Total sherds	Weight (g)
69	Oxidised glazed Malvernian ware	1	7

Table 2: Quantification of the medieval pottery

Post-medieval pottery

Post-medieval pottery consisted of a single sherd from the latest feature described above (context 108), and nine sherds from unstratified deposits (contexts 100 and 101). The stratified sherd came from a straight-sided storage jar dateable to the 17th or 18th century.

Fabric number	Fabric name	Total sherds	Weight (g)
78	Post-medieval red sandy ware	6	37
91	Post-medieval buff ware	2	10
100	Post-medieval miscellaneous wares	1	2
Total		9	49

Table 3: Quantification of the post-medieval pottery

Modern pottery

Thirty sherds of modern pottery were recovered, all from unstratified contexts (100 & 101). These were predominantly of 19th-20th century date, but included a single sherd from the base of a Pearlware (fabric 85) coffee cup, dating to the early-mid 19th century. The remaining forms consisted of plates and cups (fabric 85) with a single example of a stoneware tankard or jar (fabric 81.4).

Fabric number	Fabric name	Total sherds	Weight (g)
81.4	Modern stoneware	5	39
83	Porcelain	8	32
85	Modern stone china	17	64
Total		30	135

Table 4: Quantification of the modern pottery

Other finds consisted of a number of fragments of sewer pipe dating from the late 19th-20th centuries. In addition three iron nails, a variety of bottles or jars from the 20th century and four fragments of clear window glass. Finally three fragments of tobacco pipe stem broadly dateable from the 17th-19th centuries were recovered.

Discussion

The archaeological evidence suggests a low level of activity on the site before the 17th or 18th century, and rather more concentrated 19th and 20th century activity. The single sherd of medieval pottery is likely to represent the manuring of an arable field with muck containing domestic rubbish. The few 17th or 18th century artefacts, and the contemporary pit are likely to represent either represent agriculture or horticulture, while later artefacts suggest periodic rubbish disposal. From this evidence alone, it could be suggested that the site was farmland well into the post-

medieval period, and then became a domestic garden. This interpretation is supported by the Enclosure map of 1813, which suggests just this pattern of development.

Given the lack of similar evidence from the site immediately to the east, it appears that this part of Main Street did not form part of the medieval village, and lay beyond the Iron Age and Roman settlement identified to the south. If this interpretation is correct, then it may be that the medieval village was smaller or more dispersed than has been supposed, and that its form was not noticeably influenced by earlier settlement patterns.

Publication summary

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. Unless directed otherwise, the Service will use the following summary as the basis for publication in local or regional journals.

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during construction works behind 52 Main Street, Sedgeberrow (NGR SP 0225 3839; WSM 34311). The site lies in an area of known Iron Age, Roman, and medieval settlement, and it was considered that the groundworks might affect remains of these periods. Historic maps show that the site consisted of a cottage and garden by 1813, and has undergone several changes since. The watching brief involved recording exposed deposits and analysing the results in relation to existing evidence.

The groundworks afforded only limited windows into the stratigraphy of the site, although it was clear that no significant remains were present. Medieval agriculture was attested by one sherd of pottery and post-medieval agriculture or gardening by nine sherds of pottery and an irregular pit. Most of the artefacts recovered were of 19th and 20th century date, contemporary with the cottage occupying the street frontage.

This evidence, and the evidence of historic maps suggest that the site was farmland well into the post-medieval period, and was then developed as a cottage and garden. If this interpretation is correct, it appears that this part of Main Street did not form part of the medieval village, and lay beyond the Iron Age and Roman settlement identified to the south.

Archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	4
Photographic records AS3	1
Colour prints	15
Abbreviated context records AS40	1
Drawings	1
Boxes of finds	1
Computer disks	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

The Service would like to thank Mr Eaton for his assistance during the fieldwork.

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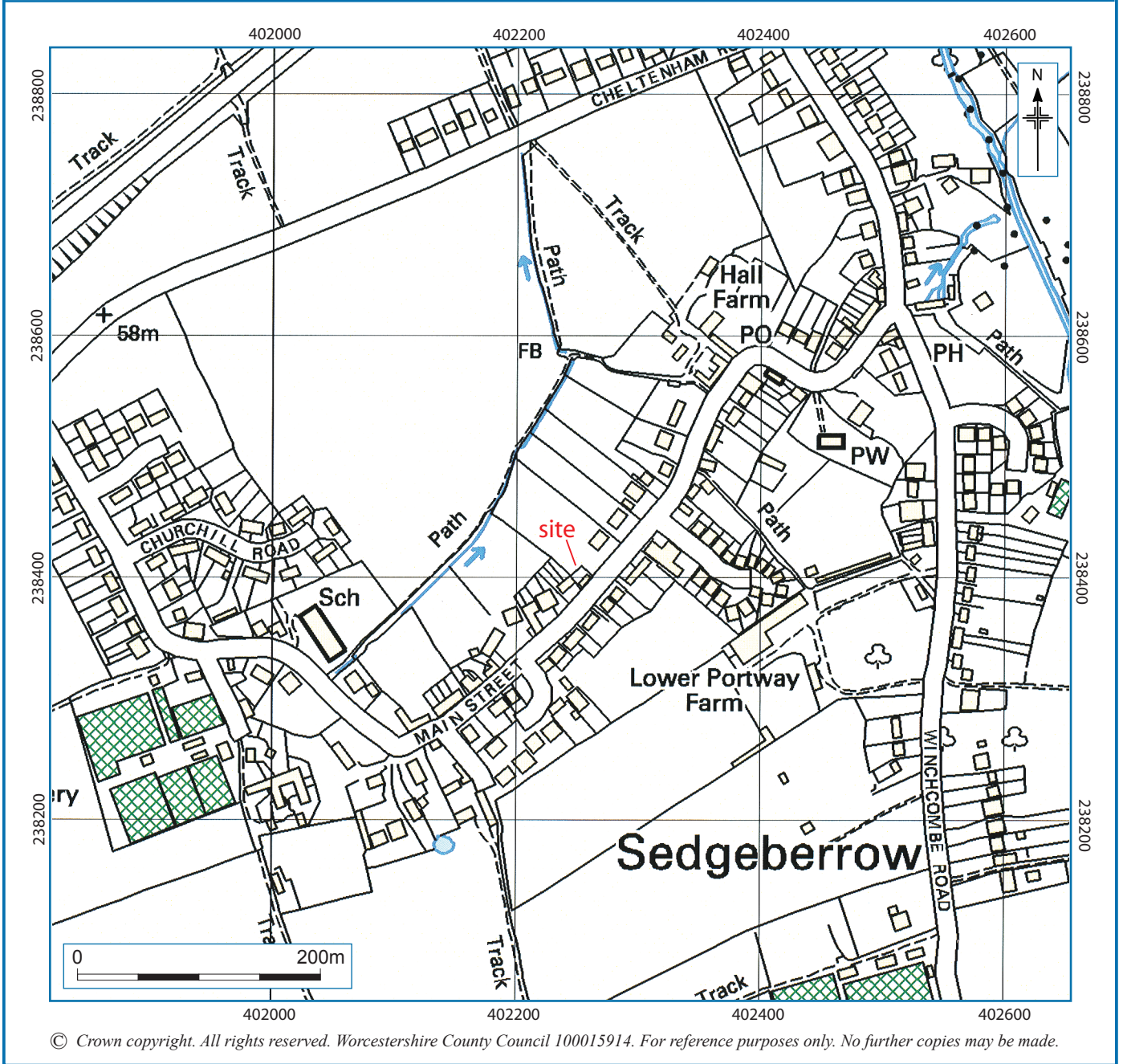
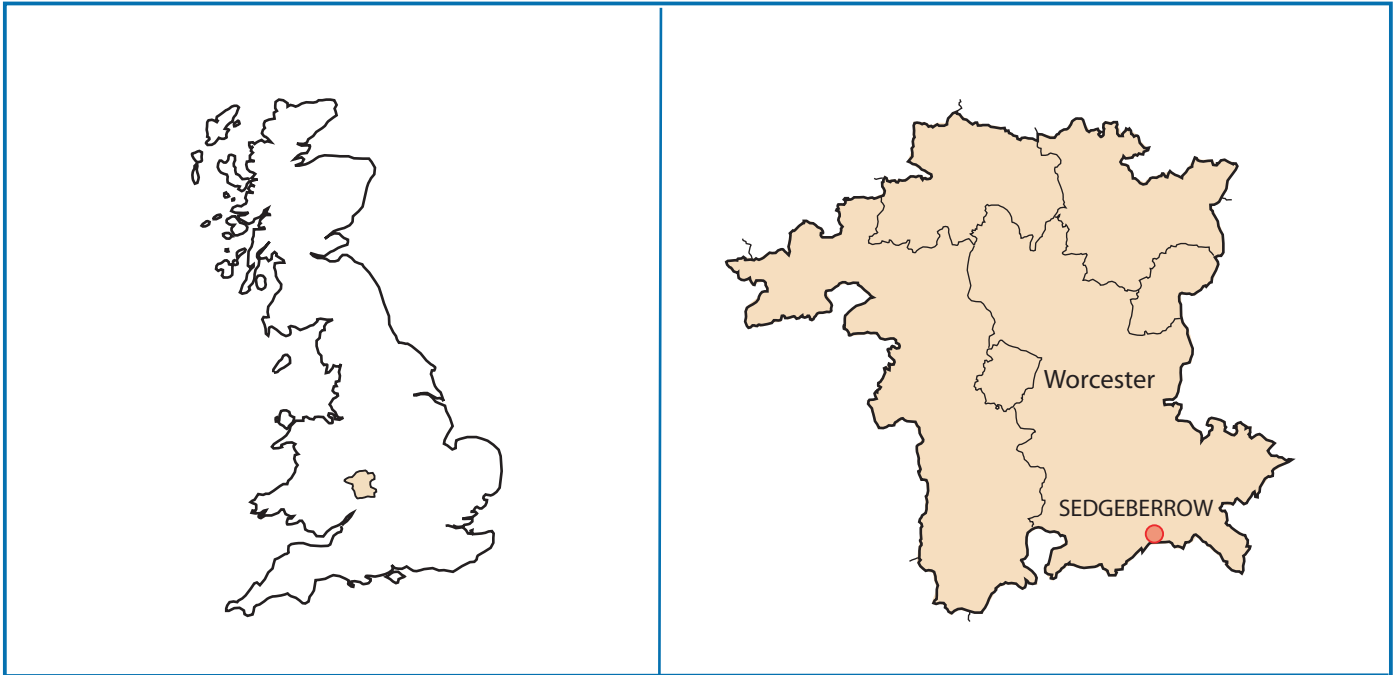
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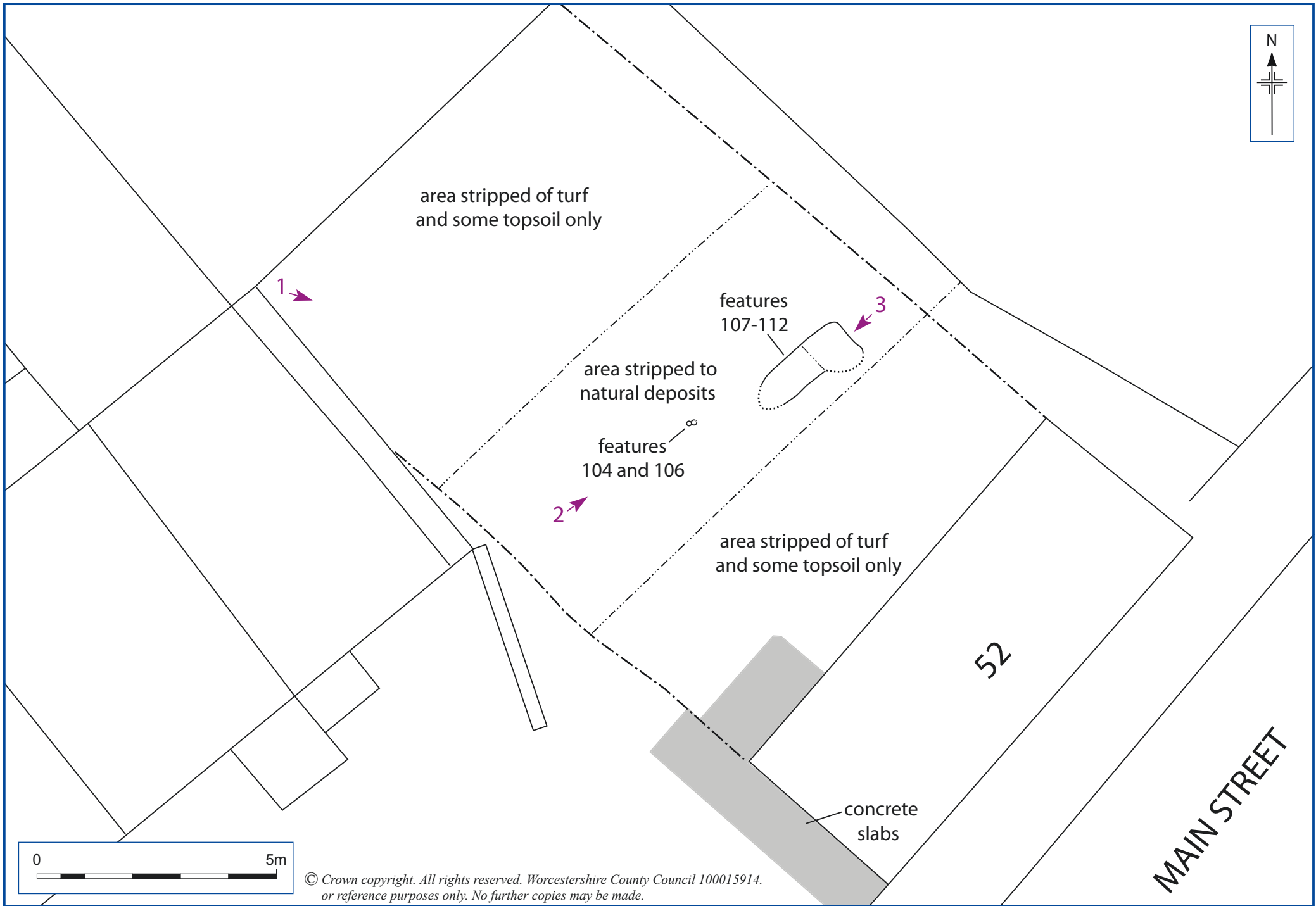
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Location of the site.

Figure 1



Plan of site and excavated features (photopoints relate to plates 1 - 3)

Figure 2



Plate 1: General view of stripped area, facing south-east



Plate 2: Periglacial features 104 and 106, facing north-east



Plate 3: Periglacial features cut by pit 110 (in foreground), facing south-west
