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## STUMP CROSS, BOROUGHBRIDGE

### REPORT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS

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## **CONTENTS**

**List of figures**

**Introduction**

**Methods**

**Results**

**Conclusions**

**Appendix I : context list**

**Appendix II : finds catalogue & note**

**Figures**

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

**Fig 1. location plan**

**Fig 2. plan of trenches 1 & 2.**

**Fig 3. sections**

**Fig 4. plan of trenches 3 & 4**

**Fig 5. plan of trenches 5, 6 & 7**

**Fig 6. finds drawing, t & b arrowhead**

**Fig 7. site survey**

## INTRODUCTION

This report forms the third and final stage in an archaeological evaluation of a large parcel of land at Stump Cross, Boroughbridge, on behalf of Wilcon Homes Ltd, pursuant to conditions laid down by the Archaeology Section, Planning Department, North Yorkshire County Council. The land, centring on NGR SE 3970 6585 is contained within four fields lettered A – D on the location plan – Figs 1 & 7., on the southern periphery of Boroughbridge, adjacent to the eastern side of Stump Cross road. The first two elements of the archaeological assessment concerned :

- 1) examination of air photographic and archive data pertaining to the site and its immediate environs.
- 2) geophysical (magnetometer) survey of the entirety of the land block subject to development proposals.

This present report details the results of sample excavations carried out at the site in June 1991. The primary objective of these excavations was to examine and assess anomalies suggested as representing archaeological remains by 1) and 2), (see earlier reports).

## METHODS

All of the trenches were machine stripped of topsoil under archaeological supervision by a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless ditching blade. Underlying archaeological deposits and natural strata were then excavated/cleaned manually and most of the finds three-dimensionally recorded. Upon completion of excavation and cleaning, all of the trenches were levelled and planned (including the plotting of variations in natural strata), and photographed with both black and white print and colour slide film. Sections were drawn where archaeological features continued into trench sides. Finally, a survey was made locating all trenches and the boundaries of the fields in which they lay.

## RESULTS

### Area A

#### Trench 1. (Figs 2.,3, 7.)

Trench 1. measuring 15.2 X 3.1 metres was sited to examine a north – south aligned linear feature known from an aerial photograph. This proved to represent a series of at least two closely aligned ditches of different profile. Both appear to be of post-medieval origin and although their precise function is unknown, they may be boundaries of some sort.

The earliest element of this complex was the cut, 31. Having an unusual profile, 31, is likely to represent not only the initial cut of a ditch but also a series of re-cuttings and/or cleanings, to the initial ditch. At its western side, 31, was seen to be truncated by the later ditch cut, 29. The fill of the initial ditch was ,30, a clean silty loam containing a few small stone inclusions and a small number of finds. Pottery from ,30, was of 19th century date. Given the likelihood that ,31, represents more than a single event ditch cut it is possible that the earliest fills and their finds have been removed during stages of ditch re-cutting and cleaning. Indeed, given the homogeneity of the fill and the presence of late finds it is possible that ,30, is not simply the product of normal silting up processes, but is rather a deliberate backfilling of the initial ditch.

Cut ,29, represents not only a re-alignment of the ditch course to the west subsequent to the demise of ,31, but seemingly a considerable change in profile to that of a wide, shallow, flat bottomed type. The primary fill of ,29, was ,28, a silty loam with few stone inclusions and containing sherds of late 18th – 19th century date. In terms of physical characteristics ,28, was of near identical matrix to ,32, this latter of which may even be representative of up-cast material excavated from the base of ditch ,29, during a cleaning operation. Context ,27, was a grey coloured rubbish layer with an ash/cinder content of up 20%. This dirty deposit contained 19th – 20th century refuse and indicates that the ditch had by this stage lost its original function. Sealing ,27, was ,26, a mottled silty clay containing little in the way of inclusions or finds. The height and extent of ,26, suggest that it is unlikely to be a ditch fill as such; rather, it is likely to be indicative of a general levelling/raising up of the ground in this low laying western part of area A. Laying above ,26, and immediately below the recent ploughsoil ,24, was ,25, a silt loam with a high organic content, including much fibrous material. Like ,26, ,25, is believed to represent a dump of material, although with a high vegetable matter content, in the western part of A. Evidence in support of the widespread dumping of material in this part of the field is provided by recent disturbance a few metres to the south-west of trench 1., that demonstrated modern material at a depth of 50 cm+.

#### **Trench 2. (Figs 2,3, 7.)**

Trench 2 measuring 17.5 X 3.1 metres was located in the eastern part of A in order to examine two of the three equidistantly spaced, east – west aligned linear anomalies detected by geophysical survey. Upon cleaning of the base of the trench following machine stripping the two single fill features were identified and excavated. Both fills ,5, ,7, were near identical sandy silt loams containing a small amount of stone and some iron pan material. 5, ,7, were shallow, only reaching a maximum depth of 17 cm, and were filling concave cuts, 6, ,8, these being up to 2.95 metres wide. Few finds were recovered from the fills, and these for the most part consisted of small undateable fragments of brick/tile.

The original interpretation of these features was that they were remnants of furrows of a medieval ridge and furrow field system. Excavation supports this original interpretation, it being clear that the ridges have lost all upstanding trace due to post medieval ploughing.

#### **Area C**

#### **Trench 3. (Figs 4, 7.)**

Measuring 44.0 X <13.0 metres trench 3 was designed to locate parts of three sub circular anomalies F, I, E, detected during geophysical survey in the north-west part of field B. After machine stripping of the topsoil and modern east-west running plough marks cutting natural beneath (in which a tanged and barbed arrowhead of Neolithic/Bronze age date was found), and subsequent to thorough manual cleaning, a horizon of natural strata of varying soil types was revealed. Consisting of soil types ranging from sand to areas of near 100% clay and including bandings of stone, several small sondages were excavated across variations in this horizon to confirm its natural origins. It seems likely that anomaly I, can be related directly to a patch of iron pan and sandy clay,(see plan). The other geophysical anomalies in this area almost certainly relate to variations in the natural strata.

#### **Trench 4. (Figs 4, 7.)**

The location of trench 4 measuring 21.0 X 3.4 metres was determined by the presence of an air photographic anomaly, and by magnetometer anomalies M, N, O, P,. The base of the excavated area comprised a natural horizon of varying material types, (see trench plan), that was cut in the west central area by a north-south aligned feature, fill ,12, cut ,13,. The fill, a sandy silty loam, was most clearly distinguished from the surrounding natural by its darker colouring and its

small rounded pebble inclusions. The very shallowly surviving cut had a slightly concave profile similar to those of ,7, and ,8, in trench 2. Although no similar features were observed within the trench it is probable, due to its proportions, that ,12/13, relates to a furrow , and not one of the remote sensed anomalies, within a ridge and furrow field system, any neighbouring furrows having been completely removed by post medieval ploughing.

#### **Trench 5. (Figs 5, 7.)**

Measuring 19.4 X 5.0 metres, trench 5 was located in order to examine a series of southwest-northeast aligned magnetometer anomalies M and N. After topsoil and modern plough cut removal, and cleaning of the base of the trench, a horizon of natural strata of widely varying soil types was revealed. These natural strata were arranged in bandings consisting of soil types ranging from stone bandings to sand and clay, and ran diagonally across the trench. It is certain that the magnetometer plots M, N, relate to the varying magnetic susceptibility of these natural bands.

#### **Area D**

#### **Trench 6. (Figs 5, 7.)**

Magnetic anomalies T, V and G, were targeted by trench 6 measuring 13.4 X 3.5 metres. Of these, V was positively located although it proved to be a ceramic agricultural land drain in a narrow trench and of recent date. Elsewhere in trench 6 only natural strata were revealed. That part of the trench base to the east of the pipe trench was predominantly a sandy clay, that to the west, a sand. This variation in the natural strata is likely to be the source of some of the magnetic anomalies.

#### **Trench 7. (Figs 5, 7.)**

Trench 7 measuring 23.5 X 5.7 metres was located in order to examine an air photographic anomaly, and magnetometer anomaly R. Only natural strata were observed within the trench although this did include a broad north-south aligned band of iron panned sand. Examination of this band, together with observation of what is likely to be the same band in an engineers test-hole some metres to the north-west, did not provide any evidence of an archaeological origin.

## CONCLUSIONS

The excavations have provided only little evidence of archaeological remains. This consists of the post medieval sequence of ditches and truncated ridge and furrow in area A, and the possible medieval plough furrow in area C. The presence of ridge and furrow in A and C laying at 90 degrees to each other raises the probability that a headland exists between the two systems. Such a relict headland may in fact be evidenced by the narrow band of area B which is 8 – 11 metres wide. It is now evident that the vague cropmarks in the aerial photograph do not, at least in areas C and D, represent archaeological remains. With reference to the geophysical survey, it is now apparent that the magnetometer anomalies have for the most part been produced by the variable magnetic susceptibility of different soil type bands in the complex glacial deposits of sands, gravels and clays, that cover the site.

## Appendix I

### Context List

CONTEXT	TRENCH	TYPE AND DETAILS
1	3	topsoil/ploughsoil, sandy silt loam, 10yr4/2
2	3	modern plough disturbance to natural, silty sand, 10yr5/3
3	3	natural in trench 3. (see plan)
4	2	topsoil/ploughsoil, silt loam, 10yr4/2
5	2	fill-medieval plough furrow, +6, sandy silt loam, 10yr5/8
6	2	cut-medieval plough furrow, -5,
7	2	fill-medieval plough furrow, +8, sandy silt loam, 10yr5/8
8	2	cut-medieval plough furrow, -6,
9	2	natural in trench 2. (see plan)
10	4	topsoil/ploughsoil, sandy silt loam, 10yr4/2
11	4	modern plough disturbance to natural, loamy sand, 10yr5/3
12	4	fill-medieval plough furrow?, +13, silty sand, 10yr5/3
13	4	cut-medieval plough furrow?, -12
14	4	natural in trench 4. (see plan)
15	5	topsoil/ploughsoil, sandy silt loam, 10yr4/2
16	5	modern plough disturbance to natural, silty sand, 10yr5/3
17	5	natural in trench 5. (see plan)
18	6	topsoil/ploughsoil, sandy silt loam, 10yr4/2
19	6	fill-of agricultural drain cut 20, sandy silt loam, 10yr4/3
20	6	cut for drain, -20
21	6	natural in trench 6. (see plan)
22	7	topsoil/ploughsoil, sandy silt loam, 10yr4/2
23	7	natural in trench 7. (see plan)
24	1	topsoil/ploughsoil, sandy silt loam, 10yr4/2
25	1	deposit, silt loam, 75yr3/2
26	1	deposit, silty clay, 10yr5/4
27	1	fill, of 29, rubbish deposit, 10yr3/2
28	1	fill, of 29, silt loam, 10yr4/2
29	1	cut, of last phase ditch
30	1	fill, of 31, silt loam, 10yr4/3
31	1	cut, of first phase ditch
32	1	deposit, silt loam, 10yr4/2
33	1	natural in trench 1.
34	2	plough disturbance to natural, silty sand, 10yr5/3

## Appendix II

### Finds Catalogue

CONTEXT	MATERIAL	DATE	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
1	Pottery	Modern	base	2
			rim	3
			handle	1
	Glass		body	2
			stopper	1
			other	1
2	Pottery		body	3
	Claypipe		stem	1
	Flint *		tanged/barbed arrowhead	1
	Brick			0.005 kg
3	Pottery	Modern	rim (19/20 C)	1
			body	2
		Roman	rim	2
			base	1
			body	5
	Brick			0.400 kg
				0.003 kg
	Glass	Roman	rim	1
			body	2
				1
				0.001 kg
5	Pottery	Roman	Brick	
			Slag	0.001 kg
	Pottery	Medieval	body	1
			handle	1
7	Pottery	Medieval	body	1
			iron object	1
	Metal		stem	1
				0.010 kg
	Clay pipe			
9	Pottery	Medieval	Brick	
11	Pottery	Roman	body	1
			Medieval	1
			rim (early 16 C)	1
			Postmedieval	body (19 C) 1
12	Clay pipe		stem	1
				0.001 kg
14	Pottery	Medieval	Brick	
15	Clay pipe		stem	1
21	Flint			3
23	Pottery	Roman	body (Samian)	1
			Medieval	1
		Postmedieval	body (11/12 C)	1
			rim (19 C)	1
			body	1

\* Small finds

CONTEXT	MATERIAL	DATE	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
23	Glass			4
	Clay pipe		stem	1
	Flint			2
	Shale (burnt)			1
	Brick			0.600 kg
27	Pottery	Modern (19/20 C)	body handle rim base	2 1 3 1
	Metal		iron object	4
			bronze	1
	Glass		bottles	5
	Tile			0.500kg
	Bone	Cattle	vertebrae (butchered) rib (butchered) rib fragment long bone (butchered)	1 4 1 1
		Sheep	rib long bone	1 2
28	Pottery	Postmedieval (18/19 C)	body base handle	13 3 1
	Clay pipe		stem handle bowl	3 1 1
	Glass			3
	Metal		iron object	1
	Brick			0.600kg
30	Pottery	Postmedieval body (19 C)	rim	3 1
	Clay pipe		stem	1
	Brick			0.200 kg
	Bone	Animal	unidentified (butchered)	1

#### Finds note

Finds from clearly defined contexts were kept by context only. Those finds located on the upper surface of natural strata were three-dimensionally recorded. The results of this exercise demonstrated that finds of all periods were represented at this horizon (transported by natural processes), and that no meaningful spatial patterns could be recognized.

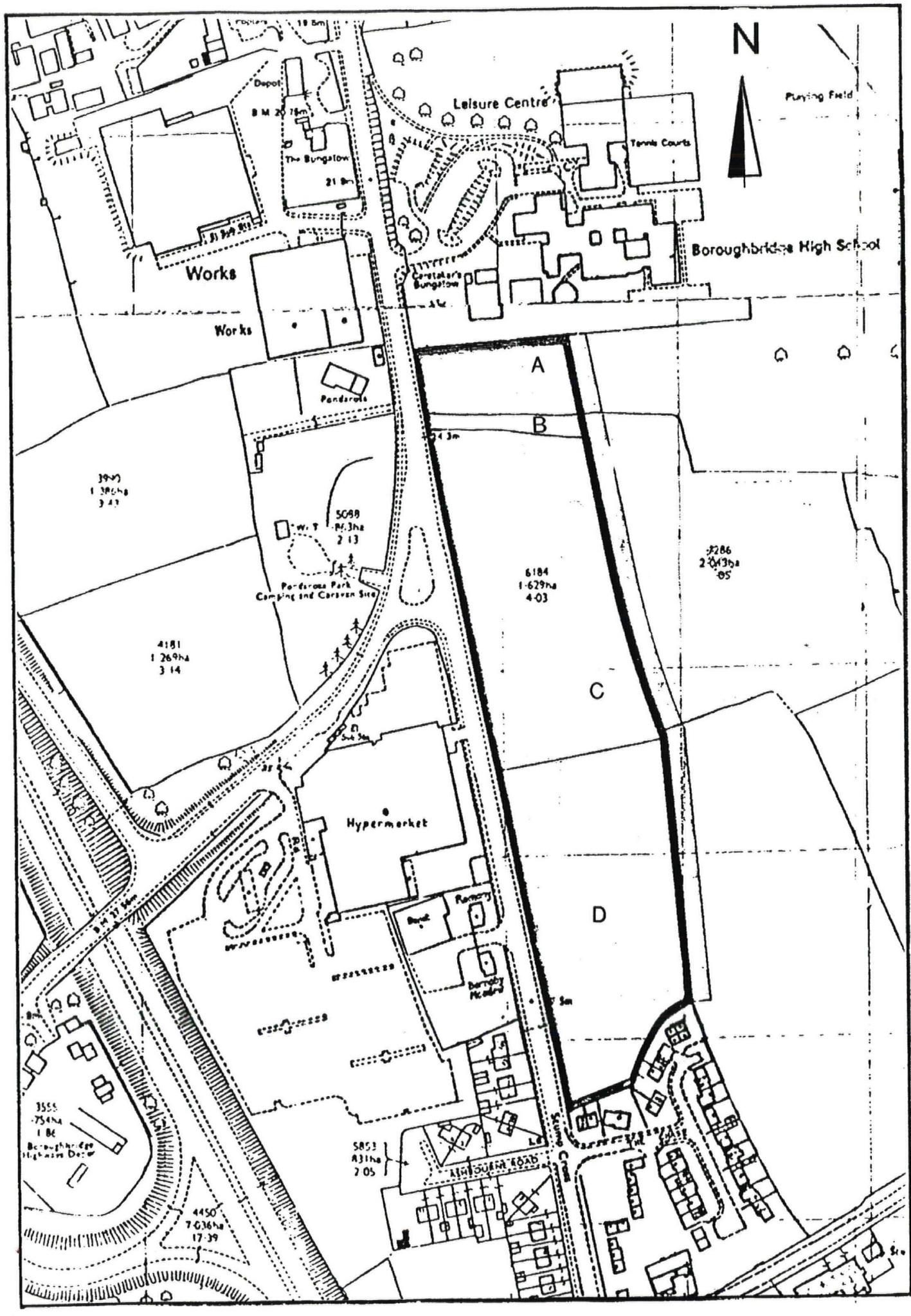
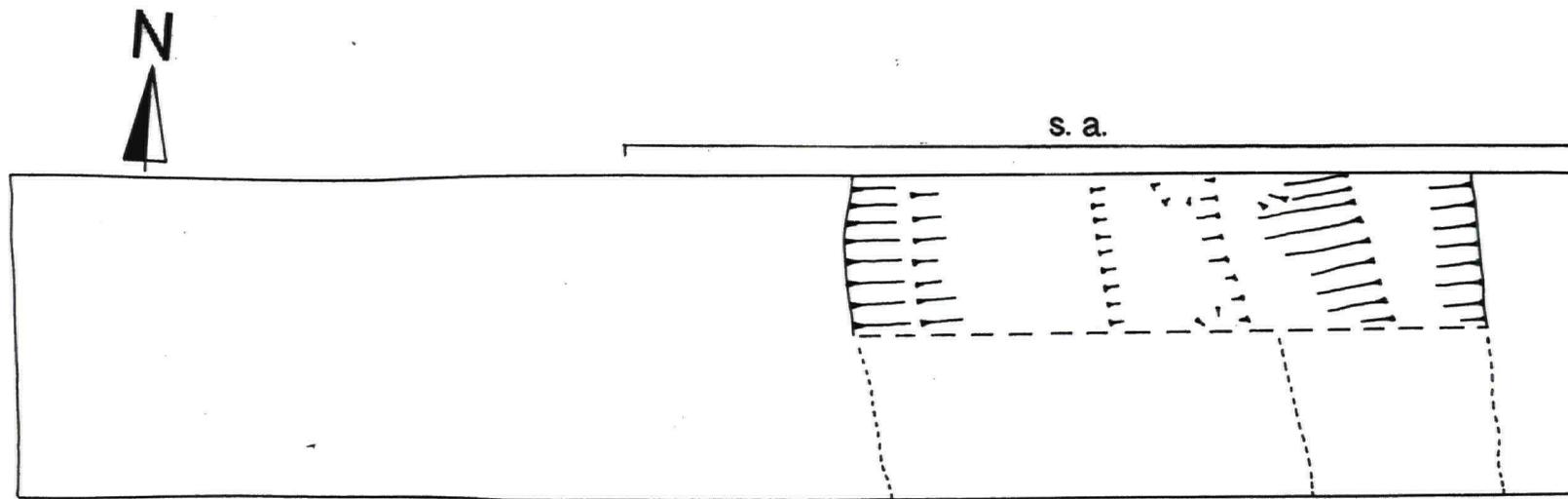


Fig. 1. Location Plan

0 100 m



Trench 1.

0 1 2 3 4 5 metres

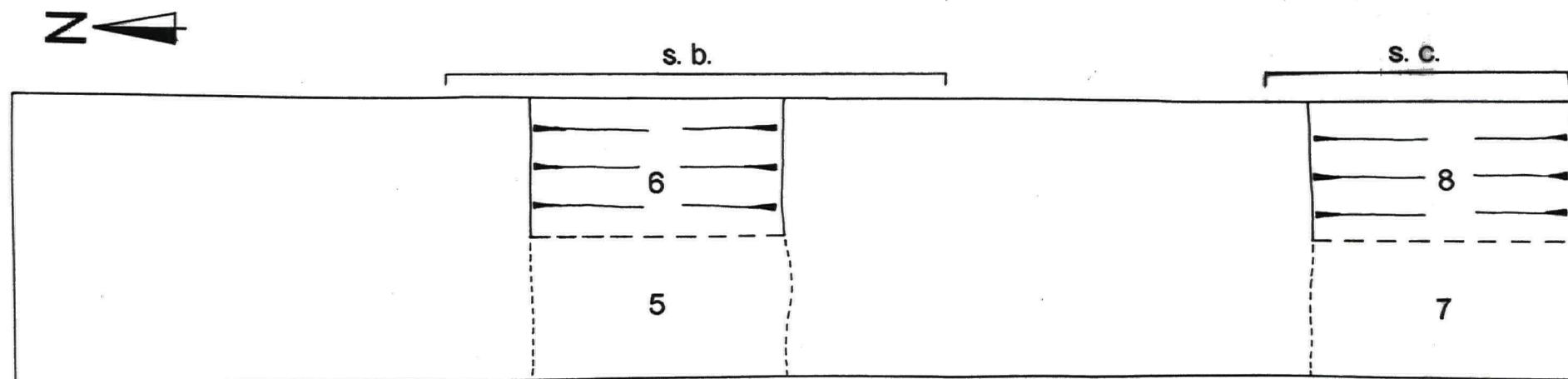


Fig 2.

Trench 2.

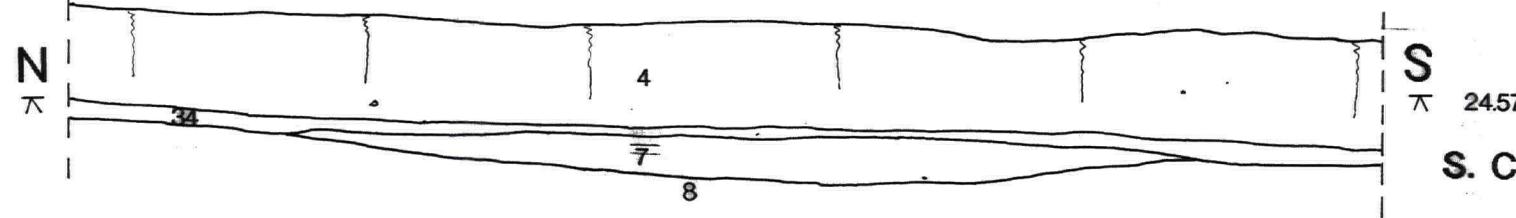
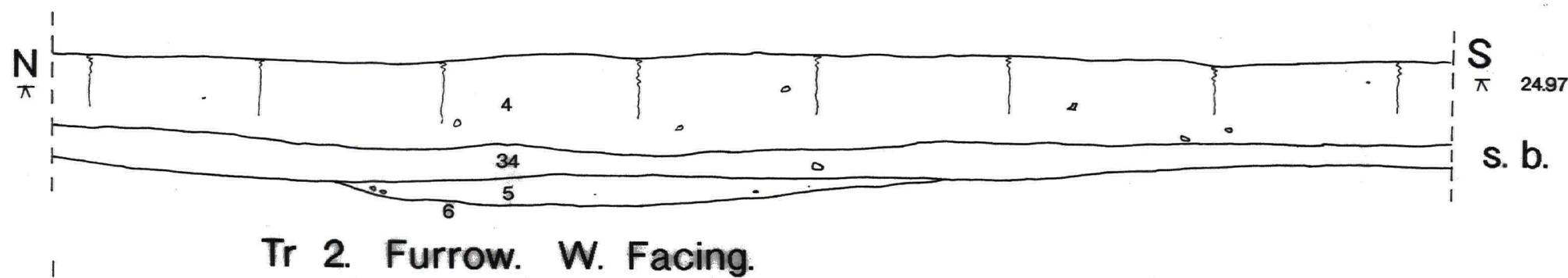
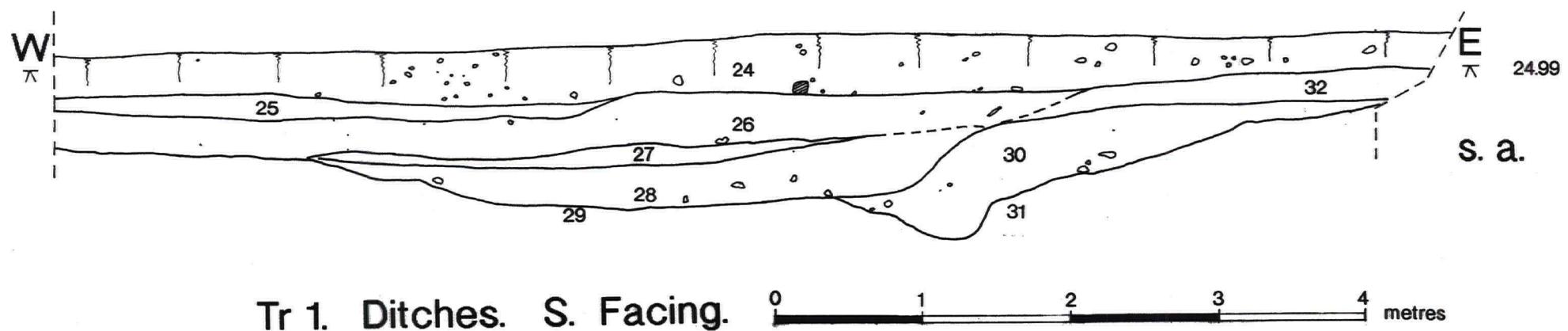
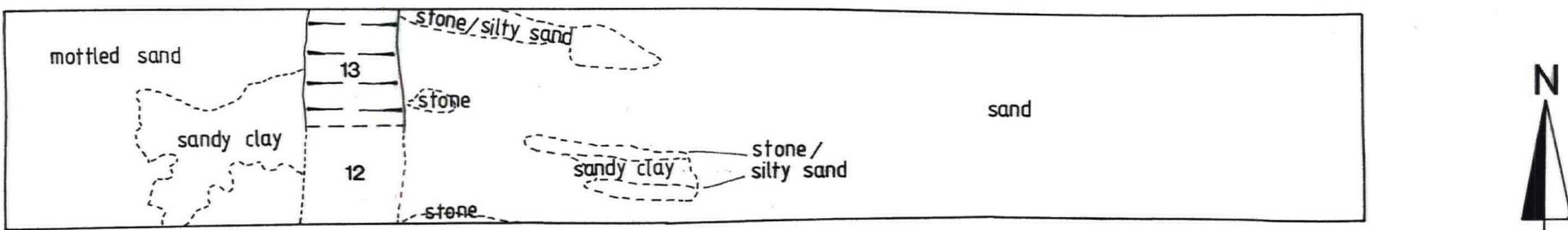
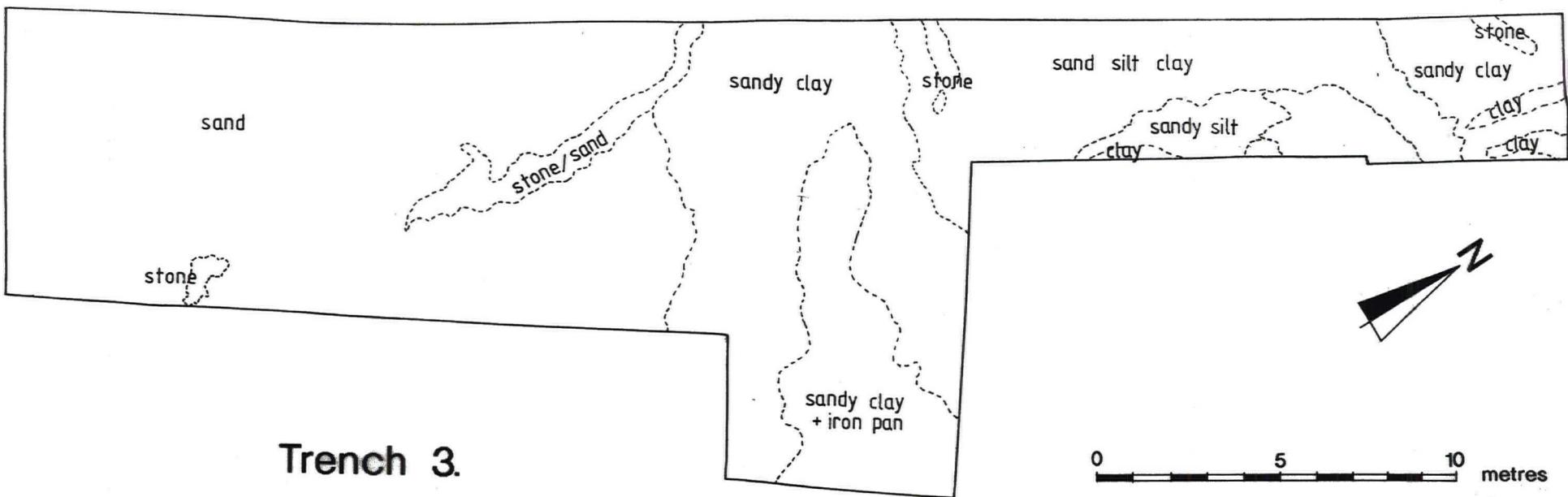
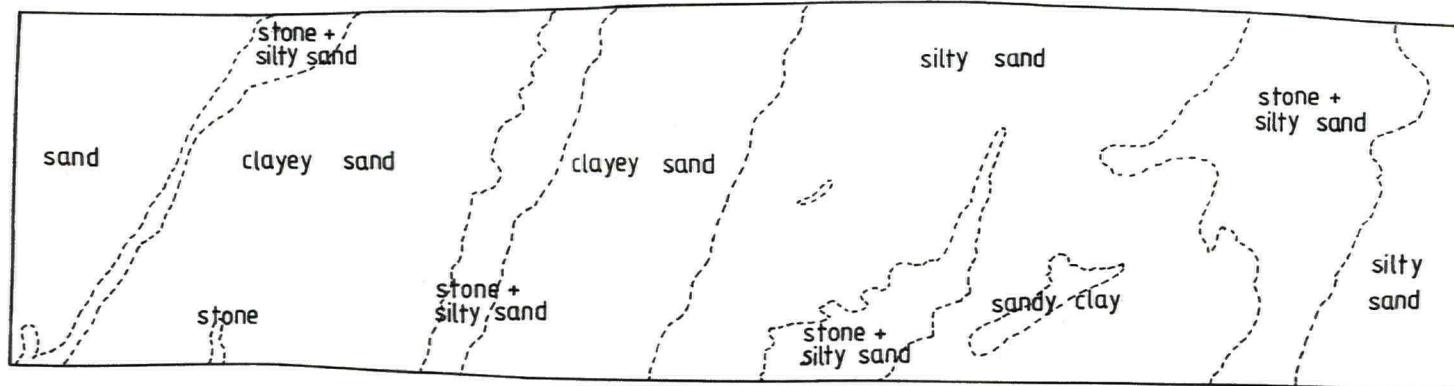


Fig 3. Tr 2. Furrow. W. Facing 0 1 2 metres

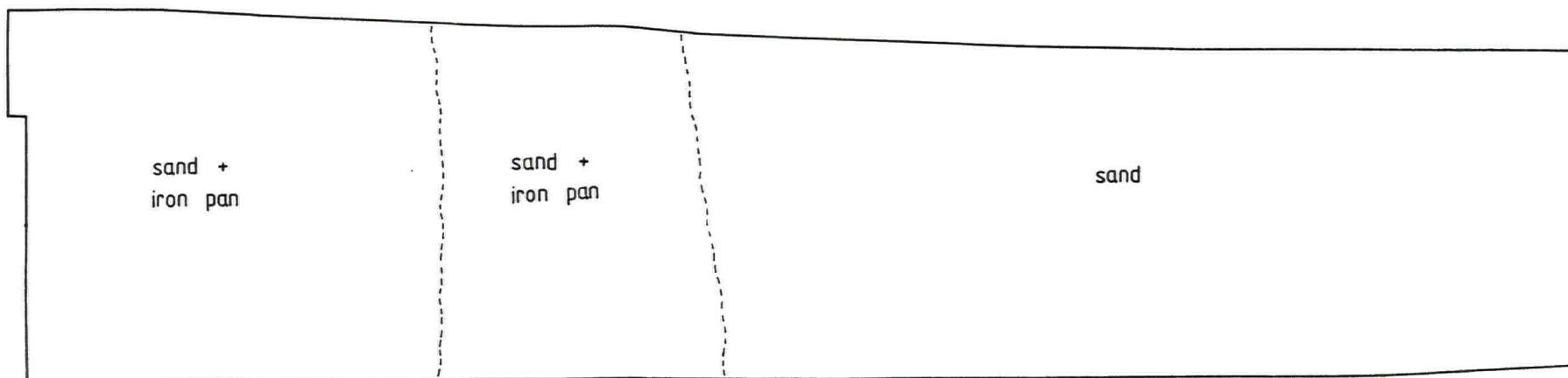


**Fig 4.**

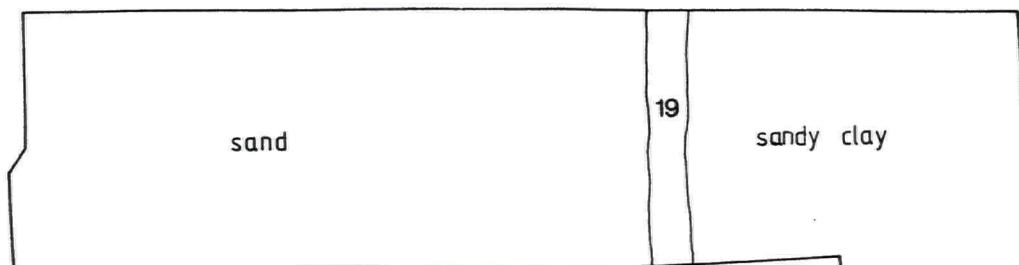
**Trench 4.**



**Trench 5.**



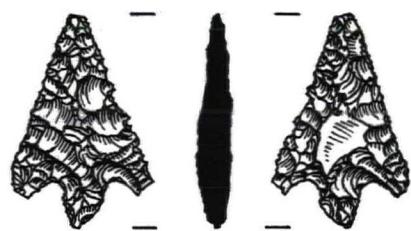
**Trench 7.**



**Fig 5.**

**Trench 6.**





**Fig 6. tanged and barbed arrowhead. Trench 3, Context 3.**

**scale 1/1**

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Trench Location Plan not scanned  
Please see Parish File for originals