

**An Archaeological Evaluation
of land between
218-224 Bradgate Road,
Anstey, Leicestershire
(SK 5409 0895).**

Gavin Speed

For: Mrs. E. V. Palmer

Checked by Project Manager

Signed:Date:

Name: James Meek.....

University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH

Tel: (0116) 2522848 Fax: (0116) 2522614

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An Archaeological Evaluation of land between 218-224 Bradgate Road, Anstey, Leicestershire (SK 5409 0895)

Gavin Speed

University of Leicester Archaeological Services
Report No. 2003/079

Summary

An archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was undertaken of land between 218 and 224 Bradgate Road, Anstey, Leicestershire (5409 0895) by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on behalf of Mrs. E. V. Palmer, in advance of possible residential development of the site.

The site was occupied by dense vegetation, which caused the site to be largely inaccessible. Two trenches were excavated during the evaluation, totalling 35m in length. An area of undated cobbles was revealed within both trenches. It is unclear if these represent the remains of a trackway or yard surface. The area had been subject to some modern disturbance, an air raid shelter being formerly situated on the site.

No significant finds were recovered from the evaluation. The site archive will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums, Arts and Records Service Accession No. X.A 83. 2003.

1. Introduction

Planning permission has been sought from Charnwood Borough Council by Mrs. E. V. Palmer, in advance of possible residential development of the site (P.A 02/2515/2) at land between 218-224 Bradgate Road, Anstey, Leicestershire (SK 5409 0895).

A desk-based assessment had been previously undertaken by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) for the application (Clarke 2002). This indicated that the site lies close to earthwork remains of a medieval Manorial complex (LE409), and is adjacent to the line of a possible Roman road (LE404). No other archaeological work has been previously undertaken on the site.

An archaeological evaluation of the development area was therefore requested by the Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council, Heritage Services, as advisor to the planning authority. The work followed the *Design Specification for Archaeological Evaluation*, and was undertaken by ULAS between 03 and 04/06/03.

2. Location and Geology

The development area is located on the western edge of the village of Anstey, on the south side of Bradgate Road in the Borough of Charnwood, NGR SK 5409 0895 (see figs. 1 and 2). The development area is c.0.128 hectares (fig. 3) and lies at a height of 100m O.D. The underlying geology comprised of Boulder Clay (BGS Sheet 156).

3. Aims

The aims of the evaluation programme were:

- To establish the nature, character and extent of any archaeological deposits within the area to be affected by the proposed development.
- To establish a date range for any archaeological deposits located.
- To define the state of preservation of these deposits, including the potential for the survival of environmental data and waterlogged materials.
- To assess the local, regional and national importance of any deposits.
- To define an appropriate mitigation strategy if necessary.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

4. Archaeological and Historical Background (taken from the desk based assessment)

Located 0.8km to the northwest of the application area is an oval feature, seen as a cropmark (Leicestershire and Rutland Sites and Monuments Record LE403). No archaeological investigation of this feature has taken place, but its shape suggests the remains of a ring ditch, of possible prehistoric origin. The feature could equally represent a back-filled pond and potentially date to the post-medieval period.

Cropmarks believed to represent the line of a Roman road, thought to run between Leicester and Ratcliffe on Soar, are located 0.3km to the northwest of the application area (LE404, black and white, Hunting Survey Ltd. 1969 Run 17-2006: Leics. CC.). The cropmark appears as two parallel lines, aligned northwest/southeast, that are thought to represent drainage ditches running on either side of the road itself (Lycett 1999). A second set of cropmarks (LF11), located 0.3km to the northeast of the application area, also believed to represent the remains of a Roman road and also aligned northwest/southeast, may or may not represent a continuation of road LE404, and further archaeological work would be necessary to establish this.

Earthwork features (LE409) located 0.3km to the southeast of the application area, are thought to represent the remains of enclosures belonging to the medieval Manor House (Hartley 1989).

No archaeological investigation has previously been undertaken within the application area.

Analysis of cartographic evidence, and in particular the 1762 enclosure map (LRO DG20/MA/3/1), suggests that there were two *foci* of settlement in medieval Anstey.

The earliest focus at Anstey is represented by the tenements lying to the west and the east end of the church in a roughly linear row settlement. However, the green at the western end of Anstey village clearly forms a second focus of settlement.

Hartley (1989, 44) has plotted the ridge and furrow in this area. The results suggest that the whole of Anstey except for the village closes and meadow was probably ploughed at some time in the Middle Ages. It is possible that the application area was subject to ploughing at this time, although this is not evident from the SMR maps.

The 1841 Tithe map of Anstey village (DE20/MA/3/1) includes the application area and shows that, at this time, the land existed as part of an undeveloped, open field, known as First High Leys and owned by the Earl of Stamford.

Analysis of the Ordnance Survey maps for the area show that although the surrounding areas have been altered considerably, in the re-alignment of field boundaries and subsequent residential development, the application area itself has remained undeveloped and appears as an empty house plot between Numbers 218 and 224 Bradgate Road.

5. Methodology

The total site area is 0.128 ha. Trench A measured 1.6m x 17m; trench B measured 1.6m by 18m. The two trenches totalled 45 square metres, representing a 3.5% sample of the proposed development area. Due to the site being overgrown with brambles (and therefore mainly inaccessible), the original trench plan specified within the design specification had to be adapted, with both trenches being positioned side-by-side, running perpendicular to Bradgate Road. Trenches were excavated using a JCB 3CX fitted with a 1.6m toothless ditching bucket.

The levels above Ordnance Datum of all machined layers were recorded and all potentially significant archaeological deposits were investigated.

The work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation (1999)*, and the *Guidelines for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland (LMARS 1997)*.

6. Results

Trench A

Dimensions: 1.7m x 17m
Level at top of trench: 100.3m OD
Level at base of trench: 99.58m OD
Aligned: North-South
Contexts 1, 2, 3, 4.

The topsoil was a 0.15m layer of dark greyish-black loam (1), containing occasional rounded pebbles. There was also evidence of a vast amount of modern debris (bricks etc.) and large concrete slabs. This overlay a friable mid-brownish grey, silty-clay subsoil (2), with a depth of 0.4m. The natural (a yellowish-brown boulder clay) was exposed at a depth of between 0.4m to 0.79m.

A possible cobble surface (3) was revealed 3m from the south end of the trench which consisted of large (c.80mm) rounded pebbles on the base, and smaller (c.10mm) stones on top (OD 99.11m). The cobbles were compact and built into the natural clay, it was 3 metres in width running east-west across the trench, no dating evidence was identified. This was cut by a slate land drain (4). Both features appear to run into trench B. There was also a loose cobble spread at the north end of the trench, it is uncertain whether this is natural feature or indeed a disturbed archaeological feature.

Trench B

Dimensions: 1.7m x 18m
Level at top of trench: 99.58m OD
Level at base of trench: 98.92m OD
Aligned: North-South
Contexts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Trench B also contained a 0.15m layer of dark greyish-black loam topsoil (1), with occasional rounded pebbles. This overlay a friable mid-brownish grey silty-clay subsoil (2) that ran to a depth of 0.4m. Again there was evidence of modern debris throughout the topsoil and subsoil. The natural boulder clay was revealed at a depth of between 0.4m to 0.79m.

There was some evidence of a continuation of the cobble surface (3) from trench A, however, this appears to have been heavily truncated by a land drain (4), and a pit (5) that contained a vast amount of modern (20th century) debris. A loose cobble spread also appears at the north end of the trench, again it is similar to the spread in trench A.

7. Conclusion

The application area lies close to known earthworks of a medieval Manorial complex and cropmarks believed to represent the line of the Leicester – Ratcliffe-on-Soar Roman road (Clarke 2002). Despite this, the evaluation only revealed minimal archaeological evidence.

The cobbled surface revealed in both trenches may represent a trackway or former yard surface. Its composition and character did not suggest a feature associated with the Roman road that lies to the north of the site area, although the lack of any finds means that it remains undated. The cobbled surface was truncated by a slate land drain, which would imply that it is not of modern origin and presumably of post-medieval or earlier date.

No evidence for occupation of the site during the medieval period was revealed, and it remains likely that the site area lies outside of the main foci of medieval occupation.

The site owner stated that a world war two air raid shelter formerly stood within the site boundary. The concrete slabs and brick debris recorded within the topsoil and subsoil is likely to be the demolished remains of this structure, as may the modern pit seen within Trench B.

8. Site Archive

The archive will be deposited with Leicester Museums, Arts and Records Service with the Accession No. *X.A 83.2003*. It consists of trench recording sheets, context sheets, survey data (levels etc), colour transparency slides and monochrome negatives.

9. Publication

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*.

10. Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mrs. E. V. Palmer and Jelson Homes Ltd for their help and cooperation with this evaluation. This archaeological evaluation was carried out by Gavin Speed and Andrew Hyam. The project manager was James Meek.

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Gavin Speed
gs50@leicester.ac.uk

University of Leicester Archaeological Services
University Road, Leicester, LE1 7RH

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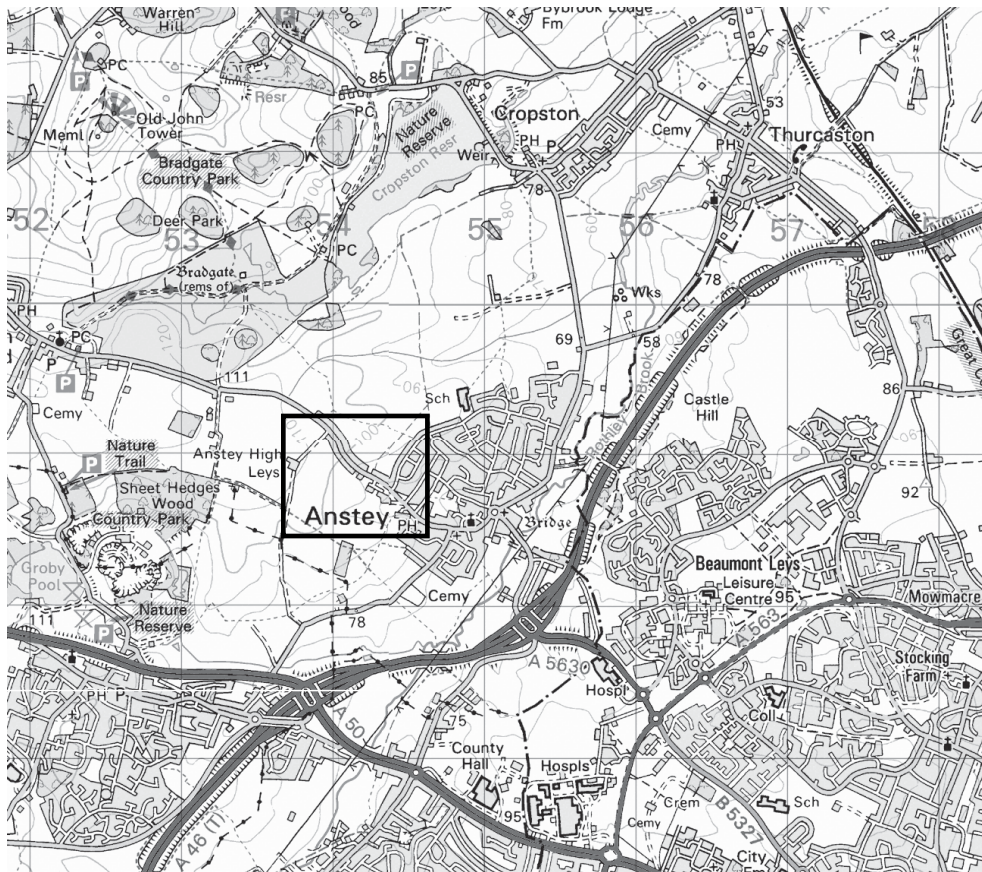


Fig. 1: Site location

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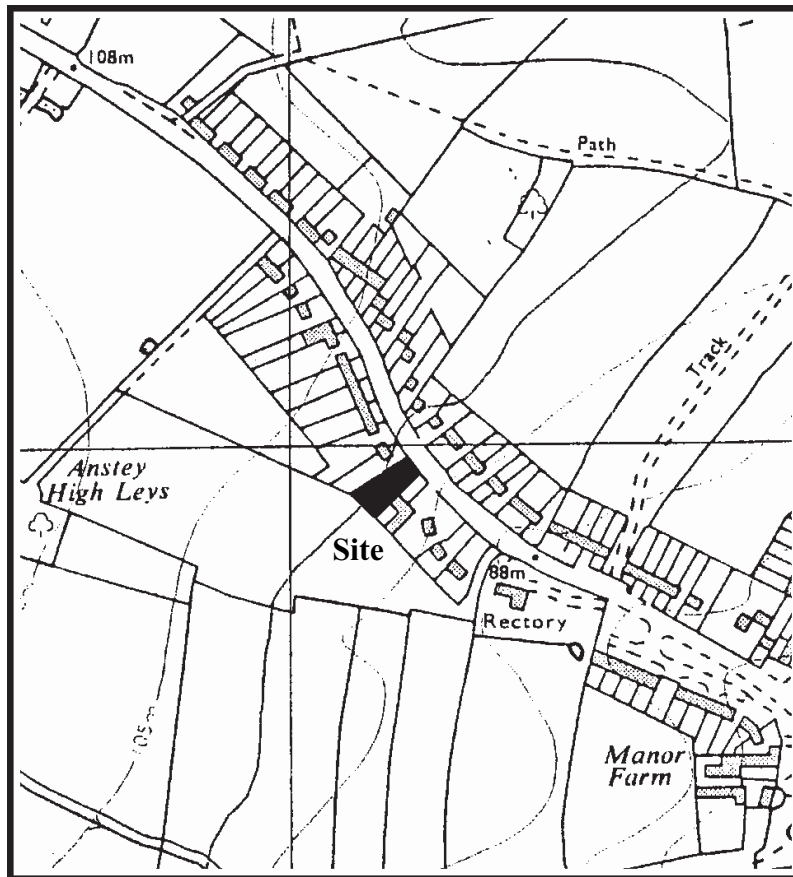


Fig. 2: Area of proposed development showing site area.

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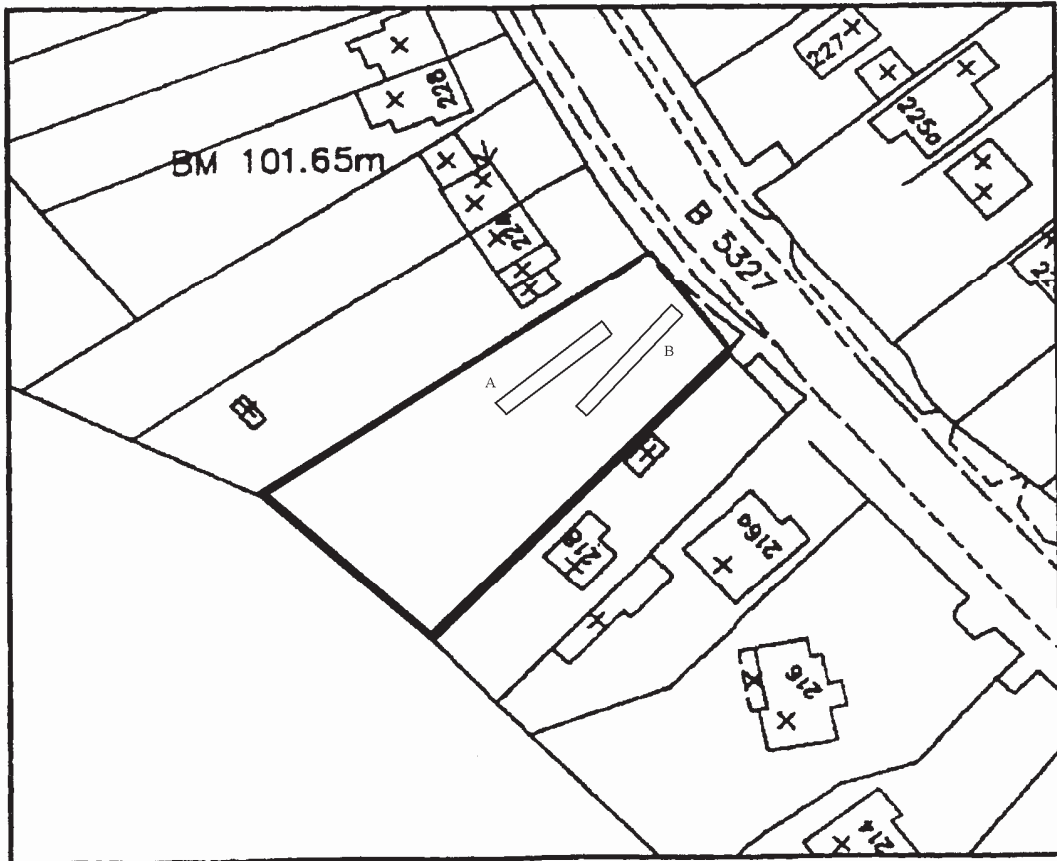


Fig. 3: Trench location plan. 1:1000

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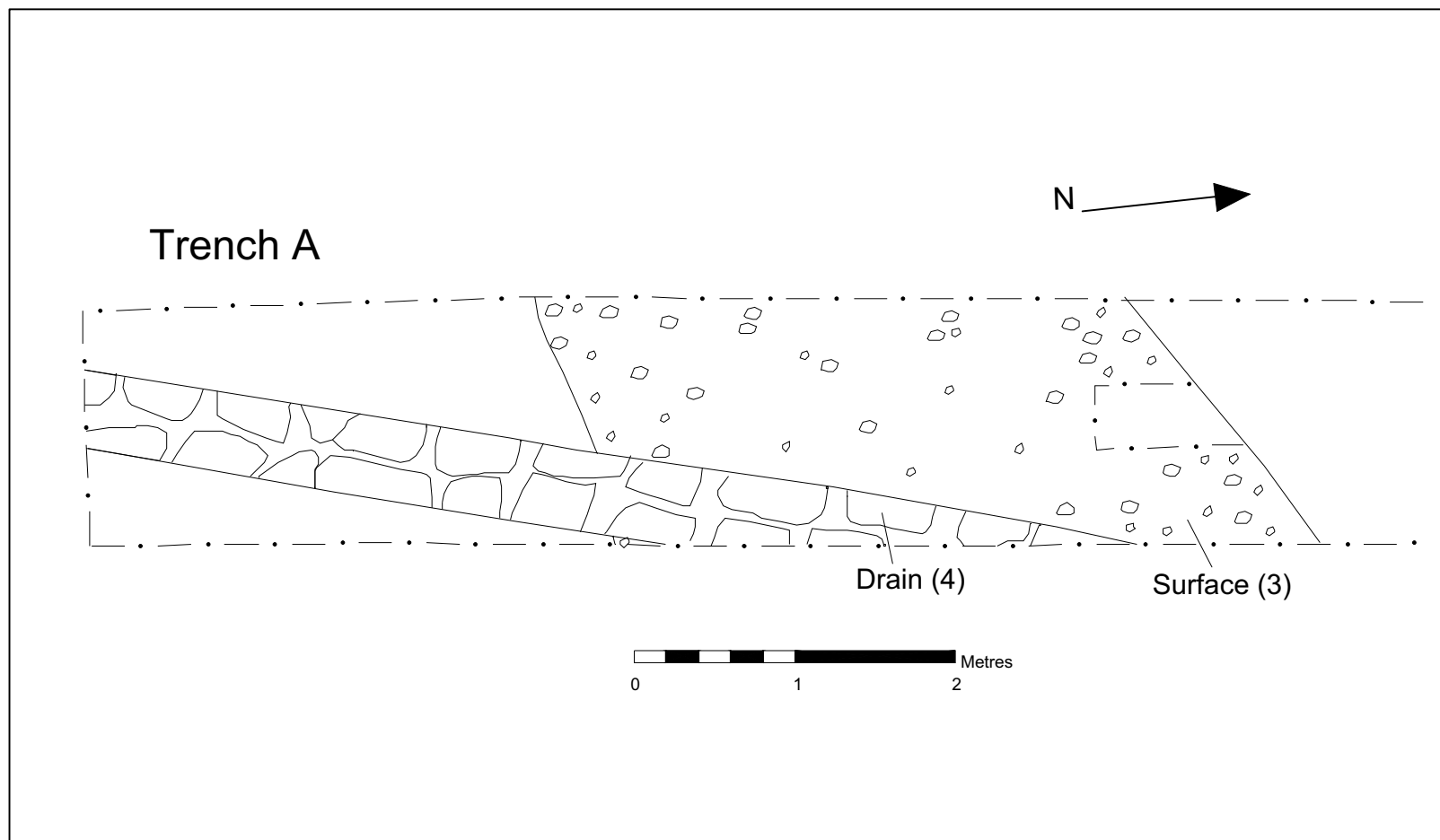


Fig 4: Trench A, showing the cobble surface (3) cut by a land drain (4).

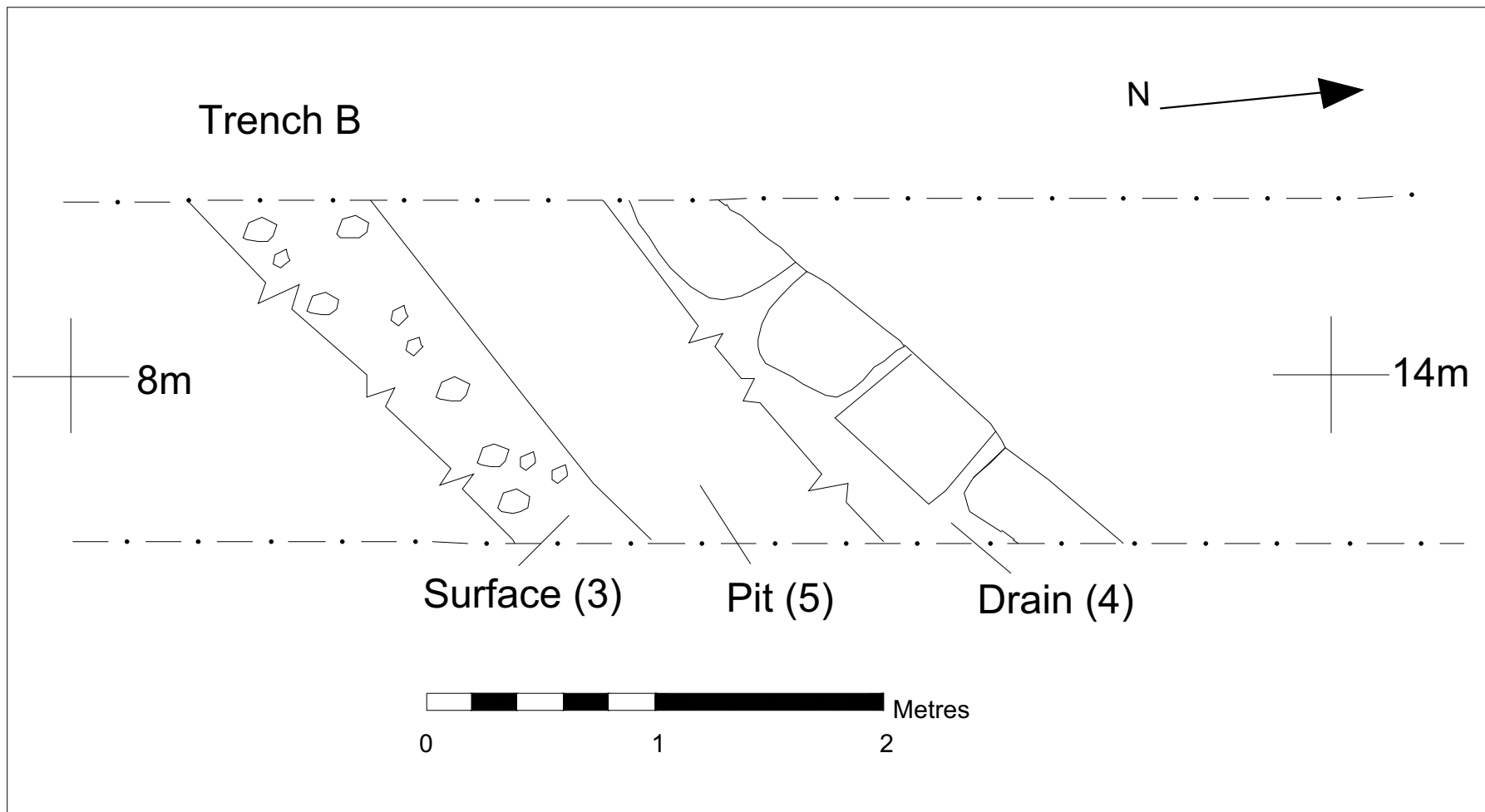


Fig. 5: Trench B, showing surface (3) cut by pit (5) containing modern debris, which also cuts a land drain (4).

