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LAND ADJOINING HUCCLECOTE RESOURCE  
CENTRE, CHURCHDOWN LANE,  
GLOUCESTER

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

GLOUCESTER ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT 1996

**LAND ADJOINING HUCCLECOTE RESOURCE CENTRE,  
CHURCHDOWN LANE, HUCCLECOTE, GLOUCESTER.  
(SITE 12/96)**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

Phil Greatorex

**INTRODUCTION**

An archaeological evaluation of the land adjoining the Hucclecote Resource centre was carried out at the request of Hucclecote Old Boys RFC during July and August 1996 by Gloucester Archaeology Unit, a service of Gloucester City council.

The land has been extensively investigated on numerous occasions in the past (below) but all have been targeted responses to specific development proposals.

The purpose of this evaluation was to determine the extent of surviving archaeological remains, in a previously unexamined area, prior to planning permission being granted.

As on previous occasions this evaluation has also been targeted on the area of proposed development.

**SITE LOCATION**

The site is located approximately 4.5km east of Gloucester City centre at National Grid Reference SO 877 175 and is bounded by Churchdown lane to the west, the A417 to the north and the M5 to the east. The southern boundary of the investigated area is largely occupied by the Hucclecote Resource centre and its associated car parking.

**SUMMARY**

The geophysical survey of the site provided a very clear indication of the complexity of intercutting archaeological features, particularly in the overspill car park area.

The initial interpretation of these results suggested the presence of a possible Iron age roundhouse and associated ditched field boundaries.

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Trenching in this area, however, demonstrated that the interpretation of the results had been affected by the apparent roundhouse being only partially revealed against the survey boundary.

Excavation results indicate the circular feature is a shallow ditch with none of the associated structural elements essential to roundhouses.

The most likely interpretation of this feature is that it represents the corner of a field system that is extending eastwards away from the survey area.

The remaining archaeological features, both here and in the clubhouse and roadway areas, are also solely field boundary ditches.

When added to the results of previous work, carried out by both this unit and Gloucestershire County Council archaeology service, the changing pattern of agricultural practice on the site is beginning to emerge. It is now obvious that the site has undergone a number of radical boundary changes within a relatively short period though further work will be required to determine the exact sequence and reasoning.

The identification of the sequencing is being complicated by the fact that the upper fills of the ditch systems throughout the site are partially affected by later, shallow, ploughing activity and future development of any kind is highly likely to cause further destruction of these features.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION / PREVIOUS WORK**

Documentary, tithe map, evidence suggests the site was historically occupied by open farmland until the construction of Hucclecote school (now the Resource centre), in 1961, when the majority of the area was converted to sports fields.

The western section of the site is known to be occupied by a 2nd-4th century Roman villa constructed over the remains of a Bronze age farmstead (Scheduled Ancient Monument 188) demonstrating a remarkable continuity of occupation in the area.

These structures were initially recorded, by partial excavation, in 1910 and more extensively in 1933. Since that date local topographical changes resulted in the position of the villa being temporarily lost. An attempt was made to verify the exact location by an AML geophysics team in 1988 (report 135/88) though the results were inconclusive.

The area to the south of the current site was extensively investigated by Gloucester archaeology unit in 1988 prior to the construction of the housing

estate. This work was continued in 1989 to include the northern and eastern boundaries of the present site. On both occasions the archaeological features recorded consisted of field boundaries and short sections of metalled trackway.

In 1991 the north-eastern corner of the site was partially excavated, by Gloucestershire county council archaeological service, prior to the construction of the M5 link road. Again the features appear to be wholly field boundaries.

## METHOD OF STUDY

A geophysical survey, of the areas likely to involve ground disturbance, was carried out by Geophysical surveys of Bradford using both magnetometry and resistivity techniques.

Following completion of the survey four distinct areas of anomalies were identified for evaluation trenching to both clarify and calibrate the results.

All four trenches were initially machine cleared of topsoil and later ploughsoil and then excavated by hand to the depth of the natural ground surface.

Features discovered during the excavation process were sampled, by the removal of sections of backfill only, to minimise unnecessary disturbance.

## SUMMARY OF GEOPHYSICAL RESULTS

The plan derived from the geophysical data is generally self explanatory in terms of the type of features that may be present within the development area.

The villa plan is clearly outlined to the west with the intercutting series of ditched field boundaries, following broadly the same alignment, to the east and south.

## RESULTS

*The evaluation results are presented as three distinct sections (zones), based on the development plan, to aid in the determination of the recommendations (below).*

*The areas distinguished are:*

- ZONE A:** The access road
- ZONE B:** The clubhouse
- ZONE C:** The car park

## **ZONE A: The access road**

Trenching was confined to the eastern end of the proposed roadway to avoid the area of the Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Trenches I and II were positioned to cross ditch alignments suggested by the geophysical survey in this area.

Trench I: No evidence of the suggested ditch could be seen.

Trench II: Three ditch alignments were confirmed in the suggested locations.

The eastern ditch has a U-shaped profile and extends to a depth of 1.20m below existing ground level. The original level from which it had been cut could not be determined due to ground conditions.

The two western ditches appear to have a depth of between 0.60m and 0.80m and could be traced by finds concentration only. Ground conditions unfortunately prevented accurate profiles being established but these appear to be broader and shallower than the eastern ditch.

## **ZONE B: The clubhouse**

Two distinct pit-like features were identified by the geophysical survey so trench III was positioned at an angle to enable the sampling of both.

Investigations revealed that the suggested pits were, in fact, a single broad shallow feature aligned approximately east-west.

The limited trenching could not demonstrate conclusively whether this represents a large boundary ditch or a single pit but the latter seems more likely given the geophysical results.

## **ZONE C: The car park**

As can be seen from the geophysical survey results there are an abundance of archaeological features in this area and in particular a circular structure on the eastern boundary.

Trench IV was located to cross the western edge of this structure and a number of the suggested ditch alignments.

The initial theory that the circular feature may represent an Iron age roundhouse has proved not to be the case. Rather, this feature now appears to be the corner of a field system that extends eastwards away from the survey area.

The minimum requirement for an increase in depth to 20cm would be a controlled watching brief as, at this level, the archaeological features become recognisable and their interrelationships become apparent.

Any increase beyond this depth would destroy all boundary relationships and later ditchfills, particularly in the carpark area, so full excavation, to the required depth, would be the only viable solution.

Deeper works, such as foundation and service trenches, pose less of a threat due to their localised nature so a watching brief would be sufficient to cover this aspect.

### RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY

Foundation and service trenches:

Watching brief

Soil stripping:

5-10cm depth:

Watching brief

15-20cm depth:

Controlled watching brief

20+cm depth:

Full excavation

Of the three other ditches sampled the northernmost, east-west ditch, is the most substantial, in terms of width and depth, and artefactually later than the other two, though no stratigraphic relationship could be demonstrated.

A distinct stratigraphic relationship was recorded between the two remaining ditches showing that the southern, east-west ditch, was the earlier.

## **FINDS**

A full catalogue of the recovered artefacts is deposited with the site archive which is currently housed in Gloucester archaeology units' premises.

Their detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this report but an assessment of the most significant finds will be published with the full site report upon completion of building works.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

It can be seen from these limited excavations, and more particularly from the results of the geophysical survey, that the site is intersected by an abundance of ditches and boundary features characteristic of intensive, prolonged, agricultural use.

All of the features sampled can be broadly dated to the Roman period and are assumed to be associated with the villa site though no direct stratigraphic relationship can be demonstrated.

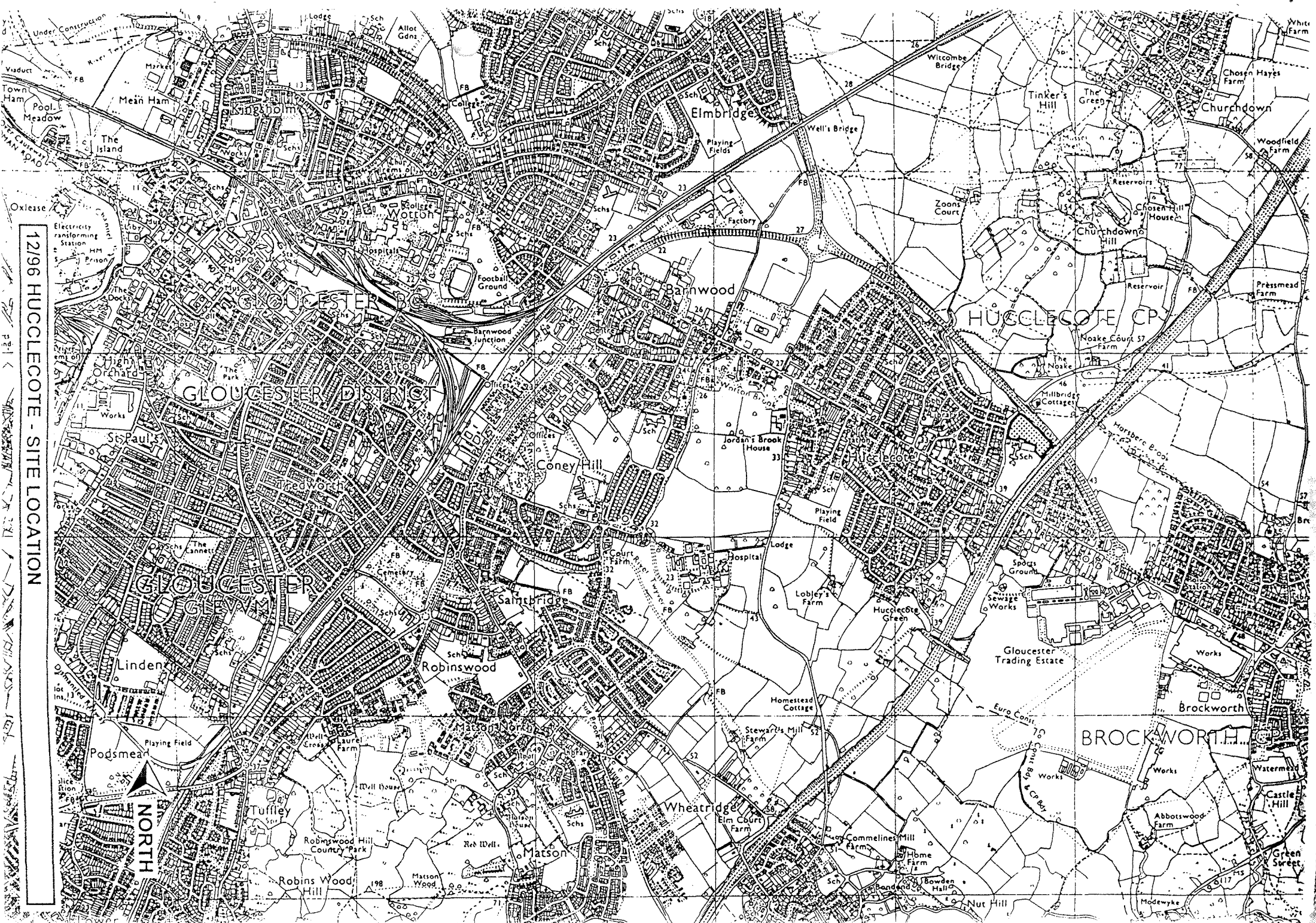
## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The three development zones (roadway, clubhouse and carpark) will require the same effective treatment in terms of lessening the impact on the archaeology and this will be governed by the construction methods employed.

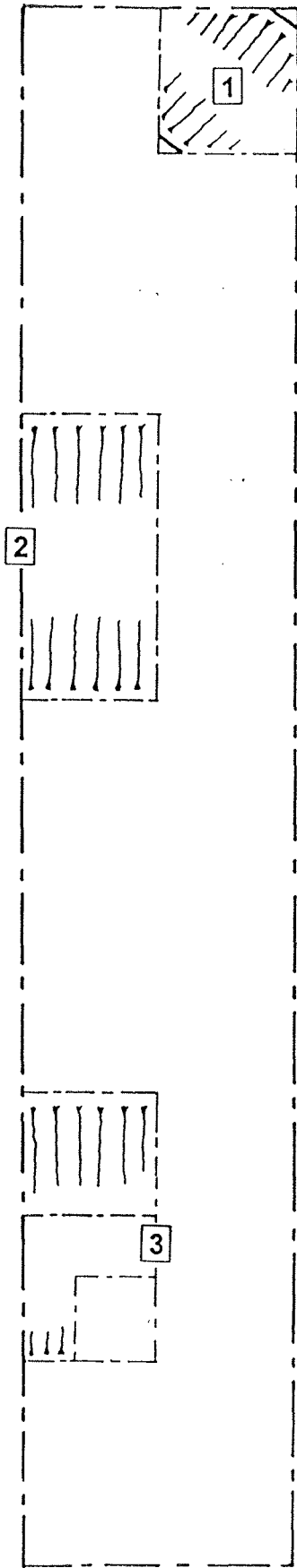
If the intention is to remove all topsoil from the development footprint, as is normally the case, this work must be closely supervised by a suitably qualified archaeologist.

The degree of intervention will then be determined by the proposed depth of these works: removal of the 5-10cm topsoil only could be sufficiently monitored by a standard watching brief, if the depth is increased to include the ploughsoil/subsoil, however, a more structured approach will be needed.

1296 HUCCLECOTE - SITE LOCATION







NW

SE

PROFILE ONLY

1

W

E

2



NORTH

Section scale 2m



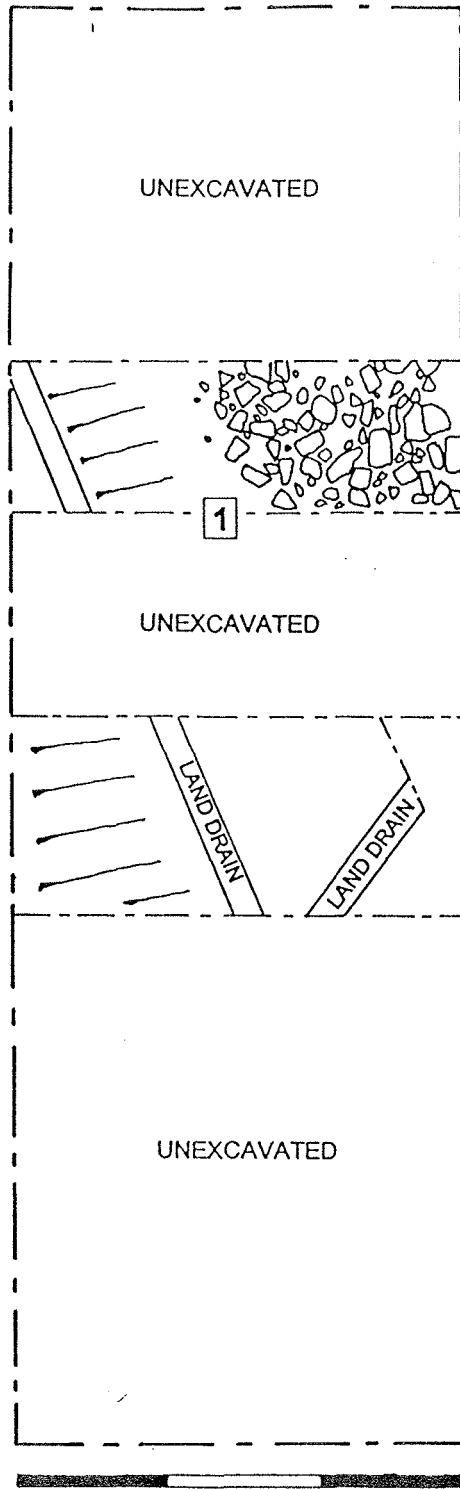
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W

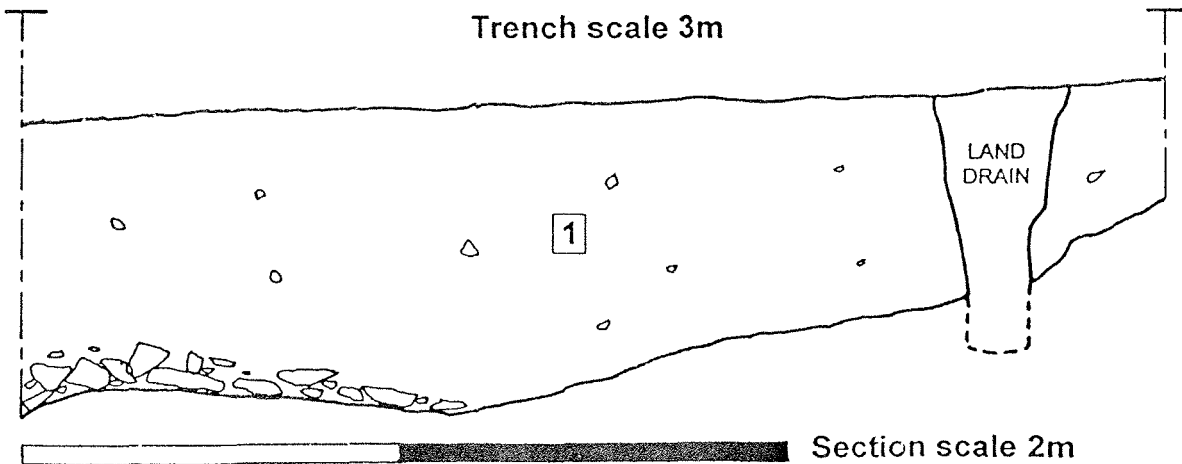
3

Trench scale 2m





Trench scale 3m



Section scale 2m

CHURCHDOWN LANE

A417

GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY GRID

TRENCH I

TRENCH II

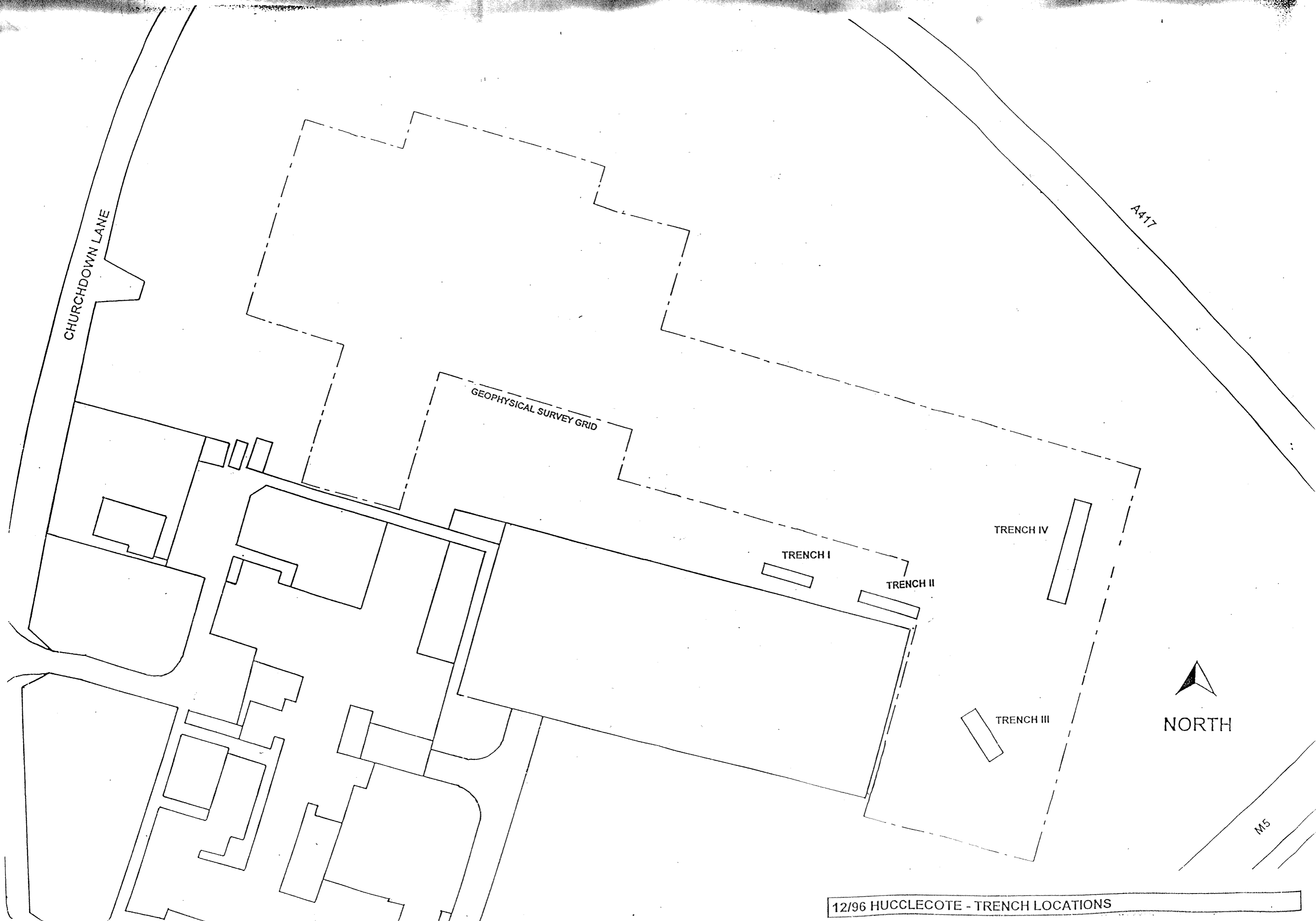
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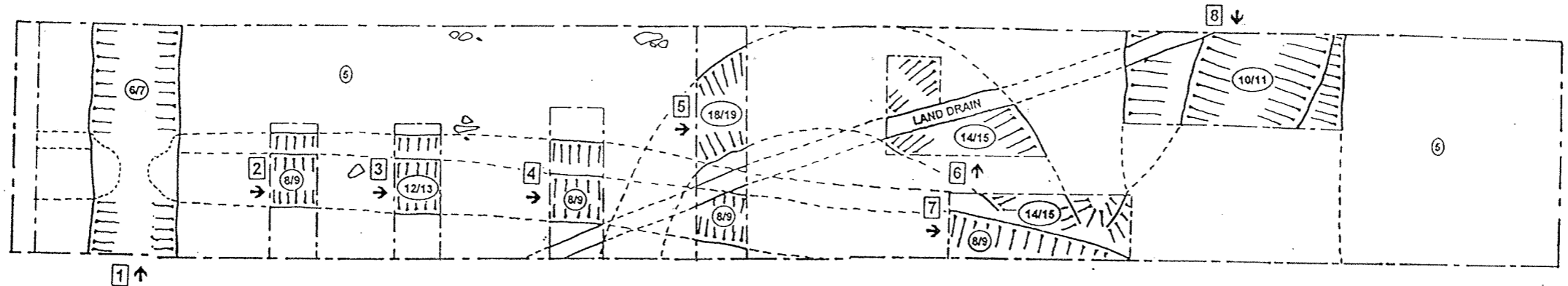
TRENCH III

NORTH

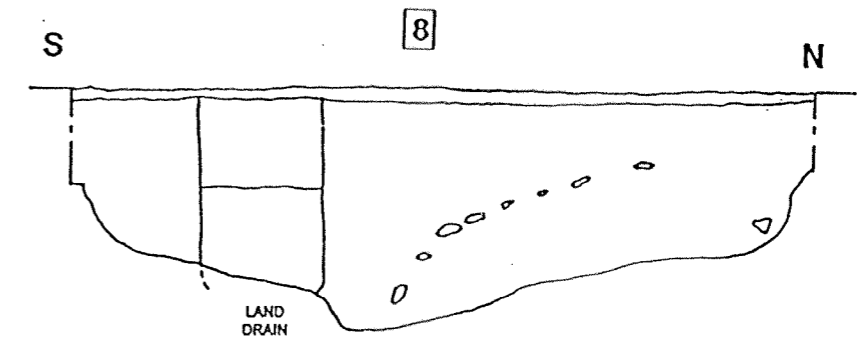
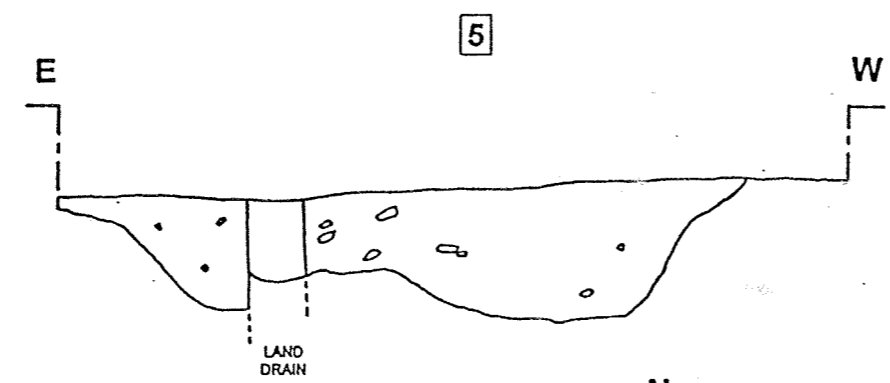
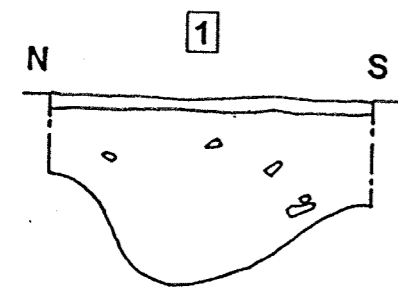
M5

12/96 HUCCLECOTE - TRENCH LOCATIONS

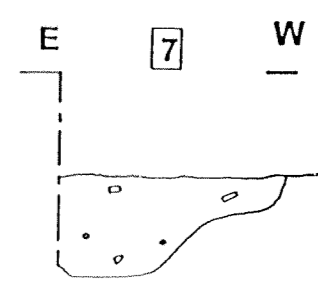
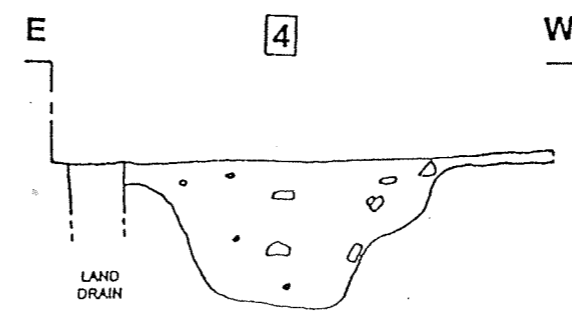
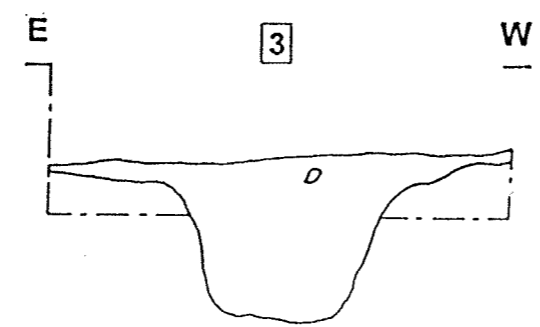
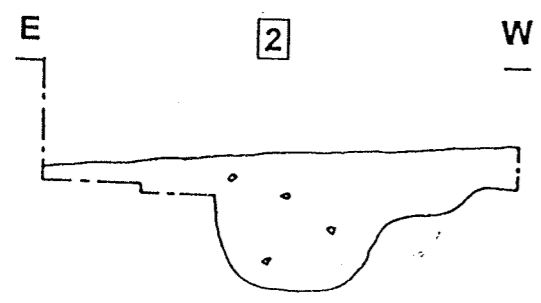
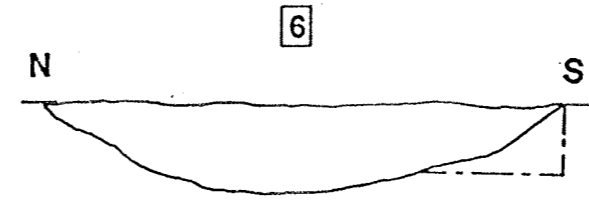




Plan scale 3m



Section scale 2m



CHURCHDOWN LANE

A417



VILLA

FIELD BOUNDARIES

GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY GRID



SUSPECTED IRON AGE ROUNDHOUSE



NORTH

M5

12/96 HUCCLECOTE - GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY RESULTS

BASED ON A PLAN PROVIDED BY GEOPHYSICAL SURVEYS OF BRADFORD