

CAERWYS OLD SCHOOL CANTEEN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

REPORT NO. 67

1153

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

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for Clwyd County Council Planning Dept.

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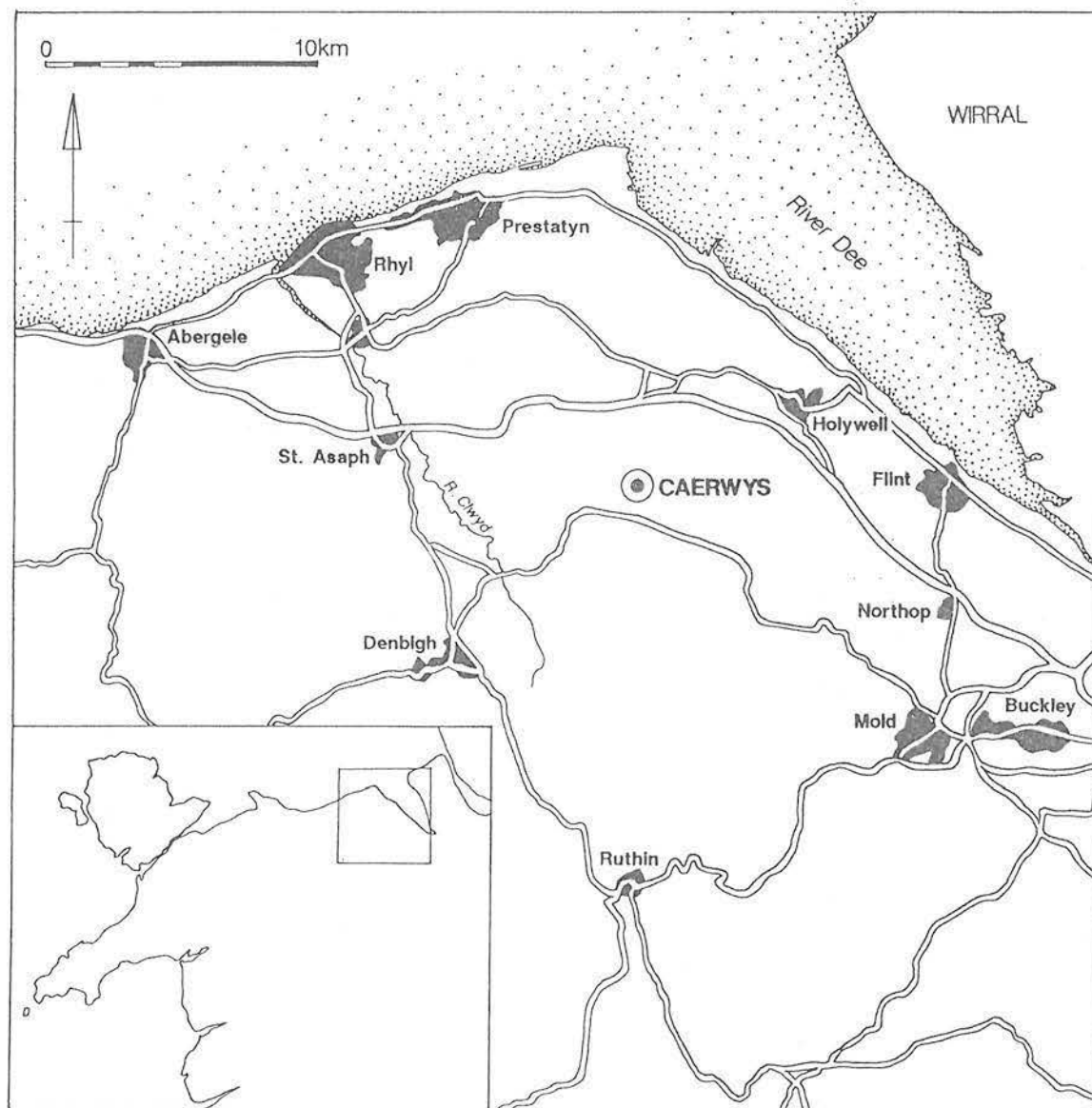


Fig. 1 Location map.

CAERWYS OLD SCHOOL CANTEEN

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust undertook an assessment excavation on behalf of Clwyd County Council on the site of the old school canteen, the High Street, Caerwys (SJ 1272 7291). The assessment was occasioned by the County Council's application for outline planning permission for a residential development.

Work commenced on 25th October 1993, when a 10m sq area was opened by machine in accordance with a brief prepared by Clwyd Archaeology Service. The area investigated was under tarmac, and this was removed by machine along with the underlying hardcore and uniform soil horizon (from here on referred to as the Old Ground Surface-OGS). Some 0.20m to 0.25m of deposits was removed in this way, of which the OGS varying in thickness formed 0.05 to 0.10m. Subsequently the trench was cleaned by hand, revealing a natural sub-soil of orange glacial clay. A test section was dug on the north west of the excavation to a depth of 0.50m through the deposit to establish that it was indeed a natural soil profile.

A number of features were identified cutting the subsoil. Contexts 008, 010, 012, 014, 016, 018 and 020 formed a series of linear features running from south to north and roughly parallel with each other (see Fig. 3). Three of the features terminated within the excavated area on the south of the trench while at least two others continued beyond the edge of the excavation. The features varied in width measuring between 0.30m and 0.20m, there being some consistency with three at approximately 0.30m wide and another three 0.25m wide. A section was dug across three of the features, 014, 016 and 018; the fill was a mid brown silty clay of similar composition to the OGS. The section revealed that the features were 0.05m deep.

On the southern end of the excavation three features were recorded, contexts 004, 006 and 024. Context 004 continued beyond the limit of the excavation, and was 0.20m long by 0.30m wide and 0.10m deep, with a mid brown silty clay fill. Slightly east of 004 context 024, a small circular feature 0.15m long by 0.25m wide and 0.10m deep, contained a fill similar to that of 004. An earlier feature, context 006, on the south west of the excavated area, was cut by feature 024. This feature (006) measured approximately 0.60m long by 0.35m wide and 0.10m deep, and was filled with a compacted grey silty clay.

On the north-east corner of the excavation, a dip in the natural was overlain by a deposit of mid brown silty clay, mixed with angular stones of up to 0.15m diameter and occasional flecks of mortar. The deposit extended for some 0.40m within the excavation trench.

DOCUMENTARY SEARCH

A brief history of Caerwys is given in Soulsby's "Towns of Medieval Wales". The town's planned layout allows for some certainty in the location of burgrave plots laid out on High Street, Water Street, North Street and South Street. The dimensions of burgrave plots are not known although they are probably seen fossilised in the tithe map of 1849 (possibly 80 ft by 50 ft plots). The earliest known map of Caerwys (Mostyn MS 8538, UCNW Bangor) of 1717 shows buildings on the burgrave plots in the area of the excavation as do the later maps of 1742 (CROM D/M/5247), 1849 (Tithe Map) and 1871 (OS 25 inch to the mile). The later Ordnance Survey maps of 1899 and 1913 show no structures located on the plot adjacent to the school.

It is possible that many of the burgrave plots within the medieval town remained vacant. Open areas of arable land within the perimeters of a town are known from other 'Edwardian boroughs' e.g. Conway and Caernarfon (see R S Kelly "Conway's Past in Future"). However, the earliest extant maps for Caerwys demonstrate that this part of the town was certainly built on by the 18th century (and probably earlier).

The majority of the features investigated appear to have been cut through the OGS and are probably of comparatively recent date (a sherd of Buckley ware was well stratified with the deposit of stones on the north-east of the assessment). Pottery recovered from the OGS and excavated features is mainly 19th and 20th century.

The assessment excavation failed to identify any archaeological deposits/remains that could reasonably be associated with any structure or structures within the limits of the current excavation and the nature of the surviving stratigraphy encountered within the assessment trench suggests that the area has been truncated, possibly when the school canteen was built in 1946-7.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK

Despite documentary evidence for buildings towards the street frontage of this plot in the C18th and C19th, the features recorded in the assessment excavation do not appear to be structural elements of any great antiquity. Nevertheless the limited area of the assessment did not allow a positive definition of their status. Truncation of earlier deposits seems probable. If further archaeological recording is proposed it is recommended that this should concentrate on clarifying the extent and function of the linear features 008, 010, 012, 014, 016, 018, and 020.

TABLE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES

Context	feature	fill	dimensions	C19/20th pot sherds
004	small semicircular cut	005 mid brown silty clay	0.20mL x 0.30mW	X
006	semicircular cut	007 grey silty clay	0.65mL x 0.35mW	
008	linear cut	009 mid brown silty clay	2.0mL x 0.30mW	
010	linear cut	011 mid brown silty clay	2.57mL x 0.28mW	X
012	linear cut	013 mid brown silty clay	2.57mL x 0.25mW	
014	linear cut	015 mid brown silty clay	1.45mL x 0.25mW	
016	linear cut	017 mid brown silty clay	1.80mL x 0.25mW	X
018	linear cut	019 mid brown silty clay	1.10mL x 0.20mW	X
020	linear cut	021 mid brown silty clay	1.80mL x 0.20mW	X
022	shallow depression	023 mid brown silty clay	0.60mL x 0.80mW	X
024	semicircular cut	025 mid brown silty clay	0.15mL x 0.25mW	

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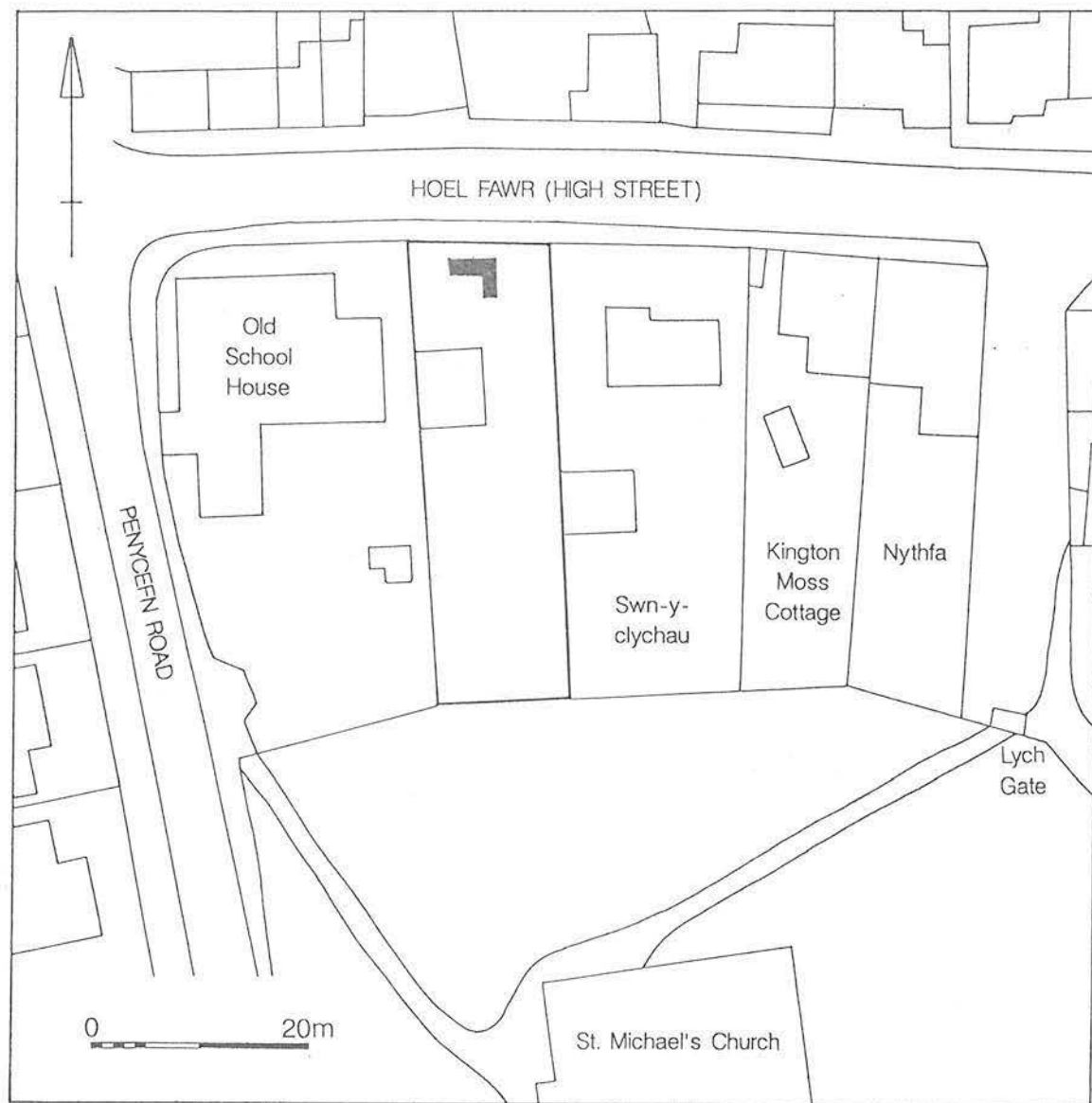


Fig. 2 Trench location.

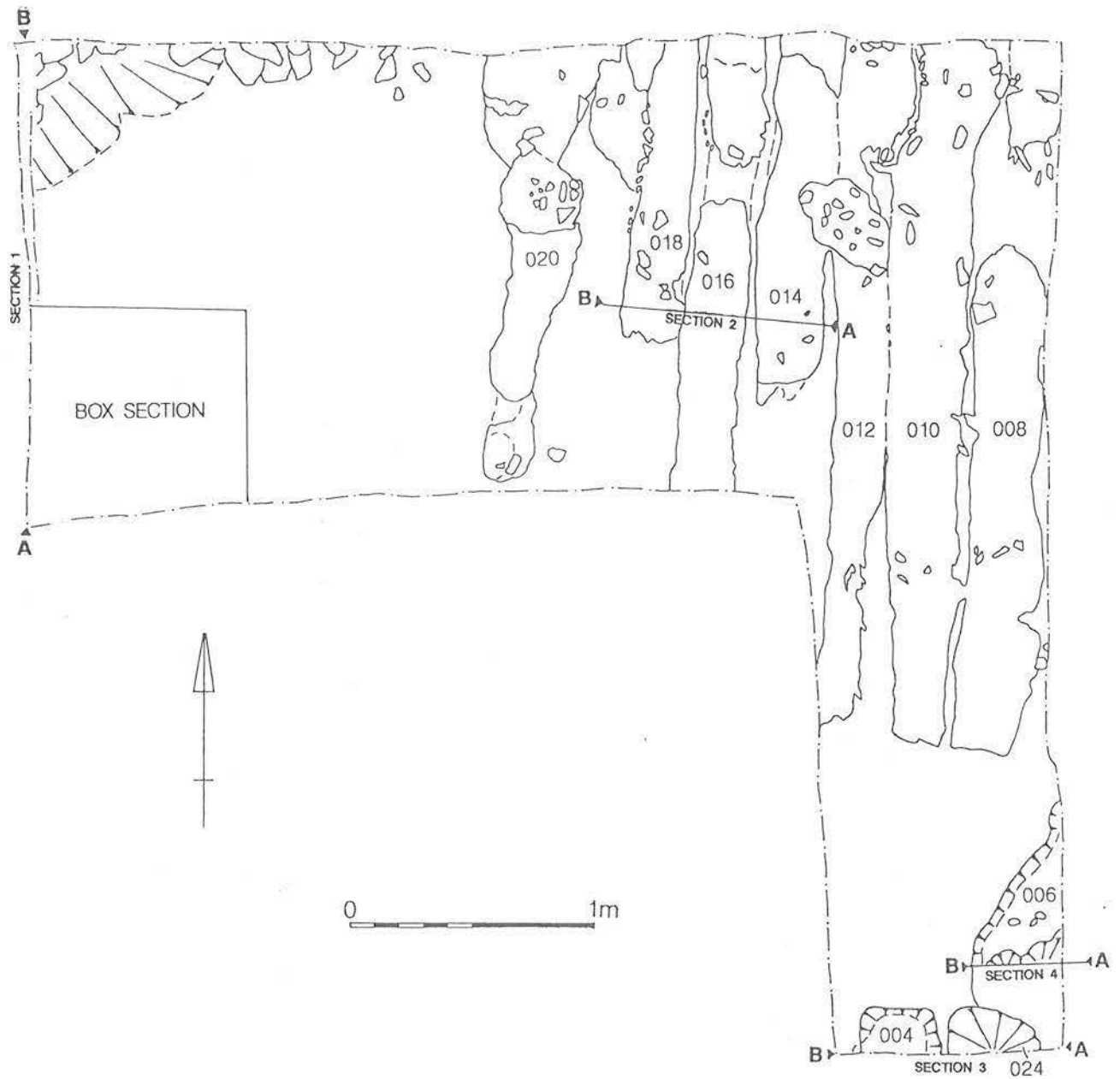


Fig. 3 Plan of trench.

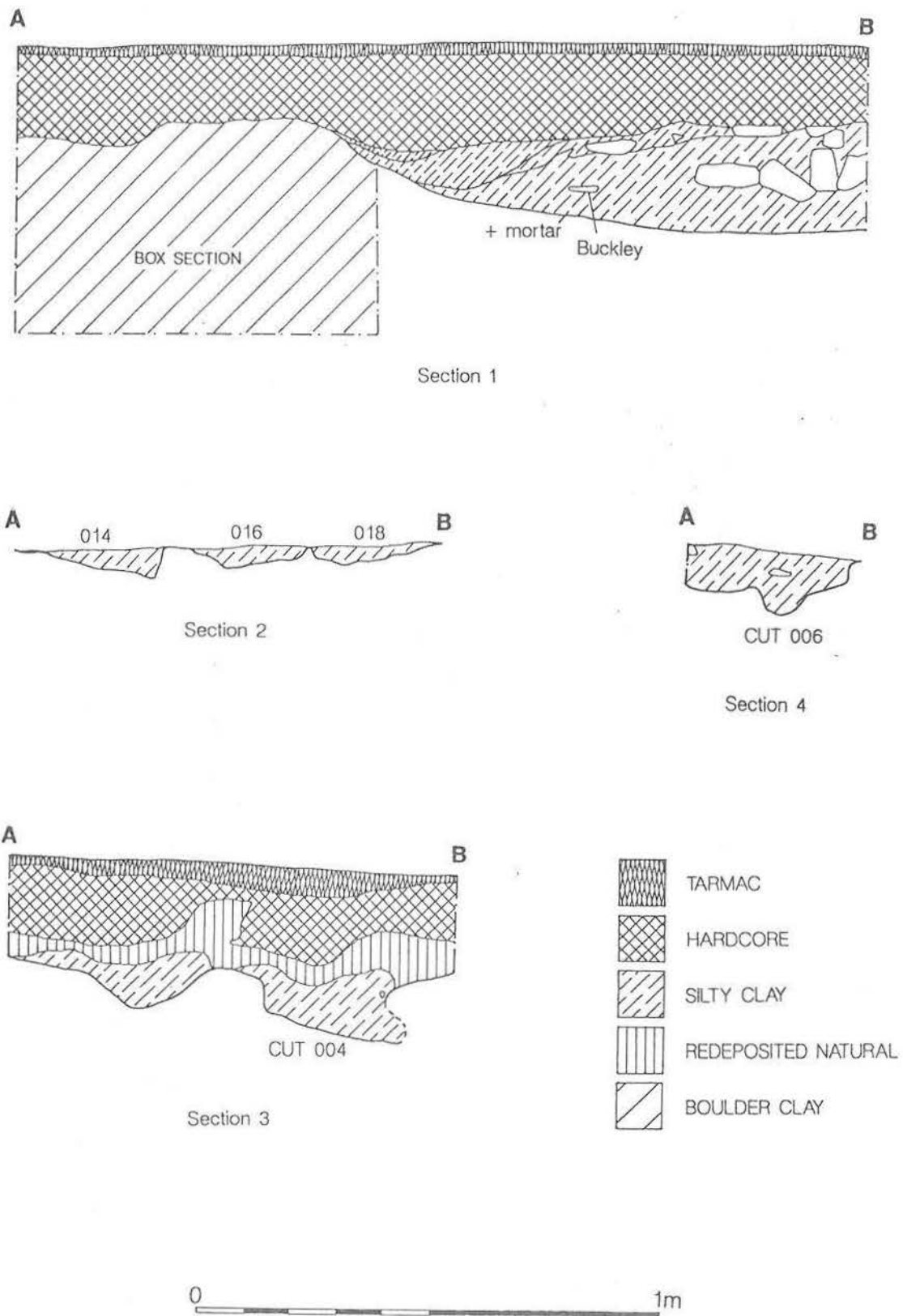


Fig. 4 Sections 1, 2, 3, and 4.

