

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
INVESTIGATIONS AT
STONEBRIDGE CROSS,
WESTWOOD,
WORCESTERSHIRE:
FINAL REPORT

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Archaeological investigations at Stonebridge Cross, Westwood, Worcestershire: final report

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Part 1 Project summary

Archaeological investigations were undertaken in 1999 at Stonebridge Cross in Westwood parish, Worcestershire (NGR SO 87648 64647). The investigations formed part of a programme of archaeological work associated with a development by Axa Sun Life Assurance Ltd.

The site at Stonebridge Cross first came to notice as a scatter of Roman pottery and building materials recovered during fieldwalking in 1996. Sample trenching in 1997 identified a concentration of archaeological remains, which were thought to represent a late Iron Age enclosure and early Roman settlement. In view of the significance of these remains, it was agreed to excavate three areas in advance of tree-planting.

The excavation took place in the spring and summer of 1999 and identified another Iron Age ditch, four pits and a roundhouse, but many more Roman features with a date range extending into the late 3rd or early 4th century. Most of the Roman features comprised gullies, pits and postholes similar to those found on rural sites elsewhere in the region. Also, most of the artefacts associated with these features were commonplace, locally produced items. However, parts of three stone buildings were also found, suggesting a much more Romanised settlement than is typically the case in Worcestershire, and some of the artefacts indicated a wider range and higher quality of material culture.

In view of the significance of the buildings, a geophysical survey was undertaken to establish their full extent and identify associated features. The results of the survey showed that the buildings were among several such structures arranged within a series of regular walled enclosures. This evidence supported the suggestion that the site was unlike most Roman rural settlements in the region, and more akin to the villas found in other parts of the country.

As only parts of the site could be investigated, it was not possible to establish its full extent, or to fully understand its form and character at each stage of its development. However, the existing evidence suggests a farmstead that developed gradually between the mid to late Iron Age and the early 2nd century, then expanded rapidly and took a much more obviously Romanised form while retaining a mixed agricultural base. The settlement appears to have been abandoned well before the end of the Roman period, and there was no evidence for later activity other than limited medieval and post-medieval agriculture.

In terms of the immediate context of the site, evidence from fieldwalking in the surrounding area suggests widespread Roman cultivation and the existence of at least two other Roman settlements. Further afield, several Iron Age and Roman sites are known in the countryside around Droitwich, which was itself an important centre of salt production from the Iron Age onwards, and the site of two forts and a villa in the Roman period.

Set against this background, the site at Stonebridge Cross can be seen as one element within a constantly evolving cultural landscape. The site also appears to represent some aspects of continuity between the Iron Age and Roman periods, in terms of settlement location and agricultural production. In addition, the site can be seen as a reflection of the development of Droitwich during this period, while the stone buildings, walled enclosures and the more uncommon artefacts on the site can be seen as expressions of Roman culture similar to the

villa at Bays Meadow. In this way, the results of the investigations provide important new information on rural settlement, agriculture, and the progress of Romanisation in the area.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Introduction

1.1 Location

The site at Stonebridge Cross lies along a low ridge near the junction of four tracks 0.7km north of Westwood House (Fig 1). The geology of the area comprises Triassic Keuper Marl overlain by Pleistocene river terrace deposits (Geological Survey of Great Britain 1976), and the soils comprise loams over clays of the Brockhurst and Hindlip series (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1986). Between 1996 and 1999 the fields on the southern slope of the ridge were improved grassland, while those to the north were in regular arable cultivation.

1.2 Archaeological background and early stages of fieldwork

The excavation formed part of a programme of archaeological work associated with the extension of the Hampton Lovett Industrial Estate, and associated road-construction, landscaping and tree-planting in its vicinity. The fieldwork was carried out in 1996-9. A programme of evaluation, watching brief and excavation was undertaken, as documented in the post-fieldwork assessment and updated project design (Miller *et al* 2001).

From the outset, the area was considered to have the potential to contain significant archaeological remains. In particular, cropmarks indicating sites of Iron Age or Roman date were known from the vicinity, and historical sources provided a context for medieval and later remains. Following consultations between the Client, the Service, and English Heritage, it was agreed that the area to the south of the Industrial Estate should be evaluated in advance of tree-planting, in order to determine the nature of the archaeological resource, and to inform appropriate mitigation strategies if required.

The evaluation took place in two stages. The first stage involved the systematic survey of recently-ploughed fields, and geophysical survey in a single pasture field (Fig 1; Edwards 1996). The fieldwalking identified the Stonebridge Cross site as a potential Roman settlement on the basis of a concentration of 83 sherds of Roman pottery weighing 376kg. Other fields also produced small quantities of Roman and later pottery, together with a few Neolithic or Bronze Age flints. The geophysical survey identified several possible archaeological features.

The second stage of the evaluation involved the excavation of 12 sample trenches, which were located in order to test the indications provided by the fieldwalking and geophysical survey data. The trenches excavated in the area of the flint scatter, and in the field tested by geophysics produced largely negative results. However, each of the evaluation trenches excavated at the Stonebridge Cross site produced evidence of Iron Age or Roman settlement (Fig 2; Napthan, Pearson and Ratkai 1997). In particular, the form and alignment of ditches found in Evaluation Trenches 6, 7 and 9 suggested a large rectilinear Iron Age enclosure, while a concentration of remains in Evaluation Trench 7 suggested a focus of early Roman occupation. The artefact assemblage consisted largely of locally-produced Malvernian and Severn Valley Ware pottery, and a small amount of charred plant remains and animal bone fragments suggested a mixed agricultural economy.

On the basis of this evidence, it was agreed after further consultation that the design for the tree-planting at the Stonebridge Cross site should be modified in order to minimise disturbance to archaeological remains, and that excavation should take place in three broad strips where disturbance was unavoidable.

1.3 **Aims**

The aim of the excavation was to record archaeological remains in advance of tree-planting, and to address research questions raised by the evaluation, principally the form of the late Iron Age enclosure and early Roman settlement (Miller *et al* 2001, appendix 3). Other research aims were identified during the course of the excavation, in particular the need to establish the date and immediate context of three stone buildings recorded near the limits of the excavated areas. In recognition of this, the Client agreed to fund an additional phase of excavation within the buildings, and a geophysical survey in their immediate area (Miller *et al* 2001, appendix 4; GSB Prospection 1999).

2. **Methods**

2.1.1 **Fieldwork**

The fieldwork strategy comprised the excavation of three long parallel trenches set out along the top of the ridge to coincide with areas designated for landscaping and tree-planting (Fig 2; Miller *et al* 2001, appendix 3). The areas between the trenches were not threatened, and therefore not excavated. These parts of the site were preserved *in situ*.

The trenches were excavated to the top of significant deposits by a 360° tracked excavator, using a toothless bucket. Subsequent cleaning and excavation were undertaken by hand. Deposits and features were sampled according to a predetermined strategy, and drawn, written and photographic records were made according to standard Service practice (Miller *et al* 2001). Artefact recovery and environmental sampling policies also conformed to standard Service practice. All trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated spoil.

2.1.2 **Post-fieldwork analyses**

Stratigraphic relationships recorded in the field were checked, and the more complex sequences of deposits were sub-divided on the basis of primary, secondary and tertiary characteristics. A Harris matrix was constructed and correlated with the deposits recorded in the evaluation.

All hand retrieved finds were examined, identified, quantified and dated. A *terminus post quem* (baseline date) was produced for each stratified context. Pottery fabrics were referenced to the fabric reference series maintained by the Service (Hurst and Rees 1992; WHEAS 2003). All information was recorded on a Microsoft Access 97 database.

The environmental samples were sub-sampled and processed by flotation followed by wet sieving using a Siraf tank. The flot was collected on a 300µm sieve and the residue sorted on a 1mm mesh. The residues were sorted by eye and the abundance of each category of environmental remains was estimated. The flots were sorted using a low power EMT light microscope and remains were identified using modern reference specimens housed at the Service. Hand-collected animal bone was identified by comparison with modern reference specimens held at the Service, and by using standard identification manuals (Scmid 1972, Hillson 1992).

3. **Results**

3.1 **Neolithic and Bronze Age activity**

Two flint flakes were found during the excavation of Trench 2, adding slightly to the diffuse scatter of flints identified during the evaluation (Edwards 1996; Napthan, Pearson and Ratkai 1997). The distribution of this material suggests the movement of small groups engaged in

hunting and other “off-site” activities, while the technology of the more diagnostic artefacts suggests a Neolithic or Bronze Age date.

3.2 Iron Age settlement

Contrary to expectations raised by the evaluation, relatively little evidence for Iron Age settlement was recovered during the excavation (Fig 3). Another large ditch similar to those found in the evaluation was found, as were four pits and part of a roundhouse gully. These features were associated with small quantities of pottery which appear to indicate continuous occupation throughout the 3rd/2nd and 1st centuries BC. The restricted size and distribution of the trenches does not allow the extent, form and character of settlement during this period to be established with any certainty. However, taken together, the evidence suggests a middling-sized farmstead with a mixed agricultural base.

With regard to the form of the settlement, it was suggested in the evaluation report that the large ditches found in Evaluation Trenches 6, 7, 9 and 10 might be correlated and interpreted as three sides of a large rectilinear enclosure (Napthan, Pearson and Ratkai, Pearson and Ratkai 1997, fig 3). However, this interpretation has had to be rejected in the light of the excavation evidence and a fresh analysis of the evaluation archive. In summary, it now appears that the ditches in Evaluation Trenches 7 and 9, and in Excavation Trench 3 (Figs 3-5) represent two successive phases of a partial or irregular enclosure, and that the ditch in Evaluation Trench 10 represents part of another such enclosure. All of these ditches appear to be of late Iron Age date, although the only conclusive dating evidence came from the ditch in Excavation Trench 3 (Fig 4; context 358; Plate 1). The ditch in Evaluation Trench 6 has since been re-dated to the 3rd century AD, and can be correlated with a similar ditch in Excavation Trench 3 (Fig 5).

The interpretation of the smaller ditches is more secure, and it is possible to reconstruct part of a rectangular enclosure on the basis of similarities in alignment, morphology, and depositional patterning. On these grounds, the late Iron Age ditch crossing Evaluation Trench 12 can be correlated with the undated ditch crossing the south end of Evaluation Trench 3 (Figs 3 and 5; Plate 2). These ditches may also be correlated with the north-south ditch near the dog-leg of Excavation Trench 3 (context 376), if a return to the north through 90° is allowed. The latter ditch contained no dateable finds, but is probably of late Iron Age date. Some support from this interpretation comes from the pits and postholes found in Excavation Trench 3 and Evaluation Trenches 11 and 12 which appear to be contained by the correlated ditches (Fig 3).

In summary, therefore, the ditches appear to represent two distinct late Iron Age enclosures, the former irregular and multi-phased, and the latter rectangular and single-phased. As noted above, the dating evidence is less than could be wished for, although it appears that both enclosures were broadly contemporary. If this were the case, then they may have defined different parts of the settlement, distinguished along social or functional lines. It also appears that settlement was not confined to either enclosure, as indicated by two pits found in Excavation Trench 1 (contexts 102 and 106), although the pottery from these pits may pre-date that from the enclosures by a small margin.

With regard to the material culture of the settlement, the limitations of the evidence allow only the most basic of generalisations. However, in terms of architecture, the curving gully in Excavation Trench 3 (context 160) is most likely to represent the eaves-drip of a middling-sized timber roundhouse (*c* 11m in diameter), while the postholes in Evaluation Trenches 11 and 12 may represent other types of timber buildings. In terms of artefacts, the pottery represents a range of common types, and shows that the inhabitants had direct or indirect access to the main centre of pottery production in the region, and also to Droitwich salt. In addition, part of a quernstone was recovered from the large ditch in Evaluation Trench 7 (Figs 3 and 12) and the stone has been identified as a quartz conglomerate found in the uplands of the Welsh Marches (see below, section 4.2). The quernstone, and the small quantity of plant and animal remains discussed below (section 4.3) provide limited

information on agricultural activities, suggesting a mixed economy based on cereal cultivation and stock-rearing.

3.3 **Late first to early second century settlement**

Again, contrary to the expectations of the evaluation, relatively little evidence of 1st to 2nd century settlement was identified during the excavation (Fig 3). Moreover, a re-analysis of the evaluation assemblage has shown many supposedly 1st to 2nd century contexts to be of 3rd century date. Only several gullies and a pit towards the east end of Excavation Trench 3 can convincingly be dated to the 1st to 2nd century, on the basis of presence/absence of diagnostic pottery, and morphological or spatial associations.

From this evidence, it appears that the focus of 1st to 2nd century occupation lay within and to the east of the later Iron Age enclosures. Continued occupation of both the irregular and rectangular enclosures is attested by finds from several contexts, while the gullies in Excavation Trench 3 appear to represent a sequence of drainage and enclosure associated with settlement. In view of the paucity of remains from this period, little can be said about the nature and significance of contemporary material culture. However, the presence of transitional wares, and a narrow range of more Romanised forms suggests a balance struck between old and new traditions of storing, preparing and serving food. A small amount of roof tiles might indicate the adoption of new, rectangular architectural forms (although no evidence for the buildings themselves was found). A copper alloy brooch recovered from the excavated spoil of Evaluation Trench 7 can also be dated to the 1st or 2nd centuries, suggesting that Romanised standards of dress and ornament were current among the inhabitants of the site.

3.4 **Late second to late third/early fourth century settlement**

The majority of the evidence for Roman settlement could be dated to the period between *c* AD 120 and the early fourth century (Fig 6). The structural evidence comprised parts of three stone buildings, and several ditches, gullies, pits and postholes, which, together with their associated artefacts, indicate a significant expansion of settlement and the adoption of more expressly Romanised forms of material culture. The stone-founded buildings and walls detected by the geophysical survey are also likely to belong to this phase, but in view of the particular nature of this evidence, it is discussed separately below (Section 4.4).

3.4.1 **Excavation Trench 1**

Building 1

Structural remains belonging to a substantial stone-founded building were found at the east end of the trench, and *c* 30m towards the west (Figs 6-8). The eastern part of the building first appeared as lines of sandstone rubble (Plate 3), which after cleaning and selective excavation, resolved themselves into rubble-packed wall foundations (Fig 7). The longest foundation ran on an east-west alignment along the northern edge of the trench (context 440). From this line, two foundations extended at right-angles to the north and south (contexts 192 and 446). The square formed by these foundations was subdivided by a central, north-south foundation (context 445), and by two more on east-west alignments (contexts 443 and 444). A short length of foundation extended from the east side of the square to its mid-point (context 435) and another extended from the same side for an unknown distance towards the east (context 423), beneath a scatter of flagstones and trampled earth.

Excavation within two small areas showed that in each case, the sandstone rubble filled narrow trenches with concave profiles and flat bases (Fig 7; Plate 4). No finds were recovered from the fills themselves, although one trench was found to cut a pit containing a single sherd of Black Burnished Ware (context 449), which is conventionally dated to after

120 AD, and gives a baseline date of construction. In addition, one sherd of pottery from an internal surface (context 430) can be dated to the 3rd or early 4th century.

In terms of a functional interpretation of these remains, the long east-west foundation and its main northern and southern returns are likely to have carried substantial timber or half-timbered walls. The interpretation of the inner, sub-dividing foundations is less certain. From the outset, it was considered that they were too slight, and the areas they define too small for them to be foundations for internal walls. It was therefore suggested that they could represent slighter foundations for a raised timber floor, which in turn led to the suggestion that the building may have been a granary. However, while there are some points of similarity between the ground-plan and those of well-attested granaries elsewhere (Morris 1979, 33, 114; figs 29-31), the subdivisions of known examples are typically longitudinal or transverse rather than crossed. Moreover, the fragments of painted plaster and window glass found during excavation strongly suggest that the building had a domestic, rather than an agrarian function, and indeed was very well appointed, by local standards.

The western part of the building comprised a north-south foundation that returned for a short distance to the west at its southern end (contexts 176 and 177; Fig 8; Plate 5), and a small, rectangular, stone-packed foundation abutting its west side (contexts 172=174; Plate 6). On the evidence of the ground-plan, and close similarities in construction techniques, the main foundation can be correlated with that extending from the structures to the east (Fig 8). Due to constraints on time and resources, the western foundations were not excavated, although the fill of a ditch pre-dating the main foundation was sampled and produced pottery of 3rd century date (context 153). It should also be noted that this ditch, an earlier ditch and the structures themselves were cut into a considerable depth of made ground (indistinguishable from natural deposits, and of uncertain extent). This in turn overlay a cobbled surface (context 168; Plate 7); each of these contexts produced pottery of at least late 2nd century date. Taken together, the combined dating evidence places the construction and use of the building firmly in the 3rd/early 4th century.

Further information on the extent and possible function of this building was provided by the later geophysical survey, the results of which are discussed below in section 4.4 and summarised in Figure 13.

Other features

The features underlying the western part of Building 1 require some further mention in their own right. The cobbled surface can probably be associated with a similar surface in Evaluation Trench 7, and taken to represent a partially surfaced area lying immediately outside the irregular Iron Age enclosure. This surface does not appear to have been long maintained, however, as that in Excavation Trench 3 was covered by made ground, as described above, and that in Evaluation Trench 7 was cut (as was the made ground) by a succession of drainage or enclosure ditches. All of this activity appears to occupy a relatively short space of time, and suggests a period of intensive replanning, culminating in the construction of Building 1, and several other buildings to be described below.

In addition to these deposits and features, a concentration of 3rd century gullies and pits was found at the far west end of the trench (Fig 8). These features appear to be set deliberately apart from the main focus of contemporary occupation, and may represent industrial or other 'off-site' activities. Two pockets of undisturbed subsoil near the centre of the trench also produced 2nd to 3rd century material including two steelyard weights (see below, section 4.2).

3.4.2 Excavation Trench 2

By contrast with the situation in Excavation Trenches 1 and 3, only a few features of late Roman date were found in Excavation Trench 2 (Fig 6). The features comprised three lengths of the same ditch in the western, central and eastern parts of the trench (context 202), and a feature of uncertain type cut into the central length of ditch (context 208).

Due to the need to concentrate time and resources on other parts of the site, only the westernmost length of the ditch was sampled in a small slot. However, this produced enough pottery to establish a date in the 2nd century or later. In terms of its function, the length of the ditch and its narrow width suggest that it bounded a track running through the site. If this were the case, then the corresponding ditch may lie beneath the present bridleway.

The feature near the centre of the trench comprised a small circular declivity, from which a linear slot extended into a wider rectangle. In plan, the feature resembled a small corn-drier with a bowl-shaped furnace, flue and oven, although the fills were too truncated to allow this interpretation to be confirmed. Nevertheless, it is difficult to suggest what else the feature might represent, and a corn drier would not be out of place among the other evidence for settlement and agriculture.

3.4.3 Excavation Trench 3

Features dated to the 2nd to early 4th century in Excavation Trench 3 comprised the remains of two superimposed stone-founded buildings, and an adjacent group of postholes that appear to represent a small oval timber structure (Fig 9). In addition, a large ditch towards the west end of the trench (context 365) can be dated to the 3rd century by association with a similar, recently re-dated ditch crossing Evaluation Trench 6 (context 602).

Building 2

The structural remains designated as Building 2 comprised an area of rubble-packed wall foundations near the west end of Excavation Trench 3 (Fig 9; Plate 8). Only part of the building was exposed, but enough was visible to indicate that it was of considerable size, with large room and two small subdivisions. For the most part, no internal surfaces survived, although the smaller of the two subdivisions contained a charcoal-filled feature resembling a small oven or kiln (context 415). On this evidence, it might be interpreted that the building had a domestic or ancillary function. The date of the building is uncertain, as no finds were recovered from the small area sampled by excavation, although its construction was identical to the 3rd/early 4th century Building 1 in Excavation Trench 1, and it was clearly overlain by the building described below.

Building 3

Building 3 was represented by a wall of sandstone blocks laid on a foundation of closely-packed rubble (Figs 6 and 9; Plate 9). The full length of the wall is uncertain, as it continued beyond the west edge of the trench and was truncated at its eastern end. However, it clearly represents a building of substantial size, and the slight remains of a return to the north indicate that it was divided into at least two large rooms. No evidence relating to the function of the building survived. In terms of its date, one sherd of pottery from its construction trench and four sherds from deposits abutting the wall date to the 2nd or 3rd century (contexts 419=458=455). However, it should be noted that these finds provide *terminus post-quem* dates only, and that the superimposition of Building 3 over Building 2 makes a date in the late 3rd/early 4th century much more likely.

Other features

The group of postholes lay immediately to the west of Building 2 (Fig 9; Plate 10). Three of the postholes contained pottery of 2nd century date, giving a *terminus post quem* for the entire group. The function of the structure represented by these postholes is uncertain, although it is likely to have been contemporary with one or other of the adjacent stone buildings, and may have served some ancillary purpose.

The large ditch at the west end of the trench (context 365) contained no dateable material associated with its construction and use. However it had a similar profile and sequence of fills to a ditch in Evaluation trench 6 (context 602) which contained 3rd century pottery in its

primary fill (Fig 5). It is therefore possible that the two ditches formed part of a discontinuous enclosure (perhaps with an entrance in the south-west), although this correlation is highly conjectural.

3.5 **Medieval and post-medieval activity**

No evidence was found for any kind of activity on the site, or in the wider area, between the early 4th century and the later medieval period. This observation is supported by a lack of South Midlands shell-tempered ware (fabric 23), which is commonly associated with mid 4th to early 5th century settlement in the region. A few sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from fieldwalking in neighbouring fields, and traces of medieval or ridge and furrow earthworks were recorded in Evaluation Trenches 1-4 on the lower slopes to the south of the site (Napthan, Pearson and Ratkai 1997, 5). Finally, small amounts of 19th century material were noted in each of the fields and trenches investigated.

4. **Specialist reports**

4.1 **Artefacts**

4.1.1 **The pottery assemblage**

Pottery formed the largest proportion of the total finds assemblage. Roman pottery formed the bulk of the assemblage, comprising forms of 1st to 3rd/early 4th century date. Much of the context dating in the evaluation report (Napthan, Pearson and Ratkai 1997) has since been revised, and there are fewer Iron Age or 1st to 2nd century contexts than previously appeared to be the case.

The pottery from the evaluation assemblage was fairly well-preserved, with the surfaces of the Roman sherds displaying only moderate levels of abrasion. In contrast, the Roman pottery in the excavation assemblage was very poorly preserved with a softened matrix and virtually no surviving surfaces or decoration. The Iron Age pottery was, in contrast, in relatively good condition with decoration and burnishing in evidence, although the surfaces of many sherds were coated with a form of hard concretion that could not be removed through washing. Similar residues were also identified on a number of Roman sherds as well as on the metalwork within the assemblage.

4.1.2 **Prehistoric pottery (D Hurst)**

All the prehistoric pottery (192 sherds weighing 2.533kg) was of Iron Age date. The majority of the Iron Age pottery was in good condition, except that any limestone tempered wares had become vesicular due to the leaching out of limestone.

The Iron Age pottery was mainly Malvernian ware (Peacock 1968, Group A; fabric 3; Fig 10) and limestone tempered ware (Peacock 1968, and Morris 1983, Group B1; fabric 4.1), the latter being a ware that becomes particularly common in the later part of the middle Iron Age at Beckford in south Worcestershire, a pattern that was also observed at the Evesham High Street Iron Age site (Edwards and Hurst 2000). The middle Iron Age Malvernian ware was all plain, except for an example of linear tooled ware from context 104. The limestone tempered ware was also all plain, and so ceramic dating suggests that the Iron Age pottery was datable from around the 3rd/2nd century BC to the 1st century BC. There was also a small amount of Droitwich salt container (briquetage).

Fabric no	Fabric name	Count	Weight (g)
1	Sandy briquetage	1	7
2	Organic briquetage	55	817
3	Malvernian ware	46	851
4.1	Palaeozoic limestone tempered ware	29	212
5.1	Sand tempered ware	3	49
97	Miscellaneous prehistoric wares	58	597

Table 1: Quantification of the prehistoric pottery by fabric

4.1.3 The Roman pottery

The Roman pottery assemblage comprised 1456 sherds weighing 17.04kg, and accounting for 81% of all pottery recovered (Table 2). In addition, a further 90 sherds of pottery spanning the late Iron Age-early Roman period were recovered and are discussed in this section of the report. Forms present indicated occupation of the site between the mid to late 1st century and the late 3rd or early 4th century. In general, the assemblage was fairly standard in composition for a rural site of this period, having a limited range of fabrics and forms.

The assemblage was dominated by locally-produced coarsewares, primarily Severn Valley wares (fabrics 12, 12.1 12.2 and 12.3; Fig 11). Of these, the oxidised fabrics (12 and 12.2) formed the larger proportion with a variety of forms identified, consisting of standard storage jars, bowls and tankards. In general, sherds of the organically tempered type (fabric 12.2) were of earlier date being 1st to 2nd century. Diagnostic forms of this fabric also indicated a higher occurrence of large vessels within this group. A sherd of reduced Severn Valley ware (fabric 12.1) was reused and fashioned into a gaming counter.

Reduced Severn Valley wares (fabrics 12.1 and 12.3) were significantly smaller in number and consisted of a narrower range of forms, primarily rusticated and common storage jars. The organically tempered variant (fabric 12.3) is only thought to have been produced during the early Roman period. A small number of reduced wares were also identified as being of regional origin (fabrics 14, 15 and 21.3).

Five sherds from contexts 108 and 113 are also thought to be of Severn Valley origin (fabric 37.2). All the sherds were burnt and highly abraded, and they appear to have come from a single vessel. In addition, 11 sherds from a single mortaria were identified as of West Midlands type (fabric 34; context 600). Although a parallel could not be found, the hooked rim of this vessel indicated it to be of early date.

Other local wares identified within the assemblage were those of Malvernian origin (fabrics 3, 3.2 and 19). However, these were in relatively low frequency in comparison to Severn Valley wares and comprised a narrow range of forms, primarily tubby cooking pots and everted rim jars. The tubby cooking pot forms (fabric 3.2), are often viewed as transitional wares, dating from the late Iron Age to early Roman periods.

Non-local wares consisted primarily of Black-burnished ware I (fabric 22). The majority of these sherds were small, undiagnostic body fragments. However, those that could be dated were generally of 2nd to 3rd century date, consisting primarily of everted rim jars (Wessex Archaeology (WA) types 1 and 2; Seager Smith and Davies 1993) and a small number of plain- and flange-rimmed bowls (WA types 20 and 22). Just one bowl of the later drop-flanged form (WA type 25) was retrieved (unstratified) and just three jars of the typologically latest form (WA type 3) were present.

Other non-local wares, present in small amounts included fragments of Oxfordshire wares (fabrics 33 and 33.1) and Hartshill/Mancetter mortaria (fabric 32). Five sherds of amphorae, including a handle were identified. The four body sherds were identified as of Dressel 20

type (fabric 42.1; contexts 318 and 723), and the handle as of Pélichet 47 type (fabric 42.3). The latter appeared to have been significantly softened by post-depositional conditions.

Samian ware was present in small amounts with the majority of sherds being small and highly abraded fragments with very little slip surviving. The few sherds which were diagnostic were of bowl and dish forms. No further finewares were identified.

Fabric number	Fabric name	Count	Weight (g)
3.2	Handmade Malvernian ware	109	2221
3/19	?Handmade or wheelthrown Malvernian ware	7	66
12	Oxidised Severn Valley ware	997	11894
12.1	Reduced Severn Valley ware	79	752
12.2	Organic tempered oxidised Severn Valley ware	87	1189
12.3	Organic tempered reduced Severn Valley ware	20	218
14	Fine sandy grey ware	6	151
15	Coarse sandy grey ware	1	8
19	Wheelthrown Malvernian ware	13	238
21.3	Micaceous ware variant	16	176
22	Black burnished ware type I	104	903
32	Mancetter/Hartshill mortarium	1	9
33	Oxfordshire mortarium	4	17
33.2	Oxfordshire red mortarium with white slip	1	91
34	West Midlands mortarium	11	89
37.2	Severn Valley/south-west mortarium	5	57
41	Unprovenanced white ware	4	10
42.1	Dressel 20 type amphorae	4	37
42.3	Pélichet 47 type amphorae	1	153
43	Samian ware	30	388
97/98	?Miscellaneous prehistoric/Roman wares	1	1
98	Miscellaneous Roman wares	47	243
?11	?Alice Holt type ware	1	21
?21.3	?Micaceous ware variant	2	18
?29	?Oxfordshire red/brown colour-coated ware	1	7
?3 or 19	?Handmade or wheelthrown Malvernian ware	2	14
?30	?Oxfordshire white colour-coated ware	3	43

Table 2: Quantification of the Roman pottery by fabric

Late Iron Age-early Roman

The late Iron Age and early Roman pottery from this phase consists almost exclusively of Malvernian tubby cooking pot vessels (fabric 3.2). These forms are often viewed as 'transitional' wares, dating from the late Iron Age to early Roman periods. This style of vessel is commonly decorated with a combination of burnishing around the rim and in vertical lines down the body. These vessels are not thought to have been produced after the end of the 2nd century (Bryant and Evans 2001, 24), and their occurrence within deposits of later date is almost certainly residual.

Late first century–early second century (contexts 103, 110, 135, 146, 151, 308, ?312, 318, 324, 326, 329, 342=397, 344, 355, 367, 371, 373, 374, 382, 454, 461, 717, 719, 721, 725, 727, 729, 801, 903, 1103, 1105)

A total of 96 sherds weighing 1.294kg were retrieved from contexts of this phase. Most of the sherds were of oxidised Severn Valley ware (fabric 12) and included a high proportion of the earlier organic tempered variant (fabric 12.2). Forms present consisted primarily of jars and tankards.

Residual sherds consisted of fragments of Dolerite tempered ware (fabric 6) and Palaeozoic limestone tempered ware (fabric 4.1).

Second century (Contexts 108, 113, 117, 131, 136, 155, 156, 157, 167, 168, 169, 201, 202, 335, 353, 357, 366, 380, 424, 450, 452, 455, 458=419=455, 701, 703, 707, 708, 709, 710, 714, 722, 723, 803, 901)

A total of 551 sherds weighing 6.637kg were retrieved from contexts within this phase of the site. Oxidised Severn Valley wares (fabric 12) dominated the assemblage, although the number of the organically tempered sherds (fabric 12.2) had decreased dramatically and by this date are likely to be exclusively residual. Jars were the most common form, with a small number of the wide-mouthed type identified for the first time within contexts of this phase. Likewise, a small number of flanged bowls were also noted for the first time.

A small number of sherds of variant micaceous ware (fabric 21.3) were also identified within contexts of this phase. A large number of sherds of this fabric have recently been identified in Worcester, at the adjacent Police Station and Magistrates' Court sites in Castle Street. Here the forms identified were early in date, consisting primarily of rusticated jar and carinated bowl forms of 1st to 2nd century date (Edwards *et al* 2002, 123; Jeremy Evans pers comm).

The most notable change on composition within this phase is the first occurrence of Black Burnished ware I which is commonly acknowledged to have reached this area only after AD 120. Four sherds of mortaria were also present within this phase and identified as being of Hartshill-Mancetter (fabric 32), West Midlands (fabric 34) and Severn Valley (fabric 37.2) fabrics.

Remaining fabrics identified included a small amount of Malvernian tubby cooking pot (fabric 3.2; contexts 167, 380 and 452), eight sherds of samian ware (fabric 43; contexts 113, 117, 169 and 709) which included three possible Dragendorf 37 form bowl sherds (contexts 117, 169 and 709), a single sherd of Dressel 20 amphora (fabric 42.1) and a single sherd of unprovenanced white ware (fabric 41; context 380).

Third century (later than 240) (context 106, 115, 116, 127, 129, 138, 142, 147, 150=152, 170, 341, 378, 416, 426, 430, 601, 602, 603)

A total of 403 sherds weighing 4.429kg were retrieved from contexts within this phase of the site. Contexts from this phase contained the widest range of pottery fabrics and dates, with much residual material in evidence. Again, oxidised Severn Valley ware fabrics formed the majority of the group and displayed a wide range of form types.

Of particular note are the presence of ten sherds of wheel-thrown Malvernian ware (fabric 19) which can generally be dated from the 3rd century onwards.

Third to early fourth century

All material of this date was unstratified and consisted of a small number of abraded sherds, primarily oxidised Severn Valley ware (fabric 12).

Functional composition of the assemblage

The functional groups of this assemblage (Table 3) have been created from diagnostic sherds present within the coarseware assemblage and are classified as follows: amphora, bowls/dishes, jars, miniature jars/beakers, tankards and mortaria. Bowls and dishes have been combined to form a single category due to the majority of sherds being too small to determine ratio of diameter to height. The figures below do not represent a minimum vessel count but show the relative proportions of diagnostic types recognised within the excavated assemblage.

Form	Total number of vessels	% of vessel forms
Amphora	3	2
Bowl/dish	27	15
Jar	123	68
Lid	1	0.5
Miniature jar/beaker	3	2
Mortaria	7	4
Tankard	16	9

Table 3 Identifiable forms in the Roman pottery assemblage

The dominant vessel type, accounting for 68% of this group was the jar. In contrast, the bowl/dish category accounts for only less than a quarter of identifiable vessel forms and although still forming a large proportion is significantly lower than that of the jars. This pattern is commonly identified on rural sites throughout the Roman period (Evans 1993) and is thought to be due to the jar form being highly adaptable, serving many functions ranging from storage of foodstuffs and liquids to cooking.

Cooking vessels were not well represented within the assemblage, with a relatively low proportion of Black-Burnished ware and Malvernian ware vessels identified. Likewise, only a small amount of sherds displayed evidence of use in the form of sooting or burning. The presence of sooting on cooking vessels is generally higher on rural assemblages than urban and it has been suggested that this may be due to traditional methods of cooking over an open fire, where wood was burned in preference to charcoal. The sparse evidence of sooting on vessels of oxidised and reduced Severn Valley ware indicates that they were used primarily as storage or tableware.

In addition, only seven fragments of mortaria were retrieved. The small proportion of these wares suggests that the pottery from this site was not primarily associated with the preparation of food. However, the presence of *mortaria* and *amphorae*, although relatively small in number, does indicate a degree of Romanisation. It is likely that such vessels were purchased because they served specialised functions such as the efficient preparation of various foodstuffs in the case of mortaria.

There is no evidence of repair within the assemblage which may suggest good and frequent access to the local market.

Contribution to dating evidence

The dating evidence gained from the pottery assemblage has been limited due to poor survival of diagnostic sherds. However, from those forms that have been identified it is possible to identify a pattern emerging in the variety of fabrics.

In the 1st and early 2nd centuries, as expected, the local coarsewares are dominant. This trend can be seen partly as a continuation of the traditional Iron Age industries and partly due

to beginning of production of Severn Valley ware. From the second century onwards, Black-Burnished ware I appears to be taking over from the locally produced Malvernian ware as the dominant cooking ware. The later 2nd to 3rd century also see a wider variety of pottery fabrics, including non-local types and forms identifiable within the assemblage.

Relative survival of different fabric types

Upon excavation, the Black-burnished ware (fabric 22) and Malvernian ware (fabrics 3, 3.2 and 19) sherds were better preserved than those of oxidised or reduced fabrics. This could be due to a number of different factors, partly concerned with the fabric and production methods and partly with post-depositional processes. The most obvious difference between the two types of pottery is that the vessel walls of Black-burnished ware and the Malvernian ware are thicker and therefore more robust and less likely to crack either during use or following discard. The fabric itself is, in general, harder and more highly fired, making it less susceptible to becoming soft and abraded, or to crumble following deposition.

The angular inclusions within the cooking pot fabrics also appear to promote better survival, occurring in a wide range of sizes from large quartz grains to smaller mica particles. The smaller particles and the clay bond and interlock with the angles and edges of the inclusions adding strength to both dry and unfired vessels (Rice 1987, 74). In contrast most of the oxidised ware within the assemblage is of a finer nature with small, well-sorted inclusions; those sherds that do have larger and more angular particles, display less abrasion. This trend can also be seen within the other fabric groups.

There are many different opinions on the role that post-depositional processes play in the survival of different pottery fabrics. In the case of this site, the majority of sherds were in a poor condition upon recovery, many with surfaces completely lost. When compared with the good survival of sherds of the same fabrics from contemporary sites in the region, such as those excavated in the city of Worcester, it seems that the post-depositional environment of this site was the cause, in the form of both chemical erosion and mechanical abrasion. Soil pH may have leached certain particles from some of the sherds causing softening of the overall fabric; especially those originally fired to a low temperature (Rice 1987, 421). This is known to have occurred in Oxidised Wares at Northwich, Cheshire (Hanson 1971, 50). Likewise, chemical elements from the soil may have been absorbed into the sherds, deposited and seen as mineralisation on the surfaces or within the fabric: some sherds are noted to have a thin, dark layer resembling iron panning deposits, deposited just below the surface. Salts can also be absorbed in solution and upon evaporation, form crystals which cause the surface layers to spall in a process of exfoliation. The fields around Stonebridge Cross have been cultivated in the recent past, and the use of fertilisers may have contaminated the soil and led to chemical reactions with the clay of more vulnerable sherds.

4.1.4 **Building materials**

Brick and tile

All brick and tile from the site was retrieved from Roman contexts and totalled 280 fragments of tile and five fragments of brick. Tile from the evaluation was predominantly retrieved from seven contexts within Evaluation trenches 7 and 9, suggesting the possibility of structures in this area of the site. The group consists primarily of undiagnostic tile, although seven flanged tegulae (contexts 101, 169, 203, 300, 257, 903 and unstratified from Trench 3) and six imbrices (contexts 113, 169, 200, 300 and 378) could be identified. One fragment (context 341) had an incised mark on its surface that may be a tally mark.

Other notable fragments within the assemblage included a single combed flue tile from context 101 may indicate the presence of a hypocaust in at least one building and it is possible that a number of the undiagnostic fragments are pilae associated with this.

The relatively small quantity of ceramic tile is notable. The large stone-founded structures identified during the excavation are most likely to have been tiled. One possible explanation may be that the tiles were removed for re-use elsewhere.

Plaster and mortar

A small amount of mortar (contexts 356, 426 and 592) and painted wall plaster (context 430) was retrieved from the main excavation and provides further evidence of the status of the buildings. The decoration on the fragment of plaster is that of a single red line, a standard colour for Roman wall paintings.

Building stone

In addition to ceramic building material, 20 flat tiles of red sandstone were also identified, 15 coming from Trench 1 (contexts 110, 127 and 142), and three from Trench 3 (contexts 300 and 455). This type of stone is consistent with that of the building excavated in Trench 1 and is likely that these were used for flooring. A further stone block from context 123 may also have been used as building material, possibly alongside tile pilae in a hypocaust as seen in the example from nearby Bays Meadow villa (D Hurst, pers comm.).

Remaining pieces of this group include miscellaneous fragments of burnt red sandstone and two large pieces of limestone, probably post pads, from contexts 341 and 357. One of these had wood fragments adhering.

4.1.5 **Metalwork**

A total of 44 pieces of metalwork were recovered from the site. The vast majority were small, undiagnostic fragments of iron. However, a highly decorated fibula brooch was retrieved from a cleaning layer in Evaluation Trench 7 and two lead steelyard weights from Excavation Trench 1.

Iron objects

A total of 41 fragments of ironwork were retrieved from the site. Many of these were small, undiagnostic fragments although it was possible to identify 20 nails. The remaining iron work consists of a nail and two unidentified objects. The largest of these came from a ditch in Evaluation Trench 6 (context 602) along with pottery of 3rd century date. The nail and smaller unidentified object came from a cobbled surface (709).

Copper alloy objects

An assessment of the brooch from Evaluation Trench 7 was carried out by Vanessa Fell (English Heritage, Ancient Monuments Laboratory). Visual inspection had suggested that the brooch was made from a debased silver alloy. However, x-ray fluorescence indicated that the base metal was bronze, alloyed with high levels of tin (V Fell, pers comm.). There were traces of corrosion products indicative of copper alloy along the inner surface of the catchplate. It is possible that this may have resulted from contact with another copper alloy object or that the pin itself was made of this metal.

The brooch is not of a common type and displays several unusual features such as a highly distinctive head (Fig 11). Decoration takes the form of three vertical rows of cloisons in the upper half of the bow. These are divided into cells, three of which still contain traces of light blue and yellow enamel inlay. The lower part of the brooch, the spring and pin are missing. X-ray analysis also revealed three circular holes that could not be seen on the surface due to the thick corrosion layer.

Lead objects

The only lead objects comprised two steelyard weights from context 138, near the centre of Excavation Trench 1. Both weights were cone shaped, one slightly larger than the other and they are paralleled by weights found in Roman Colchester (Crummy 1981, 101; fig. 105; 2510).

Slag

Only a very small amount of ironworking slag was noted, from 3rd century contexts. This is likely to indicate that ironworking was not being carried out on any large scale in the areas excavated.

4.1.6 **Other finds of Iron Age or Roman date**

Quernstone

A piece of rotary quern was retrieved from the fill of a ditch crossing Evaluation Trench 7 (Figs 3 and 4; context 716). This represents the top part of a rotary quern, with part of the handle socket (Fig 12).

Comment on material (S Smith)

The rock is pale orange-pink, fine-grained immature quartz conglomerate. The rock is typical of Devonian Upper Old Red Sandstone Quartz Conglomerate and may be provenanced within the Welsh borders, Wye Valley and Forest of Dean area.

Glass

Four pieces of vessel glass and six of window glass were retrieved, all fragments were stratified and could be securely dated to the Roman period. Of particular note were three pieces of exceptionally fine vessel glass retrieved from context 803. The sherds were an unusual pale yellowish green colour and appeared to be from the base of a single vessel. A further base fragment from another vessel was identified within context 169.

Worked bone

Only a small amount of worked bone was recovered probably due to the post-depositional environment causing degradation. That which did survive included the lower shaft of a bone pin found within in cleaning layer 101 above the sandstone building at the eastern end of Excavation Trench 1. The pin is finely worked and was probably used as hair decoration. This would have been a luxury item and again, indicative of inhabitants of a higher status site. Comparative examples include those of type 2 from Colchester dating from the ?pre-Flavian period onwards (Crummy 1981, 21; fig.18; 177).

4.2 **Environmental evidence**

Low quantities of plant and animal remains were recovered during the excavation, and the material is considered together with evidence from the evaluation.

4.2.1 **Hand-collected animal bone**

The excavation resulted in an assemblage of 41 fragments (104g) of animal bone which was recovered from eight contexts of Iron Age and Roman date. A further 74 fragments (142g) of animal bone were recovered from nine contexts of Iron Age and Roman date in the evaluation. The combined assemblage is small, and poorly preserved due to acidic soil

conditions. However, casts of perished animal bone were noted in several deposits, suggesting a higher frequency of bone than is represented by the surviving assemblage.

Iron Age

Of the contexts sampled in the excavation, only one (104) contained animal bone of Iron Age date, in the form of two small fragments of sheep or goat teeth. More material was recovered from three contexts sampled in the evaluation (contexts 716, 905 and 1004). The remains from these contexts were dominated by large ungulate (horse, cow or red deer) bones and cattle teeth.

Roman

Survival of animal bone from the deposits of this phase was mixed. The contexts sampled in the excavation produced only teeth fragments and very badly preserved bone. However, two contexts (101 and 430) contained well-preserved bone including butchered large domestic animal bone, pig teeth, sheep or goat bones and some bird bones.

Most of the contexts sampled in the evaluation (contexts 601, 709, 803, 901 and 1103) contained cattle teeth, the remaining bone fragments being small and unidentifiable, and in some cases burnt, which may indicate debris that was spread on fields as a fertiliser. However, one context (602) contained a fragment of a dog jaw, which is a rare find in the context of Roman Worcestershire. Dogs are known to have been as highly domesticated in the Roman period as they are today, and they are likely to have been used for livestock herding or hunting (Clutton-Brock 1987).

The predominance of teeth remains in the total bone assemblage reflects the poor conditions for bone survival obtaining on the site, as teeth are generally more resistant to decay. A similar composition of bone remains was noted on a Roman farmstead at Linacres Farm, north of Worcester (Dalwood *et al* 1998).

4.2.2 **Wet-sieved samples**

Iron Age

Only a few samples taken from Iron Age contexts produced environmental remains. One of the sample from a pit (context 104) produced occasional charred grass and cereal grains, a charred culm node and fat hen seeds (*Chenopodium album*), which were modern in appearance. In addition, a sample from one of the larger ditches (context 381) was rich in fragments of burnt bone.

Roman

Small quantities of environmental remains were present in several samples taken during the evaluation (see Tables 4-8 below). Both charred and uncharred plant remains were present, as well as charcoal fragments which may have been intrusive. The charred plant remains consisted of wheat grains (*Triticum* sp) and seeds presumably burnt with crop waste, such as goose-foot, spike-rush (*Elocharis* sp), dock/sorrel (*Rumex* sp), small legumes (*leguminosae* sp indet) and Brassica species. It was not possible to determine whether the latter were from a weed or cultivated species. Since both this species and goosefoot were also found uncharred, it is possible that the charred seeds of these species may have resulted from modern stubble burning. The quantity of remains was too small to allow any stage of crop processing to be identified. However, the weed seeds appear to indicate certain conditions under which crops were grown. If the goosefoot is of Roman date, it is likely to have been grown in a winter-sown crop (Hillman 1981), and spike-rush may have been growing at the wetter edges of fields.

Turning to the excavation, charred grass and cereal grains were present in samples taken from four pit fills (contexts 118, 121, 308 and 327). The most productive sample (context 308) contained a moderate quantity of charred cereal grains that were mostly identified as emmer or spelt wheat (*Triticum dicoccum/spelta*). The grains were probably charred accidentally during parching in readiness for storage or milling. On account of the small quantity of remains present, this waste is likely to represent small-scale domestic processing. Cereal grains may also have been mixed with crop waste used as tinder for domestic fires. In contexts 308 and 327 there was also an abundance of very small charred material (less than 1mm in diameter) which may represent been weeds growing in a cereal crop. Other remains found in small quantities comprised fragments of animal bone (contexts 118 and 327) and oyster shell (context 121).

Context	Context type	Period	Sample vol (l)
701	posthole	Roman	10
707	gully	Roman	15
709	surface	Roman	10
801	irregular feature	Roman	10
1203	fill of buried pot	Iron Age	2

Table 4: Samples from evaluation (WSM 23317)

Latin name	Family	Common name	Habitat	701	707	709	801
Charred plant remains							
<i>Triticum</i> sp grain	Gramineae	wheat	F	+	+		
Gramineae sp indet grain	Gramineae	grass	AF		+	+	
<i>Brassica</i> sp	Cruciferae	Cabbage/turnip etc	ABF			+	+
Leguminosae sp indet	Leguminosae	legume	ABCD		+		
<i>Rumex</i> sp	Polygonaceae	dock	ABCD			+	
<i>Eleocharis</i> sp	Cyperaceae	spike-rush	E		+		
cf <i>Eleocharis</i> sp	Cyperaceae	spike-rush	ABCDE	+			
unidentified	unidentified			+			+
Waterlogged plant remains							
<i>Fumaria</i> sp	Fumariaceae	fumitory	ABC	+			
<i>Brassica</i> sp	Cruciferae	Cabbage/turnip etc	ABF			+	
<i>Silene</i> sp	Caryophyllaceae	campion	CDE		+		
<i>Chenopodium album</i>	Chenopodiaceae	fat hen	AB	+	+	+	
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Rubiaceae	goosefoot/cleavers	CD	+	+	+	+

Key: Estimate of abundance + = 1-10

Table 5: Plant remains from environmental samples from evaluation (WSM 23317)

Context	Sample	Type	Phase	Sample vol (l)
104	1	pit	Iron Age	40
118	2	pit	Roman	20
121	3	pit	Roman	40
308	4	pit	Roman	40
327	5	pit	Iron Age	10
381	6	ditch	Iron Age	10

Table 6: Samples from excavation (WSM 27763)

Context	Sample	Type	large mammal	mollusc	charcoal	charred plant	water-logged plant	other	Comments
104	1	pit			occ	occ	occ		
118	2	pit	occ/mod		occ	occ			
121	3	pit		occ	occ	occ	occ		oyster shell frags
308	4	pit			occ	mod	occ		
327	5	pit	occ		abt	occ		abt	phosphate concretions?
381	6	ditch	abt						burnt bone fragments

Key: Occ = occasional
Mod = moderate
Abt = abundant

Table 7: Summary of environmental remains from excavation (WSM 27763)

Latin name	Family	Common name	Habitat	308
Charred plant remains				
<i>Triticum dicoccum/spelta</i> grain	Gramineae	emmer/spelt wheat	F	++
Cereal sp indet grain	Gramineae	cereal	F	+
Gramineae sp indet grain	Gramineae	grass	AF	+
cf <i>medicago</i> sp	Leguminosae	medick	BD	+
Umbelliferae sp indet	Umbelliferae		ABCDE	+

Key: Estimate of abundance + = 1-10; ++ = 11-50

Table 8 Plant remains from context 308 (WSM 27763)

4.3 Geophysical survey

A geophysical survey was undertaken after the excavation by GSB Prospection Ltd on behalf of the Service. The aim of the survey was to establish the full extent of the buildings identified in Trenches 1 and 3, and to locate any further buildings in their immediate vicinity. The survey used a resistance meter and fluxgate gradiometer to measure the electrical and magnetic properties of archaeological features across an area of c1.2 hectares, divided into three blocks. Full details of the survey methodology and results are contained within the report (GSB 1999); the purpose of this section of the report is to integrate the results of the survey with the excavated data, and add further interpretative comments. A summary plot of the main geophysical anomalies has been presented alongside the 2nd to 3rd/4th century remains on Figure 6, and a more detailed, interpretative plot of the has been reproduced as Figure 13.

4.3.1 Excavation Trench 1/Survey Area C

The survey block around Building 1 in Excavation Trench 1 provided further information on its extent and context. To re-cap, the excavated evidence suggested a large building with a long east-west wall that returned to the south at its east and west ends; in the former case, as a short length of wall, and in the latter case, as a larger subdivided structure. The results from the survey block showed the eastern part of the building as an area of relatively low resistance, with an angular area of generally high resistance interpreted as rubble immediately to the south (GSB 1999, figs 9 and 13).

In view of the limitations of both forms of evidence, it is difficult to see clear relationships between the geophysical data and the excavated remains. However, the eastern part of Building 1 appears to be contiguous with the area of higher resistance to the south, which may indicate a continuation of the same building, to form a long rectangular range with two rooms projecting from its western side. The two areas of low resistance in this area probably represent robber trenches dug and backfilled at some point after the abandonment of the building, rather than elements of the original plan.

The relationship between the western part of Building 1 and another area of high resistance to the south is less certain. The westward return of the main foundation suggests that the building did not continue to the south, although the area of high resistance begins immediately outside the trench. On balance, it is perhaps more likely that the excavated remains and geophysical data represent two separate buildings, although if both were contemporary, there would have been very little distance between the two.

Another area of high resistance was identified further to the west, along with several linear features on east-west and north-south alignments. Nine discrete areas of moderate resistance

were also identified in the western half of the survey block. The area of high resistance suggests a square building with a room projecting from its south-east corner, while the linear features are likely to represent walls separating the built-up area from other parts of the site. However, it should be noted that one such anomaly shown as crossing Trench 1 was assuredly not present when the trench was excavated, suggesting that not all of them can be taken for granted. Finally, the discrete anomalies appear to be closely associated with the central and western buildings, and are most likely to represent materials stripped from them after they were abandoned.

4.3.2 **Excavation Trench 3/ Survey Area A**

As described above, the excavated buildings at the east end of Excavation Trench 3 comprised a long wall on an east-west alignment (Building 3) overlying the foundations of an earlier, subdivided building on a slightly different alignment (Building 2). The geophysical survey results in Survey Area A show a large, irregularly-shaped area of high resistance in the southernmost block, which appears to stop, then resume few metres to the north in a pattern indicating a range of buildings with two wings at right angles to each other (GSB 1999, figs 4-6). The break in the high resistance readings may represent the northern limits of the excavated buildings, although the Building 3 may have returned to the north to join the east wing of the northern range. The reason for the high resistance readings to the south of the buildings is unclear, as no structures were evident in the area, and the few features which were initially thought to be present later proved to be natural variations in the subsoil.

The results of the limited gradiometer survey are also of interest in relation to the buildings in Excavation Trench 3, as they indicated the presence of magnetically-enhanced deposits within and just outside the trench. With the exception of a post-medieval ploughshare, which was found in association with the later wall, no other metal artefacts were found, although a large part of the area was not excavated, and it is possible that these readings represent structural fittings or artefacts lost in and around the buildings.

In the northern part of Survey Area A, the geophysical survey identified a series of high-resistance readings on north-west to south-east alignments, and a scatter of responses from ferrous artefacts. As in Survey Area C, these features are likely to represent walls, in this case probably defining the northern limits of the settlement. Unfortunately, it was not possible to establish the full extent of the enclosed area, although it appears to have extended beyond the field in which the excavation took place, and into the fields to the south and east, giving a total area well in excess of 3 ha (8 acres).

4.3.3 **Survey Area B**

The results of the geophysical survey in Survey Area B largely confirmed the pattern established by Area A, with building remains being present towards the south-west, and a series of boundaries lying further to the north-west. A return to the south-west of the inner of two banks or walls identified in Area A is apparent, although the buildings evidently continue beyond the survey block to the east.

5. **Discussion**

5.1 **The Iron Age settlement**

The evidence of Iron Age settlement at Stonebridge Cross suggests the existence of a middling-sized farmstead that was continuously occupied and substantially modified over time. In the west of the site, part of a regular enclosure is represented by three relatively shallow boundary ditches, and possibly also by several pits that lie within the area so defined (Fig 3). The evidence in the central area is more difficult to interpret, and it appears that the three large ditches in this area represent two successive phases of a single partial or irregular

enclosure, and another such enclosure lying at some distance to the north-west. At all events, it is clear that there was at least one roundhouse on the site, and other post-built buildings or structures are likely to have existed. The charred plant remains dating to this period appear to represent one element of a mixed agricultural economy, with the other element being represented by a small assemblage of animal bones.

In terms of the wider context of the site, evidence from Worcestershire and elsewhere in the West Midlands suggests that it was one of many small to middling farmsteads that formed the basic units of settlement, agricultural production and social organisation throughout the later Bronze Age and Iron Age. Few Iron Age settlement sites have been excavated in Worcestershire (Hurst 2002c), but many sites have been identified on the basis of cropmarks and isolated finds. Taken together, the evidence suggests a patchwork of wooded and open landscapes of dispersed settlement and mixed agriculture. The settlements exhibit a variety of forms, and also differ in the range of artefacts associated with them. However, they are similar enough in most respects to suggest that a degree of cultural homogeneity applied across the entire region. The regional settlement pattern seems also to have included a number of exceptional sites such as hillforts and specialised industrial centres, which may have played a significant role in structuring wider social and economic relationships.

At a more local level, the site at Stonebridge Cross can be seen as one of several farmsteads lying close to a major centre of salt production at Droitwich (Morris 1985; Woodiwiss 1992), and to a hillfort on Church Hill, Hanbury (Dyer 1991, 14; Cook, Hurst and Pearson 1998). A farmstead similar to Stonebridge Cross has recently been excavated at Stoke Lane, Wychbold (Fig 15; Jones and Evans 2002), and another has been suggested on the basis of geophysical evidence at Ford Cottages, to the south of Crutch Farm (Fig 15; WSM 16528; Hurst 2002a, 3). Other sites may also be indicated by isolated finds of Iron Age coins (Hurst 2002a, 3). Given the proximity of these sites, it is reasonable to assume that their inhabitants were economically and socially linked, and the distribution of Droitwich briquetage (sherds from salt containers) provides some archaeological evidence of these connections. Briquetage seems to have been fairly common at Stonebridge Cross (Table 1), and at Church Hill, Hanbury (Cook, Hurst and Pearson 1998, 4-5), but only a single sherd was recovered from the excavation at Stoke Lane (Jones and Evans 2002, 9). Looking slightly further afield, briquetage was rare at Deansway in Worcester (Bryant and Evans 2001, 22), but frequent at a settlement near Beckford in the Vale of Evesham (D Hurst pers comm). It is not yet clear how such variation can be interpreted, and the mechanisms that linked these communities with Droitwich and each other remain unclear. However, it does not seem that those living closest to Droitwich necessarily had greater access to Droitwich salt.

5.2 **First to second century settlement**

The evidence for 1st to 2nd century settlement is also difficult to interpret, but appears to show continuity of occupation and land-use alongside the adoption of Roman forms of architecture and material culture. Occupation may still have been largely contained within the various enclosures of the previous phase, but it appears also to have taken in an area to the east (Fig 3). Finds of roof tiles from contexts of this period indicate the presence of rectangular buildings which would have represented a significant departure from the local architectural tradition in favour of a more Romanised form. Similarly, the pottery dating to this period represents a mixture of Roman and British traditions, and points to changes in the storage, preparation, and serving of food. Taken together with a copper alloy brooch which reflects a new style of dress and ornament, the evidence suggests a period of change in several areas of traditional culture. These changes do not appear to have extended into the economic sphere, however, as the environmental remains indicate a continuation of small-scale mixed farming based on the same kinds of animals and crops.

As with the evidence for the late Iron Age settlement, the 1st to 2nd century evidence fits within the context established by previous work in Worcestershire. Excavations at several sites have provided significant information on the character of rural settlements in this period, for example Linacres Farm, North Claines (Dalwood *et al* 1998), Leylandii House Farm,

Norton and Lenchwick (Jackson, Hurst and Pearson 1996), and the George Lane and Furzen Farm settlements on the Wyre Piddle bypass (Griffin and Jackson, forthcoming). The evidence typically shows a combination of Roman and traditional traits. In most cases, the traditional elements are uppermost, but Roman influences are evident in the appearance on some sites of rectangular buildings and associated building materials, and in the widespread adoption of Roman forms of pottery and other artefacts. Set against this background, the early Roman settlement at Stonebridge Cross can be regarded as a typical example of Romanisation in a rural context.

The local background is less well known, but there are signs of other Romanised settlements, and evidence of continued salt production and new development at Droitwich. Several concentrations of 1st to 2nd century pottery have been found within a 1km radius of Stonebridge Cross, including one site in Westwood Park, south of Bowling Green Plantation (Fig 15; WSM 4155), and another site near Crutch Farm (Fig 15; WSM 15628). Other concentrations of early Roman pottery have been found in Hanbury parish to the east (Dyer 1991, 16). In addition, numerous cropmarks have also been recorded, and at least some of these are likely to represent early Roman settlements. The nature of settlement at Droitwich in this period is uncertain, although salt production undoubtedly continued, and an auxiliary fort was established at Dodderhill (Burnham and Wachter 1990, 211-217).

5.3 Second to third/fourth century settlement

As described above, the site expanded considerably in the late 2nd or 3rd century, and took on a much more Romanised form with the construction of several large stone buildings within a regular set of walled enclosures (Figs 13 and 14). In addition, there was an increase in the range of pottery and other items used during this period, although the artefact assemblage as a whole is relatively standard, and out of keeping with the quality of the buildings. As with the earlier phases of occupation, there is little direct evidence of agricultural production, but pottery from the surrounding fields suggests that a large area was under arable cultivation.

In a local context, the 2nd to 3rd century settlement appears to have been larger and more Romanised than any contemporary rural settlement investigated in Worcestershire to date, with the exception of a recently discovered site at Childswickham (Patrick and Hurst, forthcoming). The nearest similar buildings would have been those of the villa at Bay's Meadow in Droitwich, which was built in the mid second century, but the villa buildings clearly represent a much higher level of sophistication, and were associated with artefacts of exceptional quality (Hurst 2002b). Looking further afield, there are stronger similarities between Stonebridge Cross and the small villas surrounding the *civitas* capital of Wroxeter in Shropshire (Webster 1978; 83-89; White and Barker 1998, 109-112), and those near the small Roman towns of Kenchester, Herefordshire (Wilmott and Rahtz 1985) and Alcester, Warwickshire (Palmer 1999). Given that the closest parallels to the late Roman settlement at Stonebridge Cross are villas adjacent to small towns, and given also that Droitwich was certainly a local centre of some kind during this period, it is worth examining the relationships that may have existed between the two sites in this context.

Considering potential economic relationships first, the later expansion of the settlement at Stonebridge Cross could reflect the development of Droitwich into something between a specialised industrial centre and a small town (Buteux and Hurst 1996). Hard evidence for the nature of later Roman Droitwich is lacking in every respect, but its size and population are likely to have increased in line with the general expansion seen elsewhere, and a nucleus of settlement may have formed at the point where two roads converged on a ford across the Salwarpe (Crickmore 1984, 75). Some market functions might also be assumed (over and above those relating to the salt trade), while administrative functions may have been exercised from the palatial villa at Bays Meadow. In addition, it is likely that the introduction of a province-wide system of taxation would have obliged all agricultural communities to produce a surplus that could be paid in kind or exchanged for coin, and this in itself may have encouraged the development of both rural and urban settlements. Set against this background, the later expansion of the settlement at Stonebridge Cross might represent a

redevelopment geared towards meeting new demands and taking advantage of new opportunities, some of them stemming from the growth of Droitwich, and others from changes that affected the entire province.

As well as the economic relationships that may have existed between Stonebridge Cross and Droitwich, it is likely that there were social and cultural ties between the inhabitants of the two settlements. In particular, the form of the 2nd to 3rd/4th century settlement may have owed something to the presence of the villa at Bays Meadow, which was probably the only other conspicuously Romanised site in the local area. Whether personal contacts existed between the villa owners and the inhabitants of the Stonebridge Cross site is an intriguing, if unanswerable question, but the villa buildings and the culture they represented may have acted as a model for the Stonebridge Cross community. With regard to the wider, social and cultural context, the apparent absence of similar settlements in the County, and in the West Midlands as a whole suggests that such expressions of cultural identity were the exception rather than the rule. However, it is possible that Romanisation may have taken different and less recoverable forms elsewhere, and that its extent may have been underestimated. In summary therefore, there are good *a priori* grounds (but little hard evidence) for relating the expansion of the late Roman settlement at Stonebridge Cross to the development of Droitwich in this period, and to economic, social and cultural forces that applied to varying extents across the province as a whole.

To conclude this discussion, some mention must be made of the apparent abandonment of the settlement well before the end of the Roman period. While due allowance must be made for the limitations of the evidence, there are no grounds for believing that occupation continued beyond the early 4th century, or that the settlement was declining in the late 3rd century. Instead, it seems more likely that the settlement was abandoned quite suddenly, soon after it reached its maximum extent. It also seems that at least some building materials were taken from the site, presumably for re-use elsewhere. The circumstances behind this abandonment are unclear, but it supports other evidence that settlement patterns changed markedly during the Roman period, and perhaps contracted in the late 3rd or early 4th century. For example there is clear evidence of settlement “drift” within localities between the 1st and the 4th century (Griffin and Jackson, forthcoming), and for sites being both abandoned and founded in the late 3rd or 4th century (Jackson *et al* 1996, 119-119). There is also evidence for late 3rd or early 4th century contraction in some of the region’s small towns (Dalwood 2001, 49-50; Booth and Evans 2001, 305). Set against this background, the settlement at Stonebridge Cross appears to have been unusually long-lived, but not unusual in the date of its final abandonment.

5.4 **Post-Roman activity**

No evidence was found for any form of activity on the site, or in its immediate vicinity between the early 4th century and the medieval period. It is clear that extensive robbing of building materials took place at Stonebridge Cross, but there is as yet no evidence for when this took place or where the building stone and roof tiles were reused.

Anglo-Saxon charter evidence indicates that the area was wooded by 972 (Finberg 1972, 118; Hooke 1990, 397-402), suggesting that the settlement and its surrounding fields reverted to woodland at some point after their abandonment. For the post-Conquest period, a small quantity of pottery sherds and traces of ridge and furrow earthworks indicate a low level of medieval cultivation. This land-use can be associated with the home farm of a nunnery founded at Westwood in the mid-12th century (Kerr 1999). Later manorial and public records show that the nunnery’s lands were acquired by a local gentry family and were later incorporated into a substantial deer park associated with Westwood House (Light 1913). Finally, a series of 19th century maps suggest that the park had greatly diminished in size by this period, and that some parts had been brought back into cultivation. This suggestion is supported by the presence of thin scatters of post-medieval pottery in each of the fields and trenches investigated during the fieldwork.

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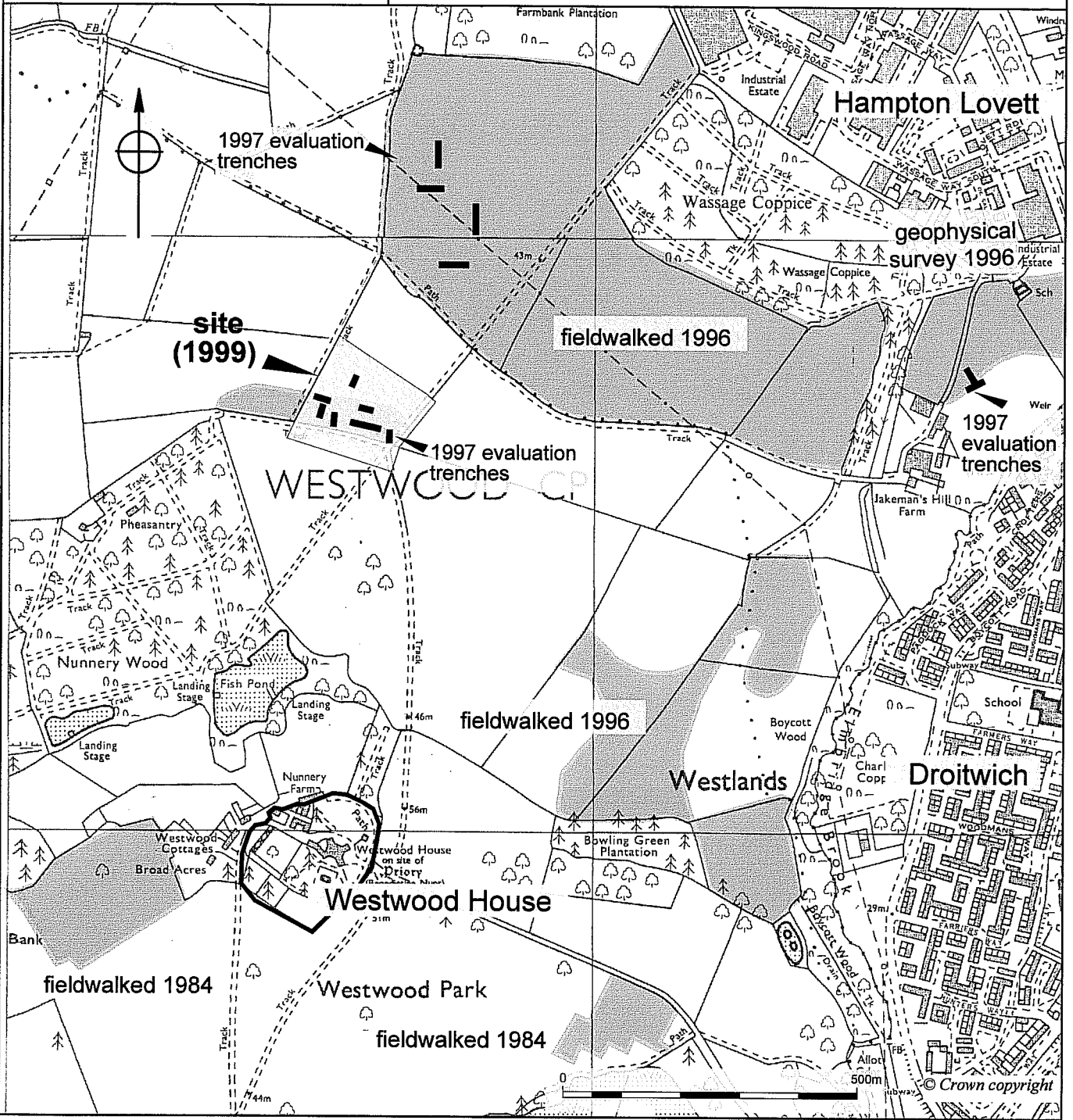
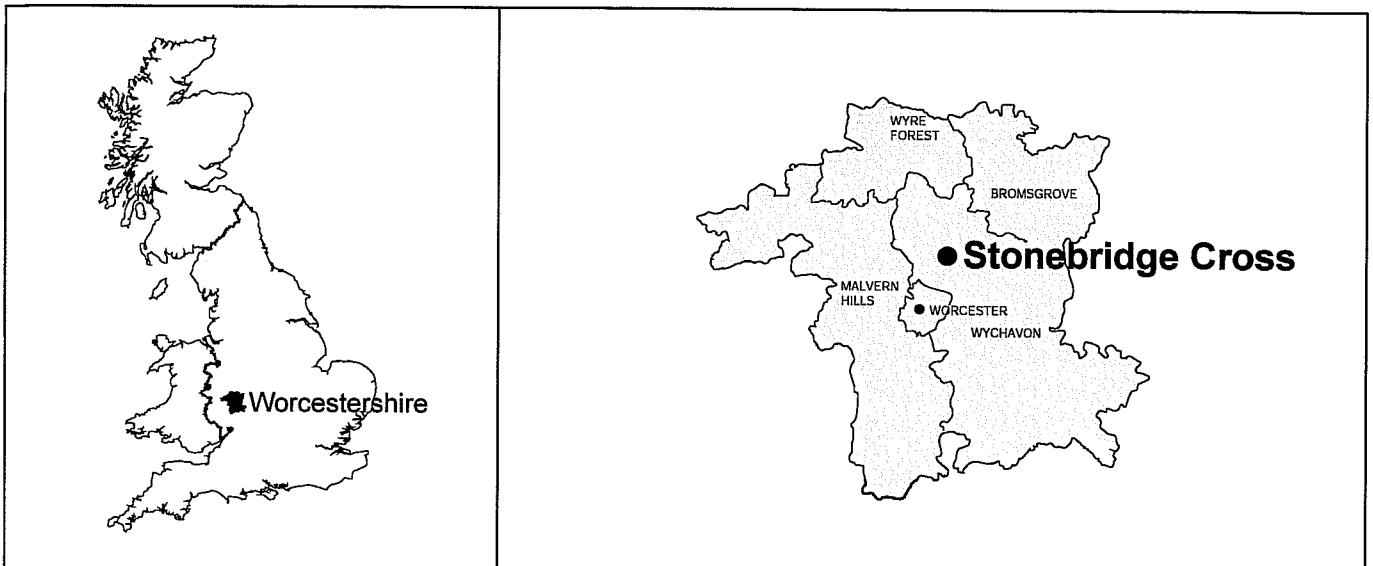
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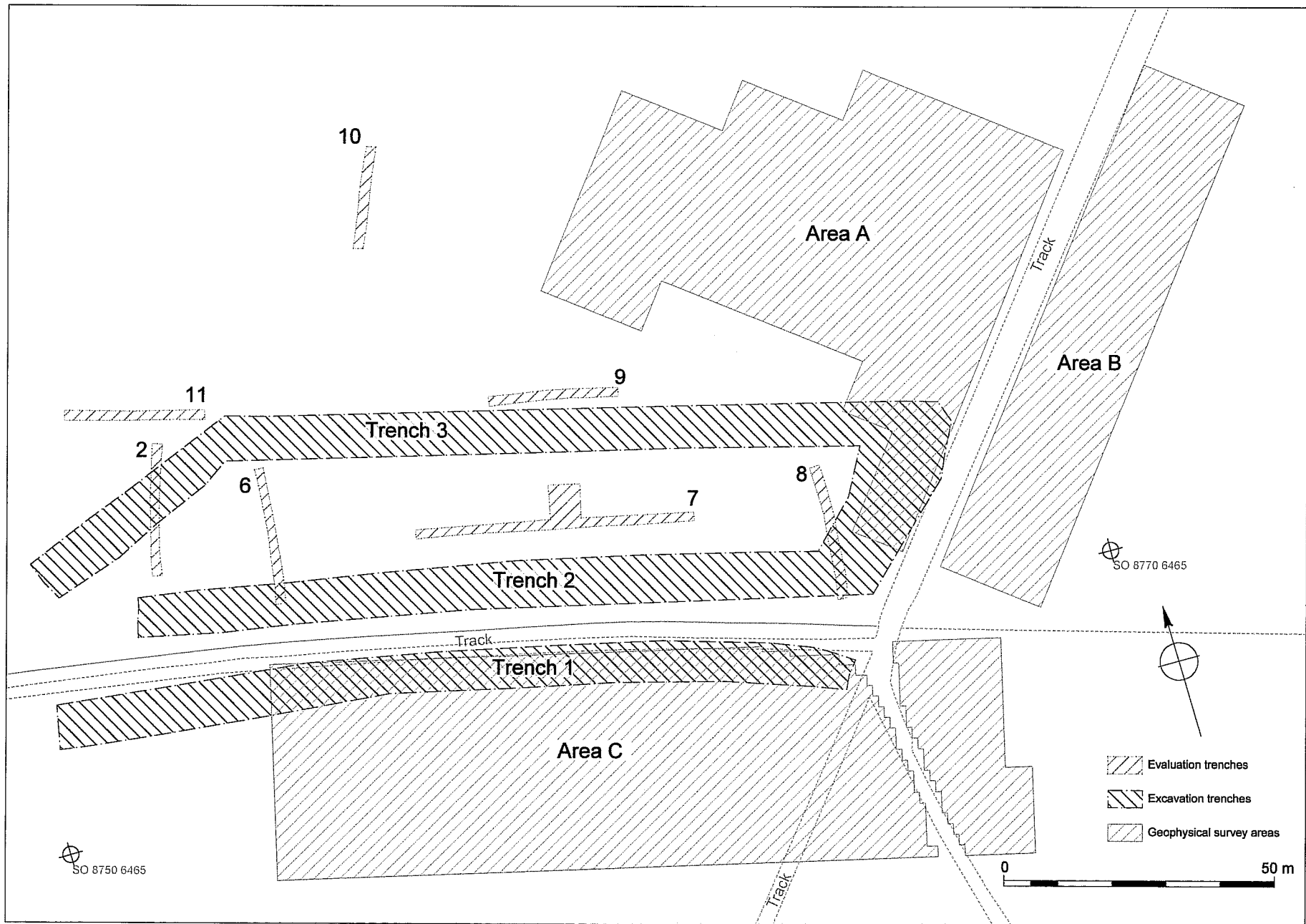
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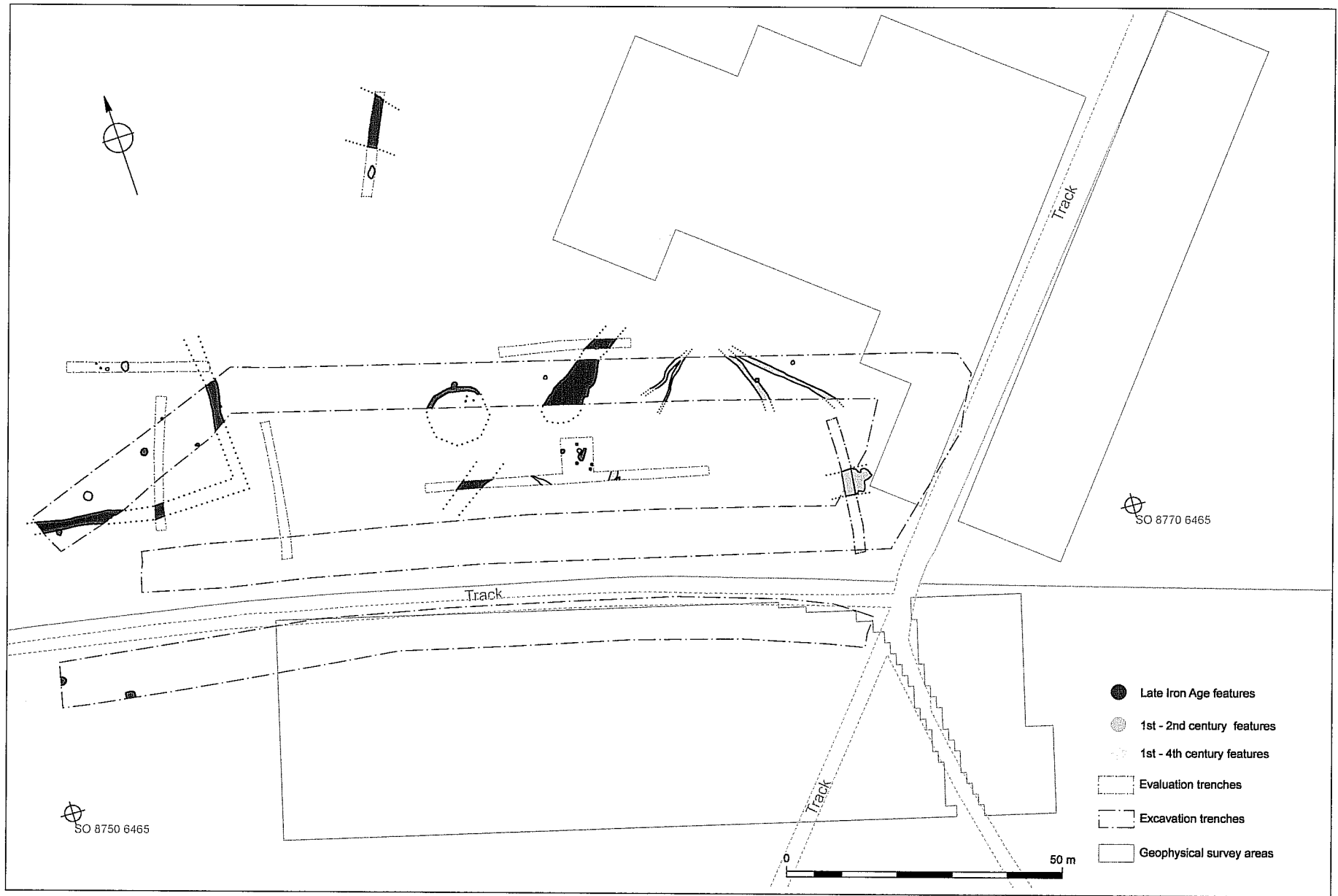
Location of the site

Figure 1:



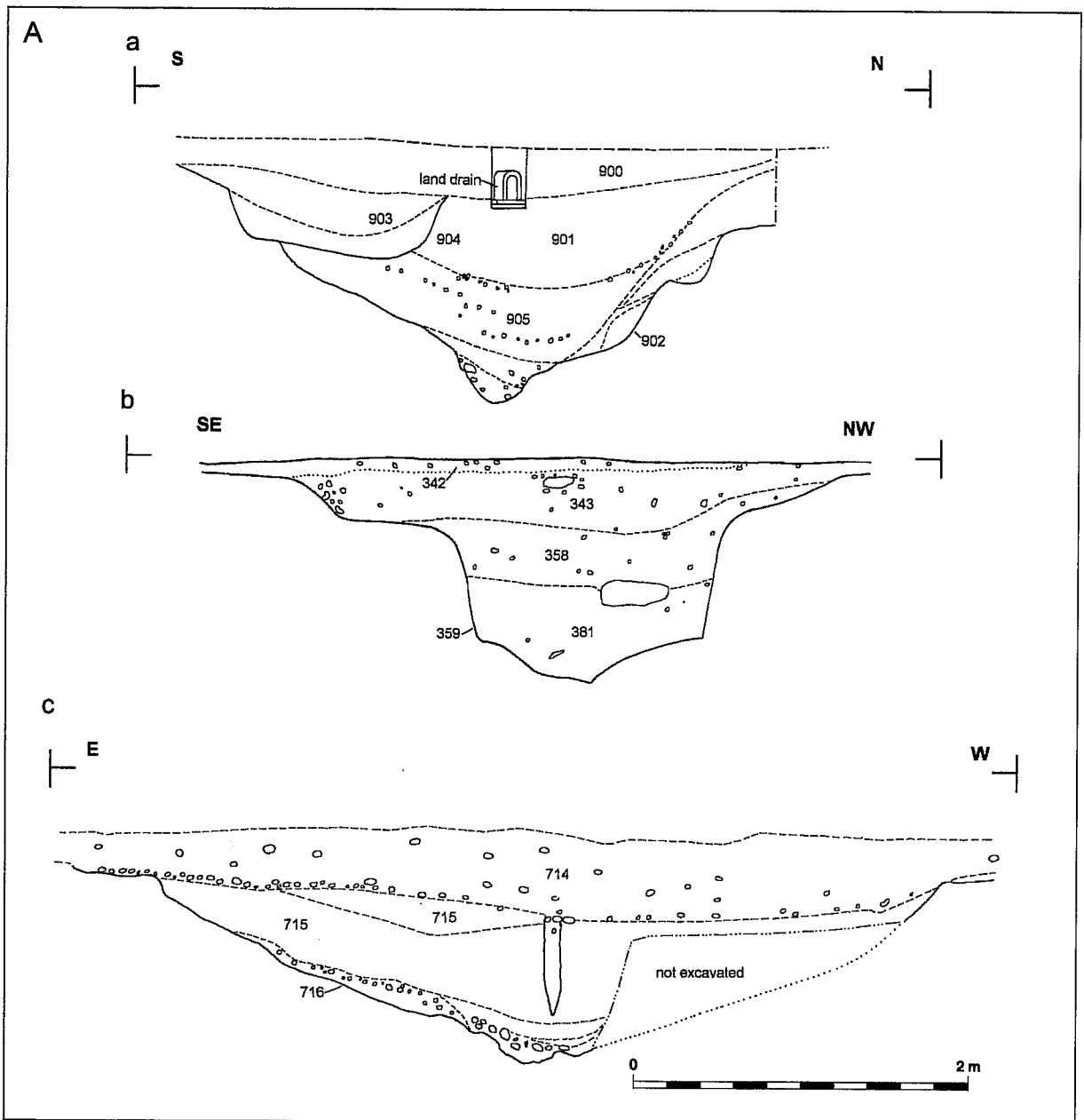
Location and numbering of trenches

Figure 2:

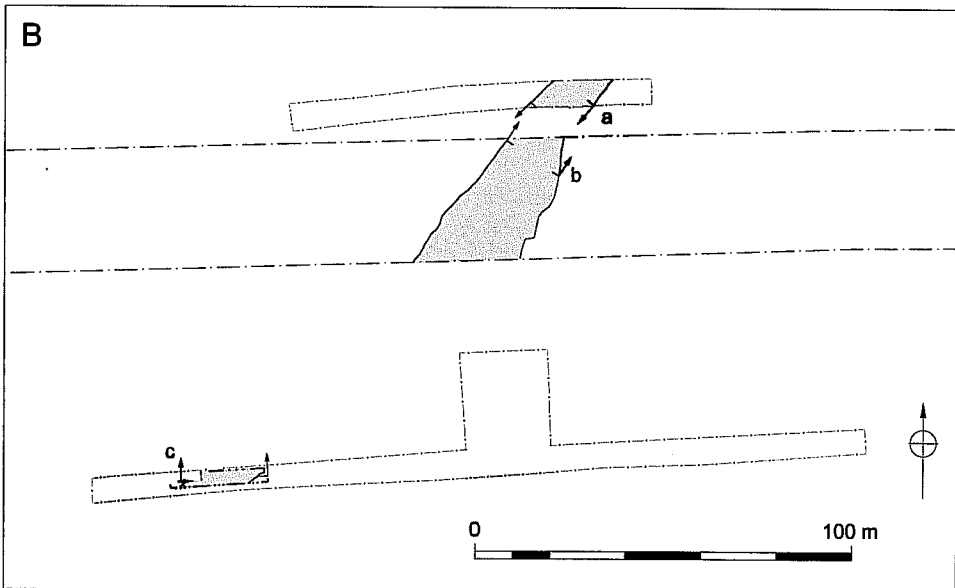


Late Iron Age and 1st to 2nd century features

Figure 3:

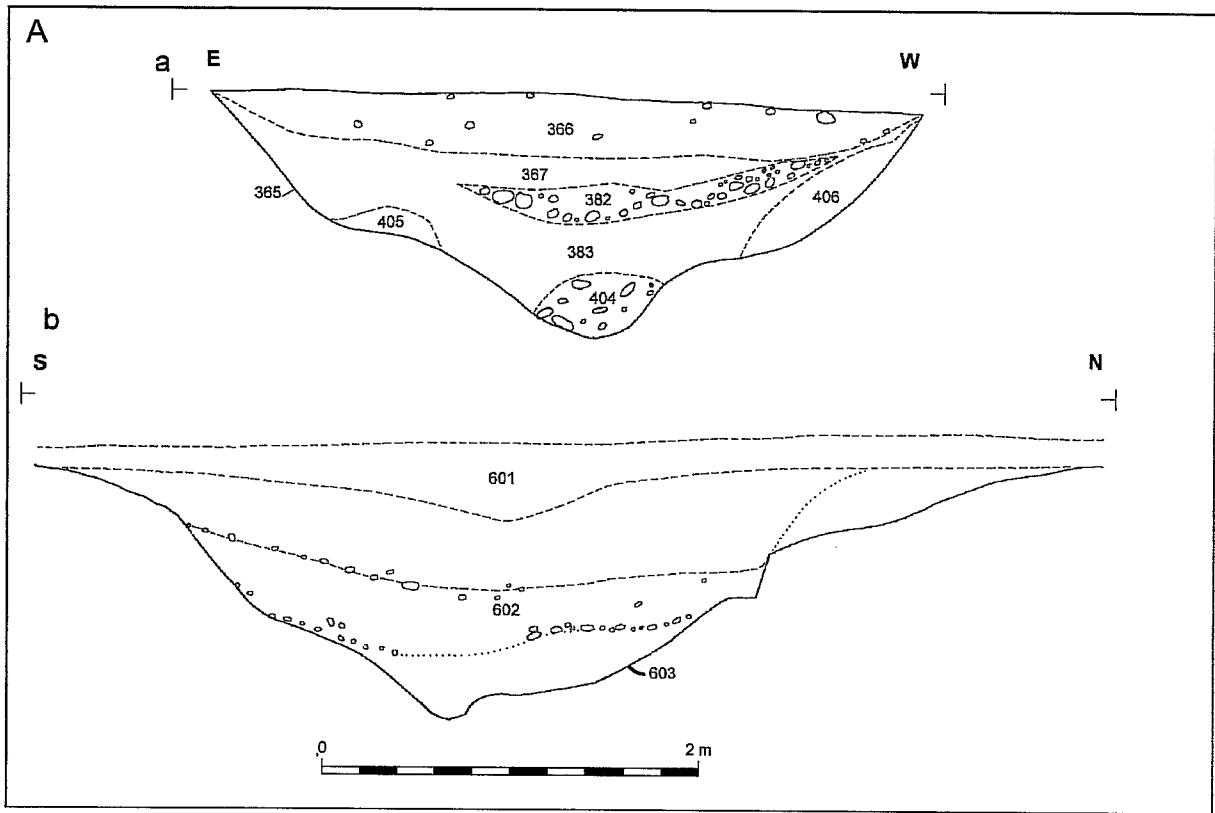


Sections through ditches 902 = 359 and ditch 716

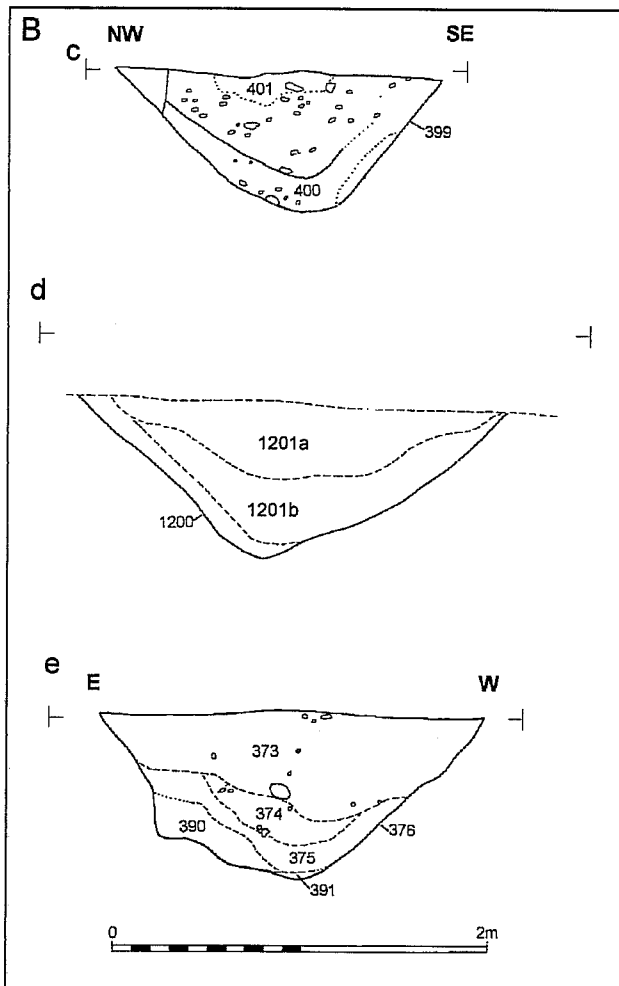


Location of ditches and sections

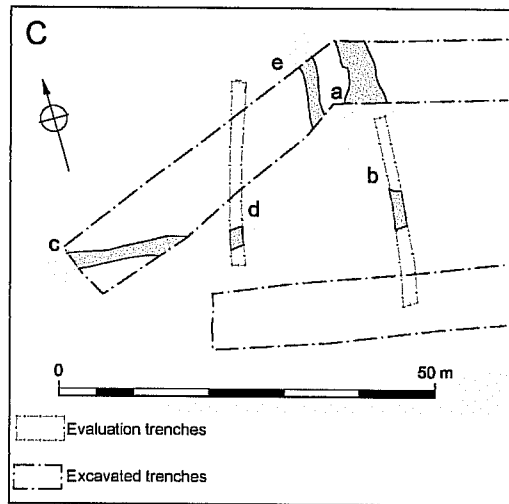
Figure 4:



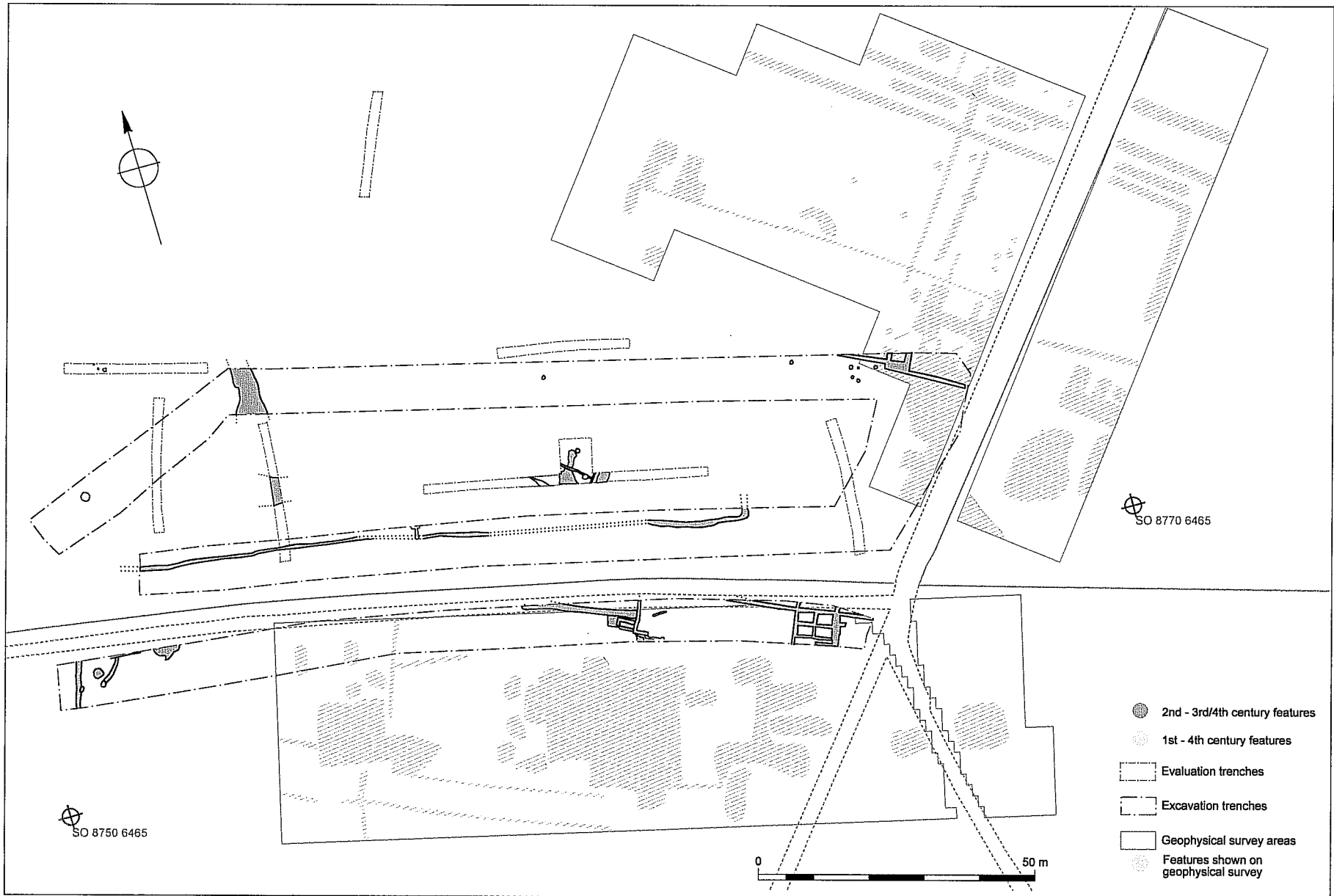
Sections through ditches 365 and 603



Sections through ditches 399, 1200 and 376.

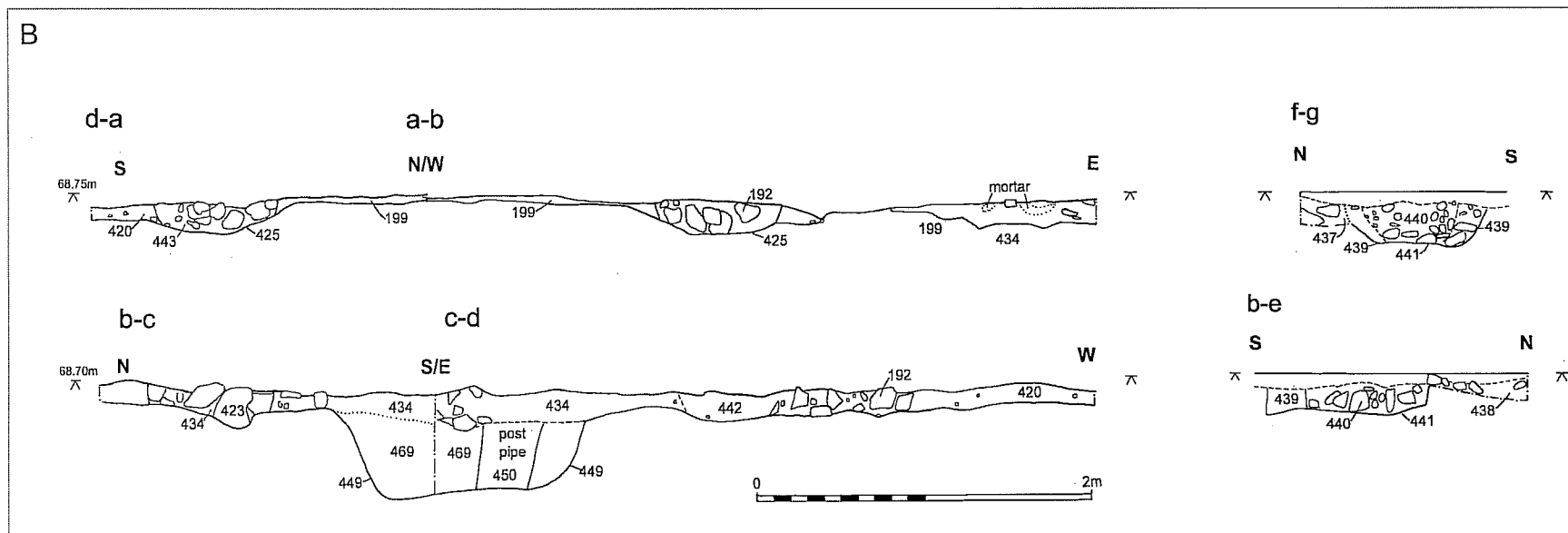
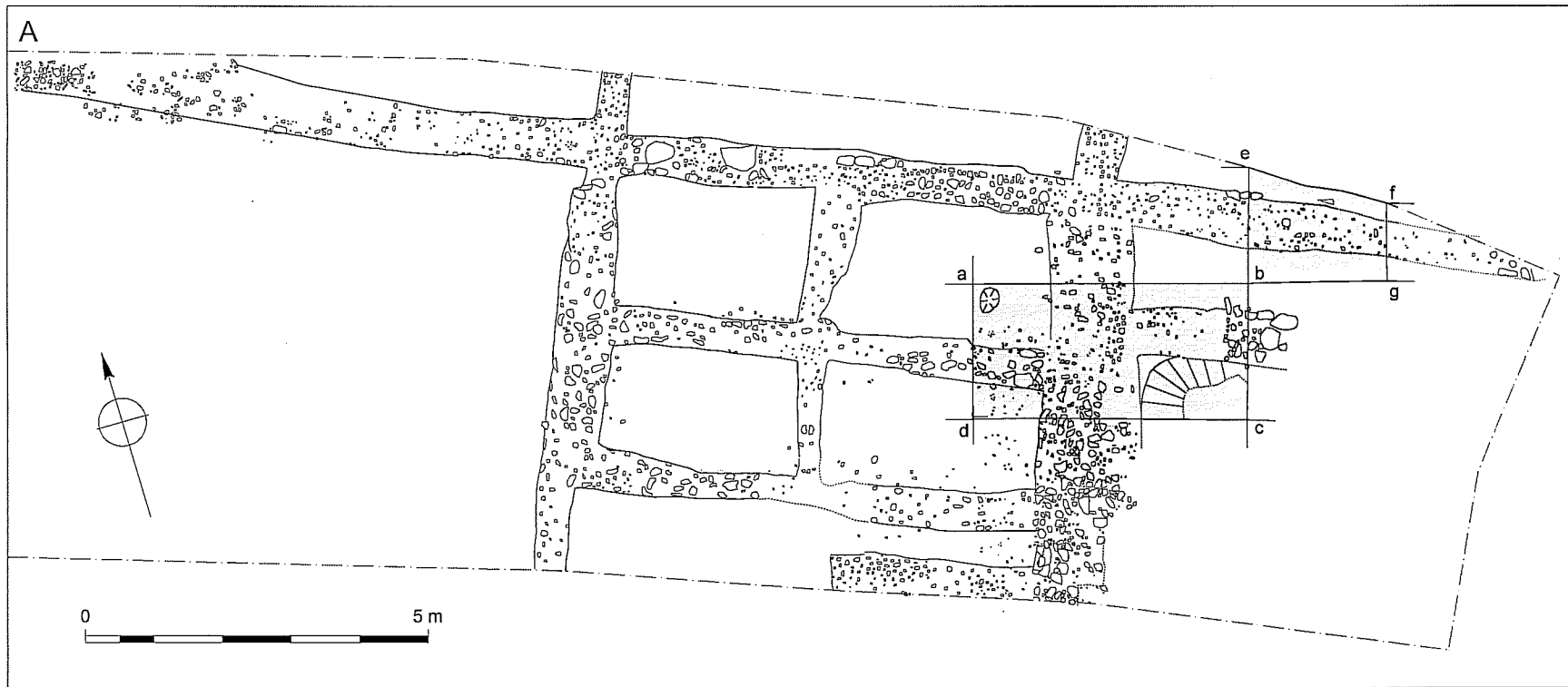


Locations of ditches and sections



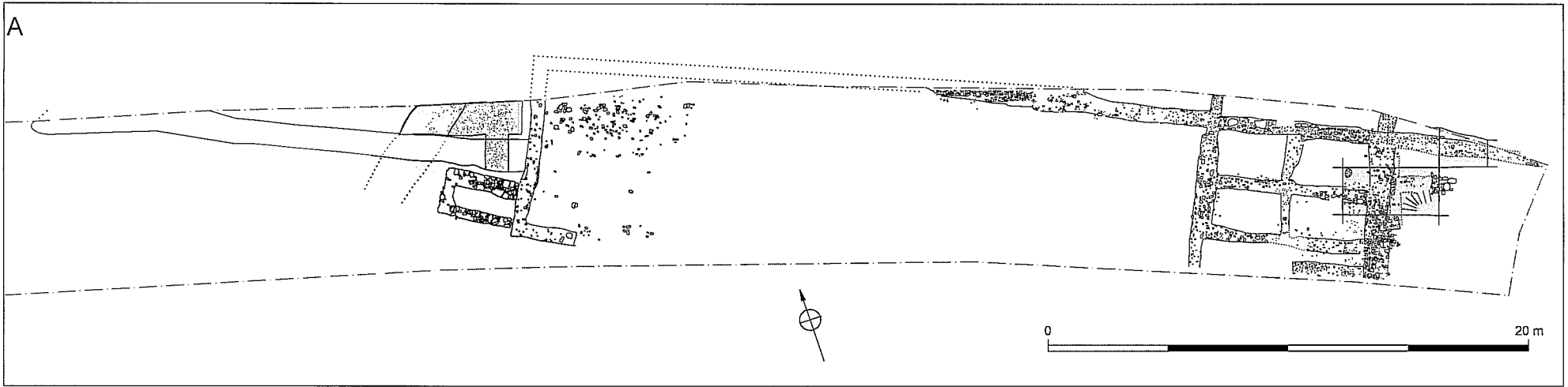
2nd - 3rd/4th century features

Figure 6:



Plan of east end of building (A) and sections through foundations (B)

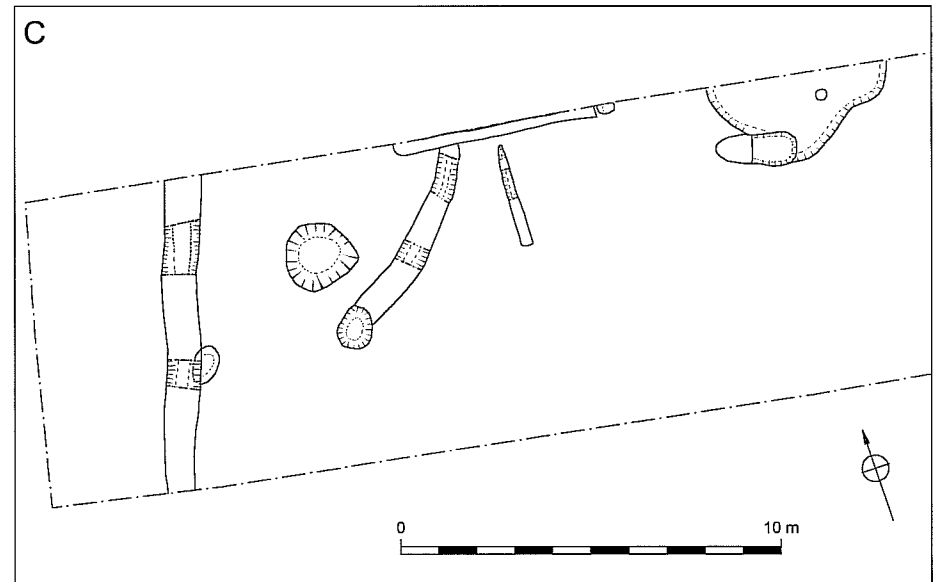
Figure 7:



Plan of building 1 and earlier features



Detail of west end of building



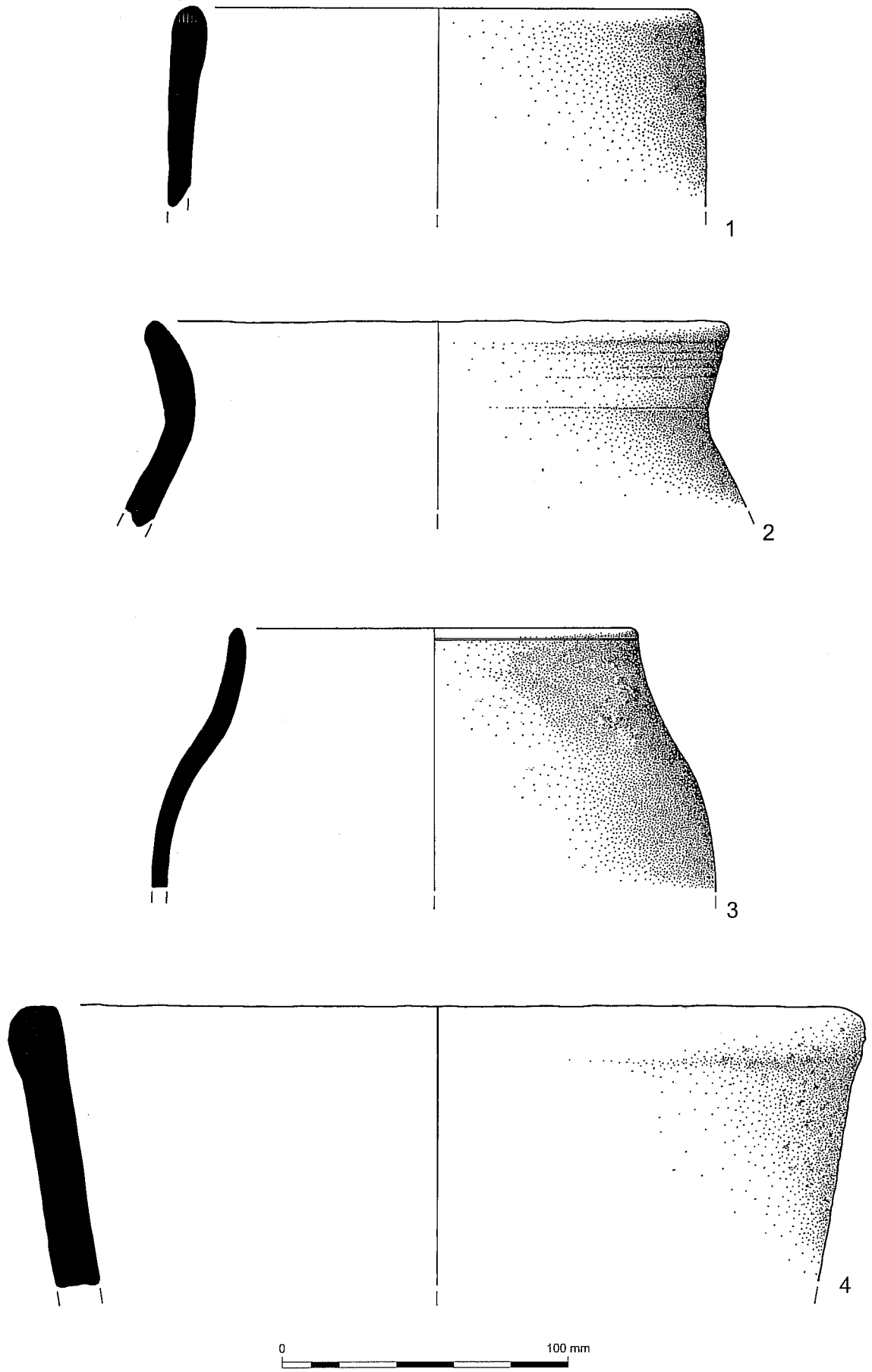
Third century features at west end of Trench 1

Figure 8:



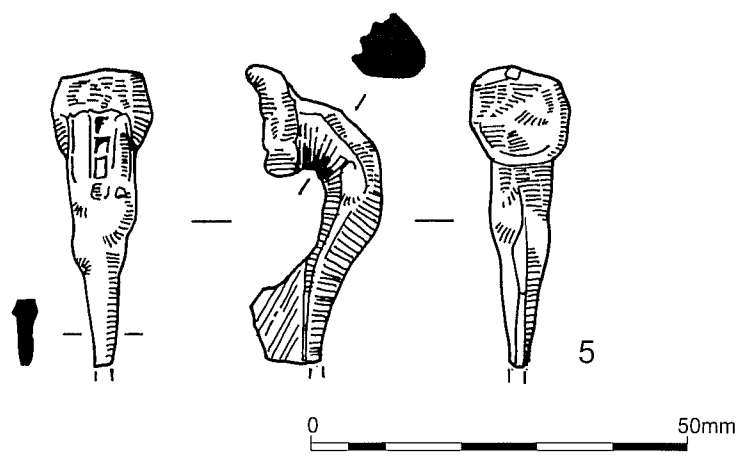
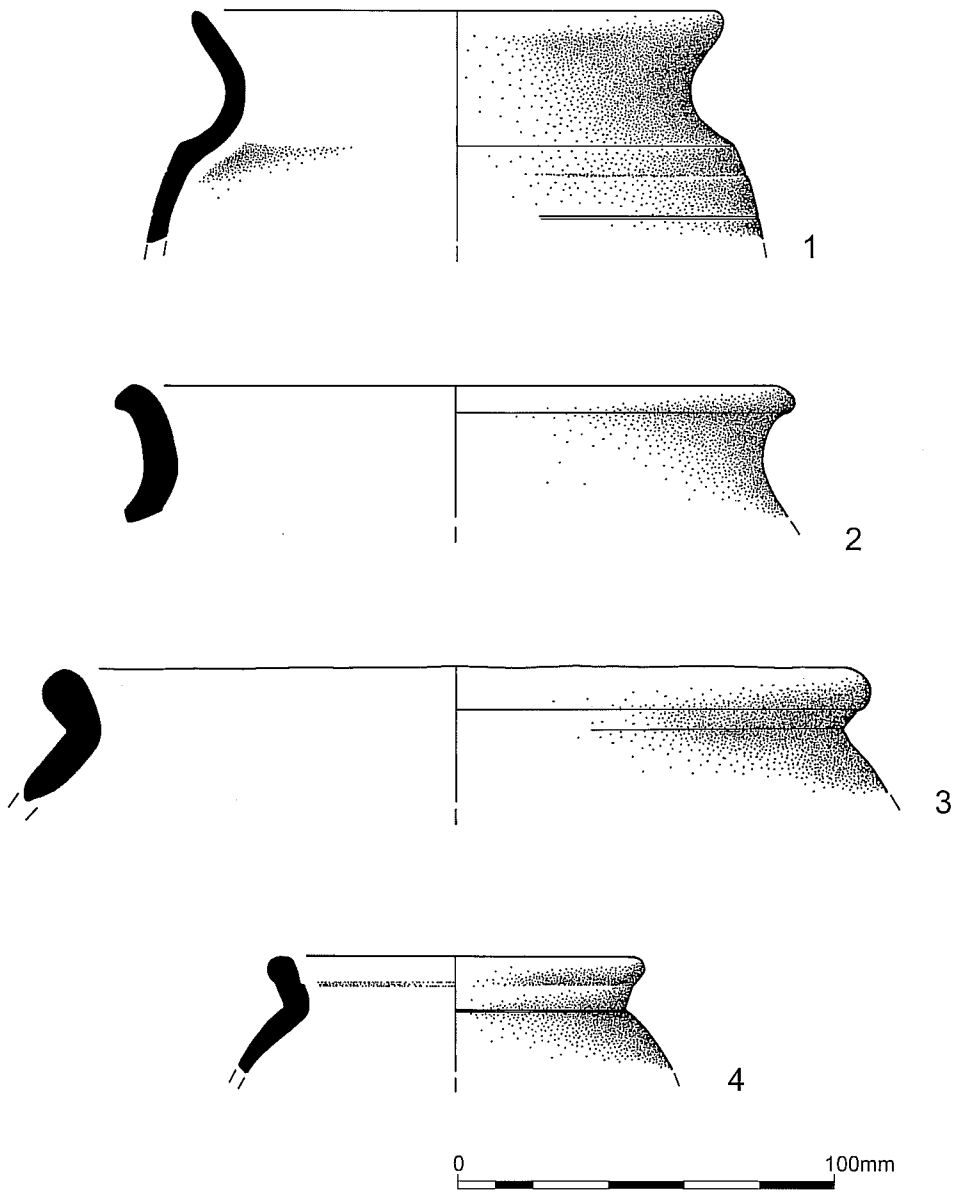
Plan of buildings 2 and 3, and post built structure adjacent

Figure 9:

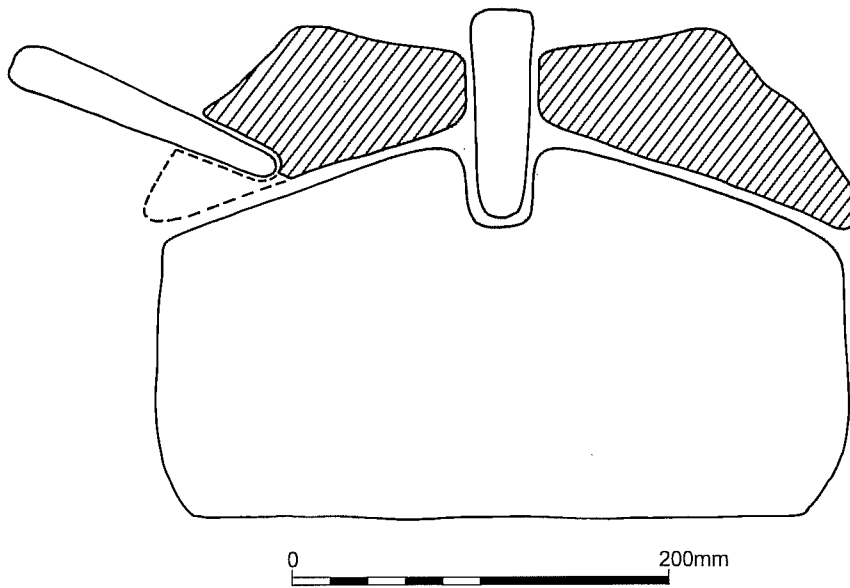
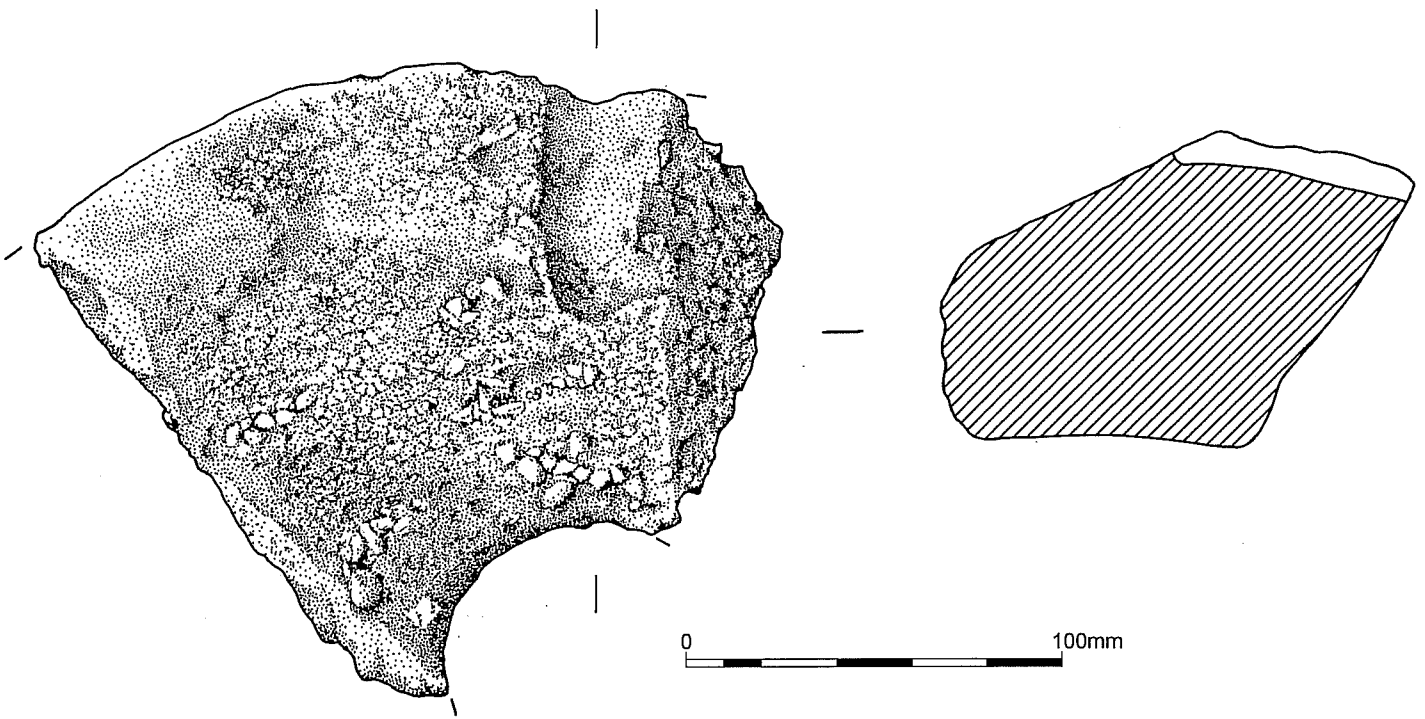


Malvernian pottery (fabric 3)

Figure 10

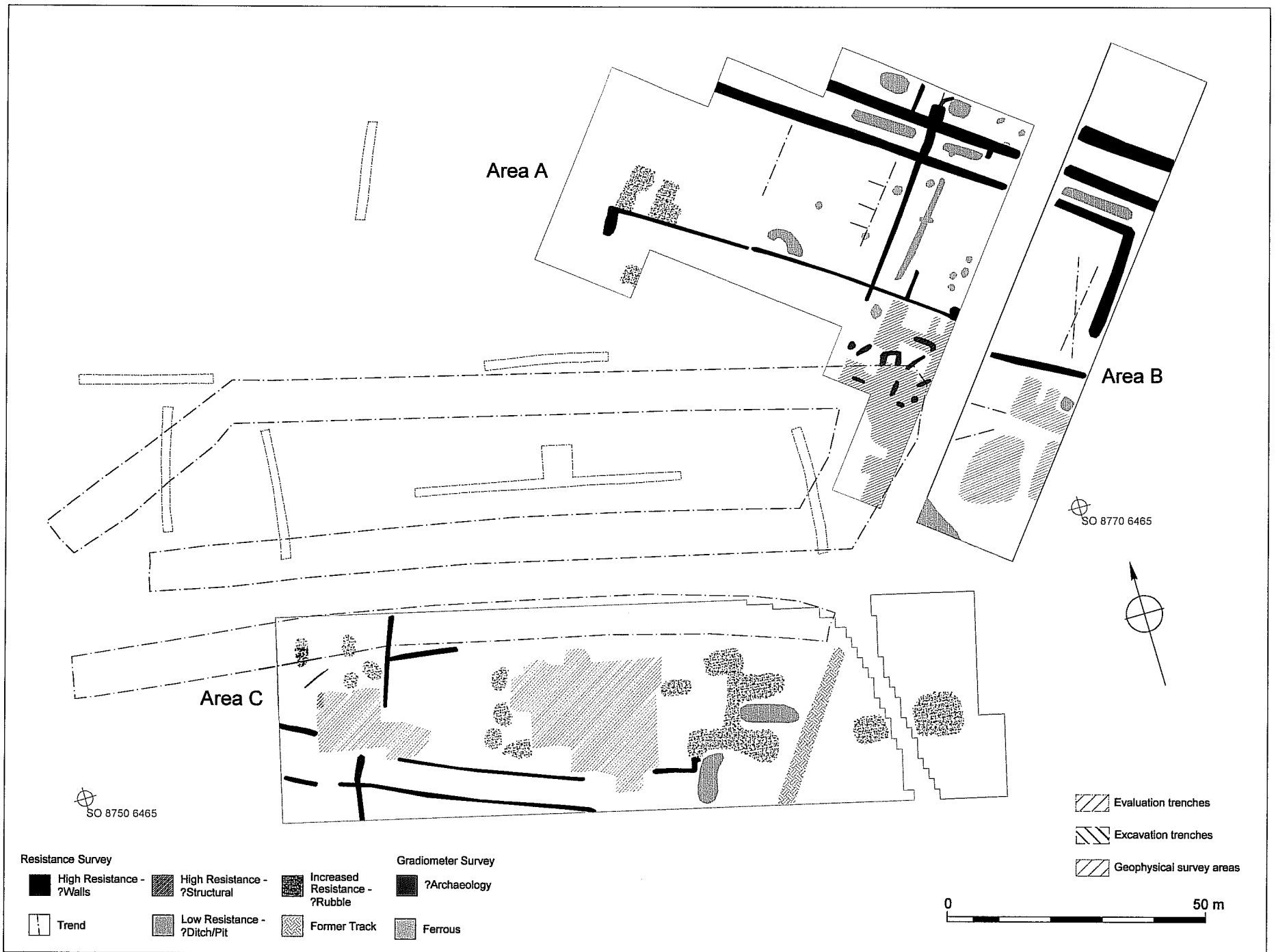


1-3 - Severn Valley ware (fabric 12); 4 - Grey ware (fabric 14); 5 - Copper alloy fibula Figure 11



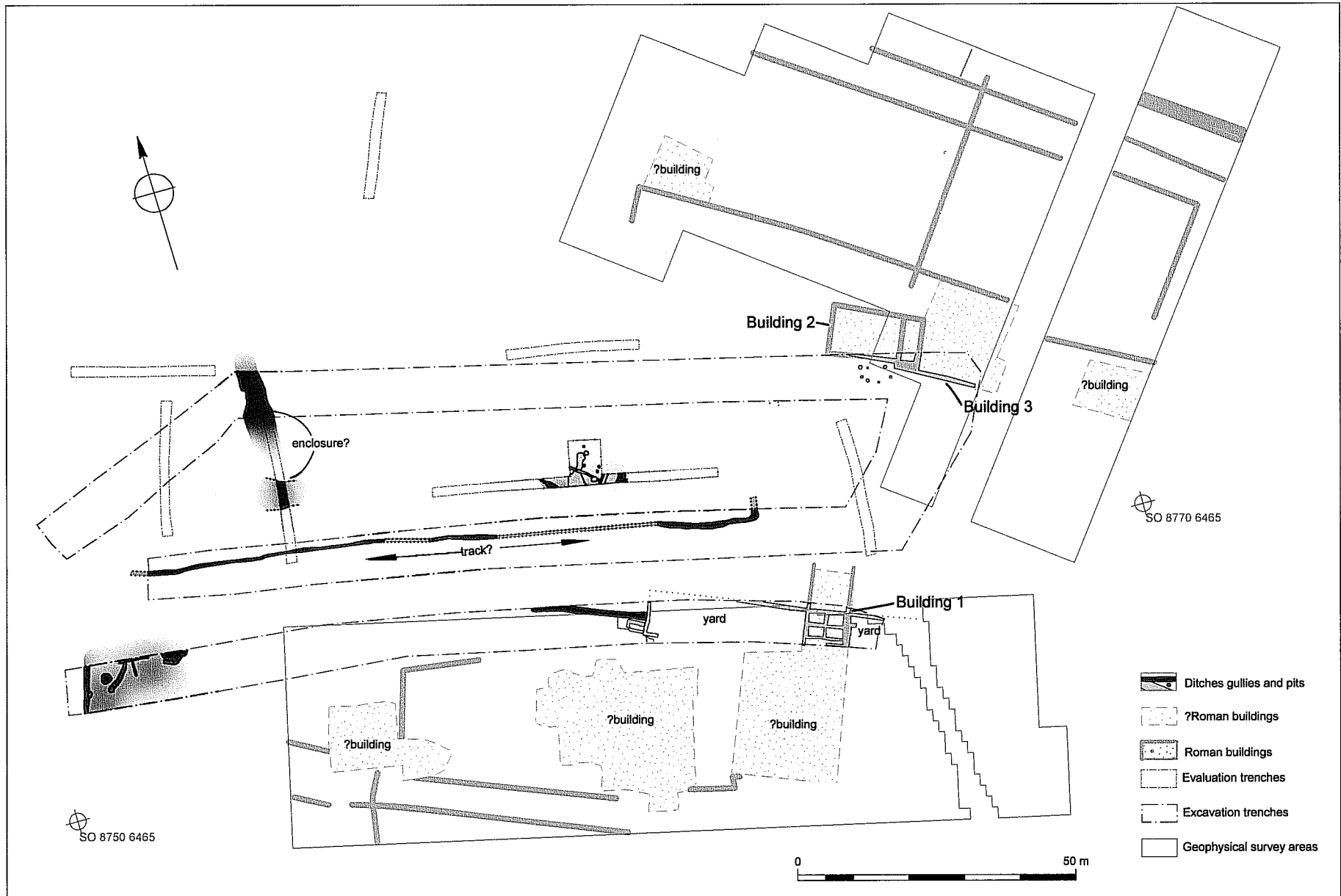
Rotary quern fragment and reconstruction diagram

Figure 12



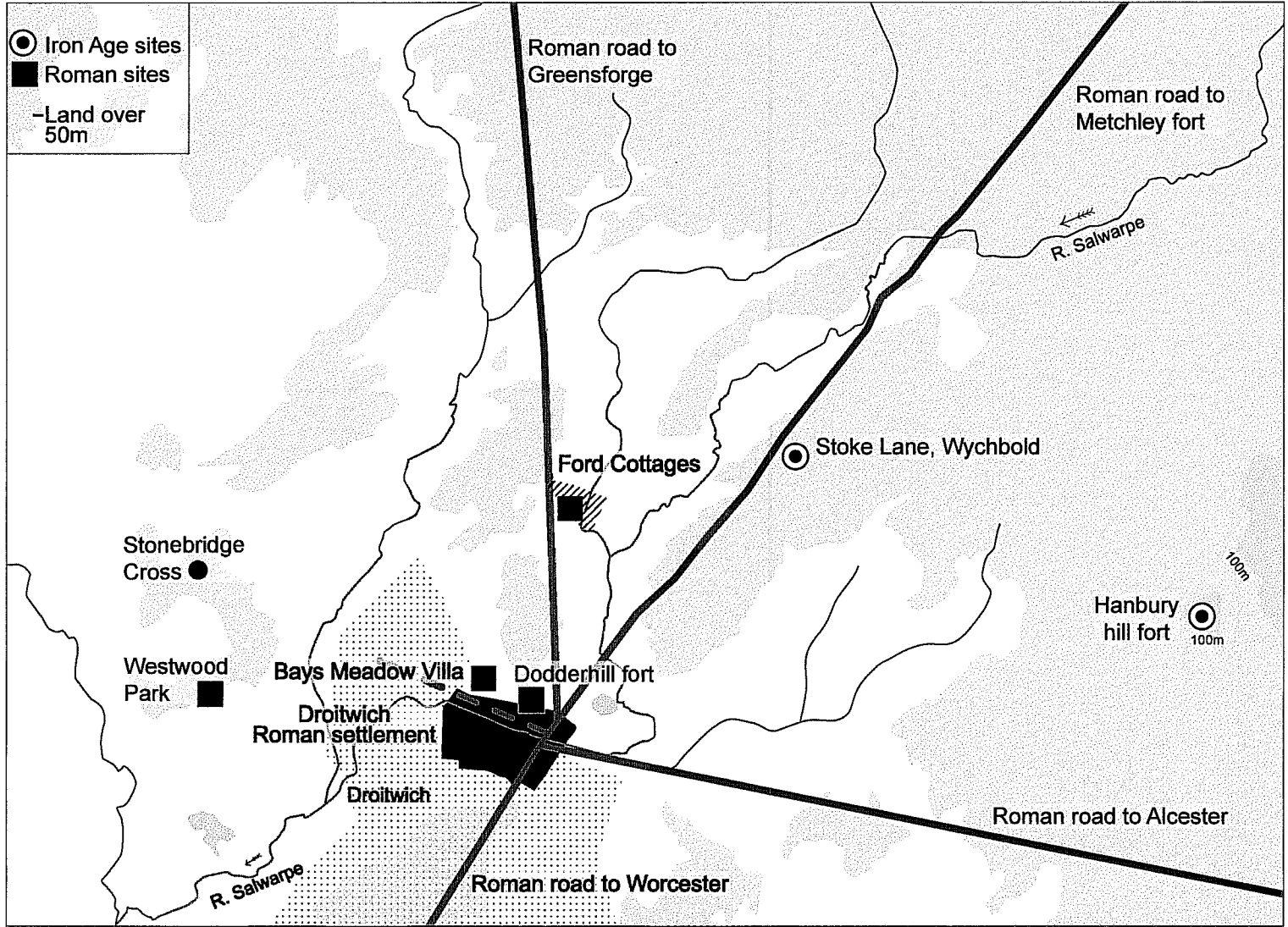
Interpretative plan of geophysical survey results

Figure 13:



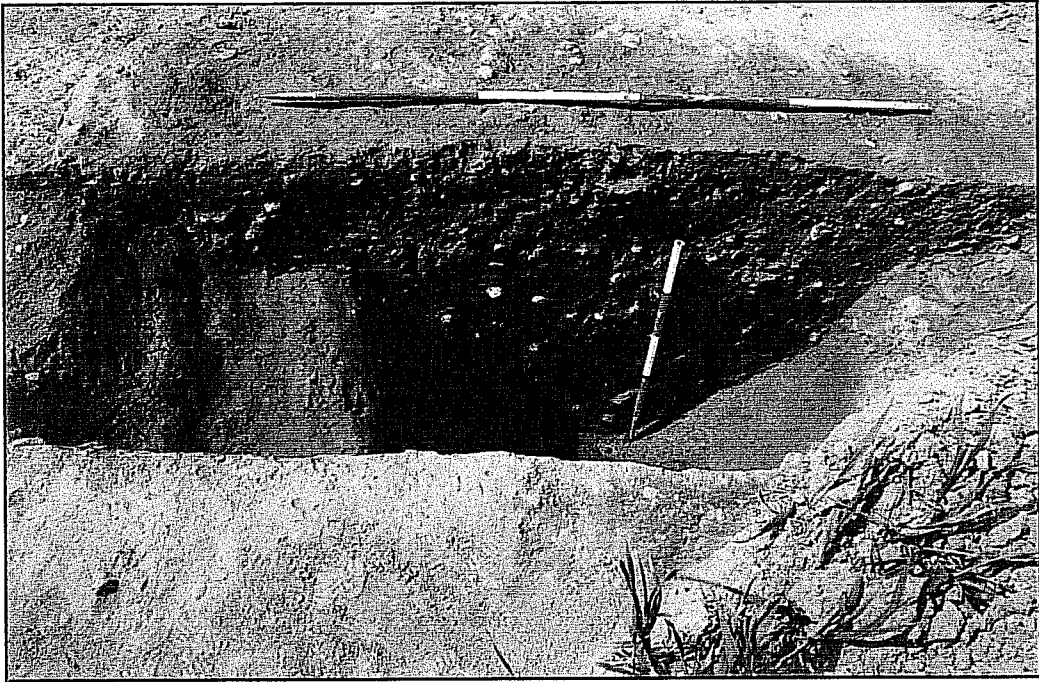
Interpretative plan of 2nd - 3rd century Roman features

Figure 14:



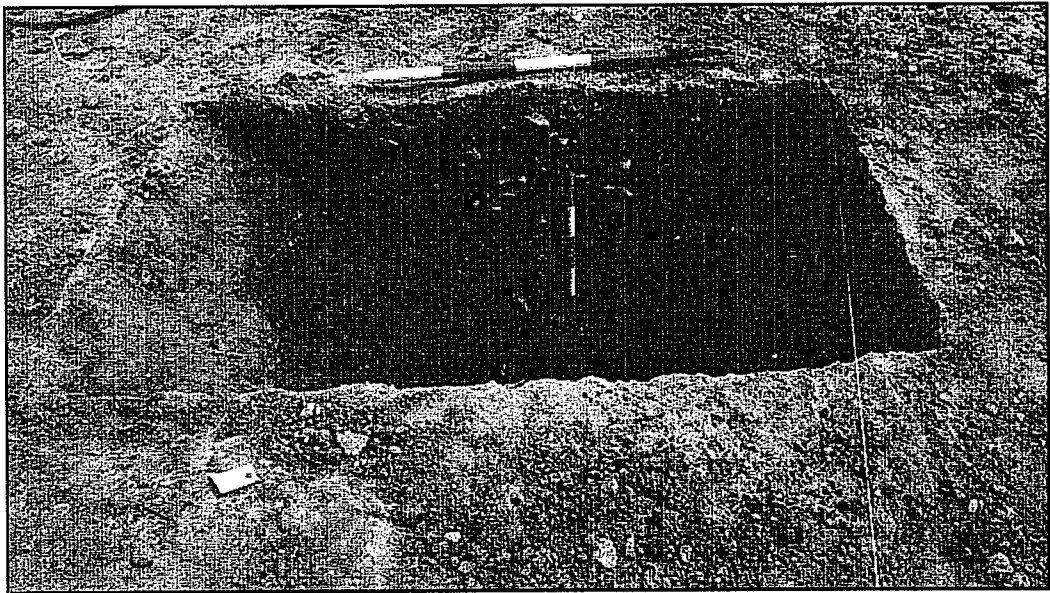
Stonebridge Cross in relation to other Iron Age and Roman sites

Figure 15:



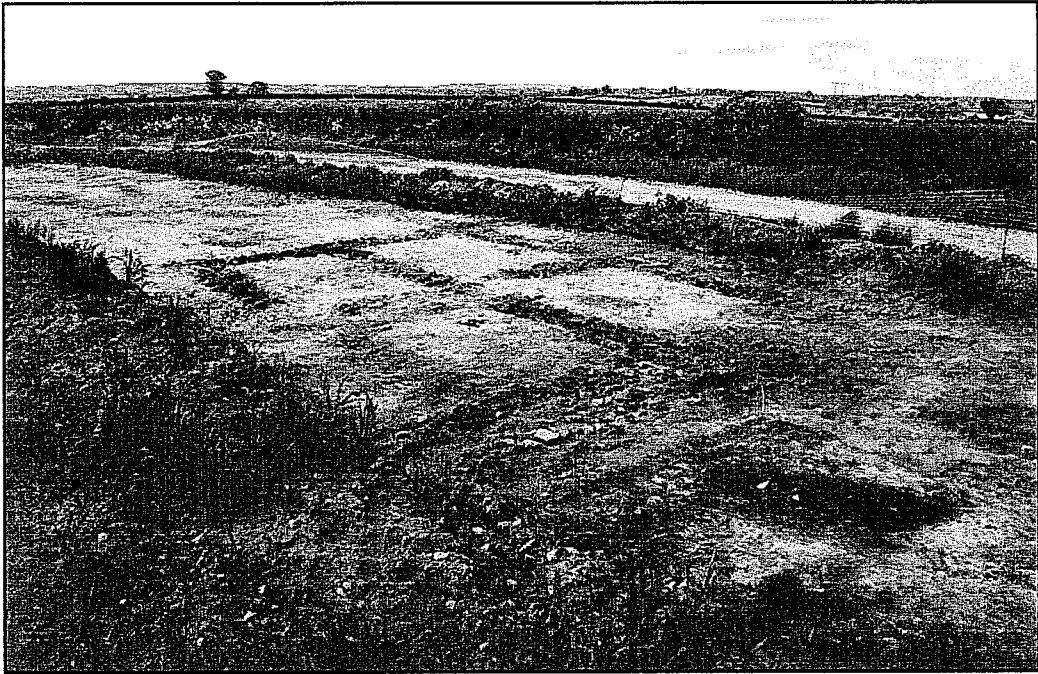
Trench 3, ditch 359 =902, facing south

Plate 1

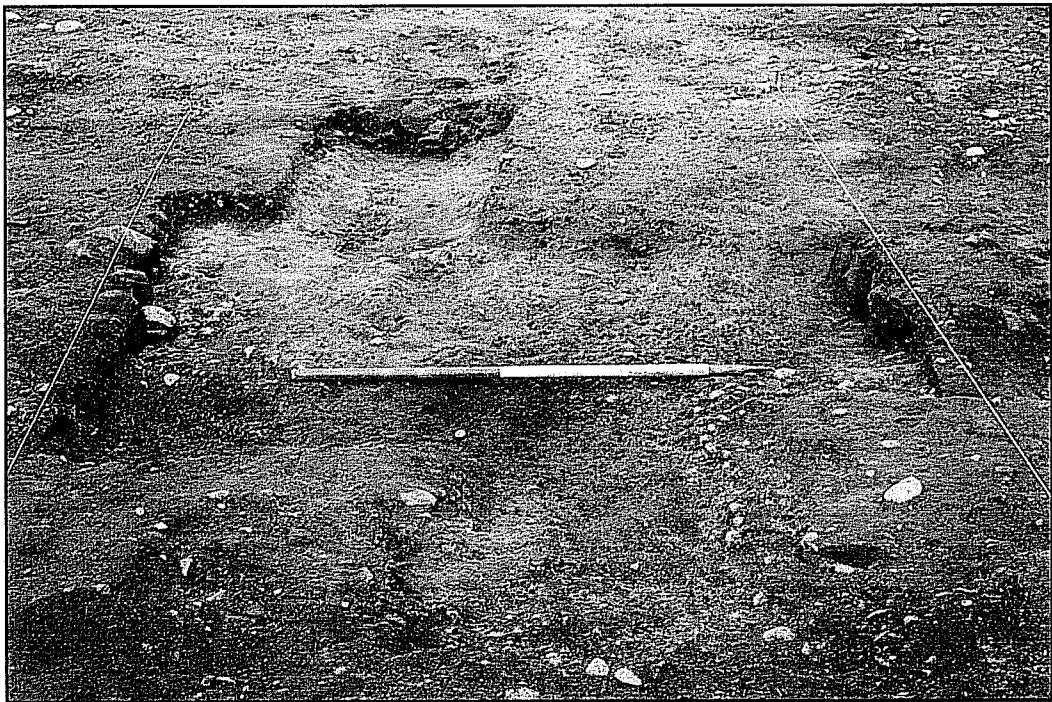


Trench 3, ditch 399 (=376 & 1200) facing west

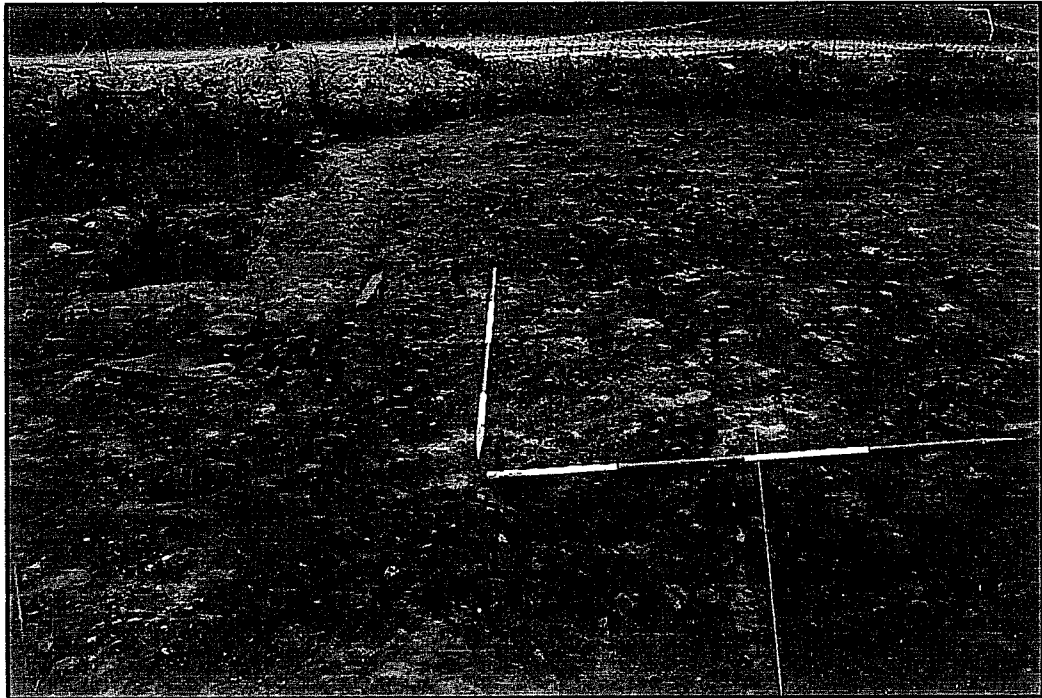
Plate 2



Trench 1, east end of building: general view facing north-east *Plate 3*



Trench 1, excavated foundations, facing west *Plate 4*



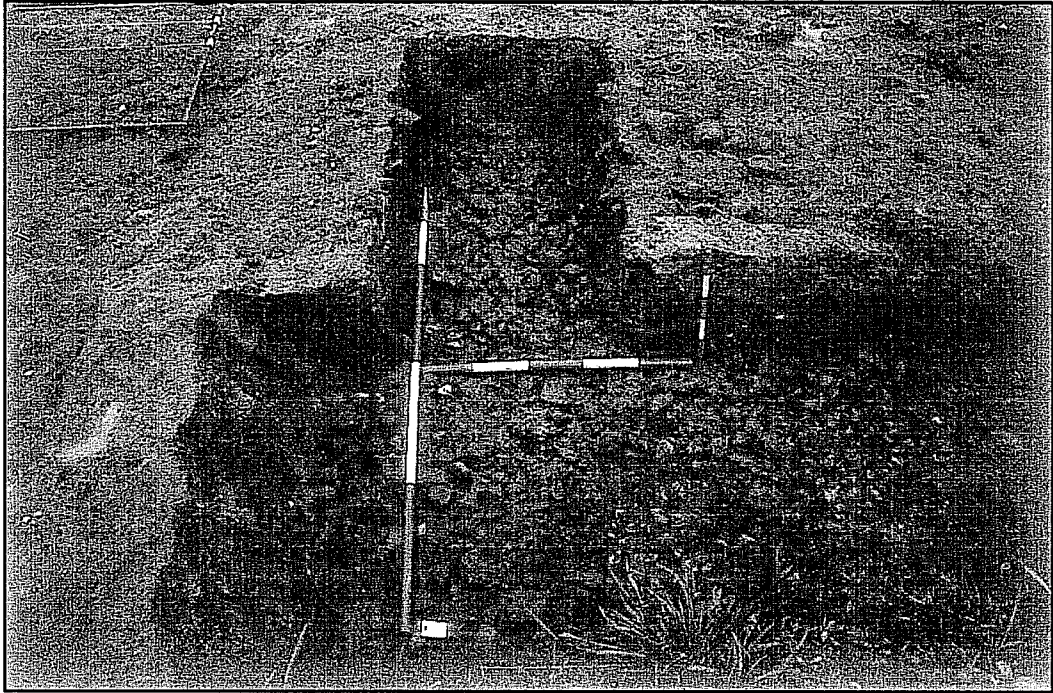
Trench 1, west end of building, main wall, facing north

Plate 5



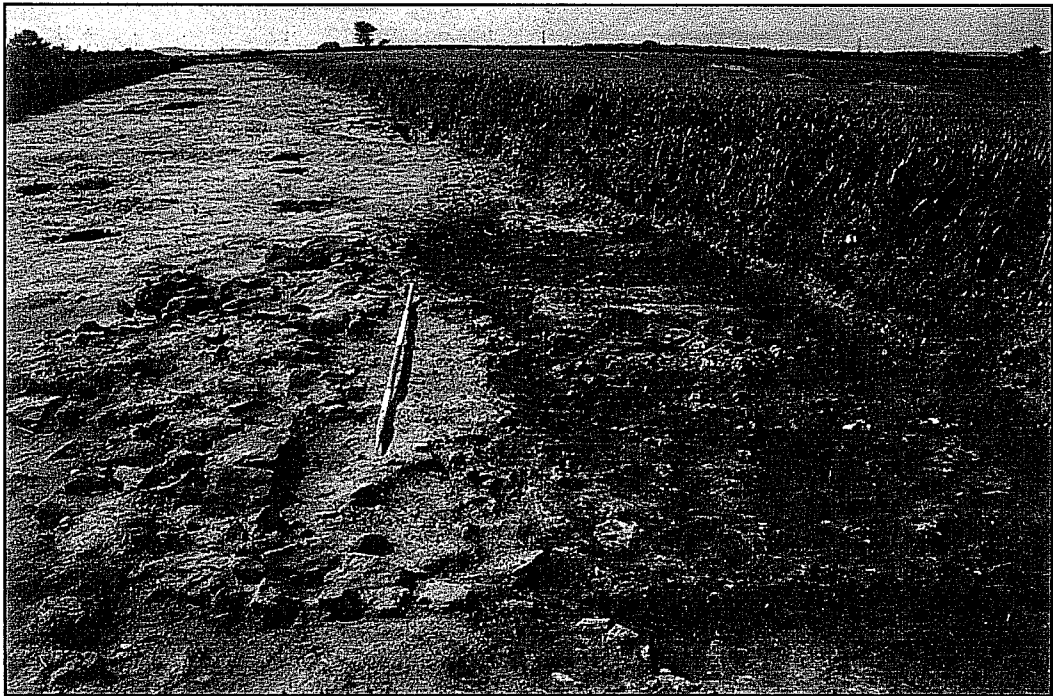
Trench 1, west end of building, rectangular annex, facing west

Plate 6



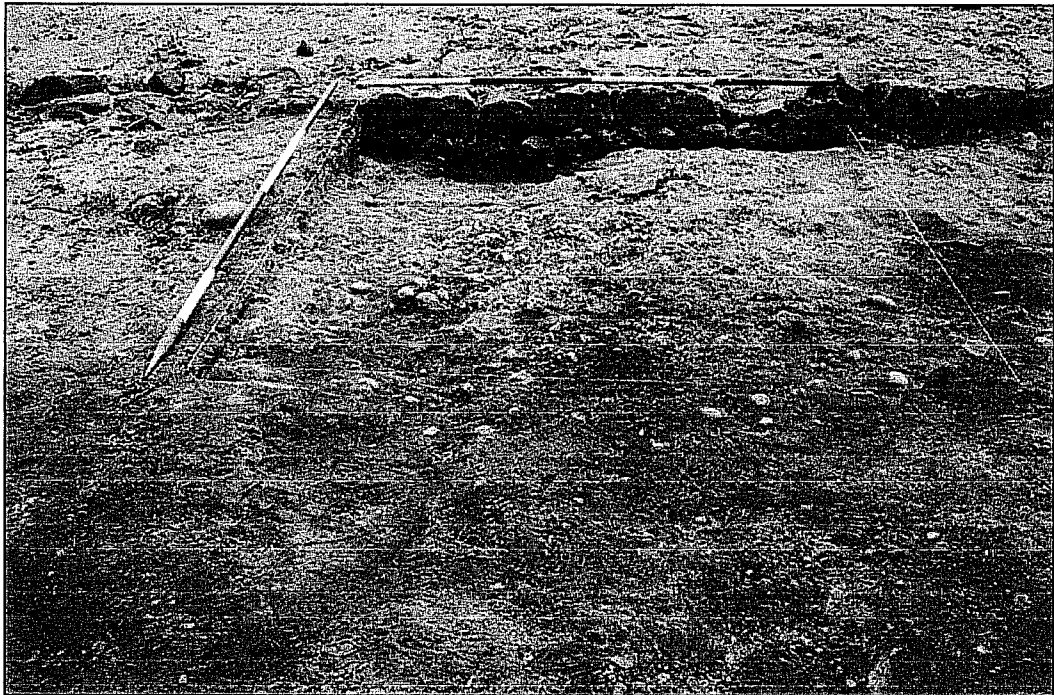
Trench 1, cobbled surface 168, facing south

Plate 7



Trench 3, earlier building facing north-east

Plate 8



Trench 3, foundations of later building facing south

Plate 9



Trench 3, postholes, facing north

Plate 10