

Rethinking Ancient Woodland

- Continuously wooded since at least 1600.
- Characterised by coppice-with-standards.
- Characterised by woodland indicator species.
- Link to Wildwood-only modified by management.
- Model emphasises stability.

The Ancient Woodland Inventory

- Created to establish the extent of ancient woodland.
- Done at a time when much woodland had been grubbed out or coniferised.
- Acts as a guide in the formulation of conservation policies.

Types of Ancient Woodland

- Primary ancient woodland-Those occupying sites that have been occupied since pre history.
- Secondary ancient woodland-Areas cleared for other uses, then re-treed before 1600.

- Aware that woodland has been radically altered by human exploitation.
- Little if any wildwood survives.

- Idea persists that ancient woodland represent-at least in the sense that they are primary-a direct link with the natural vegetation.
- And that variations in the composition reflect variations in the wildwood itself.

Rackham commenting on Bradfield Wood

- “..well documented back to 1252 and would still be instantly recognisable by Abbot Symon of that year. The outline of the woods was virtually unaltered until the 1960's, and is demarcated by a mighty bank..”

Ancient Woodlands

Ancient woodlands vary in size.

Small areas like at Fransham where in the 14-15C there were 14 such woods in the parish.

Larger areas were/are divided in to fells .

The underwood being cut on regular cycles.



Wayland Wood



Wayland Wood



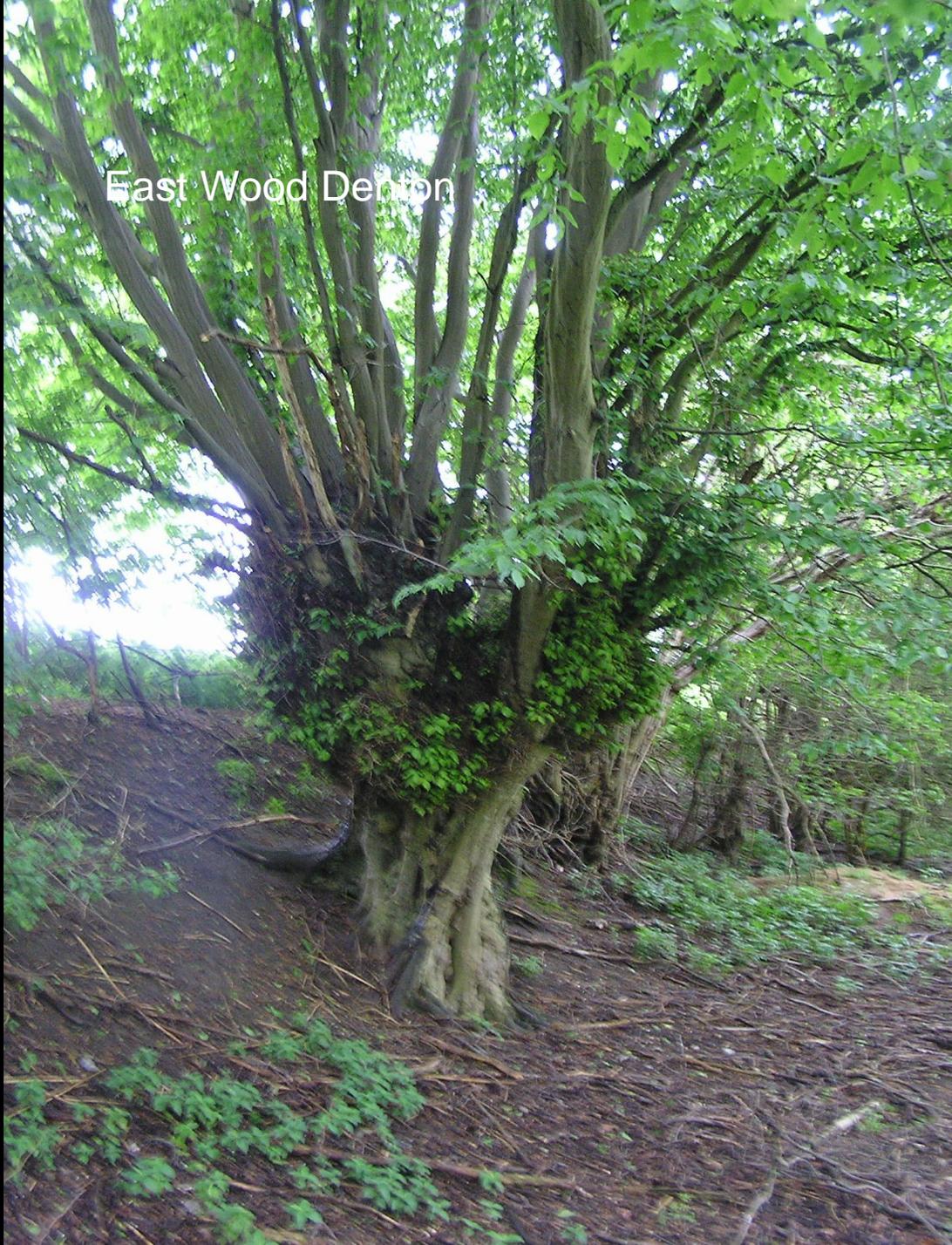
Ancient Woodlands

- Woodbanks surrounding woods which were built in the early middle ages were often massive.
- They can be found marooned within woods caused by later expansion.

Ancient Woodlands

- Woodland boundaries-for reasons not fully known were often planted with pollards.
- This practice continued into the early modern period with examples on post medieval banks.

East Wood Denton



S. L. Lime Hockering



Ancient woodland indicators

- Embraces a wide range of species.
- Was thought to reflect the “direct descendant of original natural woodland, or the consequence of longevity and stability of land use”.

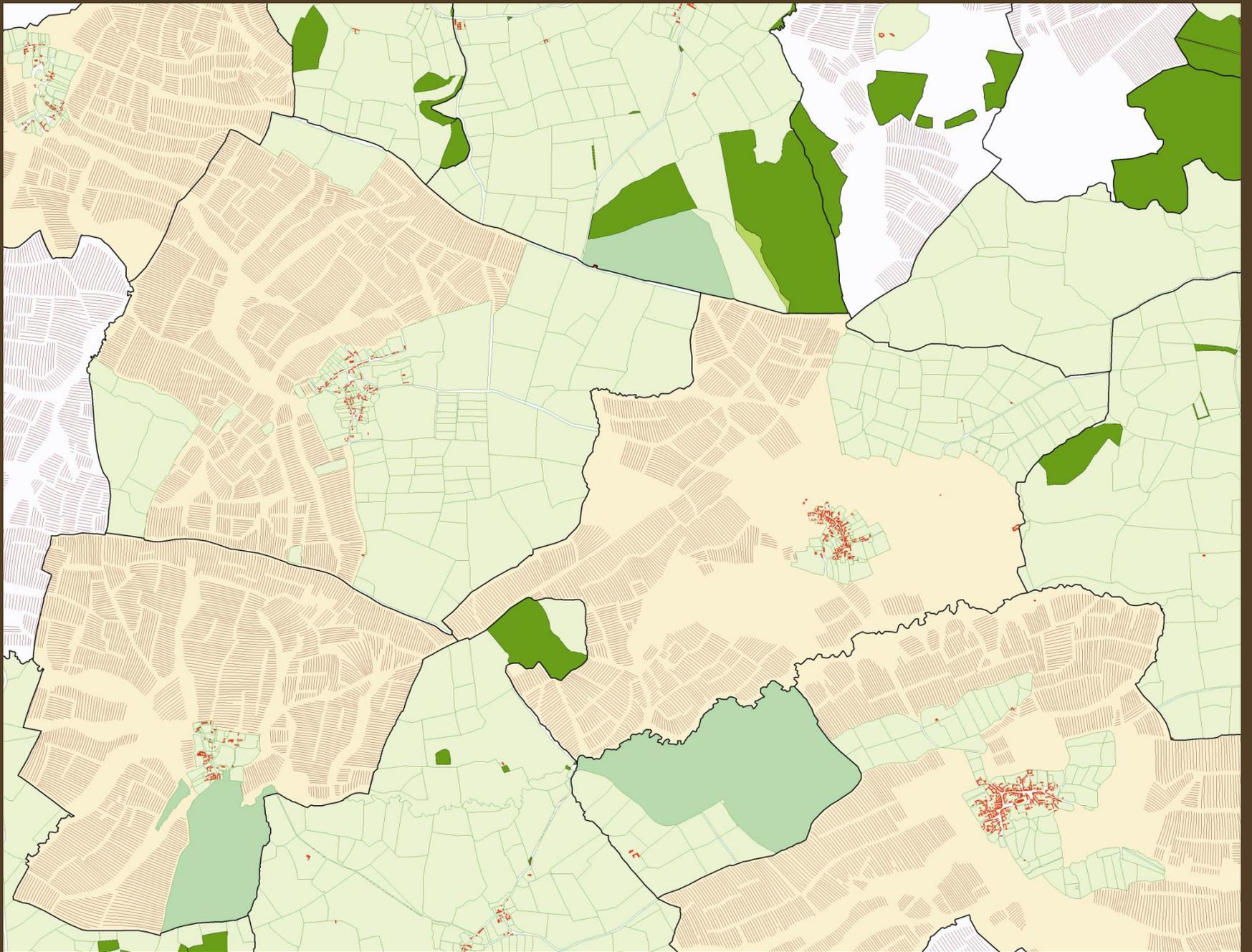


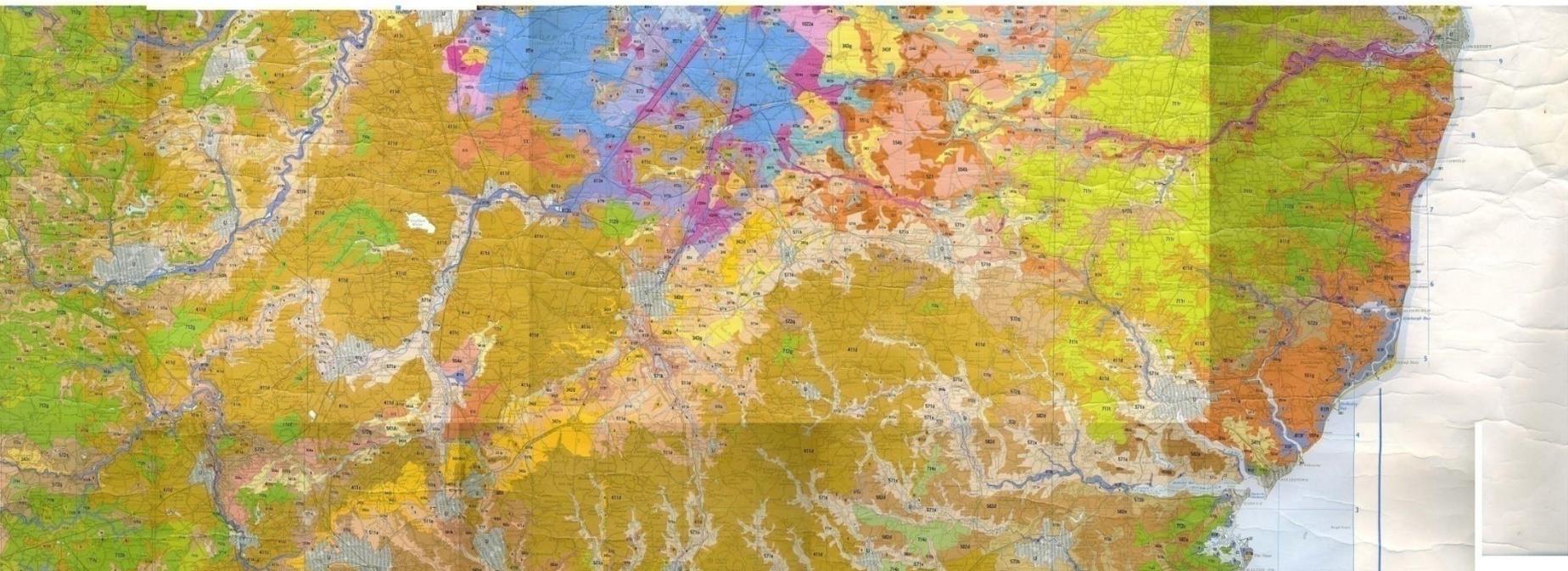
pe. Bluebells.



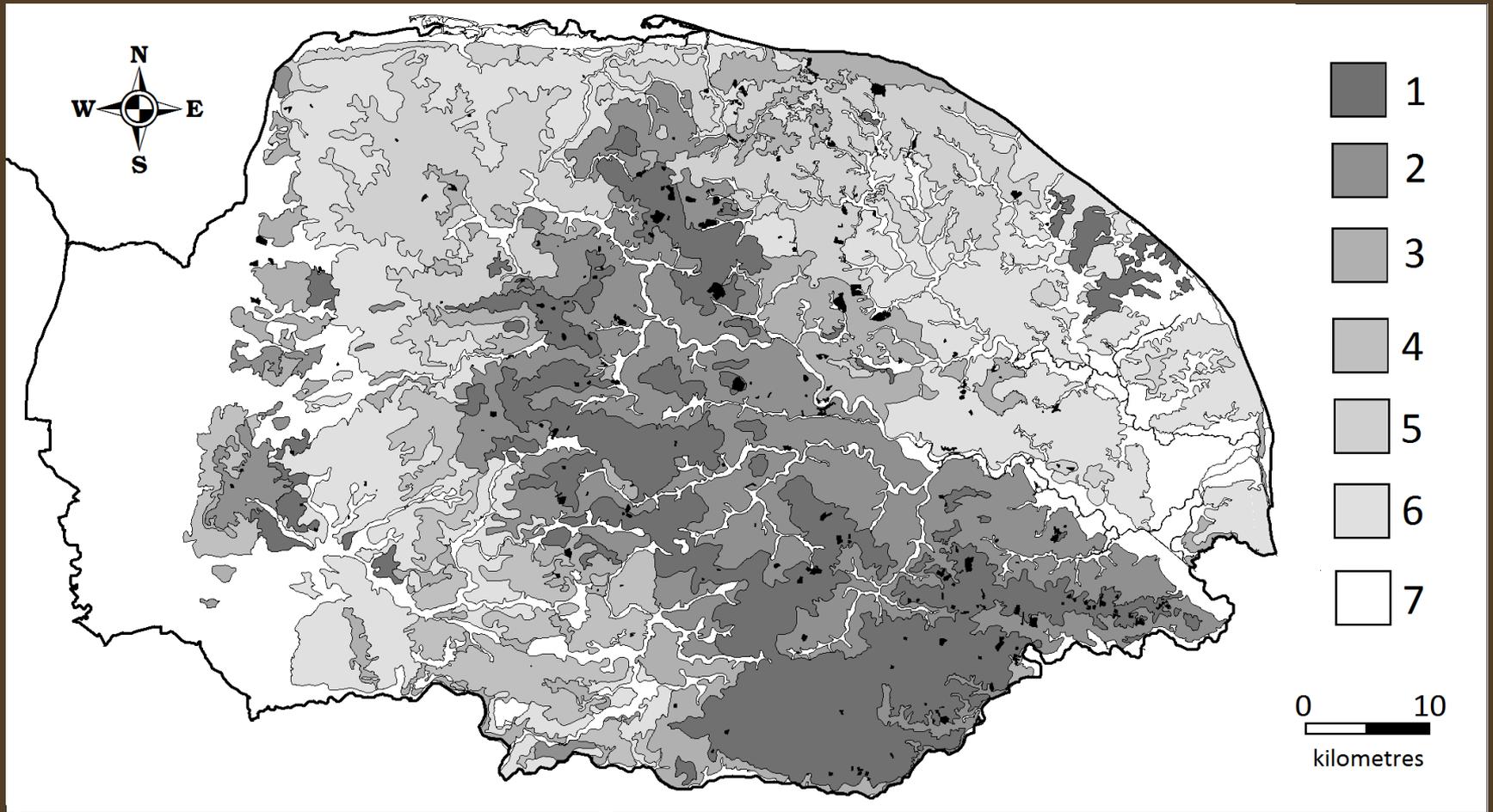
Woodland location

- Parish and other administrative boundaries
- Cluster on the margins of heavy clays

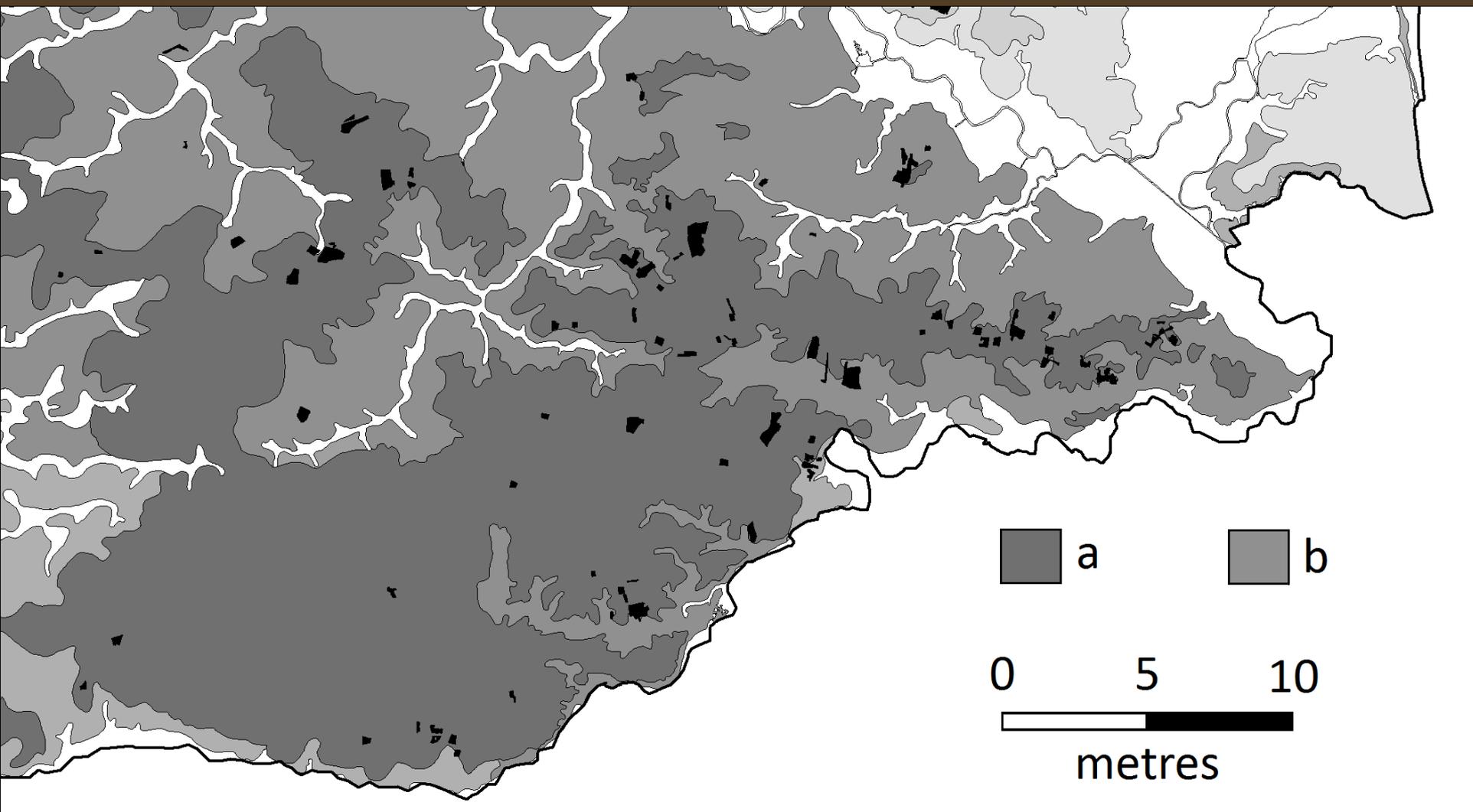




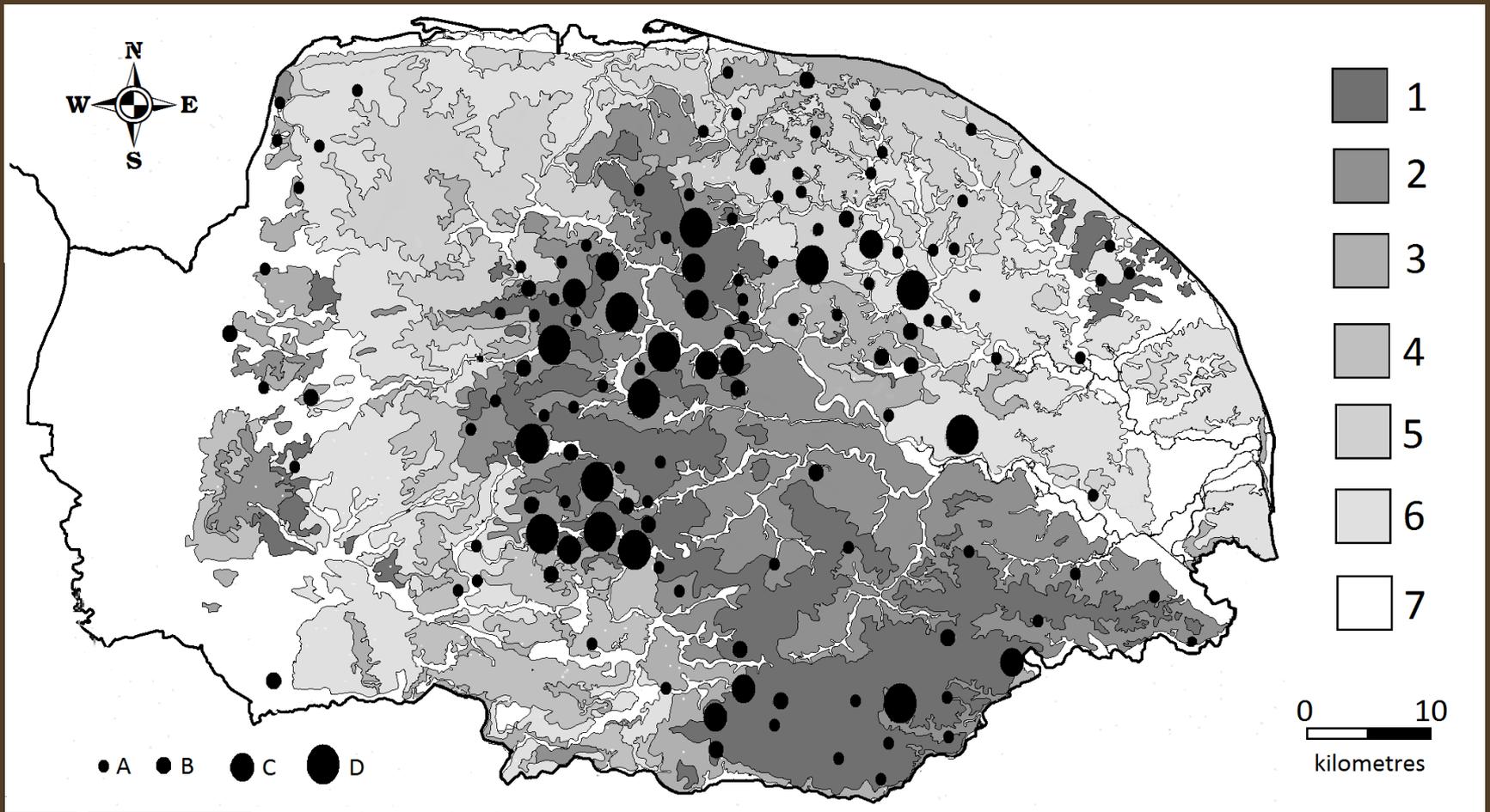
Margins of Heavy Soils



Woods on edge of clay soils



Domesday Woodlands



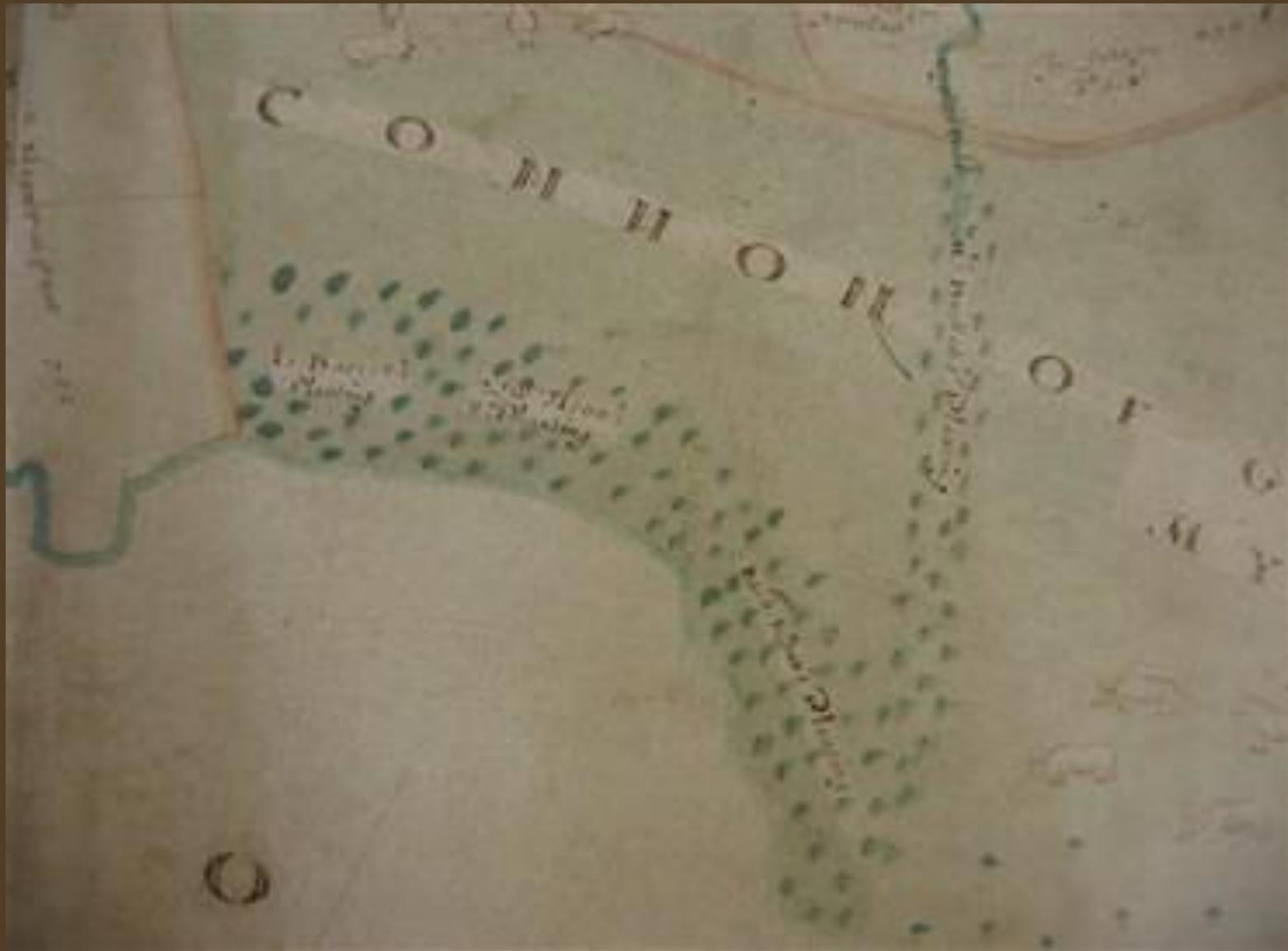
Wood pasture



Staverton



Wood Pasture Gressenhall



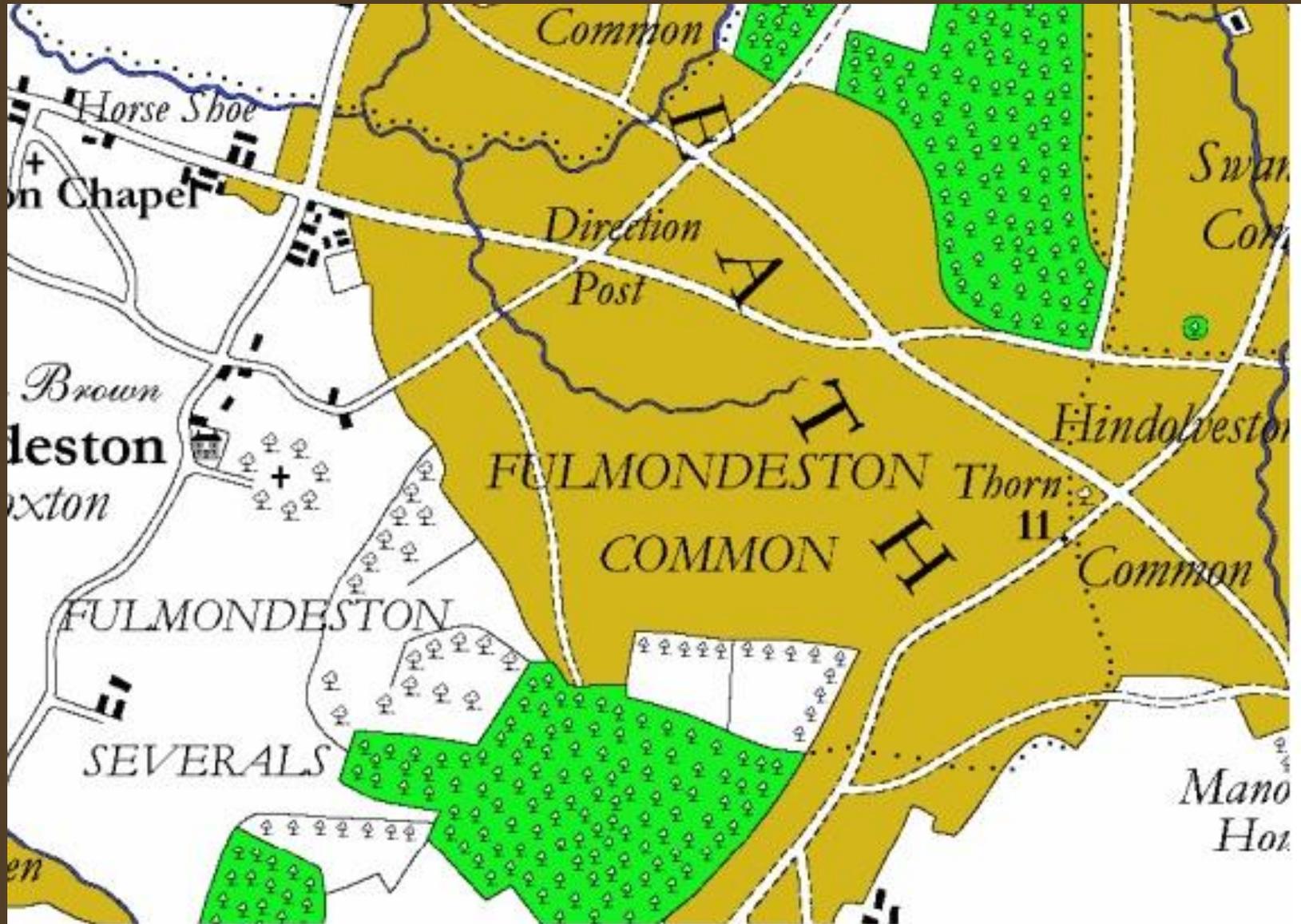


Bayfield. Wood
pasture

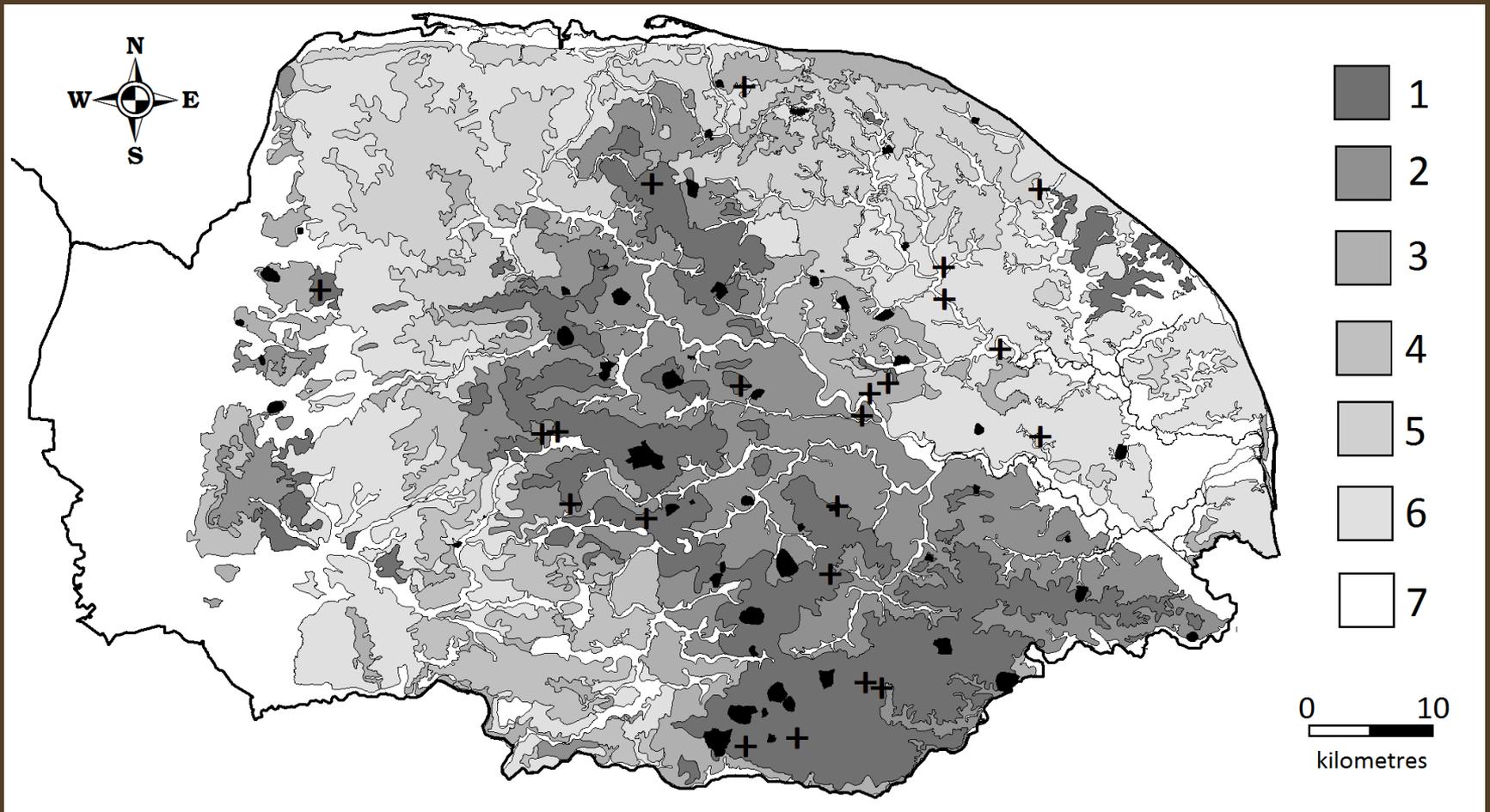
Fritton Common



Clusters of woods and commons. Faden



Distribution of medieval deer parks



Deer Park Decline

Largely disappear in C17 and C18

Rabbit Warrens and Fish Ponds
disappeared at the same time

It represented a shift in what the
upper classes did with their time.

They became “more elegant”.

Pheasants and fox hunting took
over.

Woods we surveyed



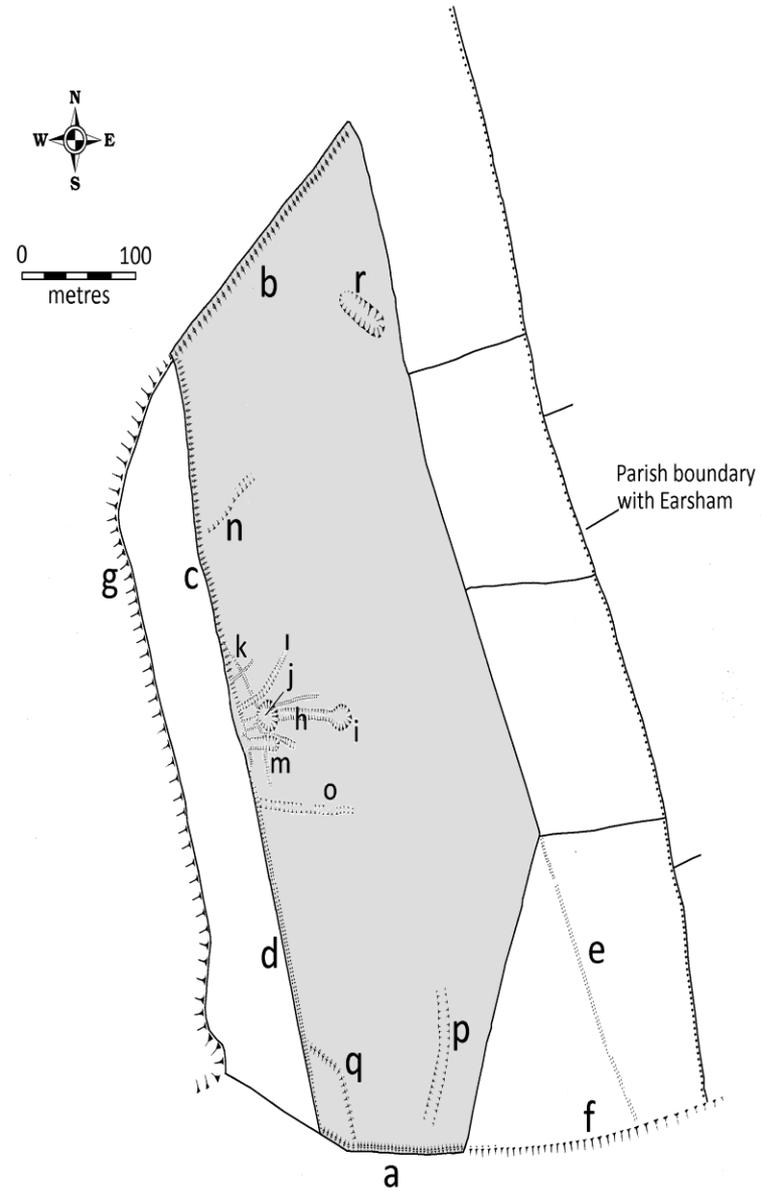
Primary Ancient Woodland.

East Wood Denton

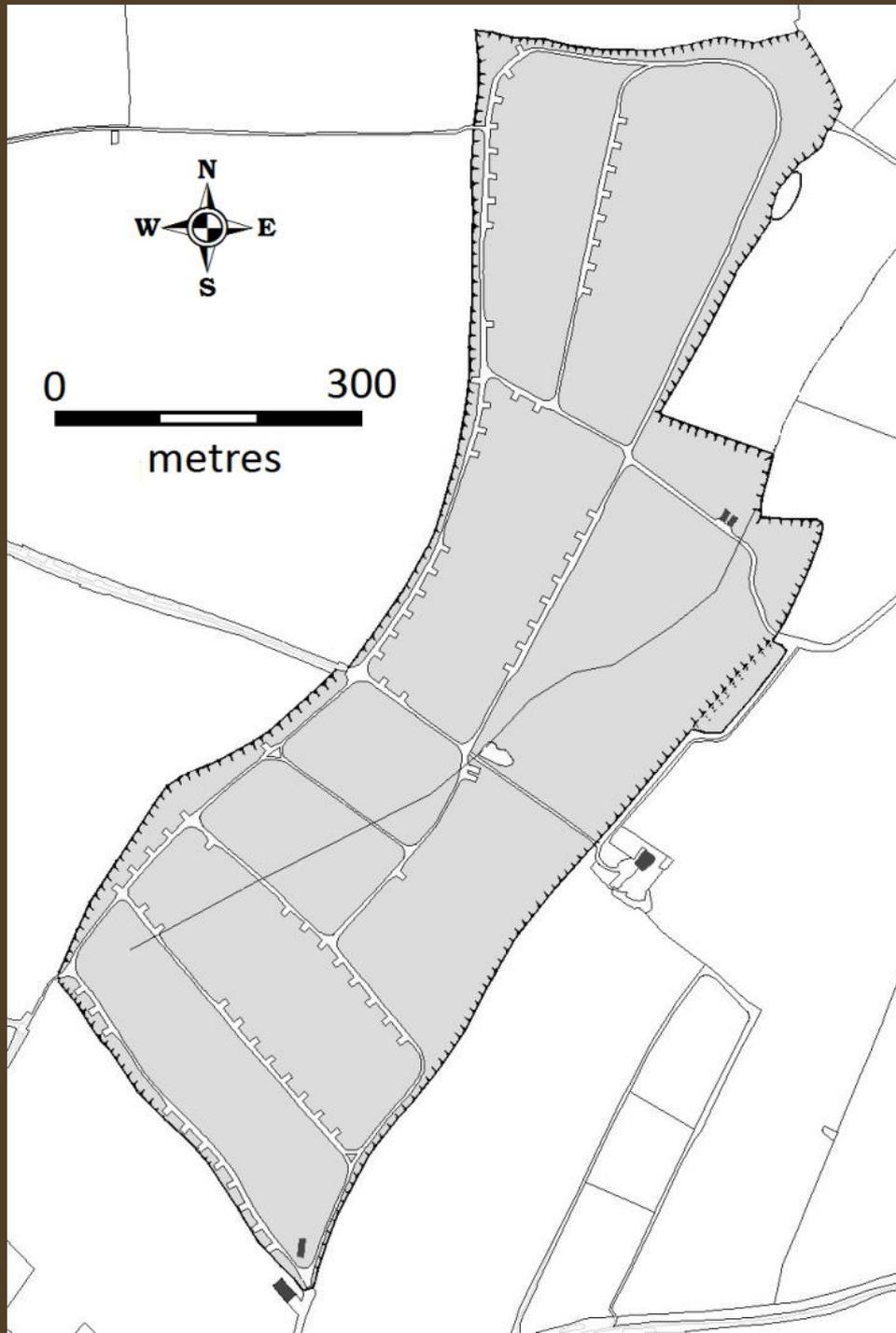
- A primary ancient woodland that has contracted progressively.

East Wood
Denton

Substantial woodbank at b & a.
Large bank at c .
Other boundaries minor.
South facing lynchets at f.
Parish boundary has large amounts of hornbeam.
Massive lynchets at g.
Major hollow way at h.

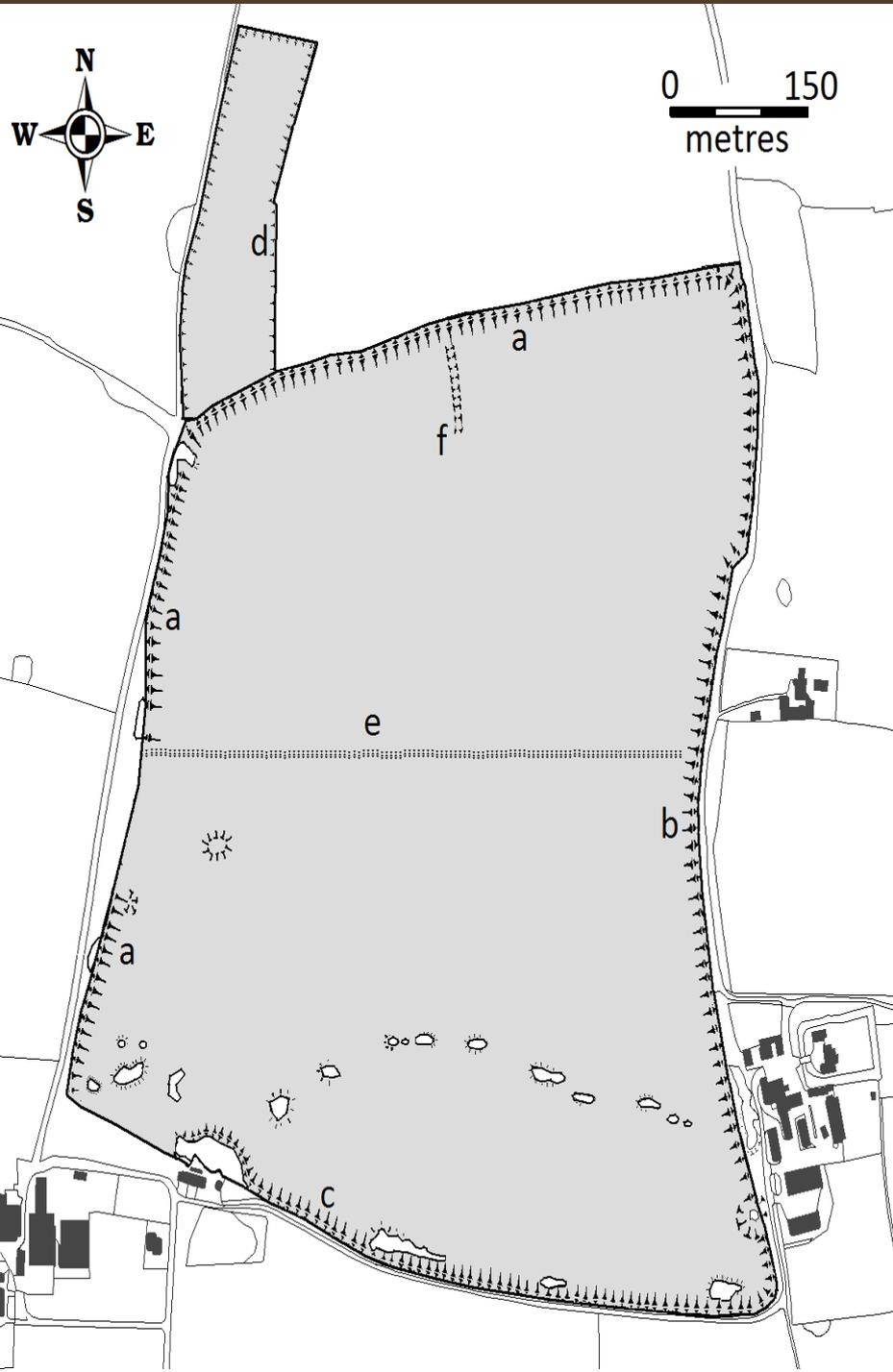


Sexton
Wood



A primary AW
contained within
thirteenth century
boundaries.

Note lack
of internal
earthworks



Tindall Wood

- a. Substantial woodbank.
- b & c smaller woodbanks.
- d later extension

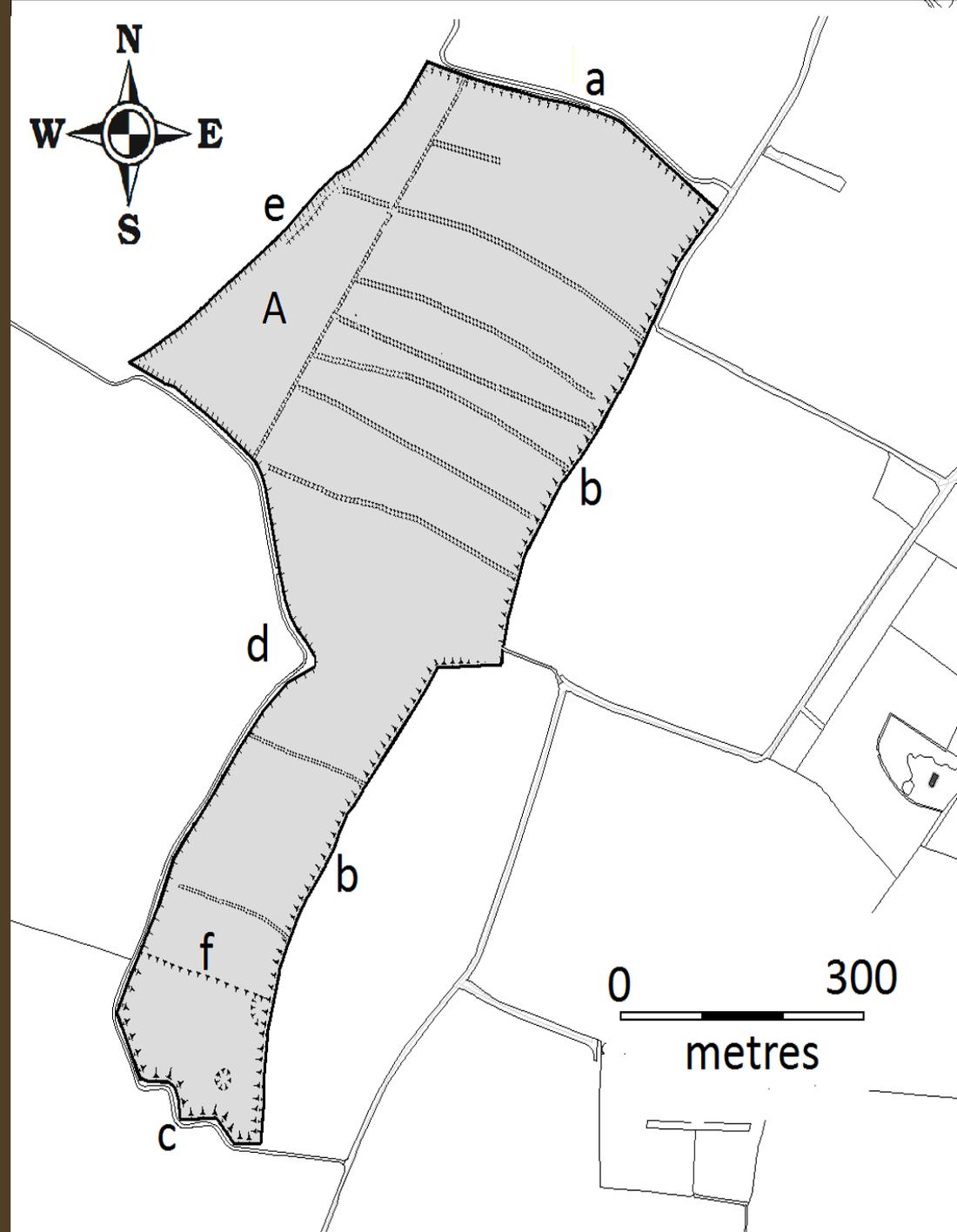
Maps of 1615, and 1816 show the same area as today and a description of 1270 describes the same area-104 acres.

Like Sexton a survey of 1270 suggests a coppice rotation of 16 years.

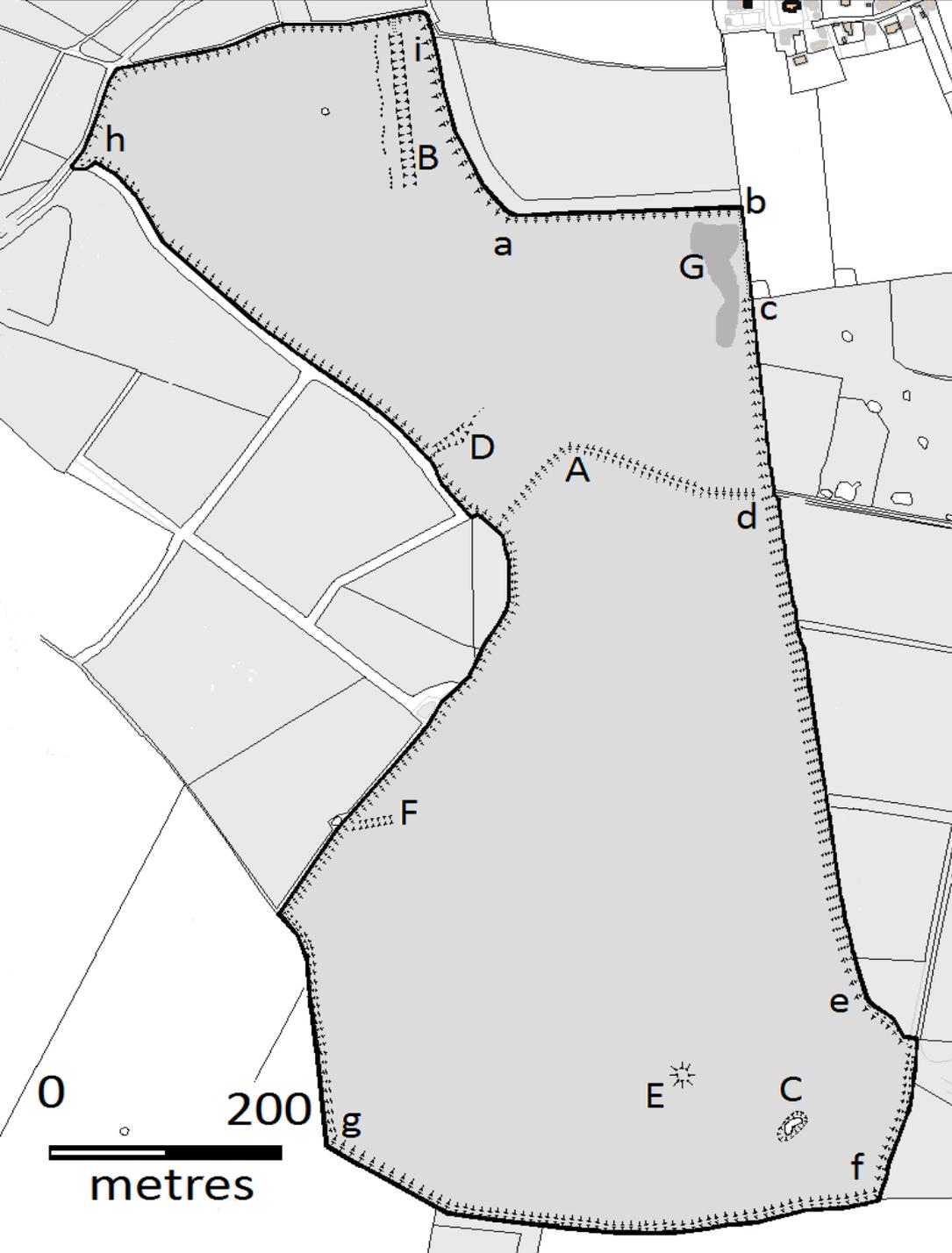
West
Bradenham
Great Wood

A. Shown as a field in 1880. As
woodland in 1840 and now.
b & c substantial woodbank
d smaller bank low to the south
e small but on parish boundary.
f lynchet.

Bank recorded as being built in
1226.



Swanton
Novers



A. subdivision of management or ownership
This woodland is primary in character but was clearly cut out of Stock Heath and Swanton Common so is a useful reminder of woodland origins-once being wood pasture. Faden shows Stock Heath to still be wood pasture in 1795.

Mixed soils.

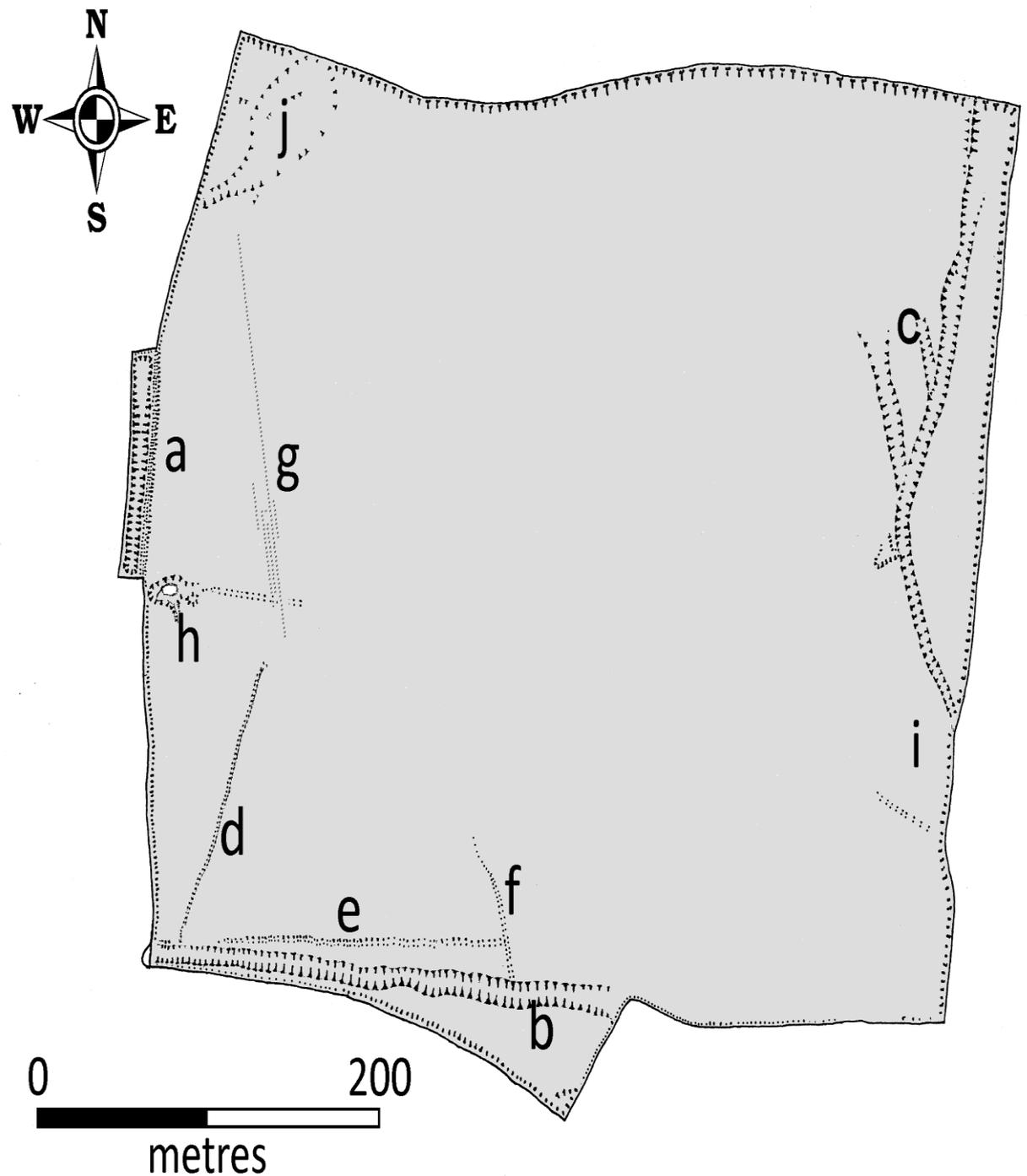
Sporle Wood

A primary wood heavily contracted with evidence in the form of hollow ways of early pastoral use. b is an unbanked hollow way.

Early maps show contraction from the south.

A 1472 survey shows a standards density of 6.9 per acre.

A document of 1750 shows that the density of standards had risen to 65 an acre.

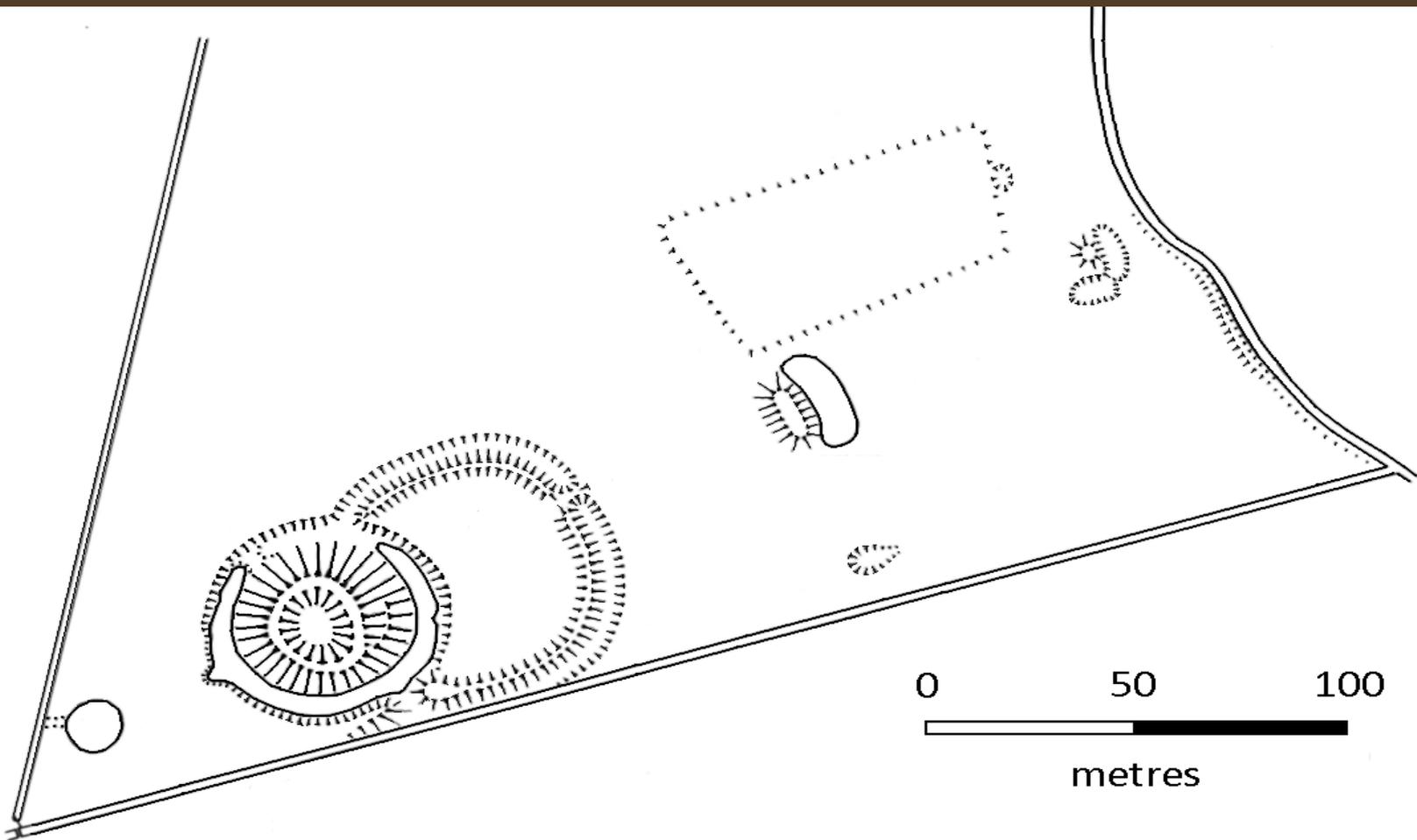


Large sites found when woods cleared

- Denton castle. Built in an area of “waste” subsequently engulfed by woodland.
- Horningtoft earthworks. A large medieval moated enclosure and residence later engulfed by woodland.

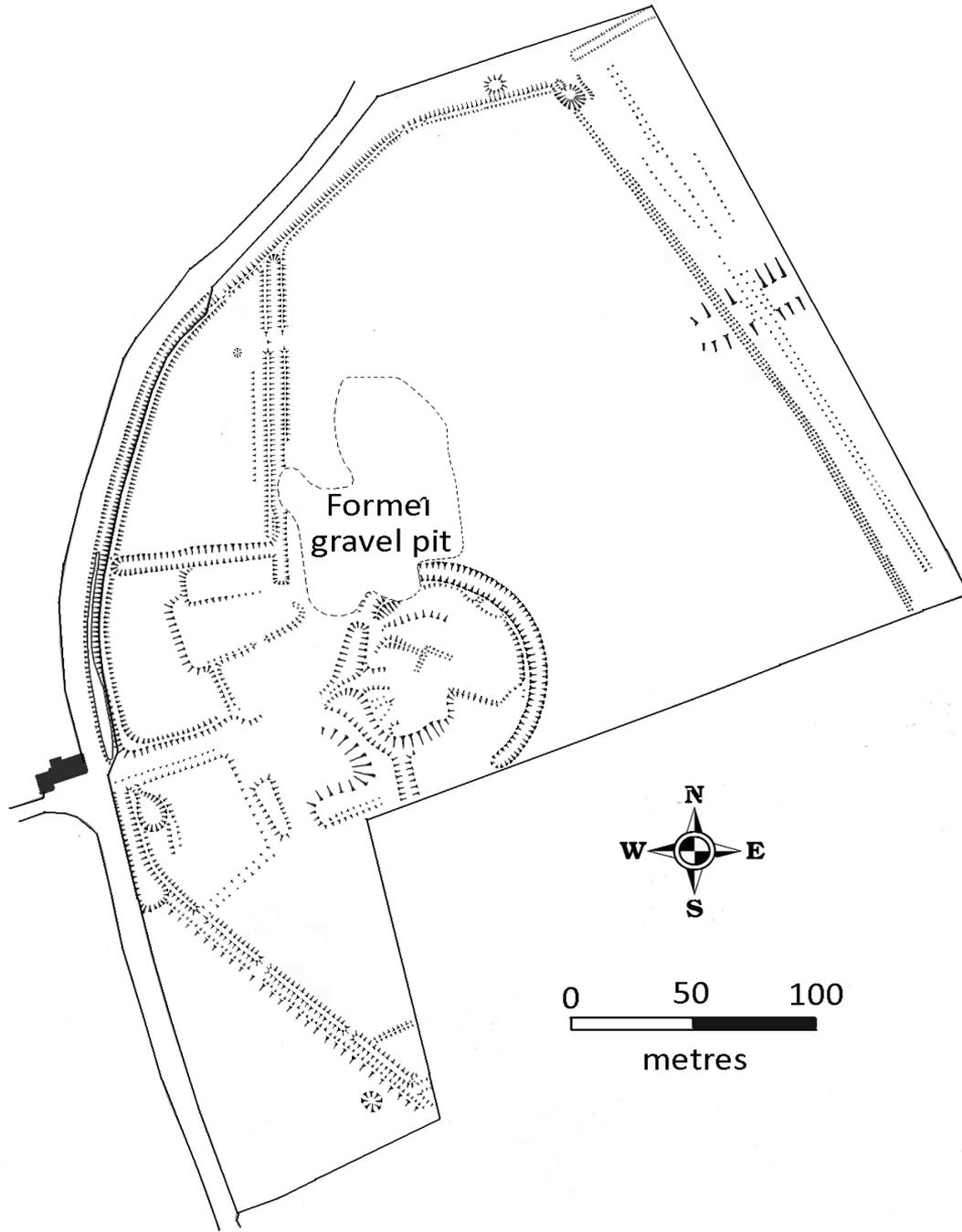
Denton Castle

Site cleared of woodland in 1850. Early Norman castle discovered. The absence of earthworks representing associated fields and closes suggest that the castle was built in a tract of undivided waste. The castle was then abandoned and the area enclosed and managed as coppice.



Horningtoft

Again, revealed by woodland clearance in the C19. Bounded by a substantial bank that formed the boundary of Horningtoft Great Wood which survives as a large fragment.



Pasture origins

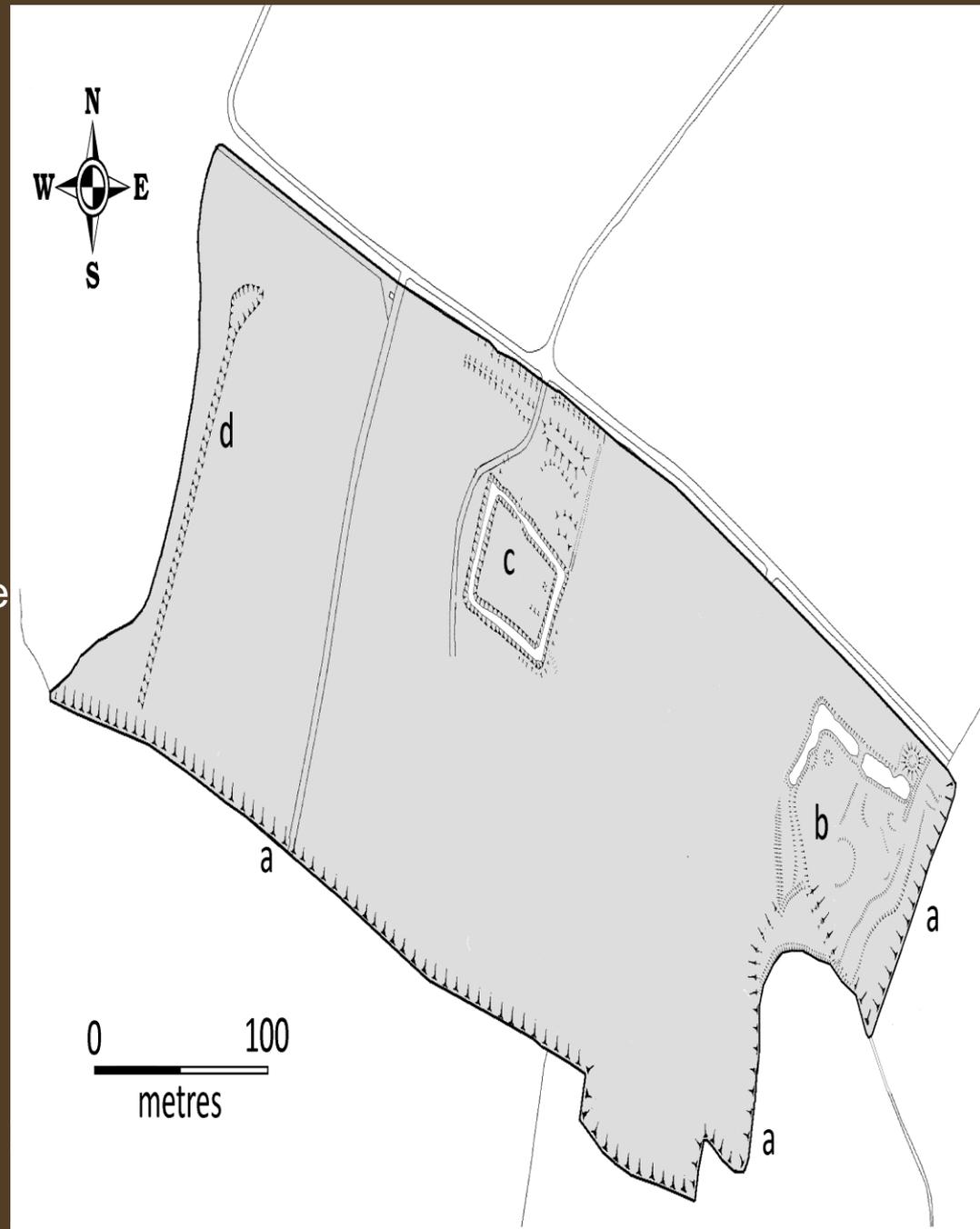
- A number of high-status sites within ancient woodland are broadly similar to Denton and Horningtoft. Those at Hedenham and Gawdy are engulfed manorial sites. Others, like Hethel, are more likely specialist manorial enclosures associated with the exploitation of the woodlands. Others like at Hales pre date the enclosed woodbank. Other sites, like at Hockering, appear to be associated with an alternative earlier use. In this case a deer park.

Woodrising moated site. Hazel Hurn

- a. Large woodbank
- b. Old moated enclosure
- c. Moated site
- d. Hollow way

The features all appear to be aligned

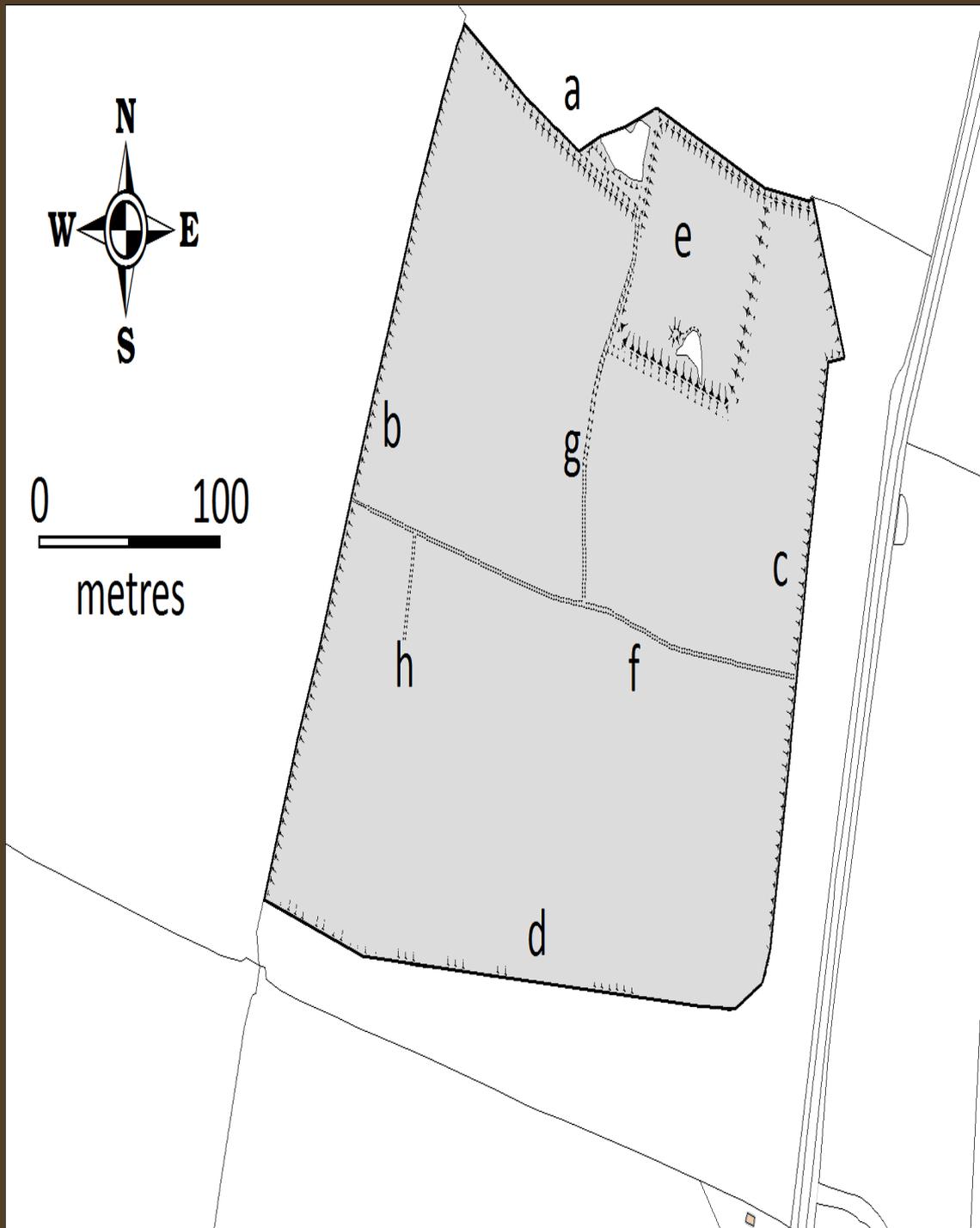
History. Perhaps all 3 woods were wood pasture until at least the C13. Accessed from the lower ground to the north, perhaps drove roads. Then they were enclosed as a single block. Then later cleared to form 3 woods.



Hales wood

a large wood bank
b & c Smaller but still big
banks . Straighter.
d Slight bank.
e. Substantial embanked
enclosure

This enclosure appears to
have been incorporated into
the woodland so predates the
enclosed wood. Perhaps it
relates to former wood pasture
use.

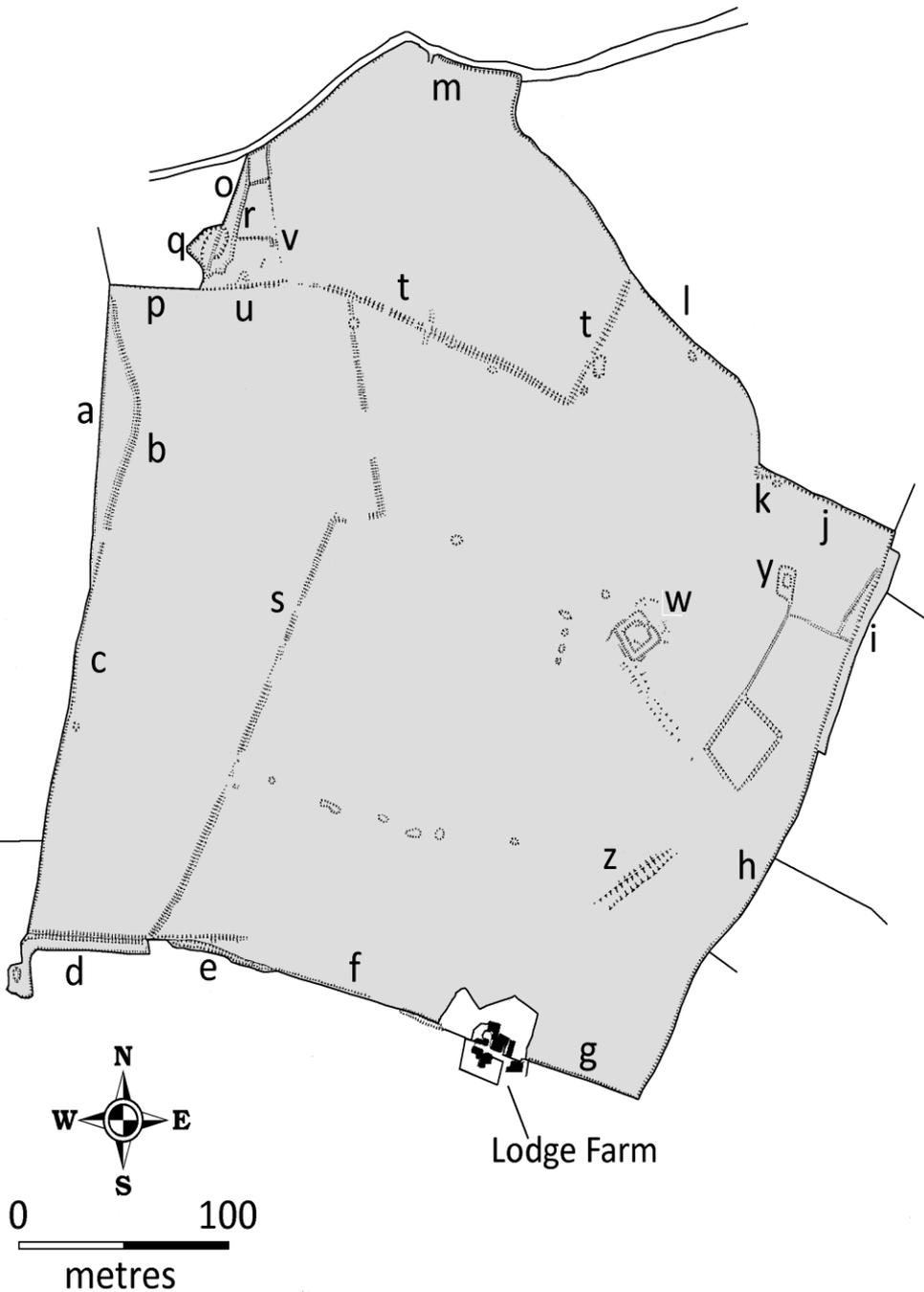


Hockering Wood

Might have been all or part of medieval deer park recorded in 1360. Foxley and Hevingham also originated as deer parks.

b original woodbank
s & t former boundaries
w moated site

The various internal boundaries may have functioned as boundaries of coppiced areas within the compartmentalised park.



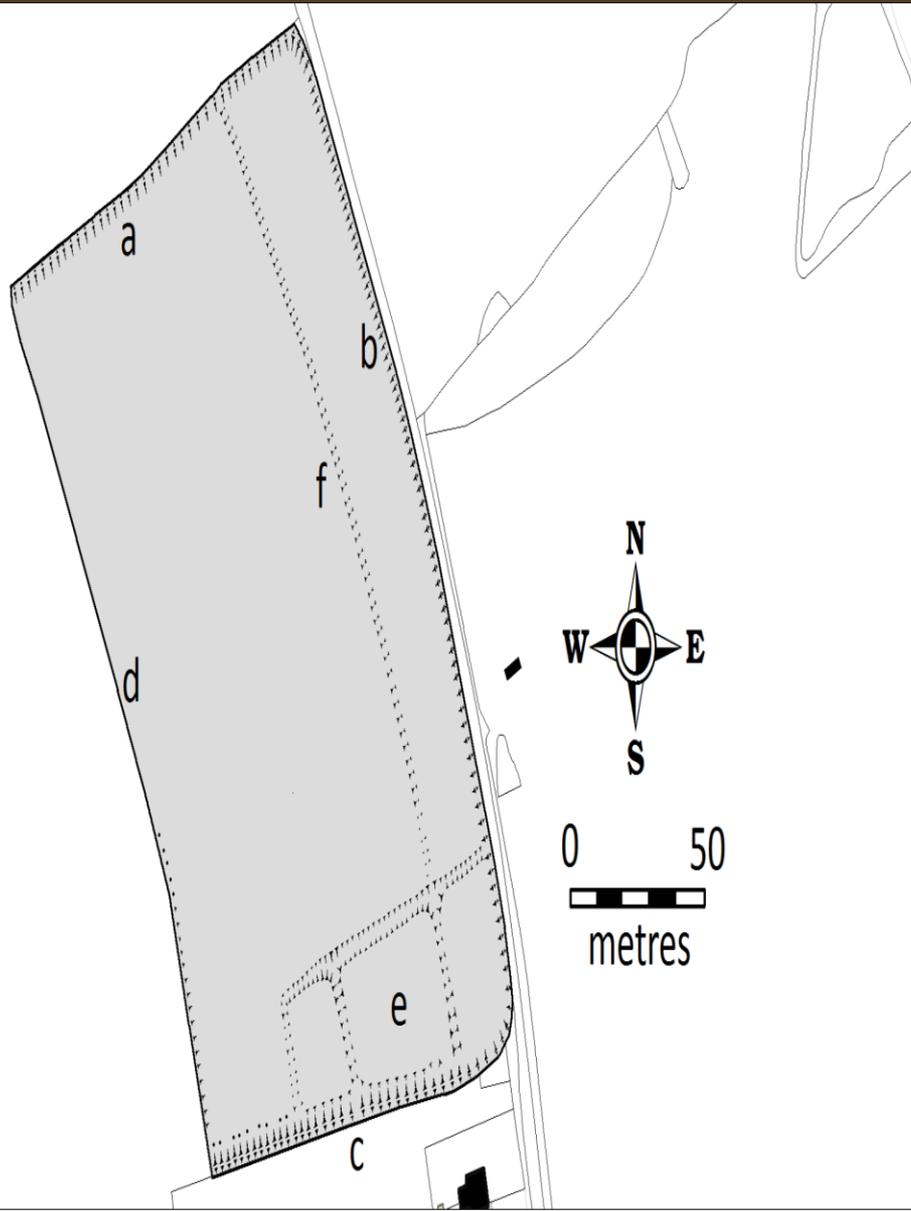
Hockering: Woodbank marooned within the wood by expansion beyond original external woodbank.





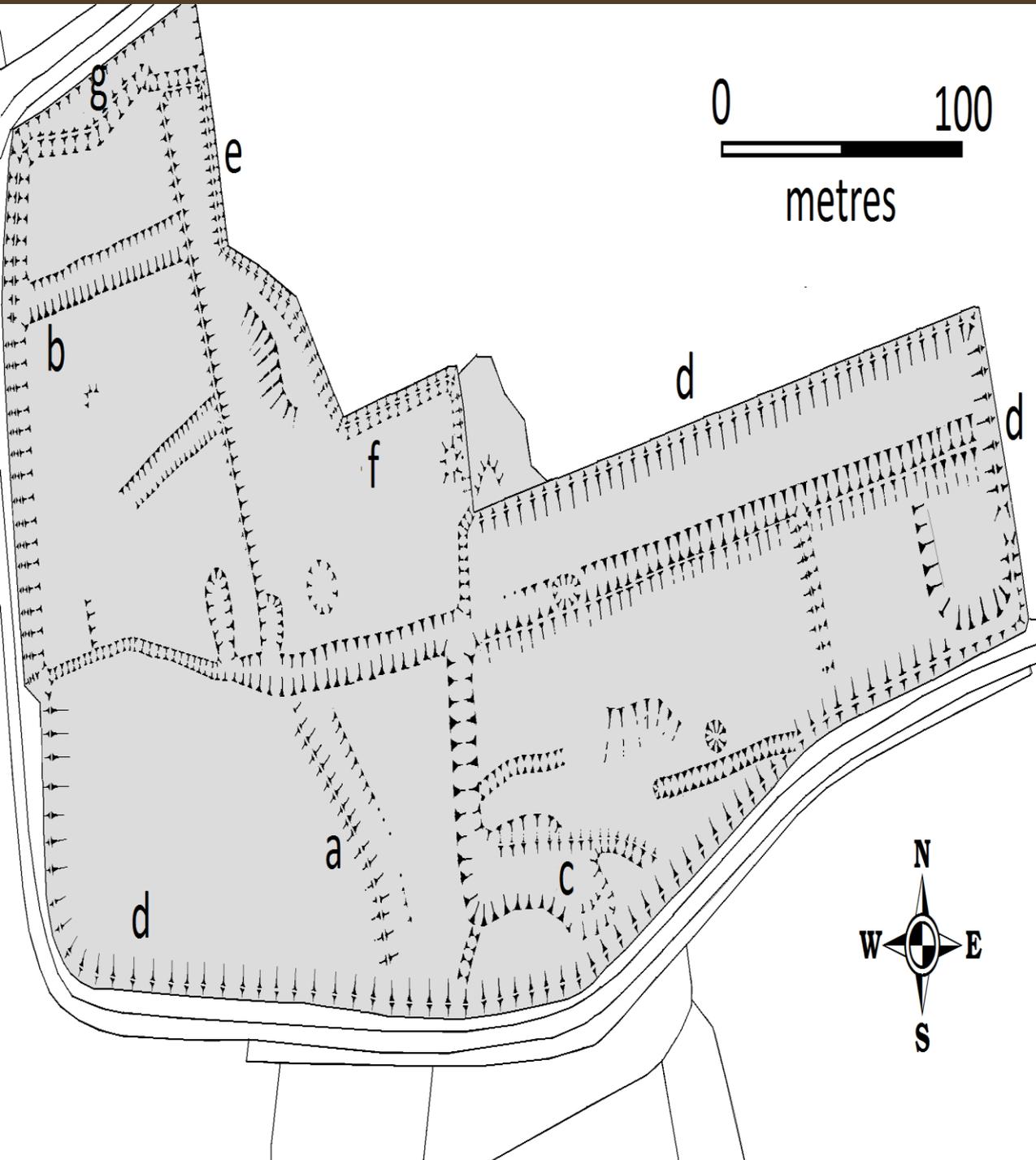
Secondary Ancient Woodland

Beckett's Wood. Woodton



Small external banks.
e Enclosures. Perhaps abandoned tofts.

Secondary woodland. The N & E boundaries are of late medieval origin. The S & W realigned as late as the C19. Includes a large number of ancient woodland indicators.



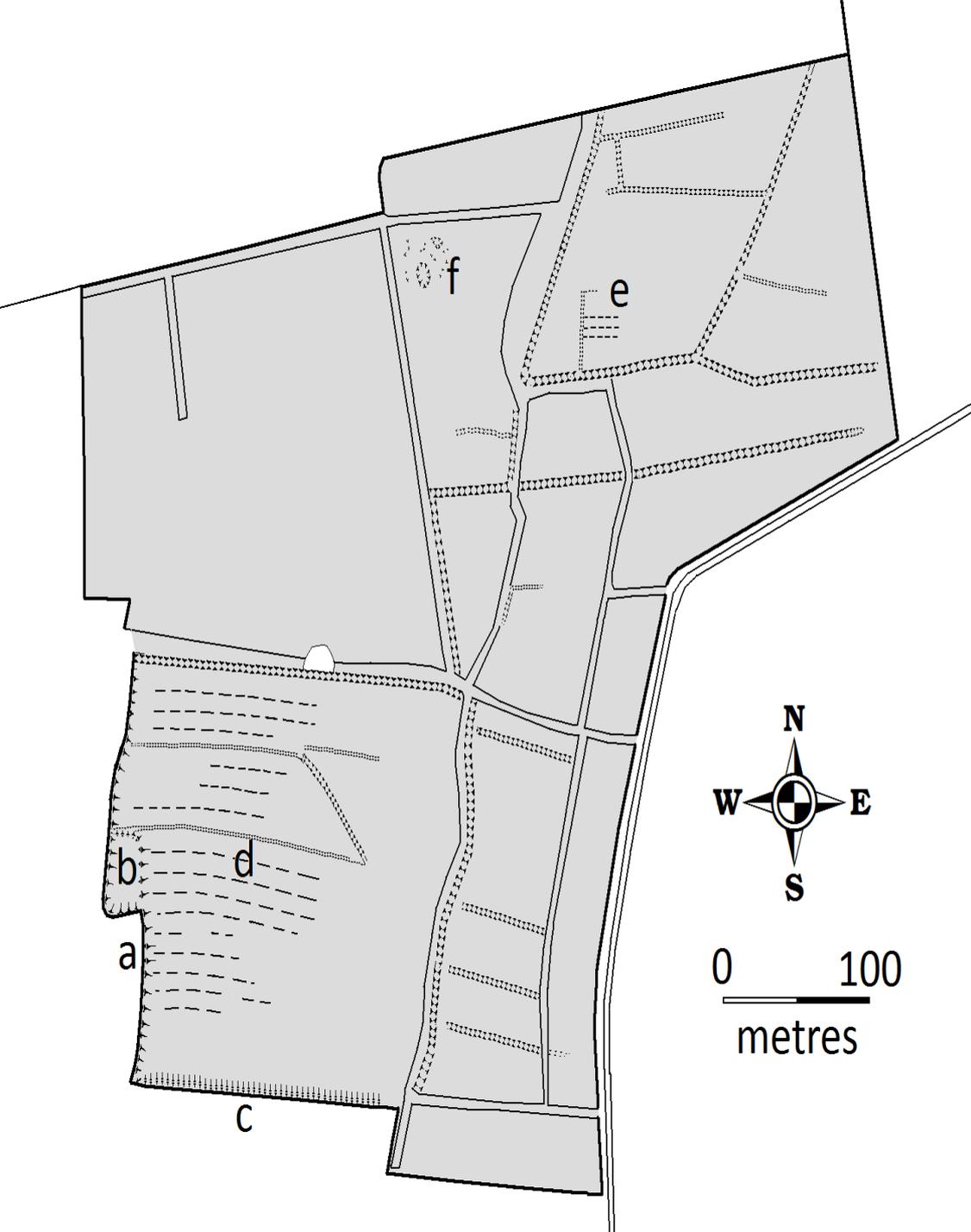
Tivetshall Wood

An ancient secondary wood with a complex settled and industrial past.

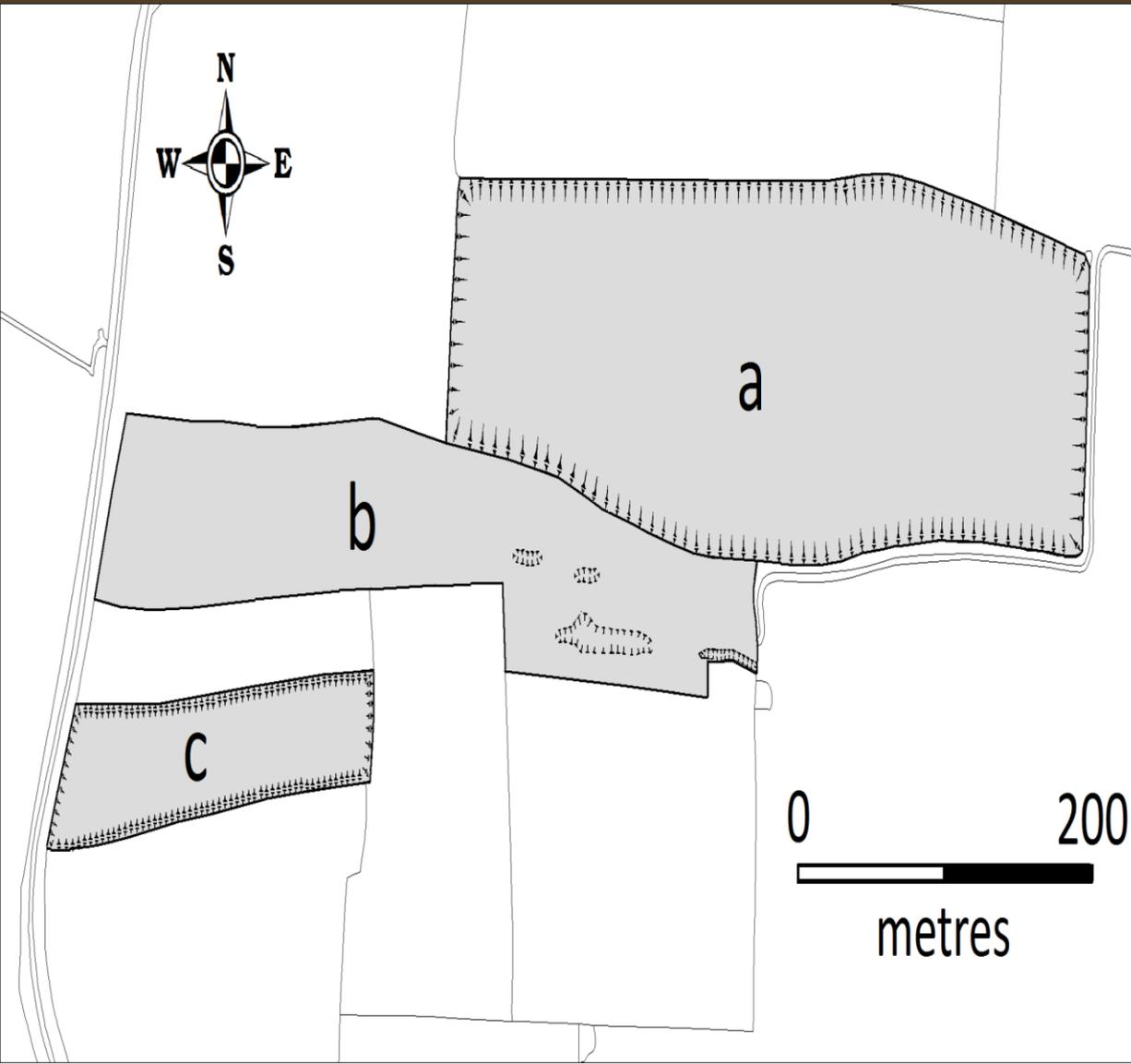
Flora includes a number of ancient woodland indicators.

Toomers
Wood

Secondary Woodland.
Domesday Vill.



Winter's Grove

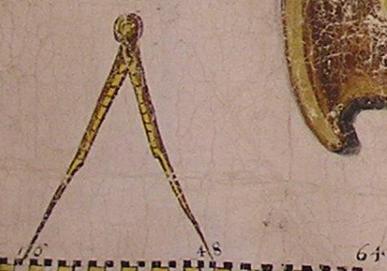


Probably secondary.
c does not appear in 1838.
b Largely open ground in 1880
a is older but sits within the pattern of field boundaries which are the result of early modern piecemeal enclosure.

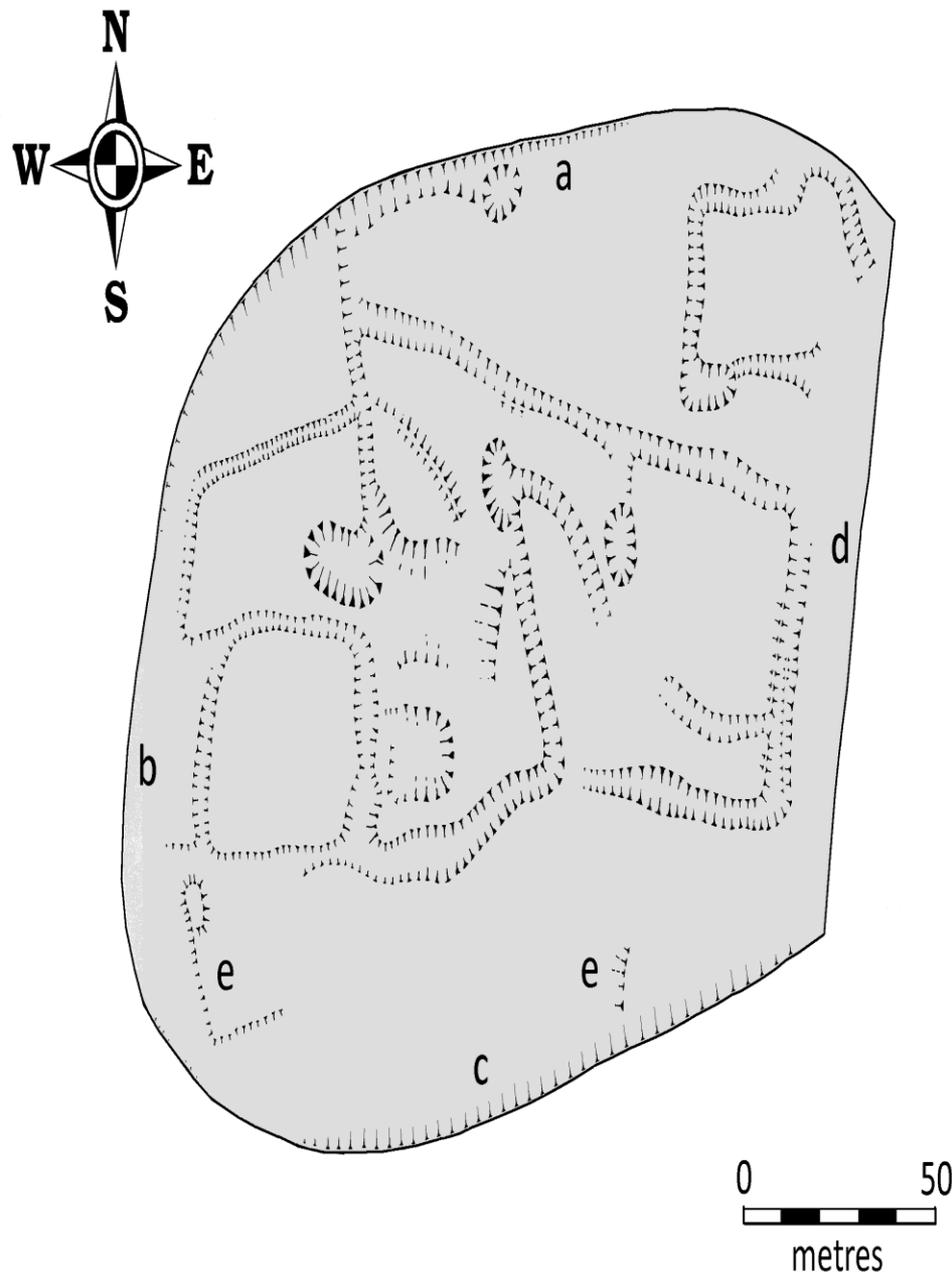


ANTIENTHOMIAN GROUNDS.

A true Description of the Demesnes of the
 Manour of Hedenham, in the County of Norfolk.
 in the Possession of Phillip Bedingfield, Esquire & Meader
 of Acres & Arable grounds & Cantons together 234
 acres & Woods 60 acres & Total sum of the
 Demesnes 294 Acres measured by
 me Thomas Waterman.



Scala. Perticarum. 1617.



Small woodbanks to north and south.

b has a marked lynchet.

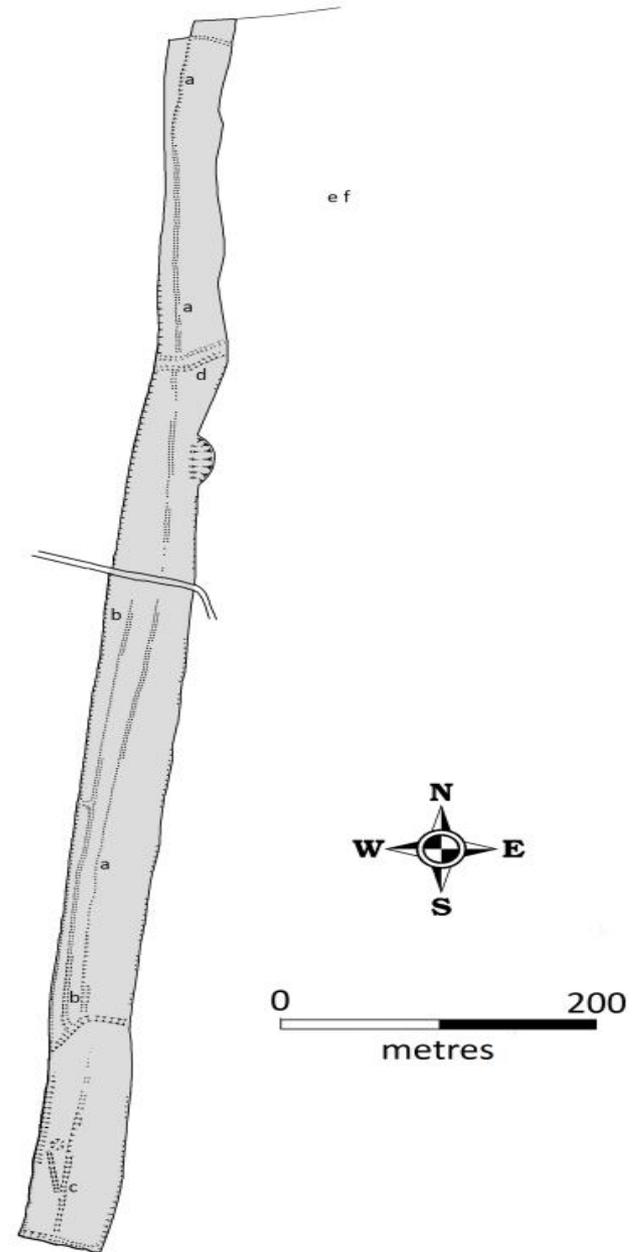
d was realigned after 1838.

A complex series of earthworks covering a range of periods.

Woodland probably grew up over the earthworks which could not be ploughed.

Long Row. Hedenham

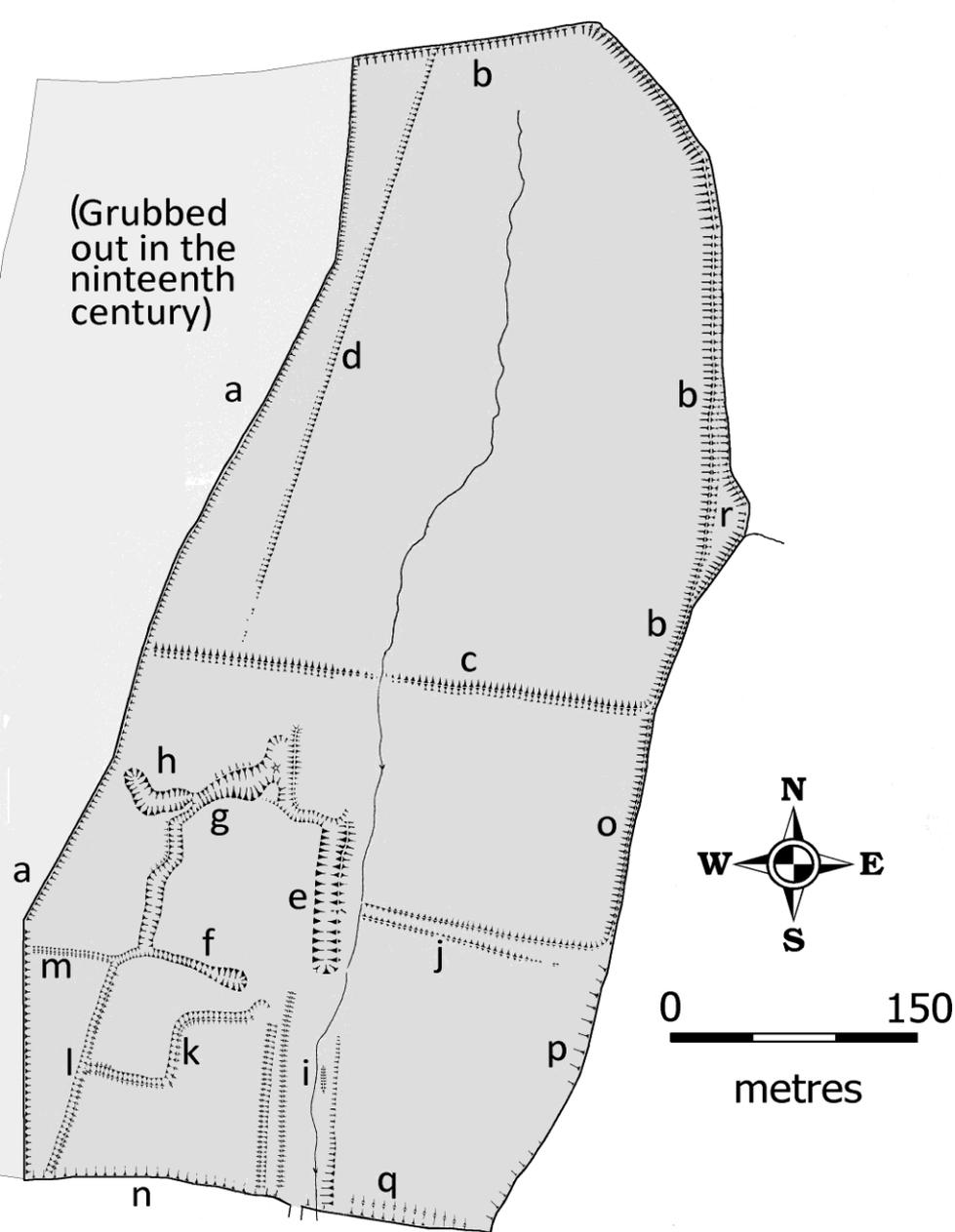
Appears to be a former lane or Drove Way which was abandoned and became overgrown in the medieval period. The wood was then enclosed and managed by coppicing.





Hedenham Wood

Hedenham Wood



Earthworks complex shows former high status residence. j approaches Hell's Yard which is now woodland. (hall yard) r large new wood bank added-why?

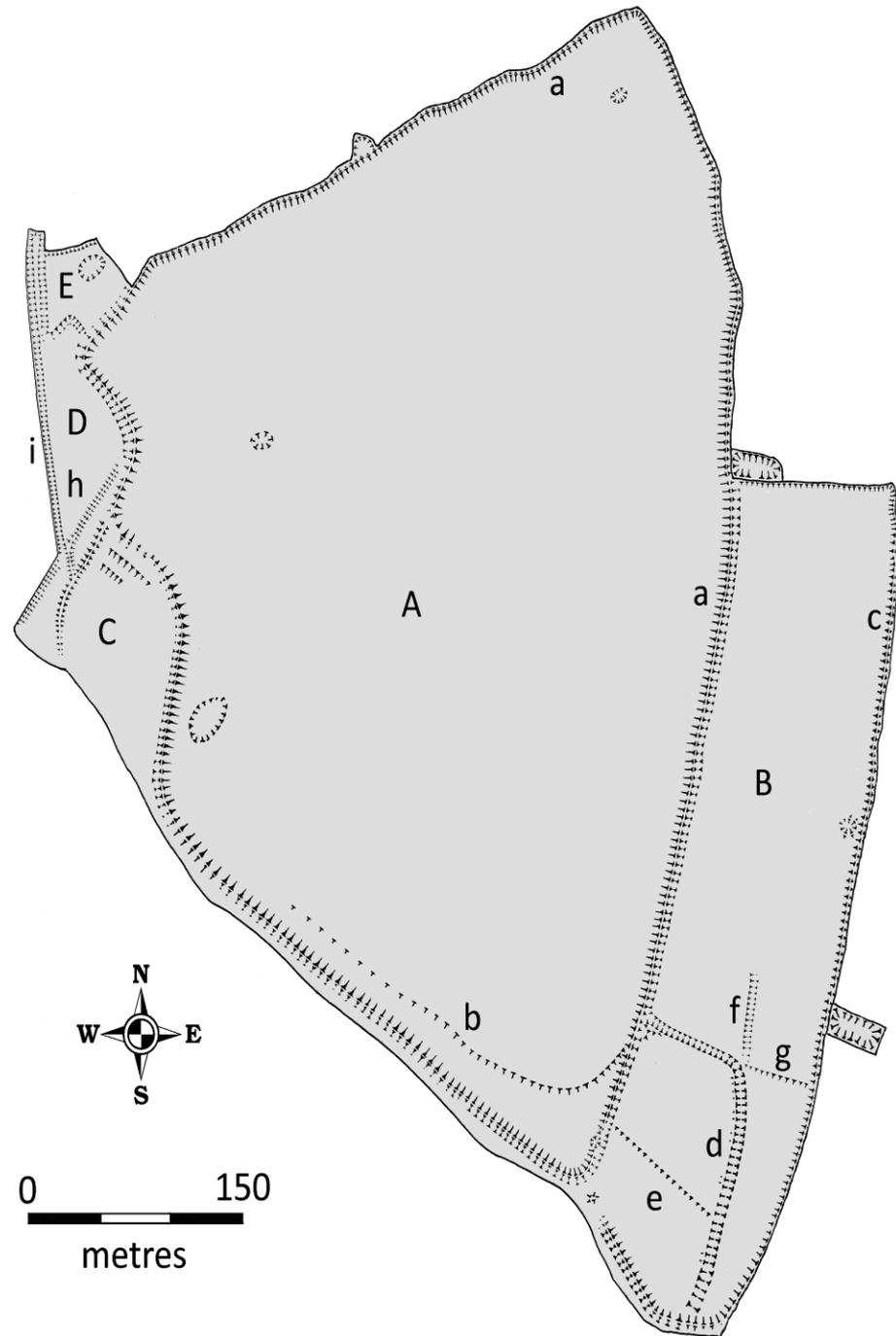
The wood appears to have expanded south then contracting from the west.

Wayland Wood

Split in to several ownerships and of different ages and vegetation. g is a lynchet. South of which is Mounteney's Wood.

B the Nab. A 1593 document refers to it as enclosed pasture or woodland.

C & D still later extentionts.

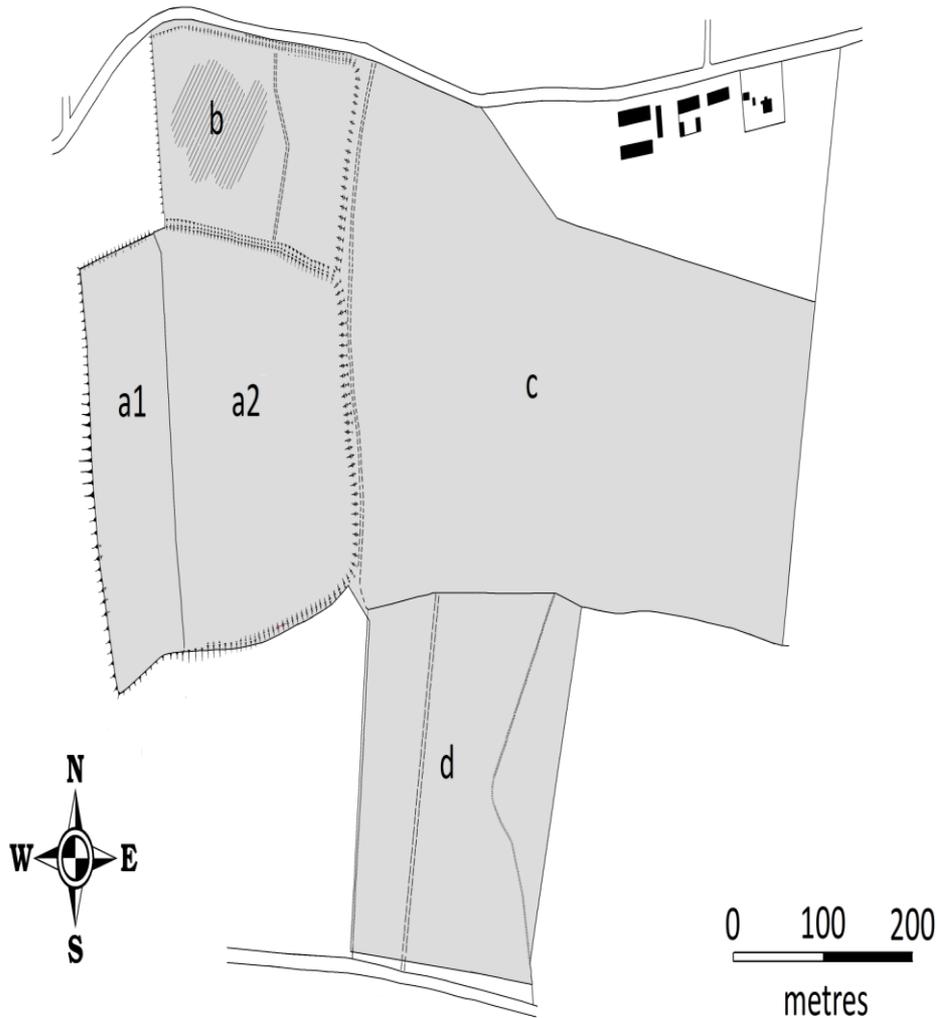




Pulham Big Wood

Complexities of expansion and contraction.

Little Wood Edgefield



A small area of medieval woodland which expanded north over common land (b) in the late medieval period and then east over the heath in the C18 and C19.

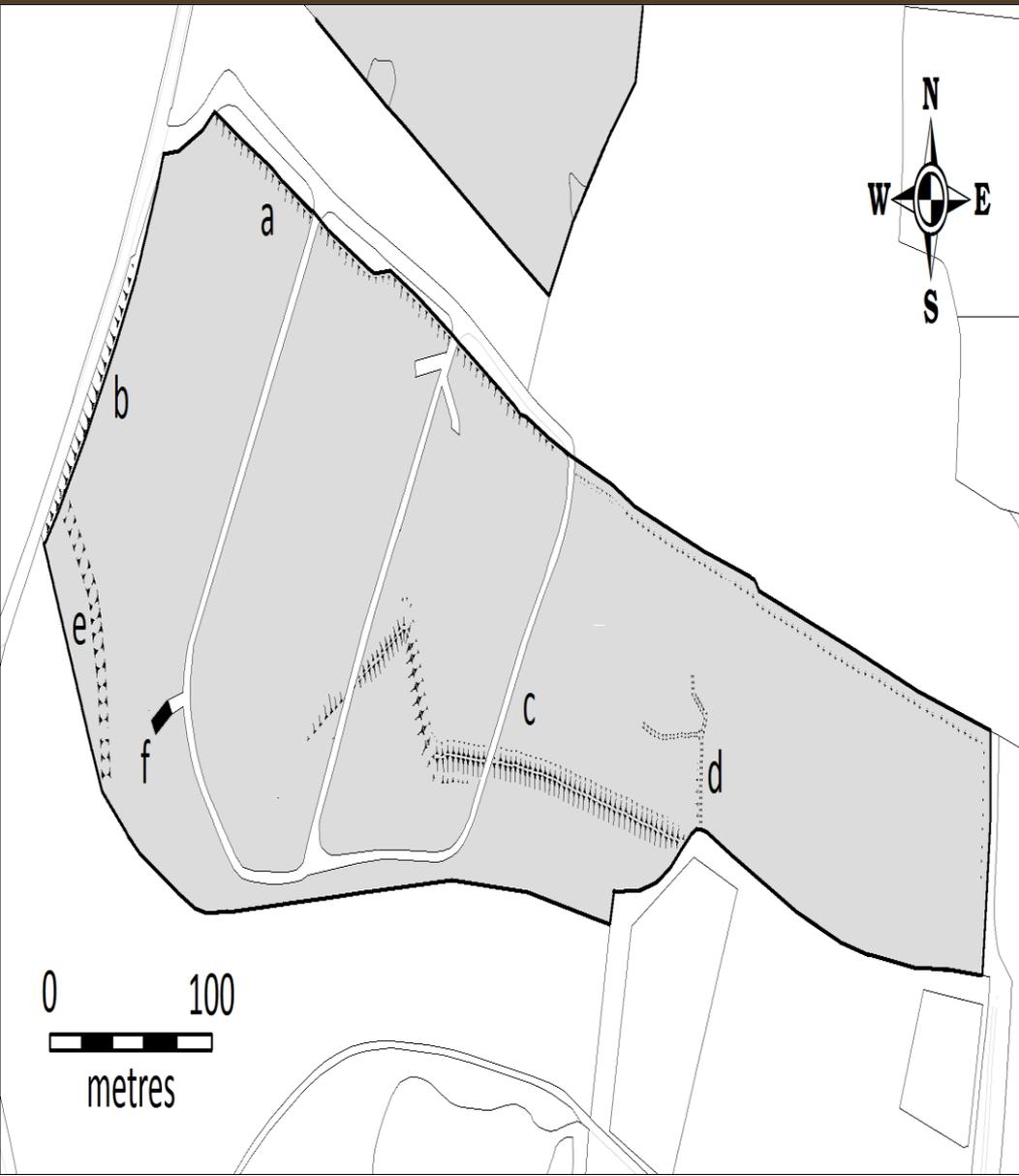
Little Wood Edgefield



Edgefield Little Wood

- Lynchet.
- Massive oak stools.

Earsham Great Wood



c former external woodbank, suggesting that the core of the wood once was to the south. The coppice structure and ground flora appear the same throughout the wood.

Hook Wood Morley



Shown on 1629 map, called Park Wood.

Sth, est and wst-small woodbank. Simple ditch to nth.

Field to nth described as stubbs wood in 1629.

Earlier woodbank in middle.

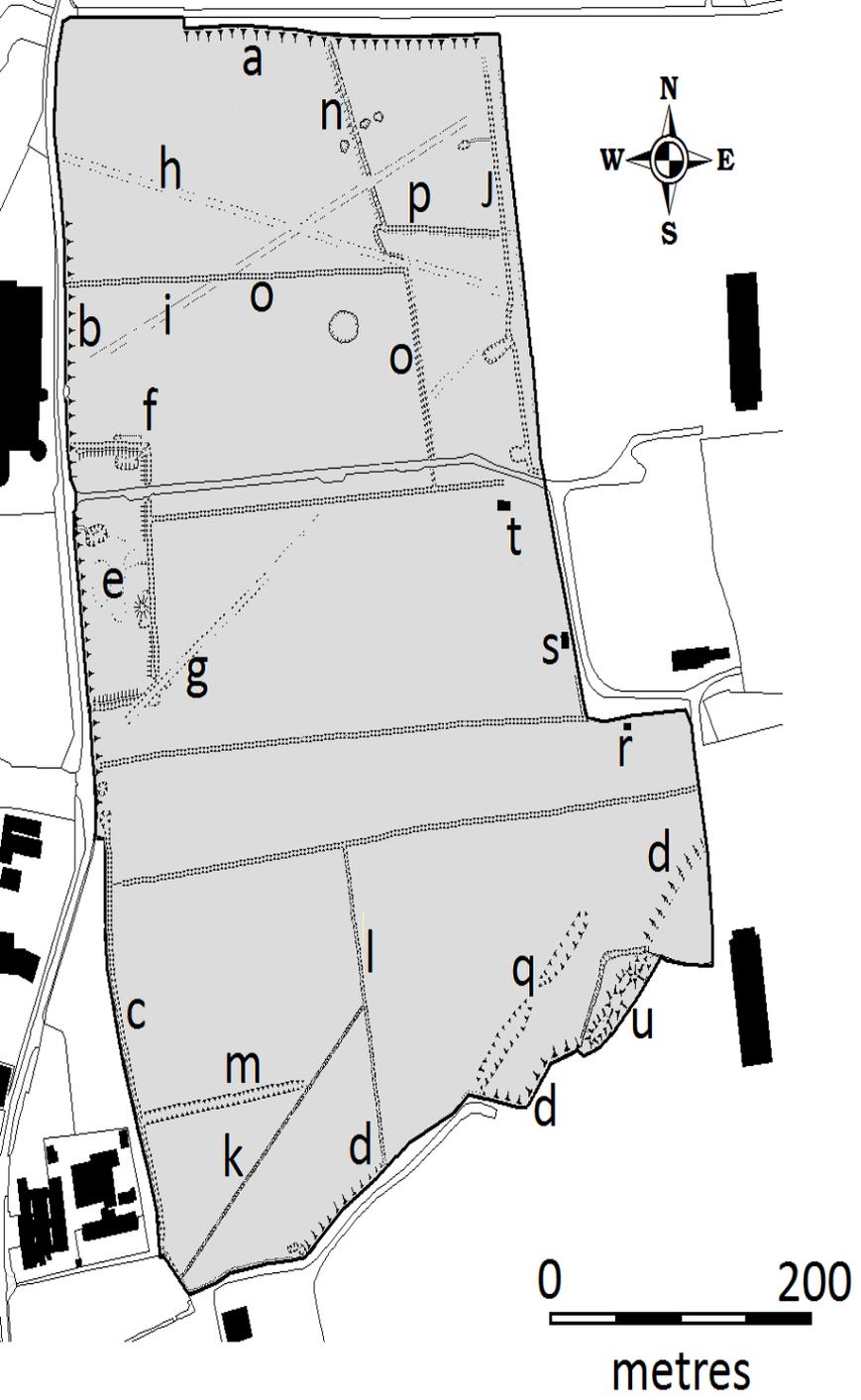
Perhaps predating the park.

Lynchet to east, possible early-Roman?-arable use.

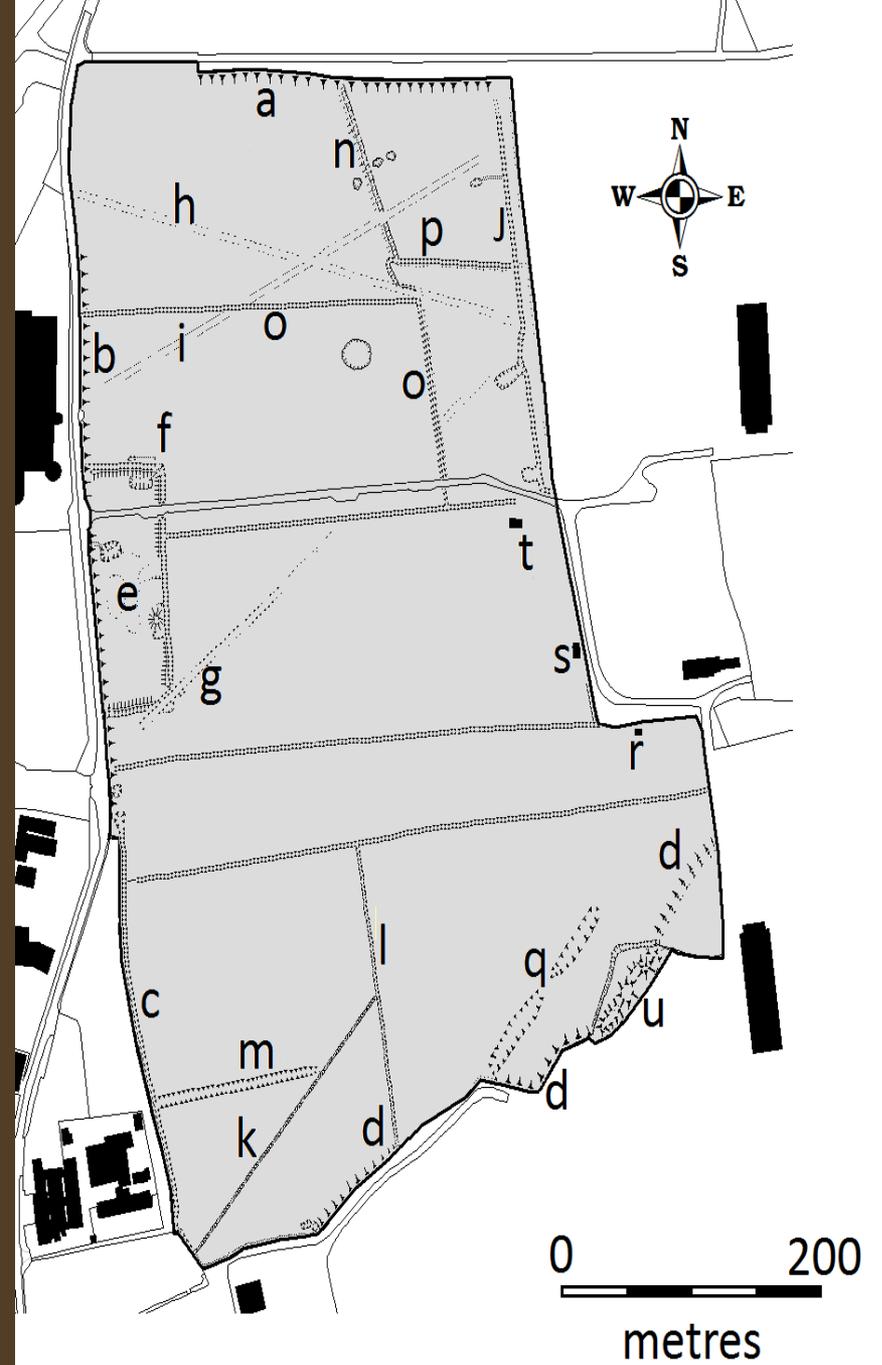
Hethel Wood

Largely primary.

A complex woodland overlain with much WWII archaeology. e is an enclosure including a probable fish pond and mound that could be a dove house. Established after the western boundary was banked. Perhaps the remains of the woodwards accomodation.

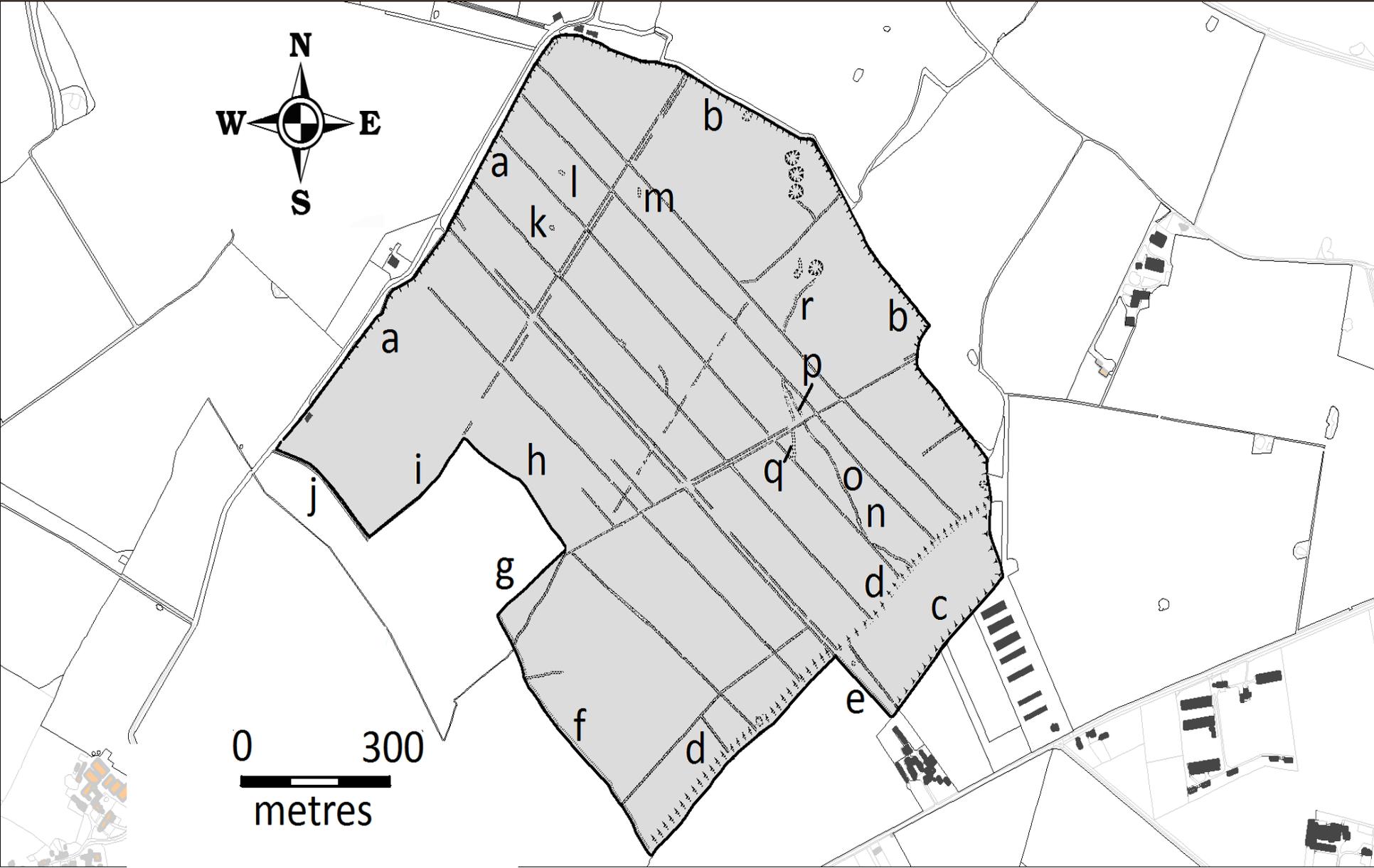


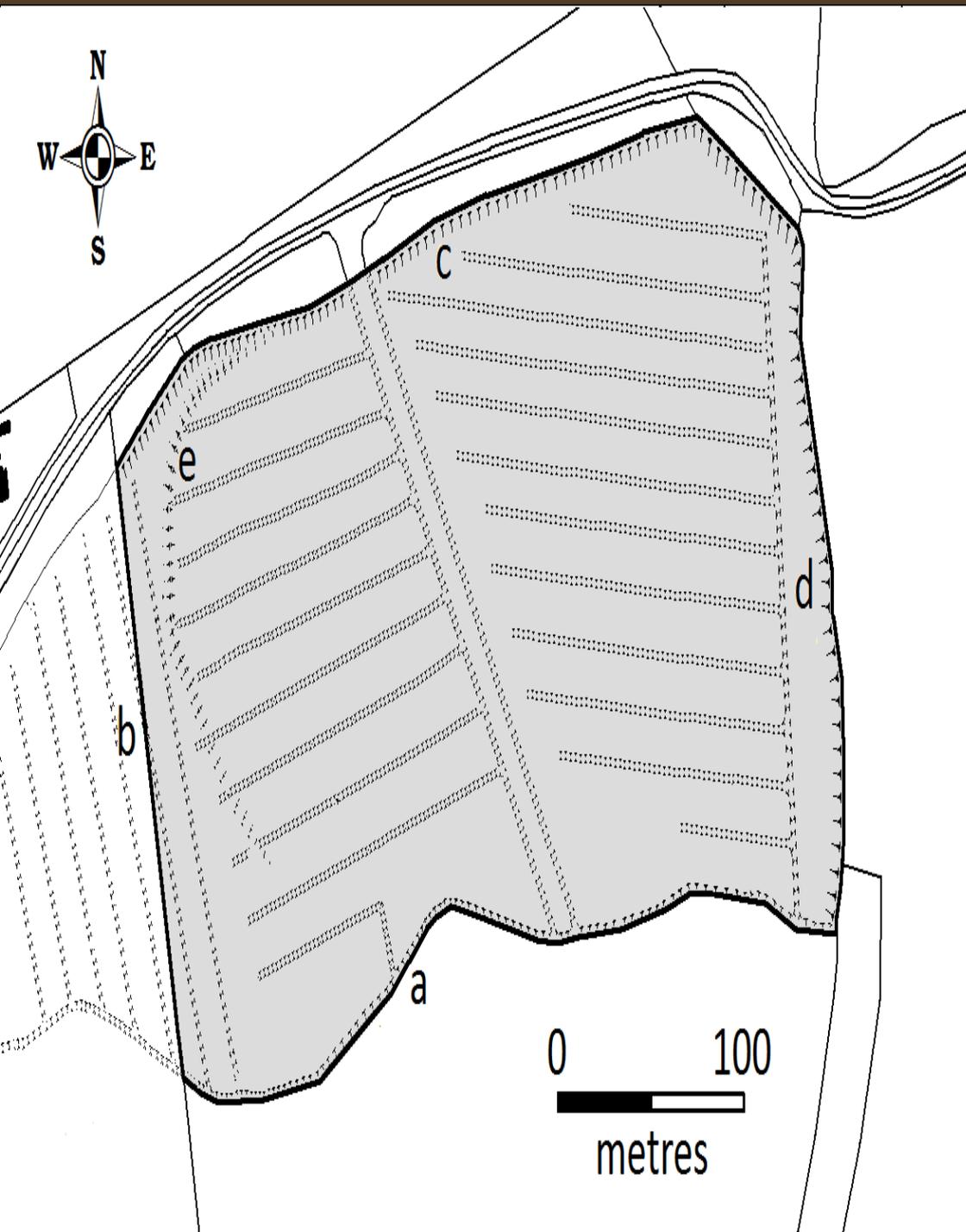
Hethel
Wood.
Avenues
shown as
earthworks



Foxley Wood

Drainage ditches.





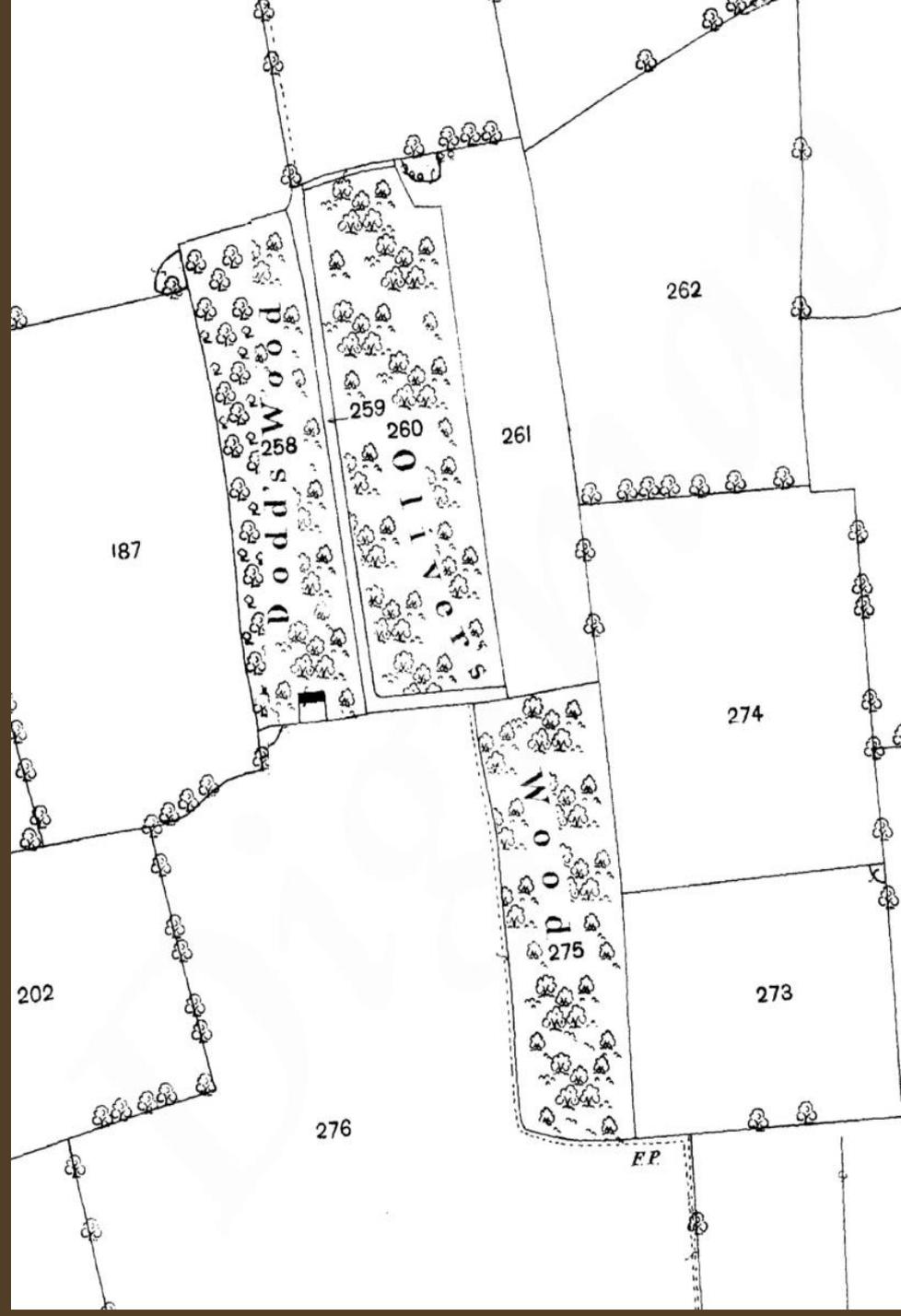
Horningtoft

e former boundary bank.

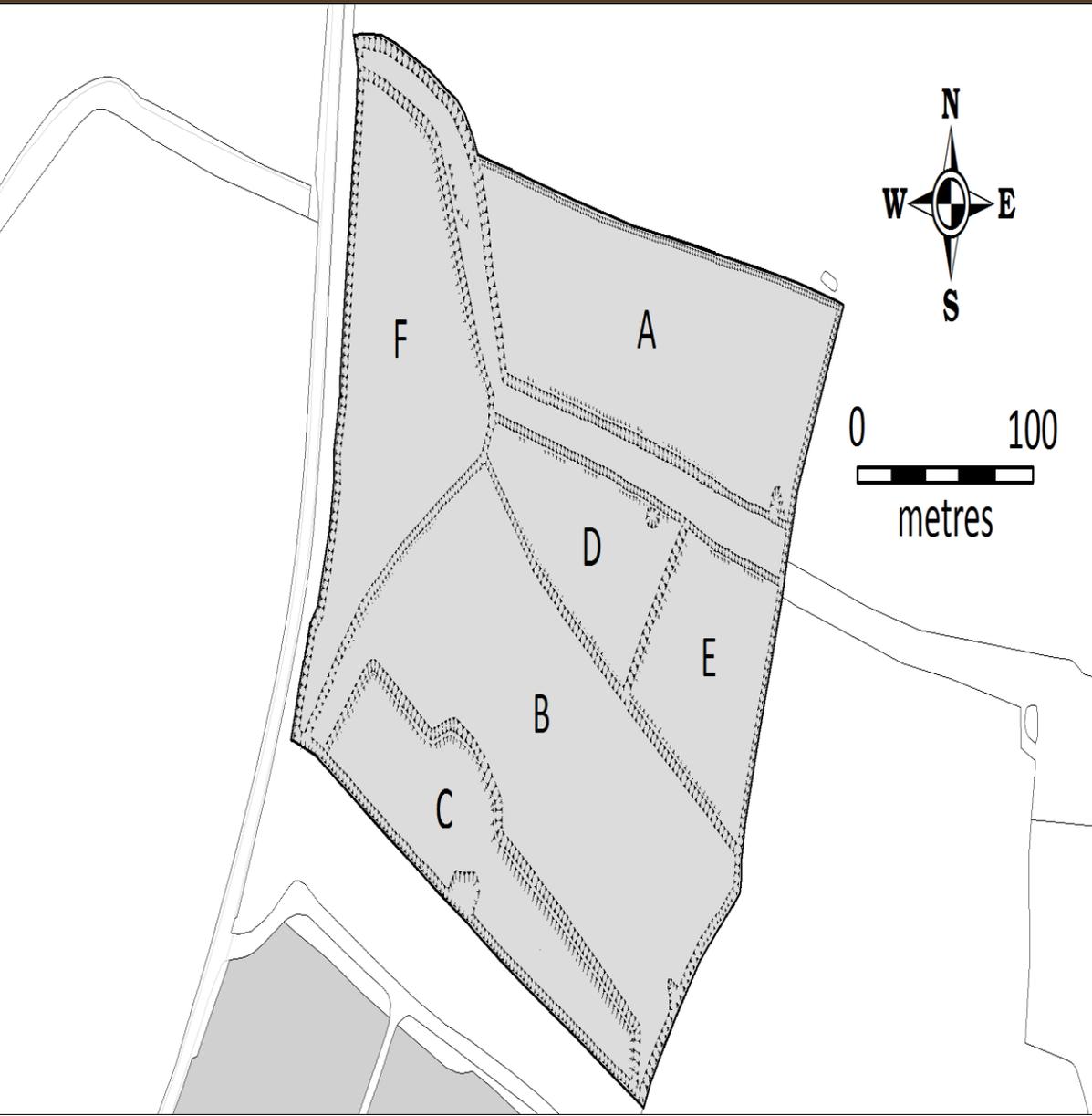
Pseudo Ancient Woodland

Pseudo-ancient
woods. Dodd's
and Oliver's
Wood planted in
C18

Fits in to the co-
axial field
system.
Does not appear
on 1797 map,
but does by
1825.



America Wood Earsham.



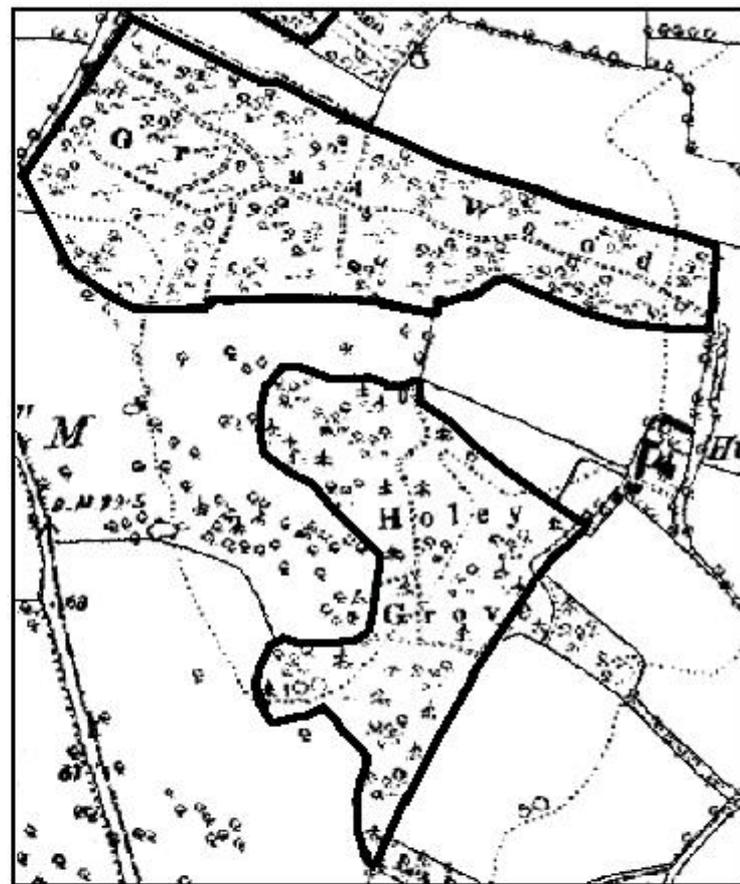
D, E, F. Much of the wood not there in 1840 and 1880.

C unwooded in 1770 map.

No large wood bank.

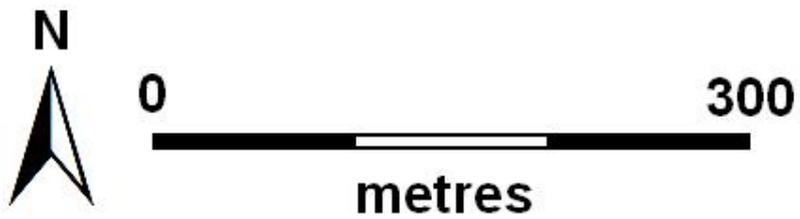
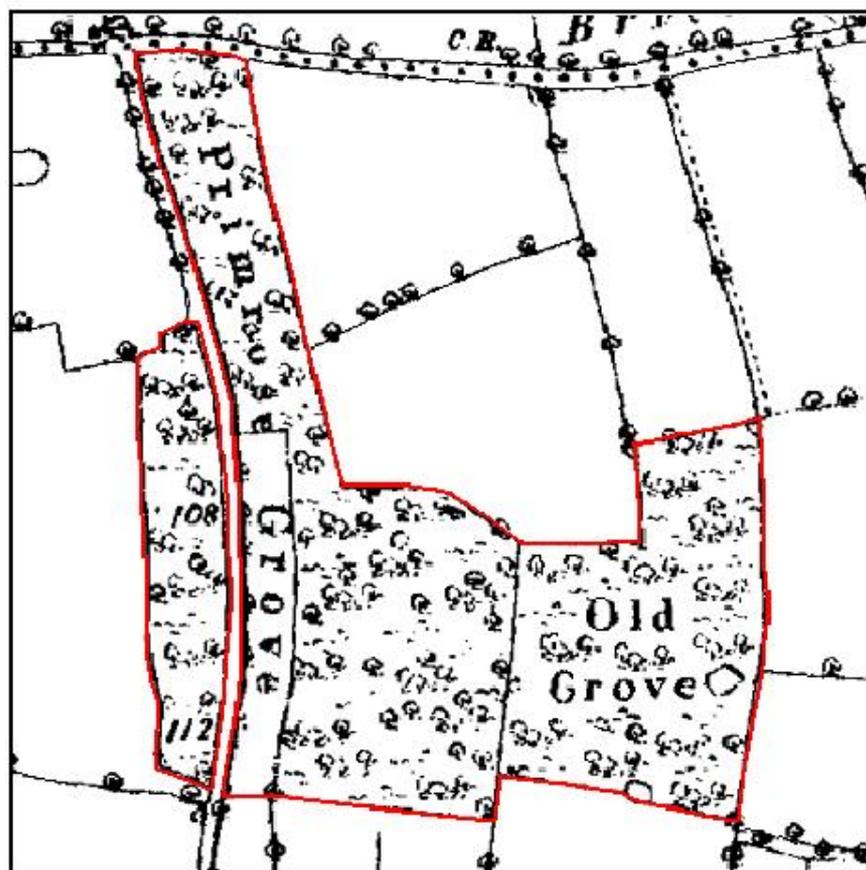
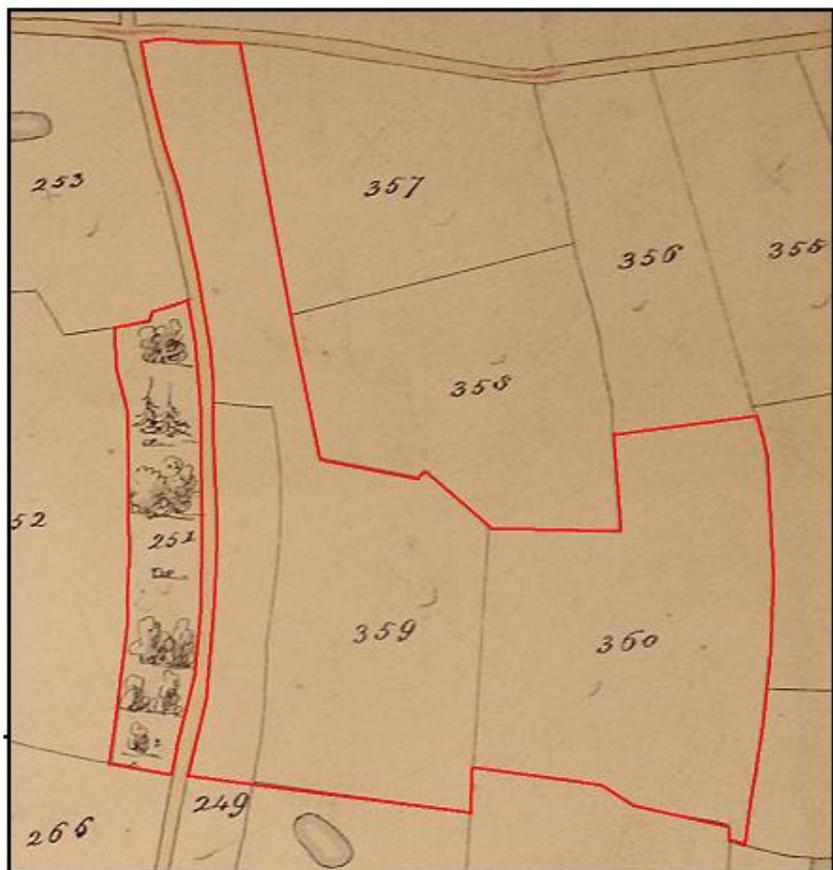
Planted in stages.
Plenty of woodland indicators

Earsham Wood. On the AWI. Not on this 1712 map

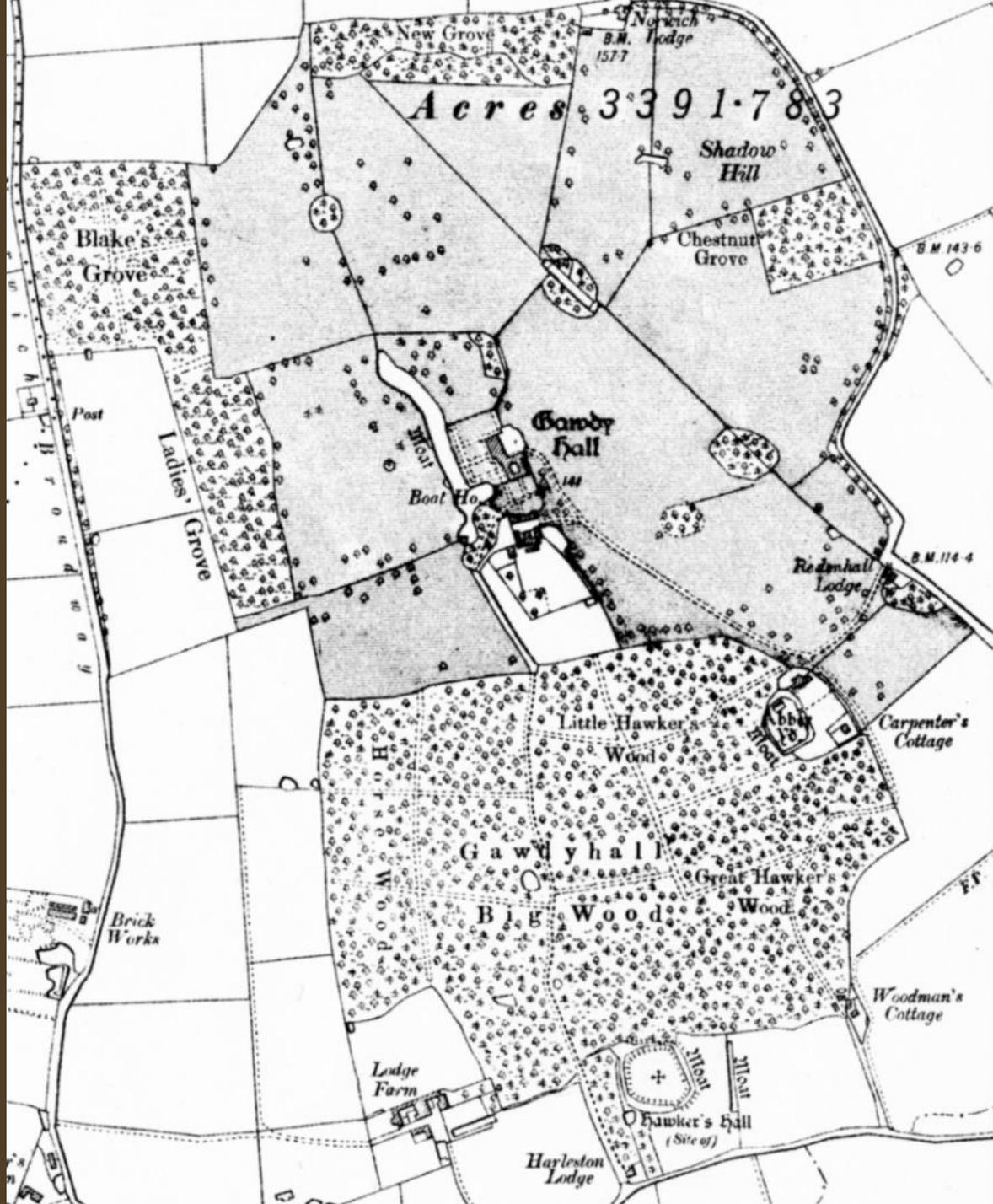


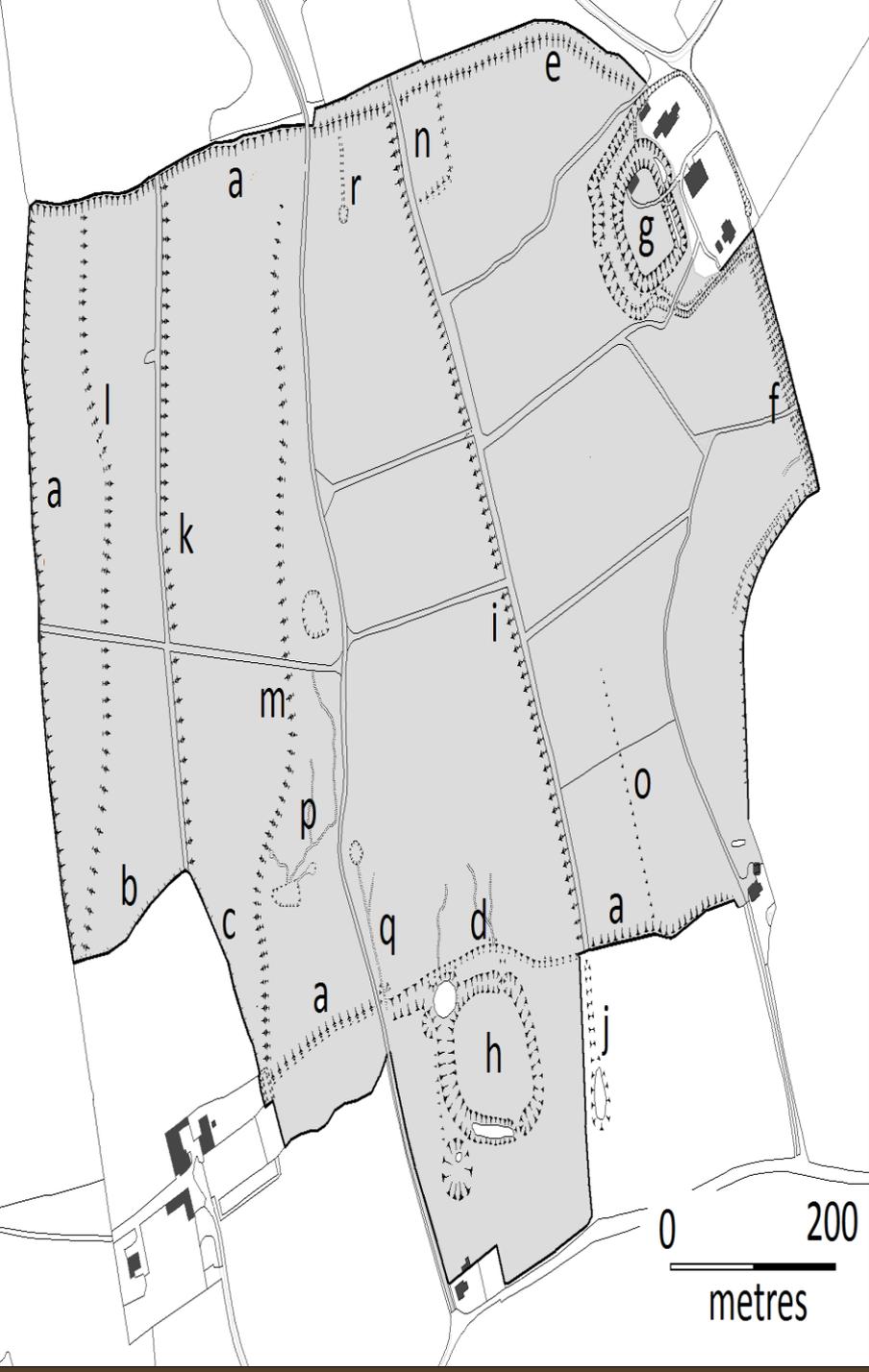
0 200
metres

Maps of 1840 and 1880



Gawdy Hall





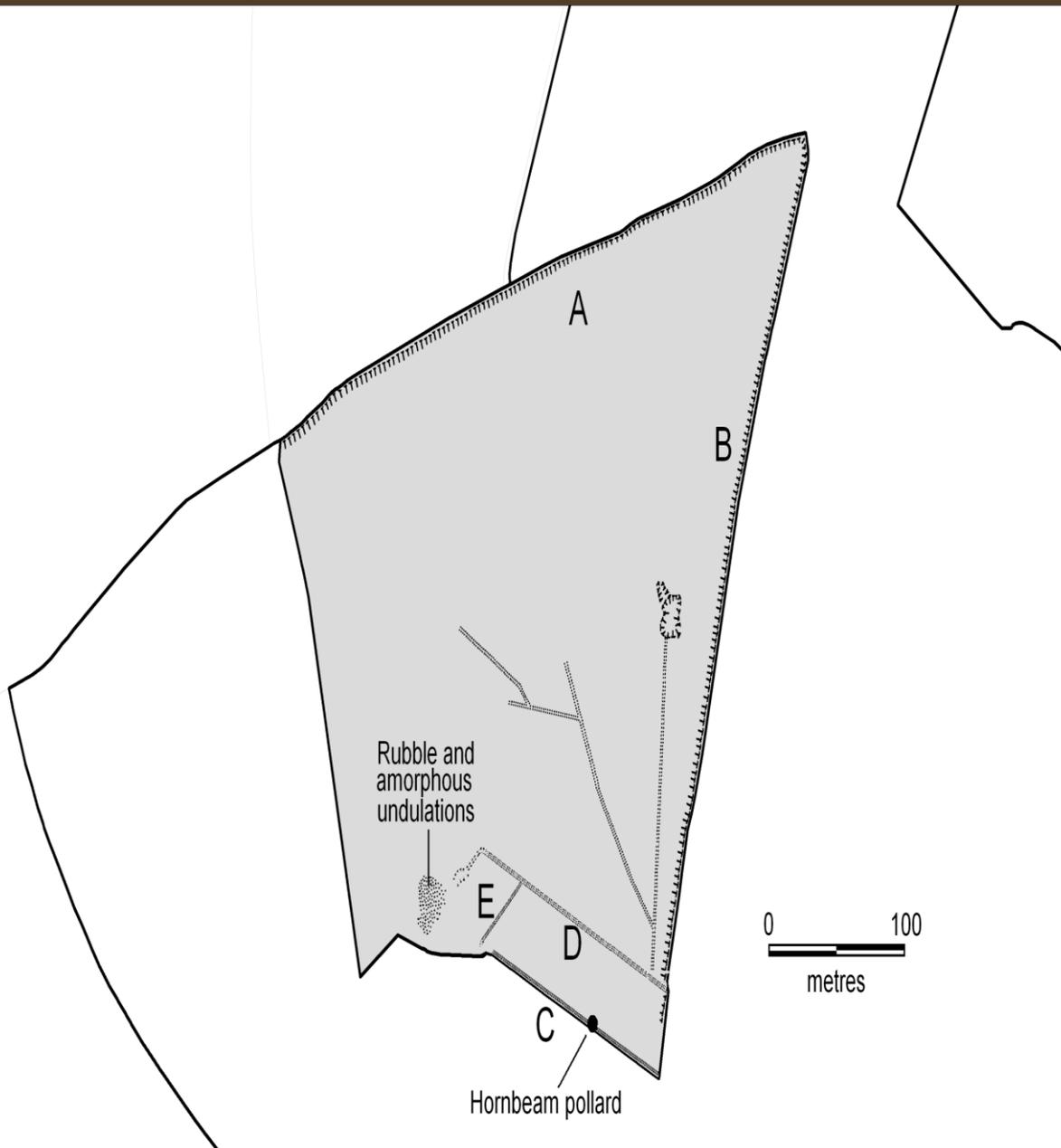
a is a substantial wood bank.
b-c small bank. Circa 1700
g & h moated sites. Originally
outside the wood.
i substantial woodbank

Gawdy
Hall

Gawdyhall Big Wood

- An archaeologically complex wood which has expanded across adjacent manorial sites in relatively recent times.

Lopham Grove



Coppice with standards.

Carpeted with dogs mercury. Also other indicators.

A and B appear to be woodbanks but are in reality banks raised to mark the parish boundary.

Map of 1720 in Arundell shows site completely untreed.

D and E seem to be relict hedges
A pseudo ancient woodland

Lopham Grove

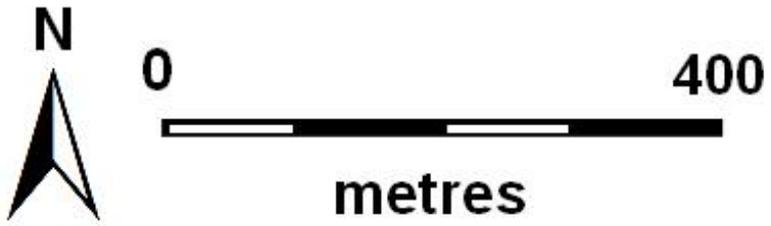
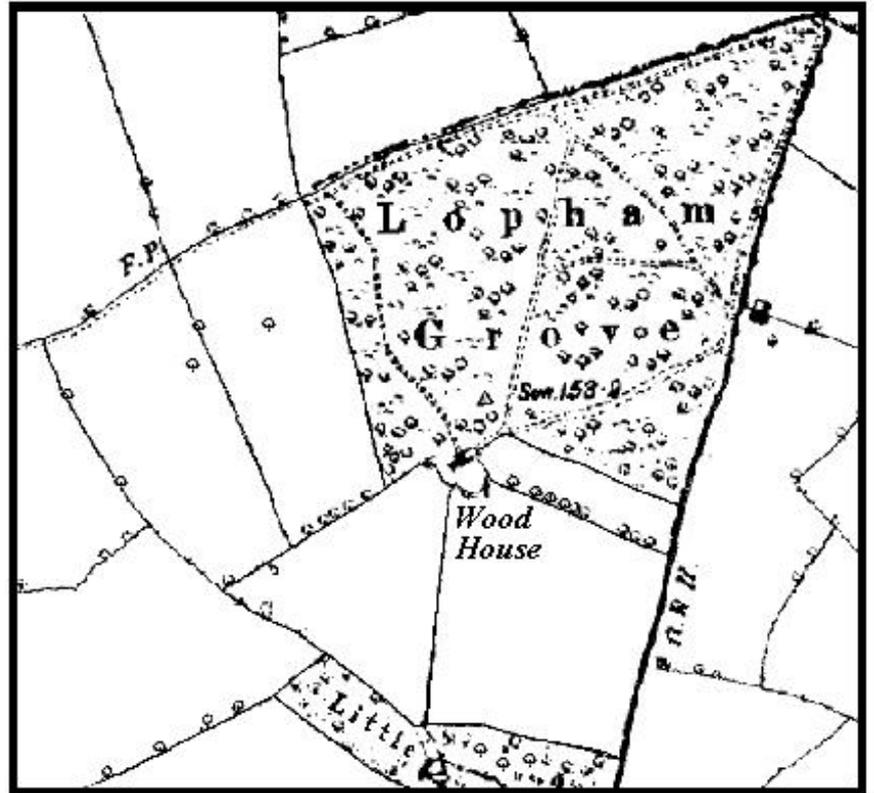
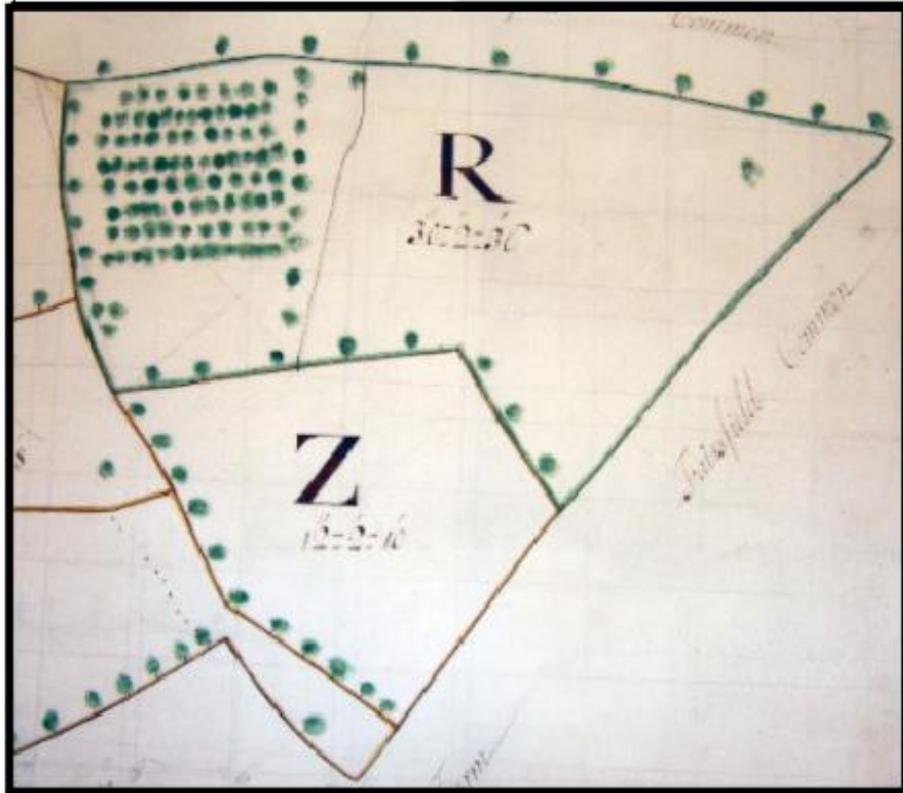


Lopham Grove





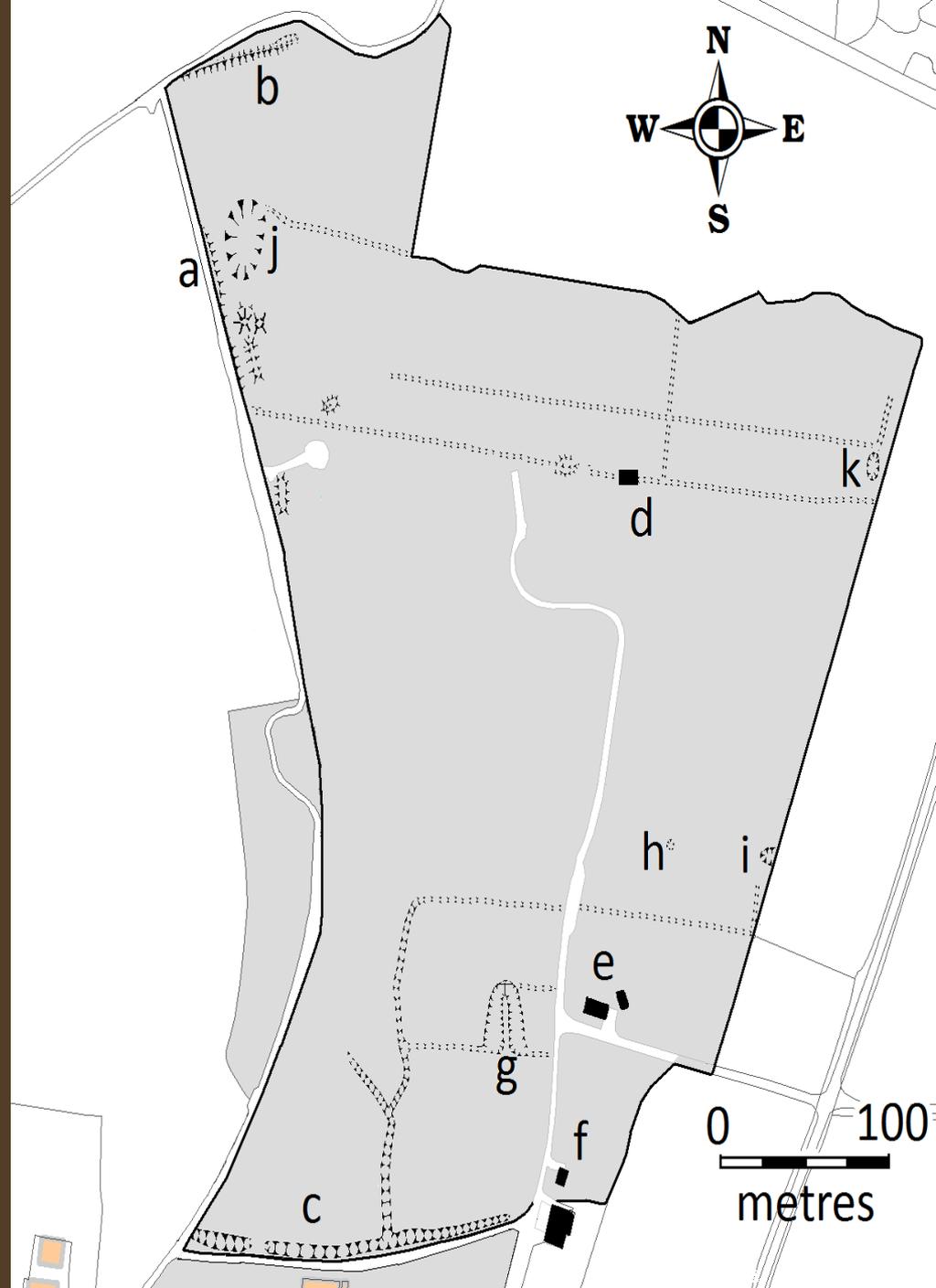
Lopham Grove. Maps of 1725 and 1880



Recent Archaeology

Billingsford Wood

Much damaged by war time activity but mostly medieval
a-b section of medieval woodbank
c Deep ditch
d, e and f WWII buildings





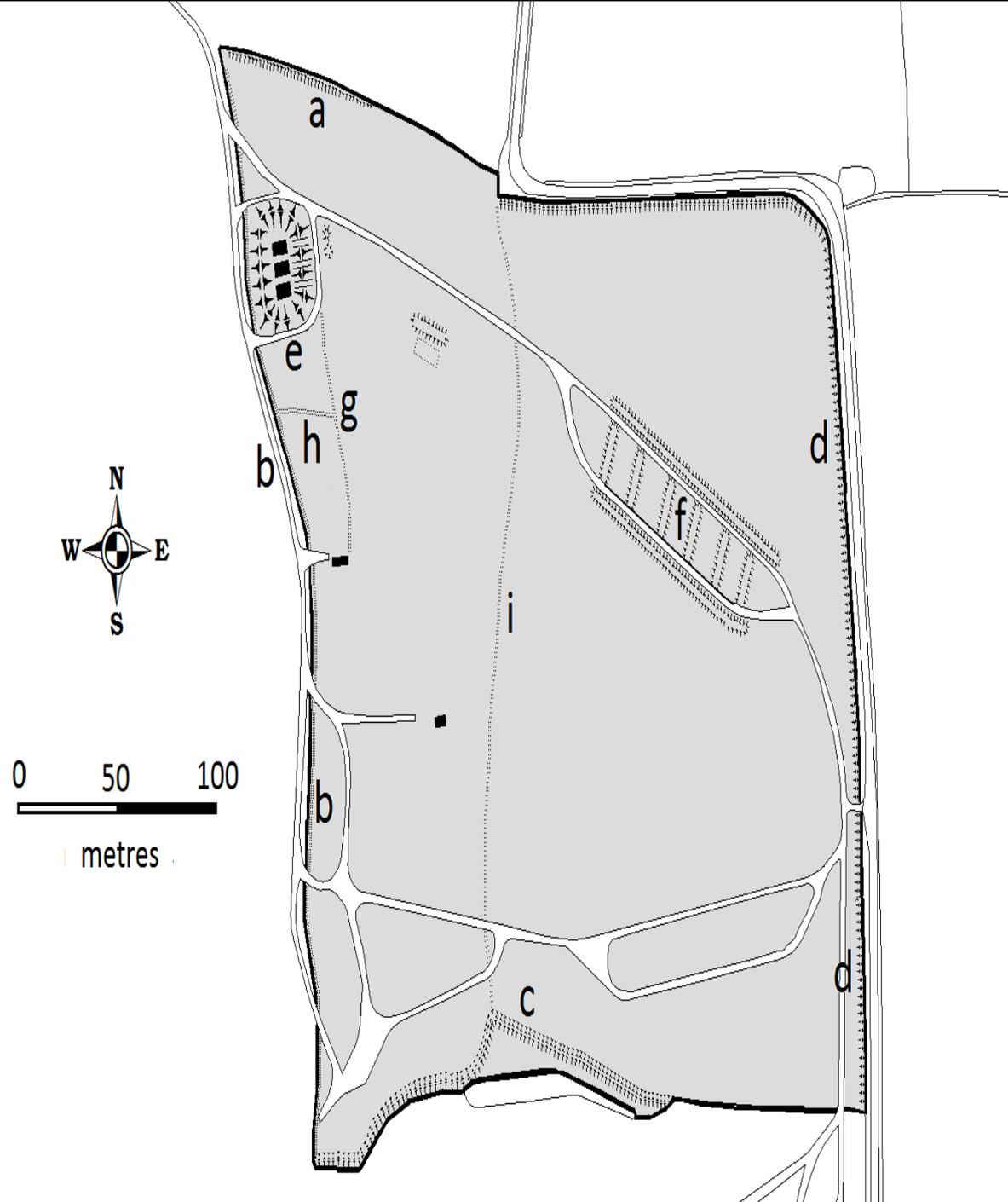
Billingsford Wood. Lynchet



Honeypot Wood

Important WWII remains

a, c and d medieval
woodbank.
e bomb storage area



Conclusions

- Do not represent a link with the “natural” vegetation of England.
- Woodland vegetation extensively modified.
- Woods and commons often contiguous thus common origin.
- Enclosure was an act of lordly privatization- hence the size of early woodbanks.
- Located on edge of clays to reduce transport on unsurfaced tracks

Wood pastures

- Before the late C17 grazed woodland covered a greater area than enclosed coppice woodland
- In the remaining “wastes” wood pasture survived much longer than previously thought.
- Private wood pastures-deer parks-did not last long. Some were incorporated into coppiced woodland.

Not all coppice woodland originated in the early middle ages.

Some ancient woods overlie areas which were farmed in the middle ages.

Some of these woods were deliberately planted, others expanded through natural regeneration.

- Woods were/are dynamic not stable environments.
- Only a few woods retain the same boundaries they were given when first enclosed.

- About a fifth of woodland on the AWI are secondary in character.
- N.B. This is not a fifth by area. Secondary woodland tend to be smaller, aiding the spread of indicator species.

Ancient Woodland Indicators

- Woods can acquire indicator species surprisingly quickly, especially in areas of heavy clay where there are multi species hedges and wide ditches acting as reservoirs.
- They are a tool not an infallible guide.
- Quick is of course relative.

The Value of Woodlands

- Even psuedo ancient woodlands have been in existence for a long time.
- Blurring the distinction between “ancient” and “recent” woodland does not so much reduce the importance of the former as raise the status of the later.
- Even quite recent woodlands have a historic and cultural significance.

- We would not, for example, condone the uncontrolled demolition of buildings just because they were built after 1600.
- Woodland requires more not less protection.

A dense forest with sunlight filtering through the trees, casting shadows on the forest floor. The text "The End" is overlaid in the center.

The End