

CPAT Report No 427

**Land adjacent to Roman Valley, Ellerton,
Shropshire
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

R Hankinson
May 2001

Report for Mr J. Ashley



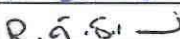
The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust
7a Church Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7DL
tel (01938) 553670, fax (01938) 552179
© CPAT

CPAT Report Record

Report and status

CPAT Report Title	Land adjacent to Roman Valley, Ellerton, Shropshire: Archaeological Evaluation		
CPAT Project Name	Roman Valley, Ellerton		
CPAT Project No	936	CPAT Report No	427
Confidential (yes/no)	Yes	draft/final	Final

Internal control

	name	signature	date
prepared by	R Hankinson		31/05/01
checked by	N.W. Jones		31/05/01
approved by	R.J. Silvester		31/05/01

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

© CPAT

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

2 EXCAVATION

3 CONCLUSIONS

4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

5 REFERENCES

APPENDIX 1: SITE ARCHIVE

APPENDIX 2: SPECIFICATION

PLATES

FIGURES

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On the 29 March 2001 Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust Contracts Section (CPAT Contracts) was asked by Ms S. Treweek of Design and Tech, Market Drayton, on behalf of her client, Mr J. Ashley, to provide a quotation for an archaeological evaluation on a plot of land between 'Roman Valley' and 'Ellerton Mill Farm' (at NGR SJ 71462593), in the village of Ellerton, near Newport, Shropshire (Fig. 1). The request was in relation to an application for Planning Consent to build a bungalow on the above site, which had been identified as being in the vicinity of a Roman road by the Shropshire County Archaeology Service; a brief specifying the requirements of the evaluation had been provided by Mr M.D. Watson, Head of Archaeology, acting in his capacity as curator.
- 1.2 The work defined by the brief consisted of the excavation of a 15m-long trench across the proposed site of the bungalow and its access road from the adjacent public road to the north-east. In line with the conditions of the brief, a specification (proposed scheme of work) was completed by CPAT Contracts and forwarded to the Head of Archaeology for approval. The specification was approved on the 3 April 2001 and CPAT submitted a quotation for the work. The CPAT quotation was accepted by Ms S. Treweek, on behalf of Mr J. Ashley, on 12 April 2001, with the site work being carried out in May 2001. This report was compiled immediately thereafter.
- 1.3 The proposed development site consists of a small pasture paddock on the south-west side of the minor road leading from Ellerton towards the village of Hinstock, on the east side of a valley which runs southwards to meet that of the River Meese, 2km distant. The valley is generally fairly shallow, but at this point, its sides dip quite steeply from the relatively level ground on either side. Within the development plot, which encompasses the upper edge of the valley, the ground also dips steeply from the south-west and north-east into a gully, which descends to the north-west and follows an approximately parallel line to the nearby road (see Fig 2). The base of the valley to the west of the proposed development is occupied by two ponds, one of which was the mill pond for the late 18th-century Ellerton Mill (Fig. 1; SMR No. 1714).
- 1.4 The Roman road (Fig. 1; SMR No. 1029), which prompted the evaluation is known as 'The Longford', and ran between Stretton, Staffordshire and Whitchurch (*Mediolanum*), Shropshire. It is believed to have been constructed to cut off the unnecessary mileage which would have been incurred in travelling to Chester (*Deva*) by way of Wroxeter. The line of the road, as depicted on the modern Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 1), can be seen to run directly towards the development plot from the south-east, though it is undefined for the preceding one kilometre. The road is again defined 7km to the north-west, where it follows the line of the A41, and passes through the village of Ternhill in the vicinity of Market Drayton. Evidence of Roman activity within the vicinity of the development consists of a late 2nd-century mortarium (Fig. 1; SMR No. 1712) found in 1964 at SJ 71412560, on a field then belonging to Ellerton Mill Farm. A small fragment of Roman grey ware has also been found in a search of the same field. This may perhaps suggest that there was some settlement of the period in the vicinity of the development.

2 EXCAVATIONS

- 2.1 The excavation comprised a single trench 15m in length and 2m wide, located according to the requirements of the brief (Fig. 2). The excavation was limited to the top of significant archaeological deposits, with further full or partial excavation of deposits being undertaken only where it was considered to be essential for achieving the objectives of the evaluation.
- 2.2 The trench was initially excavated by machine down to the top of the first recognisable archaeological horizon, with subsequent excavation undertaken by hand. This consisted of the removal of between 0.15 and 0.32m of dark red-brown sandy topsoil (1) containing 18th and 19th-century finds consisting of pottery, brick and iron objects.
- 2.3 Underlying the topsoil at the north-eastern end of the trench was reddish sandstone bedrock (3). The client commented that a previous owner of the field had quarried away a natural bank or scarp from this location; this would appear to be confirmed by the level upper surface of the bedrock and the lack of intermediate layers between bedrock and topsoil.
- 2.4 In the central section of the trench the topsoil was underlain by an accumulation deposit (4), up to 0.55m thick, comprising mid-brown loamy sand containing small rounded pebbles. Finds recovered

from the layer include pottery of 18th/19th-century date, clay-pipe fragments, brick and iron. The sequence of deposits was disturbed in the south-west half of the trench by a pit (7), 0.9m wide and up to 0.6m deep, filled with brick and stone rubble (6) containing 18th and 19th-century pottery. This was itself cut by a scoop (9) up to 0.4m deep, filled by a layer of red sandy soil (2), containing many sandstone fragments, some rounded pebbles and slag, brick and iron finds. Both features were cut through layer (4) and sealed beneath the topsoil (1).

- 2.5 The removal of layer (4) revealed a layer of loose orange sand (5) containing some rounded pebbles, which had the appearance of an accumulation deposit.
- 2.6 The investigation of layer (5) revealed it to be the fill of a cutting (8) running in an approximately north-west/south-east direction, which had been cut through the sandstone bedrock (3); this appeared to follow the line of the gully visible as an earthwork, described in 1.3 above (see also Fig 2). The north-east side of the cutting (Plate 1) was investigated by the removal of up to 1.0m of layer (5), to the apparent base of the cutting, and this revealed a single sherd of abraded Roman pottery (see Fig. 3 for location). The removal of approximately 0.4m of layer (5) at the south-west end of the trench (plate 2) revealed the south-west side of the cutting (8). Following consultation with the Head of Archaeology, it was decided that it would be acceptable to define the remainder of the cutting by augering (Fig. 3). The cutting was at least 10m wide, narrowing to 5m wide at its base, while its maximum depth was 1.8m below the existing ground surface; it appeared to be entirely rock-cut with no suggestion of a road surface.

3 CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 The development is located on the direct line of the Roman road (SMR No 1029) as projected from its known course, and the features revealed by the excavation support the surface appearance that the road line is defined at this point by a cutting (8), which would have been created to even out the steep slope of the valley side. The excavation suggests that the cutting was at least 10m wide, tapering to approximately 5m wide at its base, and attaining a maximum depth of approximately 4m below the level of the valley edge. It appears to be entirely rock-cut, with no evidence of an overlying road surface in its base, though the bedrock would have provided a perfectly adequate surface if it was carefully levelled and graded. Some erosion of the base and sides of the cutting resulting from the passage of traffic and running water is likely to have occurred, and this is supported by the augered profile which was obtained.
- 3.2 Following the abandonment of the road there appears to have been a considerable accumulation of sand (5) in the base of the gully, which produced a single find consisting of a very abraded sherd of Roman pottery which was certainly in a secondary context. The appearance and depth of the accumulation suggests that the road may have been abandoned soon after the end of the Roman period, and remained unused thereafter.
- 3.3 A further accumulation of soil (4) appears to have been deposited in the upper part of the cutting, following the termination of the phase of accumulation associated with layer (5). This may be due to post-medieval agricultural activity associated with Ellerton Mill Farm as there is no evidence that the gully was used by traffic at this time; it seems likely that the soft underlying sand would not have provided a stable surface for wheeled vehicles.
- 3.4 The final phase of activity revealed during the excavation appears to be related to the removal (within living memory) of part of the natural bank or scarp on the north-east side of the cutting, to provide stone used elsewhere in the area, perhaps for trackways. It seems likely that context (9) may be associated with this activity.

4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 4.1 The writer would like to thank Ms Penny Ward of the Shropshire Sites and Monuments Record for her search of the SMR records for the locality of the development, and our client Mr John Ashley, for his assistance.

- 4.2 The writer would also like to thank his colleagues at CPAT, Mr Glyn Owen and Mr Will Logan for their assistance with the excavations, Mr Nigel Jones for his help and assistance with the preparation of the report, and Mr Mark Walters and Ms Wendy Owen for identifying material found during the excavation.

5 REFERENCES

Shropshire Sites and Monuments Record, records as of 9th May 2001.

Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 Explorer Map (No 243), dated 2000.

APPENDIX 1

SITE ARCHIVE

Site Records

9 Context record forms
2 black and white negative films
2 colour slide films
1 colour print film
Photographic catalogue
2 A1 site drawings

Finds

Context 1

2 Mottled ware body sherds, 1690-1760, 9g
1 Creamware ?cup base, 1750-early 19th century, 13g
1 Local Red Earthenware unglazed body sherd, 18th-19th century, 10g
1 Local Red Earthenware rim, 18th-19th century, 8g
1 Coal Measures Redware unglazed body sherd, 18th-19th century, 9g
2 bone china rims, early 19th century onwards, 10g
3 Developed Whiteware sherds, 19th century, 16g
1 iron nail, 4g
1 iron strap, 154g
1 iron ?strap end, 16g
1 animal bone, 8g
4 brick frags, 66g
1 salt glazed jar base, 31g

Context 2

1 brick frag, 435g
1 iron nail, 46g
1 slag, 390g
1 slag, 28g

Context 4

1 Creamware 1750s-early 19th century, 2g
1 Coal Measures Redware trail slip, 18th-19th century, 5g
4 Coal Measures Redware, 18th-19th century, 83g
2 Coal Measures Buffware, 18th-19th century, 11g
3 clay pipe stems, one decorated, 18th-19th century, 11g
1 clay pipe stem and stamped foot, 18th-19th century, 6g
1 clay pipe bowl frag, 18th-19th century, 8g
4 brick frags, 260g
1 iron nail, 40g
1 slag, 4g
2 animal teeth, 7g

Context 5

1 Roman sandy red fabric body sherd, v. abraded, 5g

Context 6

2 holloware Local Red Earthenware internal glaze, 18th-19th century, 240g
2 post medieval brick frags, 2.7kg
1 high fired brick/tile, 2.9kg

Context Register

cont	type	fill of	filled by	above	below	cuts	cut by
1	layer of soil			2, 3, 4, 5, 6			
2	layer of fill	9			1		
3	layer of stone				1		8
4	layer of fill	8		5	1		7, 9
5	layer of fill	8		3	4		7
6	layer of fill	7			1		9
7	pit		6			4, 5	
8	cutting		4, 5			3	
9	scoop		2			4, 6	

APPENDIX 2

LAND ADJACENT TO 'ROMAN VALLEY', ELLERTON, NEWPORT, SHROPSHIRE SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION BY THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The proposed development (planning application N/00/89/CH/354 outline) involves the construction of a new dwelling on land Adjacent to 'Roman Valley', Ellerton, Newport, Shropshire. The Archaeology Service of the Shropshire County Council have determined that an archaeological evaluation should be undertaken to assess the potential impact of the proposals on the archaeological resource. Accordingly, a Brief has been prepared which details the works required.
- 1.2 The site, which consists of a small paddock, lies across the postulated line of an important Roman road (SA1029) that ran between Whitchurch and Stretton (Staffs).

2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of the assessment are:
 - 2.1.1 to reveal by means of strategic trial trenching, the nature, condition, significance and, where possible, the chronology of the archaeology within the area of the proposed development in so far as these aims are possible;
 - 2.1.2 to record any archaeological deposits revealed during the trial trenching;
 - 2.1.3 to prepare a report outlining the results of the evaluation, 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 The evaluation will take the form of a single trial trench measuring 15 x 2m, located with respect to the plan accompanying the brief. The trench will be mechanically excavated using a flat, toothless ditching bucket to remove all modern overburden onto the surface of the first recognisable archaeological horizon. Thereafter all excavation will be completed by hand. Excavation will be limited to the top of significant archaeological features and further full or partial excavation of selected deposits will be undertaken only where essential to achieve the objectives of the evaluation. All contexts will be recorded by written record and photographed in 35mm format black and white print and colour slide. A drawn record will be undertaken as required, to an appropriate scale, as defined in the brief (section 3.3). The trench will be tied in to boundaries identifiable on modern Ordnance Survey mapping and, if possible, levels will be reduced to Ordnance Datum.
- 3.2 All archaeological objects, artefacts, industrial waste and faunal remains will be recovered and related to the contexts from which they were derived. Environmental and technological evidence will be sampled where appropriate.
- 3.3 The excavation will be backfilled on completion, subject to agreement with the client.
- 3.4 Documentary research will be undertaken if considered appropriate following discussions with the Head of Archaeology. This may involve the examination of readily available primary and secondary documentary, cartographic, and photographic sources at appropriate local repositories.
- 3.5 Following the on-site work an illustrated and bound report will be prepared according to the principles laid out in the brief (section 4.6). 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.

Three copies of the report will be submitted to the client, one copy to the Head of Archaeology and one copy to the Head of Natural and Historic Environment, Shropshire County Council.

- 3.6 The site archive will be prepared to specifications laid out in Appendix 3 in the Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage, 1991) and according to the requirements of the brief (section 4). The archive will be presented to an appropriate museum within 12 months of the completion of the fieldwork, subject to the agreement of the client.

4 Resources and Programming

- 4.1 The assessment 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 3 days and the report completed immediately thereafter. The Head of Archaeology will be informed of the timetable in order to arrange for monitoring if required. The Curator of Archaeology, Museum Service, Shropshire County Council will be contacted before work commences to obtain advice on an appropriate repository for the project archive.
- 4.4 Requirements relating to Health and Safety regulations will be adhered to by CPAT and its staff.
- 4.5 CPAT is an IFA Registered Organisation and undertakes to adhere to the IFA Code of Conduct.
- 4.5 CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employer's Liability insurance.

N.W. Jones
3rd April 2001



Plate 1 North-east side of cutting (8), from south-west. Photo CPAT 1058.14



Plate 2 South-west side of cutting (8), from north. Photo CPAT 1058.12

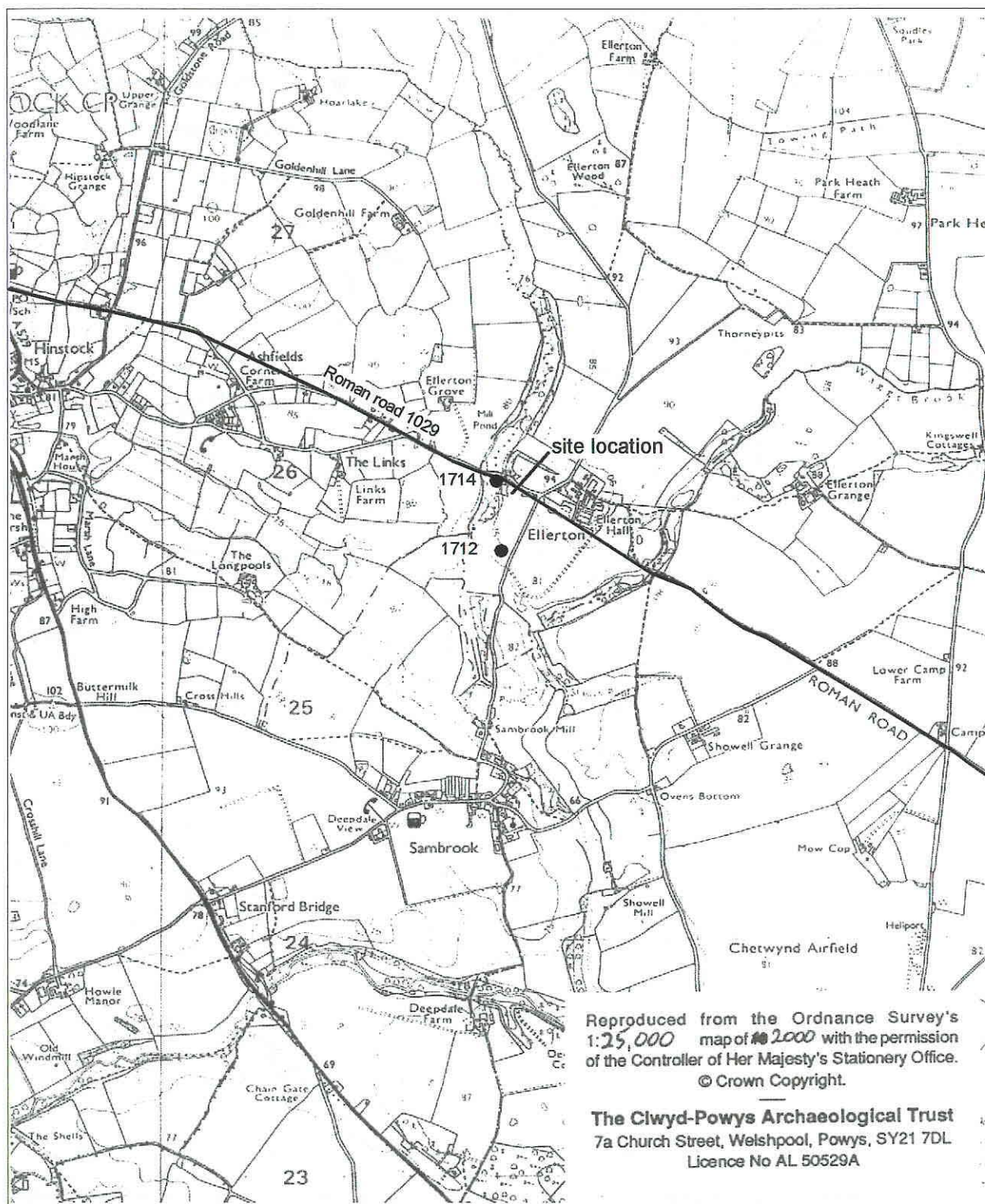


Fig. 1 Site location, scale 1:25,000

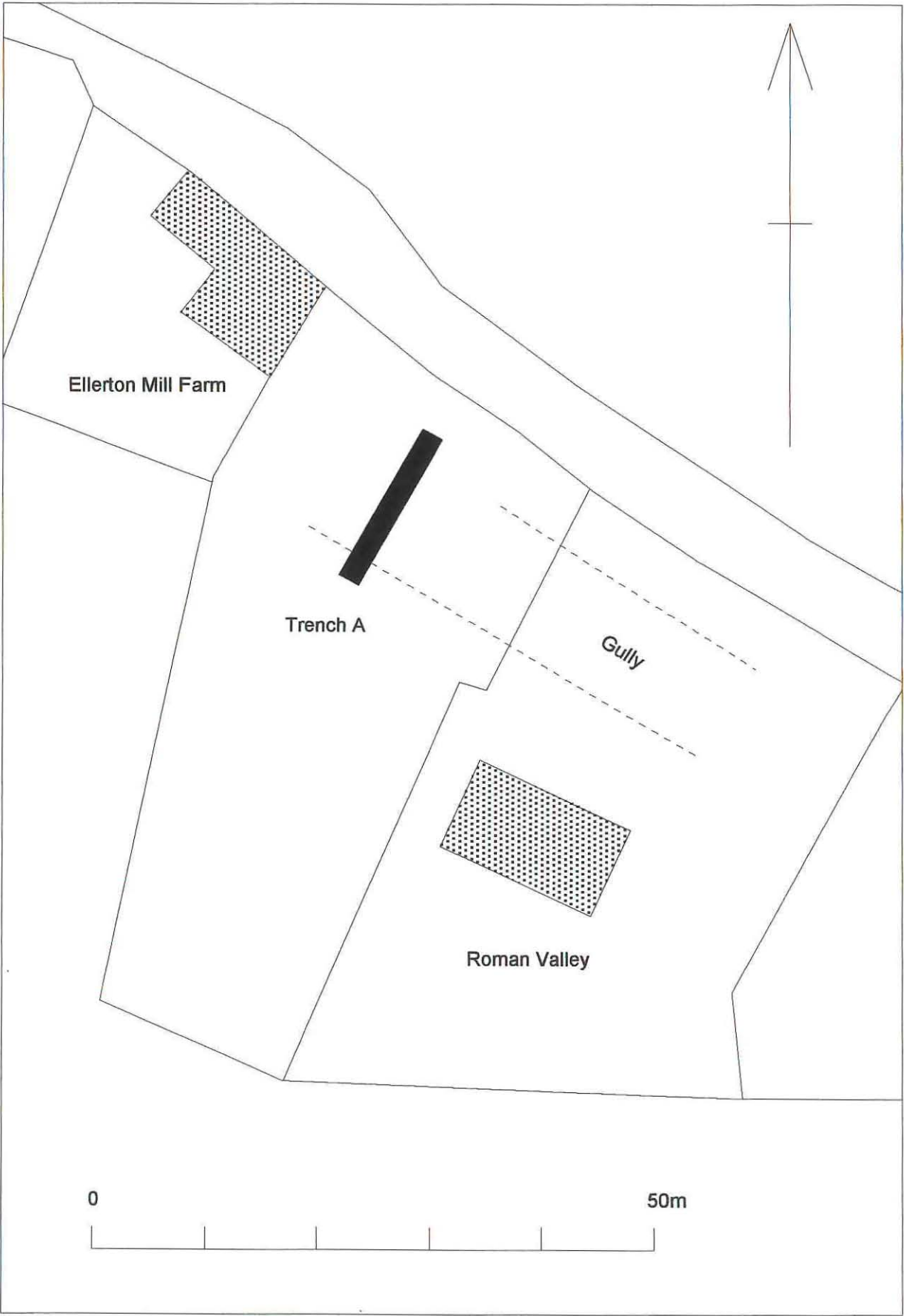


Fig. 2 Trench location, scale 1:500

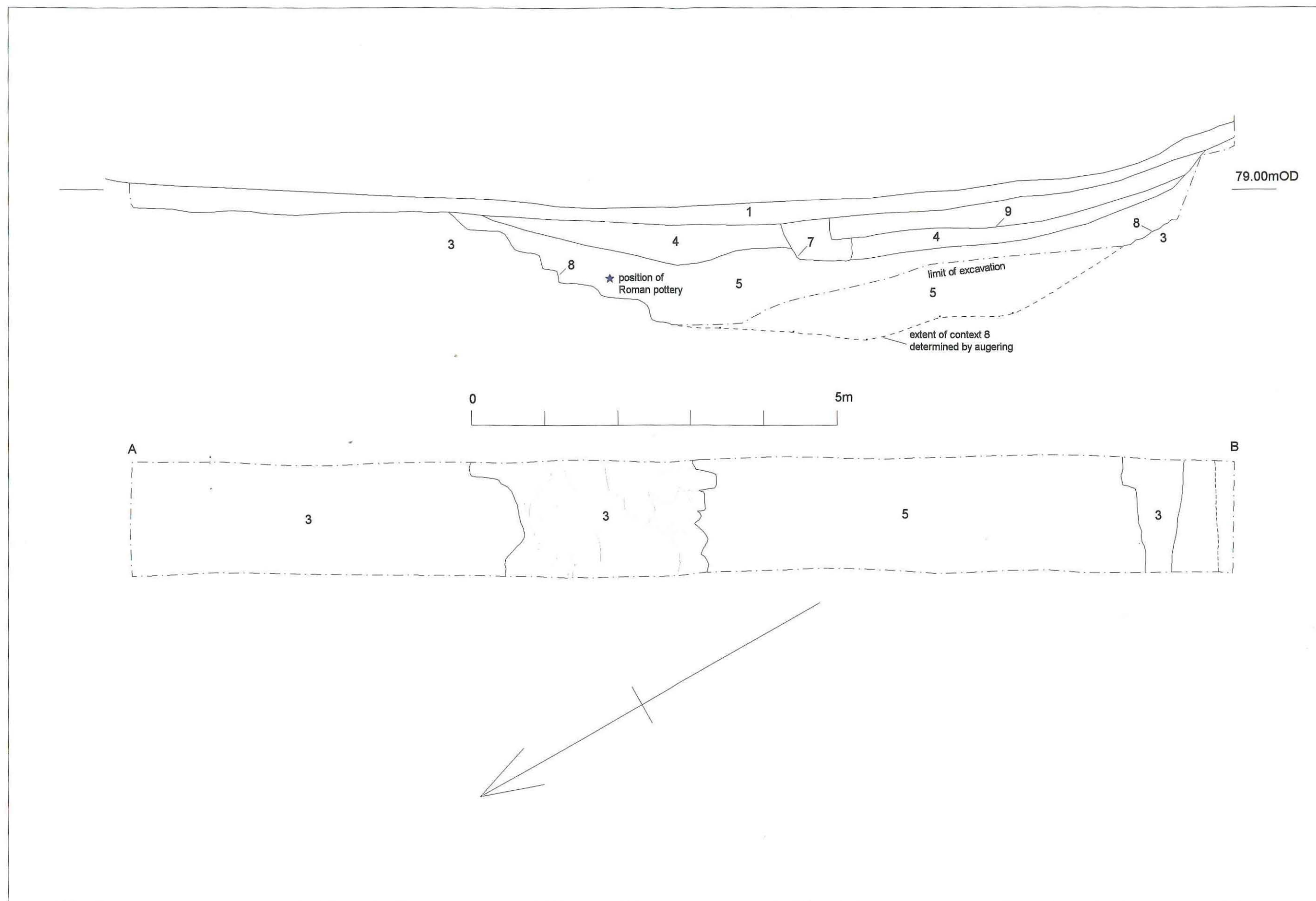


Fig. 3 Trench A plan and section, scale 1:50