

**RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AT HIGHFIELD HOUSE,
HIGHFIELD RISE, SHREWTON, SALISBURY, WILTSHIRE**

Archaeological Observations and Recording



Report No. 53242/3/1

July 2007

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**Archaeological Observations and Recording,
March–June 2007**

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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Terrain Archaeology between March and June 2007 during the groundworks associated with the redevelopment of land at Highfield House, Highfield Rise, Shrewton, Salisbury. A small number of undated features were exposed. Two possible prehistoric features were found, a small pit filled with burnt flint and an E-W flat-bottomed linear feature of unknown function, which lay about seventeen metres to the north. A very large post-medieval feature with vertical sides and a flat base was found on the High Street frontage at the western end of the site. This is of unknown function, but possibly may have been an infilled garden feature. No medieval features or finds were recovered indicating that the site lay beyond the medieval core of the village.

INTRODUCTION

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by Ankers and Rawlings Ltd to undertake a programme of archaeological observations and recording during the residential development of the grounds of Highfield House, Highfield Rise, Shrewton, Salisbury (Planning Application No. S/2006/1290). The archaeological works were undertaken to fulfil Condition 6 of the Approved Planning Application, which states that “No development shall take place within the area of the application until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.”

Archaeological Observations and Recording, also known as an Archaeological Watching Brief, is defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists as “a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons, within a specified area or site where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed.”

The development comprised the excavation of footings trenches for eight dwellings in the garden of Highfield House and associated landscaping works.

The site lies in the eastern side of the village of Shrewton on ground that slopes gently down to the west at a height of approximately 80 m above Ordnance Datum, centred on NGR SU06944392 (Figure 1). The underlying geology is Upper Chalk.

The fieldwork was carried out between the 27th March and 8th June 2007 by Steven Tatler.

Terrain Archaeology would like to acknowledge the help and cooperation of the following during this project: Jonathan Ankers and Scott Rawlings (Ankers and Rawlings Ltd), Helena Cave Penney (Wiltshire County Archaeology Service).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The area is rich in prehistoric remains, with the Neolithic Causewayed Camp of Robin Hood's Ball lying to the northwest in the parish and a large number of Bronze Age round barrows and Bronze

Age/Iron Age enclosures and field systems. There have been Roman coins found in Shrewton and Maddington and Roman pottery has been found to the southeast of Maddington, and Wessex Archaeology excavated part of a Roman cemetery and settlement about 2 km to the west of Shrewton at Maddington Farm in 1992 (McKinley & Heaton 1996).

There have been a number of early Saxon finds from the area and three 7th century burials have been found in Maddington (Wilson & Hurst 1969, 241). There was a substantial settlement here in later Saxon times and the Domesday Book records at least seven early settlements all named 'Winterbourne'. In 1086 there were three estates in Shrewton, two in Maddington, plus Addestone and Rolleston. Despite the number of settlements there was only one mill, at Shrewton. Medieval settlement earthwork remains of Addestone, Bourton, Homanton, Rolleston, and Maddington still survive, but the settlements have been absorbed into the village of Shrewton.

Highfield House lies on the High Street of Shrewton, but appears to lie beyond the area of medieval settlement. Archaeological evaluation of the school site on the opposite side of the road did not identify any archaeological features (Cotswold Archaeology 1995). Andrews and Dury's *Map of Wiltshire* (1773) indicates that by the late 18th century, this area had been incorporated into the village. Highfield House itself is a double fronted villa with basement. It has rendered walls and a slate hipped roof. The precise date of the house is unclear, but a house in approximately the same position is shown on Andrews and Dury's 1773 map, perhaps suggesting a late 18th century date.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of the archaeological observations was to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

The archaeological works aimed to observe and record all the *in situ* archaeological deposits and features revealed during the groundworks to an appropriate professional standard.

METHODS

The archaeological works were undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation by Terrain Archaeology (Document No. 3220/1/1), which was produced in response to a Written Brief issued by Wiltshire County Council Archaeology Service, dated 17 January 2007 (ref HCP/MJU/06hcp058). The works were also undertaken in line with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct and Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs* (1994, as revised).

The groundworks consisted of the machine excavation of the footings for the eight houses including terracing into the underlying chalk to level the site for Dwellings 7 and 8.

The observations of the groundworks were intensive, as defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists, with a suitably qualified archaeologist present during all sensitive ground disturbance. This included the initial topsoil strip of the site, the excavation of the footings trenches and landscaping works likely to disturb potential archaeological deposits and features.

All features and deposits, exposed during the works, were recorded using components of the Terrain Archaeology recording system of complementary written, drawn and photographic records

The records, and any materials recovered, have been compiled in a stable, cross-referenced and fully indexed archive in accordance with current UKIC guidelines and the requirements of the receiving museum.

RESULTS

Introduction

Observations were carried out during groundworks associated with four building plots within the garden of Highfield House. These were recorded as Trenches 1 to 4 and are described below. Trenches 1, 2 and 4 consisted of machine-excavated footings trenches (Plates 1–6, 10–11), while Trench 3 entailed terracing into the underlying chalk bedrock to level the site (Figure 2; Plates 7–8). All building plots were initially partially stripped of topsoil.

Trench 1 (Dwellings 1,2,3 and 4)

Trench 1 was situated at the western end of the garden along the High Street frontage and consisted of footings trenches between 0.7–1.2 m wide and up to 1.5 m deep below formation level. The underlying natural was a powdery degraded chalk (102) containing frequent pieces of flint (<100 mm). Overlying this was a pale brown silty clay subsoil (101), up to 0.2 m thick, containing frequent pieces of flint (<50mm) and chalk peagrit. This was cut by a very large linear feature (104), aligned roughly NW–SE, with vertical sides and a flat base up to 1.2 m deep (Figures 2 and 3; Plates 2 and 3). It was filled with a pale brown silty loam (103) containing lenses of degraded chalk with occasional fragments of brick. This layer was probably redeposited topsoil. It was sealed by a mid brown silty loam topsoil (100) containing occasional pieces of chalk and peagrit.

Trench 2 (Dwelling 5)

Trench 2 was situated in the southern half of the garden and consisted of foundation trenches 0.7 m wide and up to 2.0 m deep. The underlying natural consisted of powdery degraded chalk (202) containing patches of pale yellow clay. Overlying this was a pale brown silty clay loam subsoil (201), up to 0.5 m thick, containing occasional pieces of flint, chalk peagrit and lenses of redeposited chalk. In the northwest corner of the trench, the subsoil was cut by a small, probably circular pit (204), with steep sides and a flat base. It was 1.1 m in diameter and 0.4 m deep and was filled with a very dark brown silty loam fill (203) containing abundant pieces of burnt flint (Plate 5). In the eastern half of the trench a large area of disturbed ground containing tree roots and topsoil was observed, probably representing the remains of previously removed trees. The overlying topsoil in this trench consisted of a mid brown silty loam (200) containing occasional pieces of chalk and flint.

Trench 3 (Dwellings 7 and 8)

Trench 3 was situated in the northeast corner of the garden and consisted of an area 14 m long by 14 m wide and terraced 1.8 m into the natural chalk bedrock (302) at its east end (Plates 8 and 9). Overlying the chalk natural was a pale brown silty clay loam subsoil (301), up to 0.3 m thick, containing occasional pieces of flint (<100 mm) and frequent chalk peagrit. Above this was a mid brown silty loam topsoil (300), up to 0.6 m thick, containing pieces of chalk and chalk peagrit. In the southwest corner of the trench the topsoil contained pieces of glass, metal and building rubble.

Trench 4 (Dwelling 6)

Trench 4 was situated in the northern half of the garden and consisted of trenching 0.7m wide and up to 2 m deep. The underlying natural consisted of powdery degraded chalk (405). Overlying this was a pale brown silty loam subsoil (402), up to 0.4 m thick, containing occasional pieces of flint and chalk peagrit. Visible across the whole of the trench was a large linear feature (404), over

10 m long, up to 2.6 m wide and 1.0 m deep, with steep sides and a flat base and aligned East-West (Figures 2 and 3; Plates 10 and 11). It was filled with a pale brown silty loam (403) containing frequent pieces of flint. It was not possible to determine whether the ditch was cut through subsoil 402 or was sealed by it, due to the similarity of the two contexts and the fact that it was not possible to enter the trench safely because of the depth and instability of the sides. Above subsoil 402 was a mid brown silty loam topsoil (401), up to 0.4 m thick, containing pieces of chalk and flint and chalk peagrit.

Finds

No finds were retained from this watching brief.

DISCUSSION

A small number of archaeological features were revealed during this watching brief. All were cut into the natural chalk and no significant archaeological deposits survived above the chalk. The discussion and interpretation of these features is hampered by the lack of dating evidence.

The earliest feature found on site may have been the small pit (204) in Trench 2. Although no dating evidence was recovered the presence of a large quantity of burnt flint could be indicative of a later prehistoric (Bronze Age or Iron Age) date. Deposits of burnt flint in pits of Bronze Age and Iron Age date have been found elsewhere, often in proximity to water, and frequently without any or very little accompanying contemporaneous material (Bellamy 2000). They may indicate the presence of an industrial site or be sited in a liminal zone, maybe in an area shared by different communities and perhaps used for a mutual meeting place for feasting or other activities. Although, the burnt flint pit found at Highfield House lies relatively close to the River Till (which flows just the other side of High Street) there is no evidence for the type of activity represented by this pit, nor any confirmation of a late prehistoric date.

The flat-bottomed linear feature (404) found in Trench 4 may be an early boundary ditch, but it did not continue as far as Trench 1 to the west, nor was it picked up in Trench 3 to the east. Its flat-bottomed profile is also unusual for a boundary ditch. The character of its fill suggests a prehistoric date, but it is unclear whether for this feature was contemporary with the burnt flint pit.

The large feature (104) found on the High Street frontage in Trench 1 appears to have been filled in during the post-medieval period, judging from the brick fragments contained within it. Its plan shape is not certain, but it appears to be relatively irregular, but it does have vertical sides and a flat base. It is unclear what this feature represents. It is possible that it is the result of the demolition of previous buildings along the High Street frontage, but this seems unlikely and there is no evidence that there have ever been any buildings in this position. The 1773 Andrews and Dury map does not show any buildings along the frontage (Figure 4), nor are any marked on the Ordnance Survey maps, indicating that any buildings in this area would be earlier than the mid-eighteenth century. It is also possible that it is an infilled early garden feature, but nothing is shown on the historic maps in this position and it is unclear what type of feature it might represent.

The paucity of medieval finds and features, particularly along the High Street frontage confirms that this area lies outside the core of the medieval settlement of Shrewton.

REFERENCES

- | | | |
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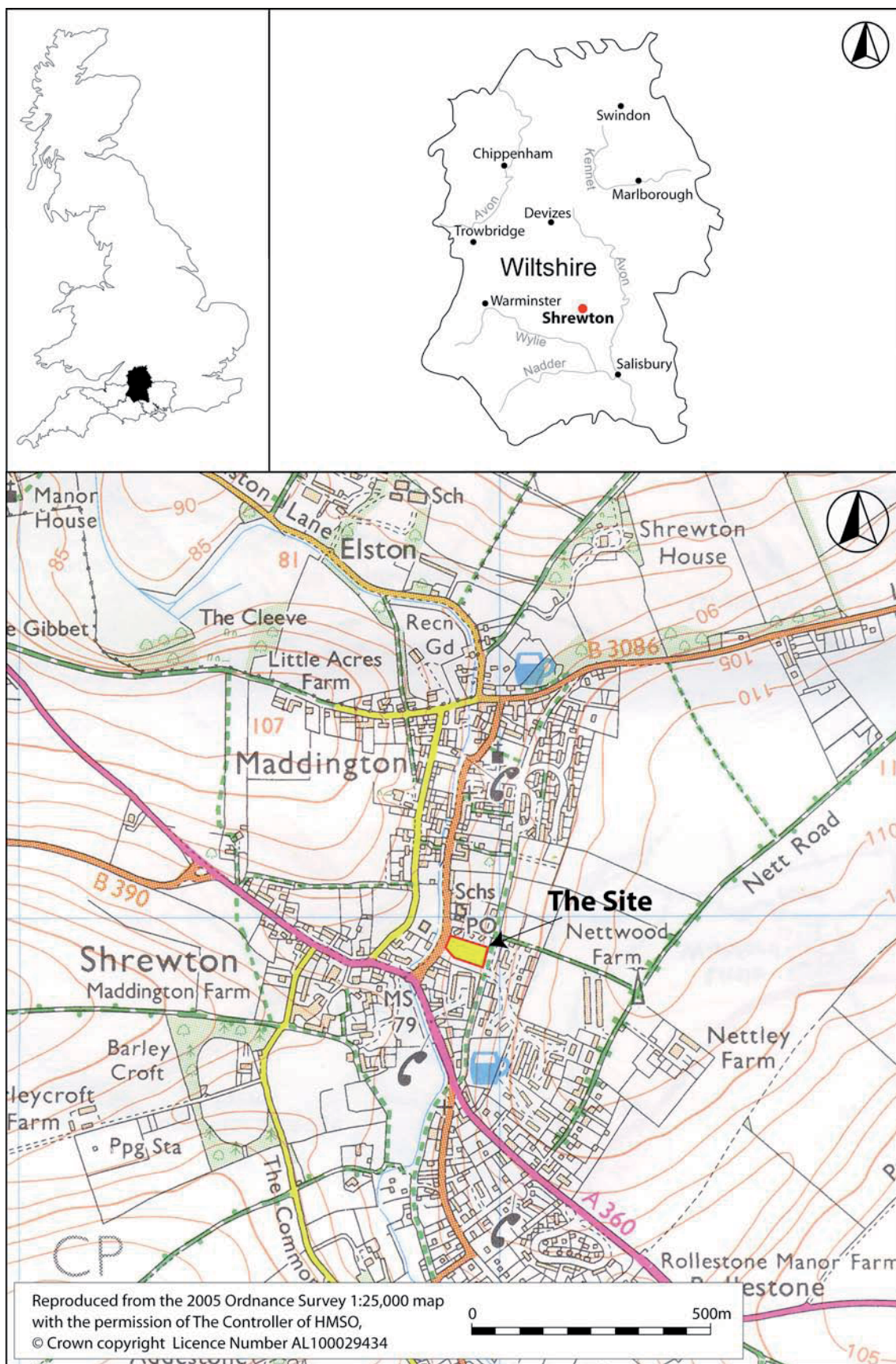


Figure 1: Site location map

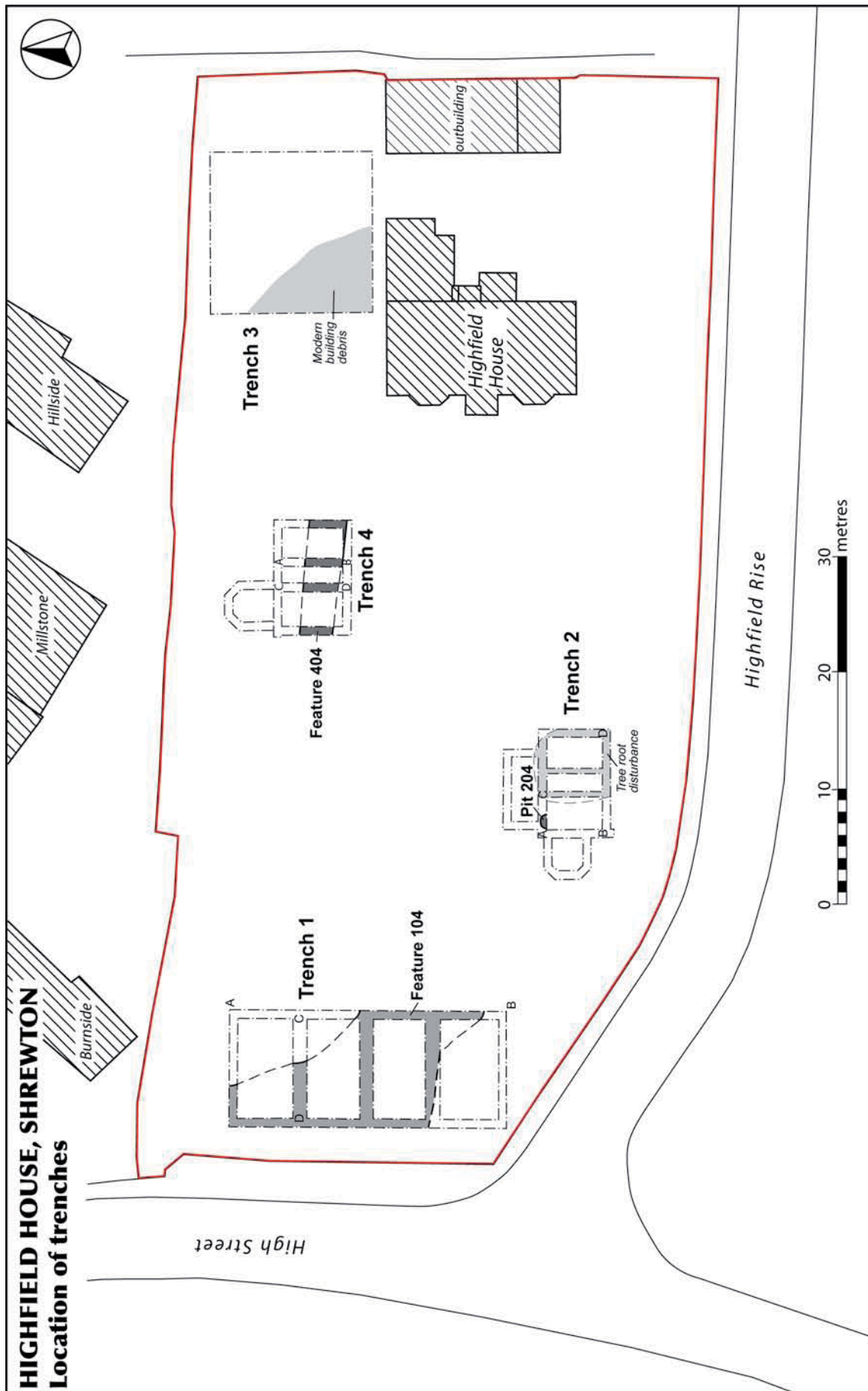


Figure 2: Trench location plan

HIGHFIELD HOUSE, SHREWTON Sections

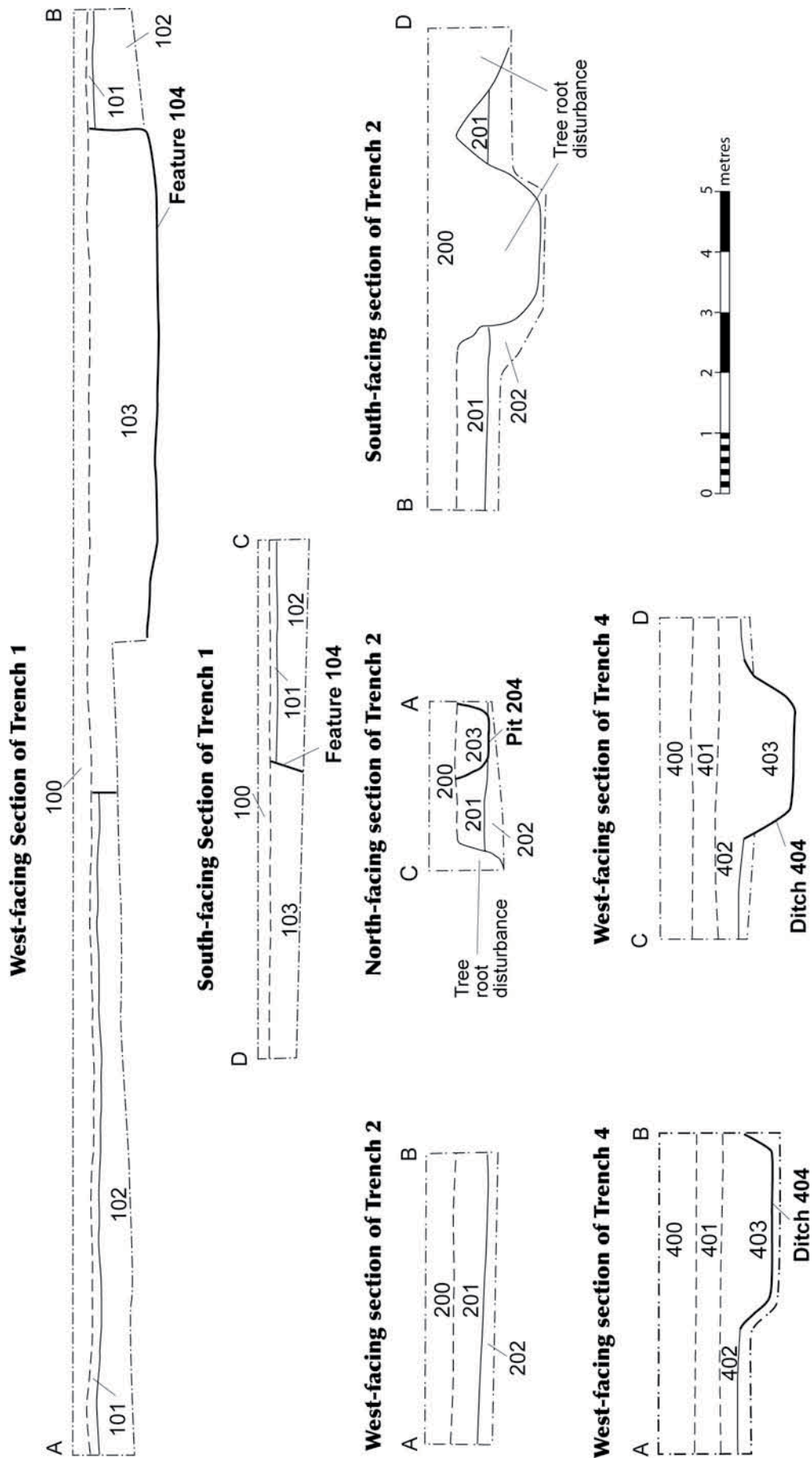


Figure 3: Sections

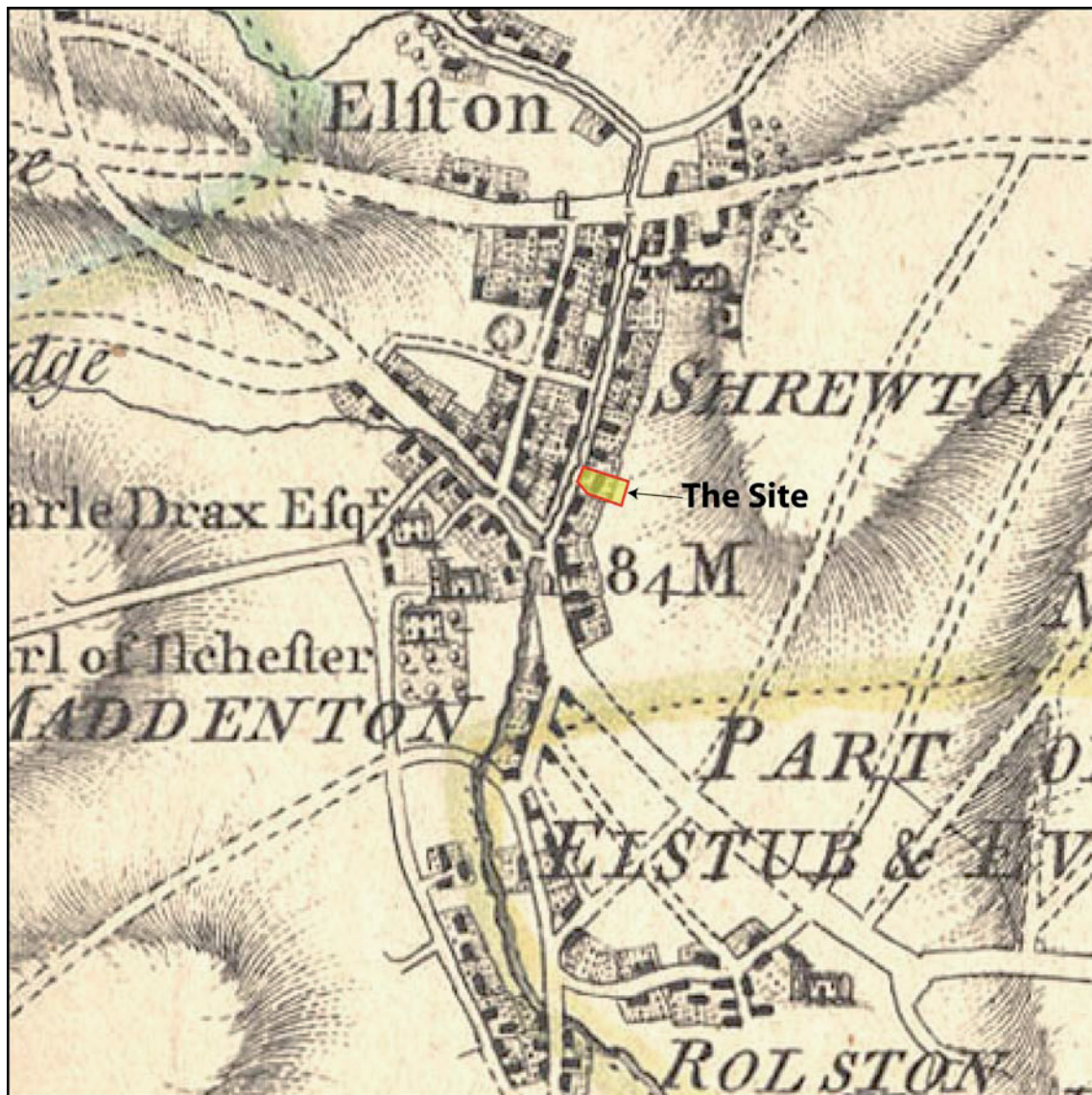


Figure 4: Extract from Andrews and Dury's map of 1773 showing the location of the site.



Plate 1: View of Trench 1 from the northeast.



Plate 2: View of Feature 104 in northern half of Trench 1.



Plate 3: View of Feature 104 in southern half of Trench 1.



Plate 4: West end of Trench 2 showing redeposited chalk.



Plate 5: Pit 204 in northern half of Trench 2.



Plate 6: Tree root disturbance in southern half of Trench 2.



Plate 7: East end of Trench 3 showing terracing into chalk bedrock.



Plate 8: Southeast corner of Trench 3 showing terracing into chalk bedrock.



Plate 9: View of Trench 3 from the southeast.



Plate 10: View of Trench 4 from the northwest.



Plate 11: West facing section in western half of Trench 4 showing Ditch 404.