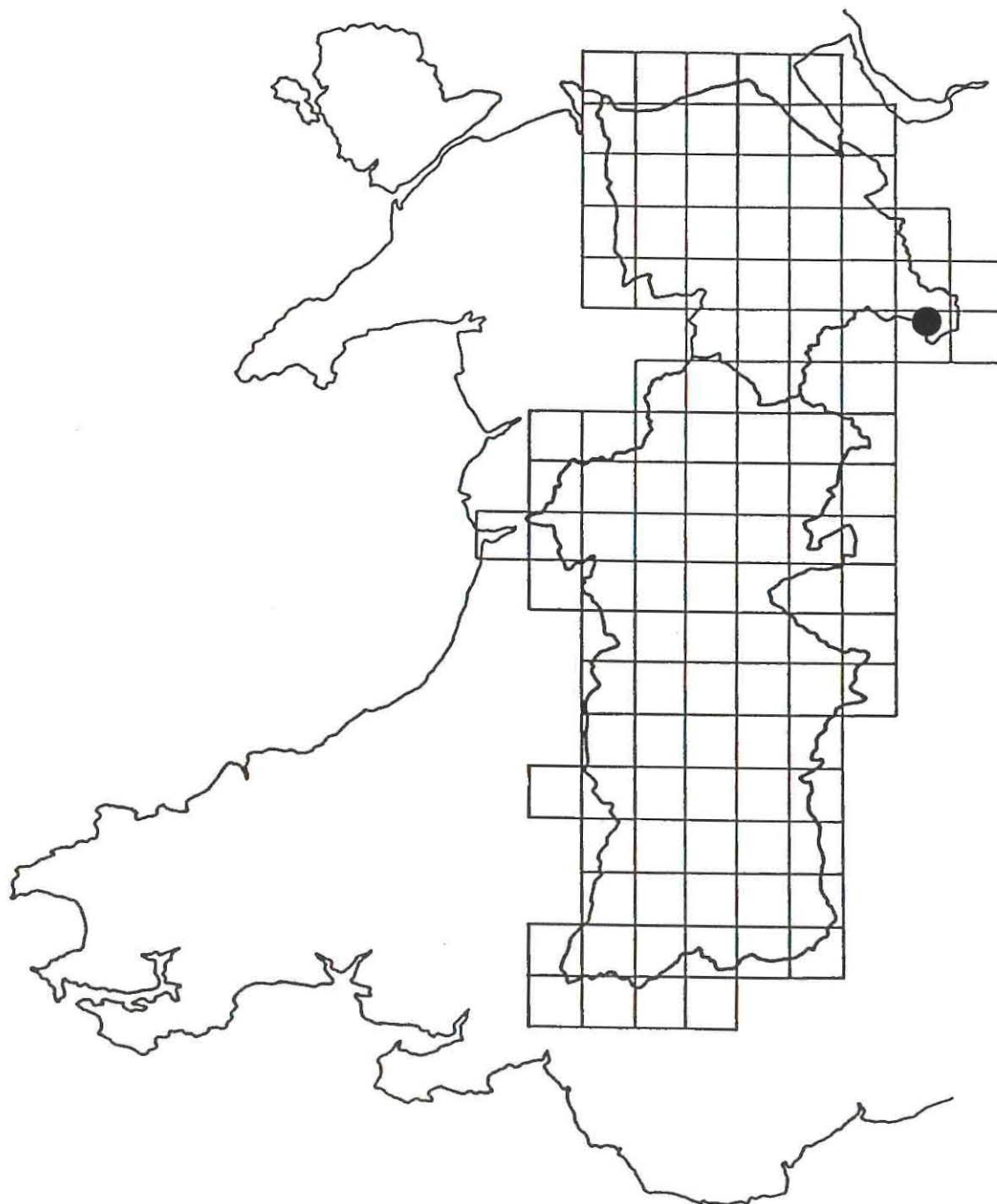


THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Mereside, Hanmer, Clwyd

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



CPAT Report No 81

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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Report prepared for W R G Hanmer Settlement Trust

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was commissioned by the W.R.G. Hanmer Settlement Trust in September 1993 to carry out an archaeological evaluation at Mereside, Hanmer, Clwyd. This was required in order to determine the archaeological sensitivity of the area which is the subject of an application to Wrexham Maelor District Council for planning permission to erect a house and garage on the site (Planning Application Ref. HAN 21570).

1.2 A brief for the evaluation had been prepared on behalf of Wrexham Maelor District Council by their archaeological advisers, the Clwyd Archaeology Service, a part of Clwyd County Council, advising the Borough Council that archaeological remains might be anticipated on the site and specifying a twofold approach to the evaluation - a desk-based review of available records relating to the area and a limited programme of excavation.

2 Location, Topography and Soils

2.1 The site (SJ 4550 3964), which is located within the village of Hanmer, consists of a subrectangular area of land, approximately 500 square metres in extent, within which stands an open barn. It is located close to the junction of Striga Lane and High Street, the latter fronting it to the east. To the north, south and west it is enclosed by privately owned houses and gardens (Fig 1).

2.2 The ground drops slightly to the east but the general aspect of the surrounding area is south-facing on moderately sloping ground which extends to Hanmer Mere some 70m to the south. The centre of the plot is at a height of approximately 81m OD.

2.3 Soils in the vicinity of Hanmer are either fine, slowly permeable, clayey loams or clays of the Salop Association derived from reddish tills, or coarser, well-drained, sandy loams of the Wick Association derived from glaciofluvial or river terrace drift (Rudeforth et al 1984). Soils on the proposed development site are of the latter category with a fairly deep upper horizon of very dark humic loam.

3 Historical Background

3.1 The village of Hanmer is dominated by two features: church and mere. To the north-east of the proposed development site and at a distance of about 75m from it is the church dedicated to St Chad. This is known to have been in existence in 1110 and as such is one of the earliest recorded churches in Wrexham Maelor. It is highly likely that there was settlement here in Anglo-Saxon times, and that possibly it was centred in the area to the east of the church (Silvester et al, 1992).

3.2 Probably the local topography has exerted considerable influence on this nucleated settlement and the pattern may subsequently not have changed significantly over the centuries. In about 1699 Edward Lhwyd recorded 25 houses around the church (Lhwyd 1909), whilst an enclosure award map of 1779 (Fig 3), records what appears to be approximately the same number of buildings along and just off the main street. This general pattern is repeated in the later tithe map of 1839 (Fig 4). Both maps are housed in the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth.

3.3 Hanmer Mere lies to the south of the village. In the 19th century a dugout canoe of supposedly prehistoric date was found close to Llynbedydd, a name which presumably refers to the mere (Silvester et al, 1992). Apart from this, no other finds of prehistoric date have been recorded. However, it is likely that the mere would have represented a significant local resource in prehistoric (as well as historic) times and further evidence of activity during this period might be anticipated in the locality.

3.4 A possible cultural relationship between the church and the mere is indicated by its Welsh name of Llynbedydd which, in translation, means 'christening lake'.

4 The Field Evaluation

4.1 Excavation work was carried out between October 12th and 14th 1993 with a workforce of 2-3 people, the brief stipulating that two trenches 1.5m wide x 4.0m long should be dug within the areas designated for the proposed house and the garage. (Fig 2). In both areas, the topsoil was stripped manually and finds recovered from it were retained. The exposed subsoil was cleaned and examined for the presence of archaeologically significant features and following consultation with a representative of Clwyd Archaeology Service half the area of both trenches was excavated to a greater depth to ensure that totally undisturbed levels were reached.

4.2 Exposed sections were examined in detail and one from each trench drawn at a scale of 1:10. A photographic record of each trench was also made as required by the brief.

4.3 Trench 1 (Figs.2 & 5)

4.3.1 The upper horizon of dark, humic loam (1) was structurally uniform for a maximum depth 0.68m. Finds recovered were mainly of post-medieval date. Below this depth, the soil consisted of a mixed intermediate layer approximately 0.08m deep of a lighter colour (2). The underlying subsoil layer, of with a maximum depth of 0.54m, is best described as a yellowish-brown, sandy loam (3) containing waterwashed stones.

4.3.2 The ceramic finds recovered mainly from 2 and the upper part of 3 were predominantly of medieval origin. Small quantities of unworked chert flakes and fragments, undiagnostic iron fragments and animal tooth and bone were also recovered. The distribution of the finds was apparently random.

4.3.3 An undisturbed grey, stony gravel and orange-red, sandy horizon was revealed at a depth of approximately 1.20m below ground level.

4.3.4 No features of archaeological significance were exposed at any point within the trench.

4.4 Trench 2 (Figs 2 & 6)

4.4.1 Soils excavated in this trench showed closely similar characteristics to those of Trench 1 and were exposed at approximately the same depths, although the undisturbed sands and gravels were reached at the slighter shallower depth of approximately 1.00m below ground surface.

4.4.2 Finds recovered from the topsoil (5) consisted of pottery sherds of a

predominantly post-medieval date together with glass, clay-pipe stems and bowls, and brick fragments.

4.4.3 Ceramic finds recovered from the intermediate and subsoil horizons (6 & 7) were randomly scattered mainly in the upper levels and again were predominantly of medieval origin. Small quantities of unworked chert, iron fragments, brick and daub fragments and animal tooth and bone were also recovered.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Taken together Figs. 1, 3 and 4 indicate that since 1779 no buildings other than the two sheds and the barn presently standing have occupied the proposed development site. During the last two centuries the area has thus been enclosed land which has probably seen some form of cultivation.

5.2 Trial excavation, though necessarily limited in extent, did not reveal any evidence of earlier structural remains. This does not, of course, preclude the possibility that structures of medieval or earlier origin are not present within the area particularly in the vicinity of the High Street frontage.

5.3 The stratigraphic distribution of ceramic finds in particular shows a marked medieval/post-medieval disposition, with the medieval element appearing predominantly in the upper layers of the subsoil and the post-medieval in the topsoil. This distinction may signify only that any cultivation in post-medieval times did not extend down to subsoil level.

5.4 Other than the chert flakes, no evidence of prehistoric activity was revealed within the excavated areas.

6 Bibliography

Lhwyd, E., 1909-1911 Parochialia being a Summary of Answers to Parochial Queries etc (Cambrian Archaeological Association; 3 Vols)

Rudeforth, C.C., Hartnup, R., Lea, J.W., Thompson, T.R.E., and Wright, P.S., 1984 Soils and Their Use in Wales Soil Survey of England and Wales, Bulletin No. 11

Silvester, R.J., Walters, M., and Wayne, D., 1992 Wrexham Maelor Historic Settlements (CPAT Report No 42, Welshpool)

Appendix 1: Archive

1.1 Plans and Sections

Location plan of evaluation trenches including OD levels.
Section drawings of each evaluation trench.

1.2 Photographic Archive

35mm colour transparencies of excavated trenches
35mm black and white negatives and contact prints of evaluation trenches.

1.3 Context Records

Record forms describing all recorded contexts.

Appendix 2: Finds

2.1 Medieval Pottery

3 sherds, medieval/late medieval, Context 1
23 sherds, medieval/late medieval, Contexts 2 & 3
8 sherds, medieval/late medieval, Context 5
16 sherds, medieval/late medieval, Contexts 6 & 7

2.2 Post-medieval Pottery

13 sherds, Context 1
45 sherds, Context 5

2.3 Glass

1 fragment, Context 7

2.4 Brick & Daub

2 fragments, Context 5
5 fragments, Context 6 & 7

2.5 Clay pipe stems and bowls

11 stem fragments, Context 1
1 bowl fragment, Context 1
1 stem fragment, Context 2
21 stem fragments, Context 5
4 bowl fragments, Context 5

2.6 Iron

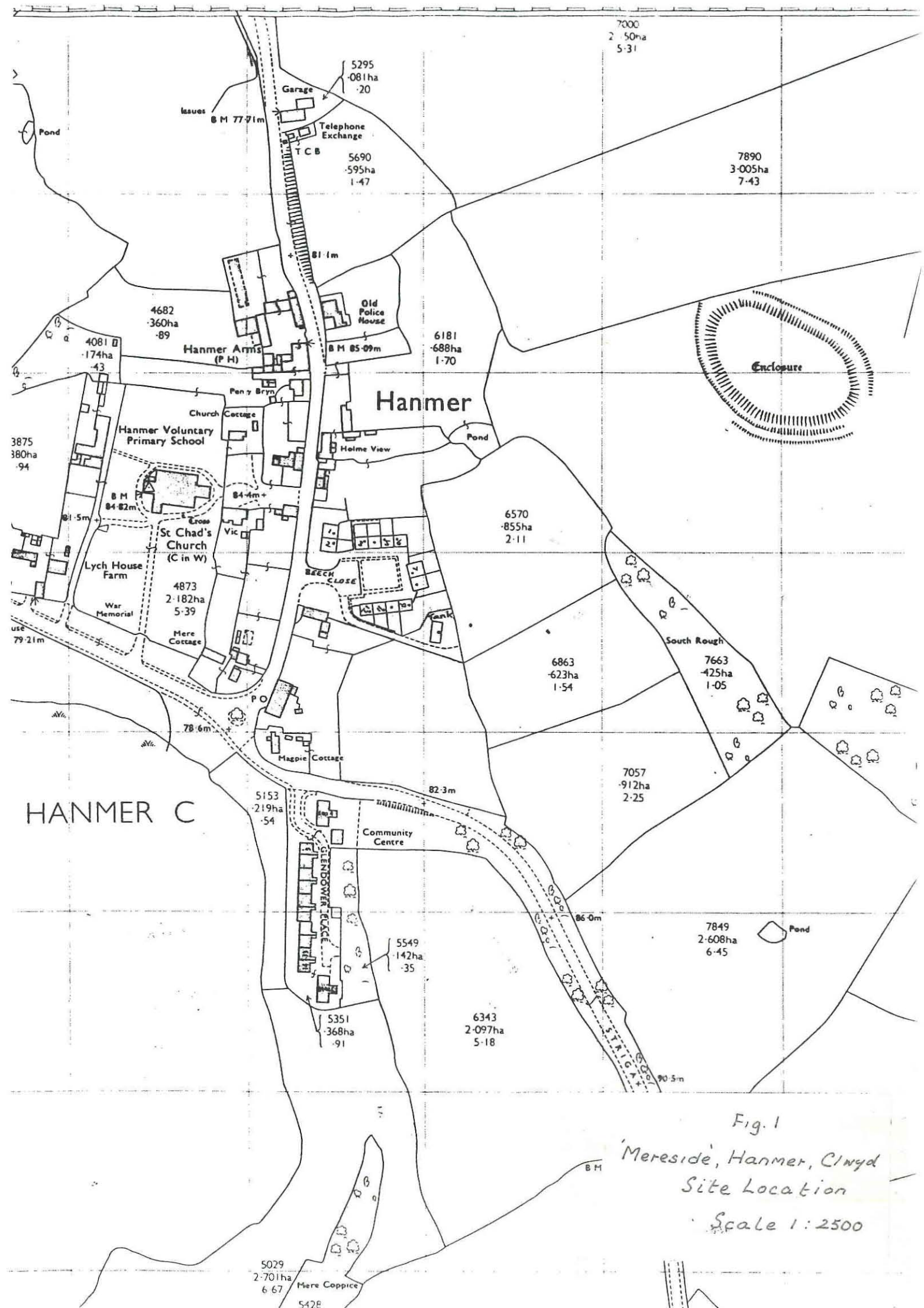
4 fragments, Context 3
3 fragments, Context 6

2.7 Chert

5 fragments, Context 3
5 fragments, Context 7

2.8 Animal bone and teeth

1 bone fragment and 1 ovicaprid tooth fragment, Context 1
1 bone fragment, 3 horse teeth fragments, Context 2
1 horse tooth fragment, Context 5



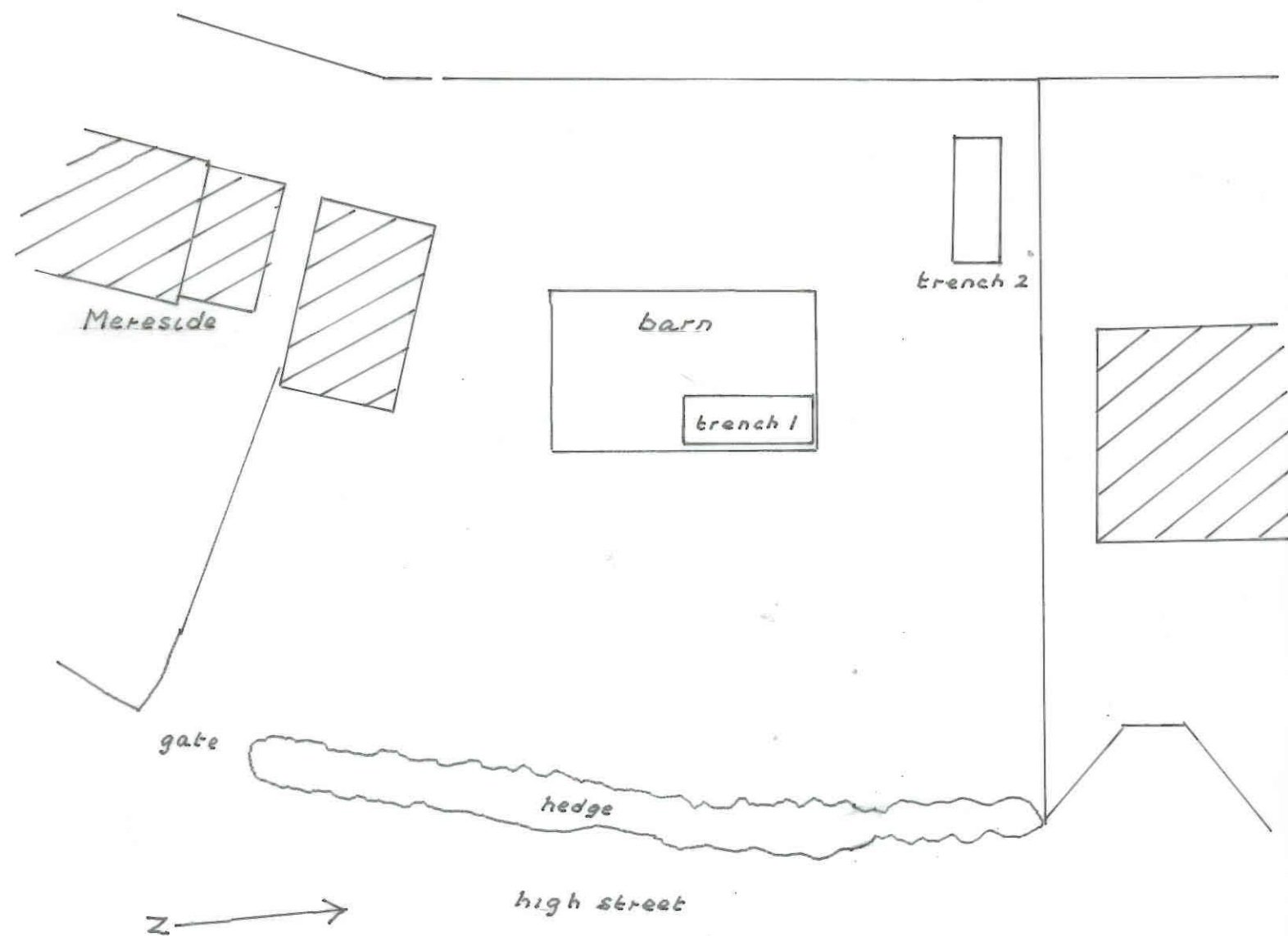
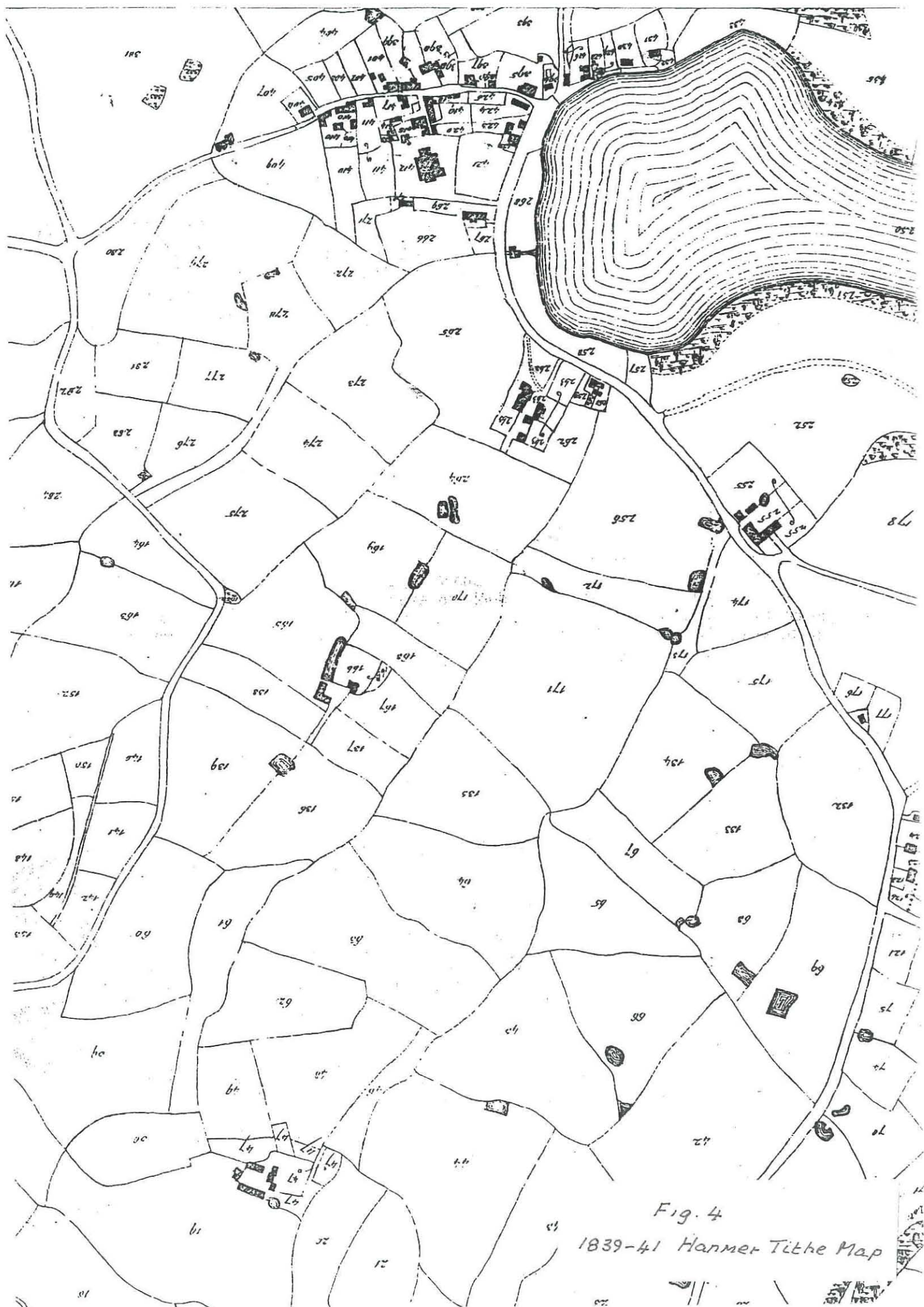


Fig. 2
'Meresside', Harmer, Clwyd
Location of trenches
Scale 1:200



Fig. 3
'Mereside', Hanmer, Clwyd
1779 Enclosure Award Map
Scale: Approx. 1:2500



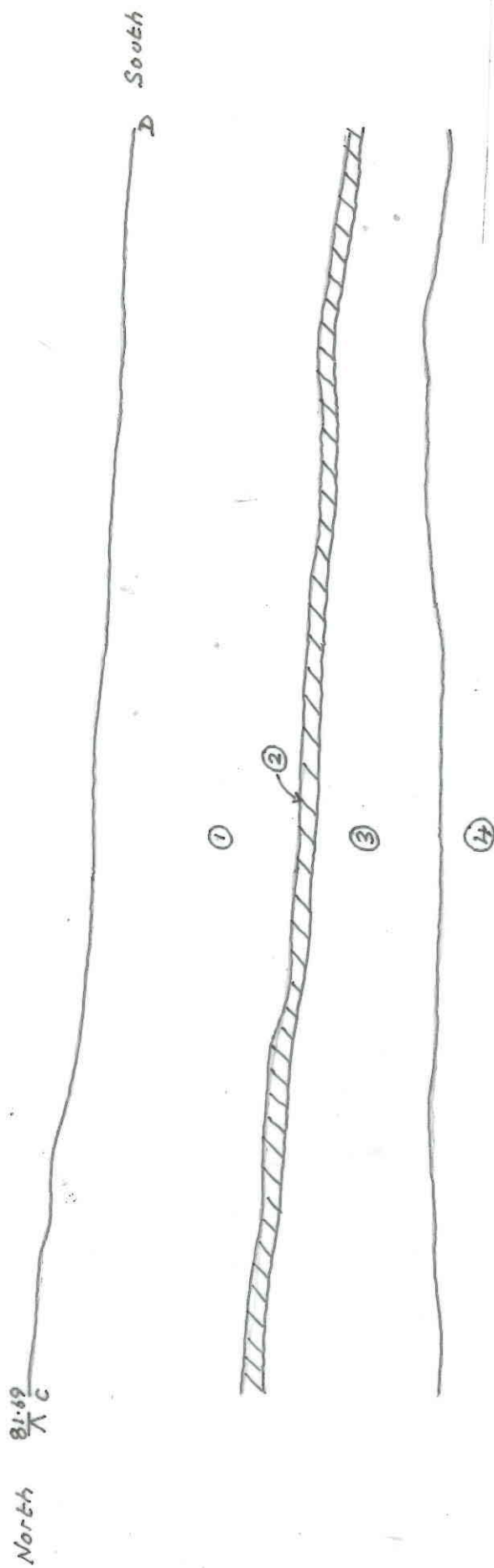
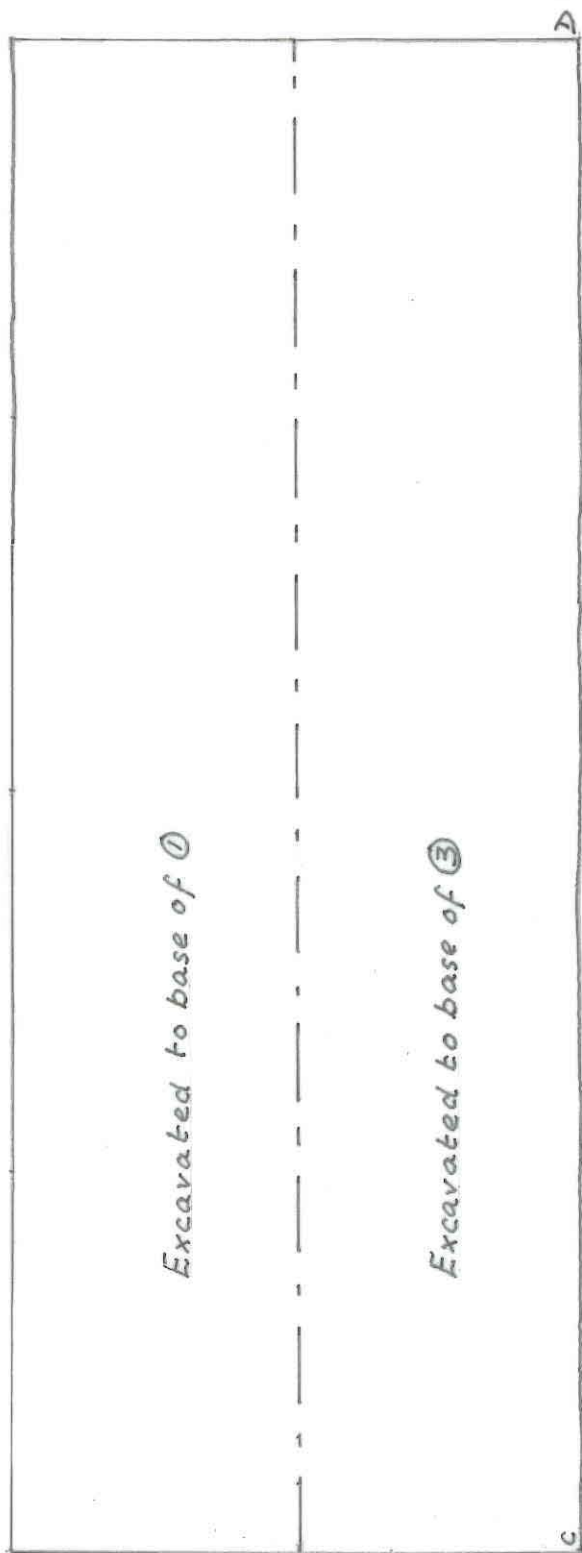


Fig. 5
Trench 1: Plan + Section
Scale 1:20

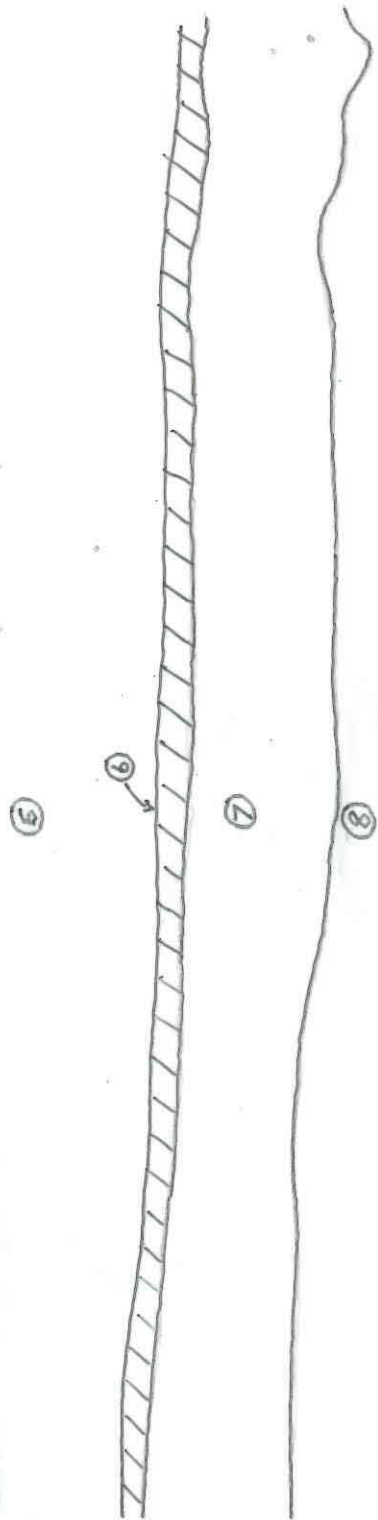
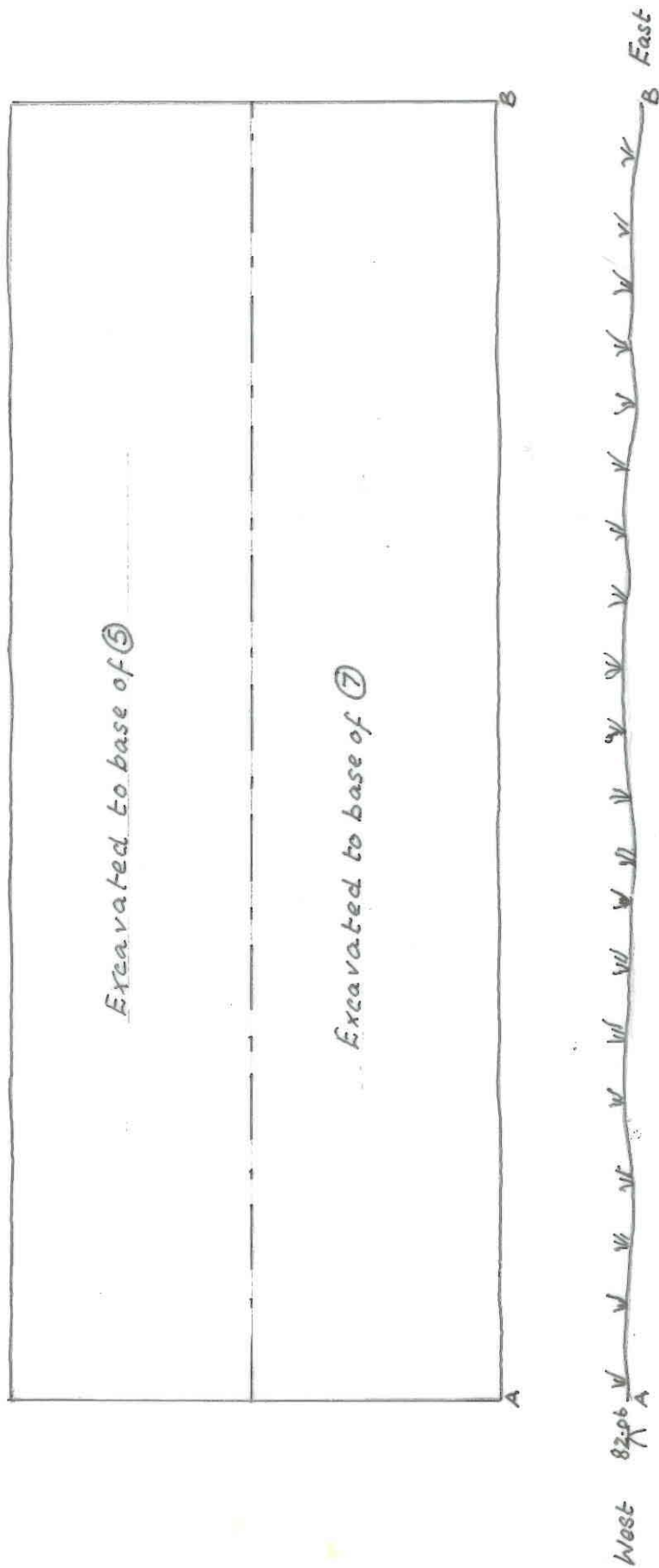


Fig. 6
Trench 2: Plan + Section
Scale 1:20