

Small Pits,
Big Ideas

Wolverley's Big Dig

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Worcestershire Archive & Archaeology Service

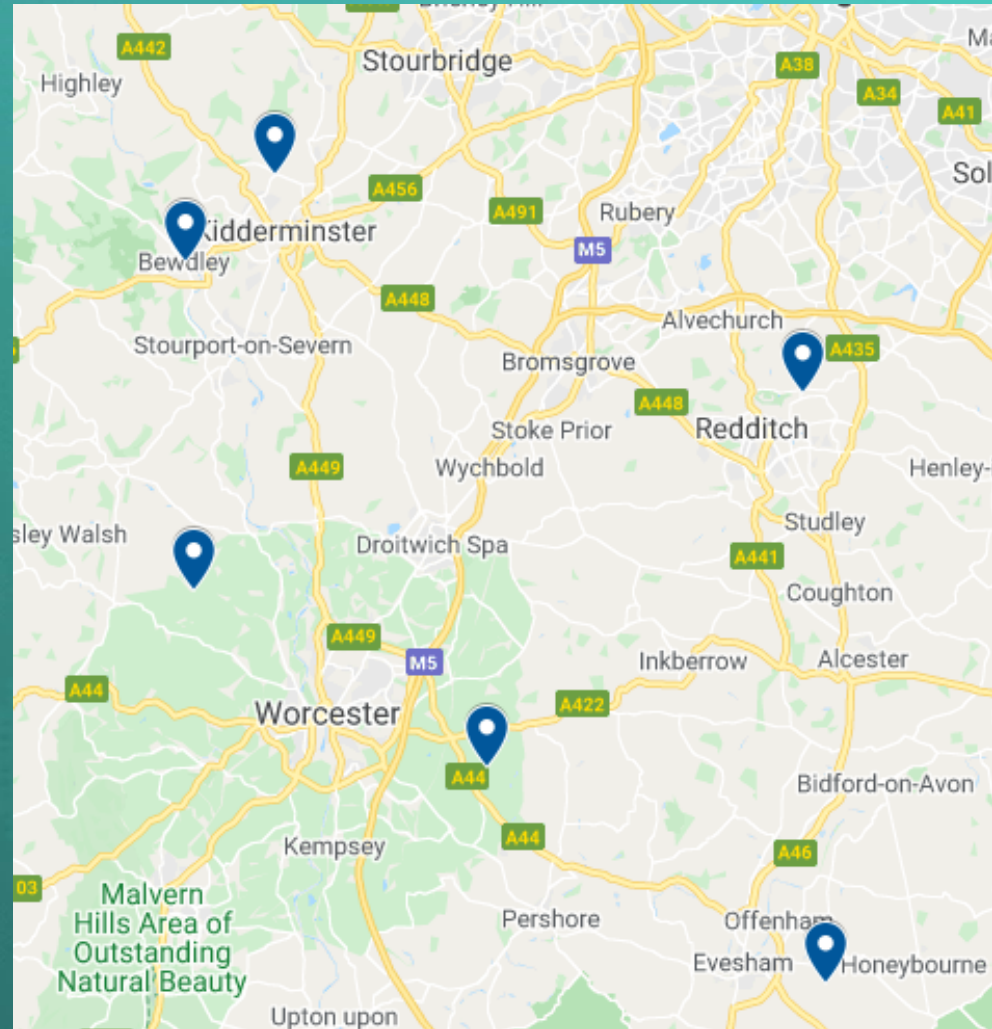
Explore the Past



Worcestershire
Archaeological
Society

Small Pits, Big Ideas II

- Community archaeology project researching rural medieval settlements
- Test pits in 6 locations across Worcestershire
- Excavations autumn 2021 – summer 2022
- Finds analysis, then final exhibitions early 2023



Village stories



- How old are they?
- When did villages first appear in Worcestershire?
- Thought to be in medieval times (10th – 12th centuries)
- Lots of villages were deserted after the Black Death – these have been excavated
- BUT, what about the villages we still live in today?



Test pitting

- Ideal way to investigate the places we still live in
- Rubbish was often thrown out the back of houses
- Amount of pottery gives idea of how many people lived nearby



Explore the Past



The big picture

- Story of medieval rural East Anglia is now fairly well understood
- Did the Black Death cause villages to shrink in the West Midlands too?

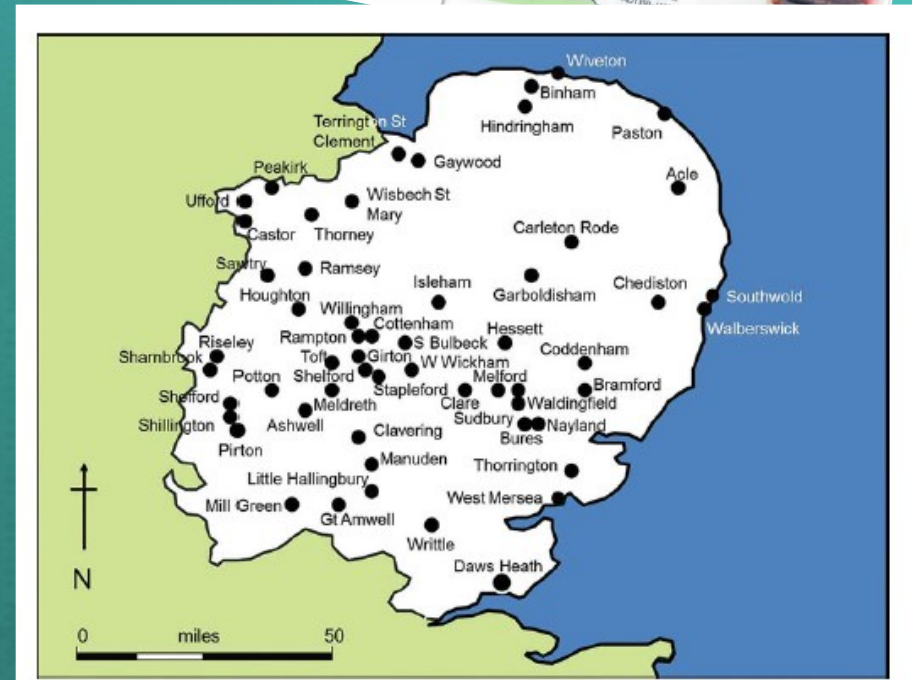


Figure 1. Eastern England, showing the location of parishes investigated by test-pit excavation within CORS to the end of 2014.

Wolverley

- First mentioned in the 9th century
- 17 households recorded in 1086 AD
- But where was the medieval settlement located?

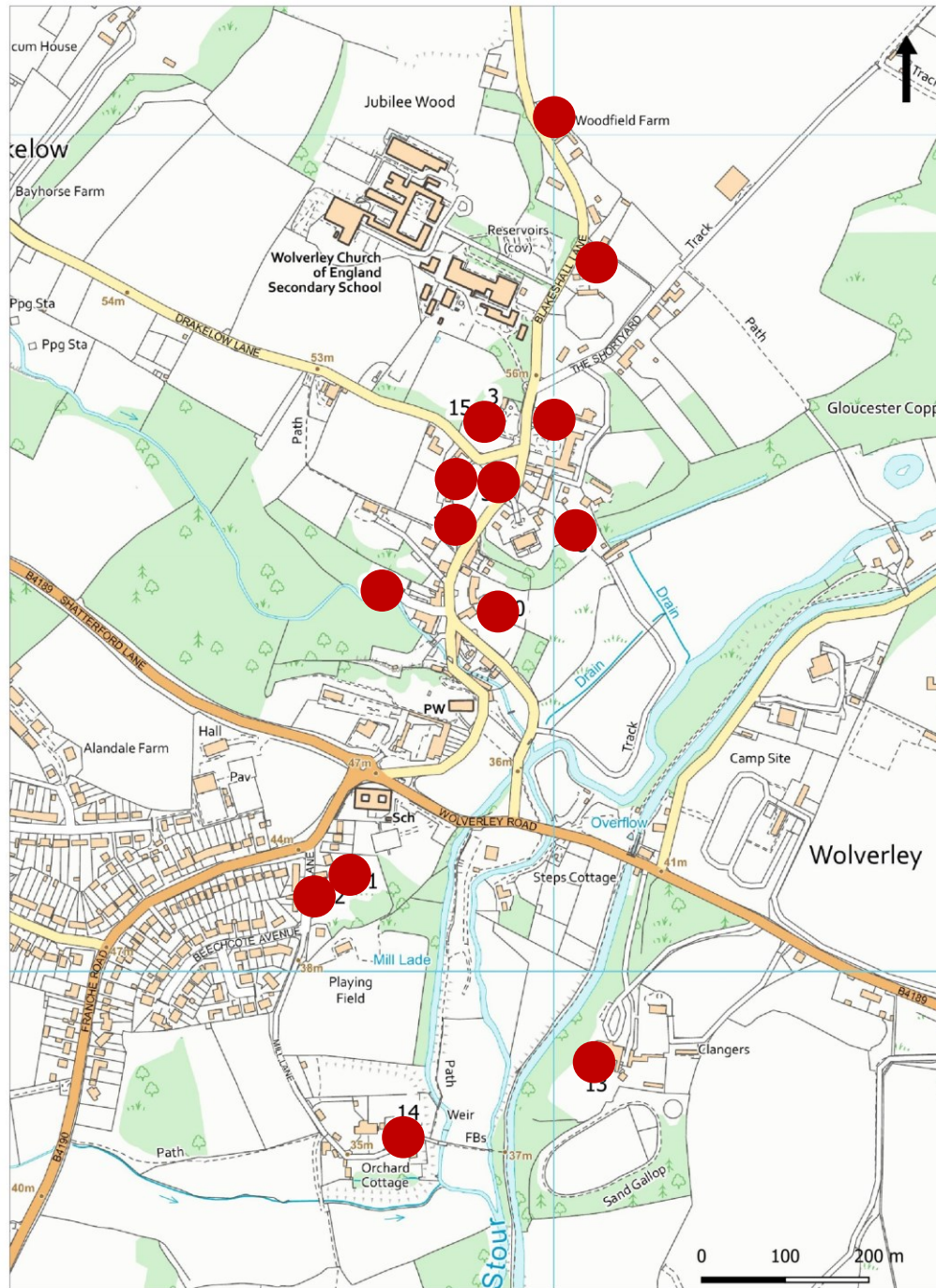


1839 Tithe map

Big Dig – June 2022

- 15 test pits
- 81 people took part
- Most test pits reached the underlying geology, meaning that all archaeological layers were excavated (i.e. no earlier finds have been missed!)

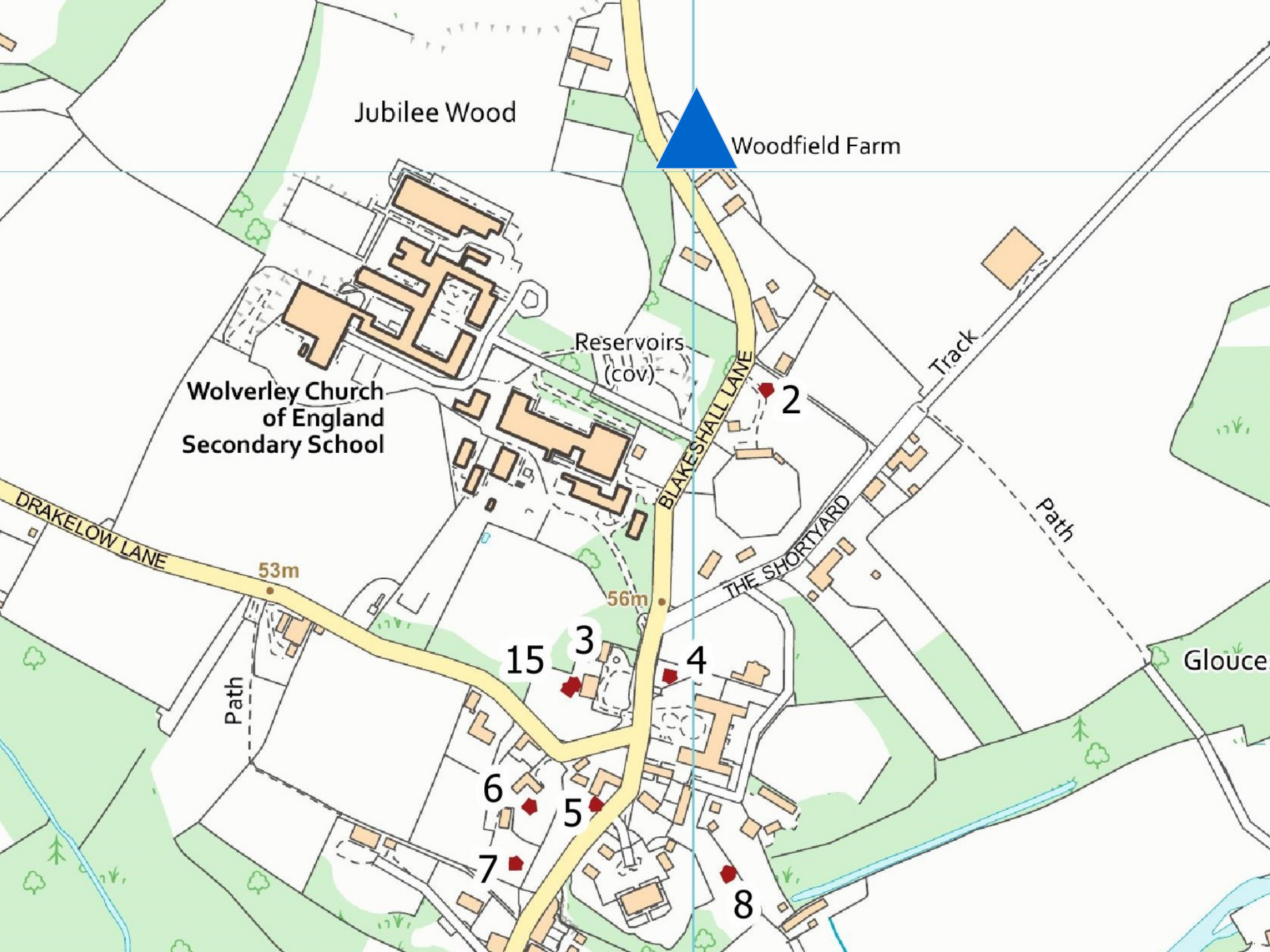




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Jubilee Wood

Woodfield Farm

Wolverley Church
of England
Secondary School

Reservoirs
(cov)

BLAKESHALL LANE

Track

THE SHORTHYARD

Path

DRAKELOW LANE

Path

Glouce

53m

56m

15

3

4

6

5

7

8

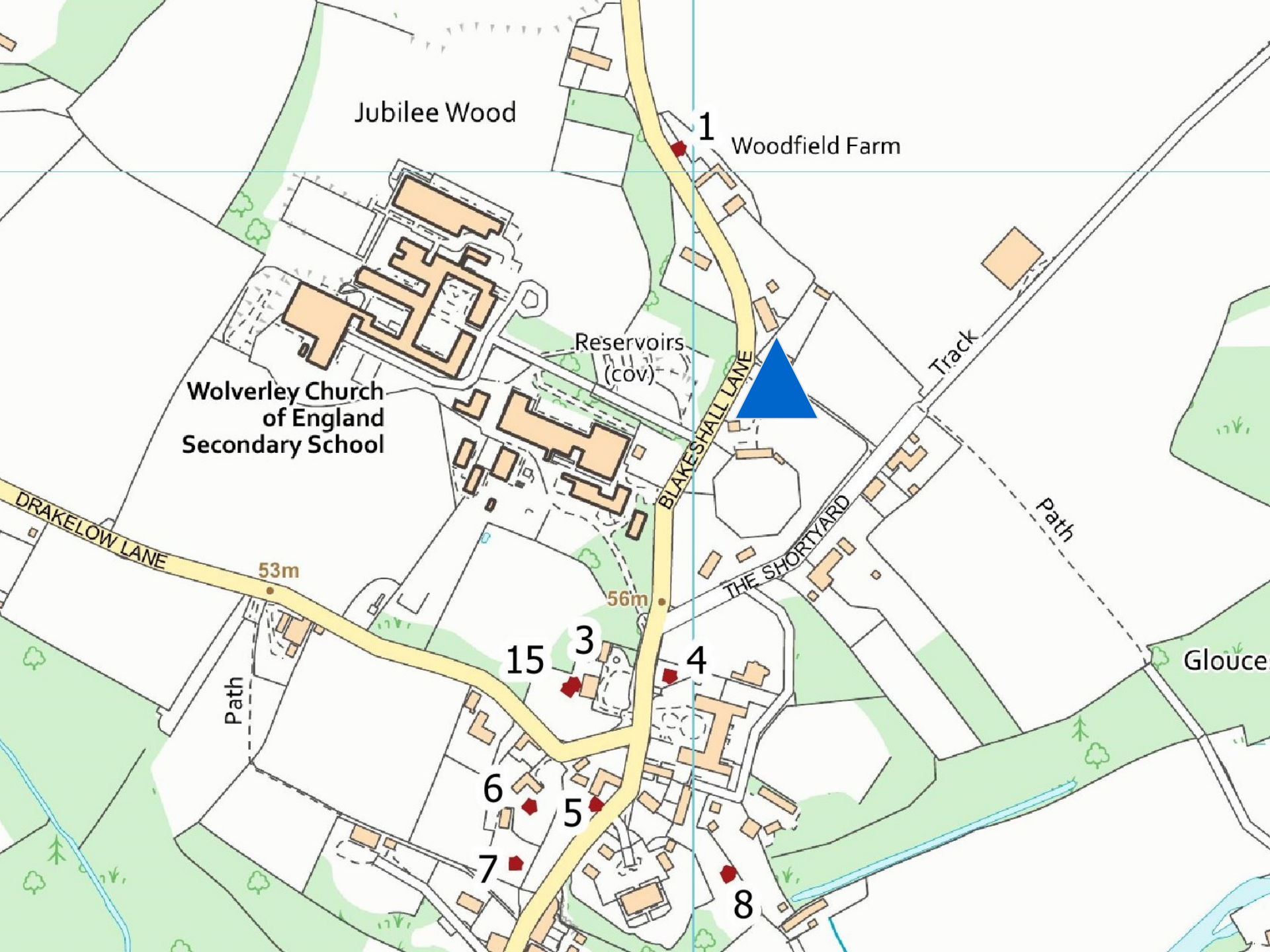
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Test Pit 1: Woodfield Barn

- Mid-19th century farm
- Lots of iron working waste – smithy on site?
- No finds predating the 18th century





Jubilee Wood

1 Woodfield Farm

Wolverley Church of England Secondary School

Reservoirs (cov)

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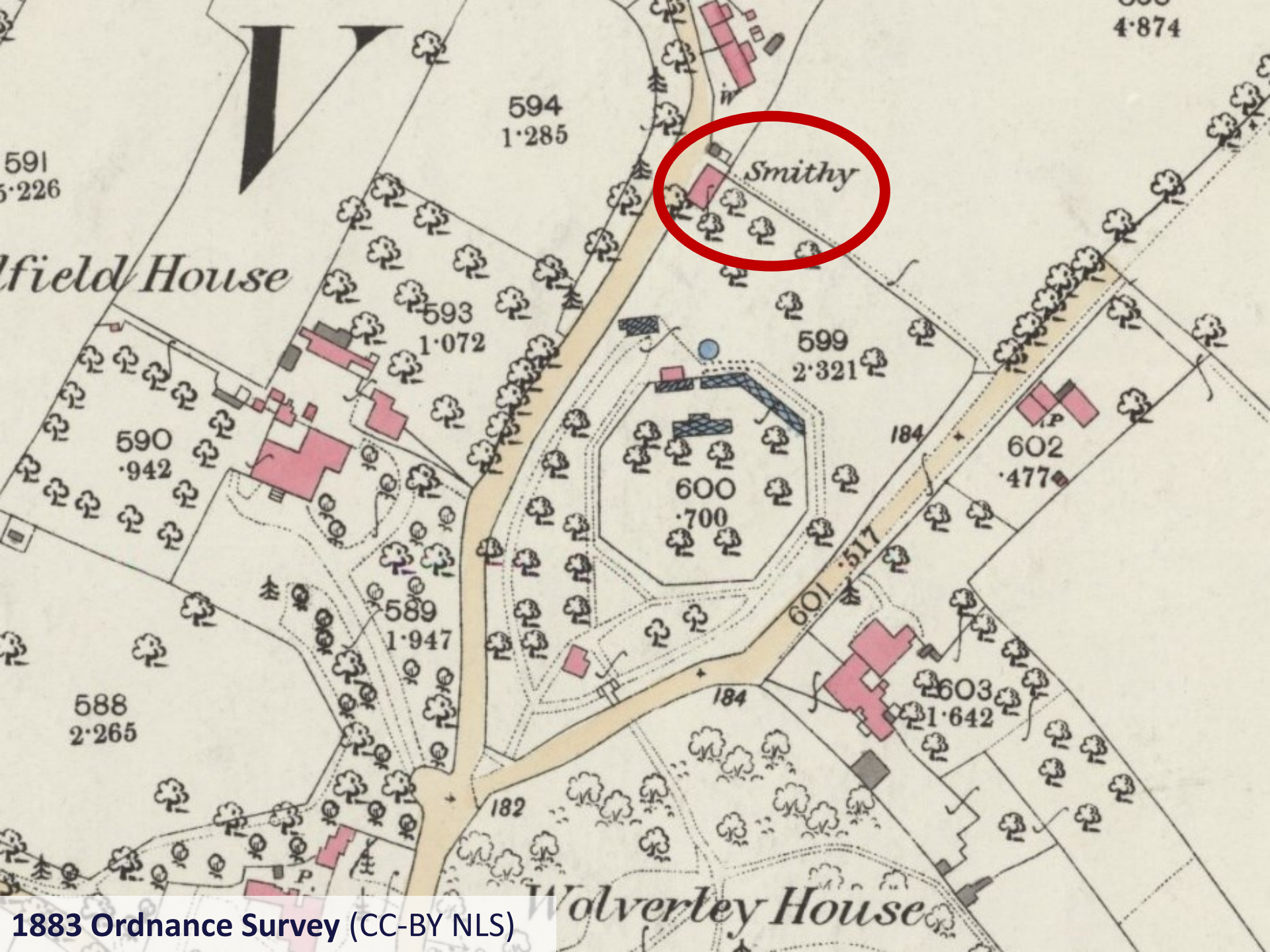
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8



Smithy

594
1·285

593
1·072

599
2·321

600
·700

602
·477

589
1·947

603
1·642

588
2·265

591
5·226

4·874

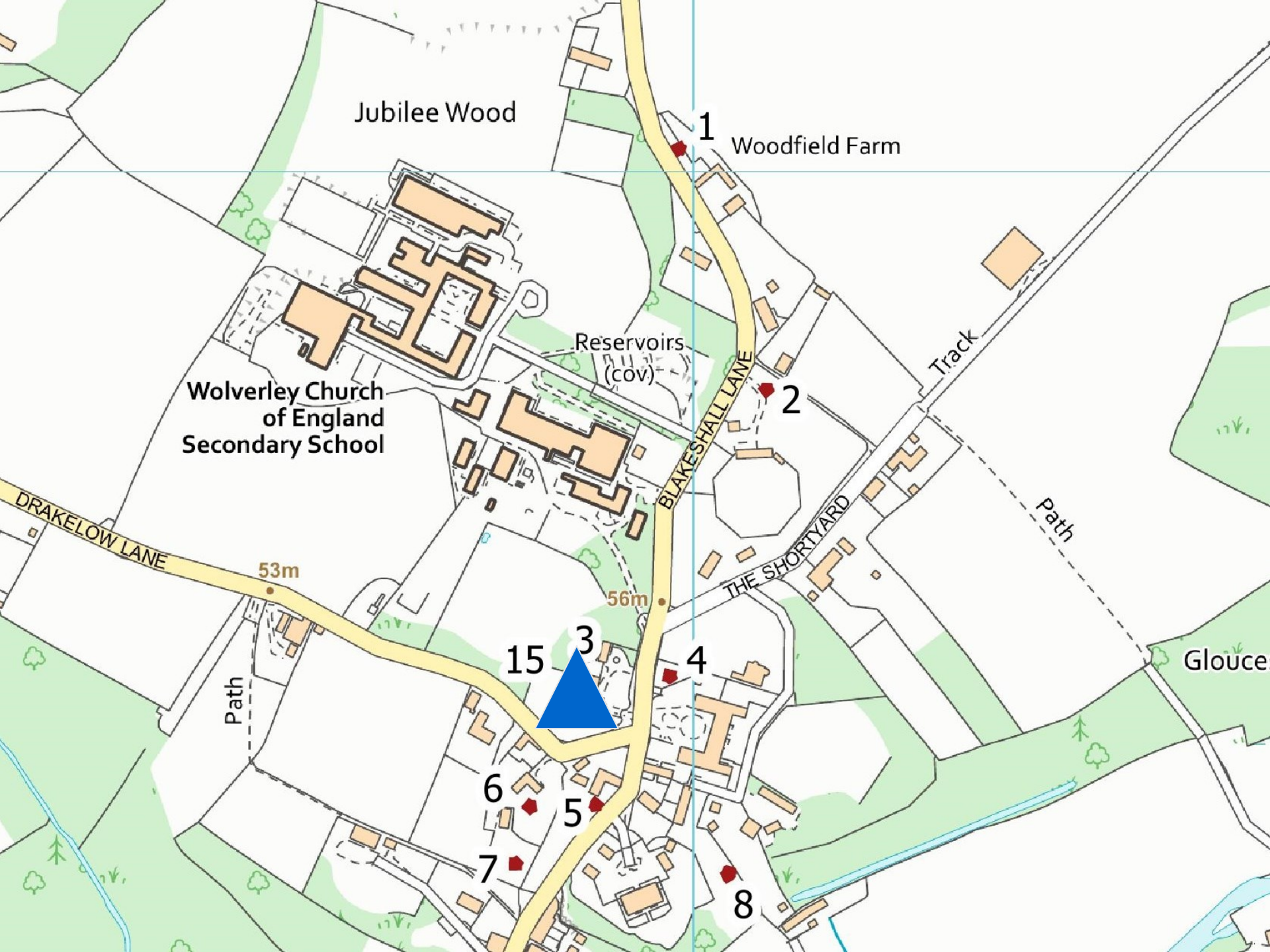
Field House

Wolverley House

Test Pit 2: Walled Garden

- Grounds of 18th century Wolverley House
- Smithy shown on 1888 Ordnance Survey
- Neolithic or Bronze Age worked flint (4000 – 800BC)
- Early handmade brick





Jubilee Wood

1 Woodfield Farm

Wolverley Church
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Reservoirs
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53m

56m

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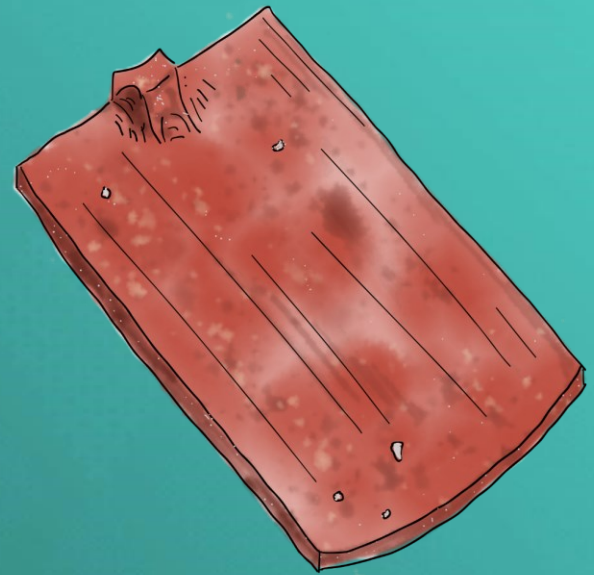
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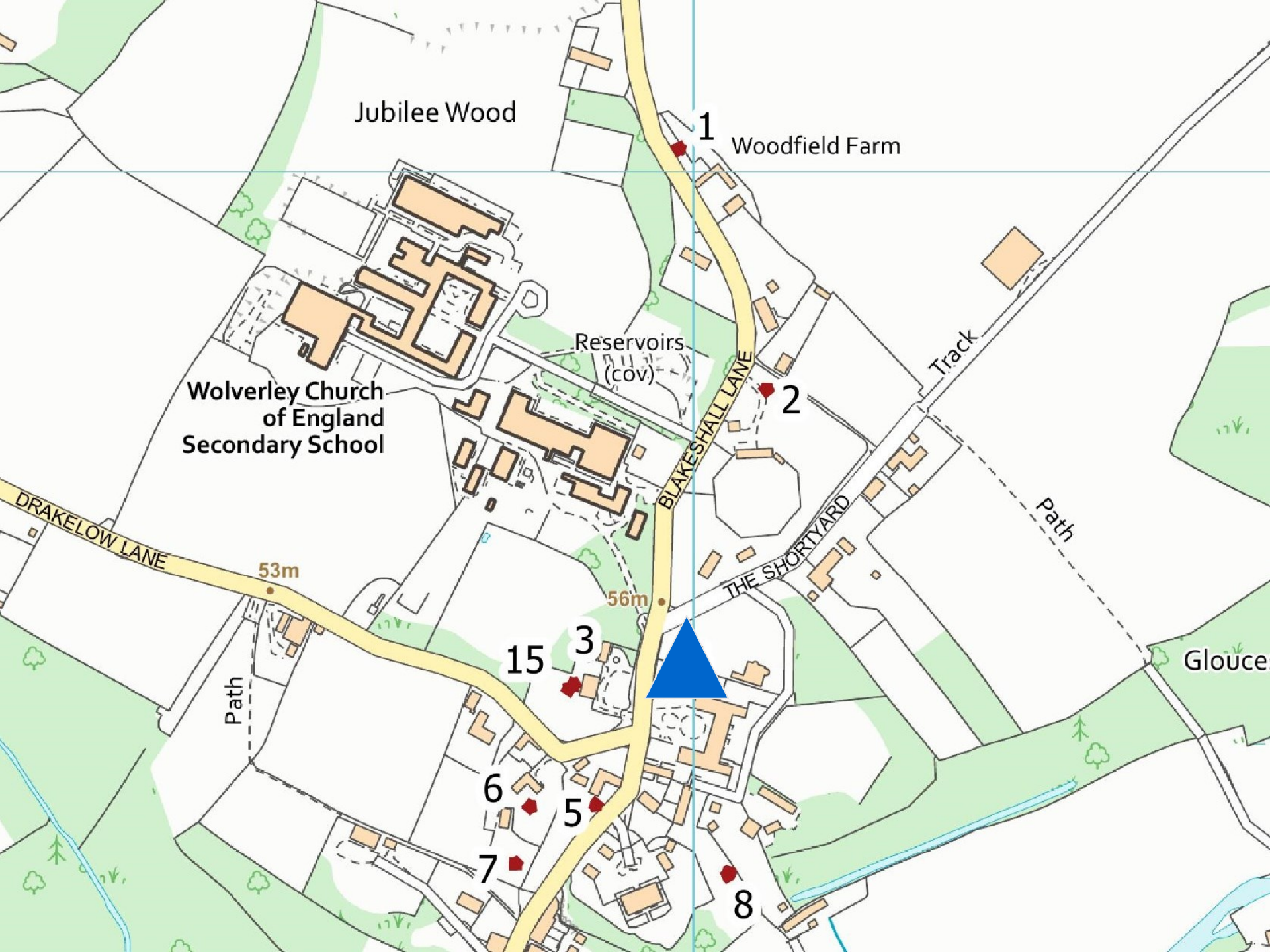
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Test Pits 3 & 15: The Birches

- Three pieces of medieval pottery
- 15th – 17th century roof tiles
- Lots of pottery from late 18th century onwards
- Earlier house on plot?





Jubilee Wood

1 Woodfield Farm

Wolverley Church of England Secondary School

Reservoirs (cov)

BLAKESHALL LANE

Track

THE SHORTHYARD

Path

DRAKELOW LANE

53m

56m

15

3

6

5

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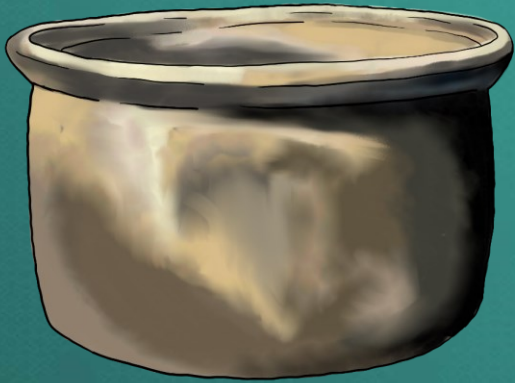
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Path

Gloucester

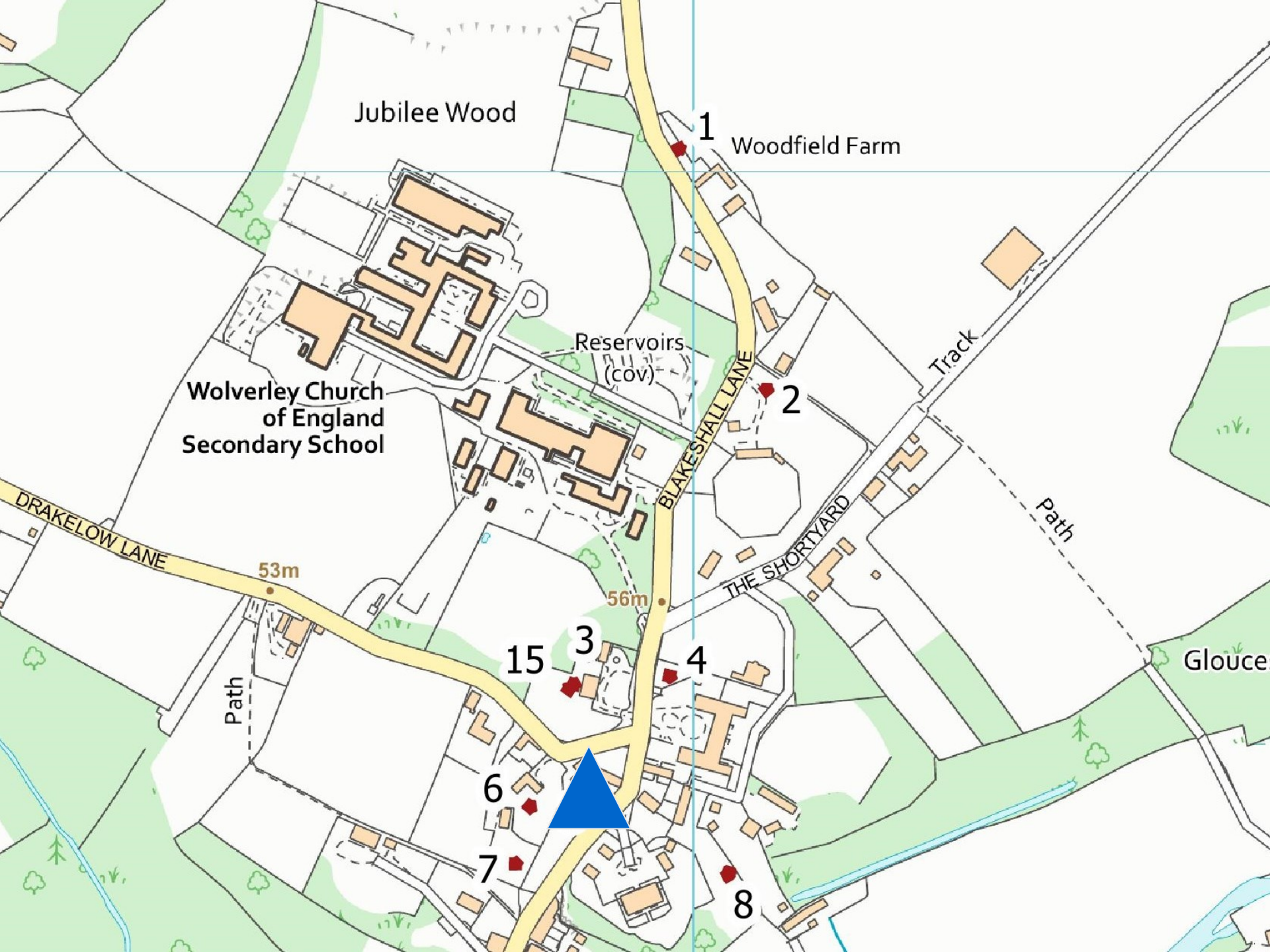


Test Pit 4: Wolverley House



- Fewer finds than expected
- But sherd of medieval cooking pot (11th – 14th century)!
- 16th century 'redware' mug
- 16th – 19th century brick & tiles





Jubilee Wood

1 Woodfield Farm

Wolverley Church of England Secondary School

Reservoirs (cov)

BLAKESHALL LANE

Track

THE SHORYARD

Path

DRAKELOW LANE

53m

56m

Glouce

Path

15

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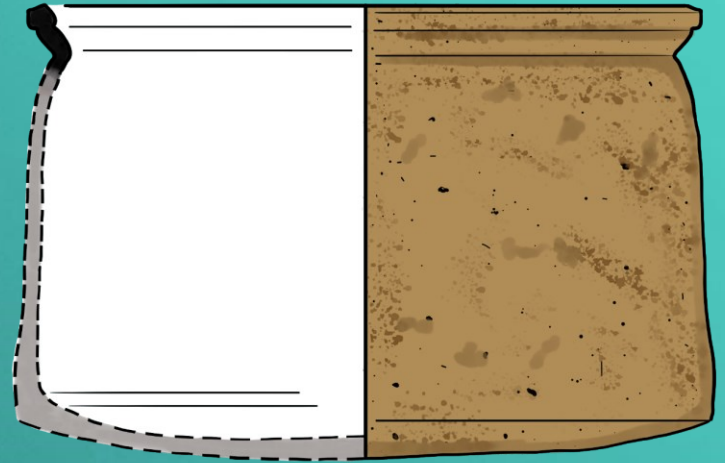
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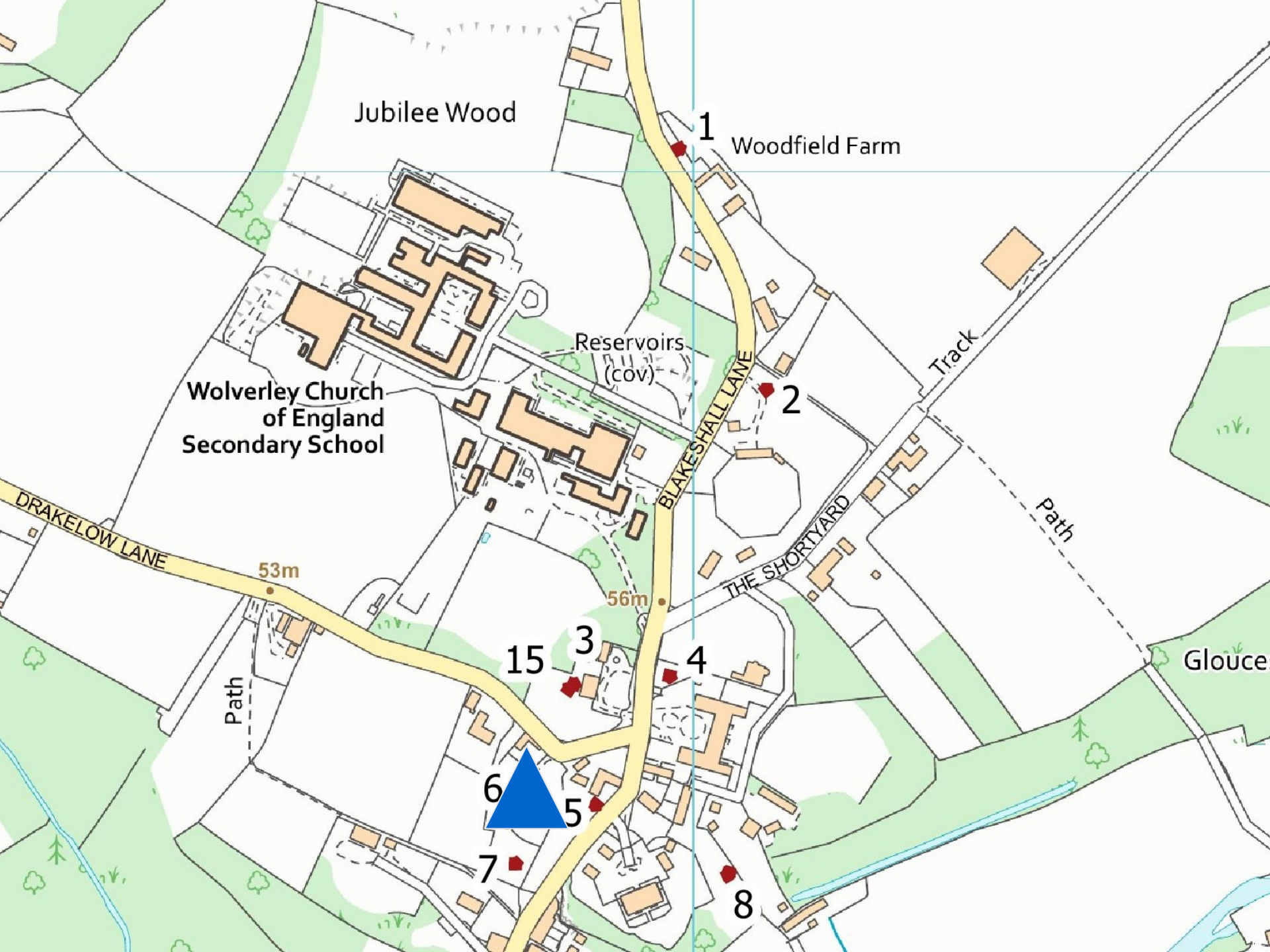
Test Pit 5: Rock Hill

- Deep build up of archaeological layers
- Lots of medieval pottery! Mostly 13th century in date
- Medieval roof tiles too (13th – 16th century), unusual in rural areas at this date





cm



Jubilee Wood

1 Woodfield Farm

Wolverley Church
of England
Secondary School

Reservoirs
(cov)

BLAKESHALL LANE

Track

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56m

Glouce

Path

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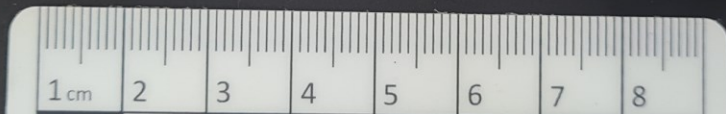
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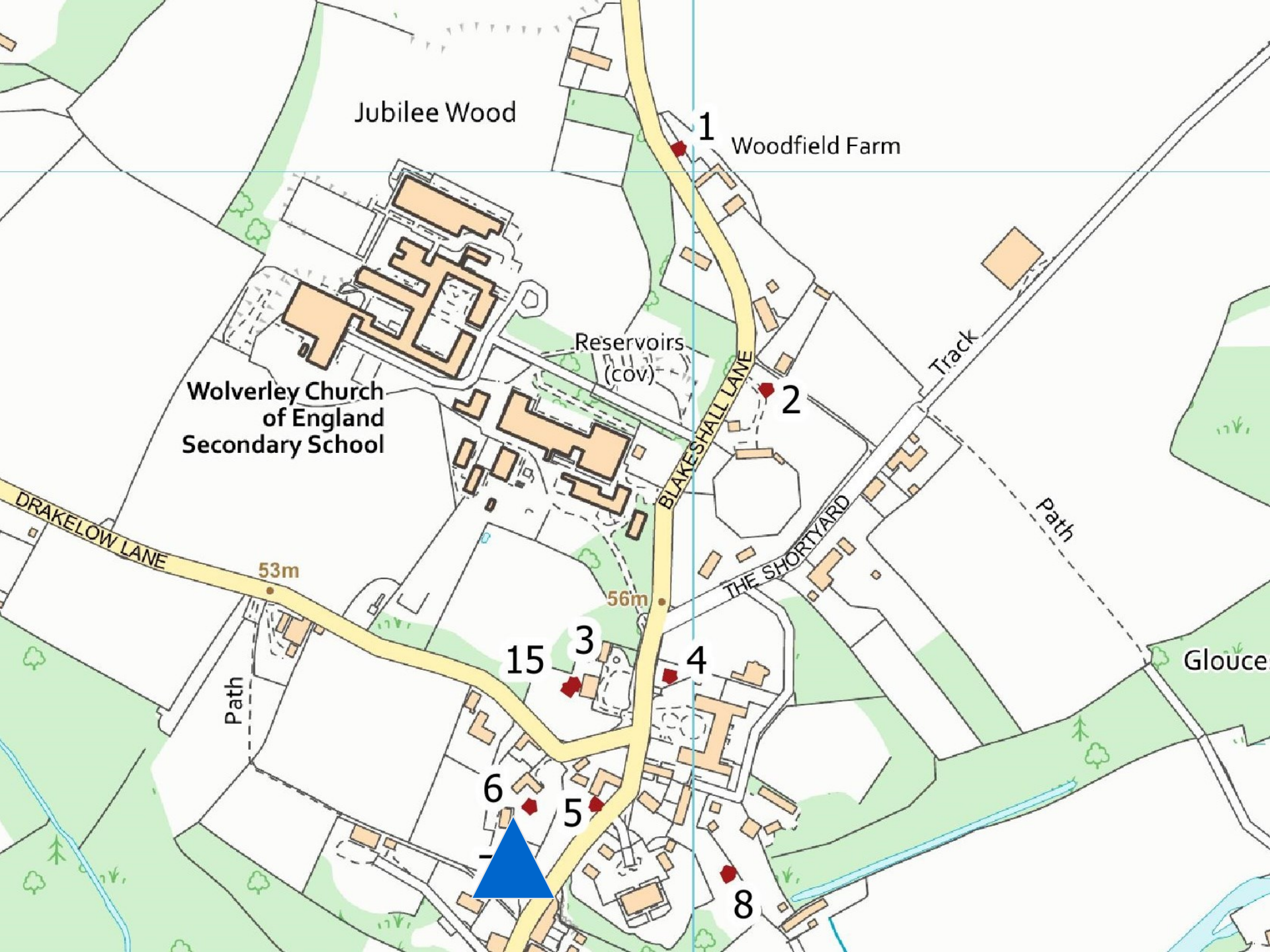


Test Pit 6: Frogmore House

- Lots of finds, mostly 18th century and later
- Range of medieval pottery, including unusual vessel
- Early window glass (pre-18th century)?







Jubilee Wood

1 Woodfield Farm

Wolverley Church of England Secondary School

Reservoirs (cov)

BLAKESHALL LANE

Track

2

THE SHORTHYARD

Path

DRAKELOW LANE

53m

56m

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Glouce

Path

6

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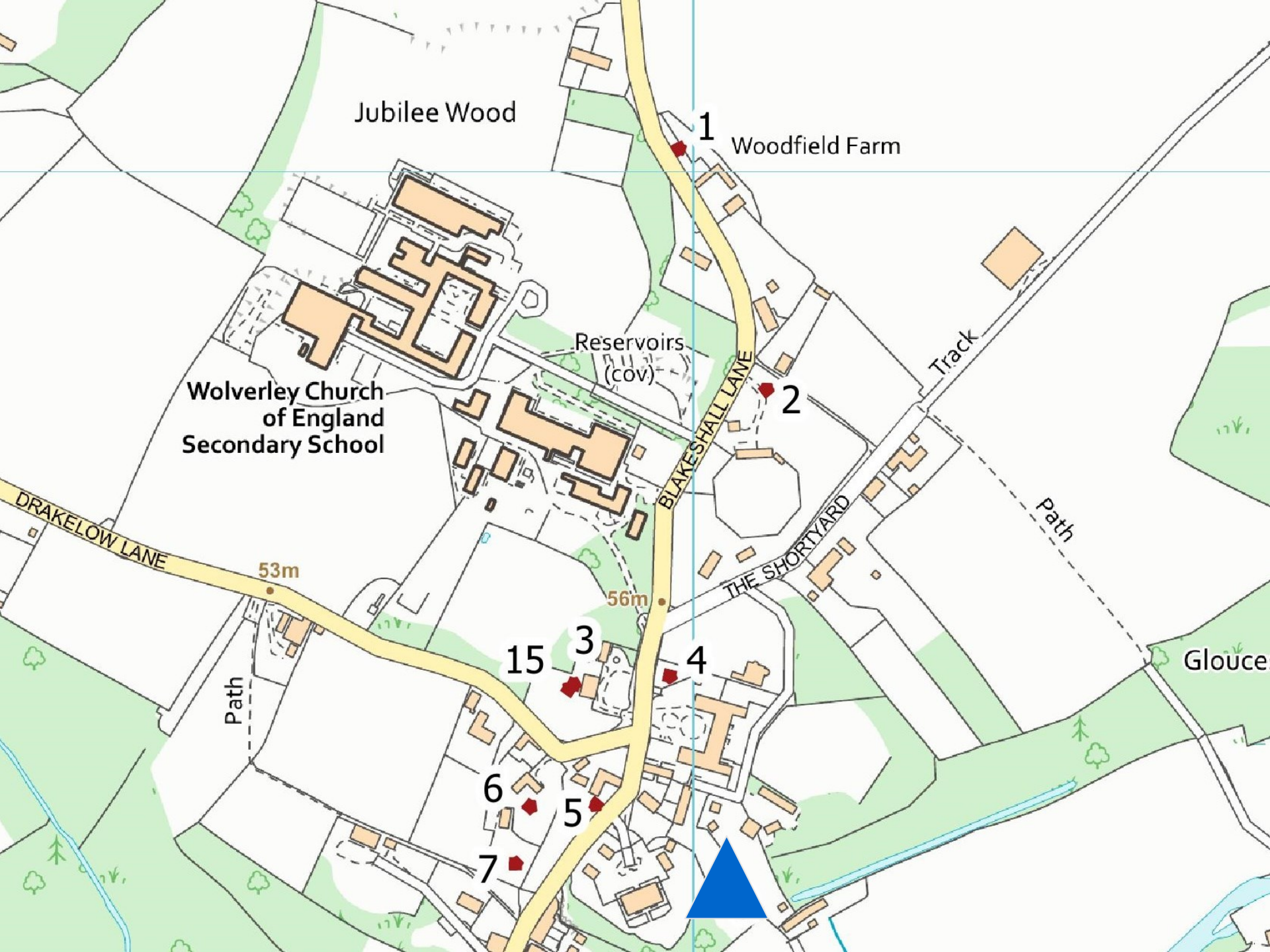


Test Pit 7: Frogmore Cottage

- Sherd of 13th – 16th century pottery (late medieval)
- Medieval occupation near to site
- Finds mostly late 18th and early 19th century



Exp



Jubilee Wood

1 Woodfield Farm

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Reservoirs (cov)

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53m

56m

Path

Glouce

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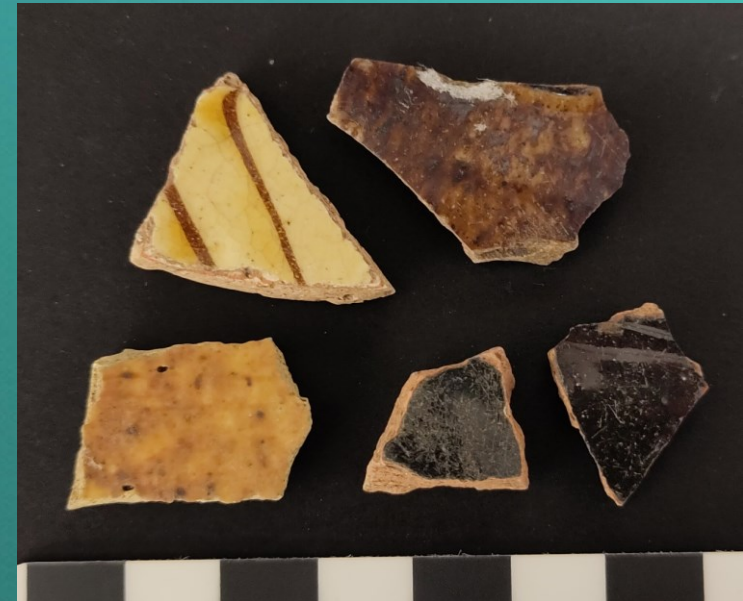
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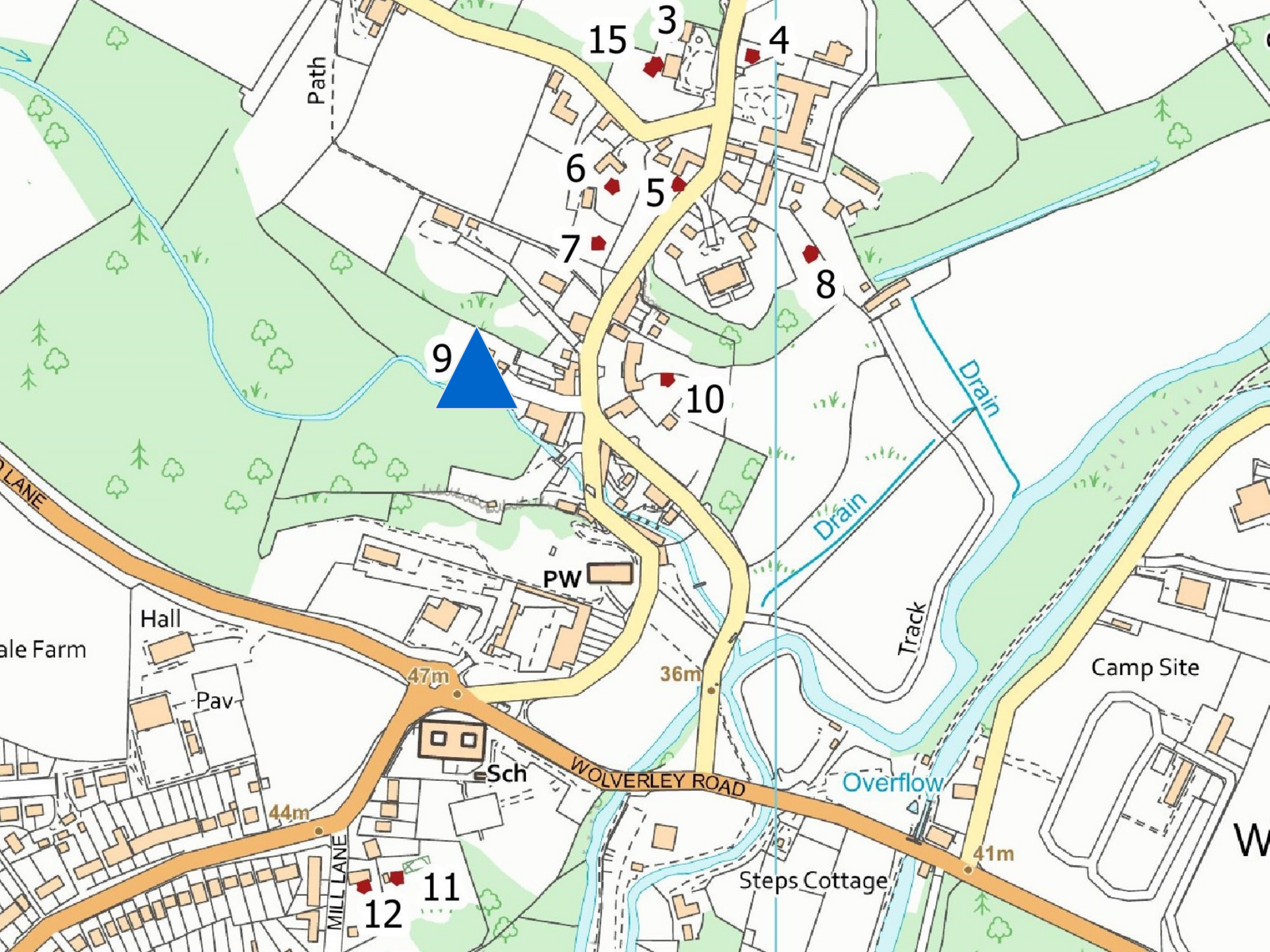




Test Pit 8: Haybarn

- Small chip of prehistoric flint
- Potentially several 16th – 17th century finds (Midlands Yellow and Manganese Mottled ware)
- Very disturbed ground – modern circuit board!





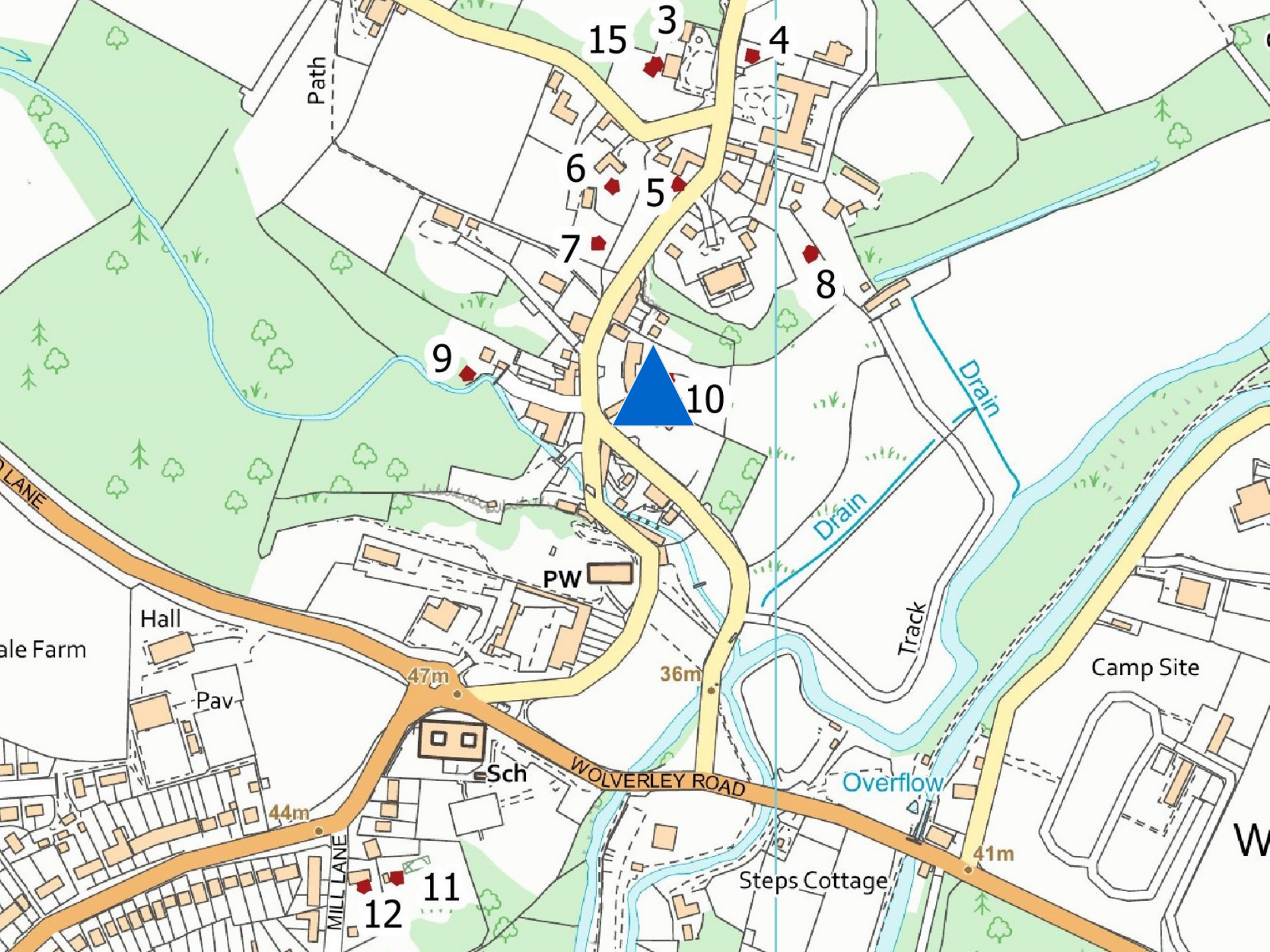


Test Pit 9: Willow Cottage



- Early roof tiles (late 15th – 17th century)
- Fits with date of cottage
- No evidence of earlier activity and ground was heavily churned, so if older artefacts they probably have been found



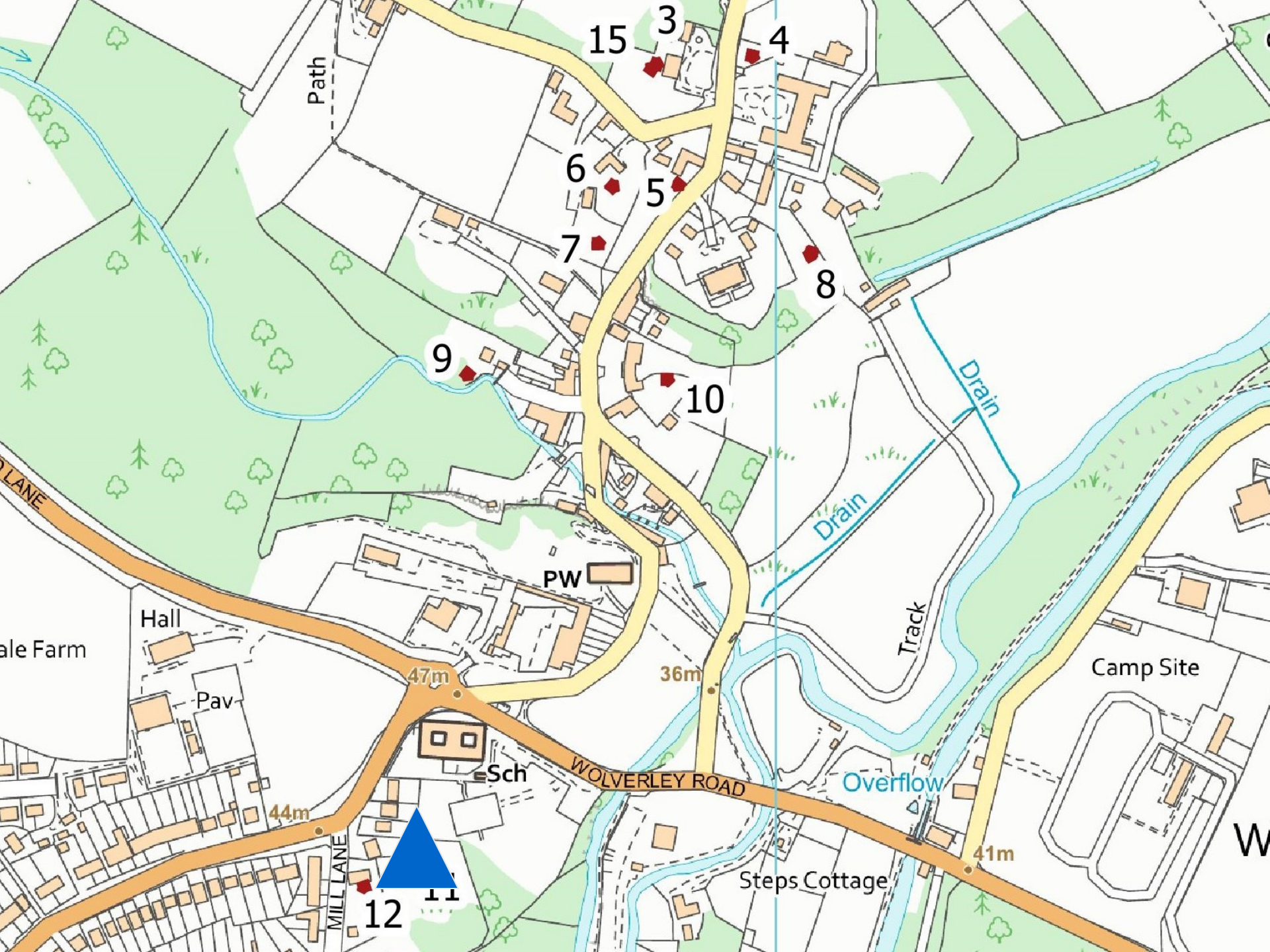




Test Pit 10: Old School House

- Wig curler?
- Late 17th – 19th century artefacts
- Ground well mixed with Victorian finds 1m down
- Could there be an earlier layer that wasn't reached?





Path

15 3 4

6 5

7

8

9

10

Drain

Drain

LANE

PW

Track

ale Farm

Hall

Camp Site

Pav

47m

36m

Overflow

44m

WOLVERLEY ROAD

41m

MILL LANE

12

11

11

Steps Cottage

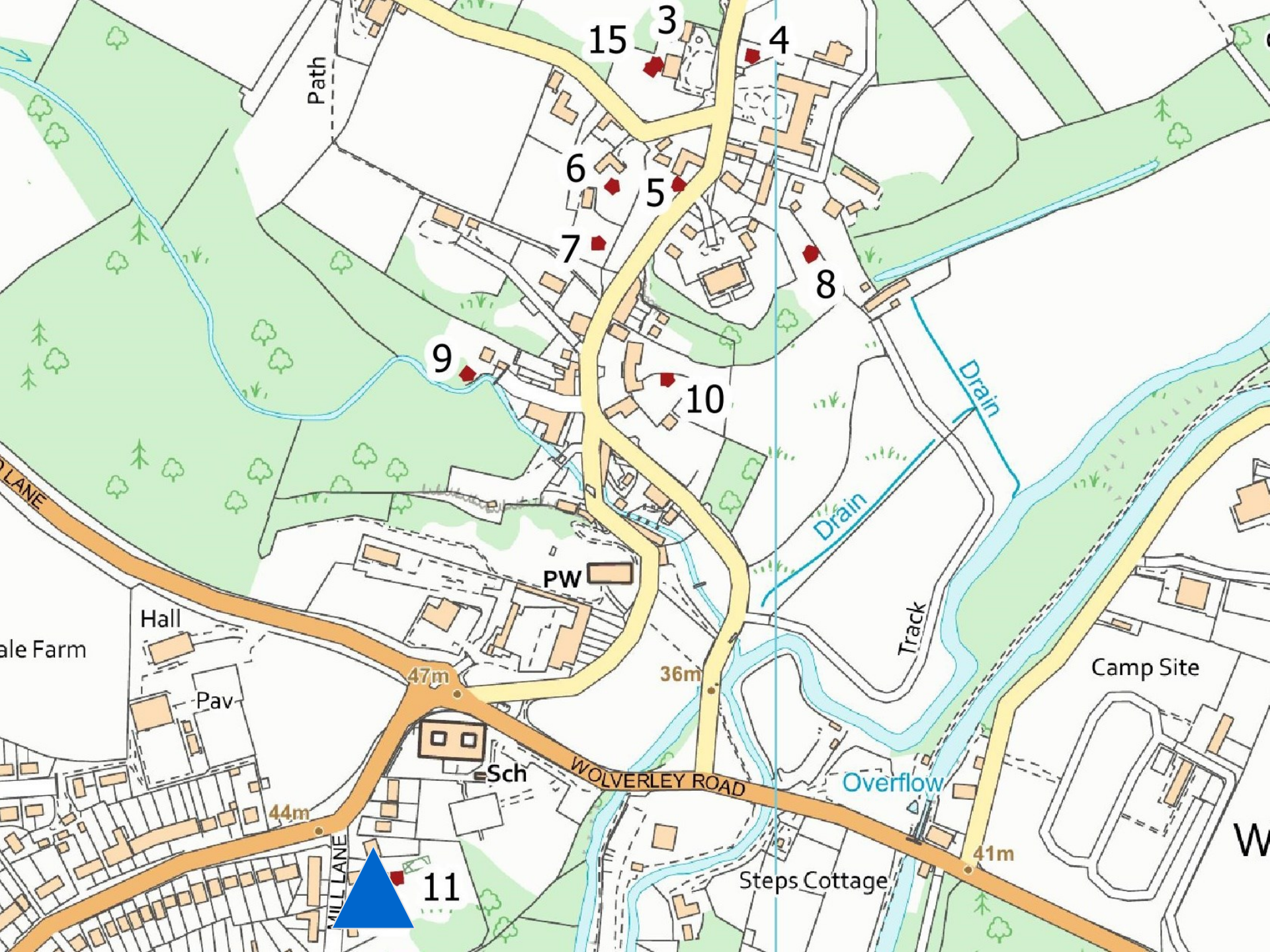
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Test Pit 11: Pan Shop Cottage

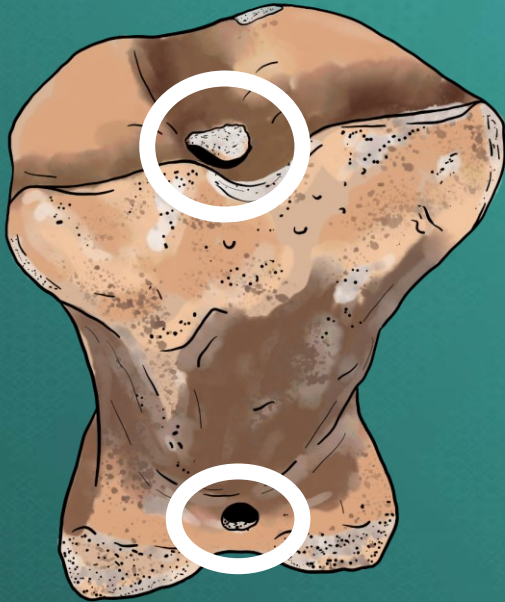
- Finds typical of household rubbish from late 18th – 19th century
- Porcelain – not seen in many other test pits
- ‘Bath Row Bottling Co Ltd Birmingham’
- Confirmed this area was farmland until recently with few houses nearby





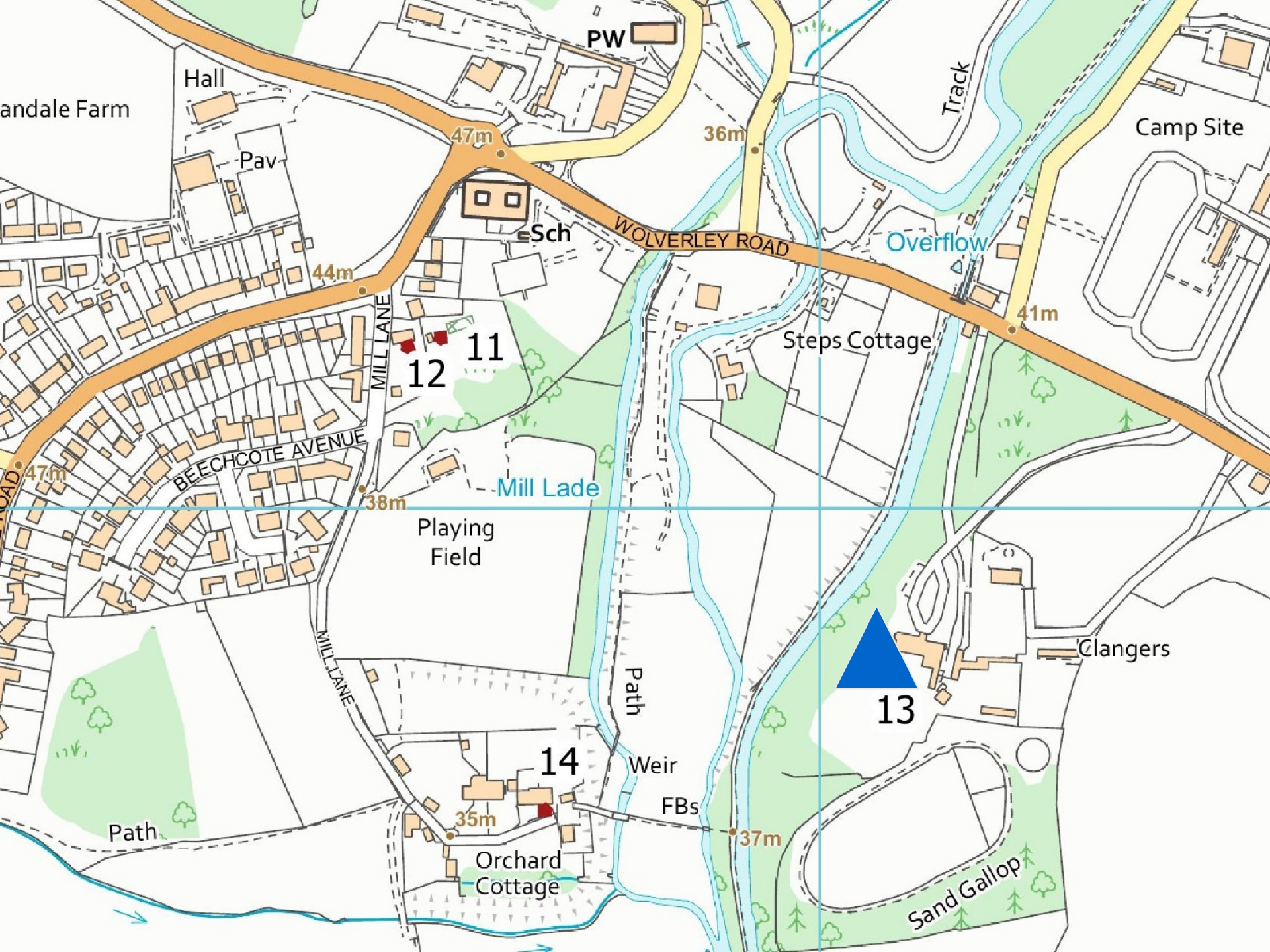


Test Pit 12: Rose Cottage



- Prehistoric worked flint
- Finds from after building converted to cottages, in late 18th century
- Horse toe bone drilled hole?





andale Farm

Hall

Pav

PW

47m

36m

Track

Camp Site

Sch

WOLVERLEY ROAD

Overflow

44m

MILL LANE

12

11

Steps Cottage

41m

47m

BEECHCOTE AVENUE

38m

Mill Lade

Playing Field

Path

13

Clangers

14

Weir

FBs

35m

37m

Orchard Cottage

Sand Gallop

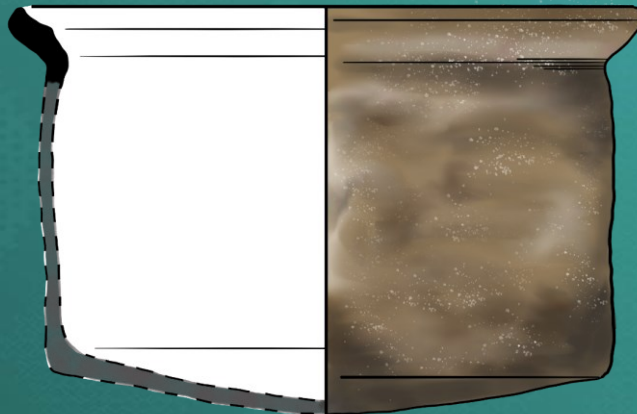
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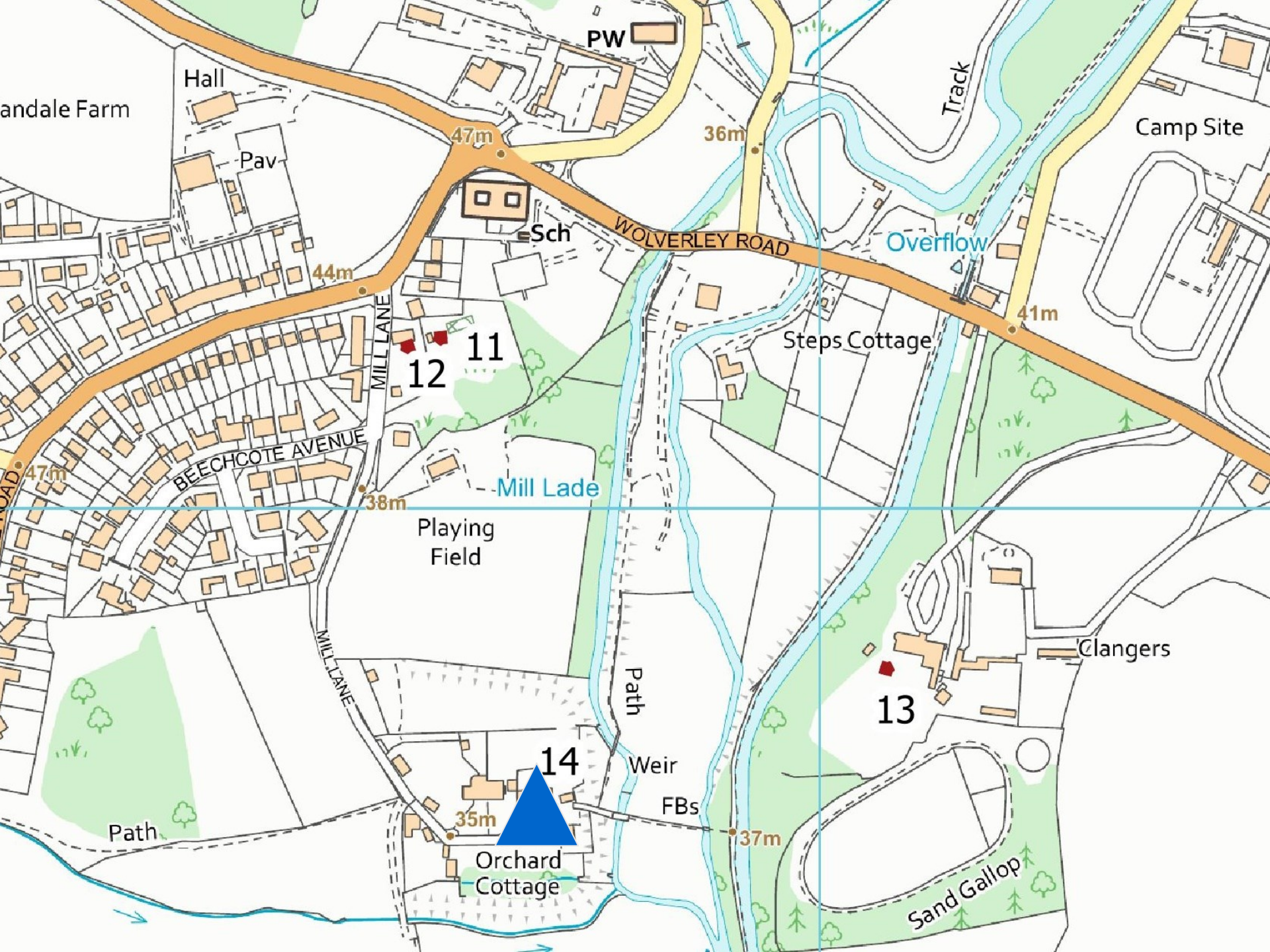


Test Pit 13: Wolverley Court



- Only Roman find!
- Medieval occupation near site – early roof tile and bit of pottery
- Brick from metalworking hearth?





andale Farm

Hall

Pav

PW

47m

36m

Track

Camp Site

Sch

WOLVERLEY ROAD

Overflow

44m

MILL LANE

12

11

Steps Cottage

41m

BEEHCOTE AVENUE

38m

Mill Lade

Playing Field

Path

Clangers

13

14

Weir

FBs

35m

Orchard Cottage

37m

Sand Gallop

Path



Test Pit 14: Wyre Mill Cottage



- Old roof tiles, from 16th – 18th century
- Pottery all late 18th century onwards
- Cobbled surface?
Natural geology underneath



WORCESTERSHIRE
COUNCIL



12th - 14th centuries



Number of finds
in test pit



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Leicestershire
County Council

15th - 16th centuries



Number of finds in test pit

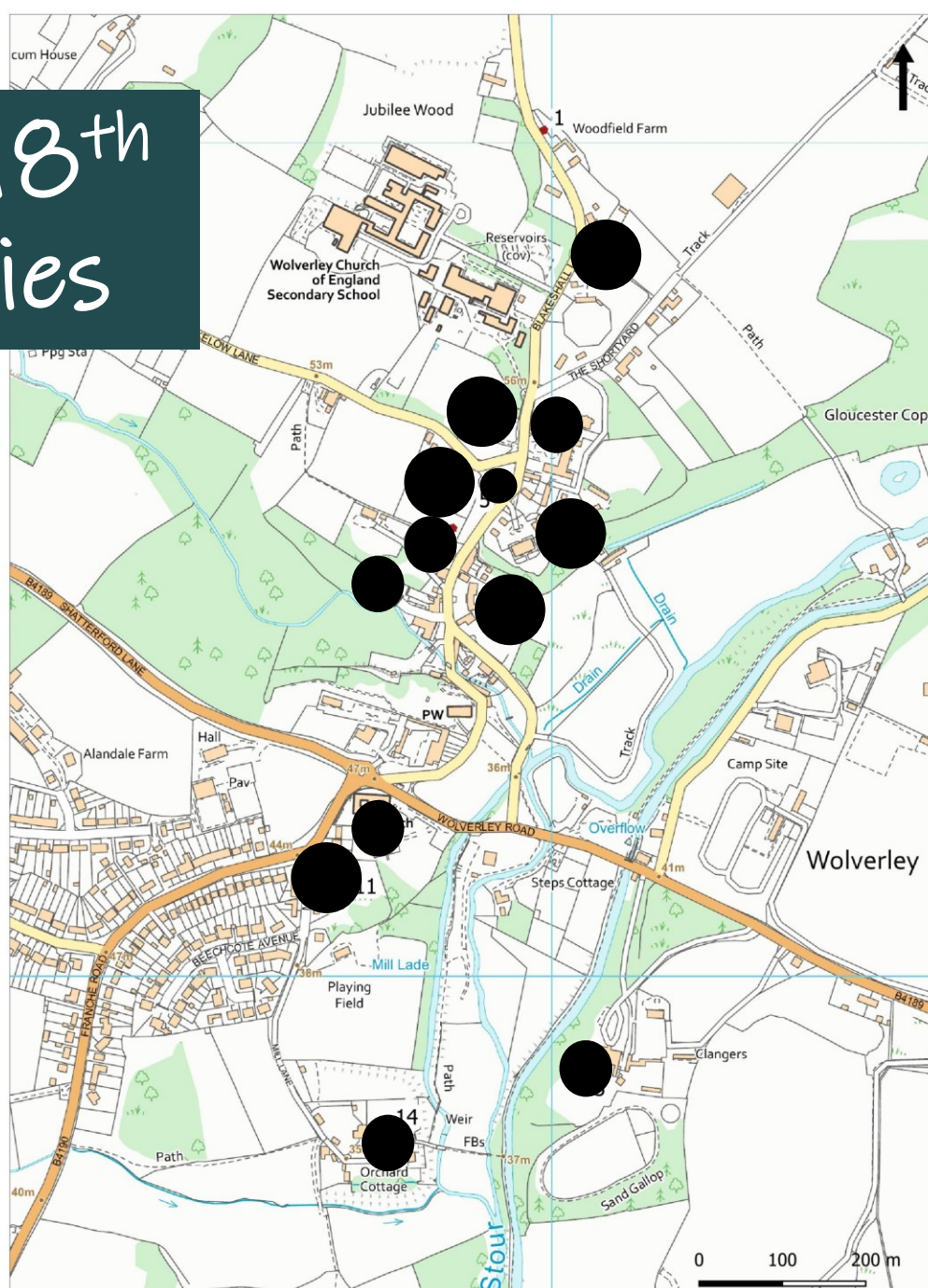


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17th - 18th centuries



Number of finds
in test pit



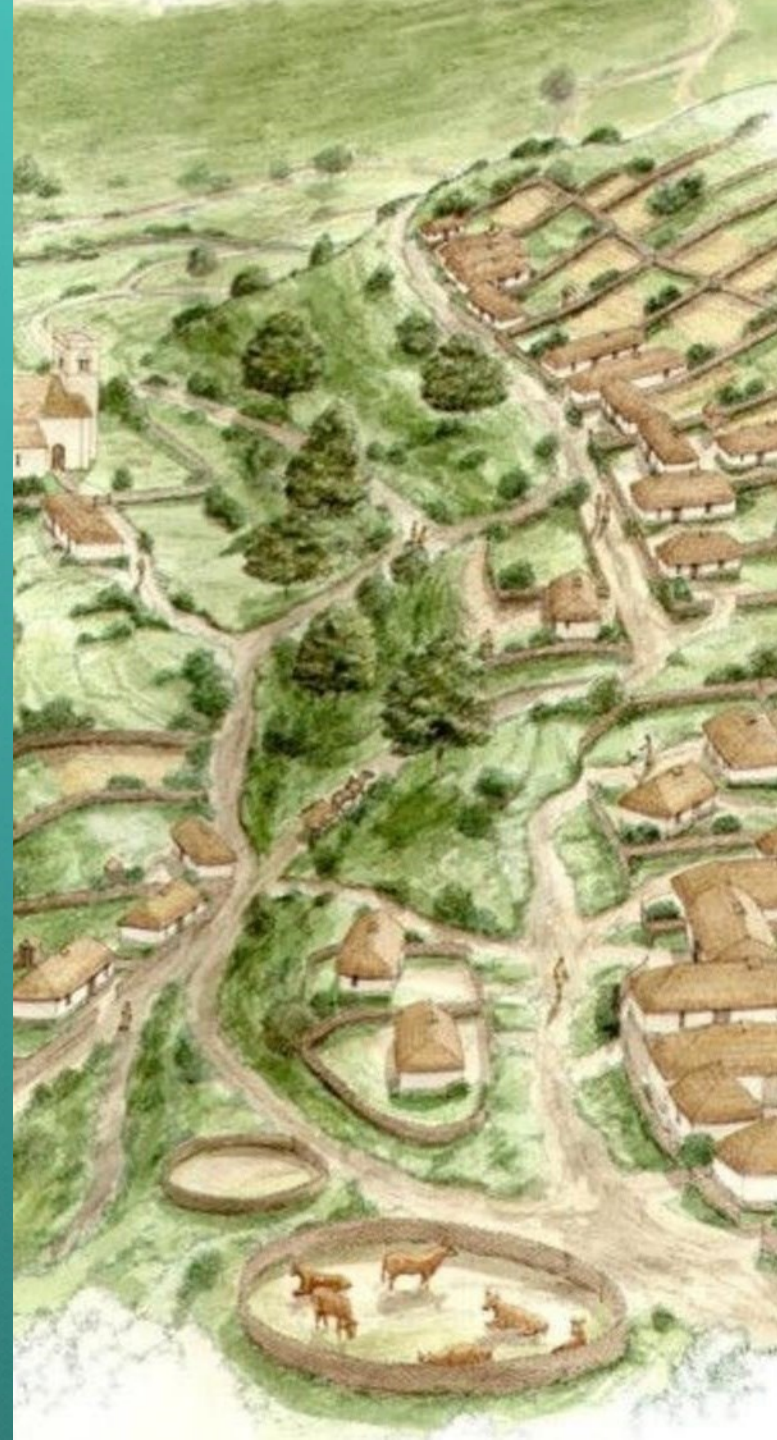
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Explore the

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County Council

Where was the medieval village?

- Clear focus of activity around junction of Blakeshall and Drakelow Lanes
- Was the manor here?
- How does it relate to church?
- Other clusters of houses across parish



But what about 9th century Wolverley?

- First written mention of Wolverley is in 9th century
- Before 1250 AD, rural Worcestershire either doesn't have access to or chooses not to use much pottery
- Big Digs have shown that we can't see earlier medieval settlement in same way as elsewhere in East Anglia

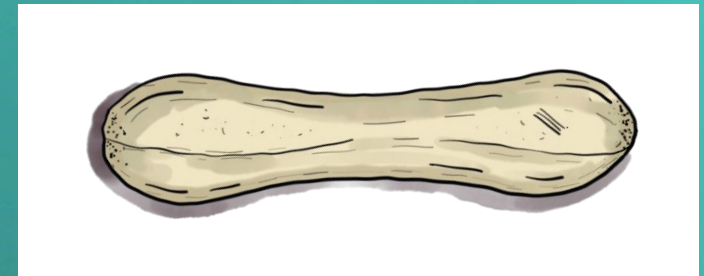
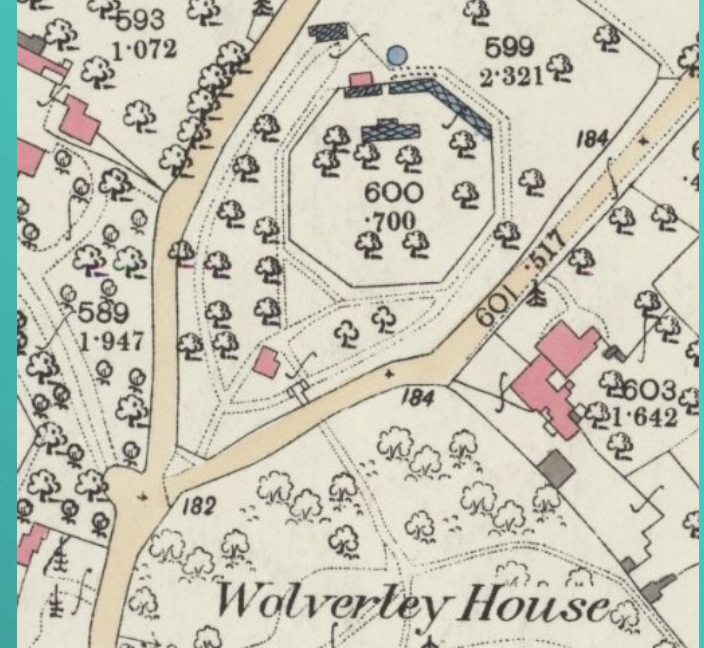
Pottery tales



- Sourced pottery from Worcester and Malvern areas, as well as Staffordshire and Shropshire
- Some locally made pottery too
- As geology here varies a lot, it might be possible to track down individual potters
- Research for the future!

Village development

- May have grown a little in 15th or 16th century
- Big expansion in 17th and 18th centuries – not just that households owned more pottery, but dwellings built on new sites
- Industrial expansion with canal (finished 1772) and mills



Curious to find out more?

Report

After the talk, the excavation report will be published online
- keep an eye on our social media or website.

Project exhibition

Kidderminster library

until 9th Feb

Redditch library

11th Feb – 5th March

The Hive, Worcester

7th – 29th March

www.explorethepast.co.uk

@ExploreThePast

**Small Pits,
Big Ideas**

HISTORY UNDER YOUR FEET



Victorian children & their toys

DO

How QUICKLY COULD YOU SPEND A PENNY?

Beware of green salettes and rawe frauytes for they wyll make your soverayne seke!

Soil Stories

THE GIRL IN THE LATE

Big Digs

Small Pits, Big Ideas

Project highlights

Cabinet of Curiosities

What was it like to live in the past? Come and explore the archaeological record!

Discover the lives of people from the past through their objects and stories.

Learn about the archaeological record and how it helps us understand the past.

Join us for a special event on the archaeological record.



Small Pits, Big Ideas

What's it all about?

Small pits, big ideas. This project explores the archaeological record through the lens of small pits. It's a chance to learn about the past in a new and exciting way.

Project highlights

Big Pit

We met people from past

1000 years found

Favorite Finds

- Small pits
- Archaeological record
- Small pits, big ideas
- Small pits, big ideas

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Big Pit

We met people from past

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Thank
YOU



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Small Pits, Big Ideas

HISTORY UNDER YOUR FEET



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Explore the Past

