

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION BEHIND THE
BISHAMPTON AND
THROCKMORTON PARISH
ROOM, THROCKMORTON,
WORCESTERSHIRE

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Archaeological evaluation behind the Bishampton and Throckmorton and Parish Room, Throckmorton, Worcestershire

Darren Miller and Alan J Jacobs

Background information

The evaluation was associated with a planning application by Bishampton and Throckmorton Parish Council to rebuild their Parish Room at Throckmorton and surface the area behind it for car parking. This proposal required an archaeological response, as the land behind the parish room is a Scheduled Ancient Monument containing earthworks and buried remains of medieval and post-medieval date (SAM 31946). The rebuilding and surfacing were not thought to pose a direct threat to any deposits that might be present, but it was thought that frequent use of the car park would result in them becoming compacted and deformed. The Parish Council were therefore required to address the archaeological implications of the proposed development by commissioning an evaluation according to a specific brief (HEAS 2004a). After submitting a detailed proposal (HEAS 2004b), the Service was commissioned to undertake the work.

Aims

The main aims of the evaluation were to establish whether any deposits were present in the area, and if so, to establish their significance and tolerance to compaction. The evaluation also aimed to assess the visual impact of the proposed car park.

Methods

The evaluation involved a combination of fieldwork, artefact analysis, and documentary research. The fieldwork involved excavating and recording a single trench near the centre of the proposed car park (Fig 3), surveying adjacent earthworks, and photographing the area from different viewpoints. The artefact analysis involved identifying artefacts by type and date, using the reference collection held by the Service. The documentary analysis was based on records held in the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record, and at the Worcestershire Record Office. All the methods employed in the evaluation conformed to the requirements of the brief, the proposal prepared by the Service, and standards established by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1999).

Results

Fieldwork

The deposits encountered in the trench formed a typical soil profile with a reworked upper horizon (Table 1, contexts 100-102). Only one feature was present, at the north end of the trench (Fig 4; contexts 103 and 104; Plates 2 and 3). This was a concave ditch on an east-west alignment filled with redeposited subsoil and imported stones. A single sherd of 13th to 18th century roof tile was recovered from the fill. These characteristics are sufficient to identify the feature as a land drain of a type used in the Vale of Evesham in the 18th and early 19th centuries (Lockett 2000, 5; Harvey 1980, 71). It can be presumed that this feature continues eastwards across the present field, and that drained into a ditch running alongside Long Lane.

Context	Description	Interpretation	Depth below ground level
100	Mid greyish brown clay loam, with few small to medium sub-rounded stones	Topsoil	0-0.15m
101	Light to mid greyish brown clay loam with common charcoal fragments and few small to medium sub-rounded stones	Subsoil	0.15-0.35m
102	Mid yellowish grey clay silt with few small to medium sub-rounded stones	Parent material	0.35m+
103	Light greyish brown clay loam with abundant medium to large sub-rounded stones	Fill of 104	0.17-0.71m
104	Linear, parallel sided feature aligned approximately east-west; c1.60m wide, with sharp break of slope at top, concave sides, gradual break of slope at base and rounded base	Field drain	0.1709.71m

Table 1: Description of deposits

The earthworks around Throckmorton are shown at a small scale on Figure 2, and those adjacent to the trench are shown at a larger scale on Figure 3. The irregular feature immediately to the east of the trench is the most substantial of the earthworks, being around 1m deep, and it likely to have been much deeper in origin. The interpretation of this feature is uncertain, but it is likely to represent the extraction of clay for building materials (bricks, tiles, and daub). The curving scarp to the north of the trench is also difficult to interpret, but it may represent landscaping within an abandoned tenement fronting onto Long Lane. Finally, the slight scarp to the west of the trench, running parallel to Long Lane, is likely to relate to the construction of the road, although a hedgerow currently separates the two features.

Photographs showing the site from several viewpoints are reproduced as Plates 4 to 8, and the points from which each photograph was taken are shown on Fig 3. As the photographs show, the site of the proposed car park is well hidden from view from the south and east by hedgerows, and from most of the track leading north-eastwards from Throckmorton Road to Throckmorton church. The site is visible from the church itself, and from the southern boundary of Church Farm, but from these viewpoints it is too far-off to be prominent.

Artefacts

The pottery assemblage retrieved from the trench consisted of 31 sherds of pottery weighing 403g. In addition fragments of roof tile, brick, bone, clay pipe stems, iron nails and plaster were recovered. The assemblage came primarily from excavated spoil (100) with only a single stratified context (104) producing finds. The artefacts could be dated from the post-medieval period onwards (see Table 2). The level of preservation was generally fair with the majority of sherds displaying only moderate levels of abrasion.

Material	Total	Weight (g)
Post-medieval pottery	30	397
Modern pottery	1	6
Ceramic tile	16	1203
Ceramic brick	8	1653
Plaster	2	14
Glass	3	48
Metal (iron)	18	243
Metal (copper alloy)	1	1
Tobacco pipe	8	17
Button	1	1
Bone	12	341
Total	100	3924

Table 2: Quantification of the assemblage

Fabric Number	Fabric name	Total sherds	Weight (g)
78	Post-medieval red sandy ware	15	276
81.3	Nottingham stoneware	2	5
81.5	Porcelain	2	4
85	Modern stone china	1	6
90	Post-medieval orange ware	3	25
91	Post-medieval buff ware	8	87
Total		31	403

Table 3: *Quantification of the pottery by fabric*

The post-medieval pottery consisted of just 30 sherds weighing 397g, just 97% by count and 99% by weight of the overall pottery assemblage (Table 2). Fabrics consist primarily of post-medieval red sandy ware (fabric 78) with examples of two vessels and a definable pancheon form dating from the 18th century. Smaller amounts of post-medieval buff wares (fabric 91) were represented in the form of platters with slip decoration and examples of both combed and feathered decoration, with a single example with a pie-crust rim. These forms are closely datable to the 18th century. Post-medieval orange ware (fabric 90) is represented by only three sherds from a flat form, and again is of 18th century dating. Both Nottingham stoneware (fabric 81.3) and white salt glazed stoneware in the form of a small bowl or cup (fabric 81.5) were present, both of mid 18th century date.

The modern pottery consisted of a single sherd weighing 6g, 3% by count and 1% by weight (Table 2). Only a single fabric of modern date was recovered: a willow pattern, flat form of modern stone china (fabric 85) from context 100 and dating from the 19th century onwards. The isolated presence of this sherd would indicate that little modern deposition has occurred, reflecting in part the use of the field as an orchard and lack of nearby modern residential activity.

Eight fragments of brick were recovered (context 100) including an example of the end of a hand-made brick dating from the 18th to early 19th centuries. A total of sixteen fragments of tile were recovered primarily of fabric 2A (Hurst 1992) dating from the 13th-18th century. These are primarily roof tiles and were recovered from both contexts 100 and 104. This material is most probably of post-medieval date.

The remainder of the assemblage can be described as follows. The three sheds of glass included the neck of one bottle, and a fragment of another one. The twelve animal bones included sheep/goat and cattle bones with butchery marks (context 100), a pig incisor (context 104), and an indeterminable radius (also context 104). Finally, the nineteen metal objects comprised seventeen square headed iron nails, one strip of iron, and one copper-alloy thimble.

In summary, the greater part of the assemblage appears to date to the 18th century, and probably derives from the occupation of nearby buildings. The lack of earlier material is significant, and may indicate the use of the land as a pasture or orchard field. The lack of distinctly later material indicates a dearth of modern depositional activity.

Documentary research

The project involved consulting a range of documentary sources. The main primary sources consulted were a map of the manor of Throckmorton made in 1784 (photocopy held at Worcestershire Record Office, BA 3883, ref r970.5:92) and Lay Subsidy returns for the 1520s (edited by Faraday 2003). The main secondary sources consulted were a desk-based assessment prepared by the Service in advance of a sewerage scheme at Throckmorton in 2002 (Hurst 2000), and a report on a watching brief on the scheme itself (Goat 2002). These contained summaries of historical records and of archaeological sites, monuments, and activities held in the Worcestershire Sites and Monuments Record (now the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record).

From this research it is apparent that the village of Throckmorton grew substantially in the medieval period, with tenements being laid out over an extensive area to the south of the church, but that the village declined between the late 15th and 18th centuries to leave the earthworks that are visible today (Dyer 1980, 256). Historic maps show that further shrinkage has occurred since the 18th century, although modern development has made up some of the shortfall. Archaeological remains

of Roman to post-medieval date are well evidenced in the area around the medieval village, although no excavation had taken place within this area prior to the present evaluation.

Discussion

The results of the fieldwork and artefact analysis indicate a lack of activity before the 18th century, and low intensity land-use thereafter. Taken alongside the earthworks adjacent to the trench, and the documentary context for medieval and later settlement at Throckmorton, the lack of evidence for earlier activity is surprising. At the very least, a few residual sherds of medieval or early post-medieval pottery might have been expected. It must therefore be concluded that the area immediately around the trench was not settled, or even cultivated in these periods. The area seems to be unusual in this respect, as earthworks to the north, north-east, east, south, and south-west and indicate the tenements of medieval or early modern villagers. The reasons for the apparent lack of activity in the area are unclear, but it could be that the ownership of this area was tied to one or other of the neighbouring tenements, and that successive owners had no need to develop it for housing, or to manage it intensively. The 18th century artefact assemblage from the trench is quite substantial, and must represent either dumping of refuse, or manuring with midden material including household waste. If the latter interpretation is correct (as seems more likely), then the area would probably have been managed as a garden or orchard, as there is no archaeological or documentary evidence for arable cultivation.

Conclusions

The results of the evaluation are relatively clear. No significant archaeological deposits were present within the trench, and it is likely that none are present in its immediate vicinity. On this basis, it seems likely that the area of the car park was not settled in the medieval or post-medieval periods, but instead was undeveloped, open land, probably associated with an adjacent tenement. The assemblage of 18th century artefacts recovered from the trench probably represents rubbish that was either dumped, or mixed with manure on a garden plot or orchard.

The results of the visual impact assessment are also clear. The site of the proposed car park is hidden from view from Long Lane and Throckmorton Road by hedgerows, and from most of the track leading north-eastwards from Throckmorton Road to Throckmorton church. The site is visible from the church itself, and from the southern boundary of Church Farm, but from these viewpoints it is too far-off to be prominent.]

In conclusion, there is no reason to believe that the proposed development will have an adverse effect on archaeological remains, or on the visual appearance of the wider area.

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 whether or not the content of this section is acceptable for such publication, and to raise any objections with the Service.

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken of land behind the Bishampton and Throckmorton Parish Room in Throckmorton (SO 9804 4967; WSM 34279). The evaluation was associated with a proposal to rebuild the Parish Room, and surface the area behind it for car parking. This proposal required an archaeological response, as the land behind the parish room contains numerous earthworks of medieval and post-medieval date and is presumed to contain equally significant buried archaeological deposits of these periods. The rebuilding and surfacing were not thought to

pose a direct threat to archaeological deposits, although it was thought that frequent use of the car park would result in deposits becoming compacted and deformed.

The results of the evaluation are relatively clear. No significant archaeological deposits were present within the trench, and it is likely that none are present in the immediate vicinity. Only one feature – a post-medieval field drain – was found, and the earliest material within the reworked topsoil was of 18th century date. On this basis, it seems likely that the area of the car park was not settled in the medieval or post-medieval periods, but instead was undeveloped, open land, probably associated with an adjacent tenement. The 18th century artefacts recovered from the topsoil probably represent rubbish that was either dumped, or mixed with manure on a garden plot or orchard.

The results of the visual impact assessment are also clear. The site of the proposed car park is hidden from view from the Long Lane and Throckmorton Road by hedgerows, and from most of the track leading north-eastwards from Throckmorton Road to Throckmorton church. The site is visible from the church itself, and from the southern boundary of Church Farm, but from these viewpoints it is too far-off to be prominent.

The archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	2
Site drawing sheets AS34	1
Trench record sheets AS41	2
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

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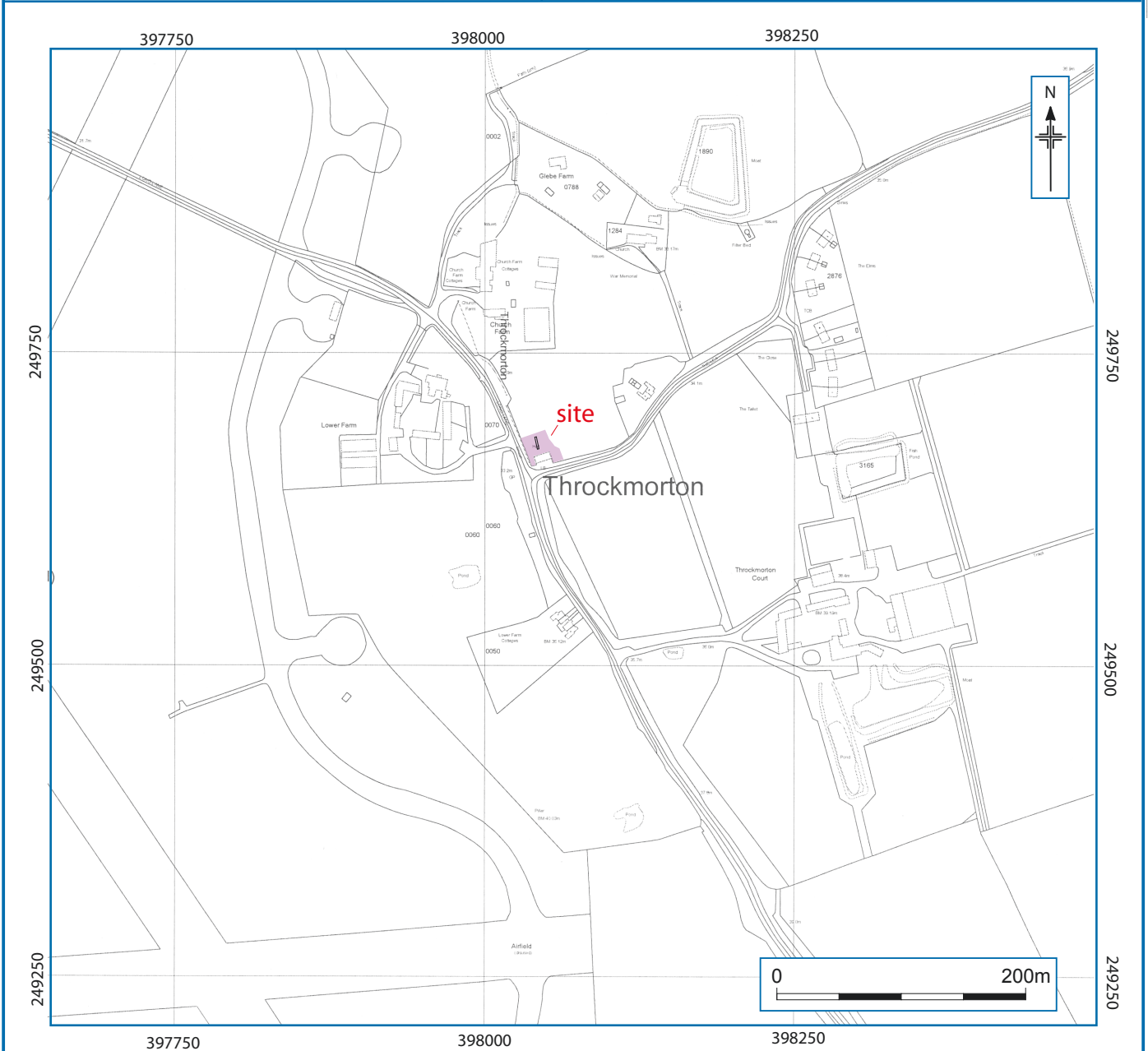
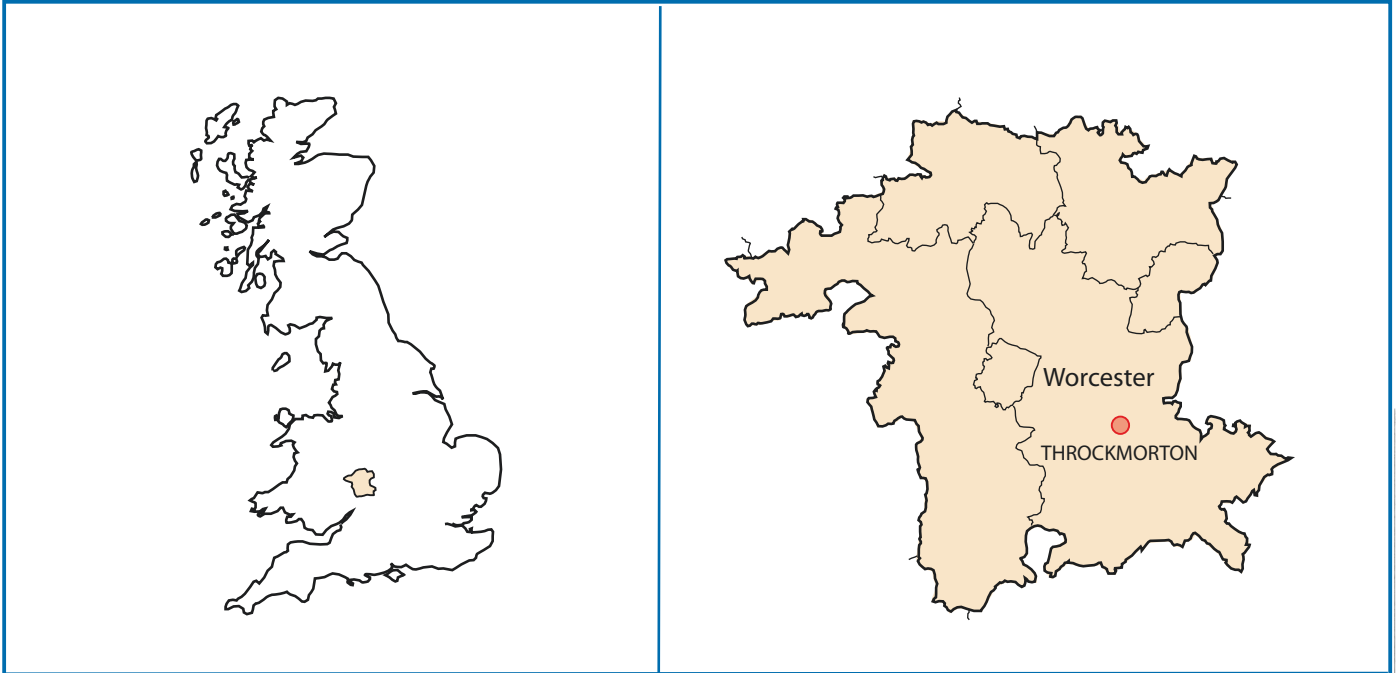
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Location of the site.

Figure 1

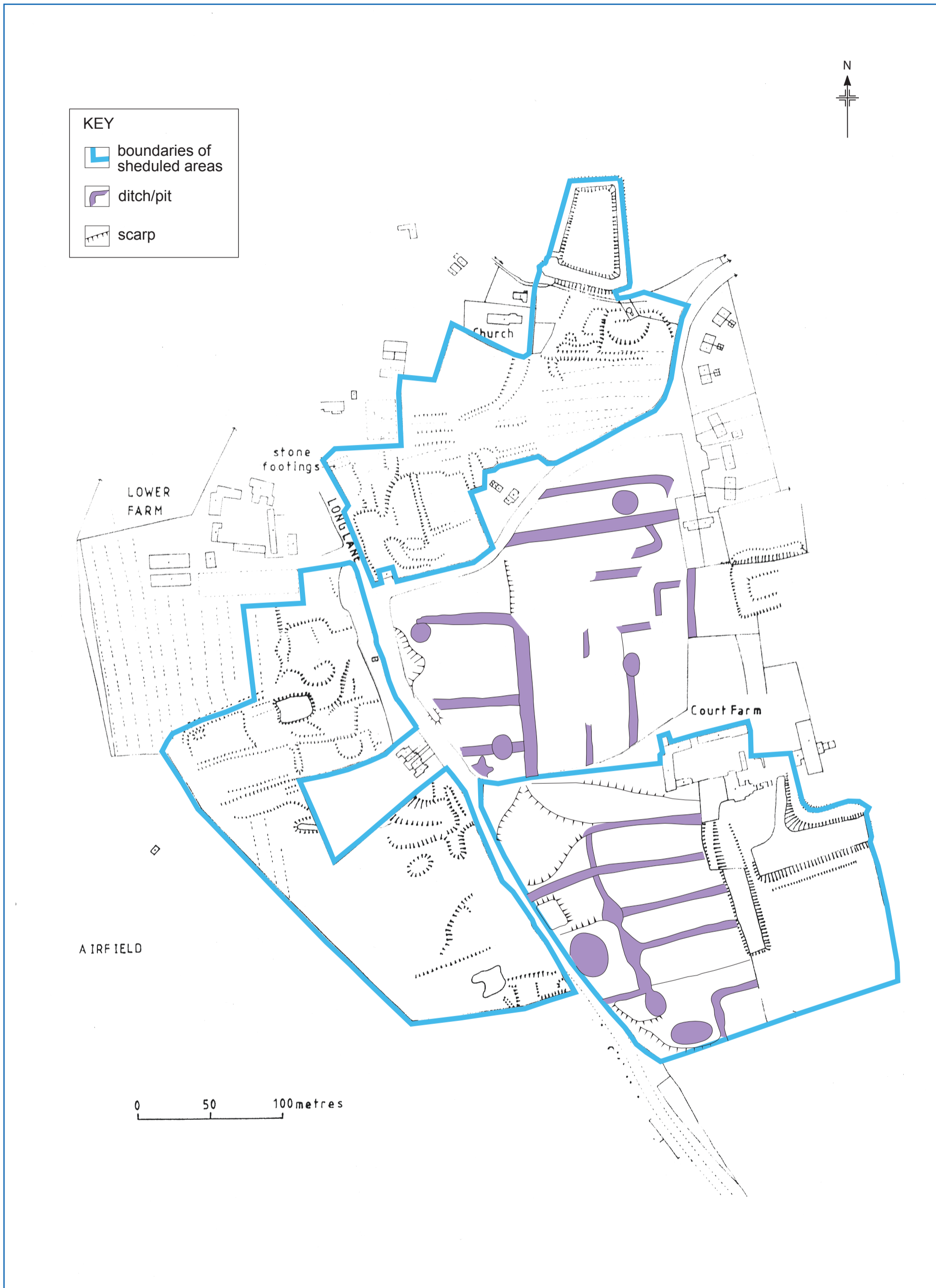


Figure 2: Composite plan of earthworks based on RCHME survey, with additional details from sketch plans

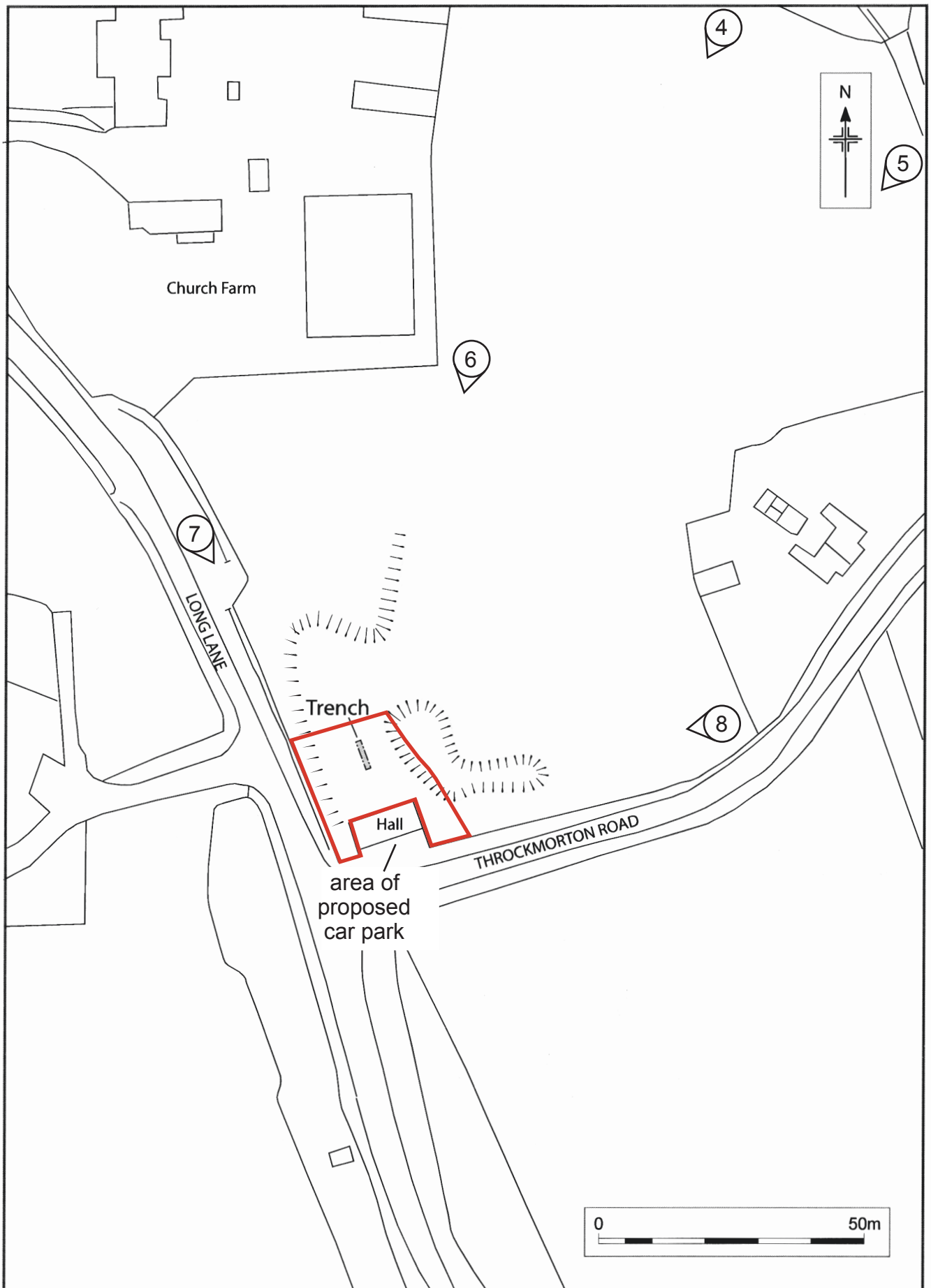


Figure 3: Location of proposed car park, evaluation trench and adjacent earthworks. Photopoints relate to plates 5 - 9.

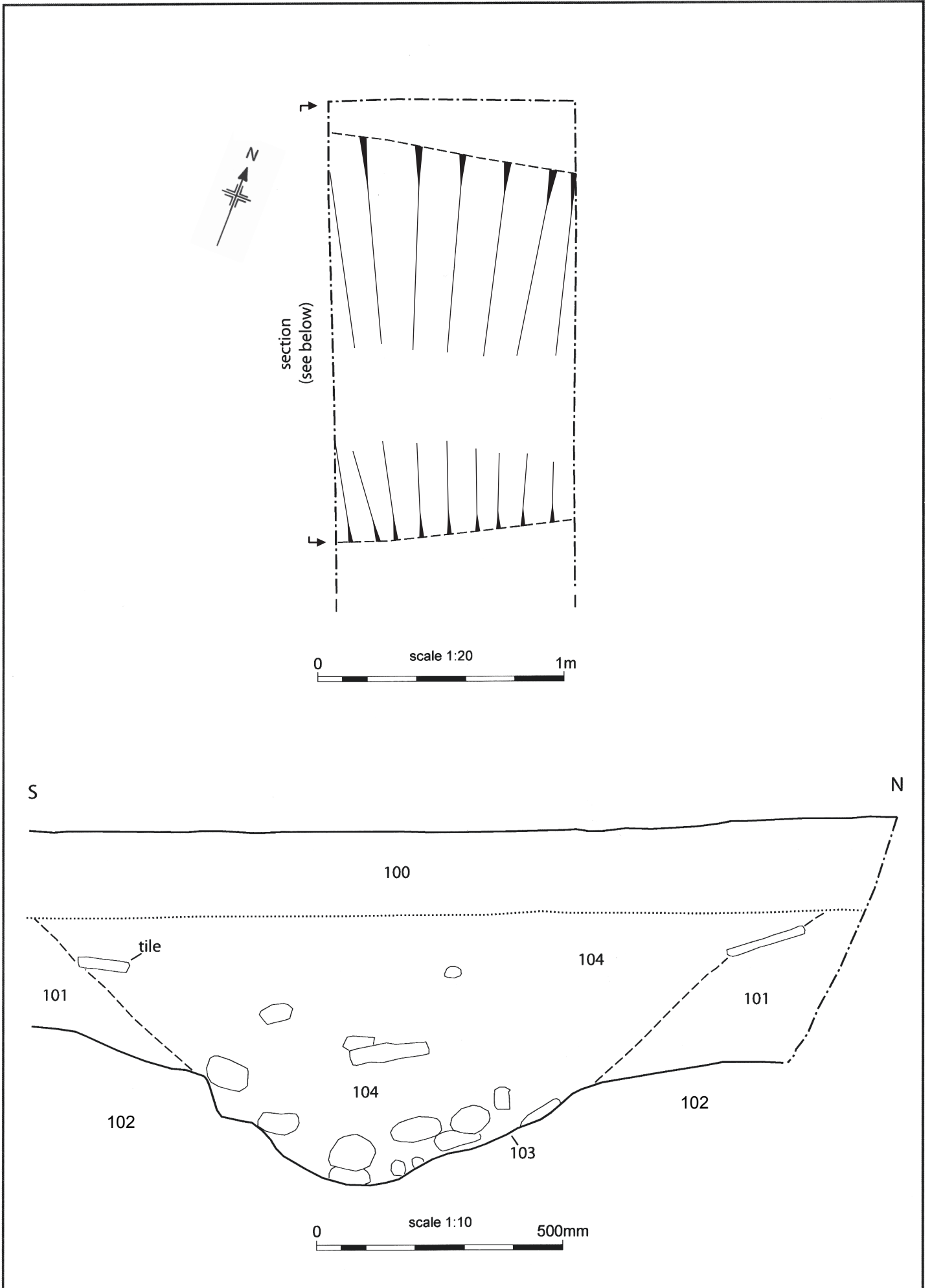


Figure 4: Plan and section of field drain 103/104



Plate 1: General view of trench, facing south



Plate 2: Trench after removal of topsoil and subsoil, with unexcavated field drain in foreground



Plate 3: East facing section through field drain



Plate 4: View of proposed car park from south door of church



Plate 5: View of proposed car park (left of centre) from track leading to church



Plate 6: View of proposed car park from south-east corner of Church Farm



Plate 7: View of proposed car park from Long Lane



Plate 8: View of proposed car park from east
