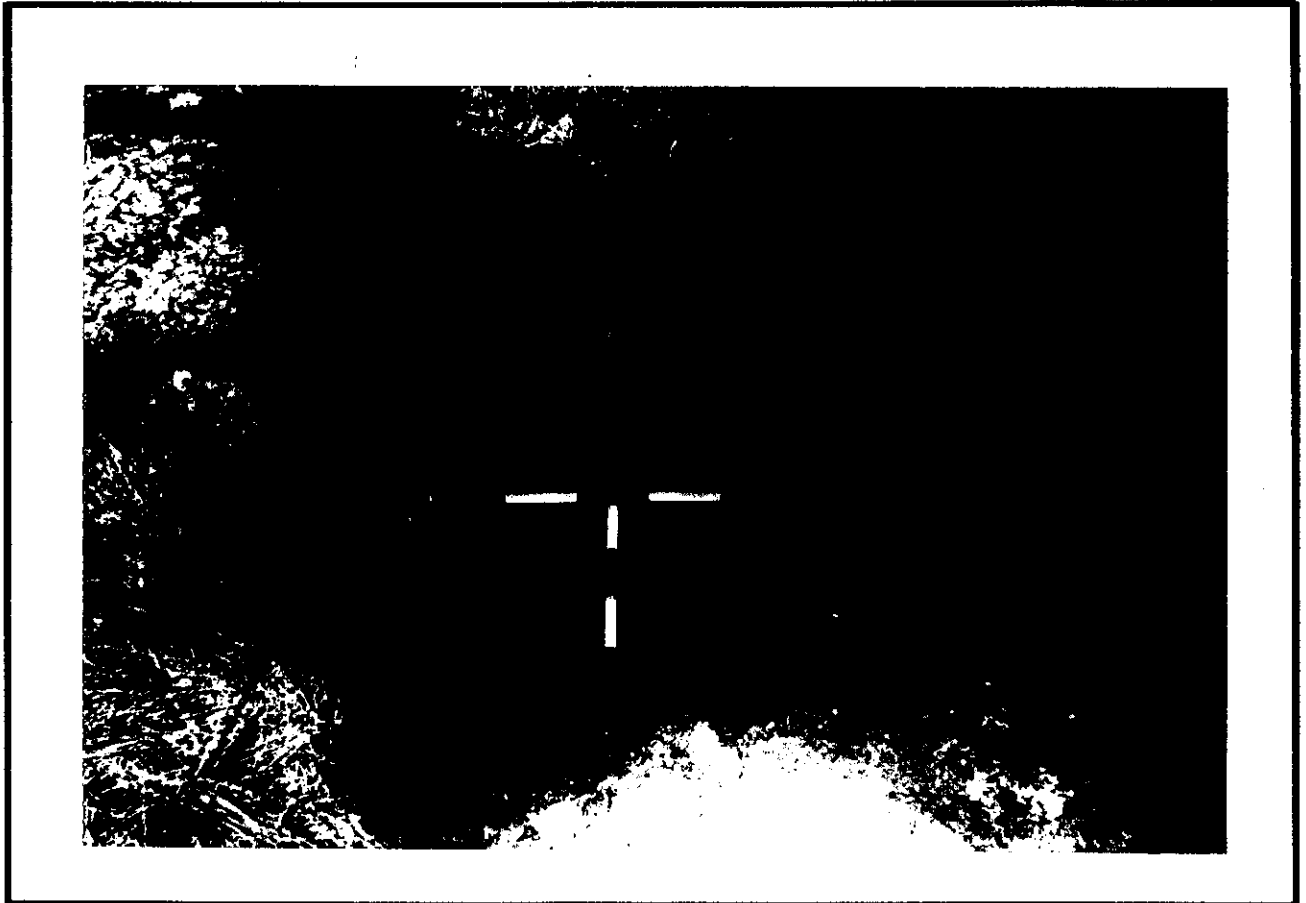


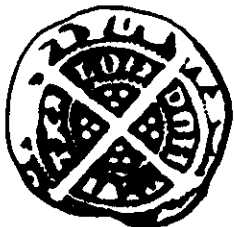
10568

AVON SMR ~~10548~~
SITE SPECIFIC ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION OFF SAVAGES WOOD ROAD
BRADLEY STOKE, AVON



ON BEHALF OF
BRIDE HALL GROUP LIMITED, LONDON

ADRIAN H. H. PARRY MA
JULY 1995



AVON ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

ABSTRACT

This report details the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out in June 1995 by the Avon Archaeological Unit on land immediately to the south of the Tesco superstore, Savages Wood Road, Bradley Stoke, Avon. The evaluation exercise (Avon SMR 10568) was commissioned by Bride Hall Group Ltd of London, prior to the proposed development of the site as a local district centre. The project was undertaken in response to Central Government Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (DoE 1990) and local planning conditions, in which the archaeological potential of a site is taken into material consideration in the determination of planning applications. In this case, the proposed development area is located (a) immediately adjacent to an excavated Bronze Age settlement site of considerable regional importance (Avon SMR 7442) and (b) 200m west of a Romano-British occupation site identified from an archaeological watching brief (Avon SMR 6755).

The aim of the evaluation was to identify and characterise any archaeological remains preserved within the proposed development area and to determine their extent, quality and state of preservation. The trial excavation areas were selected with a view to providing a representative sample of the application suite as a whole, with a slight emphasis on the segment of the development area situated immediately adjacent to the former Bronze Age settlement site (Avon SMR 7442), now occupied by the Tesco Superstore.

Ten archaeological trial trenches were opened within the proposed development area, nine of which were found to contain archaeologically significant features and deposits (specifically soil layers, ditches, postholes and small pits) consistent with those recorded in advance of the construction of the adjacent Tesco superstore. The main focus of archaeological activity appeared to be located in the southwestern quadrant of the evaluation area, although a further concentration of negative soil features was identified adjacent to the Bronze Age settlement site referred to above. The small artefactual assemblage recovered during the evaluation reflected prehistoric activity contemporaneous with the occupation of the adjacent Bronze Age site. There was no datable evidence of Romano-British, medieval or post medieval occupation of the site.

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Abbreviations used within this report

- c. circa
m metres
NGR National Grid Reference
O.D Ordnance Datum
SMR Sites and Monuments Record
< less than
> greater than

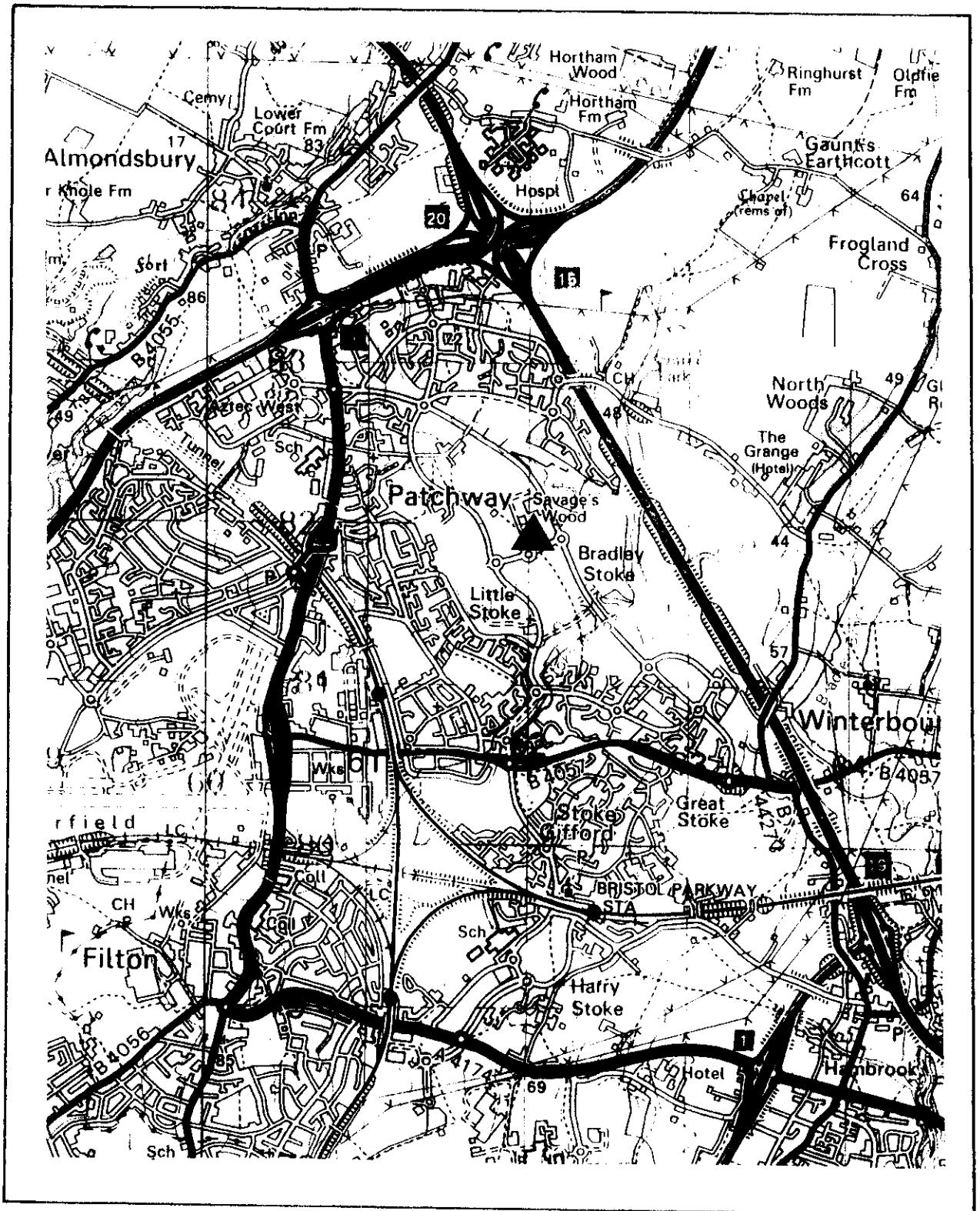
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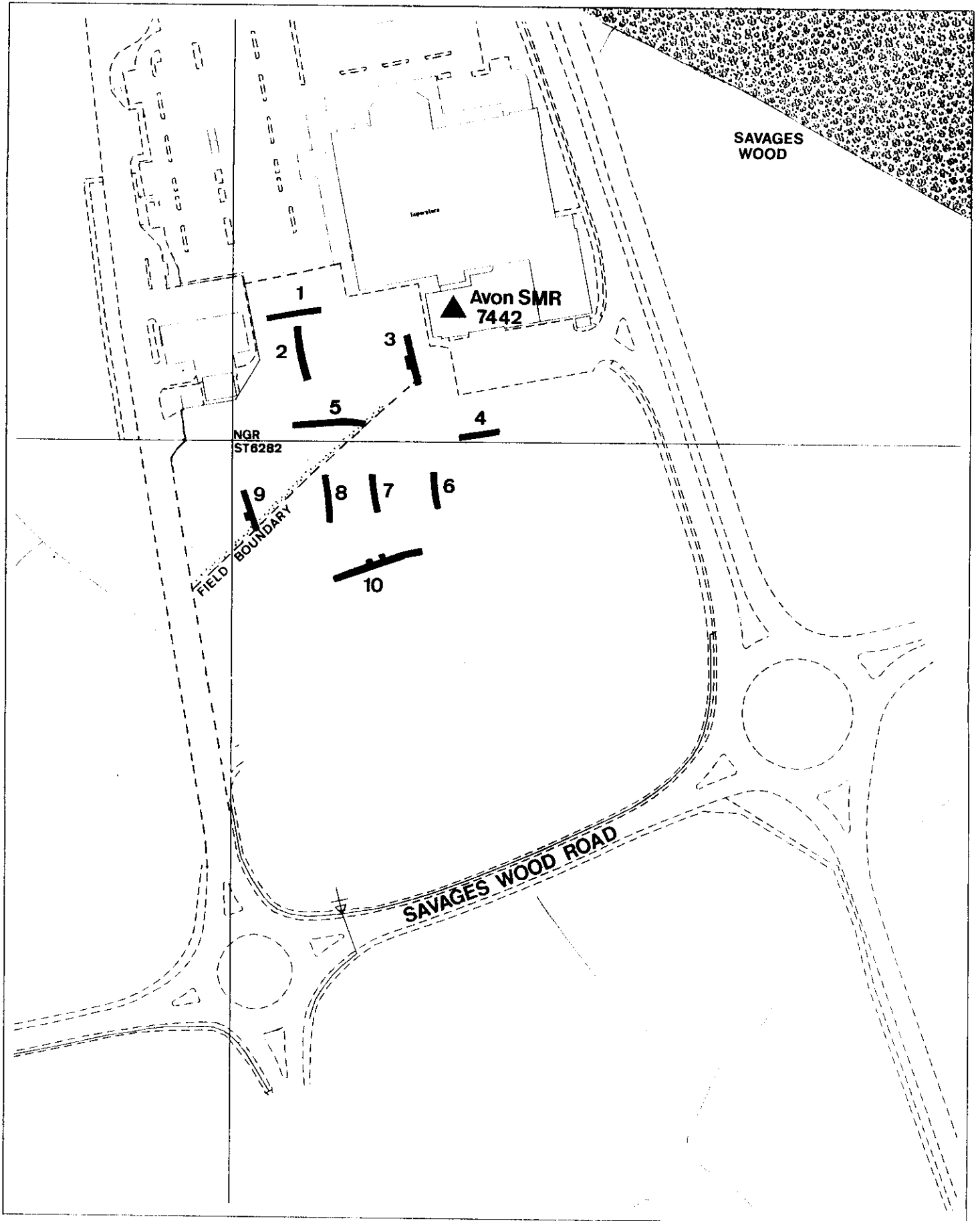
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Avon Archaeological Unit, 325 Fishponds Road, Bristol.
Principal Archaeologist: Andrew C Young BA AIFA

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Figure 1

Site Location





0 100m

Avon SMR 10548



Figure 2
Trench Location

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In June 1995, the Avon Archaeological Unit carried out an archaeological evaluation exercise on a block of land located immediately to the south of the Tesco superstore at Savages Wood, Bradley Stoke (NGR ST621821; Figs. 1 & 2). The evaluation was undertaken in advance of a proposed development of the site as a local district centre by Bride Hall Group Limited of London (Northavon planning application No. P95/0020/422)
- 1.2 On the basis of the archaeological significance of the application site (section 2), and in accordance with central government Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (DoE 1990), Avon County Structure Plan (Third Alteration) Policy BE4a and Northavon Local Plan Policy N25, the County Archaeological Officer recommended that an archaeological evaluation should be undertaken within the proposed development footprint.
- 1.3 The objective of the archaeological evaluation was to establish whether archaeological remains survived on the site and, if so, to determine their character, quality and extent. The exercise was designed to recover a sample of archaeological information which would allow the Local Planning Authority to make informed and practical decisions concerning the archaeological implications of any future development of the site, and if necessary to provide the basis for future strategies to conserve and record any significant archaeological remains identified during the project.
- 1.4 On the basis of an archaeological project design provided by the County Archaeological Officer, Bride Hall Group Limited of London agreed to fund an archaeological programme consisting of one week of fieldwork followed by one week of post site analysis and report preparation. The fieldwork commenced on June 12th 1995.
- 1.5 The archaeological evaluation was carried out by the writer, with the assistance of Jens Samuel and, in a voluntary capacity, Raymond Ducker. The drawings contained in this report were prepared by Jonathan Erskine. Andrew Young was responsible for overall project management.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site of a former Bronze Age settlement (ASMR 7442; Erskine forthcoming), now occupied by a Tesco superstore, is located immediately to the north of the proposed development area (Fig.2). The excavations carried out on the site in 1990 and 1991 recorded well preserved evidence of timber houses, pottery and flint

artefacts, and human cremation burial dating from the middle to late Bronze Age (1500 to 1000 B.C). These excavations were of crucial importance to the understanding of the Bronze Age in this area, and the Savages Wood site was the first excavated site of this date in the county, and one of the first recorded in recent times in the region. The present application site is located less than a 100m from the area excavated in 1990 and 1991 and was therefore considered to be of very high archaeological potential. The archaeological potential of the site could also be considered in a wider context in as much as archaeological fieldwork carried out since 1991 has uncovered further prehistoric sites at Webbs Farm (Avon SMR 8273; Parry 1992), Brook Way (Avon SMR 9000; Samuel 1992) and Patchway Common (Avon SMR 8615; Parry 1993). These sites have demonstrated that evidence of prehistoric activity and occupation, particularly dating to the Bronze Age, may be preserved over a widespread area within the Bradley Stoke region.

- 2.2 In addition to the close proximity of a known prehistoric site to the proposed development area, evidence of Romano-British occupation has also been recorded in the vicinity of the application site. This comprised the remains of a building and associated burials (Avon SMR 6755) recorded during archaeological watching briefs carried out 200m to the west of the current site. The possibility therefore existed that, in view of the dense Romano-British occupation in the Bradley Stoke area, archaeological remains dating from that period may have been preserved within the assessment area.

3 GEOLOGY, TOPOGRAPHY AND LANDUSE

- 3.1 The natural solid geology of the application site consists primarily of White and Blue Lias limestone bedrock with interbedded clays and sands. This strata was laid down at the end of the Triassic period.
- 3.2 The topography of the proposed development area was essentially flat (ranging in height from c.59m to 60m above O.D). The site was under long grass and vegetation immediately prior to the commencement of the fieldwork. The northern part of the proposed development footprint showed evidence of ground disturbance and dumping caused by the construction of the adjacent Tesco superstore. The remaining area of the site had recently been subjected to ploughing in order to prevent prohibited vehicular access. The remains of a former field boundary (hedge and ditch) bisected the application site on an approximate southwest-northeast orientation (Fig. 2).

4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 For the purposes of the evaluation, ten trial excavation trenches, c. 1.6m wide and of varying length, were opened within the proposed development area (Fig. 2). The trenches were specifically located in order to provide samples of (a) the range of possible archaeological structures and deposits expected to be present on the site and (b) variations in existing topography and ground conditions.
- 4.2 Recent overburden comprising topsoil and subsoil was removed from the evaluation trenches by a JCB mechanical excavator with a grading bucket.
- 4.3 Archaeologically significant features and deposits exposed *in situ* within the evaluation trenches were recorded on standard archaeological context sheets, photographically and on archaeological section drawings and plans drawn at scales of 1:10 and 1:20 respectively.
- 4.4 Archaeological finds recovered during the evaluation were subsequently washed and bagged prior to analysis and marked with the appropriate Avon Sites and Monuments Record (10548) number and Bristol Museum Accession Number (32/1995). The site records, drawings photographs and finds were deposited temporarily at the premises of the Avon Archaeological Unit, 325 Fishponds Road, Bristol as part of the site archive of Avon SMR 10548. The project archive will ultimately be deposited for long term storage with the City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery under its accession number BRSMG 32/1995. A microfiche copy of the archive will be deposited with the National Archaeological Record (NAR).
- 4.4 The precise location of the evaluation trenches was surveyed and related to a nearby benchmark provided by Team Site Engineers who were working adjacent to the site.
- 4.5 The evaluation trenches were identified numerically from 1 to 10 and are described in detail below (section 5). The context numbers assigned to each trench were numbered sequentially and were prefixed by the number of the trench.
- 4.6 The evaluation trenches were backfilled upon completion of the recording in order to comply with health and safety guidelines.

5 DETAILED SITE OBSERVATIONS

N.B The majority of the trenches were excavated to the depth of the natural substrata, the surface of which had, in places, been eroded or weathered.

5.1 **Trench 1**
Figure 2 (trench plan not illustrated)
19.20m x 1.6m x < 0.32m

5.1.1 Several small soil features (contexts 102-107) were recorded within the surface of a layer of clean brown sandy clay loam (context 111) recorded at the eastern end of this trench. On the basis of their appearance in plan, character and the fact that the shallow stratigraphy at this end of the trench had been disturbed by earthmoving and dumping related to the construction of the adjacent Tesco superstore, these features were not considered as being of archaeological significance and were interpreted as remnants of disturbed topsoil within natural subsoil.

5.1.2 Context 108, a small subcircular soil feature recorded within the surface of the natural substrata halfway along the trench was distinguished from the surrounding sand and clay by being more mottled and mixed in appearance. Its archaeological sterility suggested, however, that it was natural in origin.

5.1.3 No archaeological finds were recovered during the machining of this trench or its subsequent cleaning by hand.

5.2 **Trench 2**
Figure 2 (trench plan not illustrated)
20m x 1.6m x < 0.33m

5.2.1 Context 201/202 represented a broad (minimum width 0.80m), curvilinear soil feature, slightly irregular in plan, which appeared to extend beyond the southeastern end of the trench in two directions. This clean brown clay loam deposit appeared, on the surface, to be a pocket of subsoil filling a shallow depression within the natural substrata, although further archaeological investigation, prevented by time constraints, would be required to establish this with any certainty.

5.2.2 Soil features 204-208 were located at the northwestern end of the trench, where the topsoil and subsoil had been disturbed by earthmoving activity relating to the construction of the adjacent Tesco Superstore. Deposits 204-8 which consisted of partially heat-affected dark grey silty clay containing chippings, limestone and

fragments red clay inclusions, were interpreted, on the basis of their irregularity in plan and shallow depth (0.13m below present ground surface), as the result of this recent ground disturbance (c.f. contexts 102-7 described in 5.1.1 above). If these features did represent the truncated remains of a former occupation layer, then their archaeological significance has been diminished by modern contamination.

5.2.3 Context 203, a curvilinear deposit of very dark grey clayey loam which extended beyond the trench to the southwest, was shown by brief archaeological investigation to be a remnant of topsoil lying within a shallow depression in the surface of the natural substrata.

5.2.4 No archaeological finds were recovered from this trench during machining or subsequent cleaning by hand.

5.3 **Trench 3**
Figures 2, 3 and 5
18.80m x < 2.60 x < 0.57m

5.3.1 Context 304, which was recorded at the southeastern end of the trench, represented the charcoal rich fill of the modern field boundary ditch referred to in paragraph 3.2 above.

5.3.2 Otherwise, the most distinctive soil feature recorded within this trench (in terms of colour, character and surface definition) was context 308. This was shown by excavation to be the fill of a small, subcircular feature (interpreted as a possible posthole), which was cut into the surface of the natural substrata (Fig 5C). No archaeological finds were recovered from context 308, however, for this feature (cut 315) to be securely dated.

5.3.3 Two deposits of dark greyish-brown silty clay, contexts 307 and 310, also appeared to fill archaeologically significant features cut into the surface of the natural substrata. Cut 307 (Fig. 5B) was interpreted as the truncated and root disturbed remains of a small pit, cut 317 (Fig. 5D) as another possible posthole (although not as well defined as cut 315 above). Here again, no artefactual evidence was recovered for these features to be securely dated, although the presence of a piece of fragmented sandstone within context 307 suggests that it may have been prehistoric in origin (fragmented pennant sandstone, which is not local to the area, has been a common, though as yet unexplained, feature of prehistoric sites excavated in the Bradley Stoke area).

dated to the later prehistoric period by the recovery of several fragments of Pennant sandstone and a fragment of coarse, abraded pottery consistent with a Bronze Age fabric type identified on the adjacent Tesco site.

5.10.2 A narrow, shallow curvilinear feature (context 1026), which was sealed by a small spread of greyish-brown silt clay loam, was recorded in close proximity to gully 1017. Given its limited exposure within the trench, the character and extent of this feature could not be fully assessed.

5.10.3 A large irregular spread of dark grey silty clay (context 1009), with inclusions of pinkish-red, heat affected clay, lay in close proximity to gully 1017. This deposit (Figs 6A, 6B & 6C; Front Cover Photograph), which contained fragmented sandstone and pottery comparable to that recovered from the material filling gully 1017, sealed a number of intercut archaeologically significant features, all of which were cut into the surface of the natural substrata. These features were as follows:

Context 1018 - a ditch or gully which appeared to extend beyond the trench to the southeast. This feature (Figs. 6A & 6B) contained context 1016, a dark brown silty clay and context 1021, a heavily mineralised lens of silty clay mixed with orange brown naturally derived sand.

Context 1020 - a shallow, broad, flat bottomed cut with rounded edges. This feature (Fig. 6C), which may possibly have represented the truncated remains of a pit, appeared to be filled with a deposit (context 1022) comparable to context 1016.

Context 1027 - the rounded terminal of what appeared to be a curving linear feature given only limited exposure within the trench.

Contexts 1019, 1027 and 1030 - three small subcircular deposits of mottled greyish-brown silty clay. These features, which were not excavated, may have represented the fills of post or stake holes.

5.10.4 Of the remaining soil features recorded within this trench, contexts 1004 (Fig. 6G) and 1010 (Fig. 6D) were considered, on the basis of their character and dimensions, to have the most archaeological potential. Excavation of the former, which was cut into a deposit of brown sandy loam and the underlying natural substrata, demonstrated that it may have represented the remains of a former posthole (undated). Context 111, an irregular soil spread similar to, and possibly a continuation, of context 1009, not only contained a

struck flint flake (thereby giving it a probable prehistoric context) but also appeared to fill a small feature which extended beyond the trench to the southwest.

- 5.10.5 Contexts 1003 and 1012, which, on the basis of their shape and appearance in plan, were initially interpreted as the fills of archaeologically significant features, were shown by excavation to fill shallow, poorly defined depressions within the surface of the natural substrata (Figs 6E & 6H respectively).

6 SUMMARY

- 6.1 The evaluation exercise carried out on the application site recorded archaeologically significant remains comparable in character to Bronze Age remains excavated on the site of the Tesco Superstore during 1990 and 1991. These included ditches (both rectilinear and curvilinear), postholes and small pits. Some of these features were associated with archaeologically significant soil layers.
- 6.2 This type of archaeology was recorded, to a lesser or greater extent, in nine out of the ten trial excavation trenches, although the main foci of archaeological activity were centred upon the areas of the application site sampled by Trenches 3, 9, and 10.
- 6.3 Archaeologically significant finds, which included pottery, flint, calcified bone and fragmented sandstone were recovered from only a small number of features, but were characteristic of Bronze Age activity in this region. The marked absence of Romano-British and Medieval finds on the site also suggests that those features which did not produce any dating evidence are likely to have had their origins in the prehistoric period.

7 CONTRACTORS ADVICE

- 7.1 The results of the archaeological assessment have demonstrated that archaeologically significant prehistoric remains, consistent with those recorded during excavations on the site of the adjacent Tesco Superstore, are preserved at a relatively shallow depth within the proposed development area. Accordingly it is the conclusion of this report that the proposed development is likely to have a significant impact upon those subterranean remains identified.
- 7.2 The Department of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (DoE 1990) recognises the fragility of the archaeological resource, and the necessity, where development is proposed, to make provision for its preservation, or for an appropriate programme of archaeological recording to be undertaken in advance of development.
- 7.3 Where nationally important remains are involved there is a clear preference in favour of their physical preservation *in situ*. A similar approach is adopted by English Heritage (HBMCE 1991), and it is expressed in relevant County and District strategic planning policies.
- 7.4 It is the advice of this report that the archaeological evidence recorded during the evaluation is not of sufficient quality or *national importance* to justify physical preservation *in situ* at the expense of future development.
- 7.5 However, the archaeological remains preserved within the application site are of considerable regional importance, both because of the rarity of such later prehistoric occupation in Northavon, and because of the quality of the evidence which was recorded on the adjacent Tesco site.
- 7.6 Accordingly, if the programme of development affecting the site proceeds, and is unable to protect and accommodate the preservation of the archaeological remains which have been identified *in situ*, then the remains are considered to be of sufficient importance to justify further detailed archaeological excavation and recording by all appropriate means, in order to ensure their future preservation by record, in advance of their destruction.

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Avon Archaeological Unit

Figure 3

Trench Plans

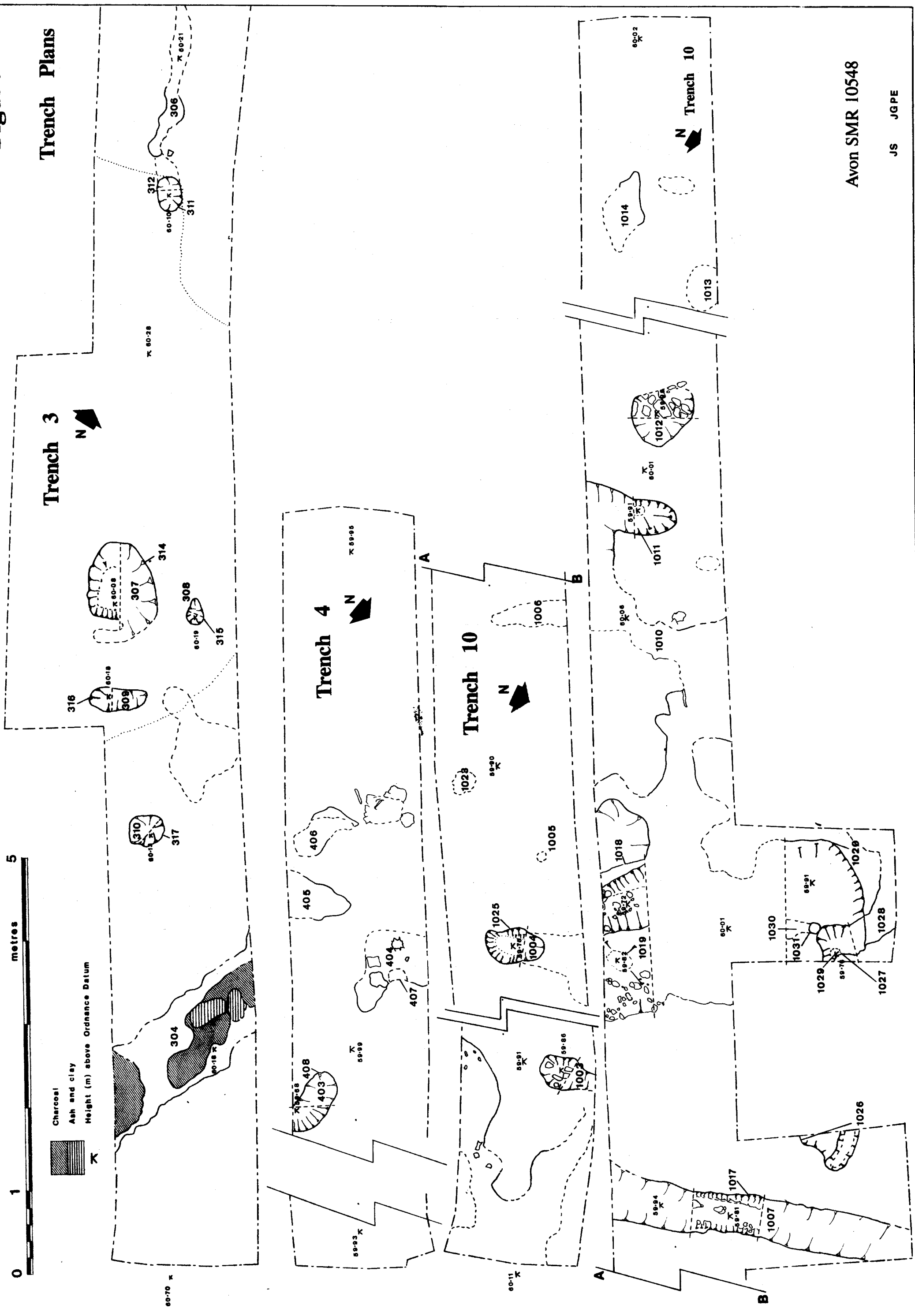
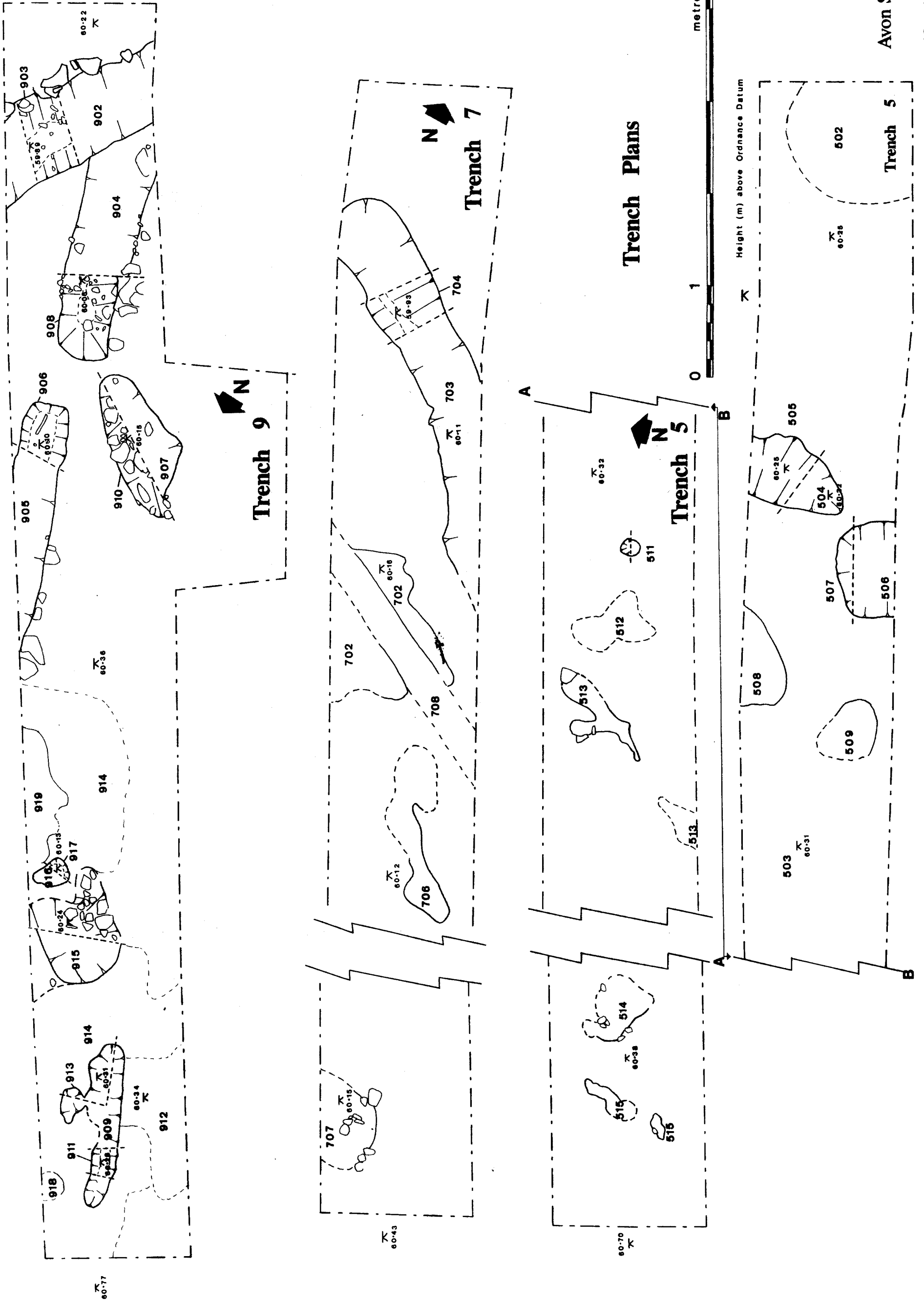


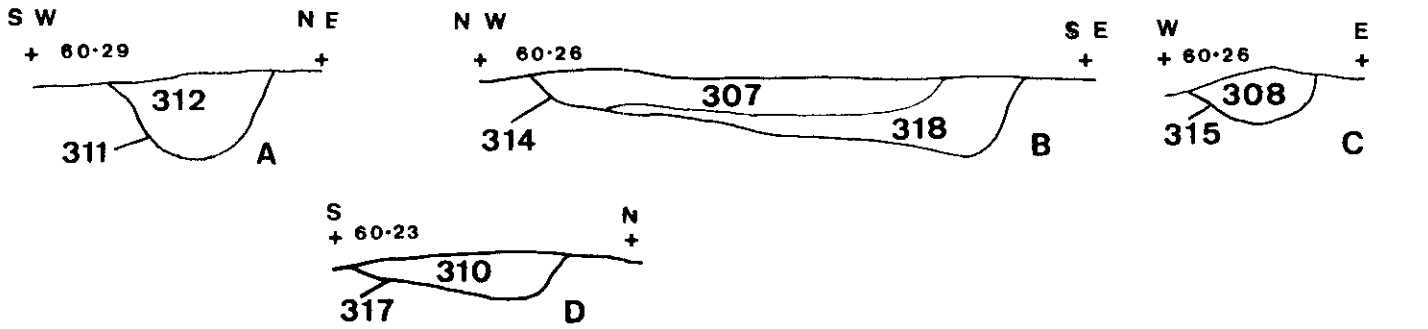
Figure 4



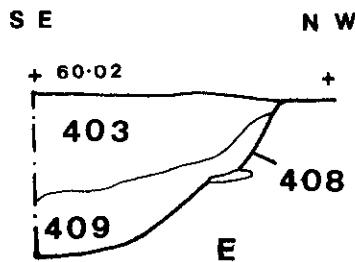
Trench 3

Section Drawings

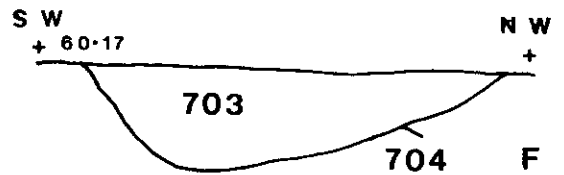
Figure 5



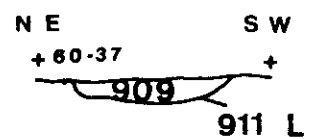
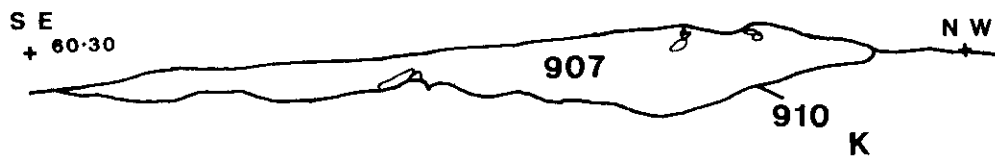
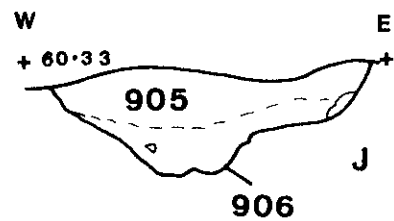
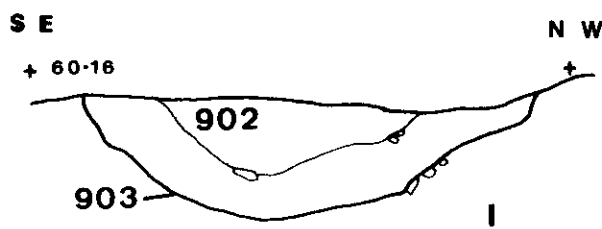
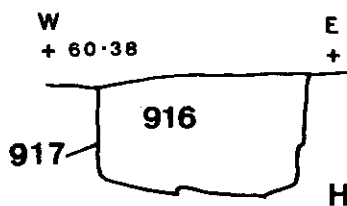
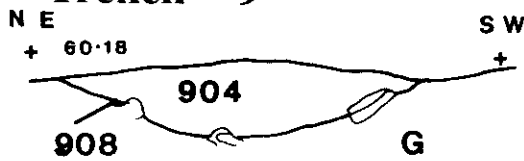
Trench 4



Trench 7



Trench 9

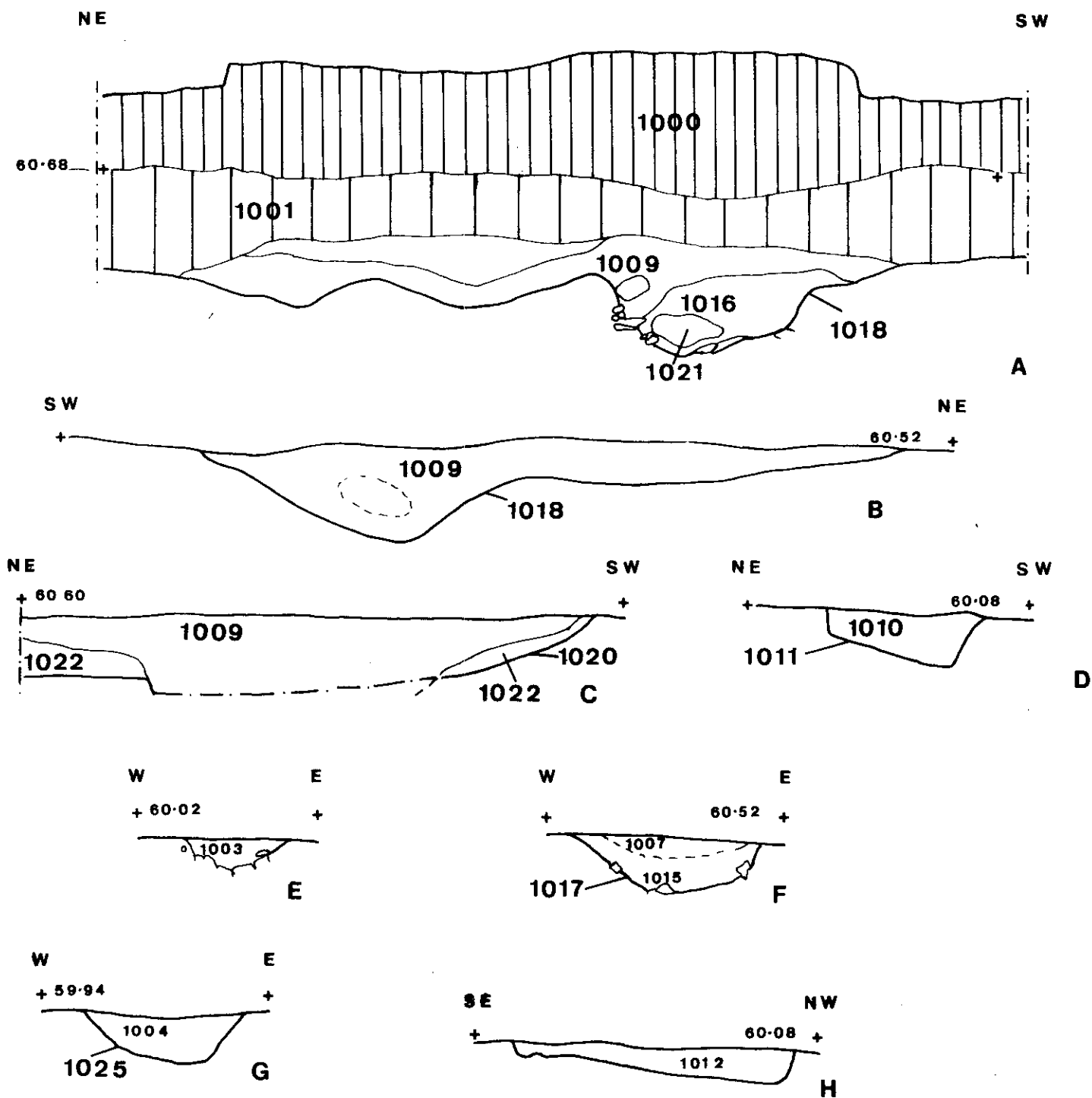


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Avon SMR 10548

Section Drawings Figure 6

Trench 10



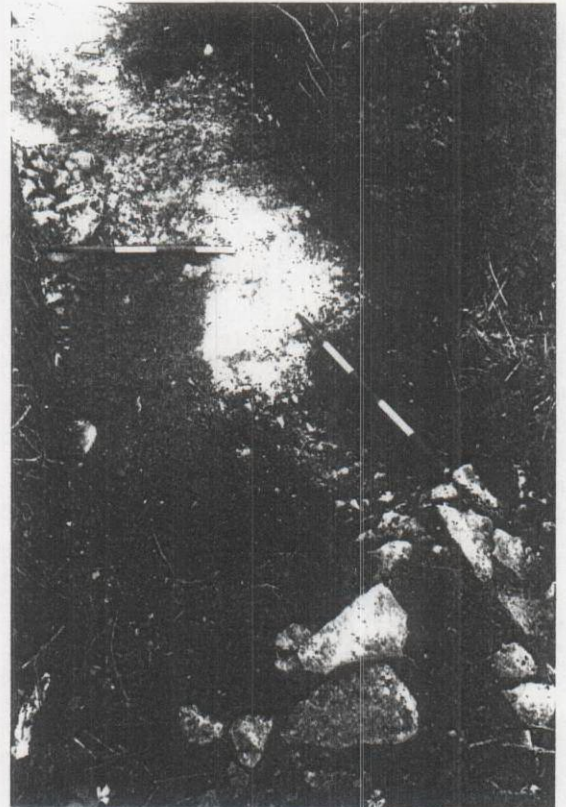
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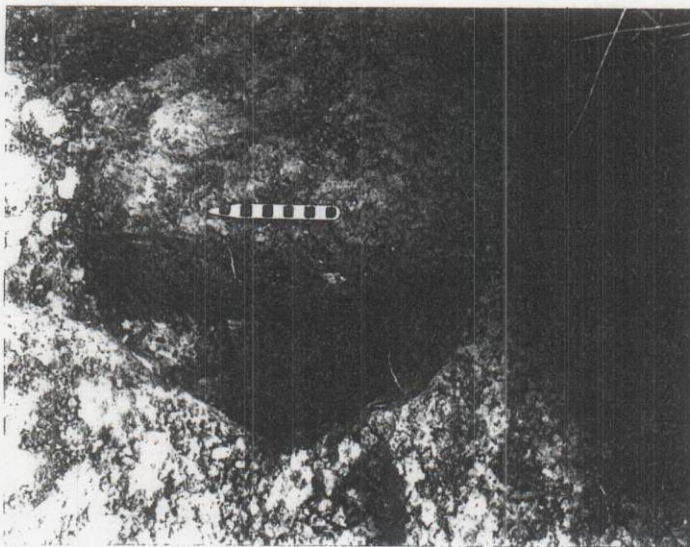
Photographs



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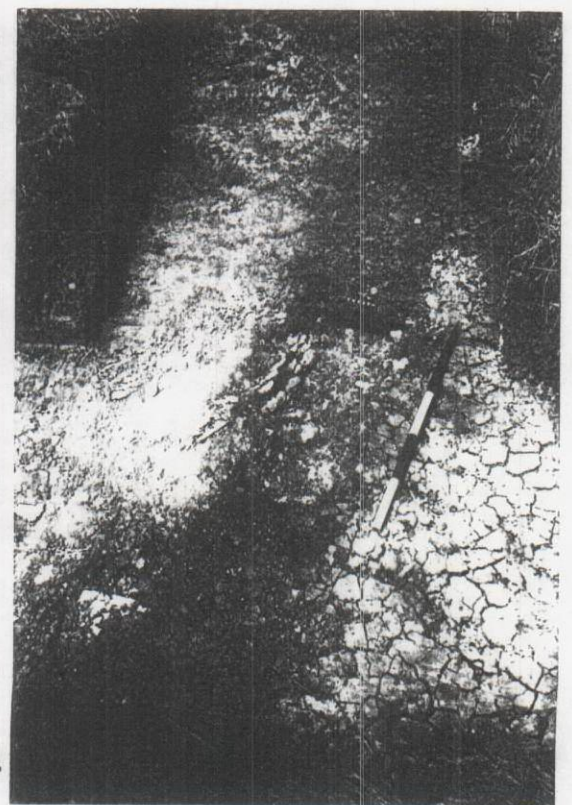


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