

**LAND AT SOUNDBOROUGH FARM
SEVENHAMPTON
GLOUCESTERSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

For

**PLACE ARCHAEOLOGICAL
CONSULTANTS LTD**

on behalf of

THE HONOURABLE R.I.H. WILLS

CA REPORT: 05069

MAY 2005

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CA PROJECT: 1947
CA REPORT: 05069

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SUMMARY

Site Name:	Land at Soundborough Farm
Location:	Sevenhampton, Gloucestershire
NGR:	SP 0525 2162
Type:	Evaluation
Date:	19 - 25 April 2005
Planning Reference:	3857/PATS
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum
Site Code:	SQS 05

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in April 2005 at the request of Place Archaeological Consultants Ltd, on behalf of The Honourable R. I. H. Wills on land at Soundborough Farm, Sevenhampton, Gloucestershire. Ten trenches were excavated across the proposed development area.

The evaluation indicated evidence for Romano-British activity, in the form of probable enclosure/ field boundary ditches, apparently limited to the north-western half of the site. Similarly, the distribution of unstratified Romano-British pottery sherds recovered from the trenches was also found to be mostly confined to the far north of the site.

A number of possible postholes and pits were identified further to the south-east, although it remains unclear whether these discrete features within an area of softer geological substrate have resulted from deliberate human activity or otherwise.

A small assemblage of worked flint was also recovered from across the site but could not be linked to any specific archaeological deposit.

The evaluation has characterised the archaeological potential of the study area, and has indicated that Romano-British ditches and possibly some more discrete features survive at a depth of c. 0.3m below the modern ground surface.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In April 2005 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation for Place Archaeological Consultants Ltd (PAC), on behalf of The Honourable R. I. H. Wills on land at Soundborough Farm, Sevenhampton, Gloucestershire (centred on NGR: SP 05252162; Fig. 1). The evaluation was undertaken to accompany a planning application for mineral extraction with the extension of the adjacent quarry.
- 1.2 The evaluation was carried out following a Desk-based Assessment (PAC 2004a) and with a subsequent detailed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by PAC (2004b) and approved by Gloucestershire County Council. The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1999), the *Management of Archaeological Projects II* (EH 1991) and the *Statement of Standards and Practices Appropriate for Archaeological Fieldwork in Gloucestershire* (GCC 1995). It was monitored by Mr Charles Parry, the archaeological advisor to the Local Planning Authority, including a site visit on 22 April 2005.

The site

- 1.3 The site is located approximately 1.8km east of Sevenhampton and occupies a spur of land falling from c. 270m AOD along its western edge to c. 255m AOD along its eastern edge (Fig. 1). Shallow dry valleys define the north and east of the site, while the adjacent land to the south has been quarried and is in the process of being reinstated.
- 1.4 The underlying geology of the area is mapped as Great Oolite Limestone (BGS 1979). The overlying soils are recorded as Elmton 1 soils (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Sheet 5 South West England, in Stratascan 2004).
- 1.5 The site is currently used as agricultural land.

Archaeological background

- 1.6 A detailed account of the known historical and archaeological background is provided in the Desk-based Assessment (PAC 2004a). This is summarised here as indicating limited potential for the presence and survival of prehistoric archaeological remains based upon the results of systematic fieldwalking undertaken in the 1980s

that concluded that “the site falls between potential settlements of Neolithic and/or Bronze Age date” and the proximity of prehistoric burial mounds (tumuli) in adjacent and nearby fields is also noted.

- 1.7 Similarly, the DBA concluded that despite the lack of artefactual evidence indicating any notable intensity of land use in the prehistoric, Roman or medieval periods there remains the possibility of peripheral or indirect evidence of settlement activity and landscape use such as field systems. This appears to be supported by the result of a geophysical survey carried out by Stratascan (Stratascan 2004) at the request of PAC, which indicated the presence of possible linear and curvilinear features.

Archaeological objectives

- 1.8 The objectives of the evaluation were to establish the character, quality, date, significance and extent of any archaeological remains or deposits surviving within the site. This information will assist the Local Planning Authority in making an informed judgement on the likely impact upon the archaeological resource by the proposed development.

Methodology

- 1.9 The fieldwork comprised the excavation of 10 trenches, which varied in size from 15m x 2m to 30m x 4m (Fig. 2). Half of the trenches were positioned directly over recorded geophysical anomalies while the remainder targeted the areas devoid of geophysical indicators.
- 1.10 All trenches were excavated by mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All machine excavation was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. Where archaeological deposits were encountered they were excavated by hand in accordance with the CA Technical Manual 1: *Excavation Recording Manual* (1996).
- 1.11 Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with the CA Technical Manual 2: *The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other samples from Archaeological Sites* (2003). All artefacts recovered were processed in

accordance with the CA Technical Manual 3: *Treatment of Finds Immediately after Excavation* (1995).

- 1.12 The archive and artefacts from the evaluation are currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner the site archive (including artefacts) will be deposited with Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum.

2. RESULTS

- 2.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts and finds are to be found in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively. Details of the relative heights of the principal deposits and features expressed as metres Above Ordnance Datum (m AOD) appear in Appendix 3.

- 2.2 Trenches 2, 3 and possibly 4 contained features dated to the Roman period (Fig. 3). Trenches 7 and 8 contained more ephemeral, undated features. Trench 10 revealed evidence of ridge and furrow cultivation and the remaining trenches contained no recognisable archaeological evidence. Generally the sequence of deposits was similar in all trenches with ploughsoil directly overlying the geological substrate.

Trench 2

- 2.3 The natural substrate 204 which comprised dense, although not solid, limestone brash, was cut by ditch 203, running approximately NW-SE with a clayey silt fill 202, from which two sherds of Romano-British pottery were recovered.

Trench 3

- 2.4 The only feature within this trench was a shallow ditch 303 with a rounded base. Orientated approximately E/W it contained a similar fill to that of 202 and a single sherd of Romano-British pottery.

Trench 4

- 2.5 A single shallow ditch 403 with rounded base was recorded, running generally NE/SW, but apparently to be curving round to the west at its exposed southern limit. This change of alignment appears to coincide with the projected alignment of ditch 303. Ditch 403 was filled with a similar material to ditches 203 and 303, although

this produced no artefacts in this trench. The ditch fill 402 was sealed by a possible remnant subsoil 404 which in turn was sealed by ploughsoil 401.

Trench 7

- 2.6 A single posthole 704, the fill of which (705) provided no dating evidence. A subsoil 702 survived in shallow pockets at the south-western end of this trench.

Trench 8

- 2.7 Natural substrate 801, which consisted of very sandy clay was cut by possible postholes 804 and 810, stakehole 806 and a small possible pit 808. None of these features produced any dating evidence and all were covered by a thin subsoil/colluvial layer 802.

Trench 10

- 2.8 A shallow furrow 1004, orientated NNE/SSW had a stoney fill, which produced no finds, and was covered by colluvial deposit 1002. Further downslope at the south-eastern end of the trench a parallel furrow fill 1007 was also identified cutting an earlier deposit of colluvium (1008).

The Finds

- 2.9 The bulk of the finds assemblage is made up from unstratified flint and a few pottery sherds recovered from the ploughsoil whilst working on site. The only stratified finds were three sherds of Romano-British pottery recovered from ditch fills 202 and 304. These have been identified as Severn Valley ware of the 2nd-4th centuries AD. Further sherds of unstratified Severn Valley ware, Dorset Black-Burnished ware and Greyware were also recovered.
- 2.10 Fragments of unstratified flint were also retrieved, including an oblique type transverse arrowhead of Late Neolithic date and an Early Bronze Age fine barbed and tanged arrowhead. A number of flakes and broken flakes may be of a broadly similar date. Several bladelets or fragments were also recovered and are of probable Mesolithic date.

The Biological Evidence

- 2.11 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the course of the evaluation.

3. DISCUSSION

- 3.1 The possible remains of a Romano-British field system, specifically the field boundary ditches, were identified in the northwestern half of the site on the higher flatter ground. These corresponded well with the probable linear anomalies identified by the geophysical survey.

- 3.2 Some more ephemeral undated features were identified to the south-east just above the main break of slope, and evidence of former ridge and furrow agriculture was identified downslope, preserved under colluvial deposits at the south-eastern end of the site.

- 3.3 The unstratified finds consisting of abraded Romano-British pottery sherds were mostly recovered from the northern corner of the site. Similarly most of the worked flint was recovered from the higher ground of the north-western half of the site.

Prehistoric

- 3.4 No features of prehistoric date were identified during the course of the evaluation, although unstratified worked flint dating from the Mesolithic period to the Early Bronze Age were recovered from the ploughsoil.

Roman

- 3.5 Ditches 203 and 303 have been broadly dated to the 2nd-4th centuries AD based upon the small amount of pottery sherds recovered from them. It is probable that ditch 403 is also of the same date. There was an apparent correlation between the location of the ditches recorded and the distribution of unstratified finds of the same date within the ploughsoil.

Medieval–post-medieval

- 3.6 Furrows 1004 and 1006 did not produce any dateable finds, although these broadly spaced furrows can be reasonably assigned to the late medieval or post-medieval periods and they shared alignment with the existing modern field boundary. may well

indicate a long period of agricultural continuity within the immediate area. The furrows only survived under colluvium at the south-eastern end of the site, demonstrating the extensive subsequent ploughing and likely truncation of archaeological deposits across the rest of the site.

Undated features

- 3.7 The possible post/stakeholes and small pit identified in Trenches 7 and 8 remain undated. The single posthole 704, cut into the underlying limestone brash, appears to be a convincing archaeological feature but the features identified in Trench 8 cut into the much softer sandy clay substrate were in an area of recorded root disturbance, and these features equally be of natural origin.

Conclusions

- 3.8 The evaluation demonstrates that *in situ* archaeological remains of the Roman period are present and preserved under the modern ploughsoil. The shallow depth of the ditches demonstrated by the general absence of recognisable subsoil and the possible eradication of former ridge and furrow cultivation remains across most of the site (see 3.7 above) indicate that these are likely to be significantly truncated remains.
- 3.9 The scarcity of both stratified and unstratified finds does not suggest any significant intensity of land use and an interpretation of the cut linear features as being part of a Romano-British field system would appear to be most probable. Their confinement to the flatter ground of the northwest of the site is also notable.
- 3.10 Whether the lithic material represents discarded material or deposited material displaced by ploughing is not clear, but it represents human activity on the site within the earlier prehistoric period.

4. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Michael Rowe, assisted by Darren Muddiman and James Tongue. The report was written by Michael Rowe. The illustrations were prepared by Lorna Gray. The archive has been compiled by Michael Rowe, and prepared for deposition by Ed McSloy. The project was managed for CA by Mary Alexander.

5. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 1979 *Geological Survey of England and Wales, 1:50,000 series, South Sheet, Third Edition Solid*

PAC (Place Archaeological Consultants Ltd) 2004a *An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment of Land at Soundborough Farm, Sevenhampton, Gloucestershire*

PAC (Place Archaeological Consultants Ltd) 2004b *A Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Soundborough Farm, Sevenhampton, Gloucestershire*

Stratascan 2004 *Geophysical Survey Report: Soundborough Farm, Sevenhampton, Gloucestershire*

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench 1

101	Ploughsoil: mid brown silty clay; < 0.26m thick
102	Natural substrate: Limestone brash
103	Tree throw: sub-circular: c. 1m in diameter x 0.17m deep
104	Fill of 103: redeposited limestone and mid orange brown silty clay

Trench 2

201	Ploughsoil: mid brown silty clay; < 0.3m thick
202	Fill of 203: mid red brown clayey silt
203	Ditch: 'V' shaped, aligned NW-SE; > 4m x 0.7m x 0.3m deep
204	Natural substrate: Limestone brash

Trench 3

301	Ploughsoil: mid brown silty clay; < 0.31m thick
302	Natural substrate: Solid bedrock and limestone brash
303	Ditch: shallow concave base, aligned E-W; > 4.5m x 0.66m x 0.07m deep
304	Fill of 303: mid red brown silty clay

Trench 4

401	Ploughsoil: mid brown silty clay; < 0.32m thick
402	Fill of 403: mid red brown silty clay
403	Ditch: shallow concave base, aligned NE-SW-curving towards W; > 4m x 1.1m x 0.13m deep
404	Subsoil: mid red brown silty clay; 0.06m thick
405	Natural substrate: Limestone brash and silty clay

Trench 5

501	Ploughsoil: mid brown silty clay; < 0.25m thick
502	Natural substrate: Solid bedrock and limestone brash

Trench 6

601	Ploughsoil: mid brown silty clay; < 0.23m thick
602	Natural substrate: Limestone brash and limestone gravel

Trench 7

701	Ploughsoil: mid brown silty clay; < 0.26m thick
702	Subsoil: mid orange brown; < 0.12m thick
703	Natural substrate: Solid bedrock and limestone brash
704	Posthole: oval, steep sided with a pointed base; 0.42m x 0.24m x 0.14m deep
705	Fill of 704: mid orange brown silty clay

Trench 8

801	Ploughsoil: mid brown silty clay; < 0.31m thick
802	Subsoil: mid red brown silty clay; < 0.14m thick
803	Natural substrate; light yellow brown sandy clay
804	?Posthole: oval, concave sides and base; > 0.2m x 0.4m x 0.07m deep

805	Fill of 804: mid orange brown silty clay
806	?Stakehole: round, steep sided with a concave base; 0.1m in diameter x 0.12m deep
807	Fill of 806: mid orange brown silty clay
808	?Pit: irregular circle, steep sides with a concave base; 0.7m x 0.58m x 0.06m deep
809	Fill of 808: mid orange brown silty clay
810	?Posthole: circular, steep sides with a concave base; 0.35m in diameter x 0.11m deep
811	Fill of 810: mid orange brown silty clay

Trench 9

901	Ploughsoil: mid brown clayey silt; < 0.26m thick
902	Natural substrate: light yellow brown silty clay and yellow-grey brown limestone gravels

Trench 10

1001	Ploughsoil: mid brown silty clay; < 0.24m thick
1002	Colluvium: mid red brown silty clay; <0.63m thick
1003	Natural substrate: light yellow brown sandy clay
1004	Furrow: shallow converging to slight dip in base; > 2m x 0.84m x 0.07m deep
1005	Fill of 1004: light orange brown silty clay
1006	Furrow: as 1004; seen only in section
1007	Fill of 1006: as 1005
1008	Colluvium: as 1002

APPENDIX 2: THE FINDS

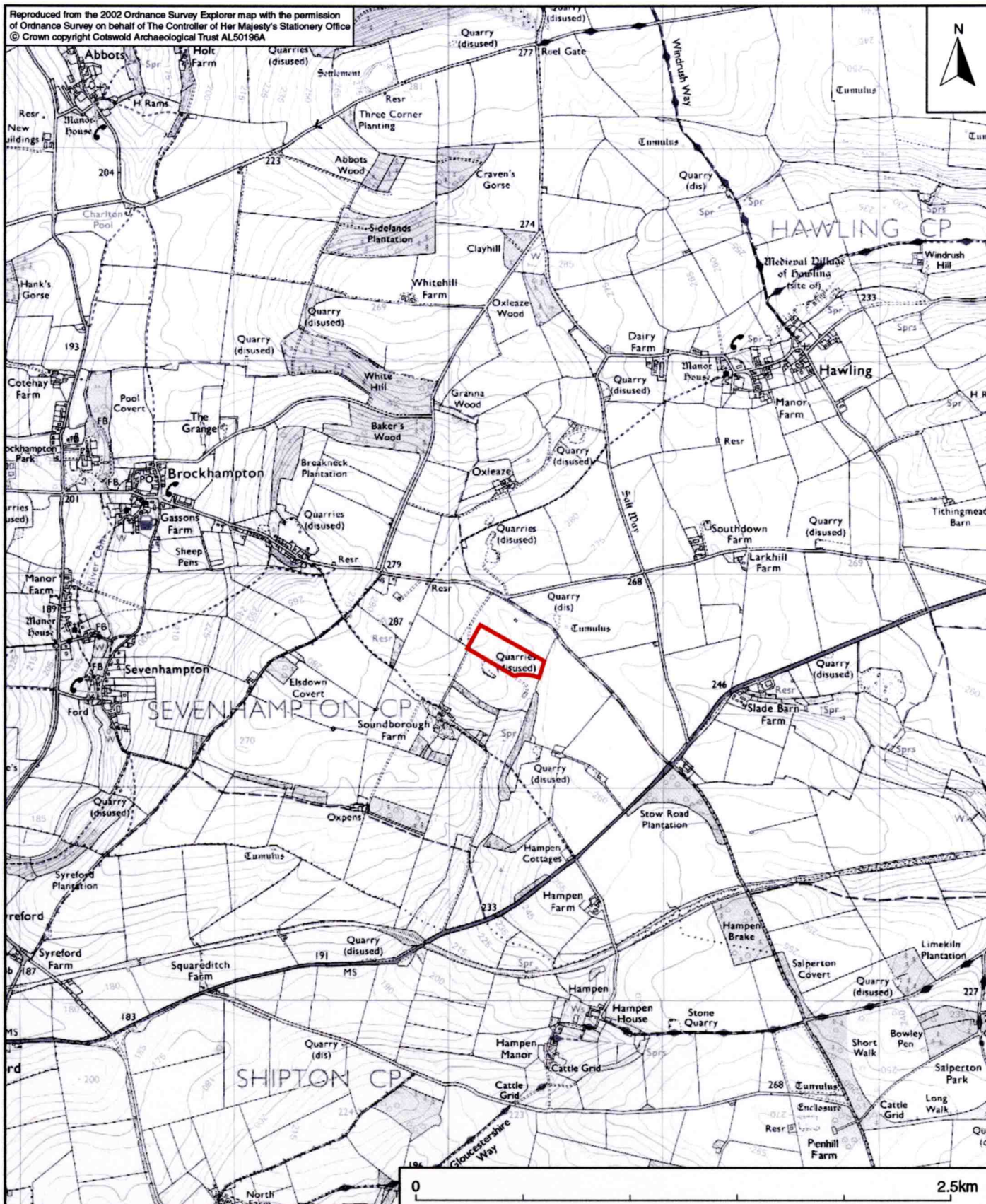
Context	Description	Count	Wt (g)	Spot-date
U/S	Pottery: Severn Valley ware type, Black-Burnished ware, Greyware	12	81	Roman
	Worked Flint	40	129	
	Glass slag	2	22	
202	Pottery: Severn Valley ware type	3	26	C2-C4
304	Pottery: Severn Valley ware type	1	5	C2-C4

APPENDIX 3: LEVELS OF PRINCIPAL DEPOSITS AND STRUCTURES

Levels are expressed as metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), calculated using the benchmark located at junction of Brockhampton – Roel Gate road (GP = 272m AOD).

	Trench 1	Trench 2	Trench 3	Trench 4	Trench 5
Current ground level	266.19 - 267.46m	267.74 - 268.19m	265.93 - 267.07m	264.47 - 266.11m	265.21 - 266.62m
Top of Feature	-	(202) 267.69m	(304) 265.95m	(402) 265.71m	-
Limit of excavation	265.95 - 267.11m	267.57 - 267.89m	265.75 - 266.77m	264.20 - 265.72m	265.05 - 266.32m

	Trench 6	Trench 7	Trench 8	Trench 9	Trench 10
Current ground level	263.04 - 263.89m	260.76 - 260.91m	260.81 - 262.20m	257.29 - 260.08m	254.86 - 256.34m
Top of feature	-	(705) 260.60m	-	-	(1005) 255.45m
Limit of excavation	262.99 - 263.69m	260.49 - 260.60m	260.52 - 261.86m	257.16 - 259.74m	254.08 - 255.82m



COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

PROJECT TITLE

**Land at Soundborough Farm,
Sevenhampton, Gloucestershire**

FIGURE TITLE

Site location plan

SCALE

1:25,000@A4

PROJECT NO.

1947

FIGURE NO.

1



- site
- evaluation trench
- archaeological feature
- geophysical anomalies



COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

PROJECT TITLE

**Land at Soundborough Farm,
Sevenhampton, Gloucestershire**

FIGURE TITLE

**Trench location plan, showing
archaeological features**

SCALE

1:2500@A4

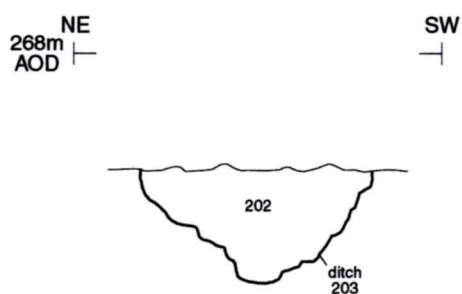
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1947

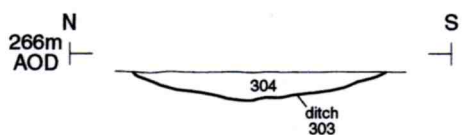
FIGURE NO.

2

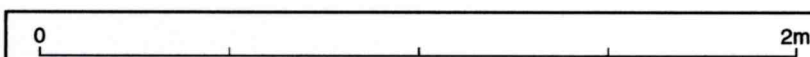
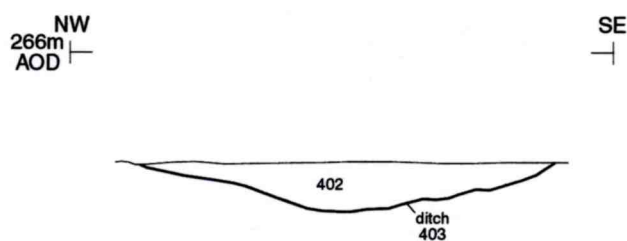
Trench 2; Section



Trench 3; Section



Trench 4; Section



COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

PROJECT TITLE

Land at Soundborough Farm,
Sevenhampton, Gloucestershire

FIGURE TITLE

Trenches 2, 3 and 4; Sections

SCALE

1:20@A4

PROJECT NO.

1947

FIGURE NO.

3