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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED  
ASSESSMENT OF LAND SOUTHWEST OF  
MELDRETH,  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

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**Work Undertaken For  
EW Pepper Ltd**

October 2013

Report Compiled by  
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National Grid Reference: TL 3673 4436

APS Report No. **122/13**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
PROJECT  
SERVICES**



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## 1. SUMMARY

*An archaeological desk-based assessment was undertaken on land located to the southwest of Meldreth, Cambridgeshire. The assessment was undertaken in order to determine the archaeological implications of proposed development of the site.*

*Late Neolithic (2850-2200 BC) and Early Bronze Age (2250-1850 BC) finds have been made to the south of the site. Cropmarks of ring-ditches and enclosures are known from the site and its vicinity and, though undated, these may also be prehistoric in origin.*

*Traversing the assessment area is a trackway of Late Iron Age (150 BC-AD 43) or Roman (AD 43-410) origin. Roman features and finds are also known from the south of the site.*

*No Saxon (AD 410-1066) sites are known from the assessment area although there is a possibility of a Middle Saxon monastery in Meldreth during this period. The site lies away from the medieval (AD 1066-1540) core of the village, within the open fields of that settlement. Ridge and furrow and associated furlong boundaries have been recorded within the site bounds from aerial photographs.*

*During the Post-medieval (AD 1540-1900) period, the site was still largely open fields which were enclosed in 1820. A group of structures, possibly a small outfarm, appear on late 19<sup>th</sup> century mapping, but had been removed by 1903. The site has remained much the same since that time, although was largely amalgamated by 1980.*

*No archaeological remains or artefacts were noted on a site visit. The site would be suitable for fieldwalking and/or geophysical survey, if crops were harvested.*

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Definition of Desk-Based Assessment

An archaeological desk-based assessment is defined as an ‘assessment of the known or potential archaeological resource within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. It consists of a collation of existing written, graphic, photographic and electronic information in order to identify the likely character, extent, quality and worth of the known or potential archaeological resource in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate’ (IfA 2008).

### 2.2 Background

Archaeological Project Services was commissioned by Savills on behalf of EW Pepper Ltd to undertake an archaeological desk-based assessment relating to land to the southwest of Meldreth, Cambridgeshire. This was in advance of a proposed renewable energy scheme at the site.

### 2.3 Site Location

Meldreth is located 15km southwest of Cambridge and 30km southwest of Huntingdon, in the administrative district of South Cambridgeshire (Fig. 1). The site is located 2.76km southwest of the centre of Meldreth as defined by the parish church of Holy Trinity at National Grid Reference TL 3673 4436 (Fig. 2). The site lies on the west side of the Cambridge to Royston railway line and encompasses some 46 hectares.

### 2.4 Topography and Geology

The Site lies on a gentle slope down to the north and east within the foothills of the Chilterns. The northwest boundary of the Site follows a minor watercourse, a tributary of the River Rhee. Heights drop from 34m OD in the south of the site to c. 24m OD to the north.

Local soils are predominantly of the Swaffham Prior Association, typically coarse loamy brown calcareous earths, with gleyic brown calcareous earths of the Milton Association along the northwest boundary of the site (Hodge *et al.* 1989, 254; 316). These soils are developed on a solid geology of Cretaceous Grey Chalk (BGS 2001).

### 3. AIMS

The purpose of the desk-based assessment is to obtain information about the known and potential archaeological resource of the assessment area, as well as identifying any heritage constraints, both statutory and advisory.

The general aim of the project is to gather sufficient information to enable the formulation of a mitigation strategy designed to lessen the impact of the development upon the actual and potential archaeological resource.

### 4. METHODS

The research undertaken in the compilation of this document included a search of records held by the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (HER) to locate all known archaeological sites and find spots occurring within a 1km radius (hereafter referred to as the assessment area) of the proposed development area (the Site). A range of relevant archaeological books and journals were also consulted, together with unpublished reports for archaeological work carried out within the limits of the search area.

A search was made at the Cambridgeshire Archives Office (CAO) for historic maps – in particular, tithe, enclosure and early Ordnance Survey maps - depicting the area affected by the proposed development. A detailed list of the sources consulted is contained within the bibliography (see below).

Information obtained from the above sources was supplemented by a site inspection of the proposed development, to assess current ground conditions and land-use patterns, and to identify any surface finds or features such as earthworks representative of archaeological activity. The survey was carried out on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2013.

## 5. RESULTS

### 5.1 Historical Evidence

Meldreth is first mentioned in *c.* 1080. Referred to as *Melreda*, the name is derived from the Old English and means ‘the mill (*mylne*) stream (*rīpe*)’ (Ekwall 1989, 320).

The first mention of Meldreth is in the *Inquisitio Comitatus Cantabrigiensis*, basically a return of land holdings which was to eventually become the Domesday Survey. The Domesday Survey records that the land was held by the Abbot of Ely, the Abbot of Saint-Evroul, Count Alan, Hardwin de Scales and Guy de Raimbeaucourt. The survey recorded extensive arable land, meadow and pasture and six mills. Furthermore, Hardwin held a minster of the Abbot of Ely (Williams and Martin 1992, 524, 529, 531). The presence of a minster church may suggest a monastery existed at Meldreth, perhaps pre-dating the Viking incursions of the 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> centuries (Oosthuizen 2000, 28).

The Ely holdings in Meldreth were perhaps given to the abbey as early as 970, when the neighbouring parish of Melbourn was first granted. It is unknown why Meldreth would be omitted, but it appears second to Melbourn in documents of the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Blake 1962, 263, 300, 304). This may indicate that the two villages were one estate and that Meldreth was subsidiary to Melbourn.

Available histories of the parish concentrate on the descent of the manors within Meldreth itself (Wright 1982, 83-97). Little mention is made of the open fields in which the Site was located.

## 5.2 Cartographic Evidence

Historic maps of the assessment area, held by Cambridgeshire Archive Office (CAO), were examined as part of research carried out for this report. Extracts from these are reproduced as Figures 3 to 5.

The earliest map examined is entitled ‘*A Map of Lands situate in the parishes of Melbourn and Meldreth in the County of Cambridge belonging to the College of St John*’ dating from 1748 (CAO TR 869/P 24). The map shows only the individual strips within the open fields that belong to the college. The Site encompasses a loose cluster of strips that lie within a larger field named as *Bull Field*.

Dating from 1799, the Ordnance Survey 2” drawings show the Site as lying within a single large field traversed by a track in the southwest portion of the area (Fig. 3). No other detail is apparent within the Site bounds, although fields in close proximity to Melbourn and Meldreth have been enclosed (OS 1799).

The earliest detailed map of the vicinity is the Meldreth Enclosure map of 1820 which shows the Site as occupying a large part of one field, *Bull Field*, with the eastern part occupying parts of *Little Field* and *Red Moor* (Fig. 4). All fields comprising the Site are owned by Joshua Fitch (CAO Q/RD<sup>T</sup><sub>C</sub> 34).

The first edition Ordnance Survey 6” map of 1891 shows the Site as encompassing one large field to the northeast and parts of several others (Fig. 5). The arrangement of fields is different to those shown on the enclosure award and no fields are named. A group of structures, including a pump, are shown within the Site’s boundary towards the northeast. No other details are depicted

(OS 1891). The second edition map of 1903 shows the only change to have occurred was the removal of the group of structures and the pump. Subsequent mapping shows no major change occurring until 1980 when the fields were finally amalgamated into a single unit.

## 5.3 Aerial Photographic Evidence

Aerial photographs of the assessment area were not examined as part of this project. Cropmarks have previously been mapped and include within the Site’s bounds an enclosure with a ring-ditch to the north, a U-shaped enclosure on the northwest boundary and a ring-ditch in the southern field. Furthermore, an enclosure with further linear features lies immediately adjacent to the site on the northwestern boundary which is likely to extend into the site. There are more enclosures and ring-ditches in the eastern part of the assessment area. In form, the enclosures are characteristic of later prehistoric or Roman settlement. The ring-ditches are typical of Bronze Age barrows, for which there is extensive evidence in this part of Cambridgeshire. However, the HER entries (see below) have these features as undated.

Overlying these is evidence for medieval field systems, either in the form of ridge and furrow or in low banks defining individual furlongs.

In addition, recent satellite imagery was examined, although did not contribute to the overall extent of the previously plotted aerial photographs. However, it was possible to discern a fourth side to the U-shaped enclosure located within the site bounds.

The well-drained loamy soils of the Swaffham Prior Association are generally conducive to cropmark formation. The cropmarks are depicted on Figure 6.

## 5.4 Archaeological Data

A search of the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record was made, for known archaeological sites or finds within a 1km radius of the centre of the Site. Other, secondary sources were also examined. Details of archaeological and historical remains falling within the assessment area are collated in Table 1 and located on Figure 7.

### *Prehistoric*

The earliest material recorded within the assessment area are flints and pottery of Late Neolithic to Early Bronze Age date (Fig. 7, No. 1). These were retrieved during archaeological investigations along the A10.

There are two Bronze Age barrows (Nos. 2 and 3) situated in the southeastern part of the assessment area. This may be the remnants of an extensive barrow cemetery, perhaps evidenced by a significant number of cropmark ring ditches in the area, though these are undated.

Traversing the assessment area is the route of a possible Iron Age or Roman trackway (No. 4) known as Avenell Way.

### *Roman*

A Roman ditch associated with pottery and other finds was revealed during excavations along the route of the Melbourn bypass (Fig. 7, No. 5). This may indicate the proximity of a settlement of the period, though the actual location is unknown.

### *Saxon*

There are no Saxon sites recorded within the assessment area at the HER.

### *Medieval*

Located just on the edge of the assessment area is a moated enclosure at St John's College Farm (Fig. 7, No. 6). This may be related to a manor that was held by St John's College in Melbourn from 1510.

Medieval entries at the HER relate to former agricultural practises and include areas of

ridge and furrow (Nos. 7 and 8) as well as furlong boundaries (No. 9). These have been mapped from aerial photographs.

On the eastern edge of the assessment area are a series of earthworks including building platforms, enclosures and sunken features (No. 10). This may relate to the manor of Melbourn Bury which represents Ely Abbey's holding in the village. An extant building, named Melbourn Bury, is believed to have medieval origins (No. 11) and lies to the west of the earthworks.

### *Post-Medieval*

Post-medieval remains and finds were also identified during the construction of the A10 bypass (Fig. 7, No. 12). A number of oval pits were recorded that may have originated as quarry pits for the underlying chalk for building materials (clunch or mortar).

Associated with Melbourn Bury is an area of parkland and garden (No. 13). This appears to be a 19<sup>th</sup> century creation.

### *Undated*

All undated entries at the HER are cropmarks (Fig. 7, Nos. 14 to 19) including enclosures, ring-ditches and linear features. Though undated, they are possibly indicating late prehistoric or Roman settlement and Bronze Age barrows.

### *Previous Archaeological Intervention*

The only interventions to have occurred within the assessment area are associated with the construction of the A10 bypass, the results of which are discussed in the preceding parts.

## 5.5 Walkover Survey

The walkover survey was carried out on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2013 in dry and overcast weather. The results of the walkover survey have been committed to Figure 8.

Access to the site is via a concrete track leading from the A10 (Plate 1) to the southern corner of the site. The track is gated and passes beneath the railway line and reaches the entrance to the field which is also gated (Plate 2).

The Site is sub-divided into three fields that are separated by grass tracks. Each of the fields is currently under a crop of brassicas, and ground visibility is generally poor except near to the field edges (Plates 3 to 7).

No archaeological features were visible and no finds were recorded. An overhead power line clips the northeastern corner of the Site. The Site is currently unsuitable for fieldwalking and geophysical survey, though both could be undertaken if crop conditions were suitable.

## 6. CONSTRAINTS

### 6.1 Heritage Constraints

#### *Statutory and Advisory Constraints*

There are two Scheduled Monuments located within the assessment area, Grinnel Hill barrow and an associated barrow to the north (Fig. 7, Nos. 2 and 3), protected by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979 (HMSO 1979).

There is one listed building within the assessment area, Melbourn Bury which has medieval origins. Both the Scheduled Monuments and listed building are partly screened from the site by trees, hedgerows and the embanked railway line. The two barrows are elevated and there may be some increased inter-visibility between these and the site

All other archaeological remains within the assessment area are protected only through the implementation of the National Planning Policy Framework which identifies the historic environment as a non-renewable resource. Its fragile and finite nature is a particularly important consideration in planning. The effect of an application on the

significance of a heritage asset or its setting is a material consideration in determining the application.

### 6.2 Other Constraints

No specific checks for buried services were undertaken as part of this assessment. An overhead cable was recorded in the northeast corner of the site.

## 7. ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL AND SIGNIFICANCE

Although there is no firm evidence for prehistoric activity at the proposed development site, undated cropmarks of ring-ditches and enclosures are suggestive of a prehistoric presence. These cropmarks sites are dispersed throughout the development area. Potential for prehistoric remains is, therefore, considered moderate.

There are few Roman sites recorded within the assessment area, although again the undated enclosures may belong to this period. Potential is low to moderate.

During the medieval and post-medieval periods, the proposed development area lay outside the village core and within the open fields of Meldreth. Apart from traces of ridge and furrow, the potential for medieval and post-medieval sites is considered low.

## 8. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

Past impacts at the site are mainly agricultural, in the form of fields, from the medieval period to the present day. Ridge and furrow and associated furlong boundaries are recorded in the southern and northern parts of the site. Furrows where they occur are likely to have impacted into any underlying



archaeological deposits.

Details regarding the proposed development are unknown at present. However, it is believed to involve the construction of parallel arrangements of solar panels 5-10m apart across the development area. Impacts on below ground deposits are restricted to piles for the frames supporting the solar panels, cable trenching, fencing and bases for inverter stations. Little of the development is expected to be higher than 3m above the current ground level.

There is possibly some increased visual impact on two Scheduled Monuments, though there is screening in the form of trees, hedgerows and a railway embankment.

## 9. CONCLUSIONS

An archaeological desk-based assessment was undertaken to determine the archaeological implications associated with proposed development on land to the southwest of Meldreth, Cambridgeshire.

Prehistoric and Roman remains are known from the assessment area and may also include a number of undated cropmarks of ring-ditches and enclosures that fall within the boundaries of the Site.

There is limited potential for medieval and post-medieval remains as the Site probably lay within the open fields of the period. However, furlong boundaries and discrete areas of ridge and furrow are known from the Site itself.

Potential impacts on archaeological remains over much of the area will possibly include the piled foundations for the frames supporting the solar panels, cable trenching and bases for associated structures.

There may be some visual impact on two Scheduled Monuments to the southeast of the site.

## 10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Mr Hodgson of Savills for commissioning this work. The work was coordinated by Steve Malone who edited this report along with Tom Lane. Access to information contained within the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record was kindly provided by Sarah Bultz of Cambridgeshire County Council. The digital HER data used in this report is copyright of Cambridgeshire County Council. Thanks are also due to the staff at Cambridgeshire Archive Office. Elizabeth Bates kindly allowed access to the library maintained by Heritage Lincolnshire.

## 11. BIBLIOGRAPHY

All of the following items were consulted during the research. However, as some of them (particularly maps) did not relate to the specific examination area, and some duplicated information available in other references, not all are listed in the text.

### *Primary Sources*

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CAO TR 869/P 24, *A Map of Lands situate in the parishes of Melbourn and Meldreth in the County of Cambridge belonging to the College of St John*, 1748

Ordnance Survey 2" drawings, 1799

Ordnance Survey, 1890, *Cambridgeshire Sheet LVIII. N.E.*, 6" map

Ordnance Survey, 1891, *Cambridgeshire Sheet LVIII. N.W.*, 6" map

Ordnance Survey, 1903, *Cambridgeshire Sheet LVIII. N.W.*, 6" map

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**12. ABBREVIATIONS**

- APS      Archaeological Project Services
- BGS      British Geological Survey
- CAO      Cambridge Archive Office
- HER      Historic Environment Record
- HMSO    Her Majesty’s Stationery Office
- IfA      Institute for Archaeologists

**Table 1:** Archaeological sites and findspots within the assessment area

Map No.	CHER No.	Description	Period	National Grid Reference
1	08777	Pottery and flint	Late Neolithic-Early Bronze Age	TL 3715 4372
2	03149	Grinnel Hill bowl barrow (SM)	Bronze Age	TL 3750 4366
3	08883	Bowl barrow (SM)	Bronze Age	TL 3749 4371
4	19147	Avenell Way - trackway	Iron Age - Roman	-
5	08777a	Feature and finds	Roman	TL 3715 4372
6	01246	Moated enclosure, St John's College Farm	Medieval	TL 376 449
7	08556a	Ridge and furrow	Medieval	TL 364 448
8	09539	Ridge and furrow	Medieval	TL 358 448
9	09541	Furlong boundaries	Medieval	TL 363 438
10	11320	Earthworks of building platforms, enclosures and sunken area	Medieval	TL 3775 4415
11	03114	Melbourn Bury – extant structure	Medieval to post-medieval	TL 3750 4410
12	08777b	Oval pits and finds	Post-medieval	TL 3715 4372
13	12298	Melbourn Bury park and garden	Post-medieval	TL 375 443
14	08554	Cropmark – ring ditch	Undated	TL 366 439
15	08556	Cropmark – enclosure and ring ditch	Undated	TL 364 448
16	08557	Cropmark – enclosure system	Undated	TL 369 449
17	08563	Cropmark – ring ditch and possible enclosure	Undated	TL 371 447
18	08901	Cropmark - enclosure	Undated	TL 366 444
19	08555	Cropmarks – 2 ring ditches, enclosure and linear features	Undated	TL 360 442



Figure 1 General location map

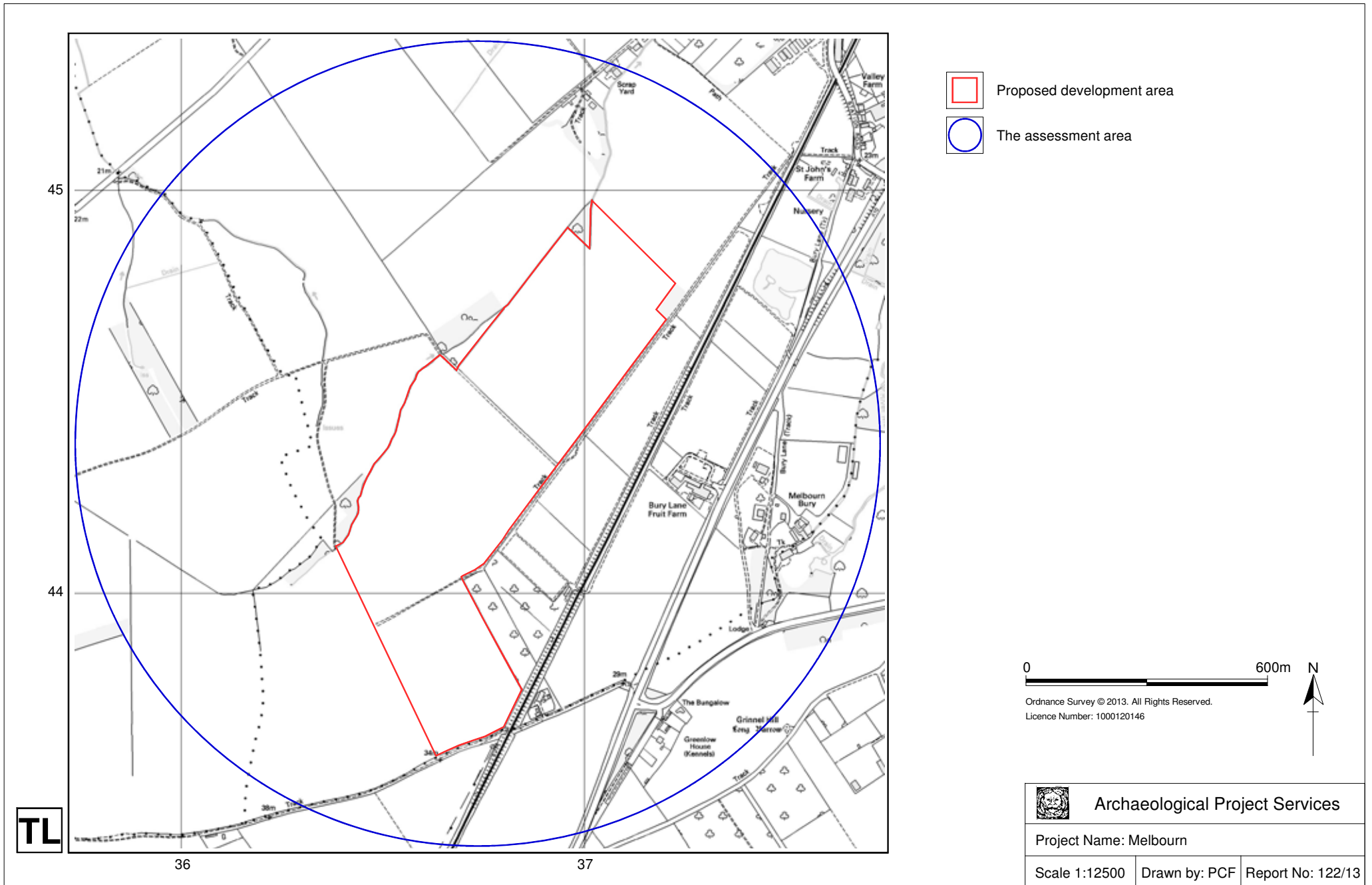


Figure 2 - The assessment area showing the proposed development site



Archaeological Project Services

Project Name: Meldreth

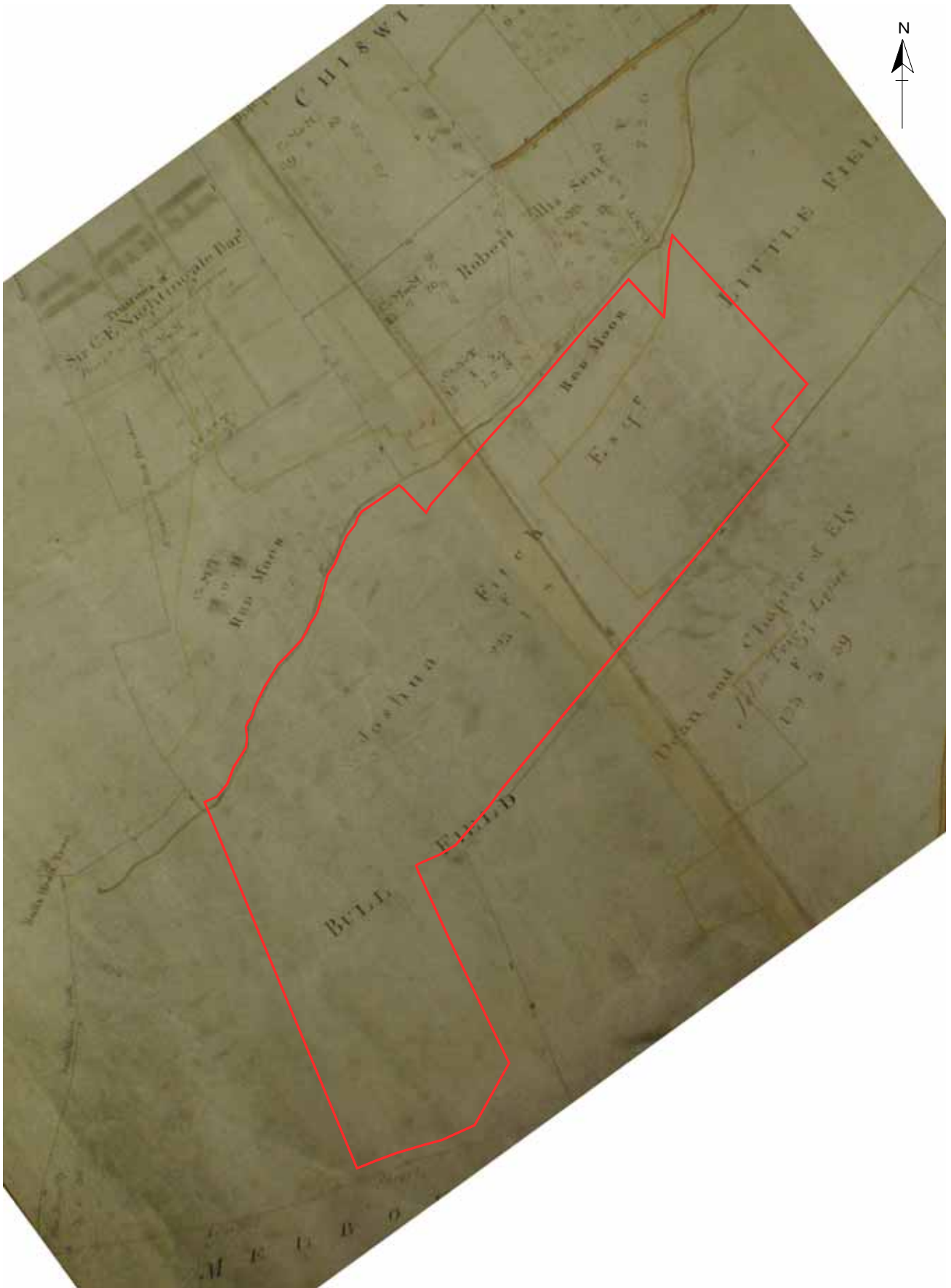
Not to scale

Drawn by: PCF

Report No: 122/13

Figure 3 - Extract from the Ordnance Survey 2" drawing, 1799





0 400m


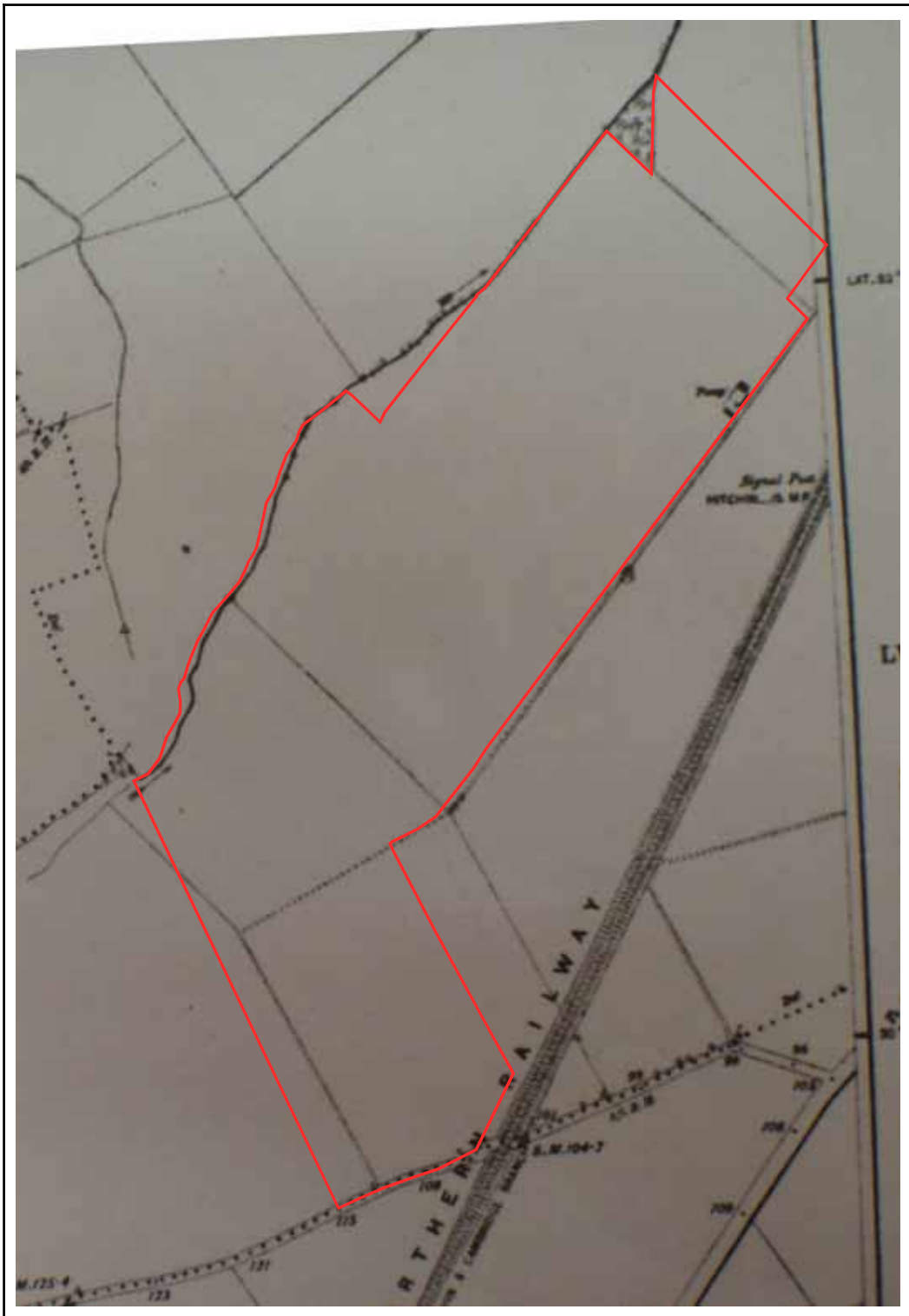
 Archaeological Project Services		
Project Name: Meldreth		
Scale 1:8000	Drawn by: PCF	Report No: 122/13

Figure 4 - Extract from the Enclosure Map, 1820




	Archaeological Project Services		
Project Name: Meldreth			
Scale 1:8000	Drawn by: PCF	Report No: 122/13	

Figure 5 - Extract from the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map, 1891



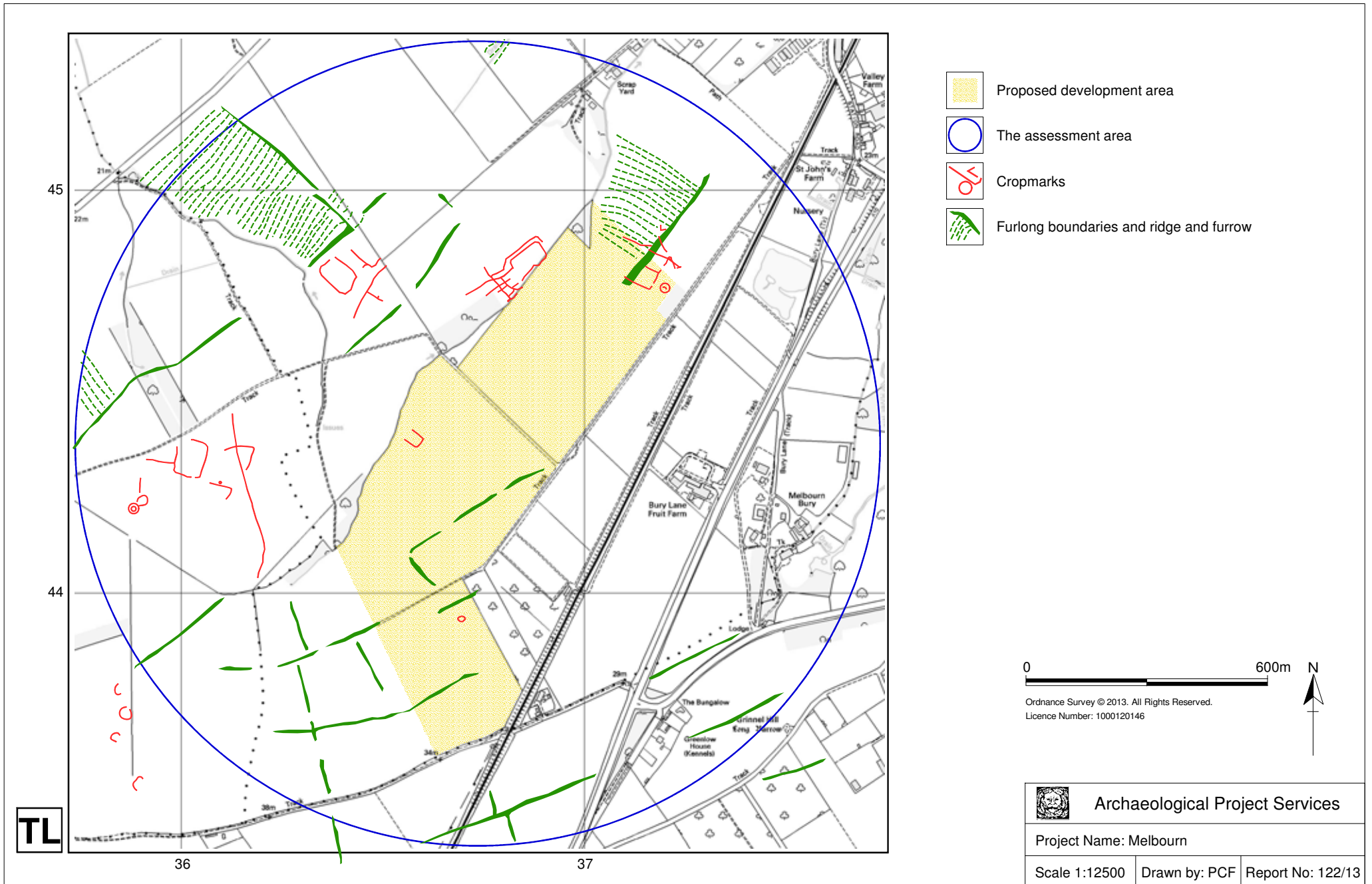


Figure 6 - The assessment area showing aerial photographic data

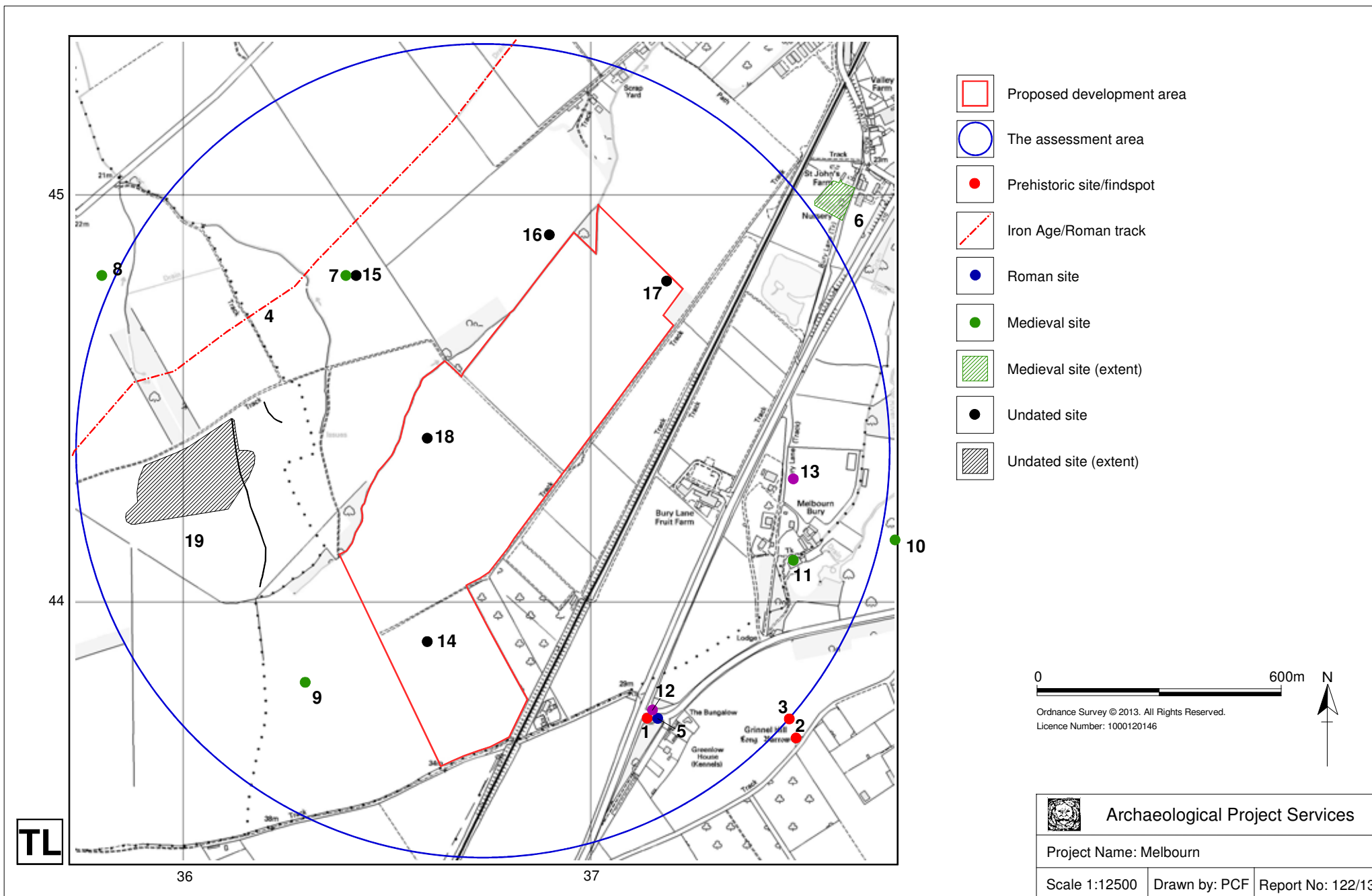
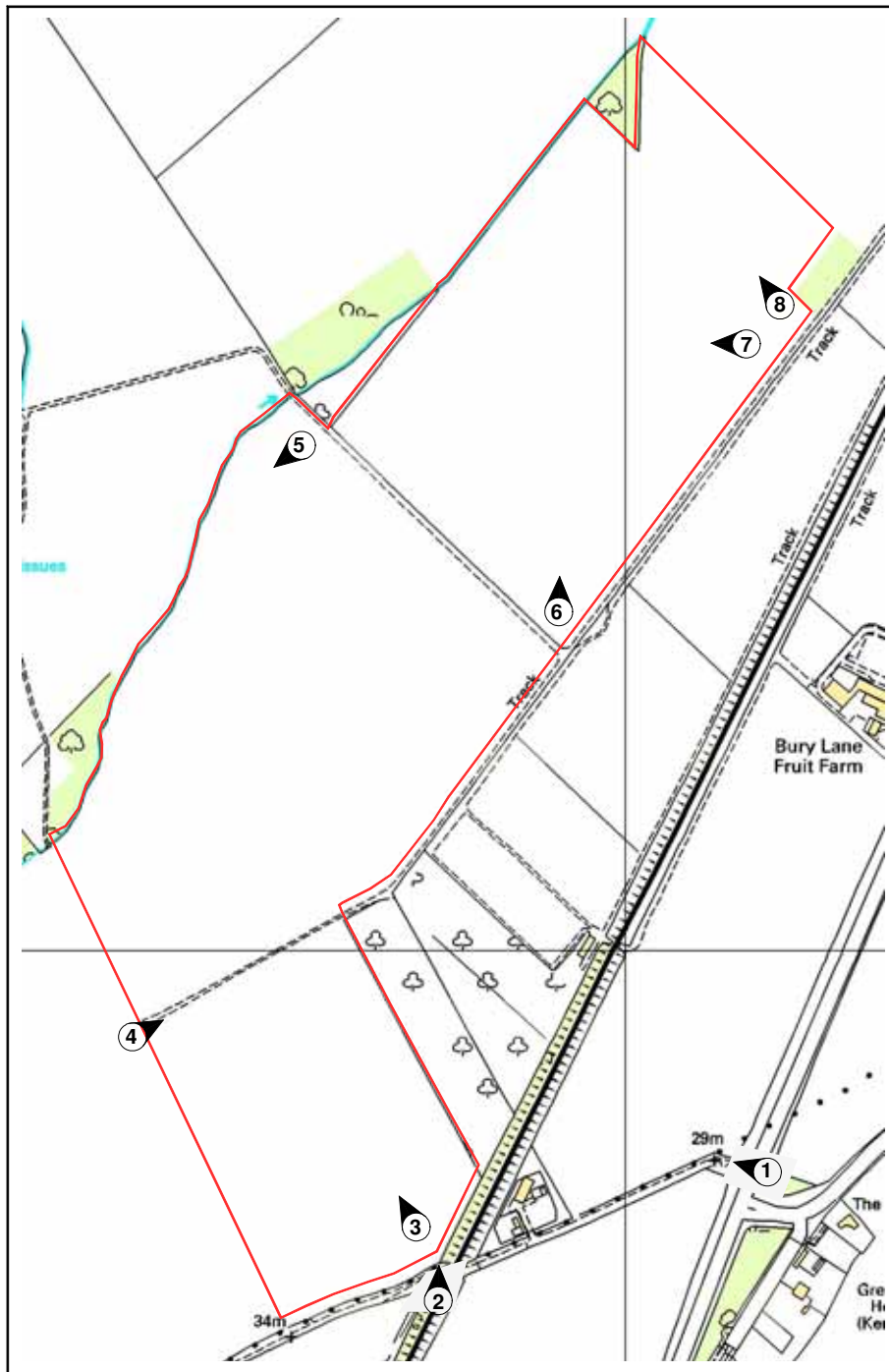


Figure 7 - Archaeological sites and findspots in the assessment area



① Camera viewpoint

0 400m

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	Archaeological Project Services	
Project Name: Meldreth		
Scale 1:8000	Drawn by: PCF	Report No: 122/13

Figure 8 - Results of the walkover survey





Plate 1 – Entrance to the Site from the A10, looking southeast



Plate 2 – Access point to the southern part of the Site, looking north



Plate 3 – View across the southern part of the Site, looking northwest



Plate 4 – View showing grassed track, looking northeast



Plate 5 – View looking southwest across the Site



Plate 6 – View across the northern part of the Site, looking north



Plate 7 – The northern part of the Site, looking west



Plate 8 – The northern limit of the Site, looking northwest

## Appendix 1

### GLOSSARY

<b>Bronze Age</b>	A period characterised by the introduction of bronze into the country for tools, between 2250 and 800 BC.
<b>Cropmark</b>	A mark that is produced by the effect of underlying archaeological features influencing the growth of a particular crop.
<b>Geophysical Survey</b>	Essentially non-invasive methods of examining below the ground surface by measuring deviations in the physical properties and characteristics of the earth. Techniques include magnetometry and resistivity survey.
<b>Iron Age</b>	A period characterised by the introduction of Iron into the country for tools, between 800 BC and AD 50.
<b>Medieval</b>	The Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1066-1500.
<b>Neolithic</b>	The 'New Stone Age' period, part of the prehistoric era, dating from approximately 4500-2250 BC.
<b>Post-medieval</b>	The period following the Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1500-1800.
<b>Prehistoric</b>	The period of human history prior to the introduction of writing. In Britain the prehistoric period lasts from the first evidence of human occupation about 500,000 BC, until the Roman invasion in the middle of the 1 <sup>st</sup> century AD.
<b>Romano-British</b>	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 43-410 when the Romans occupied Britain.
<b>Saxon</b>	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 410-1066 when England was largely settled by tribes from northern Germany.
<b>Selion</b>	The basic unit of cultivation and tenancy within the open field system. They measured approximately 7m wide and 200m long.