

**GLAMORGAN-GWENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST  
ELM FARM, UNDY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION**

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Fig 1 Location of Trial Sections

### **Acknowledgements**

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## 1. Executive Summary

Five archaeological trial sections were opened out in the vicinity of a moated site at Elm Farm, Undy which is protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The archaeological features encountered in the trial sections were predominantly of medieval date and almost certainly associated with the occupation of the moated enclosure. Those found in Area B appear to be boundary markers. In this area a palaeochannel of prehistoric origin was noted, which produced some Roman and pre-Roman pottery. However, there is little evidence of pre-medieval (or post-medieval) occupation of the site, other than the material finds.

## 2. Introduction

### Commission and Specifications

As the proposed laying of a water pipeline and construction of a storage lagoon and pumping station at Undy would entail ground disturbance close to a moated enclosure situated at NGR ST 4395 8736, Monmouth Borough Council requested that the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust undertake an archaeological field evaluation to assess the likely impact of the scheme on the archaeological resource.

The extent of this work was defined by a specification (Appendix 1) provided by the Trust. Fieldwork, comprising principally the excavation of five trial sections but coupled with walking the site to collect surface finds and survey of visible earthworks not previously recorded, was carried out between 17th and 28th February 1992.

### The Moat

The moated enclosure is largely undocumented. Research undertaken at Gwent County Records Office produced no information other than that the field was known as the North Orchard in 1842 (Tithe plan). Courtney (1983) suggests the site may represent the manorial centre of one of the two knight's fees associated with Undy.

### Topography

The land is situated astride the 10m contour at the inland edge of the Severn Levels. No geological survey had been carried out prior to excavation, but the trial work revealed that the northern end of the area examined is underlain by limestone bedrock, while the southern end overlies sandstone marl.

### Current Land Use

The land is currently used for grazing cattle and has not been ploughed by the present owner.

### 3. The Trial Excavations - Summary (Fig 1)

#### Methodology

The land was divided into two areas for the purposes of the investigation; Area A covered the northern part of the site and was explored by Trial Sections (TS) 1 and 2. Area B lay to the south of the houses on Church Road and was explored by TS 3, 4 and 5.

All the trial sections were mechanically excavated to the depth at which archaeological features became apparent. Any features uncovered were then manually excavated, and recorded through written, drawn and photographic media.

#### AREA A

TS 1 & 2, each measuring 20m x 3m, were cut through an area of flat grassland to the south-west of the moated site. TS 1 lay within the proposed site of the pumping station and TS 2 between it and the moated site. As no features were visible after removal of the overburden of turf and topsoil, the subsoil was removed down to the bedrock.

#### Trial Section 1

The only archaeological feature noted was a ditch, 1.9m wide, aligned slightly approximately north - south, which contained medieval pottery. Further hollows in the bedrock encountered in the trial section seemed to be natural in origin.

#### Trial Section 2

The ditch located in TS 1 continued into Trial Section 2, where it turned to follow a north-south alignment; medieval pottery was recovered from this feature. Three shallow, rock cut gullies were located to the east of the ditch. The central example cut the southernmost, the fill of which contained medieval pottery.

The ditch appeared to respect the boundaries of the moated enclosure and was aligned to run outside, rather than feed into, the moat.

#### AREA B

This part of the site lies at the northern end of a narrow valley which continues and widens south of the main London to South Wales railway. It will form the site of the proposed lagoon. The area was under grass, and appreciably wetter than Area A.

#### Trial Section 3

The trial section which measured 60m x 3m, was cut along the top of the western side of the valley. For most of the length of the

trench the topsoil was underlain by a layer of made ground containing 20th century finds. This overlay the natural subsoil, a red sandy silt over clay marl, which was cut by a shallow ditch, 1.5m wide, with a gully, 0.35m wide, running parallel to it. Both features were filled with grey clay, which extended outside the gully, to the west. Medieval pottery was recovered from the ditch fill.

The area around TS 3 had apparently been stripped and levelled for planned building development prior to the Second World War (ex. inf. from a former landowner) and this may have resulted in the truncation of earlier deposits.

#### Trial Section 4

The trial section, which measured 35m x 3m, was cut diagonally down the slope on the valley side to link TS 3 & 5. A small ditch aligned east-west and approximately 2m wide was uncovered at the southern end of the trial section. The ditch, which cut the natural subsoil, contained two fills, and from the lower of these a large amount of medieval pottery was recovered. At the northern end of the trial section the level of the natural subsoil dropped off very sharply into a deep feature filled with peat overlain by grey clay (these deposits are described more fully below - see TS 5).

#### Trial Section 5

The trial section, which measured 65m x 3m, was cut along the valley bottom. As in the northern end of TS 4 the topsoil was underlain by a layer of grey clay 0.6m deep. The clay overlay a layer of peat up to 0.65m deep. Both of these deposits occurred throughout the length of the trial section. The peat was in turn underlain by up to 0.5m of silt and gravel overlying the natural subsoil. The natural subsoil encountered in this trial section was the same as that in trial sections 3 and 4. Two rubble-filled land-drains of post-medieval date were cut into the top of the clay layer.

### 3. Conclusions

#### AREA A

The principal archaeological features encountered in this area was rock-cut ditch of medieval origin which skirted the moated enclosure. The gullies in TS 2 may be slots for a timber structure possibly utilising the bedrock as a floor. Timber structures are commonly found adjacent to moated enclosures and comprise the barns, stables and similar buildings associated with the main building enclosed by the moat. The majority of finds from these sections (see Appendix 3) came from a layer (011) immediately above the bedrock in layer 011. The irregular hollows in the bedrock at the north-west end of Trial Section 1 may be solution holes or even result from tree-root damage.

#### AREA B

The valley seems to be a largely silted-up creek represented by a palaeochannel, extending inland from the Severn Levels. Peat layers, where encountered elsewhere on the Levels, are generally dated to the Bronze Age. All finds from this trial section came from above the grey clay and included a small amount of both Roman and, possibly, Iron Age pottery in addition to Medieval and Post-Medieval material. This material may have been fluvially borne to the site. The other archaeological features uncovered in the area are of medieval date.



#### **4. Recommendations**

4.1 We recommend that the proposed pipe-trench running from SW 6a the site of the pumping station, and crossing close to the south-west end of the moated site be manually excavated to the top of the bedrock and all archaeological features recorded.

4.2 We recommend that the area of the pumping station should be stripped and any archaeological features excavated.

4.3 We recommend that the landscaping works for the construction of the lagoon should be subject to an archaeological watching-brief.

4.4 All archaeological works should only be undertaken by appropriately qualified bodies.

## Appendix 1

### Specifications for Archaeological Field Evaluation

#### 1. Objectives

- 1.1 Determination of the character, quality, significance, chronology, extent and depth of surviving archaeological deposits.
- 1.2 Preparation of recommendations concerning protection of archaeological interests.
- 1.3 Preparation of recommendations concerning mitigation of damage to archaeological interests.

#### 2 Integrated Survey

- 2.1 Field Walking - Field walking along gridded transects to collect surface finds and make visual observations relating to archaeological interests.
- 2.2 Ground Survey - Recording of features of archaeological interest surviving above-ground level in OS fields 0033 and 9431, excepting those features already recorded as part of the Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- 2.3 Excavation Survey - Five trial sections (see attached plan), mechanically cut to establish the range of archaeological and related paeleoenvironmental evidence within the area proposed for development or identified zones within such an area.

Throughout each section the minimum number of archaeological deposits exposed by the removal of the topsoil will be manually excavated to establish the character and chronology of past human activity.

A quarter of each section will be excavated to the base of that part of the stratigraphy which contains archaeological and related pealeoenvironmental evidence to determine the potential range and depth of such deposits.

All archaeological contexts will be recorded using a continuous numbered context system.

All significant contexts in particular those relating to past structures or other principal uses of the site will be photographed in both monochrome and colour using an appropriate format, drawn in plan and where appropriate in section at a scale no less than 1:20 and related to Ordnance Datum and National Grid.

Any finds recovered will be processed and recorded by Trust staff. All finds except those deemed as Treasure Trove are the property of the landowner. These should ideally be donated to a suitable repository, subject to agreement being reached with the relevant landowner.

All archaeological artefacts will be treated in a manner appropriate to the materials involved and recorded using a continuous numbered context system.

All finds identified as requiring conservation and/or other specialist treatment will be temporarily stored in a stable environment until they have been examined by appropriate specialists in the assessment phase to establish whether further analysis is required.

### 3 Post Fieldwork Phase

Preparation of site archive of archaeological records relating to trial excavations to the specifications as laid down in Management of Archaeological Projects, English Heritage, 1991, Appendix 3.

3.2 Assessment of archaeological data.

3.3 Preparation of the research archive, to the specifications laid down in Management of Archaeological Projects, English Heritage, 1991, Appendix 6, should no further work be envisaged.

3.4 Deposition of the research archive with the County SMR and the National Monuments Record for Wales, should no further work be undertaken.

3.5 Deposition of artefacts/ecofacts, excepting those which may be subject to the laws of Treasure Trove, to an appropriate institution subject to the agreement of the site owners.

### 4 Assessment

4.1 Assessment of information gathered through the execution of sections 2-3.

4.2 Assessment of the effects of the proposed land use on the identified archaeological resource, to include the affects of the impact of the development on the setting of the resource.

4.3 Preparation of recommendations for the in-situ preservation of archaeological features within the development proposals.

4.4 Preparation of proposals for the the recording archaeological features by controlled excavation where the in-situ preservation of archaeological features is not possible.

5. Reports

5.1 Client - Synthesis of data gathered through the execution of 2-3, 4.1, 4.2 together with inclusion of supporting evidence in appendices as appropriate and summary recommendations (sections 4.3 & 4.4).

5.2 Academic - Archaeological Digest Report.

## Appendix 2

### The Trial Excavations - Detailed Report (by DJ Maynard)

#### Trial Section 1

The trial section measured 20m x 3m and was machine-cut to a depth of 0.5m. The topsoil (001) was a dark grey-brown silty loam, 0.15m deep, containing isolated limestone pebbles. This overlay a layer of dark reddish-brown silty loam (002), up to 0.4m deep, containing occasional stones, limestone cobbles and flecks of charcoal. This layer in turn overlay the bedrock (003), a soft, pale-yellow limestone. At the south-east end of the trench the bedrock was cut by a U-shaped ditch (006), running slightly east of north, measuring 1.9m wide and 0.5m deep. The sides of the ditch were roughly cut and the base slightly dished. The ditch-fill (005) was a dark brown silty loam containing moderate quantity of angular limestone rubble, limestone cobbles and occasional charcoal flecks. The ditch may represent a medieval boundary or roadside ditch

The bedrock in the north-western 10m of the trial section was cut by an irregularly spaced group of hollows (035 and 042), up to 0.45m deep. The fill of these hollows (007 and 041) was similar to 002, but was darkened around the edges of the hollows, probably by mineralisation. The hollows seem to be of natural origin, possibly produced by the roots of trees.

#### Trial Section 2

The trial section measured 20m x 3m and was machine-cut to a depth of 0.5m. As in Trial Section 1 dark grey-brown silty loam (010) overlay reddish-brown silty loam (011) which overlay the limestone. This was cut at the northern end by a U-shaped ditch (016); probably a continuation of the ditch (006) seen in Trial Section 1. Here the ditch had narrowed slightly to a width of 1.4m. The fill (015) was a grey-brown silty loam containing frequent limestone rubble and a moderate number of flecks of charcoal. The axis of the ditch had shifted to a more north-south alignment, and respected the boundaries of the moated enclosure. The ditch fill was sealed by layer 011.

East of the ditch the bedrock was cut by three parallel gullies running east-west. The northernmost (043) measured 1.1m wide and had a maximum depth of 0.15m. It was filled with dark brown silty loam (014) which contained occasional limestone rubble. Immediately south of this was another gully (013), 0.5m wide and up to 0.2m deep. The fill (012) consisted of reddish-brown silty loam similar to layer 011, and contained occasional pieces of limestone rubble. Gully 013 cut the northern edge of a hollow or gully (021), measuring 1.6m long, 0.9m wide and with a maximum depth of 0.08m. The fill (008) was a dark brown silty loam containing a moderate number of stones and occasional charcoal

flecks. Gullies 013 and 043 continued beyond the limits of the trial section.

The fill of gully 021 contained medieval pottery. No obvious buried medieval soil level was seen in the trial section. This may have been lost when the area was stripped of topsoil for building. Gullies 021 and 043 may be beam slots for a timber structure, possibly using bedrock as a floor surface. Additional structures outside the moated enclosure are a common feature of such sites and comprise stables, barns and other ancillary buildings connected with the main dwelling. It is possible the structure may be part of a small village centred on the moated enclosure.

### Trial Section 3

The trial section measured 60m x 3m and was machine-cut to depth of 0.7m. The topsoil (017) was a dark grey-brown silty loam, 0.15m deep, containing occasional stones. This overlay two layers of made ground (018 and 019). Layer 018 consisted of dark red-brown clay marl 0.3m deep which extended the full length of the excavated area. This overlay a layer of angular limestone rubble (019) 0.25m deep. The rubble thinned out and disappeared toward the south-east end of the trial section. The made ground belongs to a planned building development on the site halted by the Second World War. Landscaping for the building development appears to have truncated a layer of grey-brown clay (020), 0.15m deep, overlain by layer 019. This layer only appeared at the south-east end of the trial section and contained frequent angular and rounded limestone rubble. Elsewhere the made ground overlay the natural subsoil (024), a red sandy clay which became clay marl lower down in the sides of excavated features, and toward the northern end of the trench.

At the southern end of the trial section the natural subsoil 024 was cut by a U-shaped ditch (009), measuring 1.47m wide and 0.5m deep. The ditch-fill (004) consisted of grey clay with frequent limestone rubble and occasional charcoal flecks. A gully (023), 0.35m wide and 0.6m deep ran parallel to the northern side of the ditch. The gully-fill (022) was similar to the grey clay of ditch-fill 004. The parallel ditch and gully may be a boundary marker, probably of medieval date. The clay layer 020 is very similar to the ditch and gully fills and is probably of similar date.

### Trial Section 4

The trial section measured 35m x 3m and the whole was machine-cut to a depth of 0.5m. A small area 10m from the north end of the trial section was machine-cut to a depth of 1.5m, to the level of the peat formation described in Trial Section 5 below. The topsoil (038) was a layer of grey silty loam up to 0.36m deep and was present throughout the length of the trial section. At the south end of the trial section the topsoil overlay the red sand

of the natural subsoil recorded in Trial Section 3. For the northern 15m of the trial section the topsoil (038) overlay the same sequence of layers recorded in trial section 5 (described below).

The latest feature was a post-medieval land-drain constructed of loose limestone rubble in a trench cut into the top of clay layer 027. The drain was aligned south-west to north east.

The natural subsoil at the southern end of the trial section was cut by a wide, shallow ditch (037), 2.5m wide and 0.5m deep and aligned east-west. The ditch fill consisted of two layers (036 and 040). The lower (036) was 0.15m in depth and consisted of grey clay with very frequent flecks and lumps of charcoal, moderate number of limestone cobbles and occasional pebbles. The upper layer (040) was of grey silty clay almost identical to the topsoil and only differentiated from it by the iron-pan present in possible ditch fill 040 and absent from the topsoil 038. A layer of grey clay (039) containing frequent charcoal flecks was seen in section to the south of the ditch, overlying the natural subsoil (024) and underlying the topsoil (038). This layer was very similar to the lower ditch-fill (036) and contained similar pottery. The ditch is of probably of medieval date and is possibly a drainage ditch.

#### Trial Section 5

The trial section measured 65m by 3m and was machine-cut to the top of the peat formation (028); a depth of 1m. A 10m length in the centre of the trial section was further machined to a depth of 2.0m to investigate the stratigraphy fully. The topsoil (025) was a grey-brown silty loam 0.15m deep containing occasional stones. This overlay a layer of reddish-brown silty loam (026) 0.2m deep, underlain by a layer of grey/brown clay (027), 0.6m deep, which contained occasional limestone rubble, pebbles and isolated charcoal flecks. The clay overlay a peat formation (028), up to 0.65m in depth, which occurred throughout the length of the trial section. Beneath the peat at the south-east end of the trial section was a layer of grey-brown sandy silt (029) 0.05m deep, containing occasional pebbles and charcoal flecks. This overlay a layer of red-brown sandy silt (030), containing frequent broken stone, 0.3m in depth. In the centre of the trial section where the machine cut was carried down to the natural subsoil (033) the peat was underlain by a 0.25m deep layer of grey clay (034), this then overlay the red-brown sandy silt and broken stone layer 030. The natural subsoil (033) underlay the sandy silt of 030. The natural subsoil was identical to that seen in Trial Sections 3 and 4. The peat and clay are probably contained by a creek reaching inland from the Severn Levels, similar peat formations on the Levels are dated to the Bronze Age. The finds which included medieval, Romano-British and, possibly, Iron Age pottery all came from above the clay layer 027.

The only features seen in the trial section were two lengths of a limestone rubble land-drain (031 and 032) both cut into the top of the clay layer 027, and of post-medieval date.



### Appendix 3

#### The Finds: Interim Report (by SH Sell)

Material from twelve contexts was submitted for examination; of these only three (019, 020, 026) produced any post-medieval finds (bottle sherds, tile, coarsewares, horseshoe fragments etc.), and quantities were small.

Of much greater significance was the presence in five contexts (011, 015, 016, 036 & 038) of Roman pottery - quantities were again small (27 sherds, total weight 0.164kg), but products of the Caldicot and Gloucester industries were noted together with fragments of samian, black-burnished and ?Caerleon colour-coated wares. Most sherds were recovered from residual contexts in the south-eastern part of the area under investigation.

The greater part (c 65%) of the pottery of medieval origin was found in the same area, principally in the topsoil (026) and from the fill (036) of a ditch running east - west. There is no scope here for a detailed analysis of the fabrics and forms present in the medieval assemblage (353 sherds, total weight 3.93kg), but in the two major contexts at least twenty vessels were present of which 90% were unglazed cooking or storage vessels (figures based on rim counts). It is likely that most are local products of the 13-15th centuries, but among the glazed wares were products of the Bristol ?Gloucester and North Wiltshire industries. A wide range of cooking or storage vessels with everted rims, usually more or less inturned, constituted the bulk of the assemblage; exceptionally one vessel has a thumbled cordon around the shoulder, and wavy-line decoration occurs on and below the rim of a very large bowl or pancheon, a less common pottery form for the period. Building debris of the medieval period is conspicuous by its absence, but the quantity of pottery from such a small-scale investigation gives every promise of an important group emerging from area excavations which will require a full and detailed analysis, with complementary illustrative input.

## Appendix 4

### Catalogue of Material Held in the Site Archive

1. Correspondence relating to the fieldwork (but excluding financial and contractual matters)
2. Photographic Records:-
  - i) Monochrome (35mm) Original Negatives and Contact Print
  - ii) Colour Slide (35mm) Original Negatives (Unmounted)
3. Site Drawings (Pencil)
  - i) Plans (3)
  - ii) Sections (4)
  - iii) Site Levels Records
4. Site Context Records
  - i) Site Context Records
  - ii) Structural Report
5. Finds
  - i) Pottery stored by context
  - ii) Finds Context Records
  - iii) Interim Report
6. Sample Forms
  - (2) Samples not retained

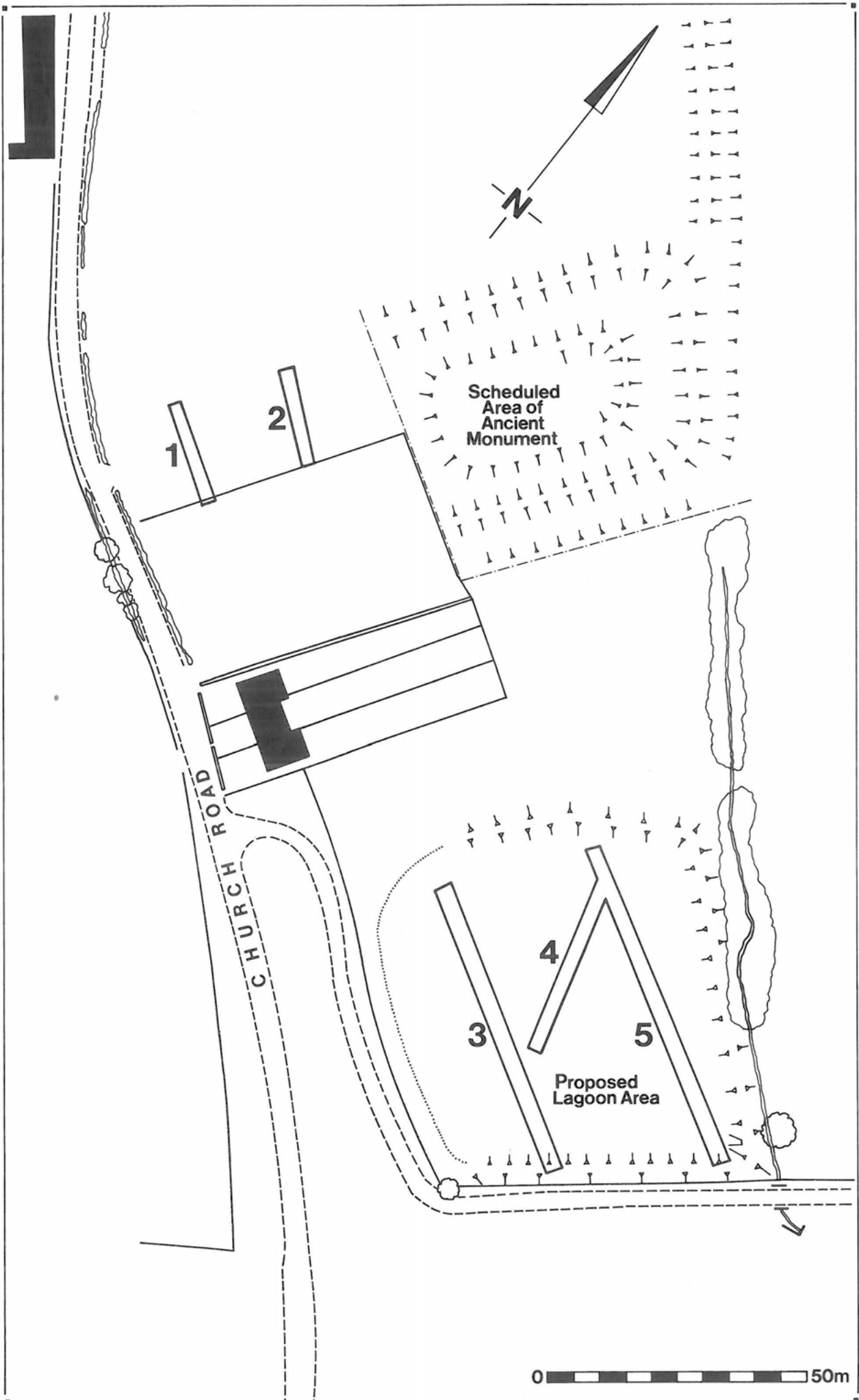


Fig 1 Location of Trial Sections