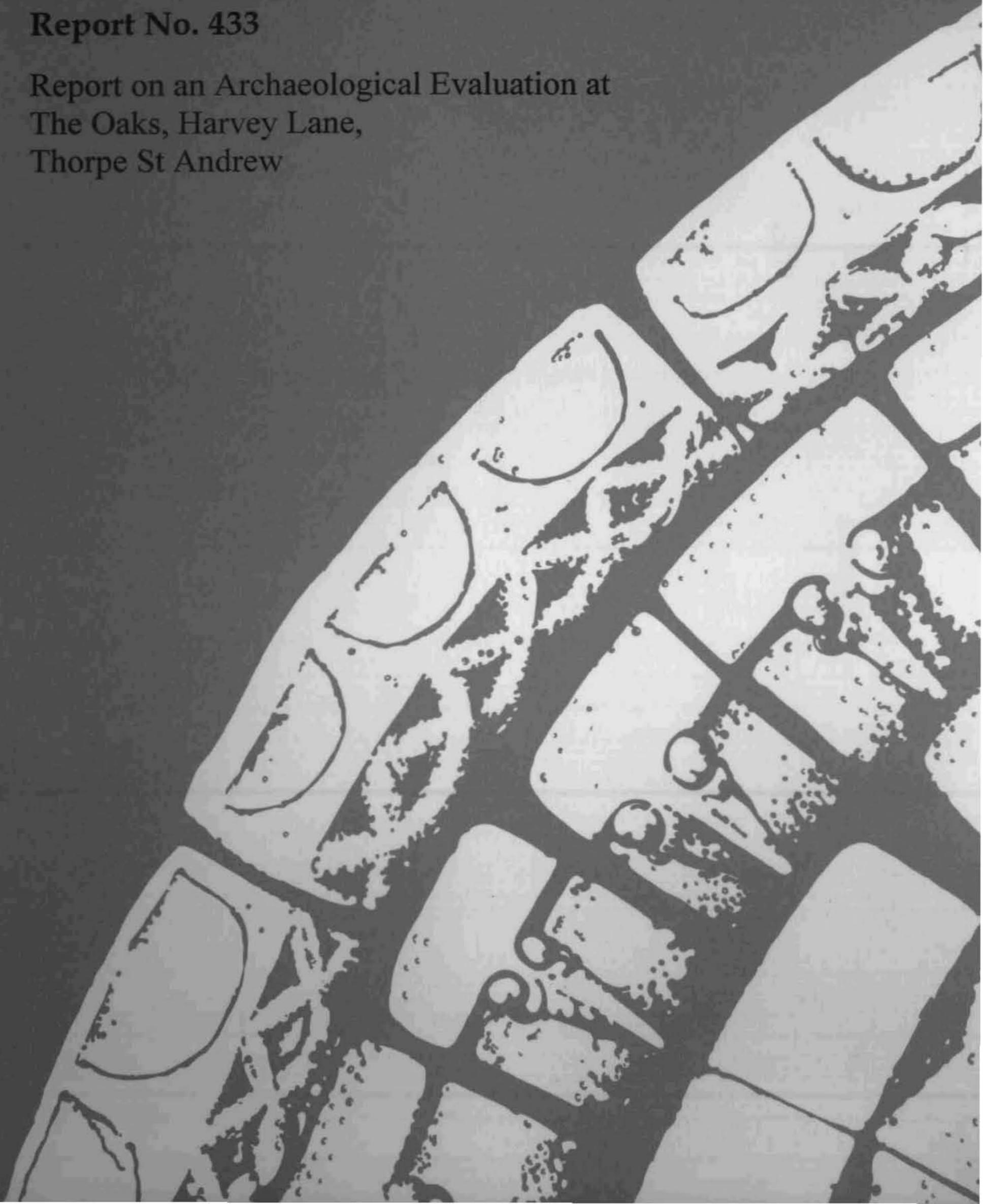


NORFOLK  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
UNIT

34516

**Report No. 433**

Report on an Archaeological Evaluation at  
The Oaks, Harvey Lane,  
Thorpe St Andrew



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**G.A. Kendall**

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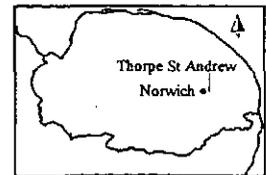
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Local Authority No.076759

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Location: The Oaks, Harvey Lane, Thorpe St Andrew  
Grid Ref: TG 254 087  
SMR No: 34516  
Dates of work: June, August 1999

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### **Summary**

*Evaluation trenching and observation of contractors' test-pitting within grounds to the rear of The Oaks, Harvey Lane, Thorpe St Andrew, recorded evidence for possible activity in prehistoric and Romano-British times. A pit and a ditch were sample excavated in one of the evaluation trenches. The pit produced a little Romano-British pottery, while a small number of worked and burnt flint items of prehistoric date were collected from the ditch. A watching brief on the excavation of geotechnical pits discovered further Romano-British pottery in the same part of the site. These results correspond with antiquarian records of Romano-British settlement evidence and Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon burials; more recently a rectilinear crop-mark has also been discovered to the east of the site.*

### **1.0 Introduction**

An archaeological evaluation and watching brief was carried out by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit within a proposed development site at The Oaks, Harvey Lane, Thorpe St Andrew. The site is located close to the eastern edge of the built-up area of Norwich and comprised a total area of c. 0.28ha. The project was undertaken on behalf of Norfolk Property Services.

This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: 29/4/99/DG), supplemented by a Method Statement prepared by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU Ref: MS/Eval/99/832).

The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16 — Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive contains full details regarding all deposits, features and finds. It is currently held by the Norfolk Museums Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

### **2.0 Geology and Topography**

The site overlies Devensian river terrace gravels, consisting of light to mid-orange coarse gravelly sands containing frequent angular and rounded flints. A mid-brown sandy loam containing varying quantities of flints and pebbles overlies this undisturbed natural material. This layer was subsequently covered by modern garden soils. The site lies at an elevation of 45.41m OD and is located on the north side of the Yare Valley, approximately 0.5km to the north of the river itself.

### 3.0 *Archaeological and Historical Background*

In the 1860s human skeletal remains were found immediately to the north of the grounds, then owned by Rev W. Frost. These were interpreted as Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon interments. One of the latter finds was reportedly found with an iron spear and shield (Clark 1949), the boss from which was recovered from the site in 1862-3. A second iron spear recovered subsequently was considered at the time to be of Iron Age date.

Subsequent to these discoveries a number of finds were made in the same area during the laying of a road. Fragments of pottery and an amphora were found along with a bronze fibula, a coin of Nero, a bronze lamp, a prick spur, and a broken bone pipe which was interpreted as part of a musical instrument (Manning 1864). The area was described as producing large stones and burnt earth, and contained large quantities of ash and calcined flint (Manning 1871).

Much of the pottery found at The Oaks was later identified as being of Late Saxon or Norman date, consisting of Thetford Ware fragments and one complete jar described as being of grey ware (Norfolk County Sites and Monuments Record Site 9628, hereafter SMR).

In 1949 a crop-mark was recorded in the same general area; this was described as a half-rectangle with a projecting 'apse' (SMR Site 9635<sub>6</sub>).

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during the excavation of six 0.9m x 2m geotechnical trial pits in June 1999. This brought to light Romano-British pottery dating from the 1st-4th centuries AD.

### 4.0 *Methodology*

The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

The Brief required that three trenches, measuring 20m x 1.80m and aligned east-to-west, were to be excavated at predetermined locations, enabling a 4% sample (108m<sup>2</sup>) of the area to be examined. Trench 1 was situated at the south end of the site, Trench 2 in its centre and Trench 3 at the north end.

Machine excavation was carried out with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket, under constant archaeological supervision.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those that were obviously modern.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using the Norfolk Archaeological Unit's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

Due to the lack of suitable deposits, no environmental samples were taken.

Site conditions in general were good and the evaluation was carried out in fine weather. Access was available to and from the site at all times.

## 5.0 *Results*

### 5.1 *Watching Brief*

#### Test Pit 1

Excavated to a depth of 1.7m, this cut through the edge of a pit containing a fill of silty sand, mid-brown/grey in colour, with a significant amount of semi-fired clay evenly distributed throughout the deposit.

#### Test Pit 2

Excavated to a depth of 1.4m, this also cut through the edge of a pit containing a similar deposit to that in TP1. Twelve sherds of pottery were recovered from this pit. All were Romano-British: they included a rim fragment of micaceous reduced ware, but this is only datable to the Roman period in general terms. Eleven fragments of white ware, also probably locally produced and datable broadly to the 1st–3rd centuries, were also recovered.

#### Test Pit 3

Excavated to a depth of 1.55m, this exposed no visible features but produced a single fragment of a sandy grey ware vessel, possibly of Thetford-type ware (10th–12th century).

#### Test Pit 4

Excavated to a depth of 1.75m, this exposed no visible features, although a small number of fired clay lumps were observed within the spoil.

#### Test Pit 5

Excavated to a depth of 1.40m, this revealed a ditch cut running from north-west to south-east. The ditch cut into the natural sand and gravel and was approximately 1.4m deep. The fill of the ditch was slightly darker than the mid-brown subsoil through which it had been cut. Its date is uncertain.

#### Test Pit 6

Excavated to a depth of 2.6m through what appeared to be modern make-up and building debris.

### 5.2 *Evaluation trenching*

#### Trenches 1 and 2

Situated in the south and central areas of the site, these were excavated to the level of undisturbed natural geology. They produced no archaeological features, although a series of dark lines recorded in Trench 2 may indicate an episode of steam ploughing.

#### Trench 3

This trench, situated in the northern part of the site, produced possible evidence for prehistoric and Roman-British activity.

The northern terminus of a ditch, [1], was exposed in the centre of Trench 3. This had a compact sandy silt fill ([2]), was 0.73m wide, and penetrated the natural to a depth of 0.80m. Two fragments of burnt flint and two flint flakes, presumably of prehistoric date,

was recovered from the fill, were recovered along with two fragments of worked sandstone.

A rectangular pit, [3], was recorded at the western end of the trench. Its southern extent lay concealed beyond the limit of the trench. It was 0.50m deep and approximately 2m wide and was filled with a light brown sandy soil containing flint rubble, [4]. It produced two sherds of white ware dating to the 1st–3rd centuries AD, along with some small pieces of burnt or fired clay. A coin dating to the 1st century AD was discovered by metal detecting within the trench spoil close to the feature, along with a further small piece of white ware. The fully-infilled pit had been cut on its eastern side by a shallow, vertical-sided pit, [7], containing a fine sandy/silty fill (depicted in section in Fig. 5).

## *6.0 Conclusions*

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed development area. The results confirmed that archaeological deposits may survive for study in the northern part of the site, as indicated by the finds of the 1860s. While the ditch contained a little worked and burnt flint of probable prehistoric date, it is possible that these were residual finds occurring within a later feature. Finds of Roman-British pottery and a 1st-century coin, however, indicate that evidence of Romano-British activity may survive here or in the immediate vicinity.

## *Acknowledgements*

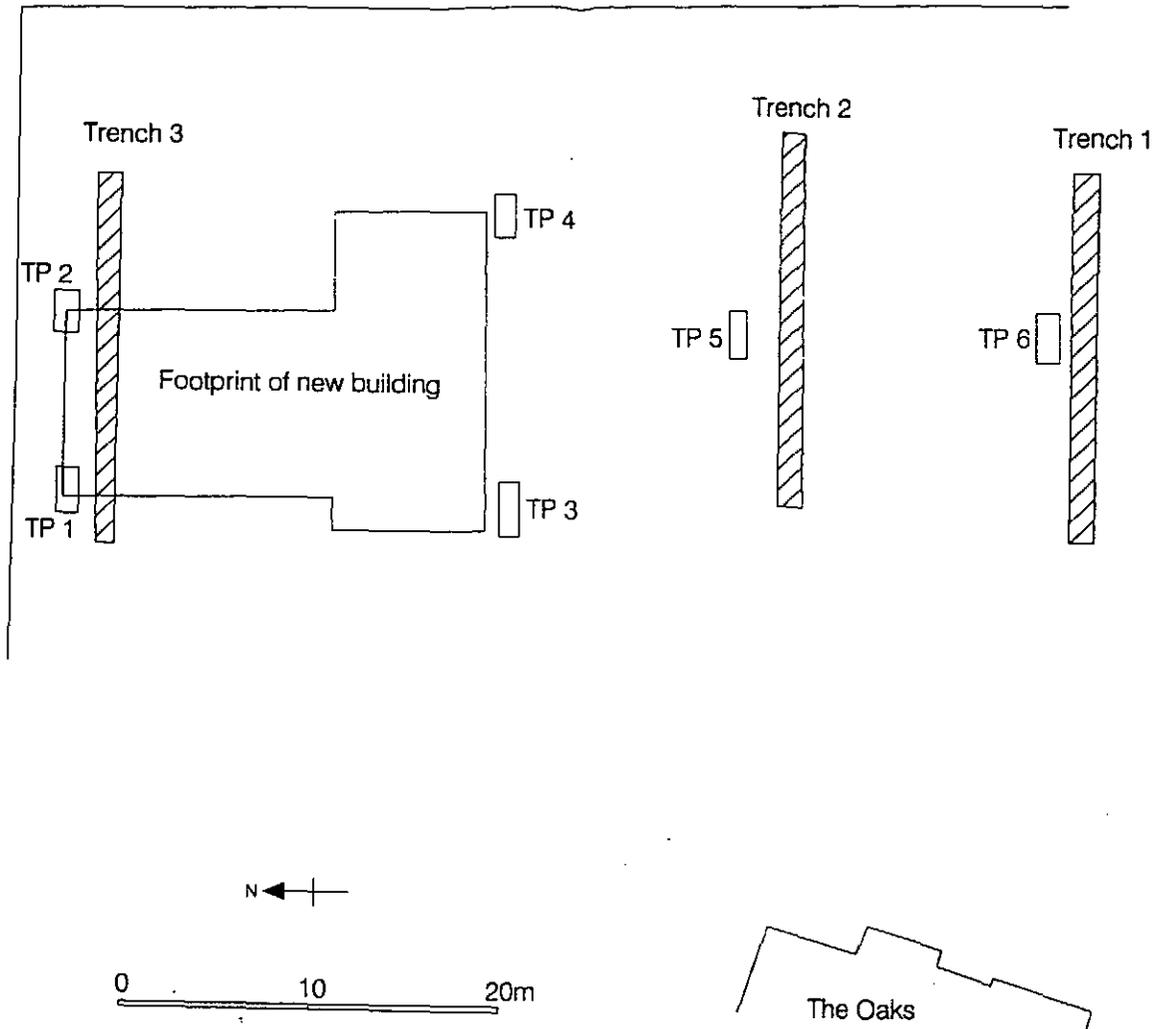
The evaluation was conducted by Susan Smith and Guy Kendall and the project managed by Andy Hutcheson. The watching brief on the test pits was carried out by Chris Phillips. The pottery was identified by Alice Lyons and Andy Hutcheson.

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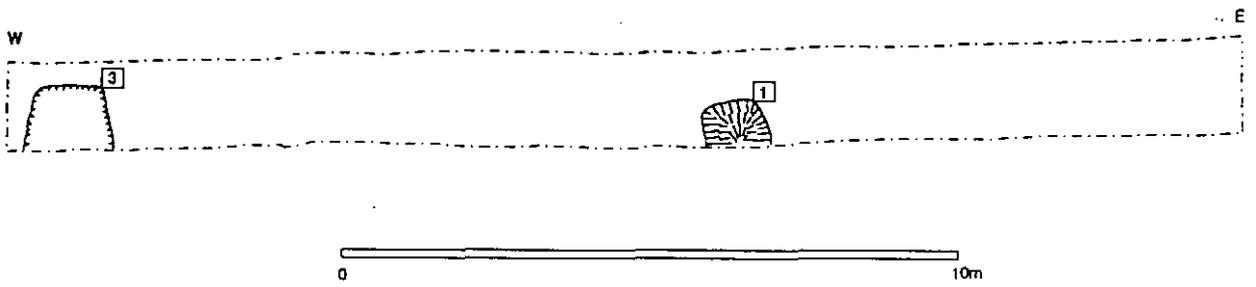
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Fig. 1 Site location. Scale 1:10,000



*Fig. 2 Trench location. Scale 1:400*



*Fig. 3 Plan of Trench 3, showing location of ditch [1] and pit [3]. Scale 1:125*

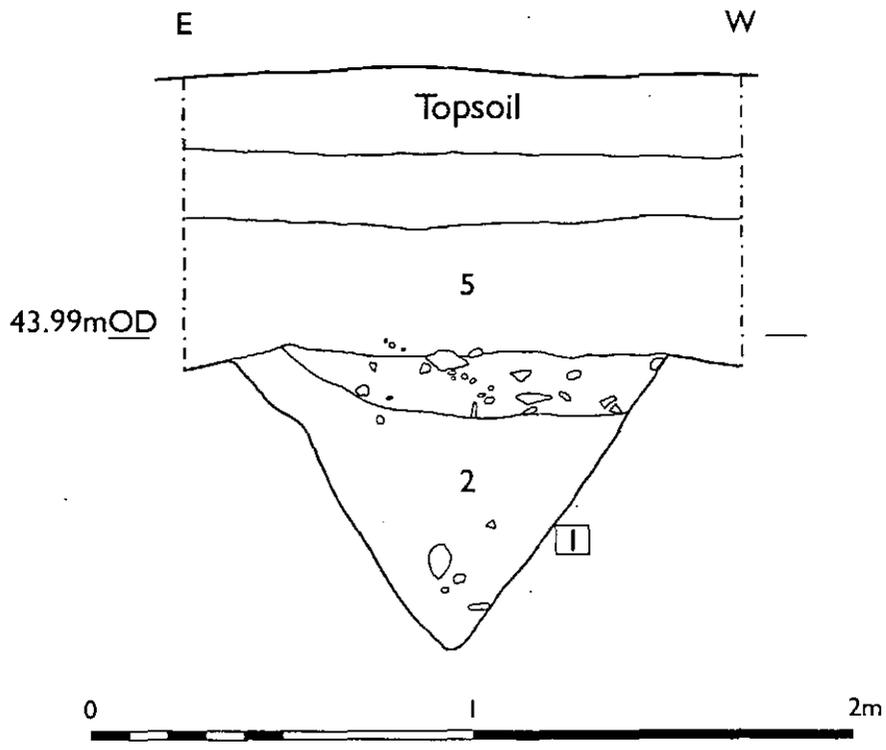
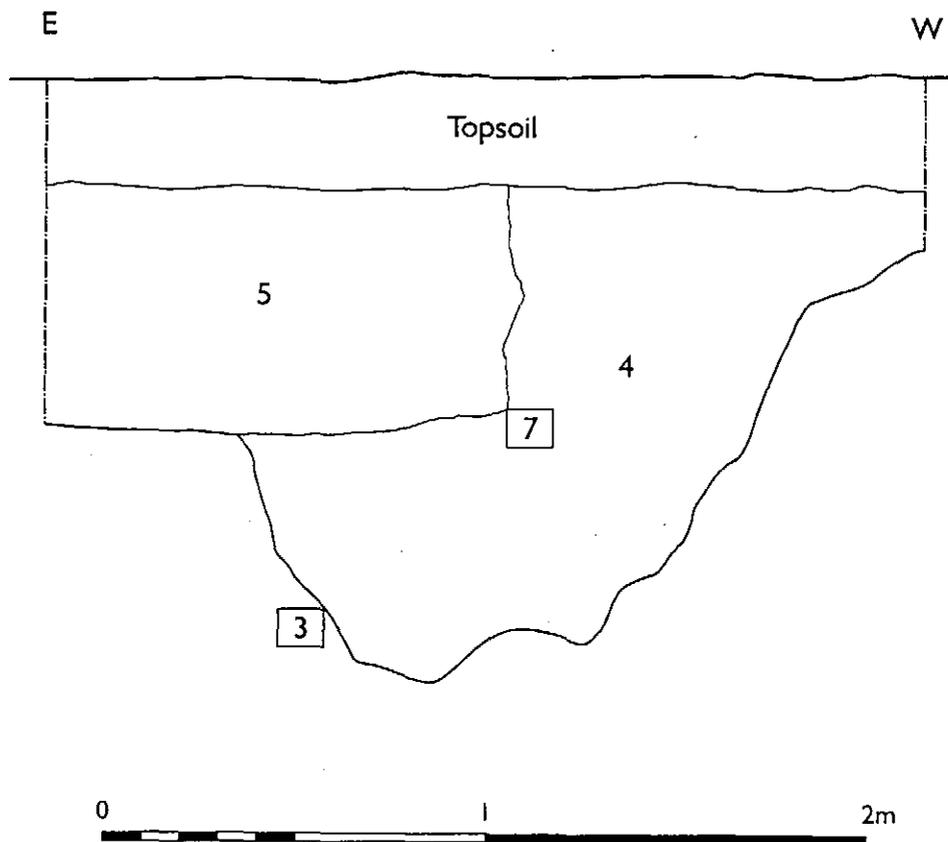


Fig. 4 Trench 3, north-facing section of ditch [1]. Scale 1:20



*Fig. 5 Trench 3, north-facing section of pit [3]. Scale 1:20*