

# Archaeological Assessment at the site of former Outdoor Activities Centre, Beaumaris.

## Introduction

The Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was contracted to do an archaeological assessment by Gwynedd County Council on the site of the former Outdoor Activities Centre, Beaumaris (NGR SH 605 762), in advance of a proposed WDA Land Reclamation Scheme.

The site occupies an area at the northern limit of the medieval town of Beaumaris, close to the north-west corner of the castle. The postulated (RCAHM(W)) line of the fifteenth century town wall runs from west to east across the area to be developed, but excavations in 1985, immediately to the west, identified a substantial ditch running some 15-20 metres to the north of this line.

## Brief

The wall (or bank) and ditch of the town defences might be expected to turn somewhere between the 1985 excavations and the castle. The assessment aimed to identify the defences if they crossed the area of the development and the extent and nature of other archaeological deposits.

The majority of the Outdoor Activities Centre lies within the limits of the Medieval town. No structures are recorded in this area of Speed's 1610 map but this does not preclude the possibility of earlier structures. In particular it was possible that structures ancillary to those fronting Rating Row, within medieval burgrave plots, might be identified within the redevelopment area. The assessment aimed to identify these features.

Two trenches, both 2 metres wide, were excavated. Overburden was removed by machine and deposits cleaned by hand to allow identification and initial interpretation of features. All features along the trenches were planned, with limited excavation of archaeological features.

## Excavation

A machine dug trench (Trench A) was cut diagonally NNW-SSE across the larger axis of the site. The trench was approximately 41m in length and 2m in width, with a maximum depth of 0.7-0.8m. Machine excavation was discontinued in this trench with the appearance of a red-orange clay 103 which appeared to have features (001, 002, 003, etc.) cut into and through it. This was a natural deposit.

Hand clearance of the bottom of Trench A followed, to clarify the stratigraphy and potential archaeological features which had been revealed. Extensive archaeological remains were found in the trench and were then photographed and planned.

Trench A was extended to the edge of the site to the N, and Trench B was opened up a short distance to the NE of Trench A. Both trenches were taken down about 1m below the top of the 'natural' (103) as defined in Trench A. The material proved to be a silty clay mix with a reddish colour (Red Northern Drift) similar to 103. No further recording other than photographs of the trenches as dug was done.

## Results

No archaeological features were recorded in Trench B and thus the results apply to Trench A only.

Examination of the E section of trench A revealed a stratigraphic sequence of 4 or 5 principal deposits.

100 - Building rubble from demolition of Outdoor Pursuit Centre

101 - A compacted grey/dark brown silty topsoil.

104 - A narrow strip of clean red/orange redeposited clay, mainly under 101

102 & 107 - A grey/brown silty clay containing shells, coal, etc. 107 represents a thin compacted more "humic" layer at top of 102 directly below 104.

103 - A mixed red, orange natural, undisturbed clay.

Three features or groups of features cut into natural 103 were then further examined.

**Ditch 010** ran obliquely across the width of the trench. The south limit was lost due to disturbance by a foundation wall and trench for the Outdoor Pursuit Centre (011). On excavation it proved to be 0.70-0.80m deep and had a maximum width of 2.0-2.2m. It contained two fills, the uppermost 018 may possibly be the same as 102, and contained several pieces of bone and modern pottery. The lower, 019, a fine sticky grey silty clay contained only one large piece of Bulkeley ware.

**Ditch 106** at the south end of the trench was a small linear ditch or slot running east-west across the trench. On excavation it had a maximum depth of 0.40-0.45m and a maximum width of 0.70-0.75m. Its fill was a smooth light brown silty-soil, irregularly flecked with charcoal and containing bone and pottery.

**Features 006, 007, 008 and 009** were a group of inter-related features at the north end of Trench A. The most modern feature was 009, a modern wall and foundation trench of the Outdoor Pursuit Centre. This cut 008, a shallow east-west linear feature, which was probably the bottom of a more substantial feature, possibly a drain, destroyed by the building of the Outdoor Pursuit Centre. It contained one piece of modern pottery. Feature 006, a narrow curvilinear feature running roughly north before turning west. It was extremely shallow and cut into the oldest of the four features 007. Its nature or purpose was uncertain and no dating evidence was found. The larger of the features 007 proved to be semi-circular in shape, and although only partially exposed, had a maximum width of 0.90m and length of 5.0m, and up to 0.60m deep. It can be suggested that this was a pit of some sort, although no dating evidence was found from this feature.

## Conclusion

Although very disturbed by the foundation walls and trenches for the Outdoor Pursuit Centre, the following may be deduced from Trench A. The east section (west facing) of Trench A contains layers associated with the Outdoor Pursuit Centre, e.g. 100, 101, 104, foundation trenches, wall foundations, drain and service channels, etc. Context 104 would seem to be a thin layer of redeposited natural clay probably connected to the construction of the Outdoor Pursuit Centre. However, 102 probably equates with the pre-building deposits, containing oyster shell fragments, charcoal, etc. 107 may possibly represent the original ground surface from before the erection of the Outdoor Pursuit Centre.

Ditch 010 contained post-medieval pottery (residual) yet has characteristics similar to a medieval ditch excavated on the nearby Osborne House site.

Feature 106 has medieval pottery sherds from its fill and it may be suggested that this feature was a boundary marker connected to the medieval burgrave plots behind Rating Row.

Several other circular and linear features were recorded in the trench and are characteristic of rubbish pits and boundary markers which may be connected with the use of the medieval burgrave plots.

## Recommendations

In light of the discovery of pits and ditches of medieval type it is recommended that should further development occur on the site of the former Outdoor Pursuit Centre, Beaumaris, then further archaeological investigation is needed and appropriate resources should be made available.

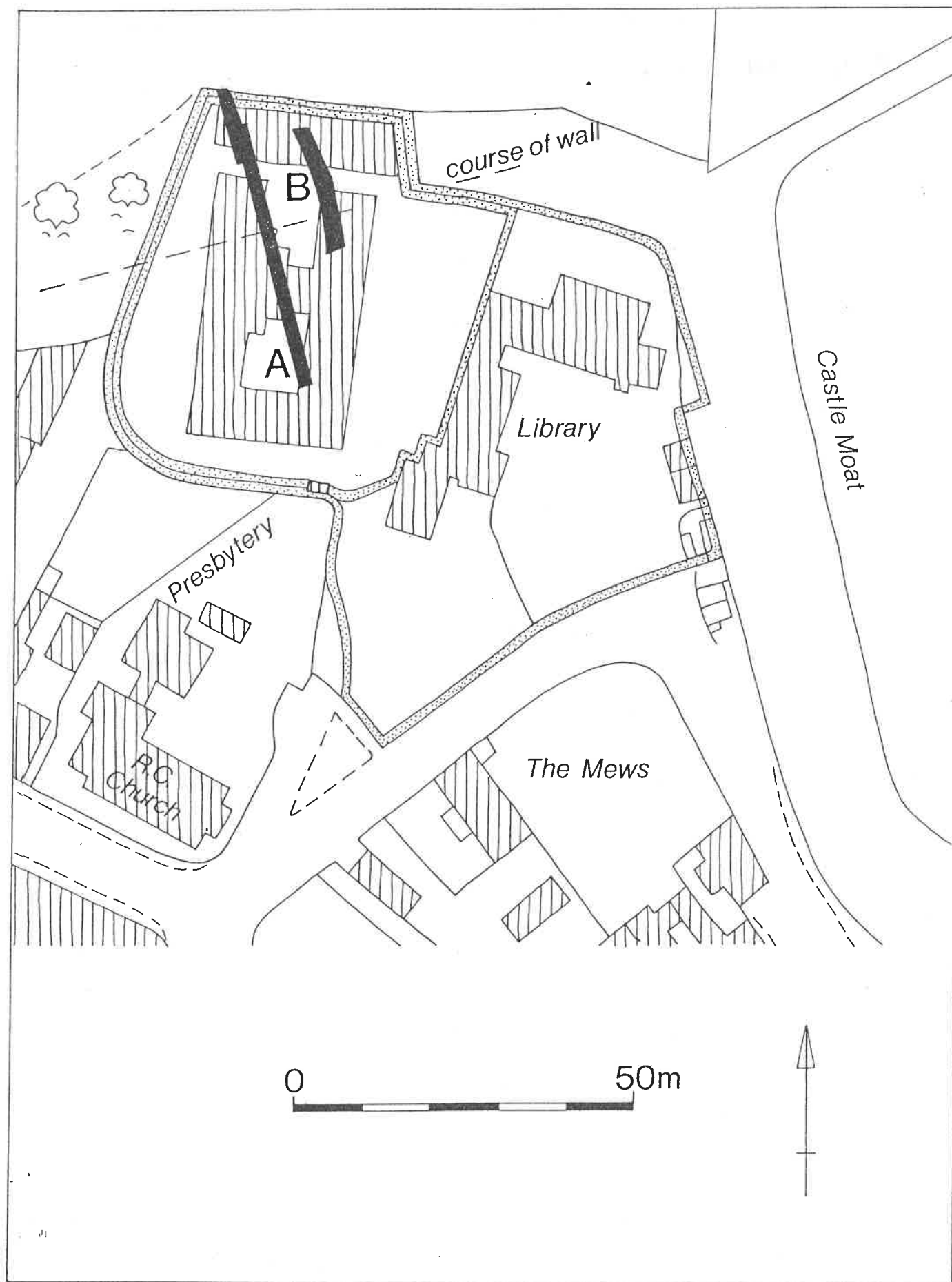


Fig. 1 Location map showing site and assessment trenches A and B

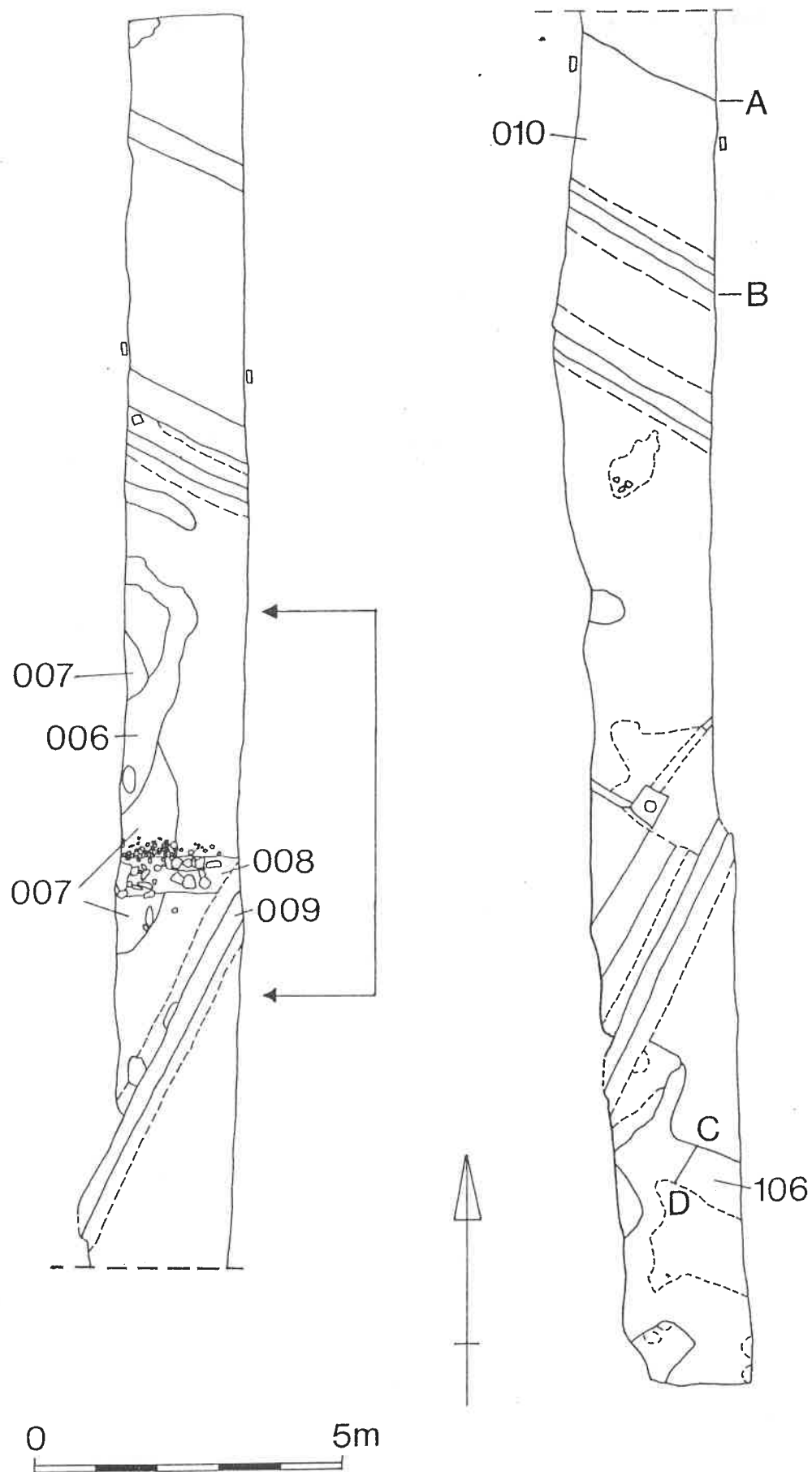


Fig. 2 Plan of main features in Trench A

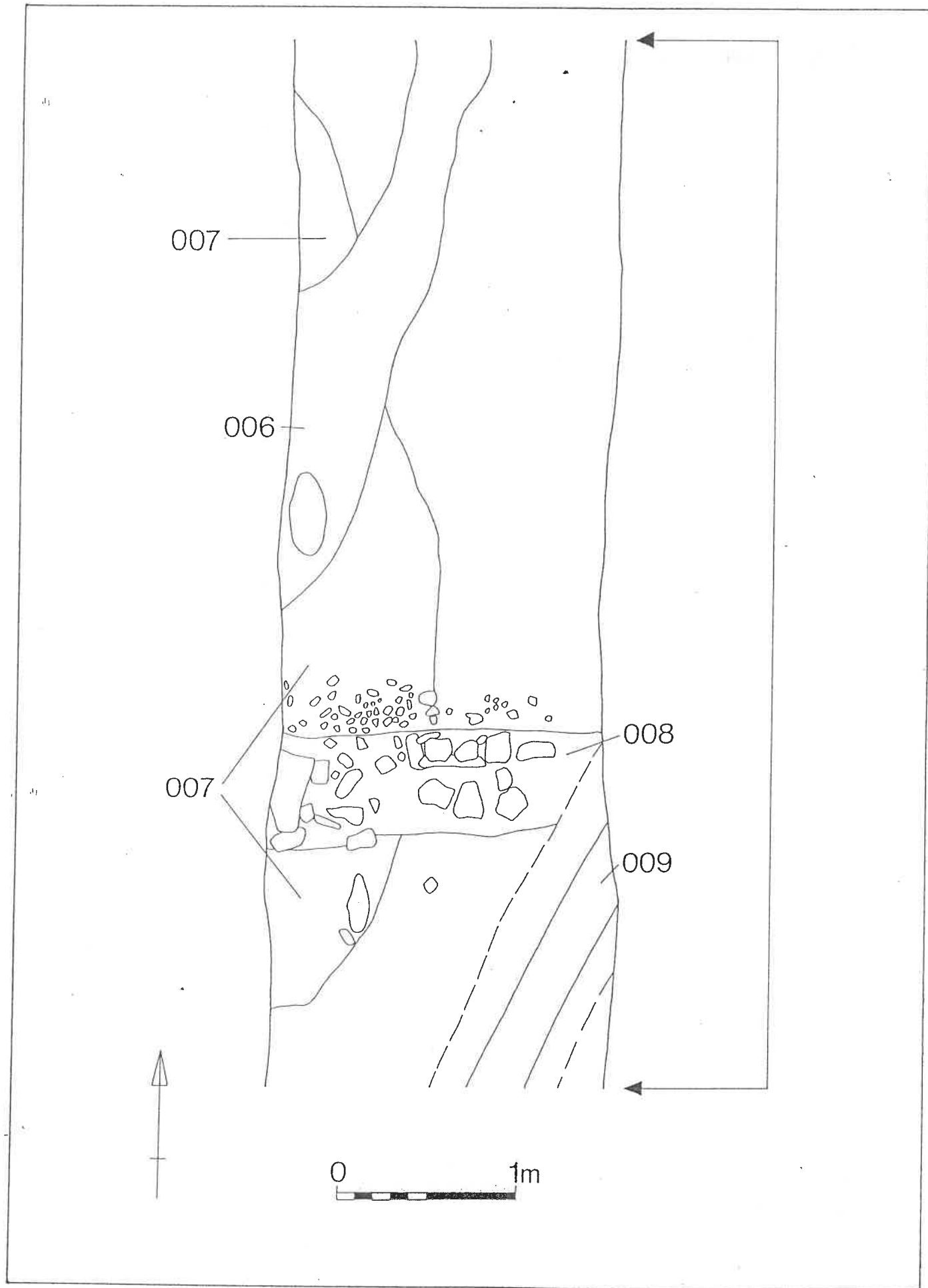
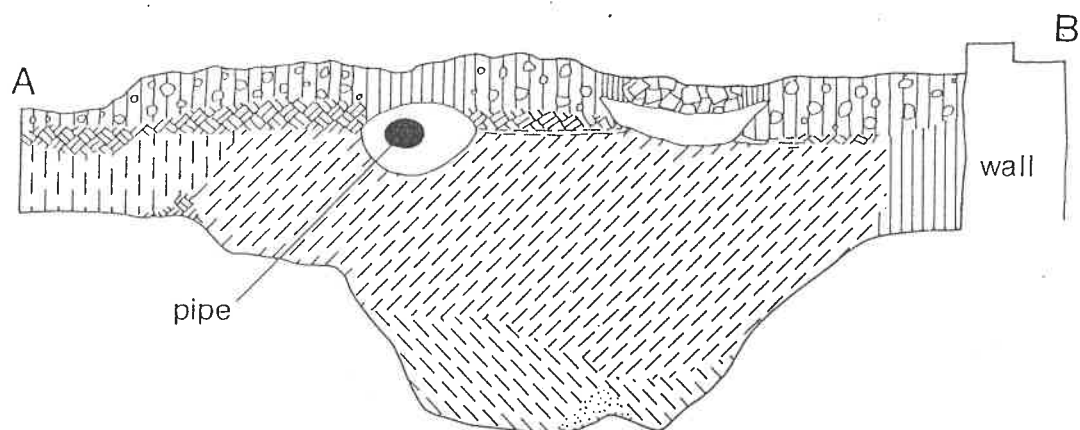
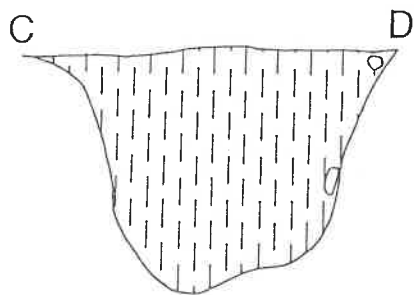


Fig. 3 Plan of part of Trench A showing features 006, 007, 008 and 009



0 1m



0 50cm

Fig. 4 Top - Section A-B Ditch 010  
Bottom - Section C-D Ditch 106