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A30 TRUNK ROAD
HONITON TO EXETER IMPROVEMENT
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
PART 4: HAYNE LANE, GITTISHAM

by

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Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit

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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

This report describes the results of an archaeological evaluation excavation undertaken in August 1994 at the site of a prehistoric enclosure at Hayne Lane, Gittisham. At the time of the excavation the field containing the site was under stubble.

1.1 **Location** (Figs 1-2, Pl. 1)

The site is located at SY140996 in an arable field on the south side of the present A30, to the west of Hayne Lane and Hamlet. It lies on the lower slopes of the Otter Valley, just below the 80m contour. The underlying geology is river terrace drift, defined on the Institute of Geological Sciences Geological Survey Map (Sidmouth, sheet 326/340) as valley gravels over Upper (Keuper) Marls.

1.2 **Background**

The site was identified from aerial photographs taken in 1984 by F.M. Griffith as a single-ditched enclosure of oval shape. It was approximately 80m long (east-west) and at least 40m wide. The northern edge of the enclosure had already been destroyed by road widening and pipeline construction.

There was no evidence of earthworks associated with the enclosure above ground. A geophysical (magnetometer) survey was undertaken by Oxford Archaeotechnics in 1994 as part of the evaluation. This survey indicated that the enclosure was perhaps more sub-rectangular than oval in shape. The enclosure ditch produced sharp magnetic anomalies, and a possible entrance was located at the south-eastern side of the enclosure. No clear pattern of internal features emerged.

2. THE EXCAVATION (Figs 3-5, Pls 2-4)

2.1 **Method**

A trench, *c.* 128m long by 1.6m wide, was dug across the enclosure site. This was located 25m south of, and parallel to, the northern edge of the field and within the area of the proposed improvement scheme (Figs 3-4). Between 0.2-0.25m of topsoil was removed mechanically and dumped to the south of the trench, at which time it was examined for artefacts. The topsoil (ploughsoil) directly overlay the subsoil (chert and flints in a silty clay matrix). The trench was cleaned by hand to locate features cut into the subsoil.

2.2 **Results**

Ditch terminus (possible entrance at west end) (Fig. 5, section 1; Pl. 3)

The terminus (545) of a ditch was located 27m from the west end of the trench. This feature only extended 1m into the northern side of the trench, and its true base probably lay outside the excavated area. However, it is likely to have been of a similar V-shaped profile to the ditch encountered to the east (see below). The ditch terminus contained a single fill (546) comprising a strong silty clay matrix with frequent sub-angular fragments of chert. The upper part of the fill had been disturbed by the construction of a hedgebank (542/1, 544/3; subsequently removed some time after 1963) which formerly divided the field. The ditch fill contained one sherd of possible Neolithic pottery, five lithic finds and two fragments of slag. This feature probably represented an entrance into the enclosure, additional to the south-east

entrance indicated by the geophysical survey.

Pit (Fig. 5)
A shallow, flat-bottomed pit (554) was excavated within the enclosure. Seven sherds of prehistoric pottery were recovered from the brown silty clay fill (555): three from a late Bronze Age/early Iron Age carinated bowl, and four sherds of probable Neolithic date. There were three lithic finds. The pit also contained part of a clay loom-weight (Iron Age), the outer face of which bore impressions of vegetation, presumably from having been rolled on the ground prior to firing. The impressions were too eroded to enable botanical identification (V. Straker pers. comm.).

Magnetic susceptibility readings around the western side of the pit (including the western part of fill 555) were considerably higher than those of the surrounding area. This suggested that an activity such as burning had been carried out in the immediate vicinity. Three fragments of iron tap slag were recovered from the surface of the subsoil to the west of the pit.

Enclosure ditch at east end (Fig. 5, section 2; Pl. 4)
The enclosure ditch (553) was located 28m from the east end of the trench. This was 4m wide and 2.3m deep, with a steep V-shaped profile. There was no evidence of silting at its base. The primary fill (552) comprised 1m of variously-sized angular and sub-angular fragments of chert in a clay matrix, representing the weathering of the ditch sides and its associated bank. From this layer three sherds of (undatable) prehistoric pottery, 4 lithic artefacts and 1 fragment of slag were recovered.

Above this was a soil layer (551) which had developed once the bank and ditch had stabilised. This layer was more loamy in character than fill (552) and contained occasional charcoal fragments. It was overlain by slighted bank material (550), which may have been levelled during ploughing. The subsequent soil development (548), which yielded one sherd of medieval pottery (not closely dated), possibly represented the medieval topsoil washed into the partially-filled ditch. The upper ditch fill (547) consisted of material from the original bank levelled over the ditch, either through ploughing or by the deliberate razing of the earthwork. No bank material was found to survive *in situ*, and modern ploughing appears to have truncated all features to the top of the subsoil.

Other finds
Finds from the topsoil dump (540) included 35 flint and chert artefacts and fragments of slag, in addition to medieval and post-medieval pottery and glass. Unstratified finds comprised two sherds of medieval pottery, one sherd of prehistoric pottery (undated), three fragments of slag (see above) and 7 lithic finds.

The lithics from the site as a whole are considered most likely to be of Neolithic date (T.H. Gent pers. comm.). None of the artefacts were of remarkable quality. They were made from both pebble and Beer flint (from the east Devon coast), and local chert.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation confirmed that the enclosure is an important prehistoric site with significant surviving archaeological deposits. The main occupation is likely to date from the later

prehistoric period, however the presence of Neolithic material on site has yet to be satisfactorily explained. Enclosures of this type are relatively unusual in Devon.

The extent of the proposed A30 improvement in this vicinity extends 35-40m south of the field's northern boundary. The site should therefore be subject to rescue excavations prior to its destruction. The following areas of detail require particular attention:

(i) the overall form of the enclosure including possible entrance causeways;
(ii) establishment of any phasing within the ditch outlines;
(iii) location and identification of interior features;
(iv) identification of other features possibly associated with ironworking (tap slag), or lithic finds (providing a possible context for the Neolithic material).

The scheme should leave an approximate 10m-wide strip of the enclosure unaffected (see Fig. 3) including the possible entrance at the south identified by the geophysical survey.

3.1 **Palaeoenvironmental sampling**

Because the site is relatively well-drained, waterlogged remains are considered unlikely, but if encountered should be sampled for floral and faunal identification. The most likely palaeoenvironmental evidence is anticipated in the form of charred organic material, and the sampling strategy should therefore be directed towards the recovery of such from the both the internal features (100% sampling) and the enclosing ditch (selected sampling). These samples can be used for macrofossil analysis and possible radiocarbon dating. Separate samples should be taken from the ditch fills for the purpose of pollen analysis, which may provide information on past land-use and agricultural activity.

APPENDIX 1: FINDS CATALOGUE *by* G. Langman

Context	*Comments*
540	27 sherds in total: 1 sherd English china (after 1780AD), 9 sherds S. Somerset coarsewares (17C/18C), 5 sherds S. Somerset jug (15C/16C), 12 sherds ?medieval (13C/14C/15C) 4 fragments post-med glass (18C+) 35 lithics (+ 37 discarded): including 1 end scraper, 1 side scraper 1 bag slag, weight 110gms 4 fragments coal 1 slate fragment 1 Fe nail
546	1 prehistoric pot sherd: ?Neolithic 5 lithics (+ 17 discarded) 2 slag fragments, weight 15 gms
548	1 pot sherd - ?medieval 2 lithics (+ 2 discarded): including 1 end scraper
550	1 pot sherd - prehistoric 1 fragment ?geological material
552	3 pot sherds - prehistoric 4 lithics (+ 3 discarded): including 2 side scrapers 1 slag fragment

555 7 sherds in total: 3 sherds late Bronze Age/early Iron Age from a ?carinated bowl, 4 sherds ?Neolithic
3 lithics (+ 1 discarded)
1 Iron Age loom weight (245gms in weight) [sent to V. Straker, Bristol University 7.9.94; returned Dec. 1994 - insufficient remains for analysis]

Unstrat. 2 sherds ?medieval, 1 sherd prehistoric
7 lithics (+ 9 discarded)
3 fragments slag, weight 120gms

APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

540 Topsoil. Dark yellowish-brown 10YR 4/4 silty loam, friable, freq to abundant small to medium ww stones, freq to abundant fine intrusive roots.

541 Fill of grubbed-out hedge ditch (cut 542). Brown/dark-brown silty loam, friable, freq small to medium angular chert frags.

542 Ditch cut for now grubbed-out hedgebank. Contains 541. W: 0.8m, D: *c.* 0.2m.

543 Fill of grubbed-out hedge ditch (cut 544). Brown/dark-brown 10YR 4/3 silty clay loam; friable, freq small to medium angular and sub-angular chert frags.

544 Ditch cut for grubbed-out hedgebank. Contains 543. W: *c.* 1m, D: 0.13m.

545 Ditch cut, cut into natural; contains 546. This represents the terminus of the enclosing ditch extending *c.* 1m southward into the trial trench, exposed for a width of 3.4m and a depth of 1m below turf.

546 Fill of ditch cut 545. Strong brown 7.5YR 4/6 silty clay, friable when dry. Heavily stained by manganese precipitation. Contains freq small to medium rounded and sub-angular chert frags. Common charcoal frags up to 5mm. Contained one sherd of ?Neolithic pottery.

547 Ditch fill. Stony last fill of the enclosing ditch 553. Probably represents the latest slighting of the earthwork into the ditch, either pushed or dragged in by successive ploughing. Brown/dark-brown 10YR 4/3 fine sandy silty loam, friable when dry; freq to abundant small to medium angular to sub-angular chert frags, rare charcoal frags.

548 Ditch fill. Soil stabilization layer within ditch 553. Contained medieval pottery. Its relative stonelessness suggests it has washed in during agricultural activity and as such may, because of the medieval find, represent the medieval land surface prior to the final slighting of the earthwork. Brown/dark-brown, 10YR 4/3, fine sandy silty loam, friable when dry, relatively stonelessness (< 1%), occ charcoal frags.

549 Cut and fill of modern land drain west of ditch terminus 545.

550 Ditch fill. Similar in character to 547, this context represents an infilling of the ditch 553 by slighting of the existing earthwork. Overlies a stable soil development 551. Brown/dark-brown 7.5YR 4/2 fine sandy silty loam, friable when dry. Abundant small to medium angular and sub-angular chert frags. One sherd of indeterminate prehistoric pot was recovered from this context.

551 Ditch fill. A soil stabilization horizon similar to 548 directly overlying the primary fill 552. Strong brown 7.5YR 4/6 silty clay loam, friable when dry. Common small angular and sub-angular chert, occ charcoal frags.

552 Primary fill of ditch 553, representing the initial weathering of the ditch sides and the earthwork itself. This context infills the ditch to half its original depth and yielded three sherds of indeterminate prehistoric pot. Brown/dark-brown 7.5YR 4/4 clayey silt matrix, becoming more clayey with depth; plastic when moist, slightly sticky, friable when dry. Abundant small to large angular and sub-angular chert.

553 Ditch cut. May be continuous with 545 as an enclosure ditch; V-shaped; cut into valley gravels 554. No evidence of any bank surviving above natural. W: 4.5m, D: 2.3.

554 Flat-bottomed pit cut into natural 556. Contains 555. Partially truncated by JCB during trench excavation. W: 1.3m, D: 0.3m.

555 Fill of 554. Dark yellowish-brown 10YR 4/4 silty loam, friable with abundant small fragments of charcoal. Contained one Iron Age loom weight, and seven sherds of prehistoric pot (three late Bronze/early Iron Age and four (residual) Neolithic).

556 River terrace drift subsoil (natural); abundant small to medium-sized stones in a yellowish-brown silty clay matrix.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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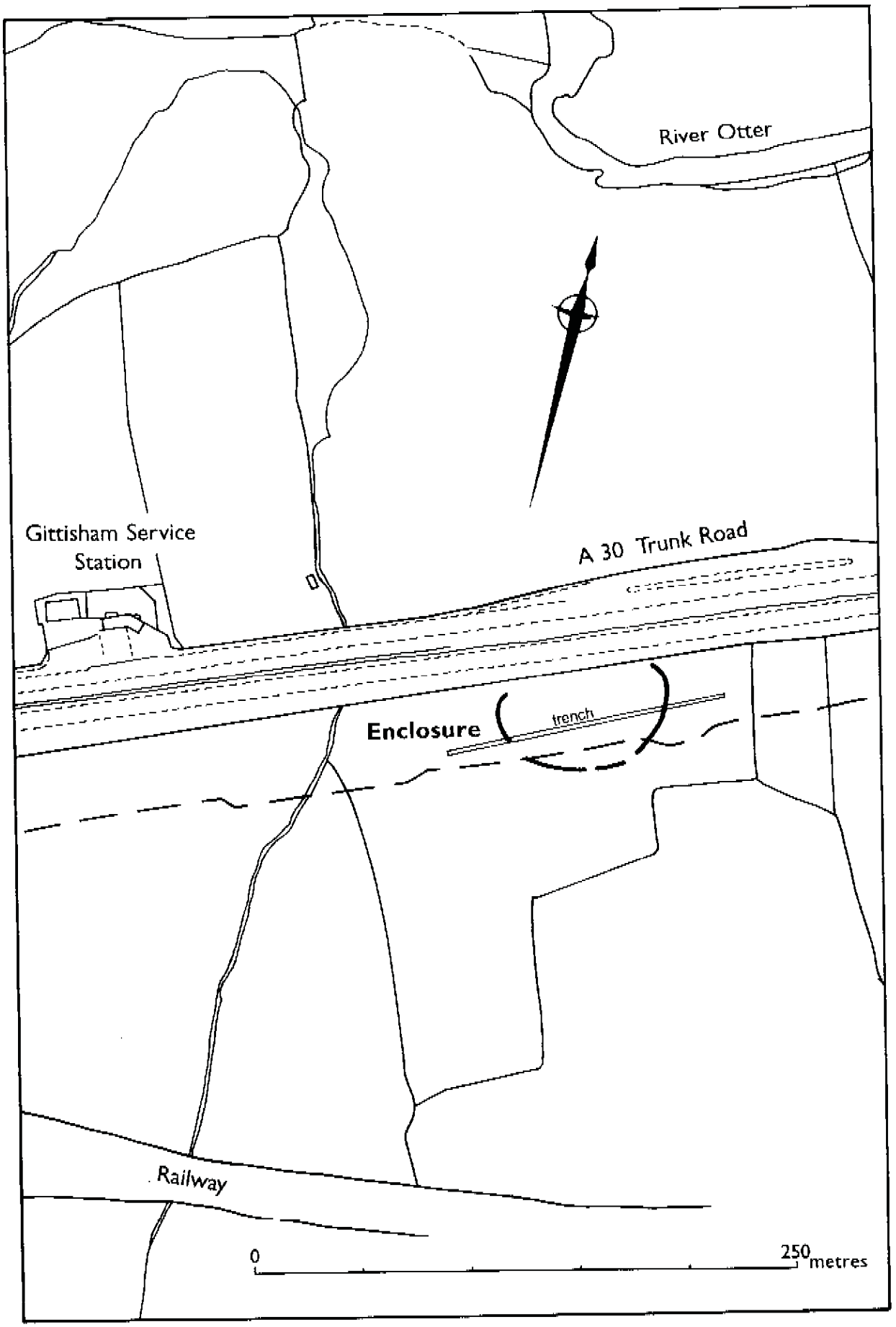

Fig. 3 Position of the enclosure.

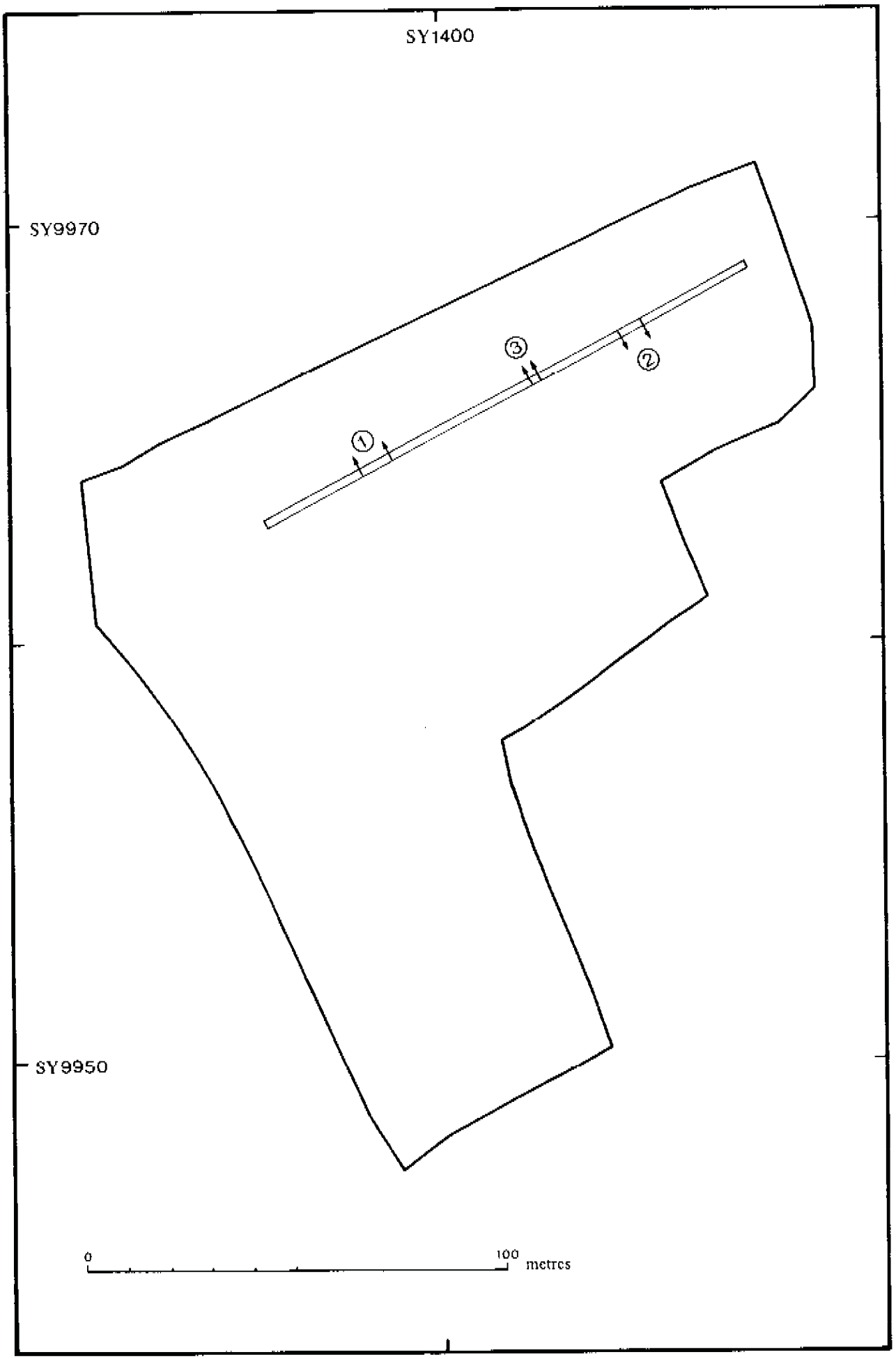

Fig. 4 Position of trench within field.

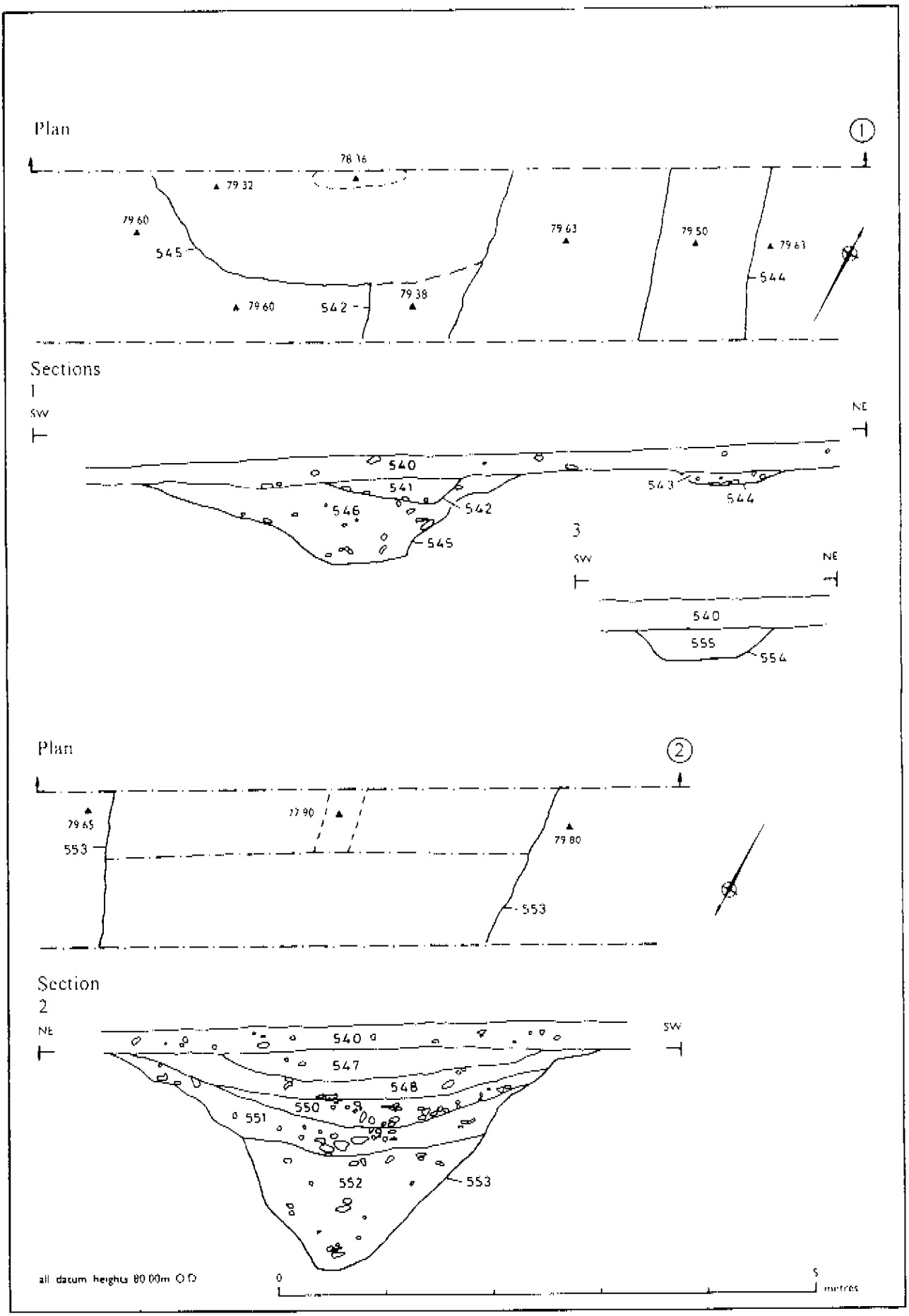

Fig. 5 Plans and sections.