



**Gloucestershire**  
COUNTY COUNCIL

*An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment,  
Evaluation and Survey of*

**Drakestone Point,  
Stinchcombe Hill,  
Gloucestershire**



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Archaeology Service  
Environment Directorate

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## Site details

Site address: Drakestone Point, Stinchcombe Hill, Nr. Dursley, Gloucestershire

OS NGR: 373621 197975

Site type: Evaluation and survey

Client: Countryside Archaeological Advisor, Gloucestershire County Council

SMR No: 27586

Dates of fieldwork: 25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> January, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> February, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2005.

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## Summary

Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service (GCCAS) was commissioned by Mr. Nick Russell, the Countryside Archaeological Advisor at Gloucestershire County Council to undertake an archaeological desk-based assessment, evaluation and survey of Drakestone Point, Stinchcombe Hill, Nr. Dursley, Gloucestershire (NGR 373759 198214). The assessment has been requested to help better understand the nature of the archaeological remains at Drakestone Point and the immediate vicinity and to inform future decisions on the management of landscape, particularly with regard to the Scheduled Monument (No.64) at the south-western end of the promontory.

This study of Drakestone Point, Stinchcombe Hill has demonstrated that the earthworks at the tip of the south-western promontory were constructed, creating a planned arrangement of banks, ditches and terraced platforms. Many of the features cut into the top of the south-eastern scarp slope, mentioned in 19<sup>th</sup> century antiquarian reports, are probably of man-made origin but uncertain and varied function. A possible ditch across the eastern promontory and earthworks associated with the 19<sup>th</sup> century firing range were identified.

- Excavation of an evaluation trench (Trench 1) and a survey of the features at the south-western end of Drakestone Point confirmed the presence of a rock-cut ditch with an upcast bank, demonstrated a planned and coherent layout and revived the interpretation that this site is a defended promontory.
- Identification of a large slightly convex ditch-like feature crossing the east-south-east pointing promontory at the north-eastern corner of Drakestone Point suggests that this too may have been an enclosed area.
- A survey of forty-one features cut into the top of the scarp edge of the east and south-east facing sides of Stinchcombe Hill suggested a series of possible interpretations including quarrying, land-slip and tree removal. However, some of these features have the characteristics of terraced platforms, which may have supported structures or provided a sheltered working platform.
- An evaluation trench (Trench 2) excavated across one of these features (No. 14; Figure 6) recorded a vertical rock-cut face on the uphill side, demonstrating that stone had been removed to a depth of at least 1.1m. A pit-like feature was recorded, cut into the main stony, sterile fill. Sealing this was a gravely layer with a highly humic matrix. Time and safety constraints prevented excavation to a depth that would confirm the nature of the feature. Material had been burnt on the gently sloping surface, at the eastern end of the platform.
- Earthworks within the golf course, immediately to the north of Drakestone Point may represent the remains of a firing range present in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## **1 Introduction**

**1.1** Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service (GCCAS) was commissioned by Mr. Nick Russell, the Countryside Advisor at Gloucestershire County Council to undertake an archaeological desk-based assessment, evaluation and survey of Drakestone Point, Stinchcombe Hill, Nr. Dursley, Gloucestershire.

**1.2** The earthworks at Drakestone Point have been variously described as the remains of an “Iron Age Camp”, a “Roman Signal Station” and the result of geological activity (RCHME 1976). Mention has also been made of thirty-two “pit dwellings” (Payne 1877) and a possible rifle range (Ordnance Survey c.1880). The programme of survey and evaluation undertaken has been designed to characterise the earthworks, principally those at the south-western tip of the promontory. Trench 1 was excavated to assess the likely origin of the banks and ditches set across the narrowest point of the ridge, immediately north-east of the tip. Trench 2 was excavated to test the nature of one of the features cut into the top of the south-eastern scarp slope.

**1.3** The assessment describes the study area and its position in the landscape. The history and archaeology of the surrounding area is presented, highlighting archaeological remains in the vicinity of the study area. Historic maps, plans, profiles, and written reports are discussed. The assessment concludes with an analysis of the archaeological and historical importance of the study area and proposals for its future management.

**1.4** Jo Vallender (Senior Project Officer, GCCAS) managed the project. Tony Morris (Assistant Project Officer, GCCAS) co-ordinated the fieldwork and post-excavation. Geophysical Survey was undertaken by Mark Noel of GeoQuest Associates. Earthwork survey and evaluation were carried out by Tony Morris, Julian Newman (Site Assistant, GCCAS) and Rachel Heaton (Senior Site Assistant, GCCAS).

**1.5** Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service is an Institute of Field Archaeologists, Registered Archaeological Organisation (IFA RAO 42).

## **2 Site location**

**2.1** Drakestone Point is a narrow, steep-sided promontory extending south-westwards from the western end of Stinchcombe Hill, a westward spur of the Cotswold escarpment, with Stinchcombe village to the north-west, Cam to the north and Dursley to the east. It lies within the area owned by Stinchcombe Recreation Ground Trust. The study area comprises Drakestone Point and land immediately to the north-east on Stinchcombe Hill within the parish of Stinchcombe. It covers c.10.8ha, centred on NGR 373759 198214. The earthworks at the end of the promontory cover c.0.4ha, centred on NGR 373621 197975. The extent of the study area assessed is shown on Figure 1.

**2.2** The site is covered mostly by reinstated meadow recovered from scrub woodland. Woodland remains on the western and lower southern and eastern slopes of Drakestone Point, as well as in small stands at the tip of the promontory and to the north of the Ordnance Survey Triangulation Point, at the edge of and within Stinchcombe Golf Course.

**2.3** Drakestone Point lies within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the Kings Stanley to Hawkesbury Scarp Management Zone. Stinchcombe Hill is highlighted for special attention (Cotswolds AONB 1996):

- Undergrazing of unimproved grassland is occurring, leading to scrub encroachment. Encouragement of the preparation of a management plan to preserve the grassland landscape is recommended.
- There is possible need for scrub clearance to protect sites of archaeological and historical interest.

**2.4** Most of the study area lies within the Stinchcombe Hill Site of Special Scientific Interest (Figure 3; SSSI pale green).

**2.5** The plateau and some of the hillside to the north-west and south-east, at the south-west end of Drakestone Point is a Scheduled Monument (No. 64). This includes the banks and ditches crossing the promontory but not the terraced areas cut into the slope at its south-western end (Figure 1). The scheduling description reads as follows:

“Drakestone Camp, Stinchcombe with adjoining ditches, prehistoric and Roman javelin pits (dene holes?) and a very perfect “hollow-way”. The defences of this small camp or signal station consist on the north, across the neck of the promontory, of 5 banks and ditches. The ditches are from 4 to 8 feet below the tops of the banks. On the south the hillside is twice scarped to increase the steepness of the slope. On the east and west, the hillside is very steep. There are a good many holes full of stones in the eastern side of the hill just below the top; but some of these holes are outside, that is north, of the camp. There aren't any holes on the western side of the hill (C. 1947). Defensible position with panoramic views over the Severn Vale probably, on a clear day, as far as the Forest of Dean and Monmouthshire. The “signal station” is at the south-west tip of the summit and is no more than 10m square, int. about 2m below top of surrounding banks. Ditches on the north side very overgrown with bushes and trees but visible where crossed by path. S & W slopes now wooded with mountain ash saplings. One rabbit burrow in S part of scheduled area. W & N sides very overgrown and largely invisible, otherwise monument appears to be in good condition (Williams 1984).”

**2.6** Geologically, the study area lies on oolitic limestone of the Middle Jurassic period. Much of the promontory is an outcrop of the Birdlip Limestone Formation (formerly the Lower Inferior Oolite), with a small area of overlying Salperton Limestone Formation (formerly the Upper Inferior Oolite). Across the northern end of the study area is a fault, running approximately east-west, marking a change of surface outcropping from the Birdlip (to the south) to the Salperton Formation (to the north). This corresponds to a steep north-facing slope and in part, a low cliff to the north of the Trigonometry Point at the southern edge of the golf course (Figure 2; British Geological Survey 2005; Ordnance Survey 1970). Mention has been made (Ordnance Survey 1971, RCHME 1976) of an interpretation of the features at the tip of Drakestone Point by the Geological Survey, describing these as a series of natural “gulls” (linear hollows created by slumping of the underlying rock formation). Enquiries to the British Geological Survey at Keyworth have as yet provided no confirmation or reference for this interpretation.

### **3 Archaeological and historical background**

Published and unpublished reports, maps and plans held in the Gloucestershire Sites and Monuments Record (GSMR) and Gloucestershire Records Office (GRO) have been used in the preparation of this report. A gazetteer of sites recorded on GSMR in the vicinity of the site is appended, including their distance from the proposed development site. GSMR sites in the immediate vicinity of the assessment area are located on Figure 3.

#### **3.1 Drakestone Point (GSMR 445)**

**3.1.1** The earliest reference to Drakestone is in an article by Lloyd Baker (1821):

“...A little beyond Westridge is a considerable projection called Stinchcombe Hill, which ends in a point not more than 10 yards wide, called Drakestone. Across Drakestone there are three nearly perfect banks and ditches, but none round it. This is the very highest point of Stinchcombe Hill, and commands one of the most extensive prospects in England. When considered singly it is not easy to guess what could have been the use of a work apparently so insignificant, but it most probably was a sort of Beacon, for from Westridge, Uley Bury, which is the next fortress, cannot be seen, but Drakestone can be seen from both, as well as

from Knoll, Elberton, Oldbury, the Abbey, Old Sodbury, Bredon Hill, and perhaps from Bloody Acre and Horton.”

**3.1.2** Payne (1877) describes the earthworks at “Drakestone” as a series of mounds and ditches, including a regional and local location map and a profile. This shows three terraced areas, stepping up from south-west to north-east. Continuing to the north-west are a series of four banks and ditches, a further terraced area and a final bank and ditch. These are interpreted as fortifications for the point, interpreted as a signalling station by which communication was kept up between the neighbouring Camps of Uley Bury and Westridge (Blackenbury). Payne proposes an alternative function: that of a “refuge” for a local population, living in “pit-dwellings” cut into the scarp, just below the brow of the plateau, on the south-eastern side of the Stinchcombe Hill plateau. Seventeen of these features are noted on south-eastern and southern side of “Drakestone” and another fourteen on the south-east facing slope of the Stinchcombe Hill plateau to the north-east. One example exists within the area of the Hill. They are described as offering sites sheltered from the northern and western wind, varying in length from 8 to 14ft, having “little depth”. A larger (25ft long) and deeper (5ft) example is noted just above a hillside gully known as Stancombe Throat. Comparisons are made to “pit-dwellings” at Westridge Hill and Minchinhampton Common.

**3.1.3** Guise (1881) cites the following:

...”The extreme point of the hill is known as the “Drake Stone”. It is protected by four lines of entrenchment and traces of more than one hut circle are visible in the neighbourhood. The term “Drake stone” is believed by Mr. John Bellows to be a corruption from the Welsh “Drych”, a sight of spectacle...”

**3.1.4** Wits (1883) reports the earlier observations of Lloyd Baker and Payne, including the remains of 32 “pit-dwellings discovered “a little to the north”, describing the site as an ancient signalling station or “outlook”:

“...defended by a series of banks and ditches, certainly not less than four in number, and yet the area defended is only one-sixteenth part of an acre in extent, far too small for a camp. There is probably no spot in Gloucestershire where grander views can be obtained; it is admirably adapted for a post of observation, at least ten other camps being visible...”

**3.1.5** Burrow (1919) summarises earlier observations, referring to a series of four mounds and ditches and highlighting a particular “pit-dwelling”, 25ft in length and 6ft at its greatest depth, sited just above the ravine known as Stinchcombe Throat.

**3.1.6** Smith (1964) suggests that Drakestone is derived from *draca* (Old English: dragon) and *stān* (Old English: stone).

**3.1.7** Ordnance Survey Card Index Antiquity No. ST 79 NW 2 sites the following:

“The almost level spur of Drakestone Point is broken by a series of banks, with ditches facing Stinchcombe hill, extending over a distance of 180 feet where the width is only about 30 feet. At the NE end two banks, with their medial ditch, curve back on each side into the hillside; elsewhere the banks and ditches are straighter, although bank M-N broadens considerably at its east end. A small mound, possibly a barrow, about 20 feet in diameter and 2 feet in height, with a central depression now occupied by a seat, stands between P and Q. A small oval depression about 18 inches deep lies near point F on the edge of ditch G.”

A labelled (A-Q) section with “guessed” horizontal and vertical distances is shown (Ordnance Survey 1970b). An update to the record states:

“The earthworks at Drakestone Point occur on a spur of Oolite and comprise about six lateral ‘trenches’. These bear no resemblance to a hill fort and according to the Geological survey are a series of natural “gulls”, and not a ‘Camp’ as published on the OS 25”.

The situation at the end of the spur affords excellent views over the Severn Vale, but while there may have been such things as Iron Age Beacons something more tangible is required before we can accept one here." (Ordnance Survey 1971).

**3.1.8** The earthworks at Drakestone Point, including the thirty-two "pit-dwellings", are discussed in "Iron-Age and Romano-British Monuments in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds" (RCHME 1976). A summary of the literary sources, brief comments and a N-S profile across the "ridges and gullies" at Drakestone Point" dismiss them as natural features.

### **3.2 Prehistoric period**

A Neolithic stone implement, described as an axehead of Petrology Group VI, was found on the Stancombe (south) side of Stinchcombe Hill and was exhibited by J H Cooke at a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries in 1881 (GSMR 2804; seemingly mislocated on the SMR plot; Lucy 1890-2).

### **3.3 Romano-British period**

**3.3.1** Within an article "On the Roman Wall of Gloucester" a reference to the following find is made:

"Only a few months ago in the company of our president, I found some *tesserae* with mortar attached to them at the Roman Signal Station at the top of Stinchcombe Hill." (Bellows 1876, 157).

**3.3.2** The Roman villa at Stancombe Park (GSMR 2806) was excavated in c.1847 by P. B. Purnell, who reported a room or passage 2.3m wide with tessellated pavement. A suite of rooms heated by hypocaust was found, including a large apartment thought to be the atrium, containing the bases of two rows of stone columns. The lower part of a Roman inscribed tombstone and a fragment of an inscribed tablet from P. B. Purnell's collection are thought to have originated either at Stinchcombe or Cirencester, are now in Gloucester City museum, which also houses fragments of tessellated pavement and other finds donated by Miss Purnell before 1883. According to Witts a metalled road with two arms in the form of a "Y" could formerly be seen leading to the villa. Many walls adjacent to Stancombe Park are built wholly or in part from re-used stone, which could come from the villa.

### **3.4 Medieval period**

Henry, Duke of Anjou spent a night at the castle of *Durslea* in 1149, though the castle at Dursley is said to have been built by Roger de Berkeley after his loss of Berkeley Castle in 1153. The Drakestone Point earthworks have been suggested as a possible site (Renn 1968).

### **3.5 Post-medieval period**

Drakestone House and Drakestone Side are first recorded in 1651 in the Parliamentary Survey of the land of the Dean and chapter of Worcester 1649 (Smith 1964).

### **3.6 Other archaeological evidence in the surrounding area**

**3.6.1** A very wide, deep ditch/hollow-way runs downhill to the east of and parallel to a lane descending from Stinchcombe Hill in the direction of Stancombe Park (GSMR 2803).

**3.6.2** Lynchets, up to 3ft high on a moderate slope of Cotteswold Sand, below 400ft contour, (GSMR 2805) have been noted in a broken pattern east of Stancombe Park and c.270m north of the Roman Villa (GSMR 2806). These have been interpreted as "Celtic fields" (Royal Commission on Historical Monuments England 1976) and strip-lynchets (Saville 1980, No.756, 22, 23).

**3.6.3** Well-preserved lynchets were noted to the east and south-east of Clingre Farm, on a west-facing slope overlooking the M5 motorway (Saville 1980, No.755, 22, 23; GSMR 4175).

**3.6.4** Reasonably well preserved lynchet banks were noted on a west-facing slope to south-east of Southend Farm (Saville 1980, No.757, 22, 23; GSMR 5937).

**3.6.5** In parkland called Great Bowery Upper Yard two series of strip-lynchets are well preserved. Each group consists of three lynchets. The northerly series runs north-east to south-west and has banks 1.5m to 2m in height, the terraces varying between 23 and 35m in width. The southerly series runs north to south and is less steeply banked with narrower terraces. The parish boundary between Stinchcombe and North Nibley remains as a massive bank below the latter series (Popplewell 1984; GSMR 11013).

**3.6.6** A series of lynchets were exposed in spring 1986 by clearance of scrubby undergrowth on the south-facing slope to the north-west of Stancombe Park. The uppermost merges into the wood below Drakestone Point. The lower three extend for about 210m and are about 9m wide (Popplewell 1987; GSMR 11059).

**3.6.7** In 1997, an archaeological watching brief (GSMR 18416) in Stinchcombe was undertaken by Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service in connection with land drainage works for a proposed children's play area. A flint core, two sherds of highly abraded Romano-British greyware and a *tegula* fragment were recovered. Spoil over a distance c.5m towards the south end of the most westerly, narrow, north-south trench contained several small Oolite blocks.

#### **4 Cartographic evidence**

**4.1** A copy of the 1839 Tithe Map for Stinchcombe (Gwatkin 1995) shows Stinchcombe Hill common with the south-western and eastern promontories delineated by footpaths. Land to the west of what is now called Drakestone Point is labelled "Hillside" or "Drake Stone Piece". All this land is labelled as pasture. An arable field to the south-west of the Drakestone Point promontory is called "Drake Stone".

**4.2** A copy of plans made by H. Dryden at Drakestone Point on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1842 (Gloucester Record Office 1888) shows the promontory with three, stepped, terraced areas at the south-western tip and four banks and ditches to the north east of these. The south-western ditch is set back from the north-eastern edge of the upper terrace. A set of three profiles is also illustrated. This high quality survey and unusual watercolour show the features apparently much as they survive currently.

**4.3** The First Edition Ordnance Survey County Series Plan (Ordnance Survey c.1880) shows earthworks at "Drakestone Point", which it labels "Beacon". These comprise, two banks and ditches and associated lynchet-like features. They are offset approximately 30 to 40m to the north-east of the current/1842 features, suggesting a significant surveying error. Drakestone Point is not wooded. The linear earthworks labeled "Mantelet" are shown at the north-eastern end of the Drakestone Point spur, at the southern edge of the main plateau of Stinchcombe Hill, with "Targets" in front. These mark the south-west end of a "Rifle Range". A flagstaff is noted to the north-north-east of the Trigonometry Point.

**4.4** The Second Edition Ordnance Survey County Series Plan (Ordnance Survey c.1900) is similar to the First Edition plan. It labels the northern most range earthwork "Old Magazine" (Feature No.24 see below).

**4.5** The Third Edition Ordnance Survey County Series Plan (Ordnance Survey c.1925) labels the Drakestone Point promontory tip earthworks "Camp".

#### **5 Geophysics**

A magnetometry survey was carried out in the area between the features at the tip of Drakestone Point and the Golf Course to the north. Two areas of iron debris probably represent scatters of recent litter. Three large linear features may represent ditches or joints within the underlying oolitic limestone, infilled with soil (Noel 2005: Appendix 2). They may represent camber cracks, due to gravitational stress. The speckled texture in the geophysical

data image almost certainly reflects limestone solution hollows in the bedrock and sets an anomaly threshold below which features of archaeological interest cannot be detected (approximately 1.0m; Noel pers. com.).

## 6 Trench 1

**6.1** The nature of the features at the narrow promontory tip at the south-west end of Drakestone point are a matter for debate. The opportunity to test the nature of the linear ridges and hollows was missed at the time of the excavation of a path cutting at right-angles through them. This appears to have been carried out at a time when the features were being reported as geomorphological in origin. Observation of the partly eroding banks in the footpath cuttings clearly reveals their stone-rubble make-up. A decision was taken to dig a small test-pit across the interface of one of the ridges and hollows to test the nature of these features. English Nature gave permission to dig within the scrub woodland but not the open meadow areas. A site was chosen in the only feasible opening within the trees. This lay at the brow of the plateau edge within the ditch nearest to the viewpoint and bench, on the east side of the track (Ditch 1; Figure 4a). Initially, a 2.5m by 0.8m trench was excavated by hand, partly into the linear bank to the north-east (Bank 2; Figure 4a) and at right angles to the bank and ditch. This revealed the evidence for the form and constituents of one side of each of these features. A decision was then taken to extend the trench south-westwards to 4.0m, to provide a complete section across the prospective ditch.

**6.2** Views of Trench 1 in section and plan are shown in Figure 5a-d. The natural bedrock (105) was oolitic limestone. This formed the solid base of the excavation. Its surface was covered in three areas by grey-white calcium carbonate precipitation deposit that had built up at the horizon to the bedrock surface and the looser material above.

**6.3** (104), a near stone-free, firm, pale, brownish yellow, fine sand, was preserved above (105) in the south-west facing section and at the foot of the north-east end of the south-east facing section (Figure 5a).

**6.4** The surface of (105), except at the north-east end of the trench, marked a cut [108] and was at one point open and exposed to the elements. Evidence for this comes from the nature of the material resting on it: (107), (103), (102) and (106) and from the cut line through the *in situ* but fully leached out former soil deposit (104) preserved beneath the bank material to the north-east.

**6.5** Soil was removed on the south side of Bank 2. Bedrock was dug out, commencing some 0.8m further to the south-west leaving a near vertical 0.25m high step. A 20° slope downwards to the south-west over the next 0.6m gave a depth of 0.40m in relation to the original bedrock surface. 1.3m further south-west, a 0.1m vertical step upwards marked the south-eastwardly fading south-west edge of the ditch as the natural slope plummets away south-eastwards. The bedrock surface took on the form of the curving eastern corner-base of the high mound (Platform 1; Figure 4a) to the west. [108] defined a 1.88m wide ditch (Ditch 1) cut into bedrock.

**6.6** (107), a brownish orange, fine sandy silt was the primary fill of [108] at its north-eastern edge, forming the initial windblown silting phase, incorporating small numbers of small to medium stones included by fall-back from the upcast bank material above.

**6.7** (103) was made up of 70 to 80% angular to sub-angular stones. It was the primary upcast bank material, forming its main mass and sealing (107) beneath. After construction, some of this material slumped back into the ditch sealing (107) and running out across the bedrock ditch base.

**6.8** (103) lay beneath (102). This stony upper bank material contained more humic material from the surface. It formed a continuation of slumped stony material into the ditch, which merged with similar material (106) derived from the steep mound to the west to fully

cover the original bedrock ditch cut [108]. An iron alloy horseshoe fragment of probable post-medieval origin was found at the upper edge of (102), the only find from the Trench 1.

**6.9** (101), a dark brown slightly sandy silt with up to 40% stone content and abundant tree roots, formed the main ditch fill, a very humic woodland sub-soil.

**6.10** (100), the topsoil, was a stone-free, dark brown, organic, sandy silt.

## **7 Earthwork Survey**

**7.1** Two phases of earthwork survey were undertaken as part of the study:

- Detailed survey of the features at the tip of the Drakestone Point promontory.
- Identification and location of other features at Drakestone Point and areas to the north and north-east of this on Stinchcombe Hill.

### **7.2 Features at the tip of the Drakestone Point promontory**

**7.2.1** A plan and three profiles were recorded. The plan was drawn at a scale of 1:200 by measuring offsets at right angles from two baselines: A to F and A to H (Figure 4a). Measurements were recorded to the nearest 0.1m. On the plateau, these remain accurate to plus or minus 0.05m but within the tree-covered slopes to either side, accuracy of measurement deteriorates rapidly with distance from the baseline. At the extreme eastern and western edges (barring the dimensions of Feature No.s 2, 3 and 46, which were checked subsequently) errors are estimated at plus or minus 2 to 3m. Profiles were recorded along the two baselines and additionally between pegs A and I. These were drawn at a scale of 1:50 and measurements taken to the nearest 0.01m. Levels above Ordnance Datum were recorded for the profiles and across the plateau area of the plan.

**7.2.2** At the tip of the promontory, a relatively level area has been labelled Platform 1 (c.215.0m AOD). To the south-west of this are two more features terraced into the slope, labelled Platform 2 (c.212.9m AOD) and 3 (c.209.3m AOD). South-east of Platform 3 is another possible terraced platform/landslip (Feature No.17: see below). Across the northern side of Platform 1, set back from the edge, is a small linear bank (Bank 1). In 1842, this was continuous, but is now interrupted by the path, cut probably in the 1970s. The slight northern extension to Bank 1 on the west side of the path is probably due to the upcast from this process. Much of the material cut away was used as causeway material across Ditch 1. The latter cuts across the promontory, ending at the steepening natural slope to the west and a terraced platform (Feature No.46 to the east). Bank 2 lies north-north-east of Ditch 1. It widens out at its eastern end and tapers out rapidly to the west. Ditch 2 is insubstantial, widening dramatically to the east as a result of the position of Bank 3. This bank is aligned in a series of five straight stretches, changing direction alternately northwards and southwards. Ditch 3 like Ditch 1 is substantial, surviving to a depth of over 1.5m at its deepest. It does not continue far to the east, possibly due to the presence of another terraced platform just above the steepening natural slope: Feature No.s 2 and 3 combined (see below). North of Ditch 3 is a flattish area containing two Hollows (1 and 2). Beyond this to the north-east are Bank and Ditch 4, running north-west to south-east, set at 45° to the other banks and ditches. A small bank (Bank 5) marks the northern side of the narrowing western end of Ditch 3.

**7.2.3** The earthworks at the south-west end of Drakestone Point would seem to represent a series of four banks and ditches defending the tip of the of the promontory, the site of three (possibly four) terraced platforms. Other platforms and hollows appear to be integrated into the bank and ditch system.

### **7.3 Other features**

**7.3.1** The recognition of terraced platforms associated with the banks and ditches led to the observation of similar features cut into the south and south-east facing upper slopes at Drakestone Point, the smaller, east-south-east pointing promontory to the north-east and the

edge of the main Stinchcombe Hill plateau beyond. Payne (1877) refers to these features *en masse* as “pit-dwellings”. A survey was carried out with the aim of locating and giving basic descriptions of the features present. A hand-held Global Positioning system gave National Grid co-ordinates to 1m detail, plus or minus approximately 5m. Seventeen features at Drakestone Point were drawn at scale of 1:200 (see archive), offsetting at right-angles from a baseline or, in three cases where tree-cover was too great, as a measured sketch. The results are presented in Table 1 below and Figure 6. A subjective classification has been presented along with the descriptive and measured data in an attempt to group features with similar characteristics. All features except one are the result of the removal of material from the slope. This includes the removal by people or natural slipping, of soil, rock and trees. “Quarry hollow” suggests removal by people and “Landslip” by natural processes. “Terraced platform” describes a flat-based cut into the hillside and may have been created by quarrying of stone or deliberately as a site for a structure. Possibilities include building platforms, sheltered drying/work areas and even Tenter-frame sites. Other features within the golf course at the northern end of Drakestone Point and just beyond on the main Stinchcombe Hill plateau are presented in Table 2 and discussed separately.

**7.3.2 Table 1: characterising the features cut into the scarp slope.**

FEATURES CUT INTO THE SCARP SLOPE					
No.	NGR	Overall Dimensions	Terraced Platform Dimensions	Description	Classification
1	373703 198008	c.5m wide at base.	-	Natural slumping.	Landslip
2	-	-	-	see 3 below	-
3	373705 198033	12.0m NNE-SSW; 6.0m WNW-ESE	-	Combined with 2, this forms a possible terraced platform at the south-eastern limit of the Drakestone Point earthworks (Figure 4a), partially covered on its southern side by later debris build-up.	Quarry hollow/ terraced platform
4	373712 198047	3.4m NE-SW; 5.0m NW-SE	-	Small hollow	Tree site/ Quarry hollow
5	373714 198060	14.1m NNE-SSW; 8.5m WNW-ESE	-	Elongated, sloping terraced platform	Landslip/ terraced platform
6	373720 198086	7.8m NE-SW; 6.9m NW-SE	-	Ovoid hollow with flat base and upcast bank around the lip of the downhill side.	Quarry hollow/ terraced platform
7	-	-	-	Natural slope: area of onset of scrub regeneration.	Vegetation scar.
8	373726 198104	7.3m N-S; 6.5m E-W	5.3m N-S; 2.4m E-W	Platform sub-rectangular in form apart from NW corner that is replaced by a steady curve.	Terraced platform
9	373734 198123	6.0m NE-SW; 6.6m NW-SE	-	Sub-rectangular-ovoid hollow. Slight curving upcast bank around downhill side.	Quarry hollow/ landslip
10	373749 198154	5.5m NE-SW; 5.9m NW-SE	-	Sub-rectangular platform, with slight broadening of the incised slope on the uphill side.	Quarry hollow/ terraced platform
11	373772 198169	7.7m x 7.7m	4.9m NE-SW 4.1m NW-SE	Sub-rectangular terraced platform with straight downslope (SE) edge.	Terraced platform/ quarry hollow

12	373787 198185	10.8m NW-SE; 8.7m NE-SW	3.9m ENE-WSW; 2.9m NNW-SSE and 5.7m ENE-WSW; 4.0m NNW-SSE	Two sub-rectangular, linked, terraced platforms slightly offset from one another along the NE-SW axis. They share, approximately, the same north-western edge, while the smaller, south-westerly platform lies c.0.2m higher.	Terraced platform.
13	373794 198199	6.1m E-W; 5.6m N-S	3.8m E-W; 3.0m N-S	Sub-rectangular to sub-rounded platform, forming part of a localised group forming a right angle with Feature No.14 at the angle. WSW of Feature No.14	Terraced platform
14	see 13	8.0m ENE-WSW; 4.4m NNW-SSE	6.3m ENE-WSW; 2.7m NNW-SSE	Sub-rectangular platform, forming part of a localised group forming a right angle with Feature No.13 and 15. ENE of No.13 and SSE of No. 15. Small parallel linear bank 3.9m downslope (SSE: 5.0 x 0.9m): possible spoil from platform.	Terraced platform
15	373800 198208	6.3m ENE-WSW; 3.3m NNW-SSE	5.8m ENE-WSW; 2.1m NNW-SSE 5.82.1	Sub-quadrilateral platform, longer on the downhill side, forming part of a localised group forming a right angle with Feature No.13 and 14. Directly upslope of feature No. 14.	Terraced platform
16	373842 198213	15.5m E-W; 6.0m N-S	-	Curving hollow.	Quarry Hollow
17	373628 197978	7.9m N-S; 7.9m E-W	7.9m N-S; 3.4m E-W	Trapezoidal platform set in the slope below Platform 3 at the tip of Drakestone Point.	Terraced platform/ landslip
18	373732 198133	6.0m NE-SW; 8.8m SE-NW	-	Rounded hollow with downslope lip.	Quarry Hollow/ terraced platform
19	373882 198224	Western hollow	-	Three-armed hollow formed from two sub-rectangular hollows cut into the hillside along the same contour and uphill of these at the brow of the slope, a v-shaped hollow with a rounded base, which may be the southern end of Feature No.23	Quarry hollow/ terraced platform; southern end of linear hollow.
20	373922 198221	5.9m E-W; 4.2m N-S	-	Sub-rectangular feature cut into the hillside.	Terraced platform/ quarry hollow
21	373934 198223	5.5m E-W; 4.7m N-S	-	Sub-rectangular hollow.	Quarry hollow/ terraced platform.
22	373964 198211	5.0m E-W; 5.5m N-S	-	Sub-rectangular hollow.	Quarry hollow/ terraced platform.
27	373944 198207	5.9m WNW-ESE; 2.2m NNE-SSW	-	Narrow, slightly sloping platform possibly of natural origin.	Landslip/ terraced platform
28	373989 198265	7.4m WSW-ENE; 6.1m NNW-ESE	-	Shallow hollow in the corner of woodland between the golf course (5 <sup>th</sup> fairway) and the footpath.	Quarry Hollow
29	373982 198269	2.9m NW-SE; 2.6m NE-SW	-	Sub-square hollow.	Tree site
30	373988 198284	6.4m NE-SW; 4.4m SE-NW	-	Ovoid hollow up to 1m deep. Questioning golfers revealed that no sand is remembered in this feature and No.31 over the last forty years.	Former bunker / quarry hollow
31	374005 198292	9.3m NE-SW; 4.6m SE-NW	-	Long ovoid hollow up to 1m deep.	Former bunker/ quarry hollow

32	374029 198306	14.2m NE-SW; 4.8m SE-NW	-	Hollow, narrowing to nothing to the south-west.	Quarry hollow
33	374043 198320	c.3.3m diameter	-	Shallow, circular hollow	Quarry hollow/ tree site
34	374047 198323	5.6m NE-SW; 2.6m SE-NW; narrower at NE end	-	Irregular, sub-rectangular hollow	Quarry hollow
35	374055 198325	5.6m ENE-WSW; 3.2m NNW-SSE	-	Narrow terraced strip with straight downslope edge.	Landslip/terraced platform
36	374065 198331	5.9m ENE-WSW; 3.5m NNW-SSE	-	Sub-rectangular to ovoid hollow.	Quarry hollow
37	374076 198335	7.7m ENE-WSW; 3.6m NNW-SSE	-	Long, irregular hollow.	Quarry hollow/ landslip
38	374088 198340	9.5m ENE-WSW; 3.4m NNW-SSE	-	Possible amalgamation of two features: more pronounced hollow at each end.	Quarry hollow
39	374099 198344	8.5m ENE-WSW; 3.6m NNW-SSE at WSW end; 2.9m NNW-SSE at ENE end	-	Large ovoid feature with flattish irregularly shaped terraced base, wider at its western end.	Quarry hollow
40	374107 198347	5.5m ENE-WSW; 3.7m NNW-SSE	3.9m ENE-WSW; 2.3m NNW-SSE	Sub-rectangular platform.	Quarry hollow/ terraced platform
41	374113 198351	5.7m ENE-WSW; 3.3m NNW-SSE	-	Sub-rectangular to ovoid platform.	Quarry hollow/ terraced platform
42	374123 198355	5.2m ENE-WSW; 3.1m NNW-SSE	3.6m ENE-WSW; 2.1m NNW-SSE	Small, elongated, ovoid platform.	Quarry hollow/ terraced platform
43	374136 198351	9.0m ENE-WSW; 4.3m NNW-SSE	6.6m ENE-WSW; 2.0m NNW-SSE	Long, narrow, sub-rectangular platform.	Quarry hollow/ terraced platform
44	374168 198363	12.2m ENE-WSW; 10.0m NNW-SSE	-	Large ovoid hollow at slight promontory.	Quarry hollow
45	374313 198460	10.3m E-W; 7.8m N-S (11.3m including upcast bank)	-	Large, ovoid pit, up to c.2.5m deep, at upper end of valley; upcast forms a bank around the downslope edge; c.2m wide entrance gap (slight hollow) at the east end.	Quarry hollow
46	373691 198013	-	6.4m NNE-SSW; 4.8m WNW-ESE	Terraced platform at the foot of Ditch 1; Platform 1 mound to the west, Bank 2 to the north.	Terraced platform

7.3.3 Forty-one features were identified falling into the following categories:

Quarry hollow/terraced platform:	11	Landslip:	1
Quarry hollow:	9	Quarry hollow/tree site:	1
Terraced platform:	6	Terraced platform/landslip:	1
Landslip/terraced platform:	3	Tree site:	1
Bunker (golf)/quarry hollow:	2	Tree site/quarry hollow:	1
Quarry hollow/landslip:	2	Vegetation scar:	1
Terraced platform/quarry hollow:	2		

**7.3.4 Table 2: characterising the features in the vicinity of the slope and low cliff marking the fault at the northern end of Drakestone Point.**

FEATURES WITHIN THE GOLF COURSE					
No.	NGR	Overall Dimensions	Terraced platform Dimensions	Description	Classification
23	373887 198241 to 373893 198263	c.23m NNE-SSW; 5.0m wide at N end (low cliff edge behind temporary 5 <sup>th</sup> green); 5.0m at S end (N side of 6 <sup>th</sup> fairway)	-	Possible ditch across the end of the promontory extending eastwards from Drakestone point. Part back filled for the 6 <sup>th</sup> hole fairway, separating it from its southern extent at the promontory, scarp edge: see Feature No.19.	Linear hollow
24	373857 198313	9.3m NE-SW; 6.7m NW-SE	-	Partly buried building with arched roof. Brick and concrete structure covered by earth mound. Linear and irregular mounds and hollows to the south-east. Firing range structure.	Building
25	373853 198331 to 373850 198335	10.3m NNW-SSE (possibly extending to NNW); 2.4m wide	-	Possibly part of the former firing range earthworks. Undulations to the south-west may be associated with this feature.	Linear bank
26	373915 198245	13.3m WNW-ESE; 7.9m NNE-SSW	10.5m WNW-ESE; 4.7m NNE-SSW	Sub-rectangular terraced platform cut into the NNE facing slope along the line of the geological fault crossing the northern end of Drakestone Point. East of Feature No. 23 on the northern edge of the eastern promontory.	Terraced platform

**7.3.5** Feature No.19 probably marks the scarp-slope end of Feature No. 23, the 5m wide linear hollow, and may be highly significant. Seen in a vertical aerial photograph (Get Mapping 1999), this feature links the low geological fault line cliff along the northern side of Drakestone point, within the golf course, with the southern scarp, in a gently curving line. This is the perfect site for a large ditch defending the narrow, east-south-east-pointing promontory (Figure 6). The large, terraced platform, Feature No. 26 lies within this area.

## 8 Trench 2

**8.1** An evaluation trench (Figure 7) was excavated across one of the features cut into the scarp slope in an attempt to characterise the profile, deposits and potential features preserved. Feature No. 14 (Table 1; Figure 6) was chosen, being one of the most convincing

terraced platforms and because of its pivotal position as part of a group of three such features, set at right-angles. The trench was sited at right-angles to the long axis of the feature, dividing it in two, with its north-north-western end just upslope of the steep bank marking the rear of the feature (NGR 373806 198206) and its south-south-eastern end just downslope of the platform lip (NGR 373807 198201). It was 5.10m long (north-north-west to south-south-east) and 0.50m wide and was excavated by hand. English Nature gave permission to excavate within the SSSI, provided that this was restricted to the feature and its edges, where previously cleared scrub growth was regenerating, and that damage to the grassed slopes around the feature was minimal and that the small amount of turf removed was carefully replaced after backfilling.

**8.2** Bedrock (208) was encountered on the uphill side of the feature as a cut face at an angle of c.45°, steeper than the natural slope, extending over 0.8m before shallowing to a gently sloping 0.4m wide step above a vertical face, 0.7m high. The depth of the trench at this point (1.1m), its narrowness (0.5m) and the looseness of the deposits encountered, prevented further excavation on safety grounds. The base of this vertical face and any associated rock-cut platform or slope were not therefore reached. The form of the bedrock surface within the feature, bearing in mind that the slopes all around have a naturally weathered form, clearly demonstrated that stone had been removed at this site to a depth of at least 1.1m, either for quarrying purposes or to create a terraced feature.

**8.3** (207), a sterile, loose, yellowish grey clayey silt, lay against the base of the vertical rock-face, extending 0.74m south-south-east in plan and was seen in section as a wedge of material with its surface sloping at c.20° to the horizontal. It contained small to very large angular stones and appeared to be a primary fill, possibly derived from the rock face by weathering.

**8.4** (206), an orange brown sandy silt containing many small to large angular to sub-rounded stones, overlay (207). It was 0.44 to 0.56m thick to the north-north-west, but not bottomed in the centre or south-south-east end of the trench. It appears to have been a colluvial deposit that filled the rock-cut feature to the top of the vertical face on the uphill side.

**8.5** [205], an irregularly shaped pit-like or linear feature that crossed the middle of Trench 2, cut (206). It was filled with angular to sub-rounded stones (204), with no discernable matrix. It was 0.42m deep and 0.92m wide in the west-south-west facing section, but deeper and wider in the east-north-east facing section.

**8.6** (203), formed the layer sealing (206) at its northern end, along with the top of the vertical rock-face and half of the 0.4m wide rock cut step. This deposit was an orange sandy silt containing very few stones. It abutted (202), the very stony subsoil on the steeper rock-cut slope. It is possible that (203) was the fill of a cut through (202) and (206).

**8.7** (201), a humic deposit, 0.14 to 0.23m thick, with abundant small angular stones formed the upper surface of the terraced area. It merged into (200), a mid greyish brown sandy silt with occasional angular stones, which formed the topsoil on either side. (201) sealed (204), which may have already been truncated. The source of this stony deposit is unclear. (200) sealed (202) and (203).

**8.8** Feature No. 14 was cut into the scarp slope, removing stone and leaving a vertical rock-cut face. The form of the resulting rock-cut platform has not been resolved. Neither has its function. The sterility of the lower fills encountered (206) and (207) suggests quarrying as the most likely initial use. The site would have provided a sheltered location against northerly winds. The cut-feature [205] and the layer of fine angular stones (201) show usage of the resulting platform in the later stages of its history. These activities remain undated.

## **9 Conclusions**

**9.1** 19<sup>th</sup> century antiquarians have raised many points of archaeological interest about Stinchcombe Hill and more particularly Drakestone Point, mostly by speculating on the

possible function of the earthworks at its far south-western limit. Some made an attempt to record and explain these, with particular commendation to H. Dryden's survey of 1842 (GRO 1888) and a mention to G. Payne (1877) for a less rigorous but highly enthusiastic attempt. Finds such as the Group VI, Neolithic stone axe (GSMR 2804; Lucy 1890-2) from the southern slopes of the hill, the *tesseræ* found on Stinchcombe Hill (Bellows 1876) and the mention of the remains of hut circles in the neighbourhood (Guise 1881) and more recently the records of lynchet based field systems around the lower slopes of the hill (Saville 1980 and Popplewell 1984, 1987) all give a picture of long standing activity in the close vicinity of these earthworks.

**9.2** Twentieth century geological interpretation of the Drakestone point features as being of geomorphological origin ("gulls") was mentioned in reports of the 1970s (Ordnance Survey 1971, RCHME 1976).

**9.3** The Trench 1 excavated as part of this study has shown for the first time that one of the linear banks (Bank 2; Figure 4a) is made of upcast stone rubble lying on the leached-out remains of a former soil. Near vertical edges for a 1.88m wide ditch-cut (Ditch 1; Figure 4a) have been demonstrated along with a series of fills fully compatible with this feature being a man-made ditch.

**9.4** An earthwork survey of the banks, ditches, terraced platforms and hollows gives a picture of an interdependent and planned layout to the features. The system of banks and ditches appears to be a defensive system for the three (possibly four) terraced platforms at the promontory tip.

**9.5** A survey of forty-one features cut into the top of the scarp edge of the east and south-east facing sides of Stinchcombe Hill, including Drakestone Point, the narrow east-south-east pointing promontory at its north-eastern corner and north-eastwards to the head of the deep-valley, referred to by Payne (1877) as "Stancombe Throat", below the modern public car park, suggested a series of possible causes including quarrying, land slipping and tree removal. However, a significant minority of these features have the characteristics of terraced platforms, which may have supported some structure or provided a sheltered working platform. It is interesting to note that the majority of these are positioned at Drakestone Point between the two promontories.

**9.6** An evaluation trench (Trench 2) excavated across one of these features (No. 14; Figure 6) recorded a vertical rock-cut face on the uphill side, demonstrating that stone had been removed to a depth of at least 1.1m. A pit-like feature was recorded, cut into the main stony, sterile fill. Sealing this was a gravely layer with a highly humic matrix. Quarrying of stone remains the most likely initial goal, but the resulting rock-cut platform would certainly have provided shelter against northerly weather and usage in the latter part of its history has been demonstrated.

**9.7** A potential ditch and the presence of a large terraced platform suggest that the east-south-east pointing promontory also had the potential to act as an enclosed area or defensive site.

**9.8** Earthworks within the golf course, immediately to the north of Drakestone Point may represent the remains of a firing range present in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**9.9** The western scarp-slope of Drakestone Point has no incised features. However, beyond this to the north, from the memorial shelter onwards, there is a mass of terracing, quarrying and trackways on a vast range of scales.

**9.10** No conclusions can be drawn about the area around the Trigonometry Point, which was not closely examined during this project.

## **10 Future management proposals**

**10.1** Scrub growth is regenerating on the slopes either side of the plateau at Drakestone Point, particularly within the cut features identified. Root damage has probably been very great to these in the past, but some sort of grazing regime would address this problem.

**10.2** The tree-roots are causing some damage of the earthworks at the south-western promontory. Clearance and return to pasture would address this problem.

**10.3** Erosion scarring by footpaths is severe in places, particularly damaging to the scarp-slope features north-east of Drakestone Point. A single terraced track along the slope avoiding these features would reduce this damage.

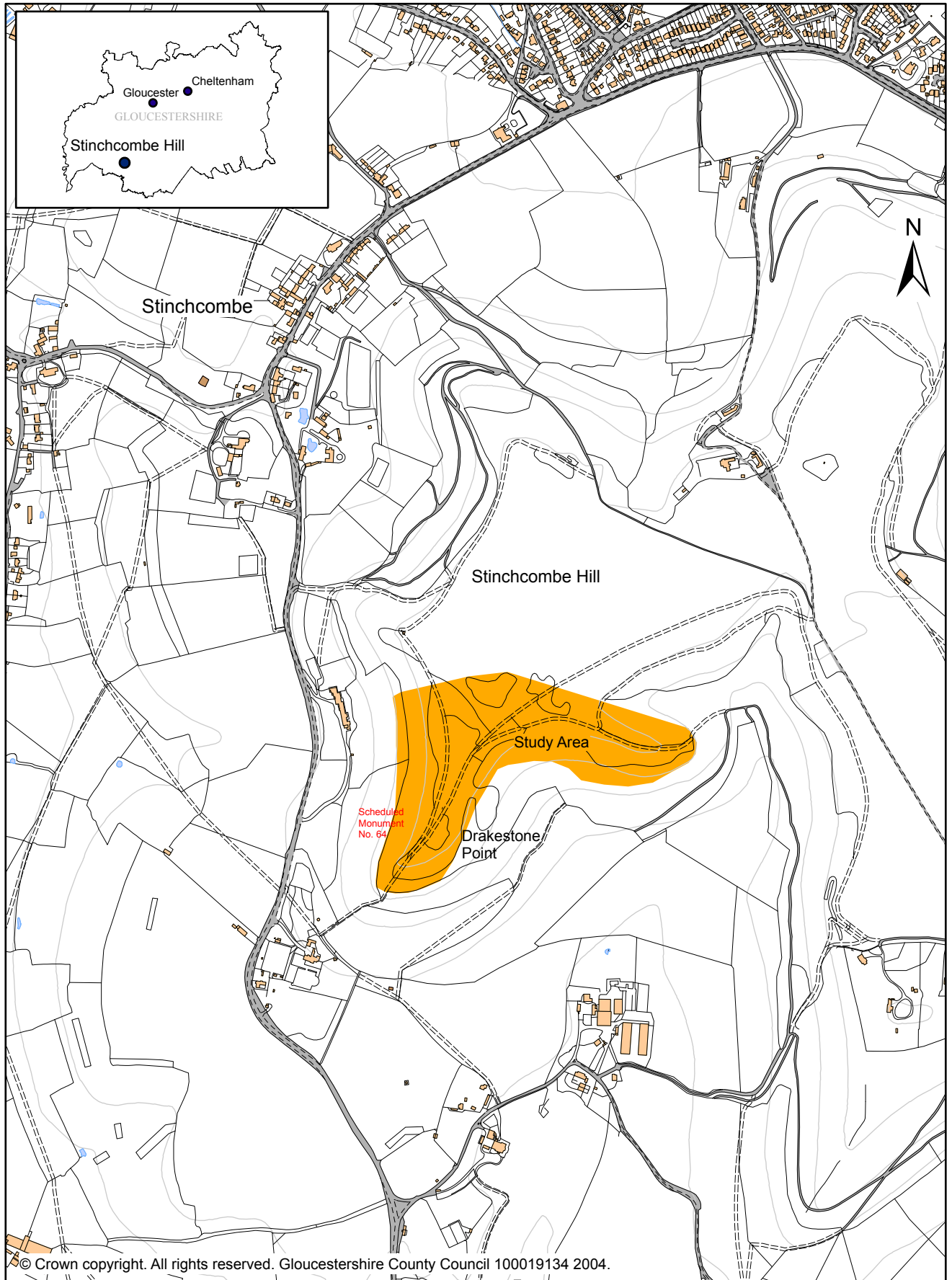
## **11 Proposals for future archaeological work**

- Research excavation of one or more terraced platforms at the two promontory sites and on the south-eastern scarp slope.
- Research excavation of the banks and ditches in order to obtain dating evidence for their construction.
- Completion of 1:200 earthwork plans for the features identified.
- Excavation of an evaluation trench to test the potential ditch: Feature No. 23
- Excavation of evaluation trenches to test the large, linear anomalies identified by the geophysical survey.
- Excavation of evaluation trenches to test the plateau at Drakestone Point, particularly at its highest point.

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Figure 1: Location plan (Scale 1:10000).

0 500 m

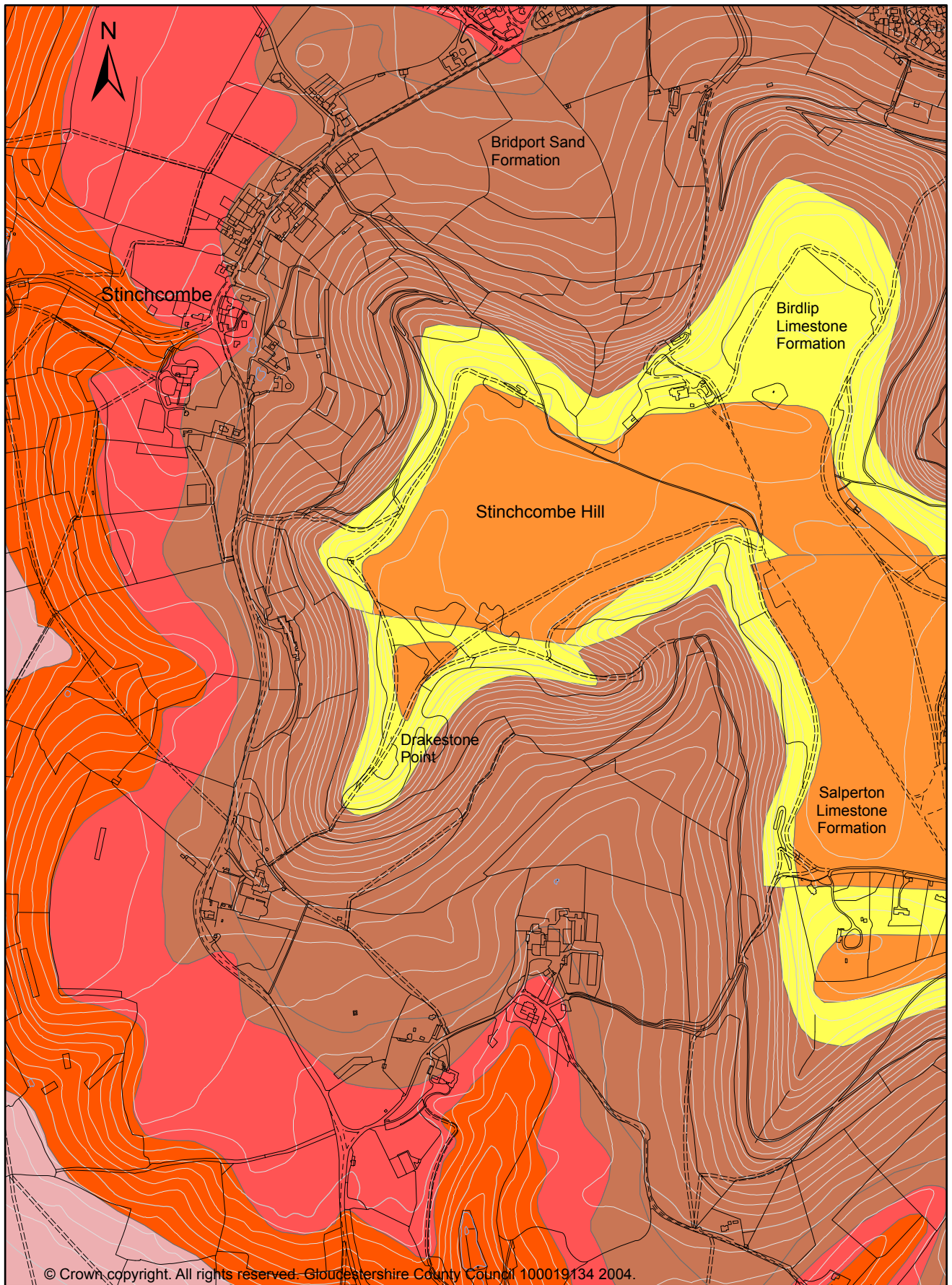


Figure 2: Geology (British Geological Survey 2005; Scale 1:10000).



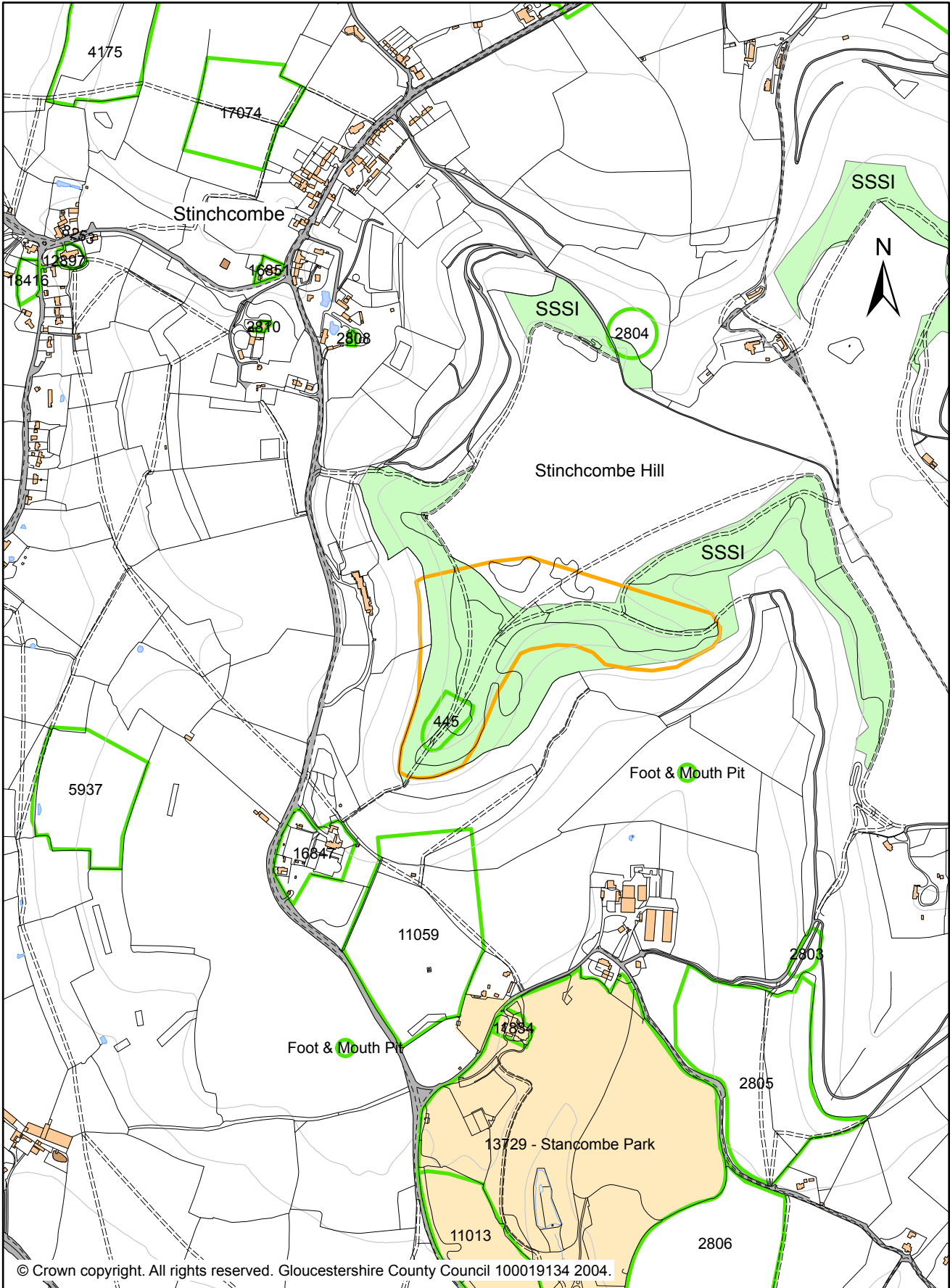
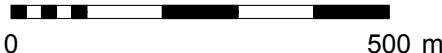
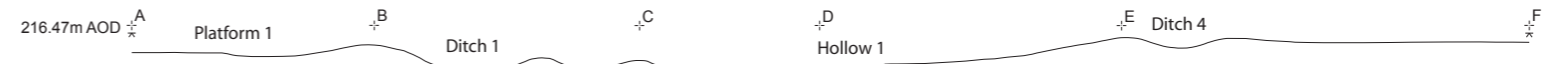


Figure 3: Gloucestershire Sites and Monuments Records in the vicinity of the study area (Scale 1:10000).



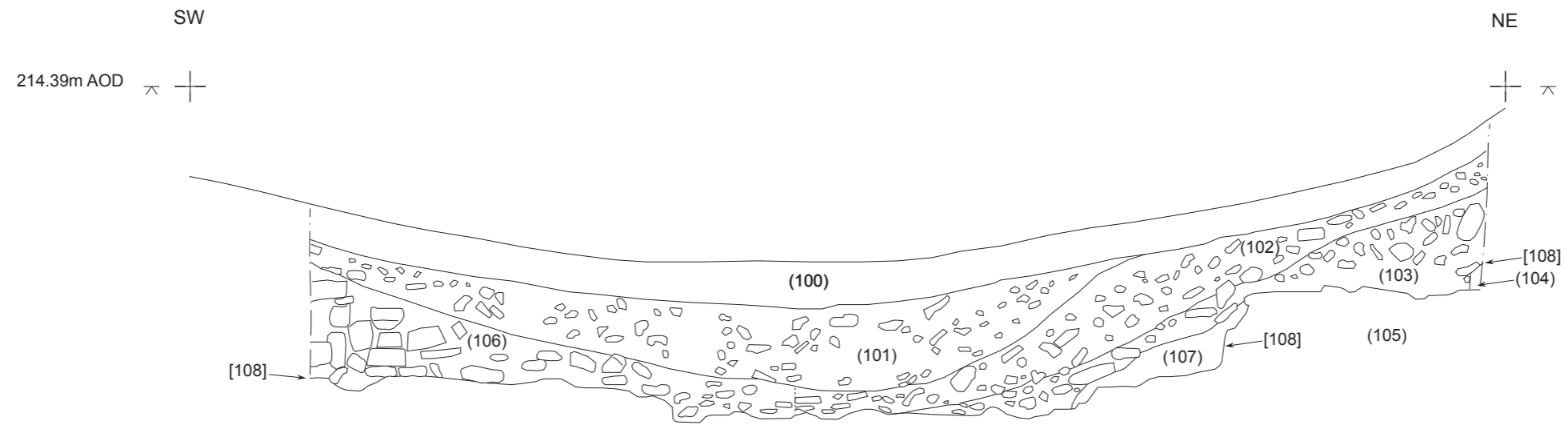


4e: Ditches and banks, looking south-south-west



4f: Platform 2 and 3, looking south-west

Figure 4: Earthwork survey and profiles (Scale 1:500)



5a: South-east facing section (Scale 1:20)



5b: Trench 1, looking south-west



5c: South-east facing section



5d: Trench 1, looking north-east

Figure 5: Trench 1: south-east facing section and photos.







