Évora Archaeological Survey: Fieldwalking

Margaret Maddison

Toma a alegria do dia Já que sob o pó da terra Longo te será o sono Seize the joy of the day Since under the dust of earth Long will be your sleep

Ibn Abdun of Évora, translated into Portuguese by Adalberto Alves (Alves, 1987)

SETTING UP THE SURVEY

Colin Burgess had taken his Newcastle Department of Adult Education students to various parts of western Europe on study tours over many years. At Easter 1985 he led one to southern Portugal (guided by Portuguese archaeologist Isabel Lisboa, who was then studying at Cambridge University, and was later one of the facilitators of the project) which included exploring the Évora area of the Alentejo for five days. The Alentejo is the largest province of Portugal. It is bounded on the east by the Spanish border, on the west by the sea, in the south by the mountains of the Algarve, and the River Tejo to the north. It occupies about 30% of Portugal's area but contains only about 6% of the population and is thus relatively underpopulated. Évora lies near the centre of the Alentejo, about 130km east of Lisbon, on the putative Roman road from Lisbon to Merida. In 1986 it was declared a World Heritage Site.

Those of us on the 1985 tour remember the joy of visiting the magnificent megalithic monuments of the region, whose flowery spring landscape was littered with cairns; we speculated whether some of these might represent more than clearance and what a fieldwalking survey might reveal. As Colin wrote (Burgess *et al.*, undated):

'We were all struck by the tremendous archaeological potential of the Évora district, and local archaeological interests there seemed very keen to have outside help in sorting out the very rich archaeology of their region. One thing led to another, and eventually to the Survey Project'.

With his characteristic relish of short time-frames, Colin went into action. By the following summer he had secured funding, obtained support and agreement from both the local and regional Portuguese authorities, assembled a team of specialists, enlisted and trained a team of volunteer fieldwalkers, sorted accommodation, transport and travel arrangements, and had suitable maps prepared.

Portugal was then at a critical point in its history with its entry to the European Union. The Alentejo was noted for its special montado system. How much this might be altered by the possible introduction of new farming systems into the area, boosted by EU money, was in question. In forthright terms Colin (Burgess, 1990a) feared

¹ Montado: a sustainable ecosystem based on a low density of trees (particularly cork oak and holm oak) combined with pastoral or agricultural activity.

"...the usual grant-induced onslaught on the landscape and its remains".

The depopulation of the countryside around Évora, already apparent from the number of abandoned farmhouses, would probably accelerate. Thus a wide-ranging survey was proposed, taking the opportunity to record the distribution of rural features (including industrial archaeology) which were no longer functioning and might soon disappear, as well as the potential prehistoric and later archaeology which was of prime interest.

PERSONNEL AND FUNDING

The Survey's principal colleagues in Portugal were Jorge Oliveira (University of Évora), Virgílio Correia (Serviço Regional de Arqueologia do Sul), and Manuel Calado (an expert volunteer). The University provided transport, equipment and storage facilities. The Câmara Municipal (town council) of Évora was particularly encouraging, not only with personnel but also practical support in transport and equipment. Financially, it was a substantial initial grant secured by Colin from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation that got the project off the ground. This was followed by grants from a wide range of sources, including Newcastle University, Edinburgh University, and the Prehistoric Society, as well as those obtained by individual student or academic participants. The NAG fieldwalkers themselves also contributed out of their own pockets.

Each year Colin was able to recruit a number of relevant specialists to deal with aspects of the project such as site planning, a survey of soils, pottery and other finds, and excavations of sites of different periods. However, the greatest numbers of personnel were his extra-mural students from Newcastle University, mostly NAG members, who did fieldwalking, as well as surveying and excavation. NAG also supplied equipment and members undertook various support services, including planning, handling the finances, taking equipment to Portugal, finding accommodation, and so on.

FIELDWALKING PREPARATION

Systematic large-scale fieldwalking was a British area of expertise and in Newcastle Colin had a group of students whom he had introduced to the fieldwork methods pioneered by Roger Mercer of Edinburgh University. Mercer had organised fieldwork in Sutherland and had offered advice to anyone intending a similar project (Mercer, 1980). Some of Colin's students had already done their own local fieldwalking projects based on these methods. The record forms were designed by the writer based on fieldwalking surveys she had done in Northumberland with Paul Sellers, but adapted to expected conditions and the numbering of the Portuguese maps. In addition, several of us had practical experience in the surveying of buildings and industrial archaeology. We found it was somewhat easier to conduct fieldwalking in Portugal than in Britain, as there was a right of access to all except specially fenced areas, such as the *hortas* where the locals intensively grew vegetables, or those under crop.

MAPS

The maps for fieldwalkers took considerable organisation. At that time in Portugal, detailed, large-scale maps - like British Ordnance Survey maps - were scarce and unevenly distributed, and none that then existed covered the area we were surveying. Instead the standard 1/25000 Military Maps were used. These were not all of the same date of production, and indeed the set of maps the Portuguese side of the team was able

to provide for the area were rather old. Gordon Moir was given the advance task of preparing suitable maps. He recalls that he was provided with *Cartas Militares* numbers 448 and 459 and asked to produce suitable maps for the field at 1:10000 covering the proposed survey area. In 1986 this centred on the Almendres estate and extended north to the main Lisbon – Évora road.



Figure 1. Colin's master map is on the wall of the *Escola Secundaria Severim de Faria*, Évora, at the end of the 1990 season. The blank, central, portion is 1986; yellow is 1987; blue 1988, red 1989 and green 1990. Areas left were completed in the 1991 season. It is not thought that in 1991 any extension outside the figured area took place so this represents the extent of the survey; see also figure 6. (Photo: © Sue Brophy.)

A Carta Militar covered an area 16 by 10 kilometres, at a scale of 1:25000 (i.e. 4 cm = 1 km). By using the enlargement facility on a photocopying machine at its maximum, say 158%, and doing this twice, sufficient magnification was achieved to provide copies at the required scale. During this enlargement process good horizontal and vertical overlaps with the adjacent photocopied sheets was maintained, so that when the area to be fieldwalked was outlined it would lie entirely on one A4 sheet which the fieldwalkers could take out into the countryside. Such areas were normally 1 sq km or so and, following Mercer's strictures, defined largely by sections of the many tracks that threaded through the region. In later seasons, as the Survey area expanded, parts of

Cartas Militares numbers 437, 447 and 458 were used. Colin maintained a master map which was enlarged as the survey progressed. On this map the fieldwalking areas were marked and when completed coloured in according to the year, see figure 1.

In his Interim Report, (Burgess, 1990) Colin described how the boundaries for the Survey Area were chosen (pp. 35-36, figure 2). As the survey progressed these boundaries changed and were extended. In part this was because the 'natural geographical boundaries were often not recognisable on the ground and field-walking teams strayed outside. The force of Mercer's stricture that an area's boundary must be visible on the ground became apparent. Also interesting areas appeared and became included in the Survey. As a result figure 2 (op. cit.) has had to be redrawn to include the actual area covered, and is presented here as figure 6. This figure reproduces the kilometre spaced grid from the military maps, and it is to this grid that the six-figure references refer. Where possible these grid references are to the actual site, but where this is not possible, to the farm that provides the site name.

AIMS AND METHODS

The aim of the Survey was to record man-made features of all periods in order to build a picture of previous use of the landscape. In the first year a survey of about 100 sq km was intended, about 90% of which was completed then. This was later extended to over 250 sq km which included different types of terrain. As a vital first step fieldwalkers were introduced by Portuguese colleagues to the agriculture of the area, typical features of the landscape and archaeological sites. In later years they themselves were able to induct new fieldwalkers and Colin produced notes for newcomers on what to expect, (Burgess, undated).

We took Mercer's advice to consider safety first, never to walk or work alone; to avoid getting lost, but if you did, stop and recover your position; to divide the region up into small areas with boundaries explicitly recognisable on the ground; to meet punctually at precise rendezvous; to bear in mind mobility (i.e. wheels) and communications (shortwave radio), but that if there were no communications, then people had to be self-reliant. So, fieldwalkers went out in teams of at least two or three, armed with a compass and extracts of large-scale military maps, record forms, measuring tapes, collection bags for small finds, and water, first aid kit, binoculars, and ideally with a walking stick which was useful to warn off aggressive farm dogs and to inspect thickets and vegetation-covered rocks.

Each day every team was allocated an area to walk (coded according to the master map) whose boundaries were defined by the mostly unpaved rough tracks shown on the maps. Teams were taken by vehicle to their starting point and a collection point and time was arranged. It was necessary to begin work very early and finish around midday as the temperature rose to seriously uncomfortable levels after that.

It was theoretically ideal to walk the perimeter of the allocated area first, but this was not always possible. But it was essential to establish a base line and then to systematically walk transects at 10m apart across each area. When a find was made it was marked on the map; sites were immediately recorded with descriptions, measurements, sketches, etc., and artefacts were recorded, collected and bagged. Active and abandoned farmsteads were also examined in detail, as these often turned out to have collections of stones such as querns, Roman milestones, altars, and so on, or

disused olive presses, which might have been re-purposed or saved as potential building material.

Although people were rarely encountered in the countryside, occasional enquiries to farm workers, using the basic Portuguese that some of the group had learnt, might result in useful information. Through the Portuguese equivalent of a job creation scheme, the Câmara Municipal de Évora also provided a dozen or so local young people to take part in fieldwalking. They were keen to practice their English, but were also a great help in communicating with local people.

Large numbers of thickets of sharp, prickly, vegetation were encountered, see figure 2. These had to be probed with the walking stick, for archaeological remains might be within, as in this case, figure 3. Clearing such monuments was time-consuming, but essential so that the planning and recording teams could do their work. Secateurs, gloves, sticks and shears were needed. The young people from the Câmara were very helpful here. They also helped with the fieldwalking, enabling more teams to be deployed in the field. Some, notably Ana, Sandra and Noémia, participated every year even when their funding had ceased.





Figure 2. As found in the field (Photos: © Gordon Moir)

Figure 3. After clearing, an anta is revealed

Methods had to be amended in the face of practicalities. In the first year sites were marked with long canes and fluorescent tape flags, but this soon proved unworkable since they were awkward to carry, we ran out of them, and they had to be retrieved regularly. The terrain itself varied as the Survey covered new ground over the years. It was found that the dirt tracks recorded on maps had sometimes moved from their mapped route or disappeared altogether, so flexibility and map-reading skill were required. With experience, the record form was abbreviated. It also very quickly became apparent that the numerous cairns which initially had been recorded in detail were relatively recent clearance. Nevertheless, it might be possible to find that a cairn was hiding an earlier site, and they were always inspected in case worked stones or other material had been dumped on them. It was also soon realised that the mixture of tile, brick and dolia sherds that was sampled on every occasion at first was very widespread. These heavy wares meant that even a small sample became burdensome when one was a long way from the pick-up point. The possibility of encountering another such scatter before the rendezvous argued for collecting only a small but representative sample. The record form, in any case, provided sufficient evidence of the nature of the scatter.

Each evening the whole Évora Archaeological Survey team held a debriefing meeting back at base to report progress and any significant finds. From the fieldwalkers' records a decision was made by directorial staff on which sites to inspect and follow up with photography and/or survey or ultimately, in a few cases, excavation.

THE SURVEY 1986 - 1991

For the first three years the whole team stayed at Monte das Flores, a large country house a few kilometres south-west of Évora. In 1986 there were 30 or so from the UK. These included Stephan Harrison and Philip Immirzi who conducted work on the geology and soils of the area, (Harrison and Immirzi, 1990) and Keith Blood who led site surveying, assisted by Basil Butcher and Chris Burgess. Young people from the Câmara Municipal also took part with the fieldwalkers from Newcastle.

In 1987 the team was smaller, with reduced funding. The fieldwalking survey area was extended. Two alternative fieldwalking techniques were trialled by Isabel Lisboa and Clay Mathers, but not pursued any further. Students from Manchester (led by David Coombs) and Leicester University (led by Alex Gibson) excavated on sites identified previously, while Frances Lynch began her anta planning campaign (this volume). Steven Willis of Durham University examined the Roman sites and finds resulting from the 1987 fieldwalking (Willis, 1990 and this volume).

In 1988 expeditions were made in April and July/August financed by a grant from the Research Committee of the University of Newcastle (Burgess, 1988). In April geomorphological work was done by Stephan Harrison, Mark Macklin, and David Passmore, (Harrison et al, 1990). In summer, Adam Welfare and David Kear examined the putative Roman roads. Keith Blood again led surveying. Roman pottery expert John Dore and finds processor Valerie McLellan also joined the team. Fieldwalking/survey was done with additional volunteers: archaeology students from Newcastle University and professionals from the Scottish Development Department Central Excavation Unit.

In 1989 minimal funding was available, and much less comfortable accommodation was found in Évora itself. The UK team consisted of six fieldwalkers, plus John Dore, two planners, and Colin (who was only able to be present part of the time). Portuguese colleagues present included Virgílio Correia, Paula Rosado, and some of the Câmara students. The aim was to complete as much of the fieldwalking as possible.

In 1990 a larger expedition was undertaken in July and August. As in 1989 this was funded partly by the Research Committee of the University of Newcastle. Assistance by the Câmara Municipal provided accommodation at a local school, transport and equipment. Trial excavations were led by Anthony Harding at Monte do Casão (743 770), and by Simon Mason at Alto do Castelinho da Serra (775 753) (see Gibson, this volume). A geomorphological/environmental team (Elizabeth Stockdale, Mark Macklin, incorporating comments by David Passmore and Stephan Harrison) worked on soil and landuse, and alluvial sequences. E. Sherrington investigated the recent landuse of undated structures by interviewing members of the local farming community. Fieldwalking of the Survey area was completed (with a few exceptions), as was planning of chambered tombs. A report on work in 1989-90 was produced: Burgess, 1990b.

In September 1991 a final season of fieldwork was done by a small team, staying at the University of Évora's Mitra field station, Valverde. Fieldwalking was completed by

Margaret Maddison with Deborah Gambol for two weeks and Colin Burgess for the final week in areas previously inaccessible because of crops. Important sites such as Valeira, Monte do Casão, and Fonte do Abade (873 954) were planned by Keith Blood and Derek Taylor. A new survey was also carried out of the excavated and extensively restored Chalcolithic walled fort (with later phases of occupation) of Castelo do Giraldo (843 662). Although a geophysical survey of both the Valeira crossroads site (872 777) and Monte do Casão had been intended, the fluxgate gradiometer arrived without its operator. Chris Burgess was, however, able to do a limited amount of gradiometer survey at Valeira. He also continued to work on finds illustration, particularly of the classic Chalcolithic material found at Valeira, (Burgess, 1991).

RESULTS

The fieldwalking Survey of the entire 250 sq km was completed with the result that this was then one of the most thoroughly-explored areas in southern Europe. Evidence of activity in all periods from the Neolithic to recent was recorded. Only a brief outline can be given here.

The landscape within the Survey area was varied. Much of the ground under cork oaks and olives was regularly ploughed to grow crops or to prevent the growth of rampant vegetation and its consequent fire risk. When this occurred artefact scatters could come to light, but it also meant that only surface features made of large, immovable stones survived *in situ*. Elsewhere, impenetrable eucalyptus forest or successive crops such as grain or sunflowers might cause destruction. Again, when these were removed artefact scatters could indicate sites, as at Valeira. Fieldwalkers frequently had to investigate heavily bramble-covered potential sites. In theory, if these had been completely cleared (an impossible task) more would have been revealed. As with any fieldwalking survey, there is always the possibility of identifying new sites in future, as new artefacts come to the surface when the soil is disturbed again or as other conditions vary. As an example, the standing stone site of Cromeleque do Vale Maria do Meio appears to have been missed by us, probably because it was hidden in vegetation.

Evidence of the Palaeolithic or Mesolithic Periods was not recognised until the geomorphology survey found evidence of a flaked stone industry just outside the survey area, north of Montemor-o-Novo.

The newly discovered chambered tombs almost doubled the number known before the Survey. Notably, in 1989 we made the discovery of an undisturbed chambered tomb at Benamarique (859 803) with its mound intact but, tragically, it had been bulldozed to destruction by the following year, and only displaced finds were recovered.

Several cistas or 'sub-megalithic boxes'— smaller, lower, box-like versions of chambered tombs—were also found, one of these being annexed to a dolmen and thus providing evidence for its comparative dating (Lynch, this volume). A Late Neolithic/Chalcolithic/Early Bronze Age artefact scatter presumably eroding from a nearby settlement was found near the cista at Cabanas (820 645). At Serranheira (813 824) a stone ard tip was found and a fragment of a schist plaque was picked up near Alcanede (830 821).



Figure 4. Cista, or sub-megalithic box, Cegonheira 3 (Photo: © Gordon Moir)

Surface finds revealed several sites of the Neolithic-Chalcolithic. Well over 80 querns were found. In at least one location (Monte do Casão where 22 saucer querns were found – one cup-marked) these were apparently not only for grain processing. Several which had large holes worn through from both sides, may have been polishers for the considerable number of stone axes and other stone tools found nearby. As these milling stones were of various shapes and sizes Monte do Casão may also have been a quern production site. Pottery and perforated clay plaques were also found. Monte do Casão was partially excavated in 1990 by Anthony Harding (this volume). In Colin's opinion this proved to be an important Neolithic ditched defensive site: possibly one of the earliest and most extensive in Iberia. The equally remarkable Valeira site when field-walked in 1990 produced Chalcolithic pottery, polished stone implements and querns, some double-sided, fig. 5.





Figure 5. Two-sided querns found at Valeira crossroads, 1990.

Concerning the Valeira pottery, Colin described it as (Burgess, 1991): '....a classic Chalcolithic group, dominated by expanded rim dishes and bowls of the kind so well-known from bastioned forts such as Zambujal and Monte da Tumba.'

Both Monte do Casão and Valeira were planned in 1991. An even earlier Mid to Late Neolithic site was brought to the Survey's attention by students at the Pomarinho Agricultural College. Potentially, these sites could provide a Neolithic and Chalcolithic sequence for this part of the country. Cup-marked rocks had only been recorded locally in small numbers before the Survey, on megaliths or capstones, but not on the outcrops

(such as Serranheira (814 814) and Cegonheira (830 818)), earthfast boulders, or portable stones which were now discovered in a range of settings. Over a dozen were added to those previously known. Flints were rare finds (at Benamarique chambered tomb and a single microlith at Pinheiro do Campo 2 (804 720)).

Of the Bronze Age, relatively little was found. A few isolated cists, for example at Banhos (754 689); near Provença (845 668); and north-east of Zambujeiro (858 664), could be added to the previously known cist cemeteries; two of these cemeteries were planned, Bandeiras (813 673), Hortinhas (860 667). At Pardieiro (842 664) a possible stele was noted. Some material assigned to the Chalcolithic might be of the Early Bronze Age. Colin addressed the problem of the lack of finds of the Bronze and Iron Ages in his reports (see the references below).

Several Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age castros (hillforts) were added to the small number known (Burgess et al, 1999). Those planned included Valada de Almansor (874 811) and Vale de El-Rei de Cima (859 775). The small castro of Alto do Castelinho da Serra, (775 753) where trial excavation was led by Simon Mason in 1990 (and continued by Catriona Gibson in 1993, this volume), produced spectacular results: large quantities of pottery including Bronze Age, Greek and Punic material. Several rotary querns, characteristic of the Iron Age and later, were found in the Survey area.

Much material of the Roman Period was found and thus many previously-unknown Roman sites were identified. Two significant finds from the last years of the Survey were a possible Roman-period structure at Fonte do Abade, which was planned, and a rich surface scatter at Almo (823 741) producing fine wares, which might possibly indicate a villa. Possible villa sites site were known at Carapeteiro (783 764) and Moita do Gato (832 753). Roman objects such as altars, columns, and an inscription were found at the farms of Almendres (828 692) and Moita da Gato, and fragments of tesserae from near Carapeteiro. Elsewhere, a phallus sculpture was discovered at Rosa (806 743). The castelo (Roman castellum) at Vale de el Rei de Cima (861 771), where Iron Age/Roman pottery was found, was planned. Cobbled tracks with ditches, which differed from the usual purely dirt tracks, were proved by intensive field observations not to be Roman, as some local opinion had believed, but built in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. However, the most widespread material found was tile, brick and dolia, thought to indicate wine and/or olive oil production, potentially from any time from the Roman period onwards. Only rarely was it associated with fine wares. The several oil or grape presses recorded could not be securely dated to the Roman period despite David Coombs' excavation at Almendres and may, indeed, have been in service for many centuries.

It was noticeable that no certain Moorish material was found among the vast quantity of pottery, confirming the impression that Arab settlement was mainly urban.

Little material unequivocally datable to the Medieval Period was found but, significantly, Virgilio Correia was able to demonstrate that the stone tower standing at the north end of the Alto do Castelinho da Serra castro was mostly of Roman construction, refurbished in the Middle Ages as part of a chain guarding the approaches to the town of Montemor-o-Novo. It is possible that some of the numerous types of stone-built enclosure discovered in a variety of styles and shapes, but of mostly of unknown purpose, may belong to this period.

On a positive note, many Post-Medieval to recent rural structures sites were recorded. Industrial sites included the well-preserved kiln/furnace complexes at Alcalva de Baixo (808 776) for kaolin, and for lime at Salinha (764 664) which stood near limestone quarries and iron mines. A watermill with its dam and leats survived at Nogueira (786 661). A further watermill complex at Boa Fé (793 678) included a mill with associated buildings, a fine bridge and a paved ford; while another industrial watermill group was found at Malhada (811 761). At Galeria da Água (765 650) an abandoned mining hamlet was discovered. Several kilns for tiles, bricks and pottery were recorded during the survey.

Unsurprisingly, agricultural remains were numerous. Pigeon houses, olive or grape press sites, hilltop threshing floors, piglet feeding enclosures (such as Zambujal (776 772) and Paço (827 710)) and deserted, overgrown and unused farm buildings, including a chapel, were among the finds. 'Figure-of-eight' drystone-walled enclosures were identified by the writer as pig enclosures which had lost their roofs; their layout was copied by later structures in materials which required rectangular construction. This was confirmed by interviews with local inhabitants done in 1990 by E. Sherrington.

Numerous abandoned farmhouses and many ruined structures of uncertain function were recorded. Some of these (as at Casa Velha (845 794)) were merely indicated by low banks and mounds, but there could be no certain correlation between condition and age. It seems likely that many of these enclosures were primarily of agricultural use, but Ms Sherrington's enquiries to local inhabitants only produced the response that they were very old and their purpose guesswork.

Other pre-modern structures such as bridges, fords, and dams were noted. A representative sample was properly planned, for example the paved ford at Boa Fé, and the abandoned mining hamlet at Galeria da Água.

At that time these Post-Medieval sites were a common feature of the rural landscape around Évora, but how many are left now? In the light of British experience that much vernacular architecture and many agricultural or industrial sites were only valued once the majority had disappeared, it would have been worthwhile to survey a few more types in detail, had time allowed.

In all, the fieldwalking survey was successful in finding around 600 sites, or artefact scatters indicating former sites, or isolated surface finds. These were all recorded on the finds sheets and their associated maps, including the definitive master map. Finds from 1989-90 were deposited at the newly opened stores at Évora Museum. Finds from previous years of the Survey had been deposited at various locations and it was hoped that they too might be assembled at the Museum, but see the article by Virgílio Correia in this volume for the current situation. Colin Burgess had hoped to publish a final comprehensive report on the Survey, but this never appeared, probably largely due to the failure to find suitable finance. Publications resulting directly from the Survey are listed below and in the other papers in this volume.

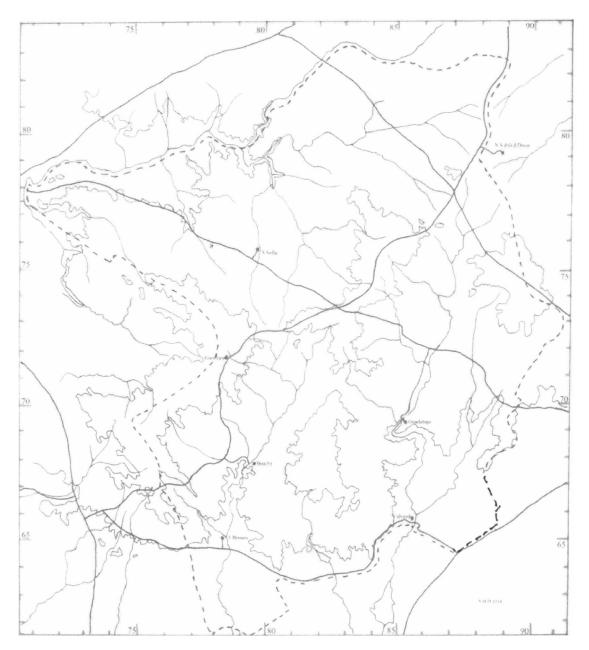


Figure 6. The survey region as recorded at the end of the 1990 season. The pecked line shows the limits of the survey area. This map is an extended version of the distribution maps in Burgess, 1990. Grid references in the text refer to the kilometre-spaced grid defined on the borders of the figure, which is taken directly from the Cartas Militares.

NEWCASTLE FIELDWALKERS, SURVEYORS, AND EXCAVATORS

It is unfortunately impossible to list in this outline all of the many individuals or the funding organisations who supported the Survey. The Newcastle volunteers who regularly participated in the Survey, some every year, included (in alphabetical order) Susan Brown (now Brophy), Chris Burgess, Basil Butcher, Barbara Esslemont, Tom Heyes, Margaret Maddison, Gordon Moir, and Paul Sellers. Gordon Moir organised many practical details and Peggy Butler maintained the financial records. All of us were immensely grateful to Colin for the wonderful experience of this project. Not only was it a stimulating contrast to fieldwalking in Northumberland, but it left us with an enduring love of Évora, the Alentejo and its people, and a thousand special memories.

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