

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-
BASED ASSESSMENT ON THE
NORTH LITTLETON FLOOD
ALLEVIATION SCHEME, NORTH
LITTLETON, WORCESTERSHIRE

James Goad, Shona Robson-Glyde, Simon Griffin and Simon Woodiwiss

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

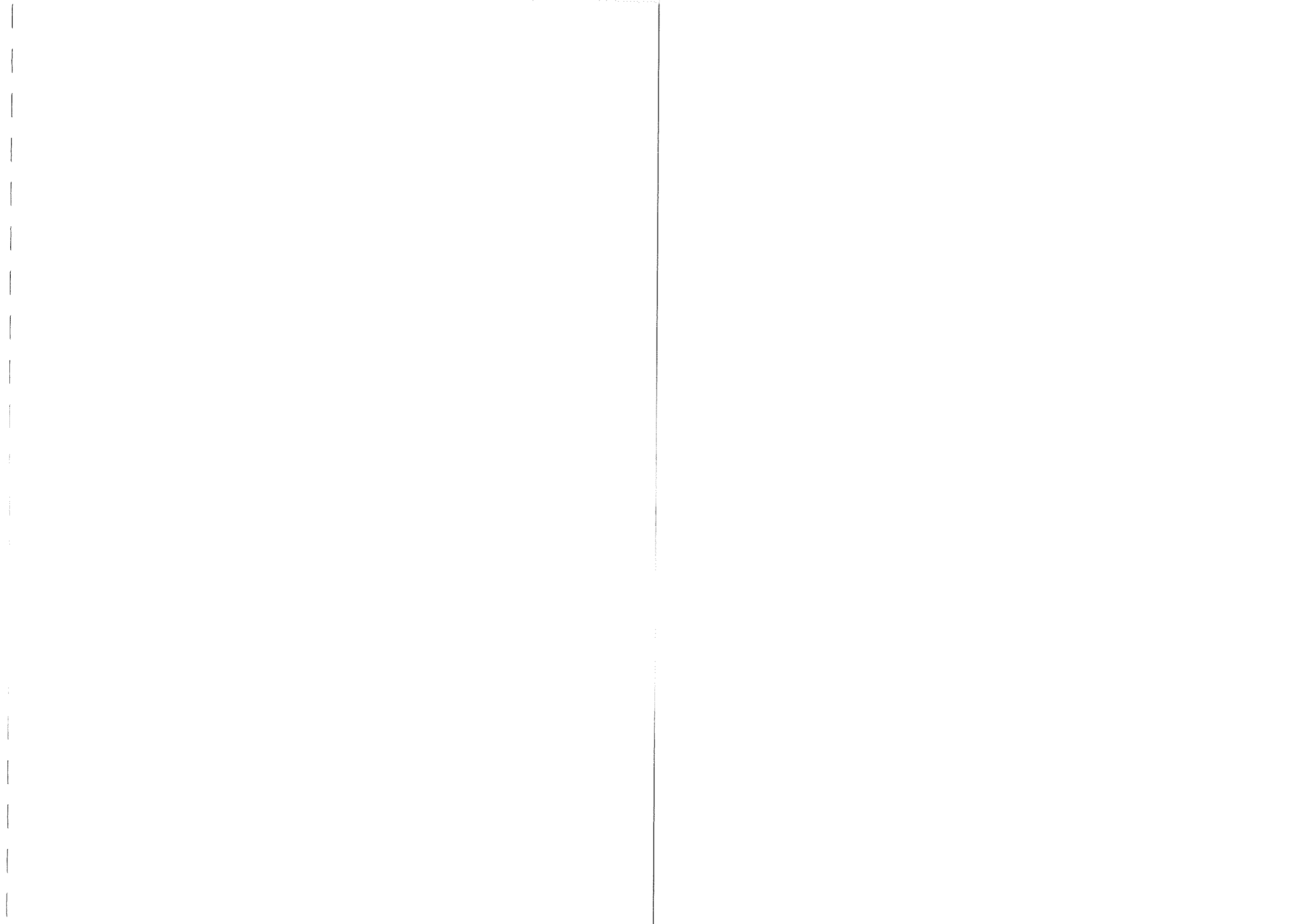
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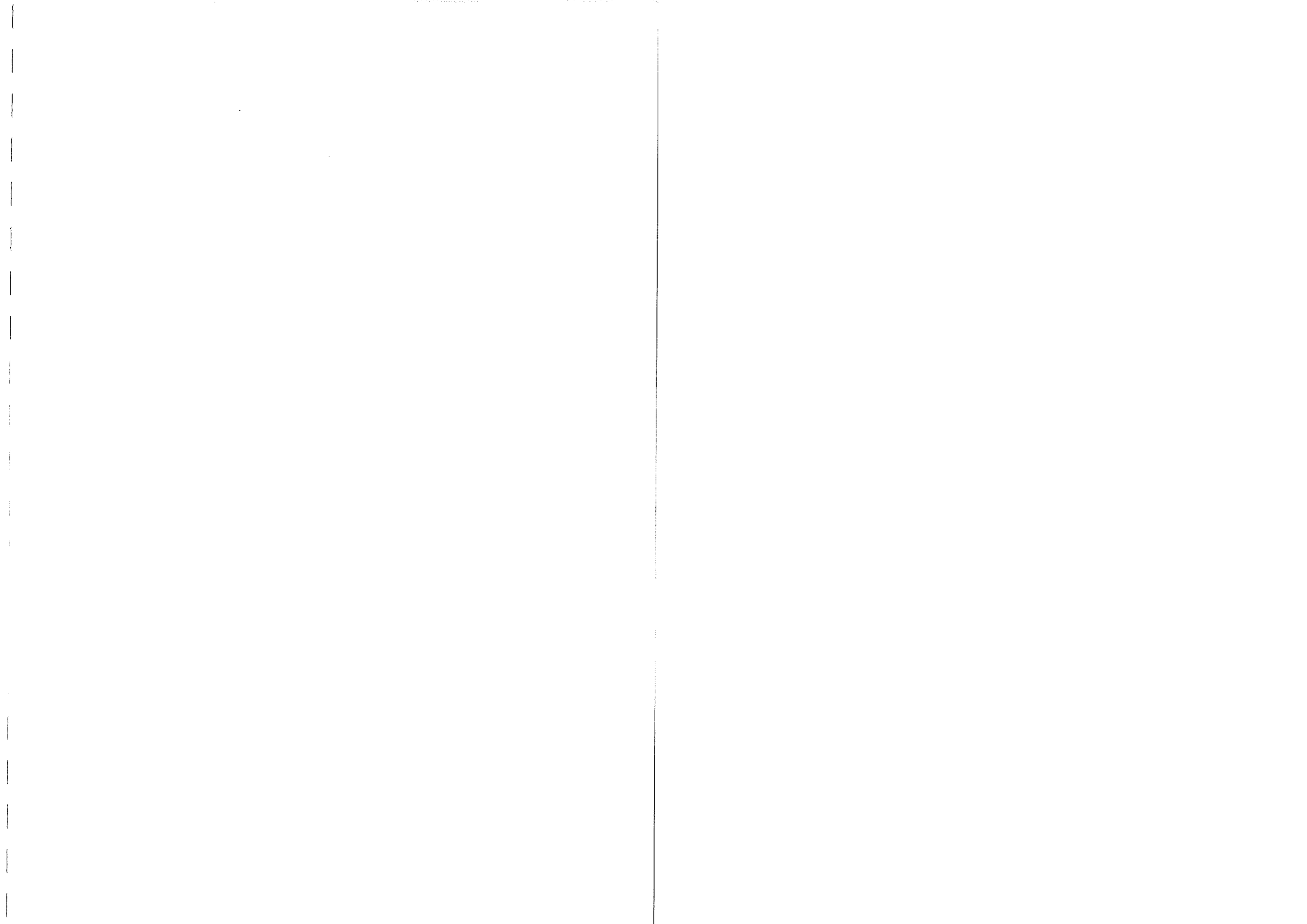


Project 2636
Report 1285
WSM 33824



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Archaeological desk-based assessment of the North Littleton Flood Alleviation Scheme, Worcestershire

James Goad, Simon Griffin and Simon Woodiwiss
With contributions by Shona Robson-Glyde

Part 1 Project summary

An archaeological desk-based assessment was undertaken at North Littleton, Worcestershire (NGR SP08414774 and SP08204709). It was undertaken on behalf of Glendale Environmental, who were acting on behalf of the Environment Agency, who propose to replace four bridges in the village of North Littleton as part of a flood alleviation scheme; three within the village, and the fourth in farmland to the south. The project aimed to determine whether the four bridges had any historic, architectural or archaeological significance, given that no records existed for them.

The project concluded that the four bridges were most likely of 18th century date with repairs and alterations in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is unlikely that any earlier structures existed. The village of North Littleton itself has documented origins in the early medieval period, although there is evidence from the surrounding area, which suggests that there may be a Roman-British settlement in the vicinity. Pottery and coins have been recorded in the area. The present day village evolved from a larger royal estate in the 8th century when the estate was subdivided the villages of North, Middle and South Littleton were formed. North Littleton was a separate entity by the late 16th century. The layout of the village is distinctive, with the houses arranged in two rows either side, and parallel to the Cleeve Brook. This suggests that at least two of the brook crossings (north and south) would have had their origins at the time the roads were first used but were most likely to have been crossed by means of a ford before the present bridges were constructed.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological desk-based assessment was undertaken at North Littleton, Worcestershire (NGR SP 0841 4774 and SP 0820 4709), for Glendale Environmental who were acting on behalf of the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency intends to replace four bridges in North Littleton as part of a flood alleviation scheme. The bridges have to be assessed for their architectural, archaeological and historic significance in order to fulfil the aims of the County Structure Plan (Hereford and Worcester County Council 1993; policy CTC5), the district local plan Wychavon District Local Plan 1993, policy CB18, and the Water Act 1989 Code of practice on conservation access and recreation.

1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological desk-based assessment* (IFA 1999). The project also conforms to a brief prepared by Worcestershire County Council Historic Environment and Archaeology Service Planning Advisory Section (HEAS 2004a) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (HEAS 2004b).

1.3 Aims

The aims and scope of the project are to:

- collect relevant information relating to the archaeological potential of the proposed development area;
- assess the potential significance of any archaeological remains and the built heritage; and
- assess the impact of the proposed development on these remains and the built heritage.

2. Methods

2.1 Documentary search

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER). In addition the following sources were also consulted.

Cartographic sources

- A Survey of the Manor of Middle and North Littleton for Sir J Rushout 1697 WCRO ref BA 4221/74.
- North, Middle and South Littleton Inclosure Plan 1814.
- Estate Plan 1858 WCRO ref. BA 4221/30 ii.
- Freehold Estate 1875 WCRO ref. BA 4221/44 i.
- Assorted plans of lands and footpaths (no date) WCRO ref. BA 2586.

- Ordnance Survey 25 inch: 1 mile 1885.
- Ordnance Survey 6 inch: 1 mile 1904.

Aerial photographs

- SP04 NE-4, NGR 080 471, No. NU28.

Documentary sources

- Cook 1998 and 1999.
- Place-names (Mawer and Stenton 1927).
- County histories (VCH II).
- Domesday (Thorn and Thorn 1983).
- Miller 1999.
- Watson 1988, WCRO ref 899.761 BA no. 11223.
- Willis-Bund c 1920.

2.2 **Fieldwork**

2.2.1 **Fieldwork**

A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service (HEAS 2004b). Fieldwork was undertaken on 16th September 2004.

A visit was made to the site to inspect the four bridges. All four bridges were photographed in detail with appropriate scales, and a written assessment of their date, character and condition made. Photographs illustrating the key architectural or historic elements of each bridge were taken for the purpose of being included in this report.

2.3 **Building recording**

The project conformed to the specification for a photographic survey as defined by the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England (RCHME 1996).

2.4 **Impact assessment criteria**

The criteria cited in Table 1 have been used to identify the significance of any unmitigated impacts. In keeping with advice provided in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) notes 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment' and PPG16 'Archaeology and Planning', suitable mitigation and any residual effects have been identified (DoE, 1990 and 1995).

Table 1: Significance criteria for cultural heritage issues

<p>Severe Adverse: Loss of integrity of nationally important archaeology/cultural heritage including Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Grade I/II* registered parks and gardens and registered battlefields. Demolition of a Grade I/II* Listed Building. Dramatic adverse change in the setting or visual amenity of the feature/site.</p>
<p>Major Adverse: Land take resulting in the degradation of a cultural heritage site of national importance and/or extensive change to the setting or visual amenity of such a site e.g. intrusion into the setting of a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Loss of integrity of sites of archaeological interest of regional value, or Grade II registered parks and gardens, e.g. a dramatic change in the setting or visual amenity of a regionally important site such as a Conservation Area. Widespread adverse effects on the setting or structure of a Grade I/II* Listed Building. Demolition of a Grade II Listed Building.</p>
<p>Moderate Adverse: Land take resulting in the degradation of a cultural heritage site of regional importance and/or extensive change to the setting or visual amenity of such a site. Extensive change to the setting or structure of a Grade II Listed Building. Demolition of a locally listed or other historically important building. Encroachment upon a Conservation Area, historic parkland or other historic landscapes where the quality of the setting or its amenity would be noticeably impaired. Slight change to the setting or structure of a Grade I/II* listed building. Removal of a historically important hedgerow (after the Hedgerows Regulations).</p>
<p>Minor Adverse: Loss of integrity of an area where archaeological features/areas of local importance have been identified. Slight change to the setting or structure of a Grade II Listed Building. Limited encroachment upon a Conservation Area or historic parkland or other historic landscape where intrusive views are created or slight effects upon its integrity would result.</p>
<p>Not Significant: Landscape or ecological planting on an area where locally important archaeological features have been identified but impacts are thought to have no long term effect on the resource. Removal of common hedgerows and limited damage to important hedgerows where no replacement proposed.</p>
<p>Minor Beneficial: Perceptible improvement in the setting or structure of a Grade II listed building, Conservation Area or Grade II historic parkland. Improved management of locally/regionally important archaeological site.</p>
<p>Moderate Beneficial: Perceptible improvement in the setting or structure of a Grade I/II* listed building, Conservation Area or Grade I/II* historic parkland. Improved management of nationally important archaeological site.</p>

2.5 The methods in retrospect

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

3. Topographical and archaeological context

The village of North Littleton lies 5.3km north-east of Evesham in Worcestershire. North Littleton is part of the parish of North and Middle Littleton, which lies from the Avon to the Roman Road known as Ryknield Street (3km to the east of the village). The Saxon boundaries of the Evesham lands describe the road as "the old way which the natives call 'No Man's Land', otherwise Buckle Street" (VCH II, 408).

The soils of the area are of the Evesham 2 series, which are Jurassic and Cretaceous clays. These are slowly permeable clayey soils, with some slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged non-calcerous clayey and fine loamy or fine silty over clay soils. Landslips and associated irregular terrain are common. As regards land use, agriculture has seen winter cereals and short-term grassland with stock rearing in drier lowlands. Moist lowlands have much dairying on permanent grassland (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

The parish has evidence of activity from the prehistoric period onwards. The area around North Littleton itself has been extensively fieldwalked, showing evidence of a number of Romano-British sites. Romano-British pottery was located adjacent to the west side of the village (WSM 02796). Anglo-Saxon settlement is believed to have been established within an area which had been intensively settled in the Romano-British period, with some farmsteads developing from existing Iron Age settlements (Watson 1988).

The earliest available map of North Littleton, an enclosure map of 1811, shows the village as a row form (cf Roberts 1987) but with two parallel rows. The village is bisected by the Cleeve Brook, over which are the four bridges that are the subject of this assessment. Judging by the distribution of early standing buildings it seems that the eastern part of the village is the earliest. The buildings lie alongside a road that probably originated as a field trackway. There is no sign of ridge and furrow in the strip between the brook and the road. It has been suggested that the two rows have a different history as the boundaries of the plots on either side of the brook do not line-up (Watson 1988).

Documentary evidence shows that the Littletons began as part of a large royal estate, which by the early 8th century had begun to fragment in to smaller units, including the Littletons. Before the compilation of the Domesday Book, the original Littleton unit had sub-divided in to two estates, which are believed to correspond with the two ecclesiastical parishes (Watson 1988; VCH II, 409), South and Middle Littleton as only these settlements had chapels (cf Cox 1975, 27).

Although there is no direct evidence for the bridge structures to date from the medieval period, it is just possible that there would have been bridges or more likely fords in similar positions to both the north bridge and the south bridge. Though not definitive the 1697 map does represent the brook and roads crossing each other on the site of the north and south bridges presumably indicating fords at these locations.

A study of the pre-18th century standing buildings in the village was undertaken in order to identify all the surviving medieval buildings and trace the pre-Georgian development of the villages. Until the 19th century the Littletons were distinctly separate settlements. If a village is defined as a rural settlement with a compact morphology of buildings with homes and farmsteads providing administrative or service functions, such as the location of a parish church or the centre of a manor, then building survey and documentation show the Littletons were villages by the late 16th century. Before this date both the extent and location of the settlements is uncertain. Although North Littleton has never possessed a church, it has been an

independent manor since 1540. Like Middle Littleton, North Littleton possessed a tithe barn and may have functioned as a separate manor during the late medieval period (Watson 1988).

North Littleton was home to a papermaking industry early in the 19th century. This became unprofitable and the extensive buildings required for the process fell in to ruin and were removed. Similarly there was an active business carried on in the stone and lime trade. Quarrymen lived in North Littleton. Flagstones of good quality were raised. Middle Littleton church exhibits some evidence of the stone working trade, which had disappeared from the area by the 20th century (VCH II, 409).

The modern village is laid out in the same pattern as visible on the Inclosure Plan of 1814. Some houses have, however, been built on the edges of the roads running from the village on the west (Arrow Lane) and east sides (School Lane).

4. Archaeological and historical context

Archaeological sites registered with the HER and within 500m of the study area are summarised in Table 1. Fourteen sites (WSM) lie within the study area. There are also eight Listed Buildings in the village of North Littleton.

Table 1 Sites registered with the HER

HER reference/status	OS grid reference	Site name/description	Date
WSM 02804	SP08304756	Dovecote, rear of Walnut House, N Littleton	Medieval
WSM 02866	SP07994706	Tithe barn (Listed building) Middle Littleton (SAM309)	Medieval
WSM 02867	SP07974700	Manor House, Middle Littleton	Post-medieval
WSM 04031	SP08254744	Dwelling, North & Middle Littleton	Post-medieval
WSM 09596	SP08414751	Post Office, N Littleton	Post-medieval
WSM 26327	SP08424746	Old Farm, East Side, North Littleton	Post-medieval
WSM 29883	SP08414736	Middle Farm, East Side, North Littleton	Post-medieval
WSM 32282	SP08414746	The Tithe Barn, Old Farm, North Littleton	Post-medieval
WSM 20315	SP08304770	Find spot – Romano-British coins and objects	Roman
WSM 29152	SP07944775	Pottery scatter, south of Red House Farm, South Littleton	Roman to Post-medieval
WSM 02796	SP08154760	Ridge and Furrow, West of North Littleton	Medieval
WSM22161	SP 08004700	Middle Littleton Village – origins in the medieval period	Medieval, early medieval/ Dark Age to Post-medieval
WSM 22162	SP 08304750	North Littleton Village	Medieval
WSM 27109	SP 08574725	Conjectural Roman Settlement nr Blake Hill, North Littleton	Roman

5. Description of the bridges

5.1 North bridge (Plates 1-4)

The north bridge lies over the Cleeve Brook at the north end of the village. The bridge is a stone structure (Cotswold Oolitic limestone probably from quarries around Broadway) with a semi-circular arch and a stringcourse one course above the arch. A concrete culvert (1.4m wide and 0.5m high) passes below the bridge. The bridge elevations appear to be of 19th century date (on stylistic grounds and due to the absence of modern tooling), but have actually been rebuilt during widening of the road (to its present width of 18.85m). This stonework is only a facing to a modern concrete structure. The original bridge fabric (possibly Cotswold limestone, but it was not possible to identify it safely) does, however, exist at the centre of bridge and is only visible by looking through the arch. It appears safest to assume an 18th century for the original fabric, though this requires further confirmation. The suggestion that the bridge has origins earlier than the 19th century is based on the differing character of the stonework of the original bridge arch and the elevations. The road is also represented as crossing the brook on the 1814 map.

5.2 Footbridge (Plates 5-7)

The footbridge is located in the geographic centre of the village on a trackway joining East Side with West Side and is associated with Old Farm. The bridge construction is original and the fabric consists of Cotswold Oolitic limestone with a semi-circular stone arch construction with the pathway set directly on top of the arch span. The stones typically measure 280x190x80mm or 500x150x110mm. The stonework is roughly coursed and incorporates a number of handmade header set bricks that appear to date to the 19th century and the mortar used appears very dark and concreted. The bridge is considered to be 19th century in date.

5.3 South bridge (Plates 8-12)

The south bridge is also constructed of Cotswold Oolitic limestone. The bridge width measures 7.40m. The arch of the tunnel is composed of red brick apart from the bottom three courses which are stone. The arch measures 1.60m wide at the base and is 1.30m in height from the top of the arch to the stream bed. There is a modern concrete plinth or "starling" protecting the historic structure from erosion.

This bridge is the most impressive bridge (being on the most important historic road) of the four North Littleton structures. The roadway running up to, and away, from the bridge is bounded on both sides by walls creating a funnel shape ("wing walls"). There is a building break, most obvious on the south elevation around the arch, that suggest relining of the arch with brick. It is considered probable that the original structure is of 18th century date with repairs to the arch in the 19th century. The road is also represented as crossing the brook on the 1814 map.

5.4 Field bridge (Plates 13-16)

The field bridge is the southernmost of the four bridges situated in open farmland between the villages of North and Middle Littleton. It consists of a small narrow bridge constructed of similar stone to other bridges. The arch is semi-circular and has no stringcourse. The top of the arch's stonework is visible over the top of the span. The bridge would appear to post-date 1697 as it is not shown on the map of that date. The use of maps to prove a negative is generally unwise, however, in this instance a field road is shown approaching the site of the bridge but turning south and heading for a more southerly crossing. The bridge is not shown on the 1814 enclosure but the field boundary is shown as crossing the brook and is it possible that the bridge existed by this date. The south side has a wider arch than the arch narrower span of the north side which possibly shows that this was the water exit from the bridge. The

stonework of this structure is of much better quality than the footbridge. It seems most likely the bridge was constructed for agricultural purposes.

6. **Assessment of significance**

None of the bridges are scheduled under the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979* or Listed Buildings and may be considered not to be important on a national basis. The north, south and foot-bridges lie within or on the boundary of the North and Middle Littleton Conservation Area (WDC 1998) and within or on the boundary of the open space identified for that area.

Assessment of the significance of these bridges is hampered by there being no readily available synopsis or consideration of post-medieval bridges nationally (though English Heritage have published monument class descriptions for Roman and medieval multi-span bridges) nor smaller bridges for the county. The bridges are, however, a feature of the local landscape and in particular the following are characteristics which contribute to their significance.

- They are considered most likely to date to the 18th century and are contemporary with a number of Listed Buildings in the area.
- They are built of a stone used extensively in the area.
- The brook and its bridges are a focus in the village's form.

It should be noted that the widening of the north bridge involved the sensitive (for its time) retention of the original structure within the new, and careful dismantling and re-erection of the two elevations. Elsewhere in the county a post-medieval packhorse bridge at Hatt House Farm, Lower Sapay, has been subject to repairs under a Countryside Stewardship Scheme (Cook 2003).

In terms of the historic environment and measures to protect it, there is a clear preference for the retention of the historic structure of the bridges. Planning and related decisions are however made in a wider context and options for mitigation are therefore given below.

7. **Potential impacts**

Precise details of the proposals were not available at the time this report was prepared but it is assumed that it would involve the complete removal of the existing bridge structures unless the one or other of the mitigation measures were implemented.

The demolition of the bridges will have a "moderate adverse impact" or "major adverse" impact if it is considered to have a dramatic effect on the Conservation Area, especially for the north, south and foot-bridges which form part of the open space.

Construction works may entail ground disturbance over wider areas for compounds and access roads etc.

8. **Mitigation measures**

The following have been produced from a historic environment perspective and should not be taken to imply any practical or engineering feasibility.

Where retention of the bridges is to be considered increasing flow capacity may be obtained by deepening of the existing channel, or installation of a secondary water channel away from

the structure. The modern concrete plinths will have reduced flow at low flow levels and their removal and replacement by a structure with less mass may also be considered.

Where the bridges are to be demolished and replaced by modern structures the following mitigation may be considered a likely requirement.

- Recording of the visible structure before demolition to an appropriate level.
- Recording of the structure (material and methods of construction), this may be possible to programme within the demolition programme or may have to be conducted as a separate precursor to demolition.
- Design of replacement structures with respect to the local historic environment or which will contribute to the future historic environment in a positive way.

Where construction activity extends beyond the bridge location this may have the potential to encounter other archaeological sites and further advice should be sought.

9. 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 desk-based assessment was undertaken on behalf of Glendale Environmental and the Environment Agency at North Littleton, Worcestershire (NGR ref SP08414774 and SP08204709; SMR ref WSM 33824). The study provided an assessment and photographic record of four bridges within and around the village of North Littleton. The bridges have been dated to the 18th century with major phases of repair and adaptation in the 19th and 20th centuries. Although it is likely that the crossing points originated earlier, presumably as fords.

10. The archive

The archive consists of:

- 1 Fieldwork progress records AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 1 Computer disk

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum

Hartlebury Castle

Hartlebury

Near Kidderminster

Worcestershire DY11 7XZ

Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

11. **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Becca Satchwell of Glendale Environmental, and Mike Glyde Planning Archaeologist for Worcestershire County Council.

12. **Personnel**

The fieldwork and report preparation was led by James Goad. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Simon Griffin. Additional text was prepared by Simon Woodiwiss. Fieldwork assessment was undertaken by James Goad and illustration by Carolyn Hunt. Shona Robson-Glyde contributed to the assessment of the bridges and photographs.

13. **Bibliography**

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Willis-Bund, J W, c 1920 *Worcestershire bridges*

14. **Abbreviations**

NMR National Monuments Record.

HER Historic Environment Record.

WCRO Worcestershire County Records Office.

WSM Numbers prefixed with 'WSM' are the primary reference numbers used by the Worcestershire County Historic Environment Record.



Plate 1 North bridge, north face.



Plate 2 North bridge, north face

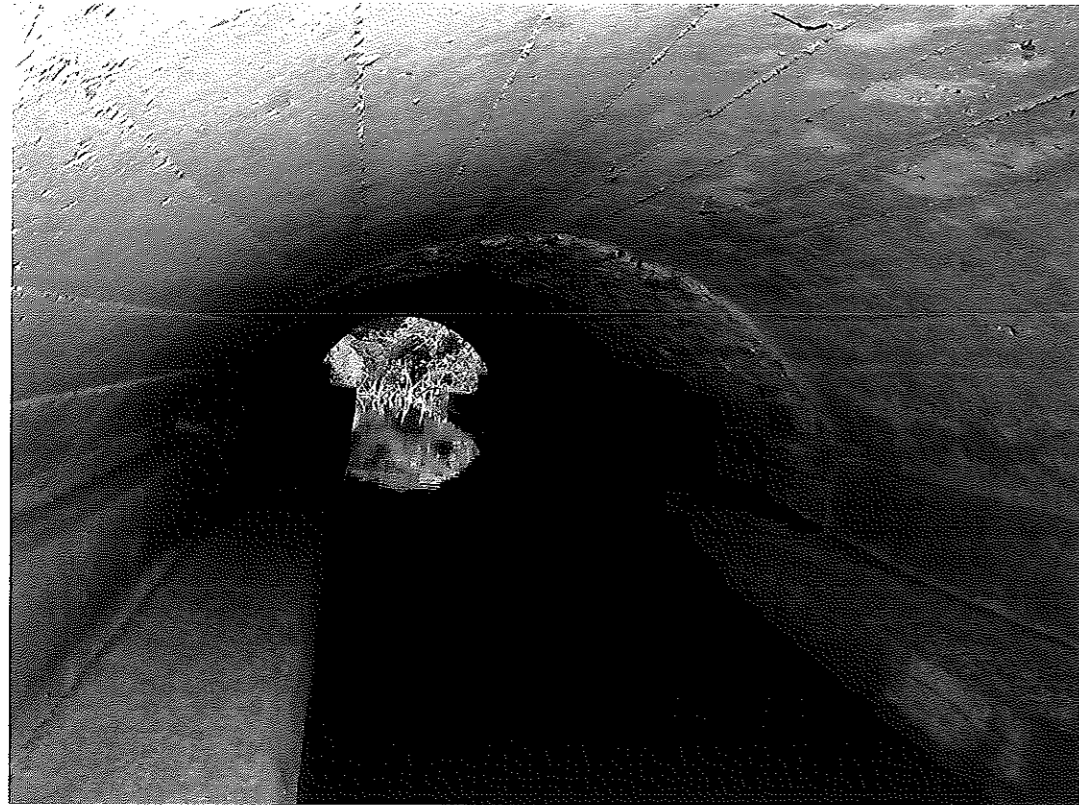


Plate 3 North bridge, view south, note older section of bridge in centre



Plate 4 North bridge, south face

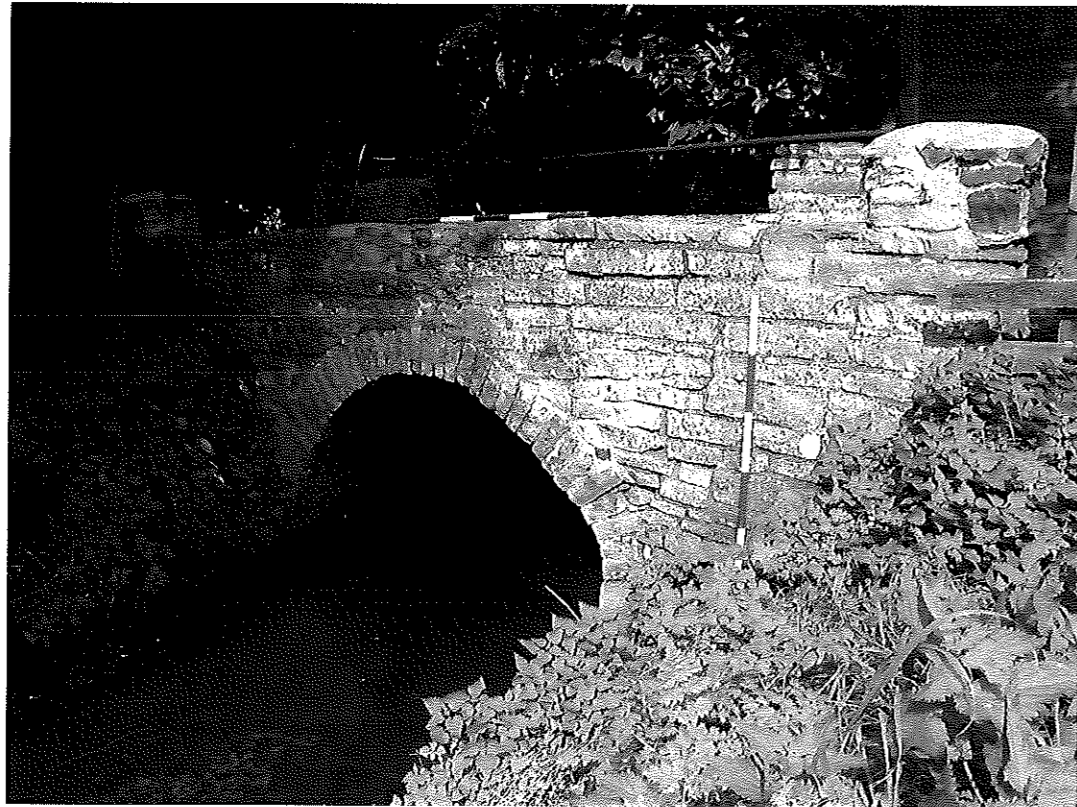


Plate 5 Footbridge, south face



Plate 6 Footbridge, detail of south face



Plate 7 Footbridge, looking east at bridge and footpath



Plate 8 South bridge, south face



Plate 9 South bridge, view north along tunnel



Plate 10 South bridge, looking NE at south side of bridge



Plate 11 South bridge, culverted north entrance to bridge



Plate 12 South bridge, close up of bridge arch, north entrance



Plate 13 Field bridge, south side of bridge



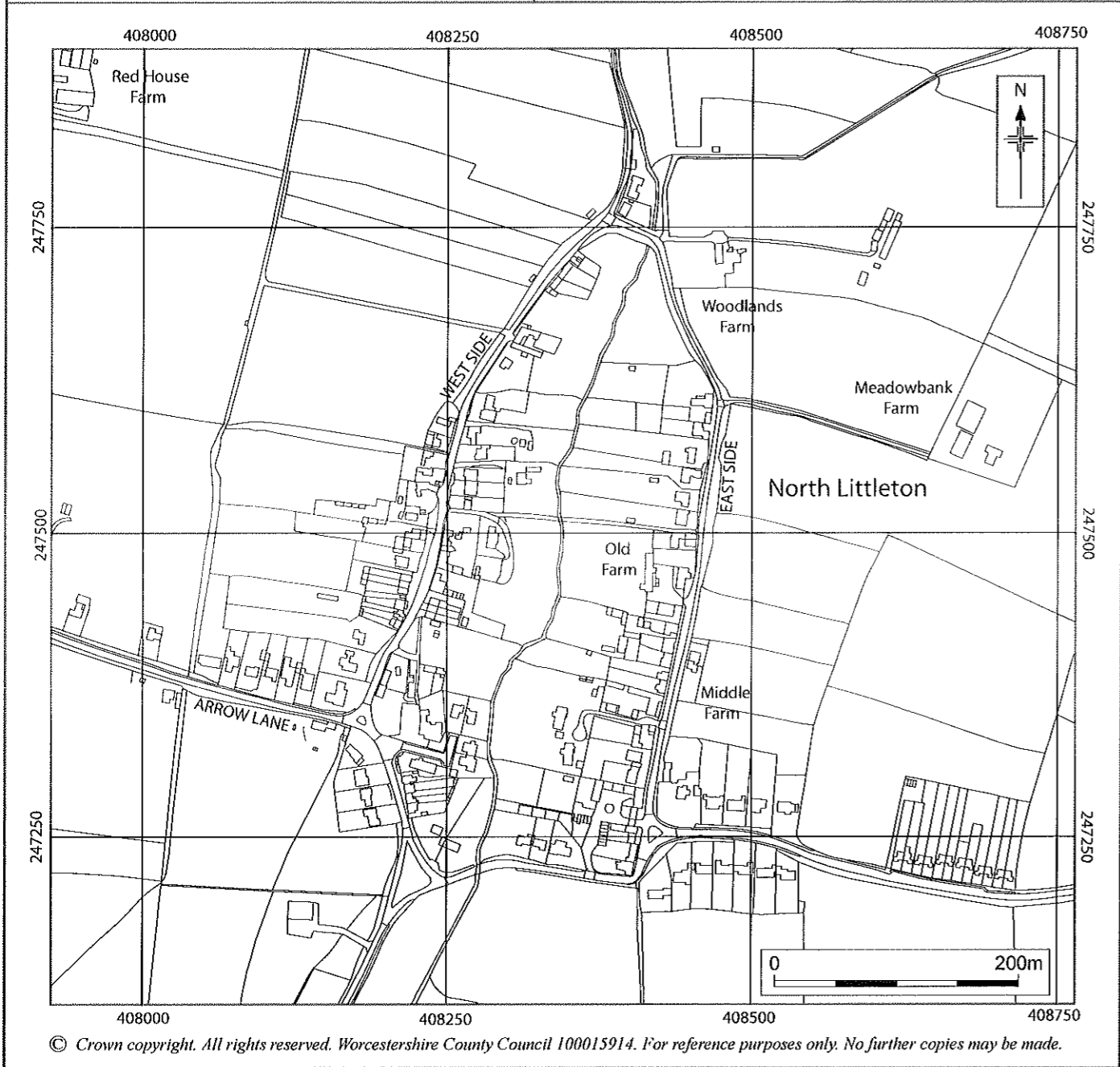
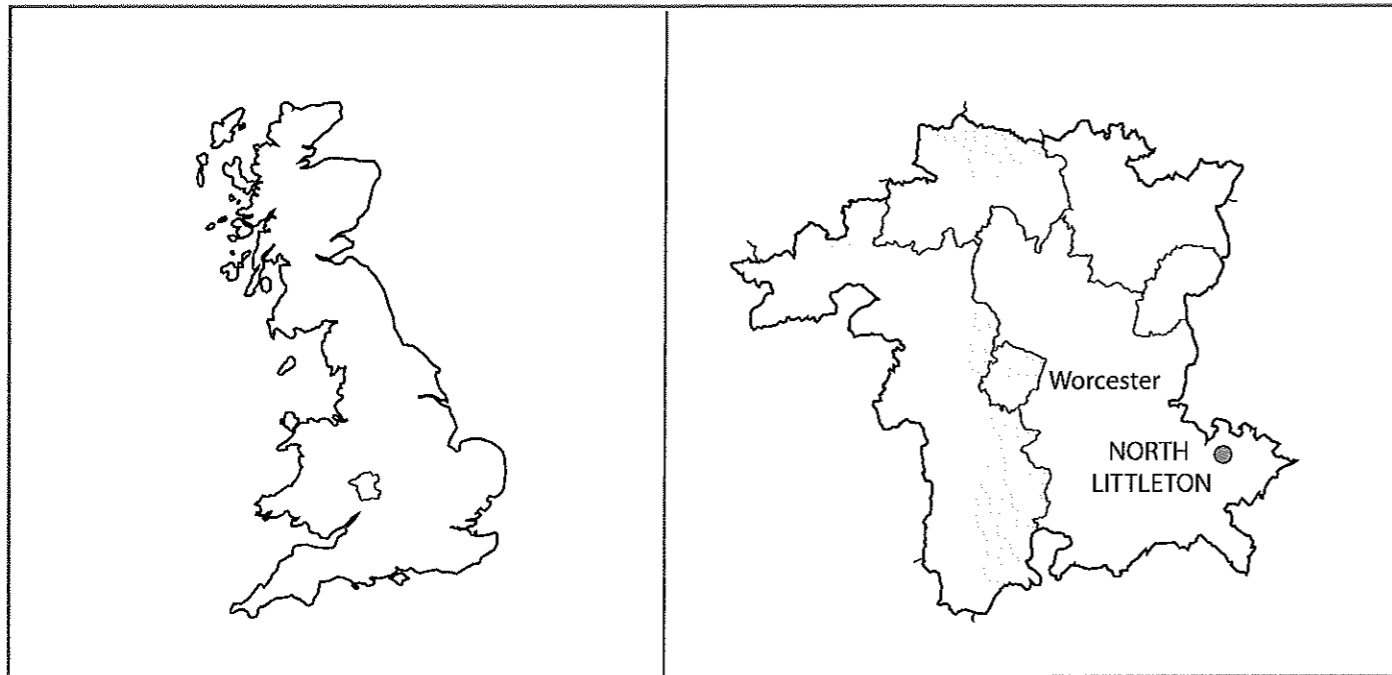
Plate 14 Field bridge, south side of bridge



Plate 15 Field bridge, close up of arch



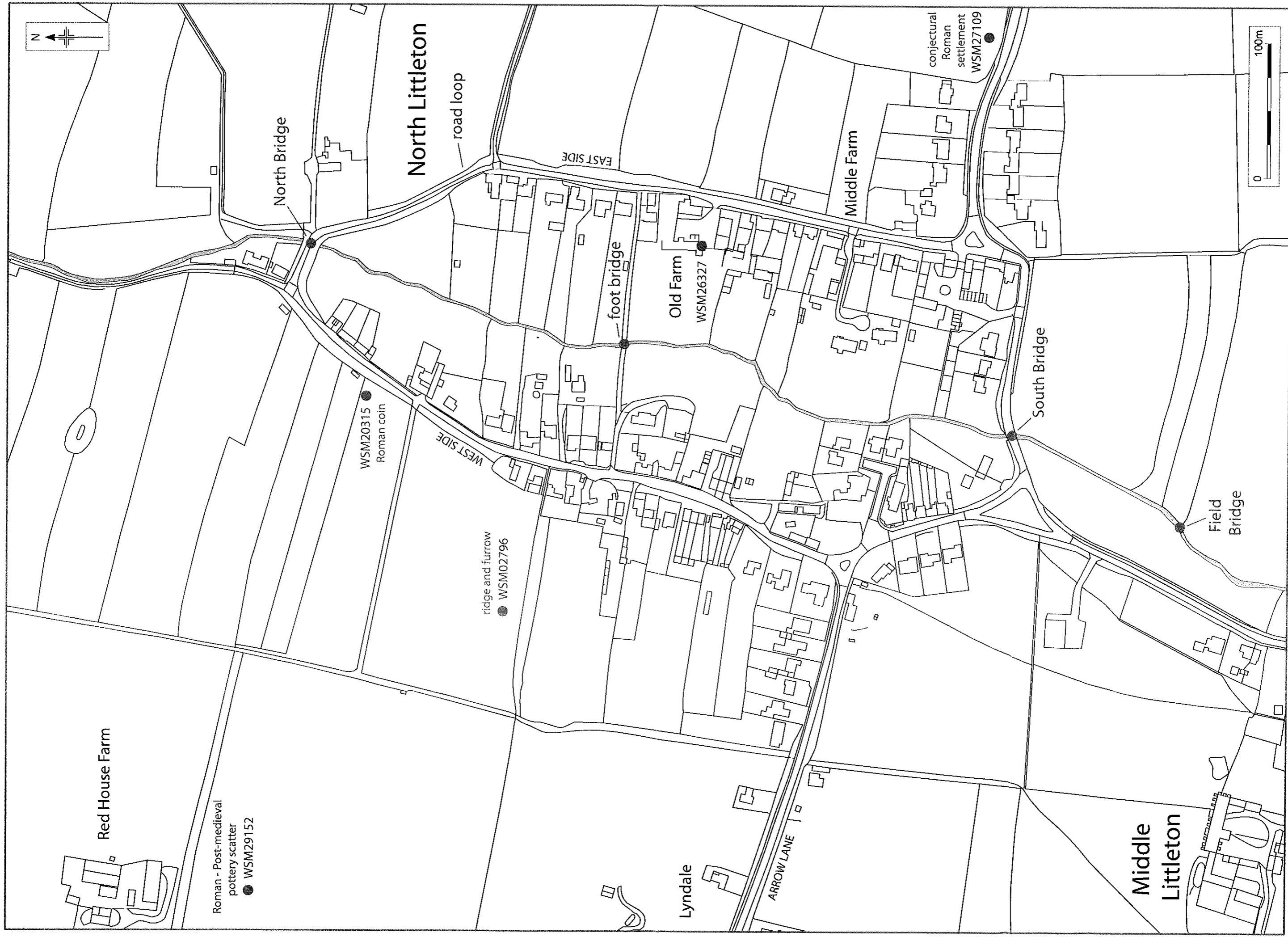
Plate 16 Field bridge, looking SE, top of bridge arch visible on path



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Location of the study area.

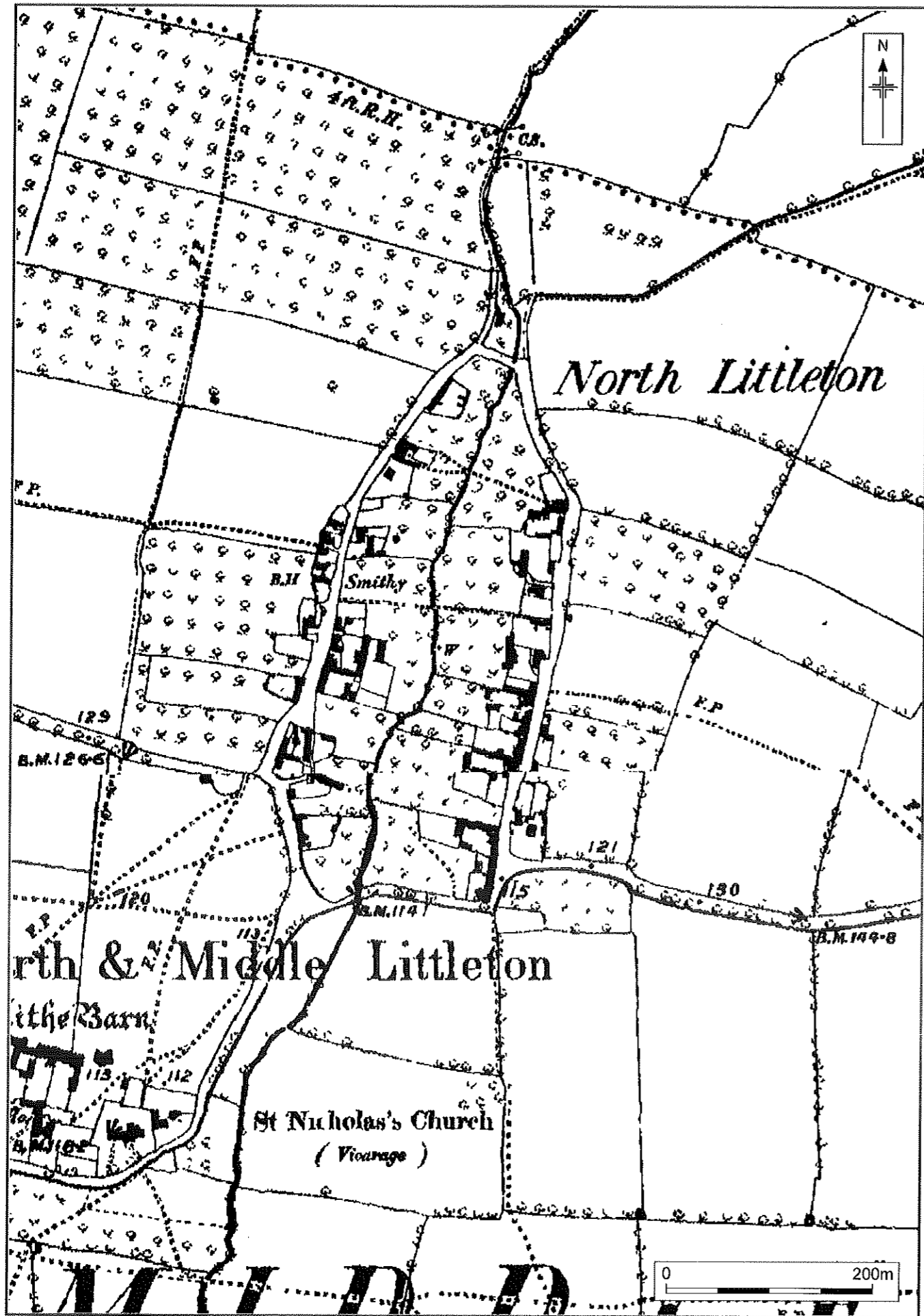
Figure 1



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Location of bridges and sites in the vicinity.

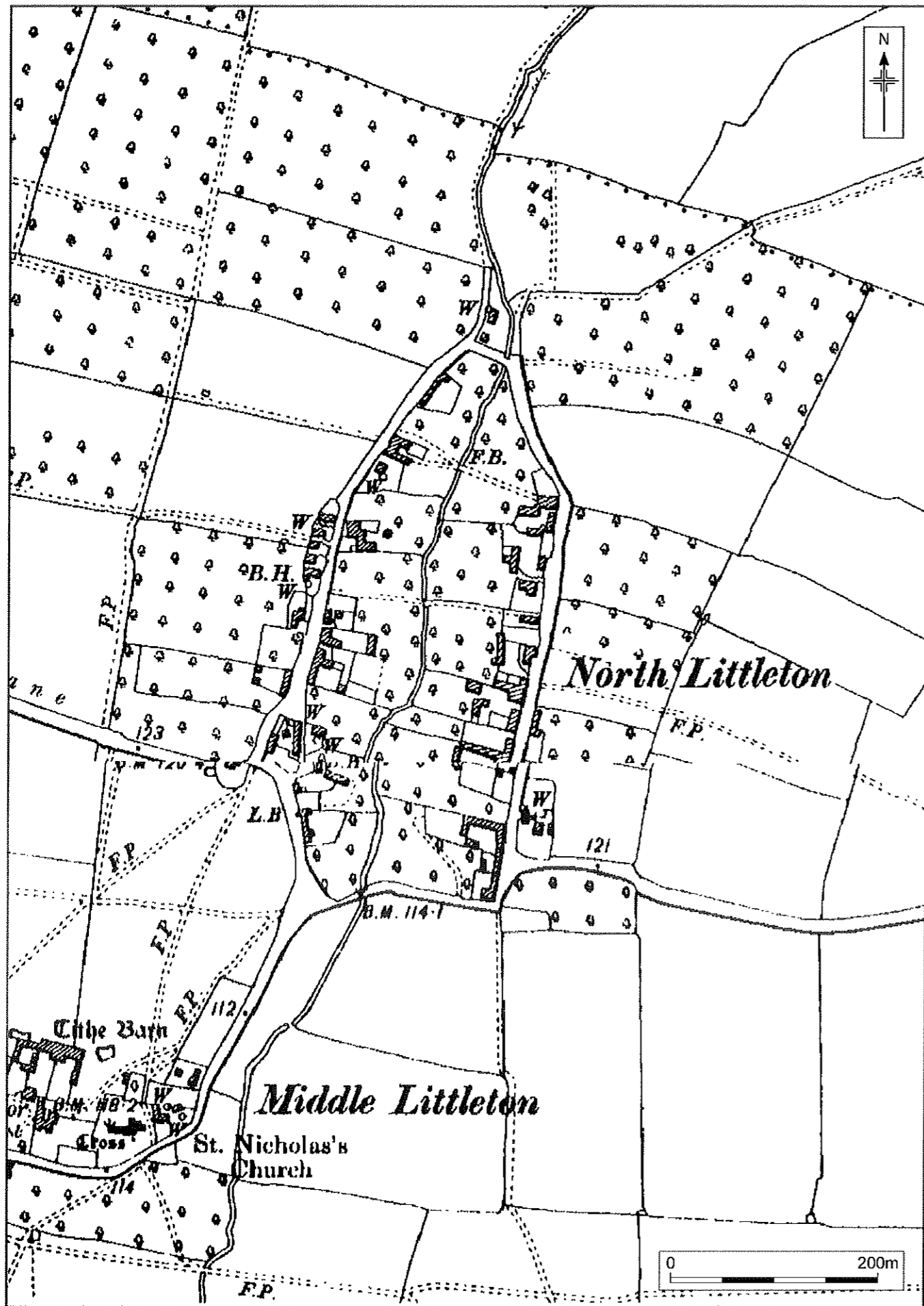
Figure 2



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Extract from 1st edition Ordnance Survey map, 1889 - 1891.

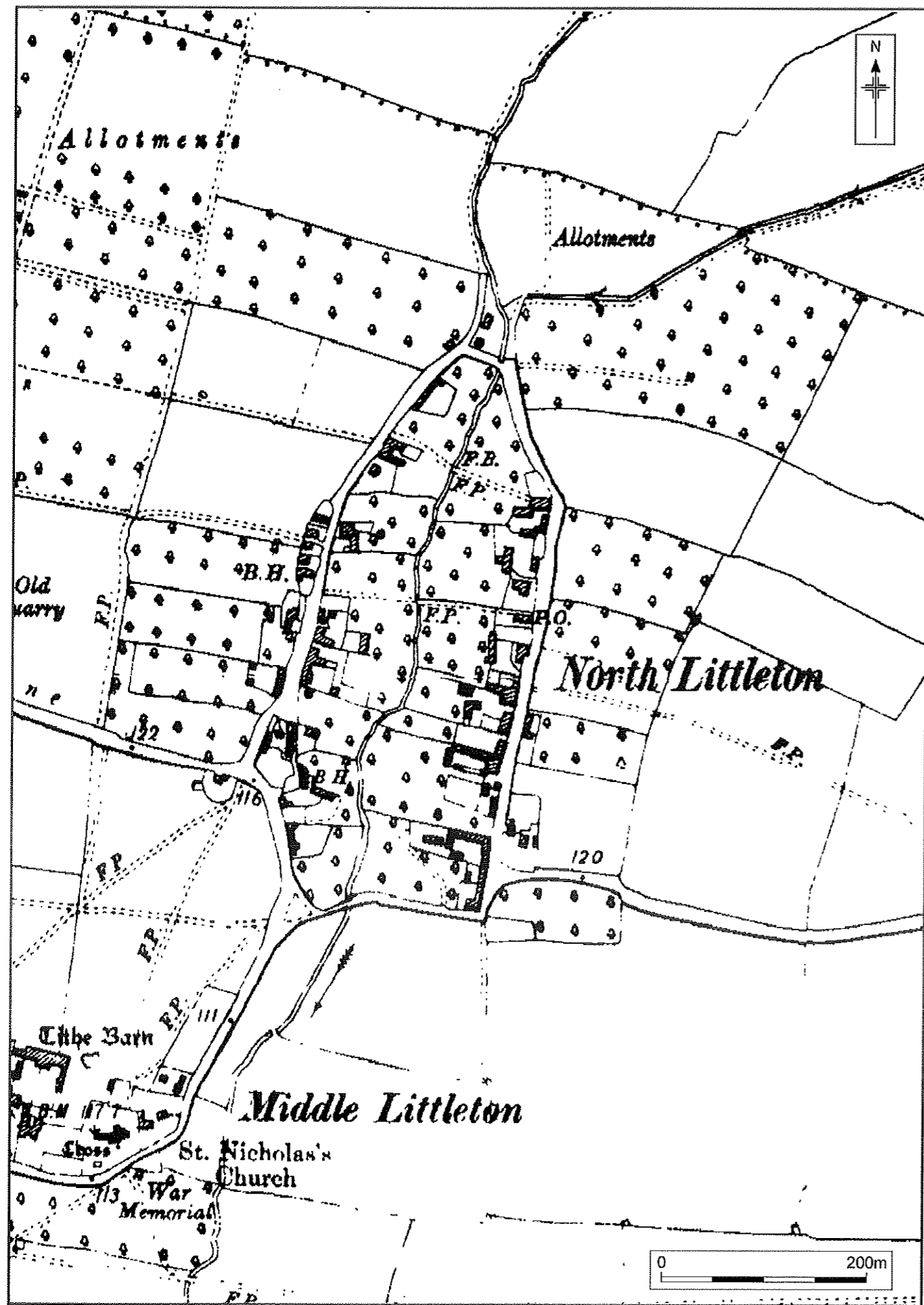
Figure 3



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Extract from 1905 Ordnance Survey map.

Figure 4



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Extract from 3rd edition Ordnance Survey map.

Figure 5