

| INDEX DATA  | RPS INFORMATION                                 |
|---|---|
| Scheme Title A6 Rushden<br>and Higham Ferrers<br>Bypass | Details<br>Archaeological Evaluation<br>Stage 2 |
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A6 RUSHDEN AND HIGHAM FERRERS BYPASS  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION: STAGE 2  
FIELDWALKING AND GEOPHYSICAL SURVEYS

ABSTRACT

*This report forms the second stage of Archaeological Evaluation of the proposed A6 Rushden - Higham Ferrers bypass route. It was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology on behalf of the Highways Agency from November 1996 - January 1997. A corridor of land, 5.4km in length and 100m wide, was investigated by non-intrusive techniques comprising geophysical survey and fieldwalking. Four sites (Sites 1 - 4) had been previously identified in a Stage 1 desk top assessment lying within a 200m corridor and a further two sites (Sites 5 - 6) lay close by. No evidence for Sites 1, 2, 5 and 6 was found in the stage 2 work and they may lie entirely outside the proposed route. Evidence for Site 3 was recovered by both techniques. It appears to be a Romano-British settlement with associated field system. It may have an Iron Age antecedent. Only slight evidence of Site 4 was recovered in the form of small concentrations of Iron Age and Romano-British pottery. It may be the periphery of a settlement or it may represent intensive manuring of a contemporary field system. No new sites were discovered. Recommendations for further work are made.*

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A programme of fieldwalking and geophysical survey was carried out along the line of the proposed A6 Rushden - Higham Ferrers bypass between November 1996 and January 1997, forming the second stage of archaeological evaluation of the route.
- 1.2 The first stage, carried out in September 1996, comprised a desk-top study to identify sites already known to lie in the area (Chapman and Shaw 1996).
- 1.3 The purpose of the second stage was to identify further sites, and to characterise sites already known, by non-intrusive survey methods (ie techniques which do not involve disturbance to the ground).
- 1.4 The work was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology on behalf of the Highways Agency and working to a brief agreed by them.

2. BACKGROUND (Fig 1)

- 2.1 The proposed route of the road splits from the present A6 London to Carlisle Trunk Road at around SP 965648. It then runs around the east side of the towns of Rushden and Higham Ferrers for a distance of 5.4km before rejoining the present route of the A6 at its junction with the A605 (SP 960690).
- 2.2 For the purpose of the Stage 1 desk-top study a corridor of investigation 200m wide, 100m either side of the road line, was established. A total of six archaeological sites were identified (Figs 1A, 1B), four within the corridor (Sites 1-4) and a further two (Sites 5-6) immediately outside.

|        |           |  |
|--------|-----------|--|
| Site 1 | SP 965693 | Cropmark located by aerial photography |
|--------|-----------|--|

|        |             |  |
|--------|-------------|--|
| Site 2 | SP 95466881 | Romano-British settlement  |
| Site 3 | SP 965681   | Romano-British settlement? Surface<br>scatters of pottery and cropmarks<br>located by aerial photography |
| Site 4 | SP967658    | Linear cropmark located by aerial<br>photography   |
| Site 5 | SP960968    | Iron Age and Romano-British features and<br>finds  |
| Site 6 | SP96666737  | Iron Age settlement?   |

### 3. STRATEGY

- 3.1 For the non-intensive survey the study area was narrowed to a corridor 100m in width (ie extending 50m either side of the centre line of the published route).
- 3.2 The road corridor crosses thirty parcels of land, chiefly agricultural fields. These have been numbered according to the order in which each field was investigated (Figs 2A, 2B).
- 3.3 The Stage 2 archaeological evaluation comprised:
  - (1) fieldwalking of all available arable fields
  - (2) Scanning by geophysical survey of areas where fieldwalking was not possible (ie pasture, set-aside etc)
  - (3) detailed geophysical survey of "hot-spots" discovered by reconnaissance survey or fieldwalking.
- 3.4 In the event ten parcels of land were fieldwalked and fifteen were scanned. No work was possible in five parcels (Fields 16-17, 27-28, 30) as they were either allotments or recreation grounds which were not suitable for fieldwalking, nor for magnetometer survey due to the presence of metal sheds, fences, scrap metal etc which cause distortions to the earth's magnetic field.

### 4. FIELDWALKING

#### 4.1 Methodology

- 4.1.1 Fieldwalking was the preferred method of survey but can only be undertaken on arable land as it relies on fragments of pottery and other material being brought to the surface by the plough. Ten of the thirty parcels of land (Fields 1-9, 29) were in a walkable condition. All contained a crop, mostly cereal, which was just showing on the surface of the field or low enough for pottery still to be visible through any crop. These are ideal fieldwalking conditions.
- 4.1.2 All of the fields were walked along parallel transects set at 20m intervals. In most cases the full width of the 100m corridor was walked but in a few cases only 2 or 4 transects were walked as the road corridor did not extend far into those fields.
- 4.1.3 All pottery and tile of medieval or earlier date, together with worked flint, and other significant finds were collected.

4.1.4 Where sufficient finds of a particular category were found to indicate a potential archaeological site the findspots were plotted by category and date of artefacts in 20m 'stints' of recovery within each transect.

#### 4.2 Results

A summary of the results is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

| FIELD | NGR        | HA   | FLINT | POTTERY |     |     |     |     |
|-------|------------|------|-------|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|       |            |      |       | IA      | RB  | EMS | MED | UNC |
| 1     | SP96316968 | 0.37 | 1     | 0       | 0   | 0   | 1   | 0   |
| 2     | SP96336955 | 1.93 | 13    | 0       | 2   | 0   | 1   | 0   |
| 3     | SP96506899 | 1.43 | 4     | 0       | 2   | 0   | 10  | 0   |
| 4     | SP96696800 | 3.75 | 12    | 11      | 258 | 0   | 84  | 2   |
| 5     | SP96726775 | 1.59 | 2     | 0       | 11  | 0   | 38  | 0   |
| 6     | SP96756760 | 1.29 | 0     | 0       | 4   | 0   | 13  | 0   |
| 7     | SP96796728 | 1.55 | 1     | 1       | 6   | 0   | 23  | 0   |
| 8     | SP96756538 | 5.40 | 1     | 7       | 51  | 0   | 87  | 0   |
| 9     | SP96626504 | 3.85 | 0     | 0       | 8   | 0   | 44  | 0   |
| 29    | SP96706820 | 0.26 | 0     | 0       | 9   | 0   | 4   | 0   |

##### 4.2.1 Worked Flint

Only a small amount of worked flint was recovered, nowhere in sufficient quantity to indicate an archaeological site. The only diagnostic pieces were an end scraper from Field 1 and a core/hammerstone from Field 4. The majority of the remainder were flakes.

##### 4.2.2 Iron Age Pottery

Only a small quantity of Iron Age pottery was recovered, all but one sherd of which was from Fields 4 and 8 (Figs 3, 4). The sherds in these fields lay in the vicinity of larger Romano-British scatters and may indicate an earlier origin for these sites.

##### 4.2.3 Romano-British Pottery

A large quantity of Romano-British pottery was recovered from Field 4 (Fig 5) with the densest concentration at its northern end in the vicinity of a cropmark site, Site 3, with which it is apparently connected. A smaller concentration was recovered from Field 8, in which cropmark site, Site 4, is located (Fig 6).

#### 4.2.4 Medieval Pottery

Only small amounts of medieval pottery were recovered, never in sufficient quantity to suggest the presence of a site of this period. Rather they denote the spreading of manure onto the fields at this date.

#### 4.2.5 Other Finds

A few metal objects were recovered, all of medieval or later date. They ranged from a copper alloy strip and wire to an iron binding strip. A number of pieces of daub were recovered particularly from Field 4 and these are likely to have come from the settlement in this field (Site 3). They are insufficient, however, to indicate the presence of any particular feature.

### 5. GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY

5.1 The geophysical survey was undertaken using two Geoscan Research FM36 fluxgate gradiometers. Two stages of work were undertaken: reconnaissance survey and detailed survey.

#### 5.2 Reconnaissance Survey

5.2.1 Reconnaissance survey was undertaken across fifteen parcels of land (Fields 10-15, 18-26) which are currently under pasture or set-aside. The working corridor was marked within each field by placing ranging poles at either end. Zig-zag and longitudinal traverses were made along the proposed road route similar to the methodology applied on the route of the M3 (Clark 1990, 87-8, Fig 69).

5.2.2 It was intended that where anomalies greater than  $\pm 2nT$  above the background response were found these would be surveyed in detail as they may mark potential archaeological sites.

5.2.3 In the event, however, no such anomalies were found.

5.2.4 The area of Site 4 at the north end of Field 8 was also scanned in order to assess whether buried features could be located here. No potential archaeological features were found. A possible pipe trench was located, however, and it may be that it is this which is indicated by the linear mark on the cropmark plot (Fig 4).

#### 5.3 Detailed Survey

5.3.1 No potentially significant anomalies were recovered from the scan survey.

5.3.2 Detailed survey was, however, carried out in three fields: Field 4, where the cropmark site/field scatter Site 3 lay; Field 20 immediately to the north of Field 4 in order to assess whether Site 3 spread into this area; and Field 23 where a number of enclosures, Site 1, were known.

5.3.3 Detailed survey grids were surveyed within a 20m x 20m square with readings logged at 0.25m intervals along parallel transects set 1m

apart using an ST1 sample trigger with the sensitivity level set at 0.1nT. The instrument is set at this level to enable the weak magnetic signals to be detected (see Fig 5.3.6 below and Fig 3).

- 5.3.4 The sensor alignment or balance was checked upon the completion of survey within each grid square. All data were downloaded in the field into a Toshiba lap-top computer and stored on 3.5" diskettes.
- 5.3.5 The data were analysed using the computer program Geoplot 2.01. Low magnetism is represented as white and high magnetism as black in the resultant plots. The data were processed using zero mean functions in order to correct the unevenness of the plots to give a smoother graphical appearance. The data were also despiked, thereby reducing extreme readings as caused by stray iron fragments and spurious effects due to the inherent magnetism of soils.
- 5.3.6 Further numerical smoothing of the data has been carried out using a low pass filter in order to reduce background noise levels and highlight other features that may be archaeologically significant.
- 5.3.7 Field 4 (Figs 7, 8)

A cropmark site, Site 3, was known to lie in the north-west corner of the field and a concentration of Romano-British pottery had been found here during the fieldwalking. Accordingly detailed geophysical survey was carried out, targeting the area of the high pottery concentrations. Initially six grids (0.24ha) were surveyed and when these proved to provide positive evidence a further fourteen grids (0.56ha) were surveyed in an attempt to establish the nature and extent of the settlement.

The results demonstrated the presence of a series of buried curvilinear ditches and enclosures. The more strongly magnetic features were located at the north-west end of the survey area close to the features known from cropmark evidence. It is likely that these represent a settlement site. Indeed some areas of curving ditch may represent the sites of roundhouses. To the south-east a series of more weakly magnetic rectangular enclosures perhaps represent an associated 'Celtic' field system.

#### 5.3.8 Field 20 (not illustrated)

Two grids (0.08 ha) were surveyed immediately to the north of Field 4 to assess whether the features in Field 4 spread into Field 20 also. The only anomalies encountered were linear markings which can be identified as furrows related to the pre-enclosure field system.

#### 5.3.9 Field 23 (not illustrated)

A series of enclosures (see above: Site 1) may impinge into the eastern side of the 100m corridor. Scanning failed to identify any significant anomalies. Nevertheless it was decided to carry out a detailed survey over the anticipated area of the cropmark within the corridor. No potentially archaeological features were located and it is possible that the cropmarks are geological or that they lie entirely outside the road corridor.

## 6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1 No new sites were located by the Stage 2 work, nor was there any evidence that Sites 1, 2, 5 or 6 penetrated into road corridor. It has, however, allowed the better definition of the date, character, extent and importance of Sites 3 and 4.

### Site 3 SP96676817 (Fig 8)

Romano-British settlement and associated field system with possible Iron Age antecedents. The discovery of a settlement in association with its field system is of some importance, although it is likely to have suffered some damage from ploughing.

### Site 4 SP96926579 (Figs 4, 6)

Slight concentration of Iron Age and Romano-British pottery which may indicate the periphery or may be merely an intensively manured part of a contemporary field system.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Future evaluation work should be restricted to the area of the road corridor.

### 7.2 Site 3

- (1) geophysical survey should be undertaken to the north and south of the present survey area in order to establish the extent of the enclosures and boundaries
- (2) targeted trial trenching should then be undertaken in order to establish the condition and importance of the archaeological remains
- (3) on completion of (1) and (2) above a mitigation strategy designed to preserve the archaeological remains either in situ or by record should be adopted

### 7.3 Site 4

- (1) a mitigation strategy of stripping off the overburden down to archaeological levels and recording any archaeological remains present should be adopted

## REFERENCES

- Chapman, A. & Shaw, M 1996 A6 Rushden and Higham Ferrers Bypass Archaeological Desk Top Assessment, Northamptonshire Archaeology Report.
- Clark, A. J. 1990 Seeing Beneath the Soil, Batsford, London.
- Shaw, M & Steadman, S 1991 Archaeological Evaluation on Duchy of Lancaster Land at Higham Ferrers, Northants, text and illustrations, Northamptonshire Archaeology Unit Report.

# SCHEDULE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Fig 1a: Bypass route (north), survey corridor and known archaeological sites. Scale 1:12500
- Fig 1b: Bypass route (south), survey corridor and known archaeological sites. Scale 1:12500
- Fig 2a: Bypass route (north), survey corridor and areas investigated. Scale 1:12500
- Fig 2b: Bypass route (south), survey corridor and areas investigated. Scale 1:12500
- Fig 3: Field 4, fieldwalking results: Iron Age pottery. Scale 1:2500
- Fig 4: Field 8, fieldwalking results: Iron Age pottery. Scale 1:2500
- Fig 5: Field 4, fieldwalking results: Romano-British pottery. Scale 1:2500
- Fig 6: Field 8, fieldwalking results: Romano-British pottery. Scale 1:2500
- Fig 7: Field 4, geophysical survey plot. Scale 1:1000
- Fig 8: Field 4, composite plot: geophysical survey interpretation, Romano-British pottery and cropmarks. Scale 1:1000

Project Manager and Editor: Mike Shaw, BA MIFA  
 Fieldwork Supervisor: Peter Masters, BA HND PIFA  
 GIS Illustrations: Peter Masters  
 Ceramic identification:

Iron Age: Dennis Jackson FSA

Roman: Tora Hylton, Peter Masters and Brian Dix BA FSA

Medieval: Iain Soden BA MIFA and Peter Masters

Flint identification: Alex Thorne BSc AIFA MAAIS

Other Finds: Tora Hylton

Text: Peter Masters and Mike Shaw  
 Northamptonshire Archaeology  
 A service of Northamptonshire County Council  
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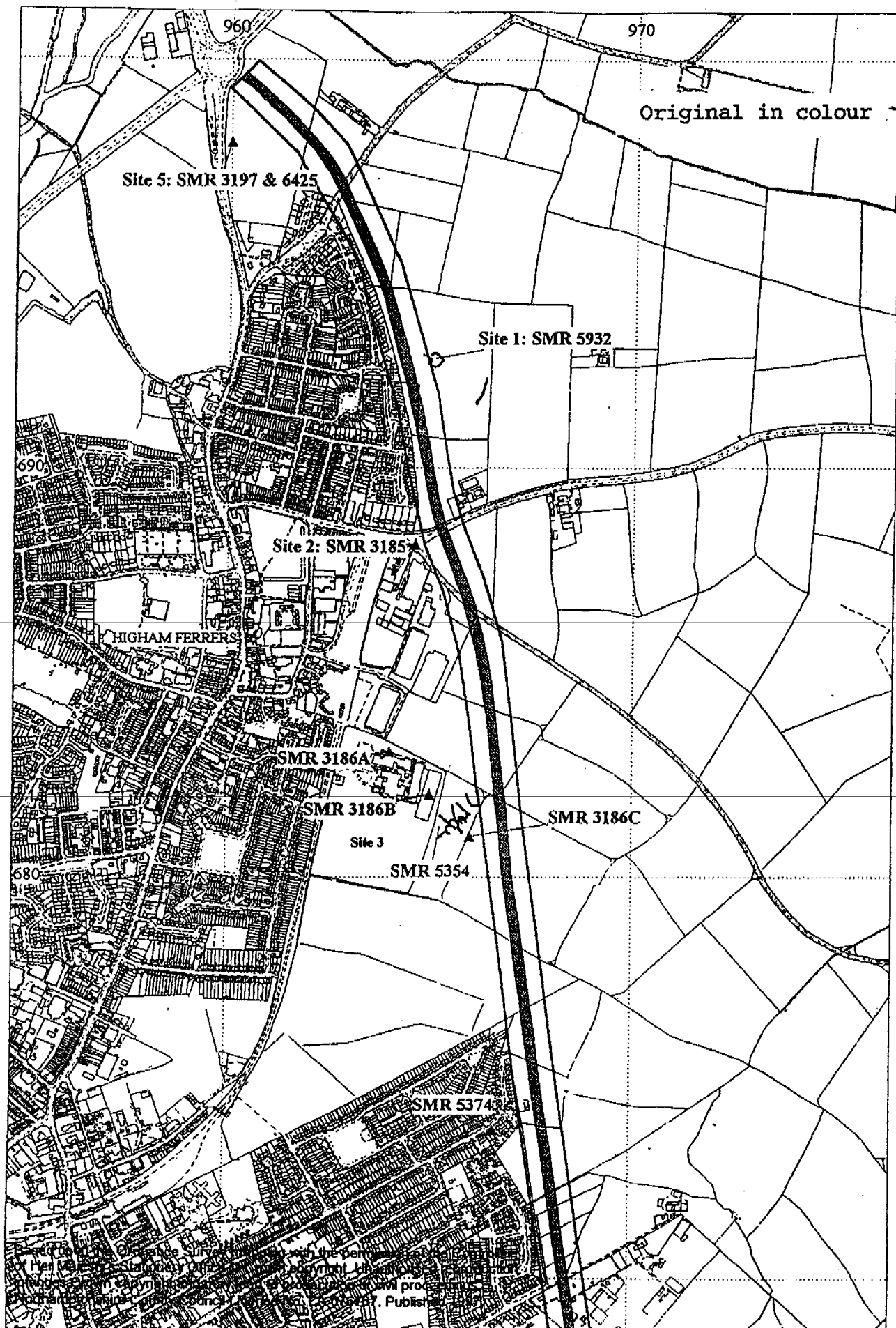


Fig. 1a

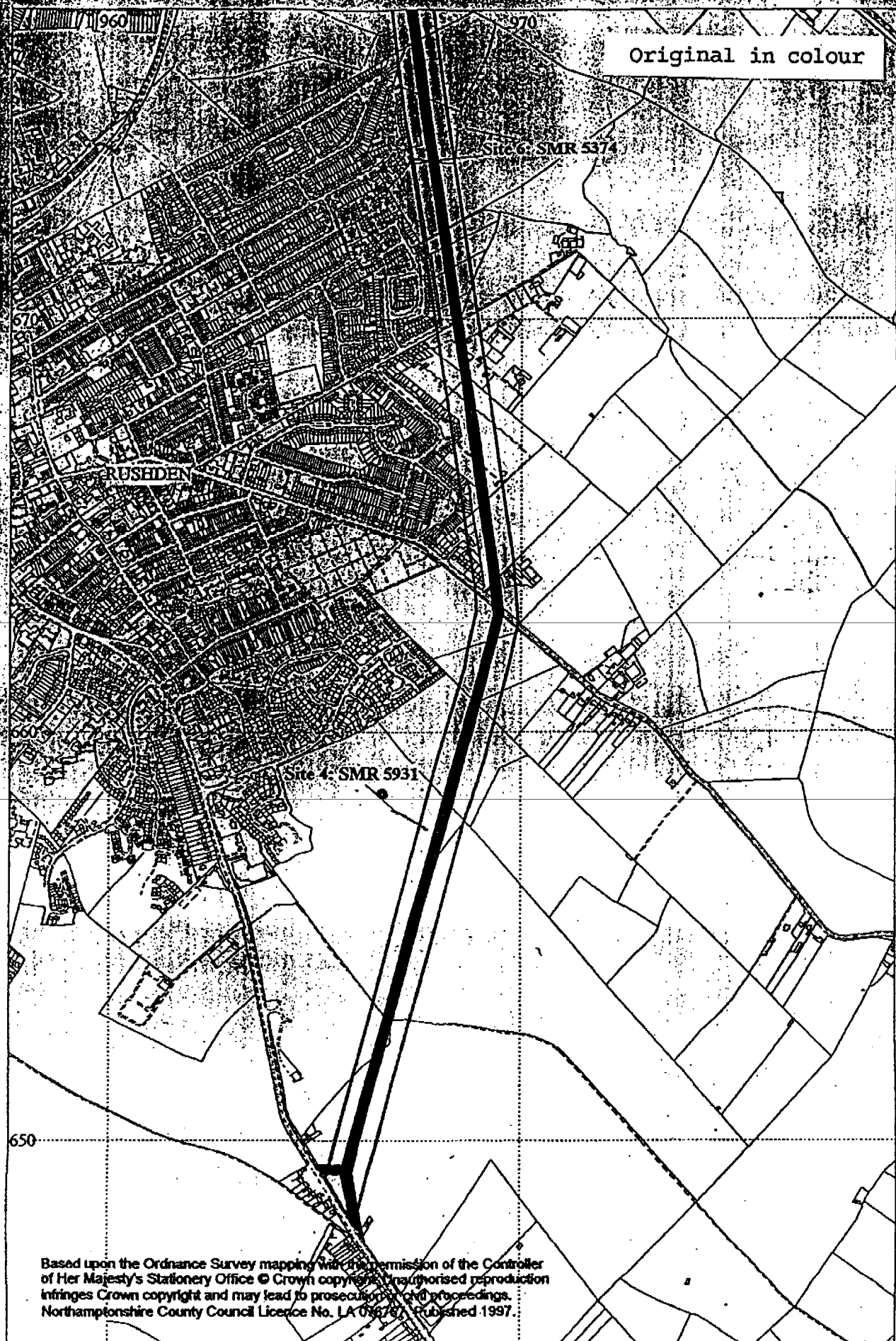


Fig. 1b

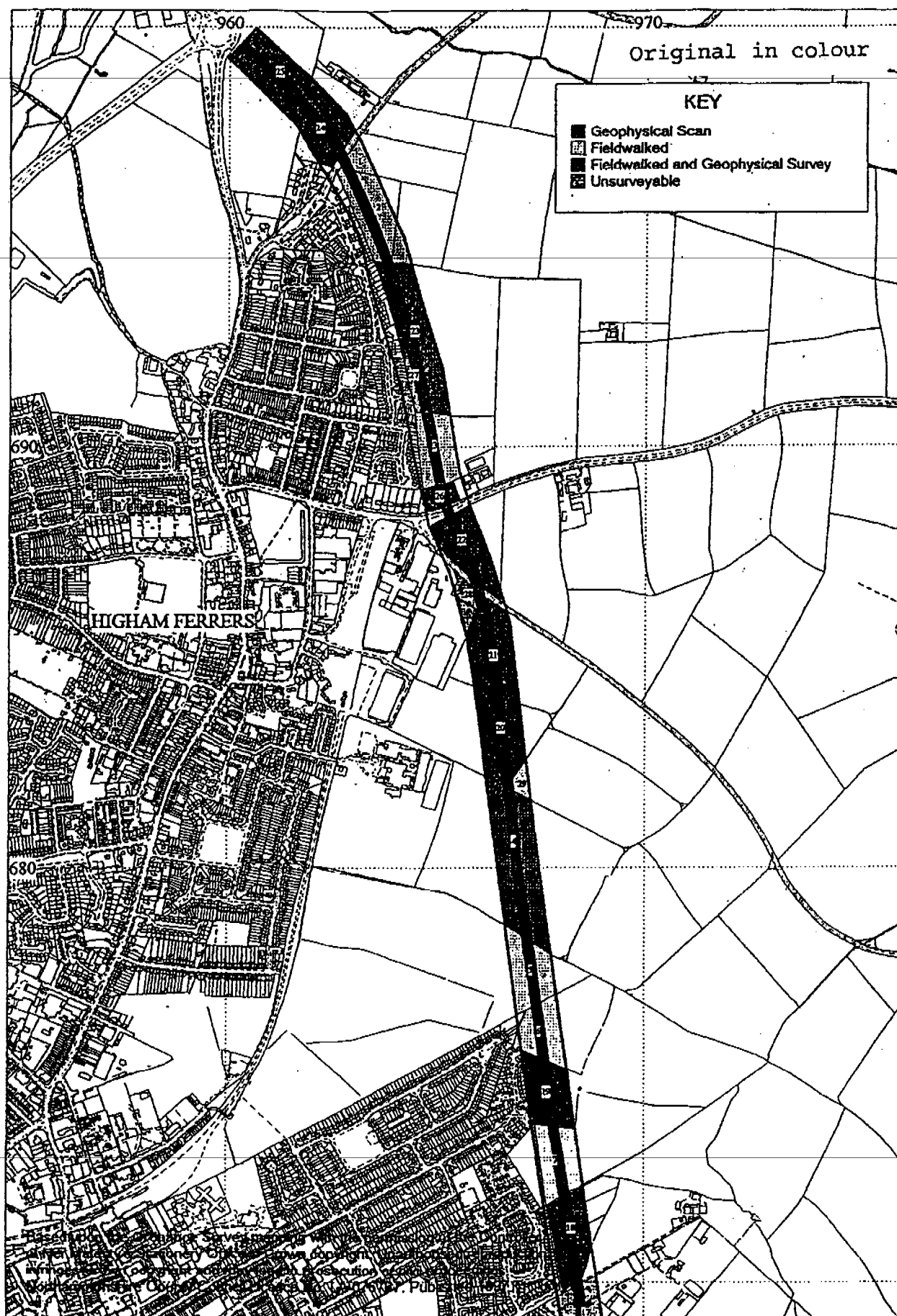


Fig. 2a

Original in colour

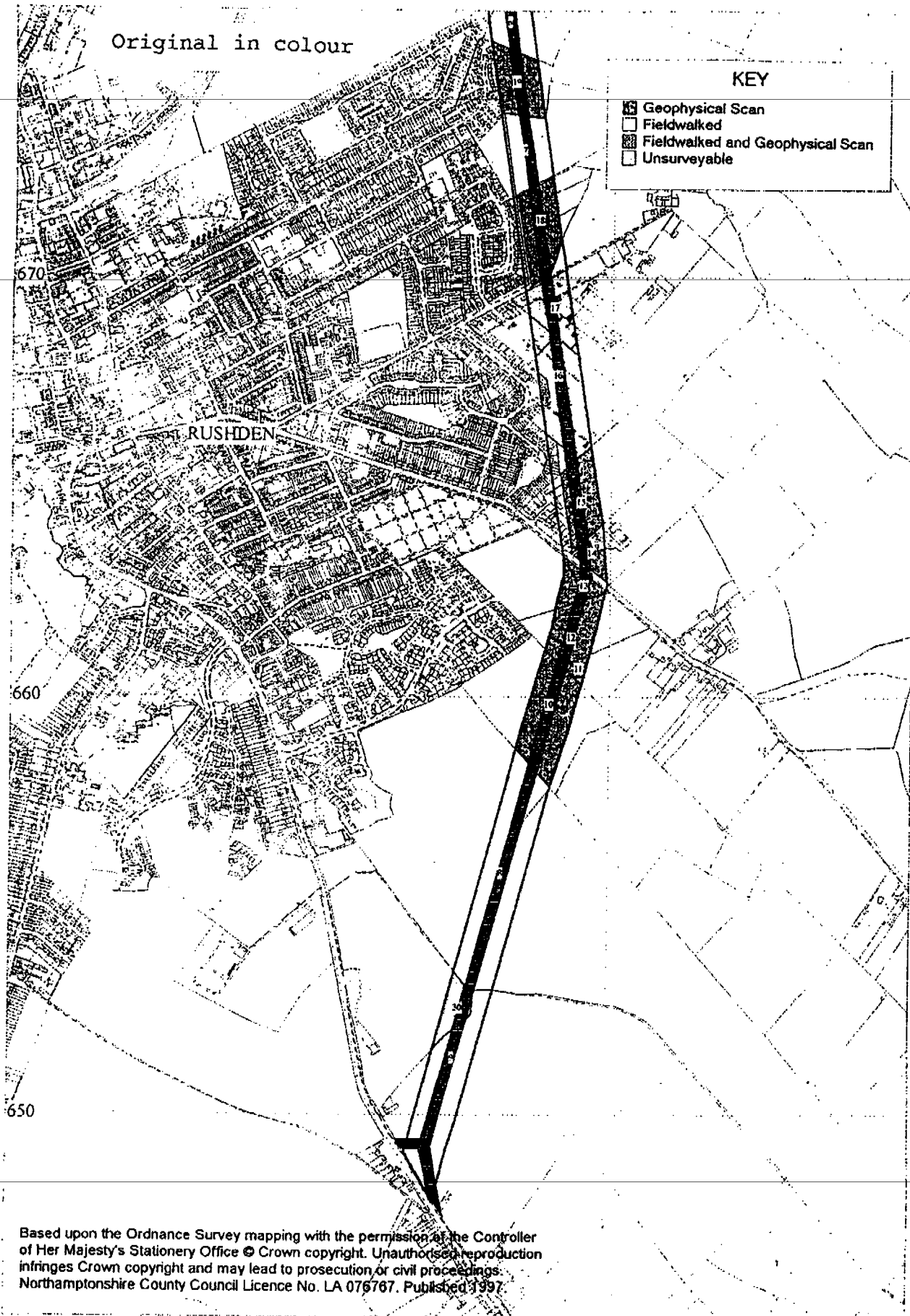


Fig. 2b

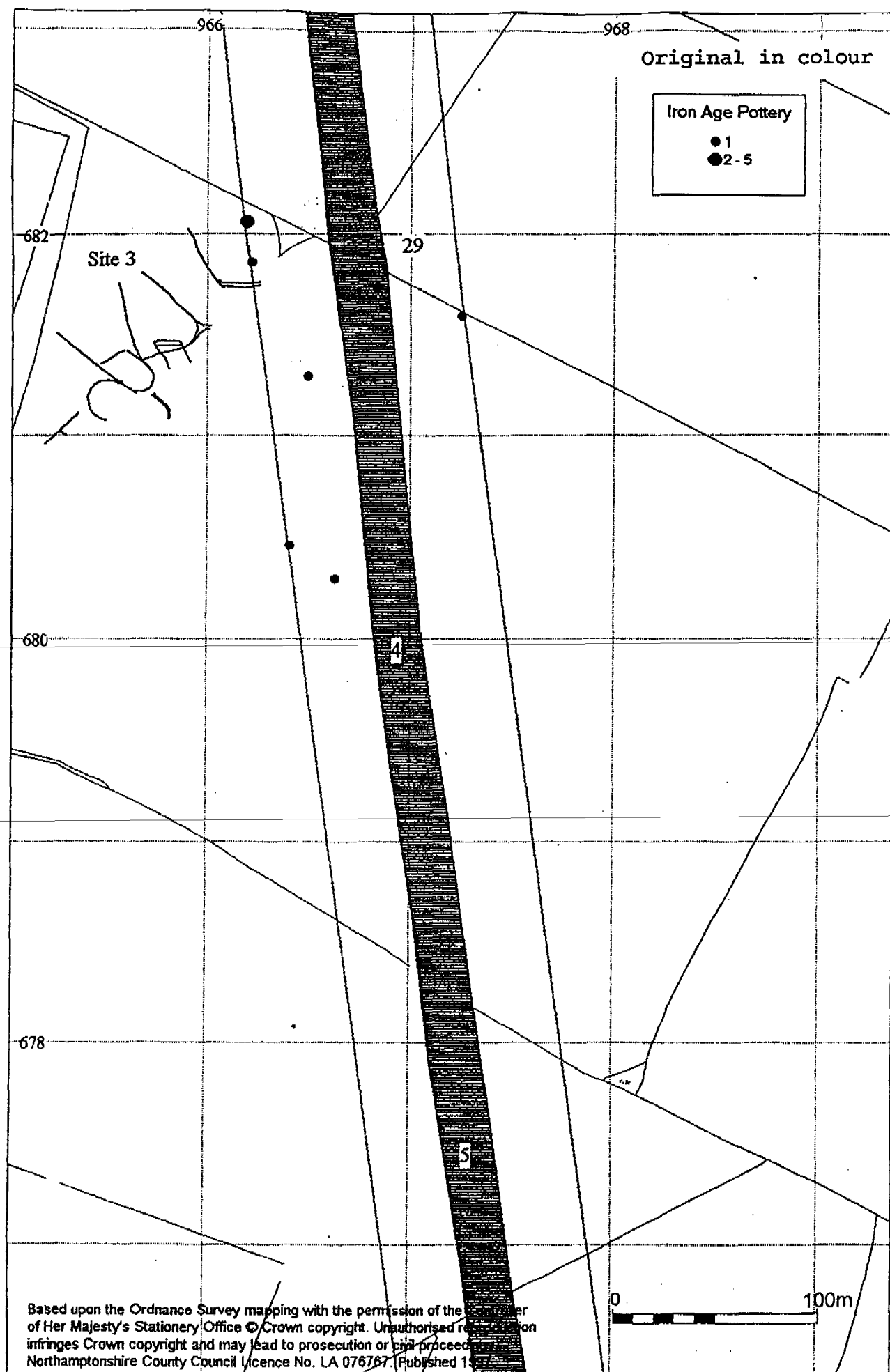


Fig. 3

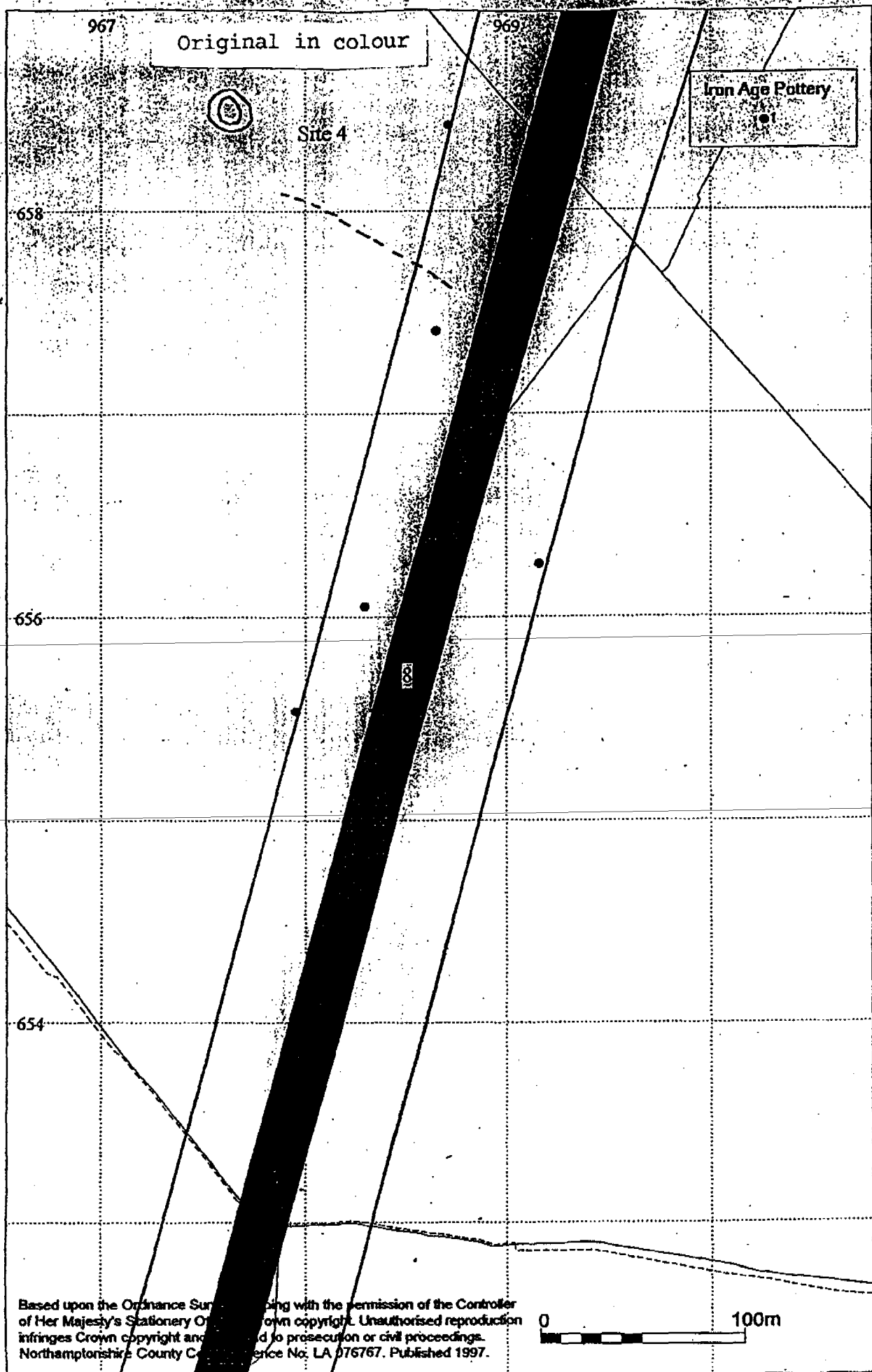


Fig. 4

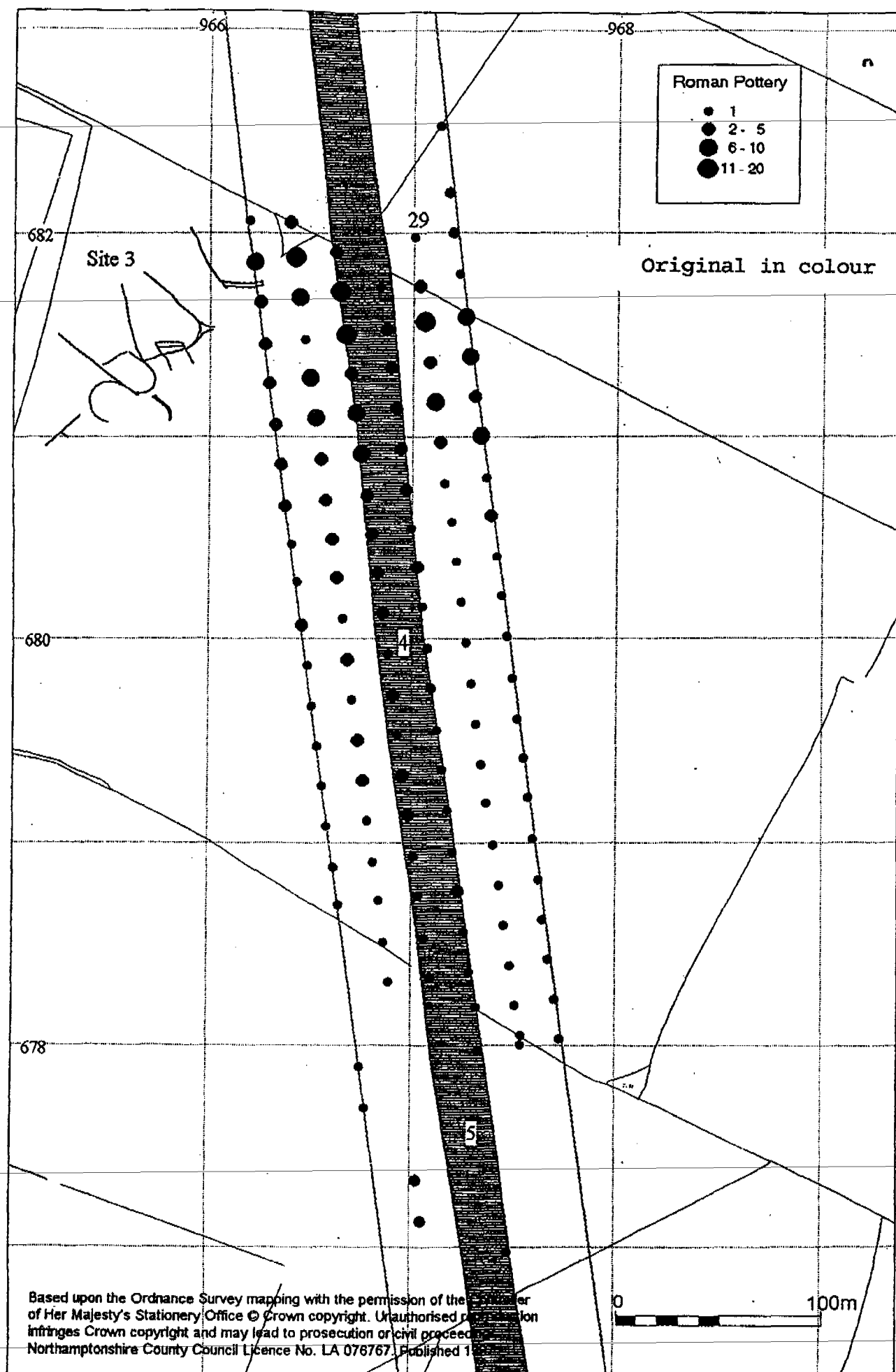


Fig. 5

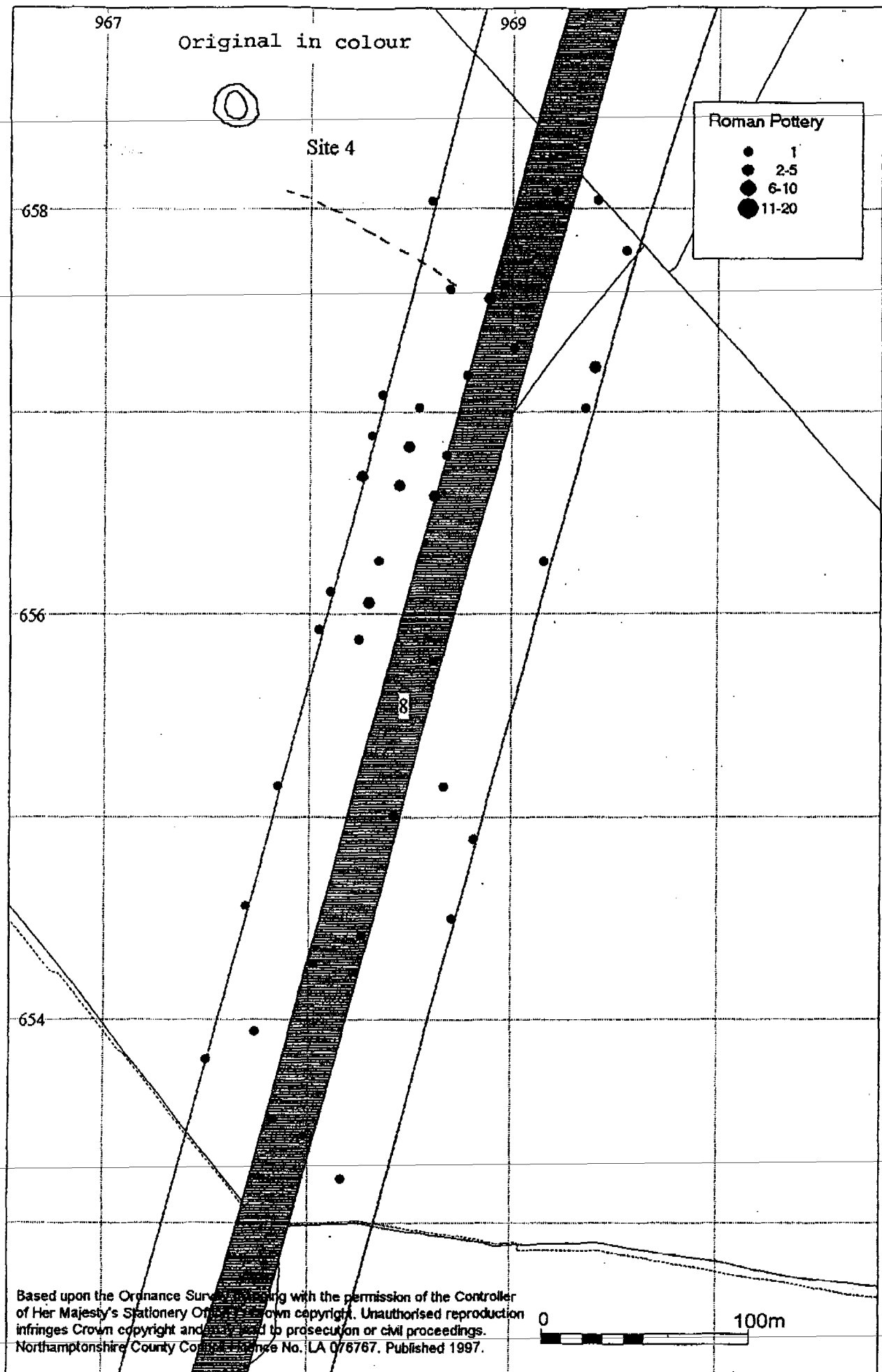


Fig. 6



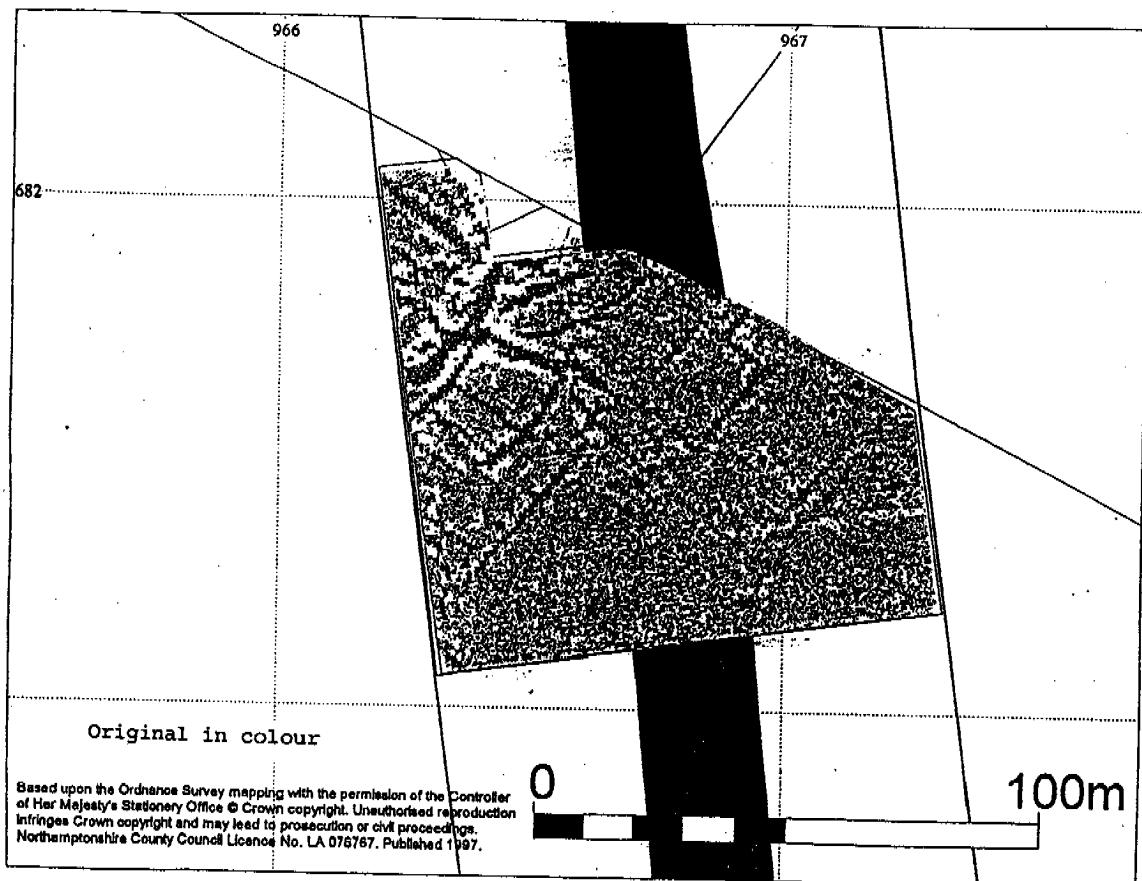


Fig. 7

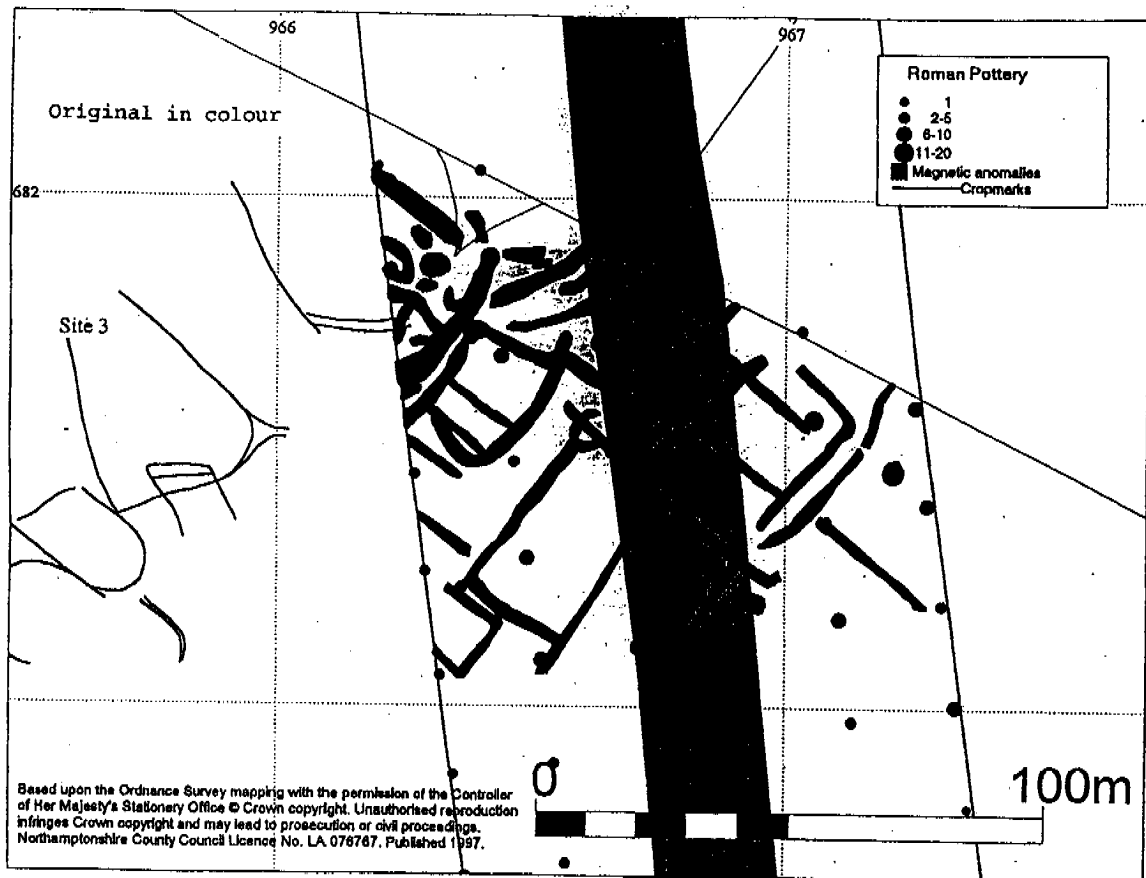


Fig. 8