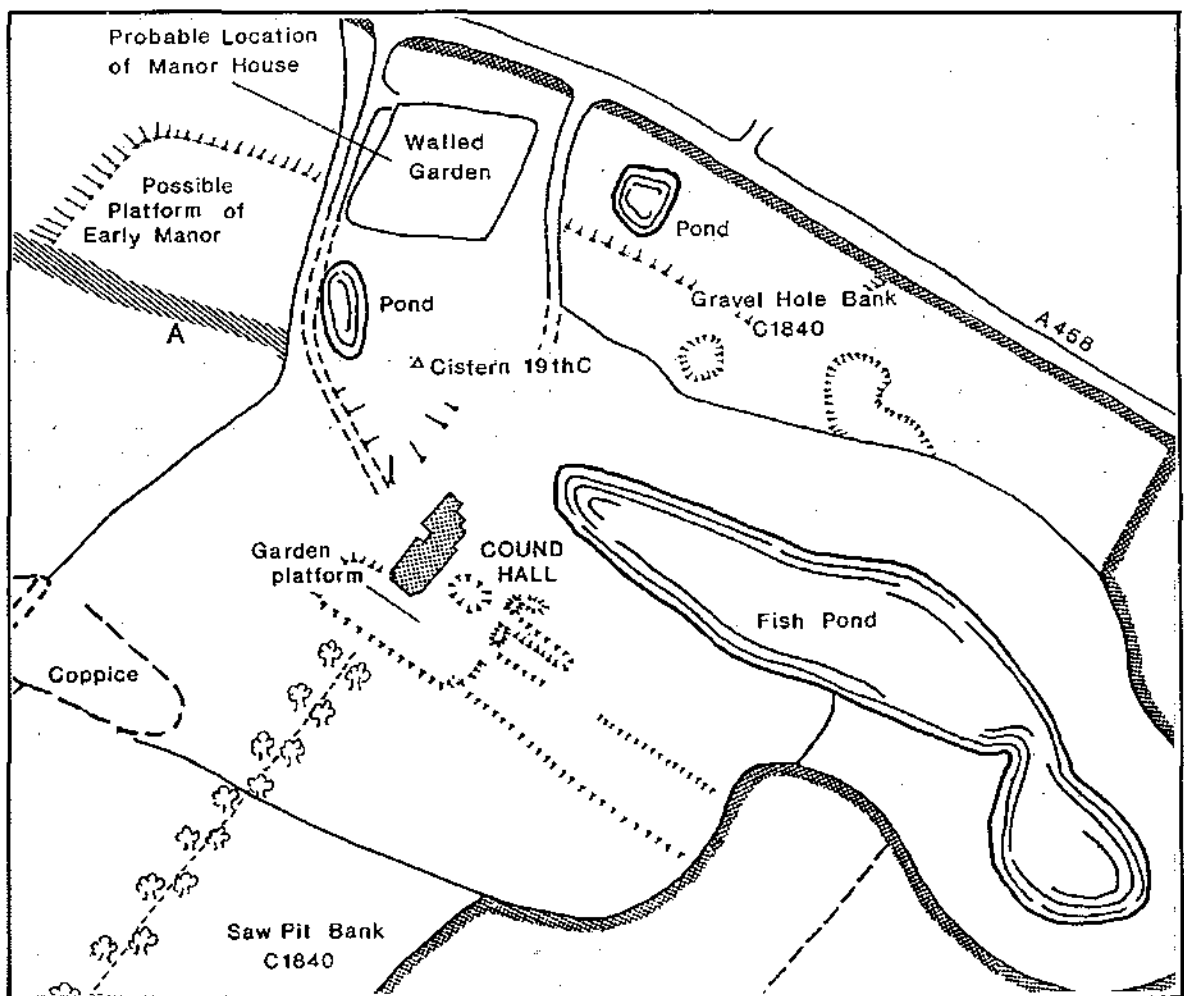


*Birmingham University  
Field Archaeology Unit*

# COUND HALL

## An Archaeological Appraisal



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## An Archaeological Appraisal

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### 1.0: INTRODUCTION

In July 1990 Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit was commissioned by Jonathan Courtney and Partners of Wellington to undertake a documentary and archaeological appraisal of the grounds of Cound Hall, Shropshire (centred on NGR SJ561 053) in advance of proposed redevelopment. The proposed redevelopment involves the extension and conversion of the 18th-century hall into a hotel and golf clubhouse, and landscaping works within the grounds, including the creation of the golf course itself. The present land use within the development area can be divided into three principal types: land occupied by the hall and associated outbuildings and farm buildings to the north; land around the hall complex which retains features of a former 18th-century formal garden and landscaped park; and land to the west and south of the hall, currently comprising arable fields (fig 1).

A brief, jointly prepared by Shropshire County Council Property and Planning Services and Shropshire Leisure Services, specified that the archaeological appraisal should comprise three elements: documentary research, fieldwalking and measured survey. The first of these elements, the documentary assessment of the available historical and archaeological data, was undertaken in August before the fieldwalking and measured survey, which for practical purposes was undertaken in mid-September, after the arable fields within the proposed development area had been ploughed.

The documentary assessment reviews and interprets the available secondary documentary sources, principally the relevant entry in the Victoria County History of Shropshire; the various map sources, which begin with the Rocque map of 1752; the existing archaeological data, principally housed in the Shropshire Sites and Monuments Record; and the available aerial photographs.

In order to achieve a comprehensive assessment of the potential content and significance of archaeological remains within the proposed development site, a broad assessment of the archaeological resource in the surrounding area is first undertaken in order to determine the implications of the wider archaeological pattern for the exploitation of the site itself and the survival of archaeological evidence. Attention is then focused, in somewhat greater detail, on the archaeology and landscape history of the parish of Cound, before turning to the existing archaeological and historical record of the development site itself.

The measured survey and fieldwalking elements of the project were carried out between September 13th and 19th 1990, after the arable crop on the large field to the west of the hall had been harvested and the field ploughed. This field had been identified as an area of archaeological interest prior to the survey, through aerial photography which revealed a number of cropmarks, and also through the identification of scatters of primarily post-medieval pottery and demolition rubble, found during site inspections by personnel of the Shropshire County Council's Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). In addition to the large field to the west of the hall, the whole of the development area was inspected in order to locate recorded and previously unrecorded archaeological features, and the remains of the formal gardens around the hall were surveyed.

The final section of the report reviews the results of the research and fieldwork with reference to the probable archaeological impact of the redevelopment proposals and specific questions raised in the County Council's brief. Recommendations are made for an archaeological response to the development proposals and for the future management of the archaeological resource.

## 2.0: THE SETTING

Cound lies within the rich, if still poorly-understood, archaeological landscape of the middle Severn valley, dominated by the River Severn itself, a natural route of communication and focus of settlement from prehistoric times onwards. Glacial meltwaters carved out the Ironbridge Gorge to the east and defined the present course of the Severn, depositing fluvio-glacial gravels in the valleys, and sand and boulder clay which masked the solid rocks over large areas (Earp and Hains 1971). The varied topography and geology of the valley have exercised a strong influence on the exploitation of the land and the pattern of settlement (fig 2).

The archaeological evidence for settlement, albeit limited, is contained in published archaeological reports, syntheses and in the Shropshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). The SMR provides details of all sites located by fieldwork and plotted from aerial photographs, together with standing buildings of historical importance and the recorded find spots of individual artefacts. This information originates, by-and-large, from piecemeal incidents of archaeological fieldwork and reconnaissance and not from any systematic study: the data must be interpreted in the light of this important qualification. Aerial survey has, perhaps, contributed most to the study of settlement patterns, but may not represent a reliable sample of the evidence on the ground. The factors that affect this 'reliability' include the flying patterns employed, and the natural topography, geology, and the land use of the areas overflown (Whimster 1989).

Traces of mesolithic (*c.*8000 - 4000BC) and neolithic (*c.*4000-2500BC) settlement in the middle Severn valley are largely ephemeral, mainly comprising scatters of flints and axes distributed along the course of the River Severn, tributaries of the Severn including the Cound Brook, and along the Clun-Clee ridgeway to the south (Carver Forthcoming).

The Bronze Age (*c.*2500 - 700 BC) is represented by barrows, visible as earthworks and ring-ditches, and isolated finds of artefacts or metalwork hoards, but no settlement evidence dating before the Late Bronze Age has been

identified. Barrow burials cluster on the gravel terraces of the Severn and its tributaries to the east of Shrewsbury: contemporary settlement may have been located away from the cemeteries on more productive agricultural land (Watson Forthcoming).

Settlement in the Severn valley in the Iron Age (*c.*700BC - 50AD) is represented by the construction and occupation of hillforts, and concurrent settlement within small, ditched lowland enclosures. The hillforts, such as the Wrekin and the Burgs, may have functioned as major foci for a scattered rural population. Concentrations of small, ditched enclosures, representing individual farmsteads, have been located by aerial photography in lowland areas. The identification of a minimum of twenty-three cropmark enclosures within a 3km radius of Wroxeter suggests that the Roman town developed within an already densely-occupied landscape (Whimster 1989), although the occupation and construction of enclosure sites continued after the Roman conquest. Ditched enclosures have been excavated near Sharpstones Hill (Barker, Haldon and Jenks Forthcoming) and more recently at Duncote Farm, Preston Farm and Preston Montford (Ellis, Hughes and Jones 1990).

The Roman military advance into Shropshire is represented by a group of marching camps clustered around the Wrekin and controlling a crossing of the River Severn between Wroxeter and Cound. Military bases were established at Red Hill, Penkridge and Wall along Watling Street, which linked London with the north west. Located at a site of strategic importance, Wroxeter began as a legionary base before developing into a major Roman town, capital of the *cantō* of the *Cornovii*. The existence of a major military and civil centre at Wroxeter will have acted as an important economic and social stimulus to the native population settled within the city's hinterland, of which the later parish of Cound forms a part. Villas, however, the most distinctive expression of Romanized rural settlement, are rare in the Wroxeter hinterland, and present evidence suggests that the 'native' tradition of farmstead enclosures remained strong throughout the Roman period.

Tantalisingly few sites can be confidently dated to the immediately post-Roman centuries. The evidence suggests a reduced occupation of urban centres, such as Wroxeter, into the 5th century, followed by their abandonment in favour of smaller, more easily defended sites, such as The Berth at Baschurch west of Shrewsbury (Webster 1981). Suspected middle-Saxon halls have been identified by aerial photography at Atcham, while the history of Shrewsbury, the ultimate successor to Wroxeter, begins with the establishment there of a late-Saxon burh in the late 9th /early 10th century.

A much wider and fuller range of sources of evidence is available for the medieval period, with documentary sources taking precedence over archaeological evidence. Much of the limited archaeological work on the medieval rural settlement pattern in the area has concentrated on the location and examination of deserted or shrunken medieval villages, which may be identified as earthworks visible on the ground or on aerial photographs, as surviving elements around (smaller) modern villages, or as scattered artefactual material in ploughed fields. Cound parish contains several examples of such deserted or shrunken settlements, including the former township of Lower Cound, and it is most convenient in the present context to review the nature of such settlements, and the varied reasons for their differing fates, at the level of the parish itself.

### 3.0: COUND PARISH

#### 3.1: Archaeology (fig 3)

The parish is bounded to the north by the River Severn and to the east by the course of the Kenley ridge, crossing an area of moorland. The western boundary follows the courses of streams and the line of Watling Street to the north (V.C.H. 1968). The parish is dominated by a ridge of high ground running south-westwards from Harnage to Evenwood in the parish of Acton Burnell. The northern area of the parish is within the flood plain of the River Severn. To the south the land rises to 120m towards Harnage and Golding. Most of the parish lies on boulder clay, while sand and gravel deposited along the River Severn

extends along the banks of the Cound Brook. A belt of sandstone divides the alluvial flood-plain of the Severn from the higher ground to the south (V.C.H. 1968; fig 2).

The earliest evidence of activity within the parish takes the form of isolated finds of neolithic stone axes. One of these axes (SA 1757) was found at Coundarbour Farm, near the Cound Brook, immediately to the west of the proposed redevelopment site. The exact provenance of the other two axes is not known, but the finds highlight the potential importance of the Cound Brook as a focus for prehistoric settlement.

The earliest prehistoric monuments in the parish are datable to the Bronze Age, and take the form of cropmarks indicating a multi-period complex on the border between Cound and Berrington parishes (SA 477). The cropmarks extend over an area of 700 hectares and comprise a large group of ring-ditches (the remains of ploughed-out barrows), probably succeeded by a ditched enclosure, field boundaries and trackways of probable Iron Age date (Watson *Forthcoming*). A second focus of Bronze Age activity within the parish, 2km to the south east, is provided by a group of ring-ditches forming a barrow cemetery (SA 4395).

The most imposing relic of the Iron Age is the bivallate promontory fort at Stevenshill (SA 1438), 1.2km south of Cound Hall. The fort occupies a rounded hilltop with steep gradients to the south and east, visible on the ground as an interrupted bank and ditch with an entrance to the northeast. Other evidence of Iron Age occupation takes the form of enclosures of 'farmstead' type and associated field boundaries. However, it is not yet possible to distinguish from the morphology of the cropmarks alone between enclosures of solely Iron Age date and those which continued in use into, or were constructed during, the Roman period. Four probable enclosures have been located north of Cound Hall, on the gravel terrace to the south of the Severn (SA 4261, SA 4158, SA 451, SA 457). Parts of further enclosures have been identified from cropmarks north and west of Golding (SA 2348, SA 442), and south of Stevenshill (SA 2213); and a group of field boundaries are recorded north of Golding (SA 446).

With the exception of 'native' enclosures possibly occupied during this period, no Roman remains have yet been identified in the parish. However, the proximity of Roman forts and the city of Wroxeter has already been noted, and an important Roman road, Watling Street West (linking Wroxeter with Leintwardine and Caerleon to the south), defined the north-west angle of the later parish boundary.

Medieval and post-medieval occupation within the parish is more fully represented in documentary sources.

### 3.2: History (fig 4)

In the Middle Ages the parish of Cound, which came under the jurisdiction of the court of the administrative Hundred of Condover, encompassed three manors: Cound, which was the capital manor, Golding manor and Harnage Grange. In addition, a number of smaller, freehold estates existed in the north of the parish until the 18th century. Historically, settlement within the Hundred of Condover has tended to concentrate around suitable sites on the sides of river valleys. Cound is located near the edge of the belt of sandstone which divides the alluvial flood-plain of the Severn from the higher ground to the south. Of the 61 hamlets or settlements recorded within the Hundred of Condover at the time of the Domesday survey, it is known that at least eight have been deserted, and that as many as 31 have shrunk considerably (VCH 1968, 2).

The north-south division of the parish of Cound into highland and lowland is reflected in a contrast of land use. The area to the south of the shale and sandstone outcrop of the Harnage ridge appears to have been extensively covered by woodland in the Middle Ages. Although the areas around Cound Moor and Moreton were progressively cleared of forest from the 17th century, culminating in the enclosure of the Cound moor in 1830, the southernmost area of the parish above the 120m contour line was still only partially cleared at the beginning of the 19th century. By contrast, in the north of the parish near Cound there was relatively little woodland. In 1086 Cound manor only had pannage for around 50 swine (VCH 1908, 320), 'and although

the parish was nominally part of the Long Forest there is a significant absence of references to assarts here in the 12th and early 13th centuries' (VCH 1968, 59). Because there was very little arable land in the south of the parish, stock rearing and dairy farming were the chief occupations there, and even by 1801 only 302 hectares were said to be under plough, although the enclosure and draining of Cound Moor more than doubled this figure. However, in the north of the parish arable farming was the norm.

The pattern of land ownership within the parish also correlates closely with the geography of the area. In the south there was very little fluctuation in the size of the estates until the 20th century. This was probably in part because many of the estates formed single economic units which had only been carved from the forest relatively late in the medieval period. In the north the picture is far more complicated. The acquisitions of the Dodd family from the mid-16th century, and the growth of the manorial estate of Cound from the mid-17th century, meant that a complicated pattern of landownership and tenure, based loosely on the medieval open field system, gradually became rationalised into larger estates by the mid-18th century – the establishment of the park around Cound Hall from the 1740s being, perhaps, the most disruptive part of this reorganisation.

Again, the influence of the local geography is reflected in the distribution and character of the various settlements within the parish. It is interesting to note that a large number of early buildings, many dating from the 17th century and incorporating earlier elements, are to be found in the small hamlets south of the Harnage Ridge where the economic imperatives of development have been less keenly felt. Upper Cound still retains a number of timber-framed buildings, and the fact that it was called New Street in the 14th century suggests that it was the product of colonisation in the later Middle Ages. Like Upper Cound the settlement at Harnage, scattered irregularly around the road from Cound, has changed little since the 17th century. Golding was a tiny hamlet consisting of two houses – the hall and farm – until the early 19th century. South of the Cound moor three of the scattered

farms which occupy the area were originally medieval hamlets with small open fields assarted from the forest; these are Moreton Farm, Bull Farm and Harnage Grange, which was the largest and already established by the time it became a dependency of Buildwas Abbey in 1232.

The pattern of communication within the parish has changed considerably over time. South of the Harnage Ridge various roads fell into disuse as the settlements which they served either shrunk considerably or were abandoned altogether. In the north of the parish the road system underwent a series of alterations from the early 18th century, mainly as a result of the disruption caused by the development of the park around Cound Hall from the 1740s. Until the mid 18th century the original line of the road from Shrewsbury to Much Wenlock was further south, crossing the Cound Brook by a timber bridge about 100 metres upstream from the present road. A linear cropmark in the field just to the west of Cound Hall probably indicates its original course, which would have passed just to the north of the present hall. When the Shrewsbury link of the Severn Valley Railway was constructed in the mid-19th century the road had to be rerouted again so that it ran to the south of the Cound Lodge Inn. The River Severn formed another transport link through the parish. Punchbowl Cottages, just to the rear of the Cound Lodge Inn, used to be an inn catering for the boatmen, and there was also a ferry across the river at this point which connected Eaton Constantine with Cound parish. A disused road from the church at Cound linked up with this ferry, as did another from Harnage which was of some importance in the 17th century as a route for transporting agricultural produce.

#### 4.0: COUND HALL AND ITS ENVIRONS

The grounds of Cound Hall are sited on the gravel terraces of the River Severn (Pocock 1938; fig 2). To the north is the alluvium of the river valley, to the south, lower mottled sandstone. The surrounding area is mostly composed of boulder clay.

#### 4.1 Documentary Evidence

In addition to the land immediately adjacent to the hall, the proposed development area around Cound Hall includes a field to the north which used to be known as Gravel Hole Bank, the hall garden, and most of those fields called Cound Lawns on the Tithe Map of 1842 (fig 5). This area comprised the core of the park laid out around Cound Hall by the Cresset family in the 18th century. While many of the features associated with this period are still visible, it is likely that evidence of many earlier features was swept away when the park was constructed. Documentary sources suggest that an earlier manor house was located within this area and that the estate included an earlier medieval park; it also appears that parts of the village of Lower Cound were destroyed when the road from Shrewsbury to Much Wenlock was redirected. Therefore it is probably most appropriate to discuss the specific history of this area within the context of the development of the manor of Cound itself, in order to tie the various narrative strands of the history of the area together before the park was created in the 18th century.

#### The Settlement

There were two villages at Cound: Lower Cound, of which little now survives, and Upper Cound, which still contains several 17th-century houses. Lower Cound was clearly the primary settlement within the parish; the church, manor house and medieval demesne all lay within its bounds. It appears that the church always stood some distance from the settlement itself, its location determined by the firmer foundation given by the underlying sandstone in that area. Several roads converged on the church: from Harnage, from Cound Lodge Inn to the east until the 19th century, and from Lower Cound to the north-west and Upper Cound to the south-west. Only the road from Lower Cound to Harnage is now metalled, the other roads having reverted to little more than tracks or pathways. An old timber-framed parsonage which lay to the east of the churchyard was the only building standing next to the church until the mid-19th century, when the school was built.

Around 1540 Leland described Lower Count as a poor village, noting that the Count Brook ran through it (Toulmin Smith 1964, 84). In the later 14th century Lower Count was serviced by three ale sellers, and from Hearth Tax records it appears there were probably at least 12 houses here in the 17th century. There was also a mill and a smithy near the bridge that carried the main road over the Count Brook, and an alehouse said to be at the bridge-end in 1670. A mill was recorded in the village in 1086, and it is probable that this stood on the same site as the present, 19th-century, mill. The alehouse was last licensed in 1748, after which the main road was diverted about 100 metres to the north to accommodate the newly-created park around Count Hall. Therefore it would appear that the settlement of Lower Count was never particularly large, but unlike the settlements on the less hospitable land to the south of the Harnage Ridge it did not shrink to the size of a farmstead during the later medieval period, although some shrinkage probably occurred. It is most likely that it belongs to the class of shrunken medieval village (SMV) resulting from the interference of large landowning interests, creating parks around their country seats, as happened nearby at Willey (Stamper 1987, 70).

Lower Count clearly lay beside the Count Brook, probably focusing on the mill, smithy and alehouse near the old bridge over the river. The V.C.H. (1968, 60) suggests that the village spread along the road to Upper Count, running parallel to the river. Alternatively, the village may have spread across the river along the old main road, although the results of the archaeological fieldwork do not suggest settlement spread much beyond the eastern bank of the Count Brook.

### The Manor

A medieval manor was the working centre of an estate supported by the rents and services of undertenants, its affairs being managed by a court held by, or for, the owner. The manor house would have been the hub of the estate surrounded by barns and other agricultural buildings resembling what would now be called a farm. It was common for these estates to

include a variety of types of land use within their bounds: woodland for timber, fuel, and pannage; agricultural land within vast open fields; and meadows for grazing cattle or growing hay.

Although most of the better-drained land north of the Harnage Ridge was carved up into open fields, there was still a sizable area of woodland within Count manor, probably situated on the belt of boulder clay which runs from Venus Bank to the River Severn, of which Longdole Coppice is a surviving remnant (fig 4). It appears that this woodland, which was a valuable commodity in the Middle Ages, was managed as an enclosed park. The park existed in 1298, when it was stocked with wild swine, and was probably formed soon after 1254 when a grant of free warren was obtained (VCH 1968, 59). However, by the 15th century the park had been leased as a farm and other assarts had been made into it. When Leland passed nearby around 1540 he recorded 'no great wood in sight' (Toulmin Smith 1964, 84), so the park had probably fallen into disuse by this time.

Previous research has identified the bounds of the open fields of the village of Count with some precision (VCH 1968, 59). Ryton Field lay between Venus Bank and the Count Brook, Church Field lay south-east of the village, between the former road to Harnage and Count Moor Brook, and a third field, whose name is not known, was situated to the north of the church and became part of Count Hall park in the 18th century (fig 4). The meadows lay in the floodplain beside the River Severn north of the A458, and in 1385 supported a stock of over 300 sheep, although by 1416 they had reverted to hay production (VCH 1968, 66).

When the probable locations of these features are plotted (fig 4) it can be seen that the most likely location for the medieval manor house would be somewhat to the north of the present Count Hall, between the open fields, meadows and woodland. Indeed, the medieval manor house was said to lie to the north of the old main road from Shrewsbury to Much Wenlock, in the garden of Count Hall (which presumably means the walled kitchen garden, called 'the hall garden' on the Tithe Map of 1842), where foundations were said to be still visible in 1929 (Tipping

1929, 418). It is known that this house was a timber-framed structure and had been leased to tenants continuously since at least 1385 (VCH 1968, 64). The relocation of the present hall appears to have taken place because the alluvial soil on which the old manor house had been built was unsuitable for a structure of any size. The church is located even further to the south, on the sandstone, probably for much the same reason.

In 1086 the value of Cound manor was assessed at 4.5 hides, with land for 2 ploughs, and there were 6 male and 4 female serfs, although this figure had shrunk to 4 by 1287. In addition to these servants there were 6 villeins and 6 bordars with 4 ploughs between them, who rented parts of the open fields but also had to offer their services to the lord of the manor. Customary tenantage was always the preferred option in the management of the manor, although it would appear that the manor was leased in whole or part from at least the late medieval period by its absentee owners, the Earls of Arundle, until it was sold in 1560. In 1623 the manor was bought by the Cresset family who held the property directly until 1792, and thereafter by relations until A.C. McCorquodale bought it in 1906.

Because the manor was leased over a long period of time—for example in 1416 one Thomas Drayton occupied part of the manor house in addition to leasing part of the meadows for forty shillings—it appears that the size and composition of the manorial estate did not change very much until the 18th century. By 1675 it was said that the demesne lands were so intermixed that they could hardly be distinguished from those of the tenants (VCH 1968, 67). The process of enclosure of these open fields was piecemeal and notably slow within the manor until the 18th century, probably for the reasons highlighted above. Indeed, even as late as 1703 it was reported that strips were still visible in the field next to Cound Hall while it was being built (VCH 1968, 60). However, from 1700 a compact estate was gradually built up by means of exchanges, which formed the basis of the parkland which was developed from the 1740s.

## The Parkland, Hall and Gardens

During the course of the 18th century a large number of parks were built around country houses. The park around Cound Hall is one example of this activity, and illustrates the contemporary social and economic attitudes of the Cresset family. Following Alexander Pope's adage that 'in all let nature never be forgot', the emphasis of garden design shifted from models of enclosed Classical symmetry towards a re-creation of the Natural – the aim being the creation of a sympathetic 'total landscape', often within the context of a park (Strong 1979, 197). Capability Brown was the foremost exponent of this fashion, his major commissions being carried out between 1751 and 1783. While no documentary evidence concerning the design of the park at Cound has been found to date, especially any maps, in essence it appears to have been a transitional garden, containing elements of both styles. This would be consistent with the lapse between the completion of the new hall in 1704, and the completion of the legal transfer of the nearby properties, which were subsumed into the park by the 1750s.

It is clear that when, in 1703–4, the Cressets built the impressive structure of Cound Hall in the exaggerated classical fashion of the day, they had different aspirations for the property than the previous generations of the family. Until the road to Shrewsbury was diverted in the 1740s it must have passed uncomfortably close to the new hall, and the creation of the park through acquisition of all the property around the hall could be interpreted as an attempt to secure some seclusion and privacy, as was the case at Willey Park nearby (Stamper 1987, 74).

Certainly, the creation of the park entailed a massive reorganisation of the landscape around the hall. The lawns of the hall covered what had previously been an open field of Lower Cound, and it is likely if any part of the village lay to the east of the Cound Brook it would have been razed at this time. The lawns of the hall also extended further to the east than they do today, which entailed the diversion of the Harnage road

to the south of the church, and the downgrading of the route to Cound Lodge to a footpath.

If the kitchen garden of the hall was situated over the site of the old manor house, as is suggested by documentary evidence, then the proximity of the farm buildings of the hall, and a fish pond known to have existed until the early 20th century just to the south, may represent surviving plan elements of the earlier manorial enclosure.

#### **4.2: Aerial photographs**

Previous archaeological investigation of the area proposed for development has been limited to aerial photography and brief site inspections. There has been no systematic archaeological survey or trial excavation to test the character of the visible features.

The collection of vertical and oblique aerial photographs was examined to identify crop or soil marks that may be archaeologically significant (fig 4). The most distinct cropmark (A) is slightly curvilinear, and aligned approximately parallel to the modern road to the north: it is interpreted as the main Shrewsbury to Much Wenlock road, later diverted onto its present course during the emparkment of Cound Hall. Cropmark A is joined by a second, less distinct cropmark (B) which may also mark the course of a trackway.

Two cropmarks to the south (C and D) represent ploughed-out field boundaries marked on the Tithe Map of 1842. Other, regular, linear and rectilinear crop marks (not plotted) probably result from modern agricultural practice, field drains, or ploughed-out field boundaries. A number of very indistinct marks were noted to the south of A, but these were not identifiable as features on the ground.

#### **4.3: The archaeological evidence**

##### **Landscape Survey**

A preliminary perusal of the proposed development area around Cound Hall was carried out prior to the measured survey and fieldwalking in order to target specific areas which would merit detailed study. This investigation tended to confirm the interpretation of the various

landscape features made in previous field inspections, with a few additions.

The large field to the west of Cound Hall was targeted for both fieldwalking and measured survey, in order to attempt to answer a number of outstanding questions concerning its archaeological development. The SMR records a possible deserted medieval settlement (SA 1269) in this field. A scatter of stones across the field was suspected to mark the line of the old road from Shrewsbury to Much Wenlock (corresponding to cropmark A above), while 'well-defined stains and building material' were also noted, indicating the former presence of dwellings. The earthwork remains of a possible hollow-way, aligned east-west, are also recorded to the west of the Church. The hollow-way may mark the line of the old Lower Cound-to-Harnage road before it was diverted to the south of the church during the creation of Cound park in the 18th century.

A linear feature, interpreted as the possible arm of a moat or fishpond, and a platform (SA 13261) were also noted near this hollow-way. However, inspection revealed that this was probably the ploughed-over remains of a tennis court. The SMR map also records a possible location for deserted settlement SA 1269 to the east of the church, but the supporting evidence is unclear, and the site lies outside the proposed development area.

Inspection revealed traces of garden features within the grounds south-east of the hall, visible as slight linear earthworks representing a regular pattern of walls, paths and trees, components of a formal garden of probable 18th-century date. The ground in the area of the gardens has been artificially levelled-up to form a raised platform slightly above the level of the surrounding farmland. The area immediately north of the hall is heavily wooded, with brick outbuildings and cottages mainly of the 19th and 20th centuries located around the walled kitchen garden.

A large number of undulations and irregular hollows in the field to the north of Cound Hall were found from cartographic evidence to be gravel pits. As such, they were not deemed to be of sufficient archaeological interest to merit measured survey.

## Fieldwalking

Intensive fieldwalking was undertaken on the large arable field to the west of Cound Hall, which has an area of over 118,000 square metres (fig 6). The field has been under the plough since the Second World War, and although it has not been subjected to very deep ploughing, it has been stone scraped, the stones being relaid in strips to aid drainage. These processes will have had some effect on the distribution of pot sherds and other artefacts within the field and may account for a number of the smaller linear cropmarks apparent over the field.

On the ground, some of the cropmarks in this field (4.2 above) were visible as either dark grey or reddish-brown stains on a red silty clay. The strongest cropmark was the large, dark, linear stain running east-west towards the north end of the field, which has been identified as the line of the disused road (cropmark A).

The field was divided into grid squares of 50 x 50 square metres, and each square was intensively fieldwalked. During the course of the fieldwalking the conditions were mostly dry, although on the last three days the mornings were quite damp, following fairly heavy precipitation during the previous night, which aided the recognition of artefacts considerably.

The artefacts recorded included fragments of glass, clay pipe, slate, tile, brick and drainpipe, in addition to pottery. All pottery (a total of 491 sherds weighing just over 6 kilograms) was collected but only a representative sample of other material was retained after counting and classification.

The vast majority of finds identified were post medieval, the bulk of these appearing to range in date from the 17th to the 18th centuries. The main fabric types present include Midlands Purple, Midlands Yellow slipwares, Cistercian-type wares, black-glazed earthenwares, stonewares (including German stonewares) and 'china'. Only one sherd of medieval pottery and three sherds of Roman pottery were positively identified, which can be dismissed as 'background noise'.

The density plot of the fieldwalking results (fig 6) shows a general spread of material across

the field, with two main concentrations at the western and eastern ends of the old road. The concentration of broken glass, pottery and clay pipes found in square 25, at the western side of the field, and lesser concentrations in the adjacent squares, may be associated with the former inn near the bridge, which was last licensed in the mid-18th century. The second main concentration, at the eastern end of the road, although less marked, may relate to earthwork remains of a possible platform associated with the early manor (see below).

The virtual absence of medieval pottery from the field, and the lack of any notable concentration of finds along the line of the old road, both argue against the presence of a deserted medieval village here.

## Measured Survey

The measured survey was undertaken using a Sokkisha Set 3 Total Station, the results being plotted at scales of either 1:1000 or 1:500. The whole of the proposed development area was surveyed at a scale of 1:1000 (fig 7) through identification and accurate location of earthworks or features not outlined on the most recent Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of the area, while the features around and including the disused road, and the remains of the formal garden, were surveyed in more detail at a scale of 1:500 (fig 8).

The results of the survey (fig 7) tend to confirm the tentative conclusions derived from the documentary research. The cropmarks C and D, identified as field boundaries on the 1842 Tithe Map, are just discernible as ploughed-out ditches. The possible remains of a severely eroded causeway associated with the avenue from the 18th-century hall to the church are just visible as a slightly raised linear feature. A large hollow, approximately 90 metres in diameter, was located to the north-east of the church, but its function, unless possibly a quarry pit, is uncertain.

The larger, 1:500 scale, survey (fig 8) of the formal garden and disused road revealed, to the east of the hall, the remains of a sunken, circular bed or parterre, 25 metres in diameter divided into quadrants, and another sunken linear feature extending a further 70 metres eastwards, which

may represent another sunken bed or, more probably, a secluded walkway from the parterre.

These features are located on a raised platform to the south-east of the hall, which is the common position for gardens. Nearest the house, and including the circular feature, the platform is slightly lower and covers an area approximately 30 by 70 metres. The long linear ditch to the west of this platform was initially thought to be a Ha-Ha, a common 18th-century garden feature, but it appears that this feature was in fact produced by replacement of a brick culvert feeding water to the pond to the east of the hall. To the east of the first platform a step then opens out onto a higher and larger platform which extends a further 160 metres eastwards.

The disused road is located about 120 metres to the south of the present A458 where it bridges the Cound Brook. On the ground the feature is between six and ten metres wide and is characterised by a uneven spread of stones, it meanders eastwards, roughly parallel with the present road, until the cut of the western access road to the hall obscures its path.

About 110 metres further south, by the Cound Brook, is what appears to be a denuded building platform. Another linear expanse of stones was identified running south from the disused road to this platform, which cuts a northwards-facing slope between them. This may represent an access road to the building.

To the north of the disused road, on the eastern side of the field, the remains of a larger, raised platform were discerned extending 100 metres northwards from the road. Although disturbed by the later access road to the hall, a truncated eastward return, roughly aligned with the northern corner of the walled garden, can be seen. It is possible that this feature represents part of a platform associated with the medieval manorial complex, although, if so, medieval pottery might have been expected from the fieldwalking here.

## 5.0: IMPLICATIONS

The Shropshire County Council brief highlights four aspects of the historic landscape which are to be given particular attention in the archaeological appraisal:

- a) the position of the early house site – to be investigated with particular reference to the proposed new build.
- b) the site of the early road – to be investigated with particular reference to landscaping and car parking.
- c) the site and content of the settlement remains – to be investigated with particular reference to the proposed golf course.
- d) any former garden/landscaping remains.

The appraisal of the documentary evidence, map sources, aerial photographs and SMR data, together with fieldwalking and measured survey, has helped to clarify these issues and set parameters for assessing the archaeological implications of the proposed development. The following assessment and recommendations should be read in conjunction with figures 9 and 10.

The early house is most likely to be sited in the present position of the walled garden, which is not to be directly affected by the proposed new build. However, it cannot be ascertained, on present evidence, whether the remains of the manor house lie wholly within the walled garden or extend beyond it, in which case they may be affected by the proposed new build. If Tipping was correct in identifying ruins in the walled garden, visible in 1929, as belonging to the early house, the implication is that the remains may be fairly well preserved. Carefully-located archaeological trial trenches within, and to the south of, the walled garden would provide the best means of assessing the nature, extent and quality of preservation of early buildings in this area.

Furthermore, the medieval and early post-medieval manorial establishment consisted of much more than just the manor house itself, and would have included a whole range of ancillary buildings. It has been suggested above that the existing outbuildings to the south of the walled garden, which are to be integrated into the proposed new build, may occupy the site of original outbuildings associated with the early manor house, conveniently sited immediately to the north of the old road. In addition, the measured survey has identified the part of a possible platform associated with the early manorial settlement, and fieldwalking has revealed a concentration of finds, albeit post-medieval, in the same general area. This area, in the north-east corner of the field to the west of the hall, is to be part of the golf course in the present developmental proposals and, as such, archaeological deposits are unlikely to be under direct threat if landscaping is limited to building up the ground surface, rather than scouring it. If trial excavation of the walled garden and its immediate environs revealed a complex extending over into this area, then geophysical survey may be recommended as a means of further non-destructive investigation.

The line of the early road has been clearly established on the basis of the evidence from documentary, cartographic and air-photographic sources; together with systematic fieldwalking and survey. Although the field has been under plough since the Second World War, this feature has not been wholly destroyed. Again, archaeological deposits are not under threat from the proposed development of the golf course, and it is therefore unlikely that any further work will be necessary along the line of the road, especially because of the notable absence of any material evidence from the medieval period relating to the presumed deserted village.

To the east of this field the line of the road appears to pass through the area of the proposed hotel extension. Trial excavation, as part of a programme also investigating the possible remains of the early manor house, would offer the best possibility of establishing its exact position here.

The site and content of the settlement remains were less clearly established on the basis of the documentary evidence investigated. The V.C.H. authors clearly take the view that the former village of Lower Cound lay alongside the road to Upper Cound, to the west of the Cound Brook and beyond the proposed development area. However, further analysis of the relevant documentary sources (notably Leland's *Itinerary*), reveals that the evidence is not clear cut. An alternative is that Lower Cound may have lain along the old main road, on both the western (where the mill still stands) and eastern sides of the river. This interpretation would make best sense of Leland's statement that the river ran through the village, and indeed it is possible to envisage the village as straggling along the main road eastwards towards the presumed site of the medieval hall. However, systematic fieldwalking and measured survey failed to reveal any clear traces of settlement remains beyond the eastern fringe of the river.

The garden and landscape features associated with the park can be divided into two broad zones, on the basis of degree of survival:

Farming of the original 'lawns' of the park in the field to the west of the hall, and to the east beyond the limits of the proposed development area, has largely obliterated any landscape features in these areas, although the tree-lined avenue from the hall to the church partially survives and is to be retained. The area around the pond to the east of the house is of great beauty and will remain as such.

The remains of the formal garden adjacent to the hall have been overgrown for a considerable period of time, and measured survey has not significantly altered understanding of the remaining visible features. Certainly, if it were part of the refurbishment programme of the hall that this area was to be restored as a garden, then it might be appropriate from an aesthetic perspective to ascertain by means of limited excavation the plan of original formal garden in order to reinstate it. However, from an archaeological point of view, it is unlikely that the remains of the garden are of significant

interest in terms of understanding 18th-century gardens. The area itself is comparatively small in relation to the surrounding parkland, and it is felt that this garden would never have been a significant feature within the overall plan of the hall complex.

Beyond these specific historical features, Sections 2 and 3 above have drawn attention to the wealth of prehistoric and Roman remains within the parish itself or in the immediately surrounding area. While no such remains have yet been identified within the proposed development area, there is considerable potential for the location of such remains through intensive fieldwork.

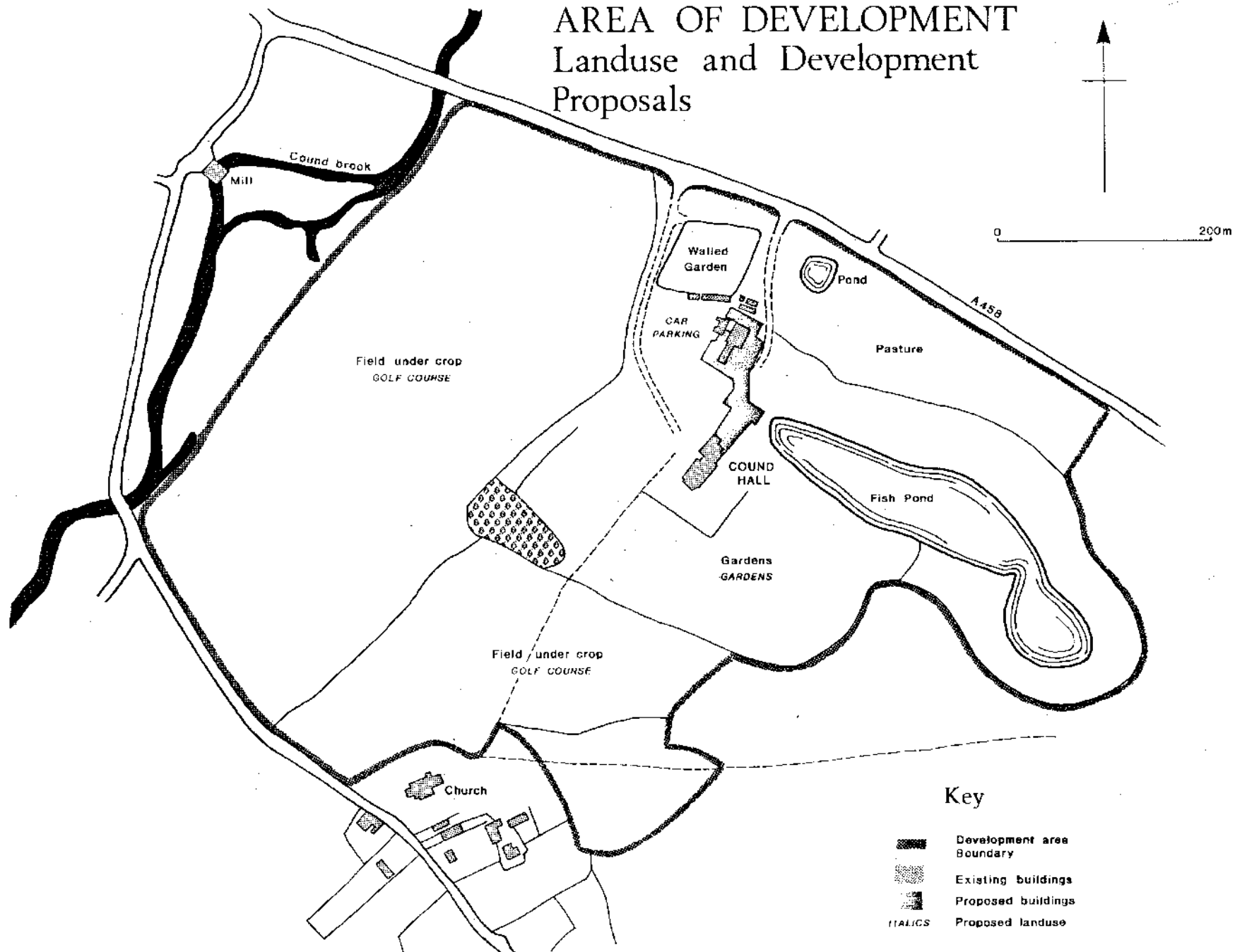
## 6.0: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# AREA OF DEVELOPMENT Landuse and Development Proposals



## Key

- Development area Boundary
- Existing buildings
- Proposed buildings
- Proposed landuse

FIG 1

# COUND PARISH

## Topography and Drift Geology

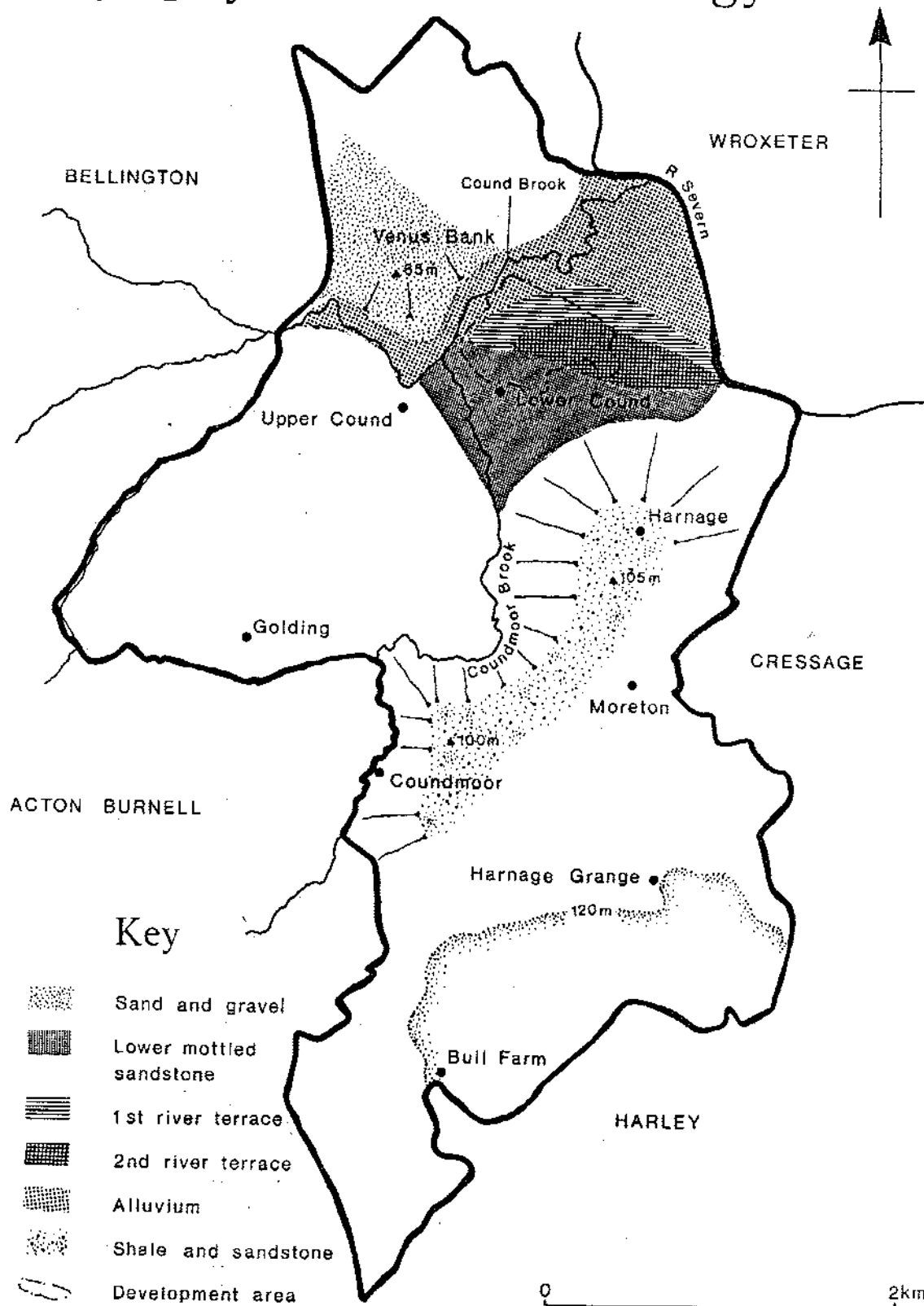


FIG 2

# COUND PARISH

## Prehistoric and Roman Features

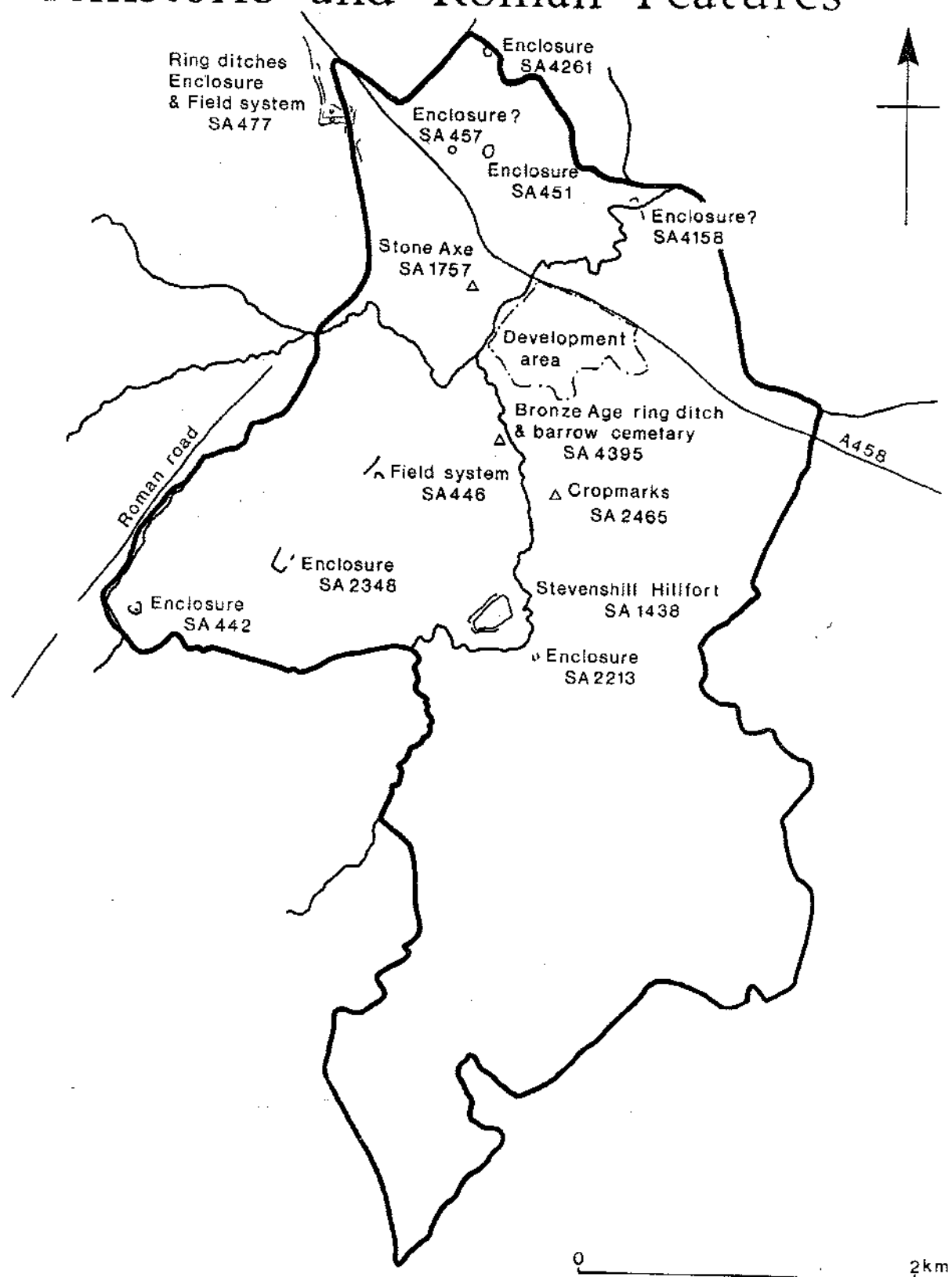


FIG 3

# COUND PARISH

## Features of Historical Interest

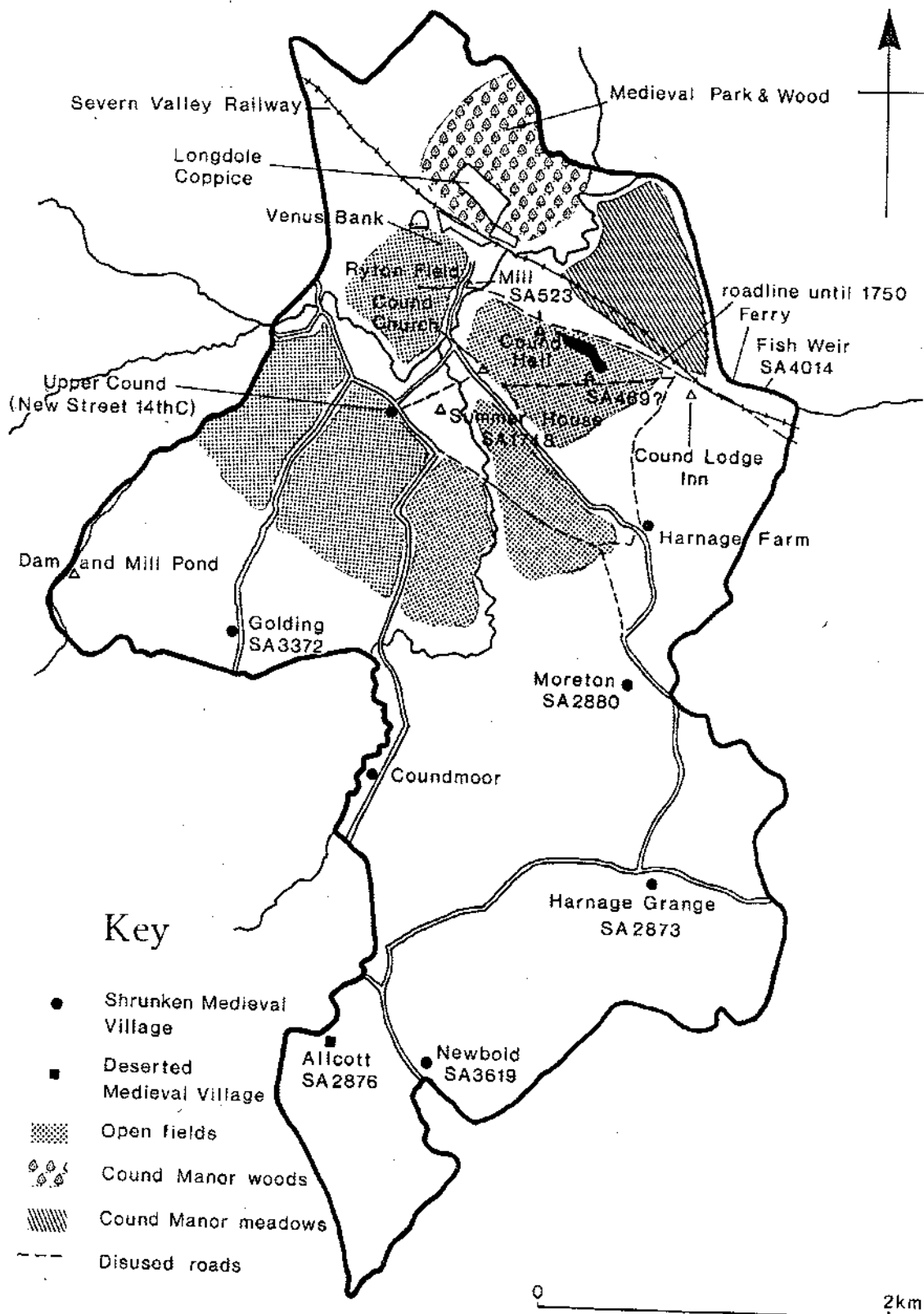


FIG 4

# AREA OF DEVELOPMENT

## Archaeological and Historical Features

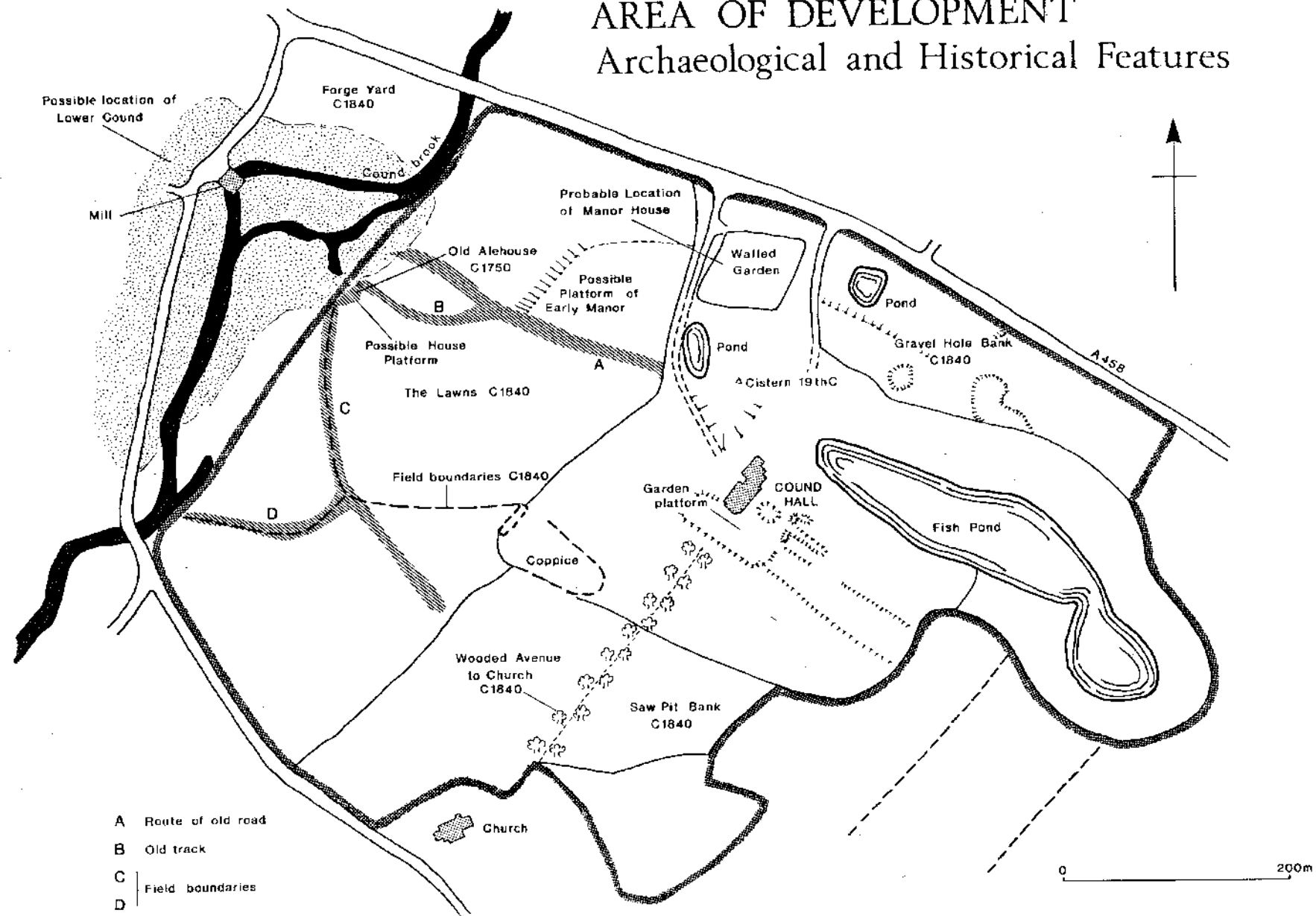
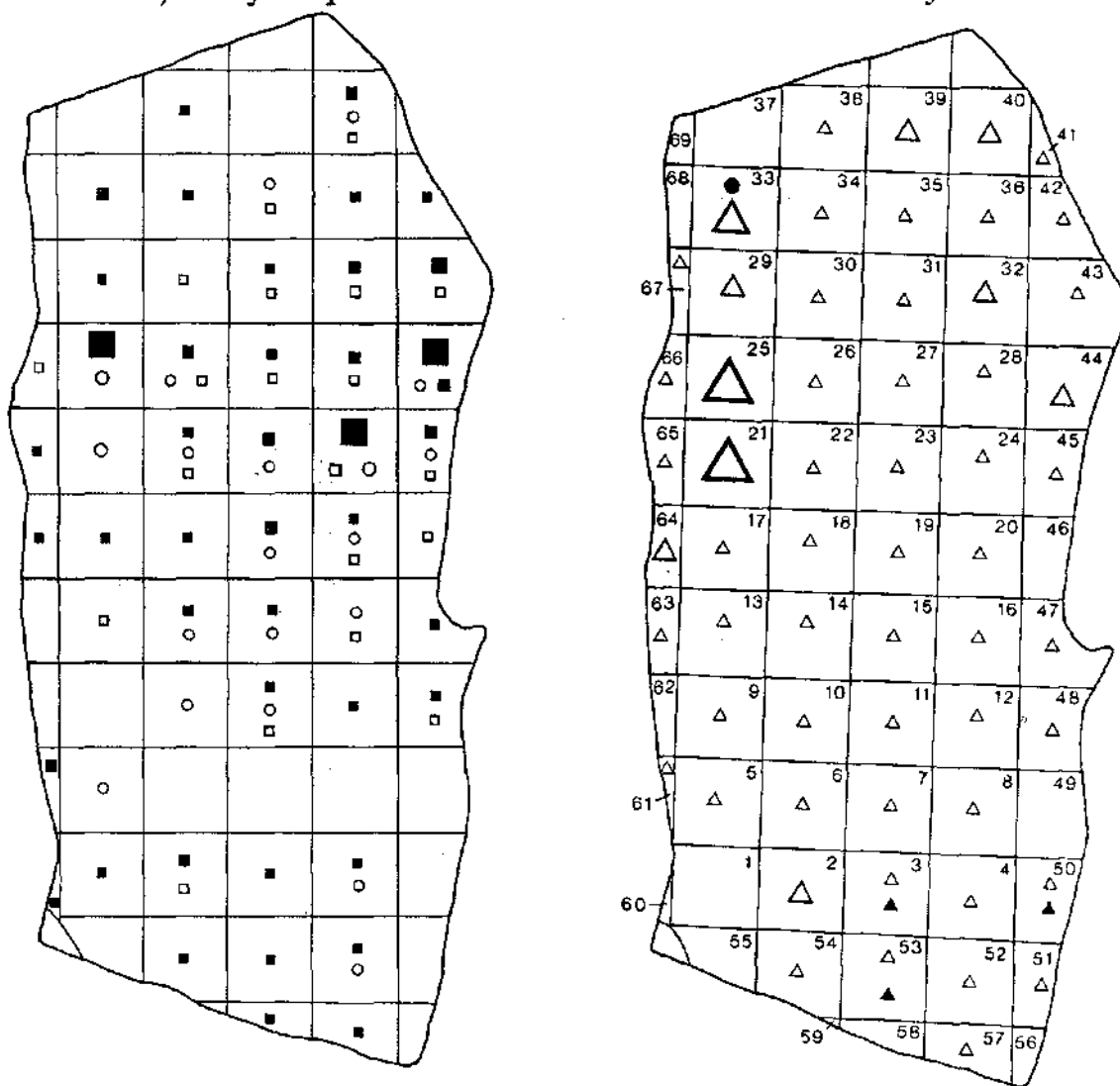


FIG 5

# COUND HALL Fieldwalking Results

a. Glass, Clay Pipe & Brick      b. Sherd density



a.

Post medieval

quantity

Glass

Clay pipe

Brick

5- 10- 15- 20+

■ ■ ■ ■

○ ○ ○ ○

□ □ □ □

b.

Pottery

number of sherds

10- 20- 30- 40+

Post medieval

△ △ △ △

Medieval

●

Roman

▲

FIG 6

*Birmingham University  
Field Archaeology Unit*

# COUND HALL

## An Archaeological Appraisal

Plans  
(Figs 7–10)

B.U.F.A.U.

