

**An archaeological  
watching brief at  
Gryme's Dyke,  
Stanway Green,  
Colchester, Essex**

**January 2001**

**on behalf of  
24 Seven Utility Services Ltd**



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**CAT Report 94**

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## 1 Summary

- 1.1 Observations were made at a scheduled section of Gryme's Dyke Middle during work to relocate an electricity transformer and to connect it to existing electricity cables. The area was badly disturbed and much of the work took place within the backfill of the existing cable trenches. Although not having been dug for cables, the area where the trench for the transformer (Trench 5) was dug was also disturbed.
- 1.2 No clear remains of the rampart of Gryme's Dyke were revealed nor the previous land surface, and it is not clear whether this area is actually part of the rampart. No finds or features were encountered.

## 2 Introduction

- 2.1 This is a report on an archaeological watching brief carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on the 17th and 18th of January 2001, on behalf of 24 Seven Utility Services Ltd.
- 2.2 The site is located to the east of Stanway Green at National Grid Reference TL 9633 2332. It lies at the southern end of the Gryme's Dyke Middle earthwork which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (no 10h). The site lies on the slope of a low bank which at its highest point stands 0.5m above the level of the road. It is not clear whether this bank originally formed part of the dyke's rampart.
- 2.3 The work was necessitated by the relocation of an electricity telegraph pole with transformer and the connection of the new transformer by cables. This involved the digging out of some of the baulks between existing Trenches 1-4 (T1-T4) and also digging a new trench (T5) for the transformer.
- 2.4 This report follows the standards set out in the Borough Council's *Guidelines on standards and practices for archaeological fieldwork in the Borough of Colchester* (1996) and *Guidelines on the preparations and transfer of archaeological archives to Colchester Museums* (1996), and the IFA's *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (1994).

### **3 Archaeological background**

- 3.1** Gryme's Dyke is the longest and most westerly of a number of large linear earthwork dykes in Colchester. Most of the dykes were built in the late Iron Age to define and protect the important settlement centre of Camulodunum (Colchester). However, some can be dated to the early Roman period which is probably when Gryme's Dyke was constructed (*CAR 11*, 111). The dyke survives for much of its length as an earthwork and was originally fronted by a ditch on its west side, now mostly infilled. Just north of the site of the new transformer the dyke's height is 2m. Its course can be traced for several kilometres, from the New Bridge, north of the River Colne (Gryme's Dyke North), to Stanway Green (Gryme's Dyke Middle), where the earthwork turns a sharp corner to continue west before running south west to the Roman River (Gryme's Dyke South). The site of the new transformer appears to be on or just south of this corner.
- 3.2** There have been three excavations on the dyke near the present site (Fig 1). Two trenches were dug by CFC Hawkes; one to the north in 1956 and another just to the south on the line of the dyke in 1957. However, little or nothing is known about the results of this work (*CAR 11*, catalogue of excavations and observations nos 21 and 33). More recently, in 1977, an excavation close to the area of Hawkes' 1956 trench revealed the structure of the bank and demonstrated the presence of the former land surface sealed beneath it. The level of this surface corresponded approximately with that of the present surrounding ground-level (*CAR 11*, no 20). The finds from this excavation, which included a small quantity of pottery and a coin (Claudian, dated AD 55-75), suggest an early Roman date for its construction.

### **4 Aims and objectives**

The aim of the watching brief was to identify and record any archaeological features, finds or deposits revealed by the groundworks.

### **5 Methods**

A record of the position of the site excavations was made in 2000 which has been reproduced here with additional information in Figures 2 and 3. Soils types were noted and digital photographs taken in 2001 which have been reproduced here as Plates 1-3.

## **6 Results**

- 6.1** In February 2000, four small trenches had been dug next to two telegraph poles to expose electricity cables. These trenches T1-T4 measured between 1.5m and 2m in length, 1m and 1.25m in width, and 600mm to 1m in depth. Short lengths of narrow trench between 500mm and 1m deep had also been dug extending from T1 and T4 at this time. This work had been carried out in order to relocate and reconnect an electricity telegraph pole carrying a transformer. The work was monitored by CAT and a report has been written on this phase (CAT Report 63).
- 6.2** This work was started again this year and was visited by the author on the 17th and 18th of January 2001. Existing trenches T1-T4 were still open and the reconnection of the new transformer involved the digging out of approximately 1m-deep baulks between trenches T1 and T2, T2 and T3, and T2 and T4, to connect the electricity cables. The material in these narrow trenches was the same disturbed dark brown sandy loam observed in February 2000. It contained modern pieces of plastic, brick and concrete.
- 6.3** A new trench (T5) was dug for the new transformer to the west of T2, measuring 1.4m x 1.1m x 900mm deep. This area had not been dug for cables and so was potentially less disturbed. However, there was no indication of the rampart in this trench or of a previous land surface. All four sections contained a mid brown silty sand and gravel. In the easternmost section this material also contained modern plastic, china and glass down to 800mm, indicating a modern date for its deposition.

## **7 Conclusions**

- 7.1** The excavations were mainly dug into modern deposits including backfill of existing cable trenches. Modern brick fragments, concrete and pieces of plastic were observed in most of the sections.
- 7.2** It is not clear whether the bank on which the works were carried out originally formed part of the dyke's rampart. The dyke is shown on OS maps to turn to the west just north of the site. Therefore the gradient of the site may be due to later slumping of the dyke's rampart southwards, or dumping of material on the face of the dyke.

## 8 Archive deposition

A copy of this report will be deposited permanently with Colchester Museum under accession code 2001.13.

## 9 Acknowledgements

Thanks to Martin Winter, Archaeological Officer of Colchester Borough Council, to 24 Seven Utility Services Ltd and to Breheny Contractors.

## 10 References

- Benfield, Stephen, 2000 Gryme's Dyke, Stanway Green - a short assessment of the archaeological impact of contractor's groundworks at the southern end of Gryme's Dyke Middle earthwork: CAT Report 63
- CAR 11 *Camulodunum 2*, Colchester Archaeological Report 11, by CFC Hawkes & Philip Crummy (1995)

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Plate 1 Photograph of the site looking south, with T1 in the foreground.



Plate 2 Photograph of T4 looking south, showing the cut of the cable trench.



Plate 3 Photograph of T5 looking east, showing modern material in the bottom of the trench.

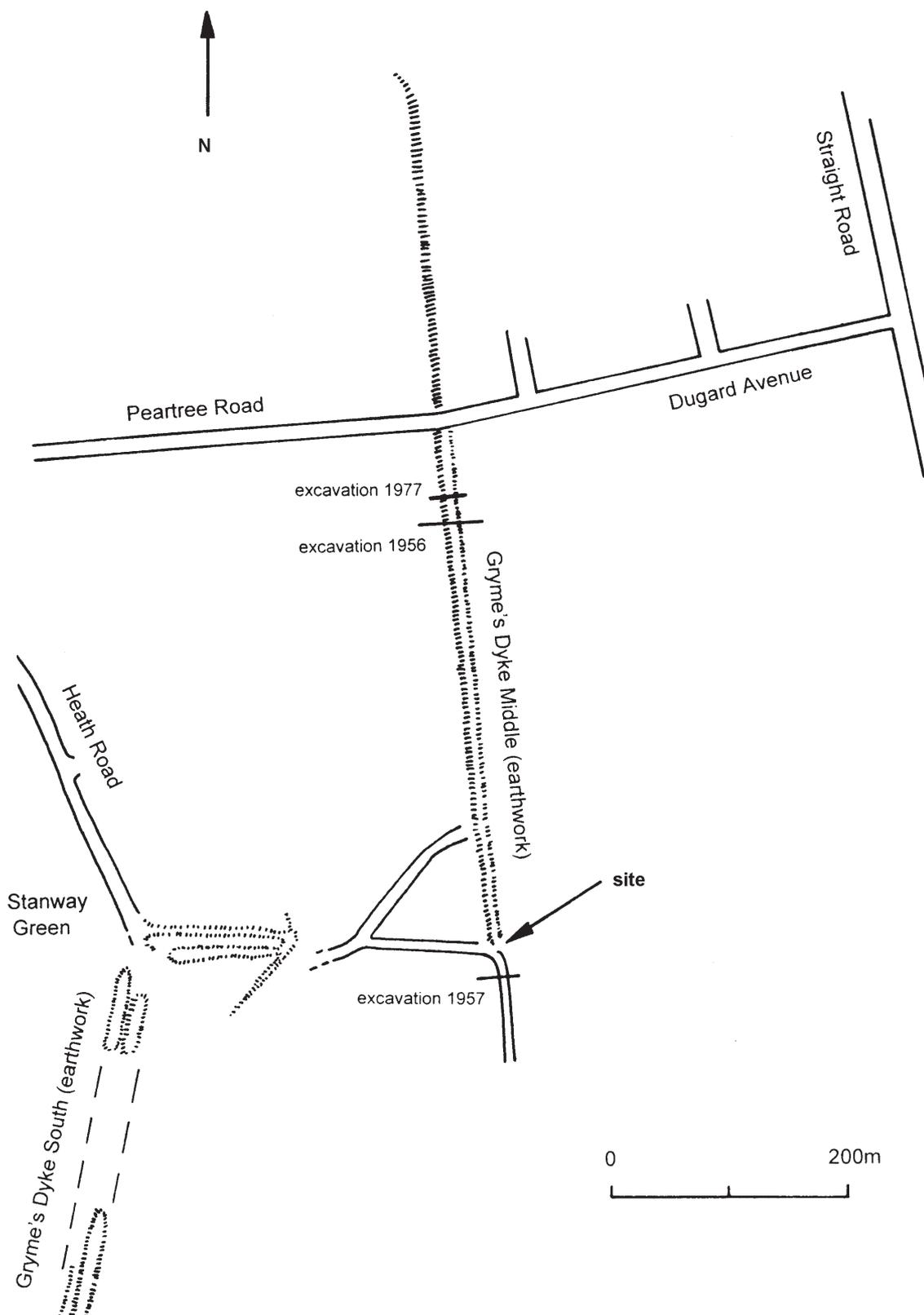


Fig 1 Site location.

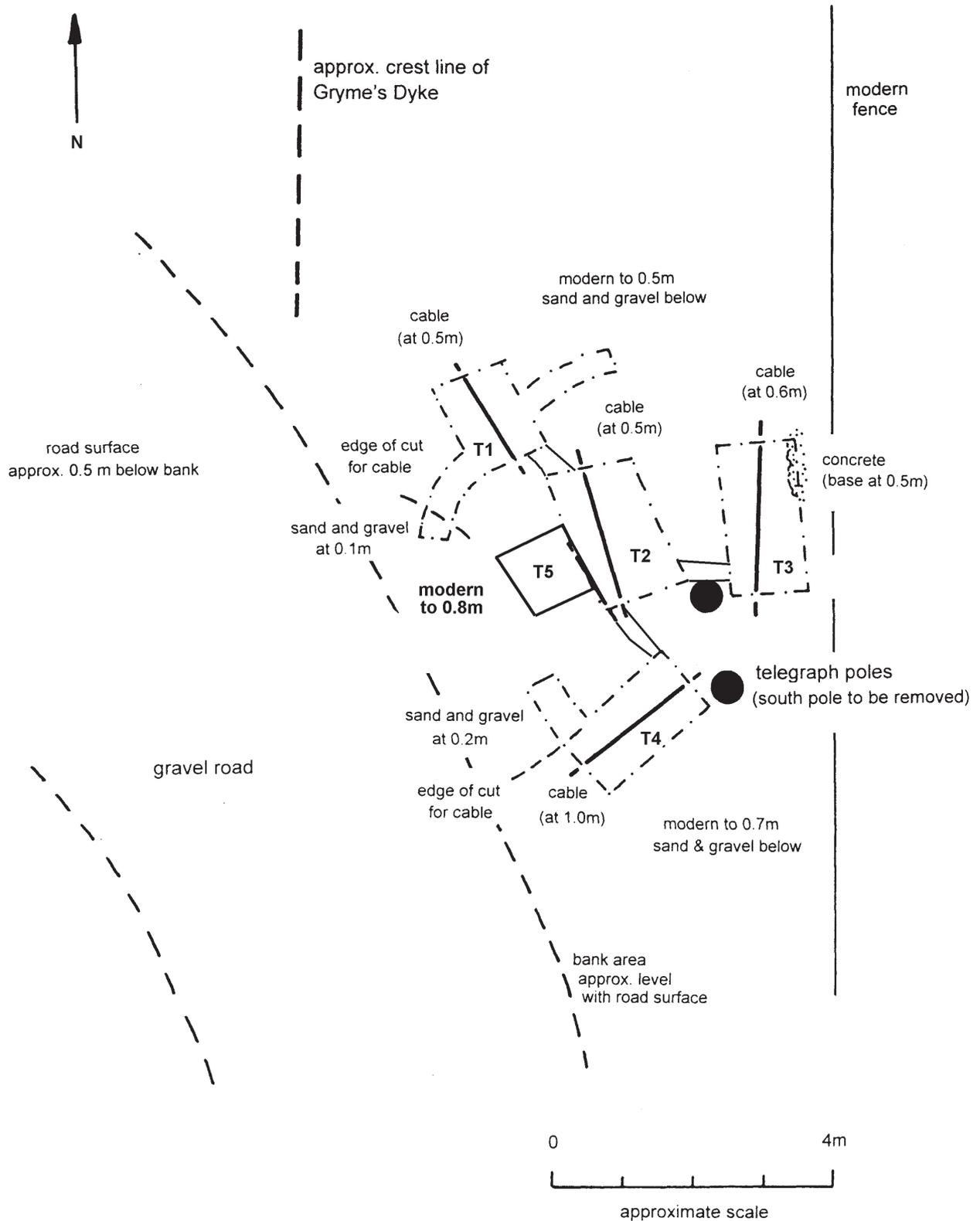
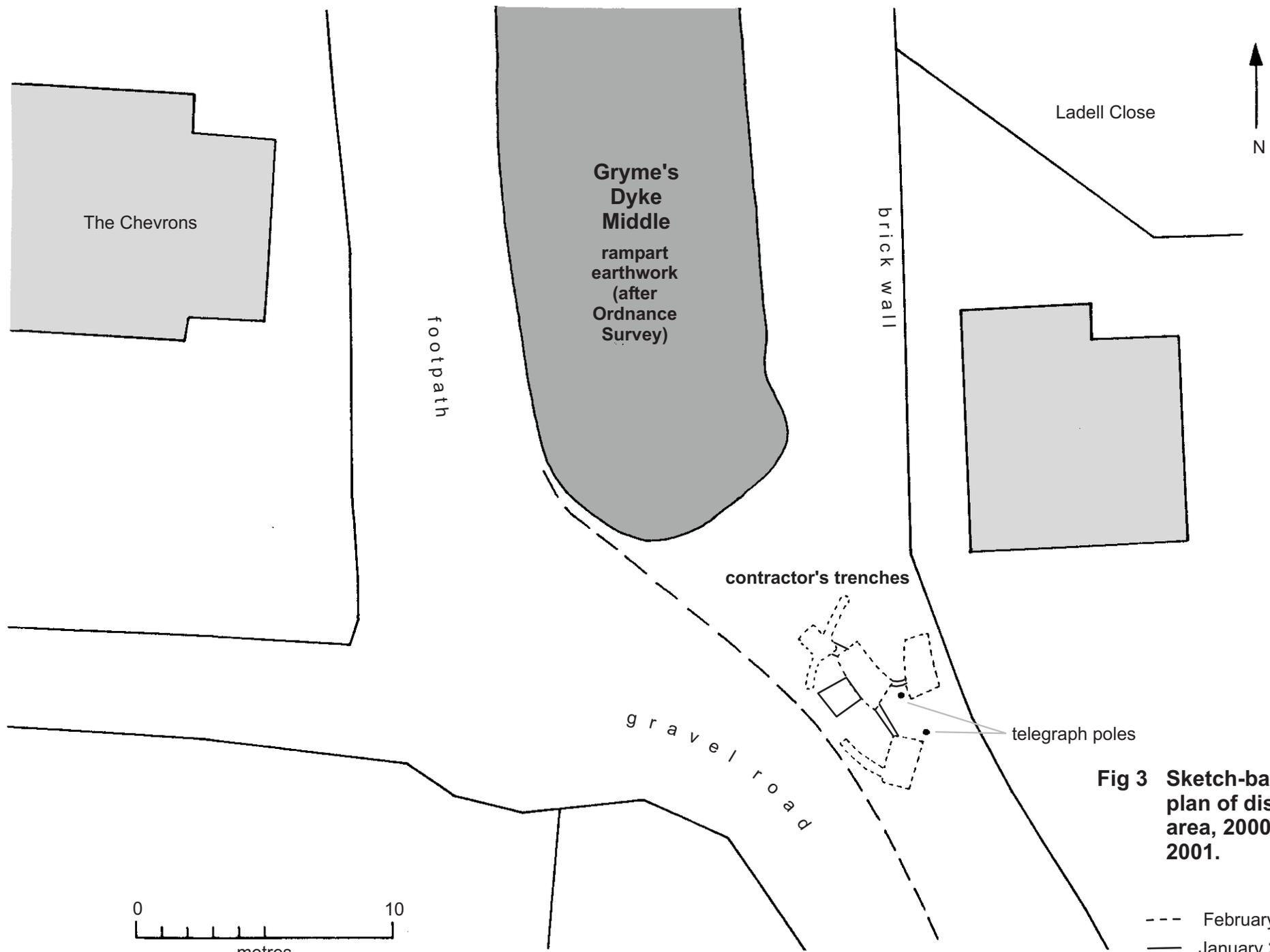


Fig 2 Location of contractor's trenches, 2000 and 2001.

--- February 2000  
 — January 2001



**Fig 3 Sketch-based plan of disturbed area, 2000 and 2001.**

--- February 2000  
 — January 2001