



Lochinvar Flood Alleviation Scheme, Longtown, Cumbria

Archaeological Watching Brief



Oxford Archaeology North

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SUMMARY

The Environment Agency has proposed the construction of a new embankment and lagoon as part of flood alleviation works to the east of Longtown, Cumbria (NY 38912 68774). The scheme was considered to lie within an area of archaeological potential.

In January 2008 Jacobs UK commissioned Oxford Archaeology (North) to undertake an archaeological watching brief on behalf of their client, the Environment Agency, during the preliminary phase of earthworks. These comprised eight geotechnical trial pits, consisting of four boreholes and four hand-dug test pits, dug down to a maximum depth of 1.2m below the existing ground surface. No features, structures or deposits of archaeological significance were found, but a small assemblage of artefacts were recovered from the topsoil. These included a small group of potsherds and a prehistoric flint flake. These were unstratified so did not contribute to any significant further understanding of the area.

In June 2010 OA North was contacted by Hugh Johnston of the Environment Agency with regards to carrying out a second watching brief of the topsoil strip before the construction of earthworks; this work was undertaken in July 2010 and consisted of two days of monitoring visits.

While no features, structures or deposits of archaeological significance were observed during these works, a hedgerow from an earlier field boundary was observed. There were several fragments of pottery and glass found in the topsoil, with a fragment of glass coming from the hedgerow itself. The majority of the artefacts were unstratified and contributed little significance to the understanding of the site. No further archaeological work is recommended.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) would like to thank Hugh Johnston of the Environment Agency for commissioning the work.

The watching brief was undertaken by Paul Dunn, who also wrote this report. The project was managed by Alan Lupton, who also edited the report.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF PROJECT

1.1.1 The Environment Agency has proposed the construction of a new flood alleviation scheme to the east of Longtown, Cumbria (NY 38912 68774; Fig 1). The scheme may potentially impact upon any surviving archaeological remains. Consequently, Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) were commissioned by Hugh Johnston, of the Environment Agency, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during preliminary earthworks. The work was undertaken on 28th and 29th July 2010.

1.2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

1.2.1 Longtown lies in the Esk Valley, 13km north of Carlisle and 4km south of the Scottish border. The underlying geology of the coastal area around Longtown is made up of Triassic red and grey sandstones with partings of grey mudstone (Institute of Geological Sciences 1976). Longtown lies within the Solway Basin area, an area of relatively flat lowland bounded by the Cumbria High Fells to the south and by the hills of the Scottish borders to the north (Countryside Commission 1998).

1.3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

1.3.1 **Prehistoric Period:** there is no evidence for Mesolithic activity around the Longtown area, but contemporary material in Cumbria comes from the Eden Valley, Shap area and the Cumbrian west coast (Cherry and Cherry 2002). Evidence for later prehistoric activity is more common in the region, although settlement sites that can be identified with any certainty are rare (Hodgkinson *et al* 2000, 111). A complex of cropmarks shown on an aerial photograph to the north of Longtown may represent prehistoric settlement remains. Field boundaries or an enclosure, a small sub-oval feature or enclosure and a possible trackway have been identified (CCC 2002). In addition, a Late Bronze Age socketed spearhead was found in 1950 in gravel quarries near Longtown (Hogg 1953, 205).

1.3.2 **Roman Period:** Longtown is situated approximately 10km north of Hadrian's Wall, and the route of a north/south Roman road probably ran through the nearby area, which would have connected Carlisle with the Roman outpost fort of *Castra Exploratum* (Camp of the Scouts) at Netherby, 3km to the north. However, no physical trace of this road has ever been recorded, (Margary 1973, 456). A fourth century AD Roman coin was found in Longtown in 1983, although its exact findspot location is unknown (CCC 2002), and there is little other evidence of Roman activity in the close vicinity of Longtown.

1.3.3 **Medieval Period:** there is circumstantial evidence that the Battle of Arthuret, took place about 0.75km south of Longtown in *c* AD 573 (Miller 1975). The identification of the site as that of Arthuret was first proposed by Skene, supported by the possible derivation of the name of nearby Carwinley from

Car Gwenddoleu, the defeated pagan protagonist (CCC 2002, 4). The name Longtown first appears in 1267, as *Longeton*, in the Calendar of Charter Rolls (Armstrong *et al* 1971). This was a reference to the death of the last of the de Stutevilles, Johanna, Lady of the Manor of Arthuret (Routledge 2000, 3). It is thought that this early settlement was focused on St Michael's Church in the parish of Arthuret, 1km south of Longtown (*ibid*). At that time, Arthuret had no capital messuages or properties, but it did have a mill, a brewery and several freehold tenancies (*ibid*).

- 1.3.4 It is thought that the main focus of medieval settlement shifted north towards the present day town after 1306, when a granting of a weekly market and a yearly fair on the feast of St Giles took place. This market and fair was held on the banks of the Esk, and was chosen to take advantage of a river crossing along the ancient route from Carlisle to Edinburgh (*ibid*).
- 1.3.5 Longtown's position within the 'debatable lands' contested by England and Scotland meant that settlements in the area were frequently raided in the later medieval period. In 1528, many houses and barns in the vicinity of Longtown were destroyed, including at Netherby, Howend, Arthuret, Skarbanke and Stubble (*ibid*).
- 1.3.6 **Post-medieval Period:** although there were only a dozen houses in Longtown in 1688, built of clay and thatch (Routledge 2000, 3), the village cattle market was of considerable note, however, and rivalled that of Carlisle (Bulman and Frith 1959). A bridge over the River Esk was built in 1756, superseding the ford situated at the bottom of Esk Street (CCC 2002, 5).
- 1.3.7 In 1757, Longtown was the beneficiary of Reverend Robert Graham, who inherited the nearby Netherby Estates through the will of Lady Widdrington in 1757 (Routledge 2000, 4). The Reverend Graham set about comprehensive improvements of the Netherby Estates and drained a thousand acres of land (*ibid*). Under Graham's direction, Longtown was entirely rebuilt and laid out in a formal grid pattern with four principal streets running east/west off the main arterial spine. The buildings were set in wide streets in formal terraces of two-storied, three-bay, cobble- and rubble-constructed, lime-rendered houses, with regular opening patterns of sash windows and central-panelled doors, all under common slate roofs (CCC 2002, 5). This gave Longtown a strong architectural unity that still characterises the town to the present day. In 1861 the railway came to Longtown, with the opening of the Waverley line. The railway line that formed part of the network connecting Carlisle, Edinburgh and Berwick, closed in 1970 (Routledge 2000).
- 1.3.8 **Previous Work:** Oxford Archaeology (North) undertook a watching brief of eight geotechnical trial pits in January 2008. These comprised four boreholes and four hand-dug test pits, dug down to a maximum depth of 1.2m below the existing ground surface (OA North 2008). No features, structures or deposits of archaeological significance were found, but a small assemblage of artefacts were recovered from the topsoil. These included a small group of potsherds and a prehistoric flint flake. These were unstratified so did not contribute to any significant further understanding of the area.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 WATCHING BRIEF

- 2.1.1 A programme of field observation recorded accurately the location, extent and character of any surviving archaeological features and/or deposits exposed during the course of the excavation. The work comprised the systematic examination of any subsoil horizons exposed during the course of the groundworks, and the accurate recording of all archaeological features and horizons, and any artefacts, identified during observation.
- 2.1.2 All groundworks on the site were conducted under constant archaeological supervision and comprised the machine removal of topsoil. All exposed soil horizons were examined and described, and spoil heaps were carefully checked for any unstratified finds.
- 2.1.3 A daily record of the nature, extent and depths of groundworks was maintained throughout the duration of the project. All archaeological contexts were recorded on OA North's *pro-forma* sheets, using a system based on that of the English Heritage Centre for Archaeology. A monochrome and colour slide photographic record was maintained throughout and, where appropriate, scaled profiles were produced of archaeological features at a scale of 1:10 and plans at a scale of 1:20.

2.2 ARCHIVE

- 2.2.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with current IFA and English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 1991). The paper and digital archive will be provided in the English Heritage Centre for Archaeology format and will be submitted to the Carlisle Record Office on completion of the project. Copies of the report will also be submitted to the Historic Environment Record. The Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) online database *Online Access index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) will be completed as part of the archiving phase of the project.

3. WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 The area for the construction of the earthworks was stripped by a D6 Bulldozer. This removed the topsoil and a small amount of subsoil down to an average 0.40m depth. The topsoil comprised a dark brown sandy loam, 0.36m deep, and the subsoil a light brown silt, 0.04m thick. The subsoil did not extend to across the whole area, but was mostly found in the lower area of the site either side of the beck. The natural was observed as orangey-yellow clay but with areas of greyish sand found mostly around the lower edges of the beck which cuts through the site. There were a few features observed on the site, but they were of little archaeological significance.

3.2 RESULTS

3.2.1 The most prominent feature of the site was the number of field drains, which ran north/south and east/west, many intercutting. The ones running north/south along the site were 6m apart and were clay-type drains, whereas the drains running east/west were more sporadically spaced and were made up of a rubble core, similar to a French drain. The drains are cut to a much deeper depth (0.30m below the topsoil) on the higher ground at the southern end of site than the much lower area just to the south of the beck (0.05m below the topsoil). On the area north of the beck the field drains are running east/west and are fairly sparse.

3.2.2 The area to the south of the beck contained a few dark features. Some of these appeared to be some sort of wheel ruts, resulting from tractors sinking in the soft ground at this part of the site. Some, however, turned out to be the remains of an older hedgerow. This feature runs in a fairly straight line east/west before turning sharply to north/south, it is then lost 15m before the beck. It was identified as a hedgerow due to the irregular nature of its edges. Two 1m interventions were made through the hedgerow, **100** and **103**, these showed a maximum depth of 0.25m and maximum width of 1.29m. They both showed two fills, an upper dark organic fill, **102** and **105** and a lower sandy fill, **101** and **102** respectively. The upper fill made up the majority of the fill of the feature, to a maximum depth of 0.20m. The lower fill seems to have resulted from root action. A piece of green bottle glass was found in the upper fill **105** of intervention **103**.



Plate 1: View of slot **100**

3.3 FINDS

- 3.3.1 The bulk of the finds were from the topsoil; these were all of limited significance to the site. These mostly included post-medieval pottery fragments, mostly blue and white pottery, and clay tobacco pipe. There was also some bottle glass from the topsoil. A piece of bottle glass was found in one of the hedgerows, along with fragments of coal and coke.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The watching brief recorded no significant archaeological features, structures or deposits during the course of monitoring the site ground works. The only features that were found comprised the remains of a hedgerow that would have made up an earlier field boundary. The artefacts recovered were of limited significance, and add little to the interpretation of the site and of the Longtown area. No further archaeological work is recommended.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

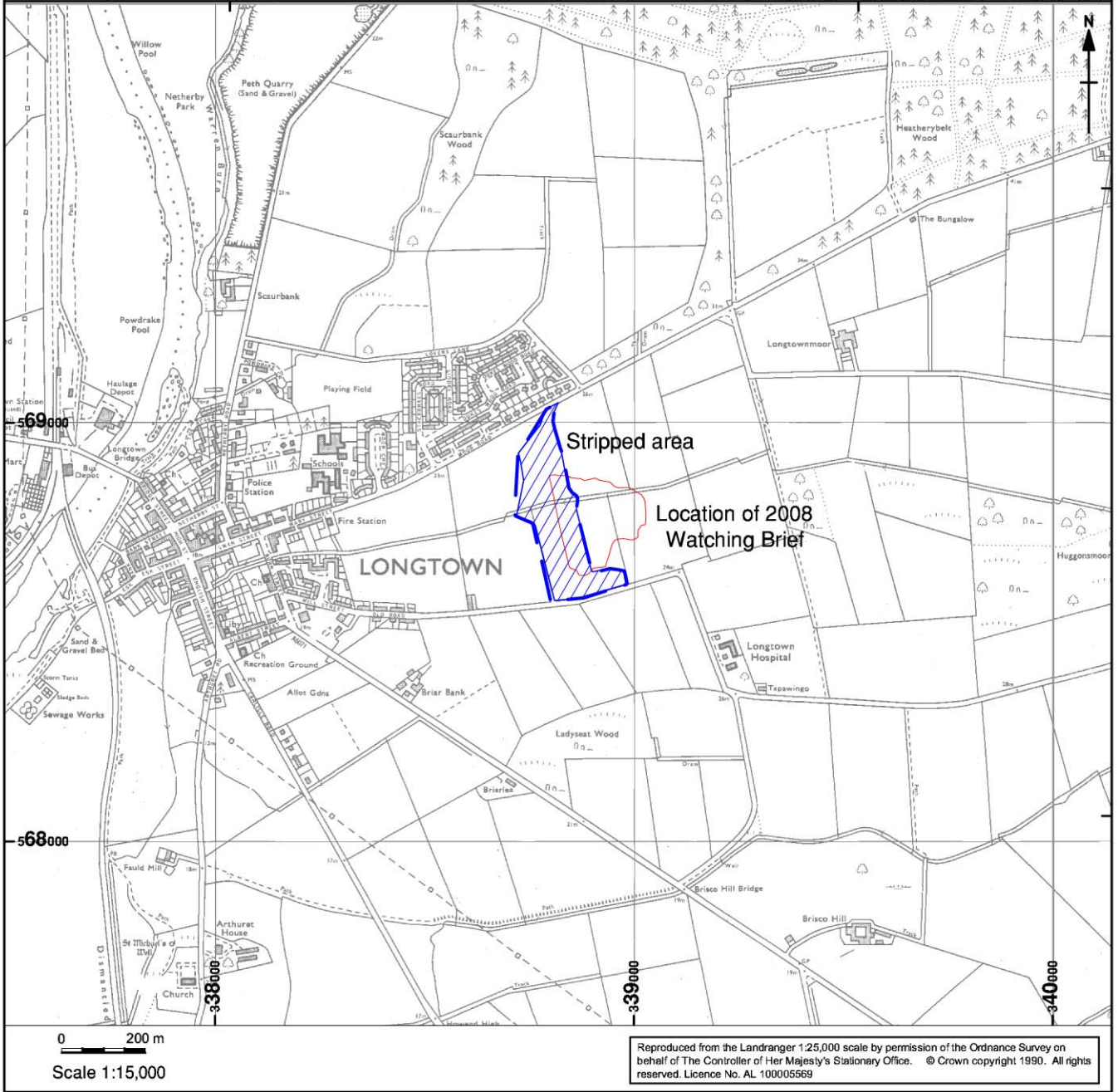
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Figure 2: Plan showing the location of the watching brief areas and slots **100** and **103**

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Figure 1: Site location

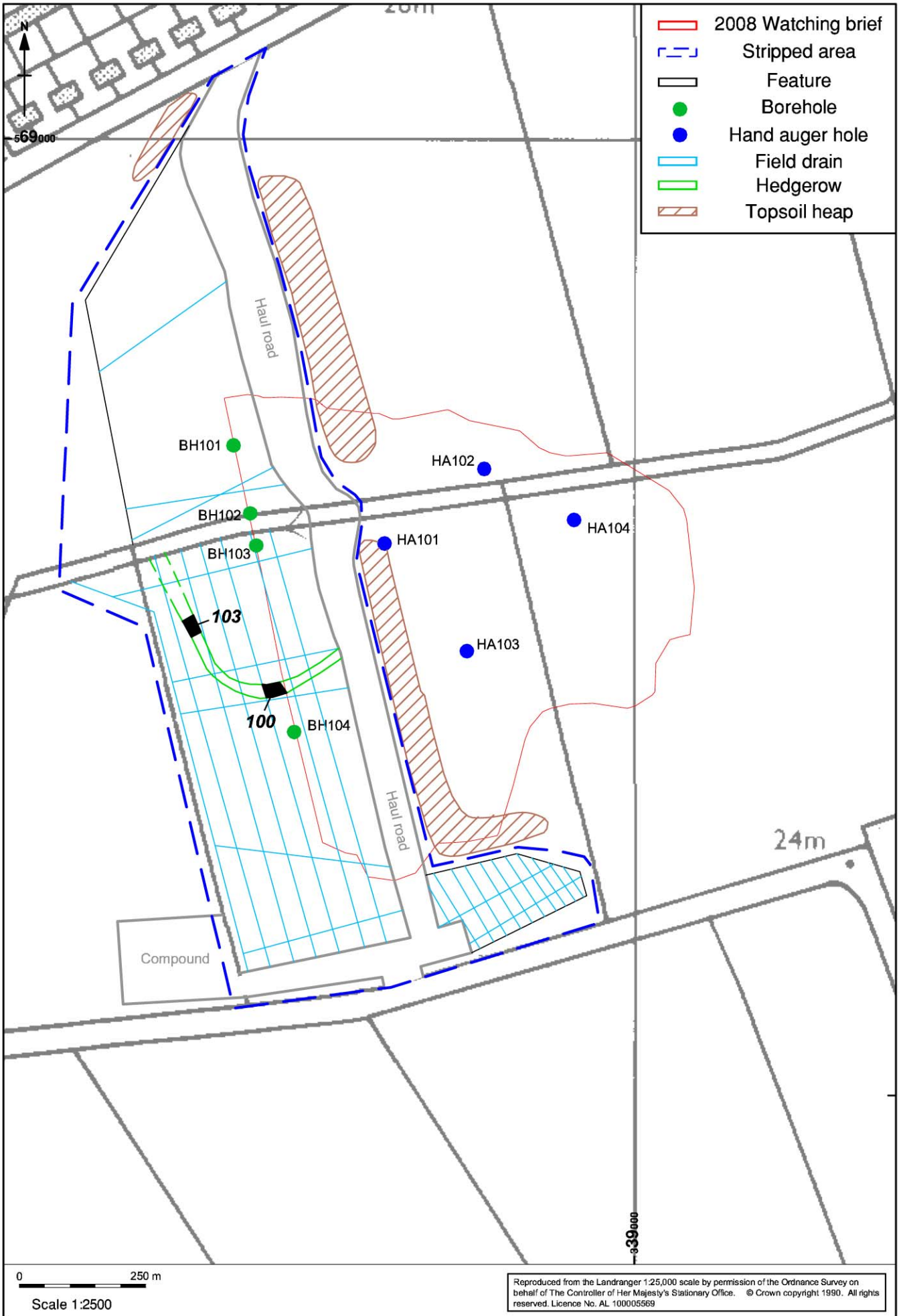


Figure 2: Plan showing the location of the watching brief areas and slots **100** and **103**