

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Criccin Cross, Rhuddlan, Denbighshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



CPAT Report No 348

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N W Jones and W G Owen
March 2000

Report for Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments

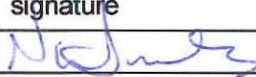
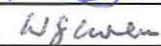
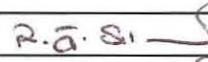
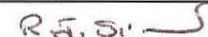
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In January 2000, the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by Fiona Gale, Denbighshire County Council, to provide a specification and quotation for undertaking a small-scale evaluation on the site of Criccin Cross, Rhuddlan, Denbighshire. The quotation was accepted in February 2000 and the evaluation undertaken during the same month.
- 1.2 The scheduled ancient monument of Criccin Cross (SAM FI 102) comprises the remains of a 13th or 14th-century cross which is now damaged and leaning, and it had been proposed that the cross should be repaired and re-erected. Accordingly, a brief was prepared by Fiona Gale, Denbighshire County Council, acting as agents for Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, describing a scheme of archaeological field evaluation, which was undertaken in advance of repair works.
- 1.3 The aim of the evaluation was to establish the original location of the cross and determine whether the mound on which it is set was of natural origin, or man-made. The evaluation formed the first phase of the scheme of works, the second stage of which will consist of the repair and re-erection of the cross, together with erosion control measures.

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 The cross lies adjacent to the B5429 about 2km south-east of Rhuddlan, sited in a field opposite Criccin Farm (Fig. 1; SJ 04117714; 36mOD). The underlying solid geology is lower mottled sandstones with overlying drift of glacial sands and gravels.

3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The cross is situated on a prominent mound composed of sandy soil within a field known as Maes y Groes. The site was referred to by Lewis in his *Topographical Dictionary* (1833): 'About a mile from the town, in the hamlet of Cricin, there is a large tumulus heaped over the remains of St Eurgin or Cain, daughter of Maelwyn and niece of St Asaph . . . on the tumulus is the shaft of a cross, the head of which is now in the pool of the farm adjoining'. The mound was considered by Ellis Davies to be of natural formation, composed of sandy soil, and he suggested that the name might have been derived from *crugyn*, meaning a small mound (Davies 1949, 323-4).
- 3.2 The surviving remains of the cross consist of a rectangular base-slab with chamfered upper edge and mutilated stops at the corners, within which is set the now broken shaft of rectangular section with chamfered edges, standing to 0.8m. The base-slab is broken and has been repaired with concrete and two iron dowels. It is thought that the cross is probably of 13th or early 14th-century date.

4 EVALUATION (Fig. 2)

- 4.1 The evaluation was undertaken between the 21st and 24th February 2000, and consisted of two hand excavated trenches (Fig. 2). The size and position of the trenches were determined following discussions with Fiona Gale. Trench A (3.0 x 3.0m with an extension 2.0 x 1.8m to the south-west) was located around the cross at the summit of the mound, while Trench B (5.0 x 1.5m) was positioned at the perimeter of the mound on the northern side. A full written, drawn and photographic record was maintained throughout the evaluation. Numbers in brackets in the following text refer to individual context numbers in the site archive.
 - 4.2 The trenches were located by a total station survey, which included a contour survey of the mound and its immediate area (Fig. 2).
- Trench A (Fig. 3)**
- 4.3 The removal of up to 0.14m of turf and topsoil (5) revealed a layer of loose sand which was interpreted as being a naturally deposited subsoil. The cross base (7), which measured 1.01 x 0.95m and 0.24m thick, had been displaced and had partly sunk into the subsoil on the northern side,

probably as a result of animal burrowing. To the south and south-east of the cross base and partly exposed above the surface of Context 5, were four blocks of unworked limestone (9). No other features were identified.

Trench B (Fig. 4)

- 4.4 The removal of up to 0.18m of turf and brown topsoil (1) revealed a layer of very dark brown sandy loam (2) up to 0.4m thick, which contained abundant charcoal and finds of 19th or 20th-century date, which were not retained. At the northern end of the trench this layer also contained a lens of lime mortar up to 0.08m thick (3). Beneath Context 2 was a layer of strong brown, loose silty sand, which extended below the base of the trench and which was interpreted as a layer of undisturbed subsoil.

5 WATCHING BRIEF

- 5.1 A watching brief was undertaken on 9th March 2000 during the lifting of the cross and its re-positioning on a new concrete base 1.5m to the south-west of its previous position.
- 5.2 Following the removal of the cross base and shaft, a further six limestone blocks were revealed, together with a modern brick at a maximum depth of 0.6m below the modern ground surface. No other features were identified. Further investigation confirmed that the sand beneath the cross base was entirely of natural deposition.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The results from the evaluation have proved that the mound on which the cross is situated is of natural origin. However, there does appear to be a slight terrace up to 10m in diameter and 0.3m high on the summit of the mound, which may have resulted from a deliberate levelling of the summit prior to the erection of the cross. The slight fall from west to east is almost certainly due to the prolonged activity of rabbits and farm animals which has caused subsidence.
- 6.2 The excavation around the cross base revealed no evidence to suggest that the cross might not be in its original position. In fact a photograph taken in 1963 which is in the possession of the tenant, Mrs Williams, shows the cross to be upright and in more or less its current position on the mound. It would appear that the limestone blocks had been placed beneath and around the cross base in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent further displacement at some time after 1963 (Mr David Williams *pers comm.*). No other features were identified within the excavated area.
- 6.3 The survey, together with a visual assessment of the immediate topography, suggests that the present appearance of the mound may in part be due to quarrying for sand on the northern side, the date of which is unknown. An examination of the contours (Fig. 2) reveals that the mound forms the end of a low natural ridge running north-north-west to south-south-east. The western side of the mound forms a seamless continuation of this ridge and is not a separate feature, while the northern side has the appearance of being cut away. While the excavation of Trench B could not confirm this hypothesis, the layer of debris (2 and 3) and finds recovered, lying directly above the undisturbed subsoil does indicate that the hollow on the northern side has to some extent been infilled, probably during the early 20th century.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 7.1 Thanks are due to the following for their assistance: Fiona Gale, Denbighshire County Council; Mr and Mrs Williams, Criccin Fawr.

8 REFERENCES

- Davies, E, 1949. *The Prehistoric and Roman Remains of Flintshire*. Cardiff.
- Lewis, S, 1833. *A Topographical Dictionary of Wales*. London: S Lewis & Son.

APPENDIX 1

CRICCIN CROSS, RHUDDLAN, DENBIGHSHIRE SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION BY CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The scheduled ancient monument of Criccin Cross (SAM FI 102) comprises the remains of a 13th or 14th century cross set on a small mound. The surviving remains, standing to 0.8m, are now damaged and leaning and it has been proposed that the cross should be repaired and re-erected. The Denbighshire Archaeology Service, acting as agents for Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, have prepared a brief describing a scheme of archaeological field evaluation, to be undertaken in advance of any repair works.
- 1.2 The cross lies adjacent to the B5429 about 2km SE of Rhuddlan, sited in a field opposite Criccin Farm (SJ 04117714).

2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of the evaluation are:
 - 2.1.1 to reveal by means archaeological excavation, the extent, condition, character, quality and date of the archaeological deposits and to ascertain whether the mound on which the cross is located is natural or artificial, as well as locating the original cross base.
 - 2.1.2 to record any archaeology revealed in the evaluation trenches;
 - 2.1.3 to prepare a report outlining the results of the field evaluation and incorporating sufficient information on the archaeological resource for a reasonable planning decision to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the area affected by the proposed development;
 - 2.1.4 to identify and recommendations options for the management of the archaeological resource, including any further provision for that resource where it is considered necessary.

3 Methods

- 3.1 The evaluation will involve the hand excavation of two trenches, each c. 8 x 2m, located across the top of the mound at right angles to each other, forming a cross on top of the mound. The exact position to be agreed with Denbighshire Archaeology Service. It is possible that the proposed arrangement of trenches might not be sufficient to determine the nature of the mound. Should the scheme subsequently be revised, perhaps to incorporate a single trench on the summit of the mound and a second across the perimeter of the mound, there is unlikely to be any change in the costings, provided that the total area of excavation remains roughly the same.
- 3.2 Topsoil and any modern overburden will be removed onto the surface of the first recognisable archaeological horizon. Broken pieces of the cross shaft will be removed, although the cross base and shaft will be left in situ. The trenches will be excavated to a depth sufficient to achieve the aims of the evaluation, subject to health and safety considerations and any limitations imposed by the existence of the cross remains.
- 3.3 The evaluation will be undertaken using standard evaluation procedures:
 - 3.3.1 evaluation of the archaeological deposits by hand trowelling to establish their importance and integrity, but avoiding any unnecessary disturbance of the deposits. All features encountered will be examined as fully as appropriate to fulfil the requirements of the evaluation and within the constraints imposed by time and safety considerations.

- 3.3.2 all archaeological contexts recorded using the standard numbered context system employed by CPAT. All significant contexts to be planned and/or drawn in section at scales of either 1:10 or 1:20 as appropriate, and photographed in monochrome and colour slide. All drawn records will be related to control points depicted on modern maps and Ordnance Datum. The position of the trenches and the mound itself will be recorded using total station surveying. If requested, it should be possible to undertake a detailed survey of the mound and its setting at no additional cost.
- 3.3.4 all archaeological artefacts and environmental samples recorded and processed in a manner appropriate to the material involved. Those requiring conservation or other specialist treatment will be stored in a stable environment until such times as they can be examined by a specialist. All finds, except those deemed to be Treasure Trove, are the property of the landowner. It is anticipated that they will be donated to the appropriate local or regional museum, subject to agreement being reached with the landowner and the museum curator. A contingency sum has been allowed for the assessment of any environmental deposits by Prof. Mike Walker, University of Wales, Lampeter, and which may also be called upon should any specialist artefact analysis be required.
- 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; Excavation; Conclusions and Recommendations 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 two skilled archaeologists under the direct supervision of an experienced field archaeologist, who will also be responsible for undertaking the desk-based assessment. Overall supervision will be by 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 take no more than five days in all and that the subsequent report would be prepared immediately thereafter. The date of commencement, at the time of writing, has yet to be agreed with the client, and will be dependent on the state of the site and negotiated access. At present, CPAT would require a minimum of two weeks written notice prior to the commencement of the project.
- 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.

NW Jones
12th January 2000

APPENDIX 2

SITE ARCHIVE

9 context record forms
1 black and white negative film
1 colour print film
colour slide film
photographic catalogue

Total Station survey digital data



Plate 1 Trench A from SE. Photo CPAT 918.20



Plate 2 Trench A from NE. Photo CPAT 918.21



Plate 3 Trench B from S. Photo CPAT 918.14



Plate 4 Trench B section from E. Photo CPAT 918.18



Fig. 1 Criccin Cross location 1:2,000

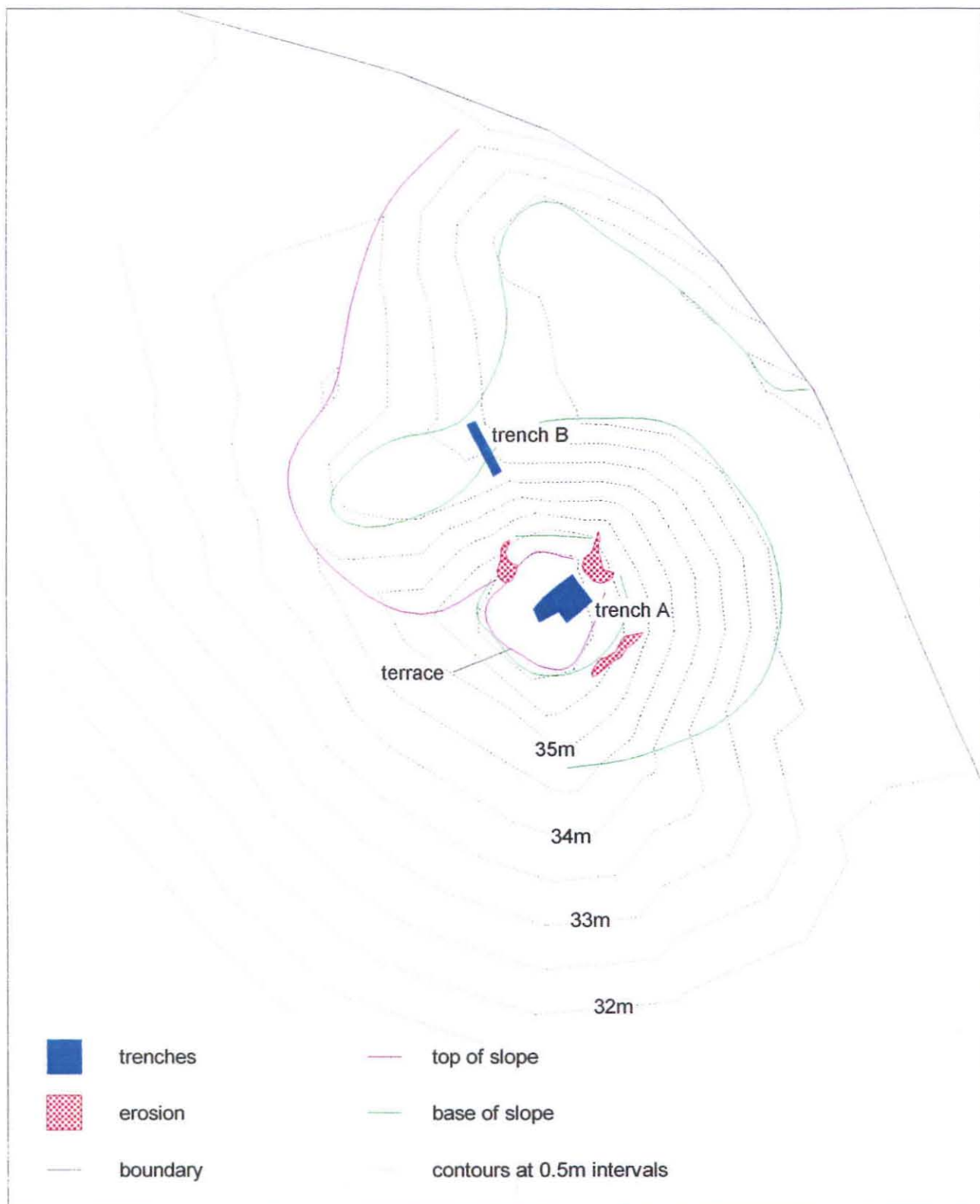
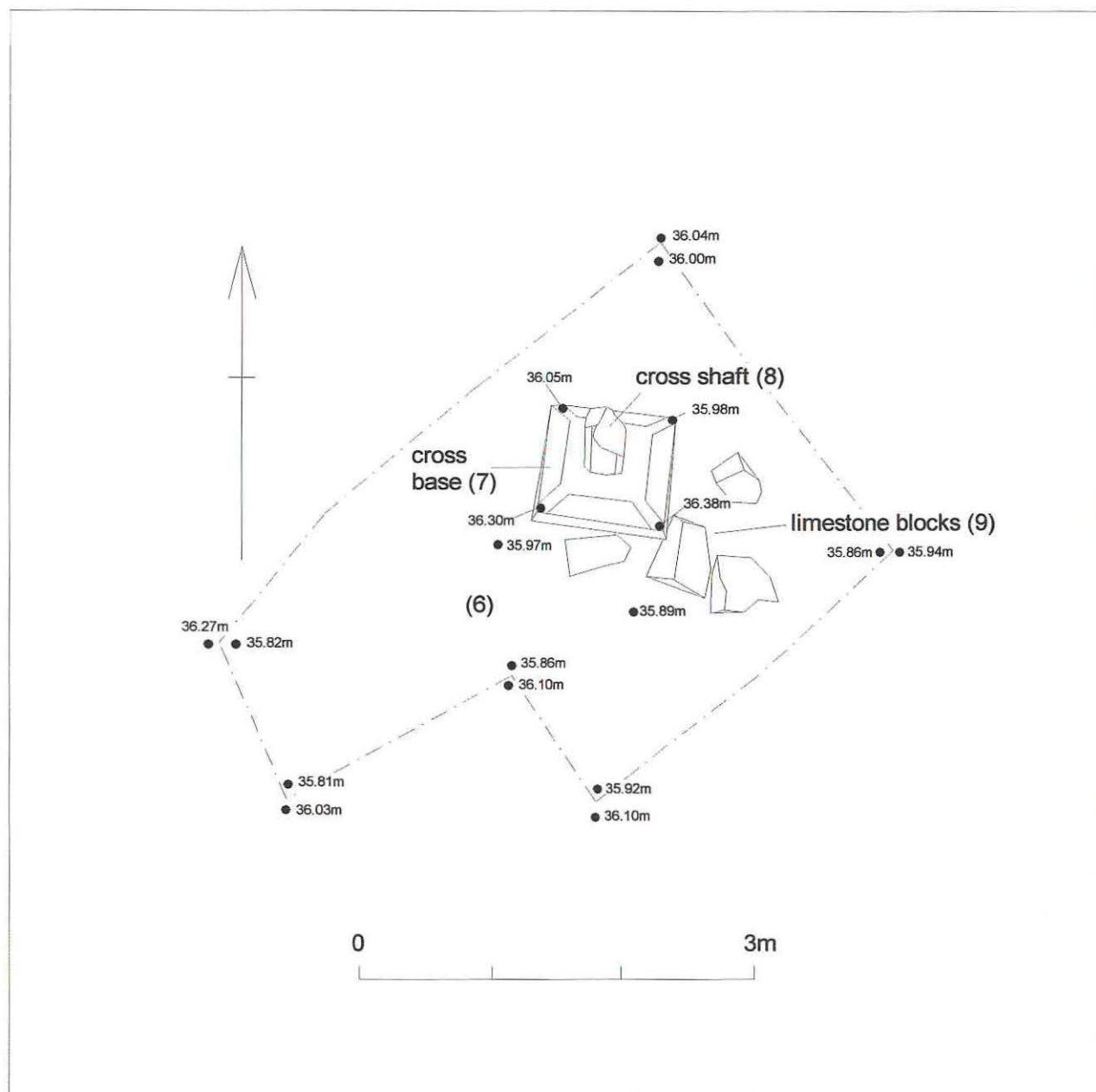


Fig. 2 Contour survey and location of trenches. Scale 1:500



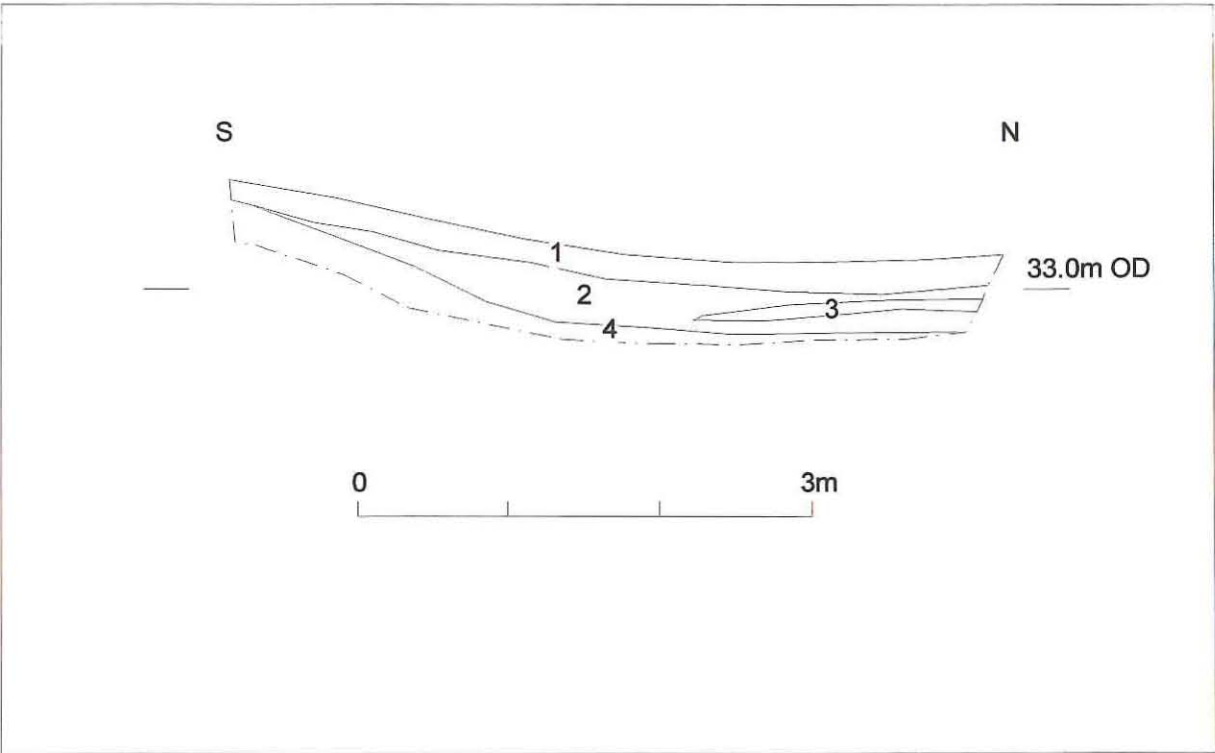


Fig. 4 Trench B section 1:50