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A303 AMESBURY TO BERWICK DOWN, WILTSHIRE - ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

FIELD EVALUATION EXCAVATIONS (MARCH - APRIL 1993)

CONFIDENTIAL

**Statement of Results**

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# A303 AMESBURY TO BERWICK DOWN, WILTSHIRE - ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

## FIELD EVALUATION EXCAVATIONS (MARCH - APRIL 1993)

### Statement of Results

#### 1. Introduction

A number of extant earthworks and buried archaeological features identified by geophysical survey and/or from aerial photographs lie on sections of possible alternative routes being considered in association with improvement to the A303 between Amesbury and Berwick Down.

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Sir William Halcrow and Partners Ltd, through their archaeological consultant Dr John Samuels, to investigate the integrity and preservation of selected sites. A document outlining the proposed evaluation methodology was prepared by Wessex Archaeology and approved in advance of the fieldwork taking place.

Three areas were investigated between 15th March and 16th April 1993 (Figs. 1 and 2; Trenches A, B and C). All trenches were excavated and backfilled by hand. A brief summary of the results only is given here.

#### 2. Trenches A1 and A2 (Figs. 2, 3; centred on SU 10294107)

The trenches were positioned to test the relationship between an extant linear earthwork (ditch and bank) running from north-west to south-east and a possible earlier ditch, running from west-south-west to east-north-east, identified both on aerial photographs and by geophysical survey. The evaluation was also intended to investigate more closely the nature of the latter feature. The buried ditch was relocated by geophysical scanning carried out by Geophysical Surveys of Bradford. An existing field boundary follows the line of the earthwork.

*Trench A1* was located at the eastern edge of a field, outside the area under cultivation, along the western lip of the earthwork ditch. The trench was 8m long and 1m wide.

Very friable loam topsoil, up to 0.35m deep, overlay 0.05 - 0.10m deep loam with much chalk pea grit, the lower deposit sealing two features cut into chalk bedrock: a ditch (Fig. 3;

4) and a shallow scoop (Fig. 3; 6). The ditch, which was c. 1.50m wide and had a maximum depth of 0.73m, contained a primary fill of loose, very slightly silty chalk rubble (Fig. 3; 8). Subsequent deposits consisted of more compact weathered chalk and silty loam (7) and relatively chalk-free loam (3). All layers within the ditch contained a small proportion of unworked flint nodules and fragments.

No pottery was recovered from either of the excavated features, but one sherd from an Early Bronze Age vessel and five sherds of Roman pottery were found in the topsoil or subsoil (Table 1). Small quantities of undiagnostic worked and burnt flint were recovered from the topsoil and subsoil and also from the fills of ditch 4 (Tables 1, 2).

Mollusc samples taken from the ditch produced open country assemblages typical of long-established open conditions, probably dry, short, grassland (grazed) or arable. No shade-loving species were observed. The assemblages appeared well-sealed and uncontaminated, the species present probably indicating a prehistoric date for the feature (see below for more detailed commentary on the mollusca).

The scoop, which extended beyond the western edge of the trench, was 0.28m deep and c. 1.60m wide. It was filled with compact, silty, weathered chalk and chalk rubble (Fig. 3; 5). No finds were recovered from the feature.

*Trench A2* was 0.50m east of Trench A1, lying approximately across the lowest part of the earthwork ditch (which in this area was not well defined). The trench was rhomboidal in plan, to minimise the area of excavation, and was 3m x 2m in area (Fig. 3).

Topsoil and chalky subsoil were removed, similar in nature and depth to those excavated in Trench A1, exposing the intersection of the earthwork ditch (Fig. 3; 14) with the buried ditch (12); the earthwork ditch was clearly seen to cut the latter. Neither feature was excavated.

### 3. Trenches B1 and B2 (Figs. 2, 4; southern end (B2) at SU 11554176, northern end (B1) at SU 11524188)

Trench B was positioned to test the state of preservation of a long barrow and to establish the presence or otherwise of a ditch at its northern end. The long barrow, which lies less than 1km south-west of Stonehenge, survives as an upstanding earthwork and is a Scheduled Monument (Wiltshire, Monument No. 63c), consent for the excavation of which was granted by the Department of National Heritage.

A trench, B1, 30m long and 1m wide was excavated from the road into the northern end of the long barrow. Excavation through the barrow mound showed the monument to be severely disturbed, however, and a second trench, B2, offset 1m to the east but otherwise continuing from the southern end of Trench B1, was opened in an attempt to define the extent of damage to the barrow. Trench B2 was 10m long.

The greater part of *Trench B1*, c. 22m, lay within a field under cultivation. In this area loam topsoil, c. 0.23m deep and containing much evidence of modern activity (including fragments of asbestos, concrete, glass, iron and coal), lay directly over chalk bedrock. Three features, all of recent date, were investigated in this area: a post-pit, c. 7.50m north of the long barrow fence, the concrete setting and part of the post remaining *in situ* in the base of the feature; a second feature, c. 4.50m south of the roadside fence, of a similar nature but filled with soil and redeposited chalk; a shallow gully, of unknown function, extending north and south of the latter feature and probably associated with it. Ploughmarks cutting the chalk, generally aligned parallel with the A303, were also recorded in this part of the trench. The small collection of worked flint from trench B1 included a crude scraper from the topsoil.

In the fenced area encompassing the long barrow, topsoil was more variable in depth, ranging between 0.05m - 0.30m, and, north of the barrow mound, again lay immediately above chalk. (A small, square post-hole was recorded c. 4.30m south of the existing fence, indicating the probable position of an earlier fence line around the monument.)

The northern part of the mound consisted predominantly of friable dark brown loam deposits (Fig. 4; 31, 33, 34), interspersed with a layer of chalk rubble (32). A number of backfilled pits or trenches were recorded (Fig. 4; 30, 65, 80, 82), many of which were seen to coincide with irregularities in the turf-covered surface of the mound, and most of which contained modern artefacts (such as wire, glass and modern ceramic fragments, including sherds from two jugs printed 'YMCA': Table 1). Two pieces of crudely scored chalk, were found in the fill of feature 65 (60); the origin of the marks is uncertain but they were probably caused by animal claws. Disturbance extended into the barrow for almost 12m before *in situ* mound material was reached, and thereafter interrupted much of the remaining 5m of *Trench B2*. Even in areas where human disturbance to the barrow appeared less severe, the structure was found to be much damaged by animal activity, with burrows and runs penetrating the monument at all levels.

The surviving structure of the barrow, although much tunnelled through by animals, was represented by areas of chalk rubble (eg. Fig. 4; 56, 62, 63) overlying patches of relatively stone-free, dark brown, humic loam (eg. Fig. 4; 67, 68, 72), the latter representing a probable

turf and/or soil layer buried beneath the barrow mound. The chalk rubble was variable in nature, in some areas being vacuous and 'clean', but elsewhere appearing more weathered and compact. Two fragments of antler, possibly from antler picks, were recovered from the surface of the chalk rubble (61) exposed during the excavation of pit 65 toward the southern end of Trench B2; other finds recovered from these deposits included worked flint and intrusive modern material (Tables 1, 2). As a result of animal activity, the humic loam survived only as small 'islands', which, for the most part lay directly above chalk, but an intervening deposit of lighter coloured loam was noted in some areas (eg. Fig. 4; 74). A similar layer also overlay the humic loam in the same area (Fig. 4; 71), but it is possible that both deposits were the result of animal activity. The humic loam was not excavated but small samples were taken for molluscan analysis. A preliminary assessment of the potential of these samples has been undertaken and is reported on below.

#### **Trench C (Figs. 2, 5; southern end at SU 11554181)**

Trench C was positioned to test the state of preservation of a round barrow. The barrow, which lies immediately north of the A303, survives as an upstanding earthwork and is a Scheduled Monument (Wiltshire, Monument No. 63b), consent for the excavation of which was granted by the Department of National Heritage. A second round barrow lies c. 13m to the north but was not investigated.

*Trench C* was 10m long and 1m wide, extending northwards from the roadside fence to and up the lower southern slope of the barrow mound. Limited excavation indicated that the monument was generally well-preserved although some evidence of animal disturbance and of erosion, probably the result of ploughing, was noted.

Loam topsoil was between 0.10 - 0.19m deep, lying deepest over the buried barrow ditch. Below topsoil were layers of loam with chalk and flint, deposits possibly displaced from the upper part of the barrow mound by ploughing or other erosive processes (Fig. 5; 58, 44, 43, 39), interleaved by relatively stone-free dark brown humic loams, buried turf/soil horizons indicative of periods of stabilisation. The earliest and latest of the three humic loam deposits (Fig. 5; 48/52/53 and 40 respectively) extended across the area of the barrow ditch, the earliest deposit directly sealing it; both layers were substantial (up to 0.12m deep). The earliest humic layer showed some evidence of *in situ* burning (Fig. 5; 52) and, where this was interrupted by a number of irregular striations, of possible ploughing. The intermediate humic loam (Fig. 5; 54/59) extended much higher up the barrow mound but was thin (0.04m) and intermittent; the lower part of the deposit and the lower slopes of the mound generally being affected by animal disturbance. The barrow ditch was not excavated.

Most of the excavated deposits contained worked flint (Tables 1, 2; see below for commentary on the flint). The small excavated section of layer 39, which may represent *in situ* barrow mound, produced thirty-eight worked flints and others were noted on the surface of the underlying (unexcavated) layer; a sherd of Early Bronze Age pottery was also recovered from layer 39. One decorated sherd of Early Bronze Age pottery, a probable fragment of spotted dolerite and much worked flint were recovered from layer 48/52/53 (Tables 1, 2).

A small gully was excavated at the southern end of the trench, south of the barrow ditch (Fig. 5; 42). The feature was only well defined where it cut chalk bedrock and contained no finds by which it might have been dated. It is possible that the gully may have been associated with roadside drainage, although this is unproven.

A second possible feature of irregular profile was sealed by the earliest humic loam and appeared to cut the southern upper fill of the barrow ditch (Fig. 5; 51). The fills of the gully were different from the fill of the barrow ditch, apparently containing fewer chalk and flint fragments, but since the latter was not excavated this was not conclusively established. A large number of pieces of worked flint were recovered from the gully (Tables 1, 2) and it may be noted that the collection generally exhibits damage caused in antiquity.

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## THE FINDS

TABLE 1: OVERALL QUANTIFICATION OF FINDS

Trench	Context	Feature/ Deposit	Pottery (no/wt)	Worked Flint (no)	Burnt Flint (wt)	Stone (no/wt)	Glass (no/wt)	Metal (no)	Animal Bone (wt)
A1	1	Topsoil	3/10g	10	39g			1	
	2	Subsoil	2/11g	6					
	3	Ditch fill		2	8g				
	7	Ditch fill			74g				
A2	9	Topsoil		6	9g				
	10	Subsoil	1/7g	2					
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>6/28g</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>130g</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>
B1	26	Topsoil		4					
	28	Pit fill							110g
	29	Pit fill	12/434g					1	1g
B2	60	Pit fill	2/28g	1		2/580g			122g
	61	Chalk rubble		2			2/56g	4	585g
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>14/462g</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2/580g</b>	<b>2/56g</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>818g</b>
C	38	Topsoil		22	44g	1/96g			
	39	Chalk rubble	1/2g	38	4g				
	40	Buried soil/turf		25	19g				21g
	43	Eroded soil		36	48g				11g
	44	Eroded soil		13	9g				1g
	46	Animal disturbed soil		35					42g
	48	Buried soil/turf		4					2g
	49	Gully fill		29	1g				19g
	50	Gully fill		35	12g				
	52	Burnt buried soil/turf		55		1/194g			5g
	53	Buried soil/turf	1/14g	20					4g
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>3/16g</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>137g</b>	<b>2/290</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>105g</b>

### The Pottery

#### Trench A

The six sherds recovered comprise only prehistoric and Roman material. The prehistoric pottery consists of a single body sherd (context 1) of grog and sandy fabric which is probably from a Beaker or other Early Bronze Age vessel. The Roman period pottery was recovered from three contexts (1, 2 and 10), and consists of an everted rim and body sherd from a wheelthrown, sandy greyware vessel which is probably 2nd-3rd century AD in date (context 1), one Black Burnished Ware 1 body sherd (context 2) and a body sherd from the neck zone of a wheelthrown, sandy orangeware vessel (context 10).



### *Trench B*

Only modern pottery was recovered from two contexts in this trench (29 and 60). The vessels are diagnostic pieces of English stoneware and whiteware milk jugs. The former are fragments from a beer bottle bearing '...VIBOND & SON..... THIS BOTTLE IS THE PROPERTY OF .... BREWE...', the latter is printed with 'YMCA' within its triangle symbol on the side.

### *Trench C*

Two body sherds of grog and sandy fabric Beaker or other Early Bronze Age pottery were recovered from different contexts (39 and 53). The latter piece bears decoration consisting of irregular jabbing.

### **The worked flint**

Three hundred and forty-five pieces of struck flint were recovered from the three trenches. Of this total 26 are from Trench A and just seven from Trench B. There is no diagnostic material from either of these small groups which consist of crudely struck flakes, mostly broken at the time of manufacture or, at least, in antiquity. Two edge retouched flakes were recovered from Trench A (context 1) and a crude scraper from Trench B (context 26).

The bulk of the material derives from contexts associated with the round barrow in Trench C. Again, the majority of pieces are unretouched flakes, many of them broken. For the most part they are fairly thick, squat, and irregular with many hinge fractures and no indication of platform preparation. The few cores are small and crudely worked with the exception of an example of a 'Levallois' type core from context 40, an humic horizon overlying the postulated position of the barrow ditch. This type of core is of Late Neolithic date and frequently associated with the production of 'transverse' arrowheads. The retouched material consists of one scraper, two rough scraper/borers, two large and very roughly worked nodules with heavily abraded edges which were probably used as hammers or choppers, and an edge retouched flake. One small, burnt piece is probably a 'thumbnail' scraper. Overall, the material seems likely to be of Late Neolithic or, more probably, Bronze Age date.

Two points of interest are, firstly, that the material from contexts 49 and 50, within gully 51, generally exhibits much damage. Virtually all the flint from the three excavation trenches is white patinated but many of the flakes from the gully which have been broken or edge damaged have a light milky patina over the areas of damage. This suggests that these contexts have been disturbed some time in antiquity and would be consistent with an earlier feature, the gully, having been disturbed when the barrow was built. Secondly, although context 52 contained evidence of *in situ* burning only one flake from that context showed any obvious sign of having been burnt

TABLE 2: WORKED FLINT COMPOSITION (by no)

1 = Irregular waste  
 2 = Cores  
 3 = Core rejuvenation flakes  
 4 = Flakes  
 5 = Blades/bladelets  
 6 = Retouched

Trench	Context	1	2	3	4	5	6	Burnt	Broken
A	1		1		1		2		6
	2				3				3
	3								2
	9				2		1		3
	10				1				1
B	26		2				1		1
	60	1							
	61				2				
C	38		1		8			2	11
	39	3			18			1	16
	40		1		8		1	5	10
	43	5			16				15
	44				6		1		6
	46				16			1	18
	48				4				
	49	2	1		14		1		11
	50	2	2		16		2		13
	52				38		1	1	15
	53				13				7
TOTAL		13	8		166		10	10	138

### Stone

A small number of pieces of stone were retained from the excavations - two from Trench B2 and two from Trench C (Table 1). The two pieces of chalk from Trench B2 were both recovered from disturbed contexts. The larger piece is trapezoidal in shape (c. 165mm x 90mm) and c. 25mm thick. The piece exhibits a series of crude scoremarks, of varying width and depth, on several of its faces. The origin of these marks is unclear but they may well derive from animals.

The two stones retained from Trench C comprise a small fragment of limestone (context 38) and a larger piece of igneous rock, probably spotted dolerite.

No petrological examination of the retained stones has been undertaken.

### Animal Bone

Relatively small amounts of animal bone were recovered from Trenches B and C, the greater part of the collection (by weight) comprising three pieces of antler from Trench B2 (Table 1). The assemblage was scanned and is summarised in Table 3.

The animal bone recovered from Trench B (long barrow) largely comprises 3 pieces of red deer antler. Small fragments of small-mammal (sheep/goat or pig) were also recovered, and

of particular interest were some heavily butchered juvenile sheep long bones. Interestingly the unfused epiphysis was found in a separate context (i.e. conjoins in context 60 and 28). The majority of bone (by number) appeared to be rabbit bones, presumably of recent date.

The majority of the bone from Trench C (roundbarrow) was highly fragmented and unidentified. The small assemblage was predominantly small mammal and the greater part of this group is probably sheep/goat. No definite pig bone was identified. Cow was represented by a single astragalus.

TABLE 3: ANIMAL BONE IDENTIFICATION (by no)

Trench	Context	red deer antler	Cow	Unid lge mammal	juvenile sheep	unid small mammal/ sheep	rabbit	Unid mammal
B1	28				2*	4	19	
	29						1	
B2	60				2	6	10	
	61	3			1	6	21	
<b>Totals</b>		3			5	14	51	
C	40			1		7		
	43							16
	44							1
	46		1			1		
	48					4		
	49		1					
	52					2		
	53					1		
<b>Totals</b>			2	1		15		17

In summary both small faunal assemblages are typical of the remains from the Stonehenge environs (Maltby 1990). The red deer antler and the butchered juvenile sheep bones are of particular interest even though there were not recovered from stratified contexts associated with the barrow itself.

### Molluscan sampling and evidence

#### Trench A

A column of five samples were taken from ditch 4 and a single spot sample was taken from scoop 6. The samples were processed using standard techniques outlined by Evans (1972) and detailed by Allen (1989; 1990). The flots were scanned (Table 4) in order to assess shell preservation, assemblage composition and the potential for detailed analysis.

*Ditch 4* - Large samples (2kg) were processed from all samples due to the low shell numbers, despite the highly calcareous nature of the ditch fills. Only the primary and lower secondary fill (cf. Evans 1972, 321 - 328; Limbrey 1975, 290 - 300) were sampled. Mollusc preservation was good, and shell numbers were moderate. All samples produced open country assemblages and no shade-loving species was observed. The lack of any fragments of *Pomatias elegans*, a species that inhabits disturbed/cleared ground was noteworthy. No burrowing species (*Cecillioides acicula*) were noticed in any of the flots, suggesting that all

assemblages were well sealed and uncontaminated. The assemblages are typical of long established open country conditions, probably dry short grassland (grazed) or arable. The lower secondary fill shows a slight change in flot assemblage composition, indicating local change in the land-use.

Scoop 6 was almost devoid of Mollusca. A single Helicellid individual was noted in the flot. This is an open country species.

TABLE 4: TRENCH A - MOLLUSC PRESERVATION AND COMPOSITION FROM SCANNED FLOTS

Key : A ≥ 10; B = 5 - 9; C < 4

Sample	2	3	4	5	6	7
Context	8	7	7	7	3	5
Feature	Ditch 4					Scoop 6
<b>Mollusca</b>						
Open country species						
<i>Helicella itala</i>	C	C	B	A	B	-
<i>Pupilla muscorum</i>	C	C	C	B	A	-
<i>Vertigo cf. pygmaea</i>	C	-	-	C	-	-
<i>Vallonia</i> spp.	B	B	C	B	A	-
Helicellids	-	-	-	-	-	C
Catholic species						
<i>Trichia hispida</i>	-	-	-	C	B	-
<i>Cochlicopa</i> spp.	-	-	-	C	-	-
Shell Numbers	mod	mod	low	good	good	v. low

Overall, the Mollusca indicate well established open country conditions which prevailed in this area from the Late Neolithic (Allen *et al.* 1990) and the lack of large numbers of Introduced Helicellids probably suggests a prehistoric date.

Since the features are not securely dated no further analysis is recommended. Detailed analysis could determine the precise nature of the local environs (e.g. grazed pasture or arable) which may be of significance in interpreting the function of the ditch. The samples have been processed and are therefore in a stable archiveable form. If no further work is undertaken then all the residues (except the >5.6mm) and flots should be archived.

#### Trench B (longbarrow)

Two contexts, each apparently representing 'islands' of preserved buried soil were sampled for Mollusca in an attempt to determine (a) if micro fauna from the islands was heavily contaminated, and (b) if the mollusc assemblages are palaeo-environmentally significant. Despite the fragmentary nature of survival of the palaeosol, apart from obvious animal burrows, it looked intact on field inspection and indeed an worm-worked horizon was present and identified in the field indicating the presence of the old turf line (and was highlighted in the coarse [>5.6mm] stone content of the bulk samples): Apart from animal burrows (probably rabbit and possibly mole) no other biotic disturbance was noted.

Columns of two samples removed from both the upper stone-free horizon and lower stonier horizon in both instances. Four samples of c. 2000g were processed for land Mollusca using standard methods (cf. Evans 1972; Allen 1989; 1990). The flots only of the four samples were rapidly scanned under a x10 - x30 stereo-binocular microscope and the species present crudely quantified (Table 5).

TABLE 5: TRENCH B - MOLLUSC PRESERVATION AND COMPOSITION FROM SCANNED FLOTS

Key: A=  $\geq 10$ ; B= 9-3; C=  $< 2$ ; + = non-apical fragment

Column	A		B	
Sample	11	10	9	8
	top	bottom	top	bottom
Context	69		67	
<b>Mollusca</b>				
Open country species				
<i>Pupilla muscorum</i>	A	B	A	B
<i>Valloniasspp.</i>	A	A	A	B
<i>Helicella itala</i>	A	+	A	C
<i>Vertigo pygmaea</i>	B	C	B	C
<i>Truncatellina cylindracea</i>	B	-	C	-
Shade-loving and intermediate species				
<i>Clausilia cf. bidentata</i>	-	-	C	-
<i>Vitrea spp.</i>	-	-	-	C
<i>Cepaea spp.</i>	-	-	+	-
<i>Pomatias elegans</i>	-	-	-	+
Burrowing species				
<i>Cecilioides acicula</i>	0	0	0	0
Shell numbers (flot)	75+	30+	75+	20+

Preservation in each sample was generally good and uniform throughout each sample. Contamination or mixing was not evident in that no modern shells (with periostricum) or introduced species (Roman or medieval) were noted. Further not a single specimen of *Cecilioides acicula*, a ubiquitous burrowing species, was recorded. From this, and the variation in assemblage composition (see below) it is likely that the mollusc assemblages are uncontaminated and unmixed.

*Palaeo-environmental significance of the results*- shells were well preserved and high numbers (over 75) were recorded in both flots from the upper (possible turf) horizons. The subsoil in both cases were more stony and contained less shells in the flots, but rapid scan of the residues indicated fragments and apices that are identifiable but would not float. All samples contain enough shells to make palaeo-environmental analysis statistically viable.

All assemblages were dominated by open country species indicating the the long barrow was probably constructed in a pre-existing open environment. The occurrence of *Truncatellina cylindracea*, a relatively rare species, is noteworthy as is xerophilous it usually inhabits very open dry (often grazed) downland. Furthermore it tends to be both spatially and temporally restricted but has been recorded in in Bronze Age contexts at King Barrow Ridge (Allen and Wyles forthcoming) and Fighledean (Allen and Wyles 1992/3).

Despite all assemblages being predominately open country there is a hint of both spatial variation and change through time. Some change in the assemblages is indicated by the presence of more shade-loving species in the basal samples (e.g. *Pomatias elegans*, *Cepaea* spp. and *Vitrea* spp. Further spatial variation is indicated by the recovery of *Clausilia* cf. *bidentata* and 4 specimens of *T. cylindracea* in one upper sample and 1 and nil respectively in the other.

Analysis of these four samples would provide further palaeo-environmental data to refine the general interpretation provided by the Stonehenge Environs Project (Allen *et al.* 1990). Further the analysis may also enable some element of spatial variation within the palaeosol to be addressed, which is generally a subject currently on the general national agenda (Evans pers. comm.). In view of the intact nature of the assemblages, preservation, assemblage composition and date, analysis and reporting of all four samples is recommended

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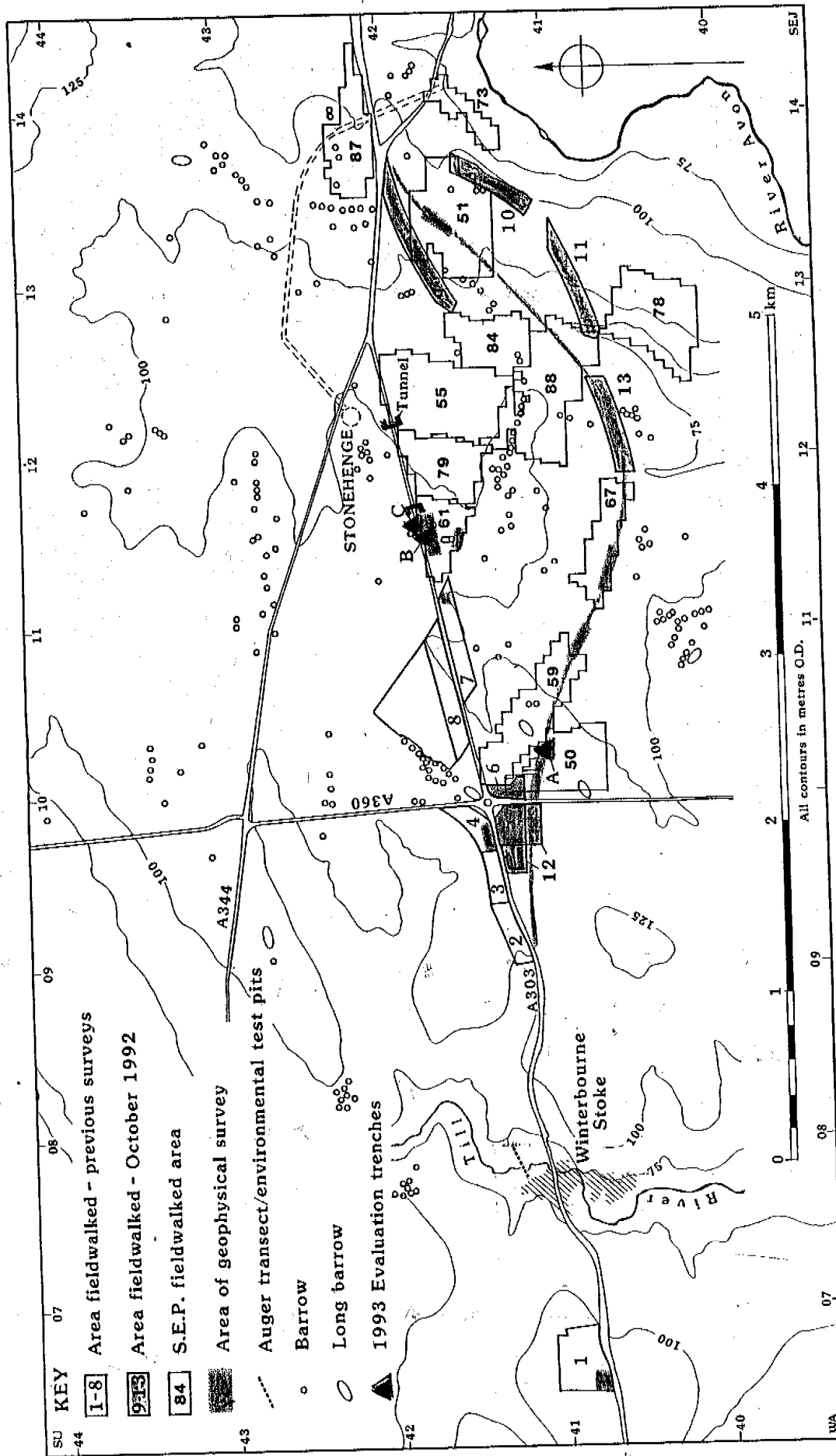


Fig. 1: A303 Amesbury - Berwick Down overall survey areas

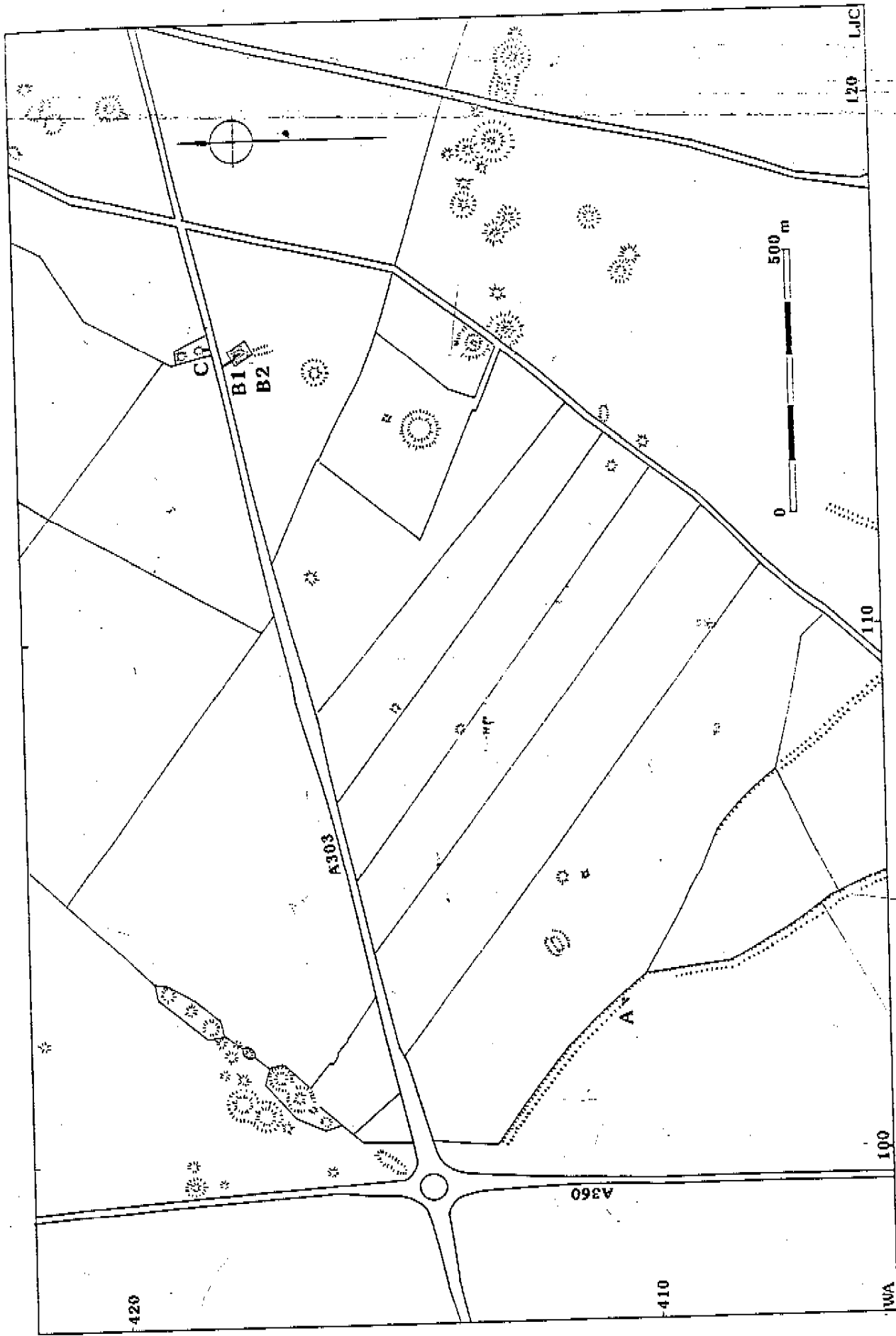


Fig. 2. Location of trenches A, B1, B2 and C



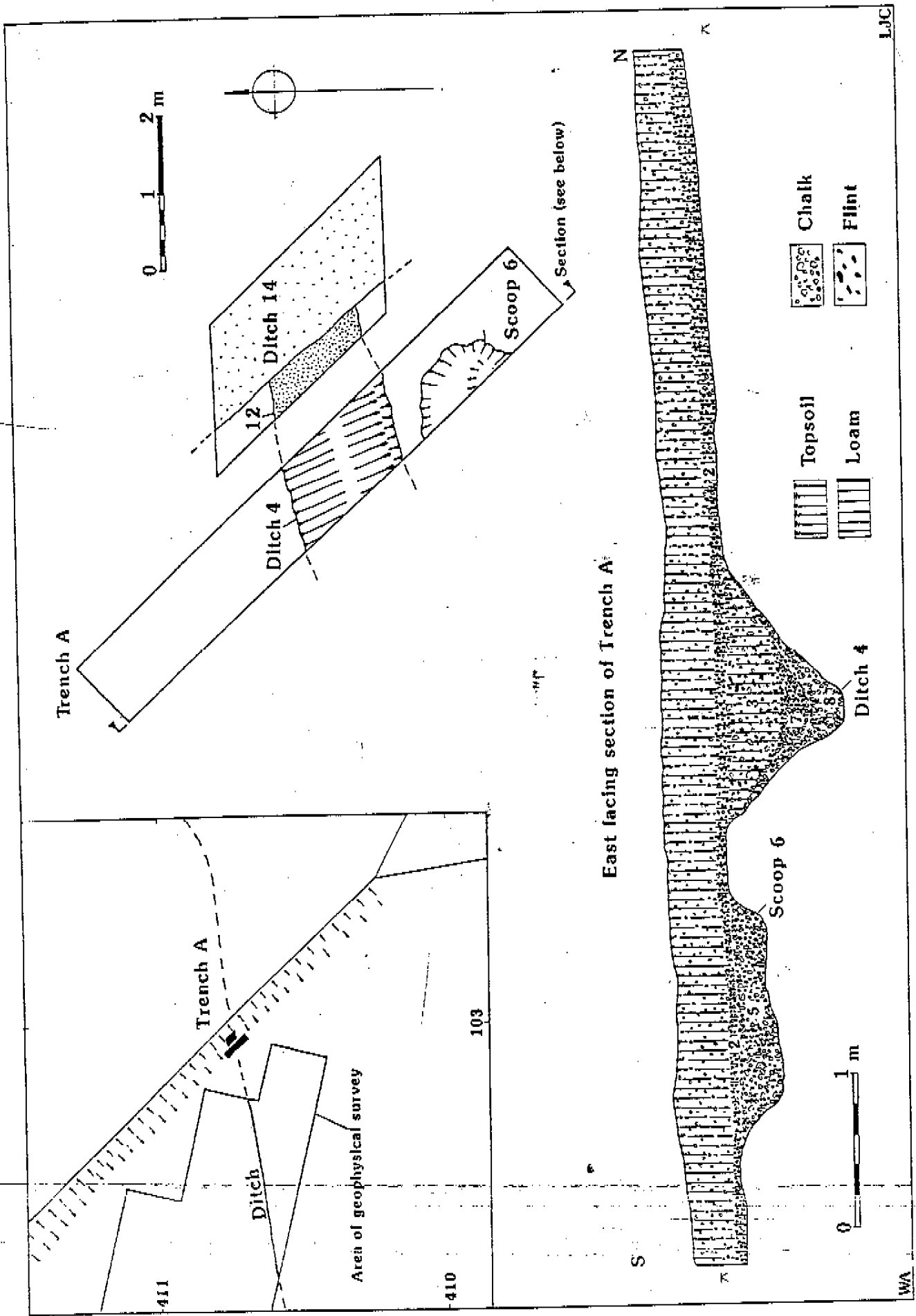
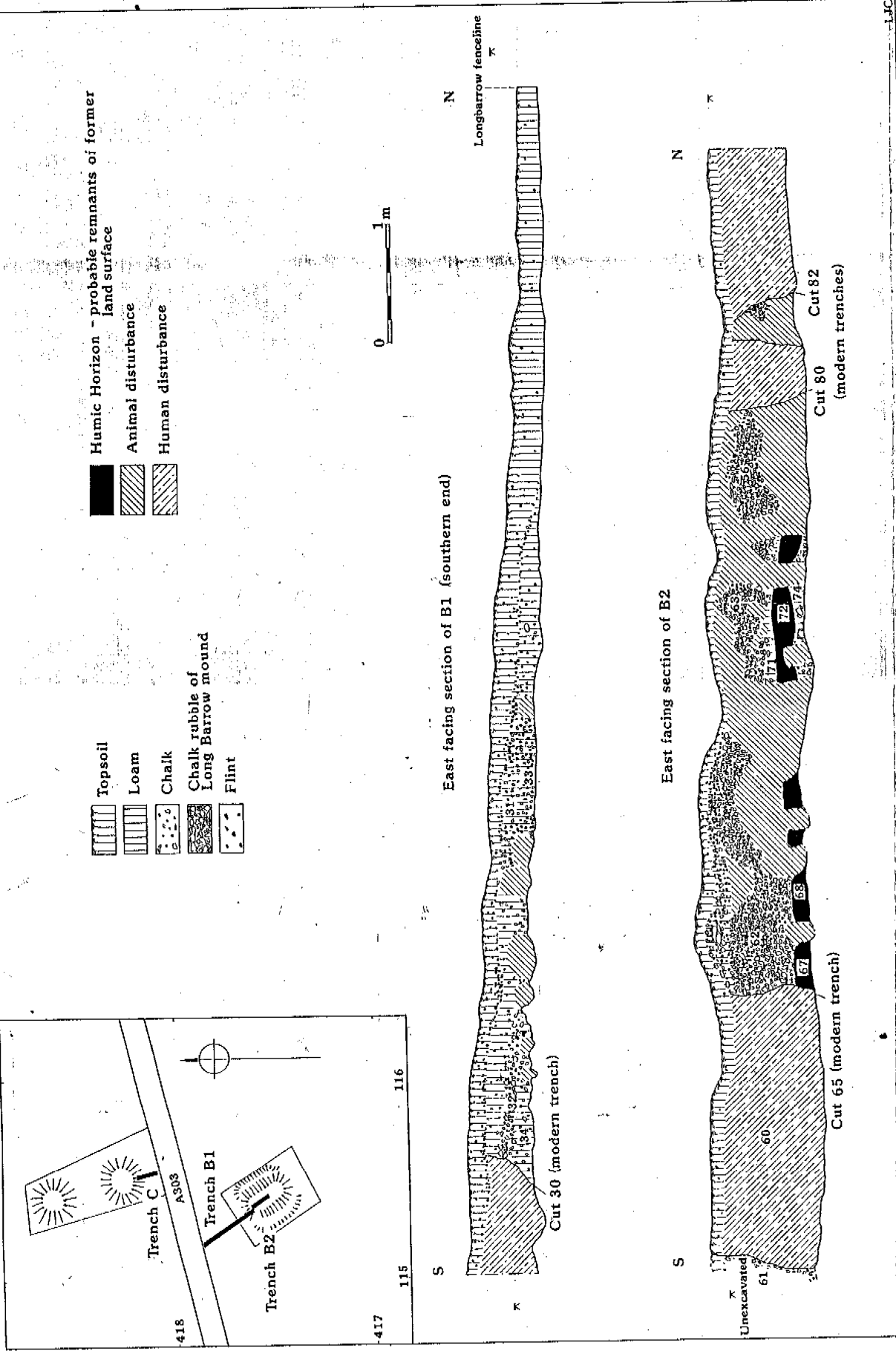
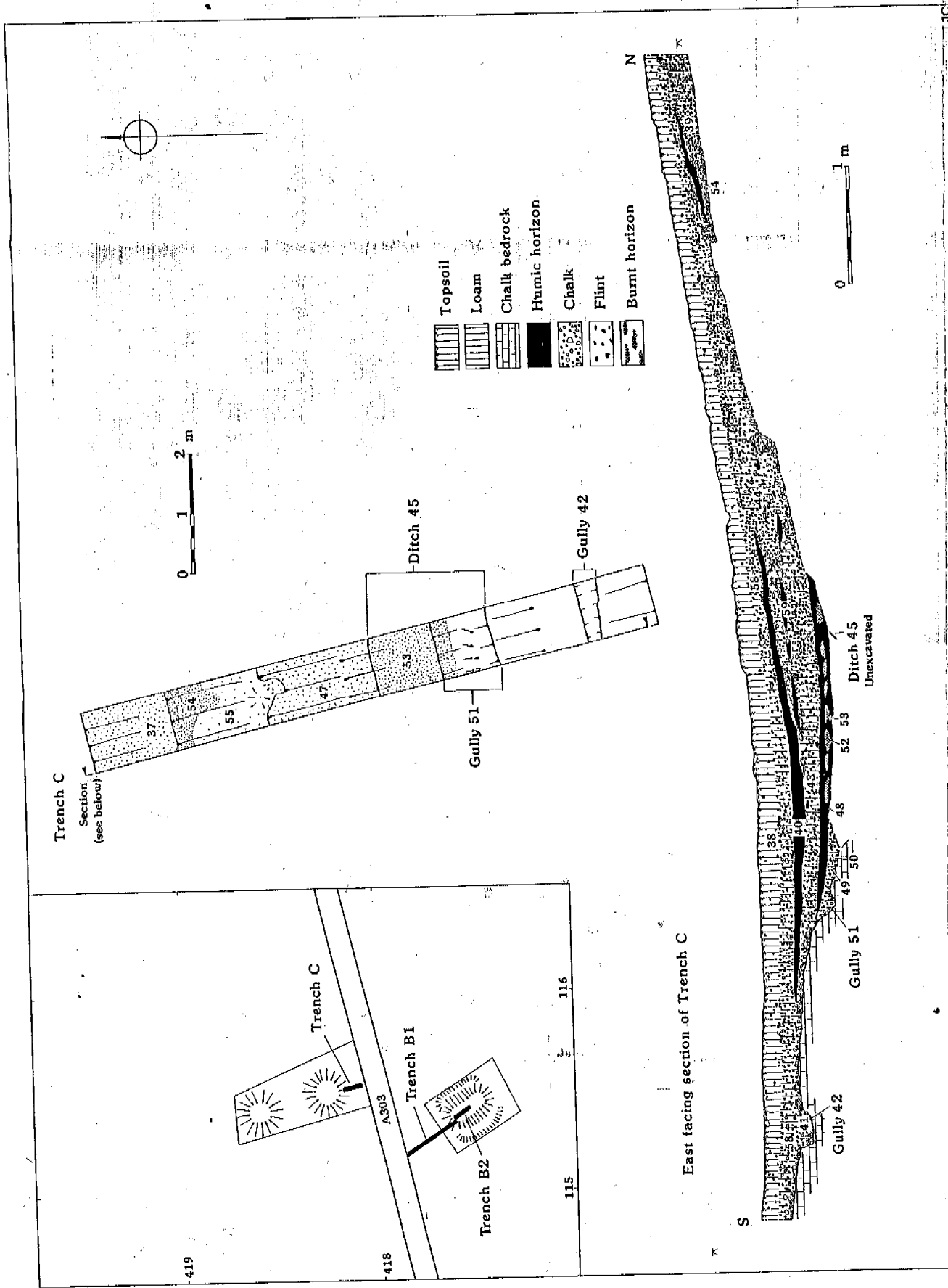


Fig. 3. Trench A - plans and section



UWA

Fig. 4. Trenches B1 and B2 - location and sections



IWA  
Fig. 5. Trench C - plans and section