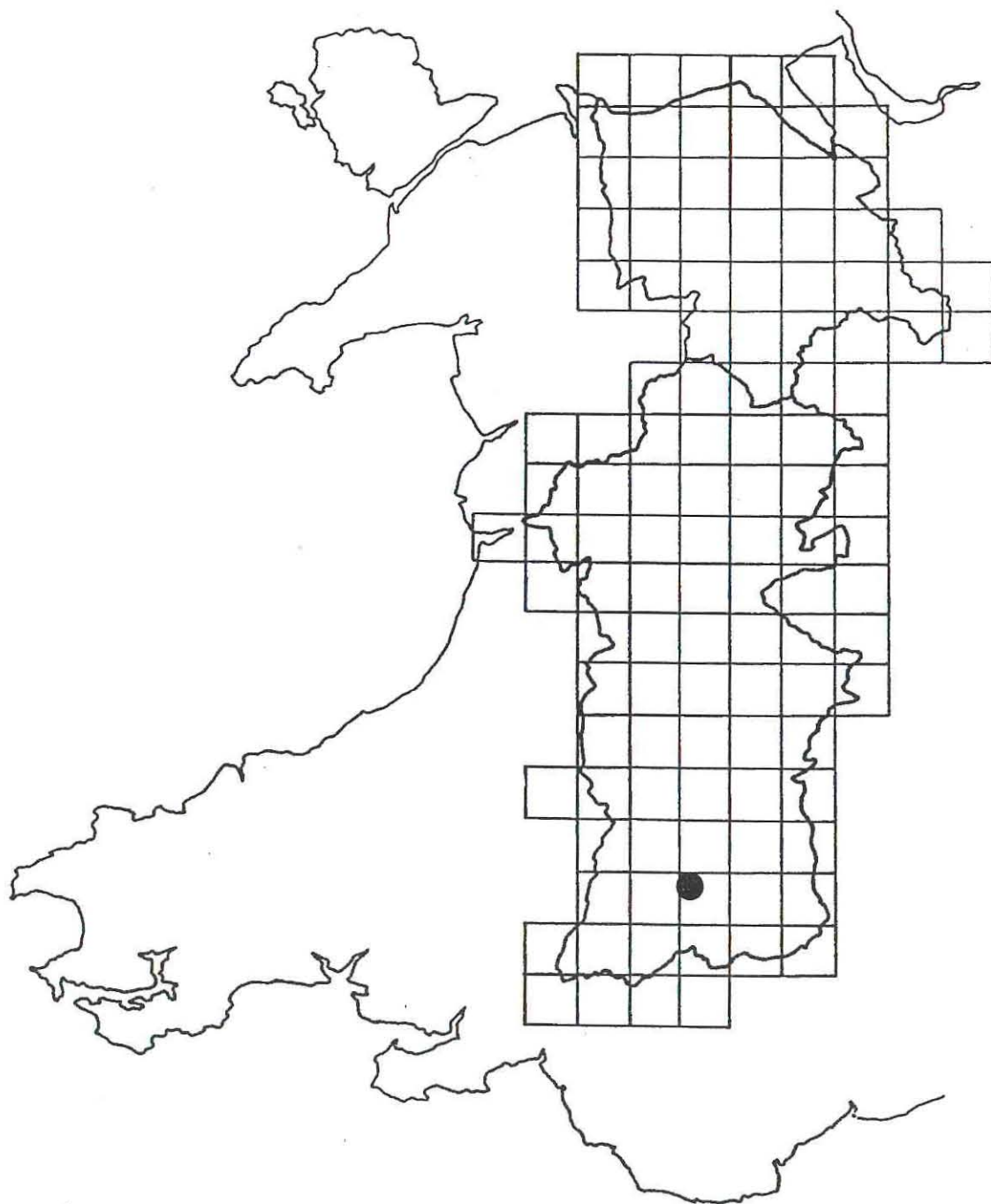


*Land adjacent to
Llanspyddid Church, Powys*

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



CPAT Report No 91

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Llanspyddid Church, Powys*

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by W J Owen
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Report prepared for the Representative Body of the Church in Wales

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The following archaeological evaluation was carried out in response to a planning application for two residential dwellings on land adjacent to St. Cattwg's Church, Llanspyddid, Powys (Brecon Beacons National Park planning application K13190). A brief (CPAT EVB 53) was prepared by the curatorial section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) in consultation with the archaeologist of the Brecon Beacons National Park. CPAT's field section was invited to tender for the evaluation, and their specification is included in this report as Appendix 1. The proposed development lies immediately to the west of the Church (NGR SO 01142816) on pasture land which was formerly a playground (Fig 1).
- 1.2 The development is located within an area of considerable archaeological potential within the core of the medieval village, as defined by the report on Historic Settlements in the Brecon Beacons National Park (Silvester and Dorling 1993). The plot is thought to contain part of the original, and larger, former churchyard, and to include possible evidence for burials and structural remains relating to early religious buildings.

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Although there is no direct evidence, it is thought that the Church of St Cattwg was founded during the 7th or 8th century, based on a reference in the Llandaff Charters to 'Llandespetit' church (c. AD 1223-25). The present church dates to largely the 14th century, although there is a 13th-century font within the church, and a scheduled 7th to 9th-century pillar stone (SAM B121). The churchyard is presently much reduced from its postulated former extent, although parts of the earlier curvilinear boundary still survive. On the basis of shape, it has been assumed that the original churchyard enclosed the area now bounded by the road to the south of the church, encompassing the proposed development plot and the former Llanspyddid Farm. The curvilinearity of the churchyard, the British dedication and the pillar stone all point to an early medieval foundation, that is before the Norman conquest.
- 2.2 Little is known of the history of Llanspyddid village, which developed on the southern bank of the River Usk, presumably centred on St Cattwg's Church. The origins and early history of the settlement are likely to be closely linked with the church, and an early medieval foundation would therefore seem probable.

3 THE EVALUATION

- 3.1 The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was commissioned to undertake the evaluation, which was carried out between 14th and 28th February 1994. In accordance with the evaluation brief, a single trench was excavated to determine the extent of the surviving archaeology and to evaluate the significance and likely dating of any features revealed (Fig 1). The trench was excavated initially by machine with subsequent cleaning, excavation and recording by hand. Archaeological features were only excavated to a depth and extent which allowed their form, function and date to be investigated. A full drawn, written and photographic record was maintained throughout. The results from the excavations were as follows.
- 3.2 **Trench A** (35 x 1.5m; Figs 3 and 4). Numbers in brackets refer to Figures 3 and 4.
- 3.2.1 The post-medieval overburden was removed by machine. At the southern end of the trench this consisted of a single layer of ploughsoil (1) c. 0.25m thick, containing post-medieval pottery. Beneath this, in a short section of the trench, lay a thin lens of humic, but stony soil (29). At the northern end of the trench, however, a greater depth (c. 0.60m) was removed. A thick layer of stiff, red, stony silty-clay (3) lay immediately beneath the turf, sealing the post-medieval ploughsoil (4) beneath it. It had clearly been deposited in recent times as there had been no accumulation of topsoil over it. This layer may represent an attempt to level up the sloping field and could perhaps relate to the period when the field was used as a children's playground.
- 3.2.2 Beneath the ploughsoil (4) at the northern end of the trench a stony layer (5), c. 0.06m thick, was revealed. Its surface was disturbed by roots and contaminated with post-medieval pottery probably originating from the ploughsoil above it. Only two shallow features (19 and 21) were identified cutting this layer; both possible postholes which remain undated.
- 3.2.3 Removal of layer 5 revealed the underlying natural subsoil (15) which displayed parallel lines of stones within it, presumably the result of peri-glacial processes. A number of small, shallow, probable postholes (23, 25 and 27) cut into the natural subsoil were first seen at this level. It is possible that they may also have been cut through layer 5, above, but were not identified there due to the disturbed nature of that layer. Although their fills contained no dating evidence, the grey-brown silty loam within them closely resembled context 4, the post-medieval ploughsoil, and is perhaps indicative of a fairly recent date.
- 3.2.4 Beneath the ploughsoil (1) at the southern end of the trench, a layer of very stony red silty clay (7) was revealed overlying the natural subsoil (15). The northern limit of this layer is marked by a ditch (6), c. 2.00m wide and 0.60m deep, running east/west and cut into the natural pink-red stony clay subsoil (15). It is unclear whether or not the ditch was cut through layer 7. The lowest fill of the ditch was a layer of very sticky pink-brown silty-clay (35), 0.30m thick, which was sealed by layer 31 (see below), a spread of stone which then appears to have sunk into the ditch. Above this, two further layers of pink-grey silty clay and a thin lens of greyer silt accumulated (34, 33 and 32), eventually

- sealed by a layer of brown silty-loam (8).
- 3.2.5 Lying to the north of ditch 6, was a layer of large stones in a matrix of pink-red clay-silt (9), which contained a considerable number of sherds of Roman coarse pottery and samian ware. The layer was c. 0.14m thick and c. 2.00m in width. These stones are large and closely packed and are probably the in situ remains of a former bank alongside, and associated with, ditch 6, but originally separated from it by an intervening berm c. 1.30m wide. To the north and south of context 9 lay spreads of smaller and more irregularly spaced stones (14, 30 and 31). These more scattered stones may have eroded out of the bank whilst it was still extant, spreading to either side, with layer 31 overlying the berm and partially sealing and sinking into the ditch, which was by then partly silted. Removal of a portion of contexts 9 and 31 revealed the natural pink-red stony-clay subsoil directly beneath.
- 3.2.6 Immediately below the base of the ploughsoil (1), and overlying layers 9, 30 and 31, was a spread of pink-red clay-silt (2), 0.10m thick, and identical in appearance to that in the matrix of stone layer 9 below it. This layer extended northwards for 6.50m from a point close to the north edge of ditch 6. It is best interpreted as material originally forming the bank, which had been slighted, and then spread out to the north.
- 3.2.7 North of the bank, removal of contexts 30 and 2 revealed a surface of small tightly packed stones (16). This surface was cut by two features running east/west (10 and 12). Further investigation of context 10 revealed it to be a grave, containing human teeth at its western end, but no datable finds. It measured 0.66m wide and in excess of 1.50m long, extending beyond the eastern limit of excavation. Context 12 lay parallel to this grave and 0.60m to the north. Its width was similar to that of context 10, and it also extended beyond the eastern limit of excavation, with only 0.80m lying within Trench A. Although unexcavated, its similarity to context 10 would suggest that this too was a grave.
- 3.2.8 The only remaining feature revealed in Trench A was a shallow, curving gully (17), cut into the natural subsoil. Its date and function are unknown.

4 THE FINDS

- 4.1 A number of sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered from the upper levels of the evaluation trench, mostly from the ploughsoils. The majority of these were probably of later 17th- or 18th-century date. A few pieces of glass probably of similar date were also recovered.
- 4.2 A considerable quantity of Roman coarse pottery sherds and a small number of samian ware sherds were recovered from deposits which appeared to have formed a bank (contexts 9, 31 and 2). A white glass plano-convex counter of Roman type, as well as a perforated ceramic roundel were recovered from context 2.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The evaluation produced evidence for the existence of a bank and ditch, which are presumed to have formed the southern boundary of an earlier and larger churchyard at Llanspyddid. The curve of the boundary of the existing churchyard, if extended, might pass through the evaluation trench at the point where the ditch was identified, rather than following the straighter present-day boundaries around the farm. The bank and ditch remain undated, but must post-date the Roman period, since Roman pottery was incorporated in the construction of the bank. Two east/west graves were identified within the evaluation trench, but no dating evidence was recovered from these. They certainly pre-date the reduction in size of the churchyard, which must have occurred at some time prior to the 19th century. Quite how early this reduction occurred is a matter of speculation only.
- 5.2 The material used to construct the bank (contexts 9, 31 and 2) contained a considerable quantity of Roman pottery, but Roman finds were not recovered from any other deposits within the evaluation trench. It is not clear where this material originated from, as it would appear to be in secondary contexts. However, Brecon Gaer Roman fort is located only 1.6km north-west of Llanspyddid and it would not be uncommon to find civilian occupation in the vicinity of the fort. It introduces the possibility of Roman occupation close to the site, or even within that part of the development plot not examined by the evaluation trench, which might have been responsible for the pottery found within the bank.
- 5.3 It may be presumed from the evidence from the evaluation that further burials are likely within the development plot. Any ground disturbance below the base of the ploughsoil (on average 0.2m below the ground surface) is likely to damage or destroy potentially significant archaeological deposits.

6 REFERENCES

Silvester, R.J., and Dorling, P.J., 1993 Historic Settlements in the Brecon Beacons National Park, CPAT Report No 44

APPENDIX 1

SPECIFICATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

1 Introduction

1.1 A proposed housing development (Brecon Beacons National Park planning application K13190) on land next to St Cattwg's church, Llanspyddid, lies within what is believed to be the historic core of the village. The church itself may have originated as early as the 7th century, and the development plot is inside a curving boundary which may represent an early churchyard, subsequently reduced in size. Consequently, it has been suggested that substantial archaeological remains may exist in the area of the proposed development.

1.2 Brecon Beacons National Park have decided on the advice of their own archaeologist and the Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust that an evaluation is necessary to assess the implications of the planning application on the archaeological resource in order that these can be taken into account during the determination of that planning. Accordingly a brief (CPAT EVB 53) has been prepared by the Regional Sites and Monuments Record for Powys which describes the scheme of archaeological works required.

2 Objectives

2.1 The objectives of the evaluation are:

2.1.1 to reveal by means of a carefully located excavation trench, the nature, significance and, where possible, the chronology of the archaeology within the area of the proposed development in so far as these are possible;

2.1.2 to record any archaeology so revealed;

2.1.3 to prepare a report outlining the results of the evaluation and incorporating sufficient information on the archaeological resource for the planning authority to assess the implications of the development.

3 Methods

3.1 The evaluation will take the form of a single trench, 35m long and 1.5m wide, as specified in the evaluation brief. The trench will have the topsoil and any modern overburden removed mechanically. This will be followed by manual excavation of all areas deemed to be of potential archaeological significance within the trench. All features encountered will be examined as fully as appropriate within the constraints imposed by time and safety considerations.

3.2 The excavation will be undertaken using standard evaluation procedures:

3.2.1 removal of modern overburden and sterile lower levels

3.2.2 evaluation of the archaeological deposits by hand trowelling to establish their importance and integrity, but avoiding any unnecessary disturbance of the deposits.

3.2.3 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 appropriate scales (as defined in the Evaluation Brief), and photographed in monochrome and colour. All drawn records will be related to control points depicted on modern maps.

3.2.4 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 an appropriate museum, subject to agreement being reached with the landowner and the museum curator.

3.3 Following the on-site work a report will be prepared according to the principles laid out in the Evaluation Brief.

3.4 The site archive will be prepared to specifications laid out in Appendix 3 in the Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage, 1991), to be deposited in the Powys County Sites and Monuments Record.

4 Resources and Programming

4.1 The evaluation will be undertaken by a small team of skilled archaeologists under the direct supervision of an experienced field archaeologist. Overall supervision will be by a senior member of CPAT's staff who will also be a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

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

4.3 It is anticipated that the evaluation will take up to five days and the subsequent report would be prepared thereafter, dependent on the client's instructions and the arrangement of a suitable timetable. The date of commencement, at the time of writing, has yet to be agreed with the client.

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.

R. J. Silvester
2 August 1993

APPENDIX 2: FINDS

2.1 Roman pottery

13 sherds coarse pottery, Context 2
33 sherds coarse pottery, Context 9
6 sherds coarse pottery, Context 14
1 sherd samian ware, Context 2
2 sherds samian ware, Context 9
1 fragment samian ware, Context 31

2.2 Post-medieval pottery

4 sherds, Context 5
2 sherds, Context 8

2.3 Small finds

1 perforated ceramic roundel, probably Roman, Context 2
1 plano-convex white glass counter, Roman type, Context 2

2.4 Human skeletal remains

teeth (belonging to one individual), Context 11 (fill of grave 10)

2.5 Animal bone and teeth

6 fragments, Context 8
12 fragments, Context 9
8 fragments, Context 11

2.6 Brick/tile fragments

2 fragments, undated, Context 5

2.7 Glass

3 fragments (post-medieval), Context 5

2.8 Iron ore

1 lump, Context 9

2.9 Coal

1 lump, Context 5

2.10 Slag

4 fragments, Context 2
1 fragment, Context 9
1 fragment, Context 11
2 fragments, Context 14

APPENDIX 3: EXCAVATION ARCHIVE

Site Code: LSP

3.1 Context records

35 Contexts record forms

3.2 Photographic archive

25 35mm Colour Slides

1 35mm Black and White negative film with contact and archive prints

Photographic catalogue

3.3 Drawings

2 A1 site drawings

1 A4 site drawing

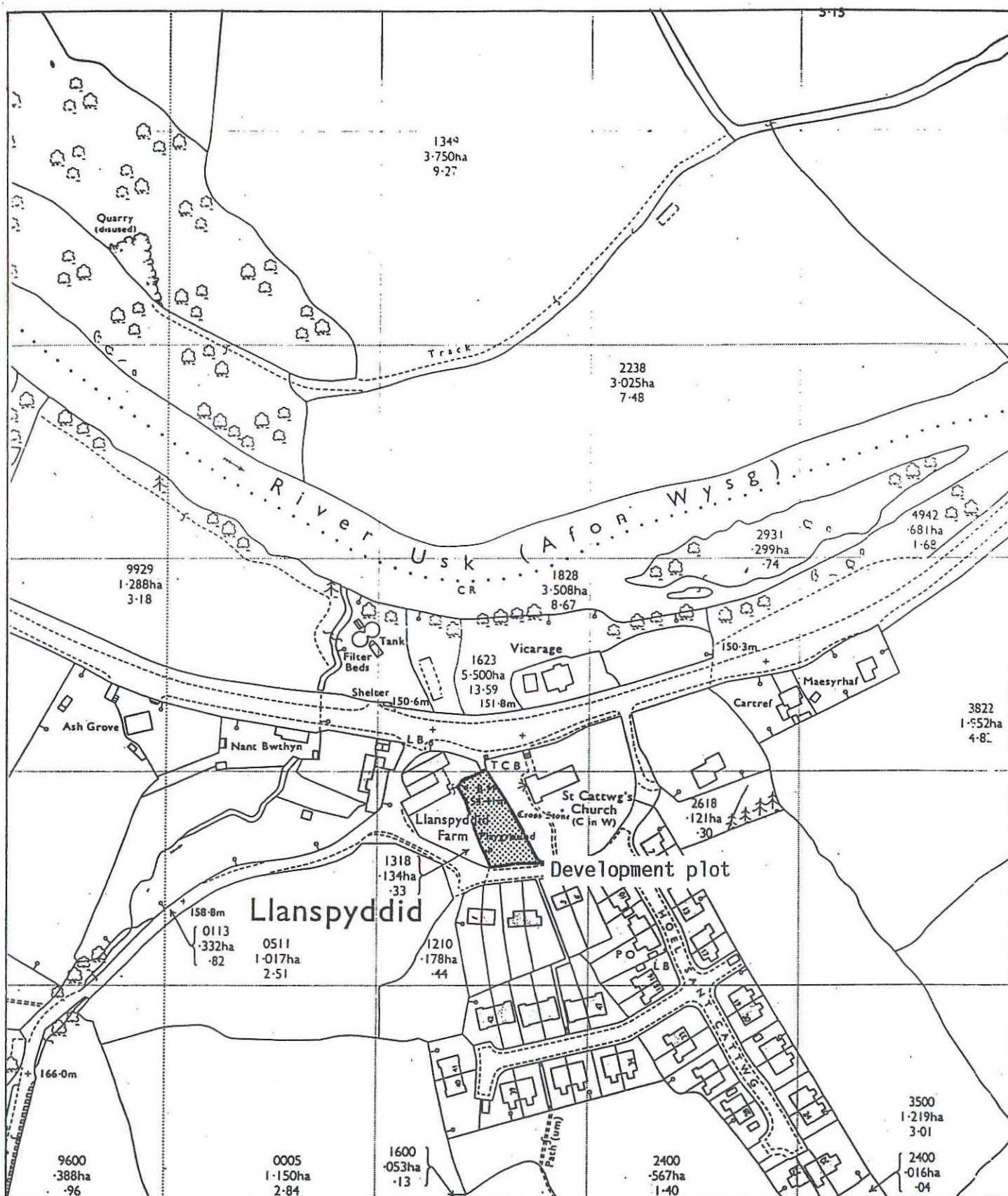


Fig 1: Location of development plot scale 1:2500

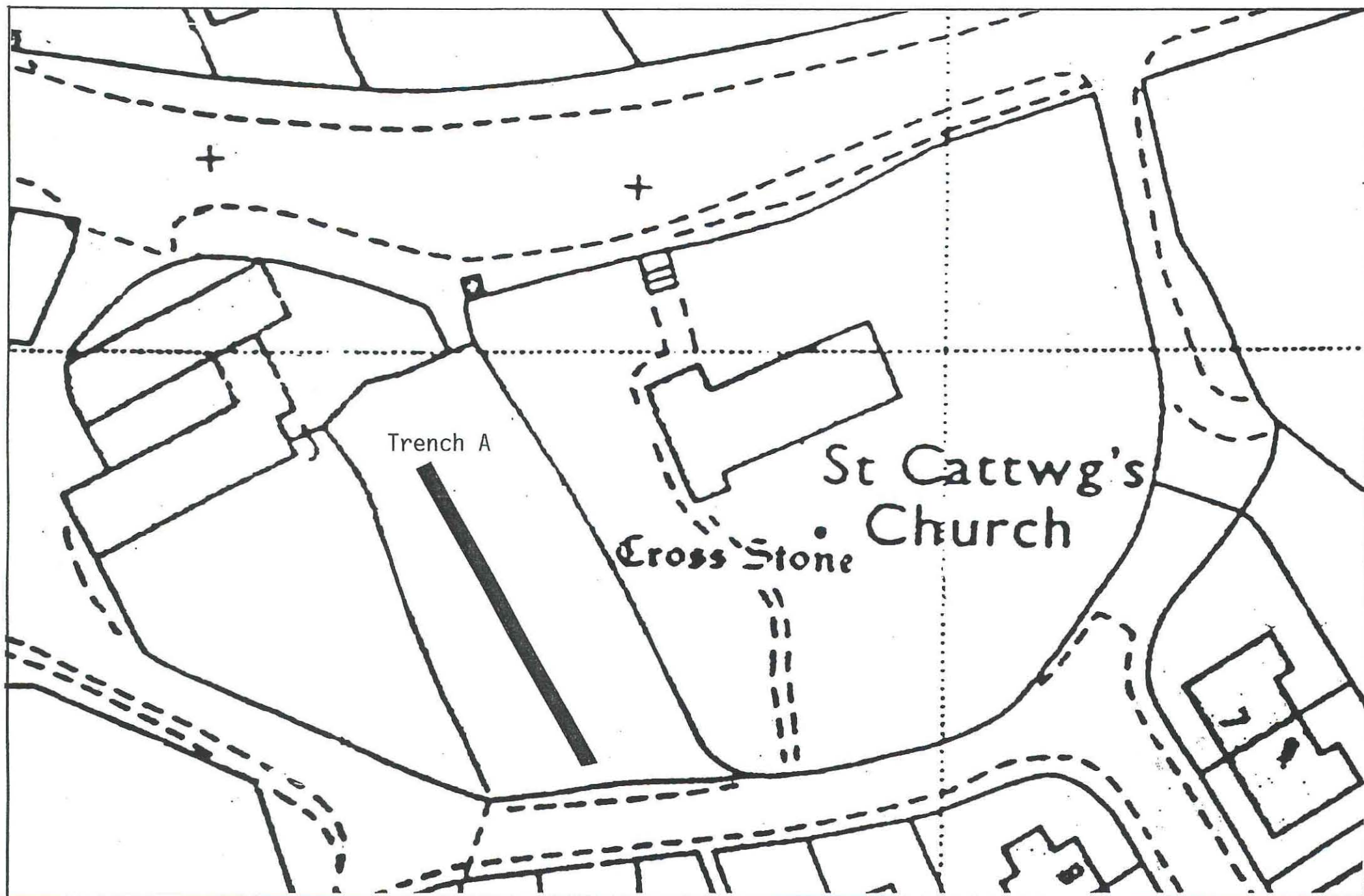


Fig 2: Location of evaluation trench scale 1:500

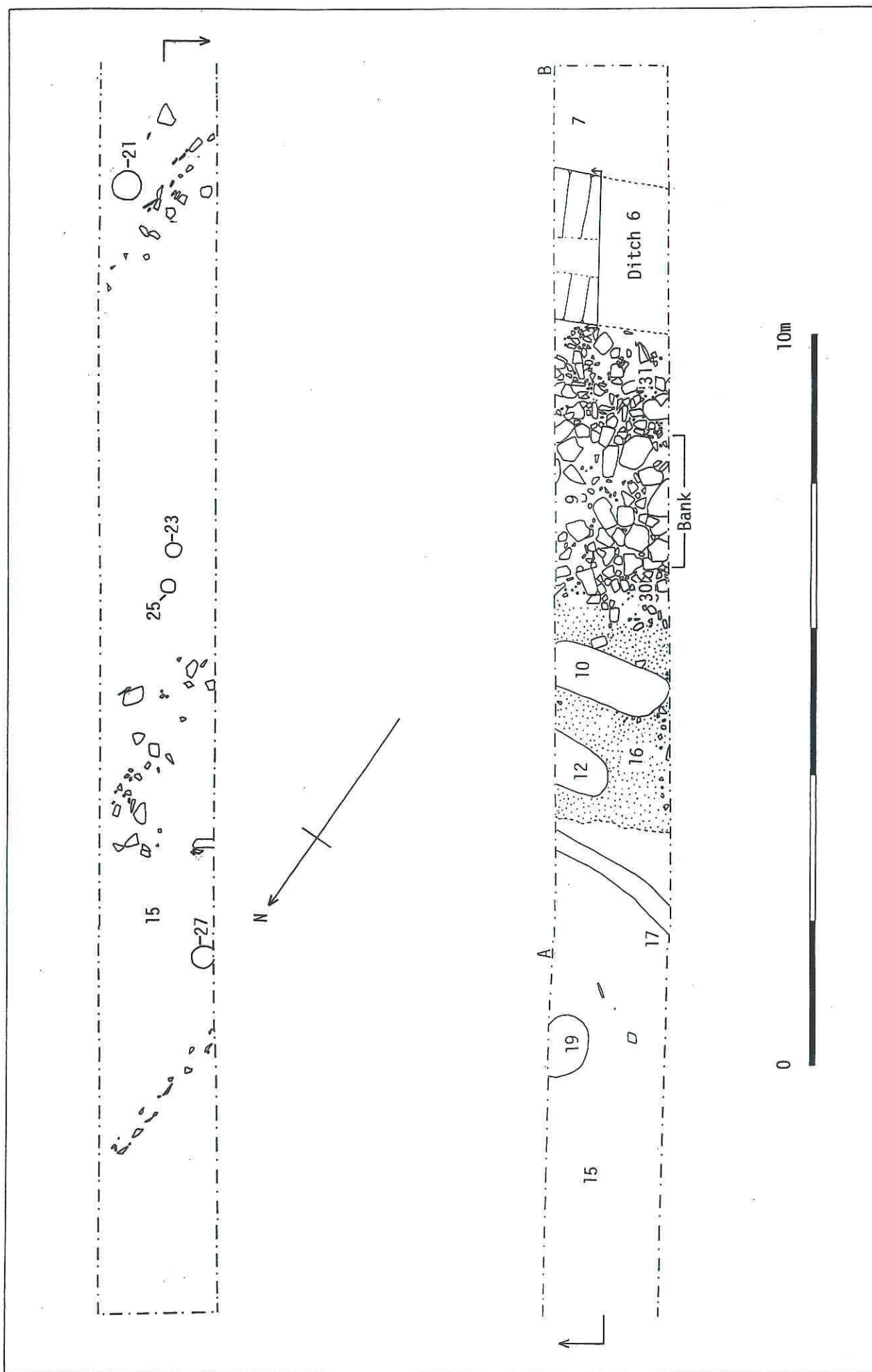


Fig 3: Plan of Trench A

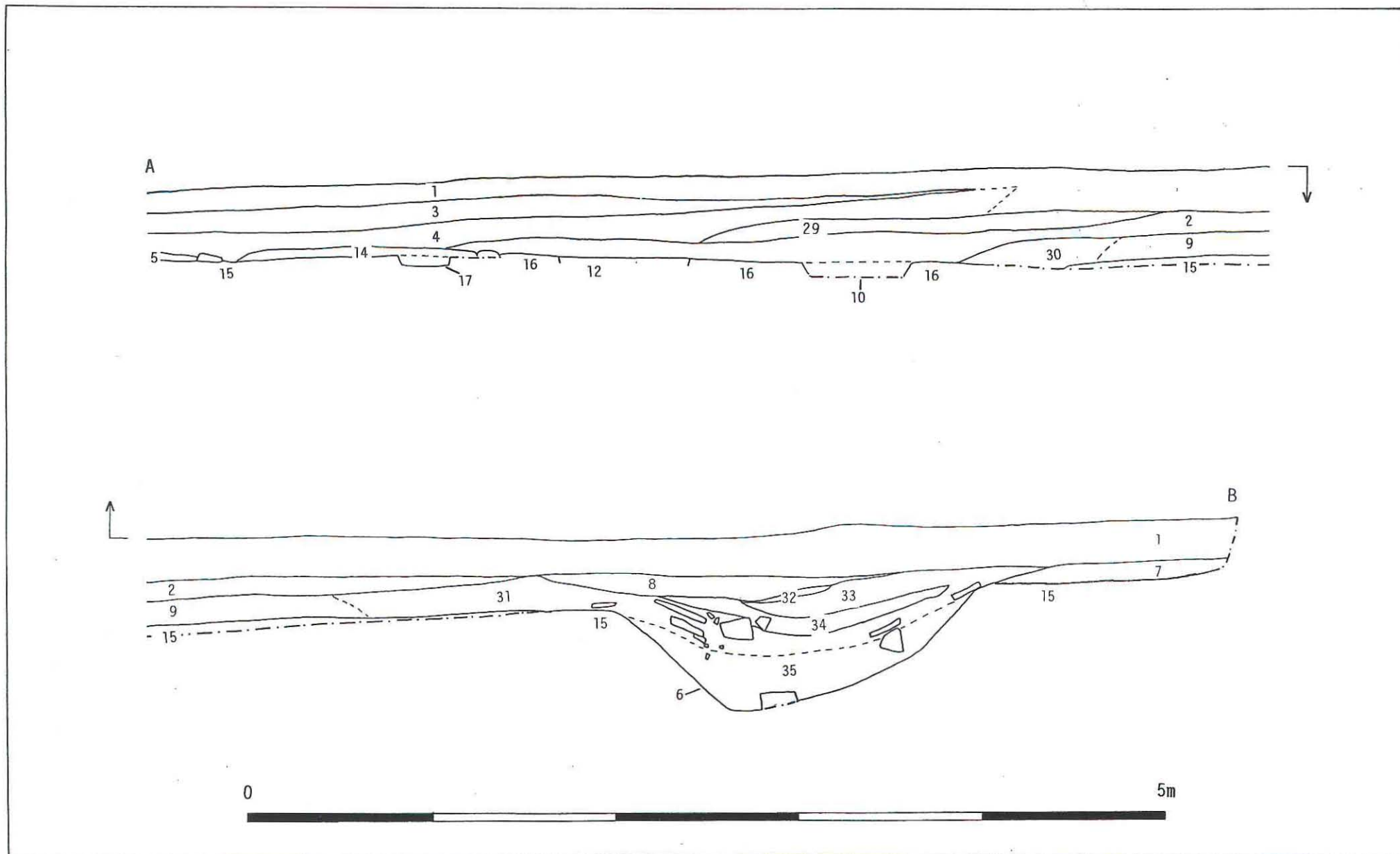


Fig 4: Section of south end of Trench A and Ditch 6