

61-63 Wood Lane,
Earlswood, Hockley Heath,
Solihull

Archaeological Evaluation



understanding heritage matters

Report No 1115
August 2011



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: 61-63 Wood Lane, Earlswood, Hockley Heath, Solihull

Commissioned by: Mr Mark Palmer

Project Report No. 1115

Site Code: HE11

NGR: SP 1120 7436

Planning Reference: 2009/360

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Date: 2/8/11

Report reference: Gethin, B, 2011, 61-63 Wood Lane, Earlswood, Hockley Heath, Solihull: Archaeological Evaluation, Archaeology Warwickshire Report 1115

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Contents

	Summary
1	Introduction
2	Location
3	Archaeological and Historical Background
4	Observation
5	Conclusions
	Acknowledgements
	Bibliography

Appendix

List of Contexts

List of Figures

1	Site Location
2	Detail of the 1917-1918 Third Edition Ordnance Survey map
3	Evaluation trench detailed plan
4	Part of the trench after stripping, looking north
5	Large 20th century pit (5)

Summary

An archaeological evaluation on behalf of Mr Mark Palmer consisting of a single L-shaped trench adjacent to the present building encountered no archaeological remains associated with the undated cropmarks to the north of the site. Two early 20th century pits were exposed but not excavated along with several relatively modern service trenches.

1 Introduction

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council for the demolition of 61 and 63 Wood Lane, Earlswood, Hockley Heath (Planning Ref. 2009/360) and the erection of two new dwellings. The site lies within an area of archaeological potential, adjacent to undated enclosures which show as cropmarks in the fields to the north. It was therefore a condition of planning permission that the applicant should secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, prior to the development taking place.

1.2 A programme of fieldwork, consisting of the excavation of an archaeological evaluation trench, was commissioned from Archaeology Warwickshire and carried out in July 2011. This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under the site code HE11.

2 Location

2.1 The site is located at national grid reference SP 1120 7436 in the parish of Hockley Heath. The development site was previously occupied by a garden with a thin gravel driveway.

2.2 The underlying geology of the area is Till (British Geological Survey 1989).

3 Aims and Methods of the Evaluation

3.1 The evaluation was designed to discover the date, nature and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits which might be present within the area of the development.

3.2 The work undertaken involved the examination of early map evidence as well as records of archaeological remains in the area and local historical journals and other publications. This was followed by the excavation of a trench designed to cover a representative sample of the area to be developed.

4. Archaeological and Historical Background

4.1 Several sites are shown in the area on the Solihull Sites and Monuments record (Fig 1). To the north of the site an undated enclosure (MSI 8548) shows as a cropmark in a field.

This is likely to be prehistoric or Roman in date and may represent a farmstead of that period. Further to the north of this a ring ditch (MSI 8457), perhaps marking the location of a ploughed out burial mound, also shows as a cropmark. Several prehistoric objects have been found just to the south of the development site. They lie within Warwickshire (Fig 1) and are recorded on the county's Historic Environment Record. A barbed and tanged flint arrowhead (MWA 8125), of Bronze Age date, was found in the mud on the edge of Earlswood Lakes. Two polished stone axes (MWA 8126), of Neolithic date, have also been found in the vicinity.

4.2 To the north-west of the site, Wood Farm Cottage (MSI 210) is probably 17th century in date. To the east of the site is Earlswood Lakes Engine House (MSI 206). This was the pumping station to provide the Stratford-upon-Avon canal with water from the large reservoirs now known as Earlswood Lakes (MWA 1864). The canal was built between 1793 and 1816 (VCH, 1945).

Map Evidence

4.3 The site is shown on the 1834 Ordnance Survey map as a field, probably part of Manor Farm, just to the north. The site is still shown as a field on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884-1888 and the Second Edition of 1904-1905. The existing houses are marked on the 1917-18 Third Edition Ordnance Survey map (Fig 2). This also marks an additional outbuilding on their east side, which no longer exists.

5 Evaluation Trench

5.1 The L-shaped evaluation trench was excavated using a large tracked machine with a 1.85m wide toothless ditching bucket. The trench covered a total area of approximately 49.3m² and was excavated down to geological natural which consisted of brownish yellow sandy clay with frequent small-medium pebbles (14).

5.2 The geological natural was cut by a number of relatively modern features. A large pit 5 was partially visible at the south end of the trench. It was filled by a dark greyish brown sandy loam (6) which contained occasional fragments of brick, glass, including a Henley-in-Arden Mineral Water Company bottle, and early 20th century pottery. A further small rectangular pit 3 was filled by a dark greyish brown sandy loam (4), which contained occasional charcoal fleck, fragments of brick and a piece of old steel pipe. Neither pit was excavated.

5.3 A number of services were also cut into the geological natural. Two gas pipe trenches (7 and 10) crossed the trench in an approximately north-south direction and a narrow trench 12, possibly an old field drain, ran roughly east-west along the northern half of the trench.

5.4 The geological natural was overlain by between 0.27m and 0.35m of dark greyish brown sandy loam (2) which contained frequent tree roots. It was possibly the remains of a rather thin ploughsoil relating to the site's former use as a field. This was sealed by between 0.10m and 0.15m of dark greyish brown topsoil.

6 Conclusions

6.1 No archaeological remains associated with the cropmarks in the field to the north of the site were found. The two pits (3 and 5) were most likely associated with the early occupation of the houses, shortly after they had been built in the early 20th century.

Acknowledgements

The Warwickshire Museum would like to thank Mr. Mark Palmer for commissioning the work. Work on site was carried out by Bryn Gethin and Kevin Wright. This report was written by Bryn Gethin with illustrations by Candy Stevens and was checked by Stuart Palmer.

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Appendix

LIST OF CONTEXTS

Context	Description
1	Topsoil
2	Old ploughsoil
3	Pit
4	Pit fill (of 3)
5	Pit
6	Pit fill (of 5)
7	Gas pipe trench
8	Gas pipe trench fill (of 7)
9	Ceramic storm drain
10	Gas pipe trench
11	Gas pipe trench fill (of 10)
12	Field drain
13	Field drain fill (of 12)
14	Geological natural

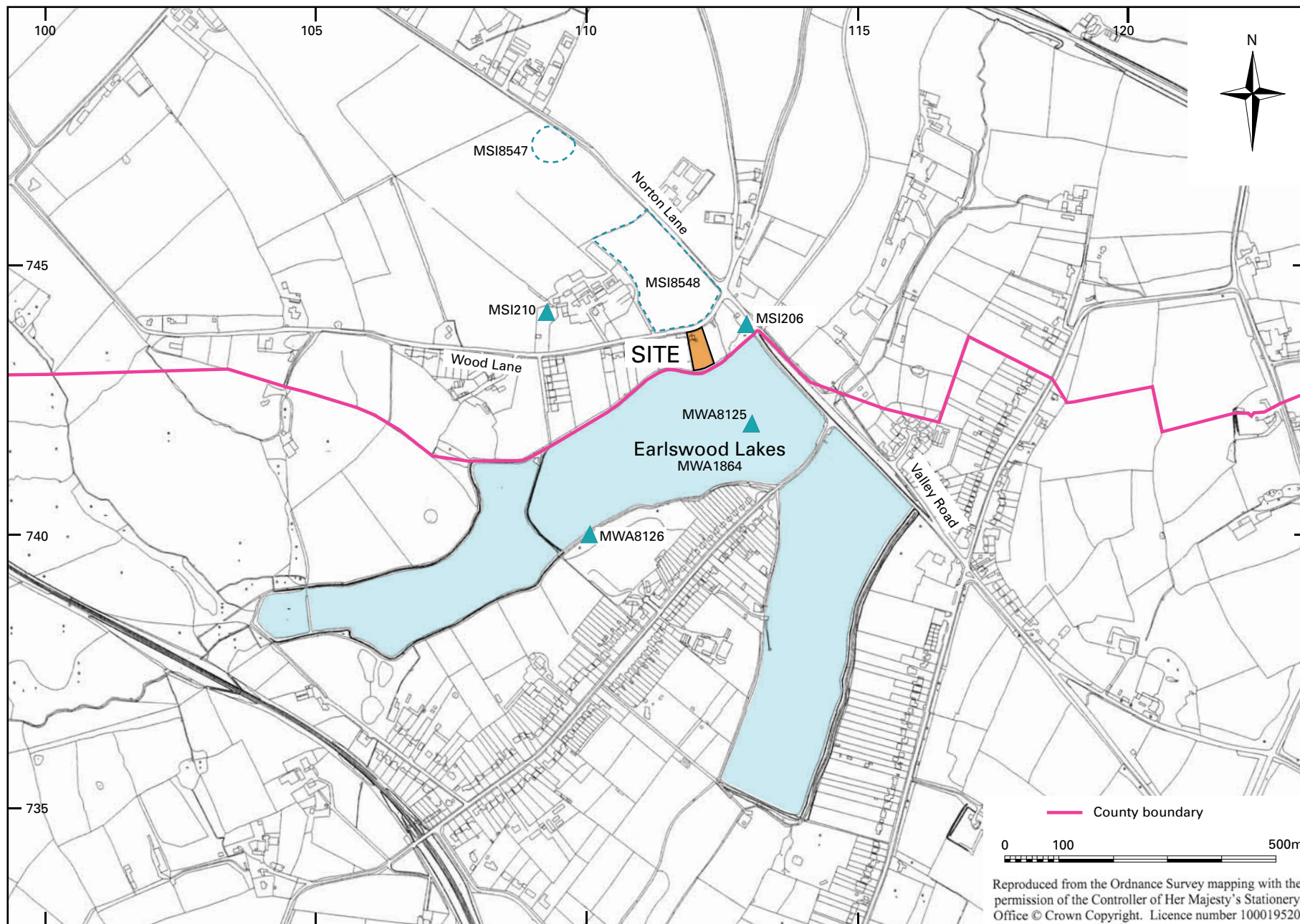


Fig 1: Site location

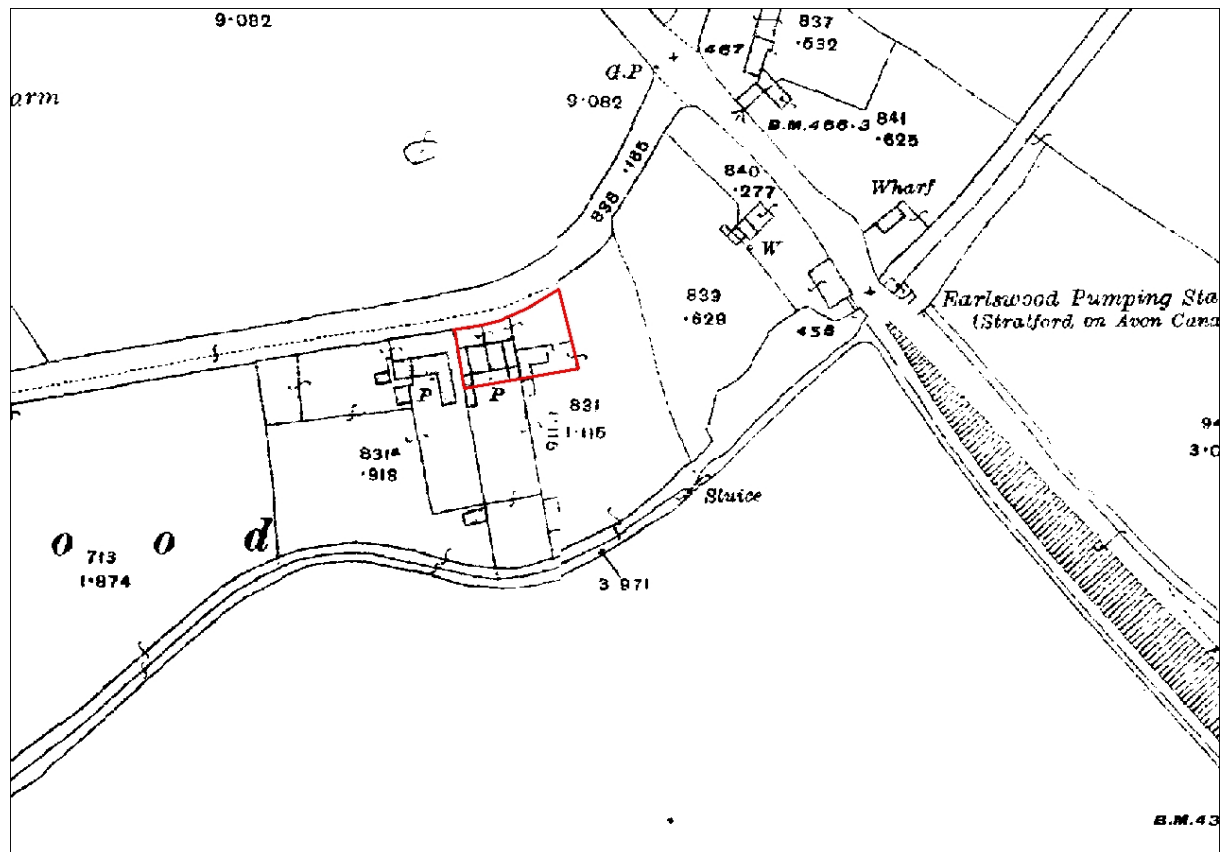


Fig 2: Detail of the 1917-1918 Third Edition Ordnance Survey map

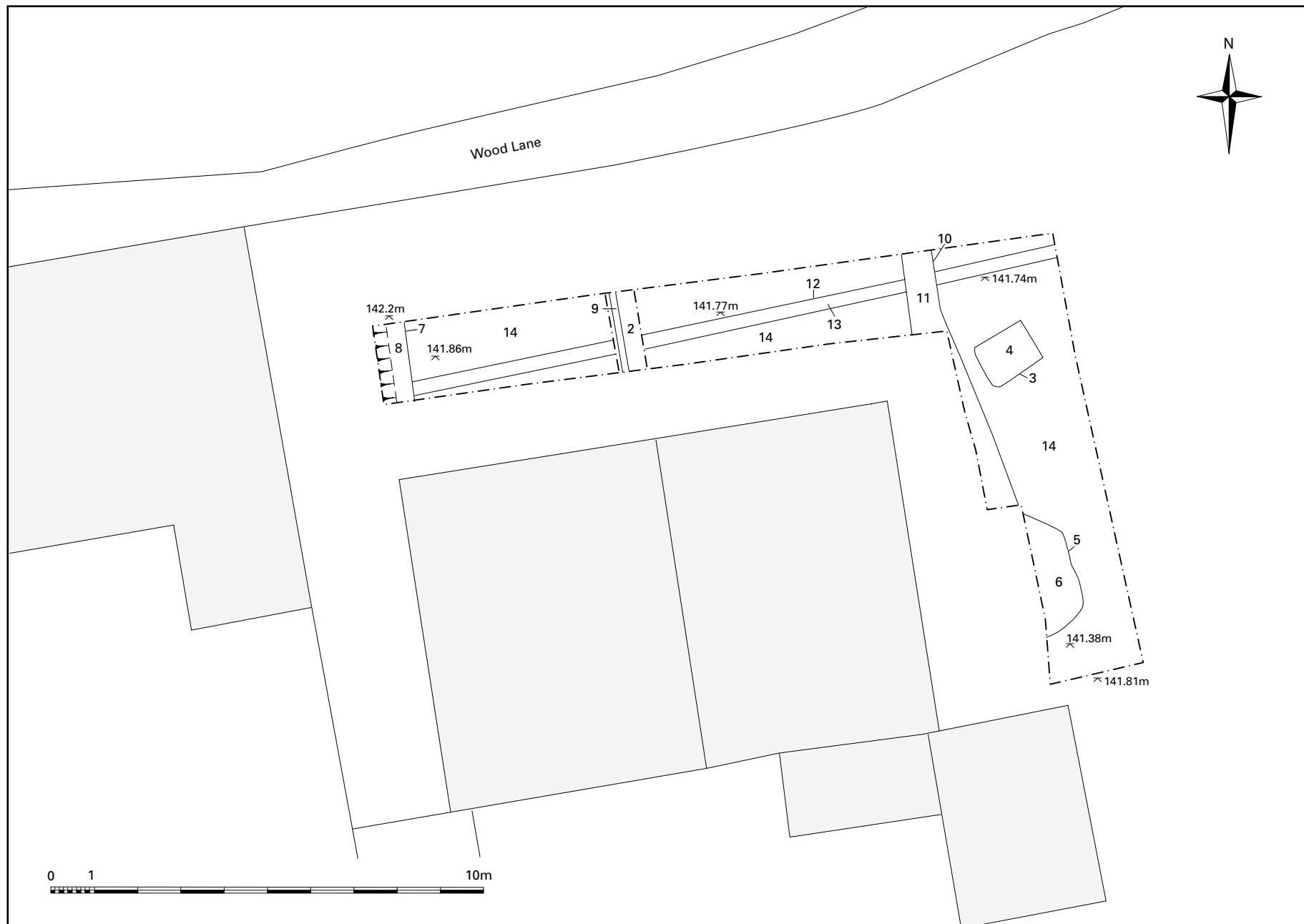


Fig 3: Evaluation trench detailed plan



Fig 4: Part of the trench after stripping, looking north



Fig 5: Large 20th century pit (5)