



SOUTHWOLD EARTHWORKS

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE
OF CANADA

Management Plan



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February, 2007

Foreword



Canada's national historic sites, national parks and national marine conservation areas offer Canadians from coast-to-coast-to-coast unique opportunities to experience and understand our wonderful country. They are places of learning, recreation and fun where Canadians can connect with our past and appreciate the natural, cultural and social forces that shaped Canada.

From our smallest national park to our most visited national historic site to our largest national marine conservation area, each of these places offers Canadians and visitors unique opportunities to experience Canada. These places of beauty, wonder and learning are valued by Canadians - they are part of our past, our present and our future.

Our Government's goal is to ensure that each of these special places is conserved.

We see a future in which these special places will further Canadians' appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of Canada, the economic well-being of communities, and the vitality of our society.

Our Government's vision is to build a culture of heritage conservation in Canada by offering Canadians exceptional opportunities to experience our natural and cultural heritage.

These values form the foundation of the new management plan for Southwold Earthworks National Historic Site of Canada. I offer my appreciation to the many thoughtful Canadians who helped to develop this plan, particularly to our dedicated team from Parks Canada, and to all those local organizations and individuals who have demonstrated their good will, hard work, spirit of co-operation and extraordinary sense of stewardship.

In this same spirit of partnership and responsibility, I am pleased to approve the Southwold Earthworks National Historic Site of Canada Management Plan.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Baird". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

John Baird
Minister of the Environment

This Plan has been recommended for approval by:



Alan Latourelle
Chief Executive Officer
Parks Canada Agency



Chip Bird
Field Unit Superintendent
Southwestern Ontario, Parks Canada Agency

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1.0 INTRODUCTION1**
 - 1.1 PURPOSE OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN1
 - 1.2 LOCAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT1

- 2.0 IMPORTANCE OF SOUTHWOLD EARTHWORKS TO THE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITES SYSTEM2**

- 3.0 COMMEMORATIVE INTENT AND DESIGNATED PLACE2**
 - 3.1 CONCEPT OF COMMEMORATIVE INTEGRITY2
 - 3.2 REASONS FOR DESIGNATION OF SOUTHWOLD EARTHWORKS2
 - 3.3 STATEMENT OF COMMEMORATIVE INTENT AND DESIGNATED PLACE ..2

- 4.0 CURRENT SITUATION3**
 - 4.1 RESOURCES DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE REASONS FOR NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE3
 - 4.2 MESSAGES OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE3
 - 4.3 VISITOR USE AND OPERATIONS4
 - 4.4 FIRST NATIONS INVOLVEMENT4

- 5.0 VISION5**

- 6.0 MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS5**
 - 6.1 MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES5
 - 6.2 MANAGEMENT ACTIONS5

- 7.0 FIRST NATIONS INVOLVEMENT6**

- 8.0 PARTNERSHIPS AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT7**

- 9.0 IMPLEMENTATION7**

- 10.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT7**

- APPENDICES**
 - FIGURE 1 - REGIONAL CONTEXT9
 - FIGURE 2 - LOCAL CONTEXT10
 - FIGURE 3 - PRESENT CONDITIONS11
 - FIGURE 4 - PLAN OF THE VILLAGE INFERRED FROM THE 1976 EXCAVATIONS12

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This is a management plan for Southwold Earthworks National Historic Site of Canada, which is located in southwestern Ontario in rural Southwold Township. The site is a rare example of an Aboriginal village surrounded by a double ring of earthworks, built by the Neutral Iroquois about A.D. 1450 to 1550.

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

A management plan is a strategic document that guides management of a national historic site. It has a 10-15 year lifespan, and is reviewed every 5 years and adjusted to reflect new conditions, policy direction and legislation. It is required by the *Parks Canada Agency Act*, guided by public consultation and approved by the Minister of the Environment. In addition to the *Parks Canada Agency Act*, preparation of this management plan is guided by the *Historic Sites and Monuments Act* and *Parks Canada's Guiding Principles and Operational Policies*, including the Cultural Resource Management Policy.

National historic sites exist under the authority of the *Historic Sites and Monuments Act*. Through the Act, the Government of Canada gives official recognition of historic places through the approval by the Minister of the Environment, upon recommendations made by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.

The management plan for Southwold Earthworks National Historic Site of Canada (NHSC) will help guide decision-making towards achieving commemorative integrity and providing opportunities for visitor use and enjoyment of the site

This is the second management plan for Southwold Earthworks. The first plan, completed in 1982, outlined a modest degree of site development which has been implemented. Parks Canada is just beginning to involve First Nations in discussions about management of the site, which will be reflected the next time the plan is reviewed, in five years.

1.2 LOCAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Southwold Earthworks is a pre-contact site of the Neutral Iroquois people, established sometime between A.D. 1450 and 1550. The Southwold village occupies an area of about 0.8 ha (2 acres) surrounded by a double ring of earthworks. The site is in southwestern Ontario in rural Southwold Township, Elgin County, on the banks of a tributary of Talbot Creek approximately 20 km west of St. Thomas, Ontario. It is a non-operational site with minimal facilities.

The property is in a park-like setting, surrounded by a hardwood forest to the north and cultivated agricultural lands to the east, west and south. Scattered trees, predominantly mature hardwoods, are now found within the earthworks. Grasses and wildflowers cover the ground.

2.0 IMPORTANCE OF SOUTHWOLD EARTHWORKS TO THE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE SYSTEM

Southwold Earthworks is part of a nation-wide family of over 900 sites. Each site has had a nationally significant impact on Canadian history or illustrates a nationally important aspect of the history of Canada. They commemorate thousands of years of human history and a rich variety of themes, spanning political, economic, intellectual, cultural and social life.

The National Historic Sites Systems Plan has organized Canadian history into themes. Within this plan, Southwold Earthworks represents the sub-theme 'Canada's Earliest Inhabitants' under the theme 'Peopling the Land'. It is also one of 154 National Historic Sites administered by Parks Canada and which, together with our National Parks and National Marine Conservation Areas comprise our unique heritage places, places which foster a sense of national identity and pride as well as appreciation for this rich and diverse county we share.

3.0 COMMEMORATIVE INTEGRITY

3.1 CONCEPT OF COMMEMORATIVE INTEGRITY

Parks Canada's primary responsibility at Southwold Earthworks is to ensure its commemorative integrity. This term refers to the health and wholeness of a historic site. A site is said to possess commemorative integrity when the resources that symbolize or represent its importance are not impaired or under threat; the reasons for the site's national historic significance are effectively communicated to the public; and the site's heritage values are respected by all whose decisions or actions affect the site.

Commemorative Integrity Statements are prepared for each site owned by Parks Canada. These documents identify what was commemorated and why; which resources are nationally significant, their value and objectives for their protection; the messages of national significance and objectives for their effective communication; and other heritage values, resources and messages associated with the site. They are key documents used in the preparation of management plans.

3.2 REASONS FOR DESIGNATION OF SOUTHWOLD EARTHWORKS

Southwold Earthworks was one of the very first sites considered by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. Indeed, the site was one of the first topics discussed at the initial meeting of the Board in 1919. On the Board's recommendation, the site was declared to be of national significance in 1923, and it was purchased by the federal government in 1929.

The 1983 plaque text states: "This prehistoric site was once a fortified village occupied by the Neutral Indians between about 1500 and 1650 AD. An earth and palisade wall, later strengthened by a second wall, protected a cluster of longhouses. The Neutrals, who emerged as a distinct group within Iroquois culture about 1450, were so-called because they did not participate in wars with traditional Iroquois rivals. This neutrality aroused the ire of the Iroquois Confederacy, and Mohawk and Seneca raids brought about the demise of the Neutral nation by 1650."

3.3 STATEMENT OF COMMEMORATIVE INTENT AND DESIGNATED PLACE

A Statement of Commemorative Intent is part of the Commemorative Integrity Statement. It refers to the reasons for a site's designation as a national historic site. A statement of commemorative intent provides the answer to the question "When and for what reason was this site designated by the Minister responsible for the Historic Sites and Monuments Act as a national

historic site?" The designated place refers to the exact property that was commemorated.

In March 2005, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada discussed the site and provided the following information regarding the Statement of Commemorative Intent and designated place:

Southwold Earthworks are of national historic importance because

they are a rare and well-preserved example of an Aboriginal fortified village completely surrounded by earthworks, built by the Attiwandaron (Neutral Iroquois) between about A.D. 1450 and 1550.

and, that the designated place for this site is defined as

the five acre (2.06 ha) parcel of land administered by Parks Canada but excluding the easement, or right-of-way, that provides access to the site.

4.0 CURRENT SITUATION

4.1 RESOURCES DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE REASONS FOR NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

There have been two major archaeological investigations at Southwold Earthworks, in 1935 and 1976. It is believed that no more than 20% of the site remains intact. The 1976 excavations were undertaken by the London Museum of Archaeology (now re-named the Museum of Ontario Archaeology) under contract to Parks Canada, and the process of returning the artifacts to Parks Canada's administration has been initiated. No excavations are thought to have been undertaken outside the property administered by Parks Canada to search for related features such as middens or ossuaries; this will be confirmed with the Museum of Ontario Archaeology. The earthworks appear to be stable and pot-hunting is not a problem.

A potential issue related to the protection of cultural resources is the management of vegetation on site and on the earthworks in particular. A number of the mature beech trees within the circle of the earthworks are dying and should be removed; however they do

contribute significantly to the atmosphere of the site. A replanting programme to replace the dying trees was initiated but is now in abeyance. Management of vegetation is also of concern as plant growth could damage or obscure the outline of the earthworks.

4.2 MESSAGES OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaque and three display panels, which were installed in 1983, provide concise explanations of the national historic significance of the site. There is a limited amount of information on the Parks Canada web site. There are no site publications, heritage presentation services or special events.

There is an issue related to messages to be communicated. One of the reasons why the Commemorative Integrity Statement has not been completed is because recent information has resulted in two different interpretations of the purpose, meaning and significance of the site. What we know about Southwold Earthworks derives from two sources: the results of archaeological investigations, and an oral tradition of the Oneida Iroquois.

Southwold is a site of the Neutral Iroquois, so called because they did not participate in the conflicts among the other Iroquois groups. Southwold village is an area of about 0.8 hectares (2 acres) surrounded by a double ring of earthworks. Originally the earthworks served as the foundation for a double ring of pickets or palisades which circled the village more or less completely. The main entrance was located at the northeast part of the earthworks, and two other openings - on the northwest and southern portions of the perimeter - permitted a small stream, a tributary of Talbot Creek, to flow between the rows of palisades.

Archaeological investigation has revealed the remains of 18 longhouses of various sizes and orientations within the village, accompanied by other features interpreted as hearths, storage pits and refuse pits (see Figure 4.) An open area in the centre of the village provided a common activity area or meeting place. If

all of the houses were occupied at the same time, the village could house an estimated population of 800 people. The archaeological interpretation concludes that Southwold was a typical pre-contact Neutral village, palisaded for *defensive* purposes.

An oral tradition of the Oneida Iroquois tells us that Southwold was a sacred *ceremonial* site, enclosed so that ceremonies taking place within were screened from the view of those who should not see them. The stream which flows through the village was dammed and diverted to flow between the earthworks, in a complete circle, during purification ceremonies which would have taken place once or twice a year when the water levels were high. The site would have been occupied not as a year-round village, but as a seasonal place of pilgrimage; elders and their assistants may have lived here permanently as caretakers of the site.

The archaeological interpretation and the oral traditions complement each other in enhancing our understanding of the Southwold site. There are several examples where oral tradition has been able to provide an explanation for something archaeology could not. First, the oral tradition notes that the site was not defensive in nature but was dedicated to special healing and purification ceremonies.

Archaeologists found the site atypical of Neutral villages of the period because it is located on flat land with no natural defensive advantages and it contains no evidence of ever being attacked. Second, excavations in 1935 did find evidence of a dam at the point where the stream flows out of the earthworks but archaeologists could only hypothesize why a dam would have been necessary. Oral tradition points to the earthwork itself serving as a moat when the dam was used, encircling the site with water like fluid in the womb of Mother Earth. Third, archaeological estimates of site population were that about 800 people could have lived there, but curiously, there was little evidence of refuse and garbage within the site. Oral traditions describe a place that was looked after by certain people throughout the year, but a

place where many people gathered only twice a year. There would be markedly less refuse created in such a situation, and indeed, perhaps refuse was disposed of in a special way because the site was special or sacred.

These differing interpretations will be explored more fully during the completion of the Commemorative Integrity Statement, which is a high priority for this management plan. A longer term objective might be to return to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada with a request that the Board consider an adjustment to the reasons for designation.

4.3 VISITOR USE AND OPERATIONS

Southwold Earthworks is administered by the Southwestern Ontario Field Unit. Parks Canada owns a 2.06 ha parcel surrounding the former village site. A 300 metre right-of-way from Elgin County Road 14 provides access to the village site. This right-of-way is not owned by Parks Canada but is held by an easement on the deed. Facilities include a small parking area on the county road, interpretive panels, a few picnic tables and portable toilets. Grass cutting is carried out on contract with an adjacent property owner.

The visitor experience offered at Southwold Earthworks is low-key and relies heavily on the imagination of the visitor. The earthworks and the remains of the small stream running between them are the only visible historic features. The beech trees within the earthworks, as well as the backdrop of the hardwood forest which encircles the north half of the site, contribute to the feeling of tranquility and contemplation which the site possesses.

There is no information available on current visitor numbers, who visits or why. Basic visitor research will need to be undertaken in support of the planning programme.

4.4 FIRST NATIONS INVOLVEMENT

There have been limited opportunities for First Nations involvement in discussions about protection,

management and communication of messages at the site. Establishing mutually beneficial relationships with First Nations is a priority for Parks Canada as management planning progresses at Southwold Earthworks.

There are three First Nations which may have an interest in the future of this site. Oneida of the Thames are the closest First Nation to the site, and a representative participated in the original commemorative integrity workshop and offered an Oneida interpretation of the site's meaning. The Oneida of the Thames are not only geographically close to the earthworks but also linguistically and culturally related to this site as a member of the Iroquoian language group. Chippewa of the Thames First Nation is also nearby. The Chippewa are a different cultural affiliation from either the Neutral people or the Oneida. A third group nearby is the Muncey-Delaware First Nation.

5.0 VISION

A preliminary vision has been prepared for Southwold Earthworks. This vision will be further refined through discussions with First Nations and others who may be interested in the site.

- This is an opportunity to involve First Nations in determining the stories to tell and the scale of operation of the site.
- Southwold Earthworks will be protected and presented to the public as one of a network of heritage attractions based on agreements with First Nations and other museums and sites in the London/St. Thomas area.
- Various interpretations of the purpose and meaning of Southwold Earthworks will be presented to the public, allowing for opportunities for reflection on the meaning of history and on different ways of knowing.
- The secluded nature of the site, the park-like setting enhanced by the beech trees, and the low level of

facility development all contribute to a sense of place which encourages reflection and personal discovery.

- Because of its participation in the network of heritage places and with minor site upgrades, Southwold Earthworks will become an important educational resource for area school boards. Parks Canada will take advantage of opportunities to link the site to provincial curricula.

6.0 MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

6.1 MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

This plan provides strategic direction to ensure the commemorative integrity of Southwold Earthworks National Historic Site of Canada. Parks Canada's objectives are:

- To manage the cultural resources of the site in such a manner as to ensure its commemorative integrity.
- To convey messages of national significance to on-site and off-site audiences.
- To provide rewarding visitor experiences.
- To build long-term relationships with First Nations and to involve them in discussions about the future protection and presentation of the site.
- To explore opportunities to work with stakeholders, school boards and tourism agencies to promote the site and communicate messages of national significance.

6.2 MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

The above set of management objectives for Southwold Earthworks is broad in scope. Specific actions to meet the first three objectives in the above list include:

6.2.1 RESOURCES DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE REASONS FOR NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

- Complete the Commemorative Integrity Statement. This is the first step in identifying what was commemorated and why; which resources are nationally significant, their value and objectives for their protection; the messages of national significance and objectives for their effective communication; and other heritage values, resources and messages associated with the site.
- Return to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada to seek an adjustment to the reasons for designation. This might become a longer-term action.
- Prepare a landscape management plan to address issues related to the protection and distinctness in outline of the earthworks, health of the beech trees, replanting programmes, weed control and other landscape management issues.
- Work with the Museum of Ontario Archaeology in London and other institutions to assess and inventory the artifact collection from past archaeological investigations. Parks Canada will seek to involve First Nations in decisions about transfer of the collection and plans for protection.

6.2.2 MESSAGES OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

- Through completion of the Commemorative Integrity Statement, confirm messages of national significance and additional messages.
- Explore opportunities for expanding communication of messages. Some methods to consider are provision of information in First Nations languages, production of more interpretation panels, and creation of education and web site products.
- Identify outcomes, audiences and messages. As part of its work in heritage presentation, Parks Canada follows a process to identify outcomes, audiences and messages. Presently, little is known about

visitors to the site or other audiences. Through implementation of this management plan, outcomes for heritage presentation will be determined, key audiences will be identified, and detailed messages for each audience will be prepared.

6.2.3 VISITOR USE AND OPERATIONS

- Conduct research to determine level of use of site and visitor needs and expectations.
- Assess current status of site as non-operational, with minimal facilities. This includes assessment of the condition and effectiveness of way-finding signs, parking area, pathway to the site, and facilities.

7.0 FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT

A significant objective for Parks Canada is to engage First Nations in the implementation of this management plan over the next five years. Actions include:

- Contact all three First Nations to introduce the planning programme, invite participation and begin dialogues about the site.
- Work with First Nations to hold culturally-appropriate ceremonies or events to recognize the significance of the site and to move forward in developing understanding of mutual goals.
- Involve First Nations in discussions regarding research requirements, management of the site, preservation of the archaeological collection, and presentation of messages.

8.0 OTHER PARTNERSHIPS AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

As there are limited services at the site, there have been no active partnerships or opportunities for public involvement. To meet the objective to explore opportunities to work with stakeholders, school boards and tourism agencies to promote the site and communicate messages of national significance, actions include:

- Contact stakeholders and potential tourism partners such as the Museum of Ontario Archaeology, Lawson Iroquoian Village, Ska-Nah-Doht Iroquoian Village and Museum at the Longwoods Conservation Area and heritage groups. Invite them to share information and discuss ideas for joint projects and marketing products.
- Contact local school boards to determine their interest in enhancing learning opportunities about the site.
- Explore opportunities to disseminate information and consult with local residents, businesses, institutions and municipal and provincial governments.

As this plan is implemented, there will be opportunities for re-evaluation of the purposed actions. Partners and stakeholders will be asked to do that re-evaluation in concert with Parks Canada.

9.0 IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of this management plan is the responsibility of the Southwestern Ontario Field Unit of Parks Canada. Parks Canada uses its annual business planning process to identify the funding and timing of actions called for in management plans.

This plan will be reviewed every five years to evaluate progress and address new issues and/or priorities.

9.1 SUMMARY OF KEY ACTIONS

Immediate Priority:

- Initiate contact with First Nations to discuss the site.
- Contact potential stakeholders, tourism partners and school boards to determine their interest in participating in management planning activities.
- Complete the Commemorative Integrity Statement.

Medium Priority:

- Following completion of Commemorative Integrity Statement, develop heritage presentation plan, including on-site, off-site and web-related initiatives; involve First Nations, regional heritage attractions and educational stakeholders in the development of this plan.
- Confirm research needs and develop research programme.
- Assess visitor facilities and plan improvements, if necessary.
- Develop a landscape management plan for the site.

Long-term Priority:

- Assess need to refer the question of the site's more recent dual interpretations to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, with a request that the Board consider an adjustment to the reasons for designation.

10.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

This management plan for Southwold Earthworks National Historic Site of Canada has been assessed to identify any adverse environmental effects of proposed strategies and actions. In addition, the plan was assessed to consider environmental effects on the site that should be taken into account when setting management direction. The environmental assessment was conducted according to direction in the Parks Canada Management Directive 2.4.2-Impact

Assessment (1998), Parks Canada Guide to the Environmental Assessment of Management Plans (2000) and the Environmental Assessment Process for Policy and Programs (Federal Environmental Assessment Review Office, 1993). The environmental assessment ensures the plan adheres to Parks Canada's environmental policies and those of the Government of Canada in general. The environmental assessment of the management proposal was conducted in the final stage of drafting the management plan to allow for incorporation of necessary changes into the final document.

The proposed activities and actions of Southwold Earthworks NHSC management plan are positive in nature and supportive of the overall goal to ensure the commemorative integrity of the site. Management proposals resulting in positive impacts on the natural, cultural and socio-economic environments were noted and include actions such as the development of an on-going dialogue between Parks Canada and First Nations with interest in the site. Should any maintenance projects go ahead in the future, such as up-grades to visitor facilities, a project specific environmental assessment may be required under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*.

Overall, the plan initiatives contribute to the commemorative integrity of the site and clearly demonstrate adherence to Parks Canada's cultural resource management goals and objectives. In so doing, they should enable the site to achieve its vision for Southwold Earthworks National Historic Site of Canada.

Figure 1

SOUTHWOLD EARTHWORKS
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE OF CANADA
Regional Context

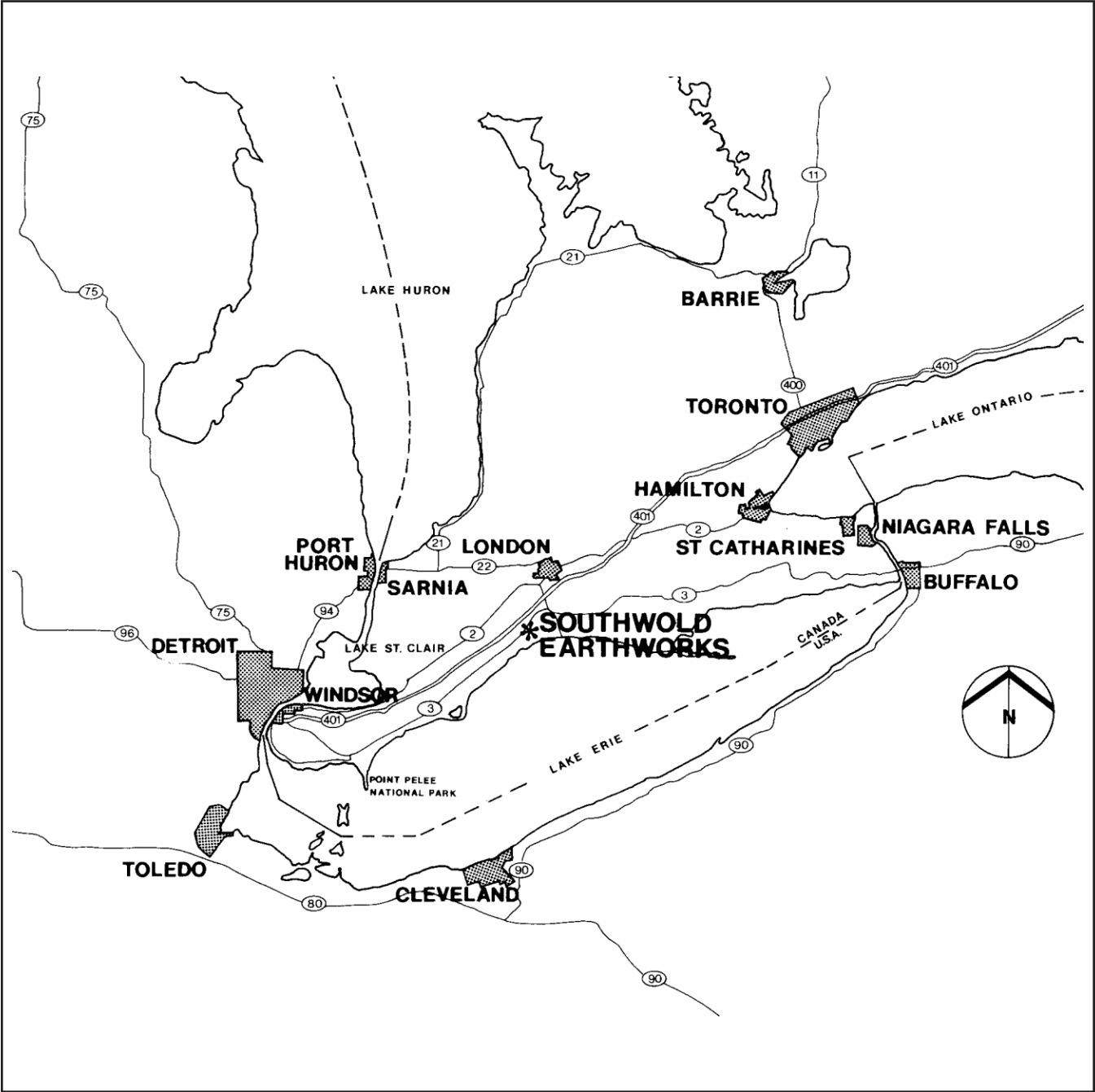


Figure 2

SOUTHWOLD EARTHWORKS

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE OF CANADA

Local Context

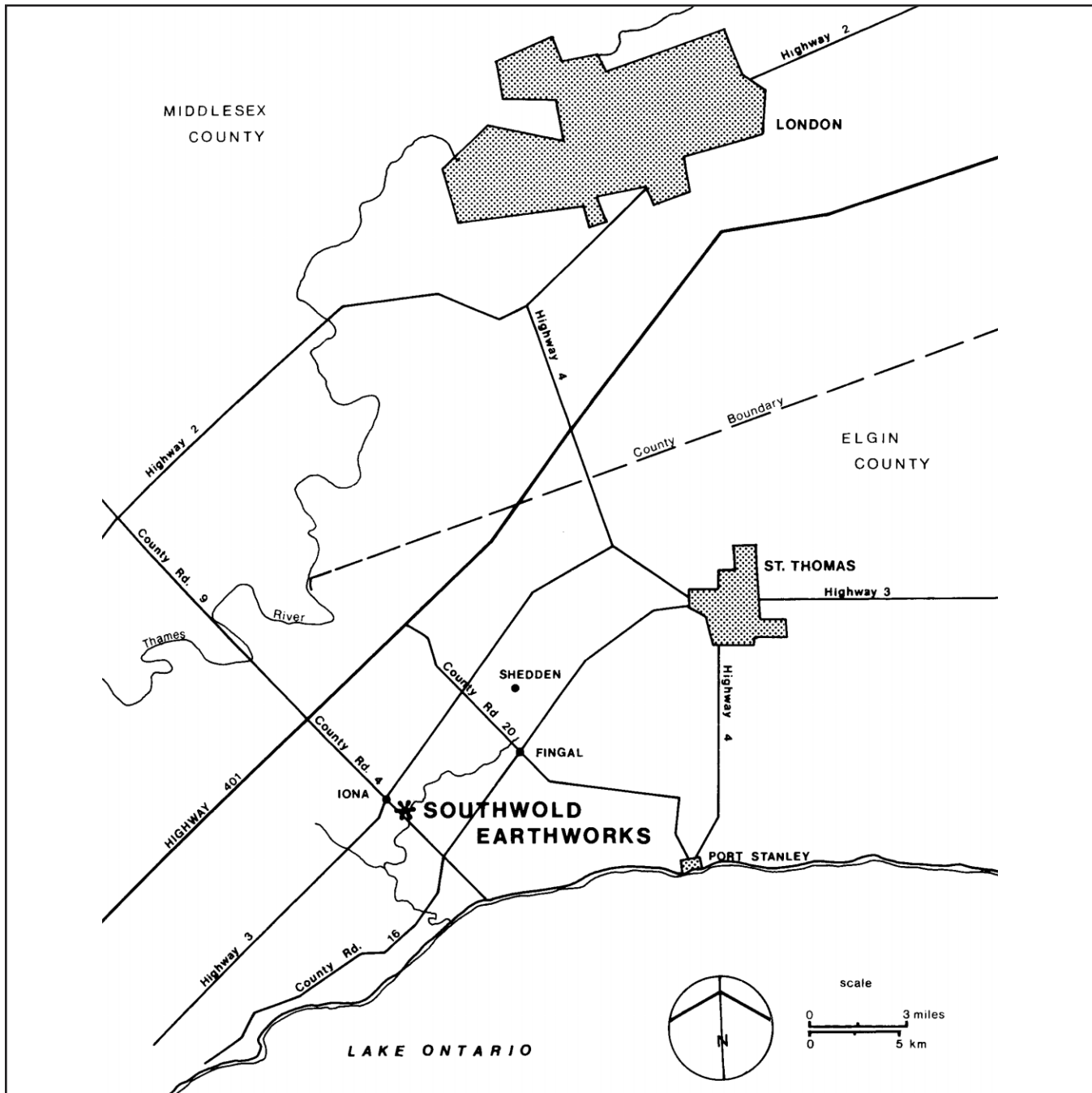


Figure 3

SOUTHWOLD EARTHWORKS

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE OF CANADA

Present Conditions

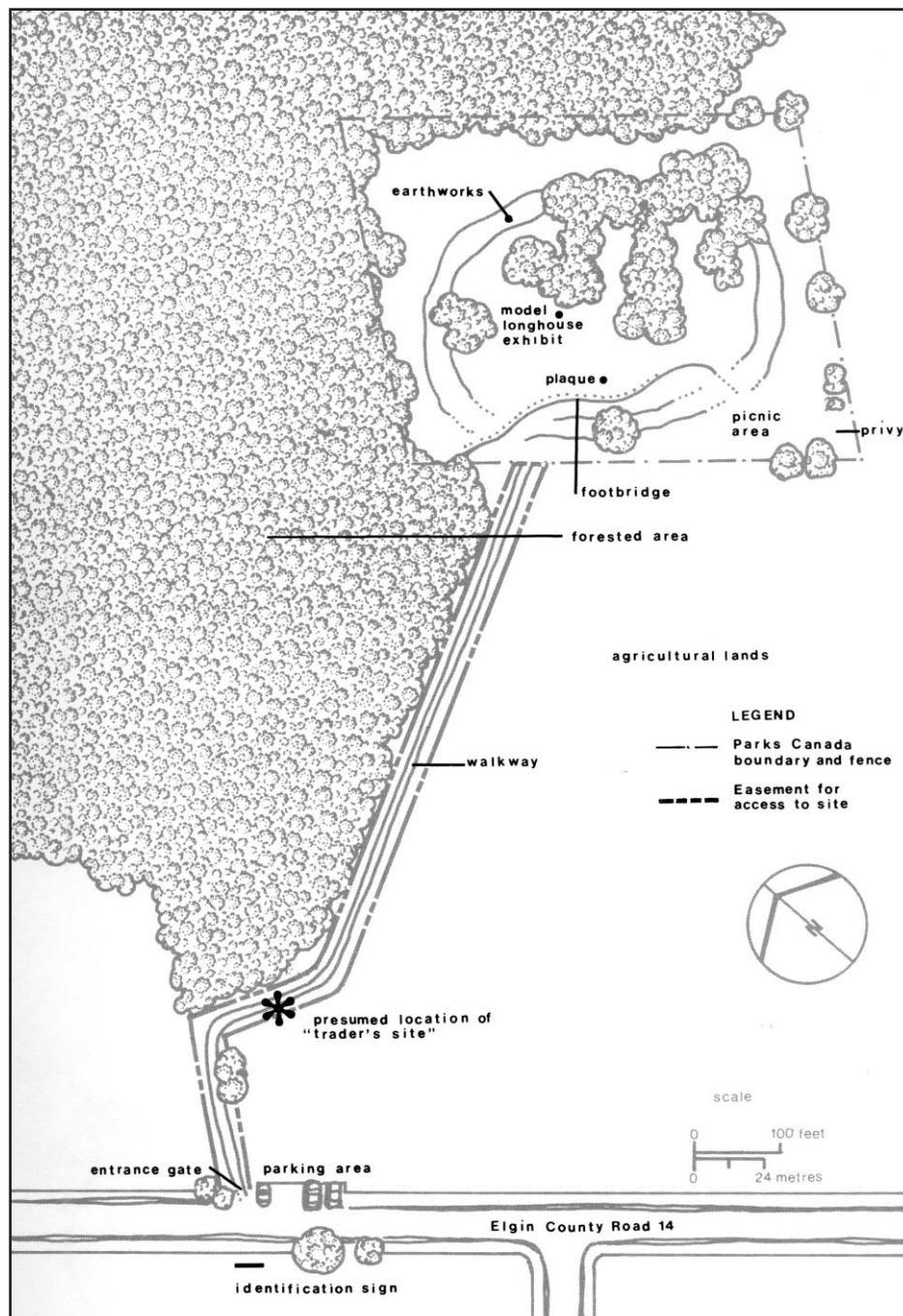


Figure 4

SOUTHWOLD EARTHWORKS

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE OF CANADA

Plan of the village inferred from the 1976 excavations

