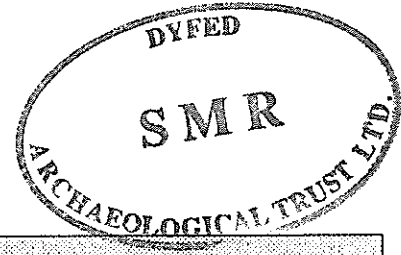


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PRN 25701



**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT
ON THE SITE OF
THE PROPOSED BRANCH LIBRARY AND DAY CENTRE,
LLANDOVERY, DYFED. JANUARY 1991**

31/10/91

CARRIED OUT BY

DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

ON BEHALF OF

ARCHITECT'S DEPARTMENT, DYFED COUNTY COUNCIL

31/01/91

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT ON THE SITE OF THE PROPOSED BRANCH LIBRARY AND DAY CENTRE, LLANDOVERY, DYFED, JANUARY 1991.

INTRODUCTION

The site of the proposed library and day centre lies immediately to the north of the earthwork and stone castle of Llandovery on the site of the old cattle market. To the south of the castle flows the River Bran while to the north along the line of King Street flows the now culverted stream known as the Bawddwr. In the Middle Ages, before it was culverted, the course of this stream lay immediately to the north of the castle. The present topography of the town including the proposed development site is flat, at about a height of 65m OD, a few metres above the height of the floodplain of the River Bran. The castle stands on a rocky eminence.

In the Middle Ages, it is likely that the Bawddwr fed the defensive circuit of the castle on its northern and western sides, so creating a wet ditch or moat. Up to the early 14th century the site of the proposed development seems to have been an open area as it was known as the 'meadow of the Baudour' in 1317. However, later in the same century it had become part of the castle yard and may even have been enclosed by a defensive circuit. The later history of the site is unclear. In the mid-19th century no buildings stood immediately to the north of the castle, and it was not until the early 20th century that the cattle market was built; this was recently demolished and the site levelled and turned into a temporary car park.

In 1975 Soulsby and Jones identified the area to the north of the castle as having archaeological potential and recommended that any development work on the site of the cattle market would require archaeological supervision. The purpose of the assessment excavations was, therefore, to discover what Medieval and later archaeological deposits had survived the building and demolition of the cattle market; to ascertain the nature and character of these deposits; to evaluate the effect of development on the archaeological deposits and to reveal the geology and original topography the site.

THE EXCAVATIONS

Two trenches (Fig. 1) were machine excavated down to a maximum depth of 1.6m below the surface of the car park. After excavation, the sides of the trenches were carefully trowelled down and the resulting sections drawn and described and all finds carefully logged. It was anticipated that Trench 1 would reveal the upper deposits of the castle's defensive ditch at its southern end and at its northern end a possible counterscarp bank associated with this ditch. Trench 2 was planned to provide a general assessment of the archaeological deposits across the centre of the proposed development.

Trench 1 (Figure 2)

This was 19m in length north to south, with its southern end close to the boundary wall of the site adjacent to the castle. After removal of the car park hardcore, a band of deposits (nos. 1-13) was revealed together with a wall (24). None was of any great antiquity; all were probably laid down within the last two centuries at the earliest and most within this century. The mortar floor layers (4, 10 and 12) and the wall (24) were probably part of the 20th century cattle market. The soil layer 5 had developed prior to the construction of the market. This layer lay directly over the natural river gravel deposits 23. At the southern end of the trench a deeper soil deposit (7) had formed in a hollow over the infilled/silted-up defensive ditch of the castle. From the finds in this soil (including a coin of 1805) it would seem to have developed in the late 18th to early 19th centuries.

At the southern end of the trench, below the contexts described above, the deposits were mixed and difficult to interpret. There does appear to have been a defensive ditch to the castle, but its edge was very difficult to locate with any degree of confidence in the excavation trench. Certainly layers 14-18 were fills of this ditch. They had been water deposited under anaerobic conditions. They contained no artefacts. To the north, these ditch deposits merged with series of similar layers (19-22). These latter deposits were more compact and had been deposited in less anaerobic conditions. Within the clay layer 19 three pieces of eroded Roman tile or brick were found. To the north, deposits 19-22 merged with the very compact, highly stratified river gravels of layer 23.

Trench 2 (Figure 3)

The stratigraphy in this trench was very simple: layers of 19th and 20th century date overlaid natural river gravel deposits (4). Layers 2 and 6, mortar floor deposits, were probably associated with the cattle market, as was layer 3. Of note is the very distinct, horizontal interface between the modern layers and the natural river gravels; this suggests that at some point in the past the site had been levelled, possibly when the cattle market was constructed.

SUMMARY

No artefacts of Medieval date were found in the excavations (see tables below), and no features or layers of Medieval date were discovered (apart from the castle's defensive ditch). Indeed, no other man-made deposits earlier than the late 18th century were identified.

It would seem that the whole area of the proposed development had been cleared and levelled prior to the construction of the cattle market; this would account for the absence of pre-18th century finds and deposits. It is possible that prior to this levelling the ground surface was somewhat higher.

The presence of three pieces of eroded Roman brick in naturally deposited clay indicates that river erosion and deposition was occurring adjacent to the north side of the castle in the Roman or post-Roman periods. The brick was probably derived from the Roman fort at Llanfair-ar-bryn.

TABLE 1. REGISTER OF CONTEXTS IN TRENCH 1

1. Rounded stones and pebbles in silty clay matrix.
2. White mortar lumps and angular stones in 'dirty' clay-loam matrix.
3. Compacted, dark grey silty-loam.
4. Broken and crushed band of white mortar.
5. Compacted, black silty loam with trace of 'iron pan' beneath. Finds: sherd white earthenware, blue transfer decoration, late 19th century; sherd red earthenware, red-brown glaze, 18-19th century.
6. Dark brown silty-loam.
7. Dark brown silty-loam with stones and mortar fragments. Finds: coin, dated 1805, George III, poss. Irish halfpenny.
8. Compact gravel and rounded stones in a silty-loam matrix. Finds: 2 sherds buff stoneware with dark brown external glaze, buff internal glaze, 19th century.
9. Angular stones in compact dark brown silty-loam matrix - probably filling pit dug against wall 24.
10. Layer of crushed white mortar.
11. Black silty-loam with charcoal and stones.
12. Black soil containing white mortar lumps. Finds: White stoneware, white glaze, late 19th - early 20th century.
13. Very dark brown loamy-silt.
14. Rounded stones and gravel in a dark grey silty-loam matrix.
15. Mid-brown coarse sand - iron stained.
16. Rounded stones and gravel in a dark grey silty-loam matrix.
17. Dark grey clay.
18. Dark grey-brown clay - similar to 17 but containing some organic deposits and fragments of charcoal.
19. Clay, upper horizon gleyed dark grey, lower gleyed but dark grey brown and containing organic remains and flecks of charcoal. Finds: 3 eroded pieces of red tile or brick, probably Roman.
20. Dark grey coarse sand with large rounded stones.
21. Mid-brown silty sand.
22. Extensive deposit of banded sands, gravels and rounded stones, generally mid-grey brown in colour.
23. Extensive deposit of banded sands, gravels and rounded stones, generally mid-brown in colour. Similar to 22 but more compact and 'cleaner'.
24. Stone wall bonded with white mortar.
25. Small rubble-filled pit.

TABLE 2. REGISTER OF CONTEXTS IN TRENCH 2

1. Broken stone, brick and mortar in a 'dirty' clay matrix.
2. Layer of crushed and broken white mortar - same as layer 4 in Trench 1. Finds: Grey stoneware, grey glaze, late 19 - early 20th century.
3. Dark loamy soil with some stones and mortar. Finds: basal sherd of red fabric, internal glaze mottled green-brown; white earthenware, white glaze with blue transfer pattern, late 19th century; grey stoneware jar with buff external glaze, late 19th -early 20th century; red-orange basal sherd with mica inclusions, poss. from Merida, S. Spain, 16th - 17th century.
4. Extensive deposit of banded sands, gravels and rounded stones - the same layer as 23 in Trench 1.
5. Gravel and rounded stones with some mortar specks. Finds: reddish, gravel tempered earthenware with yellow internal glaze, poss. from N. Devon, 17th - 18th

century; short length of a clay pipe stem.

6. Layer of crushed white mortar.

Unstratified finds from Trench 2: heavy rim sherd, red-brown gravel tempered earthenware, internal green glaze, N. Devon, 18th - 19th century; handle, red-brown gravel tempered earthenware, streak of green-brown glaze, N. Devon, 17th - 18th century; red earthenware, black glaze, 17th - 18th century.

The site archive, drawings, photographs, etc, has been deposited with the Dyfed Archaeological Trust's Sites and Monuments Record. The artefacts have been lodged with Carmarthen Museum.

SOURCES CONSULTED

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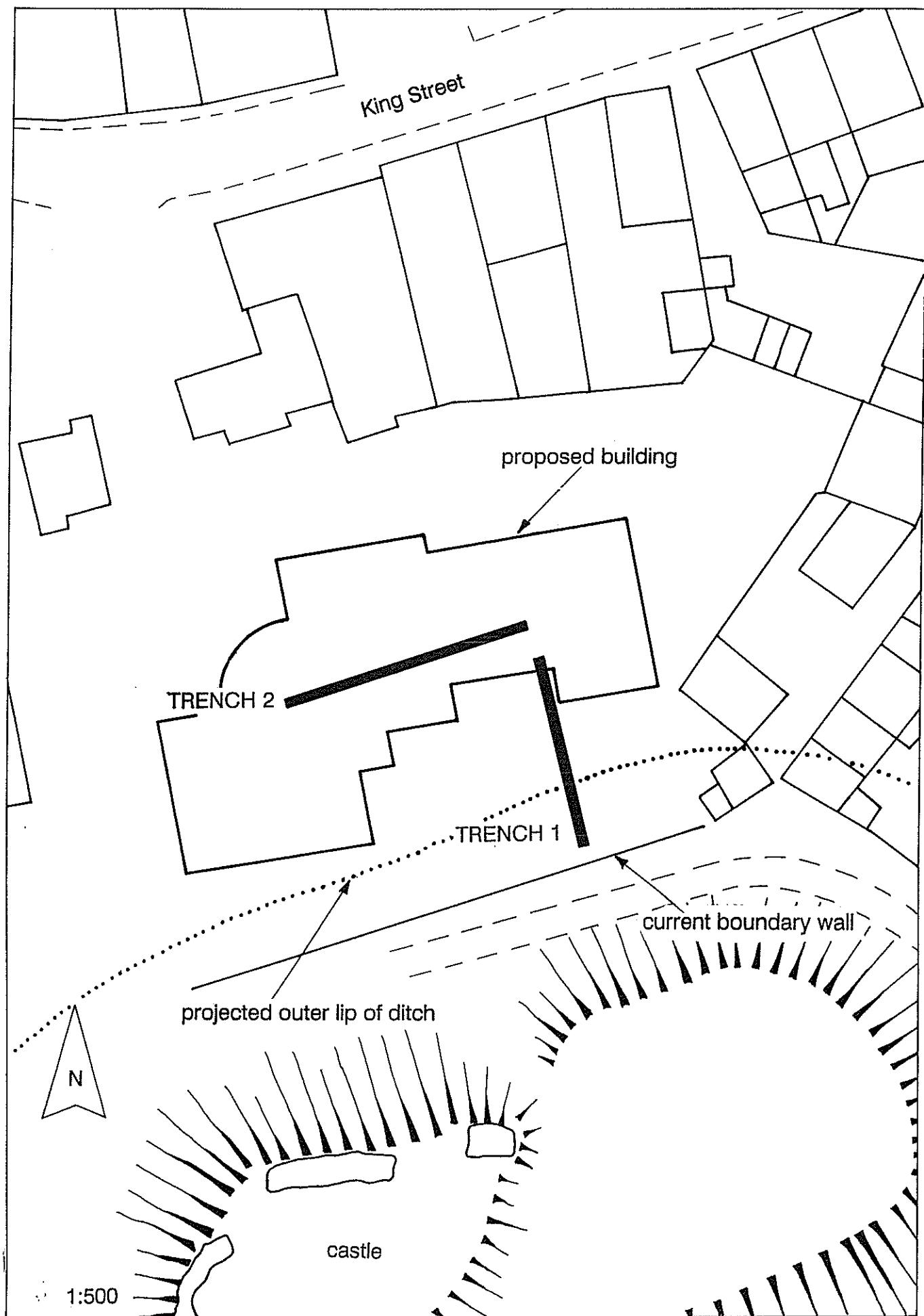


Figure 1

TRENCH 1 - SECTION

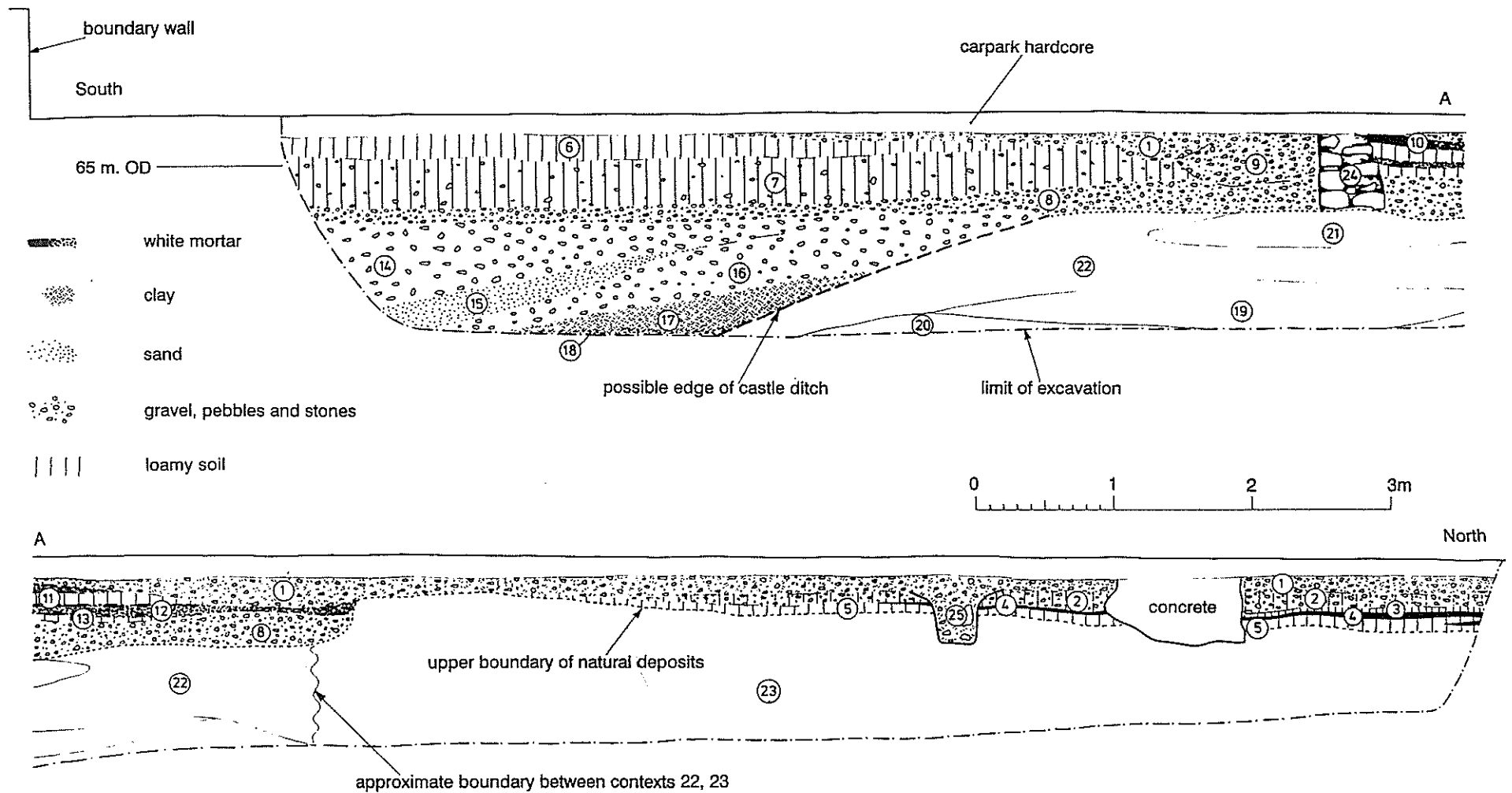
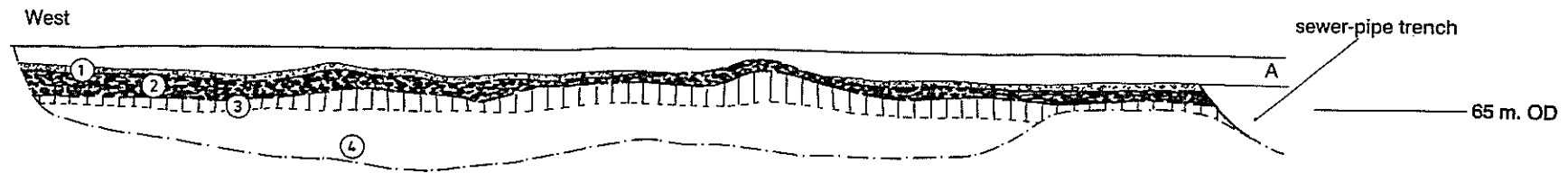


Figure 2



TRENCH 2 - SECTION

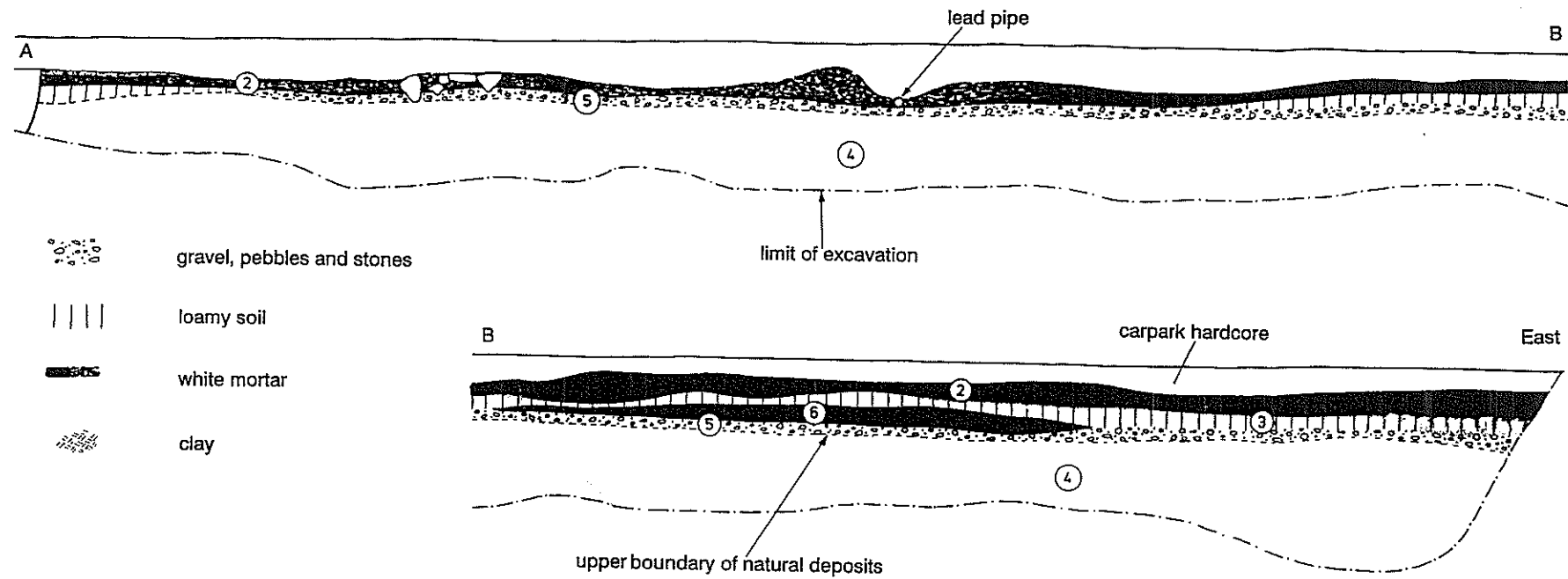


Figure 3