

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT
OF DCC TORBAY RING ROAD
STAGE 3
PLATEAU ROUTE ETO 430**

by

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SUMMARY

The archaeological assessment of Torbay Ring Road Stage 3, the Plateau Route, has primarily taken the form of a desktop study. It has drawn on information from historical and cartographic sources in addition to the archaeological database of the County Sites and Monuments Register. The results of geological investigations have also been utilised.

As with the Valley Route, it is clear from this assessment that the area under investigation is one of archaeological significance. There is evidence of settlement from the prehistoric period on the level plateau area within the route corridor, and this may have been more extensive than the existing evidence indicates.

In order to establish an accurate picture of the archaeological remains along the route, it will be necessary to undertake further investigations in the form of archaeological evaluations. This is in accordance with the procedures set out in DOE Planning Policy Guidance Note No. 16 *Archaeology and Planning*. The evaluations will take the form of a limited programme of intrusive (trial trenching) and non-intrusive (geophysical survey) fieldwork. This should establish the nature, character and extent of the archaeological deposits, and allow for an assessment of their overall value and for their future treatment within the road scheme.

The areas where evaluations are recommended are described in section 4 of the report. These are:

- (i) Sites Nos 1a-b. Colluvial deposits: two areas are identified for evaluation in the form of trial trenching and palaeoenvironmental sampling.
- (ii) Site No. 3. Prehistoric enclosures: a geophysical survey is recommended initially to establish more clearly the nature and extent of these features. As a result of the evaluation work, it may be necessary to consider proposals for the preservation of the remains. Alternatively, further archaeological investigations may be required, culminating if necessary in large-scale area excavations. This assessment has also identified the need for a watching brief to be undertaken during construction work.

1. INTRODUCTION

This assessment has been prepared at the request of Devon County Council to evaluate the Plateau Route of the proposed Torbay Ring Road Stage 3 as shown on DCC Drawing No. 6037T/134. This report should be consulted in conjunction with the previous archaeological assessment of the Valley Route entitled *Archaeological Assessment of DCC Torbay Ring Road Stage 3* (EMAFU Report No. 92.36, December 1992).

1.1 The proposed route

The total length of the proposed Plateau Route is approximately 2.7km. The route commences in the parish of Marldon at the Churscombe Cross roundabout. From here it follows the line of Kings Ash Road (the old parish boundary between Marldon and Paignton) for c. 500m. At SX871619 the route diverges to the south-west (new roundabout to be constructed) and passes to the north-west of the modern Nursery buildings. At SX87006176 it cuts across the parish boundary into Paignton (now part of Torbay B.C.). From here the route sweeps to the west through gently-sloping fields to the west of Luscombe Road as far as the south-east corner of the 19th-century reservoirs. The route then returns eastward to join Kings Ash Road just west of the built-up area at the limit of Torbay Ring Road Stage 4. Along the southern part of the route the valley slopes are less steep.

1.2 The assessment

The scheme has been considered taking into account a reasonable buffer zone (of at least 25m) to either side of the working corridor. The aims of the assessment are:

- (i) to identify archaeological features along the length of the proposed route which are considered worthy of preservation;
- (ii) to identify features which will require archaeological recording, and any particular areas, sites or features which might require more detailed assessment or evaluation;
- (iii) to identify areas where archaeological features are likely to be encountered during construction work.

The assessment comprises:

- (i) a brief survey of available documentary evidence (including maps) in the Devon Record Office and Westcountry Studies Library, Exeter;
- (ii) a search of the Devon County Sites and Monuments Register (SMR), County Hall, Exeter;
- (iii) an examination of the borehole and trial pit logs supplied by Structural Soils Ltd;
- (iv) a rapid field examination of the proposed route.

2. SITES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL INTEREST

1. Colluvial deposits (Fig. 1, Nos 1a-b)

Substantial colluvial deposits (hillwash), up to several metres deep, have been reported by the soil engineers from Structural Soils Ltd who have recently undertaken preliminary investigations to ascertain the suitability of the terrain for road construction. This has involved the digging of boreholes and trial pits at intervals along the route.

The two possible areas of colluvium lie to the east of Kings Ash Road, from the commencement of the route at least as far south as the field to the north-east of Cruel Cross (No. 1a), and east of Great Park Lakes (No. 1b). In some places the colluvium was said to have accumulated to a depth of over 3m, banking up against the hedge boundaries.

There seems little doubt that the valleys have undergone substantial topographical changes as a result of colluvial activity, and the valley slopes continue to be unstable. Substantial colluvial deposits are archaeologically significant for two reasons:

(i) They may overlie and seal early ground surfaces (buried soils) or other deposits which could contain preserved organic material (e.g. pollen). Such material can provide information about past land-use. Similarly, dateable material (e.g. charcoal) can often be retrieved.

(ii) The hillwash (colluvial) deposits may themselves contain artefacts from settlement sites which were located upslope.

There are indications along the Valley Route of environmental material having been sealed by deposits of hillwash, and this is mirrored to some extent in the results from the trial pits dug along the Plateau Route. In the gentle valley to the north-east of Cruel Cross (SX870619) one trial pit has shown some evidence of charcoal at a depth of between 2.2-2.9m (TP241).

2. Parish and estate boundary (Fig. 1, No. 2)

The parish boundary between Marldon and Paignton (now part of Torbay BC) is cut by the proposed route to the west of the main road at SX87006176. Marldon itself was from early times included (at least in part) within the manor and ecclesiastical parish of Paignton, which was held by the bishops of Exeter until the Reformation. The boundary itself should historically be regarded as an estate boundary, marking the southern extent of Westerland. This was an estate of at least late medieval origin which was at one time regarded as a sub-manor of Paignton. In the mid 19th century the land to the north of the boundary belonged to Lower Westerland. The land to the south of the boundary was divided between several tenements (the Kings Aish Estate being recent).

Archaeological deposits in the form of buried soils may be preserved beneath the hedgebank which marks the boundary. Such sealed deposits are potential repositories of environmental information, e.g. pollen, which can be radiocarbon dated). A trackway may have existed alongside this boundary (see 3 below).

3. Cropmark sites: possible prehistoric enclosures (Fig. 1, No. 3; Fig. 2)

As noted in EMAFU Report No. 92.63, prehistoric enclosure (settlement) sites tend to be located along ridges or on upper valley slopes rather than within the valleys themselves. The proposed route travels along the western edge of a plateau where the presence of such sites may be expected.

Just south of the estate boundary mentioned above (see 2), and to the north-west of Smallcombe Cross, two archaeological sites (No. 3 on Fig. 1) have been identified from aerial photographs which were taken in 1984. At SX87006167 a faint oval cropmark has been recorded (SMR SX86SE/72). Clearer marks have been recorded in the next field at SX87056163, representing part of a rectilinear enclosure of possible prehistoric date, and another linear feature (SMR SX86SE/73). The proposed route passes within metres of these sites and is likely to cut through the northernmost (oval cropmark) site.

The profiles of two nearby trial pits which were cut to the west of these sites (TP229 and TP228), indicate the presence of possible features surviving below ground, which may be associated with the enclosures. No evidence of the cropmark sites can be detected above ground.

The northern of the two cropmark fields is now given over to rough (neglected) pasture. In the mid 19th century it comprised two fields known as Higher and Lower Oldway (Paignton Tithe Map and Apportionment, Nos 774, 773; see also 6 below). These field-names indicate the presence of an ancient trackway. This is likely to be Kings Ash Road itself which, to the south of Churscombe Cross, forms part of an old route shown on Ogilby's Road Map (Dartmouth to Newton Bushel) of 1675 and Donn's Map of Devon of 1765. The other possibility is that there was a track lying alongside the estate boundary. Such boundaries or tracks are often located near prehistoric sites (e.g. earthworks) which functioned as convenient landmarks. However, no evidence of any such trackway was detected during the preliminary fieldwork.

4. Mill field-names: ?site of windmill (Fig. 1, No. 4)

Four fields located to the west of Luscombe Road were called 'Millpair' in the mid 19th century (Paignton Tithe Map Nos 771, 814-6). These names probably refer to the former existence of at least one windmill, although no surviving evidence for such was observed above ground during fieldwork. The route passes through the northernmost of these fields, just south of Kings Aish House.

5. Watercourse (Fig. 1, No. 5)

From Greatpark Lane as far as Kings Ash Road the route follows the course of a watercourse that emanates just south of the silted reservoir (Lower Tweenaways Water). This represents part of the water supply from the Westerland Valley which was utilised by the bishops of Exeter to serve their mill at Paignton. No evidence of culverting was found during the preliminary fieldwork, however much of this area comprised rough neglected pasture, and it is possible that any surviving evidence is obscured by vegetation.

6. Field-names (Fig. 1, No. 6)

At the termination (southern end) of the proposed route are three fields which were named Backward, Middle and Great Oldway in the mid 19th century (Paignton Tithe Map and Apportionment, Nos 1267, 1270, 1275). These probably refer to Kings Ash Road, part of which was an ancient route to the coast.

7. Buildings along the route (not numbered on Fig. 1)

Two buildings are likely to be affected by construction work. These are an outbuilding at SX86846152 (within the northernmost 'Millpair' field, and a house called 'Naptor' at SX86686123. Both these buildings are of 20th-century date, and do not require further recording.

3. CONCLUSION

The main areas of archaeological interest along the proposed Plateau Route are as follows:

- (i) *Colluvial deposits* (Nos 1a-b)
- (ii) *Boundary* (No. 2)
- (ii) *Prehistoric features* (No. 3)

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Preservation

No sites or features requiring preservation have been identified along the route on the basis of existing knowledge. However, it may be necessary to earmark certain sites for preservation in the light of the results of the recommended evaluation excavations.

4.2 Archaeological evaluation

In accordance with the Department of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance Note No. 16 *Archaeology and Planning* (Nov. 1990), it is recommended that evaluation excavations are carried out well in advance of road construction in order to establish the extent and nature of any archaeological deposits or features. This will permit more considered decisions to be made about the treatment of sites during the road scheme.

(a) *Colluvial deposits*

These should be concentrated in the area around TP241 (1a on Fig. 1; Fig. 3) and to the east of Great Park Lakes (1b on Fig.1; Fig. 4).

(b) *Cropmark sites*

It appears that the route will cut through part of the northernmost site (identified as a faint oval cropmark), and it is recommended that a geophysical survey is carried out prior to the final determination of the route by DCC. This should be undertaken within the area defined by A and B on Fig. 1, and should include as many fields as possible. There will be a certain amount of survey outside the actual corridor, but it is necessary to put the information in the context of the surrounding landscape. Depending on the results of the survey, it may be necessary to make further recommendations for excavation of the site. The survey should also determine whether the site should be avoided by the proposed route.

4.3 Further archaeological investigations

It may be necessary to undertake more detailed investigations in certain areas along the route. The nature, location and extent of any such investigations can only be determined after the evaluations recommended above have been completed.

4.4 Watching brief

It is recommended that a watching brief be undertaken along the length of the route during construction work. Fieldwalking should be carried out soon after the topsoil has been stripped in order to retrieve surface finds and identify any sites or features relating to the areas of interest in section 3.

A watching brief carried out during construction work itself should identify any further features of archaeological interest which have not been visible in plan at the initial stages. It should be noted that further evaluation, the provision for sampling or recording, and limited hand excavation in selected areas may be necessary. For example, at this stage it will be determined whether the taking of samples from ruptured hedgebanks (e.g. boundary No. 2) is appropriate. Accordingly, allowance within the programme should be made at this stage for accommodating any such eventualities. The contractors should be alerted to the presence of archaeologists on site, although their presence need not cause undue delay or hindrance.

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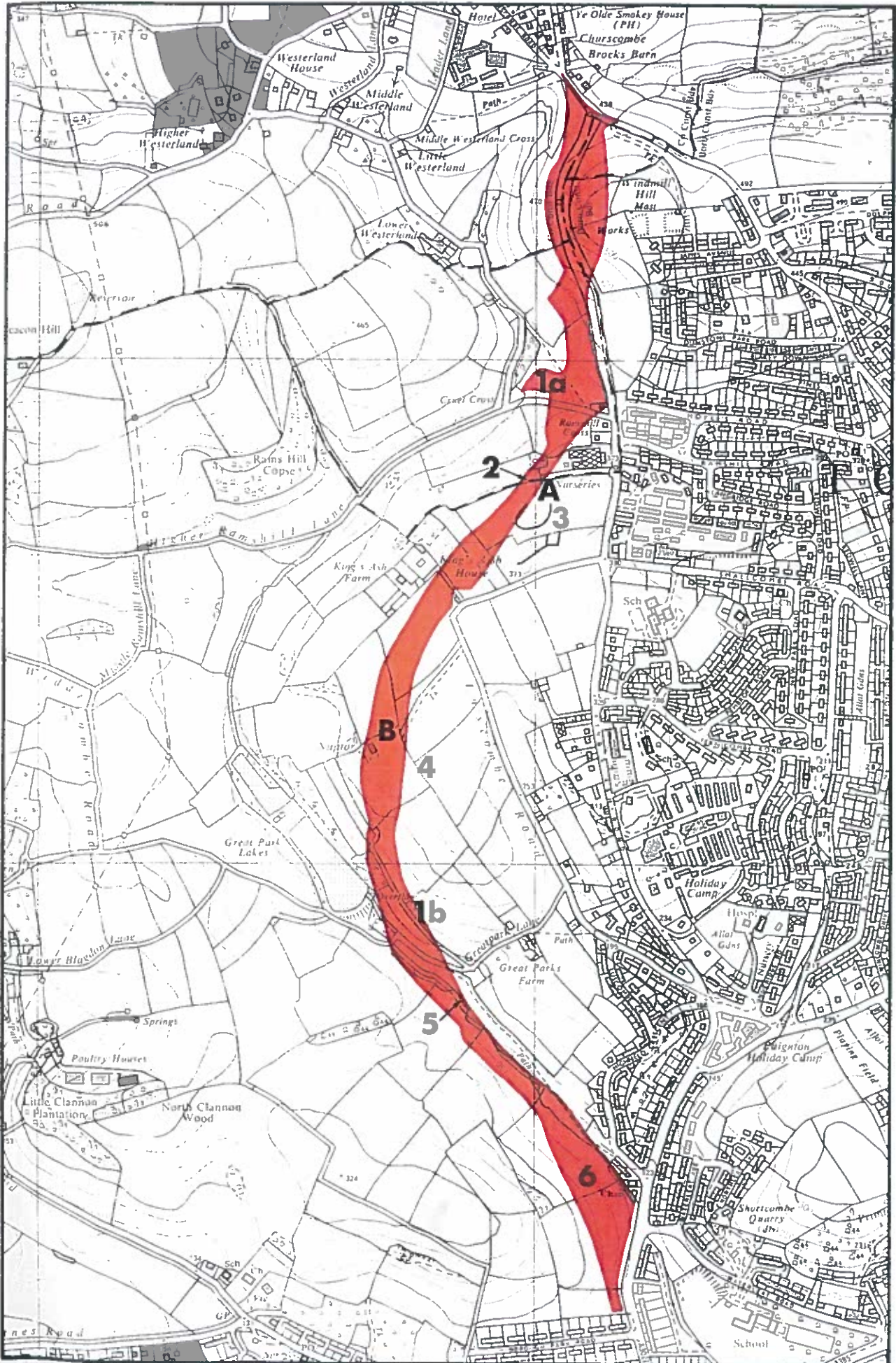


Fig. 1 The proposed route corridor showing location of sites.

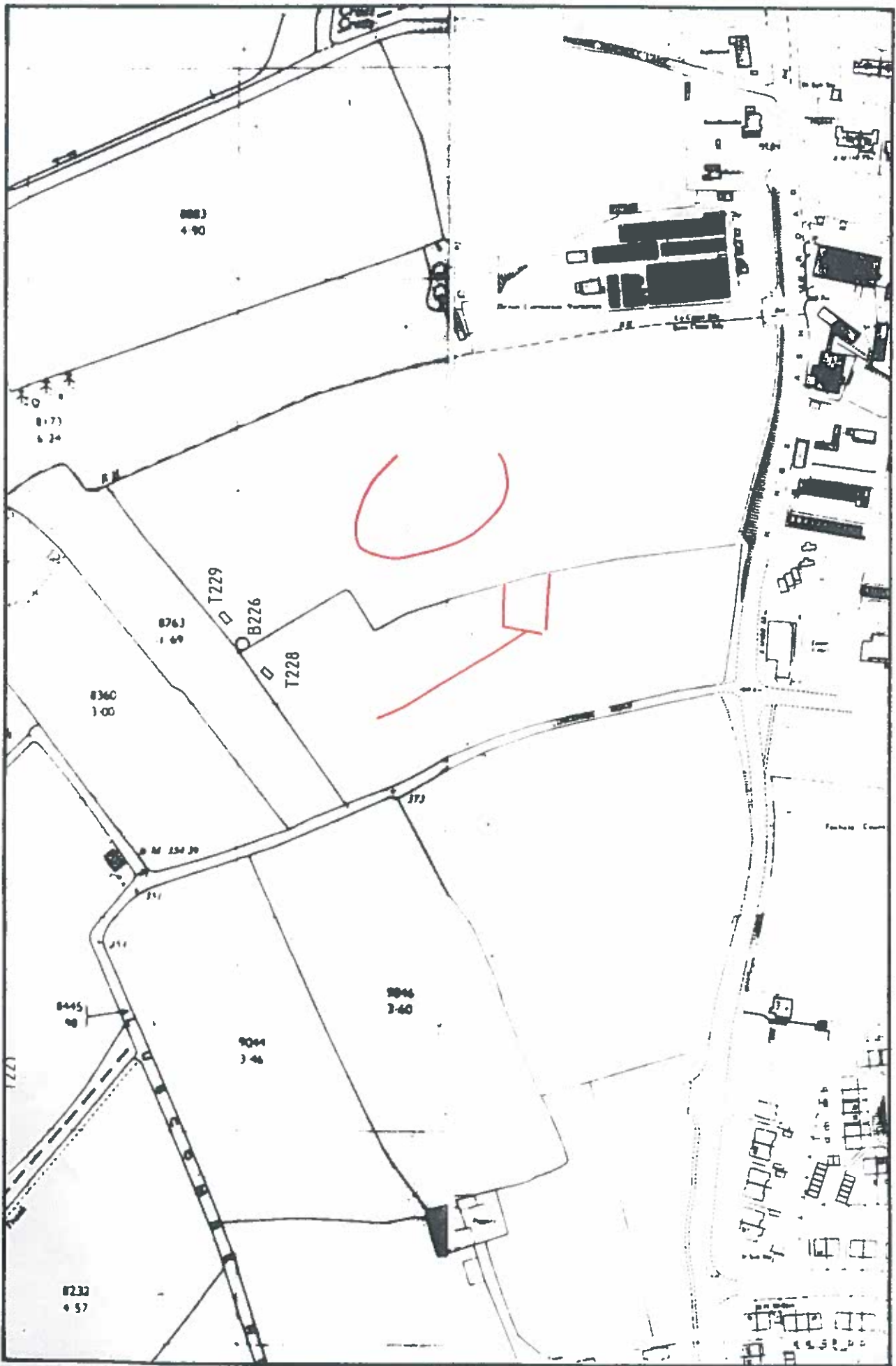


Fig. 2 Location of cropmark sites.

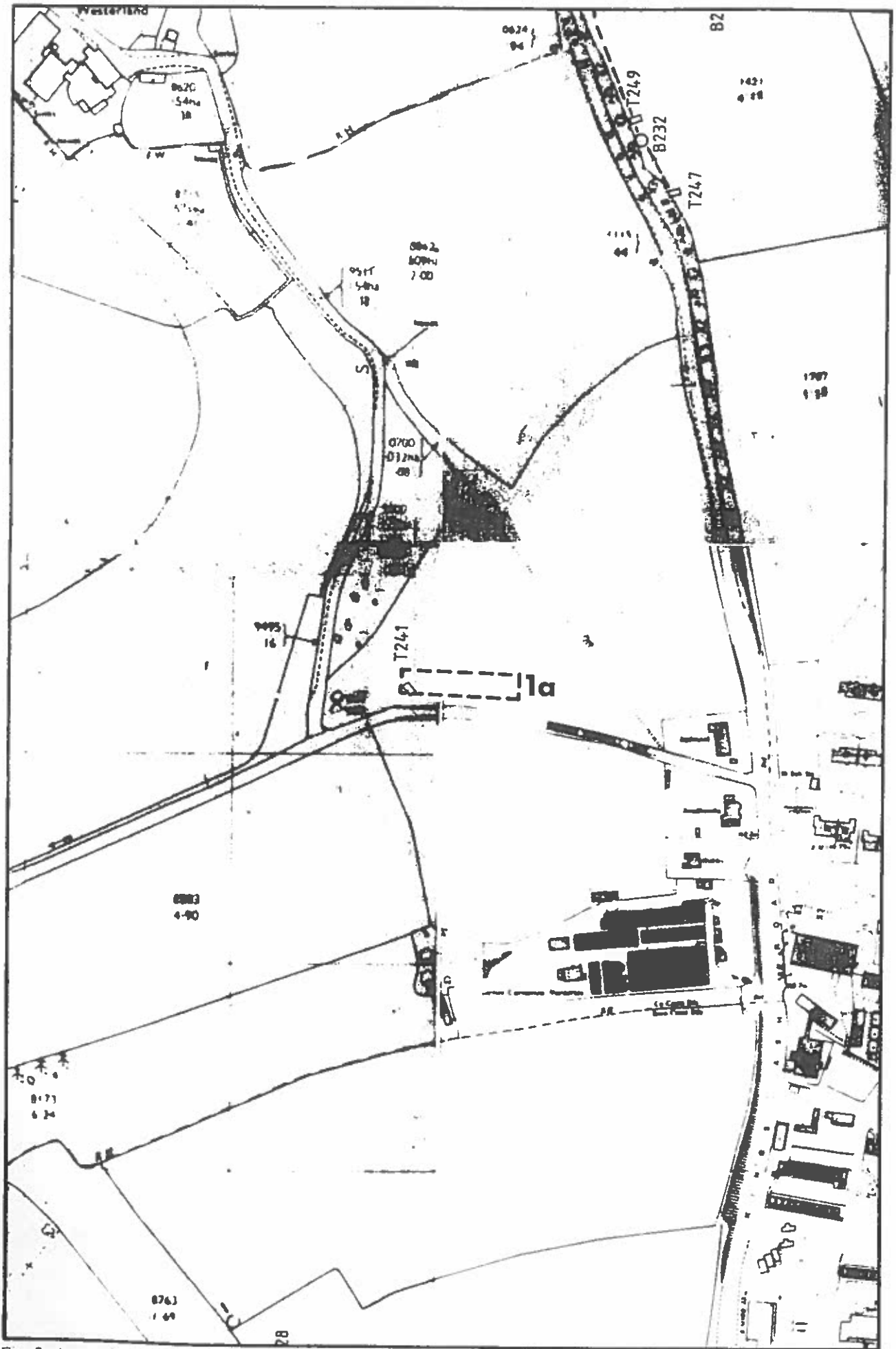


Fig 3 Area within which sampling for colluvium should be undertaken (1a).

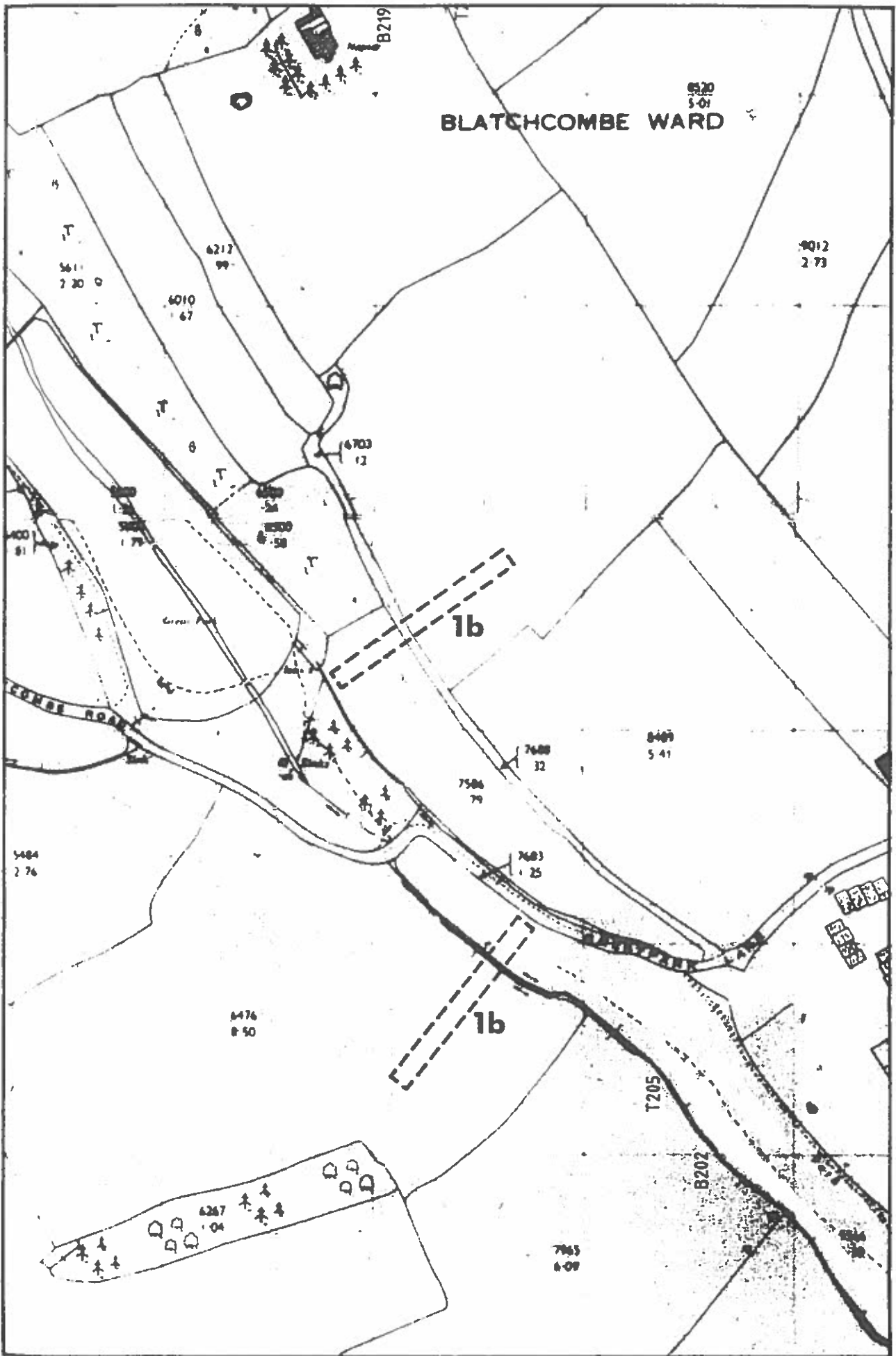


Fig. 4 Area within which sampling for colluvium should be undertaken (1b).



Plate 1. The northern part of the route immediately west of the Nurseries, looking south.



Plate 2. The route east of Kings Ash House, looking north-east.