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Road Number A31	Date April 1997
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A31 STAG GATE TO ROUNDHOUSE ROUNDABOUT  
IMPROVEMENT

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

C.A.T JOB: 0637  
C.A.T REPORT: 97460

APRIL 1997

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Headquarters Building, Kemble Business Park, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 6BQ  
Tel. 01285 771022 Fax. 01285 771033

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## **GLOSSARY**

### **ANGLO-SAXON**

Taken here as the period from the end of the Roman era *c* AD 400 to the Norman Conquest (1066).

### **ARCHAEOLOGY**

For the purposes of this project, archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains, from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

### **CAT**

Cotswold Archaeological Trust

### **DRO**

Dorset County Record Office

### **IFA**

Institute of Field Archaeologists.

### **IRON AGE**

The first period in which iron was the predominant metal. In Britain it is dated between *c*700 BC to the Roman conquest in AD 43.

### **MEDIEVAL**

Taken here as the period from the Norman invasion in AD 1066 to approximately AD 1500.

### **MODERN**

The period following the Post-Medieval period.

NGR

National Grid Reference given from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

OD

Ordnance Datum; used to express a given height above mean sea level.

OS

Ordnance Survey

PALAEOENVIRONMENTAL

The reconstruction of past environments based upon evidence recovered from preserved botanical and entomological remains.

PALAEOLITHIC

The earliest period of human activity in the UK for which archaeological evidence survives, from about 1 million years BC to about 10,000 years BC.

POST-MEDIEVAL

The period following the medieval period. From c AD 1500 to the industrial revolution.

ROMANO-BRITISH

Term used to describe a fusion of indigenous late Iron Age tradition with Roman culture, often abbreviated as 'R-B', and taken to mean the period from AD43 to about AD410.

SITE

Sites may be defined as 'windows' onto the archaeological resource, eg an excavation, aerial photograph, or an old map. Any of these may reveal certain archaeological features (pits, ditches, etc) which can be classed as components, but not monuments.

SMR

Sites and Monuments Record, held by Dorset County Council.

## STUDY AREA

This is the general area, usually the property boundary surrounding the application area, which provides the focus for the report.



## **SUMMARY**

In February 1997 Cotswold Archaeological Trust was commissioned to carry out an archaeological desk-based assessment of land along the route of the proposed A31 trunk road scheme between Stag Gate (SY 9255 9938) and the Roundhouse Roundabout (SY 9488 9860), in the parishes of Sturminster Marshall and Lychett Matravers, Dorset, (Fig. 1).

No Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings or other protected landscape or historical features are recorded within the study area.

This study has identified several elements within the study area of archaeological interest: the site of prehistoric flint tool finds; the site of two former post-medieval field boundaries; a former modern gravel pit; and the presence of alluvial soils that may include palaeoenvironmental evidence. No archaeological features of Anglo-Saxon or medieval origin are recorded either within the study area or from its general environs.

The recorded presence of other archaeological features of Palaeolithic, Bronze Age and Romano-British origin within the general environs of the study area suggests that other unidentified prehistoric archaeological features may survive within or adjacent to the study area.

It should be noted that part of the proposed route borders Charborough Park, protected by statute as it is registered by English Heritage as a Grade II\* Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest.

This study recommends, that, should the proposals proceed, an archaeological field evaluation be carried out in two stages in order to identify and locate sub-surface archaeological features, and that such an evaluation should include three components (geophysical survey, surface artefact collection, and evaluation trenching) to take account of varying conditions and particular requirements.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### ***1.1 Introduction***

1.1.1 In February 1997 Cotswold Archaeological Trust was commissioned by Mr Paul Hannam of Dorset Engineering Consultancy to carry out an archaeological desk-based assessment of land along the route of the proposed A31 trunk road scheme between Stag Gate and the Roundhouse Roundabout, in the parishes of Sturminster Marshall and Lychett Matravers, Dorset, (Fig. 1).

1.1.2 The purpose of this document is to identify and describe the extent and character of the known archaeological resource within and adjacent to the study area, and to identify the possibility of unidentified archaeological features or deposits surviving within the study area, based upon the available evidence.

1.1.3 In accordance with the provisions of a brief issued by Dorset Engineering Consultancy (Hannam 1997), consultation of readily accessible archaeological and historical records has been undertaken. This desk-study should not be viewed as exhaustive but is designed to illustrate the archaeological potential of the study area, and is structured as follows. Section 1 sets the background to the study, examining the local landscape and geology. Section 2 details the results of the examination of documentary, cartographic, and various secondary sources, summarising the known archaeological remains in the immediate vicinity of the study area. Section 3 discusses the importance of the known archaeology.

### ***1.2 The study area*** (Fig. 2)

1.2.1 The study area consists of a corridor of land, for the most part roughly parallel to the course of the existing A31, between Stag Gate (SY 9255 9938) and the Roundhouse Roundabout (SY 9488 9860). The proposed route varies in width from about 10m at its

narrowest, up to a maximum width of about 45m, but averages a width of about 30m. The total length of the proposed route, between the links to the existing A31, is about 2.6km, thus an area of about 8ha is directly affected by the proposed scheme.

### ***1.3 Landuse, topography and geology***

1.3.1 The route of the proposed road runs through, or has an direct impact upon, some eleven parcels of land including an area of woodland, two fields currently under arable cultivation, and the course of the Winterbourne River. All the remaining parcels of land were under pasture at the time of inspection (19.03.97), and were generally divided by mature hedgerows (of a non-species rich character) or wood and wire fencing.

1.3.2 The route of the proposed road runs south-east from the floodplain of the Winterbourne River valley (at about 29m OD), passes through woodland known as the Penn'orth to the highest point along the route (c 43m OD), before crossing the head of a re-entrant of the Winterbourne valley (base c 32m OD, rising to c 41m OD), and then falling off gently to the southern terminus of the proposed route at about 29m OD.

1.3.3 The geology of the study area is recorded as being of Valley Gravels overlying Upper Chalk, associated with thin beds of clay-with-flints (OS 1991). Reference to borehole data from a recent survey (Soil Mechanics Ltd 1996) shows that the chalk is exposed on the middle section of the route (between the Winterbourne river and the cross-roads at SY 9422 9870), and that the remainder of the route is overlain by valley gravel deposits. Overburden is generally between 0.50m and 0.60m deep, but alluvium was recorded in the Winterbourne valley up to 0.90m deep.

### ***1.4 Archaeological specification and methodology***

1.4.1 This assessment has been conducted in accordance with the '*Standards and Guidance*

*for Desk Based Assessments'* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1994), and by a brief issued by Dorset Engineering Consultancy (Hannam 1997).

1.4.2 The assessment involved consultation of readily accessible archaeological and historical information from documentary and cartographic sources. The principal sources consulted were the Dorset County Council SMR, the National Monuments Record maintained by the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England, and the Dorset County Record Office (Dorset SMR entries are listed in Appendix 1). The latter holds Ordnance Survey, inclosure, parish, and estate map coverage for the site, as well as various secondary sources such as the Royal Commission inventories, copies of the Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Society, and antiquarian texts such as Hutchins (1774). Geotechnical survey information, colour print aerial photographs, and preliminary constraints plans were also supplied for examination by Dorset Engineering Consultancy.

1.4.3 An inspection of the proposed route to check landuse, topography, and visible archaeological features was made on the 19th of March 1997.

## **2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT (FIGS. 2 & 3)**

### **2.1 General**

2.1.1 No Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings or other protected landscape or historical features are recorded within the study area. However, it should be noted that part of the proposed route borders Charborough Park, protected by statute as it is registered by English Heritage as a Grade II\* Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest.

2.1.2 This study has identified several elements within the study area of archaeological interest: the site of prehistoric flint tool finds; the site of two former post-medieval field boundaries; a former modern gravel pit; and the presence of alluvial soils that may include palaeoenvironmental evidence. No archaeological features of Anglo-Saxon or medieval origin are recorded either within the study area or from its general environs.

2.1.3 The recorded presence of other archaeological features of Palaeolithic, Bronze Age and Romano-British origin within the general environs of the study area suggests that other unidentified archaeological features may survive within or adjacent to the study area.

### **2.2 *Prehistoric* (Fig. 2)**

2.2.1 One archaeological feature of prehistoric origin is recorded within the study area (SMR ref. 6014/45), and there are two recorded features that may be affected by works associated with the proposed road scheme (321/52 and 53).

2.2.2 SMR entry 6014/45 records the finding of prehistoric flint hammer-stones after ploughing in the 1950's.

2.2.3 SMR entries 321/52 and 53 record two Bronze Age bowl barrows at the western end of the proposed scheme.

2.2.4 There are three groups of circular soil-marks visible on a series of oblique aerial-photographs (SY9398/1, /3, /4, /5). The exact location of these soil-marks has not been established as specialist plotting has not taken place, but probable locations are noted on Fig. 2 as at about SY 9290 9890, SY 9315 9897, and SY 9332 9882, between 100m and 250m south of the proposed route. A definite origin and chronology cannot be determined without more detailed examination, but it is suggested here that these soil-marks represent clusters of Bronze Age barrows forming a cemetery group. The recorded presence of other prehistoric features of Palaeolithic to Early Iron Age origin within the general environs of the study area (eg SMR refs 321/50,-52, -53, -58; 6014/37, -40, -41, -46) suggests that other unidentified prehistoric features may survive within or adjacent to the study area.

### **2.3 Romano-British** (Fig. 2)

2.3.1 No archaeological features of Romano-British origin have been recorded within the study area.

2.3.2 The recorded presence of Romano-British archaeological features in the general environs of the study area (particularly 321/48 about 80m north of the proposed route), indicates the possibility that other unidentified Romano-British features may survive within the study area. It should be noted that the pits recorded as 321/48 were found in a chalk pit in 1842-3, somewhere in the 'Sturminster Fields' (2.6.2 below). This has been interpreted as the large quarry at SY 9345 9916 (Farrar 1964); however, this quarry is not shown on the Tithe map of 1844 (DRO ref. T/SML). An alternative candidate proposed here is the chalk quarry workings noted in the woodland during the route inspection at SY 9325 9925.

## **2.4 Anglo-Saxon**

2.4.1 No archaeological features of Anglo-Saxon origin are recorded either within the study area or from its general environs.

## **2.5 Medieval**

2.5.1 No archaeological features of medieval origin are recorded either within the study area or from its general environs. It is possible that some of the field boundaries surviving today and some of those depicted on early maps (2.6.2 below) may indicate medieval boundaries, but the balance of evidence is largely against this, particularly as this part of the parish does not appear to have been enclosed until the early 19th century (DRO ref. I49; RCHM(E) 1970, 283).

## **2.6 Post-medieval (Fig. 3)**

2.6.1 No archaeological features of post-medieval origin are recorded within the study area, excepting the probable presence of two former field boundaries at about SY 9376 9882 and 9444 9872.

2.6.2 The earliest available map evidence is the OS 1" sheet surveyed in 1811. This shows the general layout of the environs of the study area prior to a major expansion of Charborough Park in the 1840's, and the turnpiking of the Wimborne-Dorchester road creating the current route of the A31 (RCHM(E) 1970, 160, 164). The study area lies within a group of fields known as 'Sturminister Fields', with the then park boundary well to the south and west of its current location. The expanded park boundary is depicted on the Tithe map for the parish of Sturminister Marshall (DRO ref. T/SML) of 1844, the area to the south of the current A31 being emparked at some point early in this decade. Information from this map, and the 1838 Tithe map for the Parish of Lychett

Matravers (T/LMA), indicates that in the mid 19th century most of the study area was under arable cultivation; the course of the Winterbourne appears to be the same as that of today; and the woodland at SY 932 992 was then known as 'Withy's Wood', suggesting coppiced woodland.

2.6.3 Comparison between the Tithe maps of the 1830s/40s and the OS First Edition 25" maps of 1888 (the basis of the 1891 6" series), shows little change in the division of the landscape, excepting the loss of some field boundaries as smaller fields were amalgamated to form larger units. The milestones noted in the SMR as records 321/75 and 76 are shown on the 1888 OS maps.

## **2.7 Modern**

2.7.1 No archaeological features of modern origin are recorded within the study area, excepting the presence of a former gravel pit at about SY 9280 9944.

2.7.2 The OS 6" coverage of 1902 notes the presence of a gravel pit at about SY 9280 9944, under the proposed route. Gravel and chalk quarries or pits are common across this area of Dorset, and, in combination with the apparent excavation of one or both of the barrows 321/52 or 53 in the 19th century, are very likely to account for the other pits, hollows, and depressions currently visible in the field immediately east of Stag Gate and centred on SY 928 993. Meanders of the course of the Winterbourne river and other drainage features are visible on recent air-photographs, and some of these are also under the proposed route.

2.7.3 A sub-circular feature at about SY 9304 9923 appears on several vertical aerial-photographs taken in 1947 (eg 560). This feature is slightly to the north of the proposed route and may represent mineral quarrying.

2.7.4 Later OS map coverage from the 1920's up to the 1989 1:25,000 sheet shows little



change over the study area, excepting minor adjustments to field boundaries and the like.

### **3. CONCLUSIONS**

- 3.1 Within the study area, and along the course of the proposed route, are located several features of archaeological interest: Prehistoric flint tool finds (2.2.1); the site of two former post-medieval field boundaries (2.6.1); a former modern gravel pit (2.7.1). No archaeological features of Anglo-Saxon or medieval origin are recorded either within the study area or from its general environs.
- 3.2 The recorded presence of other archaeological features of Palaeolithic to Romano-British origin within the general environs of the study area (2.2.4; 2.3.2) suggests that other unidentified prehistoric and Romano-British features may survive within or adjacent to the study area.
- 3.3 The alluvial soils noted in the borehole logs (1.3.3) may preserve palaeoenvironmental and/or archaeological evidence, which would of particular interest if it could be related to, especially, prehistoric features. The alluvium may also mask other archaeological features from surface observation or aerial photographic detection.
- 3.4 It should be noted that part of the proposed route borders Charborough Park, protected by statute as it is registered by English Heritage as a Grade II\* Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest.

## **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **4.1 *General***

4.1.1 In view of the conclusions stated above, and the fact that the route of the proposed road will be stripped of topsoil to reveal the underlying chalk or gravel sub-strata (P Hannam *pers comm*) - and therefore expose to erosion or intrusion any archaeological features that may survive - it is recommended that in the event of this road proposal proceeding that an archaeological field evaluation be carried out.

4.1.2 It is recommended that any field evaluation should include three components to take account of varying conditions and particular requirements, and that the field evaluation should be undertaken in two stages.

### **4.2 *Stage I: Geophysical survey and Surface Artefact Collection***

4.2.1 Geophysical survey of the proposed route should be undertaken to identify the presence of, and to accurately locate, any sub-surface archaeological features.

4.2.2 A surface artefact collection should be carried out, under appropriate conditions, of the area of the proposed diversion of the existing A31 at about SY 9486 9857 where prehistoric flint has been recovered during past ploughing (6014/45). The objective of the collection should be to recover artefactual evidence that may indicate the presence nearby of sub-surface archaeological features. This field was under arable cultivation at the time of inspection.

### **4.3 *Stage II: Evaluation Trenches***

4.3.1 The results of Stage I of the field evaluation should then be assessed before Stage

It is undertaken, in order to ensure that a programme of evaluation trenching is targeted at detecting and defining the character, condition and chronological origin of any sub-surface archaeological features that may have been located. In addition, evaluation trenches should be dug where the geophysical survey may have been unduly constrained by factors such as soil conditions or other adverse environmental conditions.

4.3.2 Archaeological evaluation trenches should be dug to the north of the barrows 321/52 and 53, to determine if any outlying peripheral features such as ditches, banks, berms, secondary inhumations or cremations survive within this zone, or are likely to survive under the surface of the existing minor road between Almer and Sturminster Marshall.

4.3.3 Archaeological evaluation trenches should also be dug along part of the proposed route in the field immediately to the north of the Winterbourne river (centred on SY 928 993), with the specific objectives of detecting the presence of archaeological features masked by alluvium or contexts including palaeoenvironmental evidence.

## 5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cotswold Archaeological Trust would like to thank the staff of Dorset County Records Office; the staff of Dorset Heritage (in particular Ms C Pinder and Mr S Wallis); and Mr Paul Hannam of Dorset Engineering Consultancy for their assistance during the course of this project.

The report was researched and written by HF Beamish, and the illustrations were prepared by R Morton.

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86, 115

Hannam P 1997 *Brief for an archaeological assessment: A31 Stag Gate to Roundhouse Roundabout Improvement*, Dorset Engineering Consultancy typescript

Hutchins, J 1774 *The History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset*, III, 1972 reprinted facsimile of 1868 (3rd) Edition

IEA 1994 *Standards and Guidance for Desk Based Assessments*

OS Institute of Geological Sciences 1991 *Geological map of Bournemouth (Solid and Drift)*, sheet 329, 1:50,000

Soil Mechanics Ltd 1996 *A31 Folkestone to Honiton Trunk Road: Roundhouse Roundabout to Winterbourne Zelston Improvement Ground Investigation*, 2, Wokingham

RCIM(E) 1970 *An Inventory of Historical Monuments in the County of Dorset: Vol II:*

*Archaeological Sites in South-East Dorset, Parts 2 and 3, London*

The DRO place-name index for Sturminster Marshall and Lychett Matravers includes many non site specific listings under the headings of Baile House, bells, church, constable, deeds, estate, Inclosure, maps, manorial, mansion house, organ, Parish, sale, schools, surveys, thatching, Tithe, village and wills

Cartographic coverage

OS 1888 25" to 1 mile, 1st Edition, Sheet XXXIV/10

1901 25" to 1 mile, 2nd Edition, Sheets XXXIV/5, 9, 10

1928 25" to 1 mile, 3rd Edition, Sheets XXXIV/5, 9, 10

1891 6" to 1 mile, 1st Edition, Sheets 34 NW and SW

1902 6" to 1 mile, 2nd Edition, Sheets 34 NW and SW

1989 1:25,000, Pathfinder Sheet 1319 (Bere Regis and Lychett Matravers)

1811 1" to 1 mile, 1st Edition, Sheet XVI, (Wimborne Minister)

1949 1" to 1 mile, Sixth Series, Sheet 178

Sturminster Marshall Parish Tithe map of 1844 (DRO T/SML).

Sturminster Marshall Parish Inclosure map of 1845 (DRO I49).

Lychett Matravers Parish Tithe map of 1838 (DRO T/LMA).

## APPENDIX 1

### Dorset SMR entries

Ref.no.	Grid Ref	Description
321/47	SY 944 992	Pits including Roman pottery noted during gravel quarrying
321/48	SY 934 991	Pits including Roman pottery noted in chalk pit on common field location not certain
321/50	SY 946 993	Palaeolithic (Acheulean) hand-axe find-spot. Other Palaeolithic worked flint found in same general area but NGR not known
321/52	SY 9262 9938	Bowl barrow (Bronze Age), possibly opened in 19th century, excavation earthworks and channels to south
321/53	SY 9260 9938	Bowl barrow (Bronze Age), possibly opened in 19th century, cut by road to north
321/54	SY 9366 9955	Reputed site of round-barrow, also noted as site of 1940's searchlight battery, unlikely location for barrow
321/57	SY 9366 9955	Reputed site of round-barrow, also noted as site of 1940's searchlight battery, unlikely location for barrow
321/64	SY 9249 9940	Bronze Age Beaker found in 19th century, possibly from barrows to south (321/52 or 53), NGR dubious
321/67	SY 925 984	Charborough Park, Grade II* English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, 17th century core, re- extend modelled anded in 18th, 19th and 20th centuries
321/75	SY 9302 9914	Milestone (?19th century), embedded in park wall
321/76	SY 9455 9867	Milestone (?19th century), on south side of road, surface inscriptions

obliterated by vehicle impact

6014/37	SY 9489 9821	<b>Scheduled Ancient Monument (Dorset 165)</b> Bronze Age bowl barrow
6014/40	SY 9448 9805	Flint hammer-stones (prehistoric) find-spot
6014/41	SY 947 984	Palaeolithic (Levallois) flint tool find-spot
6014/45	SY 9486 9857	Find of flint hammer-stones (prehistoric)
6014/46	SY 9409 9812	Finds of late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age flint

nb. Prefix 321/ refers to entries in parish of Sturminster Marshall, and 6014/ to those in parish of Lychett Matravers



## APPENDIX 2

### Aerial Photographic coverage held by RCIM(E)

#### Vertical coverage

Library No.	Sortie No.	Date	Frames
536	CPE/UK/1893	12.12.46	3243-3246
536	CPE/UK/1893	12.12.46	4143-4149
557	CPE/UK/1930	17.01.47	3189-3192
557	CPE/UK/1930	17.01.47	4190-4193
560	CPE/UK/1934	17.01.47	2198-2202
560	CPE/UK/1934	17.01.47	3139
560	CPE/UK/1934	17.01.47	5133-5139
560	CPE/UK/1934	17.01.47	5198-5202
1709	58/1935	13.01.56	20-23
1709	58/1935	13.01.56	21-24
1713	540/1775	13.01.56	237-240
1713	540/1775	13.01.56	236-240
1728	82/1343	12.03.56	23-24
1756	58/2055	12.11.56	37
1756	58/2055	12.11.56	6
1930	58/3009	08.07.59	241-244
3256	540/316	22.04.50	5058-5062
3859	106G/LA/163	05.03.45	4070-4075
3890	106G/LA/128	10.02.45	7173-7177
4947A	106G/LA/194	03.03.45	40-47
6459	13K/UK744	24.03.41	7-9
8048	BKS/3161	07.02.68	629321-629328
8048	BKS/3161	07.02.68	629366-629373
8048	BKS/3161	07.02.68	629401-629408
10964	OS/69187	07.06.69	78-81

Specialist (oblique) coverage

Index No.	Frame	Date
ST9100/2	22	07.08.95
ST9100/3	23	07.08.95
SY9197/1	19	05.09.95
SY9197/2	20	05.09.95
SY9197/3	11	05.09.95
SY9197/4	12	05.09.95
SY9297/1	5	30.06.51
SY9297/2	6	30.06.51
SY9297/3	7	30.06.51
SY9298/1	77	25.06.52
SY9298/2	78	25.06.52
SY9398/1	21	05.09.95
SY9398/2	22	05.09.95
SY9398/3	13	05.09.95
SY9398/4	14	05.09.95
SY9398/5	15	05.09.95

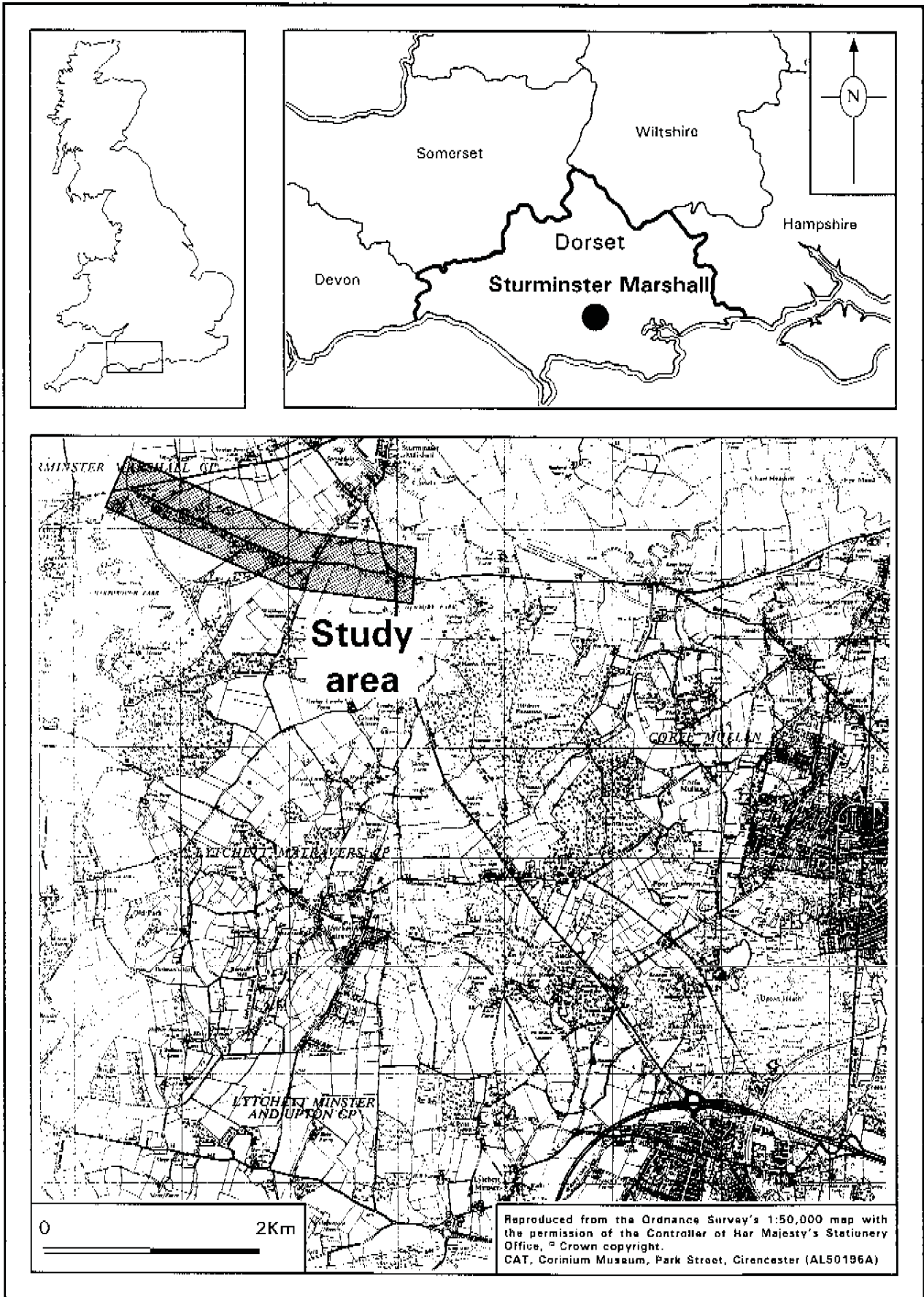


Fig. 1 Location plan

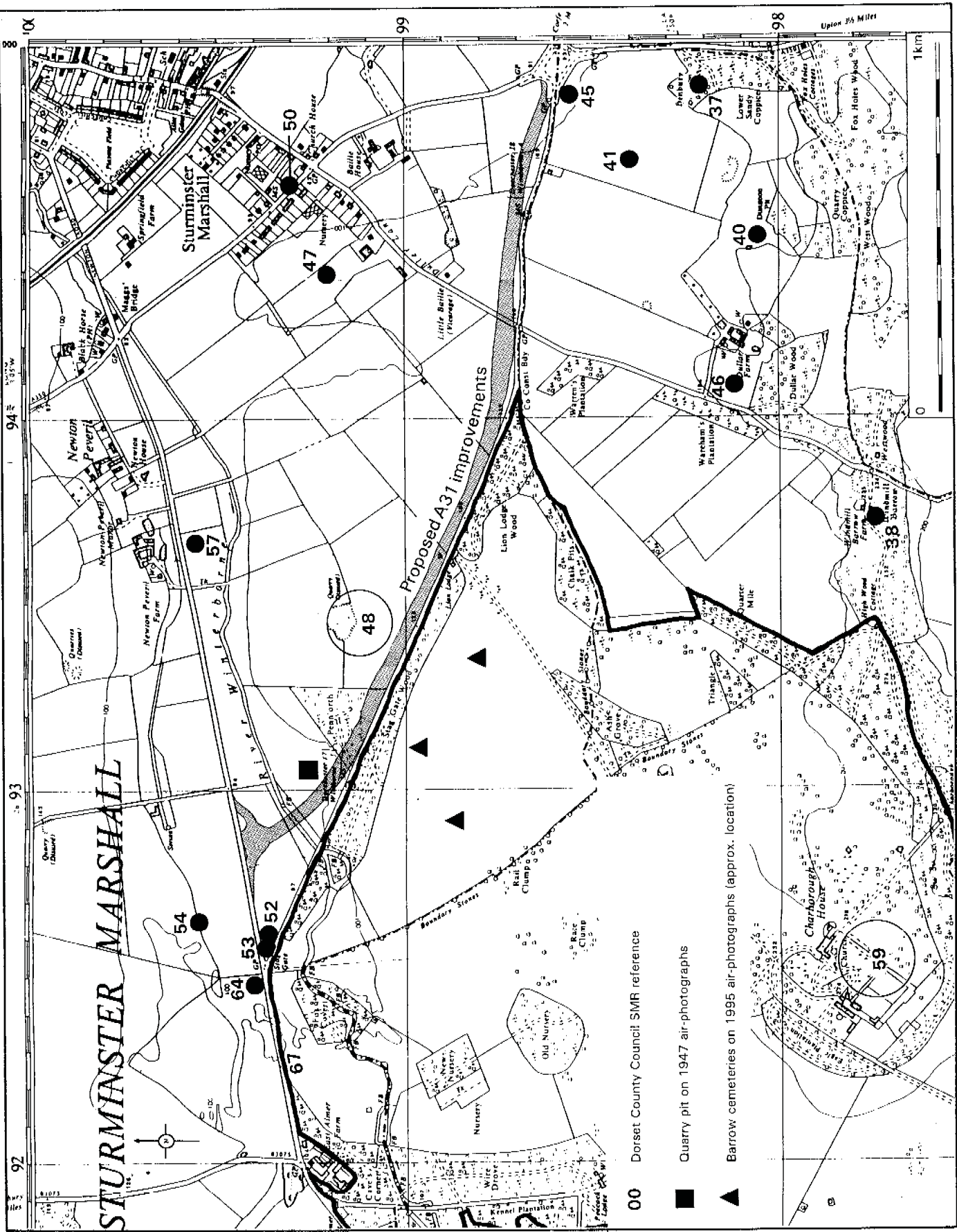


Fig. 2 Study area and identified archaeological resource

- 00 Dorset County Council SMR reference
- Quarry pit on 1947 air-photographs
- ▲ Barrow cemeteries on 1985 air-photographs (approx. location)

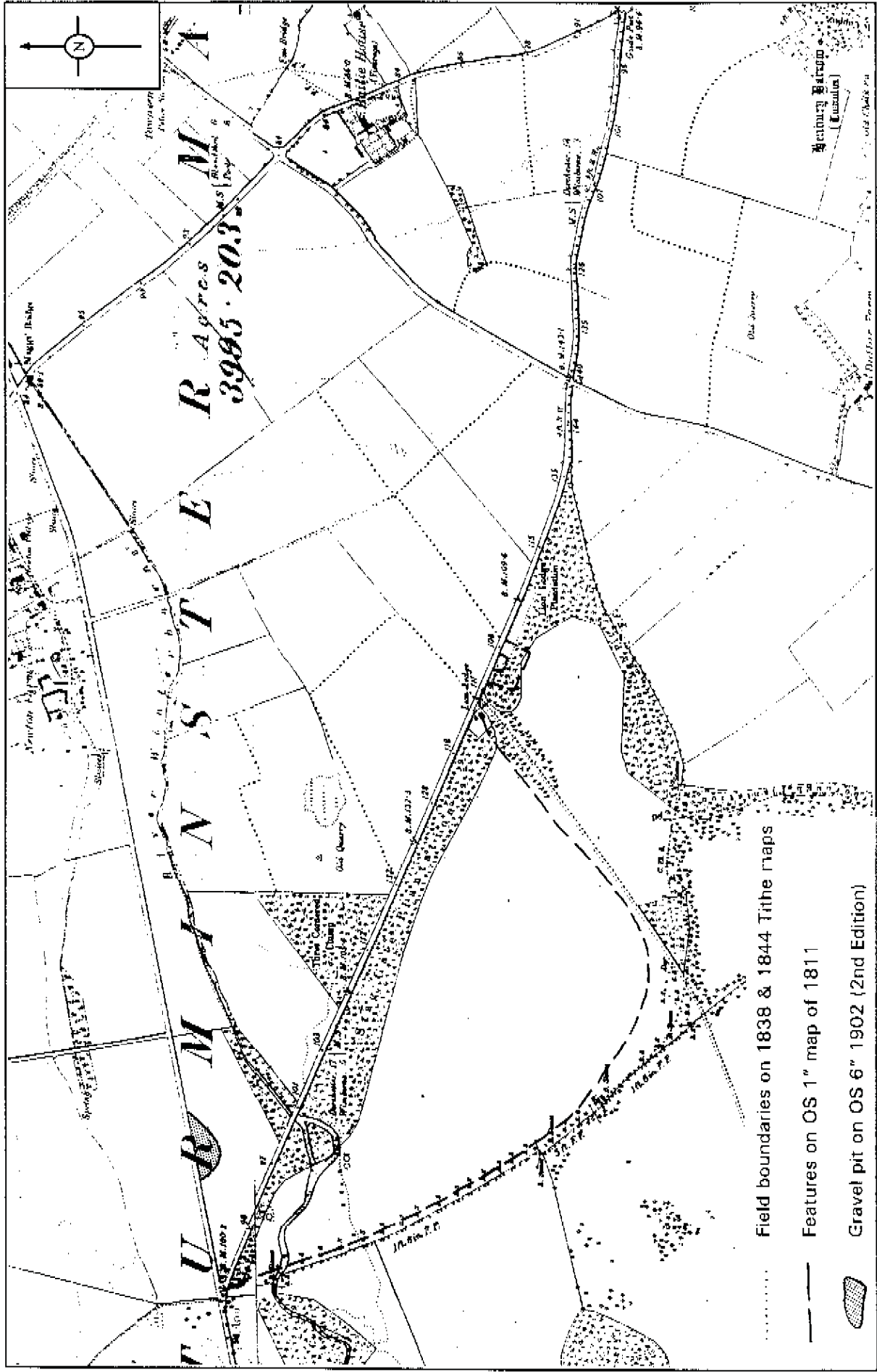


Fig. 3 OS 6" to 1 mile First Edition map of 1891 and 1892