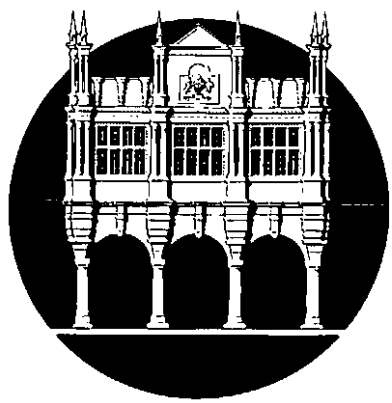
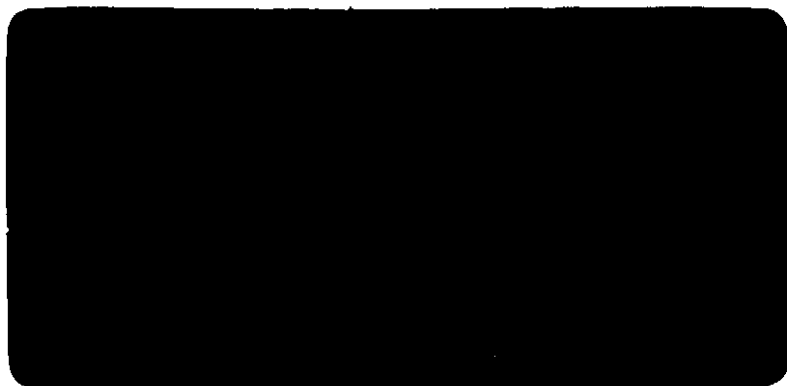


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2427



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION  
AT COATES FARM, GREINTON  
SOMERSET**

*by*

**J. Best**

**Exeter Archaeology**

**Report No. 04.25**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of an archaeological field evaluation undertaken by Exeter Archaeology (EA) in April 2004 at Coates Farm, Greinton, Somerset (ST 412363). The work was commissioned by Telken Homes Ltd as a condition of the granting of planning permission for redevelopment by Sedgemoor District Council (Alternative Applications 30/99/00002; 30/03/00007).

The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a *Specification* prepared by Somerset County Council (SCC 28 April 2003) in respect of the original application (30/99/00002) for the conversion of farm buildings and the creation of a new access road.

### 1.1 The site and geology (ST 412363; Figs 1–2)

Coates Farm is located on the western edge of Greinton village, adjacent to the churchyard of St Michael and All Angels. Coates farmhouse forms part of the street frontage on the southern side of the main road through the village (A361). The site lies to the south of the farmhouse within an area currently occupied by modern agricultural buildings and concrete yard surfaces.

The main focus of the proposed development is the conversion of stone buildings surrounding the farmhouse into private dwellings. All other modern buildings and concrete yard surfaces to the south of the farmhouse will be removed to provide garden plots for the converted properties. A new access road to these properties will be constructed through the yard.

Greinton lies at the base of the southern slopes of the Polden Hills and on the northern edge of the King's Sedge Moor levels, at a height of *c.* 15m AOD. According to the Institute of Geological Sciences (now BGS), the underlying geology of the immediate site area consists of Triassic Keuper Marl. To the north of Greinton is a fault line where Jurassic Lower Lias clay with some limestone overlies Triassic and Jurassic Rhaetic clay above the Keuper Marl.

## 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Archaeological background (some SMR sites below are marked on Fig. 2)

#### *General*

There are no prehistoric sites recorded within the immediate vicinity of Greinton. However, a small number of residual flints were found during an excavation to the west of the site, which indicated transient activity in the area dating from the late Mesolithic to the Early Bronze Age.<sup>1</sup> To the north of the site, multidisciplinary investigations around Shapwick have revealed evidence of activity from the Mesolithic period onwards and shown some continuity of settlement from the prehistoric and Roman periods.<sup>2</sup>

The Roman road from Ilchester to Combech follows the course of the modern A39 along the crest of the Polden Hills, *c.* 100m to the north of the site.<sup>3</sup> This road marks the boundary between the northern edge of Greinton Parish and the southern edge of Shapwick Parish. The pattern of Roman settlement suggests that by the end of the 4th century AD a network of

<sup>1</sup> SMR 15950.

<sup>2</sup> Aston & Gerrard 1999, 8.

<sup>3</sup> SMR 11831.

small, scattered, agricultural settlements provided service to 'villas' on a series of estates along the northern flank of the Polden Hills.<sup>4</sup> The road along the Polden Hills connected these estates to the sea ports at Combech, and to Ilchester in the east.

The regular field pattern around Shapwick is also thought to have its origins in the Roman period and possibly as far back as the Bronze Age. The patterns of land division set out in these periods would have influenced the layout of later open-fields and the post-medieval enclosed landscape.<sup>5</sup> It is likely that a similar pattern of settlement and land division influenced the development of Greinton. Recent archaeological investigations to the west of the site have revealed evidence of Roman settlement close to the historic core of the village (described below).

### *Coates Farm*

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in 1999 (SMR 44864, see Fig. 2) within the footprint of a proposed new dwelling, less than 100m to the west of EA Trench 1 (see 3.3). A 14m by 2m trench revealed archaeological remains dating to Romano-British, medieval and post-medieval periods. The primary phase of activity was represented by a Romano-British occupation level, which contained fragments of Black Burnished Ware pottery (2nd and 3rd century AD), animal bone and charcoal. This deposit was truncated by a pair of parallel ditches, aligned east to west, which contained fragments of 12th- to 14th-century pottery. The ditch profiles suggested they had been excavated to support the foundations of a timber-framed building. A later boundary ditch, aligned north to south, contained sherds of medieval pottery. This ditch probably formed part of a complex of enclosures that defined plots within and around a farm or village settlement.<sup>6</sup> Other features recorded dated to the late 19th and early 20th century.

In 2000 a watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of foundation and service trenches for the above dwelling (SMR 44865). This provided a wider view of features recorded in 1999 and exposed a second boundary ditch and an articulated human burial. The boundary ditch was aligned north to south and contained 2nd- and 3rd-century Dorset Black Burnished Ware. The flexed inhumation burial was a mature adult male, orientated north to south, probably dating from the 4th century AD. This somewhat unusual burial is almost certainly one of a group. Its proximity to the boundary ditch may also be significant, as ditches were sometimes used to define the layout and orientation of burial groups.

In 2002 an evaluation was undertaken prior to a proposed residential development at Partridge Close, to the south-west of the site (SMR 15679). The southern half of the development area had been terraced down to natural clays by the construction of modern agricultural buildings and the farmyard. Evidence for Romano-British activity included an occupation layer similar to that recorded in 1999 (SMR 44864), which had been truncated by several boundary ditches and gullies dating to the 3rd century AD. Medieval occupation was indicated by a boundary ditch and pottery scatters dating from the 11th–14th-centuries. Post-medieval and modern activity was illustrated by a number of pits, ditches and masonry walls related to the recent history of the farmstead.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Aston & Gerrard 1999, 20.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, 23.

<sup>6</sup> Leach 2000, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Young 2002, 15.

In 2003 an excavation was carried out in the above development area (SMR 15950). The earliest archaeological remains exposed were a small number of residual flints dating to the Late Mesolithic/Early Neolithic period and to the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age transition. Three phases of Romano-British activity were recorded, spanning the late 2nd to early 4th centuries AD: an enclosure was constructed in the north-west of the site, to be replaced by later enclosures to the east and south. These features were then abandoned and partially destroyed by the excavation of a large pit during the 4th century AD. Finds retrieved during the excavation included pottery, animal bones (predominantly beef cattle) and long-bones from at least two human neonatal individuals. Medieval features dated from the 14th and 15th centuries and included a large boundary ditch, which had been redefined during the 17th/18th century and infilled during the 19th century.

## 2.2 Historical background (Figs 2–4) (some SMR sites below are marked on Fig. 2)

The Domesday Book records the owner of Greinton as Glastonbury Abbey. At this time the manor was worth 50s and included 20 acres of meadow and three of woodland. Remains of the medieval settlement at Greinton have been exposed to the west of the site (SMR 44864, 44865, 15679 and 15950). These have included structural features and boundary ditches associated with tenement plots set out around the 15th-century Church of St Michael and All Angels (SMR 10538). In 1990 a watching brief was carried out during the excavation of a 0.60m by 0.60m hole through the vestry floor of St Michael's, but no archaeological remains were observed.<sup>8</sup>

Approximately 50m to the north-east of Coates Farm is the site of a Quaker burial ground (SMR 10541). The land was given to the Quakers in 1696 and the last burials took place in 1829. The meeting house was replaced by a school in 1853, which is currently used as a village hall.

To the north of the farm (ST 417371) is the site of a former windmill.<sup>9</sup> It was recorded on Newcourt's map of 1660 and Ogilby's map of 1675, but had disappeared by 1742. The site of a former limekiln was marked on a mid 18th-century map, on Ridgeway Lane to the north of the site (ST 41763683).<sup>10</sup> (These sites are not shown on Fig. 2.)

The 1841 Greinton Tithe Map shows much of the land at Coates Farm as orchard (Fig. 3).<sup>11</sup> The buildings to the south of the road (No. 24) comprised a simple rectangular building, which forms the core of the present farmhouse, and other agricultural buildings, which are part of the current ranges of stone buildings. The field pattern to the south of the farmhouse was very similar to that which exists today.

The 1885 OS map shows that the farmhouse had been extended and the ranges of stone buildings to the south and east completed.<sup>12</sup> There are still large areas of orchard shown to the south and west of the farmhouse. The major field boundaries have been retained, although the area to the south of the church has been internally divided. The 1904 OS map shows the layout of the farm unchanged (Fig. 4).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> SMR 16180.

<sup>9</sup> SMR 10537.

<sup>10</sup> SMR 10539.

<sup>11</sup> SLSL Greinton Tithe Map 1841.

<sup>12</sup> OS 1885 Sheet 51.15.

<sup>13</sup> OS 1904 Sheet 51SE.

### 3. THE EVALUATION

#### 3.1 Aims

The aim of the evaluation was to gain information on the presence/absence, character, extent, integrity, state of preservation and relative quality of the potential archaeological resource. The main requirements were:

- To excavate four trenches along the line of a proposed new access road;
- To excavate and record any archaeological deposits or features encountered;
- Production of this summary report.

#### 3.2 Method

The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a *Specification* prepared by SCC (28 April 2003) in respect of the original application (30/99/00002), and the SCC *General specification for archaeological work in Somerset* (March 1995).

Four trenches were positioned along the route of a proposed access road, in order to obtain further information on the presence and preservation of any archaeological deposits. The trenches were excavated by machine, using a 1.20m-wide toothless grading bucket. The trenches were excavated to expose the surface of *in situ* natural geology, or the top of archaeological deposits, whichever was exposed first.

Once excavated the trenches were cleaned by hand and recorded in accordance with standard EA procedure. A written record was produced on single context record sheets, a drawn record was compiled in plan and section at scales of 1:20 and 1:50, and a photographic record made using black-and-white and colour slide film.

#### 3.3 Results (Figs 2, 5–7)

##### ***Trench 1*** 6m by 5m (ST 41253637) (Fig. 5)

Trench 1 was positioned *c.* 40m to the south of the Church of St Michael & All Angels, at the north end of the new access road. The trench was also *c.* 100m to the east of previous archaeological investigations, which took place in 1999 and 2000.<sup>14</sup> The trench was originally intended to be 10m long by 4m wide, but was shortened to allow continued access through the yard for farm vehicles.

The northern part of the trench revealed a large modern disturbance cut into natural reddish-brown clay with some limestone, exposed at a depth of 0.80m below ground level (at 16.57m AOD). To the south of this was an east-west ditch (520), 2.95m wide and 0.85m deep, visible across the full width of the trench. The profile of 520 was a wide, V-shape with a slightly concave base. The lower fill (503) consisted of reddish-grey clay with occasional fragments of limestone and rare flecks of charcoal. Fill 503 also contained one sherd of Black Burnished pottery, one sherd of Roman grey ware, and two fragments of post-1000 AD coarseware. The upper fill (502) was a dark reddish clay and contained one sherd of Black Burnished ware and one sherd of unclassified Roman coarseware.

Ditch 520 had been re-cut along its north edge by a smaller ditch (522) measuring 1.30m wide by 0.60m deep. Ditch 522 was filled with a reddish-brown, redeposited natural clay (521). No finds were retrieved from this feature.

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<sup>14</sup> SMR 44864 and 44865.



Ditch 520 had been truncated along its southern edge by two modern animal burial pits (525, 528). Both pits were sub-rectangular with vertical edges and contained articulated animal skeletons. Above these pits was a 0.60m thick layer of topsoil (500), which contained fragments of 17th- and 18th-century pottery.

***Trench 2*** 5m by 4m (ST 41263631) (Fig. 6)

This trench was located adjacent to the main dairy buildings and 60m to the east of the 2003 excavation area.<sup>15</sup> The proposed size of the trench was 5m by 5m but it had to be shortened to allow access to the dairy buildings.

Natural clay was encountered at a depth of 0.90m below ground level (at 14.60 AOD). Truncating the natural ground was ditch 506, aligned east to west and measuring 0.50m wide and 0.20m deep. This was filled with a reddish-brown clay silt (505) containing one sherd of Black Burnished ware.

***Trench 3*** 8m by 3m (ST 41373631) (Fig. 7)

Trench 3 was sited at the east end of the farmyard between several agricultural buildings. The trench was moved 10m to the east of its intended location to allow access through the yard.

A light reddish-brown clay subsoil (518) was observed 1m below ground level (at 13.14m AOD). Overlying this was a 0.06m thick spread of charcoal (519), which extended 0.50m south of the north edge of Trench 3. Layers 518 and 519 were cut by a pair of parallel ditches 515 and 517, orientated NNE-SSW. These were 1.50m apart and measured 0.60m wide and 0.20m deep. They were filled with reddish-brown clay (514 and 516) containing occasional flecks of charcoal.

At the west end of the trench, the subsoil (518) was truncated by north-south ditch (511), 1m wide and 0.40m deep. It was filled with a reddish-brown clay (510), which contained rare fragments of charcoal. The eastern edge of ditch 511 was truncated by another north-south ditch (513), which also cut through layers 518 and 519. Ditch 513 was 1.10m wide and 0.40m deep, and filled with dark grey clay (512) containing a moderate amount of charcoal, concentrated predominantly in the upper 0.15m. It also contained a scrap of unclassified coarseware, possibly dating from the Roman period.

***Trench 4*** 3m by 3m (ST 41273626)

Trench 4 was located to the south of the main farmyard and 50m to the east of the 2003 excavation area. The position of the trench was revised due to the presence of contaminated ground within this field.

Natural clay was visible 1.15m below the ground surface (at 13.23m AOD). Above this was a very mixed layer of redeposited natural red clay (508). No topsoil survived above layer 508. This area of the farm has been used for the disposal of waste materials and has been extensively disturbed in the recent past.

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<sup>15</sup> SMR 15950.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

### Trench 1

The most significant archaeological features exposed were ditches 520 and 522. The larger ditch (520) is most likely a boundary ditch, which had been re-cut along its north edge by ditch 522. The fills of 520 contained fragments of both Roman and medieval pottery. However, the presence of post-1000AD pottery near the base of the deposit suggests that the ditch is medieval in date, and that the Roman pottery was residual material from former settlement activity in the area.

Similar features were recorded during excavations prior to the construction of Wisteria Cottage, to the west of the site.<sup>16</sup> Ditch F109 was a north-south ditch with a steep V-shaped profile, associated with Roman settlement at Greinton. Ditch F100 was a broad, shallow ditch, which formed part of a series of tenement enclosures in the medieval core of the village. Ditches 520 and 522 were perpendicular to F100 and F109 and may form part of the tenement plots laid out during medieval settlement of Greinton. The profile and fills of ditch 520 are similar to those of ditch F100. There are no field boundaries, or other features, marked on the Tithe Map or OS maps which correspond to 520 or 522.

### Trench 2

The only archaeological feature within Trench 2 was ditch 506, which was aligned east to west and contained one sherd of Roman pottery. A number of similar ditches were recorded during excavations at Partridge Close, to the west of the trench.<sup>17</sup> These shared a similar alignment and indicated Roman settlement activity in this area. The date and alignment of ditch 506 suggests that features relating to the former Roman settlement at Greinton extend eastwards from Partridge Close, and potentially survive intact beneath the modern farmyard.

### Trench 3

Within trench 3, all the features truncated the clay subsoil (518). This appears to correspond to layer 1008, which was interpreted as the Romano-British ground level in 1999.<sup>18</sup> The survival of this deposit at the eastern edge of the farmyard indicates that an intact Romano-British ground surface, and associated settlement activity, may survive across the full extent of the modern farmyard. Layers 1008 and 518 are located beneath *c.* 1m of topsoil, which appears to have protected the horizon from later disturbance.

The dating and sequence of features within trench 3 is limited by the paucity of obvious relationships and the small number of datable finds retrieved during excavation. Ditch 511 may be the earliest feature in Trench 3, as it is truncated by ditch 513. Ditch 511 did not contain any datable finds, and the north-south orientation corresponded to both Roman and medieval ditches excavated in the western part of the farm.<sup>19</sup> Ditch 513 contained only one small fragment of pottery, which may be of Roman date. This pottery does not provide a secure date for the construction of the ditch, but may be a residual find, as seen elsewhere on the farm.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Leach 1999 and 2000.

<sup>17</sup> Young 2003, Fig. 4.

<sup>18</sup> Leach 1999, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Leach 1999 and 2000; Young 2003.

<sup>20</sup> Leach 1999 & 2000.

Ditches 515 and 517 were aligned NNE-SSW and did not contain any datable finds. They may be the remains of a trackway aligned south-west to north-east that is marked on the 1904 OS map (Fig. 4) or an associated hedgebank along the eastern side of the track. Further investigation would be needed to establish a more definite date.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work was commissioned by Telken Homes Ltd and administered by K. Sharp (Telken) and P. J. Weddell (EA). The fieldwork was undertaken by J. Best and C.J.M. Whitton, and the illustrations were prepared by J. Read and T. Ives.

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Greinton Tithe Map 1841

##### *SMR Somerset Sites and Monuments Register*

Various entries

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Fig. 1 Location of site. Reproduced from the 1:25000 Explorer map 4 by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright 1994. All rights reserved. Licence No. AL 100016685.

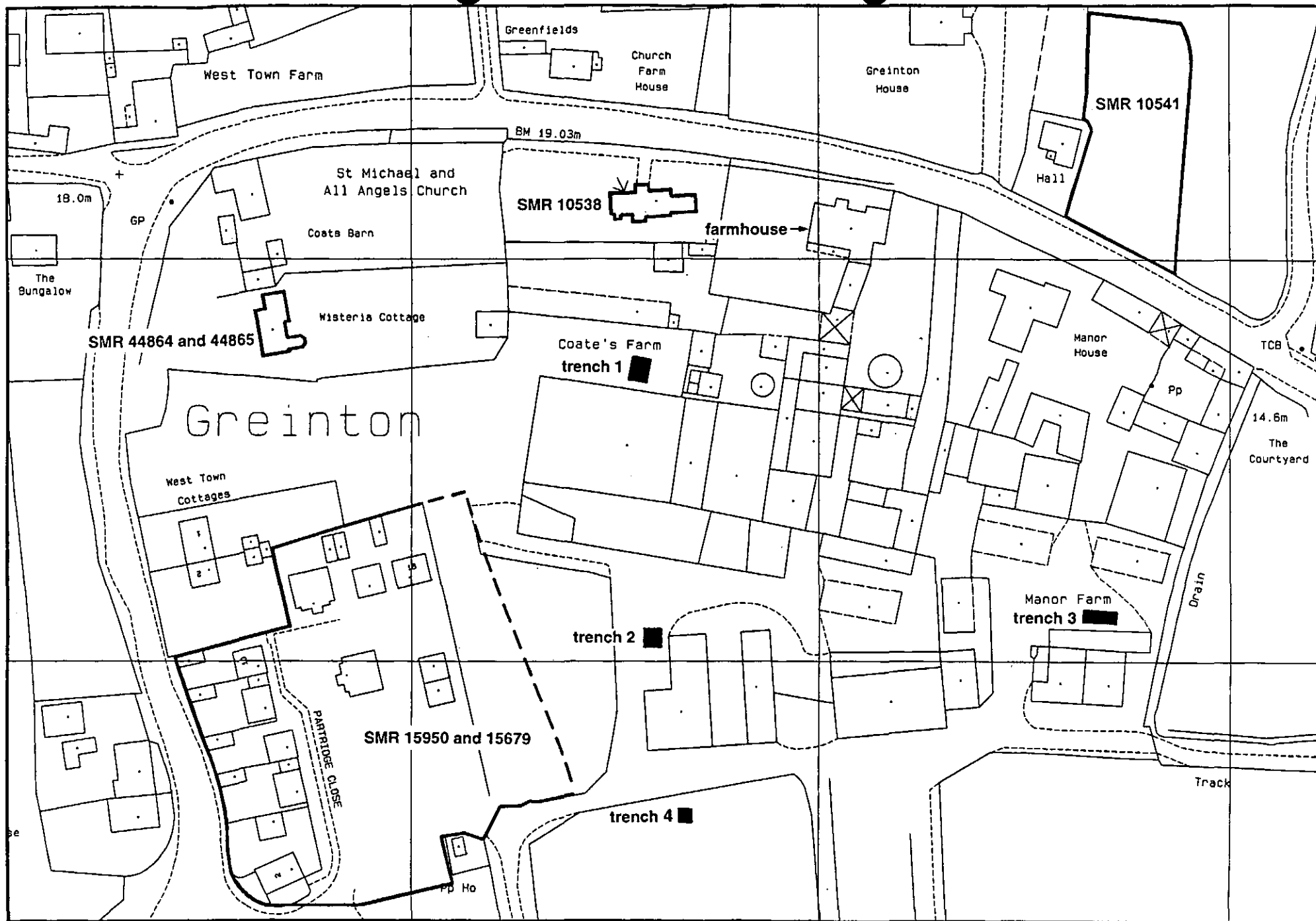


Fig. 2 Location of trenches 1–4 and SMR sites. Reproduced from 1:1250 Superplan® (centre ST 41223637) by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright 2004. All rights reserved. Licence No. AL 100016685.

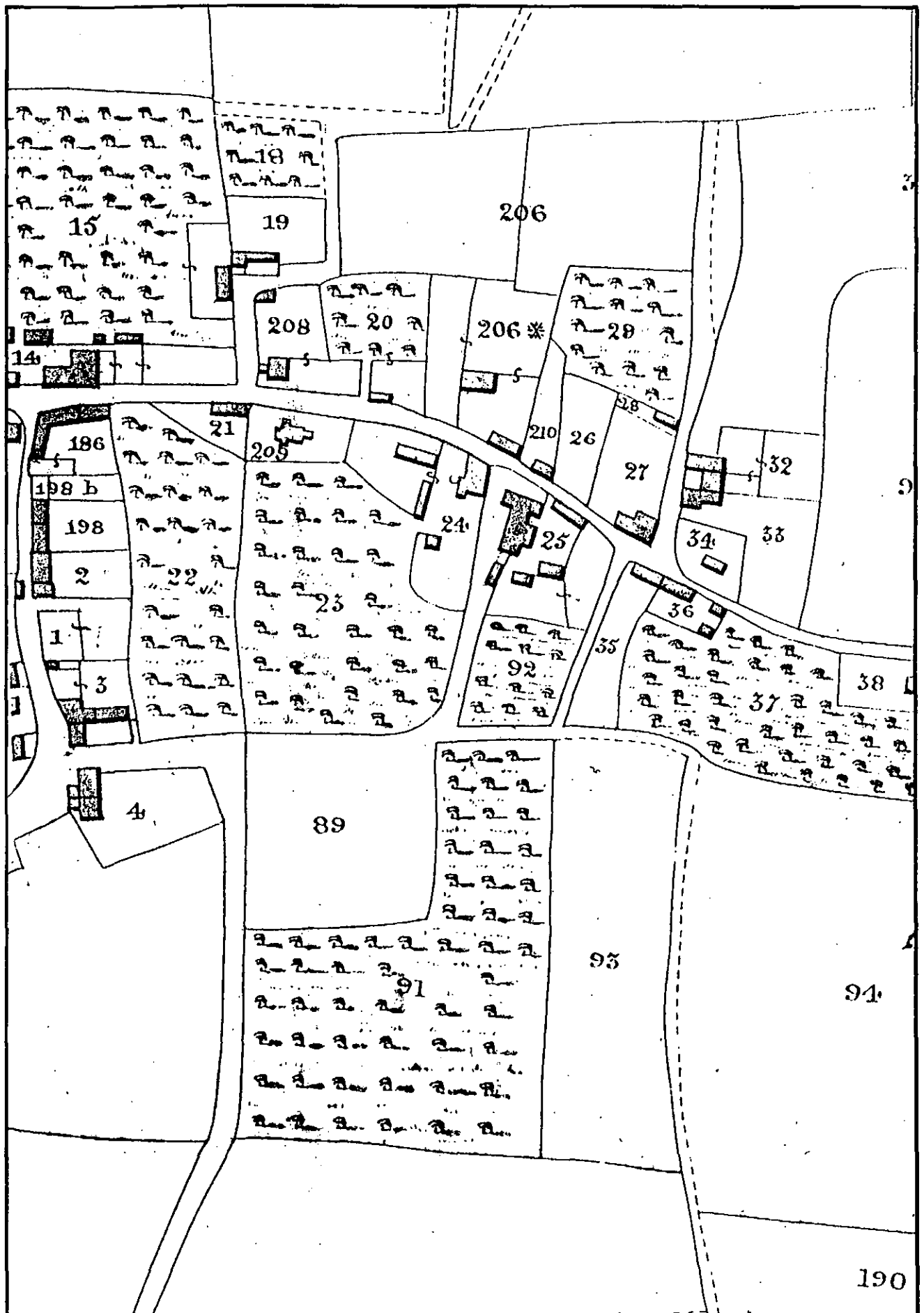


Fig. 3 The site area in 1841 (Greinton Tithe Map).

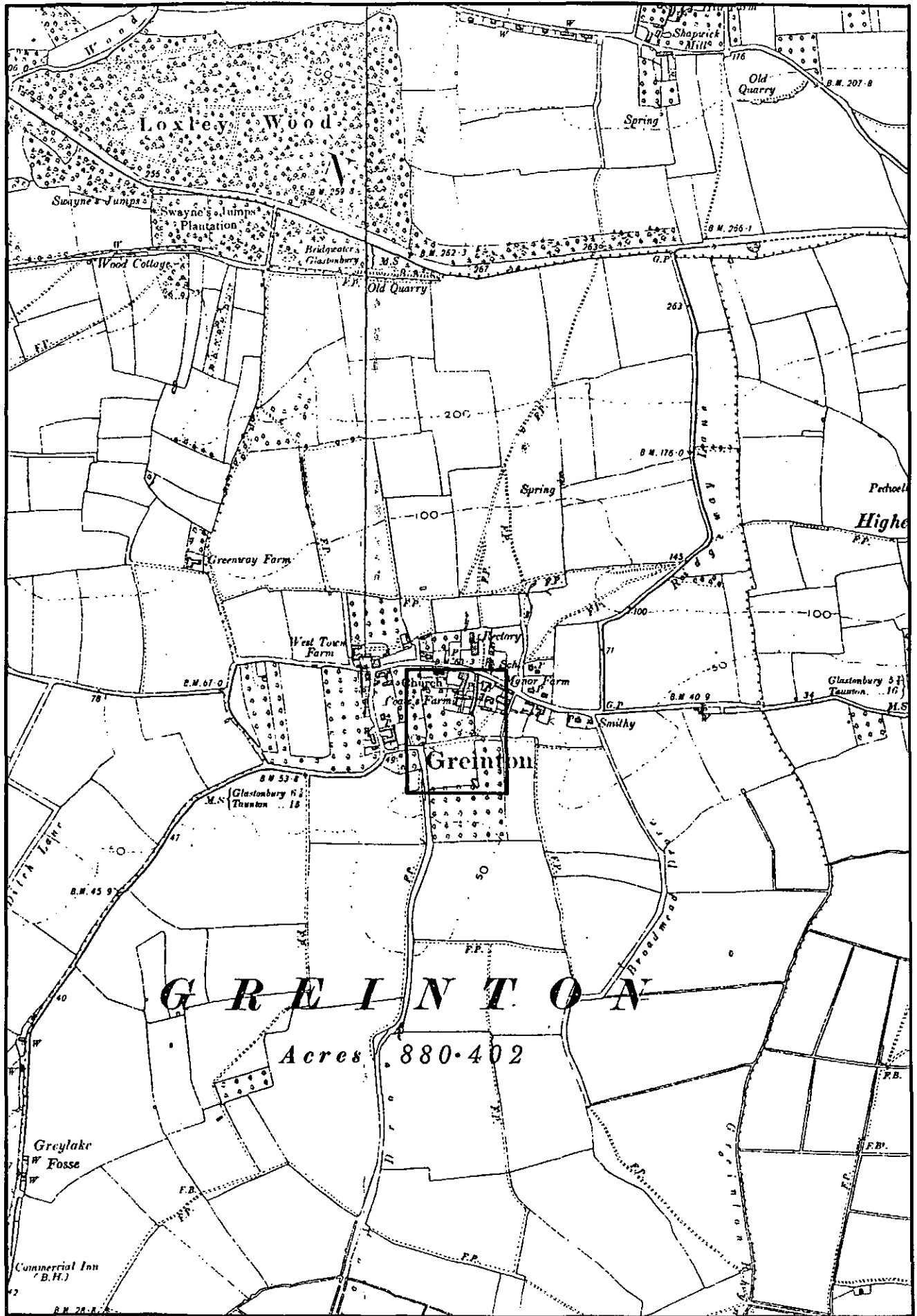
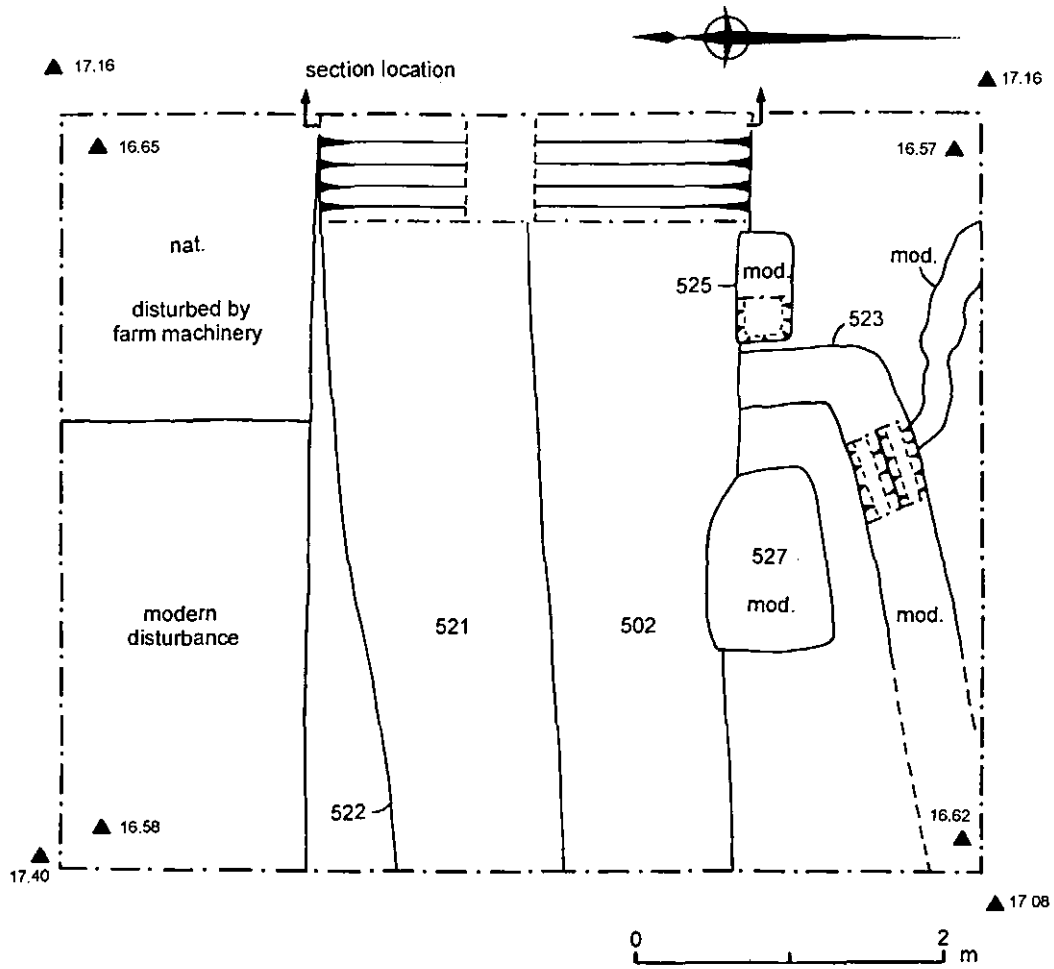


Fig. 4 The site area in 1904 (OS 1:10560 Sheet 51SE).

# Trench 1

## Plan



## Section

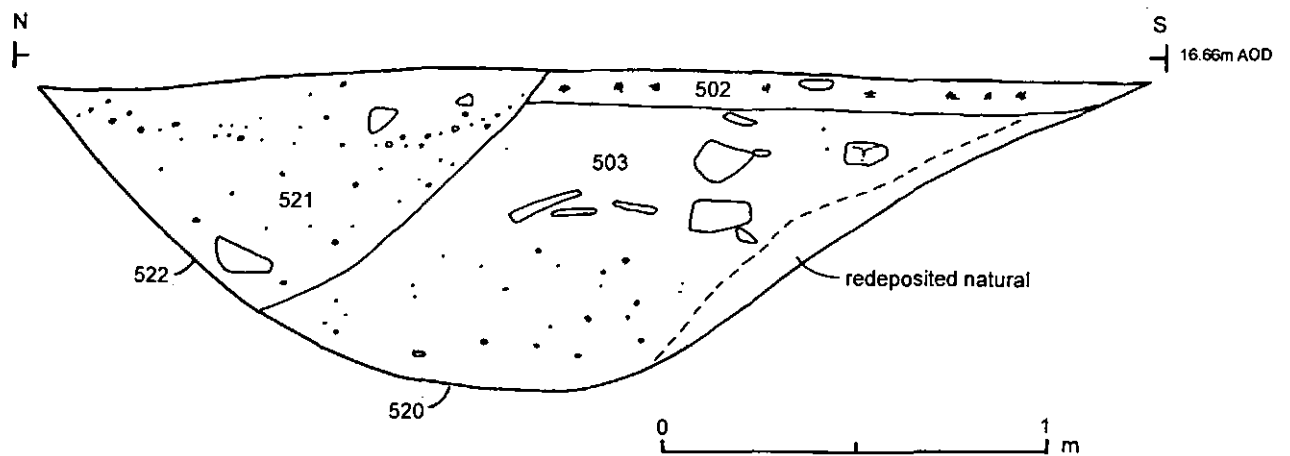
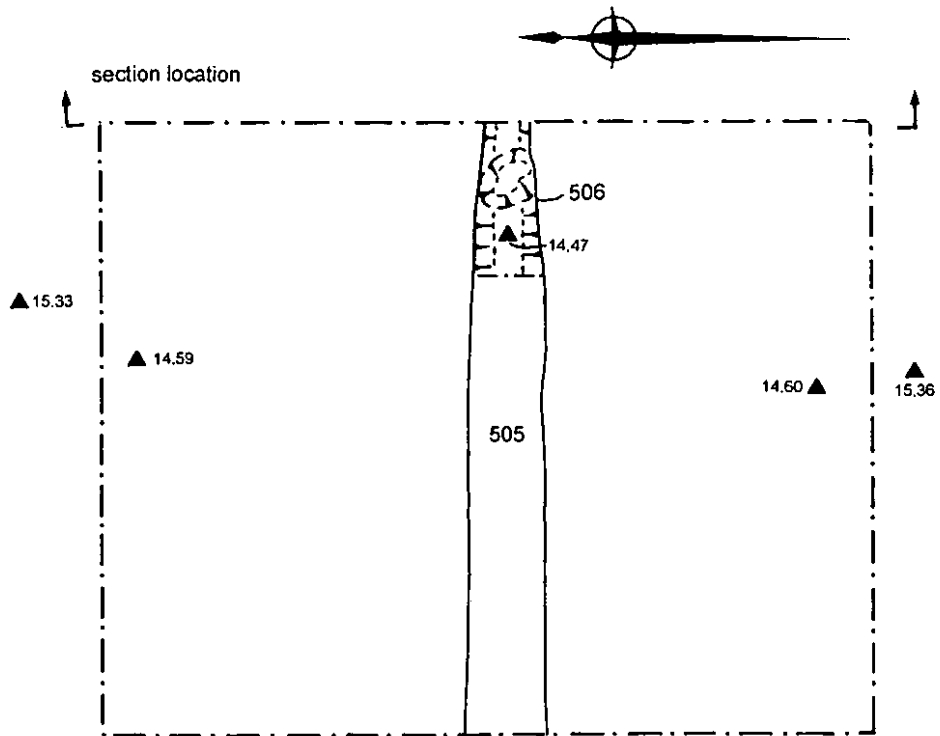


Fig. 5 Trench 1, plan and section.



# Trench 2

## Plan



## Section

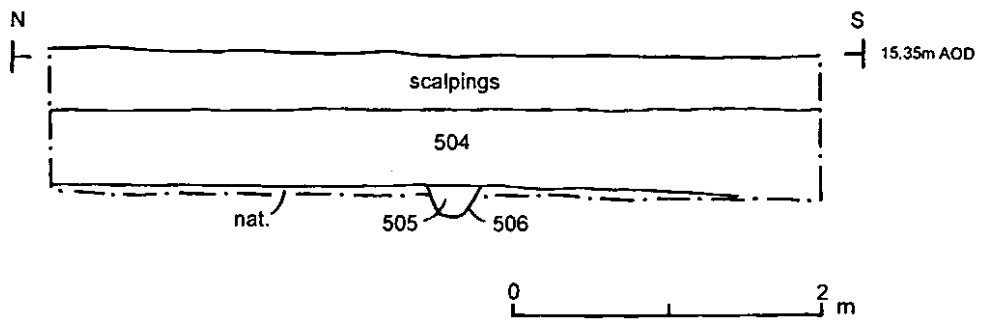
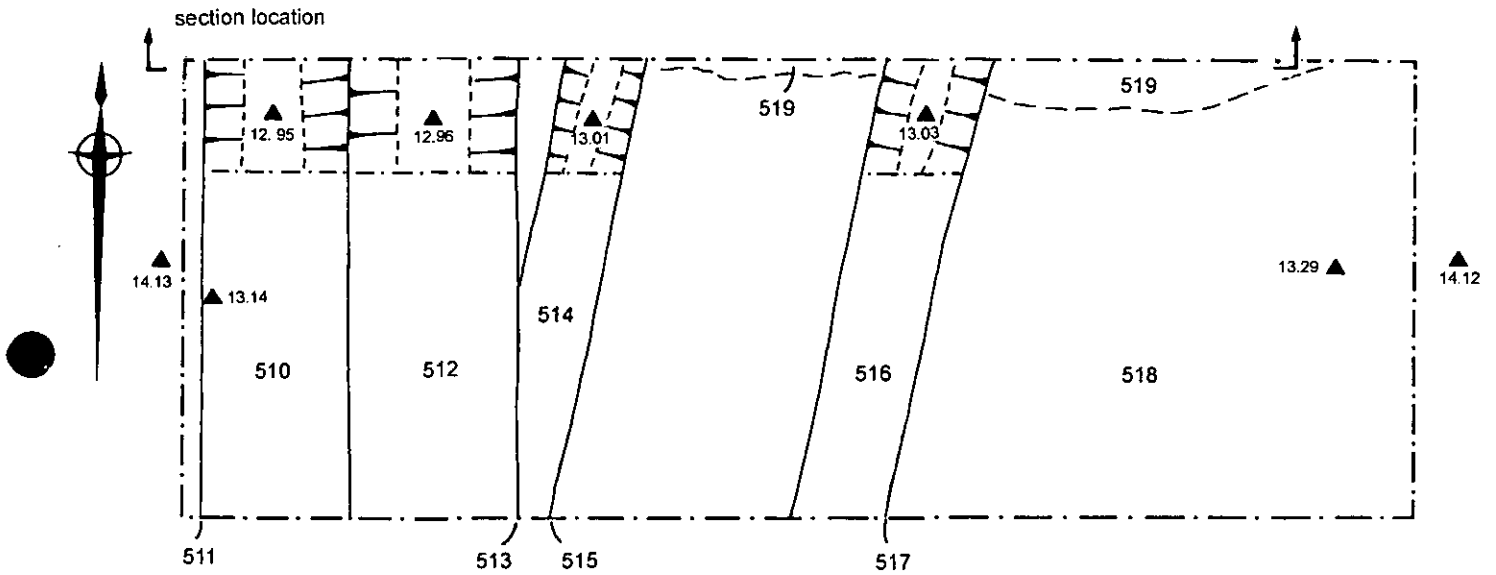


Fig. 6 Trench 2, plan and section.

# Trench 3

## Plan



## Section

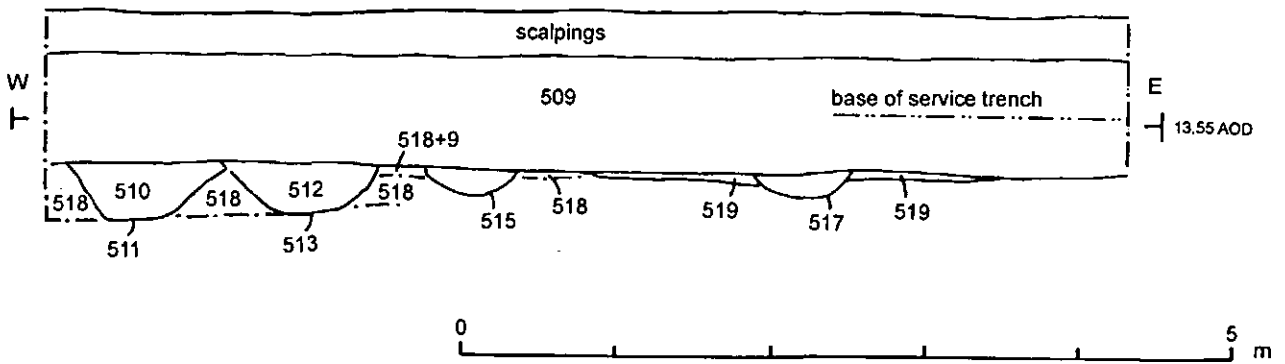


Fig. 7 Trench 3, plan and section.