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**A30 OKEHAMPTON BYPASS TO LAUNCESTON
BYPASS ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT
PART 6: ALTERNATIVE ROUTES A-E
PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT**

by

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Preface

This report is the last in a series of six describing the results of an archaeological assessment of the proposed route of the A30 Trunk Road Okehampton Bypass to Launceston Bypass in West Devon. The assessment has been prepared by Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit at the request of Devon County Council as agents for the Department of Transport. The assessment has incorporated documentary research, field survey and excavation. This report describes the results of a preliminary archaeological assessment of five possible alternative routes (A to E) within the main scheme. Part 1 of the assessment contains a summary of the results of the whole project and presents a series of recommendations for further archaeological recording and for the preservation of certain monuments and archaeological deposits.

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INTRODUCTION

There are five alternative routes, labelled A to E on Figs 2-4, which have been examined in this survey. At the request of DCC these were assessed only at a preliminary level. Since access to the areas on the ground was not possible no fieldwork was undertaken. A general description of the soils, geology and archaeological background are given in Part 1 of the assessment.

1. ROUTE A

1.1 Description

This lies at the very eastern end of the roadline starting at the Sourton Down roundabout. The route passes to the south to the present A30 for 200m, then turns and passes across Sourton Down in a westerly direction. The line runs to the north of the Published Route at a maximum distance of c. 250m before rejoining it at Lillicrap Farm. This line affects a substantially smaller area of Sourton Down than the Published Route.

1.2 Areas of archaeological interest

Statutory Protection

No Scheduled Ancient Monuments or Listed Buildings are known to lie along this route.

Palaeoenvironmental study

Most of the fields in this area bore names such as 'Moor', 'Marsh', or 'Down' in the mid 19th-century Tithe Apportionments. The field pattern has not changed a great deal since then and it is likely that some of the fields had only been enclosed in the 18th or 19th century. No settlement sites have been identified in this area. There are however likely to be deposits containing waterlogged organic palaeoenvironmental material as described in Part 5. Such deposits are probably to be found in the vicinity of two small north-flowing streams, one to the south of Hursdon (SX536916), the other south of Jordan (SX528915).

Sourton Down

Although this route takes in a smaller area of the Down than the Published Route a programme of excavations would probably still be required (Part 1). This would need to be evaluated separately once the final route and design work had been completed. Further field survey to the south of the present A30 would also be required.

Field systems (No. 3 on Fig. 2)

The field systems in this part of the parish of Sourton would require further archaeological recording in view of their proximity to the field system at Sourton Down to the east. The importance of the boundaries here and the need for further study is emphasised in Part 1 of the assessment.

2. ROUTE B

2.1 Description (Fig. 2)

This is a much longer divergence from the Published Route at the eastern (Sourton) end. It runs approximately 700m to the south of the main route for about 4km. This route follows the alignment of the present A30 for some distance, cutting across the southern edge of Sourton Down. After passing to the north of Beatdown Farm adjacent to the A30 the route curves in a westerly direction down into the Thrushel valley near Ebsworthy.

2.2 Areas of archaeological interest

Statutory Protection

No sites with statutory protection are known to lie along this route.

Sourton Down

This route cuts across a large area of the Down following a south-westerly route. In comparison to the Published Route a greater part of the historic landscape would be affected, particularly the Roman road which forms the focal point of the field system. A programme of excavation similar to that recommended in Part 1 of this report would need to be undertaken in advance of construction. This would probably however be more extensive due to the greater disturbance caused by this route.

Higher Beatdown - deserted farm site (SX52899091; Fig. 5)

This is shown on the Sourton Tithe Map (Nos 560-1) and lies about 250m to the north-east of Beatdown Farm. It seems probable that these were originally twin settlements, i.e. Higher and Lower Beatdown. The site lies at a height of c. 250m OD and is adjacent to a trackway which runs between the village of Sourton and Week Farm to the north-west. This trackway is likely to be of medieval or earlier date as it appears to pre-date the A30 road, the medieval road into Cornwall. The documentary history of this site has not yet been researched.

Medieval parish boundary: Bridestowe/Sourton (SX51069065; No. 6 on Fig. 2)

As noted in Part 5, these boundaries are of particular significance in the historic landscape and may preserve important palaeoenvironmental evidence. This boundary is also cut by the Published Route to the north where it is defined by a hedgebank on the western side of a small stream. At the location where Route B cuts the boundary this hedgebank crosses over from the eastern to the western side of the stream.

Ebsworthy (SX5090)

The history of this estate, which constituted an independent manor in the 11th century, is discussed in detail in Part 4. The conclusion that a second focus of settlement for the manor awaits discovery is relevant to the discussion of this route. Such a lost site may have lain to the north or north-east of Ebsworthy Town where the line of Route B is indicated on Fig. 2. A possible site is at the end of the abandoned trackway from the farm where a small enclosure is shown on the 1889 OS 6" map at SX50309067 (d on Fig. 6).

3. ROUTE C

3.1 Description (Fig. 3)

This route lies in the vicinity of Wrixhill Bridge and Patchill and involves a deviation of about 1.8km to the north of the Published Route. It crosses the River Thrushel to the east of Wrixhill Bridge and passes about 150m to the north before curving back to the main route north-west of Patchill. This route appears to be identical to the relevant section of the Preferred Route as defined in the 1985 survey.

3.2 Areas of archaeological interest

Statutory Protection

No Ancient Monuments or Listed Buildings lie along this route. It should be noted that this alignment would appear to avoid disturbance to the southern of the two County Bridge stones which are Listed as of Special Architectural or Historic Interest and described in Parts 1 and 5. If a junction arrangement similar to that proposed in the original Preferred Route were created the northern stone is likely to be affected.

Medieval parish boundary, Lewtrenchard outlier/Thrushelton (SX46768995; No. 10, Fig.3)

This boundary, which is discussed in Part 5, is cut just to the south of the River Thrushel. The comments made in 2.2 apply here.

4. ROUTE D

4.1 Description (Fig. 3)

This route lies between the farm of Wollacott and the road C493, which is the Roadford Reservoir access route west of Staddon. Initially it involves a very slight shift to the south of the Published Route by Breazle Water for about 700m. West of Wollacott it then deviates to the north, beginning at Eastlake Wood, passing about 100m away from the main route. The length of this section is about 2km.

4.2 Areas of archaeological interest

Statutory Protection

No Ancient Monuments or Listed Buildings are known on this route. It does however pass very close to the farm of Wollacott (as does the Published Route). The farm is well-documented from the medieval period although neither the farmhouse nor any of its outbuildings are at present listed.

Blacklands - deserted farm site (SX446892; Fig. 7)

This site, mentioned in the Preliminary Assessment (No. 20) is avoided by the Published Route. It could be affected by Route D, depending on the exact alignment of the road.

In the early medieval period the estate called Blacklands was attached to the farm of Wonnacott to the north. By the 15th century however it was held with Wollacott

(mentioned above) which lies to the east. The date of any settlement which may have formed part of the estate of Blacklands is not known. This could only be established by excavation. The site is shown on the Thrushelton Tithe Map and was the focus for a small holding of about 17 acres of land.

Bratton Clovelly outlier: manor of Godescote (No. 15 on Fig. 3, No. 16 on Fig. 4)

The route passes through the centre of this estate which is described in Part 5. The location of the lost medieval settlements belonging to the estate are discussed in Part 5, section 3. Further fieldwork, and possibly evaluation excavations, would be necessary if this route were chosen.

Medieval parish and Domesday estate boundary (as above)

The boundary between the medieval parishes of Bratton Clovelly and Thrushelton also formed the boundary between the Domesday estates of *Godescote* and Thrushelton. It is therefore likely to be of late-Saxon origin at latest. No extant features survive here as previously noted in the assessment although boundary features may survive below ground.

5. ROUTE E

5.1 Description (Fig. 4)

This lies at the western extremity of the road scheme at Lifton Down. It involves a diversion to the north and west of the existing settlement there, beginning near the farm of Yeat and linking up with the existing Launceston Bypass. This would involve less impact on the village. The overall length is about 2km.

5.2 Areas of archaeological interest

Statutory Protection

No Ancient Monuments or Listed Buildings are known to lie along this route. The line does however pass very close to a Methodist chapel which is an important example of Non-Conformist architecture. It should also be noted that this route has less impact on the Grade II listed house at Higher Cawdron which adjoins the Published Route.

Methodist chapel (SX36658512; No. 22 on Fig. 4)

This chapel is described as Wesleyan in the c. 1840 Lifton Tithe Apportionment. It probably belonged to the Launceston Circuit which dates back to at least 1790. Methodist Circuit boundaries often, as in this case, ignored county boundaries.

Roman road (SX3658; No. 21 on Fig. 4)

The route of the Roman road from Okehampton towards Cornwall is discussed fully in Part 2. If there is a Roman river crossing to the north of Polson Bridge as suggested this route will cut across the line of the road leading towards the Tamar.

Roman settlement

In view of the presence of the Roman road in the vicinity of Liftondown it is possible that a nearby Roman settlement site awaits discovery (see Part 1).

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Should any of the alternative routes as described in this report be adopted as part of the main overall route a further archaeological assessment should be carried out. This should be at the same level as the current assessment for the Published Route and include provision for field survey, documentary research and evaluation excavations where appropriate.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Documentary research for this report was undertaken by R. Goodyer and the drawings were produced by T. Dixon.

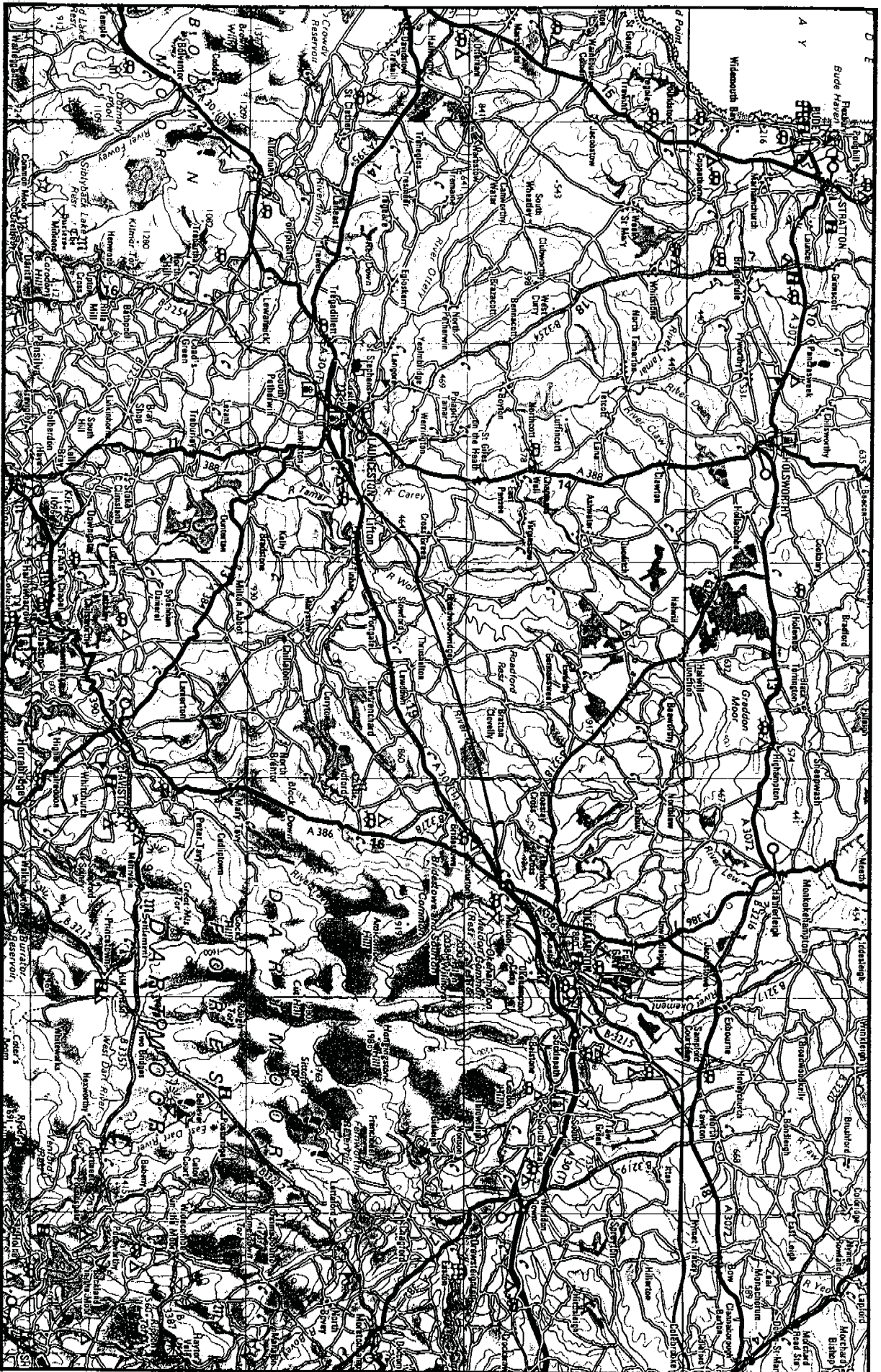


Fig. 1 The overall line of the Published Route.

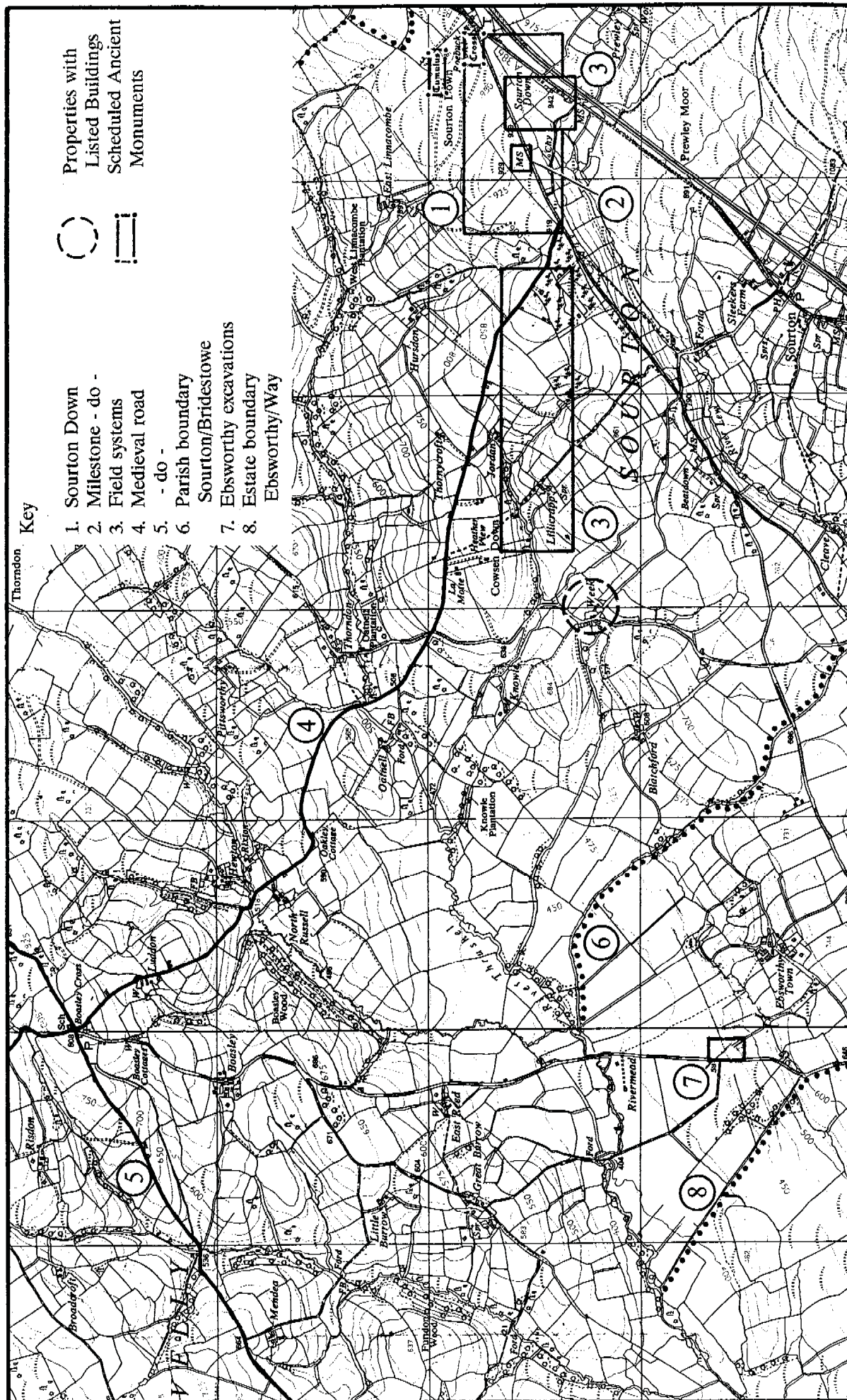


Fig. 2 The lines of Routes A and B in relation to the Published Route.

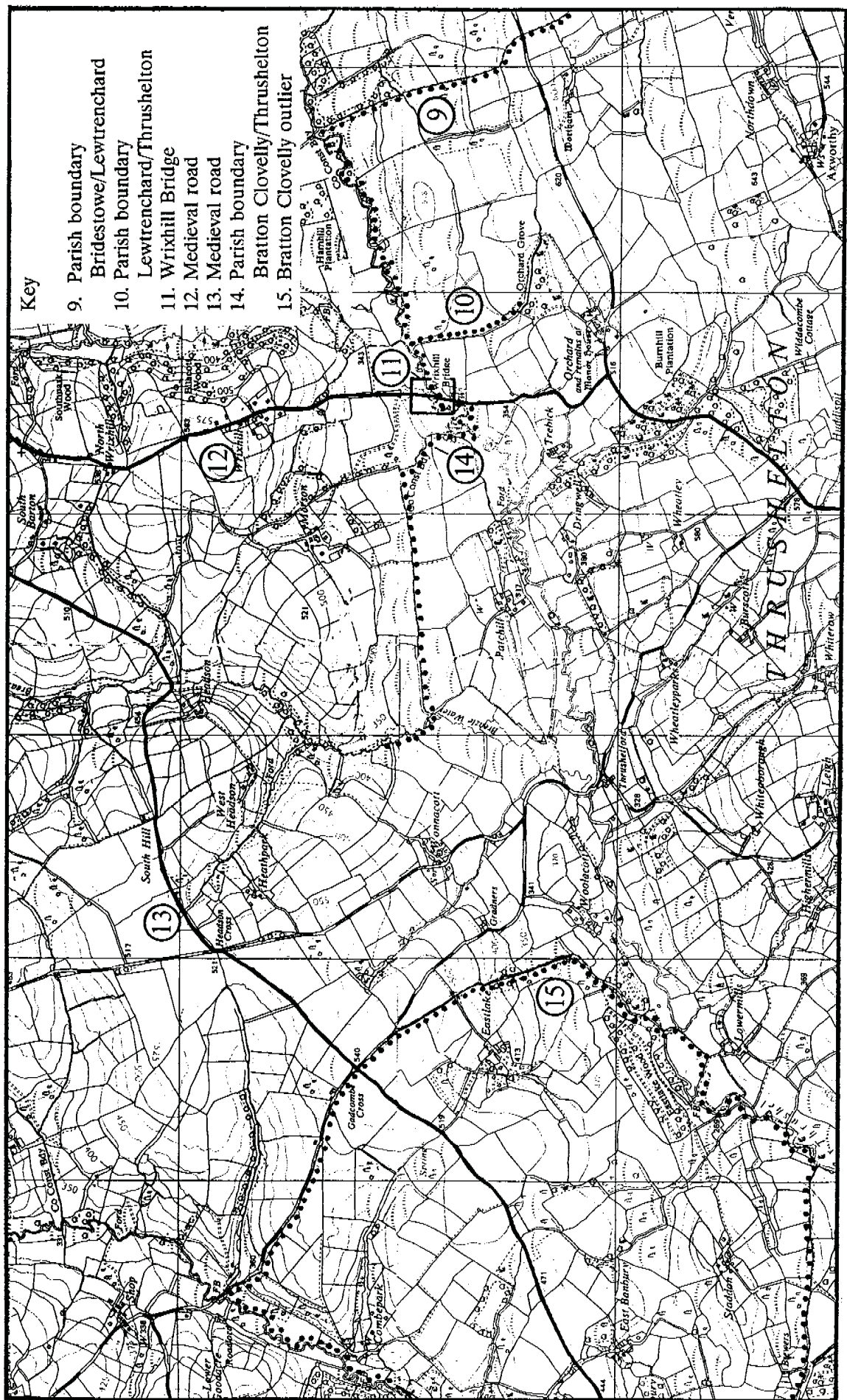


Fig. 3 The Published Route: central section.

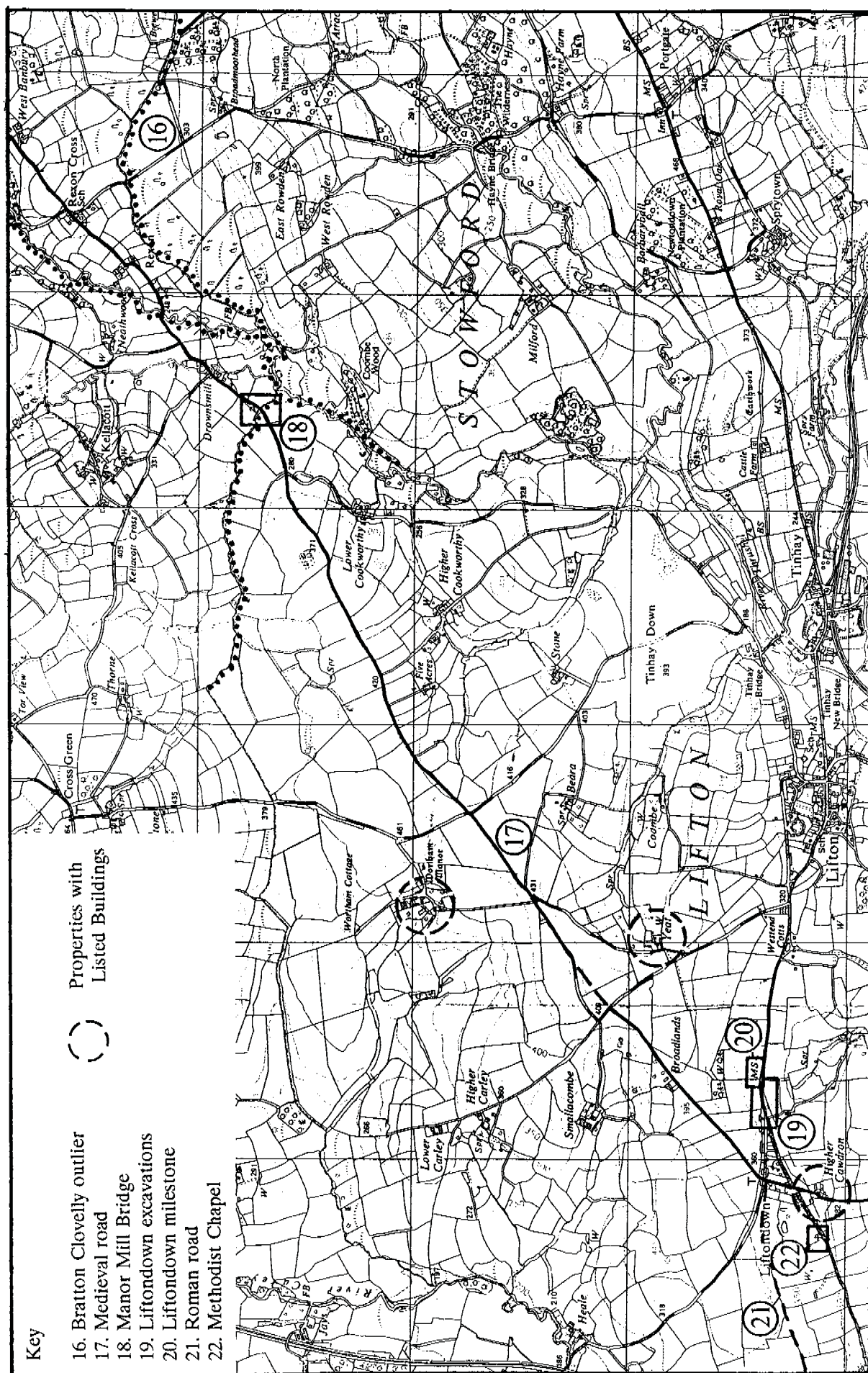


Fig. 4 The Published Route: western section.

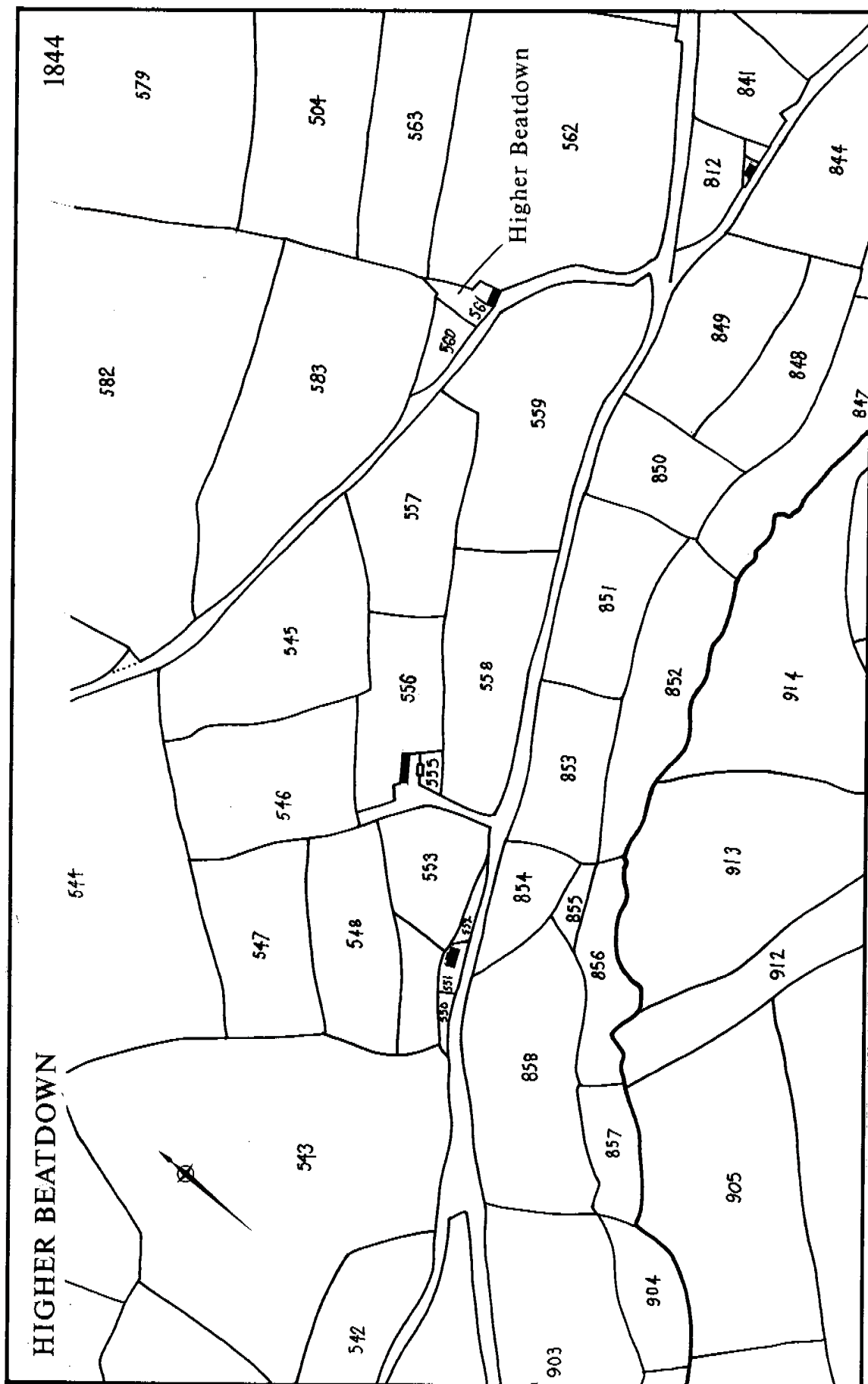


Fig. 5 The deserted settlement of Higher Beatdown 1844 (Sourton Tithe Map).



Fig. 6 Field boundaries and cropmarks at Ebsworthy taken from the 1947 RAF vertical air photographs.

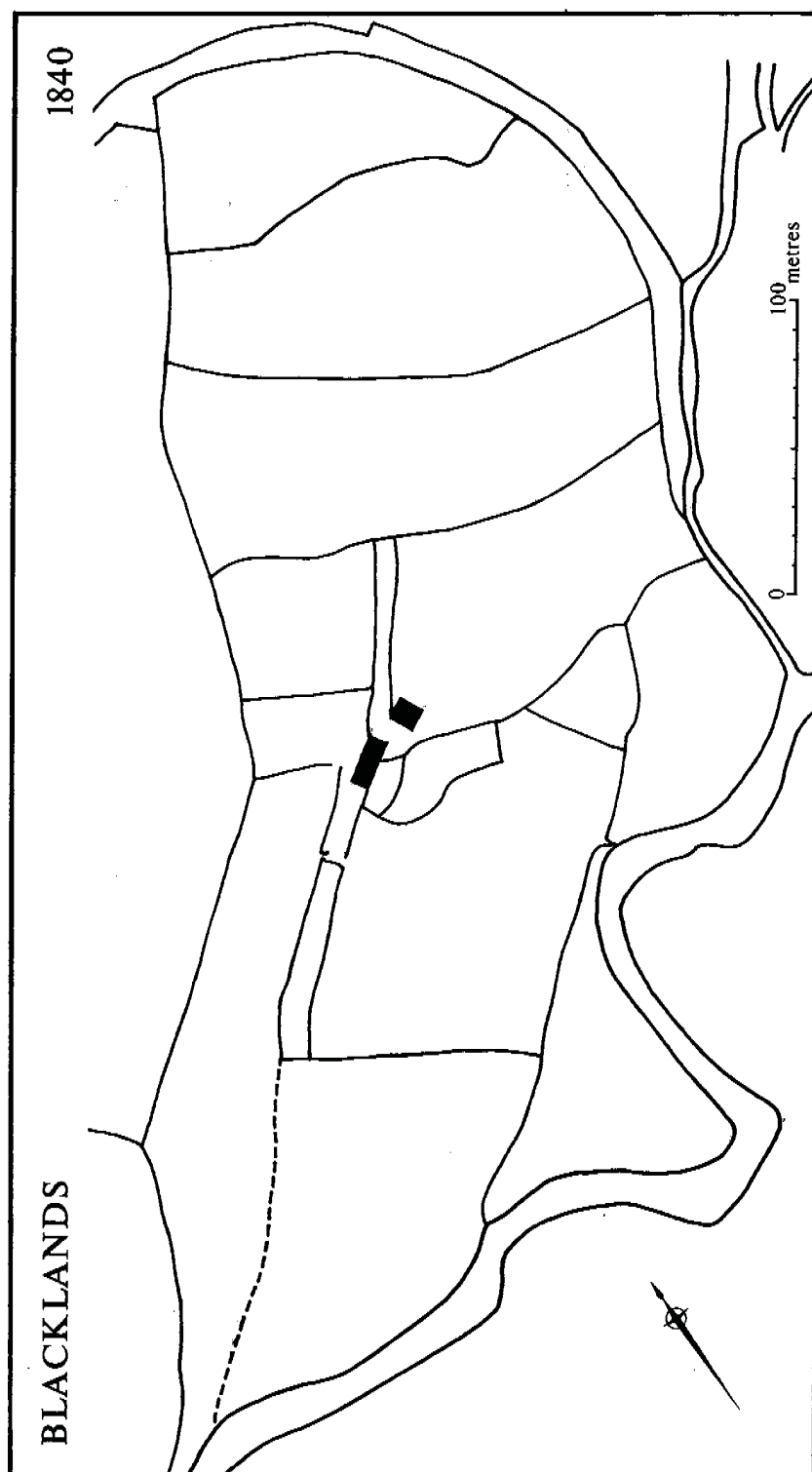


Fig.7 The deserted settlement of Blacklands near Wollacott 1840 (Thrushelton Tithe Map).