

ESTON NAB

Middlesbrough



Archaeological Evaluation



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SUMMARY

Lancaster University Archaeology Unit (LUAU) was commissioned by CPM to conduct an evaluation excavation on Eston Nab, prior to the proposed development of the site for a transmitting mast.

The site lies within an area of known prehistoric sites and spot finds, dating from the Mesolithic period to the Iron Age. The site lies in close proximity to the Iron Age promontory fort of Eston Nab.

Following the brief written by Teeside Archaeology, two trenches were excavated measuring 5m by 5m. No archaeological features were present in either trench.

It was not recommended that any further program of archaeological work should be carried out prior to the development taking place.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Dr Royston Clark of CPM for their assistance during the project. Thanks are also due to David Bridges of Wilton Farm for providing access to the site. In addition, LUAU would like to thank Robin Daniels and Peter Rowe of the Tees Archaeology for providing information from the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR).

The excavation was undertaken by Andrew Bates and Neil Wareing. The illustrations were completed by Emma Carter, and the report compiled by Andrew Bates. The project managed by Jamie Quatermain, who also edited this report.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 Planning permission was applied for by CPM to extend a transmitting station at Wilton Farm, Eston Nab, Middlesbrough, which would effectively double the size of the present transmitter enclosure to the east. Archaeological provision was placed on the proposed development by Tees Archaeology to evaluate the potential of the site for archaeological remains, prior to planning permission being granted.
- 1.1.2 Lancaster University Archaeology Unit (LUAU) was contacted by CPM to undertake an evaluation excavation. Following discussion of the project with Dr Royston Clark of CPM, and submission of a project design for the task (*Appendix 1*), LUAU was commissioned in August 2001 to undertake the work.

1.2 SITE LOCATION

- 1.2.1 The site lies on the northern limit of the North York Moors, on Eston Nab, close to the southeastern limit of the urban conurbation of Middlesbrough at approximately 239m OD (NZ 5694 1826). The area at present has six masts located on the hill, with enclosures of various sizes. The site lies within the area of a well-preserved prehistoric landscape. The most substantial structure in the immediate vicinity is an Iron Age promontory fort, located between 90m and 100m west of the site, overlooking the Tees river mouth and the Tees Valley.

1.3 PHYSICAL BACKGROUND

- 1.3.1 The solid geology of Eston Nab area consists of a small area of middle Jurassic Dogger above up to 30m of lower Jurassic liassic sandstones (Kent et al 1980, 52 – 53 and 32).
- 1.3.2 The earlier liassic sandstones are a bipartite deposit of ironstone, known as the Cleveland Ironstone or in Lincolnshire as Marlstone Rock, above sands and clays. The Cleveland Ironstone is best developed near Guisborough, where it reaches a maximum thickness of 24m (*op cit*, 32).
- 1.3.3 The later Dogger consists of highly variable marine deposits of conglomerates, sandstones, shales, limestones and ironstones, but over much of the Cleveland Basin consists of a calcareous or chamositic sandstone (*op cit*, 53).
- 1.3.4 Overlying these earlier sandstone deposits is a layer of Devensian glacial till, from the last period of glaciation of the British Isles before the present interglacial, dating from between 70,000 and 10,000 BP (*op cit*, 122 – 123; Evans 1975, 2).

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 PREHISTORIC

- 2.1.1 A number of sites are located in the immediate vicinity of Eston Moor. Flint scatters dating from the Mesolithic onwards have been noted (see *appendix 1*). Cup-marked stones, usually associated with the Neolithic period, have been recovered from heath land to the south of the site (Burgess 1989 – 90; Rowe 2001, 4) and from the excavations of the Iron Age promontory fort of Eston Nab. Most cup marked stones from the area have been portables (R. Daniels pers com). However, of the 9 possibly 10 cup marked stones recovered from the promontory fort 6 are engraved onto boulders and may not be considered true portables as described by Ian Hewitt (1990-91).
- 2.1.2 Early to mid-Bronze Age activity is noted in area by at least 47 barrows recorded on the Eston hills. The lack of similar archaeological features in the southern extent of the hills may be the result of agricultural practices rather than an archaeological bias (Vyner 1991, 25 - 27). Most of the mounds have been excavated by antiquarians, with no account of the excavations being published. One exception is the summary account of the 1927 - 9 excavations of the promontory fort by Frank Elgee, curator of Dorman Memorial Museum, in *Early Man in North East Yorkshire* published in 1930. This included the description of a damaged barrow associated with cremated bone and early Bronze Age pottery (Vyner 1988, 65).
- 2.1.3 The site lies within the territory of the Iron Age tribe of the Briganties. Stanwick, a fairly late hillfort of the Briganties but thought to be the capital of the anti-Roman Brigantian leader Venutius, is located approximately 38 km to the west south west of Eston Nab. It is thought that the last phase of fortification of Stanwick was the direct result of the ninth legion's advance into the north of Britain in 71 – 2 AD under Petillius Cerialis (Cunliff 1975, 112).
- 2.1.4 The promontory fort lies between 90m and 100m north west of the site. It is semi-elliptical in shape and encloses 1.1 hectares of land. The south east extent is defined by a bank and ditch and counterscarp bank, and the north western limit by approximately 200m of cliff face now cut into by the Nab Quarry. The entrance was possibly located close to the Eston Beacon, although this is unconfirmed (Hogg 1975, 208).
- 2.1.5 Two late bronze age palisade enclosures have been recorded during successive excavations, beginning in 1927-9 excavations by Frank Elgee and culminating in excavations of the fort by Cleveland County Archaeology Section between 1985 to 1987. Known as the long palisade and the knoll palisade, the former succeeding the latter, they are thought to represent a period of occupation of the site. The knoll palisade was replaced with a boulder wall, enlarging the enclosed area, during the early Iron Age (Vyner 1988, 65 and 89). During the mid Iron Age, around the early fifth century BC, the structure is replaced with the bank and ditch structure with counter scarp bank, visible as an earthwork today (Vyner 1988, 89).

- 2.1.6 Although post holes were recorded contemporary with the palisade enclosures suggesting occupation of the site during the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age, no pottery was recovered contemporary with the final phase of the site. This has been used to suggest a change of function of the site. The late Bronze Age and early Iron Age enclosures representing occupied defended enclosures, and the mid- to late Iron Age promontory fort functioning as an occasional focal point for the community. This need for a largely unoccupied fortification may suggest a greater reliance on the lowland soils for cultivation than the pasture which Eston Nab would have offered (Vyner 1988, 89 – 95).

2.2 ROMAN

- 2.2.1 Roman sites in the immediate vicinity is sparse, although Roman coins have been found at Eston, Guisborough and at Whitby. At Barnaby Grange Farm, near Guisborough, a Roman helmet was recovered from an ancient water coarse (Clark 1935, 64, 81, 86 and 138).
- 2.2.2 The first century Roman fort of Binchester is located approximately 40km to the north west of the site. Although not occupied throughout the period of Roman occupation, it appears again in the *Notia Dignitatum* of 395 AD (Frere 1974, 144, 158, 232 – 34). Piercebridge, located 15km south of Binchester, is an early forth century fort associated with the re-enforcement of the northern garrison at this time. This was part of an attempt to consolidate the province by Constantinus Ceasar. This followed the collapse of the short livid British Empire with the death of Allectus, during a battle at Silchester against invading Frankish forces, followed by the landing of Constantius Ceasar and his forces (Frere 1974, 339 – 342).
- 2.2.3 One villa site is recorded, approximately 4.5 km south east of Piercebridge, at Holmes House (Ordnance Survey (1978), but must be considered the very northern limit of such sites.

2.3 MEDIEVAL

- 2.3.1 Eston Nab lies in the parish of Ormesby. Prior to the Norman Conquest, the 12 curates of “Manors Ormsby” were held by four thegns, Orme being mentioned as a tennant in 1086 (Page 1968, 276 – 178).
- 2.3.2 Lands in Eston were granted to Guisborough Priory by the Meynells and their tenants, whose name appears as land owners in the area in the 13th century (Page 1968, 279), The nearest medieval settlement to the site is the village of Lackenby (Vyner 1988, 64). Guisborough Priory owned numerous lands in the vills of the Cleveland Plains and along the coast (Waites 1997, 35 – 37), including the nearby manor of Ormsby Grange (Page 1968, 279), and was active in the Iron and Wool trade (Waites 1997, 150 and 188).

2.4 POST-MEDIEVAL

- 2.4.1 Although Guisborough Priory mined Ironstone from medieval times, the Eston mines did not open until between 1850 and 1860AD (Page 1968, 277). Sandstones was removed from Eston Nab quarry from at least 1846, but Ironstone was not quarried until 1850. The quarry was soon superceded by the mines mentioned above, located approximately 0.75 km to the south west of the promontory fort and the earlier quarry, whereby mining became the principle industry of the area during the 19th century (*op cit*, 277; Vyner 1988, 64) .
- 2.4.2 Also located in the eastern quarter of the promontory fort is a Neopolionic Beacon, the building of which survived as a habitation up until the 1950's. The tower which remains was originally part of a complex of buildings (Vyner 1988, 64). A single-storey building "set against the wall" also survived up until 1902, and is thought to be associated with quarrying at Eston Nab during the 19th century (Vyner 1988, 64).
- 2.4.3 Middlesbrough, to the north west of the site in the Tees Valley, can be traced back to Victorian times, although in 1801 it was described as having only 25 inhabitants (Briggs 1990, 242). Originally the railway line was extended to Middlesbrough, in 1825, to export coal from the river Tees. Middlesbrough was incorporated in 1853, but its growth in the latter half of the 19th century can be attributed to the iron works their, attracting people from Durham, South Wales, Staffordshire, Scotland and Ireland (Briggs 1990, 247 – 248).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 THE EXCAVATION

- 3.1.1 The work undertaken followed the method statement detailed in the project design (*Appendix 1*) and complied with current legislation and accepted best practice, including the Code of Conduct and the relevant professional standards of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA).
- 3.1.2 The programme of field observation accurately recorded the location, extent, and character of any surviving archaeological features. The work consisted of the excavation of a 15m by 3m trench, the examination of any horizons exposed, and the accurate recording of all archaeological features, horizons and any artefacts found during the excavation. The area was scanned for services with a service detector tool by an employee NTL, prior to excavation of the trenches. Two high voltage electric cables were located and marked out. No machine excavation took place within 1m of the known services, but excavation did proceed within this area by hand. The trench was excavated initially with a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.22mm wide ditching bucket. Thereafter all excavation was by hand. All spoil was scanned for finds during the excavation.
- 3.1.3 The recording comprised a full description and preliminary classification of features or structures revealed, on LUAU *pro-forma* sheets, and their accurate location in plan. A plan was produced of the area excavated showing the location of the trench in relation to the gas pipeline (Fig 2). A photographic record in colour slide and monochrome formats was also compiled.

3.2 THE ARCHIVE

- 3.2.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the project design (*Appendix 1*) and in accordance with current IFA and English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 1991). The archive will be deposited in the Lancashire Record Office with a copy to the Lancashire SMR.

4. RESULTS

4.1 TRENCH 1

- 4.1.1 Trench 1 measured 5m by 5m with a maximum depth of 0.72m. Excavation proceed through 0.24m of topsoil, context **I**, onto natural boulder clay, context **2**. No archaeology was encountered within this trench.
- 4.1.2 The topsoil consisted of dark brown grey silty clay, with less than 1% sub-rounded sandstone inclusions of a maximum size of 0.06m x 0.05m x 0.03m. Finds included modern ceramics, a sample of which was retained, and plastic, which was discarded.
- 4.1.3 The natural boulder clay consisted of a mid-orange clay with 1% to 10% sub-rounded sandstone inclusions of a maximum size of 0.43m x 0.30m x 0.18m.
- 4.1.4 These contexts were located in both trenches.
- 4.1.5 In the eastern corner a sondage was excavated, 2m in length and 1m wide, through 0.50m of natural boulder clay to confirm that it was not re-deposited material.

4.2 TRENCH 2

- 4.2.1 Trench 2 measured 5m by 5m with a maximum depth of 0.26m. Two services were marked out in the proximity of Trench 2 prior to the excavation of the trench, see fig 2. The area within 1m of the these services was hand dug. No archaeology was encountered within this trench.
- 4.2.2 Excavation proceeded though 0.26m of topsoil, context **I**, onto natural boulder clay, context **2**, both of which are described above.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTERPRETATION

- 5.1.1 No sub-surface archaeology was encountered during the evaluation excavation. The topsoil on the site proved to be very thin, and no convincing sub-soil was present on the site. It seems likely that, at present, the topsoil is eroding from the site at a similar rate to that in which it forms.

5.2 IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT

- 5.3 It seems unlikely that development of the area in the immediate vicinity of the trenches will damage any sub-surface archaeological features. The potential of the site would appear to lie only in topsoil finds, but all those recovered during the excavation proved to be of a modern date.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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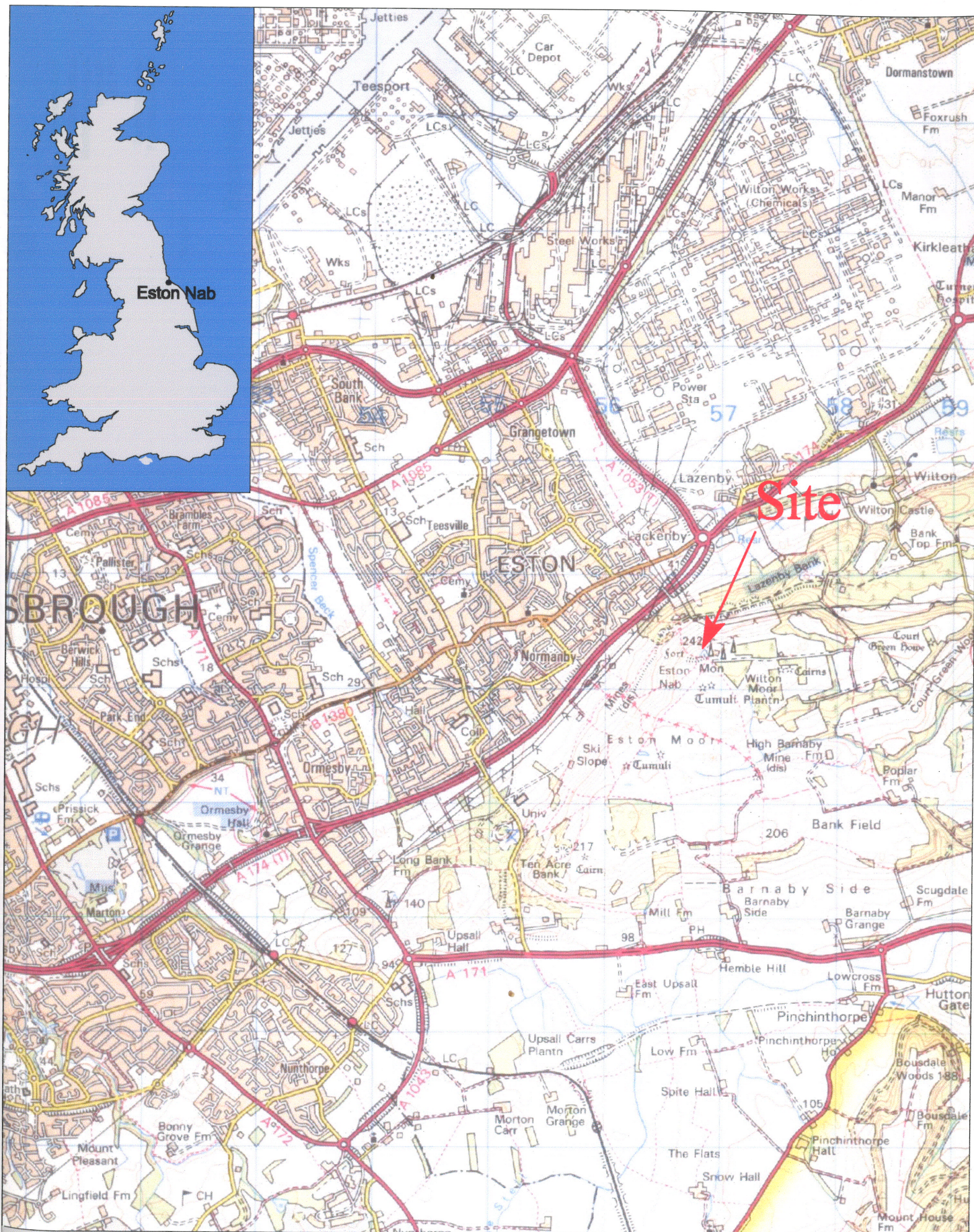
APPENDIX 2: PROJECT DESIGN

APPENDIX 3: CONTEXT LIST

Context Number	Description
1	Topsoil
2	Natural Geology, glacial till

ILLUSTRATIONS

LIST OF FIGURES



based upon the Ordnance Survey 1:50000
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0 500 1000
metres

Figure 1: Location Map



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PROJECT:

Eston Nab

DRAWING No:

2

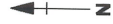


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1:1000

DRAWN BY: ELC

DATE: November 2001

LOCATION:



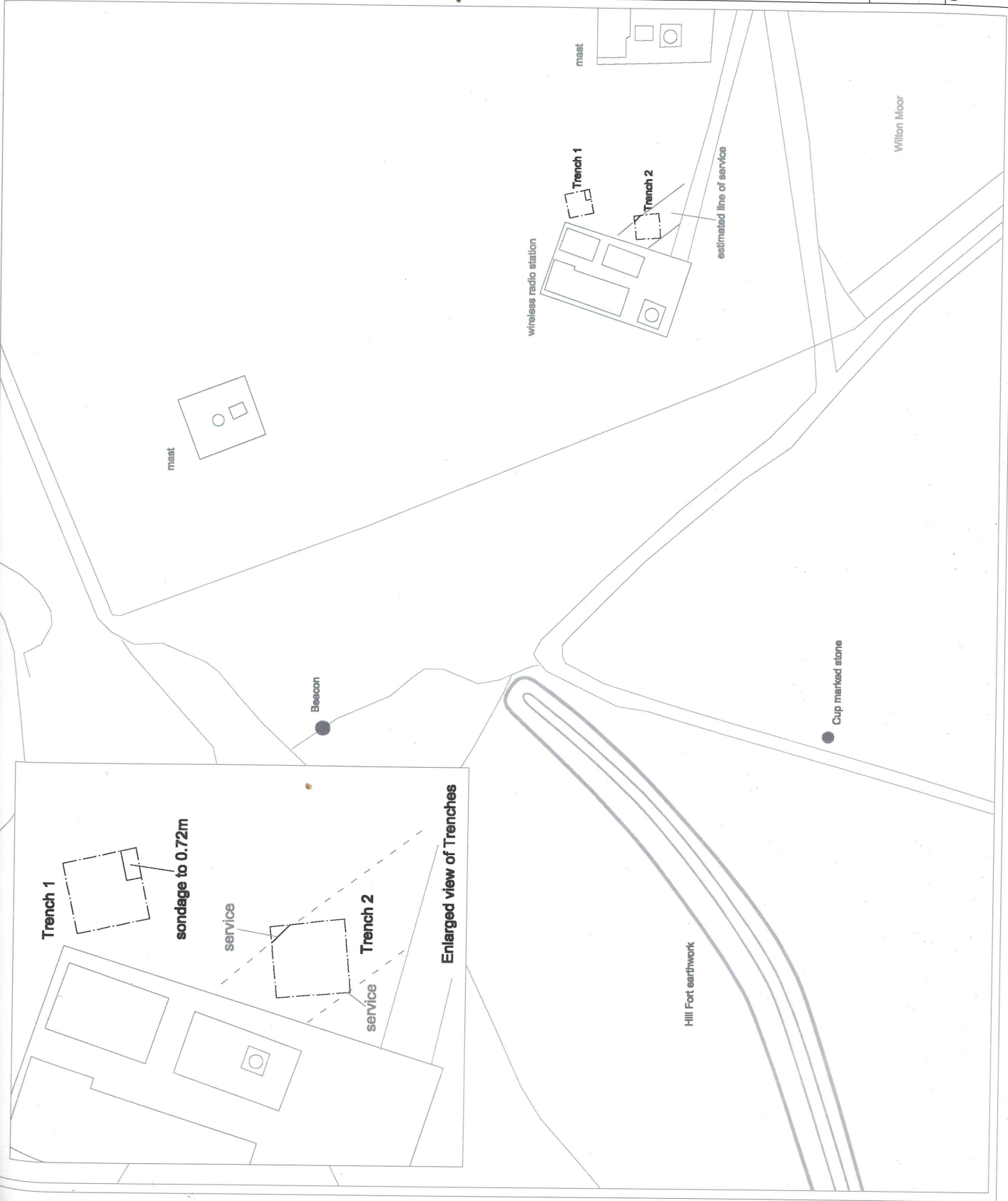
KEY

TITLE:

Trench Location Plan

COMMISSIONED BY:

CPM and NTL



Trench 1

sondage to 0.72m

service

Trench 2

service

Enlarged view of Trenches

Figure 2 : Trench Location Plan

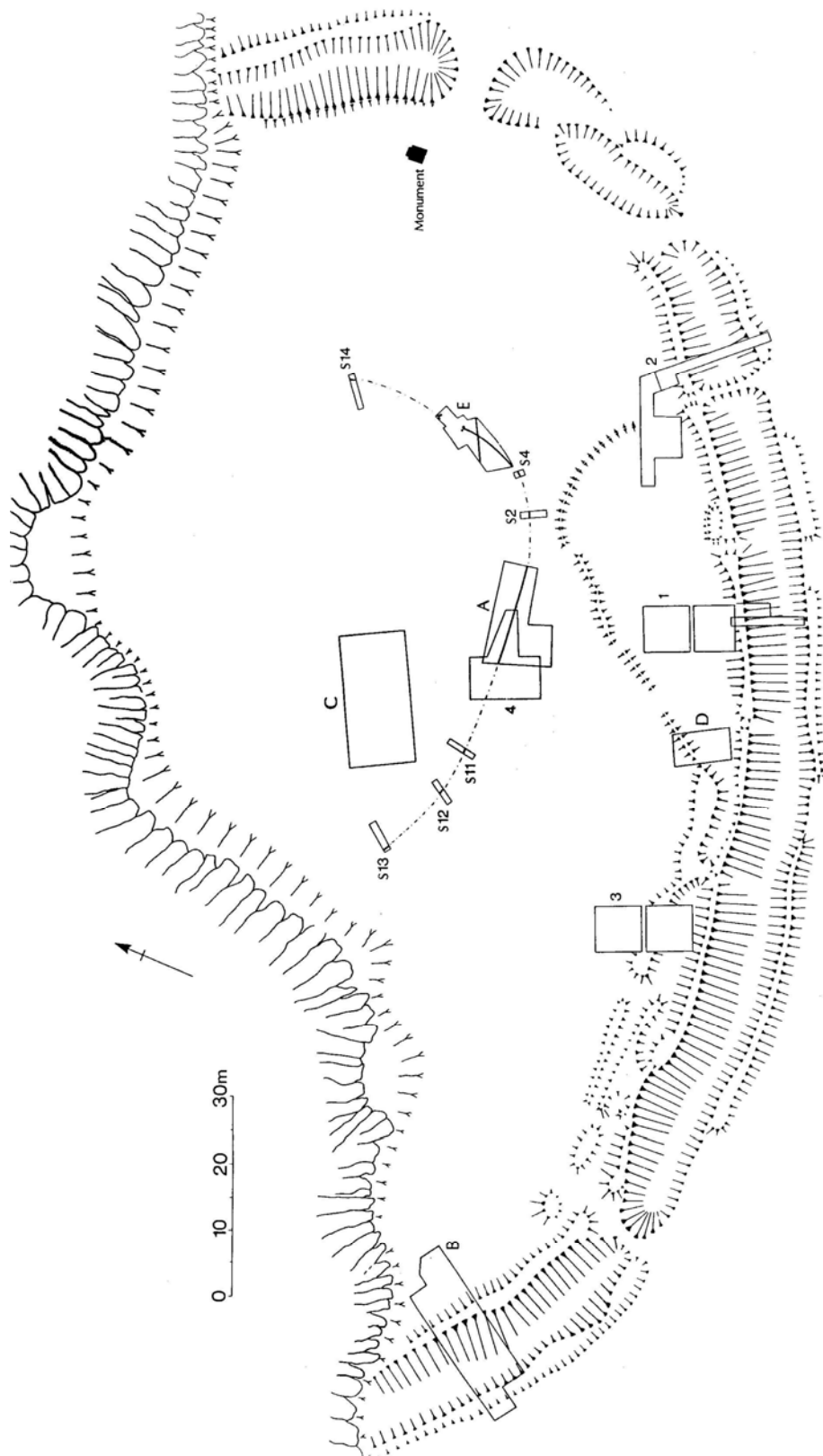


Fig 3: Excavations at Eston Nab 1966-68 (Vyner 1988, 62)

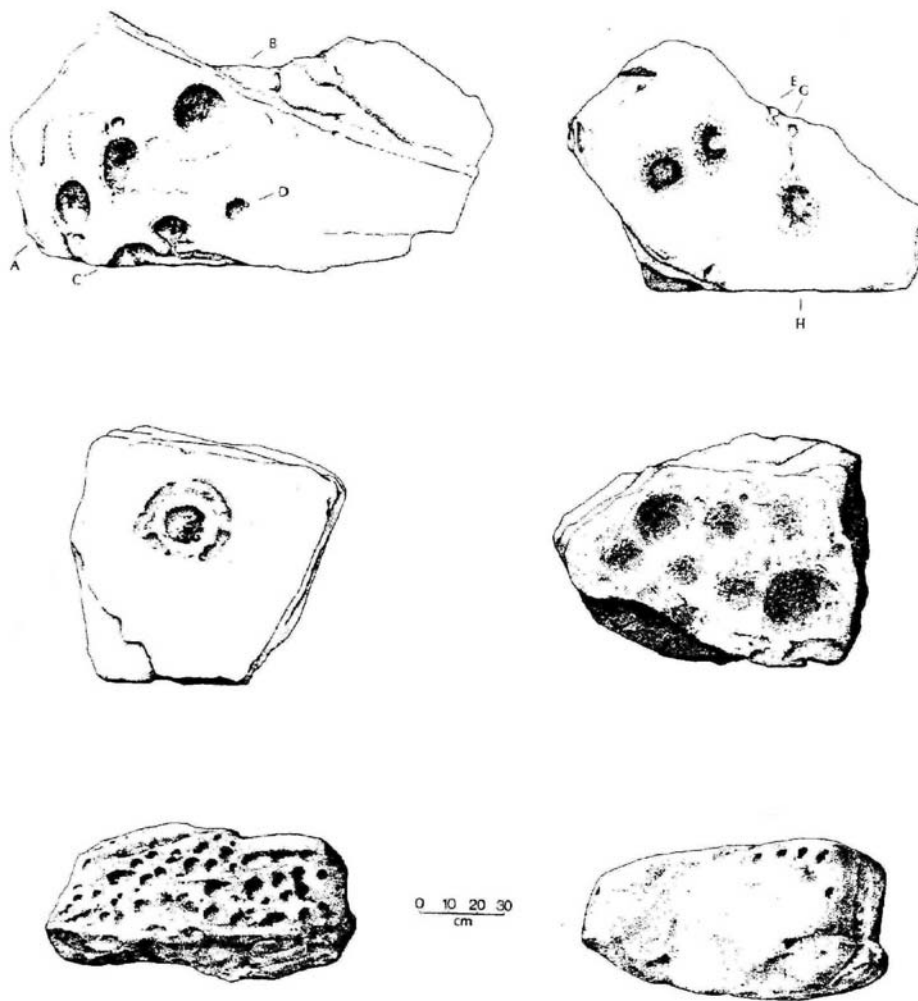


Fig4 : Three cup and ring marked stones from the excavated promontory fort (Vyner 1988, 85) Scale c1: 6

PLATES

LIST OF PLATES

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- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Trench 1, looking south. |
| 2 | Trench 2, looking south. |
| 3 | Aerial photograph of Eston Nab, looking south west. |
| 4 | Bank end ditch of Eston Nab promontory fort, looking south west. |



Plate 1 Trench 1, looking south



Plate 2 Trench 2, looking south



Plate 3 Aerial photograph of Eston Nab, looking south-west



Plate 4 Bank and ditch of Eston Nab promontory fort, looking south-west