

# A SOMERSET FIELD MONUMENT AND LAND USE SURVEY

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WITH AN APPENDIX ON CATSGORE BY ROGER LEECH (CRAAGS)

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this survey was primarily to assess the degree of damage to known archaeological sites caused by ploughing in a sample area of the county of Somerset. The project was undertaken by Frances Condick on behalf of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society with the aid of a grant from the Maltwood Trust and with the advice and assistance of the Committee for Rescue Archaeology in Avon, Gloucestershire and Somerset, and the County Planning Department's Field Archaeologist. Fieldwork was carried out by Miss Condick and members of the South East Somerset Archaeological Society (SESAS) between September 1974 and January 1975, and a gazetteer of sites and some preliminary distribution maps were prepared by Miss Condick during February 1975. Owing to the degree of detail recorded in the original gazetteer, this cannot be published here in full. Examples from the gazetteer are included below in order to illustrate the points raised in the general analysis of the results. The complete gazetteer will be housed in the Library of the Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society, Taunton Castle, for reference. The following text has been prepared by Ann Ellison and the maps by Mick Aston.

## FIELDWORK

The area chosen for the survey was the eastern half of Yeovil District comprising 38 parishes east of the Fosse Way. Duplicated questionnaires concerning the archaeological nature, land use and condition of the 80 archaeological sites listed and mapped for this area in the Ordnance Survey Archaeological Division records were prepared in the Local History Library and issued to SESAS members. The members then carried out a preliminary survey to identify those sites under threat, a task which, with their knowledge of the locality and with local people, they were eminently suited to carry out. By undertaking this time-consuming work, which was beyond the means of one person on the funds available, they also enabled Miss Condick to concentrate most of her time on detailed surveys of those sites found to be threatened. During the preliminary survey five previously unrecorded sites were discovered, while subsequent fieldwork with Miss Condick revealed another ten, bringing the total number of sites investigated to 95. Miss Condick then collated the questionnaires and produced the detailed gazetteer and a preliminary analysis of the results.

## RESULTS

As noted above, the primary aim of the survey was to inspect and evaluate plough damage of known archaeological sites. However, it became apparent at an early stage in the survey that several other damaging agents were involved and the scope of the Somerset Ploughing Survey was therefore expanded to include the effects of other damaging agents and was re-entitled the Somerset Field Monument and Land Use Survey.

Five damaging agents can be defined and the numbers of sites damaged by these various agents are listed in Table I.

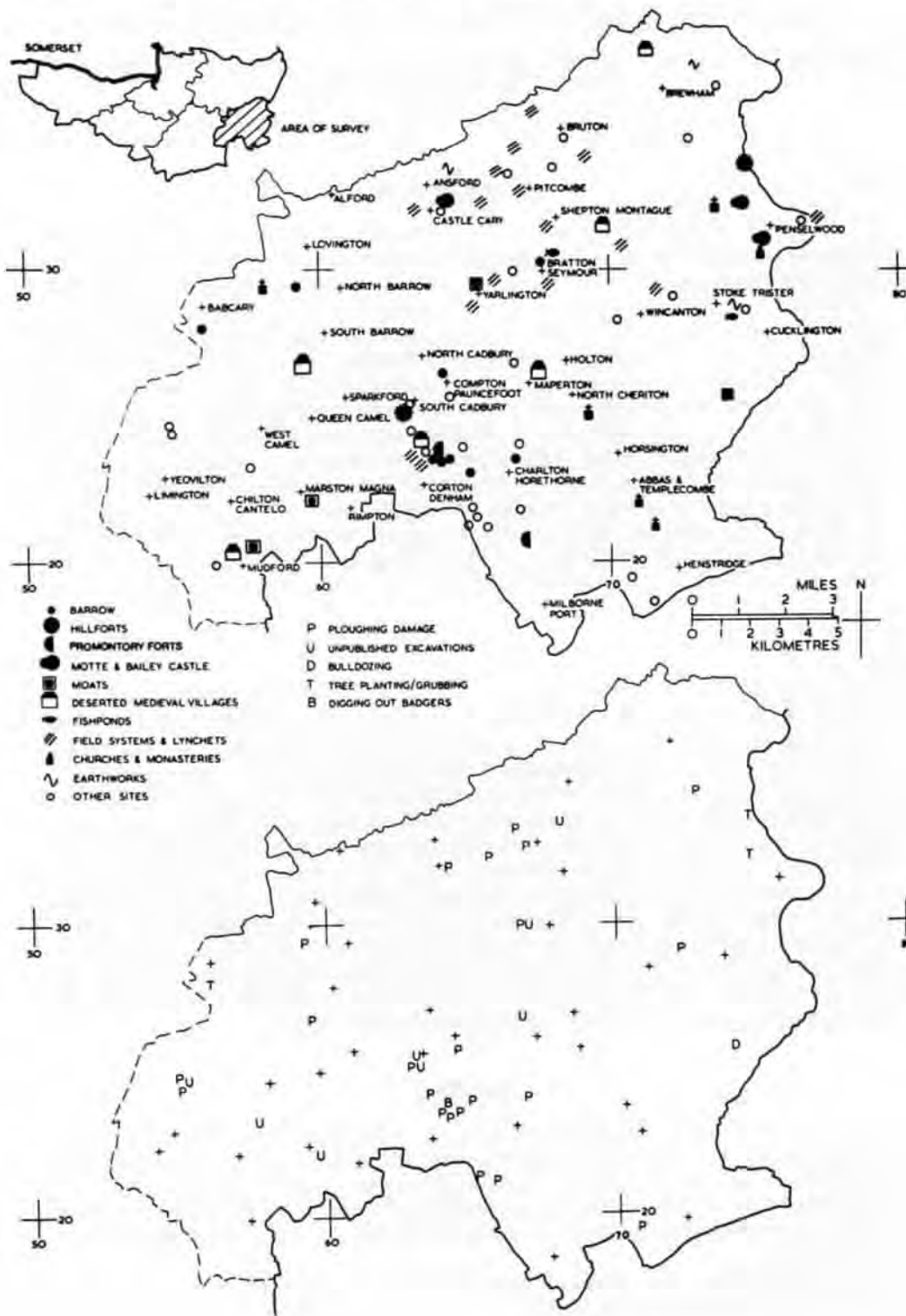


TABLE I.

<i>Agent</i>	<i>Number of sites damaged</i>
1. Ploughing	23
2. Unpublished excavation	7
3. Tree-grubbing	4
4. Bulldozing	2
5. Badger-digging	1

Of the 95 sites inspected, 37% (i.e. 35 sites) had been damaged by one or more of these agents. As expected, most damage to known archaeological sites has been caused by ploughing. However, the removal of tree-roots can also cause considerable damage to earthwork sites. An archaeological excavation also involves total destruction of the evidence contained within the areas of a site excavated. Therefore, until the results of any such research are fully published, any site excavated, whether by a professional archaeologist or a local group of enthusiasts, must be considered as damaged or destroyed. The number of sites damaged in this way in one small corner of Somerset is alarming but adequately reflects the situation in the rest of the county where there are over 70 excavations still unpublished as a result of digging since 1945 alone.

The types of archaeological site that have been damaged by these agents include standing buildings, earthwork sites, cropmarks and surface scatters of all kinds and of all periods (see Table II). The kinds of damage caused by each agent and examples of damaged sites will now be discussed in relation to each of the five agents. This evidence is summarized in Table III.

TABLE II

*Numbers of Archaeological Sites Damaged*

<i>Type of site</i>	<i>Number of sites damaged</i>	<i>Number of sites undamaged</i>	<i>Total</i>
Barrow	4	5	9
Hillfort	2	0	2
Promontory fort	1	1	2
Motte and bailey castle	1	2	3
Moat	2	2	4
D.M.V.	4	2	6
Fishponds	0	2	2
Field systems and lynchets	2	14	16
Church or monastery	0	6	6
Earthworks	0	3	3
Other sites: (a) prehistoric settlement	4	6	10
(b) Romano-British settlement	11	4	15
(c) cropmark site	1	3	4
(d) miscellaneous	2	5	7
(e) burial site	1	5	6
	—	—	—
TOTALS	35	60	95
	—	—	—

TABLE III

*Analysis of the Types of Damage*

<i>Type of Site</i>	<i>Ploughing</i>	<i>Excavation</i>	<i>Trees</i>	<i>Badgers</i>	<i>Bull-dozing</i>	<i>Total incidences of damage</i>	<i>Total no. of sites</i>
Barrow	3	—	1	—	—	4	4
Hillfort	1	1	1	—	—	3	2
Promontory fort	—	—	—	1	—	1	1
Motte and bailey castle	—	—	1	—	—	1	1
Moat	—	1	—	—	1	2	2
D.M.V.	4	—	—	—	—	4	4
Field systems and lynchets	2	—	—	—	—	2	2
Prehistoric settlement	3	—	—	—	1	4	4
Romano-British settlement	8	4	—	—	—	12	11
Cropmark	1	—	—	—	—	1	1
Miscellaneous	1	—	1	—	—	2	2
Burial site	—	1	—	—	—	1	1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>35</b>

## 1. PLOUGHING

Somerset is a predominantly pastoral county which possesses a large number of standing archaeological monuments. It will perhaps therefore be surprising to note that, of the 95 sites considered in this survey, 24% (i.e. 23 sites) have been damaged or destroyed by ploughing. Although the figures are all very low, Table III does indicate that the types of site which are most susceptible to this kind of damage are settlements of all periods (including Roman villas) and deserted medieval sites. However, even the barrows and hillforts in the area are not immune from the effects of this damaging agent. In some cases the archaeological site lies in a field that is ploughed virtually every year, but more often there is evidence that the area has been ploughed within the last five years and may be ploughed again at any time in the future.

*Examples*

(The reference under each place-name is the Ordnance Survey Record Number for the site.)

## CHARLTON HORETHORNE

9(i) ST 62 SW 3

*Grid Reference* 64062336*Description* Bronze Age twin bowl barrows.

*Previous history* These barrows were excavated by General Pitt-Rivers and Professor Rolleston in 1887. In the northernmost one were found quantities of charcoal and flint finds, but no burial. In the other (Sigwell 2) was found a grave containing

a bark coffin, inside which was a cremation with some flint flakes and a bronze dagger. The site was last visited by an Ordnance Survey field inspector on 18.xi.66.

*Present land use* pasture.

*Visible earthworks* two rather flattened and spread round barrows.

*Ploughing damage* This field has been ploughed within the last five years and will very probably be ploughed again soon. Regular deep ploughing will soon destroy these barrows completely.

*Scatter* none.

*Future damage* likely.

### **BREWHAM**

6(ii) ST 73 SW 1

*Grid reference* Cards Farm 722346

*Description* polished stone axe found on the farm.

*Previous history* The axe was found here in 1951, and given to Taunton Museum.

An Ordnance Survey field inspector visited the site 4.xi.66.

*Present land use* pasture.

*Visible earthworks* none; but the owner indicated the two fields immediately in front of the farm on the other side of the road as the area where he has constantly found flint and flint implements when ploughing.

*Ploughing damage* fields under regular cultivation.

*Scatter* The owner mentioned finding large and small shaped flints, oyster and other sea shells and many small fragments of flint.

*Future damage* The owner does not keep the finds himself, but has always given them away to anyone who wanted them. The field will be ploughed again next year.

### **MILBORNE PORT**

22(iv) ST 62 SE 6

*Grid Reference* 65742184

*Description* Neolithic and Roman finds.

*Previous history* Neolithic axe and Romano-British pottery found here in 1950; the Ordnance Survey field inspector who visited the site on 17.xi.66 found a Roman coin of Constans.

*Present land use* ploughed.

*Visible earthworks* none.

*Ploughing damage* Ploughing may have obliterated whatever there was in this field as no scatter was found.

*Scatter* none.

*Future damage* Much damage has been done already, although careful search might show that significant finds are still being turned up by the plough.

### **CHARLTON HORETHORNE CTD**

9(ix) ST 62 SE 3

*Grid Reference* 67312430

*Description* alleged Roman finds.

*Previous history* Roman finds were reported in 1950. In addition, when the field was under plough (? in the early 1960s) floors and walling were reported. The Ordnance Survey inspector who visited the site on 9.xi.66 saw nothing.

*Present land use* pasture.

*Visible earthworks* ridge and furrow, going in two different directions and of regular dimensions.

*Ploughing damage* Slight.

*Scatter* none.

*Future damage* possible, as the field might be ploughed again.

#### HENSTRIDGE

15(iii) ST 71 NW 5

*Grid Reference* 709199

*Description* Roman finds.

*Previous history* In 1950 this field was under plough. Roman pottery was found and black earth noted. The Ordnance Survey inspector visited the site on 19.xi.66 but it was pasture and nothing was visible.

*Present land use* pasture.

*Visible earthworks* none.

*Scatter* none.

*Future damage* field could be ploughed again.

#### BREWHAM

6(iii) New site — Mr. Edward Besley

*Grid Reference* ST 73713374

*Description* possible DMV.

*Previous history* The Ordnance Survey indicate chapel remains at this point on the 2½in map. These may well be linked with the earthworks in the field adjacent.

The chapel remains are now incorporated in the farm buildings. This is a very isolated and old farm and may well represent the remains of a former hamlet.

*Present land use* pasture.

*Visible earthworks* Possible house platforms and hollow ways may be distinguished with favourable light conditions.

*Ploughing damage* has clearly been ploughed in the past, but not within the last five years.

*Scatter* none.

*Future damage* field is apparently likely to be ploughed again soon.

#### CHARLTON HORETHORNE CTD

9(v) ST 62 SW 12

*Grid Reference* 63512411

*Description* deserted medieval village of Whitcomb.

*Previous history* Two large and many small enclosures and other irregularities cover an area of about 25 acres. A sluice wall, pieces of pottery and fragments of dressed stone have been found. The village was still in existence in the late 15th century and a map of 1648 shows a church on the site, but this is missing from maps of 1673 and later dates. The pottery found has mostly been of 15th to 17th century date. The site was last visited by Ordnance Survey field inspectors on 29.xi.66 and 5.xii.66.

*Present land use* ploughed.

*Visible earthworks* none, but details of the settlement are clearly visible on air photographs.

*Ploughing damage* This important DMV is under regular cultivation which will soon destroy it completely.

*Scatter* fragments of pottery and stone distinguishable in soil.

*Future damage* highly likely.

## 2. UNPUBLISHED EXCAVATION

Excavation by professional and amateur groups has taken place mainly on more obvious sites, notably Roman buildings and hillforts. The almost total lack of excavation on deserted medieval settlements and other medieval earthwork sites in the area is not surprising when the difficulty of excavation and the probable lack of 'exciting' finds are taken into account. A list of the seven excavations involved is included in the gazetteer housed in the Society's Library and it is hoped that they will be published in full before the evidence is lost.

## 3. ROOT-GRUBBING AND FORESTRY

A few known sites are imminently threatened by the felling and the subsequent removal of the roots of elms that have succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease. This activity would extensively disturb archaeological layers and future replanting would cause even more damage. In other cases, known archaeological sites have already been planted with conifers by the Forestry Commission, and will be subject to further damage when the present trees have reached maturity and are felled.

### *Examples*

#### CHARLTON MUSGROVE

10(ii) ST 73 SW 5

*Grid Reference* 74613218

*Description* motte with two baileys.

*Previous history* This is a motte with two baileys, one to the S and the other to the NW.

The site is located on the crest of a ridge. Last Ordnance Survey visit 6.xi.66. For further information see the Ordnance Survey card.

*Present land use* covered by impenetrable growth of short, closely planted conifers.

*Visible earthworks* unknown because site inaccessible.

*Ploughing damage* presumably none.

*Scatter* none known.

*Future damage* Ploughing is very unlikely, but the trees and their possible removal could damage the site.

#### CHARLTON MUSGROVE

10(iii) ST 73 SW 6

*Grid Reference* 74773354

*Description* Iron Age hillfort, known locally as 'Kenwalch's Castle'.

*Previous history* This is a univallate hillfort, 240 × 120 yards; it is bisected by the modern road but this seems to run through the original entrances to the fort and thus not to have inflicted major damage to the site. The Ordnance Survey visited the site on 16.iv.64 and 5.xi.66.

*Present land use* woodland.

*Visible earthworks* Despite the fairly heavy covering of trees, the hillfort is in excellent condition and in no way altered from its condition at the last Ordnance Survey visit.

*Ploughing damage* none and none possible.

*Scatter* none.

*Future damage* possibly by the removal of trees.

## 4. BULLDOZING

An important moated site in the survey area was totally destroyed by levelling prior to building, some time between 1966 and 1974. Similar destruction of important archaeological sites has also been noted elsewhere in the county.

*Example*

## WINCANTON

36(iv) ST 72 NW 13

*Grid Reference* 74102567

*Previous reports* The moated site marks the home of the Zouche family, who were the last Barons of Castle Cary. The Ordnance Survey inspector reported the site to be in good condition on 16.xi.66.

*Present land use* The moat has been filled in and covered by two new haybarns.

*Visible earthworks* none.

*Ploughing damage* none.

*Scatter* none.

*Future damage* site totally destroyed.

## 5. BADGER-DIGGING

One site in the area has been damaged by badger setts and the digging-out of the animals by the local residents.

## CHARLTON HORETHORNE

9(vi) ST 62 SW 13

*Grid Reference* 64052365

*Description* possible promontory fort — known locally as 'Sigwells Camp'.

*Previous history* Until 1966 this site was accepted as a small promontory fort, formed partly by natural ravines and partly by a man-made ditch, and of great natural strength. In 1878 flint finds, two arrowheads and part of a bone weaving comb were found here and given to Taunton Museum. However, the Ordnance Survey field inspector who visited the site on 17.xi.66 thinks this may be a purely natural feature and thinks the number of finds too small to be of significance.

*Present land use* rough pasture, trees and scrub.

*Visible earthworks* steep-sided triangular mound, surrounded on two sides by deep natural ravines and on one side by a wide gully, which may or may not be artificial.

*Ploughing damage* ploughing would be impossible here, but the site has suffered a good deal both from the burrowings of badgers and from the holes dug into it by men to catch the badgers.

*Scatter* fieldworkers found some flint flakes.

*Future damage* the digging mentioned above, and also there is a possible threat in the various dead trees growing on the site, which might be grubbed out.

## NEWLY RECORDED SITES

Another important result of the Survey has been the recording of 15 archaeological sites which were not listed in the O.S. Archaeological Division Records. In some cases these sites had been known for several years locally by members of SESAS, while others were new sites located as a result of the documentary research and detailed fieldwork carried out by Miss Condict. In view of the importance of these sites, they are listed below in full. They include one possible barrow, an Iron Age occupation site, two deer park boundaries, three medieval moated homesteads and three probable deserted medieval settlements.

## NEW SITES

*Somerset Field Monument and Land Use Survey Catalogue Number*

2 Alford. ST 60493267. Site of manor house.

3 Ansford. ST 645335. Possible deer park boundaries.

4(iii) Babcary. ST 59202945. Possible barrow.

5(iii) Bratton Seymour. ST 66133267. Possible boundary mound.



- 5(iv) Bratton Seymour. ST 676301. Possible tumulus.
- 5(v) Bratton Seymour. ST 68173035. Possible fishponds.
- 6(iii) Brewham. ST 713374. Deserted medieval settlement.
- 6(iv) Brewham. ST 730370. Possible deer park boundaries.
- 7(vi) Bruton. ST 693339. Strip lynchets.
- 8(iv) Castle Cary. ST 64193215. Moated site.
- 22(ix) Milborne Port. ST 677185. Mounds.
- 23(i) Mudford. ST 56402003. Moated site.
- 23(ii) Mudford. ST 57482065. Moated site.
- 29(iii) Queen Camel. ST 594267. Deserted medieval settlement.
- 31(iii) Shepton Montague. ST 698315. Possible deserted medieval settlement.

### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ninety-five archaeological sites in the eastern half of Yeovil District were inspected by members of SESAS under the leadership of a post-graduate archaeology student. 37% of these sites were found to have been damaged by one or more of five agents. In order of degree of incidence, these damaging agents were ploughing, unpublished excavation, tree-grubbing, bulldozing and badger-digging. Of these, ploughing was by far the most significant and was responsible for damage to 24% of the sites.

During the course of the survey, 15 new sites were recorded for the first time and plans of three earthworks were drawn. The new sites are mainly medieval in date and have added to our knowledge of the distribution of medieval settlements within the study area.

Arising from the results of the survey, it is possible to make the following specific recommendations:

1. It is advisable that the condition of all known archaeological sites in the county should be inspected at regular intervals. This task could best be carried out by members of a local society working within their immediate area. In order to maintain a standard procedure this process could involve the use of a detailed pro forma with an attached information sheet.
2. Arising from these inspections, notice of current potential major damage to any site should be given to the archaeologist in the County Planning Department or to CRAAGS, so that arrangements can be made for a watching brief or rescue excavation as necessary. It is to be hoped that much of the subsequent work involved in such action could be carried out by members of local societies. However, notification should be given to CRAAGS as all financial assistance from the Department of the Environment for rescue archaeology in the region is channelled through the Committee.
3. The high percentage of damaged archaeological sites recorded in one small corner of Somerset suggests that a more widespread survey of the present condition of sites throughout the county should be undertaken.
4. The rapid completion of the 'Somerset Field Monument and Land Use Survey' and its preparation for publication have only been possible as a result of the close co-operation between a wide range of archaeologists working in the county: the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, and a post-graduate student employed by them, a local society (SESAS), the archaeologist in the County Planning Department and officers of CRAAGS. The future of rescue archaeology in the county may be strengthened by the development of co-operative exercises of the kind described here and it is hoped that many more projects may be undertaken on this basis.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to Mr. Patten, Secretary of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, for making the necessary financial arrangements and to members of the Society's Archaeological Committee for assistance in the organization of the survey. David Bromwich of the Local History Library, Taunton Castle and the staff of the Somerset Record Office provided help with documentary sources and, in the field, much of the groundwork was carried out by members of the South East Somerset Archaeological Society. Miss Condict is particularly indebted to Miss M. Whitfield, Mr. & Mrs. John Keynes, the Besley family, and above all to her father who provided invaluable assistance with transport.

## APPENDIX

*Plough damage at Catsgore, a Romano-British settlement near Somerton*

BY R. H. LEECH

Excavations at Catsgore were first undertaken in 1950 (Radford, 1951). From 1970 to 1973 a further four seasons of excavation were carried out by the writer on behalf of the Department of the Environment and the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society because of damage being caused by ploughing (Leech, 1976). Before the 1970-73 excavations began the extent of the settlement was apparent from building stone and occupation debris probably brought to the surface by a combination of hill wash and ploughing (Leech, 1971).

Detailed excavation of the settlement over four years revealed much evidence of erosion by ploughing. The examples illustrated (Figs. 1-3) show the survival of layers and features of various periods in relation to field boundaries and the limits of the ploughed areas. The division into periods is a simplification of the evidence, but between buildings there was in fact little stratigraphy, probably because the ground was continually disturbed during occupation (c. A.D. 100-370) by the movement of people and animals.

To demonstrate that ploughing caused damage it must be shown that layers, now vanished, once existed. Middens and wall foundations dating up to and from the time of abandonment of the settlement were well preserved in the one area sealed by a negative lynchet and thus protected from plough damage. It is likely that similar accumulations of debris extended over the whole settlement at the time of its abandonment.

Ploughing damaged archaeological features in at least three separate ways. First, where buildings were constructed on platforms terraced along and projecting beyond the original profile of the hillside, subsequent ploughing has tended to restore the hillside to its former profile; thus many buildings suffered the greatest destruction of their foundations and floors on the downhill side, while the uphill side was relatively well preserved. Excavation of Building 3.6 (Fig. 1) showed the process at an advanced stage.

A second type of destruction by ploughing was noted where wall foundations were constructed of lias slabs pitched at an angle in a shallow trench. These walls were often well preserved where they ran across the contours and in the same direction as the plough but were frequently destroyed where they followed the contour lines and were cut into at right angles by ploughing; in the latter instance the plough will meet with much less resistance and is able to uproot quite solid foundations. The wall foundations of Building 2.7/3.3 and Building 3.13 (Fig. 2) were partly destroyed by this process.

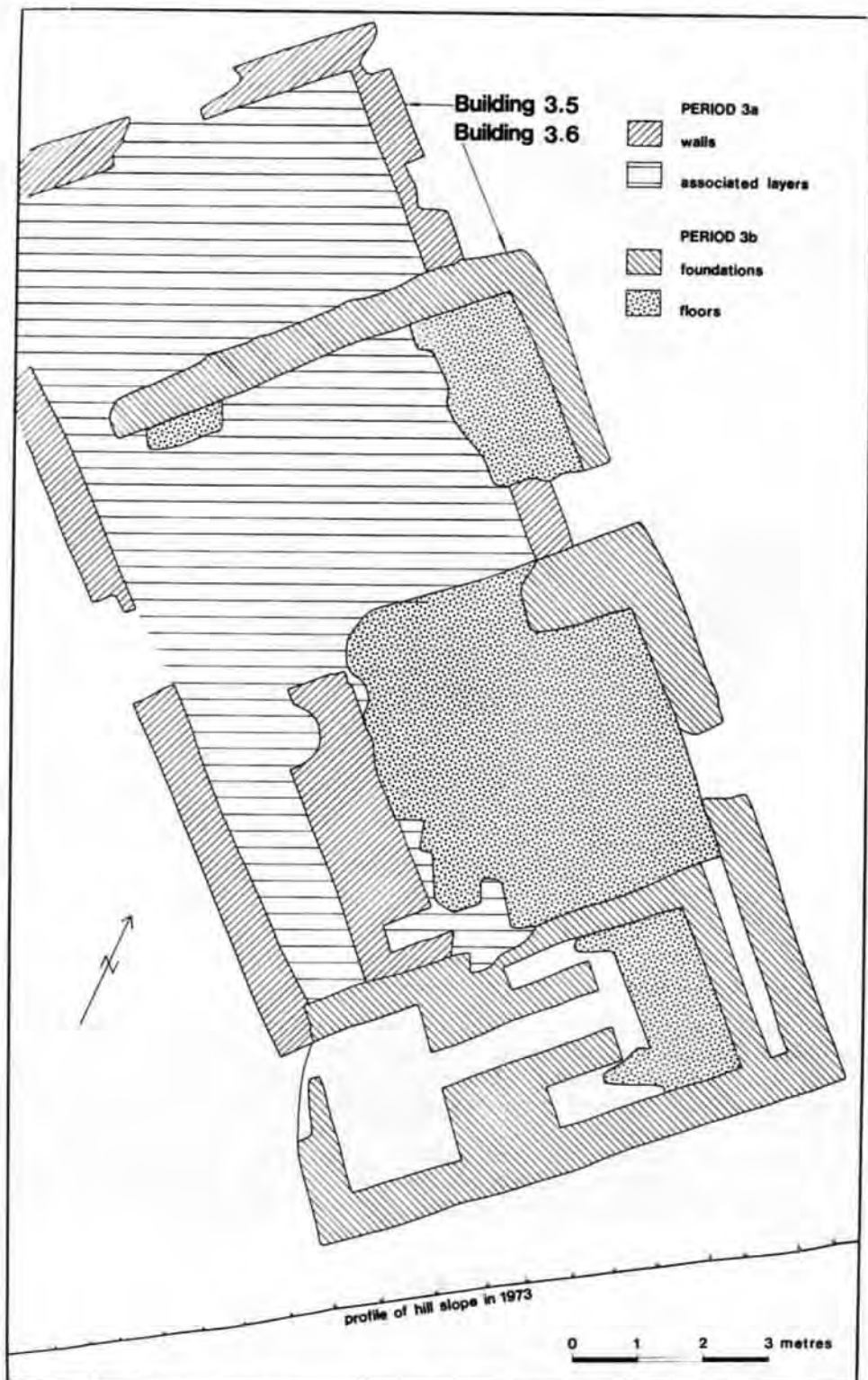


Fig. 1. Buildings 3.5 and 3.6 with uppermost layers visible after removal of recent ploughsoil, showing plough damage to walls, floors and other features on the downhill side of the Building 3.6.

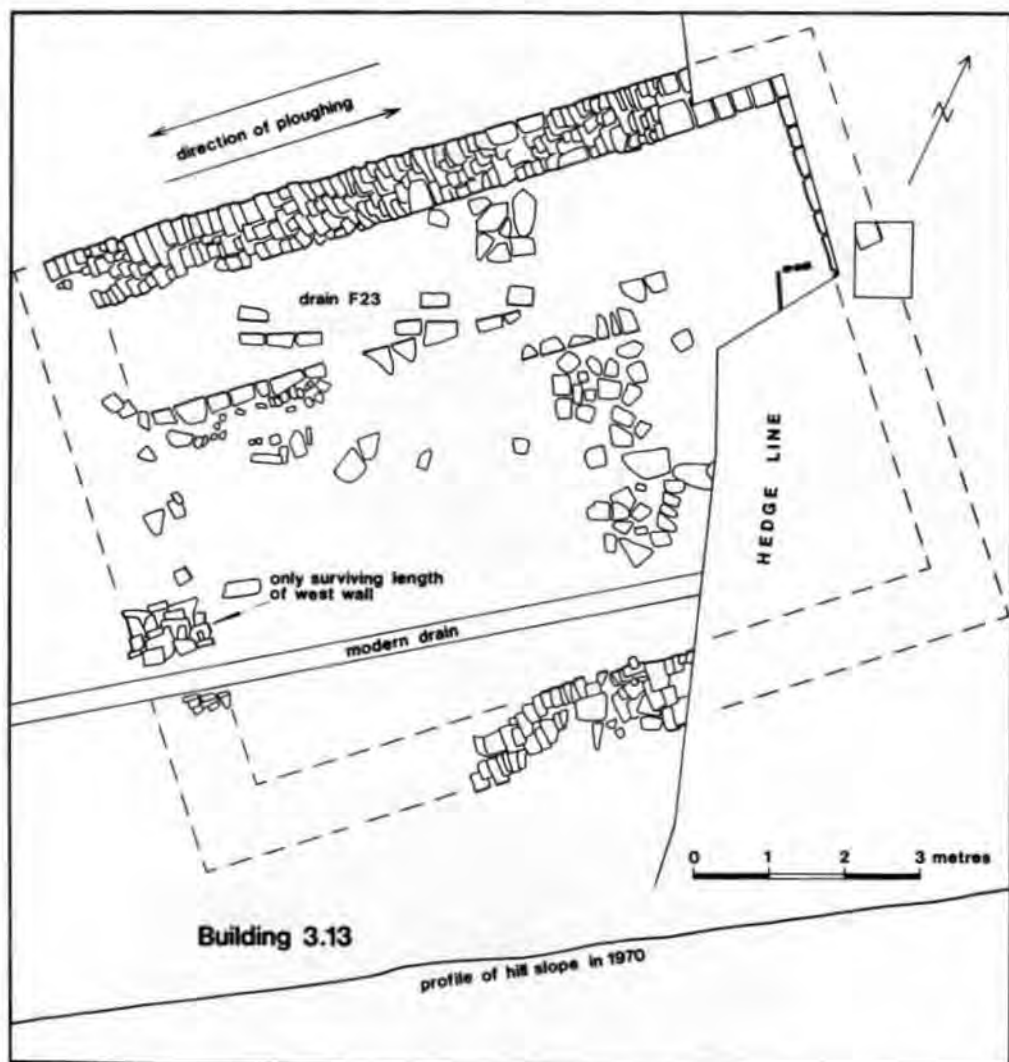


Fig. 2. Destruction of wall foundations running across the line of ploughing.

A third category of damage occurred at the ploughing headlands. At the uphill end of each field soil is disturbed by the plough and then washed downhill so that the next ploughing penetrates further, slowly forming a lynchet. Where this coincides with the existence of layers of archaeological interest their destruction by ploughing is inevitable. In the case of Building 1.2 and the feature sealing it (Fig. 3) this destruction at the headland has been rapid in recent years. Since about 1948 the hedge had encroached upon and reduced the cultivated area; the greatest damage from ploughing occurred only within this reduced area indicating that it was probably of recent date.

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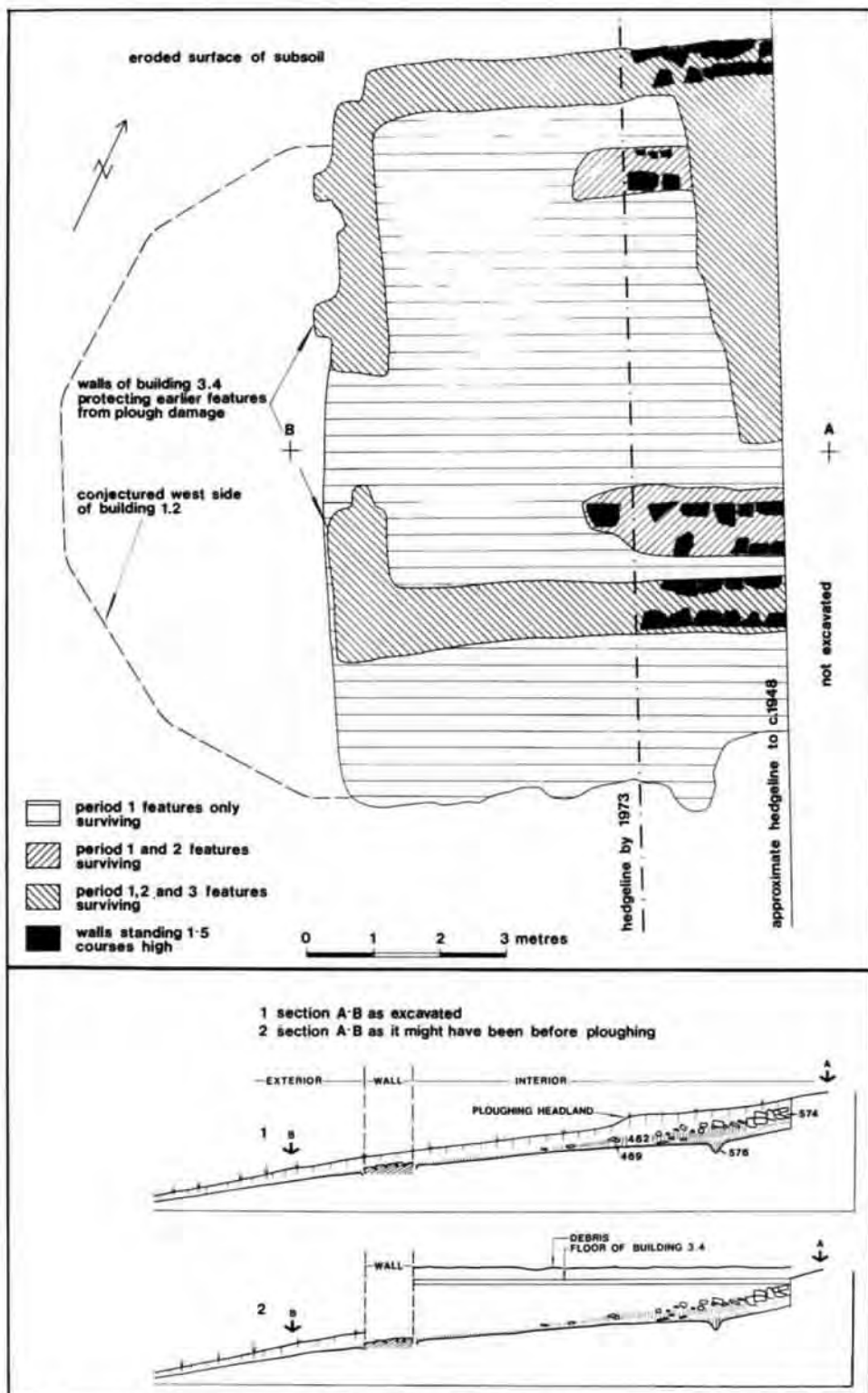


Fig. 3. Plough damage to Building 1.2 and later Buildings 2.8 and 3.4.