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**REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT
SAFLE'R PRIORDY, LLANDDERFEL.**



Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Ltd

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd Cyf

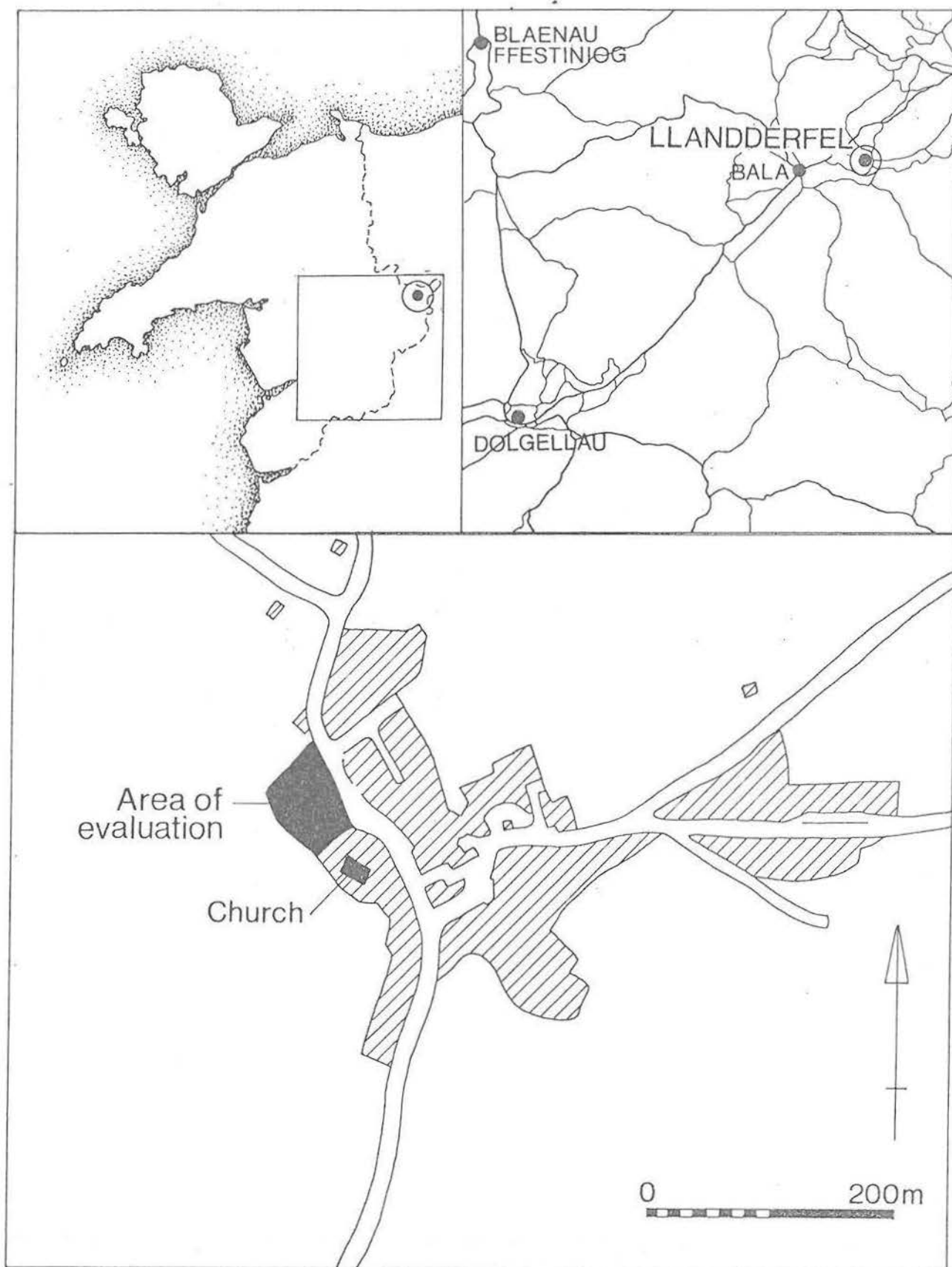


Fig. 1. Location map.

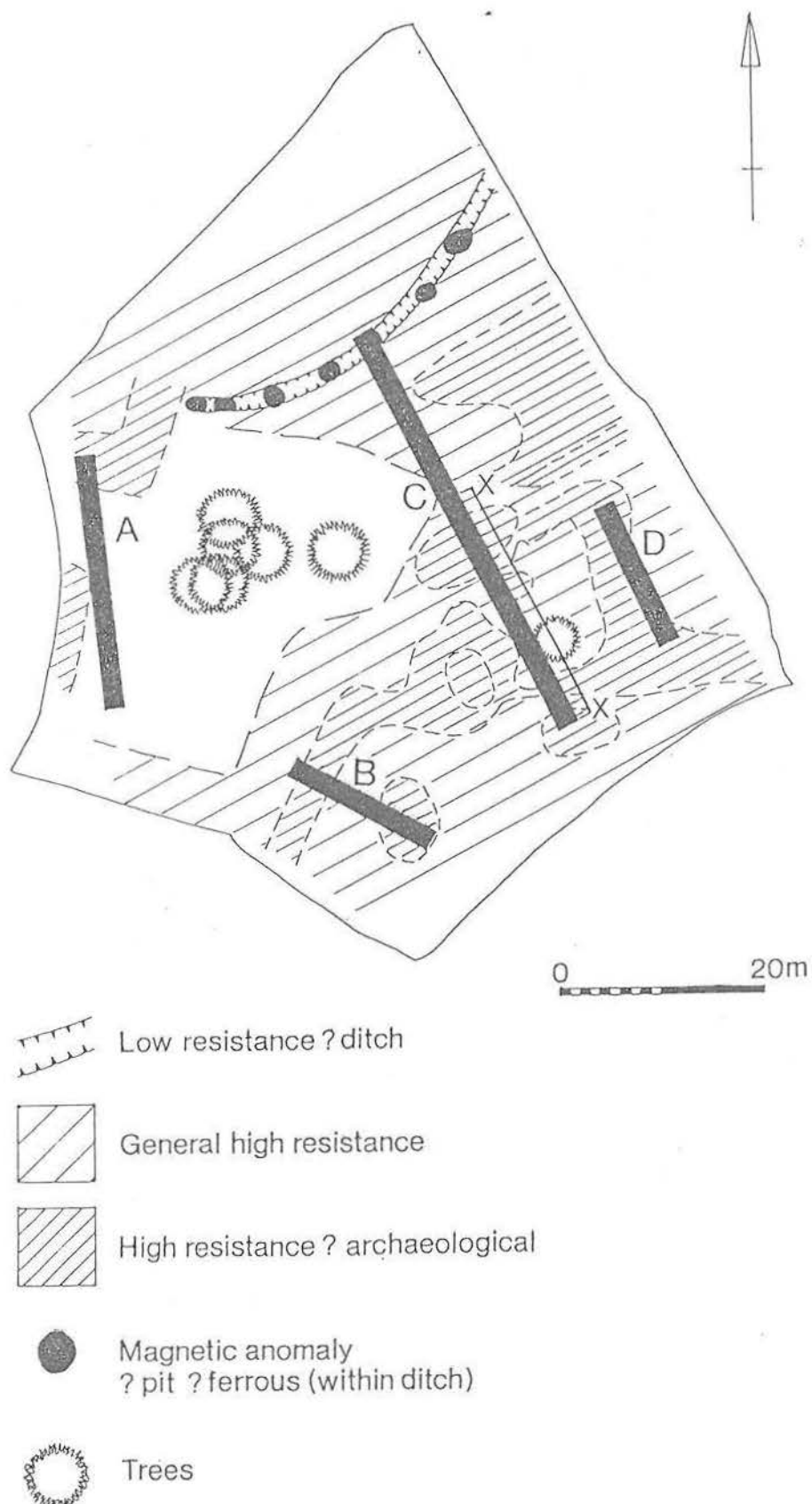


Fig. 2. Location of trenches and results of geophysical survey.

INTRODUCTION.

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust undertook an archaeological evaluation at Safle'r Priordy, Llandderfel (Fig. 1) in response to a planning application to the Snowdonia National Park Authority (5/63/129) by Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd for the erection of housing on the site. The funding for the evaluation was provided by CADW in line with the recommendations of P.P.G. 16 paragraph 25.

BRIEF.

The brief as drawn up by the Gwynedd Sites and Monuments Record was as follows:

A. EXISTING DATA.

An examination of existing archive material such as S.M.R. information, tithe and estate maps and papers, Ordnance Survey maps and published archaeological and historical articles.

B. GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY.

An investigation using non-destructive prospecting methods was proposed using resistivity and magnetometer surveys to help establish the nature and extent of any archaeological features.

C. TRIAL TRENCHING.

A programme of trial trenching, by machine, to determine the depth, survival and extent of archaeological deposits. It was proposed to cover between 2% (90m sq) and 5% (215m sq) of the threatened area. The location of the trenches to be determined by the results of the geophysical survey.

PROCEDURES AND METHODS.

A. EXISTING DATA AND DOCUMENTARY RECORDS.

Consultation was made of the G.A.T. Sites and Monuments Record, Ordnance Survey maps, local parish records and published archaeological and historical articles.

B. GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY.

Geophysical Surveys, Bradford were contracted in January 1991 to undertake the survey of Safle'r Priordy, Llandderfel using a magnetometer (Geoscan FM36 with ST1 automatic trigger) and a resistance meter (Geoscan RM4 with DL10 datalogger) to ascertain the location and extent of any buried remains.

C. TRIAL TRENCHING.

Four trial trenches were excavated by machine to assess the depth, survival and extent of any archaeological deposits within the threatened area. The trenches, which were cleaned by hand, represented 4.5% (200m sq) of the area of development.

Trench A was located along the west side of the area in order to investigate a structure shown on an early Ordnance Survey map and an area of high resistance revealed by the geophysical survey (fig. 2).

Trench B was located across a raised area, at the south of the site, which was shown as an area of high resistance by the geophysical survey (fig. 2).

Trench C was located across the site to investigate an area of low resistance with associated

magnetic anomalies to the north, possibly representing a ditch and pit feature. the remains of the cottage known to have stood in the area from the 1860's and further areas of high resistance.

Trench D was located to investigate areas of high resistance to the east of trench C.

RESULTS.

A. EXISTING DATA: DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH.

There is a tradition of a priory, belonging to the Dominican Friars, situated at Ty-Cerrig, some 50 yards north-west by west of Llandderfel church. However Llandderfel is not mentioned as one of the five Welsh Dominican houses, which are located in important medieval towns. It is probable that the site has been either wrongly assigned or that the name refers to the ownership of the field rather than to the existence of a religious house there. Ty-Cerrig, or stone house, was said to have been converted into a barn after the dissolution but was in such a condition that it was demolished by the 1850's to be replaced by a cottage. When Ty Cerrig was demolished there were reports of pipes being found between the Ty Cerrig and Fynnon Derfel to the north-west which conducted water to a large reservoir. *Priordy* is marked to the north-west of the church in early editions of the Ordnance Survey maps.

B. GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY.

Magnetic survey. (fig. 2).

Much of the magnetic response was likely to have been caused by ferrous or burnt/fired material across the site associated with modern building debris. A curving line of isolated anomalies respecting a postulated ditch (see below) may be associated with pits within the ditch, deeply buried ferrous objects or a curving pipe with metal or fired clay sections.

Resistivity survey. (fig. 2).

Areas of high resistance, which may be of archaeological interest, were found. These may be associated with paths and tracks possibly leading to former buildings. The clearest low resistance anomaly was an arc of readings in the northern half of the survey area coinciding with the magnetic anomalies. This is most likely to be a ditch or trench.

C. TRIAL TRENCHING.

TRENCH A. (figs. 2, 3).

A trench 25.5m in length and 2m wide was excavated by machine to a depth of 0.4-0.6m. Removal of the modern ploughsoil revealed a series of features. A spread of large field stones (010) was found running NE-SW across the trench. This is the remains of a field bank approximately 1m wide which was shown on an early Ordnance Survey map. To the south of this bank was a wall of flat slate slabs (011) up to six courses (0.4m) high and 0.3m wide. This is a later re-facing of the field bank. A sherd of brown glazed ware (nineteenth century) was found within the fabric of the wall. The return of this field bank, as shown on the early Ordnance Survey map was recorded in the northern half of the trench (013). To the north of this field bank a shallow ditch (014) was noted. The ditch was approximately 3.5m wide, 0.5m deep and contained modern burnt debris, iron, charcoal and burnt clay and ploughsoil.

TRENCH B. (figs. 2, 4).

A trench 15.8m long and 2m wide was excavated by machine to a depth of 0.3-0.5m. The removal of the modern ploughsoil revealed a number of features (020-040) cut into the compact gravel subsoil (019). On excavation these features were shown to be steep-sided and filled with a greyish brown clayey silt. Some features contained sherds of nineteenth century pottery. The majority of the features were linear and orientated north-south but no discernible pattern could be identified. A discussion with the last occupant of the cottage revealed that this was an area of garden and it is probable that these features are bedding trenches.

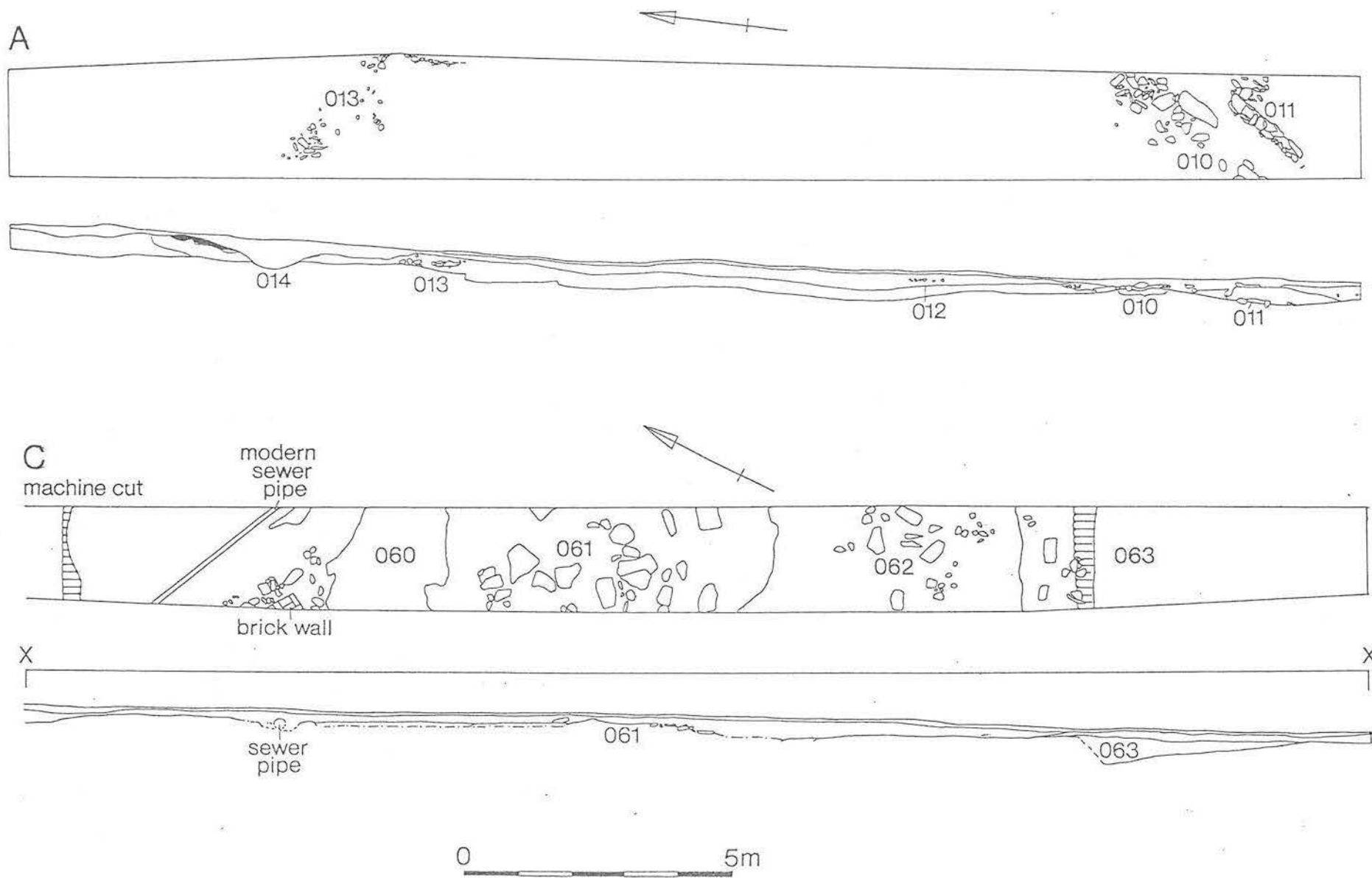


Fig. 3. Plan and sections of Trenches A and C.

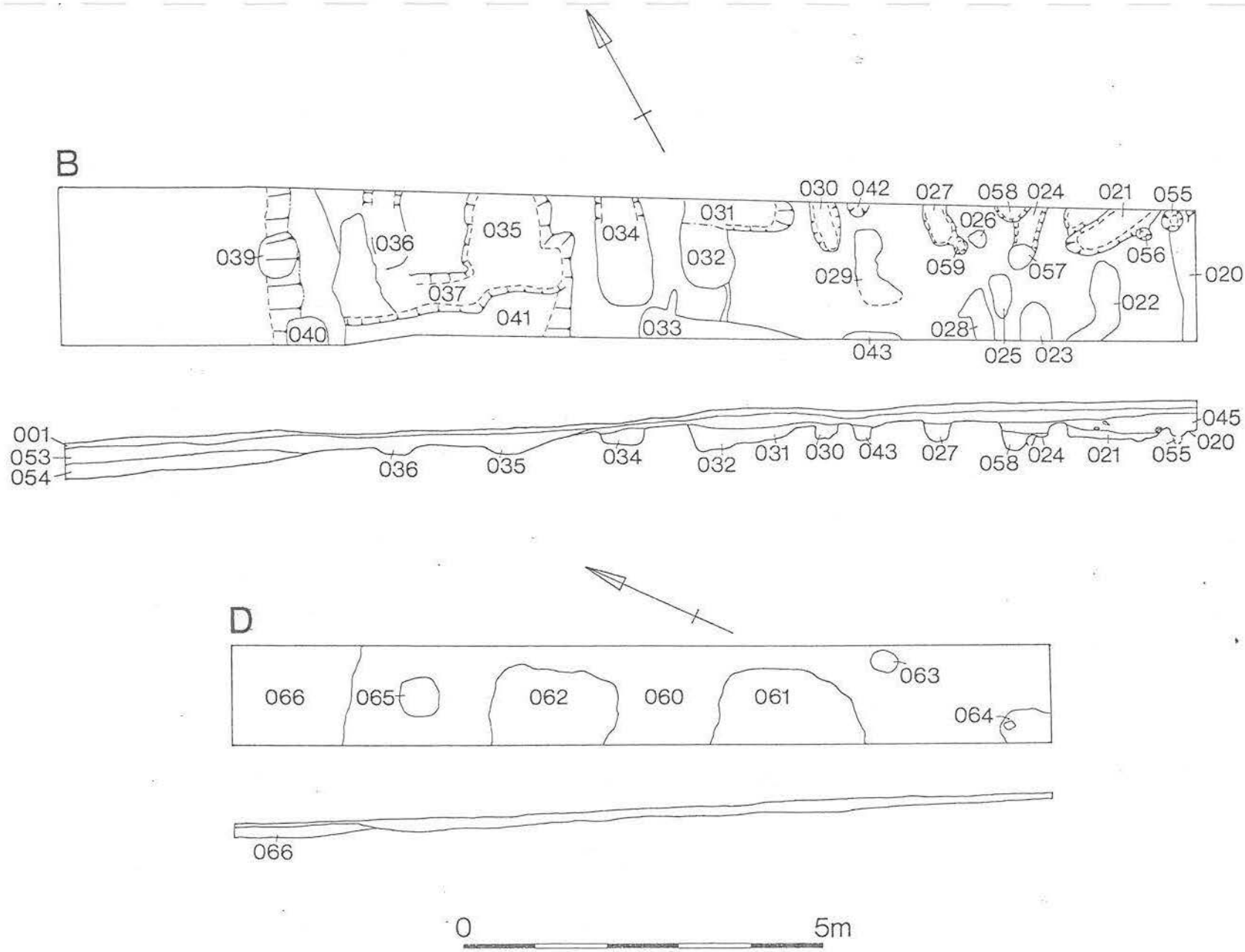


Fig. 4. Plan and sections of Trenches B and D.

TRENCH C. (figs. 2, 3).

A trench 44m long and 2m wide was excavated by machine to a depth of 0.3-0.5m across the site. The removal of the modern topsoil revealed a number of features. At the northern end of the trench the postulated ditch was found to be a length of twisted copper wire leading from a telegraph pole 0.25m below the ground surface. The magnetic anomaly was found to be a dump of yellow clay above this wire. Further to the south in the trench the foundations of the north wall of the cottage were found together with a modern sewer pipe. The remains of the east wall of the cottage (062) were noted but no floor levels or other archaeological features were revealed beneath the mortar, brick and stone destruction debris (061) between the walls. To the south of the east wall of the cottage a possible pit (063) containing modern roof slate, brick and stone debris was recorded. A large quantity of modern and nineteenth century pottery was found within the ploughsoil and the destruction debris in this trench. Two sherds of green glazed medieval pottery and a portion of a medieval green glazed ridge-tile (fig. 5) were found within the ploughsoil to the north of the cottage.

TRENCH D. (Figs. 2, 4).

A trench 15.6m long and 2m wide was excavated by machine to a depth of 0.2-0.4m onto the natural compacted gravel subsoil. Three circular features (063, 064, 065) were found to be bedding trenches on excavation.

SUMMARY.

No features of archaeological significance were revealed in any of the trenches of this evaluation. The location of the cottage and known field walls were confirmed and the low resistance anomaly from the geophysical survey was identified as a length of copper wiring and the areas of high resistance were identified as natural deposits of gravel. There was no evidence for the existence of earlier versions of the building. There was no evidence to support the tradition of a priory here, within any of the trenches, but such evidence may be forthcoming from areas not investigated or from the field to the west of the area of development. The occurrence of the sherds of medieval pottery within the ploughsoil may be regarded as significant.

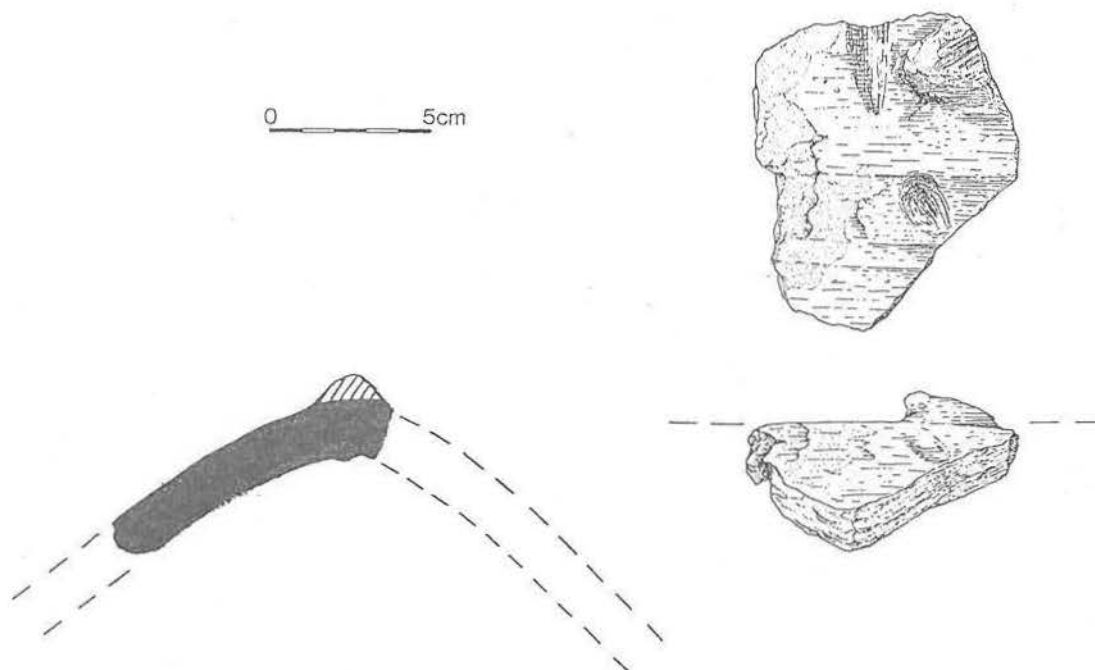


Fig. 5. Medieval green-glazed ridge-tile.

