

**BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY
FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT**

**The Men's Club,
Alvechurch,
Hereford and Worcester**

**An Archaeological
Evaluation**

B.U.F.A.U.



Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
Project No. 522
April 1998

**The Men's Club, Alvechurch,
Hereford and Worcester**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
March 1998**

by
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1.0 Summary

In March 1998 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land adjacent to the Men's Club, Alvechurch, Hereford and Worcester (SP 0294 7260). The evaluation was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit in advance of the construction of bowling facilities for the club. The site lies to the east of Swan Street, an important element in the topography of the medieval borough of Alvechurch, and it was considered possible that burgage plots running back from the Swan Street frontage could extend into the site.

Two trenches, each c.10m long and 1.5m wide, were excavated. In the event, no archaeological features were identified and no significant finds were recovered, and it is concluded that the burgage plots did not extend into the area of the evaluation.

2.0 Background

The site is situated in an area of overgrown land to the south-east of The Men's Club in Alvechurch, Hereford and Worcester (SP 0294 7260). To the west lies Swan Street and to the north The Square, which are important elements in the topography of the medieval borough of Alvechurch (Figs. 1 & 2).

An application to develop the site in order to provide bowling facilities for The Men's Club was submitted to Hereford and Worcester County Council (B97/0821). In view of the archaeological potential of the site an archaeological evaluation of the land was required. The aim of the evaluation was to examine the survival and quality of any archaeological deposits on the site, and especially to examine the relationship of the site to tenement plots running eastwards from Swan Street and southwards from The Square, or possible connections with the milling activity associated with the River Arrow, flowing to the east.

The evaluation was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit in March 1998.

3.0 Methods

The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a brief prepared by the Planning Advisory Section, County Archaeological Service, Hereford and Worcester County Council (HWCM 26312, 10/11/1997) and a Method Statement prepared by BUFAU (24/11/1997, revised 9/3/98).

Two trenches were excavated, each c.10m long and 1.5m wide. The trenches were excavated by a mechanical excavator to a depth of c.0.6m. Topsoil and subsoil were

removed to the top of archaeological deposits or to the natural subsoil, which here consists of alluvium and gravels overlying Mercian Mudstone. The east-facing sections of both trenches were drawn at a scale of 1:20 and photographed in black and white and colour slide. Provision was made for environmental sampling but no suitable deposits were uncovered.

The site is heavily covered in trees and is within a designated conservation area. Consequently, in order to ensure that trenches were excavated as close to the original planned disposition and also to ensure that trees and their root systems were not damaged, the trenches both have slight bends in them.

4.0 Results

Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

Topsoil (1001) and subsoil (1002) were removed by machine to a depth of c.0.6m where the natural was revealed, consisting of pale buff sand and gravels with quantities of larger pebbles (1003), overlying a red/brown plastic clay with pebble inclusions (2004). A section of the trench (towards the centre) was excavated to a slightly greater depth to ensure that the sequence of geological materials was adequately understood.

One feature was identified as a land drain with a pottery pipe (F101). This ran from west to east.

Trench 2 (Fig. 4)

Topsoil (2001) and subsoil (2002) were removed by machine to a depth of c.0.6m where the natural was revealed, consisting of pale sand and gravels (2003) overlying red/brown clay (2004).

The trench was excavated deeper into the natural deposits at its northern end, where a lens of off-white sand was noted (2005). This overlay a lens of slightly dirtier sand and gravel (2006) which, in turn, overlay a lens of similar material but with a red clay admix (2007), and this overlay another lens of off-white sand (2008). All of these layers overlay the red/brown clay (2004).

No features were identified.

5.0 The finds

A deposit of modern rubbish had been dumped at the northern end of Trench 2. No finds were kept from this recent material. No finds were retained from the evaluation. The finds recovered and discarded consisted of:

- 1 square glass bottle fragment.
- 1 piece of decorated tile; garden edging.
- 1 piece of roof tile.

6.0 Discussion

Alvechurch gained borough status c.1239, when Bishop Walter of Worcester obtained the rights to hold a weekly market at the gates of his palace. Burgesses are first mentioned in the 1290s when there were 58 tenants holding 76 burgages (Dalwood 1996, after Aston 1970-2, Dyer 1980 and Beresford 1981). It is within this period that the market place will have been established in the area now known as The Square and burgage plots founded on the main roads leading to the central market place. The main route runs from north to south between Redditch, to the south, and Birmingham, to the north. The town seems to have expanded in a linear pattern along this main route.

Swan Street forms the southern component of the route, running towards Redditch, and the burgage plots, still visible in the present townscape, run from this street towards the area of the evaluation, to the south of the main market area. The absence of any archaeological features or even residual pottery scatters in the topsoil would suggest that the burgage plots did not extend into the area of the evaluation. The unusual form of the boundary possibly represents the edge of a field system pre-dating the foundation of the burgage plots.

Development of the site is unlikely to disturb or damage archaeological deposits and no further archaeological excavation is recommended.

7.0 The site archive

The site archive consists of the following items

Context cards	12
Feature card	1
Site drawings (sections at 1:20)	2
Black and white print film, with contact print	1
Colour slide film, mounted	1
Sheet of surveying information	1

No finds have been retained from the evaluation.

The archive will be deposited with:

Hereford and Worcester County Archaeology Service
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury (Nr. Kidderminster)
Worcestershire
DY11 7XZ

8.0 Acknowledgements

This project was sponsored by Alvechurch Men's Club in advance of proposed development of the site. The archaeological evaluation was undertaken by S.J.Linnane and Jon Sterenberg for Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit. The project was monitored by S. Butoux for BUFAU and by S. Hartley for Hereford and Worcester County Archaeological Service. The figures were drawn by Nigel Dodds.

9.0 Reference

Dalwood H. 1996 *Archaeological Assessment of Alvechurch, Hereford and Worcester* (revised December 1996), Hereford and Worcester County Council. Project 945, Report 295.

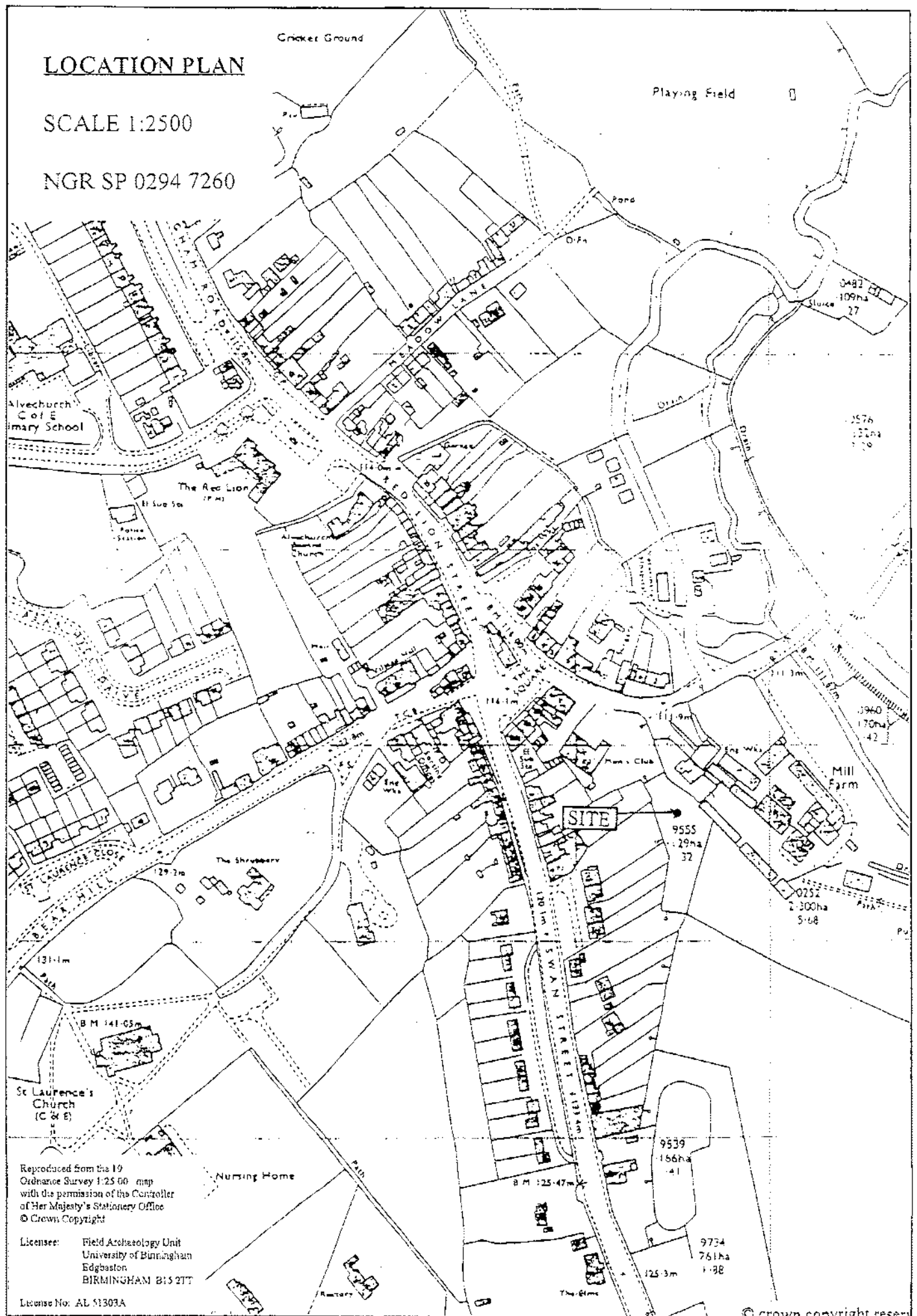




Fig.2

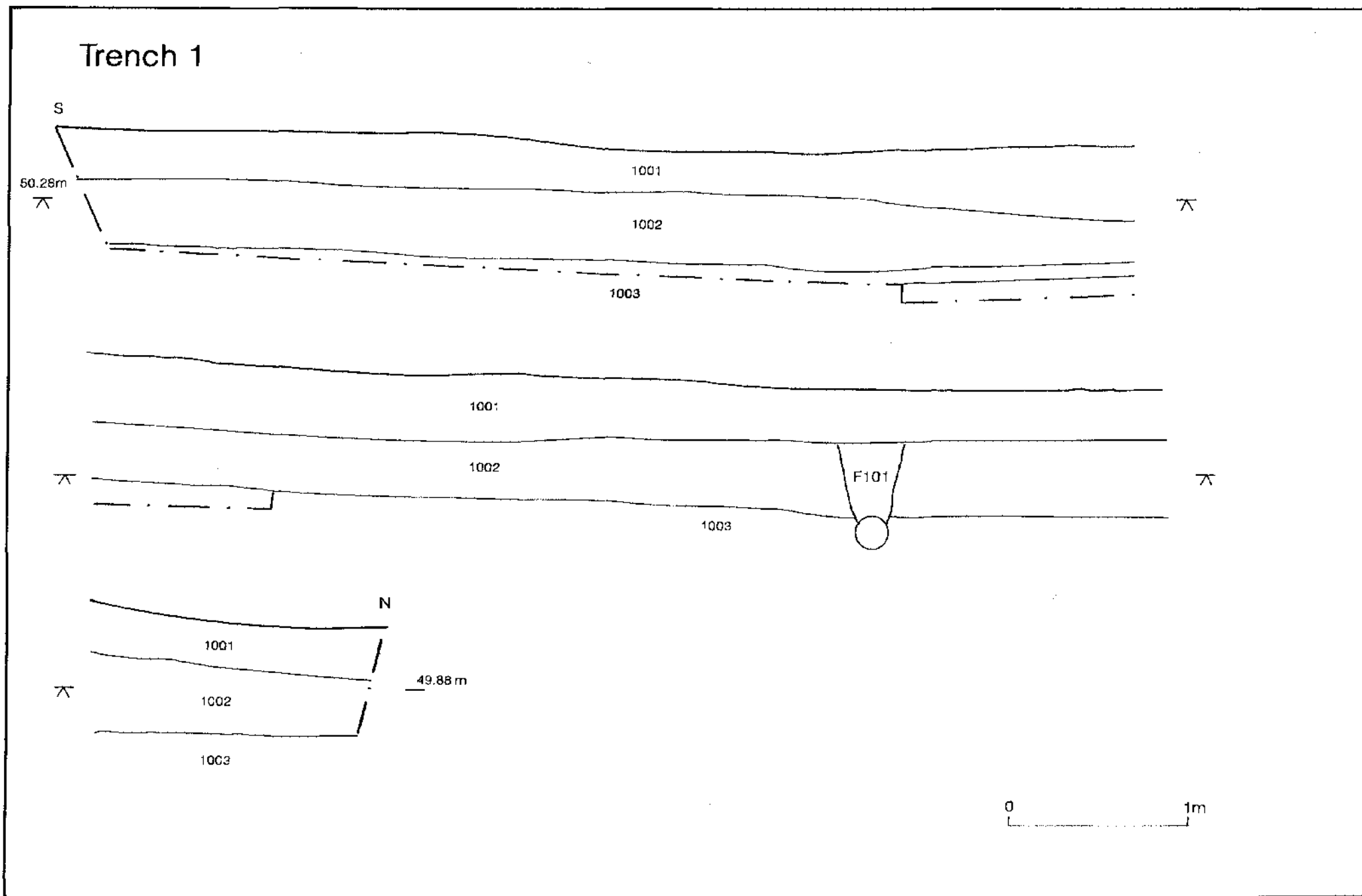


Fig.3

Trench 2

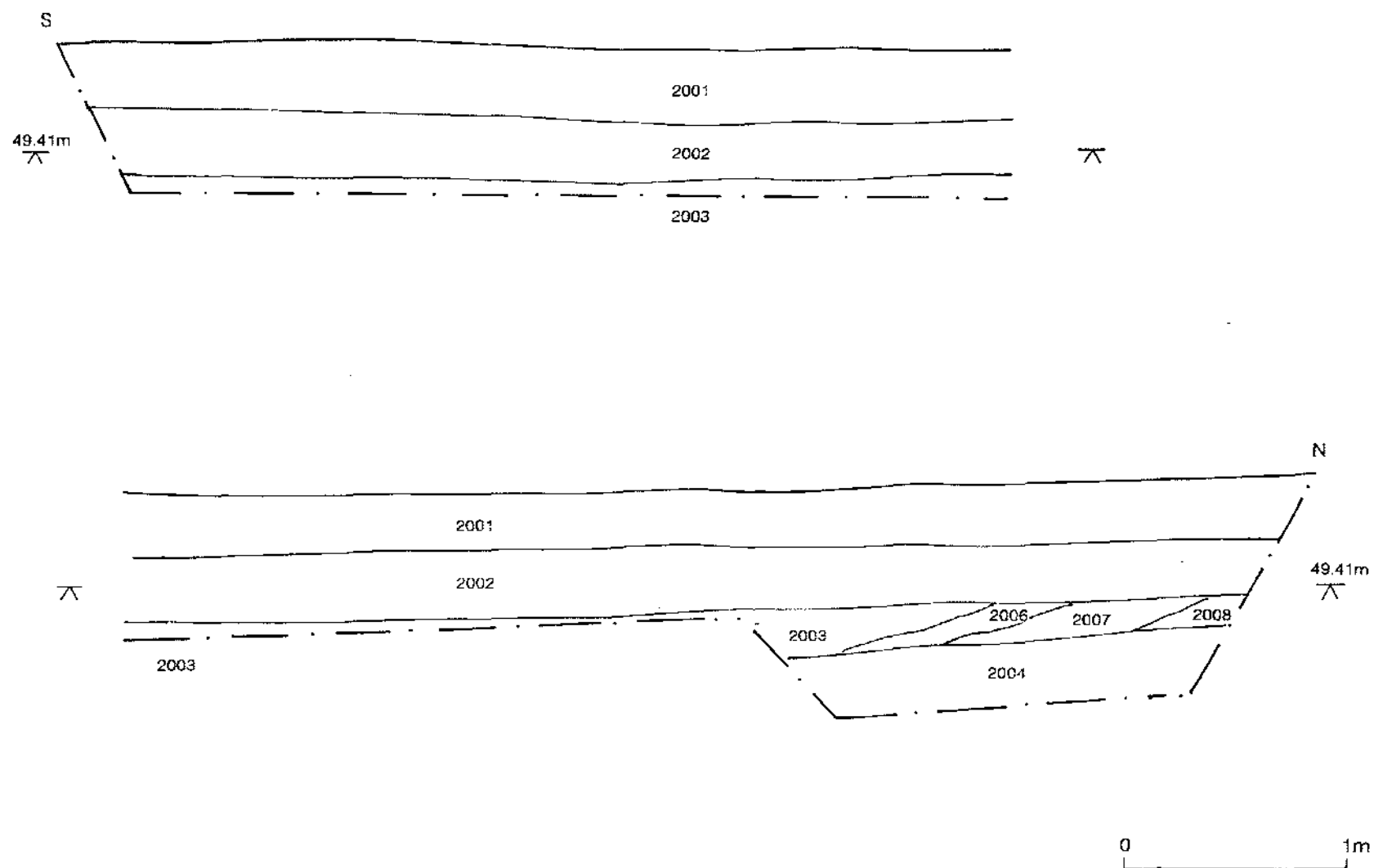


Fig.4