

AVILON,
BOURTON-ON-THE-WATER,
GLOUCESTERSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

C.A.T. JOB: 729
C.A.T. REPORT: 98949

OCTOBER 1998

This report has been researched and compiled with all reasonable skill, care, and attention to detail within the terms of the project as specified by the Client and within the general terms and conditions of Cotswold Archaeological Trust Ltd. The Trust shall not be liable for any inaccuracy, error or omission in the report or other documents produced as part of the Consultancy and no liability is accepted for any claim, loss or damage howsoever arising from any opinion stated or conclusion or other material contained in this report or other documents supplied as part of the Consultancy.

This report is confidential to the Client. Cotswold Archaeological Trust Ltd. accept no responsibility whatsoever to third parties to whom this report, or any part of it is made known. Any such party relies upon this report entirely at their own risk.

© Cotswold Archaeological Trust
Headquarters Building, Kemble Business Park, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 6BQ
Tel. 01285 771022 Fax. 01285 771033 E-mail. cots.arch@virgin.net

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	2
SUMMARY	3
1. INTRODUCTION.....	4
<i>1.1 Introduction</i>	4
<i>1.2 The Study Area</i>	4
<i>1.3 Archaeological background</i>	4
<i>1.4 Methodology</i>	5
2. RESULTS	6
<i>2.1 General</i>	6
<i>2.2 Trench 1</i>	6
<i>2.3 Trench 2</i>	7
3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....	9
4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	11
5. BIBLIOGRAPHY	12
APPENDIX 1	13
<i>Pottery Assessment, By J R Timby</i>	13

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. Location plan	14
Figure 2. Study area showing trench locations and geophysical results	15
Figure 3. Trench 1; plan and section.....	16
Figure 4. Trench 2; plan and section.....	17

SUMMARY

In October 1998 Cotswold Archaeological Trust carried out an archaeological evaluation of land at 'Avilon', Bourton-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire. Two trenches were excavated with a total length of 30m. The trenches revealed later Iron-age and Roman cut features including pits, gullies and a large ditch. Many of these features were not extensively investigated as they were sealed by a substantial late Iron-Age/Roman limestone rubble deposit covering the whole excavated area. This evidence of Iron-Age and Roman activity within the excavated trenches supports the conclusions of the previous desk based and geophysical work on the site, suggesting intensive occupation from this period across the whole study area.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 In October 1998 Cotswold Archaeological Trust was commissioned by Mr R. L. Davies to carry out an archaeological evaluation of land at Avilon, Greystones Lane, Bourton-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire, (centred on NGR: SP171 208) (Fig. 1). This work follows on from previous desk based assessment and geophysical prospection work completed in April 1998 (Kenyon 1998), in connection with an application for scheduled monument consent to build a bungalow on part of the site.

1.2 The Study Area

1.2.1 Avilon house and its garden covers an area of *c.* 0.42ha to the south of Greystones Lane on the east side of Bourton-on-the-Water. It is bounded to the west by Cemetery Lane, and to the south and east by allotment gardens and a cemetery. The current house is located in the northern half of the site, while the southern area, where development is proposed, is covered by lawns formerly used as a tennis court.

1.2.2 The study area lies on level ground on a gravel terrace between the rivers Dikler and Windrush at a height of approximately 130m OD. The underlying geology is formed of Lower Lias clays (Geological Survey of Great Britain 1:50,000 Sheet 217).

1.3 Archaeological background

1.3.1 The area proposed for development lies within the bounds of Salmonsbury Camp, an Iron-Age defended site protected as a scheduled ancient monument (Gloucestershire SAM no. 99). Various parts of the camp and its defences

were excavated in the 1930s by G. C. Dunning (Dunning 1976), and a part of the garden of Avilon to the north of the current study area was excavated by Helena O'Neil in 1956 during the construction of the current house, revealing evidence of Iron-age and Roman occupation (O'Neil 1977). As noted above, more recent work has already been carried out on the site in the form of a desk-based assessment by CAT (Kenyon 1998), and a geophysical survey by Stratascan for CAT (Barker 1998). In the light of these studies it was determined that while the whole area was likely to be of archaeological interest, the south-western portion of the proposed development area showed the least archaeological potential according to the geophysical results (Fig. 2). It is this area which was the subject of this evaluation.

1.4 Methodology

- 1.4.1 A detailed project design was prepared by Cotswold Archaeological Trust (Walker 1998) in line with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1994), and approved by English Heritage and Gloucestershire County Council. The evaluation sought to determine whether any archaeological deposits survive in the area proposed for development, and their depth and state of preservation. Excavation was initially undertaken with a mechanical mini-excavator, to remove topsoil and modern overburden, and this continued by hand once archaeological deposits had been identified.

2. RESULTS

2.1 General

2.1.1 Two trenches were excavated in the locations shown on Figure 2. Trench 1 was 20m long and 1.5m wide, running north to south. Trench 2 was placed to the west, at right-angles to trench 1, 10m long and 1.5m wide. Natural substrate in the form of dark orange gravel was encountered in both trenches at a depth of approximately 0.6m, below the modern ground surface.

2.2 Trench 1

2.2.1 The uppermost archaeological layer in this trench was found at a depth of only around 0.25m below the modern surface. Removal of a modern topsoil and turf layer (101), revealed a layer of dark brown sandy silt (102). This layer was up to 0.4m thick and covered the whole excavated area, containing numerous large pieces of relatively unabraded Iron-age and Roman pottery (see Appendix 1). At the base of layer (102) and within a matrix indistinguishable from that layer were large numbers of limestone fragments up to 0.3m in size, as well as patches of gravel, forming an intermittent band visible in section along the whole length of the trench (114). It is likely that this stone layer represents the last phase of occupation of the site, dating on current evidence to the 2nd century AD. While the stone spreads revealed within the limits of the trench did not show any coherent layout, some appeared to be *in situ* whilst others appeared to have been moderately disturbed by later ploughing.

2.2.2 In two areas where there was a lesser concentration of limestone in layer (114), this was tested by excavation. At the north end of the trench an area 5m long was excavated. In this area a black sandy clay layer 0.1m thick (111) was encountered immediately below (114). It is possible that this represents a pre-

existing ground surface upon which the structures represented by (114) were placed. This layer (111) in turn covered natural dark orange clays and gravels (113). Both these layers, (111) and (113) were cut by a series of features, circular pits [109], [115], [116], and [117] and a shallow linear gully [105]. The largest of the pits, [109] was 1.8m in diameter. Only gully [105] was excavated, revealing a U shaped profile and several large sherds of later Iron-Age pottery. The fills of all these features were of a dark brown sandy clay which made it very difficult to distinguish between feature fills and layers (111) and (102), examination in section suggested that the cuts had all been made from above (111) and were sealed by (102) and (114). It is however possible that some of these features were contemporary with the structures represented by (114) and that later plough action has spread the limestone in (114) across the top of these features.

2.2.3 Layers (102) and (114) were removed in a second area 7m long at the south end of Trench 1. Here the rubble layer (114) sealed a thin (0.05m) layer of clean yellowish pea grit and small gravel (103). It is possible that this layer represents a surface or trackway, two parallel edges were revealed suggesting a track oriented north-east to south-west and around 2.5m wide. This in turn overlaid a dark brownish black sandy clay deposit with some large limestone fragments (112). This layer was not excavated but it is possible that it corresponds to the former ground surface layer identified to the north as (111).

2.3 Trench 2

2.3.1 Trench 2 presented a similar series of deposits to those encountered in Trench 1. Below a modern turf and topsoil layer 0.25m thick, (201), was a mid-brown modern subsoil layer 0.2m thick, (204), possibly associated with the levelling of the current lawn. Below that were a layer of dark brown sandy clay (202), and a layer of limestone rubble (211), with a combined thickness of 0.4m. Layer (202) contained substantial amounts of Iron-Age and Roman pottery

and is likely to correspond, along with (211) to the disturbed occupation layers identified as (102) and (114) in Trench 1. Below this was a thin (0.1m) layer of dark brown sandy clay (209) which again possibly represents a former ground surface similar to (111) in Trench 1. At the interface of (211) and (209) at the east end of the trench were a series of patches of ash and charcoal a few centimetres thick (203). These may represent a structural feature such as a hearth, utilising the now disturbed limestone fragments found in (211) above, some of which showed evidence of burning. In turn below (209) lay natural orange gravel and clay (210).

2.3.2 Again as in Trench 1, features were identified cutting through the former ground surface layer (209), and sealed by the rubble layer (211). The first of these was a large cut [206], occupying the centre of the trench, 5m long, filled with dark brown sandy clay and large amounts of limestone rubble, as well as pockets of ash and gravel (205). To the west of this was a similarly large ditch [208], at least 2m wide which occupied the whole of the west end of the trench, oriented approximately north-west to south-east. This was filled by a mid-brown clayey fill (207), containing small fragments of limestone and some gravel. Neither of these features was fully excavated but they were shown in section to be at least 0.3m deep.

2.3.3 Between the block of (209) left *in situ* at the east end of Trench 2, and the east side of cut [206], a small area of natural gravel (210) was exposed. The surface of this gravel showed bands of linear dark staining running east to west. It is possible that these are traces of ploughing relating to agricultural use of the site prior to the intensive Iron-Age settlement activity represented by the layers above.

3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 The results of this evaluation are consistent in some respects with those of the 1956 Avilon House excavations which took place a few metres to the north (O'Neil 1977), and the more distant 'Site III' excavations (Dunning 1976), although in both those cases the larger areas excavated allowed more certain conclusions to be drawn. Dunning (1976, 78) suggested two phases of Iron-Age occupation, an earlier phase of activity surviving as pits, ditches, and other cut features, superimposed by a 'Belgic' phase consisting of stone flagged roundhouses. The 1956 excavations revealed more of this later, stone-built, phase as well as Roman artefactual material (O'Neil 1977, 23). It is tempting to associate the lower cut features found during this evaluation with the earlier Iron-Age phase of activity and to ascribe the stone rubble layers (114) and (211) to a later phase. The small areas exposed, however, did not allow a reliable judgement to be made of the degree of disturbance to the rubble layers caused by later ploughing and modern re-levelling. A wider exposure of these layers would show to what extent the stone remains *in situ*, allowing coherent structures to be identified, or conversely to how far it has been disturbed, and dragged across possibly contemporary features.
- 3.2 The pottery recovered in the evaluation (see Appendix 1) can be contrasted with material from the 1956 excavations. O'Neil identified Iron-Age features, which she dated to Dunning's 'Belgic' phase, Roman material was also noted (O'Neil 1977, 23). In the evaluation no 'Belgic' fabric types were recovered. Diagnostically Roman sherds occurred in most contexts including the rubble layers, as well as more broadly dated later Iron-Age fabrics. This provides a date from the 2nd century AD for nearly all the activity recorded in the evaluation. It should also be noted that while the 1956 excavations produced high status imported wares such as samian, only relatively locally produced coarsewares were found during the evaluation.
- 3.3 When the excavated features are compared with the geophysical plots, it is

notable that these deposits survive in an area which was geophysically relatively quiet. In Trench 2 this may reflect the presence of a modern subsoil deposit over the western part of the trench possibly corresponding to geophysical area 'R2' on Fig 2, or the responses of deeper cut features may have been masked by the thick and relatively homogenous layer of rubble (114)/(211) covering the whole area. The likely presence of a rubble spread across parts of the evaluated area was proposed on the basis of the geophysical results, and marked in yellow on Fig. 2. At the same time, however, while the excavations revealed evidence of burning and possibly a hearth-like feature at the east end of Trench 2, this was not reflected in the geophysics. Normally burnt features would be expected to produce a strong response to magnetic survey. Thus while the geophysical survey would appear to have detected a number of features to the east of the evaluated area, the absence of detected anomalies across other parts of the site cannot be taken as a reliable guide to the presence or absence of archaeologically significant deposits.

- 3.4 In conclusion, it is clear that relatively undisturbed Iron-age and Roman deposits lie throughout the evaluated area, close to the surface and covered only by the relatively modest modern topsoil and turf layer 0.25m thick. In some areas these deposits form a stratified and possibly multi-phase sequence up to 0.4m thick, with untruncated cut features extending to a probably significantly greater depth into the natural gravel. While no final design is available at present for the building proposed for the site, there is little doubt that any design proposed would require foundations which would intrude significantly into this shallow buried archaeology.

4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cotswold Archaeological Trust would like to thank Mr R L Davies and family, and Mr Andrew Davison of English Heritage for their assistance in the course of this project.

Fieldwork was carried out by David Kenyon and Julie Martin. This report was compiled by David Kenyon, and illustrated by Peter Moore.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barker P, 1998 *A report for Cotswold Archaeological Trust on a geophysical survey carried out at Aviron, Bourton-on-the-Water, Stratascan*

Dunning G, C, 1976, Salmonsbury, Bourton-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire, in Harding D, N, (Ed), *Hillforts: Later Prehistoric Earthworks in Britain and Ireland*, London

Geological survey of England & Wales, 1981 1:50,000 Sheet **217**, *Moreton-in-Marsh*

IFA, 1994 *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluations*,
Institute of Field Archaeologists

Kenyon D,R, 1998, *'Aviron', Bourton-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire, Archaeological Assessment*. Cotswold Archaeological Trust

O'Neil H, 1977, Salmonsbury, Bourton-on-the-Water. Some aspects of Archaeology in Bourton Vale, *TBGAS* Vol. **XCIV**, 11-23

Walker G, 1998, *'Aviron', Bourton-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire, Project design for an archaeological evaluation*. Cotswold Archaeological Trust

APPENDIX 1

Pottery Assessment, By J R Timby

Summary

The two trenches produced a total 107 sherds weighing 2076g. The material is in relatively good condition with moderately large, fresh sherds, with some joining examples. This is reflected in an average sherd size of 19.4g suggesting little disturbance of deposits in recent times. The assemblage was rapidly scanned in a wet condition to assess its likely date range so any comments made here must be regarded as provisional.

The material comprises a mixture of native handmade wares of later Iron-age origin alongside Roman wheelmade wares. The group is entirely composed of coarsewares of both regional and local origin. Prominent amongst the group were handmade sherds of Malvernian rock-tempered ware. This industry is a long lived one dating from the Middle Iron-age well into the 2nd century AD with little technological change. Its presence here alongside Roman grey wares and Severn Valley ware suggests these are Roman products. Also present are a few sherds of wheelmade and handmade Savernake ware jars and wheelmade black burnished ware from Wiltshire, both wares spanning the second half of the 1st century AD into the 2nd century. A single sherd of Dorset black burnished ware from (200), is further evidence of a likely date in the first half of the 2nd century. A small number of shell-tempered, sandy and grog-tempered handmade jars could be of later Iron-Age or early Roman origin. There is nothing in the group which need date later than the mid 2nd century.

Catalogue

Context	Fabrics	No	Wt	Date Range	TPQ
102	MALV,SAV,SVW,GREY, GROG,SHELL	22	687	LIA-EARLY ROMAN	2ND
103	MALV,GREY,	2	80	1ST-2ND	1ST-2ND
104	SHELL,GROG	4	328	LIA	LIA
200*	MALV,SVW,GREY,BB1, GROG,SAV	8	135	1ST-2ND	2ND
202	MALV,SAV,SVW,GREY, SAND,SHELL,GROG	51	512	LIA-EARLY ROMAN	2ND
205	MALV,SAV,SVW,GREY, GROG,SHELL,WMBBW	20	334	LIA-EARLY ROMAN	LATE 1ST- E 2ND
Total		107	2076		

* (200): Unstratified material collected during machining and cleaning of Trench 2

Key:	MALV	Malvernian rock-tempered
	SAV	Savernake types
	SVW	Severn Valley ware
	GROG	grog-tempered various
	SAND	handmade sand-tempered
	SHELL	handmade shell-tempered
	WMBBW	wheelmade black-burnished ware
	BB1	Dorset black burnished ware
	GREY	grey and black sandy wheelmade wares

Figure 1. Location plan

Figure 2. Study area showing trench locations and geophysical results

Figure 3. Trench 1; plan and section

Figure 4. Trench 2; plan and section

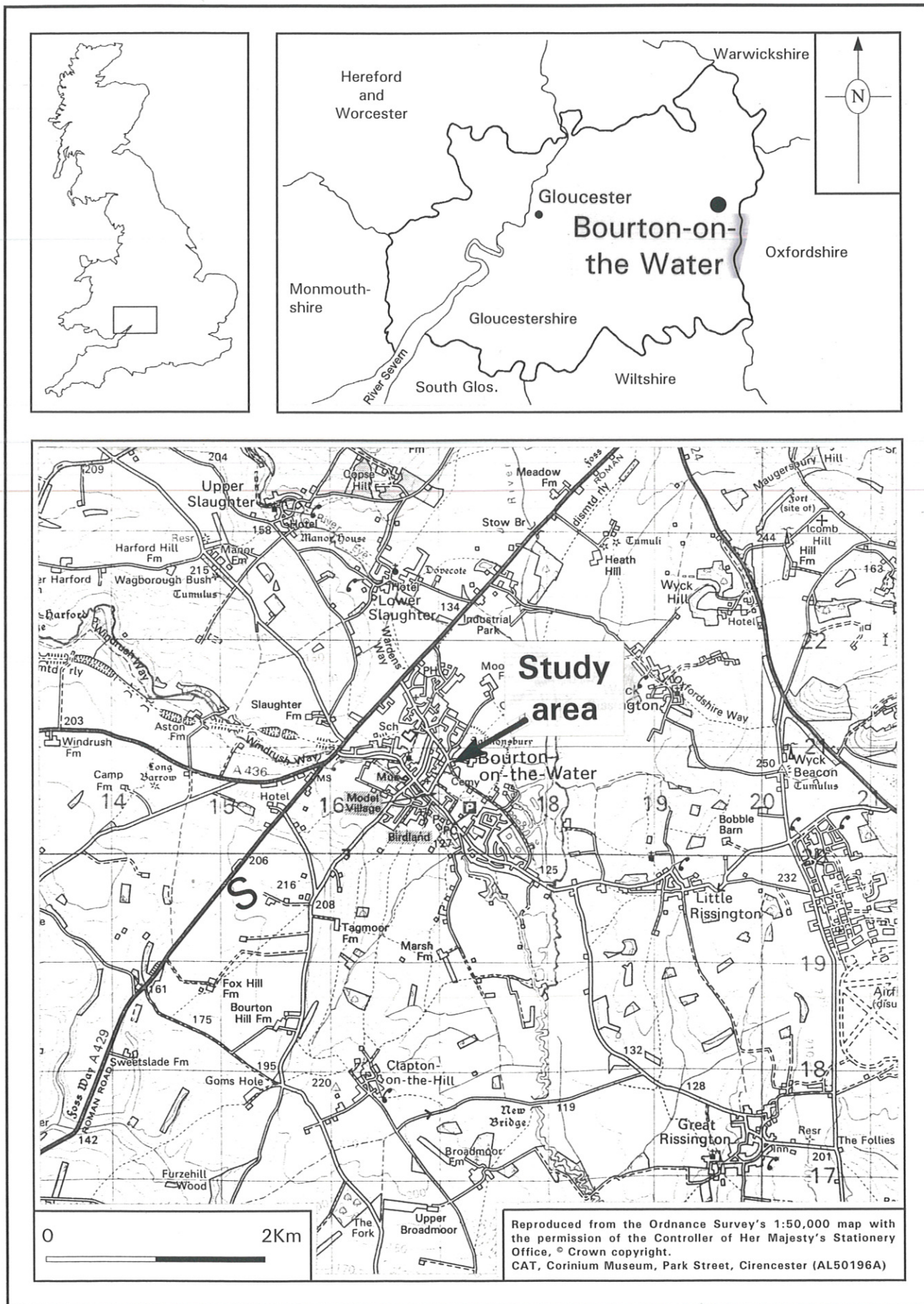
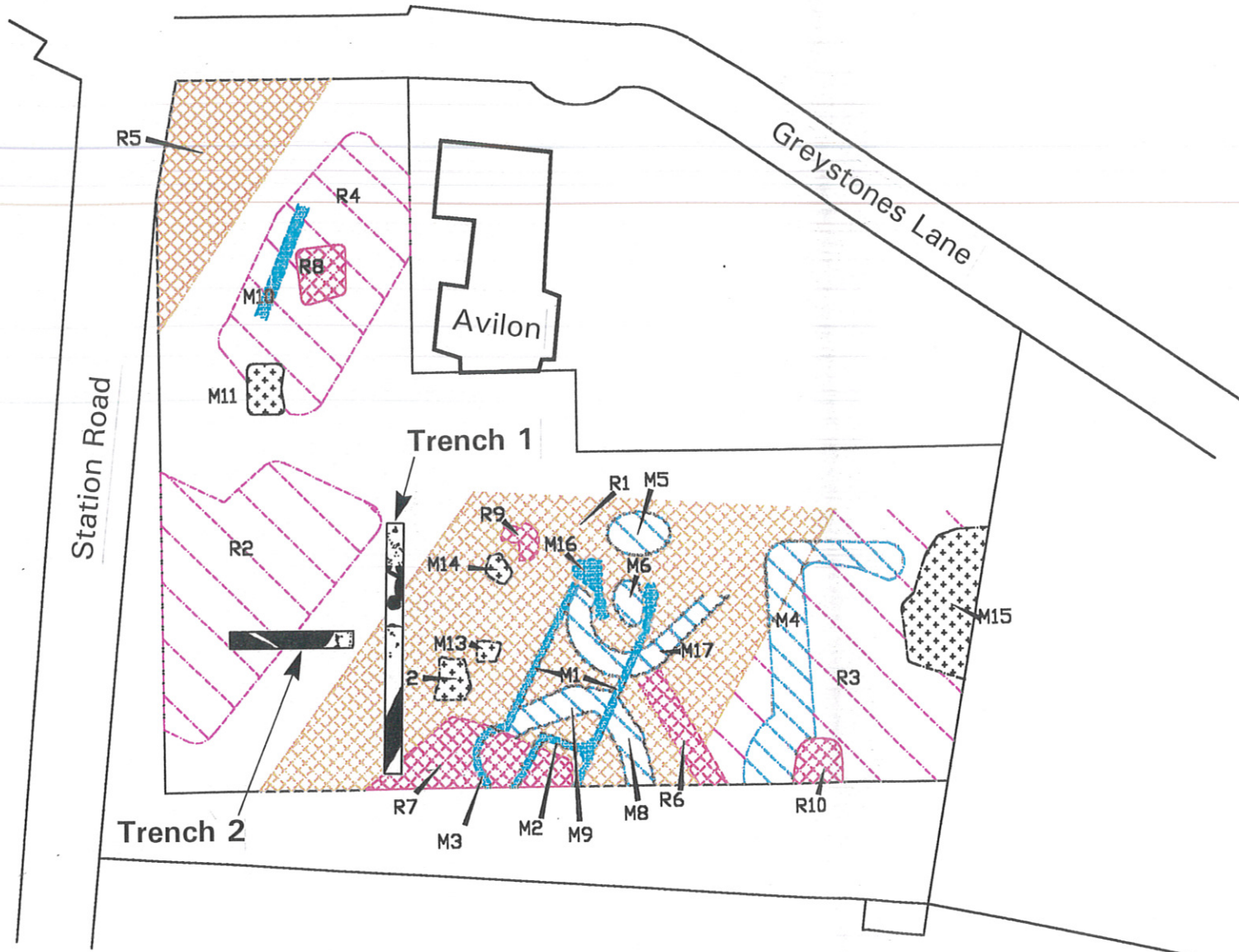


Fig. 1 Location plan



KEY	
	Strong magnetic disturbance (?hearth, kiln, buried metal debris)
	Positive magnetic anomaly (?cut feature ditch/plt)
	Negative magnetic anomaly (?foundation/wall)
	High resistance area (?rubble or foundation)
	General area of higher resistance (?rubble spread or geological variation)
	General area of lower resistance (?hollow or geological variation)

Date: April 1998

Client: COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Scale: 1:500

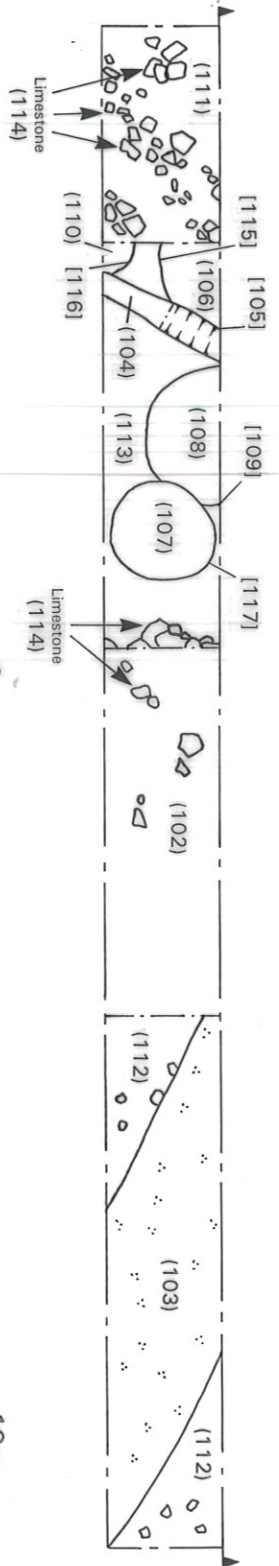
Subject: Geophysical Survey - Aviron, Bourton on the Water
Plot of both magnetic and resistance anomalies

Figure: 13

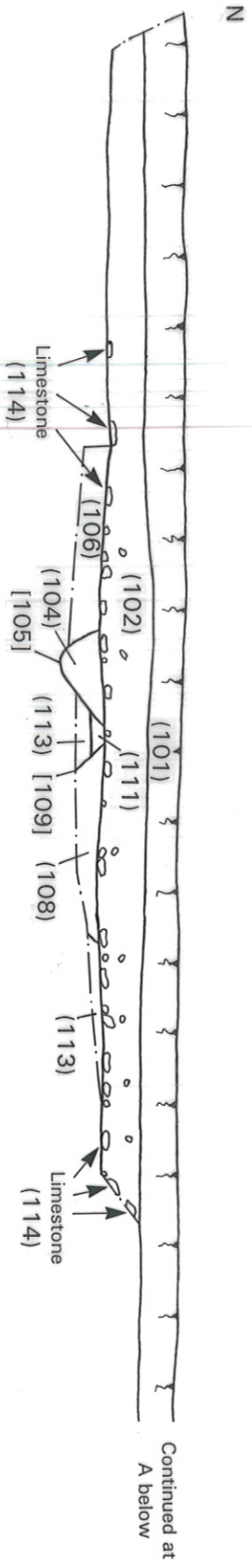
Figure 2

Study area showing
trench locations and
geophysical results

Plan



Section



A

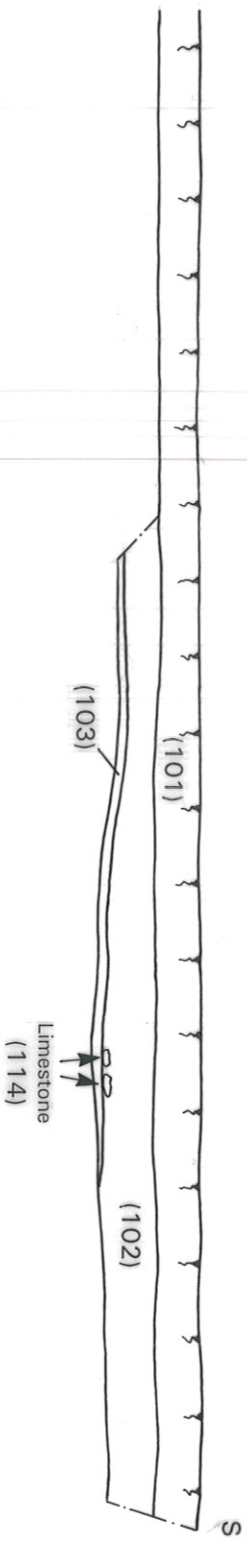
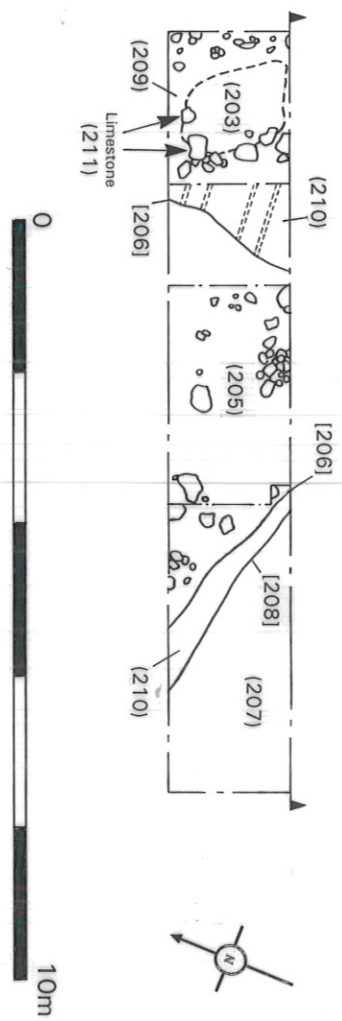


Fig. 3 Trench 1, plan and section

Plan



Section

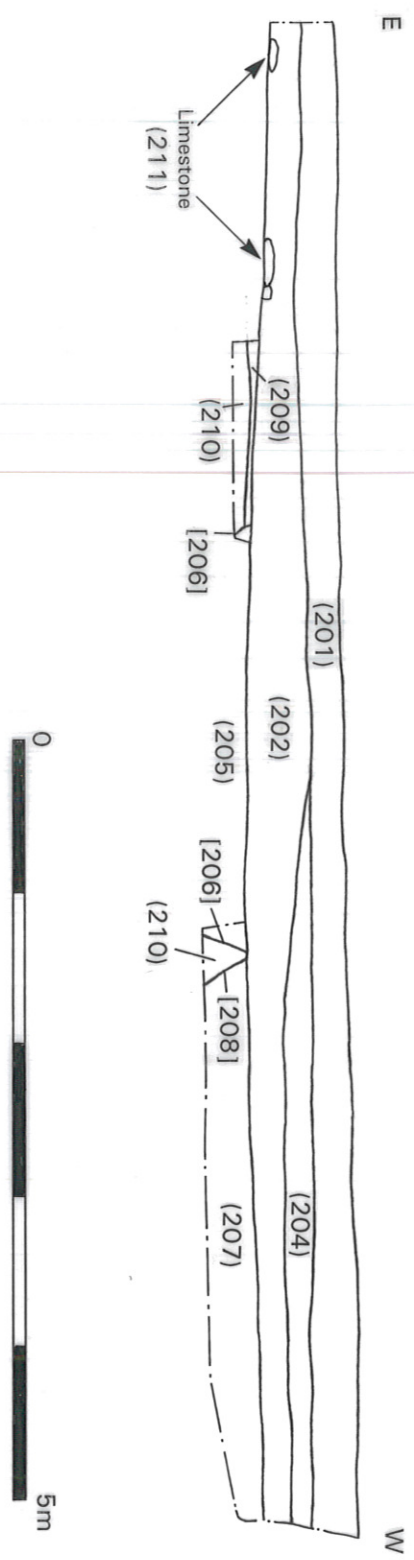


Fig. 4 Trench 2, plan and section