An archaeological evaluation on land at junction 19 of the M1 motorway, Leicestershire (SP 561 788)

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1. Summary

An archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was undertaken by ULAS for White Green Young and the Highways Agency in March 2004 on land near Junction 19 of the M1 motorway, Leicestershire (SP 561 788). The trenches were positioned to test a putative cropmark within a prehistoric surface scatter. Although some archaeological material was present no archaeological deposits were revealed which corresponded to the cropmark. The archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services under accession code X.A150 2004.

2. Introduction

The trenching evaluation forms part of the archaeological work carried out in advance of alterations to Junction 19 of the M1, where the M1, the M6, and the A14 meet. The area is Site 20 as defined in the Stage 3 archaeological assessment (Priest 2004), and comprises of a possible enclosure cropmark and a surface scatter, predominantly of prehistoric worked flint. A geophysical magnetometry survey failed to locate any anomalies corresponding to the cropmark (Stratascan 2004).

3. Objectives

The objective of the trial trenching was to ascertain whether any significant archaeological remains were present in the area, and if so, to establish their extent, date, quality, character, form and potential.

4 General Methodology

All work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) *Code of Conduct* and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations.*

Trial trenching totalling *c.*188m^2 was undertaken. Trenches 3 and 4 were positioned over the putative cropmark, whilst trenches 1, 2, and 5 provided a sample of the area. The work was carried out in March 2004.

The topsoil was removed in spits by machine using a toothless ditching bucket under full supervision, until archaeological deposits or undisturbed substrata were encountered. A

properly formed subsoil was absent in most of the trenches, which were mostly less than 0.5m in depth over clay substrata.

The location of the trenches was surveyed using a Total Station Electronic Distance Measurer (EDM) linked to a Psion hand held computer. All trenches were recorded on *pro-forma* trench recording sheets and photographed. Any potential archaeological deposits were sampled, photographed and drawn to scale.

5. Geology and topography

The evaluation area slopes down to the north, with a minor slope to the east. It lies in between the A14 and the M1. The underlying geology is indicated as river terrace gravel, although in the event, only clays or sandy clays were revealed in the trenching.

6. Results

Trench 1

Topsoil was a mid grey brown silty clay, over a greenish brown clayish discontinuous subsoil. Significant amounts of modern building debris was present from the surface to the natural sandy clay substrata, and the inconsistent topsoil and subsoil measurements are evidence that the northern edge of the field may well have been disturbed during earlier road construction work. No archaeological finds or features were noted.

Interval from West end All measurements in cms from ground level	1m	5m	10m	15m	20m
Topsoil depth	22	16	48	40	34
Base of subsoil	35	28	n/a	n/a	62
Top of natural	35	28	48	40	62
Base of trench	52	44	64	60	62

Trench 2

Topsoil was a mid grey brown silty clay, over a greyish brown clayish discontinuous subsoil. Natural substrata were yellow sandy clay with pebbles, and yellow blue clay. No archaeological finds or features were noted.

Interval from south end All measurements in cms from ground level	1m	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m
Topsoil depth	32	20	30	22	25	33	27
Base of subsoil	n/a	30	n/a	n/a	37	46	45
Top of natural	32	30	30	22	37	46	45
Base of trench	45	40	44	37	48	54	56

Trench 3

Topsoil was a mid grey brown silty clay, with no discernable subsoil present. Natural substrata were blue, and green/brown clays. A possible archaeological feature was present, a small pit of *c.* 20cm width by *c.* 20cm depth by *c.* 80cm in length. This had several large (≤ 30cms) stones within a sandy clay fill, but no finds. No definite base could be defined for this feature and it is possible that the feature is in fact natural rather than man-made.

Interval from west end All measurements in cms from ground level	1m	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m
Topsoil depth	24	22	30	23	29	32	34
Base of subsoil	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Top of natural	24	22	30	23	29	32	34
Base of trench	33	40	52	38	43	41	42

Trench 4

Topsoil was a mid grey brown silty clay, with a yellowish brown silt clay subsoil where present. Natural substratum was a blue green clay. No archaeological finds or features were noted.

Interval from south end All measurements in cms from ground level	1m	5m	10m	15m	20m
Topsoil depth	30	26	30	33	32
Base of subsoil	36	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Top of natural	36	26	30	33	32
Base of trench	47	40	40	42	36

Trench 5

Topsoil was a mid grey brown silty clay, with a mid brown clay silt subsoil where present. Natural substratum was a blue green clay, with some rounded pebbles. A thin gully of *c.*40cm in width and depth was present crossing the south west end of the trench. This had a clean clayish fill, with very occasional charcoal flecks. No dateable finds were recovered from the fill, but a number of rocks (≤ 30cm) were present in the fill.

Interval from south end All measurements in cms from ground level	1m	5m	10m	15m	20m
Topsoil depth	30	26	30	33	32
Base of subsoil	36	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Top of natural	36	26	30	33	32
Base of trench	47	40	40	42	36

7. Discussion

The north edge of the field shows evidence of recent disturbance, possibly connected with the construction of the present interchange. Further upslope, only trench 5 exhibited a convincing archaeological feature. The potential feature in trench 3 does not correspond with the putative cropmark, nor does it appear substantial enough to cause one. No archaeological deposits were found in trench 4, which was also positioned over the cropmark. Nevertheless, quantities of worked flint were noted on the surface of field. Either the cropmark does not represent an archaeological feature, or it has been ploughed out over the course of recent years.

8. Archive

The archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services under accession code X.A150.2004. It consists of 2 context sheets, 1 context index, 5 trench recording sheets, 1 sheet of scaled drawings, and colour prints and negatives.

9. Acknowledgements

The work was directed by Jon Coward with the assistance of Dave Parker. The project was managed by Patrick Clay. We would like to thank Mr Grindal for his co-operation in enabling access for this work.

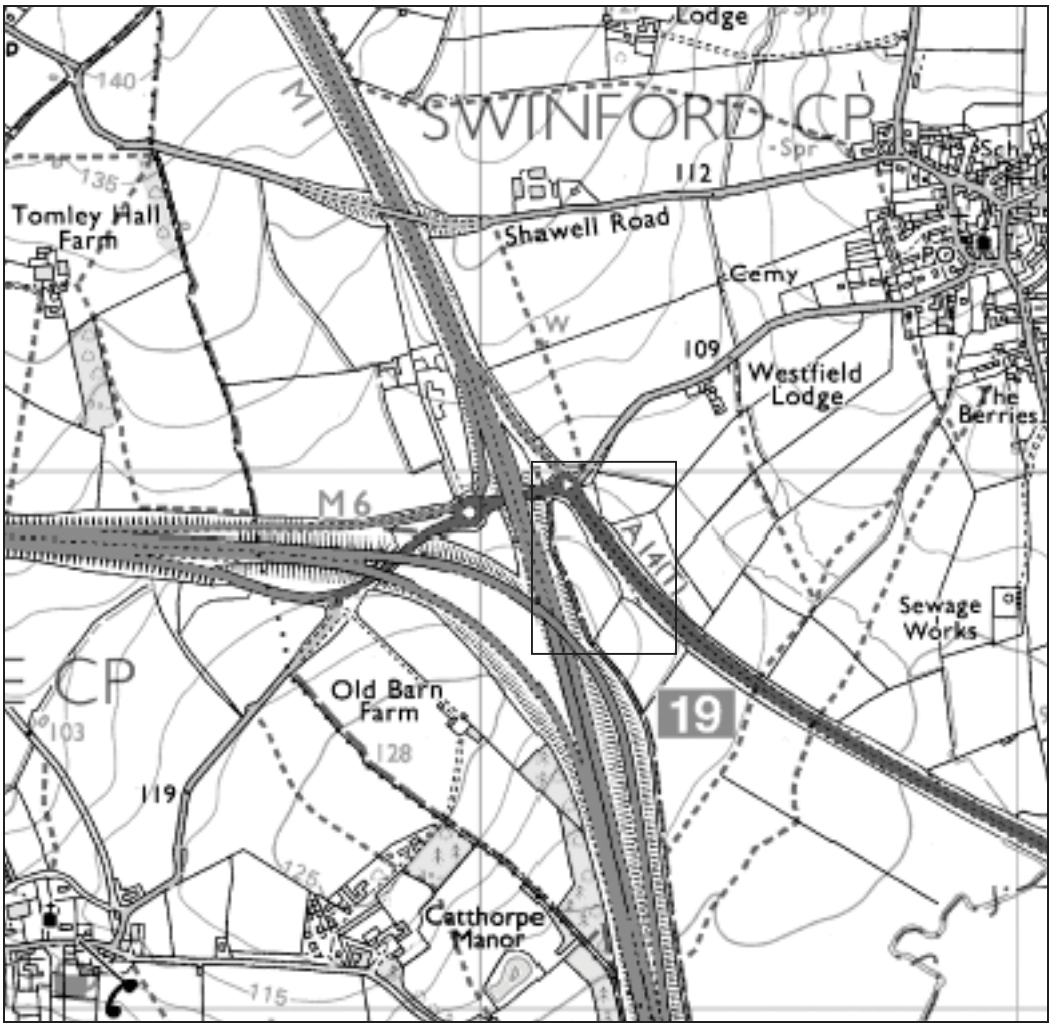

Fig 1. Location of Site.

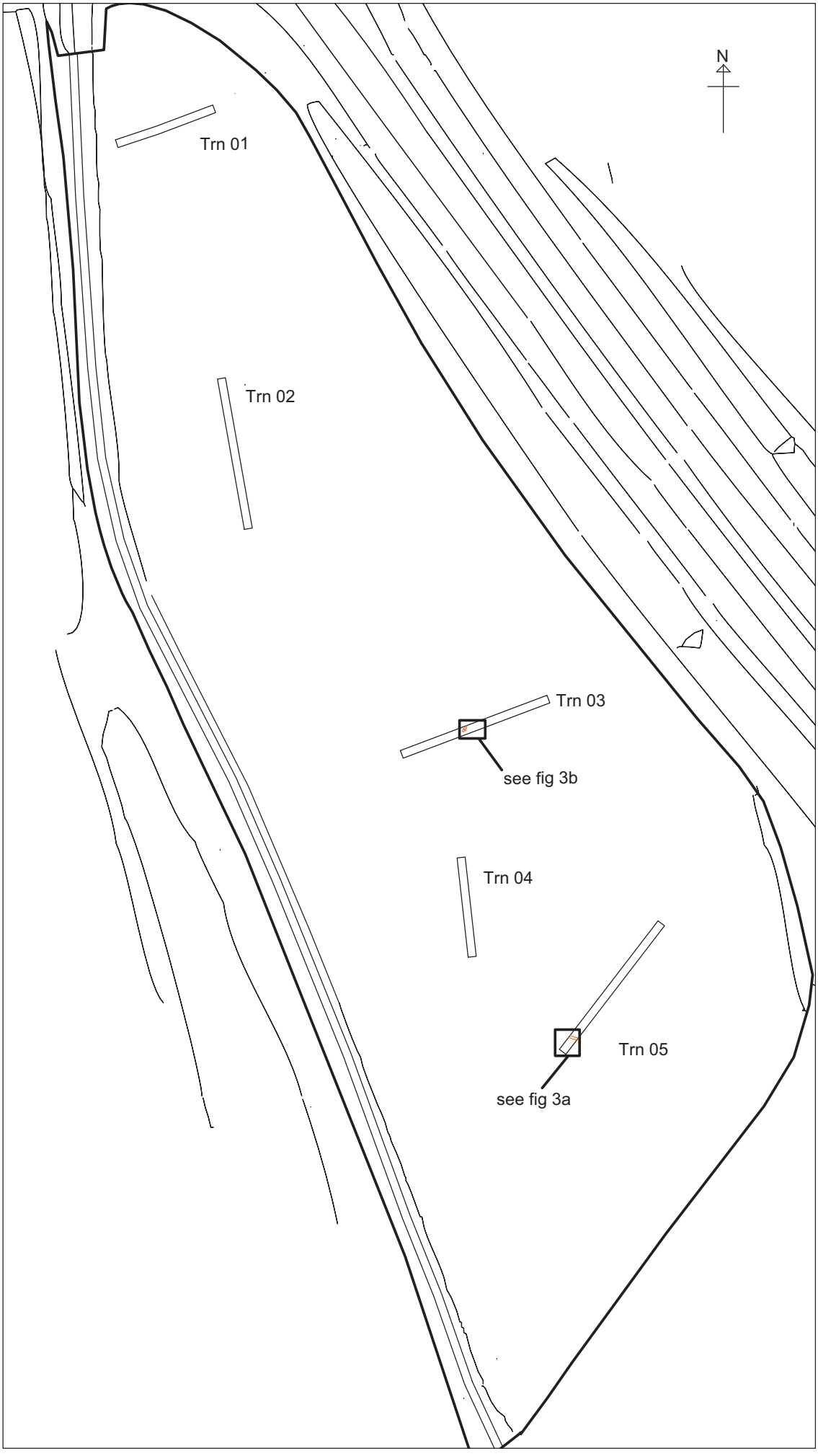

Figure 2 Layout of trenches Scale 1:1000

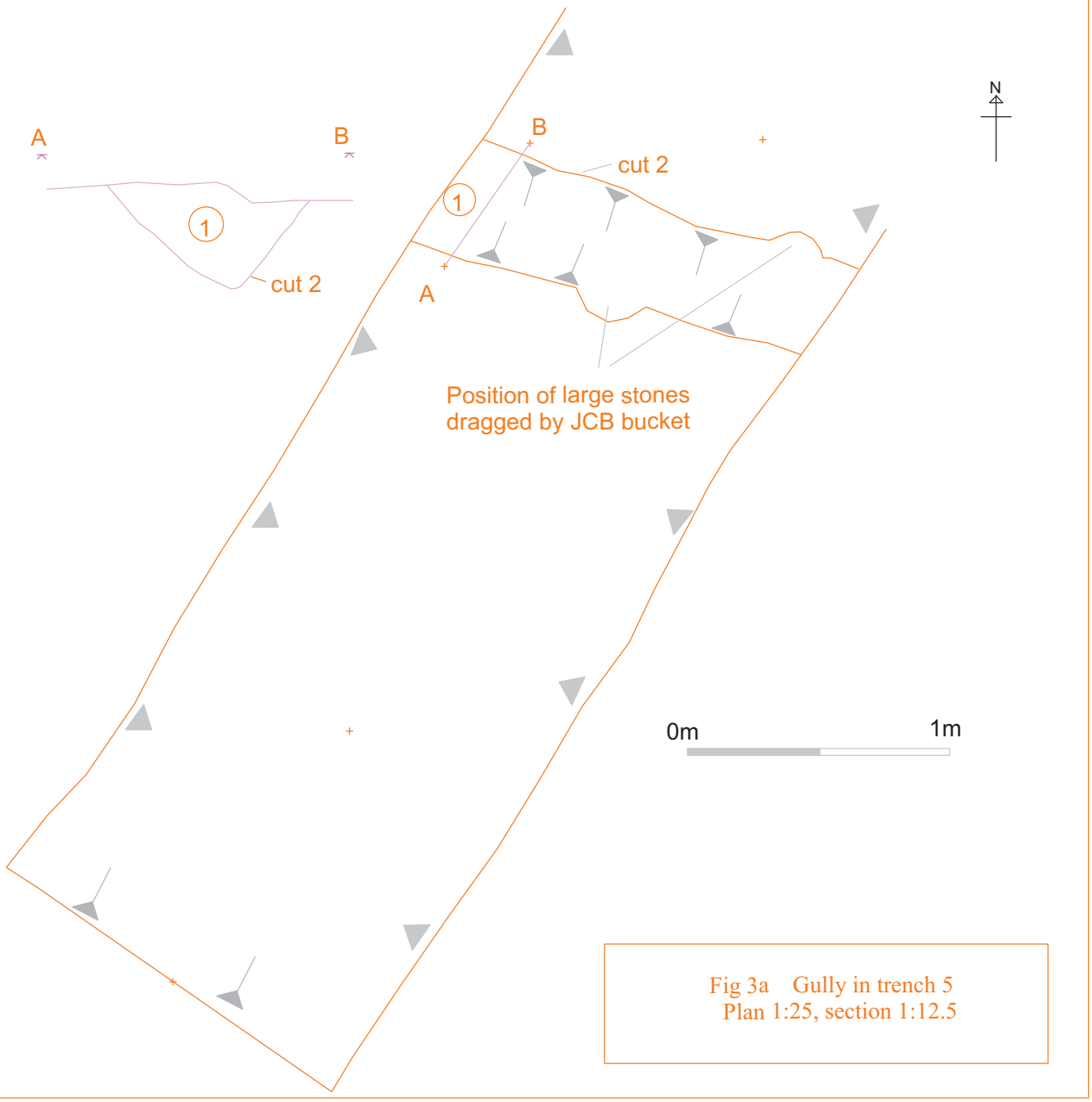

Fig 3a Gully in trench 5
Plan 1:25, section 1:12.5

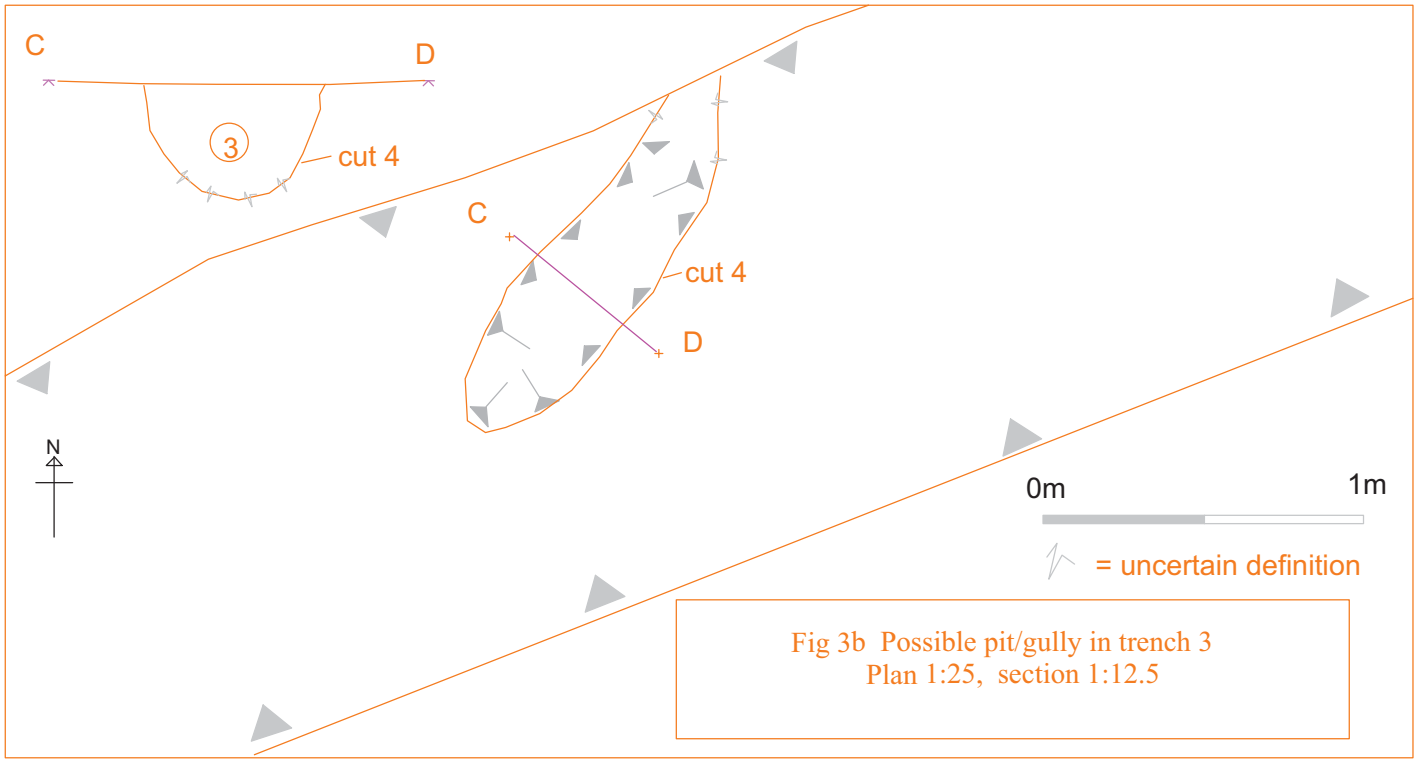

Fig 3b Possible pit/gully in trench 3
Plan 1:25, section 1:12.5