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**A30 TRUNK ROAD
HONITON TO EXETER IMPROVEMENT
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
PART 2: FAIR OAK, CLYST HONITON**

by

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Preface

This report is one of a series of six describing the results of archaeological investigations along the proposed route of the A30 Trunk Road Honiton to Exeter Improvement Scheme in east Devon. The fieldwork was undertaken by Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit (EMAFU) between June and December 1994. The project was funded by the Highways Agency.

A preliminary archaeological assessment of the published route had been prepared in 1991 (EMAFU Report No. 91.22). At a meeting on 31 March 1994 representatives of interested parties (the Highways Agency, Acer Consultants, EMAFU, Devon County Archaeological Service and English Heritage) discussed the archaeological implications of the scheme. It was agreed to bring the level of archaeological assessment in line with recent guidelines laid out in the Department of Transport's document: *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, Vol. II* (1993).

A Scoping Statement was subsequently produced by EMAFU identifying the archaeological requirements as follows: an update/review of the 1991 assessment; an assessment of existing borehole/trial-pit data; the implementation of a geophysical survey; evaluation excavations; field survey and fabric recording; fieldwalking; palaeoenvironmental sampling and dating.

The geophysical survey was carried out by Oxford Archaeotechnics and will be produced as a separate report.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location

This report describes the results of an archaeological evaluation excavation undertaken from 7-18 July 1994 at Fair Oak, Clyst Honiton (SY00129308).

1.2 The site

The site lies to the south of Exeter Airport, just south of the B3184, on the northern side of a small valley and the stream which marks the parish boundary between Clyst Honiton and Farringdon. In the 18th century, there were at least two farmsteads in this area: Smeaths, lying within the proposed route corridor, and Wilsons or Fair Oak, lying to the south of the corridor. These now survive only as earthworks. The present farm called Fair Oak is located just to the north of the proposed route corridor, where unnamed buildings are shown in 1839 (see below). There is further evidence of an 18th-century brickworking site in two fields to the north-east of the former site of Smeaths. The underlying geology of the site consists of Permian Marls, overlain by the loamy soils of the Whimple Series.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND PRELIMINARY FIELDWORK

The following is a summary of the documentary history of the sites (discussed in detail in Weddell 1991, 8-9) together with the results of preliminary fieldwork. Only the site of Smeaths was subsequently excavated, since it lay within the proposed working corridor.

2.1 Fair Oak: Smeaths and Wilsons

Historical background

The deserted settlement at Fair Oak formerly comprised two separate farmsteads known as Smeaths and Wilsons (later Fair Oak) which were shown on a map of 1798 (DRO D&C). Wilsons occupied the southern part of the site, close to the stream, and Smeaths the northern part. At this date there was no indication of buildings on the site of the present Fair Oak Farm.

By 1839 (Clyst Honiton Tithe Map) the buildings associated with Smeaths had been abandoned and the combined holdings were being farmed from Wilsons, the main farm site situated alongside the lane leading south into Farringdon and by then known as Fair Oak. The present site of Fair Oak Farm appears to have been established by 1851 (although buildings were present here in 1839), and by 1861 the original Wilsons site was known as Fair Oak Cottage (WCSI Census).

In 1702 Smeaths tenement was divided into three parts, held by Richard Smeath and two named others (D&C 4552 Survey), but it is not known whether each part had a separate dwelling house. In 1798 the tenement consisted of 39 acres and included a dwelling house, curtilage, gardens and outhouses (D&C 25/75115).

Wilson's tenement may be linked to the family of Anthony Wilson mentioned in 1581, and later with John Wilson named in 1675. The premises contained about 40 acres by the later 18th century (D&C 6020/4), which increased to about 80 acres when it was amalgamated with Smeaths.

A lease of 1661 (D&C 4552/4/2) refers to yet another property at Fair Oak, but its site has not yet been identified. Two fields to the east of the farm sites called 'Croft' in the mid 19th-century Tithe Apportionment also suggest that there may have once been other settlements in the vicinity. The place-name 'Fair Oak' itself dates to at least the 13th century (Gover *et al* 1932, 584). Although no other medieval documentation has been located, it is possible that Wilsons and Smeaths represented the remnants of a more substantial medieval settlement.

Fieldwork

The upper part of the field has been enclosed as an overflow car park for Exeter Airport, but the remaining area is under permanent pasture. There appears to have been little disturbance of the land since the settlements were abandoned and extensive earthworks survive, including terracing for buildings and evidence of a trackway leading from Clyst Honiton. To the west of the settlement an area of parallel ridges probably indicate the site of an orchard, but may originally have been caused by the medieval method of cultivation known as 'ridge and furrow' (Weddell 1991, 9).

2.2 Brickfields

Historical background

In the records of a survey by the Dean and Chapter in 1778 (DRO D&C) the inventory for Smeaths included '2 Brickfields' of six acres in extent. By the time of the Dean and Chapter survey for the 1798 map (Fig.) the fields were known as 'Higher and Lower Brick Close' and were already described as arable or pasture. The Tithe Apportionment also lists a 'Brickfield' as being under pasture. It therefore seems likely that any activity connected with brickmaking took place around 1778 and had ceased before the end of the century, the production probably being for a specific project, which has not yet been identified (Weddell 1991, 10).

Fieldwork

The field boundary between the two brickfields has now gone and the area is partially within the overflow car park for the airport. There is no clear visible evidence in the area of pits or quarries, although the ground does seem to be more irregular than that in the surrounding fields.

3. THE EXCAVATION

Two trenches were excavated mechanically across the proposed route in the vicinity of the deserted settlement of Smeaths.

3.1 Results

Trench 1

Trench 1 measured c. 1.7m x 38m. At the north end of the trench, a cobbled track (508) was exposed, which was also seen in the northern end of Trench 2. A residual sherd of possible Roman pottery was recovered from the make-up of the cobbles. Approximately 7m south of the trackway was an infilled 0.9m-deep terrace cut (528), which created a building platform. The lee of the terrace contained a ditch (517), which ran eastward. On the southern side of this ditch a mud-bonded wall made of re-used building material (513) survived for two

courses. South of this wall a metalled surface (507) extended southward for c. 8.5m before petering out. This surface probably represents an outside yard associated with Smeaths.

Trench 2

Trench 2 measured c. 1.7m x 36m. At the northern end of the trench were the disturbed remains of the cobbled trackway (508) continuing from Trench 1. A terrace cut (536) was encountered 4.8m to the south, a continuation of the cut (528) in Trench 1. At the base of the terrace cut was the cobbled lining of a drain (519), which ran up to a wall (512). This wall was a continuation of the wall (513) in Trench 1. It survived for two courses and was built of re-used building debris. It contained lime-ash flooring fragments and ashlar blocks with mortar still adhering. To the south of the wall the compacted surface of a soil layer (504) continued as far as the remains of another wall (510) represented by one course of lime-mortared pebbles running east-west across the trench. An apparent rough wall base (511), consisting of pebbles and occasional bricks, ran north-south along the trench and into the southern edge of excavation (see Plan, Fig. 4). Sherds of pottery recovered from these contexts suggest an 18th-/19th-century date.

To the south there was a compacted surface over 504. This surface continued southward until it reached the remains of a building represented by one course of lime-mortared pebbles running east-west across the trench and what appeared to be a rough wall base consisting of pebbles and occasional bricks running north-south along the trench and into the southern edge of excavation. Sherds of pottery recovered from these contexts again suggest an 18th-/19th-century date.

Both trenches were further excavated to ascertain the survival of any archaeological deposits earlier than the 18th century, but none were encountered.

Brickfields

At the north of the field (the former 'Brickfields'), in the car parking area, was a modern V-shaped drainage gully, spanning the width of the field (180m east-west). This feature was c. 0.50m deep x c. 0.50m wide. This ditch was re-excavated to a depth below natural subsoil and investigated for evidence of brickworking, but none was found. The presence of hand-made bricks in the wall (511) mentioned above should be noted: it is possible that they were made near the site. These bricks were re-used in a late 18th-/early 19th-century context.

3.2 Dating evidence

During the course of excavation 427 sherds of pottery were recovered which indicated a late 18th-century date for the structures. There were two exceptions: one sherd of possible Roman pottery from the make-up of the cobbled trackway (508) and one sherd of medieval gritty coarseware cooking-pot rim dated to 1000-1400 AD from the demolition layer (505) in Trench 1 (see Appendix 1).

4. CONCLUSION

The evaluation excavation demonstrated that there had been extensive terracing for building on the site of Smeaths tenement in the late 18th/early 19th-century. This would have effectively removed evidence of any earlier occupation. However, earlier archaeological deposits may survive in the immediate vicinity, outside the excavation area. The presence of

possible Roman pottery and medieval coarseware is, as yet, unaccounted for. Consequently, it is recommended that a watching brief be maintained during construction in order to ensure that no evidence for pre-18th-century occupation or settlement is destroyed without record.

APPENDIX 1: FINDS CATALOGUE *by G. Langman*

Context Comments

- 500 98 sherds in total.
 1 sherd Transfer Print (after 1780), 1 sherd English porcelain (late 18C+), 1 sherd creamware (after 1750), 1 sherd Staffs white salt-glazed stoneware (after 1740), 1 sherd Westerwald stoneware (18C type), 1 sherd Chinese porcelain (?18C), 1 sherd South Somerset coarseware (17C/18C), 3 sherds South Somerset 18C slipwares (trailed and slip bands), 1 sherd unidentified yellow-glazed white ware (?18C).
 1 fragment mid 18C bottle glass neck.
 5 flint pieces: 1 burnt, 4 small ?crushed fragments.
 Discarded: 9 sherds Transfer Print/china, 64 sherds creamware, 32 sherds S. Somerset 18C coarsewares, 2 sherds Bristol/Staffs slipwares, 22 fragments L.18C/19C bottle glass. 6 Fe nails, 1 Fe 2oz weight, 1 20C bullet casing (dated 1942), 3 brick fragments.
- 502 9 sherds in total.
 2 sherds Transfer print/china, 1 sherd English stoneware (late 18C/19C), 1 fragment bottle glass (19C), 1 fragment of burnt material.
 Discarded: 4 sherds Transfer Print/china, 2 sherds creamware, 2 fragments 18C/19C bottle glass, 1 fragment pantile.
- 504 51 sherds in total
 1 sherd willow pattern (after 1780), 1 sherd creamware (after 1750), 1 sherd Jackfield (mid 18C), 1 sherd English stoneware (18C/19C), 1 sherd Bristol/Staffs slipware (18C), 1 sherd Westerwald stoneware, 5 sherds South Somerset 18C coarsewares, 1 sherd flowerpot, 1 piece of coke.
 Discarded: 11 sherds Transfer Print/china, 8 sherds creamware, 20 sherds S. Somerset 18C coarsewares, 10 fragments 18C/19C window/bottle glass, 2 Fe nails.
- 505 70 sherds in total
 1 sherd china (after 1780), 2 sherds English porcelain (late 18C/19C), 2 sherds creamware (after 1750), 1 sherd Chinese porcelain (?18C), 1 sherd Westerwald stoneware (18C type), 1 sherd Bristol/Staffs press-moulded slipware dish (18C), 1 sherd late 18C micaceous whiteware, 1 sherd South Somerset coarseware (17C/18C), 5 sherds S. Somerset 18C coarsewares (mottled copper green-glaze plus slip bands), 1 sherd medieval gritty coarseware cooking-pot rim (1000-early 15C), 1 mid 18C+ bottle glass neck.
 Discarded: 5 sherds willow pattern/china, 10 sherds creamware, 3 sherds Bristol/Staffs slipware, 1 sherd late 18C micaceous whiteware, 35 sherds South Somerset 18C coarsewares, 12 fragments 18C/19C bottle glass; 4 fragments of faunal bone; 1 Fe nail; 1 20C bullet casing.
- 506 12 sherds in total.
 1 sherd Transfer Print (after 1780), 2 sherds creamware (after 1760), 1 sherd Bristol/Staffs press-moulded slipware dish (18C), 2 sherds South Somerset 18C coarsewares, 1 fragment bottle glass (18C/19C), 1 piece of unused flint.
 Discarded: 3 sherds creamware, 3 sherds S. Somerset 18C coarsewares, 1 Fe nail, 1 brick fragment.
- 508 4 sherds in total.
 4 sherds South Somerset 18C coarsewares (2 chamber-pot rims with trailed slip).
- 509 2 sherds in total.
 1 sherd willow pattern (after 1780), 1 sherd creamware (after 1760).

Context Comments

- 510 4 sherds in total.
2 sherds china (late 18C/19C), 2 sherds Chinese porcelain (?18C).
- 511 1 sherd in total.
1 sherd creamware (after 1760), 1 base fragment of clear bottle glass (?18C/?19C).
3 brick samples: 1 hand-made brick orange sandy fabric with frequent small crushed grit filler, size 115mm wide x 230mm long x 57mm depth, weight 2.825kg; 1 hand-made brick fabric as before, size 107mm wide x 240mm long x 70mm depth, weight: 3.245kg; 1 hand-made brick, brick red sandy fabric with previously stated inclusions, size 110mm wide x 235mm long x 67mm depth, weight: 3.500kg.
Discarded: 2 hand-made bricks, 1 orange fabric, 1 brick red fabric, sizes 110mm wide x 230mm long x 67mm depth, weight: 3.170kg. 110mm wide x 235mm long x 65mm depth, weight 3.855kg.
- 514 156 sherds in total.
1 sherd willow pattern (after 1780), 1 sherd black Basaltes (after 1770), 2 sherds creamware (after 1760), 1 sherd English industrial earthenware (mid 18C+), 1 sherd Staffs white salt-glazed stoneware (after 1740), 1 sherd Bristol/Staffs press-moulded slipware dish (18C), 1 sherd ?English stoneware (?18C), 8 sherds Chinese porcelain (18C), 7 sherds South Somerset coarsewares (including plain yellow glaze, trailed/scrolls slip and slip bands) all 18C, 1 sherd late 18C micaceous whiteware, 1 sherd earthenware flowerpot.
2 fragments bottle glass (mid 18C+), 2 fragments clear wine glass (18C), 7 fragments lead window comes.
Discarded: 8 sherds Transfer Print/china, 70 sherds creamware, 1 sherd English porcelain, 1 sherd English industrial earthenware, 1 sherd English stoneware, 1 sherd late 18C micaceous whiteware, 3 sherds Bristol/Staffs slipware, 46 sherds South Somerset 18C coarsewares, 10 fragments mid 18C+ bottle glass, 1 brick fragment.
- 518 3 sherds in total.
1 sherd willow pattern (after 1780), 1 sherd china, 1 sherd earthenware flowerpot, 1 fragment bottle glass (18C/19C).
- 519 4 sherds in total.
1 sherd willow pattern (after 1780), 1 sherd creamware (after 1760), 1 sherd Chinese porcelain (18C), 1 sherd South Somerset coarseware (17C/18C), 1 fragment wineglass stem (?18C).
- 520 6 sherds in total.
2 sherds South Somerset 18C coarsewares, 4 sherds same vessel, overfired/burnt, ?South Somerset, 1 fragment clear bottle glass ?18C/?19C.
- 521 2 sherds in total
1 sherd South Somerset mottled copper green-glazed coarseware (18C), 1 sherd pre-medieval (most likely Roman rather than Iron Age).
Discarded: 1 brick fragment
- 525 No sherds
1 fragment post-medieval roof tile.
Discarded: 1 brick fragment, 1 Fe nail.
- 531 2 sherds in total.
1 sherd creamware (after 1760), 1 sherd South Somerset coarseware (late 18C in character).
- unstrat 3 sherds in total
3 sherds (all one vessel) 18C decorated Delft.

APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

- 500 Topsoil/turf. Reddish-brown, friable, fine sandy loam. Inclusions - none.
- 502 Demolition/soil mix. Reddish-brown, friable, fine sandy loam. Includes abundant frags of charcoal, lime, mortar, sandstone and pottery sherds.
- 503 Demolition layer. Reddish-brown, friable, very sandy clay. Includes fibrous roots and freq charcoal frags.
- 504 Soil layer. Reddish-brown, friable, fine sandy loam. Includes abundant charcoal flecks and lime mortar frags.
- 505 Demolition layer. Yellowish-reddish-brown, friable, sandy clay. Includes moderate small-medium cobbles.
- 506 Soil. Reddish-brown, friable, plastic when moist, fine sandy loam. Includes freq small frags of mortar and charcoal.
- 507 Cobbled area south of wall 513 in Trench 1. Uneven but well-compacted, becoming more like metalling to the south.
- 508 Uneven rough cobbled trackway exposed in the northern ends of Trenches 1 and 2. Made up of ww cobbles, between 0.07-0.2m in diameter.
- 509 Mixed subsoil. Reddish-brown, friable, clay fine silt.
- 510 Wall base, running E/W across Trench 2; mortar-bonded, large ww cobbles, one course high, abutted by 511.
- 511 Cobbles and brick wall base in Trench 2; large ww cobbles, and brick in a linear fashion, orientated N-S; mud-bonded, one course high.
- 512 Wall build in lee of terrace in Trench 2, made up of ashlar blocks and large and medium ww stones; also contains re-used lime ash floor frags and re-used bricks with mortar still on. probably continuous with 513 in Trench 1. Built within cut 529.
- 513 Wall build in lee of terrace cut 528 in Trench 1. Survives up to two courses and built of re-used building material. Probably continuous with 512.
- 514 Fill of ditch cut 517. Reddish-brown clay, friable when dry. Inclusions - stoneless, occ pot frags, occ charcoal frags.
- 515 Surface of 508.
- 516 Surface of 507.
- 517 Cut of ditch. Flat-bottomed, running E-W. Dug in the lee of the terrace cut 530. Contains 514. W: 0.7m, D: 0.18m.
- 518 Infill of terrace cut 536, over cobbled drain 519.
- 519 Cobbled lining of drain in base of terrace cut 536.
- 521 Make-up for 508 in Trench 1. Reddish-brown, friable, clay silt; occ small sub-angular and sub-rounded stones.
- 522 Fill of wheel-rut cut into 508 in Trench 1. Medium sub-rounded ww cobbles.
- 524 Surface of 525; fairly even and smooth.
- 525 Build for metalled surface 524: ww stone 0.05-0.10m in size, sub-rounded and sub-angular.
- 527 Demolition layer. Reddish-brown, sandy silty clay, friable. Includes freq-abundant mortar frags, brick frags and charcoal.
- 528 Construction cut for 513.
- 529 Construction cut for 512.
- 530 Terrace cut in Trench 1; D: c 1m. Continuous with 536 in Trench 2.
- 531 Soil layer in Trench 1. Dark reddish-brown, silty sandy clay, friable. Includes moderate amounts of lime aggregate, charcoal, brick, manganese, occ pottery and nails.
- 532 Post-demolition fill of terrace cut in Trench 1.
- 533 Post-demolition soil development in Trench 1.
- 534 Post-demolition soil development in Trench 2.

535 Post-demolition soil development in Trench 2.

536 Terrace cut, flat-bottomed and containing cobbled drain 519. D: 1.2m. Running E-W and probably continuous with 530.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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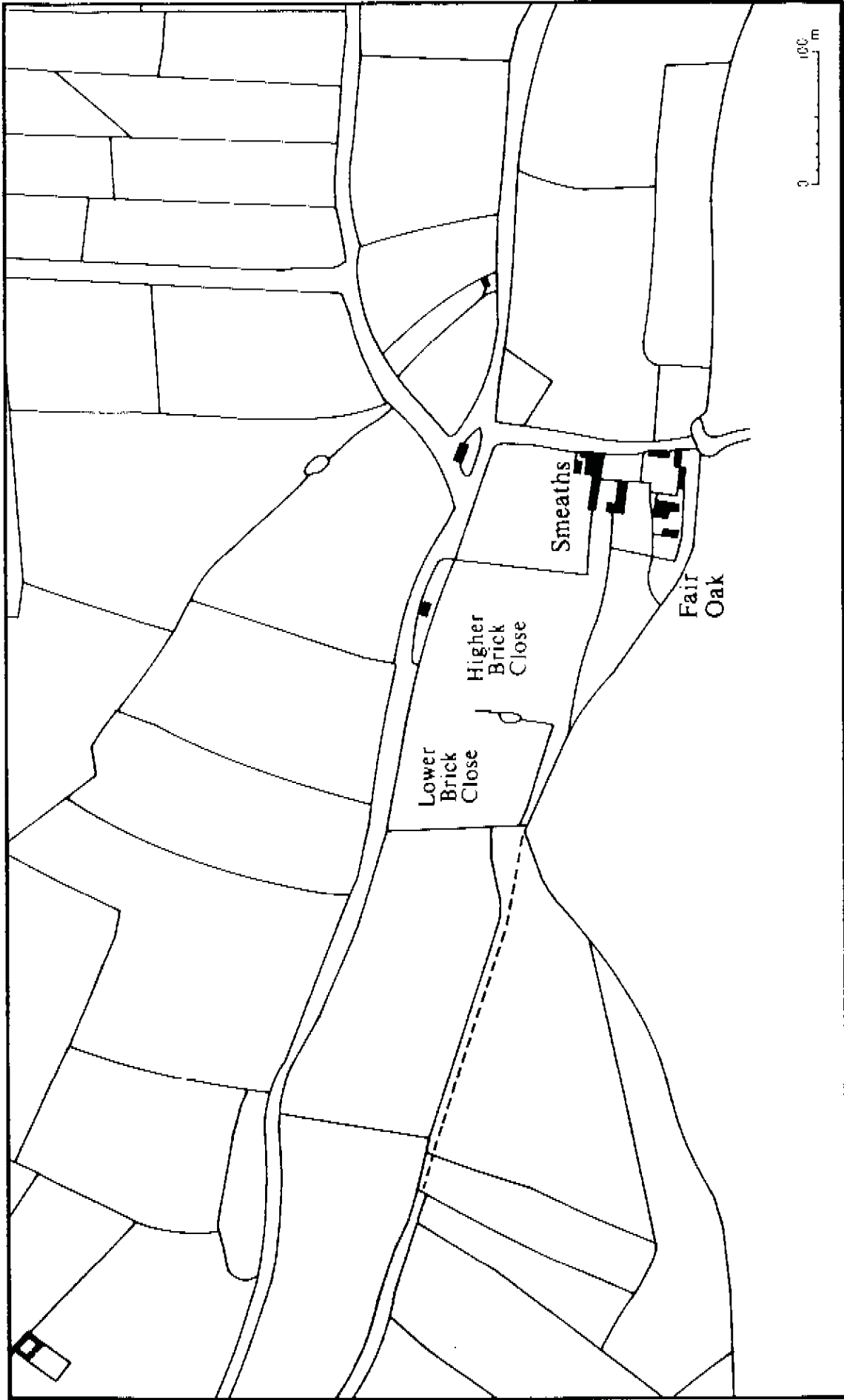


Fig. 2 Detail of 1798 Dean and Chapter map showing Smeaths and Fair Oak (Wilson).

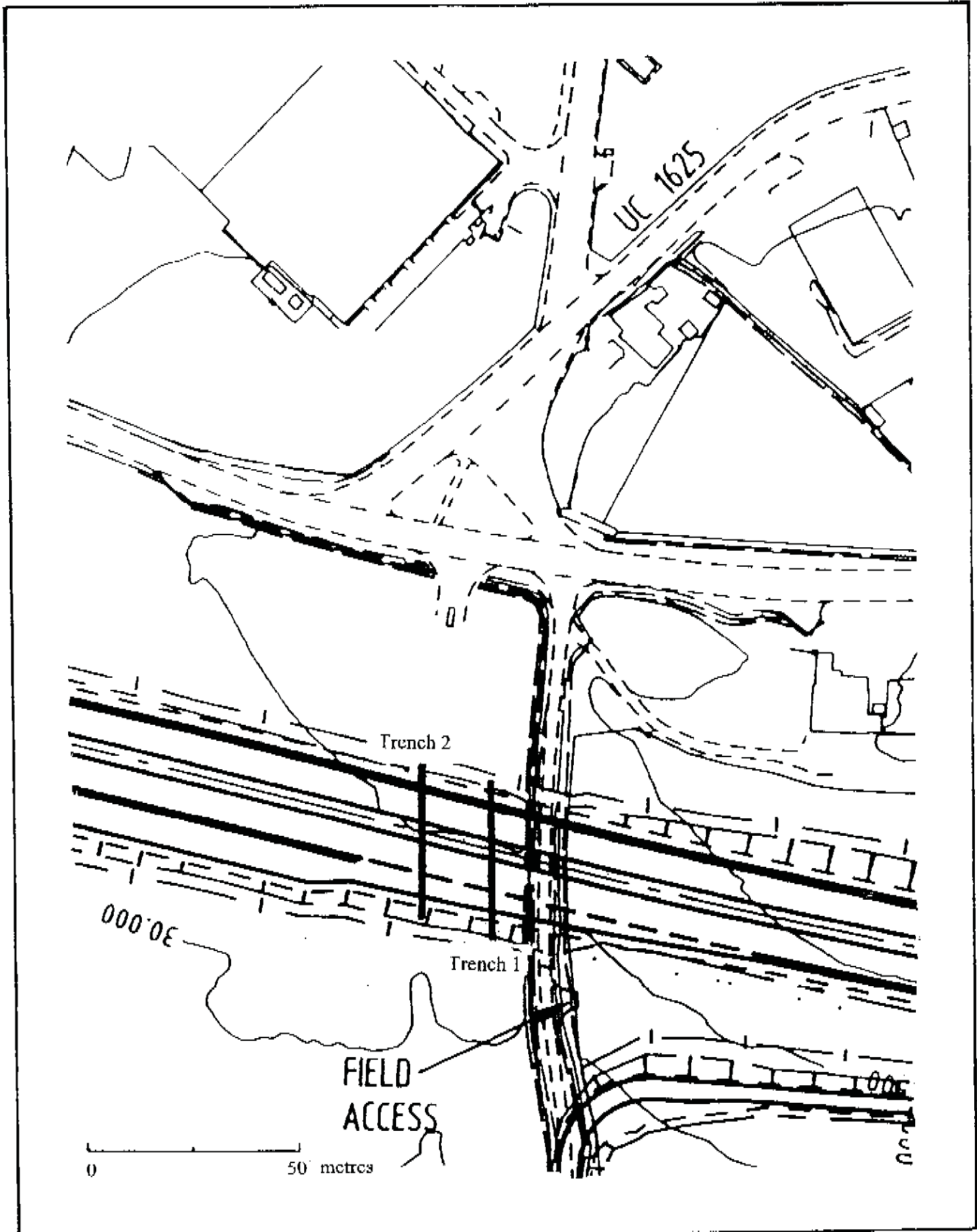


Fig. 3 Location of trenches.

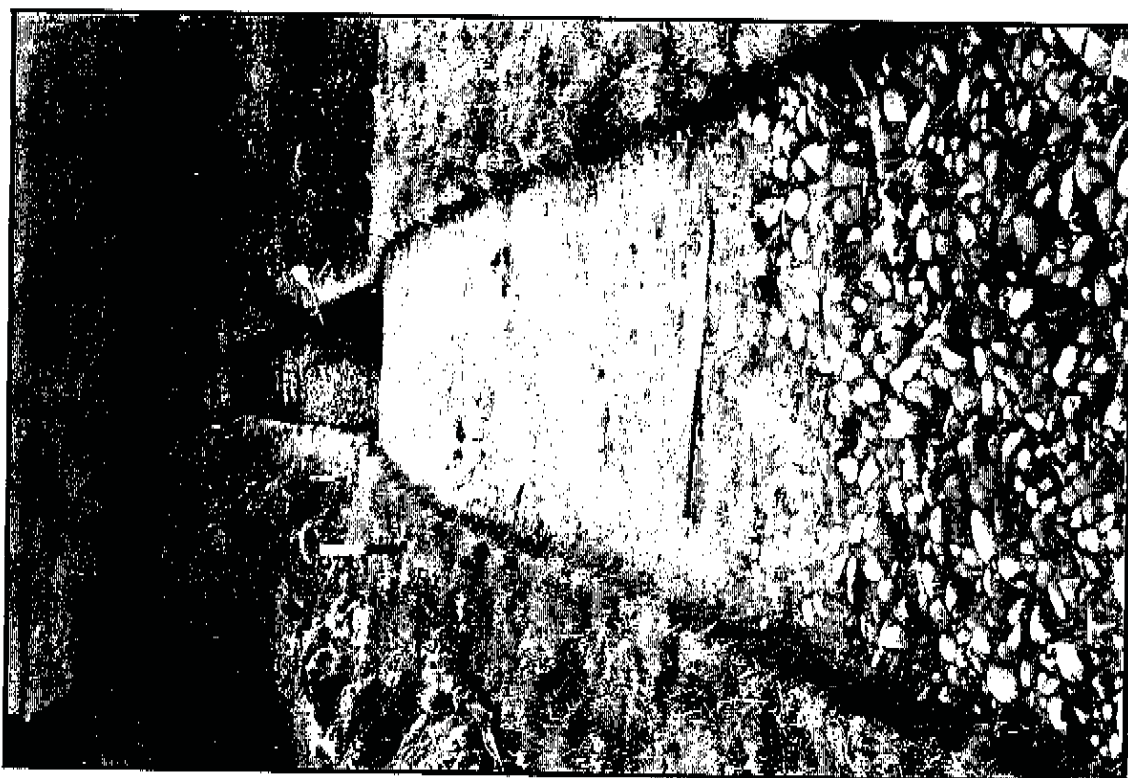


Plate 1 View of Trench 1 with cobbled trackway 508 in foreground. Looking south. (Scale: 1m).

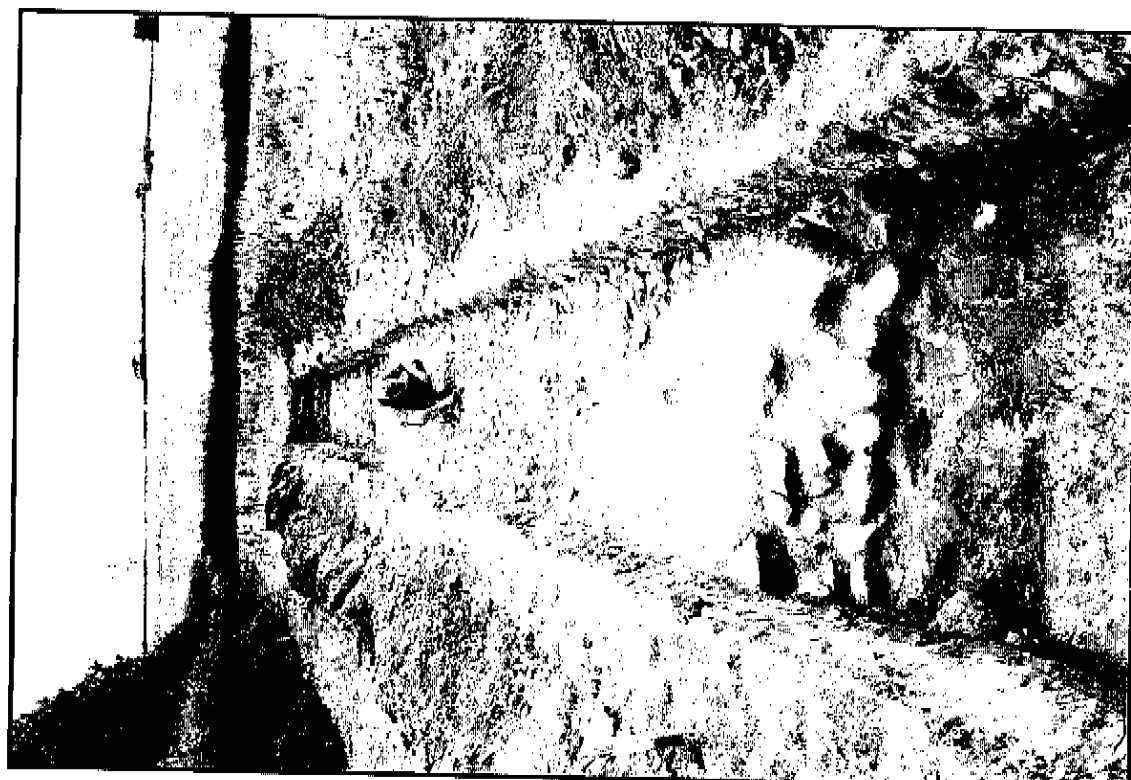


Plate 2 View of the southern half of Trench 1, showing wall 513 and cobbled surface 507. Looking south.

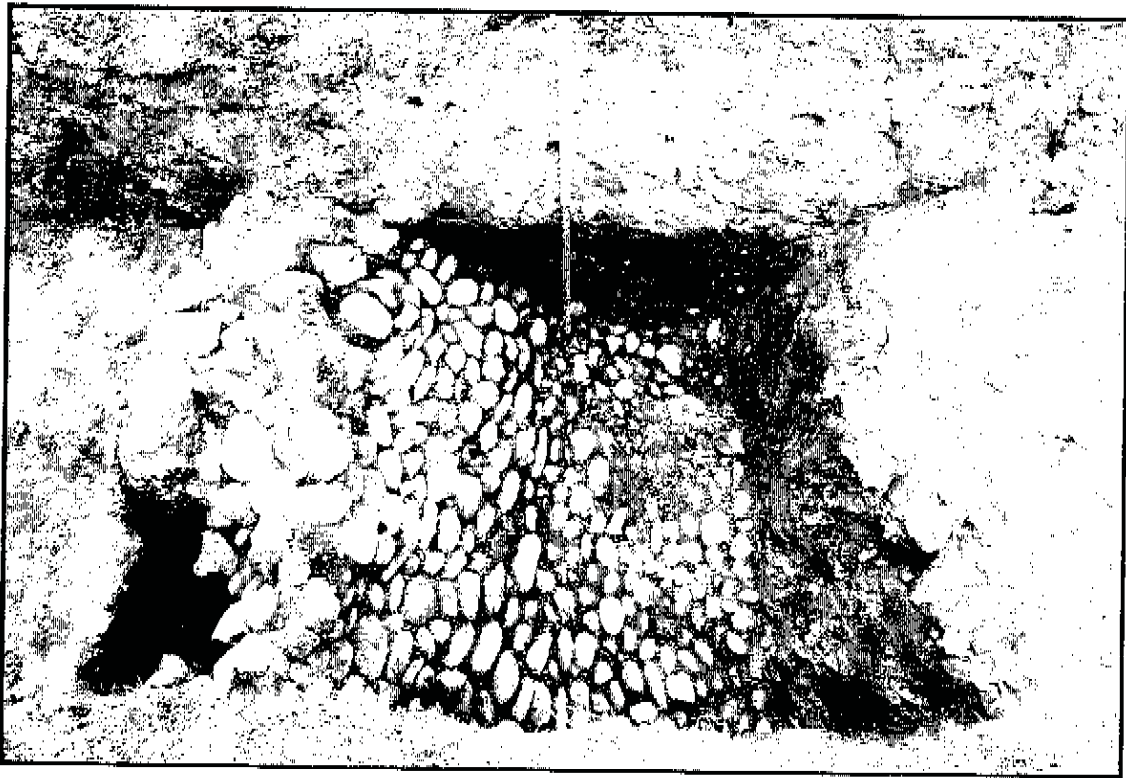


Plate 3 Wall 512 and cobbled drain 519 in Trench 2. Looking west. (Scale: 1m).



Plate 4 Remains of wall bases in southern end of Trench 2. Looking south-west.