

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION OF LAND AT LEYS
ROAD, HARVINGTON,
WORCESTERSHIRE

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With a contribution by Alan J Jacobs

Illustrated by Steve Rigby

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Project 2620
Report 1336
WSM 34312

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Background information

The evaluation was associated with a planning application by Evesham and Pershore Housing Association to build four apartments and six houses in a pasture field to the south of Leys Road, near the west edge of Harvington (Fig 1). On the basis of information held in the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record, the Planning Advisory Section of the Service considered that this development might have an adverse impact on significant archaeological remains. In particular, it was thought that vulnerable remains associated with prehistoric sites to the north and west might be present. Accordingly, in line with local government policies, the Client was required to address this issue by commissioning a field evaluation. A brief for the evaluation was prepared by the Planning Advisory Section (HEAS 2005a), and on the basis of a detailed specification (HEAS 2005b), the Field Section of the Service was commissioned to undertake the work.

Aims

The aims of the evaluation were to establish whether any archaeological deposits were present in the area, and if so, to establish their character, date, and significance.

Methods

The evaluation involved a combination of fieldwork, artefact analysis, and documentary research (HEAS 2005b). The fieldwork involved excavating and recording four trenches and scanning the area with a metal-detector with a view to recovering artefacts from the topsoil. The trenches totalled an area of more than 80m² representing 4% of the development area (Fig 2). The brief also required an earthwork survey, although it was readily apparent that no earthworks of any kind were present on the site. The artefact analysis involved identifying artefacts by type and date, and inferring their mode of deposition. The documentary research involved consulting various records held in the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record and Worcestershire Record Office. All the methods conformed to the requirements of the brief, the specification prepared by the Service, and standards maintained by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1999).

Results

The deposits encountered in each of the four trenches constituted locally typical fine loams over clays (Table 1; Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983). These soils had developed on late Devensian fluvio-glacial deposits (Geological Survey of England and Wales 1974). Contrary to expectations, and despite good conditions of visibility and access, no significant archaeological features were identified in any of the trenches. The only features present were the furrows of ploughed out ridge and furrow earthworks. These were identified in Trenches 1, 2, 3, and 5, on approximately north-west to south-east alignments (Fig 3). The ridges that once existed between the furrows had been thoroughly ploughed-out. A few artefacts of modern date were recovered from the former ploughsoil in Trenches 1 and 4 (Table 2). Similarly, only a few modern nails and miscellaneous fragments were found during the metal-detector survey. To some extent, this may

reflect the rough ground of the field, which reduced the depth to which the detector could penetrate, although it is clear that no significant concentrations of metal artefacts were present.

Context	Description	Interpretation	Depth
100, 200, 300, etc	n/a	Number allocated to artefacts from excavated spoil	n/a
101, 201, 301 etc	Firm mid greyish brown silt loam with common small roots	Topsoil	0.20-0.25m
102, 203, 302 etc	Firm mid greyish brown clay silt with few small sub-rounded gravels	Subsoil	0.30-0.40m
103, 202, 303 etc	Stiff mid brownish red silty clay with common to abundant small sub-rounded stones	Parent material	n/a
Not numbered	Firm, slightly reddish brown fine sandy silt with few small rounded gravels and charcoal flecks	Fill of furrows in Trenches 1, 2, 3, and 5	Unexcavated

Table 1: Summary description of deposits

Artefacts

The artefact assemblage from the sample trenches is summarised in Table 2. It is all of 19th or 20th century date. The pottery, from Trench 2 (context 200) consisted of a single sherd of stone china with a blue flower decoration, most likely from a small bowl or cup (fabric 85). The remaining finds, all from Trench 4 (context 400), consisted of fragments of a glass bottle, a ceramic drain cover (fabric 1), a field drain, and a brick (fabric 2c). The slight concentration of material in this area is likely to relate to modern fly-tipping, evidence of which is visible on the surface.

Context	Material	Total	Weight (g)
200	Modern pottery	1	1
400	Brick	1	199
400	Tile	3	132
400	Glass	1	8
400	Total	6	340

Table 2: Quantification of the assemblage

The few artefacts located during the metal-detecting survey were obviously modern, and were not retained.

Documentary research

The Worcestershire Historic Environment Record contains three records relating to the area (Fig 3). One record is of an undated, but probably late prehistoric settlement represented by cropmarks, some 150m to the west of the area (WSM 101130). At the time the planning application was considered, it was reasonable to suppose that remains of this settlement, or of surrounding enclosures, might extend as far as the proposed development area. The other two records are of field names recorded on the Harvington Inclosure Award of 1787 (Transcribed by Schooling 1965 and Guyatt 1999). One field name, “Barrow Piece”, c300m to the north of the proposed development area, strongly suggests the site of a ploughed out Bronze Age barrow, and as such monuments often occur in groups, or in landscapes where other ritual activities took place, there was and still can be a reasonable expectation of archaeological remains in its vicinity. The other field name, “Norbrook Furlong”, c300m to the south of the site, is less suggestive of archaeological remains, referring as it does to the brook that forms the southern boundary of the field. However, the brook has been identified as an internal boundary of a late Anglo-Saxon estate (Hooke 1990, 50), and the existence of this estate provides a general context for archaeological remains of the period.

The Inclosure map itself also provides a context for remains of medieval and later cultivation, as it shows a decaying field system of irregular open fields interspersed with private inclosures (Fig 4). From studies of field systems elsewhere in Worcestershire and the West Midlands (eg Roberts 1973), this field system is likely to be of medieval origin, although it will almost certainly have been altered in later centuries, to meet different needs. In 1787, the proposed development area lay

in an open field that straddled the Evesham road. The field as a whole was “Penacres” in 1787, and its western half was divided into “Shorter Furlong” and “Banlands furlong”. From this evidence, remains of ridge and furrow earthworks might have been expected, along with pottery and other debris which, as a refuse component of manure, would have been periodically spread on the fields. The first edition Ordnance Survey map of a century later shows the field system substantially unchanged (Fig 5), and indeed it is still apparent in spite of much later development (Fig 1).

Discussion

Despite a reasonable expectation of prehistoric and/or Romano-British remains being present on the site, nothing of the sort was found. It is therefore likely that no such remains are present, and that it was not a focus of activity in these periods. From this, it follows that neither the settlement to the west, nor the activity represented by the barrow to the north encroached upon the site. A very small degree of uncertainty must remain in view of the nature of sampling, and the poor ground conditions for metal-detecting, but the weight of the evidence strongly supports a negative conclusion.

The furrows that crossed the site from north-west to south east are consistent with documentary evidence for medieval and later cultivation. They are most likely to be of 18th or 19th century date, although the field system they belonged to is probably of medieval origin. The lack of medieval and early modern material in the ploughsoil suggests that the field was not manured with midden material in these periods, but by livestock grazing on the fallow. The single sherd of china from Trench 2 may indicate manuring with midden material in the 19th or early 20th century, and it may have been at this time that the ridges between the earthworks were removed.

Neither the furrows, nor the modern artefact assemblage are archaeologically significant as they are not well preserved and have a low interpretative potential.

Conclusions

The results of the evaluation are reasonably clear. No significant archaeological remains were identified, and it is likely that none are present in the development area. On this basis of this evidence, it appears that the site has never been a focus of activity, unlike areas to the west and north.

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 to the south of Leys Road, in Harvington near Evesham (SP 0478 4951; WSM 34312). The evaluation was associated with a proposed housing development. Records held in the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record suggested that significant archaeological remains might be present in the proposed development area. In particular, it was thought that remains associated with a nearby late prehistoric or Romano-British settlement and Bronze Age barrow might be present.

The aims of the evaluation were to establish whether any deposits were present in the area, and if so, to establish their character, date, and significance.

The evaluation involved a combination of fieldwork and desk-based research. Four sample trenches were excavated, and the area was scanned with a metal-detector. After the fieldwork, the finds were examined, and various documentary sources were consulted.

The results of the evaluation are reasonably clear. No significant archaeological remains were identified, and it is likely that none are present. The only features identified were the furrows of ploughed-out post-medieval ridge and furrow earthworks. A few modern artefacts were recovered from the former ploughsoil, but no earlier material. On this basis of this evidence, it appears that the site has never been a focus of activity, unlike areas to the west and north.

The archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	1
Site drawing sheets AS34	1
Trench record sheets AS41	5
Boxes of finds	1 to be discarded
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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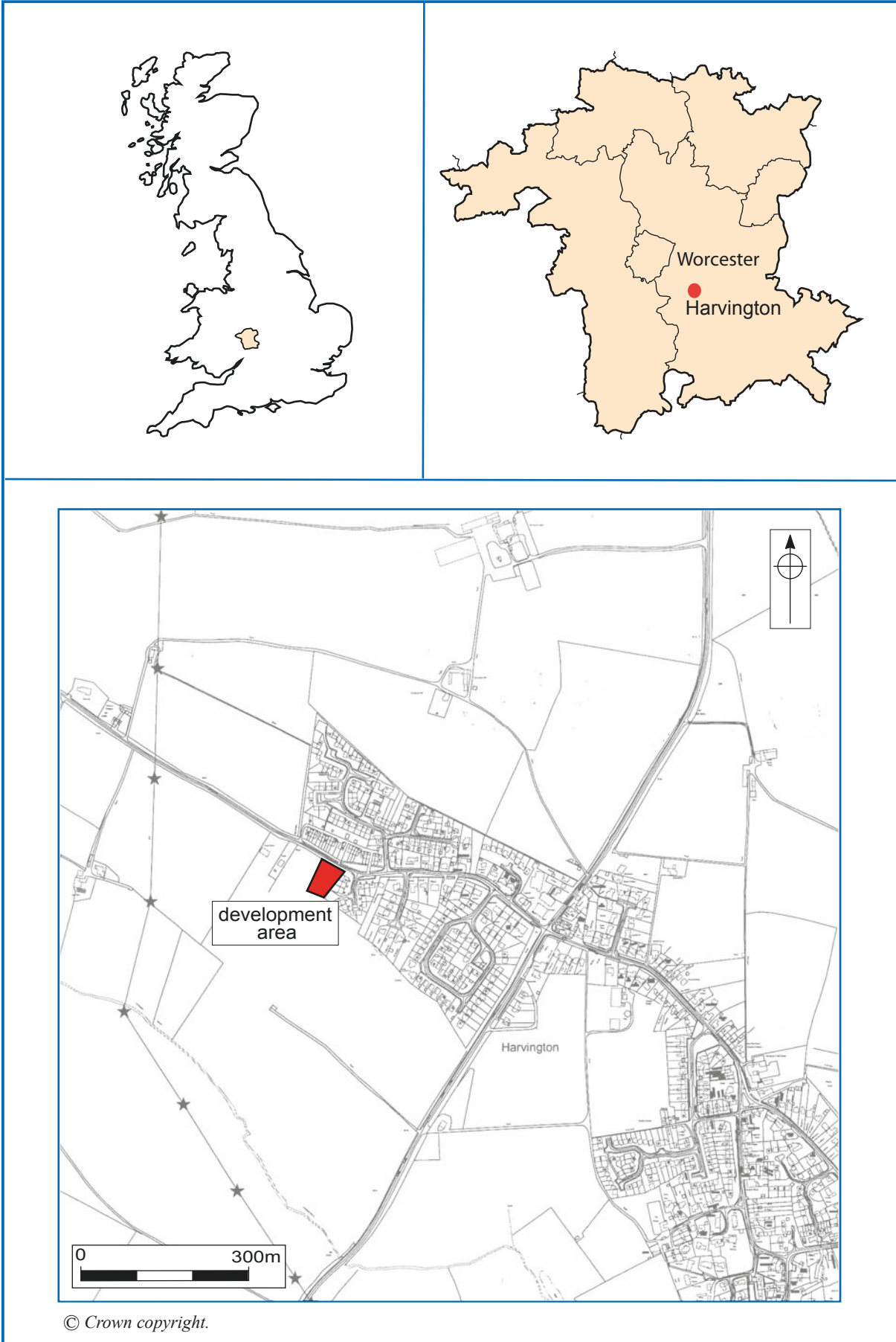
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Location of the site.

Figure 1

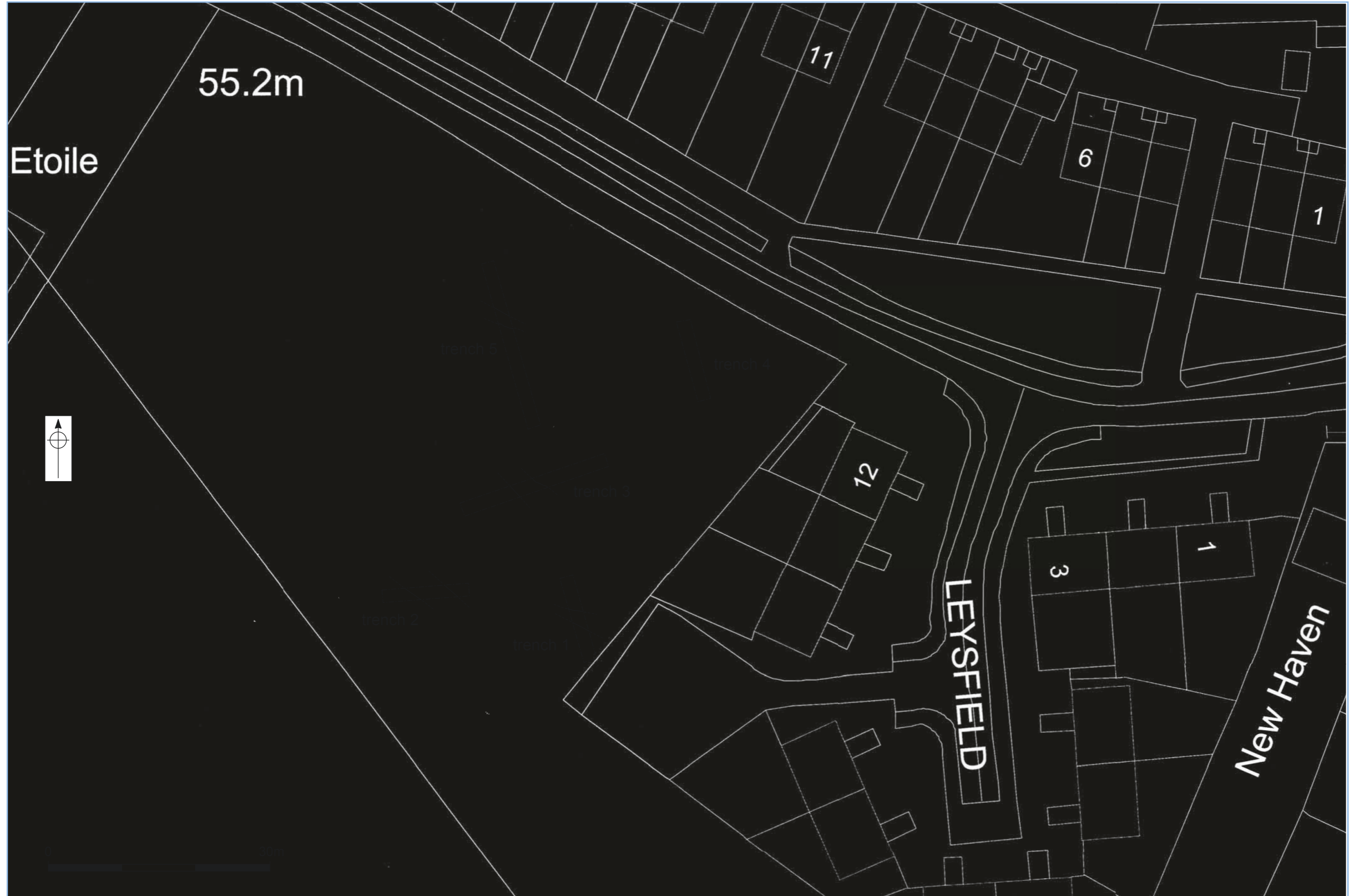


Figure 2: Location of trenches and prominent furrows



Figure 3: Historic Environment Record data, 2005



Figure 4: Transcription of inclosure map, 1787

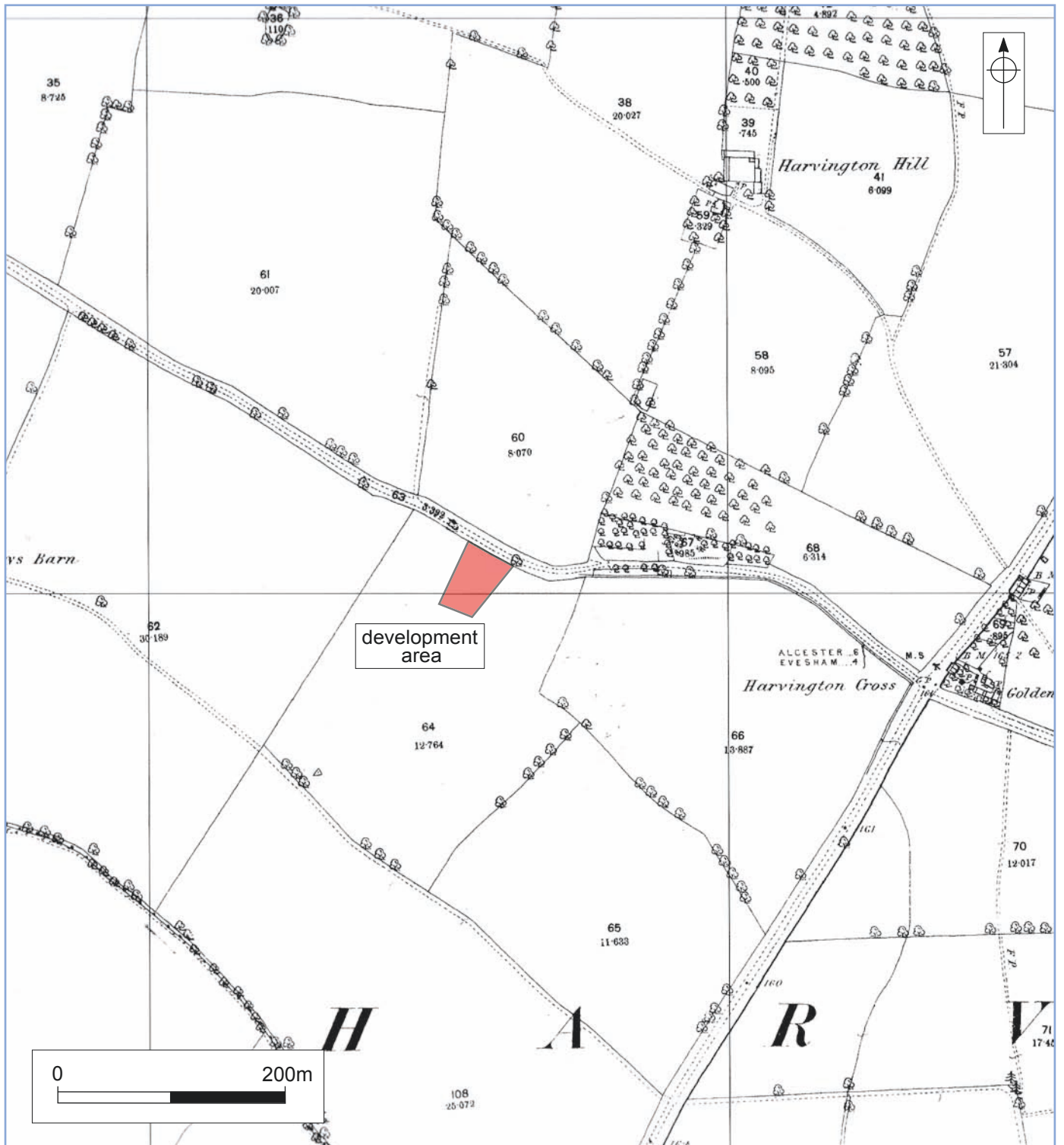


Figure 5: First edition OS map, 1884-6



Plate 1: General view of site facing north-east



Plate 2: Representative view of excavated trench (Trench 3, facing north-east)



Plate 3: Representative view of furrow (Trench 1, facing north-east)