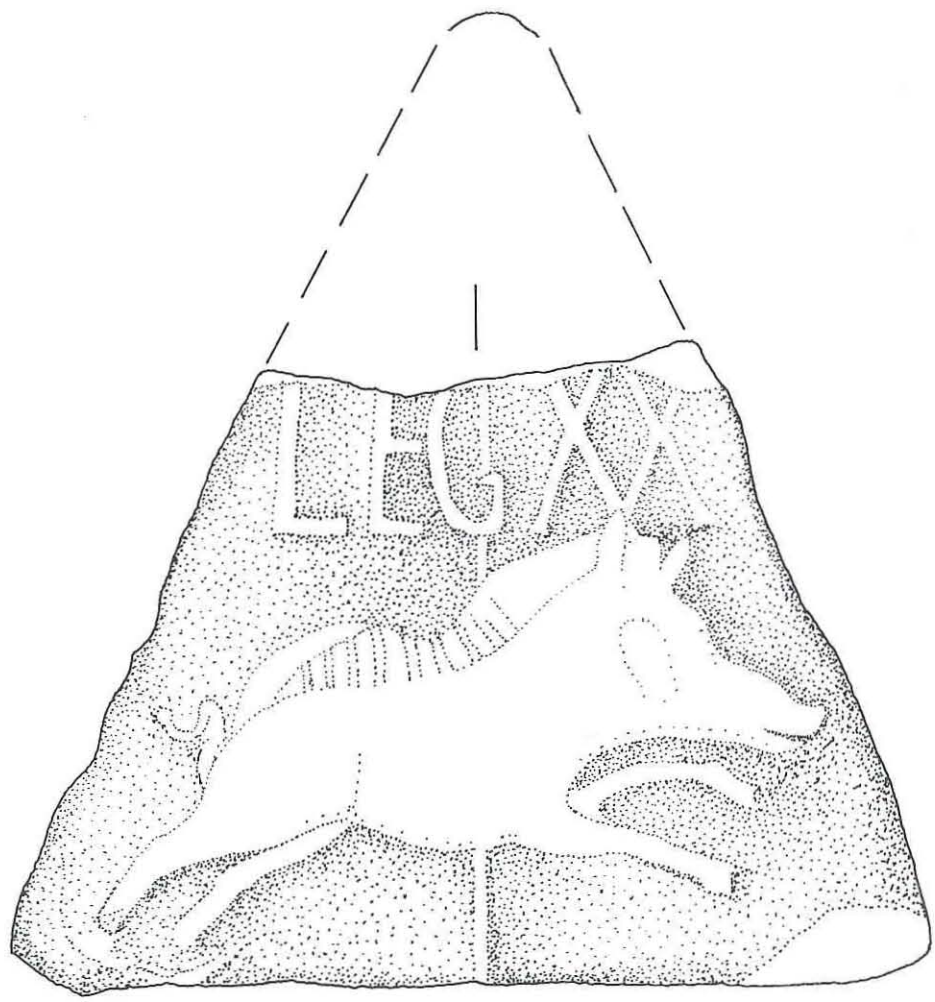
THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Claremont, Prestatyn, Denbighshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



CPAT Report No 439

CPAT Report No 439

Claremont, Prestatyn, Denbighshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

R Hankinson
October 2001

Report for Mr & Mrs K.C. Williams

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust
7a Church Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7DL
tel (01938) 553670, fax (01938) 552179

CPAT Report Record

Report and status

CPAT Report Title	Claremont, Prestatyn, Denbighshire: Archaeological Evaluation		
CPAT Project Name	Claremont, Prestatyn		
CPAT Project No	953	CPAT Report No	439
Confidential (yes/no)	No	draft/final	Final

Internal control

	name	signature	date
prepared by	R. Hankinson		25/10/01
checked by	N.W. Jones		25/10/01
approved by	R.J. Silvester		30/10/01

Revisions

no	date	made by	checked by	approved by

Internal memo

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust
7a Church Street Welshpool Powys SY21 7DL
tel (01938) 553670, fax 552179

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

4 EVALUATION

5 CONCLUSIONS

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

7 REFERENCES

APPENDIX 1: SPECIFICATION

APPENDIX 2: PROJECT ARCHIVE

FIGURES

PLATES

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In May 2001 the Contracts Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by Jones & Redfearn of Rhyl, acting for Mr & Mrs K.C. Williams of Claremont, Prestatyn, to prepare a specification and quotation for undertaking an archaeological evaluation within the grounds of the aforementioned Claremont. These fall within the area of the scheduled ancient monument known as Prestatyn Roman Fort (SAM Fl 94). The evaluation process was in relation to a planning application for consent to erect a single new dwelling in the grounds of the existing house.

1.2 The evaluation was the subject of a brief drawn up by Mrs Fiona Gale, Denbighshire County Archaeologist, in response to a request for the archaeological evaluation by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments dated 9th April 2001. The specification was approved by Mrs Gale, though subsequently in July and August 2001 there were revisions to both the number and location of the proposed trenches. A revised quotation was accepted by Jones & Redfearn on behalf of their clients on 20th August; the resulting evaluation was carried out in the first half of October 2001 and this report compiled immediately thereafter.

1.3 Discussions with Dr Sian Rees, Cadw: Regional Inspector for Welsh Historic Monuments, prior to the commencement of site work, resulted in a slight change to the methodology specified in the project brief. Much of the evaluation area was occupied by a concrete base which had been the site of a group of agricultural buildings, and it had been proposed that a machine would only be used to remove the concrete and that all subsequent excavations would be by hand. As there would be a machine on site for this work approval was sought for the overburden beneath the concrete to be removed by machine. This was granted providing that: i) the depth of the overburden was tested prior to any machining of deposits beneath the concrete: and ii) that the machine was only used under close archaeological supervision.

1.4 The brief specified a total of six trenches, located on the positions of the proposed new dwelling, its garage and its access road. However, on-site consultations with Mr D. Jones of Jones & Redfearn revealed that the northern end of the access road would utilise an existing concrete hardstanding, preventing any disturbance to the archaeological deposits in this area. As a result of this, discussions were held with Mrs Gale which led to the abandonment of the northernmost trench on the access road. A total of five trenches, 1m wide, were eventually excavated covering a total length of 32.7m.

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

2.1 The site area lies approximately 1km to the south-south-west of the centre of Prestatyn, Denbighshire (SJ 06218183; Fig. 1), on a plateau of glacial deposits at an elevation of between 15m and 20m above Ordnance Datum. The edge of the plateau is marked by a scarp immediately to the south of the evaluation area, where the land falls by 5m.

2.2 The soils of the area generally consist of reddish fine loam over clay belonging to the Salop Association (1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map), while the underlying geology consists of rocks belonging to the Westphalian division of the Upper Carboniferous period, generally known as the 'Coal Measures', which are locally covered by a significant amount of glacial drift (1994 British Geological Survey map).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND (Fig. 1)

3.1 The evaluation area lies in close proximity to the northern end of significant zones of Roman and Iron Age activity, which have been the subject of detailed excavation in the past (Blockley 1989, 3). The most notable evidence of this activity is the Roman bath-house off Melyd Avenue, less than 100m to the south of the evaluation, originally revealed by excavations in the 1930s.

3.2 The first excavations in the locality were sited immediately to the south of the evaluation area and were carried out by Smith and Newstead in 1934-5, and by Newstead alone in 1936-7. The 1934 excavations took the form of several sections through a ditch running along the 15m contour, as well as an investigation of the lower-lying ground to the south; numerous tiles bearing the official stamp of

the 20th Legion were recovered (see front cover of report). The 1935-7 excavations consisted of further trenching and the investigation of three masonry buildings (Blockley 1989, 3). The interim report on the excavations (Newstead 1937) mentions a trial trench (Cut 1935 A; see Fig. 2) excavated for approximately 50m north-west from the 'south-east angle of the Roman ditch' and therefore within the putative enclosure formed by that ditch. The trench would thus appear to have been entirely within the grounds of Claremont, but 'no trace of Roman occupation was found' (Newstead 1937, 221).

3.3 Further excavations were carried out in the locality by Webster (in 1951) and Tobias (in 1955), but unfortunately neither of these were published and the results are not known. During the 1970s two further excavations were carried out nearby: Barret, Kenworthy and Stevenson recorded building rubble 'not later than *c.* AD150' in the south-east corner of the Meadows Estate in 1973, while Professor G.D.B Jones recorded 'one outer and two inner ditches . . . fronting a sustantial clay rampart' in a small trench near Fforddisa in 1976 (Blockley 1989, 3).

3.4 The area of the 1930s excavations was re-assessed in a trial excavation by CPAT in 1980. The northern section of the trench (immediately to the south of the grounds of Claremont) was characterised by fluvio-glacial sediments but, with the exception of the Roman ditch recorded in the 1930s at the north end of the Melyd Avenue site, this area was lacking in Roman material; it was noted however that Roman deposits were better preserved further downslope to the south (Brassil 1989, 11). The excavation also revealed that the Roman ditch ran south-south-east from its eastern end and it therefore appears probable that the enclosure which it forms could be associated with the area of the bath-house, rather than with a putative Roman fort on the plateau to the north.

3.5 A detailed examination of the area of the 1930s excavations was carried out by CPAT in 1984-5 (Blockley 1989). This revealed Iron Age occupation, succeeded by extensive Roman occupation dating from AD 70 to the early 4th century, including industrial structures as well as the bath-house already mentioned (Blockley 1989, 13). A research excavation covering a total of 108m^2 and a subsequent resistivity survey were also carried out by CPAT between 1984 and 1986 in the grounds of Ysgol y Llys, on the opposite side of Meadows Lane to Claremont, with a view to providing further information regarding the Roman fort postulated by Smith and by Jones in 1934 and 1976 respectively (Weetman 1986; Blockley 1989, 4). No evidence of a fort was discovered in this further work.

4 EXCAVATION

4.1 For the present evaluation a total of five trenches were excavated, three on the footprint of the proposed new dwelling, a fourth on the footprint of the garage and the fifth on the southern end of the access road, where deposits were likely to be disturbed by construction and building work. A layer of concrete (11), which had been the base of some agricultural buildings, formed the ground surface at Trenches A, B, C, and part of D. Each trench was 1.0m wide in accordance with the brief.

4.2 Trench A (4.7m x 1.0m; Fig. 3; Plate 1)

4.2.1 Excavation consisted initially of the breaking and removal by machine of the layer of concrete (11) which was *c.*0.1m thick. This revealed a layer of brown silty loam (25), 0.16m thick, which appeared to represent the lower part of a former topsoil layer. This was also removed by machine, to reveal a layer of brown loam with tufa flecks (26) which appeared to represent a former ploughsoil. The depth of layer 26 was tested by hand and the upper portion removed by machine; removal of the lower part of the layer by hand revealed that it had a maximum depth of 0.23m and overlay the natural subsoil (29). The natural subsoil was variable and consisted of brown, red-brown, red and reddish yellow gravels and silt, which was tested by sondage to a depth of 0.4m and proven to be of natural origin.

4.2.2 At the east end of the trench a drainage gully (28), 0.3m wide and 0.6m deep, with a sectional ceramic pipe in the base of its fill (27), was found to have been cut through the ploughsoil and into the natural subsoil. To the west of the gully a probable post-hole (31), 0.23m in diameter and 0.20m deep, had been cut into the natural subsoil beneath the ploughsoil (26). The fill (30) contained a few flecks of charcoal, though not a sufficient quantity to allow a radiocarbon date to be obtained.

4.3 Trench B (6.9m x 1.0m: Fig. 3; Plate 2)

4.3.1 Excavation consisted initially of the breaking and removal by machine of the layer of concrete (11), *c.*0.1m thick. Beneath this was a layer of brown silty loam (24), up to 0.1m thick, which appeared to represent the lower part of a former topsoil layer. This was also removed by machine to reveal a layer of brown loam with tufa flecks (12), which appeared to represent a former ploughsoil. The depth of layer 12 was tested by hand and the upper portion removed by machine; removal of the lower part of the layer by hand revealed that it had a maximum depth of 0.28m and overlay the natural subsoil (13). The natural subsoil was variable and consisted of red and red-brown clay, gravel and silt, examination of features cut into the subsoil demonstrated that it was of natural origin.

4.3.2 At the west end of the trench a pit or ditch (14), 0.54m deep, was revealed, which had been cut through the ploughsoil (12) and was evidently of relatively modern origin. To the east of the pit/ditch (see Plate 6), a drainage gully (18), 0.35m wide and 0.56m deep, was revealed; this had a sectional ceramic pipe in the base of its fill (19), and appeared to have been sealed by the ploughsoil, though the similarity between the fill of the gully and the ploughsoil meant that there was some doubt regarding their stratigraphic relationship. The drainage gully was cut by a post-hole (17), 0.4m long x 0.25m wide, containing bricks and cement in its fill (16); this was evidently modern and was accordingly not investigated. Towards the east end of the trench (see Plate 7) a rounded gully or pit (21), 0.64m wide x 0.53m deep, had been cut through the ploughsoil (12) and was evidently of relatively modern origin. The pit had apparently cut the edge of a spread of stony silt (22), up to 0.13m thick, which appeared to fill a shallow scoop (23). A single iron nail was found in layer 22, but its condition appeared to preclude the possiblity that it was of Roman origin.

4.4 Trench C (11.2m x 1.0m: Fig. 4; Plate 3)

4.4.1 Excavation consisted initially of the breaking and removal by machine of the layer of concrete (11), *c.*0.1m thick, revealing a 0.18m thick layer of brown silty loam (35) This probably represented the lower part of a former topsoil layer, and was removed by machine to reveal a layer of brown loam with tufa flecks (36), which appeared to represent a former ploughsoil. The depth of layer 36 was tested by hand and the upper portion removed by machine; removal of the lower part of the layer by hand revealed that it had a maximum depth of 0.28m and overlay the natural subsoil (39). The natural subsoil was variable and consisted of brown, red-brown, red, orange-brown and grey sands, silt and gravel; this was tested by sondage to a depth of 0.35m and proved to be of natural origin.

4.4.2 A single possible feature was revealed (38), 0.50m in diameter x 0.14m deep, though its red clay fill (37) was devoid of finds and was identical to the clay which forms part of the natural subsoil in Trenches B and E. It is possible that this was a natural depositional feature.

4.5 Trench D (3.9m x 1.0m: Fig. 5; Plate 4)

4.5.1 Excavation of the east end of this trench consisted initially of the breaking and removal by machine of the layer of concrete (11), *c.*0.1m thick. At the west end of the trench the turf which formed part of a lawn was removed by hand and the machine then removed a 0.2m thick layer of dark grey loamy topsoil (32); the topsoil was found to grade to brown loam at its base which continued beneath the concrete, confirming that the layer found beneath the concrete elsewhere is the lower part of a former topsoil. A layer of brown loam with tufa flecks (33), which appeared to represent a former ploughsoil, was found beneath the topsoil. The depth of layer 33 was tested by hand and the upper portion removed by machine; removal of the lower part of the layer by hand revealed that it had a maximum depth of 0.24m and overlay the natural subsoil (34). The natural subsoil varied from red clay to brown gravel. No features were found in this trench.

4.6 Trench E (6.0m x 1.0m: Fig. 5; Plate 5)

4.6.1 The initial excavation of this trench comprised the deturfing of a section of lawn. The dark grey loamy topsoil (1), up to 0.26m in thickness, was then removed by machine revealing a layer of brown loam with tufa flecks (2), which represents the former ploughsoil. A lens of compact grey gravel (10) between the topsoil and ploughsoil was evidently of modern origin. The depth of layer 2 was tested by hand and the upper portion removed by machine; removal of the lower part of the layer by hand revealed that it had a maximum thickness of 0.20m and overlay the natural subsoil (3). The natural subsoil was variable and consisted of red and red-brown silt, clay and gravel; examination of excavated features proved that it was of natural origin.

4.6.2 At the west end of the trench a shallow linear depression (4), 0.1m wide and 0.03m deep (max), ran in a north-west/south-east direction; this has been interpreted as a probable ploughmark. To the east of the ploughmark was a large, vertically-sided, trench (6), 1.0m wide and at least 0.65m deep, which was evidently of modern origin; its appearance suggested that it could have been excavated by a

machine. Further to the east (see Plate 8), a drainage gully (8), 0.3m wide x 0.6m deep, was revealed; this had a sectional ceramic pipe in the base of its fill (9), which also included a single sherd of 17th or 18th-century slipware. The gully appeared to have been sealed by the ploughsoil, though the similarity between its fill and the ploughsoil meant that there was some doubt regarding their stratigraphic relationship.

4.7 No artefacts which could be ascribed to the Roman period were revealed by the evaluation. The material was characterised by pottery and glass finds of 18th and 19th-century date, though a small number of flints were recovered from the overburden, none of which appeared to have obvious diagnostic traits. A small sherd of 17th to 18th-century slipware was recovered from the fill (9) of a drainage gully in Trench E.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The evaluation included a representative portion of the area which would be affected by the proposed dwelling. Within this area, no features or finds which could be positively dated to the Roman period were encountered, though a few flints were found in the overburden which may be connected with the prehistoric activity revealed in the 1984-5 excavations at Melyd Avenue, immediately to the south.

5.2 The most recent element of the evaluation area is the concrete base for a series of agricultural buildings, none of which are now extant. The concrete had evidently been laid on the topsoil with only minor excavations, sufficient to level the site but with no attempt to provide a solid footing. Beneath the topsoil a layer of former ploughsoil had been cut by a number of modern pits and gullies. In addition to these relatively recent features, three drainage gullies containing sectional ceramic pipes were encountered; this drainage activity must have been related to the agricultural use of the site area during the post-medieval period, though similarities in the fill of these gullies and the ploughsoil rendered stratigraphic interpretation difficult. The probable ploughmark (4) which was recorded in Trench E suggests that the site has been subject to arable activity in the past.

5.3 A single possible post-hole (31) was revealed in Trench A, although this remains undated. A second feature (38) was considered to be a possible post-hole, but it is more likely that this is a depositional feature of natural origin.

5.4 It is evident that in addition to the Roman bath-house there is an area of significant Iron Age occupation and Roman industrial activity at Melyd Avenue, first recorded in excavations dating to the 1930s. These early excavations included sections across a Roman ditch at the northern edge of the plot where it borders the grounds of Claremont, and it was originally thought that the ditch formed a rectangular enclosure sited on the plateau above Melyd Avenue (i.e. it included the grounds of Claremont). Despite the fact that a trial excavation in what are now the grounds of Claremont in 1935 failed to find any Roman material this was interpreted as a possible Roman fort associated with the nearby bath-house. A trial excavation carried out at Melyd Avenue in 1980 demonstrated that the ditch discovered in the 1930s actually continued south-south-east away from Claremont, and it is therefore more likely that it represents an enclosure centred on the bath-house. The 1980 excavation also found that, with the exception of the ditch, the northern part of the Melyd Avenue site was lacking in Roman material.

5.5 The present evaluation has revealed no evidence for Roman occupation within the areas investigated. In particular, the lack of Roman artefacts brings into question the validity of the postulated Roman activity within this area.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

6.1 The writer would like to thank the following people for their assistance during the project:
Mr Glyn Owen, Ms Wendy Owen and Mr Nigel Jones of CPAT, Mr David Jones of Jones & Redfearn, Mrs Fiona Gale, the Denbighshire County Archaeologist, and Dr Sian Rees, Cadw Regional Inspector of Ancient Monuments.

7 REFERENCES

Blockley, K, 1989, *Prestatyn 1984-5: An Iron Age Farmstead and Romano-British Industrial Settlement in North Wales,* Oxford: British Archaeological Reports.

Brassil, K, 1989, *Trial excavations at Melyd Avenue 1980*, in Blockley, K, 1989, *Prestatyn 1984-5: An Iron Age Farmstead and Romano-British Industrial Settlement in North Wales,* Oxford: British Archaeological Reports.

Newstead, R, 1937, 'The Roman station, Prestatyn: first interim report', *Archaeologia Cambrensis,* 92, 208-232.

Weetman, M, 1986, 'Ysgol y Llys, Prestatyn', *Archaeology in Wales,* 26, 44.

Cartographic Sources

1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map (Sheet 2 - Wales) and Legend (1:250,000 scale)

1994 British Geological Survey map of Wales (Solid edition at 1:250,000 scale)

APPENDIX 1

CLAREMONT, MEADOWS LANE, PRESTATYN
SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
BY THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

1 Introduction

1.1 The proposed development involves the construction of a new dwelling adjacent to Claremont, Meadows Lane, Prestatyn. The site lies within the scheduled area of the Roman settlement (Fl 94) and c. 50m to the north of the Roman bath house. Following an application for Scheduled Monument Consent a brief has been prepared by Fiona Gale, Denbighshire Archaeology Service, acting on behalf of Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, which details the works required.

2 Objectives

2.1 The objectives of the assessment are:

2.1.1 to determine the nature of archaeology present within the area of the proposed development, in order to inform the scheduled monument consent process.

2.1.2 to record any archaeological sites identified during the field evaluation;

2.1.3 to prepare a report outlining the results of the assessment, incorporating sufficient information on the archaeological resource for a reasonable planning decision to be taken regarding the future management of the archaeology.

3 Methods

3.1 Six trial trenches are to be excavated, the exact location of which will be determined following consultation with the curator and client. Although five trenches were originally required by the curatorial brief changes to the proposals since the production of the brief have resulted in an additional trench (*c.* 1 x 7m) now being required in the area of the access. Any alterations to this scheme will only be undertaken following full consultation with the Cadw, the curator and the developer.

3.3 The four trenches in the area of the concrete base will be excavated using a machine excavator to remove the concrete, sub-base and modern overburden down to the level of the first recognisable archaeological horizon. Thereafter, all excavation will be conducted by hand. The remaining two trenches will be entirely excavated by hand. All archaeological contexts identified will be adequately sampled to define their function, date and relationship to other features, in so far as these aims are possible.

3.4 Contexts will be recorded on individual record forms and drawn and photographed record as appropriate. Site plans and sections will be drawn at an appropriate scale, normally 1:20. All photography will be in 35mm format black and white print and colour slide. All features will be located as accurately as possible with respect to buildings and boundaries identified on modern Ordnance Survey maps and levels will be related to Ordnance Datum where possible. Samples will be taken as appropriate for environmental and/or technological evidence.

3.4 Following the on-site work an illustrated and bound report will be prepared according to the principles laid out in the Curatorial Brief. This will be in A4 format and contain conventional sections on: Site location, Topography and Geology; Historic Background; Evaluation; Conclusions and References, together with appropriate appendices on archives and finds.

3.5 The site archive will be prepared to specifications laid out in Appendix 3 in the Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage, 1991).

4 Resources and Programming

4.1 The evaluation will be undertaken by a small team of skilled archaeologists under the direct supervision of Mr RJ Silvester, a senior member of CPAT's staff who is also a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

4.2 All report preparation will be completed by or with the assistance of the same field archaeologist who conducted the evaluation.

4.3 It is anticipated that the evaluation will be completed within 12 days, and the report will be completed within 4 days. A copy of the report will be deposited with Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments and the Regional SMR. CPAT would normally require at least two weeks written notice prior to commencement. The curator will be informed of the timetable in order to arrange for monitoring if required.

4.4 Requirements relating to Health and Safety regulations will be adhered to by CPAT and its staff.

4.5 CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employer's Liability insurance.

N.W. Jones
23rd July 2001

APPENDIX 3

PROJECT ARCHIVE

Site archive
39 Context record forms
1 black and white negative film
1 colour slide film
1 colour print film
Photographic catalogue
2 A1 site drawings

Finds

Context 1
- 2 fragments of modern floor tile - 76g
- 1 sherd of bone china (19th-20th century) - 2g
- 1 fragment of glazed tile - 7g
- 3 shards of plate glass - 212g

Context 7
- 4 shards of bottle glass - 18g
- 3 sherds of bone china (19th-20th century) - 7g
- 1 Fe object - 11g
- 1 Fe nail - 12g

Context 9
- 1 sherd of Buckley combed slipware (17th-18th century) - 6g

Context 15
- 2 sherds of bone china (19th-20th century) - 4g

Context 20
- 1 glass shard - 1g

Context 22
- 1 Fe nail - 15g

Context 24
- 1 shard of window glass - 6g
- 1 sherd of red earthenware impressed with (N?) OTTINGH (AM?) (probably 19th century) - 8g
- 1 sherd of bone china (19th-20th century) - 12g
- 1 modern ?brick fragment - 43g

Context 26
- 1 fragment of slate roof tile - 6g
- 1 flint chip - 2g
- 2 sherds of grey stoneware (18th-20th century) - 14g
- 1 sherd of bone china (19th-20th century) - 2g
- 2 shards of green glass - 7g
- 1 sherd of coal measures red slipware (Buckley ?) (17th-20th century) - 1g

Context 32
- 1 sherd pale, brown glazed earthenware (possibly medieval from Ewloe district) - 10g
- 3 white glazed tile fragments - 64g
- 1 flint chip - 6g
- 1 modern floor tile fragment - 68g
- 1 sherd of probable tin glazed earthenware - 15g
- 2 modern glass shards - 5g
- 1 sherd of blue ground ware (19th century) - 1g

Context 33
1 flint core - 7g

Context 35
1 sherd of bone china (19th-20th century) - 6g

Context 36
2 flint chips - 2g
1 probable brick fragment - 4g
1 glass shard - 7g
2 sherds of transfer printed Midlands yellow ware (19th-20th century) - 5g

Digital survey archive

Penmap survey data:
clarmont.pts
clarmont.dxf

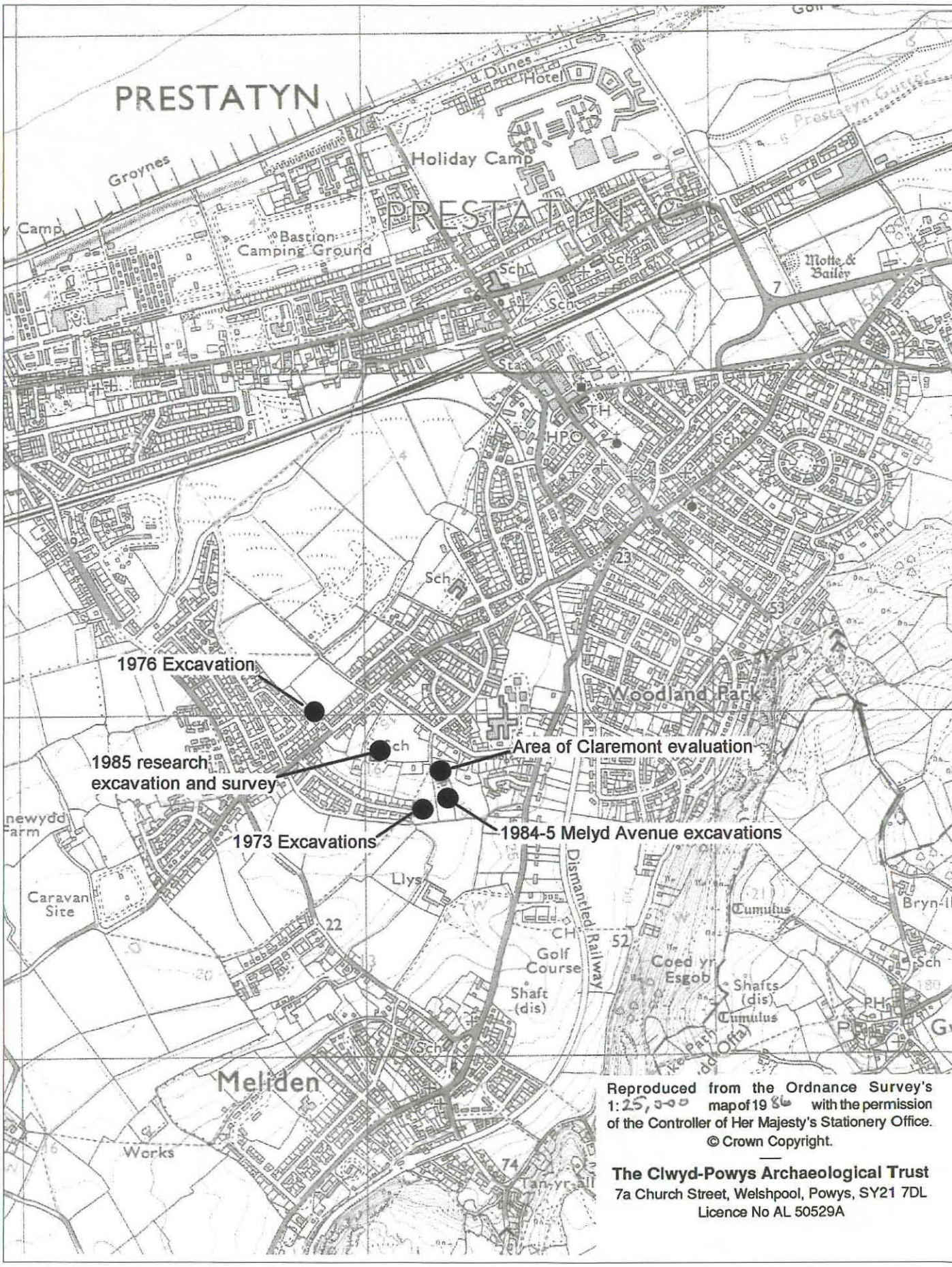


Fig 1 Site Location showing areas of previous archaeological work

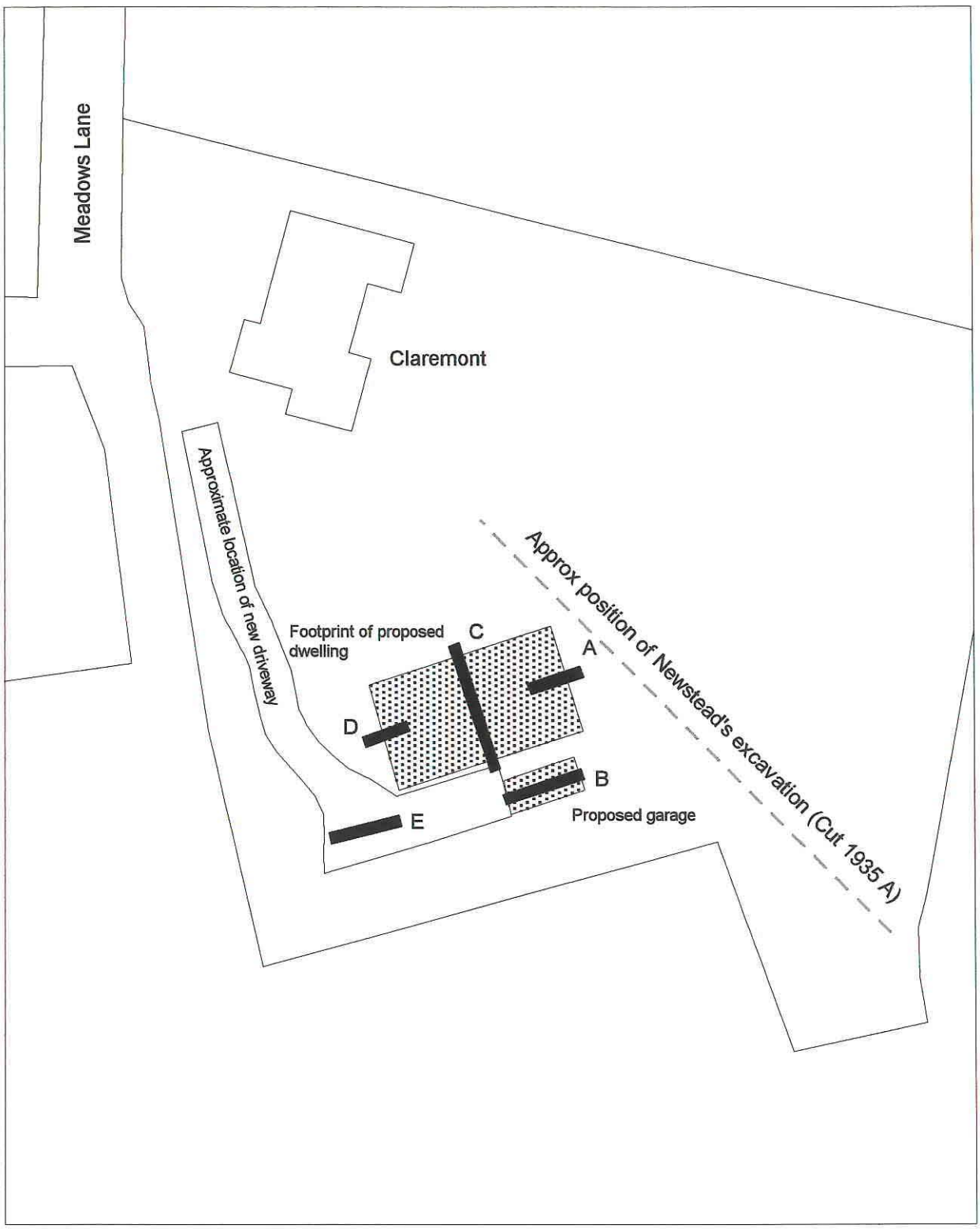


Fig. 2 Trench location, scale 1:500

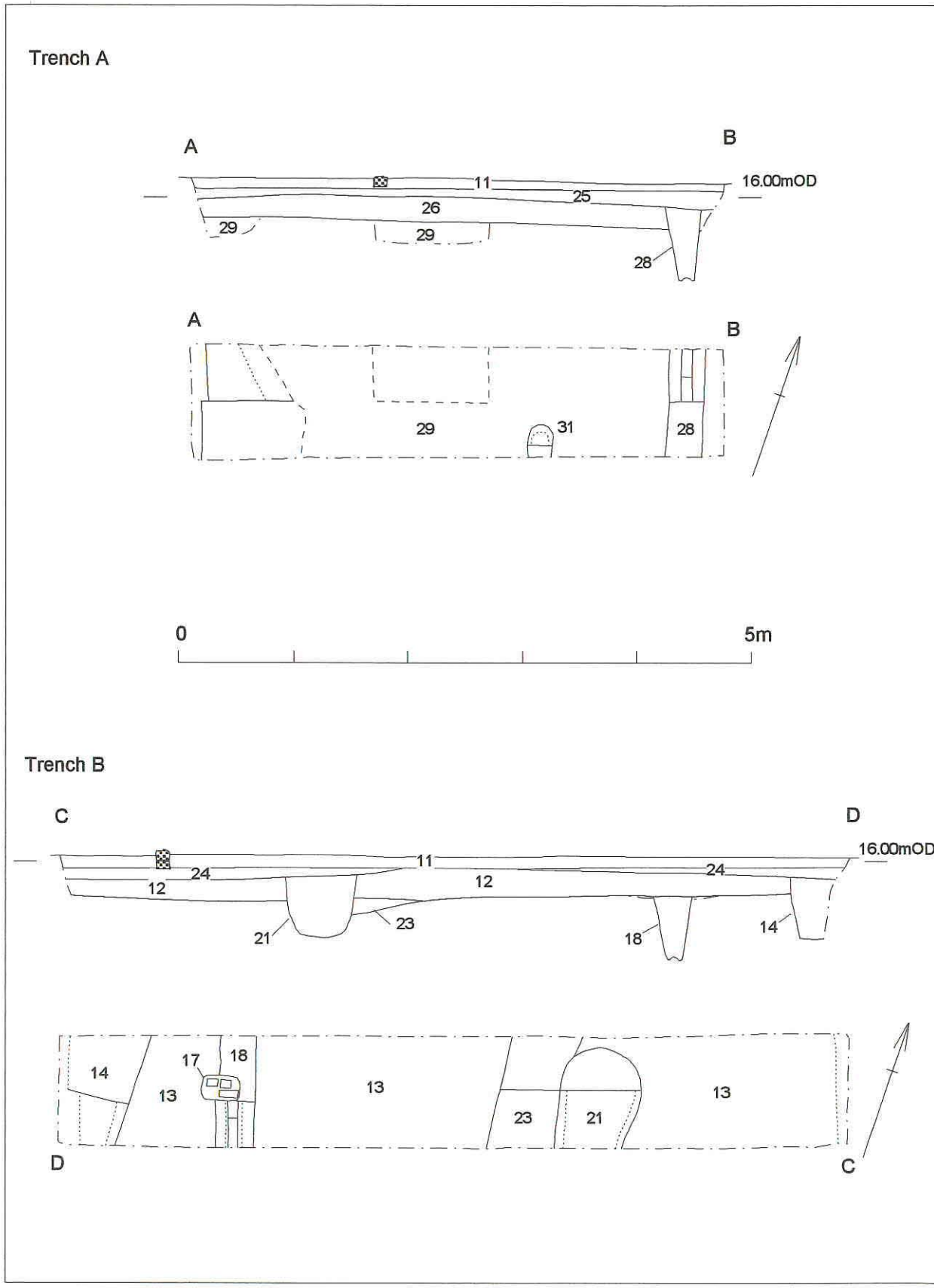


Fig. 3 Trenches A and B, scale 1:50

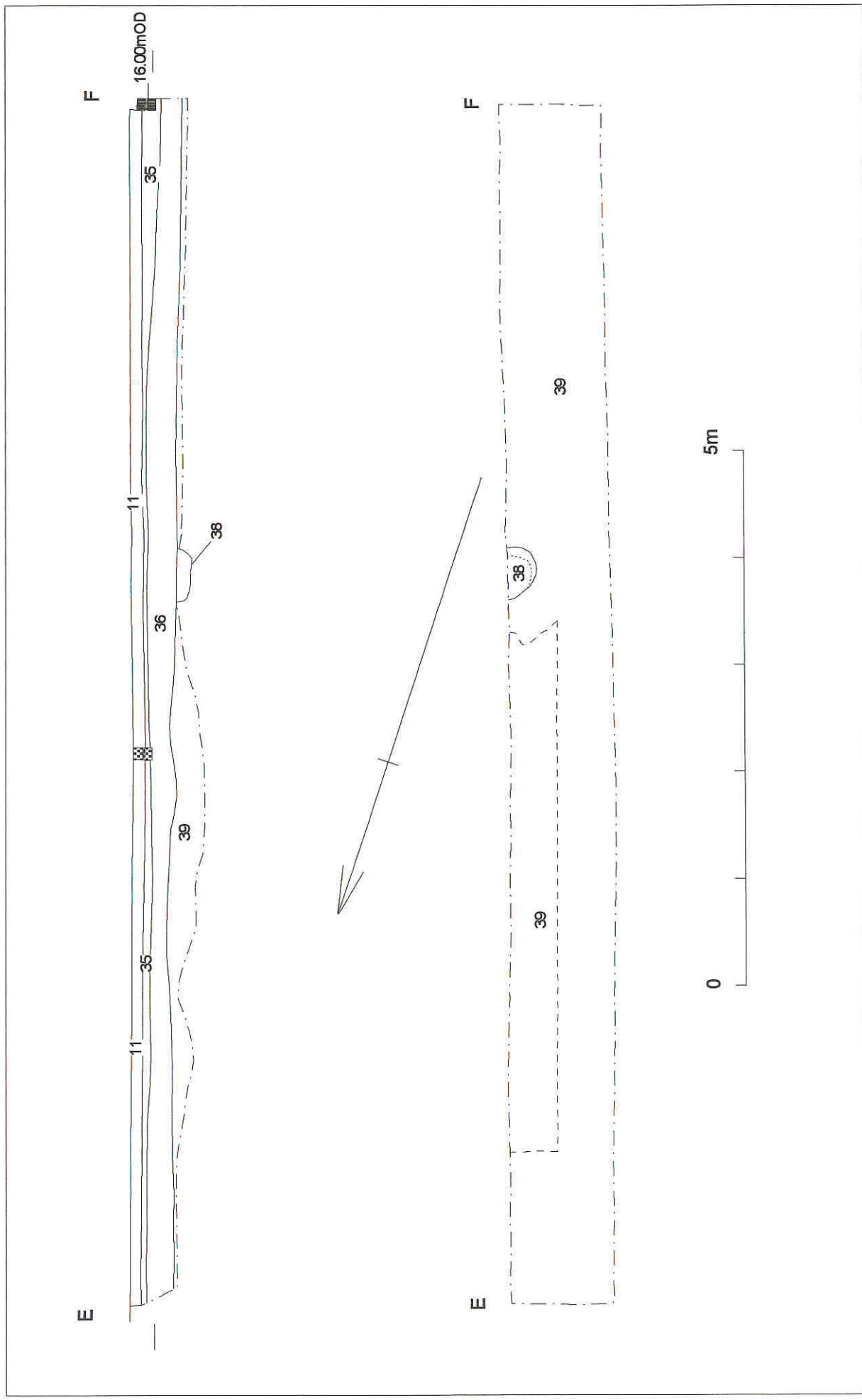


Fig. 4 Trench C, scale 1:50

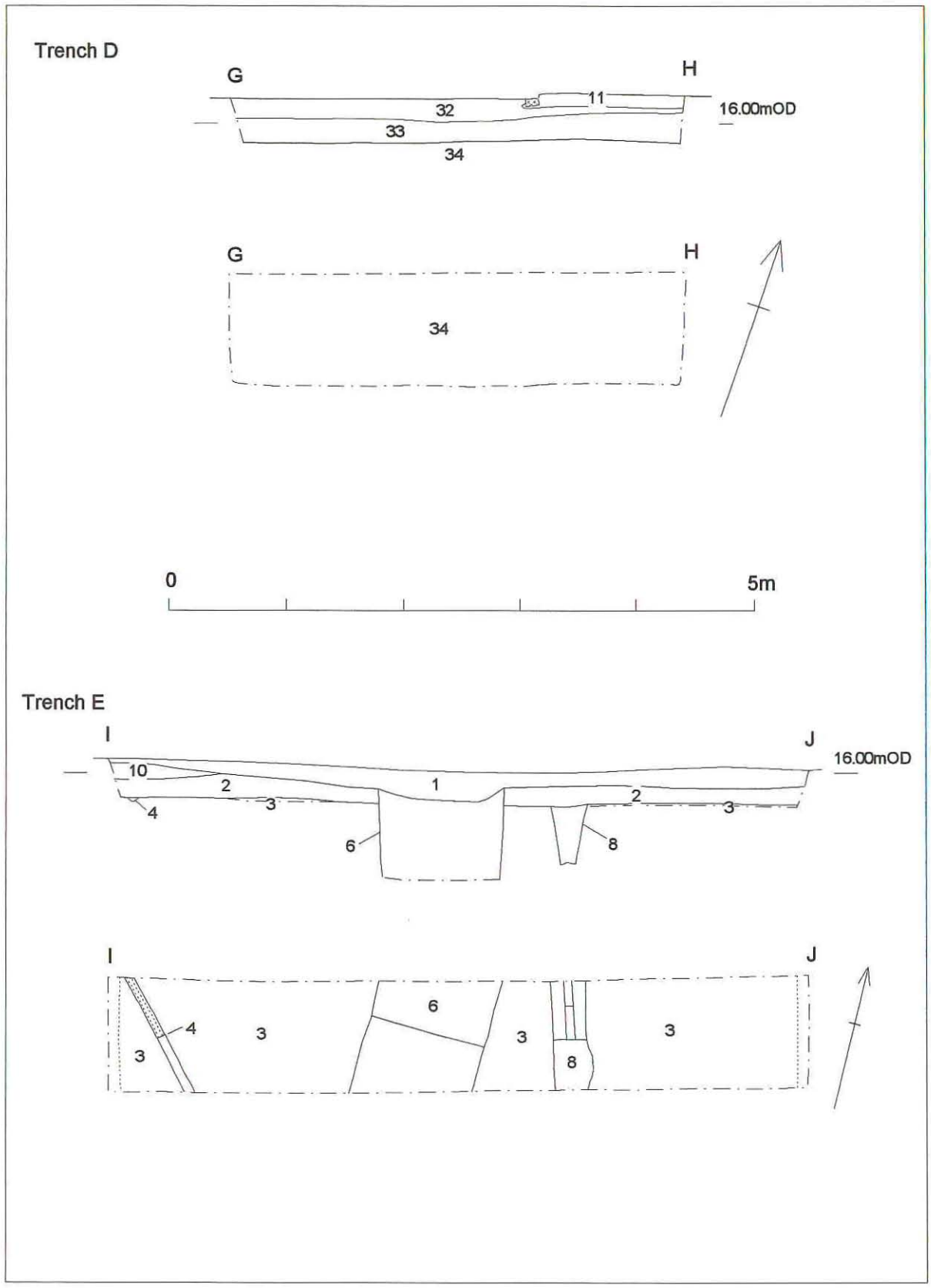


Fig. 5 Trenches D and E, scale 1:50

Plate 1 Trench A from east. Photo CPAT 1106.05

Plate 2 Trench B from east. Photo CPAT 1106.04

Plate 3 Trench C from south. Photo CPAT 1106.06

Plate 4 Trench D from west. Photo CPAT 1106.10

Plate 5 Trench E from west. Photo CPAT 1106.08

Plate 6 Drainage gully (18) and post-hole (17) in Trench B from north. Photo CPAT 1106.15

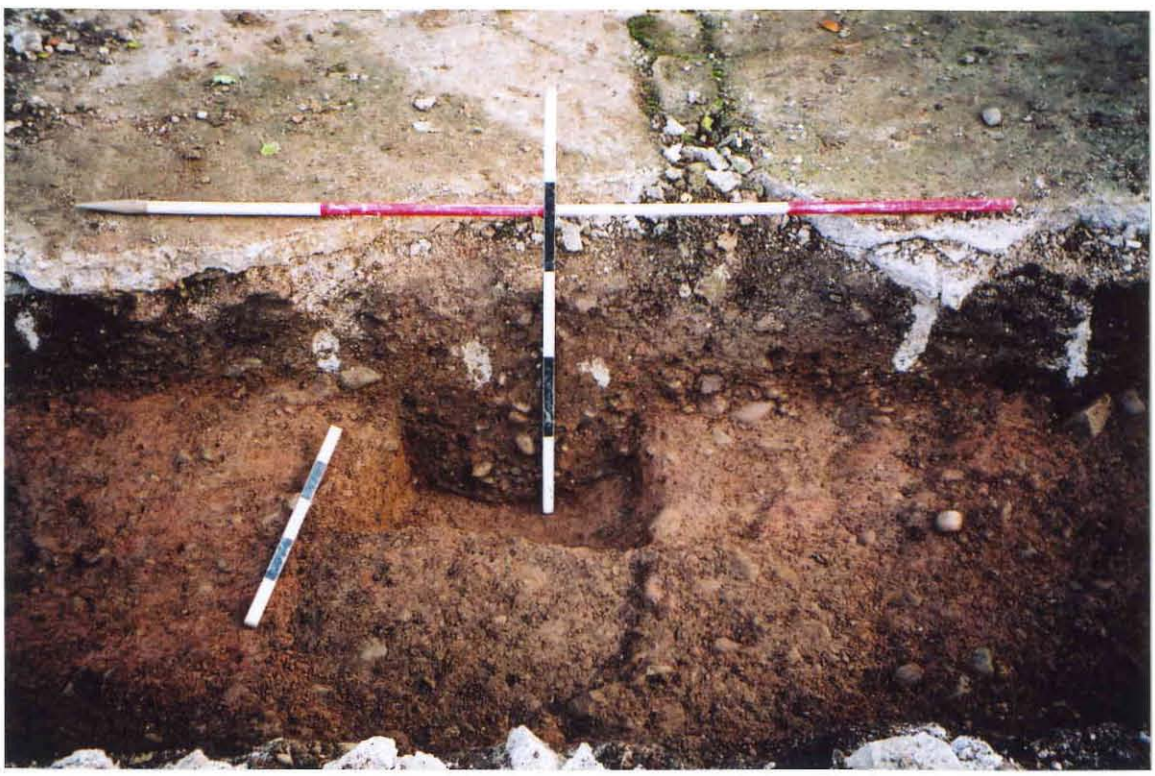


Plate 7 Pit/gully (21) and adjacent stone spread (22) in Trench B from north. Photo CPAT 1106.16

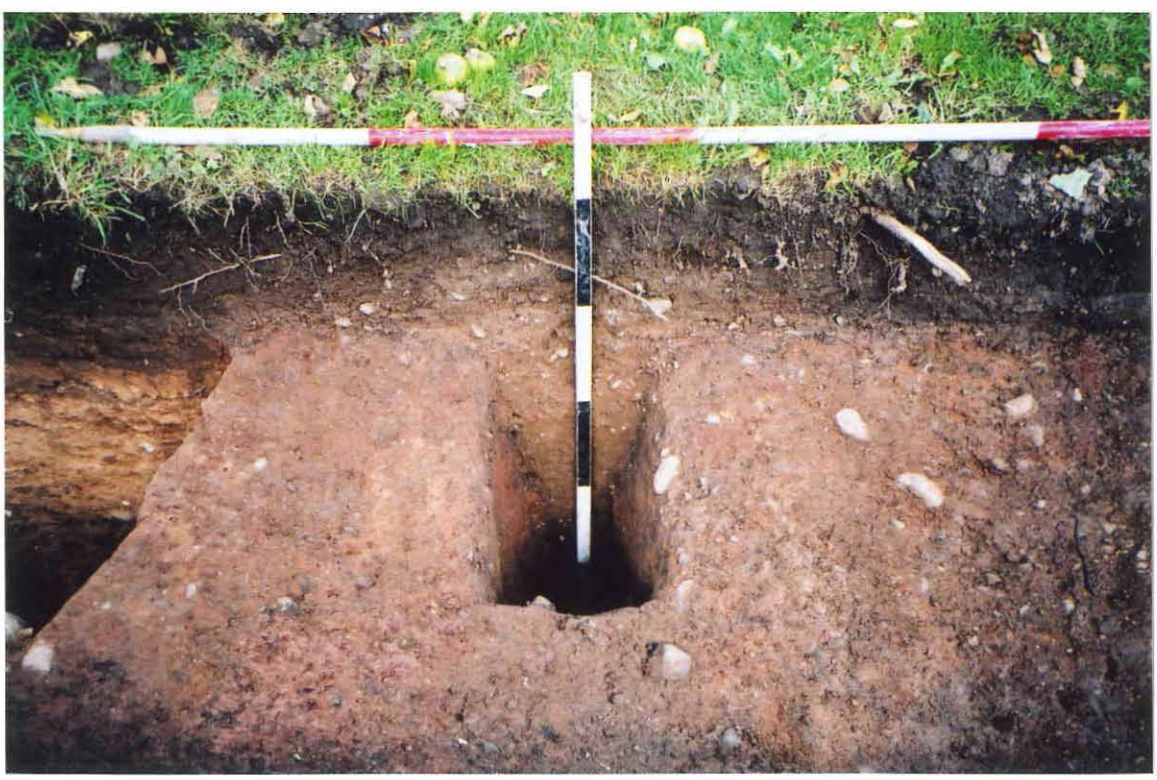


Plate 8 Drainage gully (8) in Trench E from south. Photo CPAT 1106.13