

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF
AT
LONGMORE HILL FARM,
ASTLEY, WORCESTERSHIRE

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Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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Worcestershire County Council



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Project 3328
Report 1682
WSM 40808

Archaeological Watching Brief at Longmore Hill Farm, Astley, Worcestershire

Elizabeth A. Curran

Background information

<i>Client</i>	Mr Phil Tarran of E.ON UK Ltd/ Central Networks
<i>Site address</i>	Longmore Farm, Astley Worcestershire
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SO80376878
<i>Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>	WSM 40808
<i>Planning authority reference</i>	Worcestershire County Council
<i>Brief</i>	n/a
<i>Project parameters</i>	HEAS 2009a IfA 2008

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Longmore Farm, Astley Worcestershire (Fig 1), on behalf of E.ON UK Ltd/ Central Networks, of groundworks associated with the construction of new overhead power lines.

Previous archaeological work on the site

Archaeological salvage recording was undertaken in 1996 in connection with the route of a new pipeline from Astley to Worcester (WSM 30019). The survey included part of the area concerned in the current watching brief. To the north of Scots Lane one pottery sherd of possible prehistoric date was recovered but it was quite small and the identification was not secure (WSM 20802). No deposits of this date were found in this or the adjoining field, south of Astley Water Works. Small quantities of post medieval pottery, tile and clay pipe were also recovered which was likely to indicate more intensive arable cultivation (WSM 20801, 20802 and 20803) (Dalwood *et al* 1996).

Previous archaeological work on associated sites

Archaeological salvage recording (WSM 29962) was undertaken in 1992 on the route of Severn Trent Water's Blackstone to Astley aqueduct (Dinn, J 1992). At the southernmost end of the aqueduct route, in a field to the west of Longmore Hill Farm, a single oval pit was revealed after topsoil stripping. Further cleaning of a 100m² area exposed two smaller shallow features from which no finds were recovered. The pit was recorded as 2.4m long, 1.6m wide and 0.3m deep, and had been disturbed by later plant and animal activity. The finds included Late Neolithic Beaker pottery with burnt and unburnt flint flakes, burnt stones, charred plant and animal remains. It was suggested that the assemblage was a secondary deposit of domestic rubbish (Dinn and Hemingway 1992); indicative of a nearby settlement (WSM 11093) and the site was thus thought to have potential for the survival of Bronze Age archaeological remains.

Archaeological and historical background

The groundworks were located to the north and south of Longmore Hill Farm, Astley and east of the B4196. The site is on the western edge of a shallow valley, south of a seasonal watercourse, which flows into a natural pool. The landscape is characterised as intensively cultivated lowland and the underlying geology of the area is Triassic Sandstone.

The Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) contains further records relating to the area. A number of unstratified finds spots (WSM 32579, 32580, 32581, 32583) have been recorded in the proximity of Longmore Hill Farm. These records typically comprise of a number of post medieval surface finds of slipware and black-glazed wares collected over a number of years. The

scattered pottery found is of a type commonly encountered on agricultural sites and are usually indicative of general rubbish discard or field manuring practises.

Longmore Hill Farm is a single storey Grade II listed Farmhouse (WSM 05438) built in the seventeenth century. The farmhouse is timber framed, with some lath and plaster infill and tiled roof. It has undergone a later brick extension to the rear, and the addition of a porch. Associated building enclosing a yard includes stables, dovecote and cow house (WSM 23369). Built in the nineteenth century these buildings have since been renovated into private dwellings. The Ordnance Survey map of 1884 show that part of the site was once a wooded area, located to the east of Longmore Hill Farm, which was still present on the 1930 Ordnance Survey map.

Aims

The aim of the watching brief was to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible. The fieldwork was restricted to areas of ground disturbance associated with construction of new overhead power lines.

Methods

General specification for fieldwork	CAS 1995
Sources consulted	HER Ordnance Survey maps:, 1884, 1890, 1930
Dates of fieldwork	16 th February to 20 th February 2009
Dimensions of excavated areas observed	Cable trench 1 length 66.50m width 0.30-0.40m depth 0.80-0.85m Trenches 2 to 9 length 2.00m width 0.60-0.80m depth 1.60m Trench 10 length 47.50m width 0.24m depth 0.45-0.56m Trenches 11 to15 length 2.00m width 0.60m depth 1.60m

Access to or visibility of deposits

Observation was undertaken during and after excavation of the trenches. The exposed surfaces were generally sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits. Access to deep trenches was not made for safety reasons.

Statement of confidence

Access to, and visibility of, deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

Deposit description

Trenches where no archaeological features were present have been grouped together and only a general description of the topsoil, subsoil and natural deposits provided (equivalent to --00, --01 and --02, respectively).

Trench 1, 14

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth below ground level (top and bottom of deposits)
100	Top soil	Mid-dark blackish brown coarse sand and colluvial silt. Frequent bioturbation and root action due to small copse on Southwest end. Less disturbance to east of trench. Diffuse boundary with 101.	0.00-0.30m
101	Subsoil	Light orange brown coarse sand and silt. Occasional bioturbation, mainly on south west of trench. Difuse boundary with 102.	0.05-0.45m
102	Natural	Light reddish orange coarse sand with occasional silt. Contains occasional rounded alluvial cobbles. Very clean with no obvious disturbance. Sand becomes fine with depth.	0.45m+
103	Natural Sandstone	Natural reworked sandstone derived from 103. Above 103.	0.80m+
104	Linear	Fill of shallow linear. Light orange brown coarse sand and silt. Heavily disturbed by root action.	0.80m
105	Cut of Linear	Rectangular Linear, gradual break of slope at top with smooth gradual sides. Smooth break of slope at base and shallow concave base. Orientated North to South. Furrow that relates to earlier orchard.	0.80m
106	Layer	Loose, light yellowish fine sand and silt. Occasional rounded and sub rounded pebbles. Little bioturbation. Probably degraded, weathered upper surface of 103.	0.60-0.80m

Trench 2, 4 - 6

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth below ground level (top and bottom of deposits)
--01	Top soil	Fine, soft mid dark brown sandy loam. Frequent root disturbance. Moderately compact. Occasional medium – small sub round pebble.	0.00-0.50m
--02	Subsoil	Mid-light orange brown fine silty sand. Clear boundary between above and below deposits.	0.50-0.75m
--03	Natural	Mid bright copperish – orange brown fine sand, no obvious disturbance, very clean. Rare sub round and round cobbles.	0.75m+

Trench 3, 7 - 8

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth below ground level (top and bottom of deposits)
--01	Top soil	Moderately coarse mid brown sandy loam. Frequent root disturbance. Moderately compact. Occasional medium – small sub round pebble.	0.00-0.60m
--02	Subsoil	Moderately coarse mid light greyish brown silty sand, with lenses of light orangey brown sand.	0.60-0.80m
--03	Natural	Bright soft fine orangey red sand with patches of brown sand.	0.80m+

Trench 10

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth below ground level (top and bottom of deposits)
--01	Top soil	Mid dark blackish brown coarse sandy loam. Frequent	0.00-0.37m

		root action. Contains frequent medium – small sub round pebble.	
--02	Subsoil	Mid light orangey brown coarse silty sand. Frequent sub round and sub angular small to medium pebbles and stones.	0.37-0.56m
--03	Natural	Due to the shallow depth of trench 10 natural was not observed throughout the whole of the trench.	0.56m+

Trench 9, 11 – 13, 15

Context	Interpretation	Description	Depth below ground level (top and bottom of deposits)
--01	Top soil	Mid blackish grey brown sandy loam. Frequent root action. Contains occasional sub round medium – small pebbles.	0.00-0.22m
--02	Subsoil	Moderately compact mid greyish orange fine silty sand. With lenses of light orangey brown sands. Root action.	0.22-0.70m
--03	Natural	Bright reddish brown fine hard sand, with patches of orange brown sands. Very clean.	0.70m+

Discussion and Conclusions

No significant archaeological features, layers, horizons, or structures, or archaeological artefacts were identified during the project.

Thirteen trenches were excavated for the erection cable stays and poles associated with the construction of new overhead power lines. The natural deposits (--03) consisted of very clean, moderately coarse, hard reddish-orangey brown sands with occasional lenses of silt. Natural was recorded at a depth of 0.58-0.86m below ground surface. The subsoil interface (--02) overlay and sealed the natural matrix, and did not suggest any archaeological features. The observed subsoil was of moderately compact orangey brown coarse silty sand, varying between 0.15 and 0.30m in depth.

The topsoil mantle (--01) was mid blackish brown sandy loam and was generally between in 0.45m and 0.70m in depth.

Trench 1 and 10 were excavated for an underground cable. Located at the site of Trench 1, the topsoil (100) was recorded at a depth of 0.05-0.30m below the ground surface. The observed subsoil (101) was of light orange brown coarse sand and silt and overlay the natural matrix of reddish orange coarse sand. Visible in the section of trench 1 was a shallow linear (105), 0.40m wide, 0.30m deep and filled by coarse sandy-silt (106) similar to the subsoil. Very heavily disturbed by root action it became apparent it was a furrow running north south relating to the orchard, which according to Ordnance Survey maps occupied the site until recently.

Trench 10 was only excavated to a depth of 0.45-0.56m through topsoil and subsoil and did not reach natural deposits. However there remains a limited potential for the survival of archaeological deposits in those areas of the trench not excavated to natural.

The deposits observed were not of archaeological significance, and there was no evidence of the early Bronze Age activity previously observed to the north west of the current site. The possibility remains that archaeological deposits survive in areas of the site not disturbed by the present development.

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 Mr P Tarran, E.ON UK Ltd/ Central Networks at Longmore Hill Farm, Astley, Worcestershire (NGR SO80376878; WSM 40808). The observation and recording of archaeological deposits was restricted to areas of ground disturbance associated with construction of new overhead power lines.

Salvage recording on the Blackstone-Astley Aqueduct to the north west of the subject site in 1992 revealed a pit containing a large quantity of fragmentary beaker pottery, a flint scraper & nearly 300 flint spalls.

No significant archaeological features, layers, horizons, or structures, or archaeological artefacts were identified during the project. However in some areas the trenches did not reach natural, so there remains the possibility that archaeological deposits survive in areas of the site not disturbed by the present development.

Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Mr Phil Tarran and Mr A Champion of E.ON UK Ltd/ Central Networks. Mr Mike Glyde, Historic Environment Planning Advisor, Worcestershire County Council. Mr and Mrs Russell, Longmore Hill Farm, Astley, Worcestershire and Mr and Mrs J P Tanser, Sandstone Barn, Astley, Worcestershire.

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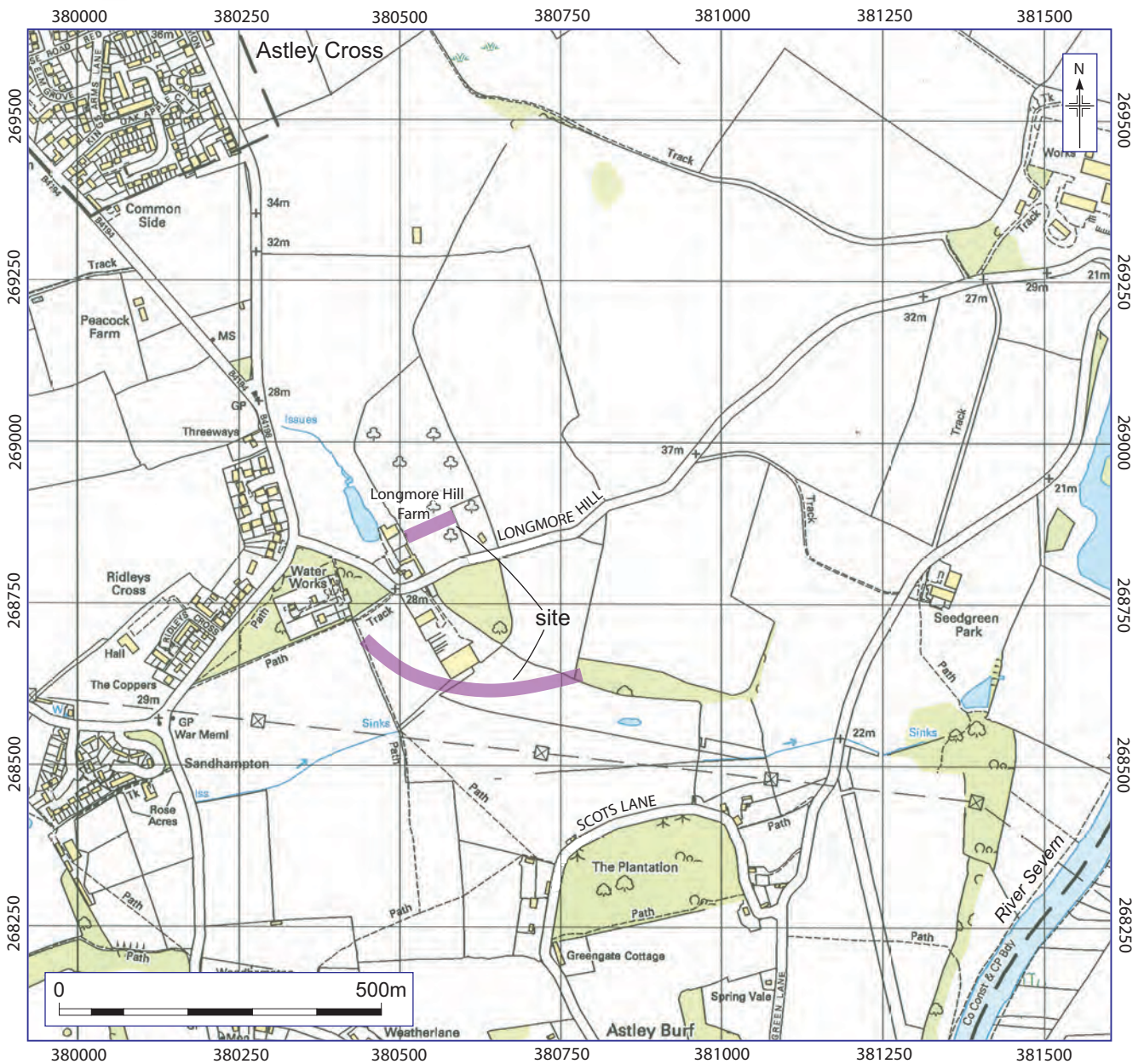
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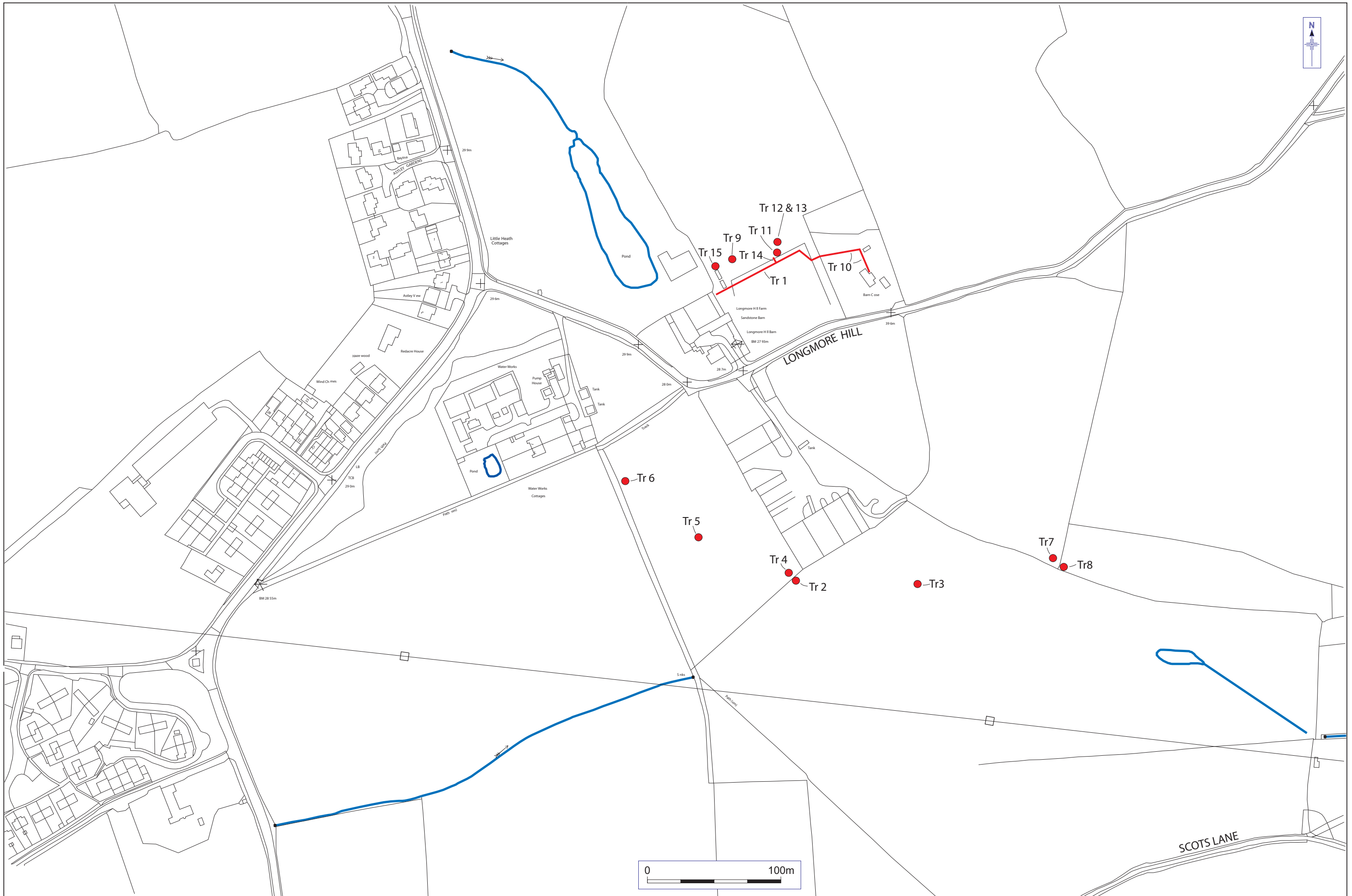
Figures



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Location of the site

Figure 1



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Trench location plan

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1: Newly erected pole for overhead lines at site of trench three (foreground) and two (background), looking north west.



Plate 2: Overview of trench one, facing north east.



Plate 3: Base of trench one, looking north.



Plate 4: North east facing section of trench one, including furrows.



Plate 5: General overview of trench five, looking south east.



Plate 6: West facing section of trench four.



Plate 7: North facing section of trench ten.



Plate 8: West facing section of trench nine.

Appendix 1 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

- 13 Trench records sheet
- 4 Fieldwork progress records AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 4 Abbreviated context records AS40
- 1 Scale drawings

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416