

**PRESTBURY FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME  
CHELTENHAM  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

*For*

**ENVIRONMENT AGENCY**


CA PROJECT: 2972  
CA REPORT: 09208

JANUARY 2010

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CA PROJECT: 2972  
CA REPORT: 09208

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date	29 January 2010
issue	01

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## SUMMARY

**Project Name:** Prestbury Flood Alleviation Scheme  
**Location:** Cheltenham, Gloucestershire  
**NGR:** SO 9720 2410  
**Type:** Evaluation  
**Date:** 25-27 November 2009  
**Location of Archive:** To be deposited with Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum  
**Accession Number:** CAGM 2009.153  
**Site Code:** PBF 09

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in November 2009 at land at Prestbury, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. Six trenches were excavated.

The evaluation identified a wall which appeared to relate to a small building depicted on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey mapping and which was still visible on the 1947 Ordnance Survey map. A number of furrows were observed, as well as a small posthole containing a fragment of abraded Iron Age pottery, a fragment of bone and a medieval or post-medieval iron nail.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In November 2009 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation for the Environment Agency on land at Prestbury, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire (centred on NGR: SO 9720 2410; Fig. 1). The evaluation was recommended by Charles Parry, Senior Archaeological Officer, Gloucestershire County Council (GCC), in response to a proposal by the Environment Agency to construct a flood alleviation scheme, with associated works

1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a detailed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CA (2009) and approved by Mr Parry. The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (2008), the *Statement of Standards and Practices Appropriate for Archaeological Field Work in Gloucestershire* (GCC 1995), the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991) and the *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE)* (EH 2006). It was monitored by Mr Parry, including a site visit on 26 November 2009.

### ***The site***

1.3 The site consist of a field to the east of Prestbury village, part of the grounds of The Hayes, two fields to the south of The Hayes (Prestbury Manor House) and one to the west (Fig. 2). The site lies at approximately 77m AOD. It is relatively level in the eastern field, slopes down gently from north to south immediately to the east of The Hayes and then more steeply north to south in the western areas.

1.4 The site encloses an area of approximately 3.8ha, which comprised open grassed fields.

1.5 The underlying solid geology of the area is mapped as undifferentiated clays, silty in upper part, with argillaceous limestone bands especially in lower part, from the Jurassic era (BGS 1981). A mixture of clays and gravels were observed in the evaluation trenches.

### **Archaeological background**

- 1.6 The only direct evidence for activity in Prestbury itself before the early medieval period is in the form of eight sherds of Roman pottery, part of a thick glass bottle or flask and a piece of iron slag (SMR 17938) found at the southern end of The Burgage, approximately 400m to the south-west of the current site (GCC 2007, 19). Prestbury was a small market town during the medieval period, encouraged by the presence of the residence of the Bishops of Hereford who owned the manor. The residence of the Bishops of Hereford is believed to have occupied the site of the moated enclosure which lies approximately 700m to the north-west of the current site (SMR 460). Documentary sources record that the Bishops had a manor house in Prestbury from the 13th century, but pottery found during excavations at the moated site in 1951 indicates that there was a building on the site from the 11th century (GCC 2007, 20).
- 1.7 Ridge and furrow earthworks are visible in the field to the east of the village and in the grounds of The Hayes. A geophysical survey of the site was undertaken by the Environment Agency in July 2009 (Fig. 2). Visual inspection of the ridge and furrow located adjacent to The Hayes demonstrated that it had been partially infilled with modern material which was visible within the survey as areas of magnetic enhancement within the furrows (EA 2009, 5). A distinct area of magnetic enhancement was defined to the south of The Hayes, this corresponds with a building shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887. This is associated with a curvilinear anomaly extending to the west and noted as an earthwork during the survey (although not visible on aerial photos and not shown on any of the mapping). This building is still shown on Ordnance Survey mapping in 1947 (ibid.).
- 1.8 A programme of geotechnical investigation, comprising trial trenching and drilling of boreholes, was monitored by CA in November 2009. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered during these works.

### **Archaeological objectives**

- 1.9 The objectives of the evaluation were to establish the character, quality, date and extent of any archaeological remains or deposits surviving within the site. This information will assist Gloucestershire County Council in making an informed

judgement on the significance of the archaeological resource, and the likely impact upon it of the proposed development.

### ***Methodology***

- 1.10 The evaluation, as proposed, comprised the excavation of eight trenches, each 30m in length by 1.8m in width (Fig. 2). Two of the proposed trenches (Trenches 2 and 3) were unexcavated, however, due to access constraints. The location of trench 7 was amended from that agreed in the WSI due to the presence of mature trees, with the approval of Jen Richards of the Environment Agency.
- 1.11 All trenches were excavated by mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All machine excavation was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. Where archaeological deposits were encountered they were excavated by hand in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual* (2007).
- 1.12 Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with CA Technical Manual 2: *The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites* (2003) and, no deposits were identified that required sampling. All artefacts recovered were processed in accordance with CA Technical Manual 3: *Treatment of Finds Immediately After Excavation* (1995).
- 1.13 The archive and artefacts from the evaluation are currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner the artefacts will be deposited with Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum under accession number CAGM 2009.153, along with the site archive. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix C, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

## **2. RESULTS (FIGS 2-4)**

- 2.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts and finds are to be found in Appendices A and B respectively.

2.2 During the evaluation a possible ditch terminus or pit, a wall with return, a series of furrows and a posthole were identified in Trenches 4, 5, 7 and 8 respectively. No archaeological deposits or features were encountered in Trenches 1 and 6. A broadly similar stratigraphic sequence was identified in all trenches. The natural substrate, comprising blue grey clay overlain by yellowish brown sandy gravel, was first observed at a depth of approximately 0.8m below present ground level (bpgl). This was overlain by alluvium approximately 0.6m thick in all trenches except Trench 1. The alluvium was sealed by subsoil and topsoil layers.

#### ***Trench 4 (Fig 2)***

2.3 The undisturbed natural substrate 4003 was first encountered at 0.85m bpgl. This was sealed by alluvium 4002. Cut in to the alluvium was the shallow feature 4005. This was only partially visible within the trench and may represent the terminus of a ditch or a pit. The top of the fill 4004 lay 0.32m bpgl (76.25m AOD). The fill 4004 of the feature contained modern wire and nails and would suggest the feature is the result of modern agricultural activity. This feature was not identified by the geophysical survey.

#### ***Trench 5 (Figs 2-3)***

2.4 The undisturbed natural substrate 5004/5005 was first encountered at 0.8m bpgl. This was sealed by alluvium 5002 and subsoil 5001. Cut through the subsoil and founded on the alluvium was wall 5003, which consisted of two courses of very roughly hewn limestone blocks. These were laid in random courses and were not bonded. The wall was orientated north-west/south-east with a right angled return to the south at the south-eastern end. The top of the wall lay at 76.54m AOD. This wall is likely to represent part of the northern wall of a building identified in the geophysical survey (EA 2009, 5). This structure corresponds with a small building depicted on the 1887 1st edition Ordnance Survey map and which still appeared on the 1947 Ordnance Survey map (ibid.). The wall was sealed by topsoil 5000. Concentrated around the wall within the topsoil 5000 were large fragments of limestone demolition rubble and post-medieval and/or modern roof tile (not retained).

### **Trench 7 (Fig 2)**

- 2.5 The undisturbed natural substrate 7002-4 was first encountered at 0.85m bpgl. This was sealed by alluvium 7001. Cut in to the alluvium was a series of furrows which were given the group number 7005. The distance between the bottoms of the furrows was 5.5-6m. The furrows also appear to be straight. These furrows contained two fills; the primary fill was identical to the overlying topsoil (group number 7006) with the rest of the furrows backfilled with clay containing abundant modern red brick inclusions (group number 7007). This backfill is visible on the geophysical survey as areas of magnetic enhancement within the furrows.

### **Trench 8 (Figs 2 and 4)**

- 2.6 The undisturbed natural substrate 8002 was first encountered at 0.9m bpgl. This was sealed by alluvium 8006. Cut in to the alluvium was shallow, sub-circular posthole 8004. It measured 0.5m by 0.35m and was only 0.08m deep. It had a single fill 8005 containing a pottery sherd, a fragment of bone and an iron nail. A darker patch in this fill may represent the remains of a postpipe (Fig. 4). The top of the fill lay 0.25m bpgl (82.67m AOD). The small fragment of pottery recovered was very abraded. It has a quartz and limestone tempered fabric suggesting an Iron Age date. The fragment of animal bone is identifiable as sheep-sized and is clearly burnt to a white colour, indicating it was burnt at a high temperature. The nail is a medieval or post-medieval nail for attaching horseshoes. The pit was sealed by subsoil 8001 and topsoil 8000.

## **3. DISCUSSION**

- 3.1 The building and furrows identified in Trenches 5 and 7 respectively were also visible as anomalies detected in the geophysical survey. Based on the cartographic evidence the building dates to at least the later 19th century and may be earlier. The lack of a floor within the building may suggest that it was a simple stock pen or other agricultural building, although this cannot be proven at present. The furrows are undated by artefacts, but based upon their form and spacing they are likely to be post-medieval in date, as medieval ridge and furrow are typically spaced 10m apart (Rackham 1986, 167) whereas later ridge and furrow are generally spaced every 4.5

to 5m (ibid., 168). Medieval ridge and furrow can also have a gentle curve to them (Taylor 1975, 82) whilst later ridge and furrow is generally straight (Rackham 1986, 168). The modern material in the fill of the feature in Trench 4 would suggest it is the result of modern agricultural activity. The curvilinear feature identified in the geophysical survey as both an anomaly and an earthwork extending west from the building was not encountered in the evaluation. Although the single posthole identified in Trench 8 containing a sherd of probable Iron Age pottery, the abraded nature of the pottery and the presence of a medieval or post-medieval nail would suggest the feature is at least medieval in date. Whether this is an isolated feature or part of a structure or fence cannot at present be determined.

#### 4. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Sian Reynish, assisted by Andrew Donald and Diarmuid Ó Seaneachain. The report was written by Sian Reynish. The illustrations were prepared by Lorna Gray. The archive has been compiled by Sian Reynish, and prepared for deposition by Victoria Taylor. The project was managed for CA by Richard Young.

#### 5. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 1981 *Geological survey of Great Britain, sheet 217, Morton-in-Marsh, 1:50,000*

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2009 *Prestbury Flood Alleviation Scheme, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*

EA (Environment Agency) 2009 *Prestbury, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire: Geophysical Survey*

GCC (Gloucestershire Country Council) 2007 *Gloucestershire Historic Towns Survey, Cheltenham Borough Archaeological Assessments, Prestbury*

Rackham, O. 1986 *The History of the Countryside*, London, JM Dent and Sons

Taylor, C. 1975 *Fields in the English Landscape*, Sutton Publishing

**APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS**

## Trench 1

Present ground level: 73.75m AOD (west end), 72.47m AOD (south-east end)

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
1000	Layer	Topsoil			0.26	
1001	Layer	Subsoil			0.15	
1002	Layer	Natural substrate: yellow Gravel				

## Trench 4

Present ground level: 75.88m AOD (north end), 76.57m AOD (south end)

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
4000	Layer	Topsoil			0.2	
4001	Layer	Subsoil			0.15	
4002	Layer	Alluvium			0.5-0.71	
4003	Layer	Natural substrate: yellow gravel				
4004	Fill	Fill of ditch/pit 4005	>0.8	0.53	0.14	
4005	Cut	Cut of ditch/pit 4005	>0.8	0.53	0.14	

## Trench 5

Present ground level: 76.65m AOD (north-west end), 77.45m AOD (south-east end)

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
5000	Layer	Topsoil			0.2	
5001	Layer	Subsoil			0.15	
5002	Layer	Alluvium			0.45-0.6	
5003	Masonry	Limestone stone wall	6	0.7	0.3	
5004	Layer	Natural substrate: yellow gravel				
5005	Layer	Natural substrate: blue grey clay				

## Trench 6

Present ground level: 78.37m AOD (west end), 79.44m AOD (east end)

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
6000	Layer	Topsoil			0.2	
6001	Layer	Subsoil			0.16	
6002	Layer	Alluvium			0.49	
6003	Layer	Natural substrate: yellow gravel			0.04	
6004	Layer	Natural substrate: blue grey clay				

## Trench 7

Present ground level: 82.61m AOD (west end), 82.10m AOD (east end)

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
7000	Layer	Topsoil			0.15	
7001	Layer	Alluvium			0.7	
7002	Layer	Natural substrate: yellow gravel			0.1	
7003	Layer	Natural substrate: blue grey clay			0.12	
7004	Layer	Natural substrate: yellow gravel				
7005	Cut	Generic number for furrows		3	0.29	
7006	Fill	Generic number for topsoil fill of 7005		>3	0.19	
7007	Fill	Generic number for modern fill of 7005		3	0.1	
7008	Layer	Turf covering 7007			0.05	

## Trench 8

Present ground level: 82.92m AOD (north-west end), 82.52m AOD (south-east end)

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
8000	Layer	Topsoil			0.15	
8001	Layer	Subsoil			0.1	
8002	Layer	Natural substrate: yellow gravel				
8003	Layer	Natural substrate: blue grey clay				
8004	Cut	Cut of posthole	0.48	0.33	0.08	
8005	Fill	Fill of posthole 8004	0.48	0.33	0.08	
8006	Layer	Alluvium			0.65	



**APPENDIX B: THE FINDS**

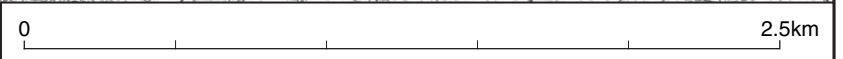
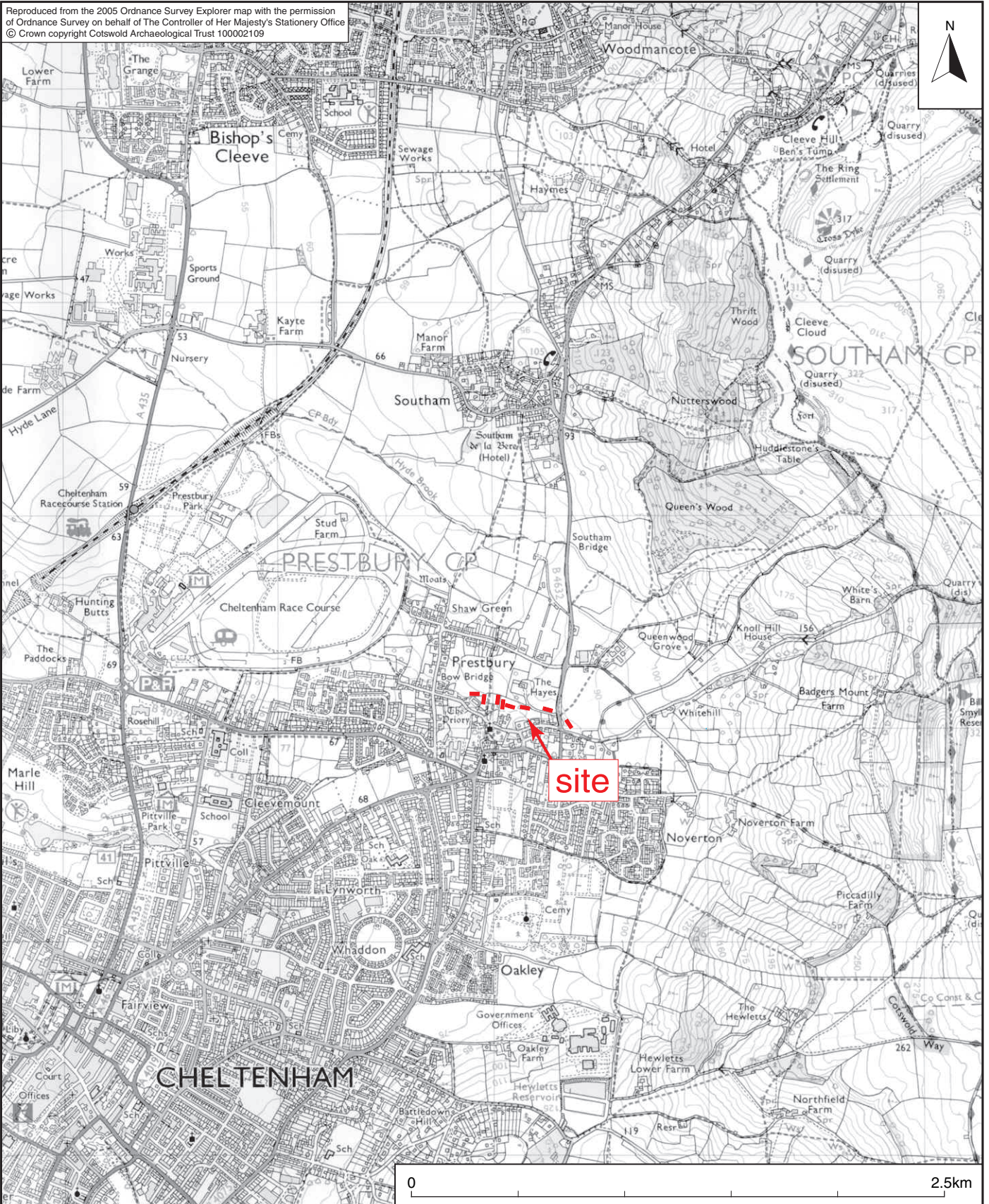
<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Weight (g)</b>	<b>Spot date</b>
8004	Prehistoric pottery: quartz and limestone tempered fabric	1	2	IA?
	Burnt animal Bone: sheep-sized	1	2	
	Iron nail	1	2	


## APPENDIX C: OASIS REPORT FORM

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project Name	Prestbury Flood Alleviation Scheme, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire.	
Short description	<p>An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in November 2009 at land at Prestbury, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. Six trenches were excavated.</p> <p>The evaluation identified a wall which appeared to relate to a small building depicted on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey mapping and which was still visible on the 1947 Ordnance Survey map. A number of furrows were observed, as well as a small posthole containing a fragment of abraded Iron Age pottery, a fragment of bone and a medieval or post-medieval iron nail.</p>	
Project dates	25 – 27 November 2009	
Project type	Evaluation	
Previous work	EA (Environment Agency) 2009 <i>Prestbury, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire: Geophysical Survey</i>	
Future work	Unknown	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
Site Location	Land at Prestbury, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire	
Study area (M <sup>2</sup> /ha)	3.8ha	
Site co-ordinates (8 Fig Grid Reference)	SO 9720 2410	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	Gloucestershire County Council	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Richard Young	
Project Supervisor	Sian Reynish	
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVES</b>		
	Intended final location of archive (museum/Accession no.)	Content
Physical	Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum	Pottery, animal bone and metal
Paper	Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum	Trench sheets, context sheets, levels register, plan and section, photographic registers and black and white negatives.
Digital	Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum	Digital photos
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2009 <i>Prestbury Flood Alleviation Scheme, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire: Archaeological Evaluation</i> . CA typescript report <b>09208</b>		

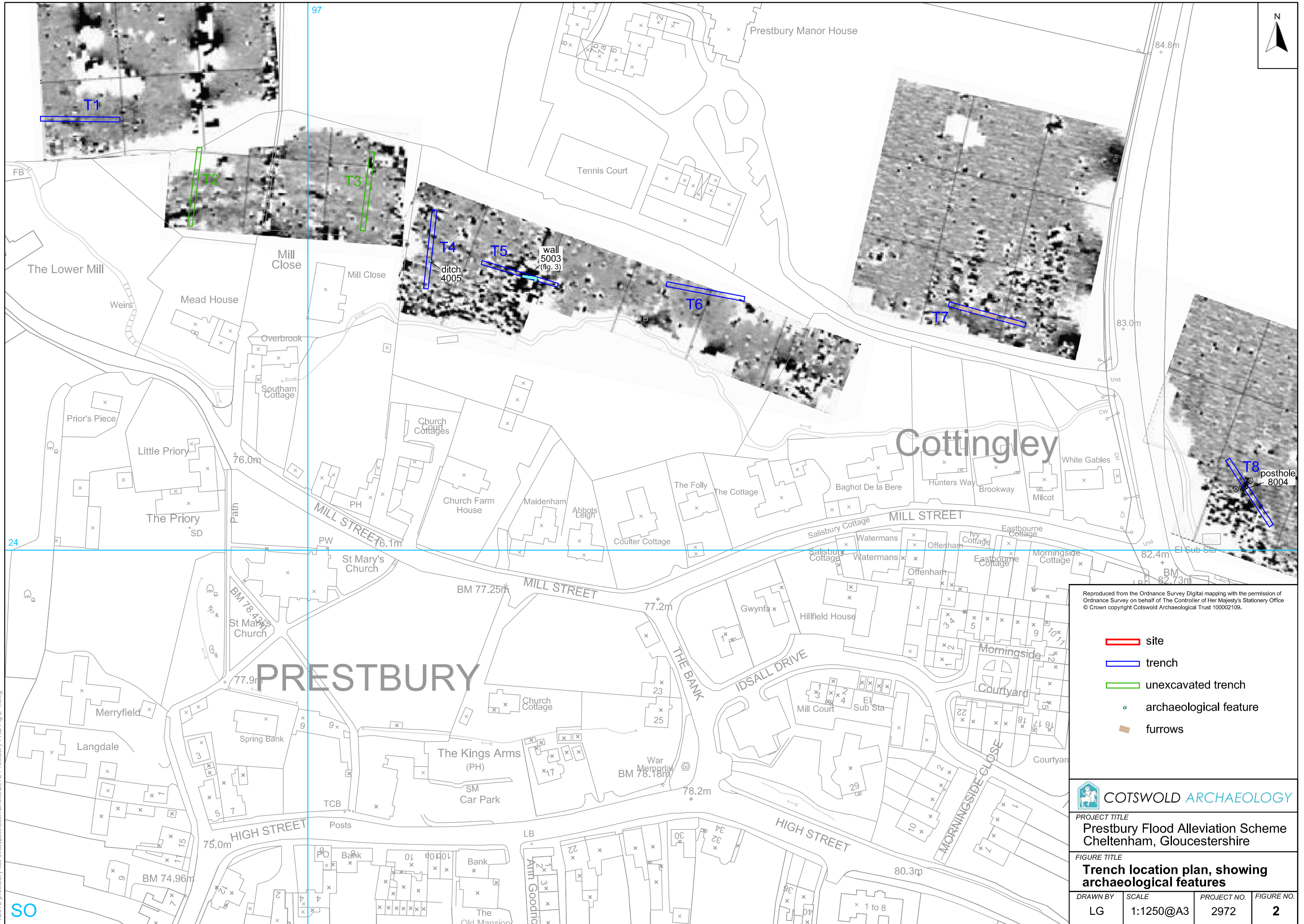


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 <b>COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY</b>			
PROJECT TITLE <b>Prestbury Flood Alleviation Scheme          Cheltenham, Gloucestershire</b>			
FIGURE TITLE <b>Site location plan</b>			
DRAWN BY	SCALE	PROJECT NO.	FIGURE NO.
LG	1:25,000@A4	2972	<b>1</b>





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- site
- trench
- unexcavated trench
- archaeological feature
- furrows

**COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY**

PROJECT TITLE  
**Prestbury Flood Alleviation Scheme**  
 Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

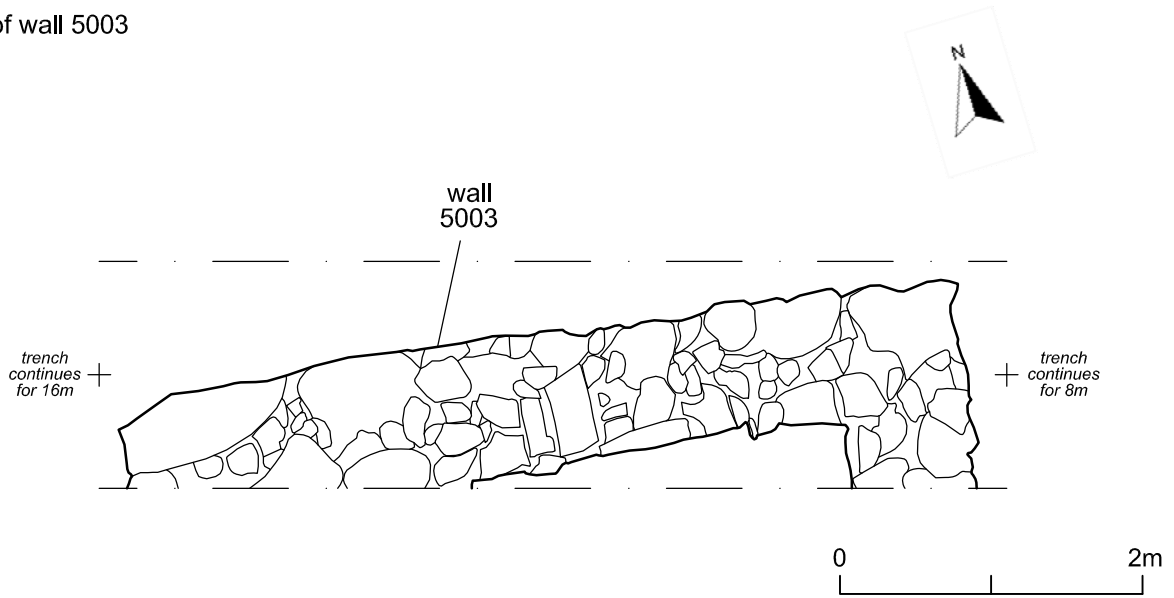
FIGURE TITLE  
**Trench location plan, showing archaeological features**

DRAWN BY	SCALE	PROJECT NO.	FIGURE NO.
LG	1:1250@A3	2972	<b>2</b>

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SO

Plan of wall 5003



Wall 5003, looking west. 0.5m and 2m scales



COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

PROJECT TITLE

Prestbury Flood Alleviation Scheme  
Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

FIGURE TITLE

**Plan and photograph of wall 5003**

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LG

SCALE

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PROJECT NO.

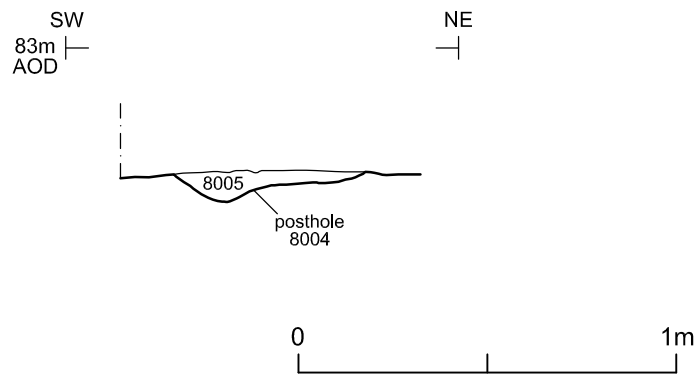
2972

FIGURE NO.

**3**



Section AA of posthole 8004

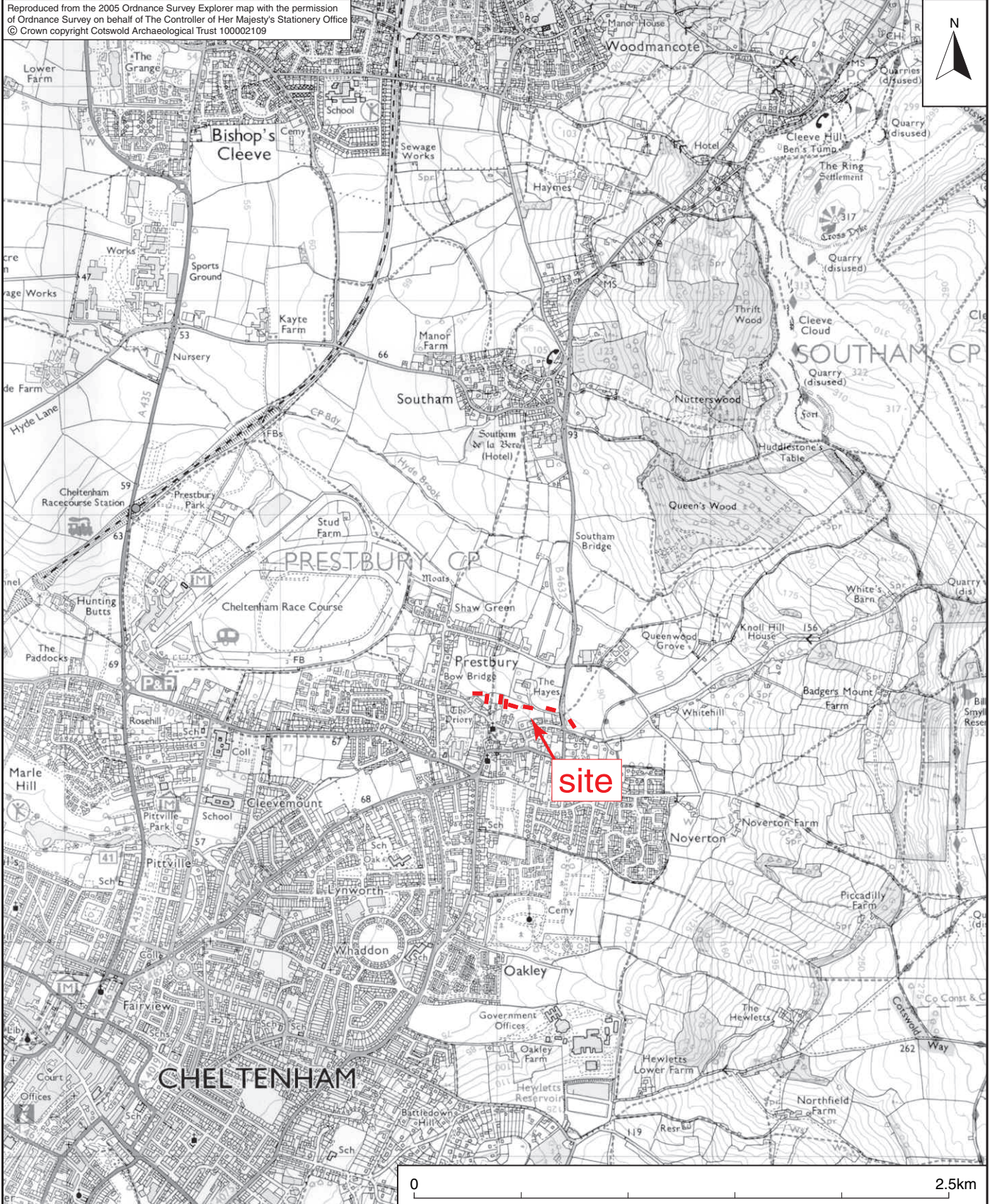


Posthole 8004, looking north-west. 0.5m scale.





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 **COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY**


**PROJECT TITLE**  
 Prestbury Flood Alleviation Scheme  
 Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

**FIGURE TITLE**  
 Site location plan

<b>DRAWN BY</b>	<b>SCALE</b>	<b>PROJECT NO.</b>	<b>FIGURE NO.</b>
LG	1:25,000@A4	2972	<b>1</b>





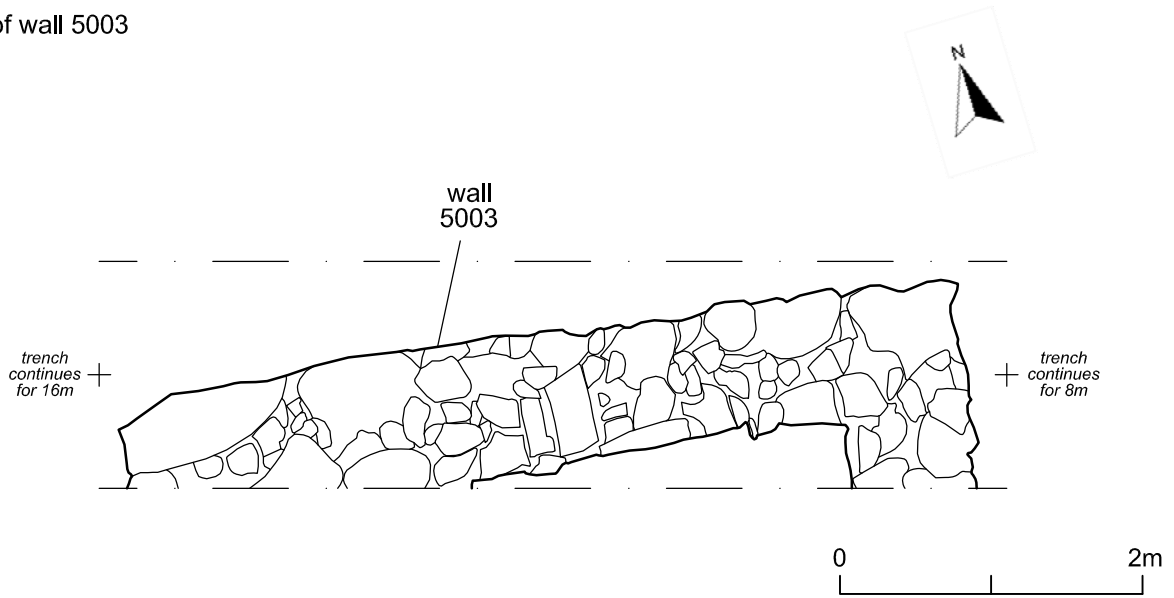

**COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY**  
 PROJECT TITLE  
 Prestbury Flood Alleviation Scheme  
 Cheltenham, Gloucestershire  
 FIGURE TITLE  
**Trench location plan, showing  
 archaeological features**  
 DRAWN BY SCALE PROJECT NO. FIGURE NO.  
 LG 1:1250@A3 2972 2

Legend:  
 ■ site  
 ■ trench  
 ■ unexcavated trench  
 ● archaeological feature  
 ■ furrows

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Plan of wall 5003



Wall 5003, looking west. 0.5m and 2m scales



COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

PROJECT TITLE

Prestbury Flood Alleviation Scheme  
Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

FIGURE TITLE

**Plan and photograph of wall 5003**

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SCALE

1:50@A4

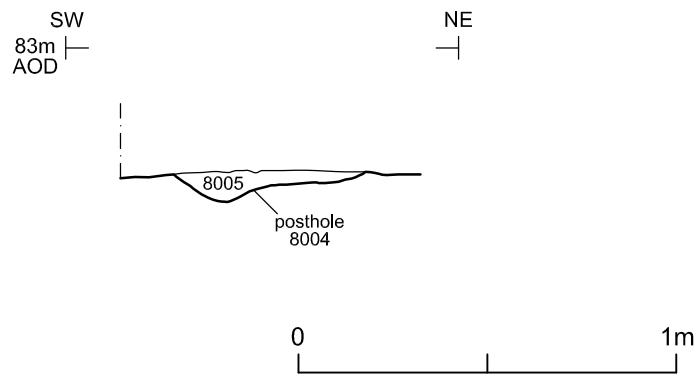
PROJECT NO.

2972

FIGURE NO.

**3**

Section AA of posthole 8004



Posthole 8004, looking north-west. 0.5m scale.

