

birmingham archaeology

Longdales Road,
Kings Norton,
Birmingham

Archaeological
Fieldwork 2007

**UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM**



Project No. 1552

**LONGDALES ROAD, KINGS NORTON, BIRMINGHAM
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION 2007**

By Bob Burrows

With a contribution by Jane Evans

For further information please contact:

Alex Jones (Director)
Birmingham Archaeology
The University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham B15 2TT
Tel: 0121 414 5513
Fax: 0121 414 5516
E-Mail: bham-arch@bham.ac.uk
Web Address: <http://www.barch.bham.ac.uk/bufau>

LONGDALES ROAD, KINGS NORTON, BIRMINGHAM

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELDWORK 2007

CONTENTS

SUMMARY

1 INTRODUCTION.....	2
1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT.....	2
1.2 LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION (FIG. 2)	2
2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.....	2
3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	3
4 METHODOLOGY	3
5 RESULTS (FIGS. 3-5)	4
5.1 TRENCH 1 (FIG. 3)	4
5.2 TRENCH 2 (FIG. 3)	4
5.3 TRENCH 3 (FIG. 3)	4
5.4 TRENCH 4 (FIG. 3)	5
5.5 TRENCH 5 (FIG. 3)	5
5.6 SALVAGE RECORDING IN AREA C (FIGS. 3-5)	5
7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	6
8 REFERENCES.....	6

Figures

- 1 Location of Longdales Road
- 2 Longdales Road, areas investigated 2006-2007 in Fields 1 and 4
- 3 Detail of R2
- 4 Sections, Trenches 1-2
- 5 Simplified plan of area of salvage recording and 2006 investigation

Appendix

- A Written Scheme of Investigation (Birmingham Archaeology) Removed

SUMMARY

Further archaeological work was undertaken at Longdales Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham (centred on NGR SP 05337761) by Birmingham Archaeology in June 2007 on instruction from Birmingham City Council. The work comprised trial-trenching adjoining the frontage of Icknield Street, and a small-scale salvage recording exercise adjoining an area excavated in 2006. Earlier work undertaken during 2002-2004 and in 2006 in advance of the cemetery development has comprised trial-trenching, area excavation and watching brief. This has identified a double-ditched enclosure complex possibly associated with animal husbandry, located to the rear of the Roman road frontage. Closer to the road frontage have been identified evidence of ditch plot divisions and other ditches, some possibly defining further enclosures. Occupation of this roadside area has been dated from the early/mid 2nd century to the late 3rd/early 4th century.

The 2007 trial-trenching identified pebble surfaces alongside the Roman road frontage, similar to those identified by fieldwork further to the north during 2006. No other Roman, or possibly Roman features were encountered. The salvage recording provided an opportunity to further examine a ring-gully and adjoining ditched plot boundary, first investigated in 2006.

LONGDALES ROAD, KINGS NORTON, BIRMINGHAM

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELDWORK 2007

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the project

Trial-trenching and salvage recording was undertaken at Longdales Road, Kings Norton Birmingham (centred on NGR SP 05337761) in June 2007. Birmingham Archaeology was commissioned to undertake the archaeological fieldwork by Birmingham City Council. The archaeological fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with the guidelines laid down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG16, Department of the Environment, November 1990), Policy 8.36 of Birmingham Unitary Development Plan and the Birmingham City Council Archaeology Strategy, adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance. The archaeological fieldwork was carried out in advance of proposals for a cemetery extension. The fieldwork conformed to the requirements of a Design Brief prepared by the council (Birmingham CC 2006), and a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Birmingham Archaeology (Birmingham Archaeology 2006), approved by the Planning Archaeologist, Birmingham City Council before implementation.

This report outlines the results of the fieldwork and has been prepared in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standards and Guidance Notes for Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Briefs (IFA 2001).

1.2 Location and description (Fig. 2)

The entire site of the existing cemetery and proposed extension consists of land bounded by Longdales Road, Icknield Street and Primrose Hill, together with land to the south of Primrose Hill. The salvage recording was undertaken in Field 1, and the trial-trenching in Field 4, further to the south. At the time of the evaluation Field 4 comprised overgrown grassland (Figs. 1-3).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site is bounded to the east by Icknield Street, which follows the line of a Roman road. Earlier work undertaken during 2002-2004 and in 2006 in advance of the cemetery development has comprised trial-trenching (Vaughan 1992), area excavation (Williams 2003 a and b; Burrows 2007) and watching brief (Mason 2004). This has identified a double-ditched enclosure complex possibly associated with animal husbandry, located to the rear of the Roman road frontage. Closer to the road frontage (Field 1) have been identified evidence of ditch plot divisions and other ditches, some possibly defining further enclosures within which were located two ring-gullies. Occupation of this roadside area has been dated from the early/mid 2nd century to the late 3rd/early 4th century.

Previous work in Field 4 comprised a single trial-trench (trench 3, Vaughan 2002) cut at a right-angle to the alignment of the Roman road. This revealed no features or deposits of archaeological interest. A watching brief (Mason 2004) was also maintained in part of the same field.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The principle aim of the trial-trenching was to determine the character, state of preservation and the potential significance of any buried remains.

More specific aims were to:

- Assess the survival of structures and deposits relating to Roman activity within the roadside areas, along with traces of plot boundaries or other Roman features within the area immediately to the rear of the Roman road frontage.
- Establish whether this particular field is a blank area within an area otherwise characterised by the extensive survival of Roman features.

In particular, the trenching was intended to provide a test of the results of earlier trial-trenching, undertaken in 1992 within Field 4 (Vaughan 1992). The identification of east-west aligned Roman plot boundaries in Field 1 to the north suggested that it was possible that the 1992 trench, which was aligned east-west may have 'missed' any ditched plot boundaries, particularly those cut on the same alignment.

The purpose of the salvage recording was to complete excavation of a ring-gully partly investigated by excavation in 2006, and also to identify and record any associated features.

4 METHODOLOGY

A total of five trial-trenches, each measuring 20m by 1.6m were excavated, in accordance with a layout specified by the Planning Archaeologist, Birmingham City Council. The trenches were located to test Field 4, in particular the roadside frontage areas as widely as possible.

All topsoil and modern overburden was removed using a JCB excavator with a toothless ditching bucket working under direct archaeological supervision, down to the top of the uppermost archaeological horizon or the subsoil in each trench.

A small salvage recording exercise was also undertaken in June 2007. The salvage recording was targeted to investigate the possible continuation of a ring ditch and any internal features also relating to the site of a dwelling, which had been partially exposed in the excavation of 2006 (Burrows 2007). Under archaeological supervision an area of topsoil and subsoil measuring 12m by 5m was removed immediately to the west of the previously excavated sections of the ring ditch. The uppermost archaeological horizon was uncovered and the exposed surface was manually cleaned preparatory to further hand-excavation.

In the trial-trenches and area for salvage recording, all stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present. Plans and sections were drawn at scales of 1:50 and 1:20, as appropriate. A comprehensive written record was maintained using a continuous numbered context system on pro-forma context and feature cards. Written records and scale plans were supplemented by photographs using monochrome and colour print and colour slide photography.

No deposits were encountered which were appropriate for sampling for environmental remains. Treatment of all finds will conform to the guidance contained within 'A Strategy for the Care and Investigation of Finds' published by English Heritage.

The full site archive includes all finds recovered. The site archive will be prepared according to guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the Management of Archaeology Projects (English Heritage, 1991), the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage (UKIC, 1990) and Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections (Museum and Art Galleries Commission, 1992). Finds and the paper archive will be deposited with Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery.

5 RESULTS (FIGS. 3-5)

The trenches are described individually in numerical order, followed by the salvage recording.

5.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

Trench 1 measured 20m in length and 1.6m in width and was aligned northwest-southeast. The natural reddish-orange clay subsoil (1002) was recorded at a depth of 0.55m below the modern surface. Towards the central and southeastern areas of the trench the natural clay had been cut by a number of east-west and north-south aligned field drains (not illustrated) and by three amorphous features. The amorphous features (1004, 1006 and 1007, not illustrated) were sectioned. In each case no finds were recovered. The shallow features had uneven bases and contained considerable evidence of root activity suggesting the remains of small tree throws. At the southeastern end of the trench the natural clay subsoil had been overlain by a layer of small and medium sized pebble surface (1008). A 1m wide sondage was excavated through the pebble surface. The largest of the sub-angular and sub-rounded pebbles measured 0.06-0.10m in diameter and the layer, which did not contain any datable evidence, was 0.04-0.09m in depth. The surface was overlain by a reddish-brown layer of silt clay subsoil (1001), which measured 0.20-0.25m in depth and was in turn sealed by topsoil (1000), measuring 0.25m in depth.

5.2 Trench 2 (Fig. 3)

Trench 2 measured 20m in length and 1.6m in width and was aligned northeast-southwest. The natural reddish-orange clay subsoil (2002) was recorded at a depth of 0.52m below the modern surface. The natural clay had been overlain across the central and northeastern areas of the trench by a shallow surface composed of small and medium sized stones (2003). The largest sub-angular and sub-rounded stones measured on average between 0.06-0.10m in diameter. A 2m wide section was excavated through the stone surface (2003) which measured 0.04-0.09m in depth, but no datable evidence was retrieved. The stone surface (2003) had been cut by a number of east-west aligned field drains and was sealed by a reddish-brown layer of silt clay subsoil (2001), measuring 0.26m in depth. The subsoil was overlain by topsoil (2000) which was 0.26m in depth.

5.3 Trench 3 (Fig. 3)

Trench 3 measured 20m in length and 1.6m in width and was aligned northwest-southeast. The reddish-orange clay subsoil (3002) was exposed at a depth of 0.52m below the modern surface. The natural subsoil was cut by a number of east-west aligned field drains and it had been sealed by a reddish-brown layer of silt clay subsoil (3001), which measured 0.26m in depth. This subsoil was overlain by topsoil (3000) which was 0.26m in depth.

5.4 Trench 4 (Fig. 3)

Trench 4 measured 20m in length and 1.6m in width and was aligned northeast-southwest. The natural reddish-orange clay subsoil (4002) was recorded at a depth of 0.47m below the modern surface. The natural subsoil was cut by a number of east-west aligned field drains and it had been sealed by a reddish-brown layer of silt clay subsoil (4001), which measured 0.23m in depth. The subsoil was overlain by topsoil (4000) which was 0.24m in depth.

5.5 Trench 5 (Fig. 3)

Trench 5 measured 20m in length and 1.6m in width and was aligned northeast-southwest. The natural reddish-orange clay subsoil (5002) was exposed at a depth of 0.47m below the modern surface. The natural subsoil was cut by a number of east-west aligned field drains and it had been sealed by a reddish-brown layer of silt clay subsoil (5001). This subsoil measured 0.23m in depth and was overlain by topsoil, which was 0.24m in depth.

No features, or possible features of archaeological interest were recorded in Trenches 3-5. No finds were collected from Trenches 1-5.

5.6 Salvage recording in Area C (Figs. 3-5)

The excavation was centred in Plot B within the Enclosure E1 interior (Burrows 2007, fig. 3). It was evident that the ring-gully (R2) did not extend far to the west of the area investigated in 2006. The salvage recording revealed the southernmost terminal (7083) of the ring-gully, which measured 0.22m wide and 0.04m in depth as it terminated. However the salvage recording did serve to illustrate that there was no direct physical relationship between the ring-gully (R2) and the roadside ditch (D1a), which continued immediately to the south on an east-west alignment across Area C. The ditch and ring-gully apparently respected each other. Three additional sections (7079, 7081 and 7085) were excavated through ditch D1a, which measured between 0.85-1.10m in width and 0.18-0.32m in depth. It had gradually sloping sides and a 'U'-shaped profile and was backfilled with greyish-brown sandy clay-silt (7078, 7080 and 7084, not illustrated) which contained a moderate amount of Roman pottery sherds retrieved from each of the excavated sections. A shallow sub-circular feature (7077) measuring 0.40m by 0.65m in diameter and 0.04m in depth was excavated approximately 4m to the west of the ring ditch. No finds were retrieved from the feature, which was backfilled with reddish-brown silt-clay with charcoal flecking. No further evidence was uncovered relating to any internal features associated with the ring-gully. The pottery from ditch D1a was 2nd-3rd century, or Roman in date.

6 DISCUSSION

The stone surface recorded in Trenches 1 and 2 may be interpreted as a hardstanding area adjoining the Roman road. No other features or possible features of Roman date could be identified, and no Roman pottery was collected. This may suggest that the field comprised a paddock laid out adjoining the Roman road. The northern boundary of the paddock would have been formed by the southernmost of a series of east-west aligned field boundaries, while its southern boundary was probably formed by a modern hedge following the natural contours of the slope. The only other features encountered were field drains, associated with modern cultivation.

Given the extensive coverage of trial-trenching in the 2007 evaluation, the absence of major ditched plot boundaries, such as those recorded in Field 1 to the north, has been confirmed. The clay subsoil with extensive pebbles recorded in the 2002 evaluation (Vaughan 2002, 7) may now be re-interpreted as the remains of the pebble hardstanding recorded more extensively in 2007.

Within the area of salvage recording, ditch 7085, 7079 and 7081 is the same feature as ditch D1a identified in 2006 (Burrows 2007, fig. 3), which formed a ditched boundary between plots A and B. Ditch D1a belongs to the earliest suite of Roman features in this roadside area, and was probably laid out in the late 2nd-early 3rd century.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation was commissioned by Birmingham City Council. Thanks are due to Dr Mike Hodder for monitoring the project. The project was supervised by Bob Burrows, assisted by Anthony Aston, Elizabeth Bishop, Paul Collins, Phil Mann, and Emma Sautejeau. The illustrations were prepared by Nigel Dodds and the text was edited by Alex Jones, who managed the project for Birmingham Archaeology.

8 REFERENCES

Birmingham Archaeology 2007 *Written Scheme of Investigation, Longdales Rd, Kings Norton, Birmingham, Trial-Trenching.*

Birmingham City Council 2007 *Brief for archaeological evaluation, Kings Norton Cemetery, Birmingham.*

Burrows, B, 2007 *Longdales Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham, 2006 excavations, post-excavation assessment*, BA report 1485.

Mason, P, 2004 *Longdales Road, Birmingham, Archaeological Watching Brief 2004*, BA report no. 1167.

Vaughan, T, *et al.*, 2002 *Archaeological evaluation at proposed New Cemetery Site, Longdales Road, Birmingham*, Archaeological service WCC.

Williams, J, 2003a *Longdales Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham, archaeological investigations 2002, post-excavation assessment*, BUFAU report 958.

Williams, J, 2003b *Longdales Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham, archaeological investigations 2003, post-excavation assessment*, BA report 958.01.

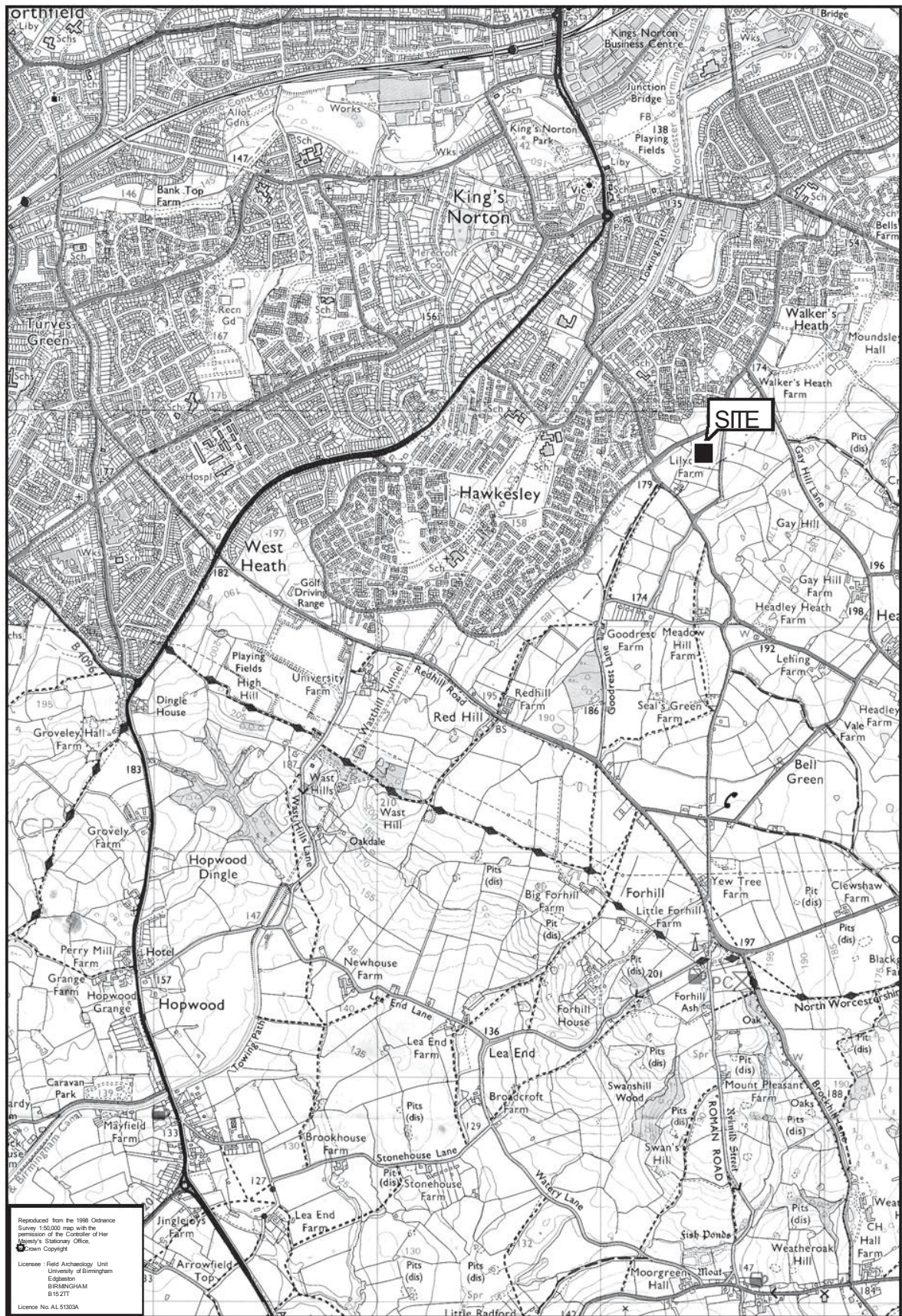


Fig.1

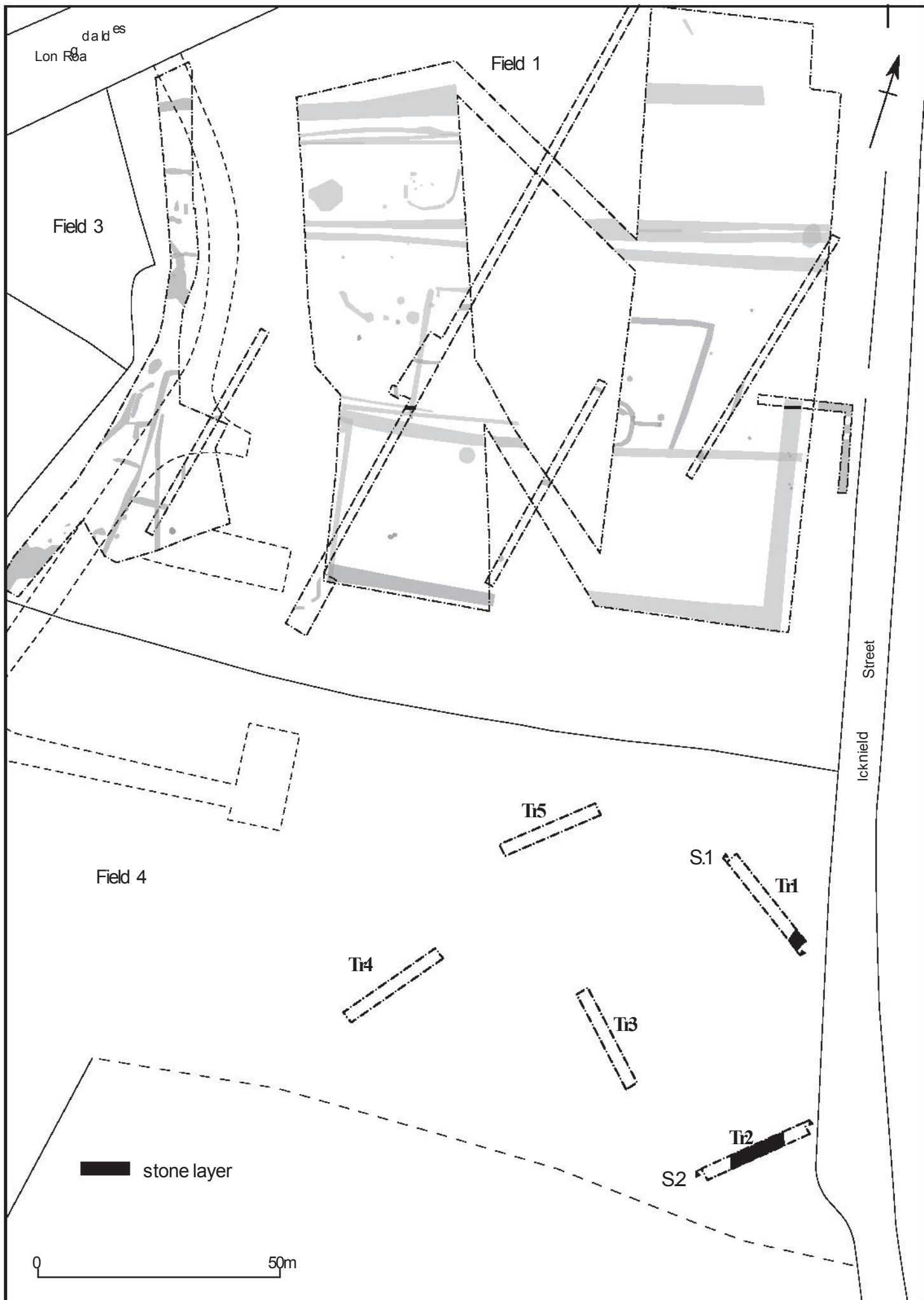


Fig.2

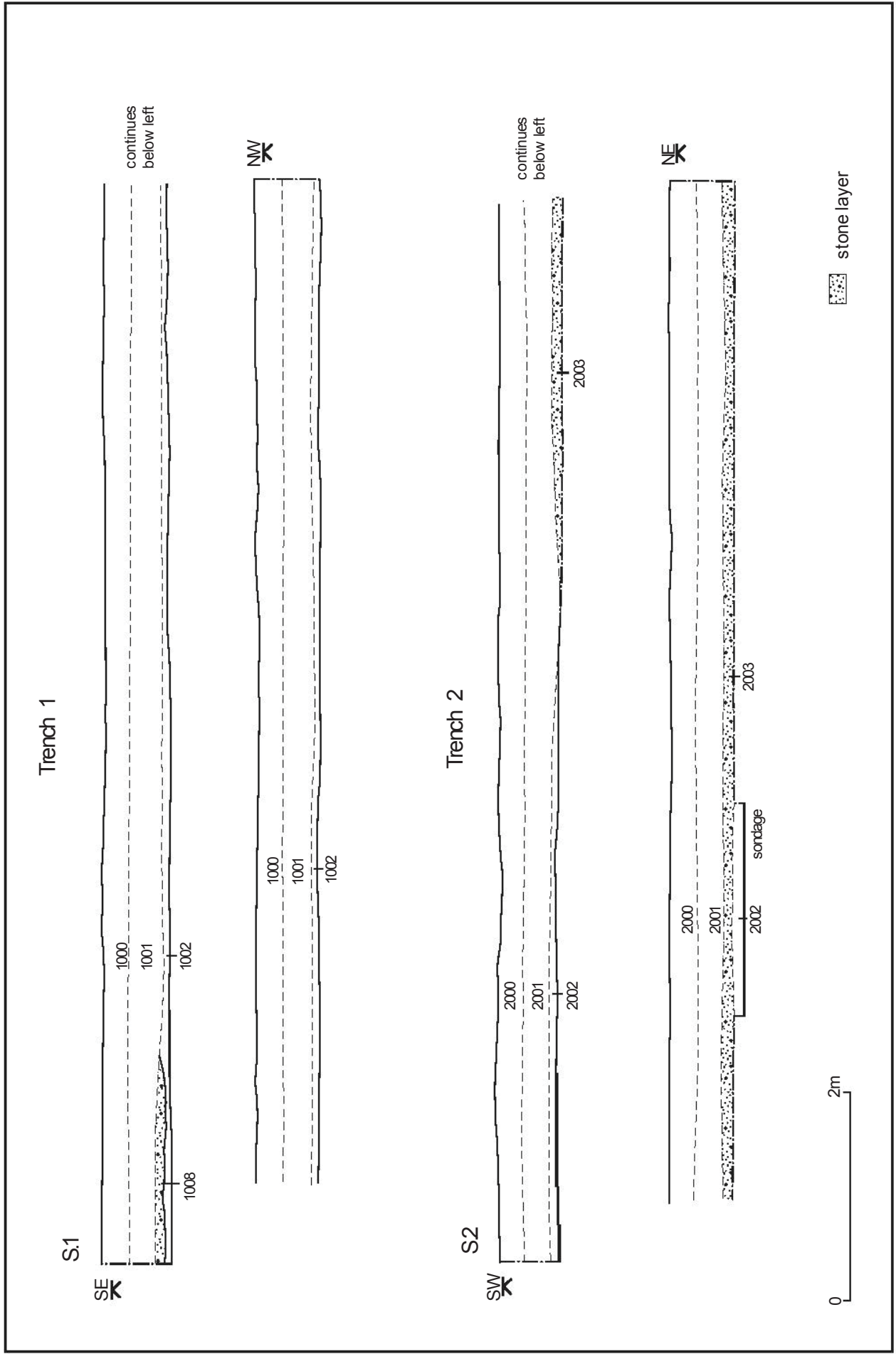


Fig.3

Fig 4



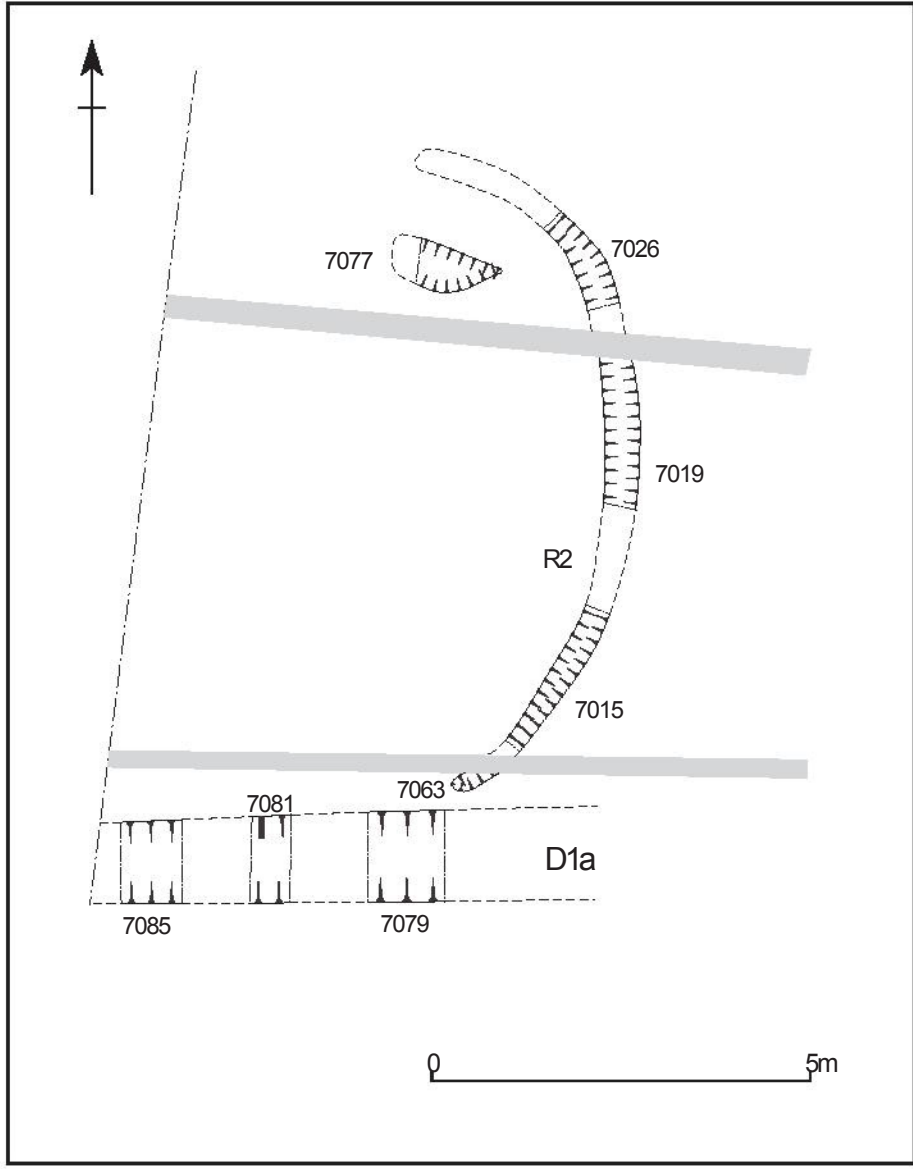


Fig.5

