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**A49 NEWPORT - SHREWSBURY TRUNK ROAD
MARSHBROOK DIVERSION:
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

by
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**A Report for the
COUNTY SURVEYOR'S DEPARTMENT
SHROPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

Archaeology Service

SHROPSHIRE 
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Marshbrook Diversion: archaeological sites affected

Fig. 2: Documentary Survey - meadows in the Study Area

Fig. 3: Site A (SA4624) - watermeadows

Fig. 4: Site B - watermeadows

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** There are currently proposals to improve a 1.75km long section of the A49 Newport-Shrewsbury Trunk Road at Marshbrook, Shropshire, between the Lazy Trout Café and the Lower Lodge (Fig. 1). The A49 at this point runs along the floor of the valley of the Marsh Brook. The valley, which forms a natural gap in the Stretton hills has been a focus for north-south communications since Roman times at least.
- 1.2** The proposed improvements affect the line of the Roman road Watling Street West, which partly follows the course of the present A49 at this point. There are also a series of earthwork remains, possibly the remains of water meadows, which lie along and adjacent to the line of the road diversion.
- 1.3** Because of the archaeological significance of the area through which the proposed road diversion will run, it was deemed necessary to conduct an archaeological evaluation of the route corridor, in accordance with the guidelines laid down in the DoE Planning Policy Guideline No. 16. A brief for the archaeological assessment and evaluation of the road diversion was prepared by the Head of Archaeology of the Leisure Services Department, Shropshire County Council (Watson, 1994).
- 1.4** The study area for this evaluation comprised the road corridor itself and a strip of land on either side. The Shrewsbury to Hereford railway line formed the western edge of the study area, and the base of the steeply rising eastern side of the Marsh Brook valley was taken as its eastern edge.
- 1.5** The Archaeology Service of the Leisure Services Department, Shropshire County Council, was commissioned by the County Surveyor's Department, Shropshire County Council, to conduct this evaluation in accordance with the brief prepared by the Head of Archaeology.

2 THE AIMS AND METHODOLOGY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

2.1 Aims and Objectives of the Evaluation

2.1.1 The aim of this evaluation is to provide information enabling an informed and reasonable planning decision to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the areas affected by the proposed road scheme.

2.1.2 The objectives were:

- a) To locate any archaeological features and deposits likely to be affected by the road diversion.
- b) To assess their survival, quality, condition, and significance.
- c) To identify and assess the significant archaeological impacts likely to arise from the construction of the road diversion and to recommend appropriate mitigation strategies.

2.2 Methodology of the Evaluation

2.2.1 To achieve these objectives, the evaluation of the route of the road scheme was required to comprise a number of different elements:

STAGE 1: Documentary Research

A desk-top study, comprising documentary and cartographic research, would be undertaken to locate and assess previously unrecorded features within the route corridor, and also to further elucidate known affected sites. This research would include a survey of the aerial photographs and primary and secondary sources held at the County Sites and Monuments Record and the County Records and Research Unit. An outline history of the land use and development of the study area would be compiled.

STAGE 2: Field Survey

A walk-over survey would be undertaken along the entire route in order to locate and assess any previously unrecorded earthwork features of significance within the route corridor.

Any earthwork remains within the route corridor would be recorded by means of an interpretive measured survey. The results would be presented as a plan or series of plans at 1:1000 scale.

STAGE 3: Field Evaluation

Sample excavation might be required following the results of Stages 1 and 2 of the evaluation. Any such excavations would be limited to the top of significant archaeological deposits, which would then be sampled only where essential for achieving the objectives of the evaluation. A full written, graphic, and photographic record would be made of the findings.

3 ASSESSMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES AFFECTED BY THE ROAD SCHEME

3.1 STAGE 1: The Documentary Research by Dr C Phillpotts

3.1.1 Introduction

The documentary research has covered the main printed, manuscript, cartographic and photographic sources for the history of the study area. More work could be done on manuscript sources to unravel the tangles of the tenorial history of the land, but this would provide little additional information about the use of the land or the impact of previous generations upon it. The emphasis of the research has been topographical in accordance with the requirements of an archaeological survey.

Enclosures of uncertain date a short distance to the east indicate that there was some prehistoric occupation of the area. At least one Roman road passed along the valley and crossed the Marsh Brook at the centre of the study area. As far as the history of the land can be traced from the time of Domesday Book onwards, it was almost entirely agricultural. The most notable features of this farming history were a corn mill and a series of water meadows in the valley, bordered by woodlands on the slopes to the east. In the nineteenth century there were brickyards nearby and the valley was transformed by the construction of the railway.

3.1.2 Geology

Marshbrook lies at the bottom of the fault valley created by the Church Stretton Fault. Some of the oldest rocks in the county, of late Precambrian date (c.700-570 million years ago), are exposed in outcrops in the sides of the Church Stretton valley around Marshbrook. Marshbrook also marks the easternmost extent of the Welsh Ice sheet of the early Wolstonian glaciation (between 200,000 and 150,000 years ago), and lies just beyond the southernmost edge of the Irish Sea Ice sheet of the Devensian glaciation, which stopped in the Church Stretton area at its peak c.18,000 years ago. The ice had 'retreated' from the Church Stretton valley by about 13,000 years ago, leaving behind boulder clays and gravels between 30-60m thick on the valley floor. Since this time, the streams, such as the Marsh Brook which runs from north to south through the study area, have been depositing alluvium over their floodplains on the valley floor. (Toghill, 1990)

3.1.3 Prehistoric Occupation

Prehistoric stone tools were found at Acton Scott last century. They were noted as a stone hammer, a net sinker and a scraper, all deposited at Shrewsbury Museum (VCHS 1, 202). The precise locations of the finds are unknown, so it is unclear how close they were to the study area.

On the hill between the A49 and Acton Scott to the east were two enclosures, both identified from aerial photographs. They are of uncertain date but are Iron Age or Romano-British in appearance. The southern example SA 1421 at SO44708935 was a double-ditched sub-circular enclosure, with traces of a rectangular feature on the west side (APs SMR SO4489B, C and D; LSL OS

series no.334; LSL County series no.6799). The northern enclosure SA 2057 at SO44778958 had a single ditch, only the north and west sides visibly surviving modern ploughing (AP SMR SO4489A). This second enclosure may have given rise to the name Castle Hill, applied to this area since the late sixteenth century (Stamper n.d. 20; SRO 3320/1/2; LSL tithe apportionment no.5 field 109). The nearest castle was the motte at Minton, a kilometre and a half to the north-west.

These finds and features indicate a prehistoric human presence to the east of the study area, but as there has been no excavation its nature is unknown. Nor is it clear if the occupation extended to the valley bottom.

3.1.4 Roman Roads

In the north half of the study area the A49 runs along the route of Watling Street West, the Roman road running from Wroxeter to Leintwardine (SA 108). At Marshbrook this road crossed the stream to the west bank and continued south-southwest towards Bushmoor. The line of the road can be traced along surviving paths and field boundaries. A length of it centring on SO440895 is Scheduled Ancient Monument Shropshire No.287, described as a "fine piece of agger" 120 yards long. Sections have been cut across the road further to the north in the Church Stretton area and found it to be a gravel surface about 4.8m broad, generally raised slightly above the level of the surrounding countryside.

A W J Houghton identified the road which runs north to join Watling Street West in Marshbrook at SO44198981 as another Roman road SA 2613 (Houghton 1961-4, 185-90). He interpreted this as a continuation of I D Margary's road no.613, which ran north from Ariconium apparently to terminate at Ashton in Herefordshire, where it joins the line of the A49 (Margary 1957, 2 63). Houghton excavated a section across it in Marsh Wood at SO444892, finding a well-made surface cut into the solid rock. However, the route he traced for the road is not entirely convincing, and near Marshbrook it probably consists of the pre-nineteenth-century road to Ludlow (see below under Road Alterations).

If Marshbrook was at the junction of two Roman roads at the point where they forded a stream, some sort of roadside settlement or installation would not be unlikely. A third-century bronze Roman coin SA 4093 was found in the car-park of the Wayside Inn (formerly New Inn and Station Inn) at SO44178984 in 1985, and what was thought to be a Roman milestone SA 256 in the Marsh Brook at approximately SO4489, but there is no other evidence of a Roman presence at the crossing. A kilometre and a half to the east a Roman villa was discovered in 1817, when the course of the road through Acton Scott was diverted. It lay at SO458898 in a sub-rectangular ditched enclosure SA 4419. It was further excavated and recorded in 1844, when six Greek coins ranging in date from 300 BC to 45 AD were found (Acton 1844, 339-45). This was one of the rare outlying villas in the Cornovii territory (Stanford 1980, 155).

3.1.5 Medieval Manors

The study area is divided between the parishes of Acton Scott, Church Stretton and Wistanstow, the boundaries running for the most part along the old courses of the streams (see below under meadows). Each of these parishes contained manors and sub-manors in the medieval period and subsequently.

At the time of the Domesday Book survey in 1086 the manor of Acton was held by Eldred as a tenant of Roger de Montgomery, earl of Shrewsbury. Before the Conquest it had been in the hands of Edric Sylvaticus, and remained with him until his lands were confiscated for rebellion, probably in 1070. The large and complex manor of Stretton, which included Little Stretton and All Stretton besides the manorial centre at Church Stretton, was held by Earl Roger. He also held two manors attached to Stretton at Minton and Whittingslow. His English predecessor in all of these was Edwin, earl of Mercia. The north-west part of the study area probably lay in the manor of Minton, except the northern end in the manor of Stretton. The manor of Wistanstow had been granted to the church of St Alkmund in Shrewsbury by Aethelflaed of Mercia early in the tenth century. It served as a prebend supplying the canons of the church with food and rents. At the time of Edward the Confessor (1042-66) it was held by Spirtes the Priest and Godric Wiffesune. On Godric's death, Earl Roger granted it to Nigel the Doctor, who held it directly from the king in 1086. He found it was "waste" when he acquired it (Thorn, 1986, 4.1.27, 4.27.33, 4.28.4, 9.1; Eyton 11, 355-6).

In 1086 these manors lay in Leintwardine Hundred, except Stretton which was in Culvestone, and later in the medieval period they all passed to Munslow Hundred.

The manor of Minton was turned into a sergeanty tenure, held by the service of guarding the royal forest of the Long Mynd and the hunting enclosures at Bushmoor and Hawkhurst (Thorn, 1986, 4.28.4n). As such it was held by the Minton family from the reign of Henry I (1100-35) onwards. In the 1260s the manor was divided amongst co-heiresses, and the fragments continued to be held by their descendants (Eyton 12, 5-11).

Wistanstow manor was absorbed into the barony of Clun, held by the FitzAlan family. The FitzAlans detached the Marsh Farm and Marshbrook area of the manor, including the south-west part of the study area, and annexed it to their manor of Strefford. This was held by their tenants the Anglicus or le Engleys family in the thirteenth century (Eyton 11, 358-68).

After the confiscation of the lands of Earl Roger's son in 1102, Stretton became a royal manor, until it was granted to the FitzAlans in 1316. It remained with their descendants the earls of Arundel until the time of Elizabeth I (Eyton 12, 27).

The manor of Acton included the entire eastern half of the study area. After the confiscations of 1102 the FitzAlans became the overlords of Acton and remained so until 1574. They had installed the le Stranges of Ness as mesne

tenants by the 1150s, but these were never resident. The resident tenancy was probably held by the descendants of Eldred, the 1086 tenant, until it too was divided amongst co-heiresses in the reign of King John (1199-1216). It was later sub-divided and subinfeudated even further, into fragments as small as a sixth of the manor, and these fragments were inherited and sold in a series of complicated patterns. "The estate was in short the subject of a very ramified Coparcenery" (Eyton 11, 376). The shares were held by the families of Purcell, Wynnesbury, Littleton and Scott. The Scotts gave their name to the village, but later took their name from the village in turn, becoming known as the Actons. The manor was finally re-united in their hands in 1587-8, and remained in the family until 1780, when it passed to John Stackhouse of Pendarves in Cornwall, the husband of an heiress. He installed his son Thomas Pendarves Stackhouse (who later took the name of Acton) as resident squire in 1807. After his death in 1835 his widow Frances held a life interest in the Hall, but the estate passed to her brother-in-law Edward William Wynne-Pendarves, the owner at the time of the tithe survey in 1840 (Stamper n.d., manors, 12; LSL tithe apportionment no.5).

3.1.6 Woodlands

Woodland was always an important component of the manorial economy on the eastern side of the study area. The name "Acton" probably denoted a specialised function in the provision of oak timber in the Saxon period (Gelling 1992, 123-4). There was a *haia*, a hedged enclosure for hunting, at Acton in 1086, probably to be identified with the common wood of Oakwood to the north-east of the study area (Thorn, 1986, 4.27.33). A survey of Shropshire forests in 1235 mentioned the wood of *Oakwud* at Acton; it had oak trees but no growth of underwood (Eyton 6, 338). Sixty acres of wood were conveyed with the sale of part of the manor (then called Acton-in-Longfield) in 1278 (Eyton 11, 377).

This woodland was progressively reduced in size by taking land into cultivation around its edges. The field called the Stocking or the Long Stocking adjacent to the Long Wood in the north-east part of the study area derives its name from the clearing of woodland, meaning land covered with tree-stumps (Foxall 1980, 6, 29; LSL tithe apportionment no.5, field 18). The farms of Oakwood and Little Oakwood appear to have been early enclosures from the west side of the wood. In 1591 Oakwood Helde was about 30 acres in extent and partially used for pasture (SRO 3320/1/1). By 1776 little woodland remained, and the remainder (under the name Hawkwood Common) was enclosed into fields in 1811 (Stamper n.d., 20-1 and n.42; SRO 3925/115.2 and Box 12).

The Long Wood was pasture in 1776, woodland in 1820 and coppiced in 1840 (SRO 3925 box 10.1, 10.2, 10.3; LSL tithe apportionment no.5, field 19). Smaller pieces of woodland in the area and Castle Hill, the part of the original common wood to the south-east of the study area, were planted with fir trees in the early nineteenth century (SRO 1045/660; 3925 box 10.2, 10.3; LSL tithe apportionment no.5 fields 66, 65, 109).

3.1.7 The Acton Scott Estate and its Farms

It appears that most of the land in the east part of the study area did not form part of the Acton Scott estate at the time of the re-unification of manor under the Acton family in 1587-8. There was a property in the north part of the study area comprising meadows and pastures called Pool Head, Garrett's Pool, the Weir Pool, and Mowsley alias Smeeth's Meadow, in Church Stretton parish (SRO 3933/1-37, 82-140). The farm later known as Oakwood was sold in 1591 by Thomas Rawlins to William Littleton, both of Little Stretton. Later it passed to the Thynne family and in 1684 to Samuel Powell of Church Stretton. The property at this time included Queensbatch Mills (see below), Castle Hill, and the meadows and pastures above, including Mowsley, and various pools and fisheries. The farm had been acquired by the manorial estate by 1776 (Stamper n.d., 15; SRO 3320/1/1-5).

In about 1600 the freehold of the farm later known as Little Oakwood was held by the Lewis family. It passed to Edmund Breeze in 1743 and then to the Thomas family. John Stackhouse bought it from John Thomas in 1808, along with other land in the valley to extend the estate on the west side (Stamper n.d., 15; SRO 2563/16).

In the surveys of 1776 and 1820 the estate was divided into a number of farms let to tenants. Those which impinged on the study area were Acton Farm, Church Farm, Oakwood Farm and Oakwood Cottage Farm (formerly Little Oakwood) (SRO 3925 115.1, 115.2, box 10.1, 10.2, 10.3). Oakwood Farm absorbed much of the land enclosed from Hawkwood Common in 1811 and Mowsley Farm on the north boundary of the parish (Stamper n.d., 23).

There were also a number of rented cottages on the estate. Those at Oakwood were known as Woodhouses in the eighteenth century, but the name afterwards went out of use. A seventeenth-century cottage SA 729 at the foot of Castle Hill at SO44438976 was refurbished with ornamental carved barge boards in the early nineteenth century. It later became the Post Office and is now a Grade II listed building (Stamper n.d., 4-5).

3.1.8 Queensbatch Mill

Water mills were noted in Domesday Book in the manors of Stretton and Wistanstow, the latter paying a rent of five packloads of corn (Thorn, 1986, 4.1.27, 9.1). A valuation of the manor and valley of Stretton in 1309 mentioned a water-mill and two fisheries (Eyton 12, 27). In the eighteenth century there was a mill at Marsh Mill on the boundary of Wistanstow parish with Acton Scott, further south than the study area, probably to be identified with the Domesday corn mill (SRO 1643/3-5).

One of the shares of Acton manor conveyed in 1278 included one sixth of the profits of a mill (Eyton 11, 377). This was probably to the north or east of the Hall, where there was a chain of fishponds (Stamper n.d., 26).

Inquisitions *post mortem* on the owners of shares of the manor of Minton included one sixth of a mill in 1283, a quarter of a mill in 1299 (paying a rent of

one and a half quarters of corn), and one third of a mill in 1308 (Eyton 12, 9-11). It is probably this mill which is to be identified with the post-medieval Queensbatch Mill, which may therefore have had a continuous history as a corn-mill for six centuries.

Queensbatch Mill SA 15770 at SO44059032 was first mentioned under that name in 1684. At that time it was a double water corn mill with a piece of meadow land attached (SRO 3320/1/2). It appeared on the maps of Rocque in 1752 and Baugh in 1808. In 1815 and 1852 it was part of the estate of the Pemberton family (SRO 1045/660; LSL railway maps R.2, R.11). It gave names such as Mill Meadow and Mill Bank to several of the surrounding fields in Church Stretton parish (LSL tithe apportionment no.81 fields 1786, 1848, 1851, 1853, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1966).

The mill was separated from its mill-pool to the west by the building of the railway embankment in 1852. The right to build over the mill-pool was purchased from the Reverend R N Pemberton by the railway company. However culverts connected the pool under the railway lines to the mill-leats, and the mill continued to operate (LSL railway maps R.4, R.36, R.146). Queensbatch Mill was listed in directories in 1851, 1863 and 1885, and appears on a map of neighbouring property for sale in 1896 (LSL C.69vf) and the OS maps of 1883 and 1902. Some of its buildings still survive.

3.1.9 Meadows (Fig. 2)

Most of the study area along the line of the Marsh Brook was probably meadow land from early in the medieval period, although there was no meadow land specified in the Domesday survey. The conveyance of part of the manor of Acton in 1278 included six acres of meadow (Eyton 11, 377). Meadows in the manor of Minton were mentioned in the inquisition post mortem of 1283 and deeds of 1292-1300 (Eyton 12, 9, 13)

At Acton Scott Crammarsh Meadow was mentioned in 1614-5, Quinny upper and lower meadows, Chelmich and Squire meadows in 1640, the Lower Meadow in 1649, Ubnell or Ebnell Meadow in 1666 and 1693, and a meadow called Marshfield or Church Field in 1693 (SRO 3925 boxes 8 and 12; 2228/1 ff.4, 6 and 11). Meadows attached to the Oakwood Farm/Queensbatch Mills property were specified in 1684, including Oaldwell Meadow and Moore Meadow (SRO 3320/1/2, 3320/1/4). Oakwood Meadow and the Beven Hale (or Bodenham) were mentioned in a deed of 1753 (SRO 3320/1/6).

In 1776 15% of the area of Acton Scott manor (excluding its commons and woods) was devoted to meadows. Upper Inn Meadow, Norley Meadow, Smeeth's Meadow and Mill Meadow lay within the study area (Stamper n.d., 22; SRO 3925 box 10.1). Field names in the tithe surveys of the 1840s indicate a substantial amount of meadow land along the valley floor (LSL tithe apportionments no.5 fields 39, 64, 105, 108, 193; no.81 fields 1786, 1811, 1849, 1853, 1924, 1926, 1967; no.351 fields 761, 762, 763, 767, 768).

There are some indications in the seventeenth century and later that the resources of these meadows were divided amongst different parts of the manor in doles (SRO 3925 box 12; 2228/1 f.6). In 1776 six tenths of the hay and aftermath from Upper Inn Meadow belonged to Church Farm, two tenths to Henly Farm and two tenths to Mr Marson. Acton Farm possessed Norley Meadow and Smeeth's Meadow in the valley, detached from the main body of its fields near Acton Scott village (SRO 3925 box 10.1). These complicated sharing arrangements were perhaps relics of the division of the manor from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. They were still reflected in the complex ownership pattern along the brook in all three parishes when the railway company acquired its strip of property in the 1850s (LSL railway maps R. 2, R.11, R.36).

In the 1776 survey a note against Upper Inn Meadow said "should be floated" and against Mill Meadow "memo. draining". However, the introduction of the new techniques to the meadows was not made until the time of Thomas Pendarves Stackhouse, as part of a programme of improvements to the estate carried out between 1807 and 1820. When Stackhouse arrived there had been no resident squire for some time and parts of the estate had scarcely changed since the fifteenth century. His improvements included the renovation of the estate cottages (amongst them the Old Post Office SA 729), changing the field boundaries to form regular closes, bringing all the woodlands into the demesne, planting larches and firs on Castle Hill, draining the fields and floating the meadows (Stamper n.d., 23-4; SRO 2563/15 and 16).

Meadows suitable for floating were noted in a survey of 1808 (SRO 2563/1 ff.8 and 9). In September 1812 Stackhouse paid John Jones for altering the course of the brook in Mr Lewis's meadow - Cow Pasture and Norley Meadow - (SRO 2563/50 extraordinary expenses). By 1820 the technique of floating meadowland was applied to Upper Inn Meadow, Mill Meadow and Lower Field, which was renamed as Munslow Meadow (SRO 3925 box 10.2, 10.3). An account book of the 1820s records substantial payments to James Harnett or Arnett the Floater for his specialised work in floating meadows, including Upper Inn Meadow in 1829. Other payments were made for the construction of sluice gates from stone, wood and iron, and wooden "floating stops". In October 1822 a culvert was made under the turnpike road to convey water to float Munslow Meadow, and Harnett was paid to float it in November and December 1823 and April 1824. A wall was built in Cow Pasture in March 1828, where the water flowed from Munslow Meadow. In June 1829 a weir was built in the brook to float a meadow (SRO 2563/38 pp.9-42).

The earthwork remains of these water meadows have been plotted in Munslow Meadow (Fig. 3, Site A) and part of Norley Meadow (Fig. 4, Site B) as Stage 2 of this evaluation (see below, section 3.2). The water courses appear on aerial photographs in the same pattern as they have been plotted on the ground, with some additional water carriers parallel to the main carriage in the centre of Munslow Meadow, and some signs of straight drains in Marsh Wood Meadow (LSL County series no.6799; OS series no.334, also available at SMR)

The old course of the stream also appears on these aerial photographs, contrasting with the modern straight course along two stretches. Through Cow Pasture and Norley Meadow it was probably straightened by John Jones in 1812, and certainly before 1820 (SRO 3925/115.1). The stream was straightened along the east side of the railway embankment in Marsh Brook Meadow as part of a land transaction in 1852 (LSL railway maps R.11 and R.36; SRO 2563/112).

3.1.10 Brickyards

Bricks were made in Acton Scott parish in 1757-8, but it is not clear where the kiln was located (Stamper n.d., 26).

To the north-west of the study area the Marshbrook Brick Works were in use by 1883, but had ceased production by 1930. A tramway linked the brickyard to the clay quarry to the north. Part of the kiln building still survives (SA6886). It does not appear on the tithe map of 1839, but it can be seen on a railway map revised in 1886 (LSL railway map R.36).

To the south of the study area a field in Wistanstow parish at SO446888 was called Brick-kiln Leasow in 1845 (LSL tithe apportionment no.351, field 735). At this time it was a pasture, suggesting that there had been brick production there which had now ceased.

3.1.11 Road Alterations

The main road from Church Stretton to Ludlow was turnpiked in 1756. It was probably at this time that a new section of road was made along the foot of Castle Hill, 200m east of the line of the old road which crossed the stream at Marshbrook and followed the route of SA 2613 through Wistanstow parish. A new road was built to ascend Castle Hill from the turnpike road to Acton Scott village in 1808-9, as part of the improvements made by Thomas Pendarves Stackhouse (Stamper n.d., 2).

3.1.12 The Coming of the Railway

The Shrewsbury and Hereford railway was built through the study area in 1850-52. The railway company therefore had to purchase various pieces of the meadow land in the valley and sell off the surplus land it did not require after construction (SRO 2563/111 and 112). By April 1852 the section from Shrewsbury to Ludlow was completed as a single line and regular services began. A double line was opened as far as Dinmore in November 1863 (Morriss 1991, 15; LSL railway maps R.36). The railway included a station at Marshbrook. This appears to have replaced about three buildings in the path of the railway and cut across the line of the old Ludlow road (LSL railway plans R.145).

3.1.13 Conclusion

The projected line of the A49 road improvement does not cross the location of any known structure. It is possible however that some evidence concerning the Roman road Watling Street West may come to light during ground reduction, particularly if the conjecture about its junction with SA 2613 is correct. In at

least the southern two-thirds of the study area, and possibly for its whole length, the line of the new road will pass through the sites of early nineteenth-century floated water meadows. It is possible that some details of the sluice arrangements may be discovered during the construction programme. The new road will also cut across former water-courses associated with these water-meadows, the original course of the Marsh Brook, and the end of a mill leat belonging to a water mill which probably dates back to the thirteenth century.

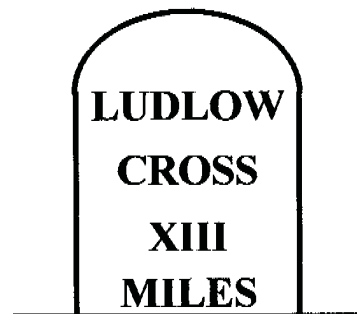
3.2 STAGE 2: The Field Survey

3.2.1 The entire line of the route corridor, and an area to either side as specified by the County Surveyor's Department, was walked in mid-June 1994. The agricultural land was all under pasture, mainly permanent, though with some improvement apparent. Two sets of earthworks, consistent with the silted ditches of former watermeadows, were noted. The first of these were in the field (field no. 2400) on the east side of the present A49 road at the bend in Marshbrook, centred on SO443899 (Site A, SA4624). The second set (Site B) were centred on SO444894 in a field (field no. 4245/4745) on the west side of the present A49 road at the southern end of the proposed road diversion. A silted-up ditch and field boundary marked the line of the tail-race of the Queensbatch Mill mill stream (Site D), and a milestone of probable eighteenth-century date at SO4418390085 was also noted and photographed (Site E).

3.2.2 **Site A (SA4624):** This site occupies the whole of the field formerly known as Munslow Field (see above, section 3.1.9). A measured survey of Site A was carried out by the Land Survey Section of the County Surveyor's Department on behalf of the Archaeology Service. The results were plotted at scales of 1:500 and 1:1000, and were drawn upon to produce Fig. 3. The survey revealed a series of shallow, parallel linear ditches, none more than 0.2m deep by 1m wide, running off from either side of a main spinal ditch or *carriage* (Fig. 3, a-a¹) about 2.5m wide by 0.6m deep. The carriage ran from north to south across the field, and in the northern part two further ditches ran parallel to its west side. These were connected by east-west ditches at either end. Raised mounds, in the surface of which stone flagstones were visible, at the intersections of some of the main ditches may mark the presence of hatches or sluices.

At the northeastern corner of the field a holloway (**b-b¹**) marks the course of a former trackway, shown on the 1840 Acton Scott parish Tithe map (LSL Tithe Apportionments No. 5) running from Little Oakwood to join the Acton Scott road at the Old Post Office. The same map also shows a field boundary or more likely a footpath bisecting the field from west to east, to link up with the above-mentioned trackway at the eastern edge of the field. A section of ditch and a low linear mound (**c-c¹**) on the eastern edge of this field coincide with this footpath/possible former field boundary. A public footpath (OS 1:2500, SO4489+SO4490 Public Footpath 11) still follows this line.

- 3.2.3 Site B:** The principle feature in this field, the field identified as Norley Meadow by the documentary research (see above, section 3.1.9) was a sinuous dry ditch up to 5m wide by up to c 0.5m deep, which followed precisely the line of the ward boundary. This feature almost certainly represents the pre-1812 course of the Marsh Brook (see above, section 3.1.9). A series of dry ditches, none more than 0.2m deep by 0.5m wide, were just visible on the eastern side of this former stream course. It is likely that these ditches also represent the remains of part of a former system of water meadows. A measured survey was undertaken of these features at a scale of 1:1000 (Fig. 4).
- 3.2.4 Site C - the Roman Road Watling Street West (SA108):** No trace of the line of the Roman road SA108 was seen outside the line of the present A49 north of its presumed crossing of the Marsh Brook in the vicinity of the present bridge. It is assumed that here its course is coincidental with that of the A49. The course of this road south of the bridge lies outside the study area.
- 3.2.5 Site D - mill leat:** The proposed road diversion cuts across a 30m long section of the tail-race of the Queensbatch Mill mill leat (identified by the documentary research). The affected section of the leat is now a silted-up semi-dry ditch about 0.25m deep by 1m wide (opening out to about 2.5m at its junction with the Marsh Brook), with a post and wire fence on its eastern side.
- 3.2.6 Site E:** A milestone, of probable eighteenth or early nineteenth-century date, was noted at SO4418390085. The milestone, which is recorded on the Ordnance Survey maps of the area, bears the inscription:



3.3 Discussion

- 3.3.1** No visible sign of the Roman road Watling Street West was apparent outside the line of the present A49 Trunk road in the northern part of the study area. It is probable, though by no means certain, that the line of the present road at this point coincides with that of the Roman road. No other remains associated with the Roman road were visible. However, in recent years, two major Roman roadside settlements have been discovered as a result of road construction, at Meole Brace, Shrewsbury (SA2) and at Heath Road, Whitchurch (SA4288). Neither site produced any cropmark evidence for their existence, and the Heath Road settlement produced no fieldwalking finds (Ellis et al, 1994, and Hannaford and Mason, 1991). Both these Roman settlements were located close to the crossing point of a stream by a Roman road, a situation paralleled at Marshbrook. Two finds of Roman date have been made at Marshbrook, a

milestone (SA256) - now lost - said to have been recovered from the Marsh Brook, and a coin (SA4093), an antonianus of Tetricus I (270-273 AD), from the edge of the car-park of the Wayside Inn. The possibility of encountering further remains of Roman date during road construction should be borne in mind when considering the archaeological provision for the road scheme (see section 5 below).

- 3.3.2** Although the present Queensbatch Mill probably dates from the seventeenth century, there may well have been a mill on the site for six hundred years (see above, section 3.1.8). The documentary research has identified the course of the millstream taking water to and from the mill, and the southernmost 30m of the leat, at the point where it flowed back into the Marsh Brook, lies within the corridor of the proposed road improvements. This former tail-race was noted during the field survey to be now represented by a shallow, silted-up ditch; nevertheless, this ditch represents an ancient feature in the landscape, possibly dating back to the medieval period. It is also possible that structural features associated with this former water channel may lie buried within its silts.
- 3.3.3** The two sets of earthwork remains recorded, Site A (SA4624) and Site B, are both likely to be the remains of former systems of watermeadows. It seems that the practice of irrigating meadowland was first introduced into this country in the early sixteenth century, although it was a long established tradition in parts of Europe (Rackham, 1986). Providing fodder for cattle and sheep at the end of winter and early part of spring was always a problem, which must have been exacerbated by an increase in sheep production in the 17th and 18th centuries (Taylor, 1975), and, in Shropshire, by increased demand for cattle and dairy products (Stamper, 1989). The introduction of watermeadows was seen as a solution to this problem.
- 3.3.4** In the simplest form of water meadows, the *catchwork* system (the Marshbrook examples appear to fall into this category), water would be led off from the main stream or river at a weir or dam, and distributed over the meadowland by a network of artificial channels or *carriages*, to be collected and returned to the stream by further channels or *drawns*. The flow of water could be controlled from hatches or sluices situated along the carriages. (Taylor, Rackham, *ibid.*) The meadows would be flooded or *float*ed over the winter months, the water depositing nutrient-rich silts, and providing protection from frosts, thus encouraging early, strong growth of grass for early pasture and hay crops (Stamper, *ibid.*). In summer, the meadows might be irrigated again to provide further crops of hay. The catchwork system of watermeadows has been recognised in Herefordshire from the late sixteenth century (Taylor, *ibid.*), and in Shropshire the flooding of meadowland was being practiced by the end of the seventeenth century (Stamper, *ibid.*).
- 3.3.5** A new technique of "floating downwards" was pioneered in Herefordshire in the late sixteenth century and had spread to the rest of the Marches, including Shropshire, by the end of the seventeenth. It was more universally applied in the chalkland valleys of Wessex. Water was conveyed from the stream along a main carriage to a series of "water carriers" or "floats", consisting of long

ridges with channels cut along their spines. The water spilt down the sides of these ridges and flowed back to the stream along the intervening furrows. The surface of the meadow was thereby covered with a thin sheet of flowing water. Specialised trenching tools for constructing the watercourses began to be made in the seventeenth century. The construction of water meadows involved a large capital outlay and was therefore only feasible on substantial estates. The meadows often needed to be provided with drains before the construction of the watercourses began (Stamper 1989, 39; VCHS 4, 153; Aston 1985, 117; Langdon 1988, 99; Cantor 1987, 48; Taylor 1975, 136; Plymley 1813, 238-40, 353-4). This system leaves distinctive surviving earthworks broadly similar to ridge and furrow ploughing. The earthwork remains at Sites A and B exhibit no signs of these ridges, and although there is a suggestion that Munslow Field (Site A) may have been semi-improved, the surviving features here are more consistent with those belonging to the catchwork system of watermeadows described above.

- 3.3.6** The documentary research has provided evidence which dates the laying out of the watermeadows on the Acton Scott estate at Marshbrook to between 1812 and 1829 (see above, section 3.1.9). However, watermeadows needed constant maintenance in order to function properly, and it is likely that the system of watermeadows at Marshbrook fell out of use in the late nineteenth century, perhaps during the great agricultural depression of 1875-1914. No studies have been undertaken to quantify the extent of surviving or vestigial watermeadows in the county as a whole, but it is likely that a large proportion of formerly irrigated meadowland has been lost due to 'improvement' of pasture, land drainage, and conversion to arable production in the last hundred years or so.
- 3.3.7** On the results of Stages 1 and 2 of this evaluation, it was considered that sample excavation prior to road construction would not be required, and it was therefore decided not to proceed with Stage 3 of the evaluation as outlined in section 2.2.1 above.

4 THE IMPACT OF THE ROAD DIVERSION ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE

4.1 The Impact of Road Construction Methods

The methods employed in road construction will inevitably involve the destruction of all earthwork remains and all but the deepest archaeological features within the road corridor. Most of the damage is done during the early stages of construction with the removal of topsoil from the road corridor, and the subsequent disturbance of the subsoil by heavy plant. The cutting of roadside drains, service trenches, and other ancillary works will further damage any surviving archaeological deposits. Even where the finished road is to be embanked, the initial site preparation is likely to involve the removal of topsoil and other unsuitable material from the road corridor. Any deposits surviving road construction will be sealed beneath a permanent structure and will be unavailable for future study and research.

4.2 The Impact on Specific Sites

- 4.2.1 Site A (SA4624) :** The proposed road improvement will cut through the western edge of the field containing the earthwork remains of these water meadows. Some 2,750m² of the field will be lost to the new road corridor, affecting one 25m length of visible earthworks.
- 4.2.2 Site B:** The proposed road diversion will almost completely destroy the surviving earthwork remains of these former water meadows.
- 4.2.3 Site C - Watling Street West Roman road (SA108):** A total length of about 600m of the Roman road is likely to be directly affected by the proposed road construction. This is comprised of one section 500m long at the northern end of the proposed works, and a section of 100m length immediately to the north of the present road junction at Marshbrook. Both these sections lie beneath the present A49 trunk road. Between these is a 300m section of the Roman road which lies to the immediate east of the new road corridor. This underlies the present A49 road, and if the present road is to be removed, then any underlying Roman road surfaces are likely to be destroyed too.
- 4.2.4 Site D:** While Queensbatch Mill itself will not be directly affected by the proposed road diversion, a 30m long section of the southern end of the tail race of the former mill leat will be cut through at SO44159011 at the point where it re-joined the Marsh Brook.
- 4.2.5 Site E:** The milestone at SO4418390085 lies just to the east of the new road corridor on the edge of a section of the present road that will be cut off by the proposed diversion. However, if the present road is to be removed, then this feature is under threat.
- 4.3 Associated Ancillary Works**
- 4.3.1 Contractors' compounds, spoil dumps, and borrow pits:** The siting of contractors' compounds, spoil dumps, and borrow pits can also adversely affect archaeological features and deposits lying outside the road corridor.

4.3.2 Landscaping and tree planting: Landscaping and tree planting may also have a detrimental effect on archaeological features and deposits outside the road corridor.

5 MITIGATING EFFECTS: RECOMMENDED ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROVISION FOR THE AFFECTED SITES

5.1 Grading of Affected Sites.

5.1.1 The archaeological provision recommended for the various sites affected by the proposed new road will depend upon their status, and may range from preservation *in situ* to the maintenance of a watching brief during the destructive phases of road construction.

5.1.2 Criteria employed for grading:

(i) In grading the sites affected by the road diversion, the same criteria have been used as those employed by English Heritage to evaluate a monument's status in terms of national importance for the purposes of scheduling.

(ii) In the light of the data accumulated by this evaluation, consideration has been given to the following criteria for each of the sites to be affected by the construction of the proposed new road: **survival/condition; period; rarity; fragility/vulnerability; documentation; group value; diversity; potential; amenity value.**

5.1.3 The known sites which will be affected by the construction of the proposed road scheme have thus been categorised within the following grades :

GRADE A: These sites are considered to be of sufficient significance as to merit preservation *in situ*.

GRADE B: These sites are of such importance as to require preservation by record. This can involve the excavation of below ground remains and the recording of above ground features. Sufficient funding for this should be allocated within the construction budget, and time for the completion of such recording should be built into the pre-construction timetable.

GRADE C: Sites on which an archaeological watching brief should be maintained. Provision of time and resources should be made for the recording of any archaeological features revealed during the course of road construction and associated ancillary works.

GRADE D: Further field evaluation is required on these sites before recommendations for the level of archaeological provision can be made.

GRADE E: Sites requiring no further archaeological provision.

5.2 Recommended Archaeological Provision

GRADE C: Sites A (SA4624) and B: the earthwork remains of these sites have already been recorded. A watching brief should be maintained here during road construction to record any buried remains associated with the watermeadows and any other archaeological features. To facilitate this, all initial topsoil stripping should be carried out under direct archaeological supervision, followed by a sub-surface examination and assessment. Provision of time and resources should be made for

the adequate recording of any archaeological features revealed during the course of road construction and associated ancillary works.

Site C - Watling Street West Roman road (SA108): a watching brief should be maintained here likewise during road construction to record any buried remains associated with the Roman road and any other archaeological features. Provision of time and resources should be made for the adequate recording of any archaeological features revealed during the course of road construction and associated ancillary works.

Site D - course of mill leat (Queensbatch Mill): a watching brief should be maintained here likewise during road construction to record any remains associated with this former artificial water course. Provision of time and resources should be made for the adequate recording of any archaeological features revealed during the course of road construction and associated ancillary works.

GRADE E Site E - Milestone at SO4418390085: no further archaeological provision is required for this feature. However, if road works, landscaping, or reclamation works are likely to affect this feature, then it should be relocated to an appropriate site at the edge of the new road corridor.

5.3 Further Recommendations

- 5.3.1** The proposed road scheme crosses a landscape predominated by permanent or improved pasture. Such land use is not conducive to the production of cropmarks visible from the air or to the detection of sites through fieldwalking. There must remain a distinct possibility that there will be other, as yet unrecorded, sites that will only be revealed once construction work on the road has been started (see section 3.3.1, above).
- 5.3.2** It is therefore further recommended that an archaeological watching brief be maintained along the entire road corridor during the destructive phases of road construction in order to record any such sites. Provision of time and resources should be made for the recording of any archaeological features revealed during the course of road construction. The watching brief should be extended to cover groundworks associated with the siting of contractors' compounds, spoil dumps, and borrow pits, and areas affected by landscaping and tree planting associated with road construction.
- 5.3.3** It is recommended that every effort be made to restrict all ground disturbing ancillary works to within the road corridor.
- 5.3.4** It is also recommended that construction companies and sub-contractors inform their employees of the need to report as soon as possible any archaeological finds and features discovered during works.

6 REFERENCES AND SOURCES CONSULTED

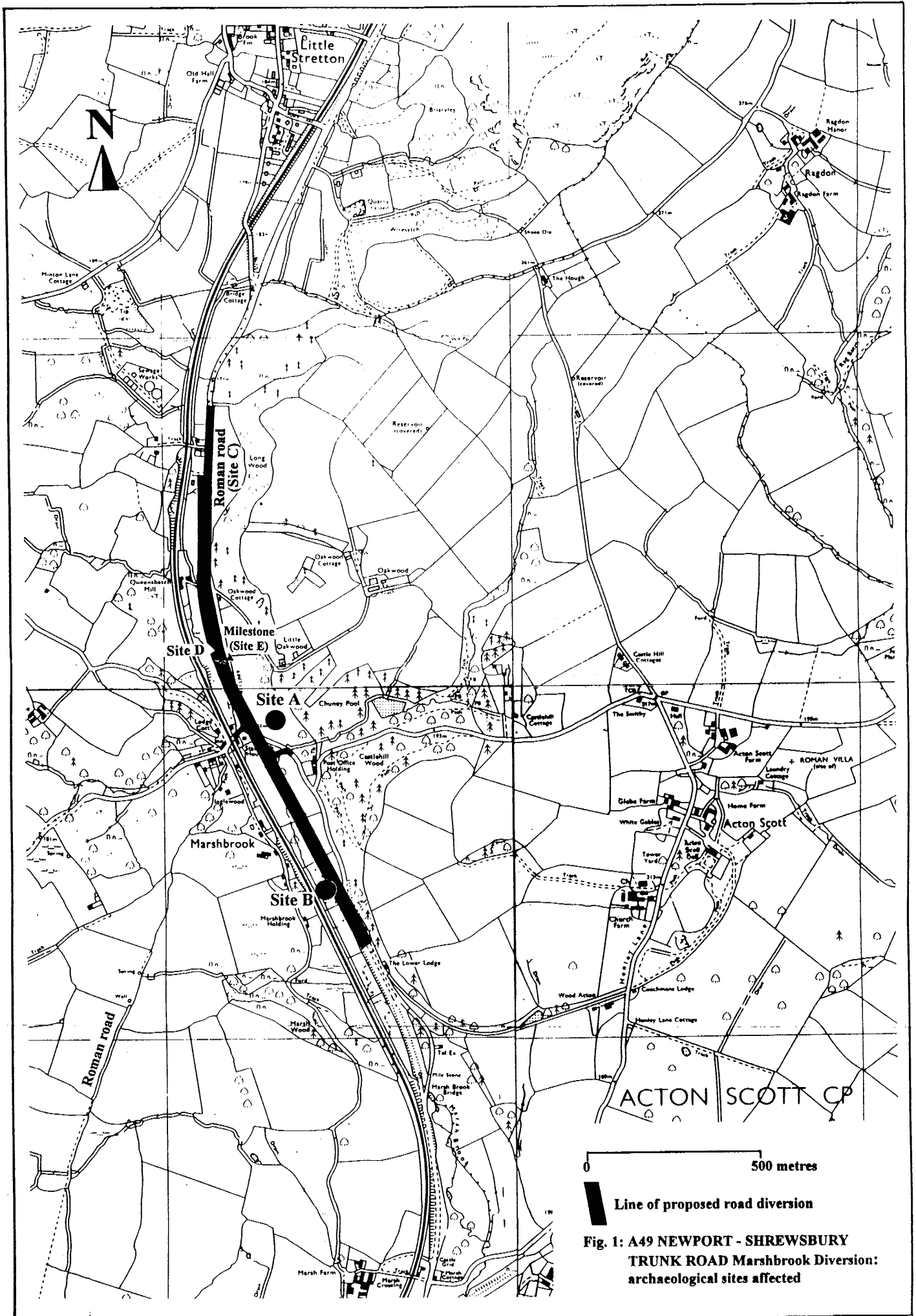
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Abbreviations:

- APs Aerial Photographs
- CSA The Cartulary of Shrewsbury Abbey ed U Rees, 1975
- DB Domesday Book xxv Shropshire ed F and C Thorn, 1986
- DoE Department of the Environment
- DoT Department of Transport
- LSL Local Studies Library, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury
- OS Ordnance Survey
- SMR Sites and Monuments Record, Shire Hall, Shrewsbury
- SRO Shropshire Record Office, Shire Hall, Shrewsbury
- TSAS Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society
- TSAHS Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society
- VCHS Victoria County History of Shropshire

7 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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0 500 metres

Line of proposed road diversion

Fig. 1: A49 NEWPORT - SHREWSBURY TRUNK ROAD Marshbrook Diversion: archaeological sites affected

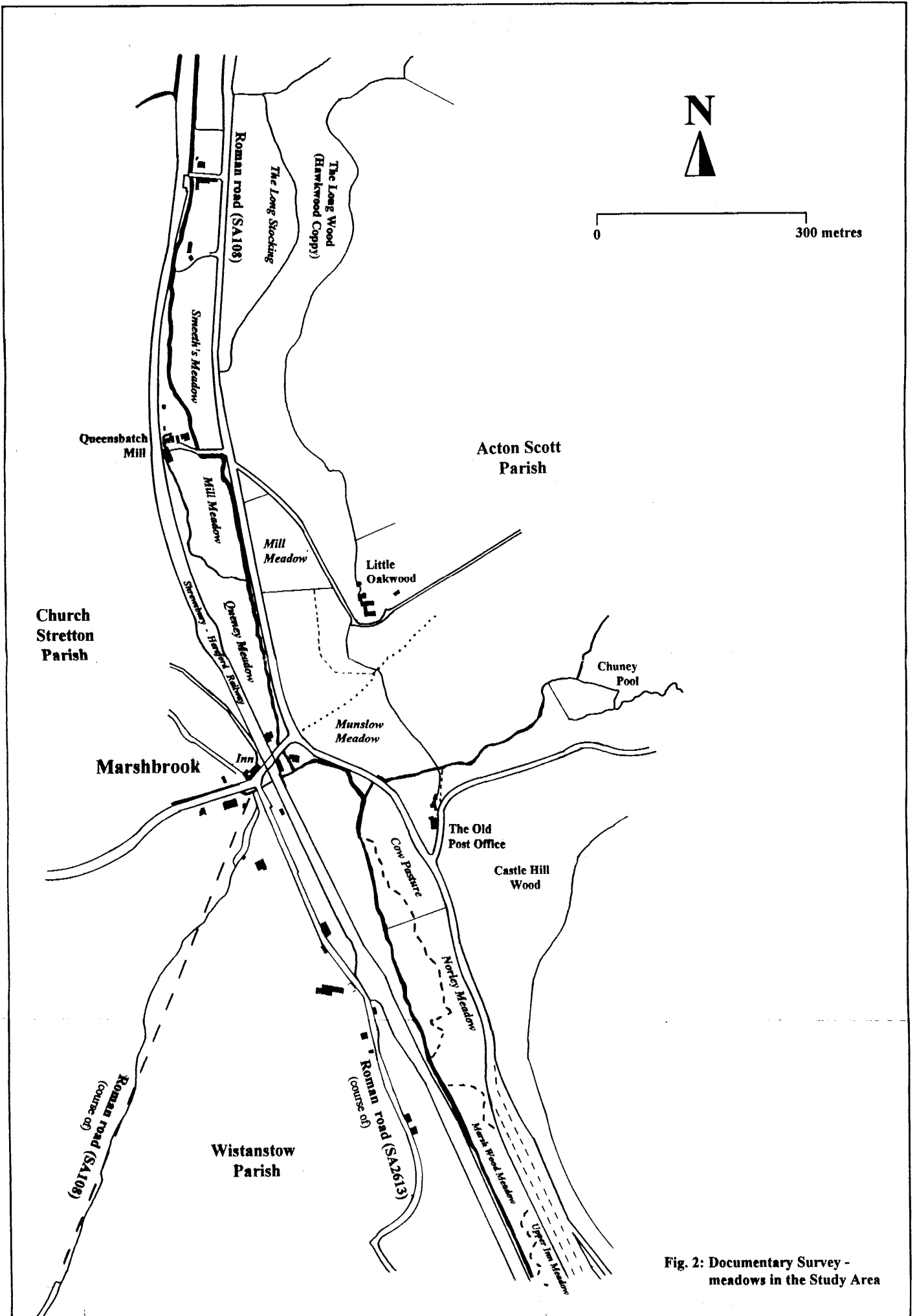


Fig. 2: Documentary Survey - meadows in the Study Area

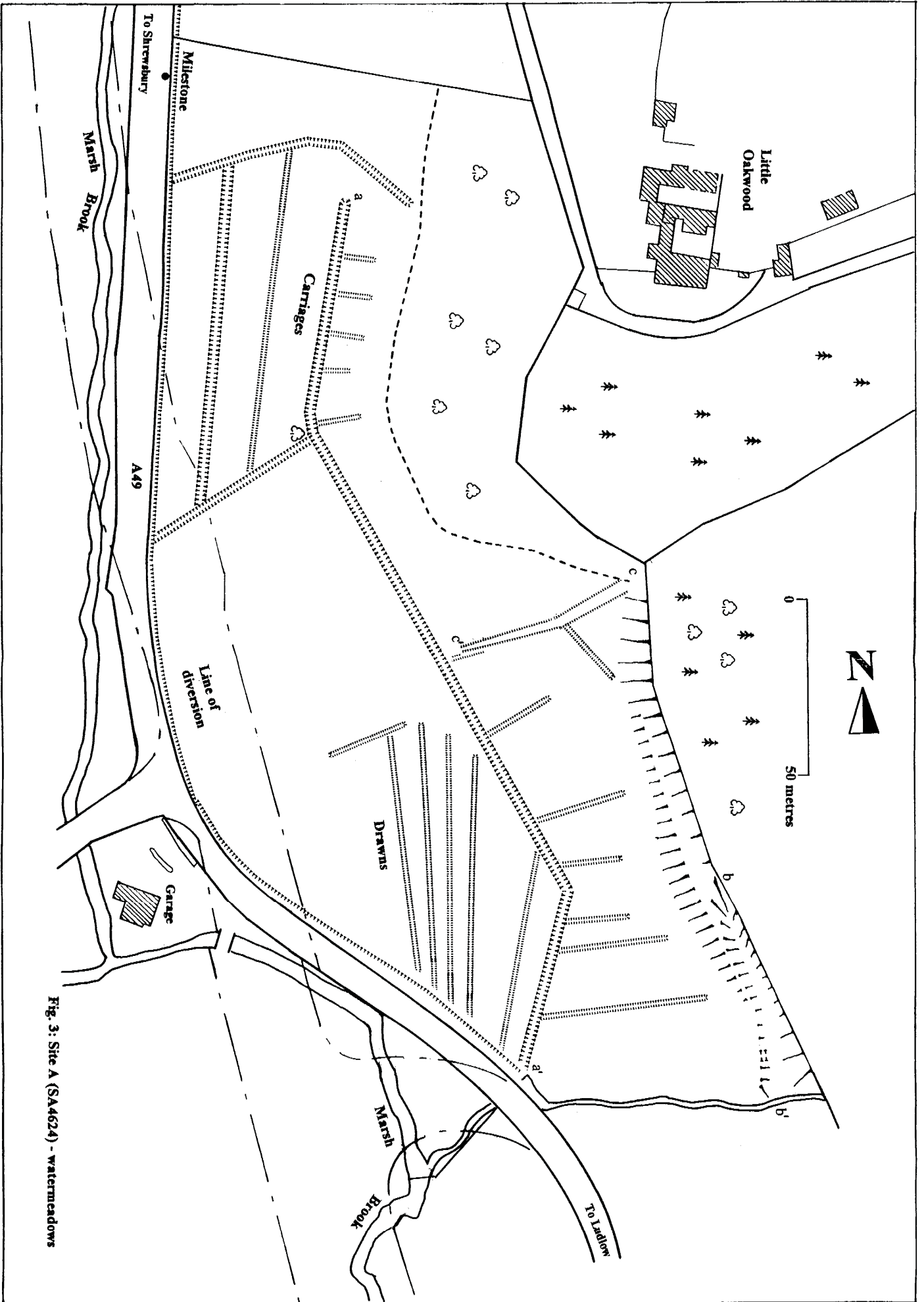


Fig. 3: Site A (SA4624) - watermeadows

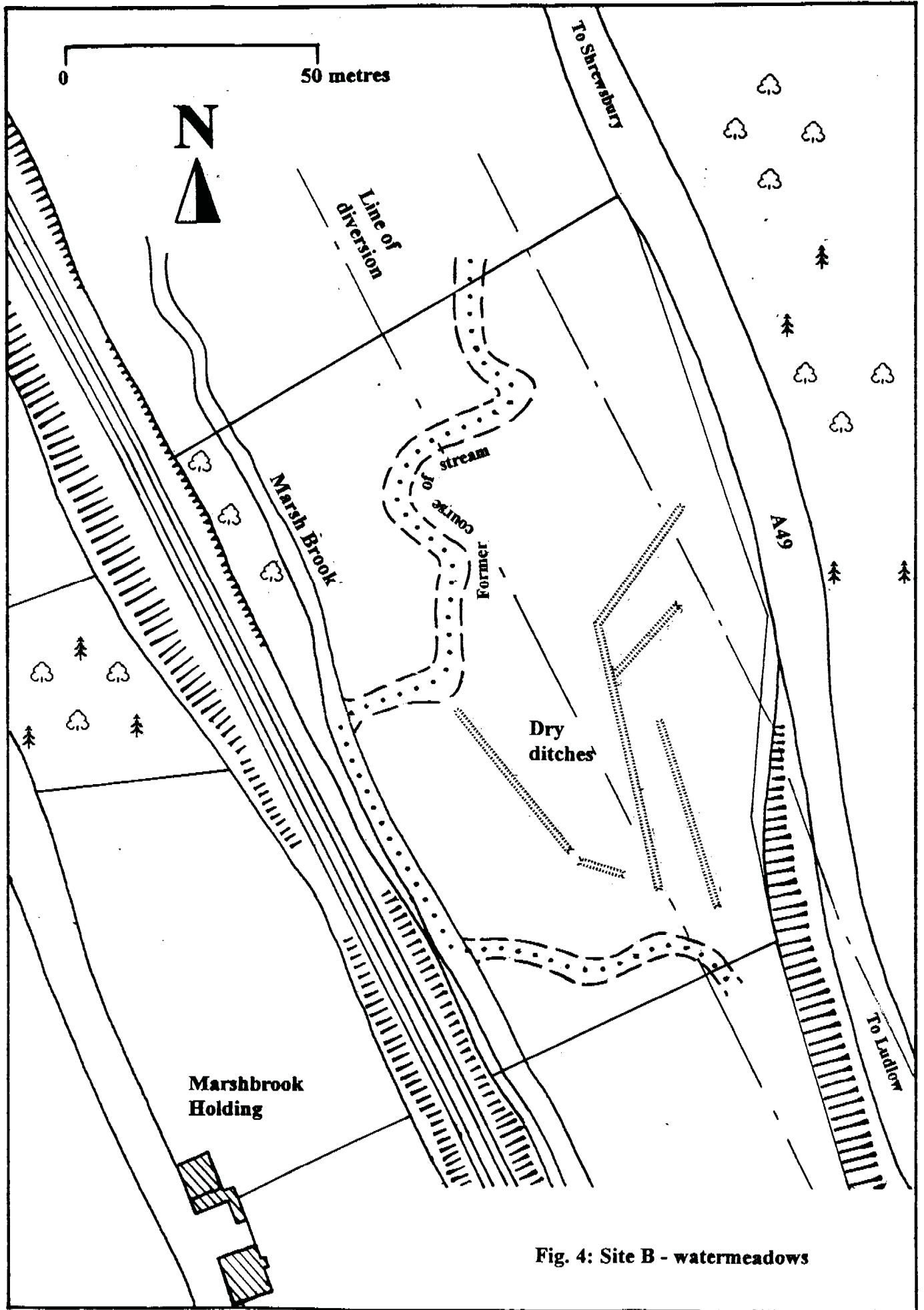


Fig. 4: Site B - watermeadows

A49 NEWPORT-SHREWSBURY TRUNK ROAD
Marshbrook Diversion:
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
(Summary of Report)

1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- 1.1 There are currently proposals to improve a 1.75km long section of the A49 Newport-Shrewsbury Trunk Road at Marshbrook, Shropshire.
- 1.2 The proposed improvements affect the line of the Roman road Watling Street West, which partly follows the course of the present A49 at this point. There are also a series of earthwork remains, possibly the remains of water meadows, which lie along and adjacent to the line of the road diversion.
- 1.3 In view of the archaeological importance of the landscape through which the route of the proposed bypass runs, it was deemed necessary to conduct an archaeological evaluation of the preferred route.
- 1.4 The Archaeology Service of the Leisure Services Department, Shropshire County Council, was commissioned by the County Surveyor's Department, Shropshire County Council, to conduct this evaluation in accordance with the brief prepared by the Head of Archaeology.

2 THE AIMS AND METHODOLOGY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

- 2.1 The aim of this evaluation was to provide information enabling an informed and reasonable planning decision to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the areas affected by the proposed road diversion.
- 2.2 The objectives were:
 - a) To locate any archaeological features and deposits likely to be affected by the preferred route.
 - b) To assess their survival, quality, condition, and significance.
 - c) To identify and assess the significant archaeological impacts likely to arise from the construction of the preferred route and to recommend appropriate mitigation strategies.
- 2.3 To achieve these objectives, the evaluation of the preferred route was required to comprise a number of different elements:

STAGE 1: Documentary Research: A desk- top study to comprise documentary and cartographic research of the route corridor.

STAGE 2: Field Survey: A walk over survey would be carried out of the entire route. Any earthwork remains within the route corridor would be recorded by means of an interpretive measured survey.

STAGE 3: Field Evaluation: Further sample excavation might be required following the results of Stages 1 and 2 of the evaluation.

2.4 The Archaeology Service of the Leisure Services Department, Shropshire County Council, was commissioned by the County Surveyor's Department, Shropshire County Council, to conduct this evaluation in accordance with the brief prepared by the Head of Archaeology.

3 ASSESSMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES IN THE PREFERRED ROUTE CORRIDOR

- 3.1 Together with the known sites, it was demonstrated that at least five archaeological sites would be directly affected by the preferred route.
- 3.2 In accordance with the brief for the evaluation, measured surveys were undertaken of the silted up ditches of former watermeadows, Site A (SA4624) and Site B, a new, previously unrecorded site revealed by Stages 1 and 2 of the evaluation.
- 3.3 No new features associated with the Roman road Watling Street West (SA108) were revealed. The course of this road (Site C) north of Marshbrook is presumed to coincide with that of the present A49 Trunk Road.
- 3.4 The southern end of the former tail-race (Site D) of the Queensbatch Mill mill leat lay within the road corridor.
- 3.5 A milestone, marked on the Ordnance Survey maps of the area at SO44189008, was recorded (Site E).

4 THE IMPACT OF THE PREFERRED ROUTE ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE

- 4.1 The methods employed in road construction will inevitably involve the destruction of all earthwork remains and all but the deepest archaeological features within the road corridor. Most of the damage is likely to be done during the early stages of construction with the removal of topsoil from the road corridor, and the subsequent disturbance of the subsoil by heavy plant. The cutting of roadside drains, service trenches, and other ancillary works will further damage any surviving archaeological deposits. Any deposits surviving road construction will be sealed beneath a permanent structure and will be unavailable for future study and research.
- 4.2 The siting of contractors' compounds, spoil dumps, and borrow pits can also adversely affect archaeological features and deposits lying outside the road corridor.
- 4.3 Landscaping and tree planting may also have a detrimental effect on archaeological features and deposits outside the road corridor.

5 MITIGATING EFFECTS: RECOMMENDED ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROVISION FOR THE AFFECTED SITES

- 5.1 The archaeological provision recommended for the various sites affected by the proposed new road will depend upon their status, and may range from preservation *in situ* to the maintenance of a watching brief during the destructive phases of road construction.
- 5.2 It is further recommended that a watching brief be maintained in order to record any previously unknown sites that come to light during road construction.
- 5.3 Strict adherence to planning procedures by contractors and subcontractors should allow for the siting of compounds, spoil dumps, and borrow pits away from known archaeological sites and features. The archaeological watching brief should be extended to cover all such ancillary works.
- 5.4 The known sites can be categorised into the following grades, depending on the level of archaeological provision considered necessary:
GRADE A: Sites requiring preservation *in situ*.
GRADE B: Sites requiring preservation by record, ie the excavation of below ground remains and the recording of above ground features.
GRADE C: Sites on which a watching brief should be maintained.
GRADE D: Sites requiring further field evaluation.
GRADE E: Sites requiring no further archaeological provision.

5.5 SCHEDULE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY THE PREFERRED ROUTE

	SMR No	Grid Ref	Description	Grade
Site A	SA4624	SO443899	Former water meadows	C
Site B	New site	SO444894	Former water meadows	C
Site C	SA108	SO44139080- SO44008940	Roman road (Watling Street West)	C
Site D		SO44159011	Queensbatch Mill mill leat	C
Site E		SO44189008	Milestone	E

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June 1994