

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

Project No. 746

September 2000

Beech Croft Farm, Northfield, Birmingham
An Archaeological Watching Brief

by
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**An Archaeological Watching Brief
2000**

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An Archaeological Watching Brief

Beech Croft Farm, Northfield, Birmingham

2000

1.0 Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeological Unit on 4th September 2000 on behalf of Mr. Mark Slater. The work was carried out during the construction of a house on land off Beech Croft Farm, Northfield, Birmingham (NGR SP 0245 7936). The development site lay within an area of potential archaeological importance close to Northfield's medieval village centre. However, no archaeological features or deposits were identified and no artifacts were recovered.

2.0 Introduction

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out during groundworks associated with a housing development on land off Beech Croft Farm, Northfield, Birmingham (NGR SP 0245 7936, planning application number S/02163/98/FUL). The archaeological fieldwork was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) on behalf of Mr. Mark Slater.

The development site is located to the west of the medieval village centre of Northfield. St Lawrence's church (SMR 01189) includes a 12th-century doorway, the Great Stone Inn (SMR 01190) contains the remains of a medieval building and there was formerly a moat (SMR 02947) to the east of the church, on Rectory Road. Below-ground archaeological remains observed at Rose Cottage (SMR 20202), adjoining the development site, consisted of probable post-pads and small pits, probably medieval in date covered by a cultivation layer. A prehistoric worked flint and a sherd of medieval pottery were found.

The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a Specification prepared by BUFAU (Mould 1999) and a Design Brief prepared by Dr Mike Hodder, Planning Archaeologist for Birmingham City Council (Hodder 1999, Appendix 1). The guidelines set down in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999) were followed.

3.0 Site Location (Fig. 1)

The site was located to the east of Number 24 Beech Farm Croft and to the west of Church Road/Church Hill. The site was previously used as an allotment and is currently vacant.

4.0 Objectives

The objectives of the watching brief were to monitor all below-ground works associated with the housing development. Any archaeological remains uncovered during the course of the groundworks were to be recorded to an appropriate level. Sampling and recovery of any contextual evidence which could contribute to an understanding of the archaeological remains within the area was also to take place.

5.0 Method

The objectives were achieved with a site visit to the contractors' groundworks on Monday 4th September 2000. The groundworks included the stripping of topsoil over areas of the site and the excavation of foundation and service trenches.

All observed deposits were recorded using pre-printed *pro-forma* recording cards for features and contexts, supplemented by scale drawings of sections and plans. Colour-slide and black and white photographs were also taken as appropriate. These records form the site archive which will be deposited with the Birmingham Sites and Monuments Record.

6.0 Archaeological Results (Fig. 2)

Before arrival on site on the 4th September some groundworks had already taken place. These groundworks consisted of the stripping of topsoil over an area approximately 20m by 20m. A thin layer of topsoil was left over the subsoil across most of the site making it extremely difficult to observe whether or not any archaeological deposits were present.

The excavation of the foundation trenches for the house were monitored (Fig.2). The trenches were excavated to a maximum depth of 1m exposing a yellow-brown sandy subsoil beneath the topsoil. Possible evidence for ridge and furrow was present in Trench A running north to south across the site. No other archaeological features were observed in the foundation trenches.

7.0 Acknowledgements

The watching brief was sponsored by Mr Mark Slater and was carried out by Chris Patrick of Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit. The report was written by Chris Patrick and edited by Catharine Mould. Illustrations were prepared by Mark Breedon. The project was managed for BUFAU by Catharine Mould. Thanks are due to Dr Mike Hodder, Planning Archaeologist for Birmingham City Council and Mr Mark Slater.

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE

Application number S/02163/98/FUL

Beech Farm Croft, Northfield(SP 0245 7936)

Construction of cottage, access, parking and garages

Brief for archaeological observation and recording during development

1.Summary

Development off Beech Farm Croft, Northfield, may expose and disturb below-ground archaeological remains, including features relating to the medieval village of Northfield. This brief is for archaeological observation and recording of any archaeological features exposed by the development.

2.Site location and description

The site is located to the east of number 24 Beech Farm Croft and west of Church Road/Church Hill. It is currently vacant.

3.Planning background

Application no. S/02163/98/FUL is for construction of a cottage with access, parking and garages. It lies within an area of potential archaeological importance, the historic village centre of Northfield and its surroundings. Planning permission has therefore been granted on condition that archaeological observation and recording be carried out during development, at the applicant's expense.

4.Existing archaeological information

The development site is located on the west of the medieval village centre of Northfield. St Laurence's church(SMR 01189) includes a 12th-century doorway, the Great Stone Inn(SMR 01190) contains the remains of a medieval building and there was formerly a moat(SMR 02947) to the east of the church, on Rectory Road. Below-ground archaeological remains observed at Rose Cottage(SMR 20202), adjoining the development site, consisted of probable post pads and small pits, probably medieval, covered by a cultivation layer. A prehistoric worked flint and a sherd of medieval pottery were found.

5.Requirements for work

The development site includes land to the rear of, and potentially related to, dwellings along Church Hill. It may contain below-ground remains of the medieval village of Northfield, including property boundaries and structures and features in former rear yards, and/or remains of earlier activity. In accordance with Policy 8.36 of the Council's Unitary Development Plan and, government advice in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, Archaeology and Planning, archaeological observation and recording is required during development.

6.Stages of work

An appropriately skilled and qualified archaeologist is to be on site to observe all groundworks for the development, including topsoil stripping, downcutting of existing levels, foundation trenches and service trenches. Any archaeological features exposed are to be recorded by written description, drawing and photography. No archaeological excavation is to be undertaken other than cleaning exposed deposits for better definition. Adequate time is to be allowed for observation and recording to take place. Finds are to be retrieved as they are revealed during groundworks or cleaning. Finds are to be cleaned, marked and bagged and any remedial conservation work undertaken.

7. Staffing

The archaeological observation and recording is to be carried out in accordance with the Code of Conduct, Standards, Guidelines and practices of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, and all staff are to be suitably qualified and experienced for their roles in the project. It is recommended that the project be under the direct supervision of a Member or Associate Member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

8. Written Scheme of Investigation

Potential contractors should present a Written Scheme of Investigation which details methods and staffing. It is recommended that the proposal be submitted to the City Council's Planning Archaeologist before a contractor is commissioned, to ensure that it meets the requirements of this brief.

9. Monitoring

The archaeological observation and recording must be carried out to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning and Architecture, Birmingham City Council, and will be monitored on his behalf by the Planning Archaeologist.

10. Reporting

The results of the archaeological observation and recording are to be presented as a written report, containing appropriate illustrations. A copy must be sent to the Planning Archaeologist.

11. Archive deposition

The written, drawn and photographic records of the archaeological observation and recording, together with any finds, must be deposited with an appropriate repository within a reasonable time of completion, following consultation with the Planning Archaeologist.

12. Publication

The written report will become publicly accessible, as part of the Birmingham Sites and Monuments Record, within six months of completion. The contractor must submit a short summary report for inclusion in *West Midlands Archaeology* and appropriate period journals.

**DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE
BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

Date prepared: 25 November 1998

Planning Archaeologist: Dr Michael Hodder 0121-303 3161 fax 0121-303 3193

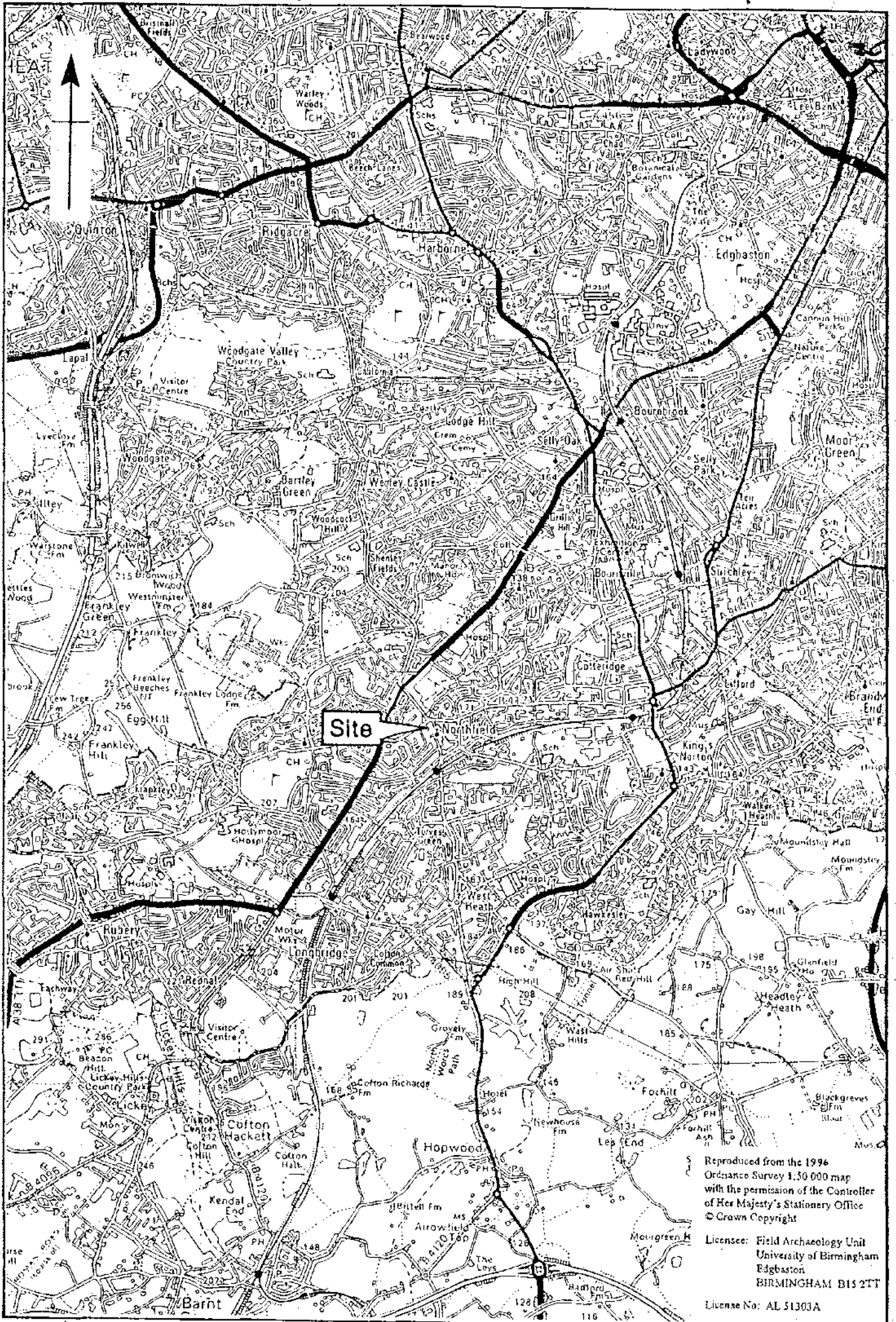
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beech2.doc



Site

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Fig.1

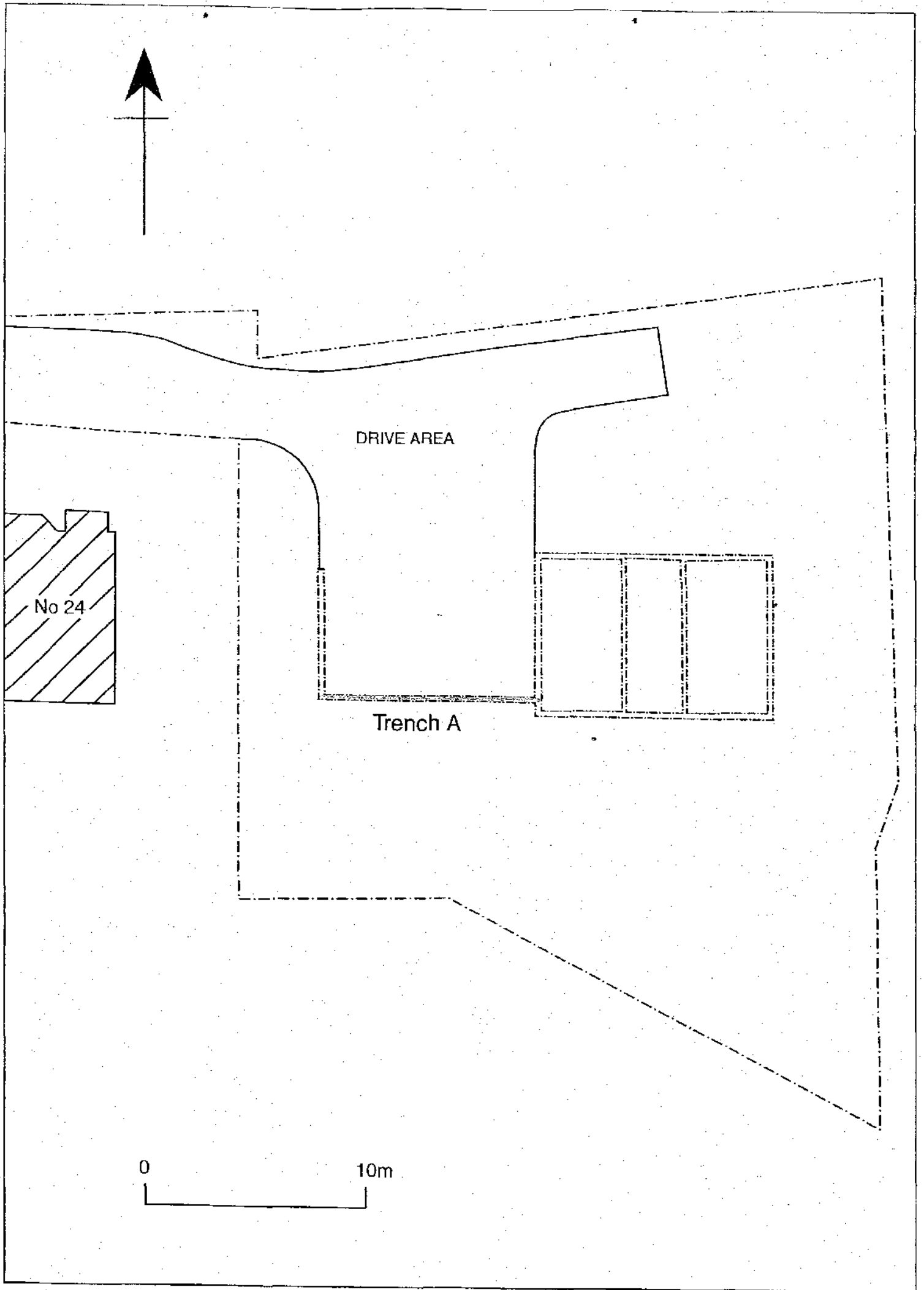


Fig.2