

DEEPING ROAD BASTON  
Results of Archaeological Evaluation

TF III 139

AUGUST 1989

LINDSEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES



## LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

### DEEPING ROAD BASTON

#### Results of Archaeological Evaluation

The modern village of Baston is a ribbon-like development on a west-east axis with the oldest properties clustering around the church and manor house, approximately 400m east of the proposed housing site.

Excavations in 1966 revealed an early Anglian cemetery together with limited evidence of Roman and medieval occupation. The origins of any settlement are difficult to establish and the presence of a fifth-century cemetery, and indeed, earlier, Roman features close to the modern village of Baston was of great interest although it does not necessarily infer continuity of settlement. It was hoped that larger-scale excavations might help to elucidate the relationship between the various elements which were recognised in 1966.

#### AIMS OF THE EVALUATION

The main objective was to establish the extent and quality of archaeological survival within the development area. The 1966 excavations had covered only a small part of the proposed development area. More recent research had identified other features and it was important to determine whether the rest of the field contained areas of archaeological importance. At the same time the results of the earlier excavations had already highlighted a number of archaeological problems which needed to be answered.

1. Whilst a number of Anglo Saxon cemeteries in the county have been excavated few have produced the early material present at Baston, which has continental parallels. Some of the later urns have affinities with those found at Sancton (N.Humberside) and Illington (Norfolk). The number of urns recovered was very small. It is therefore important to ensure that any remaining burials are recorded.

2. The extent of a Roman boundary ditch located in 1966 and its relationship, if any, to the Anglian cemetery .

3. What little is known about the Anglo-Saxon presence in Lincolnshire derives mainly from cemetery excavations. Any settlement remains would in some respects be of even greater interest than the burials. it was hoped that the associated 5th-6th century settlement might be in the vicinity of the cemetery.

4. The development site lies some distance from the centre of modern Baston. The 1966 excavations revealed medieval remains



which were considered to represent buildings of 'significance'. Their extent and function needed to be established.

## EVALUATION METHODS

### 1. Aerial photographs

The excavations in 1966 took place soon after the first modern ploughing of the field, when no aerial coverage was available. Even 10 years later when the report was published the authors had had no access to photographs, although this was the first year when archaeological features were recorded. A search of the archives at Cambridge University Photographic Collection and the National Photographic Records in London produced several photographs of the field and surrounding area. A series taken in 1976 show the ploughed field and various geological features. A second series taken in 1983 shows the archaeological features even more clearly.

Dark marks can be seen in the ripening crop which may indicate the presence of man-made features beneath the topsoil. Two distinct areas of crop marks were observed. The first (A) is in the north west corner of the development area and comprises a series of ditched enclosures which are probably Iron Age or Roman in date. The second area is in the north east corner of the field and comprises further enclosures similar in character to those of the first group (B). It should be noted that one photograph will not show all the archaeological features because the weather and ground and conditions which vary from year to year affect the visibility of such marks. This is why geophysical survey was carried out, to complement the results from the air. (see below)

Aerial photographs can also reveal soil differences and an extinct water course is visible just south of the survey field (a). A zone of gravels (lighter grey b) lies to either side and it was on the gravels that the Anglo-Saxon cemetery was found. To the north of the gravels is a zone of silt on which archaeological features of an earlier date were recorded during excavations (see below).

The 1976 air photo shows quite clearly the presence of medieval ridge and furrow ploughing (<) which runs north-south across the field. By 1983 further ploughing had eroded the ridge and furrow to reveal earlier features more clearly but shallow undulations can still be seen on the ground. The presence of ridge and furrow means it is unlikely that there was any medieval settlement on this field (see below).

Also present on the 1983 photo are crop disturbances which are non-archaeological and should be ignored.

1. The parallel lines are tractor wheel tracks (c).





1013 45 30

1013 45 30

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1983

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SITE : baston

PlottITE : baston

Plotting parameters

ITE : baston

Plotting parameters

Minimum	-8.00	966.67 %	inimum	-8.00	769.57 %	-1.95 SD
Maximum	11.00	-1566.67 %	aximum	11.00	-1295.65 %	3.27 SD
Contrast	2.0	Intensity Multiplier	ontrast	2.0	Intensity Multiplier	2.0

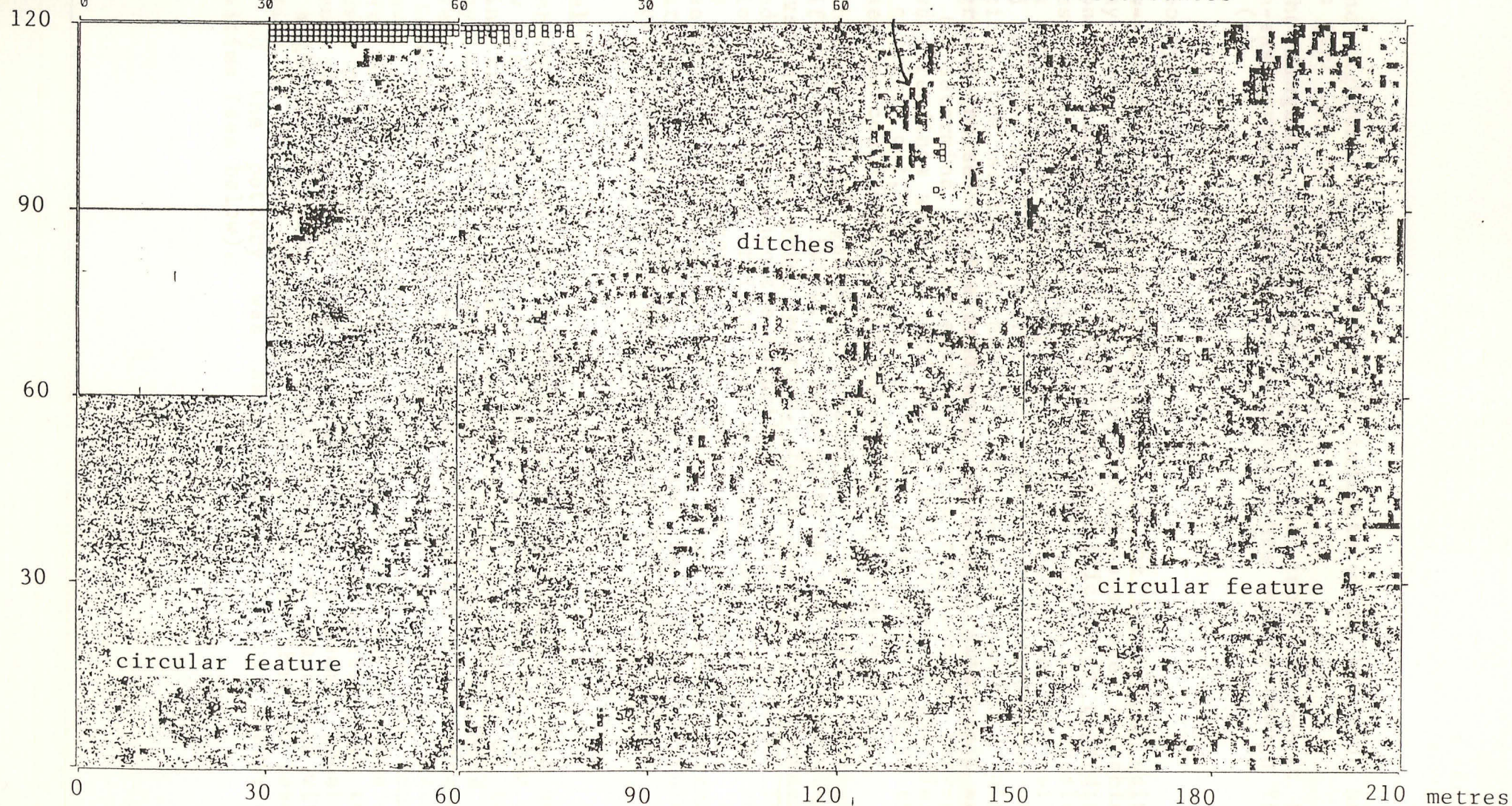
inimum	-8.00	769.57 %	-1.95 SD
aximum	11.00	-1295.65 %	3.27 SD
ontrast	2.0	Intensity Multiplier	2.0

MESH : BTN

ESH : BAS

Metres

etres



RESULTS OF MAGNETOMETER SURVEY

SITE GRID  
(Same as main plan)



2. The lighter, ill-defined areas indicate where the crop has blown over (d).

3. The diagonal line crossing the field from north-west to south-east probably marks where someone has walked through the crop (e).

## 2. Geophysical Survey

Below-ground archaeological features can be identified using geophysical techniques if ground conditions are suitable. Baston was considered to have special difficulties regarding the use of geophysical equipment. The 1966 excavations revealed areas of medieval quarrying. Such disturbance to the soils would result in interference on magnetometer read-outs. In addition, the soils are heavily mineralised causing high background 'noise' in the readings. An initial site visit was made to determine the receptivity to a magnetometer survey. However, readings were so good that a full survey of the field was carried out, this was so that judgements about the archaeology could be based on the fullest available data.

Readings above 15 gamma of variation generally indicate significant human activity. In some parts of the field readings of over 300 gamma were recorded. These proved to be modern ground disturbance when the topsoil was removed by machine. The previous excavations of 1966 were also located. Discounting the large anomalies there were still a large number of archaeological features on the site. These included several linear features, probably ditches and less clear circular features which were not present on the aerial photographs.

## 3. Fieldwalking

The short amount of time available for the evaluation did not allow for an intensive fieldwalking programme. The location of machine trenches was based on the excellent results of the geophysical survey and the aerial photographic evidence. However, fieldwalking in selected areas revealed a predominance of Saxo-Norman (i.e. approximately 850 AD onwards) and later medieval pottery with only a handful of Iron Age and Roman sherds. No early Anglo-Saxon pottery was found. The presence of medieval pottery in such large quantities was puzzling in the absence of associated building materials and seemed greater than might be expected from a general scatter associated with manuring of fields. Excavation results suggest that at least some of the pottery was associated with the quarrying activities (see below).



#### 4. Machine Trenches

Given the richness of the archaeological remains in the field it was decided not to disturb the best features but to concentrate on the area around the original excavations. The aim was to locate the old trenches and to establish whether the cemetery was more extensive than previously recorded. The cemetery lay on the most prominent feature in the field, a small plateau of ground, some 50cm higher than the surrounding area. This difference in height might have been significant in the 5th century when ground conditions may have been wetter.

A trench dug in the south west corner of the field (no. 5 on map) located one of the circular features but full investigation was not possible through lack of time.

Trenches in the northern half of the field (nos. 6 and 7) were dug in the vicinity of high geophysical anomalies to eliminate the possibilities of kilns or furnaces being present. As suspected modern ground disturbances were responsible for the readings. One trench revealed the remains of several recent fence posts and a gin trap.

A trench to the east of the site (no. 8), near to the standing farm buildings, produced a three Roman pottery sherds. This is close to the cropmarks which are presumed to be Roman and further investigation of this area is recommended.

#### 5. Excavation results

Trenches to the west and east of the original excavations (nos. 1 and 4) failed to locate any further Anglo-Saxon burials. Several oblong pits were found dug into the gravels. They were very close together, sometimes overlapping. All were shallow and about 3-4m in length and contained quantities of animal bone and medieval pottery. The most likely explanation for these features is that they were quarry pits which were then backfilled with domestic rubbish. The pottery, all wheel-thrown, comprised shelly fabrics in the St Neots tradition and finer wares from the kilns at Bourne and Stamford. One pit at the south end of the trench contained Victorian pottery and a sheep's carcase. No Anglo-Saxon pottery or graves were found.

To the north of the gravel pits trench 1 was opened out so that better sense could be made of the archaeological features. This was in the area of silts, lying beyond the gravels where the geophysical survey had suggested the presence of ditches which were not present on the aerial photographs.

Unfortunately the dry ground conditions made it difficult to identify features in the subsoil and at first just a scatter of pottery was found, unrelated to any features. These were a mixture of Saxo-Norman and Iron Age pottery, together with animal bones. A series of gullies, some of which may have been



natural undulations in the natural soils, and a shallow ditch were identified together with a large rubbish pit. All these features contained Iron Age pottery and animal bones. Machine trenches to the west and east of the main area (nos. 2 and 3) provided better ditch profiles but no finds.

Two main types of pottery, both hand-made, were present. The finer wares were part of the Scored Ware series which have a buff fabric and scratched decoration on the external surfaces. A group of coarser, black, shelly fabrics was also found representing various types of storage jars and other domestic vessels. The pottery probably dates to the 1st century B.C and is similar to that found in recent years on the Fenland Survey, a fieldwalking project in the Fens. Very few Iron Age sites in Lincolnshire have been located and only a handful have been excavated so the discoveries at Baston are of great interest. The air photographic and geophysical evidence shows that the excavated remains are on the edge of a series of ditched enclosures.

## DISCUSSION

A short evaluation cannot provide all the answers and narrow machine trenches can give only a limited indication of the nature of deposits. However, the following observations were made:

1. Medieval gravel working was extensive. Whilst full analysis of the pottery found in the quarry pits has not been carried out at this stage it is suggested that the pits pre-date the use of the field for cultivation because the general pottery spread appears to be later in date.
2. No evidence for medieval buildings was found and it is unlikely that the field contained any of this date because of the gravel working and the ridge and furrow. (There may have been houses beneath the present modern line on the north side of the development area.) Inspection of the original excavation records has produced no convincing evidence concerning the 'substantial' medieval building.
3. There was apparently no Anglo-Saxon activity in the vicinity of cemetery (but still could be elsewhere on site). The evaluation trenches were necessarily small and remains may come to light at a greater distance from the cemetery.
4. In the silt zone there are late-Iron Age features of considerable importance, given the dearth of Lincolnshire sites currently identified.
5. Very little Roman pottery was found during the evaluation and none was from features. However, since the excavations metal detector users have found a scatter of small late-Roman coins in the topsoil, on the spoil heaps (pers. comm. Mr



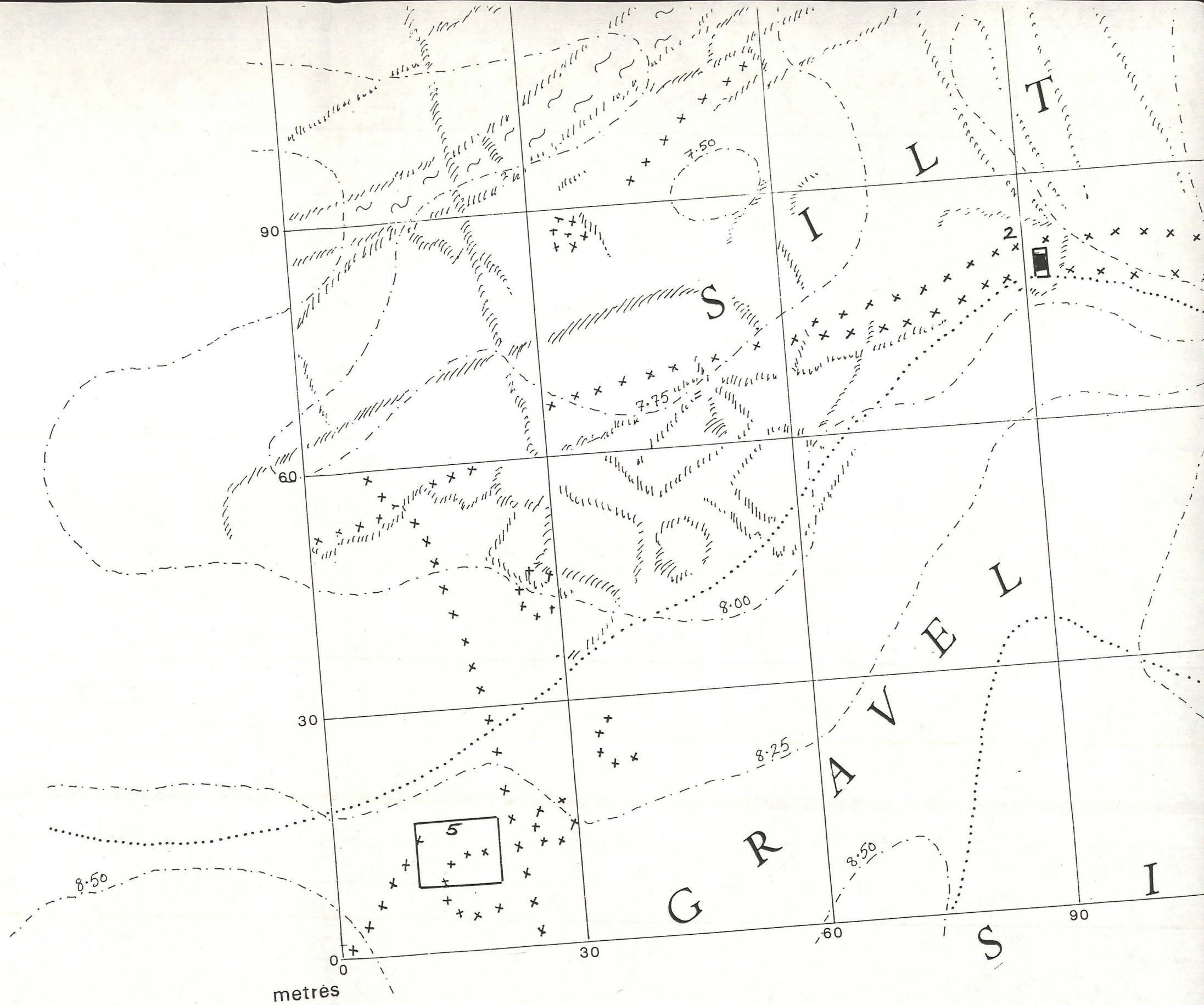
Freeman). It is unusual to find Roman coins in an area devoid of pottery but perhaps the centre of Roman activity lies beyond the excavated areas.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Excavations in the less promising areas of the field have located late-Iron Age remains of considerable potential. Very few sites of this period have been investigated in Lincolnshire, the most recent being at Billingborough in 1978 and Old Sleaford in 1986. Whilst both these sites were of similar date to the remains at Baston they were of very different character. At Billingborough the remains were associated with salt-making and those at Sleaford are thought to have been part of a 'town' rather than a rural settlement. Only a tiny part of the known archaeology was investigated during the evaluation and further excavation on the site prior to redevelopment is therefore strongly recommended.

1. The evaluation has shown that much of the gravel area to the south has probably been disturbed by medieval quarrying. It is suggested therefore that excavation should be confined to the silt band to the north. However, a watching brief when house foundations are dug, would ensure that if there are any further Anglo-Saxon remains their location can be recorded.
2. Excavation should continue in Trench 1 and its vicinity where Iron Age features, not recorded on the aerial photographs, have been located.
3. A further area of excavation should be concentrated on the cropmark complex A in the north west part of the field.
4. A third area of excavations should investigate the north east cropmark complex B. Although part of this area may be affected by modern disturbances this is the only area where Roman finds were made and it is important to establish the relationship between Roman and Iron Age activity.





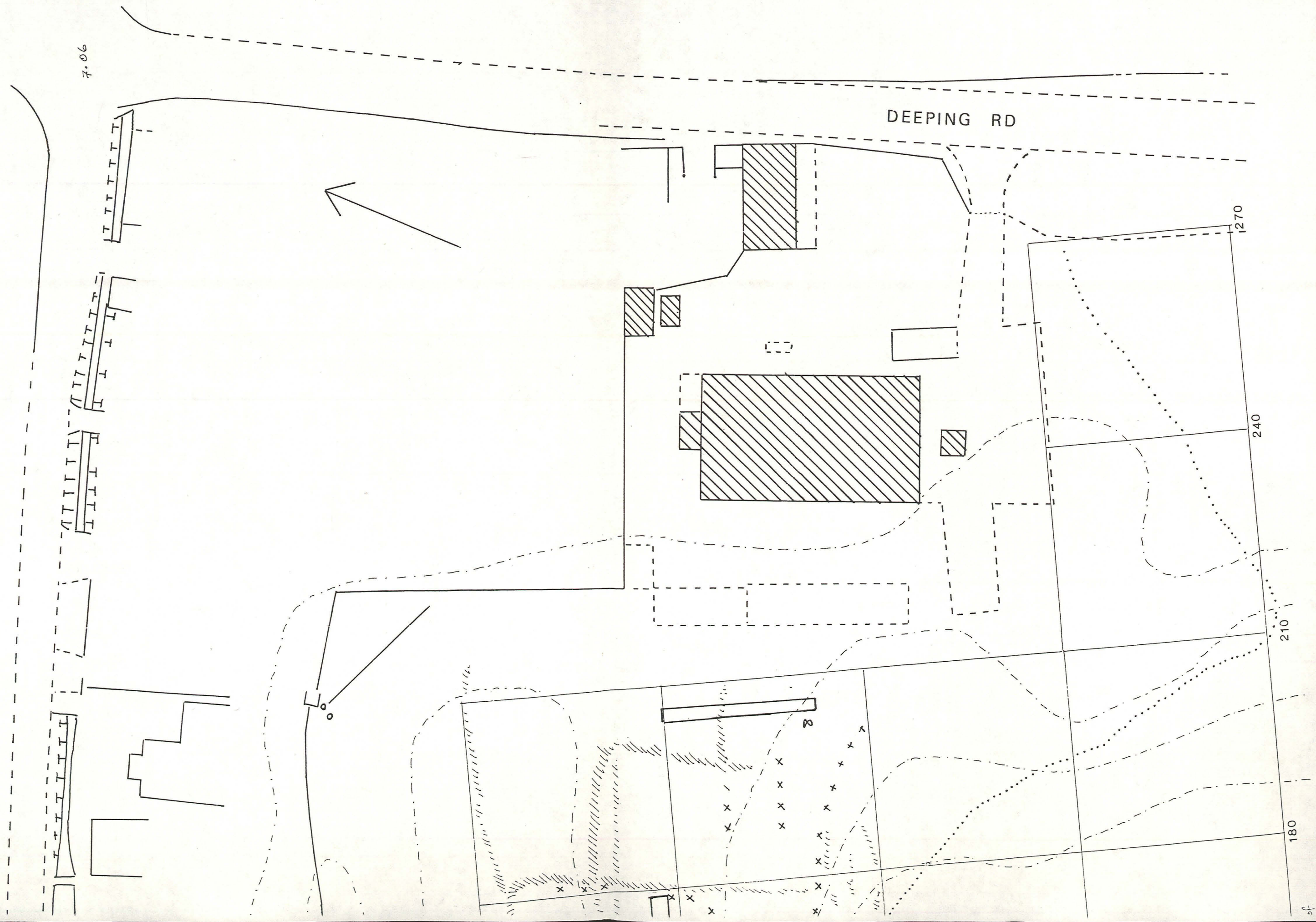
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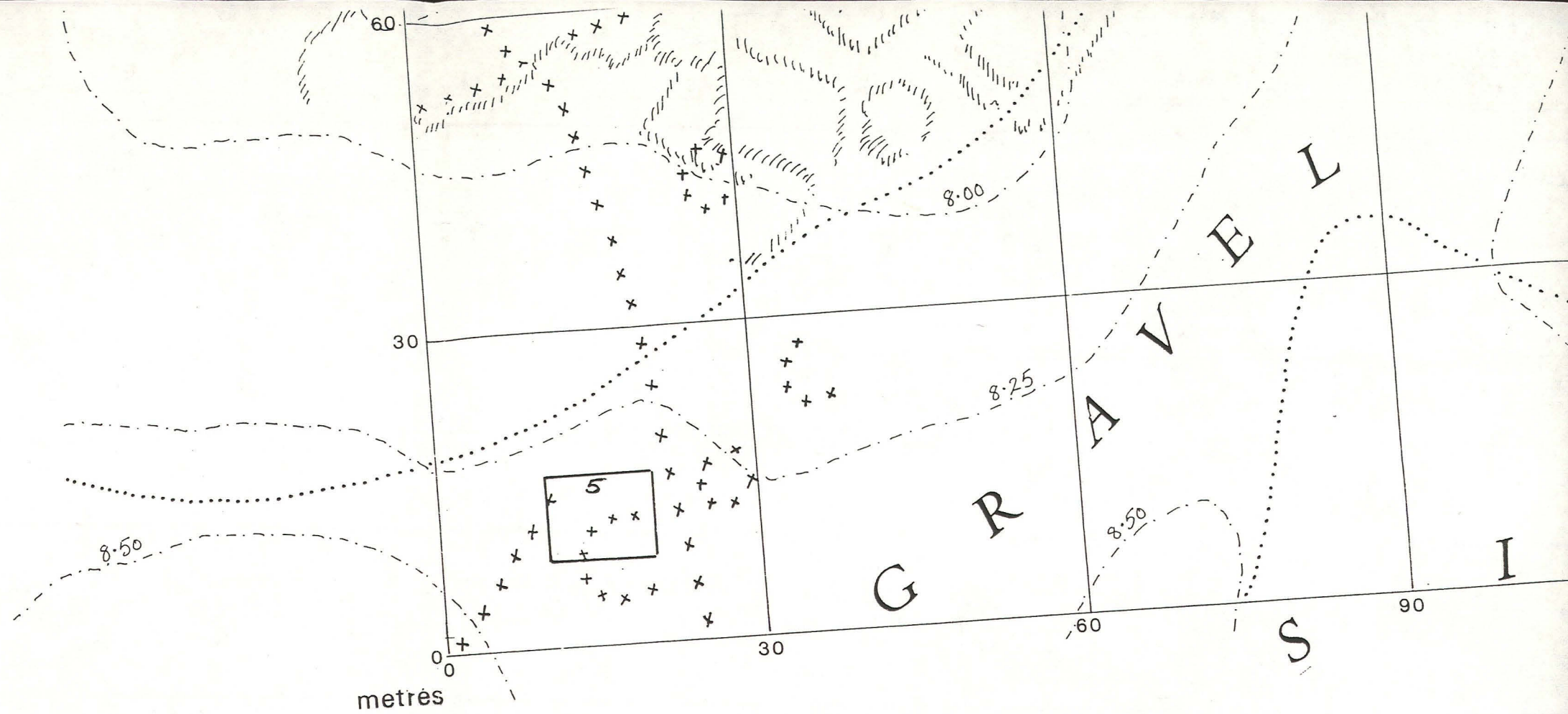
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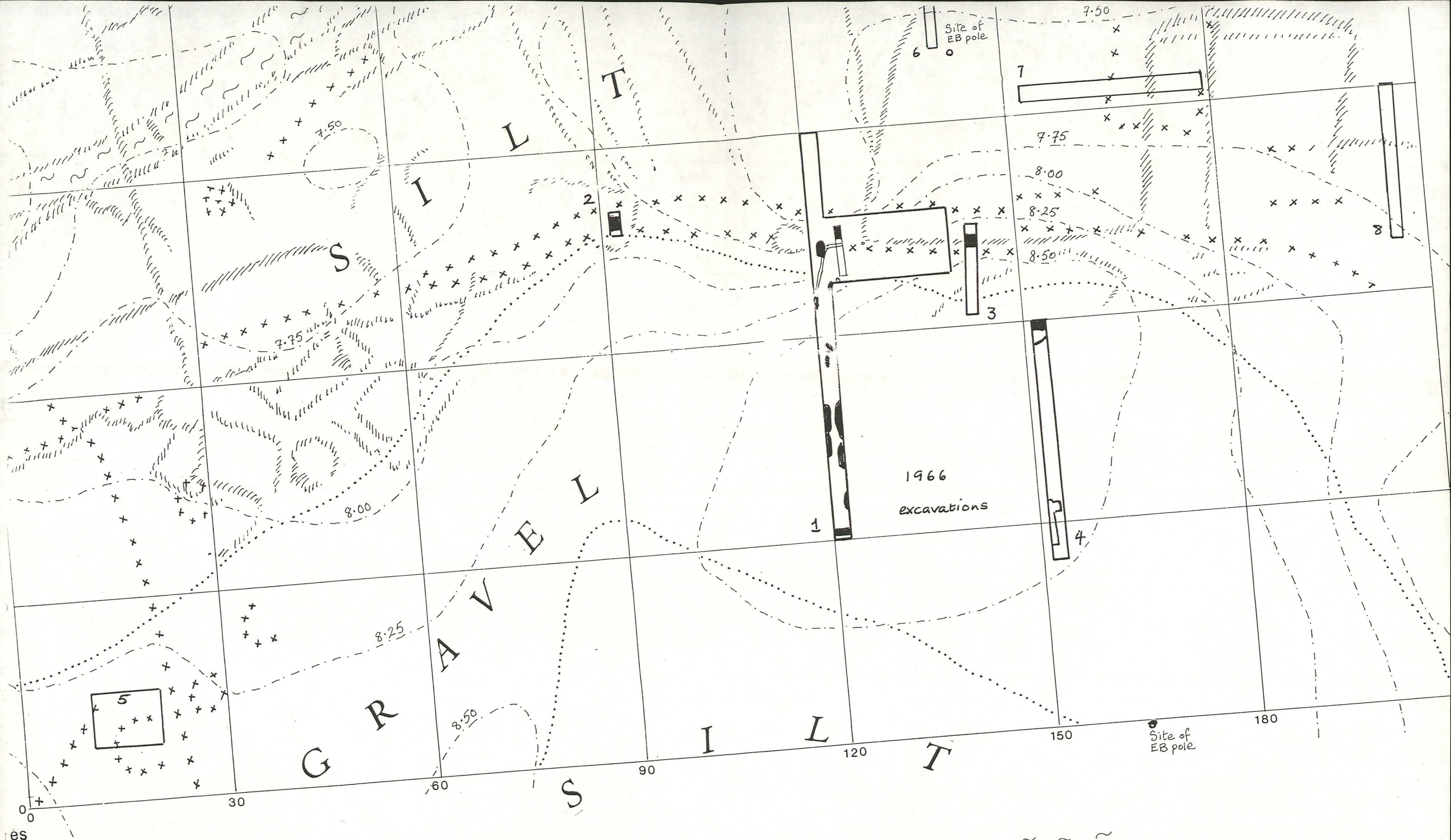
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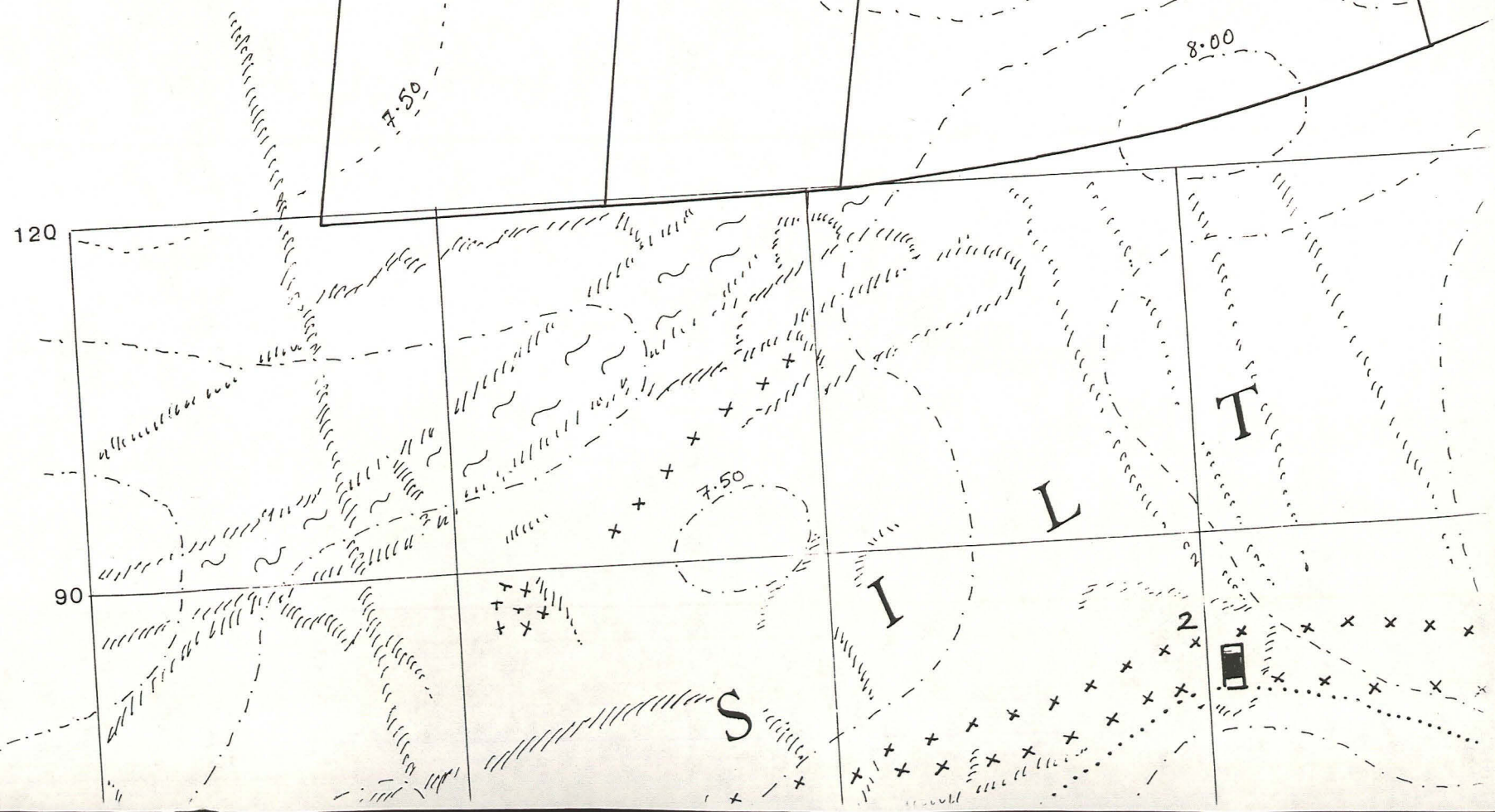
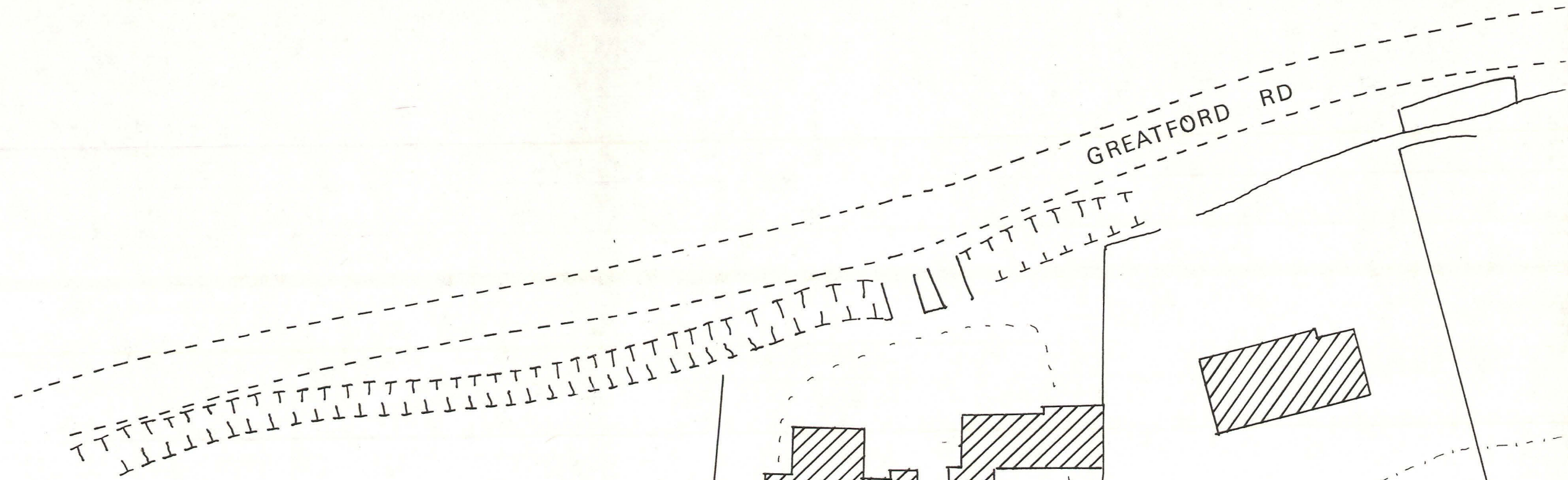
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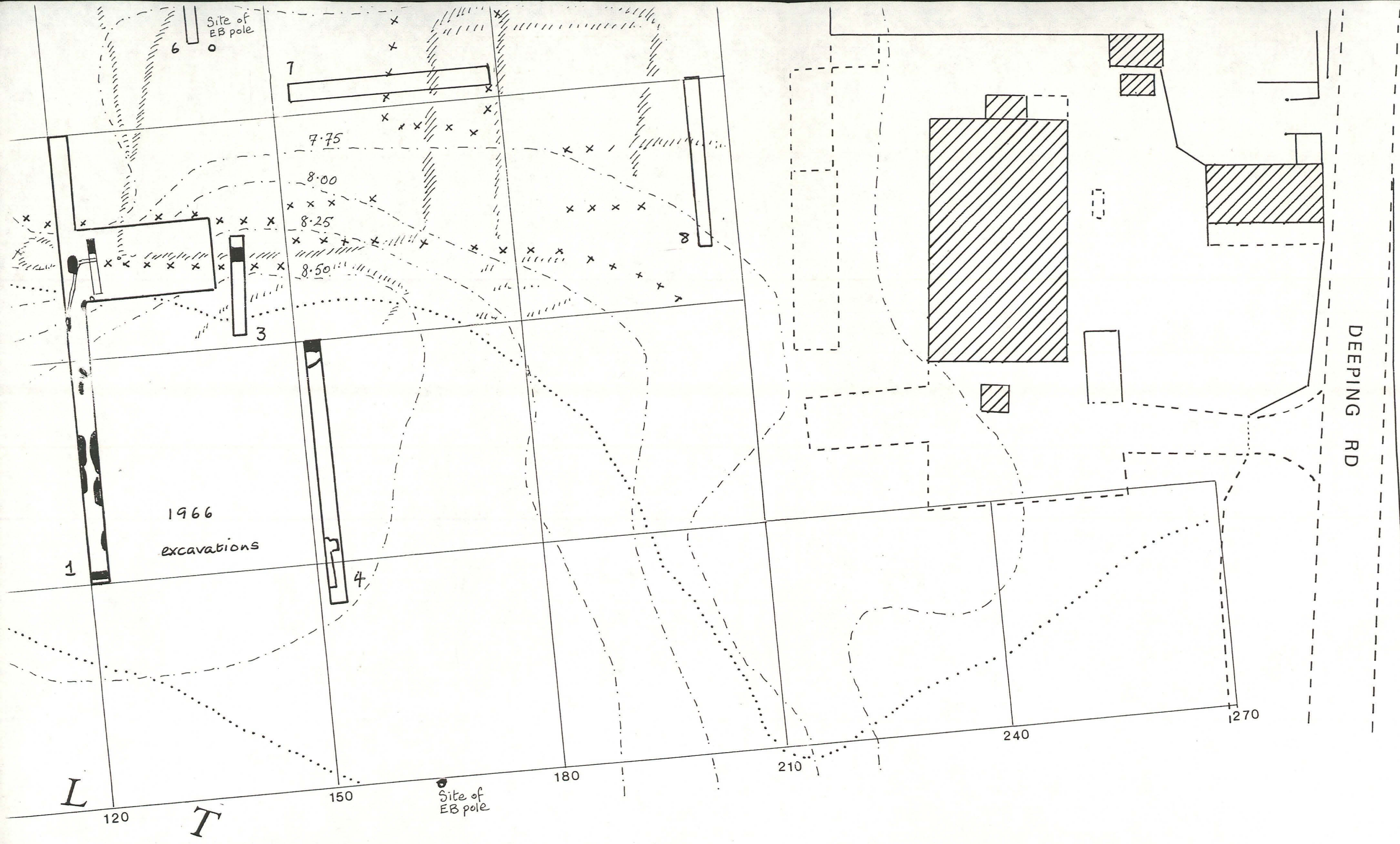
part of geophysical survey

extinct watercourse





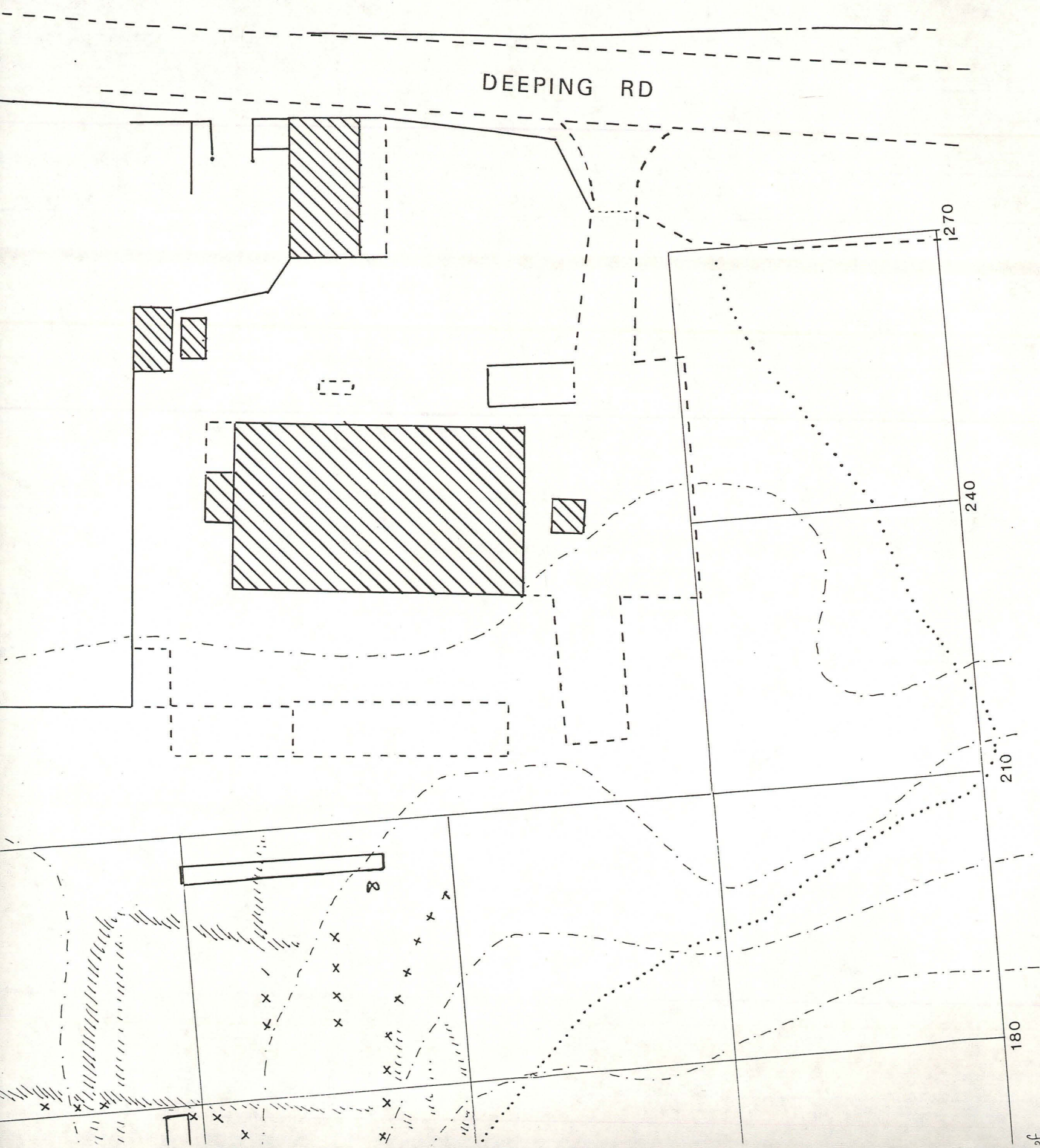




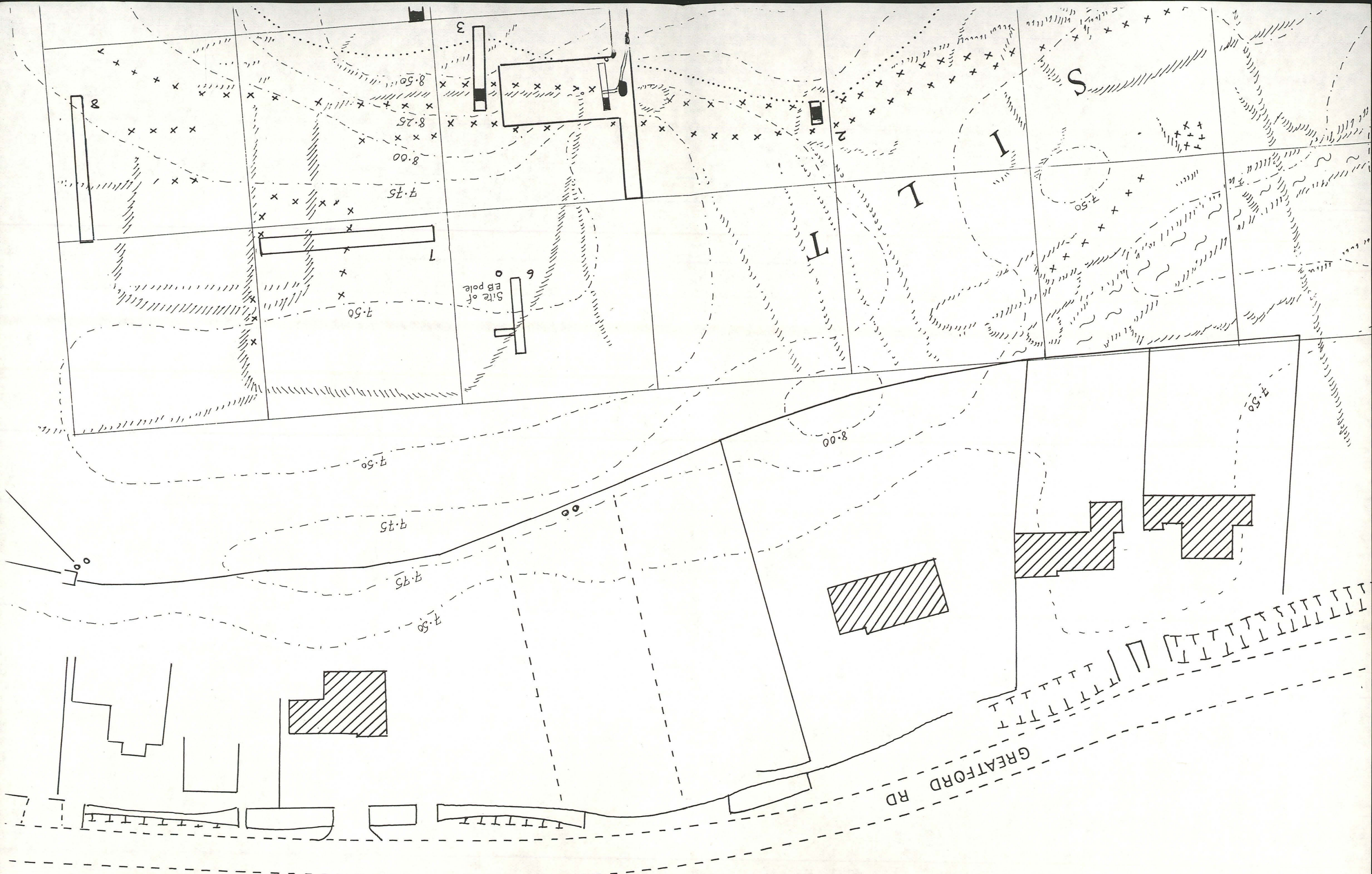
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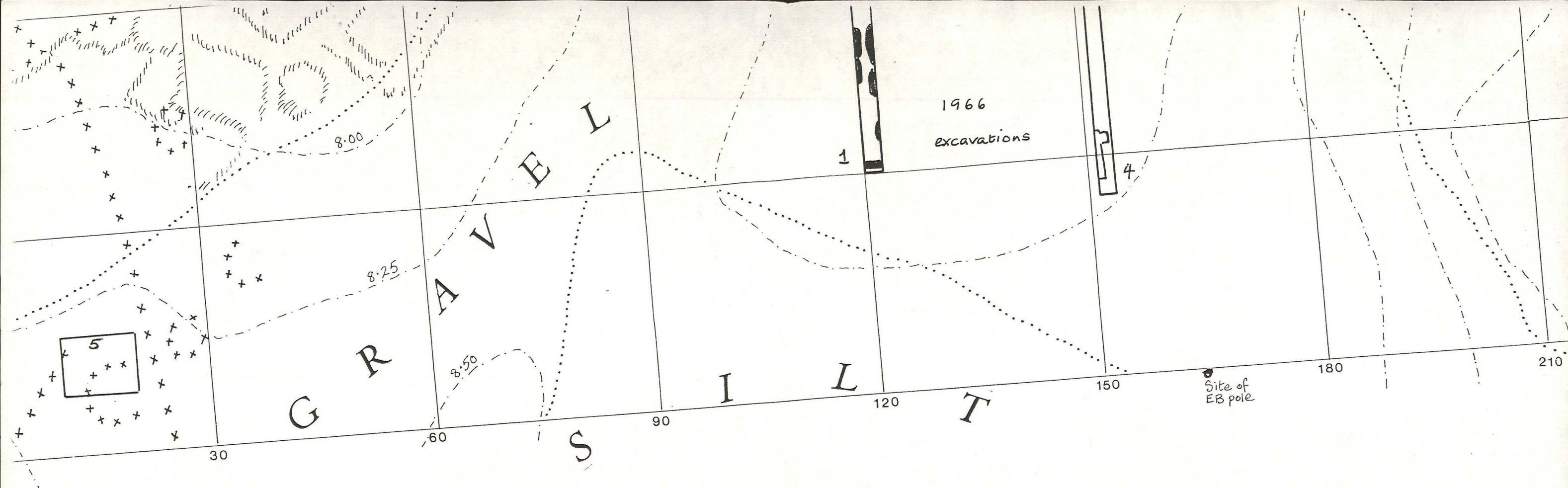












cavated area

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