

Archaeological evaluation at land at Hill View, Church Road, Icomb, Gloucestershire

Worcestershire Archaeology
for

CgMs Consulting Ltd

November 2018



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Archaeological Evaluation at land at Hill View, Church Road, Icomb, Gloucestershire



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Local planning authority:	Gloucestershire County Council
Planning reference:	18/02796/FUL
Central NGR:	SP 21098 23012
Commissioning client:	CgMs Consulting Ltd
WA project reference:	P5444
WA report reference:	2614
Oasis reference:	fieldsec1-330182

Issue	Date	Status	Details/prepared by	Checked by
1	20/10/18	Version 1	Elspeth Iliff	Tom Rogers
2	26/10/18	Version 2	Elspeth Iliff	Tom Rogers
3	05/11/18	Version 3	Elspeth Iliff	Tom Rogers

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Archaeological Evaluation at land at Hill View, Church Road, Icomb, Gloucestershire

Elsbeth Iliff

With contributions by C Jane Evans

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at land at Hill View, Church Road, Icomb, Gloucestershire (NGR SP 21098 23012). It was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Rural Solutions Ltd, who, along with their client, PLPP Management Ltd intend to construct a single dwelling for which a planning application has been submitted to Cotswold District Council.

The site comprises three pasture fields to the north west of the village of Icomb. Six trenches were excavated across the site which were partly positioned to test anomalies identified on a preceding geophysical survey and partly to test the quality of capture from the survey in blank areas.

A possible Iron Age enclosure ditch was recorded in a trench to the south corresponding with an anomaly on the geophysical survey which appears to form a square enclosure. The fills all contained high levels of stone, and Prehistoric pottery and animal bone was retrieved from the upper fill of this ditch.

A ditch orientated east-west across the central part of the site was recorded and is interpreted as a post-medieval field boundary based on its form and the finds recovered from the fill which included clay pipe and pottery dating to 17th-18th centuries. A single sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from the topsoil.

Other features recorded were related to modern drainage.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at land at Hill View, Church Road, Icomb, Gloucestershire (NGR 421096 223018). It was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd on behalf of Rural Solutions Ltd, whose client, PLPP Management Ltd intends to construct a single dwelling for which a planning application has been submitted to Cotswold District Council (reference 18/02796/FUL). The application has been reviewed by Charles Parry, Planning Archaeologist for Gloucestershire County Council, who considers that the site has potential for the survival for archaeological remains and advised that an archaeological evaluation was required to support the application.

A Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2018) and approved by Charles Parry.

2 Aims

The aims of the evaluation brief were;

- to describe any heritage asset with archaeological interest;
- to assess the nature, importance and extent of any heritage asset;
- to assess the impact of the application on any heritage asset.

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was led by Peter Lovett (BSc (hons.) ACIfA), who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2012 and has been practicing archaeology since 2004, assisted by Elspeth Iliff (BA (hons.); MSc; PCIfA). The report was prepared by Elspeth Iliff. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers (MSc; MCIfA). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MCIfA). Jane Evans (BA, MA, MCIfA), contributed the finds report.

3.2 Documentary research

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) was undertaken by CgMs Consulting (CgMs 2018). This document provides detailed research and background information on the project and. Therefore only a brief summary of this is presented below (Section 4.1)

The DBA consulted the Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record, analysing a search area of 1km radius from the boundary line of the site. This provided access to records of archaeological sites, monuments and findspots within the search area, as well as readily available archaeological and historical information from related documentary and cartographic sources. Ordnance Survey early and modern mapping was also examined.

3.3 Fieldwork strategy

Fieldwork was undertaken between 1st and 3rd October 2018. The Worcestershire Archaeology project number is P5444.

Six trenches amounting to just over 500m² in area, were excavated over the site area of 2.7ha, representing a sample of approximately 2%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2. Trenches 3 and 5 were positioned to investigate anomalies identified on the geophysical survey, while the remaining four trenches were placed to provide a sample across the rest of the development area and to ensure the testing of areas indicated as blank on the geophysical survey.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by

hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

3.4 Structural analysis

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

3.5 Artefact methodology, by C Jane Evans

The finds work reported here conforms with the following guidance: for findswork by ClfA (2014), for pottery analysis by PCRG/SGRP/MPRG (2016), for archive creation by AAF (2011), and for museum deposition by SMA (1993).

3.5.1 Recovery policy

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012; appendix 2).

3.5.2 Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A terminus post quem date was produced for each stratified context. The date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on Microsoft Access database.

No artefacts from environmental samples were examined.

Pottery fabrics were analysed at x 20 magnification and referenced to the Gloucestershire fabric type series (Vince 1983a and 1983b, appendix B3), where possible, or the Worcestershire Ceramics Online Database (<https://worcestershireceramics.org/>).

3.6 Environmental archaeology methodology

3.6.1 Sampling policy

No deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

4 The application site

4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

The site is located on the northern edge of the village of Icomb in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds, on a south-east facing slope dropping from c. 196m AOD at the far north-west end to c. 185m AOD at the south-east edge. The underlying geology is mapped as Salperton Limestone Formation, giving way to Whitby Mudstone Formation at the south-east edge of the site (BGS 2018).

The archaeological and historical background to the site is summarised below from the DBA.

There are no designated archaeological assets located on the site itself. A Scheduled Monument, the Iron Age hillfort Icomb Camp (NHLE1003342 HER358 HEA332646) is located approximately 200km west of the site.

A low potential has been identified for Prehistoric remains as there is no evidence for Prehistoric activity on or adjacent to the site. However, a number of potentially prehistoric features have been recorded in the vicinity. A linear feature is recorded c.760m south-west of the site (HEA920231), which has been interpreted as a possible Prehistoric or Romano-British cross-ridge dyke. A square enclosure has also been recorded c. 350m north-west of the site (HER40087, HEA920236), the

period and function of which remains unclarified, but thought to possibly be late Prehistoric. There was also considered to be low potential for Roman remains, due to there being no evidence of Roman activity on the site, and very little in the local landscape. The square enclosure mentioned above may date to the Romano-British period, but there has been no solid evidence to confirm this.

A low potential has also been recorded for Anglo-Saxon/Early Medieval remains. While Icomb is recorded in the Domesday Survey 1086, and earthworks of a possible Anglo-Saxon/Early Medieval origin have been recorded c. 700m north-west of the site (HEA661938), no evidence of this period has been identified on the site itself. Low potential has also been applied to remains of a Medieval date, and is considered likely to be restricted to agricultural activity of limited significance. This is based on evidence of Medieval ridge and furrow cultivation activity within the site (HEA1437806), and that settlement of the village of Icomb is known to have continued into the Medieval period. There is also evidence of a possible deserted Medieval village (DMV) recorded on the HER c. 560m to the south-east (HER3911 HEA332668). No archaeological assets dating to the Post-Medieval or modern periods have been recorded on the site, but evidence from the wider landscape indicates small-scale quarrying taking place. Cartographic sources have indicated that the site itself has been used for agricultural purposes during this period, and has been subject to the construction of a number of small structures in the south-west corner, and the addition of a number of field boundaries across the site.

4.2 Current land-use

The site covers three separate grass fields which are currently all in use for pasture.

5 Results

5.1 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figure 2. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

Natural deposits were encountered in all trenches, at between 0.22m and 0.7m below the ground surface. The geology of the site was predominantly limestone brash in a brownish orange sandy silt matrix, with a greenish grey clay deposit seen at the eastern end of Trench 4. This reflects the changes in geology shown on the BGS mapping (BGS 2018). A layer of colluvium was seen in Trenches 3 and 5, between the subsoil and the natural geology at depths of 187m AOD and 189m AOD respectively.

5.1.2 Phase 2: Late Bronze Age to Iron Age deposits

A ditch was present in Trench 5, measuring 4.22m in width and 1.05m in depth, and following a north to south alignment [506]. This feature corresponds with an anomaly on the geophysical survey which appears to form a square enclosure. The fills all contained high levels of stone, and the upper fill (503) contained prehistoric pottery and animal bone. The pottery recovered from this fill varied in date from late Bronze Age to Late Iron Age.

5.1.3 Phase 3: Post-Medieval deposits

A ditch present in Trench 4 was interpreted as a possible post-medieval field boundary based on its form and on finds recovered from the fill, including clay pipe and pottery dating to 17th-18th century [404]. The ditch which was 1.02m wide and 0.2m deep, was aligned north-east to south-west, and was truncated by a modern land-drain. This feature possibly reflects a linear anomaly depicted on the geophysical survey.

5.1.4 Phase 4: Modern deposits

The site was covered by a greyish brown sandy silty topsoil which was under grass across the entirety of the site. A number of stone filled land-drains were recorded in Trenches 3 and 4. A square, brick built structure was encountered in Trench 6, measuring 0.87m by 0.56m (603). This structure had a ceramic pipe incorporated in its east wall, and is likely a modern drain.

5.2 Artefact analysis, by C Jane Evans

The artefactual assemblage recovered is summarised in Tables 1 and 2.

A small assemblage of prehistoric, medieval and post-medieval finds was recovered (Table 1). These came from only three of the six trenches excavated, and from three individual contexts. The largest quantity of finds came from Trench 5, which produced evidence for later prehistoric activity. A handful of medieval and post-medieval finds were recovered from trenches 3 and 4 respectively. The prehistoric pottery was fragmentary and abraded (sherd size 6.7g), but most likely represents fragments from three discrete vessels.

period	material class	material subtype	object specific type	count	weight(g)
prehistoric	ceramic	earthenware	pot	22	147
medieval	ceramic	earthenware	pot	1	20
post-medieval	ceramic	earthenware	clay pipe	1	3
post-medieval	ceramic	earthenware	pot	2	7
post-medieval	metal	iron	nail	2	6
undated	bone	animal bone	fragment	35	226
undated	ceramic	fired clay	fragment	3	19

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage by period and material class

period	fabric name/code	Reference	count	weight(g)
prehistoric	oolitic limestone	Peacock 1968, Group B2	13	122
	Palaeozoic limestone	Peacock 1968, Group B1	4	6
	fossil shell	Worcestershire fabric 4.3	5	19
medieval	TF41B	Worcestershire fabric 57	1	20
post-medieval	TF61	Worcestershire fabric 78	1	1
	TF94	Worcestershire fabric 81.2	1	6
total			25	174

Table 2 Quantification of the pottery by period and fabric (fabric name/code TF = Gloucestershire fabric-type series)

Prehistoric pottery and finds

The 22 sherds of prehistoric pottery recovered from trench 5 all came from the upper fill of ditch 506 (503). Three distinct fabrics were noted (Table 2). Most common was a fabric with oolitic limestone inclusions, represented by thick and coarsely formed body sherds, probably from a single, large jar. The absence of diagnostic sherds makes precise dating difficult. Their general appearance, including a distinctive oxidised external surface and blackened internal surface, is suggestive of a late Bronze Age to early Iron Age date. The fossil shell-tempered ware, again only represented by body sherds, is likely to be of a similar date, though the lack of diagnostic form or decoration again hinders more precise dating. Both of these are fabrics local to the Cotswolds.

The four sherds of Palaeozoic limestone ware are likely to be later in date. These include three joining rim sherds and a separate body sherd from the same vessel. Only a short profile survives but the form is a jar or bowl with a gently everted rim. The black firing and burnished finish, as well as the form, are consistent with a later Iron Age date. The presence of this ware, produced in the Malvern area in Worcestershire, reflects a growth in regional ceramic trade which starts in the Middle Iron Age.

The only associated finds were three undiagnostic fragments of fired clay.

Medieval pottery

A single sherd of medieval pottery (Cotswold unglazed ware with oolitic limestone inclusions; fabric TF41B), the sagging base from a cooking pot, was retrieved from the subsoil in trench 3 (layer 301), and dates broadly to the 10th–12th century.

Post-medieval pottery and finds

Trench 4 produced a small assemblage of finds dating to the 17th–18th centuries. These comprised: a sherd of black-glazed post-medieval red ware, the rim from a Westerwald stoneware jug, a fragment of clay pipe stem and two nails.

Summary artefactual evidence by period

The prehistoric pottery provides evidence for some level of activity in the vicinity of Trench 5 in the late Bronze Age to early Iron Age, and then again in the later Iron Age. The prehistoric pottery all came from the upper fill of the possible enclosure ditch. The finds could have been re-deposited from elsewhere when the ditch was filled in. However, if they do relate directly to the ditch, which is uncertain, they might indicate a late Bronze Age to early Iron Age use of the ditch with back filling in the late Iron Age.

context	material class	object specific type	count	weight(g)	start date	end date	tpq date range
301	ceramic	pot	1	20	10th century	12th century	10th–12th century
403	ceramic	clay pipe	1	3	17th	18th	17th–18th
	ceramic	pot	2	7	17th	18th	17th–18th
	Metal (fe)	nail	2	6			

503	ceramic	pot	22	147	Late Bronze Age	later Iron Age	later Iron Age
	ceramic (fired clay)	fragment	3	19			
	animal bone	fragment	35	226			

Table 3: Summary of context dating based on artefacts

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Further analysis and reporting

Should further fieldwork be undertaken, the prehistoric pottery assemblage will need to be incorporated with any further material of this period.

6 Synthesis

This evaluation has established the presence of a small number of archaeological features within the site. The features were present in the southern half of the site in trenches 3, 4, 5 and 6. These features and associated finds are indicative of medieval to post-medieval agricultural use of the site and a prehistoric phase of activity.

The features, in general, correlate well with anomalies identified on the geophysical survey, and of the investigated geophysical anomalies, only one crossing Trench 2 did not correlate with an archaeological feature. It is worth noting however, that a number of the anomalies were found to correlate with layers of colluvium, as opposed to genuine archaeological features.

A single, shallow ditch was recorded in Trench 4, containing clay pipe, post-medieval dated pottery, and an iron nail. The form and date of this feature is suggestive of a field boundary, which is substantiated by its alignment which appears to continue the north-east to south-west aligned boundary of the site seen further south-west, which now turns south-east, but may have previously continued. As this continuation is not seen on the 1810 Enclosure Map, it would suggest that if it is indeed a field boundary, it went out of use and the field boundaries were altered prior to that date. The presence of a single sherd of 10th to 12th century pottery in the subsoil of Trench 3 indicates medieval activity in the vicinity, but as no features dating to this period were identified, this activity is likely to be residual.

The prehistoric phase of activity consists of a large ditch in Trench 5, which correlates well with a geophysical anomaly that appears to form a small enclosure. This ditch contained animal bone and pottery dating from between the late Bronze Age to the late Iron Age. This would suggest that there was either activity in the area during the late Bronze Age, and finds relating to this were re-deposited when the ditch was filled in, or that the ditch itself was open and in use from the late Bronze Age through to the Iron Age, before being backfilled in the late Iron Age. While this enclosure does appear to be relatively small, the level of finds recovered from the ditch may make it more likely that the enclosure was occupied. However, no internal features were recorded in the western half of Trench 5. The late Iron Age pottery suggests that this site was contemporary with Icomb Camp, the possible Iron Age hillfort located around 300m west of the site.

7 Significance

7.1 Nature of the archaeological interest in the site

The site contained a limited number of archaeological features which appeared to represent a prehistoric phase of activity and probable agricultural use dating to the post-medieval period.

The probable enclosure ditch in Trench 6 was of interest, as finds have dated it to the late Bronze Age to Iron Age. This feature indicates a prehistoric phase of settlement within the site and suggests that associated features may be present in the immediate vicinity.

The only other feature of any note was a shallow ditch characteristic of post-medieval agricultural land use. Its date was corroborated by finds recovered from the fill.

7.2 Relative importance of the archaeological interest in the site

The features observed appear to illustrate a site of variable importance, with some features of limited significance, whilst others demonstrated more potential.

The evidence of post-medieval agricultural activity suggests a site of interest at a local level for improving understanding of agricultural use of the land in the immediate vicinity.

Archaeological significance can be attached to the probable prehistoric enclosure, which is likely to be of local significance, but could provide more information to improve understanding of such archaeology in the surrounding area, as it may be contemporary with the Iron Age hillfort, Icomb Camp.

7.3 Physical extent of the archaeological interest in the site

The main archaeological interest is attached to the possible prehistoric enclosure in the southern half of the site, around Trench 5. Beyond this, the further southern extent of the site appeared to contain only modern remains.

The post-medieval remains were seen in the middle of the site, in Trench 4, and the majority of the northern end of the site appears to be devoid of archaeological features.

The survival of the features was reasonable, although the topsoil and subsoil across the site were shallow. The archaeological features are therefore, likely to be vulnerable to any intrusive groundworks.

8 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

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Other features recorded were related to modern drainage.

9 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Richard Smalley (CgMs Consulting Ltd), Charles Parry (Senior Archaeological Advisor, Gloucestershire County Council), and Charles Moray (the landowner).

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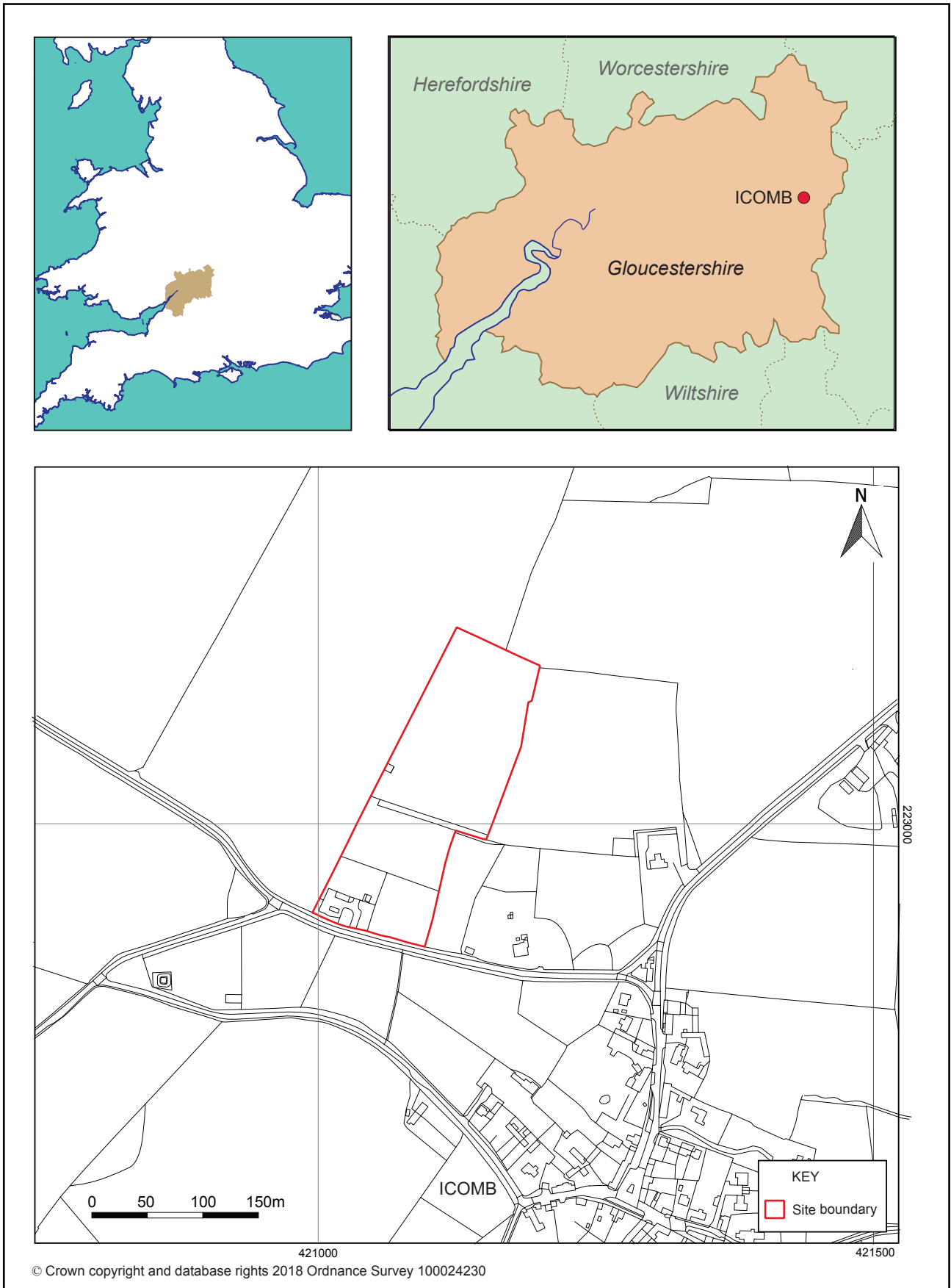
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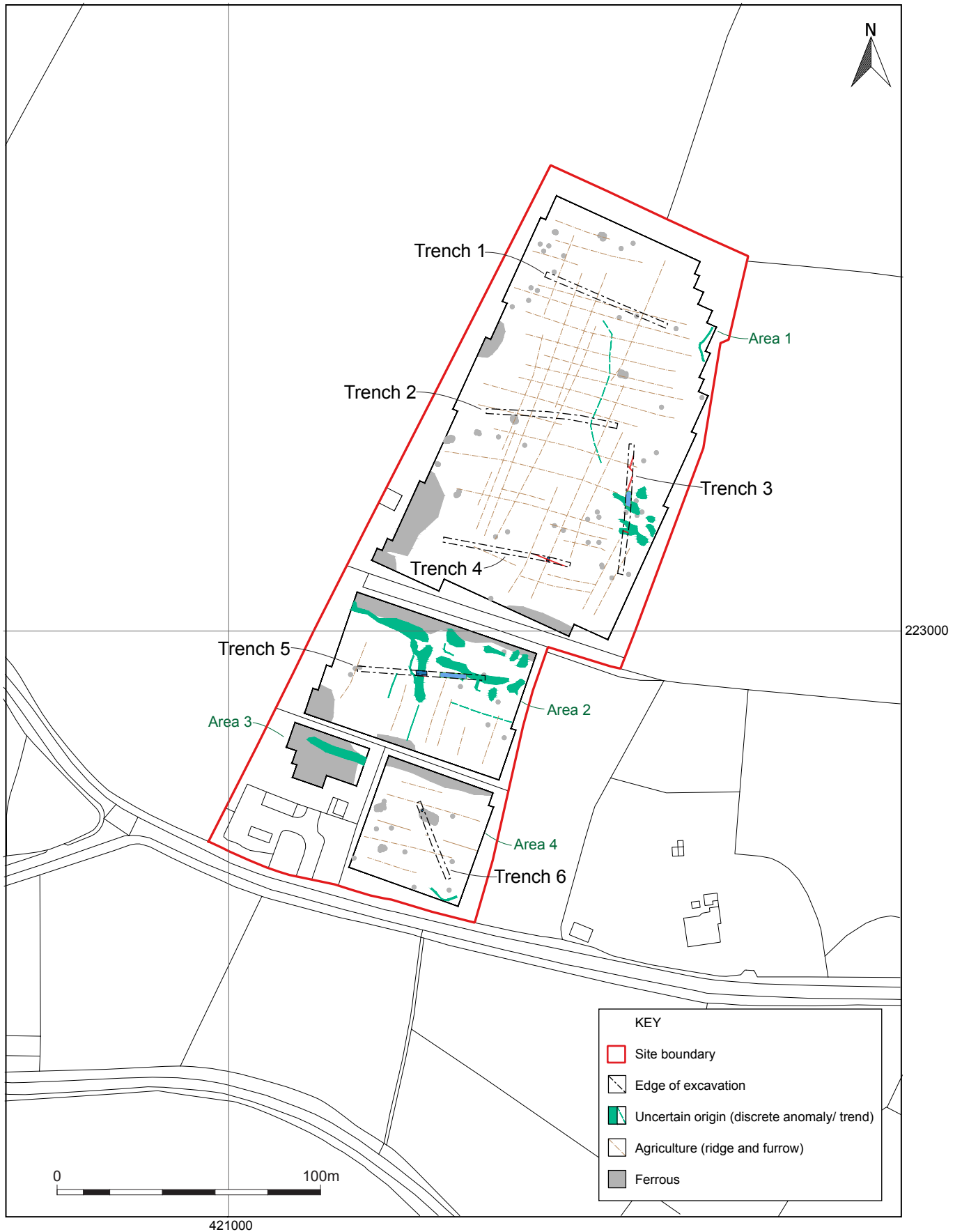
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Location of the site

Figure 1

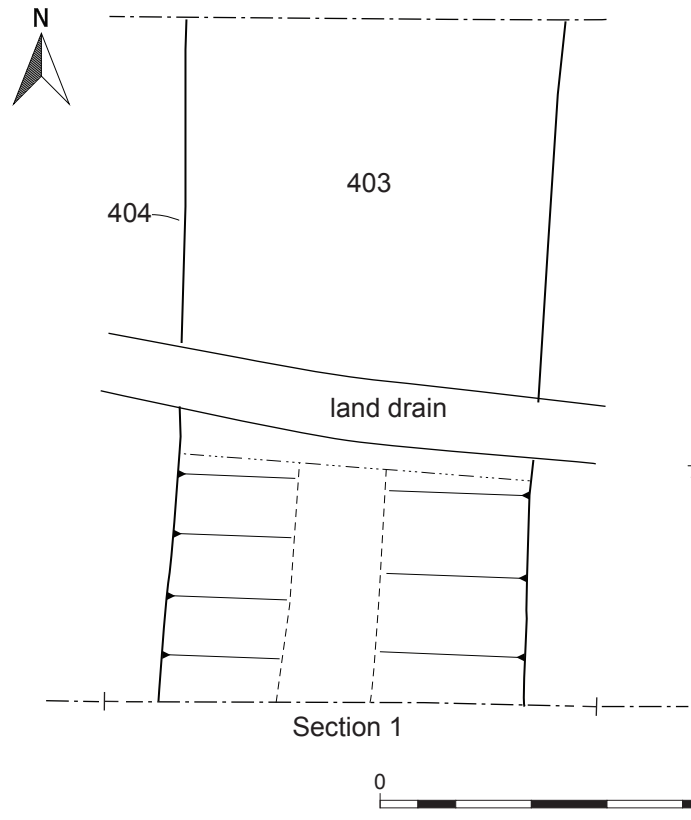


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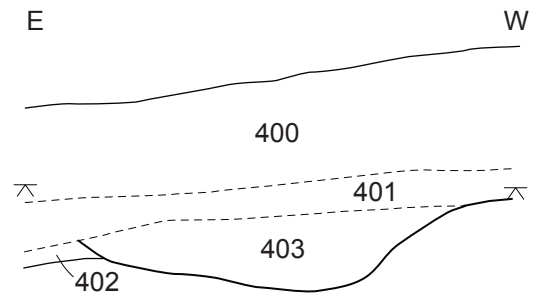
Trench location plan with geophysical survey (based upon SUMO Fig No.B)

Figure 2

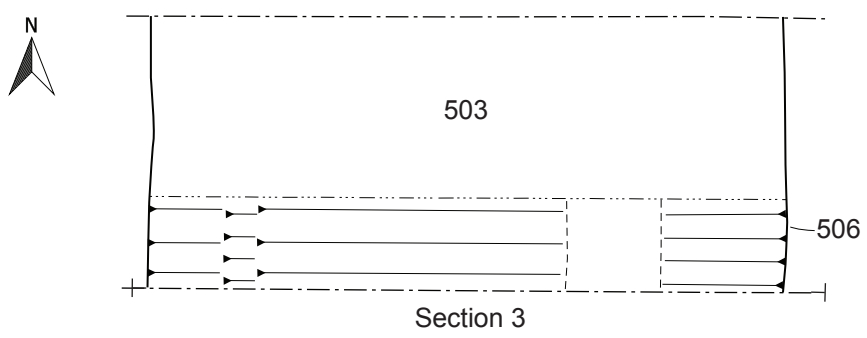
PLAN OF DITCH 404



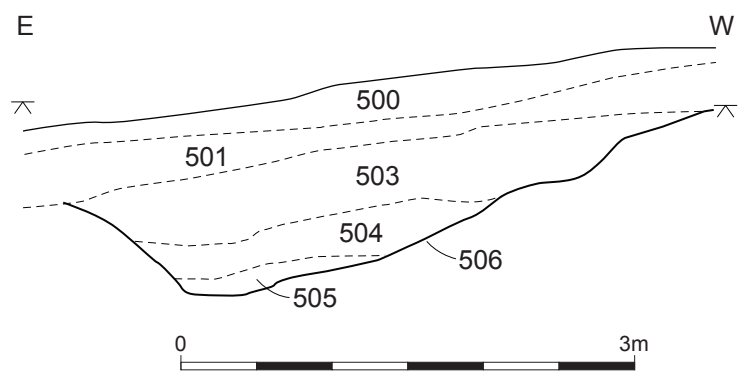
SECTION 1: DITCH 404



PLAN OF DITCH 506



SECTION 3: DITCH 506



Ditches 404 and 506: plans and sections

Figure 3

Figures

Plates



Plate 1: The site, facing south



Plate 2: Trench 1, facing south-east (scales 1m)



Plate 3: Section of Trench 5, showing colluvium deposit (507), facing south (scales 1m)



Plate 4: Ditch [506], facing south (scale 1m)



Plate 5: Ditch [404], facing south (scale 1m)



Plate 6: Structure (603), facing east (scale 0.4m)

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Main deposit descriptions

Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50m Width: 1.8m Depth: 0.22m

Orientation: NW-SE

Context	Context Type	Feature Type	Description	Interpretation	Depth
100	Layer	Topsoil	Loose mid greyish brown sandy silty	Topsoil	0.22m
101	Layer	Natural	Loose mid orangey brown sandy silt with limestone brash	Natural	

Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50m Width: 1.8m Depth: 0.3m

Orientation: E-W

Context	Context Type	Feature Type	Description	Interpretation	Depth
200	Layer	Topsoil	Loose mid greyish brown sandy silt	Topsoil	0.3m
201	Layer	Natural	Loose mid brownish orange sandy silt with limestone brash	Natural	

Trench 3

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50m Width: 1.8m Depth: 0.42m

Orientation: N-S

Context	Context Type	Feature Type	Description	Interpretation	Depth
300	Layer	Topsoil	Loose mid greyish brown sandy silt	Topsoil	0.22m
301	Layer	Subsoil	Loose light brownish yellow sandy silt	Subsoil	0.18m
302	Layer	Natural	Loose mid brownish orange sandy silt with mid orangey grey silty clay at N and S ends, with limestone brash throughout	Natural	
303	Layer	Colluvium	Mod compact mid brownish red silty clay	Patches of red clay, likely colluvium deposits.	

Trench 4

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50m Width: 1.8m Depth: 0.35m

Orientation: E-W

Context	Context Type	Feature Type	Description	Interpretation	Depth
400	Layer	Topsoil	Loose mid greyish brown sandy silt	Topsoil	0.25m

401	Layer	Subsoil	Loose mid brownish yellow sandy silt	Subsoil	0.13m
402	Layer	Natural	Loose light brownish orange sandy silt with mid greenish grey clay at E end, with limestone brash throughout	Natural	
403	Fill	Fill of ditch [404]	Friable mid brownish orange sandy clay	Fill of ditch [404]. Fairly sterile, similar to natural and containing a few post-med finds. Likely gradual weathering of surrounding material.	0.21m
404	Cut	Cut of ditch		Cut of shallow ditch aligned N-S. Contained some post-med finds and appears to line up with a hedge 5-10m away, so likely a post-med field boundary. Difference in shape of sides likely just a reflection of the slope it is situated on. Truncated by a stone	0.2m

Trench 5

Maximum dimensions: Length: 50m Width: 1.8m Depth: 0.5m

Orientation: E-W

Context	Context Type	Feature Type	Description	Interpretation	Depth
501	Layer	Subsoil	Loose mid brownish yellow clay silt	Subsoil	0.36m
502	Layer	Natural	Firm mid orangey brown clay with limestone brash	Natural	
503	Fill	Upper fill of ditch 506	Firm dark grey brown silty clay with angular limestone brash	Backfill of large ditch to seal it once it had gone out of use	0.48m
504	Fill	Fill of ditch 506	Firm mid yellowish brown silty clay	Fill of enclosure ditch. Probably result of low energy deposition as the ditch falls out of use	0.32m
505	Fill	Fill of ditch 506	Firm mid blue grey clay	Basal fill of ditch. Effectively a trampled natural in the bottom of the ditch, into which stones and charcoal had been worked	0.18m
506	Cut	Cut of ditch		Wide ditch as part of a square? enclosure as depicted on geophysical survey.	1.05m
507	Layer	Colluvium layer	Firm dark grey brown clay silt	Colluvium material washing down the slope.	0.3m
508	Layer	Colluvium layer	Firm mid reddish brown silty clay	Colluvium layer, cleaner than 507 above	0.22m

Trench 6

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30m Width: 1.8m Depth: 0.3m-0.7m

Orientation: NW-SE

Context	Context Type	Feature Type	Description	Interpretation	Depth
600	Layer	Topsoil	Loose mid greyish brown sandy silt	Topsoil	0.28m
601	Layer	Subsoil	Friable light brownish yellow sandy silt	Subsoil	0.16m
602	Layer	Natural	Loose mid brownish orange sandy silt with limestone brash and brownish red clay at SE end	Natural	
603	Structure	Brick structure		Small, rectangular brick structure with a ceramic water pipe entering it from the W side. Modern.	
604	Cut	Construction cut for 603		Construction cut for modern brick feature 603.	

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of electronic records created on ARK and:

- 43 Digital photographs
- 4 Scale drawings
- 1 Box of finds
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Corinium Museum
Park Street
Cirencester
GL7 2BX
Tel: 01285 655611