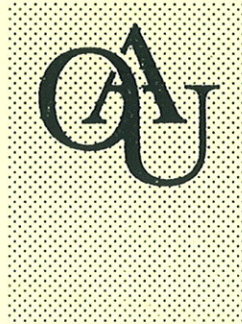


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O X F O R D A R C H A E O L O G I C A L U N I T



STUBBS FARM, KEMPSFORD,
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

STUBBS FARM, KEMPSFORD.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION.

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Summary

A field evaluation was carried out by the OAU at Stubbs Farm, Kempsford on behalf of Multi-Agg ltd. An extensive field system incorporating a double-ditched rectangular enclosure was visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs; this was tentatively dated to the 2nd century AD. One of the ditches of this system cut an oval enclosure in the NW of the evaluation area, which was dated to the early 2nd century AD.

Introduction

In June and September 1991 a two-staged archaeological evaluation was carried out by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) on behalf of Multi-Agg Ltd in advance of gravel extraction. The site, which covers approximately 19 hectares, lies less than 1 km N of the River Thames in the parish of Kempsford, E of the village at grid reference SU 1797 (Figure 1).

Archaeological background (Figure 1)

There are several sites known either as cropmarks or from fieldwalking around the evaluation area (see Figure 1).

i) The aerial photographs show linear features on two alignments across the evaluation area (see Plates 1 and 2). These form large fields, rhomboidal in shape, aligned roughly N-S by E-W. In the NW a smaller double ditched rectangular enclosure is visible alongside one of the N-S linear cropmarks (Glos. SMR No. 3165). NE of this is a sub-circular enclosure, crossed by both N-S and E-W ditches of the field system (Glos SMR No. 3034).

ii) Immediately to the N of the evaluation area the cropmark field system continues at Manor Farm (Glos SMR 3173 and 3174). There another small rectangular enclosure is visible alongside the same N-S linear boundary.

iii) A pair of parallel linear cropmarks of the field system in the application area continue WSW across the adjacent field to intersection with a trackway where stone rubble and Roman roof tiles suggest a masonry building (M.Maillard pers. comm.).

iv) S of Stubbs Farm some of the N-S cropmarks continue (Glos SMR 3156), joining into a settlement area of dense cropmarks including circular enclosures (Glos SMR no's 3166 and 3167; RCHM Kempford (7))

v) NW of the evaluation area and N of Kempford Village is an area where aerial photographs show enclosures and linear ditches covering approximately 12 hectares. (Glos SMR no's 3163, 3164, 2424, 3052 and 3157). Large quantities of both Roman and Medieval pottery have been recovered from fieldwalking.

vi) NE of the evaluation area a cropmark complex including circular ditched enclosures has been dated by fieldwalking to the Iron Age.

vii) The 1801 Kempford and Driffild Inclosure map and an estate map, of a purchase by Robert Vansittart, dated 1825 were consulted to determine if any of the ditches corresponded to then extant field boundaries. The 1787 map of the surveyed route of the Thames and Severn Canal was also consulted. None of the cropmark alignments corresponded to boundaries shown in these maps and were thought to be 18th century or earlier. The two fields comprising the site were known as the Upper Hays and Further Hays at the turn of the 18th century (see Figure 2).

Topography

The site lies on the first gravel terrace of the Thames at a height of around 75 m O.D. The ground is flat, sloping gently towards the S and the river Thames, except to the E just beyond the evaluation area, where an outcrop of Oxford Clay rises to form a low hill. In recent history the site has been ploughed.

Assessment strategy (Figure 3)

The assessment strategy was based on a 2 percent sample of the area. The sample consisted of 38 trenches 50 m long and 5 trenches 60 to 80 m long, all 1.8 m wide, which were dug by 360 degree mechanical excavator. Salvage recording was also carried out upon an area in the SW corner where topsoil stripping had already commenced (see Figure 7, Trench 1), and upon the access road down the W side of the site (Trench 6).

The features were sampled by hand to determine their nature and preservation and to recover dating evidence. Some of the larger ditches were excavated by machine, and in Trench 1 more than 10 m of one of the N-S ditches was removed by machine to look for finds. The features were planned and their sections drawn where they were excavated. The ploughsoil and machine-excavated ditch fills were monitored for finds.

Results

Soils

The general soil type was a silty clay loam with small inclusions of gravel. The ploughsoil directly overlay the natural subsoil and ranged from 0.21 m to 0.25 m in depth.

Natural features were filled by a very clean silty clay which had no gravel content, predating cultivation of the site. Early clearance was indicated by tree-holes, some of which contained burnt material, but which otherwise also contained this very clean clay fill (Figure 4).

Finds

In total 62 sherds of pottery and tile and around 20 fragments of poorly-preserved bone were recovered. No struck flint was found. Fifty four of the sherds were stratified: the vast majority were Roman, dating to the 2nd century, but there were also 2 sherds of probable Late Iron Age date. See Table 1 for the features dated by pottery. The potsherds were not particularly abraded, but were small. The ploughsoil contained 8 sherds including 1 Roman sherd from trench 43 and one from trench 41. The other finds from the ploughsoil were modern.

Archaeology

There were three main elements to the archaeological features; a series of old stream courses on the E, a system of linear ditches forming a field system, which incorporated a rectangular double ditched enclosure on the W, and a sub-circular enclosure to the NE of the rectangular enclosure (see Plates 1 and 2; Figures 1 and 3).

Most of the ditches were wide but shallow, the deepest being 0.5 m deep. Profiles were almost all 'U'-shaped. The larger ditches were filled by gleyed light grey silty clay containing snail shells, alluvium from the Thames. The smaller features were filled with leached brown silt clay.

Stream courses (Figure 3)

Traces of former shallow stream courses were observed in trenches 25, 26, 28, 31, 32, 30, 33, 34, 35, 36 and 47 (see Figure 3). None of the channels was more than 0.35 m deep, and in most places less than 0.25 m. Their profiles were irregular; all were filled with clean gleyed clay silting, darkest at the bottom, but none contained any waterlogged organic material. These formed a series of abraded streams running down the E side of the site to the Thames. There were also shallow hollows in the gravel filled with clay that survived below the ploughsoil, the clay probably derived from the outcrop to the E of the site.

Post-medieval ditches (Figure 3)

Two parallel E-W ditches visible as cropmarks were located in trenches 42 and 8 ($42/6 = 8/4$ and $42/5 = 8/3$) and in the road corridor. On the E side of the site a cropmark runs S from this feature (Plate 2; Figure 3). Both boundaries were in use at the time of the Inclosure map of 1801 (see Figure 2). The deepest cut of 8/3 was dated by a sherd of 19th century pottery; the N-S ditch was not further investigated.

The Roman Field System (Plates 1 and 2 and Figure 3)

Three large parallel linear ditches oriented NNW-SSE were visible as cropmarks crossing the evaluation area. The easternmost was that cut across by trenches 22 and 23, the middle ditch by trenches 9, 13 etc. and the westernmost by trenches 44 and 43 (see Plates 1 and 2 and Figure 3).

The easternmost ditch ($22/6 = 23/2$) split into two, one arm running S, the other SSE. The E arm was located in trench 21 ($21/2$) and the W arm in trench 37 ($37/2$). The E arm continues S as a cropmark (see Figure 1). Further excavation of this feature in Manor Farm to the N has shown that it deepens towards the river Thames, emphasising the drainage function of these NNE-SSW ditches.

The middle ditch was $9/2 = 13/3 = 5/2 = 3/2 = 4/5 = 1/4$. This too continued N into Manor Farm. On the W side two parallel ditches $10/2$ and $10/3 = 11/2$ ran off WSW, and were also found crossing the road corridor down the W edge of the site (Plate 1; Figure 3). The N ditch had two cuts at this point, $6/5$ and $6/8$. None of these features was dated. The ditches running WSW are those which continue as cropmarks to the site of a Roman building (see Archaeological Background above).

The westernmost of the NNW-SSE ditches had two cuts $44/2 = 43/3 = 39/5$ and $44/3 = 43/4 = 39/4$, which continued S as $38/2$ and $/4$ and ended at WSW ditch $10/2$ (see Plate 1 and Figure 5). Some 50 m to the E was a smaller parallel cropmark ditch $41/10 = 42/2 = 38/16$, which also ended at the WSW ditch (see Plates 1 and 2 and Figure 3). This feature ran through the sub-circular enclosure (see Figure 6) and cut the enclosure ditch, demonstrating that the field system is later.

Between these two ditches and alongside the westernmost was a rectangular double ditched enclosure (see Plates 1 and 2 and Figure 5). Trench 39 ran across both E and W sides of the enclosure, and trench 46 picked up the S side, but the N side was not reached in trench 45. The enclosure was 26 m E-W internally, the area between the ditches between 3 m and 4 m on E and W and c. 10 m on the S. The enclosure is cut across by modern ploughmarks $45/2$ and $45/3$ (see Figure 5), which were 0.19 and 0.08 m deep. These show as cropmarks crossing the middle of the double ditched enclosure (see Plates 1 and 2), suggesting that it measured approximately 40 m internally N-S. The ditches of the enclosure and of the NNW-SSE boundary alongside were deeper than the field system ditches elsewhere on the site, $39/4$ at 0.63 m being the deepest. Ditches $39/10$ and $/12$ and $46/4$ and $/7$ all contained a little Roman pottery, and where dateable this was 2nd

century AD.

In the interior of the enclosure there were gullies and an irregular hollow in trench 39, and between the double ditches 2 gullies and a pit were found in trench 46. Pit 46/5 contained sherds dated to the Late Iron Age or 1st century AD, so may be earlier than the enclosure. The other soilmarks investigated in these trenches were not man-made.

Another cropmark ditch ran off S from the outer of the double ditches, and this was 38/5 in trench 38. E of this were 9 pits and postholes and one gully, most concentrated around the enclosure, but with a second group of features at the E end of the trench beyond the NNW-SSE ditch crossing trench 42. No continuation of these features was located in the adjacent trenches 10, 11, 40, 43 or at the S end of 42. Pit 38/6 contained a deposit of burnt limestone set into the E edge of the feature, and was dated by Roman pottery to the 2nd century AD. Only two of the postholes were excavated; both survived around 0.2 m deep.

Three parallel ditches on a WNW-ESE alignment, 1/3, 1/9 and 1/11, were seen in the salvage area further S, on the W side of the middle ditch 1/4 (see Figure 7). One of these (1/3) terminated at the middle ditch, and the others were not visible beyond this on the E side of the salvage area. All three thus probably ended at 1/4, and mark sub-divisions of the main swathes defined by the NNW-SSE ditches. Other faint cropmark ditches are visible between the middle and the E ditch on a NW-SE alignment, three of which were located in trenches 17 and 19, features 17/2, 19/3 and 19/4. These were however very shallow and were not traced in other trenches. None of them was dated, and they may instead represent medieval cultivation.

Two parallel ditches aligned NW-SE were also visible as cropmarks on the SW of the site. The eastern ditch was first seen in the road corridor as 6/3, and was picked up as 14/4 = 4/2 = 1/7, just missing the ends of trenches 3 and 5; the western ditch crossed the road corridor (6/2) and continued as 4/3 = 1/5. These ditches contained no finds, but do not appear to respect the NNW-SSE field system ditches, and are probably later.

Sub-circular enclosure (Figures 3 and 6)

The sub-circular enclosure was situated 40 m to the NE of the rectangular enclosure. It was c. 38 m N-S by c. 34 m E-W internally, with an entrance located in trench 41 on the SE side. The enclosure ditch had four cuts on the N (42/7-10) and SE (41/6-9), and at least that number on the W side, 41/11 being a very broad feature recut down the middle. The innermost cut was the deepest (up to 0.45 m deep), the outer ditches being c. 0.30 m deep. On the W side 41/11, 41/12 and 41/13 were all dated to the Roman period, the outer two ditches being 2nd century AD.

Associated features were few; there were two gullies in the interior (42/4 and /6) and a single posthole outside on the S and on the E. Two possible postholes with burnt limestone in their fills were also located at the E end of trench 41, but there were no further features in trench 40 adjacent, and only a single undated gully in trench 8. Very few finds came from either the

features or the ploughsoil over the enclosure, and although excavation was limited this perhaps indicates that the enclosure was not domestic.

The enclosure was cut across by ditch 41/10 = 42/2 aligned NNW-SSE belonging to the Roman field system (see above and Figure 5), and by post-medieval ditch 41/5 and 41/6 running E-W (see Figure 2 and above).

Discrete features

Three shallow features, a posthole and two gullies, were found close together in the centre of trench 22. They all contained burnt limestone but no pottery, so are undated. No other features were found either within trench 22 or in the adjacent trenches.

Environmental

There were no features which contained waterlogged organic material nor any visible charred plant remains. Molluscan samples were taken in an attempt to date the field system and to establish whether alluviation had taken place. Samples from ditch 37/2 showed that the site had been flooding while the field system was in use, and Dr. Mark Robinson commented that the character of the alluviation was consistent with Roman or Early Medieval alluvium, but no species diagnostic of date were present.

Overall Interpretation

The archaeological deposits were quite shallow. The high water table probably influenced the depth to which features were originally dug, but it appears nevertheless that truncation by ploughing has been severe. The ditches become deeper as they near the Thames, and were clearly dug to drain as well as to delineate the fields. The easternmost of the large ditches of the field system seems to divide dry ground on the W from the wetter area with its stream courses on the E.

The field system ditches were not dated directly, but the attached rectangular enclosure contained a small collection of pottery and a single Roman roof tile (tegula) which was dated to the mid-late 2nd century AD. The paucity of finds from this area suggests that the enclosure was agricultural rather than domestic. Another rectangular enclosure is visible as a cropmark to the N in Manor Farm (see Plate 1 and Figures 1 and 3), and limited excavation has suggested that this too has few finds or associated features. These enclosures indicate a well-organised landscape designed on a large scale, and cropmarks show that it was tied into Roman settlements to the W, NW and SE.

The sub-circular enclosure was dated by pottery in the ditches to the 2nd century AD. The lack of internal features and scarcity of finds again suggests an agricultural rather than a domestic function. It is not linked into the field system and is cut by a ditch which subdivides one of the large fields, so

may be slightly earlier. Part of the field system N of the site at Manor Farm was however dated to the early 2nd Century AD, so the enclosure and the field system may originally have been contemporary.

Evidence for activity either outside the enclosures or elsewhere on the site was very slight, bearing out the cropmark evidence suggesting that this has always been agricultural land between settlements.

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Appendices

TABLE 1
CONTEXTS AND FINDS

TRENCH	CTX	TYPE	WIDTH	DEPTH	DATE
1	1	ditch	0.28	0.15	
1	2	ditch	0.78	-	
1	3	ditch	0.90	0.22	
1	4	ditch	-	-	=5/2
1	5	ditch	-	-	=4/3
1	6	ditch	0.19	0.10	
1	7	ditch	-	-	=4/2
1	8	ditch	-	-	=4/4
1	9	ditch	0.85	0.33	
1	10	ditch	-	-	=1/6
1	11	ditch	0.16	0.39	
1	12	furrow	0.48	0.15	
1	13	ditch	-	-	=1/1
3	2	ditch	-	-	=1/4, 4/5, 5/2
4	2	ditch	1.80	0.40	=1/7
4	3	ditch	0.70	0.26	=1/6
4	4	ditch	0.36	-	=1/8
4	5	ditch	-	-	=5/2
5	2	ditch	-	-	=3/2, 4/5, 1/4

8	2	gully	0.50	0.17	
8	3	ditch	3.20	0.70	post-medieval
8	4	ditch	0.80	0.50	
9	2	ditch	2.10	0.50	
10	2	ditch	1.80	0.43	
10	3	ditch	2.10	0.47	
13	3	ditch	1.80	0.43	
14	2	ditch	2.70	0.72	
14	3	pit	0.77	0.60	
17	2	ditch	1.40	0.25	
19	3	ditch	1.30	0.07	
19	4	ditch	1.30	0.07	
21	2	ditch	2.00	0.46	
22	3	gully	0.40	0.14	
22	4	posthole	0.40	0.06	
22	5	gully	0.40	0.07	
22	6	ditch	4.50	0.44	
23	2	ditch	2.74	0.44	
27	2	hearth?	0.80	0.10	
27	3	pit	1.25	0.15	
27	4	pit	0.90	0.20	
27	5	pit	-	0.18	
29	2	posthole?	0.40	0.20	
29	3	posthole?	0.30	0.03	
29	4	gully	0.35	-	
37	2	ditch	2.60	0.32	
38	2	ditch	0.40	0.13	
38	3	pit	-	0.16	
38	4	ditch	2.00	0.60	
38	5	ditch	1.00	0.48	
38	6	pit	1.80	0.52	AD 120+
38	7	ditch	0.85	-	
38	8	pit	1.60	-	
38	9	posthole	0.30	0.24	
38	10	posthole	0.38	0.16	
38	13	pit	0.50	-	
38	14	pit	0.85	-	
38	15	posthole	0.40	-	
38	16	ditch	1.30	0.40	=41/10, 42/2
38	18	posthole	0.20	-	
38	19	posthole	0.50	0.30	
38	21	posthole?	0.15	-	
38	22	posthole?	0.18	-	
38	23	posthole?	0.15	-	
38	24	pit	0.60	0.11	
39	2	ditch	1.75	0.76	
39	3	ditch	0.90	0.19	
39	4	ditch	2.90	0.63	=44/2, 43/3
39	5	ditch	1.75	0.55	
39	6	ditch	1.75	0.45	
39	7	gully	1	0.05	
39	10	gully	0.50	0.15	Roman
39	11	ditch	1.55	0.50	
39	12	ditch	1.50	0.52	Roman (Samian)
41	2	hearth	0.50	0.11	
41	3	hearth	0.80	0.11	

41	4	posthole	0.36	0.08	
41	6	ditch	0.80	-	
41	7	ditch	1.30	-	
41	8	ditch	3.50	-	=41/9,42/2,42/7
41	9	ditch	2	0.46	=41/8,41/11,42/2,42/7
41	10	ditch	1.50	-	=38/16,42/2
41	11	ditch	4.20	0.52	=41/8,41/9,41/2,42/7Roman
41	12	ditch	0.94	0.22	Roman 2nd century
41	13	ditch	0.75	0.22	Roman 2nd century
42	2	ditch	2	-	=41/8,41/9,42/7
42	3	ditch	-	-	=38/16,41/10 bone
42	4	gully	0.52	0.21	
42	5	ditch	2.90	-	=8/3?
42	6	ditch	1	-	
42	7	ditch	2.90	-	=41/8,41/9,42/2
42	8	gully	0.57	0.08	
42	9	ditch	1.10	0.31	
42	10	ditch	0.70	-	
42	11	posthole?	0.24	0.07	
42	12	posthole	0.30	0.14	
43	2	gully	0.70	0.10	
43	3	ditch	2.60	-	=44/2,39/4
43	4	ditch	0.90	0.30	
43	5	ditch	1.00	0.20	
44	2	ditch	-	-	=43/3,39/4
44	3	ditch	0.80	-	
44	4	quarry pit			
45	2	ditch	1.10	0.19	
45	3	gully	0.60	0.08	
46	2	gully	0.54	0.11	
46	3	ditch	1.80	0.52	
46	4	ditch	1.00	0.46	Roman 2nd Century
46	5	pit	-	0.34	Late Iron Age-Early Roman
46	6	ditch	0.50	-	
46	7	ditch	1.44	0.46	mid-late 2nd century
46	8	posthole	0.32	0.20	

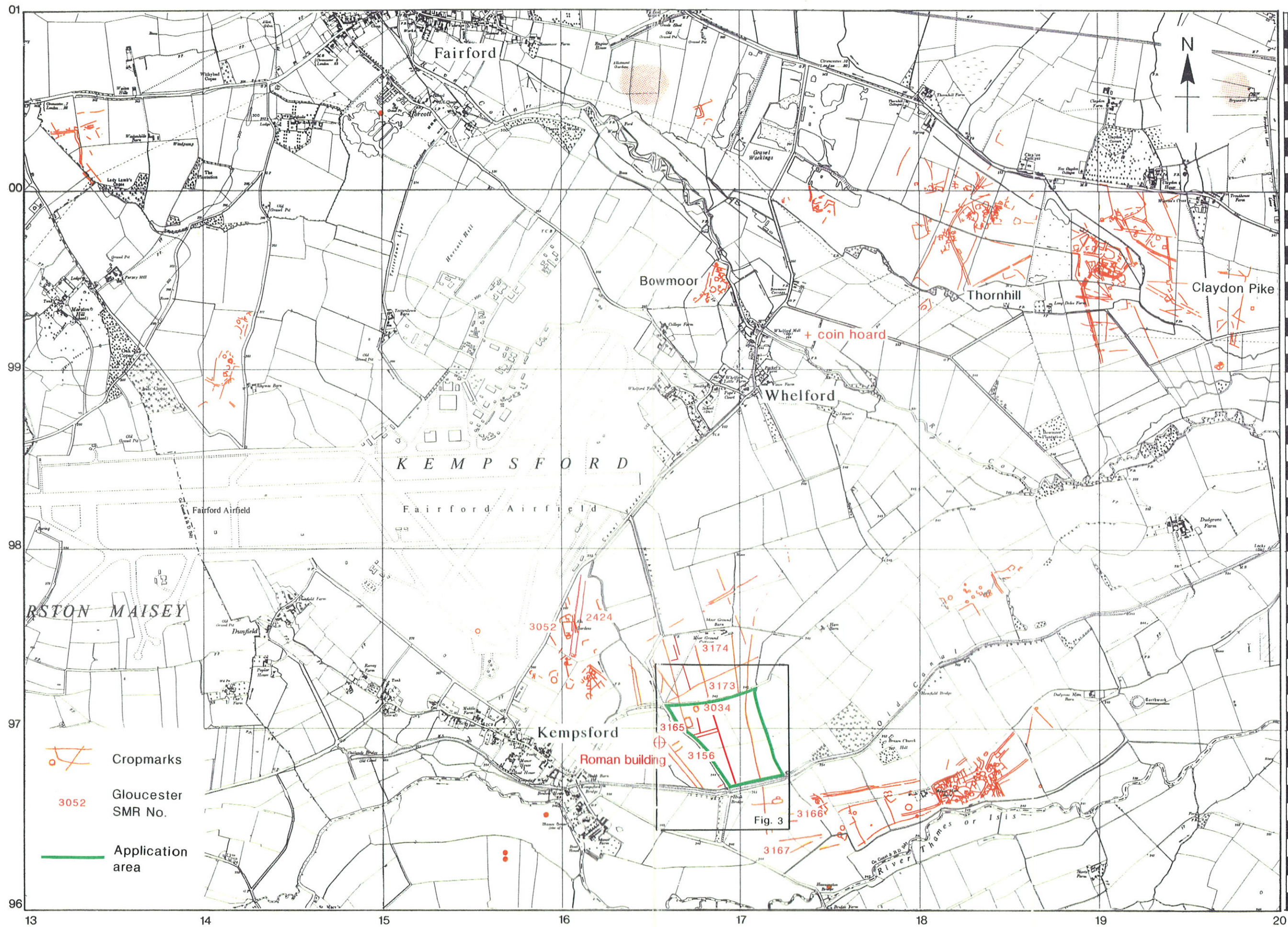


Fig. 1

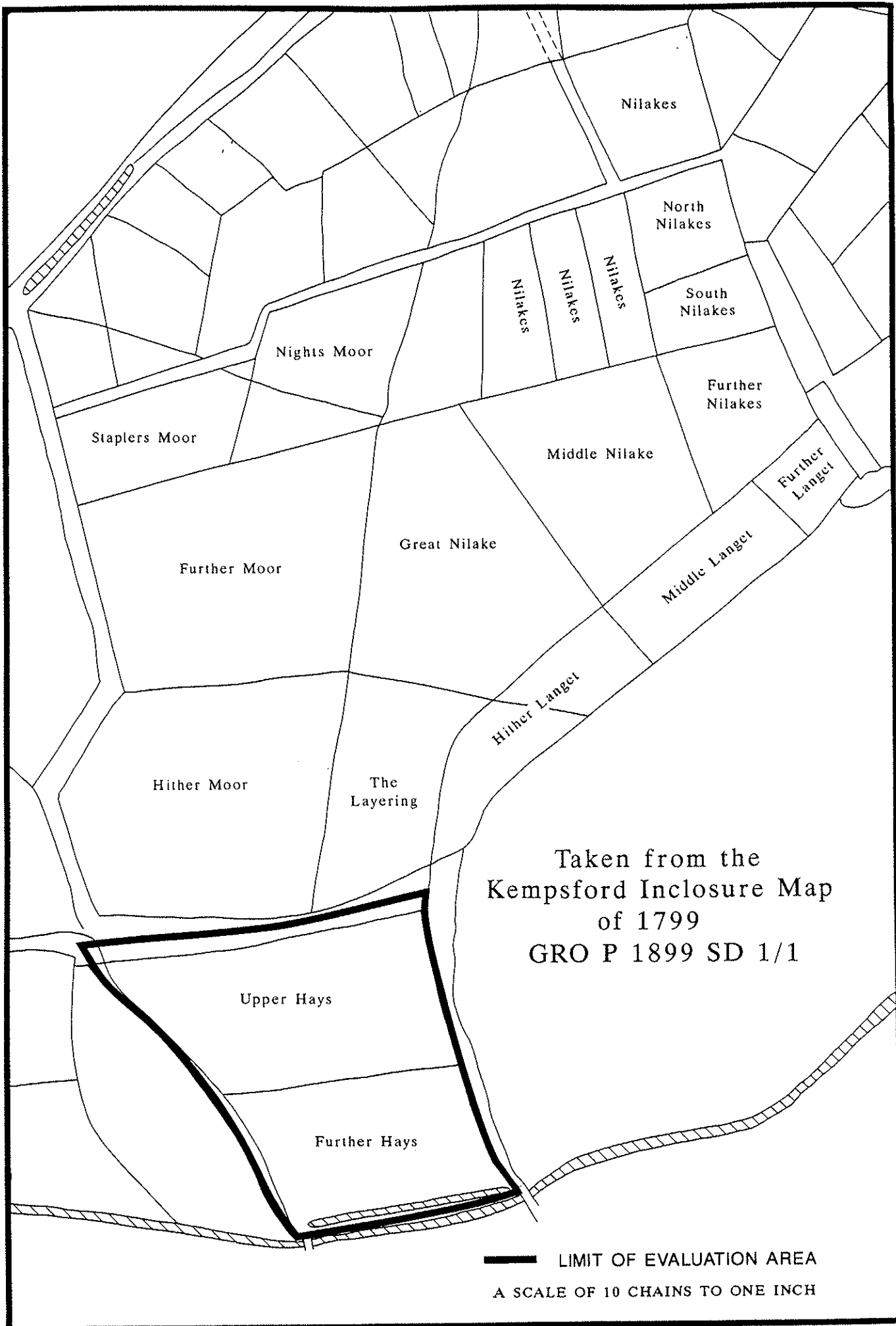


Figure 2

SECTION OF BURNT TREE THROW PIT

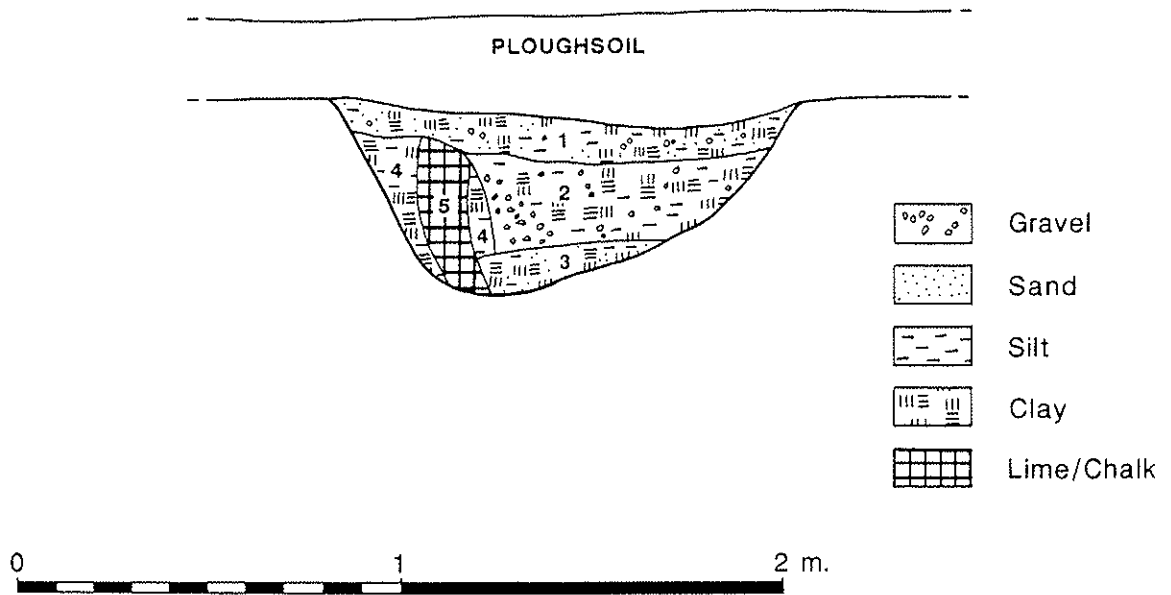


Figure 4

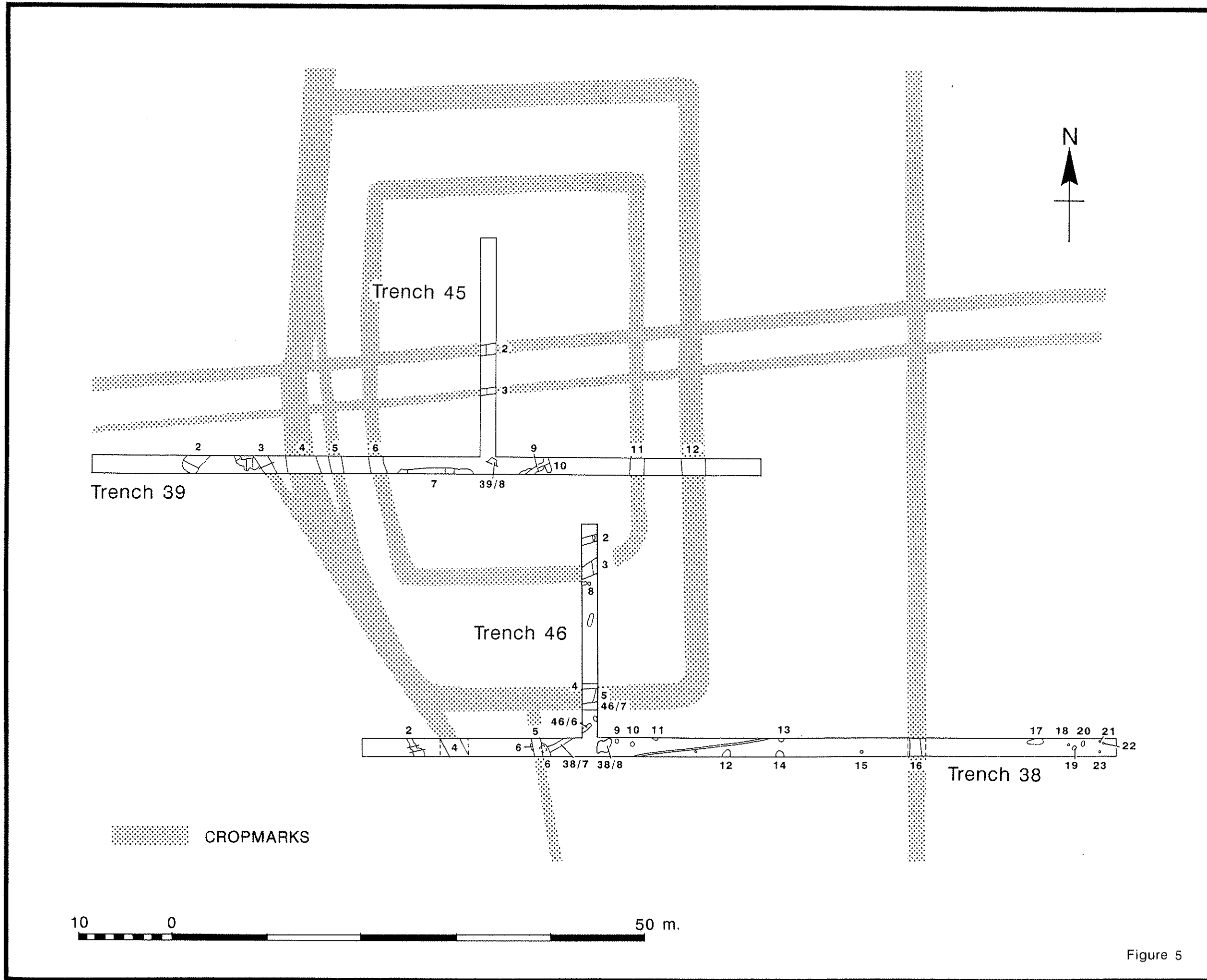


Figure 5

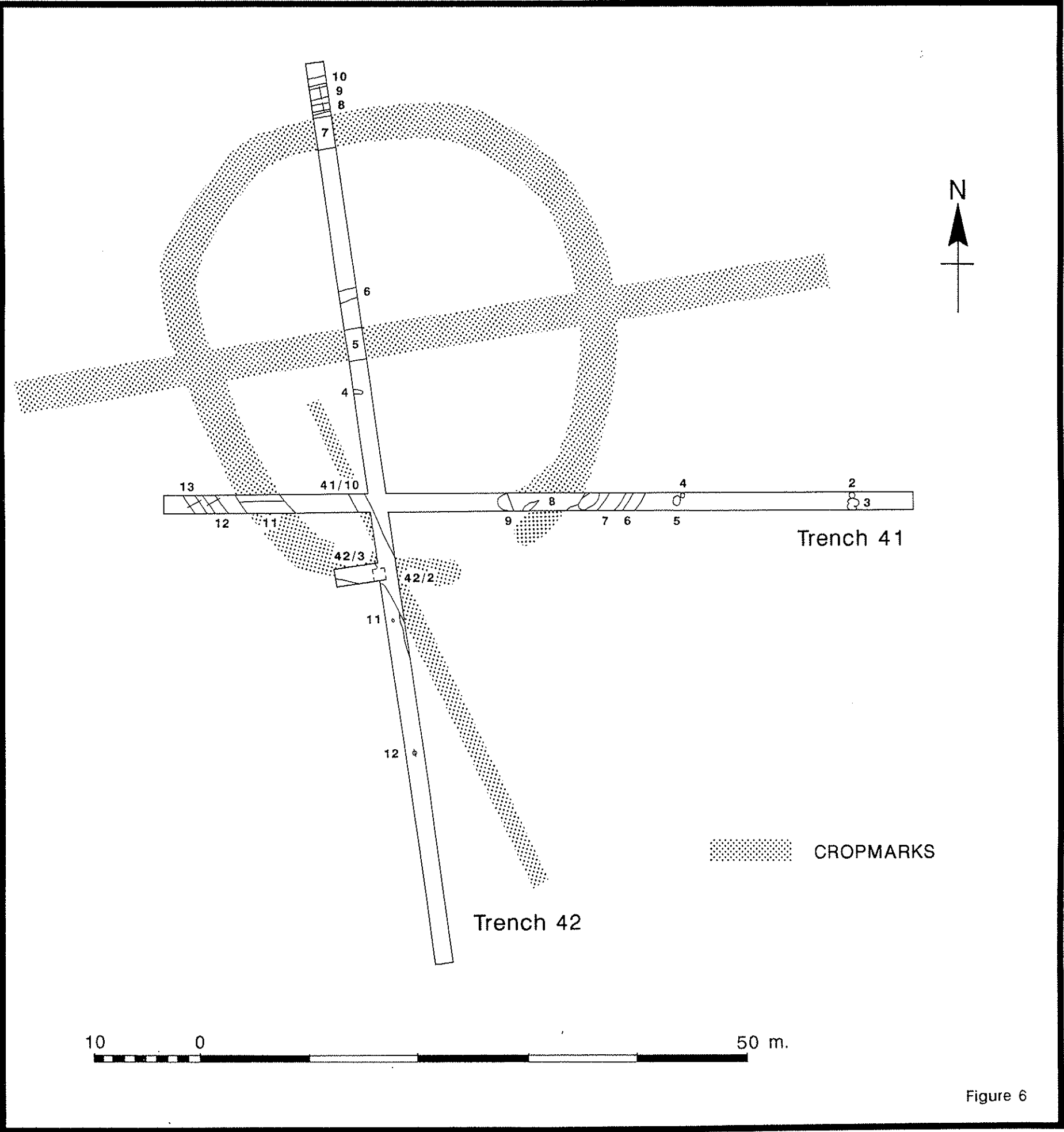


Figure 6



Plate 1

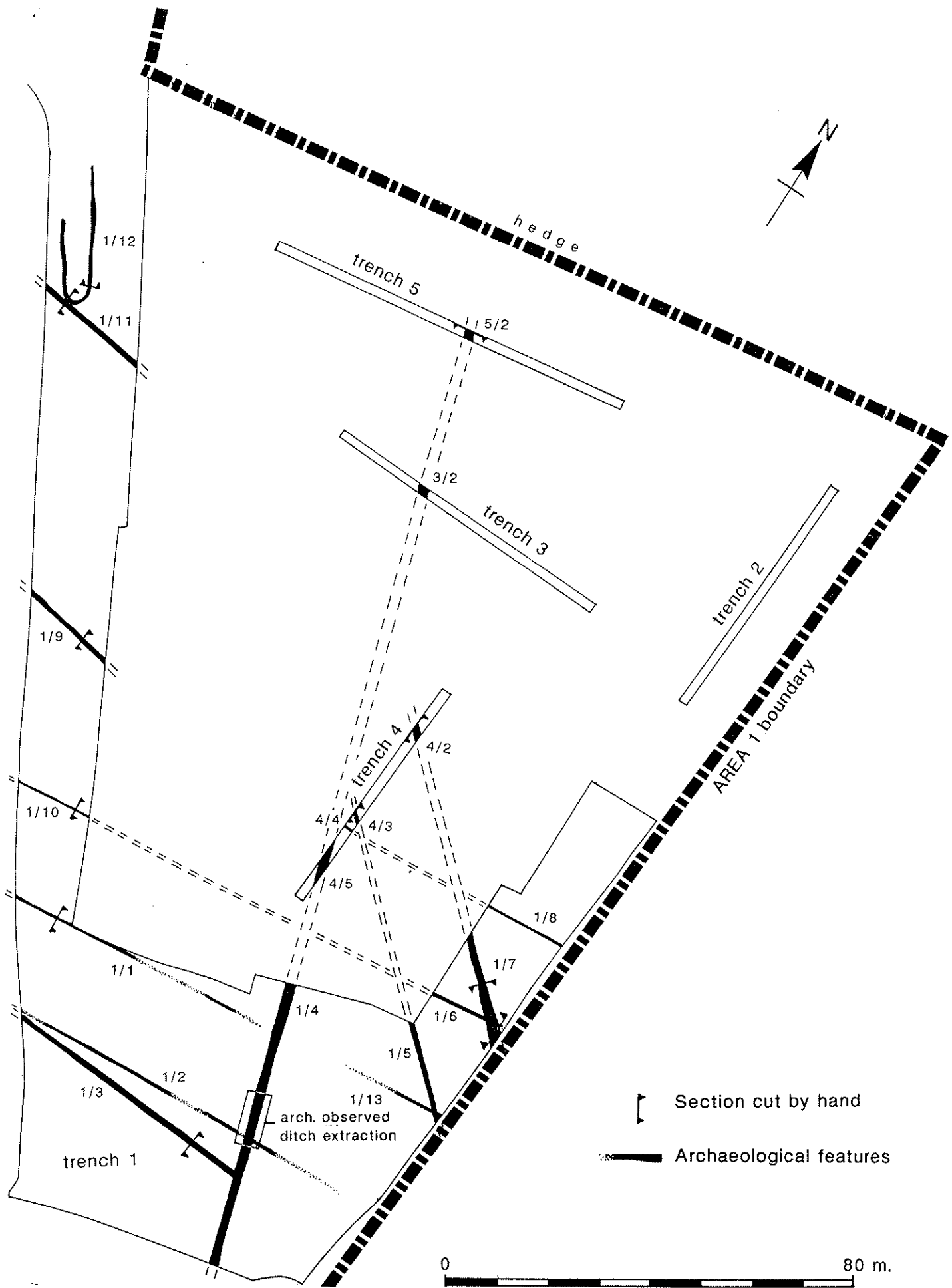


Figure 7



Plate 2



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