Northamptonshire County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological excavation of the medieval town ditch, Belgrade Plaza, Coventry

November/December 2006

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Report 07/72

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Project type	Excavation	
Site status		
Previous work	Belgrade Plaza Excavations 2005, Bond Street Evaluations 2003	
Current Land use	Former car park	
Future work	Watching brief	
Monument type/ period	Medieval/Post-medieval	
Significant finds	Medieval pottery, leather shoe	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Coventry	
Site address	c/o Bond Street/Upper Well Street, Coventry	
Study area (sq.m or ha)	155 sq m	
OS Easting & Northing	SP 33139 79273	
Height OD	*c* 81m OD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Coventry City Council	
Project brief originator	Chris Patrick, City Development Directorate, CCC	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Paul Mason	
Project Manager	Iain Soden	
Sponsor or funding body	Rose Project Services	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	November 2006	
End date	December 2006	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		
Paper		
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BIBLIOGRAPHY	Unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title		
Serial title & volume	Northamptonshire Archaeology Report 07/72	
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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION OF THE MEDIEVAL TOWN DITCH, BELGRADE PLAZA, COVENTRY

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2006

ABSTRACT

In November and December 2006 Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook an archaeological excavation of Coventry's medieval town ditch as part of the archaeological mitigation strategy for the city's Belgrade Plaza development. As a result of the excavation a nine metre- long stretch of the ditch was exposed at the junction of Bond Street and Upper Well Street where a hand-dug section revealed its depth to be c 2.3m. The remains of a collapsed fence were present beneath the fills of the ditch and a modest quantity of medieval and early post-medieval pottery was recovered along with a number of leather shoe fragments. The results of the fieldwork augment those of the Belgrade Plaza excavations of 2005 which took place to the south of the present study area.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Rose Project Services on behalf of Oakmoor Deeley to undertake an archaeological excavation on the site of the Belgrade Plaza development, Coventry (NGR 433139 279273, Fig 1). The excavation was targeted over a section of Coventry's medieval town ditch as part of a staged programme of fieldwork that had begun on the Belgrade Plaza site in 2005. The earlier excavations had exposed and sampled a length of the town ditch to the south-west of the 2006 site along part of Hill Street's medieval and post-medieval street frontage (Fig 2).

The fieldwork forming the basis of this report was undertaken in November/December 2006.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Historical documents

This research has taken in the historic maps of Coventry 1610-1851 as well as records from the National Archives and Coventry Archives (hereafter CA; Borough Archive [hereafter BA] and Private Accessions [hereafter PA]). We gratefully

acknowledge the help of George Demidowicz, Peter Coss and Michael Hinman for use of their time and unpublished notes in the preparation of this report.

General

Upper Well Street is a relatively modern name; for most of its history the excavated area lay within two plots which simply fronted Well Street, sometimes, but not often, further distinguished in documents by the statement that they lay outside the gate, or on the west or south-west side of the street. Other distinguishing characteristics include an abuttal onto the town ditch (but never the town wall), or the Radford Brook, usually called Hill Mill brook or water. It is, however, not possible to discern this plot continuously from the 14th century to the modern period because, distinctive though these characteristics and distinguishing features and topographical settings are, they were not consistently used.

During the 15th century documents also show a distinct inconsistency in their use of the cardinal points of the compass. There is a bewildering level of misunderstanding as to the location of abuttals and the matter is compounded by the properties on the far side of Well Street having the town ditch as an abuttal which forms both the side and, for some at least, the rear boundary of the plot. Identification is thus sometimes tentative at best.

From the late 15th into the 16th century, Coventry experienced a very serious economic slump, partly brought about by the collapse of its former prestigious cloth trade. One topographical result of this was the abandonment of many houses and a dramatic and spiralling drop in rental values levied by the landlords to try to stop tenants simply moving on to ever cheaper housing. In the city as a whole in 1522-3 there were over 500 empty houses, while records show that at that date in Well Street itself there were 22 empty properties (Hulton 1999, 161-3).

The town ditch in this area was intended to be kept wet at this point, fed by the waters of the Radford Brook which, from 1451, could be dammed at a spayer or sluice-gate under a tower to divert along the ditch (Dormer Harris 1907-13, 261). The city experienced regular difficulties with the ditch being used for fly-tipping, probably not helped by regular erosion and silting. In 1518 the prominent citizen, Richard Marler, whose tenants held the ditch-side property on Hill Street, was promised the sole use of the ditch and its banks (and water supply) for his tenants if he would dig it out and keep it wet. If he did not, the city would ask the chamberlains to do it and charge the costs to him! (ibid 662).

The responsibility for looking after the ditch in this area was considered a serious

one, such that any tenant who lived adjacent was not required to pay the city any ground rent (CA: BA/A/1/2/3, 89 footnote). The exemption dated back to 1421 (Dormer-Harris 1907-13, 32). The offer to Richard Marler and his tenants suggests that the tenants took advantage of the city's leniency.

In the early 16th century the makeup of the street seems relatively down-at-heel, in keeping with other surburban streets nearby. There are few trades represented which until then had been associated with the city's wealth, such as dyers or merchants. Rather, the known trades are connected with the immediate day-to day life of the city, so clerk, butcher, brewer, vintner, cooper, tailor, corviser, cobbler carpenter, walker (tanning), grazier, painter and labourer are all met with. More telling are noticeable concentrations of widows, many pairing up to share the burden of rent. There were also ten tenements housing the poor, whose names and trades we never hear of.

The Benedictine Priory remained the largest landowner in the street throughout the remainder of the medieval period. In 1545 it was said to have owned 28 house plots and five gardens (CA: PA12/2).

John Speed's map of the city in 1610 shows, in common with most other medieval suburbs, that Well Street was a fully built-up frontage (Fig 3; A). How much of this is fanciful with the city in the economic doldrums is unclear. Certainly the map makes no distinction between tenanted and empty properties.

The city's provisions for the Civil War involved demolitions just outside the gates, in order to clear a field of fire for the defenders. More than any other, this would have included the plot closest to the ditch. The adjacent Well Street gate was said to be badly decayed in 1648 as the Civil War drew to a close (CA: BA/H/17/A79/215). It was to be repaired using recycled materials to save on costs.

Samuel Bradford's map of Coventry in 1749 shows that the town ditch still remained and had not yet been redeveloped (Fig 3; B). The town wall had been reduced to ground level and formed the base of a footpath or track called simply "town wall". The ditch was hedged along its outer edge. Just beyond this was what appears to be a walkway or track before the first tenement is encountered. The layout was unchanged in the map of 1807 drawn for the antiquarian Thomas Sharp (not illustrated).

The site was built up in the second quarter of the 19th century, at which time Bond Street was laid out on the foundations of the former town wall (Fig 3; C). What may have remained of the town ditch was filled in and new Bond Street terraced

houses of brick laid out along it. It was fully built up by 1851 and remained so until after the Second World War when the houses were demolished (Fig 3; D-F).

The excavated plot comprised the ditch beneath these 19th-century houses (of which nothing remained) plus a small portion of the adjacent plot. This plot contained no structural remains so it may relate to the sliver of open ground noted adjacent to the first plot on Bradford's map of 1749.

The ditch plot

The plot which previously lay where the town ditch was cut is noted in the Coventry Benedictine Priory Cartulary (1410-11). There it states that the ditch between Hill and Well Street gates was dug in the mayoralty of John Smythier (1403). Hereabouts it was said to have destroyed four cottages which had been worth 20 shillings a year to the Priory (National Archives: E164/21 128.1). Presumably there were two cottages on each side of the street. Occupancies prior to the ditch being dug cannot be confirmed as the topography was different. However, in 1393 amongst the list of properties and interests with which the newly-formed Holy Trinity Guild was endowed, was 16s annual rent from Walter Dawe's tenement, lying between John Haylys tenement and Robert Shippeley's (CA: BA/£/16/14/5, gj). Since Shipley is known to have had the ditch-side tenement, Dawe's and Haylys may be those which the ditch destroyed.

The one uncertainty is that, since Shipley actually owned two contiguous properties, Dawes and Haylys may relate to the other (north) side of the more northerly. This uncertainty is unlikely to be resolved without further, more detailed research. Certainly in 1522 the Holy Trinity Guild continued to hold two tenements in Well Street (exact positions unclear), each of 16s yearly value. The evidence is equivocal.

This plot would seemingly support no further buildings or occupation until the 19th century, although a single deed suggests that a house had indeed been built over or very close to the ditch by 1662, occupied by Benjamin Lawton (CA: PA 1573/58/1).

The adjacent plot

Outside the ditch lay the southernmost of a series of occupied plots.

The first possible mention of the plot is in relation to the Holy Trinity Guild in 1393 (noted above), when Robert Shipley (merchant) was mentioned in the abuttal which may relate to former ditch property, destroyed in 1403 (CA: BA/B/16/14/5, gj), though as stated, this is not certain. However, the changing topography in relation to the town wall and ditch makes this unreliable and the Shipley mention could just

as easily mean it relates to the other side of his more northerly property, further from the gate.

Its first certain mention is in the Priory Cartulary (1410-11), when it was said to be in the occupation of Robert Shipley, although the same document states that previous tenants had been Thomas Wareyne and John Claver. The rent was paid to the Pittancer of the Priory. Its location is confirmed by the statement that the ditch was its abuttal (E164/21 36b.2). Shipley also held the next plot in the row. It is unclear whether Shipley actually lived here since the Cartulary says he lived in The Burges (E164/21 35b.2).

In January 1416 Robert Shipley and his son William, together with Roger Benet another merchant, sold their interest in the property to Richard Michell of Grantham, Lincolnshire and William Botoner of Withybrook, Warwickshire. The property comprised two messuages (ie the houses and gardens of this plot and the next one –both of Shipley's plots). They were said to extend to the water running towards Hill Mill (ie the Radford Brook), the town ditch was the southern abuttal, while north of the two plots was land once belonging to John Crosse (CA: BA/B/**16**/111/29).

The relevant reference (16), highlighted in bold above, indicates that this deed came into the hands of the City Corporation (now Coventry City Council) via an interest by the Holy Trinity Guild. This provides another possible line of enquiry as substantial records of the former Holy Trinity Guild survive, if only they contain enough information to distinguish different properties in the same street. It is not always possible to distinguish over a long period the nature of Guild interest, be it outright ownership or a chief rent or a portion of rent. This is the case with this plot and none of the names can be positively traced (though Boteler occurs, as does Marshall) from 1416 to the HTG rentals of 1485-6, nor is there sufficient correlation between the census and muster records of 1522-4 and the contemporary HTG records of 1529-34, or forward to the late 16th century (Templemann 1944; Hulton 1999). It is, of course, possible that the property falls during this period within the class of houses which both sets of documents do record, either as containing 'poor people', unnamed, or under the heading 'vacant'. This would explain the silence.

The plot is again recognisable in a fragmentary survey of 1576 when it was owned by widow Myles who also probably lived there. It was said to measure 63 yards long x 7 yards wide (CA: PA 99/6/1).

Thereafter the plot can be positively identified through most of the 17th century in a

series of documents which relate the previous tenants and give regular abuttals. In 1637 a Drapers' Company of Coventry feoffment mentions the plot clearly as being occupied by Alderman Samuel Myles or Thomas Ullage (CA: PA468/5/1/6,n). In 1653 the lease of the property was reassigned to Myles, also noting that the original lease went back to 1611 (CA: PA 468/5/3/43/21). The coincidence of the name Myles from the interests of 1576 and 1611-53 is surely relevant. In 1662 a deed of settlement states that it was occupied at that time by Thomas Waryn, but had previously been in the purview of Alderman Samuel Myles (d1642) and Thomas Ullage (CA: PA1573/58/1). The town ditch is given as its southern abuttal. A house there was occupied by Benjamin Lawton.

Dying without issue, Samuel Myles passed his estate in his will to Ralph King and Thomas Welles, sons of his wife by previous marriages (CA:PA 468/5/3/43/21). It was farmed by Samuel Ashton of Stoke in their absence and occupied by Benjamin Murdoch, one of a family of tanners, whose chief interest was in the next plot to the north (CA: CCA/2/3/310). They had, for some time, retained the brook-side portion of land to the west, where the extended stream-banks were to the benefit of their tanning business.

By this stage the frontage building seems to have been separated from the plot behind as abuttals make it clear that land to the east of the plot was in separate occupation, presumably formerly widow Myles' house, then occupied successively by Richard Marshall and William Stitt (CA: PA 1573/58/1).

The excavated area lies well behind the historic frontage and impinged upon the southern edge of the Shipley-Myles property, well beyond the frontage buildings, which probably lay under the now widened dual carriageway of Upper Well Street.

This research forms part of the wider historical research on the entire Belgrade Plaza site and surrounding plots. This is ongoing and a digest of the above will appear as part of the final Belgrade Plaza report.

2.2 Archaeological background

Northamptonshire Archaeology (2003)

Archaeological evaluation of the Belgrade Plaza site was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology in February 2003 (Thorne 2003). Four trenches were located along the edge of Bond Street to evaluate the town ditch. The closest of these to the current excavation area lay *c* 40m to the south-west (Trench 4). The upper fill of the ditch was discovered *c* 1.30m below the existing car park surface.

It was found to contain a large quantity of animal bone and was heavily contaminated with petro-chemicals. A 1.25m sondage cut through the fills of the ditch fill failed to locate either its base or sides.

Warwickshire Museum Field Services (2003)

As part of excavations undertaken to the south of Hill Street, Warwickshire Museum Field Services located a small section of the town wall to the north-west of St John's Hospital. The ditch at its foot was found to contain well preserved organic material (Bryn Gethin, pers comm).

Northamptonshire Archaeology (2005)

Open area excavation at the southern end of the former car park revealed structures and plots relating to Hill Street's medieval frontage (Fig 2). As part of these works, a length of the town ditch measuring *c* 53m was exposed along the south-east edge of the site, its alignment following that of the town wall, and hence also Bond Street. Although the eastern shoulder of the ditch lay beyond the site boundary, probably beneath the pavement, a near complete ditch profile was exposed in three hand-dug, stepped sections (Plate 1). These indicated a width in excess of 12m at this point in the ditch's circuit and an original depth of *c* 3m.

The ditch was the largest of a number of features cut through a patchy buried subsoil level containing pottery of the 13th/14th centuries. Its western (outer) edge exhibited a fairly even, gentle slope of *c* 30° while the inner edge was both steeper and more irregular. The base of the ditch was a gentle concave shape. In the southern and western sections the base was cut through natural pink/red clay. However, variations in the local geology meant the lower portion of the ditch in the northern section was cut through underlying sand. Here, in order to render it permeable, the base was 'puddled' with 200mm layer of pink clay. Shortly after cutting, a wattle fence woven between upright stakes was erected along the outer edge of the ditch, just below the shoulder.

The fills of the ditch suggested a complex depositional process beginning with slumping of natural material loosened during the cutting process. Distinct alternating lenses of dark organic and lighter mineral-derived hill-wash deposits had accumulated in the bottom of each section. These were overlain by organic fills seemingly deposited under waterlogged conditions. The upper fills of the ditch were characterised by a greater mineral component. There was evidence for a least one episode of re-cutting.

A modest assemblage of pottery was recovered from the ditch fills; the largest quantities were present in the upper fills. Of greater significance were large assemblages of medieval leather shoes and animal bone. The shoes were particularly prevalent in the section closest to the Hill Street frontage. Taphonomic conditions favoured the preservation of organic material with leaves and tree branches present and in some cases retaining their original pigment.

Pockets of demolition rubble including large coping stones were mixed with the upper fills of the ditch suggesting that it was almost completely silted-up when the town wall was demolished in 1662 or thereabouts.

In conjunction with the open area excavation an archaeological watching brief was maintained during the ground-works phase for the construction of a new auditorium for the Belgrade Theatre (Mason, Thorne and Webster 2006). As a result medieval fabric relating to the town wall was recorded below Bond Street. The wall survived largely as strips of core-work heavily truncated by modern services, however, a short section of ashlar blocks forming the inner face of the wall survived enabling the line of the wall to be projected along the street. Other sections of ashlar-clad wall located in close proximity may relate to a tower and 'spayer' or sluice gate which was built to divert the waters of the Radford Brook into the defensive town ditch outside the wall.

A further watching brief was undertaken in October 2005 whilst repairs were made to a sewer bored through the bedrock beneath Bond Street (McAree 2006). Remnants of the town wall were again exposed along with contemporary stratified deposits which contribute to our understanding of the man-made and natural environment in the vicinity of the Belgrade Plaza site.

2.3 Topography and geology

The current site lies at the extreme north-east corner of the Belgrade Plaza development site at approximately 81.5m above Ordnance Datum. It is bounded by Upper Well Street to the north-east, Bond Street to the south-east and the expanse of the former Bond Street car park to the south-west. The Radford Brook flows through a culvert beneath the modern ground surface a short distance to the south-west. At the time of excavation the site was still covered by the tarmac surface of the car park.

The mapped geology of the area is Keuper Marl, stiff red clay of the Triassic Enville Beds. This overlies distinctive coarse-grained red sandstone, which in turn seals Carboniferous coal seams (BGS 1984).

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Objectives

The main objective of the archaeological mitigation strategy for the Belgrade Plaza is defined in Northamptonshire Archaeology's Project Design as,

to preserve by record any archaeological deposits likely to be affected by the proposed development within designated areas. Where the archaeological deposits are affected the principal aim will be to excavate and record the archaeological remains in order to understand the nature, function and character of the site in its cultural and environmental setting (Soden 2004)

The fieldwork that forms the basis of this report comprised the last of four agreed sections through the town ditch designed to characterise it and provide future comparison for other parts that remain preserved.

3.2 Methodology

In accordance with the methodology set out in the project specification, an area measuring 16m x 10m was opened by tracked machine. Underlying modern and later post-medieval deposits were removed using toothless ditching bucket. Machining ceased once the upper surface of the filled-in ditch was reached. Deep deposits of overburden, measuring up to *c* 2m, necessitated a stepped edge of excavation. The excavation of the archaeological features cut into the natural substrate, including the fill of the ditch itself, was undertaken by hand.

All fieldwork was carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) standards and guidance. The works were conducted in accordance with the Health and Safety Policy of Northamptonshire County Council and a full risk assessment was prepared prior to the start of the project and updated on site.

Records were made on standard Northamptonshire Archaeology pro-forma context sheets. Plans of the excavated areas and features were made at scales of 1:50 and sections drawn at 1:10 and 1:20. A photographic record was maintained in colour slide, monochrome print and digital formats.

The site code BS06 was allocated to the site by the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

4.1 The town ditch

The geology, red Keuper Marl clay (512), was revealed at a depth of *c* 2.20m below the existing ground surface at *c* 79.4m OD. It was cut by the town ditch [538], which was, for the most part, aligned approximately north-west to south-east (Fig 4). It was, however, noted that its alignment appeared to be angling northwards as it approached Upper Well Street. Only the outer edge of the ditch was revealed, the inner being somewhere beyond the eastern limit of excavation below the Bond Street carriageway. In total, 9m of the ditch's width lay within the excavated area. Its depth at this point in its circuit was *c* 2.3m with an outer profile pitched at an approximate 45° angle terminating in a wide, flat base at *c* 77.25m OD (Fig 5; Sections 1 and 2, Plate 2).

Excavation was undertaken by hand in challenging winter conditions worsened by the presence of petro-chemical contaminants that had leached through the material filling the ditch. As such, some of the subtle changes in the character of deposits, as observed in the excavated sections to the south (McAree, Mason and Soden, in preparation), may have been lost.

The primary fill of the ditch was a waterlogged charcoal grey silty clay with a mid-brown veining (545) that appeared to be the product of *in situ* organic decomposition interspersed with waterborne minerals (Fig 5, Sections 1 and 2). In the base of the ditch it lay to a depth of 0.30m. A single sherd of 15th century pottery and a large quantity of horn cores were recovered from this deposit. Duckweed fruits and freshwater mollusc shells indicative of a still water environment were also retrieved from a waterlogged soil sample. In the centre of the ditch the primary fill was overlain by a thin band of brown silt (544), possibly the product of a single episode of flooding.

This was sealed by an organically rich dark grey brown clay loam flecked with charcoal (542). It contained fragmented sandstone, occasional broken roof tiles, animal bone and a small number of leather shoes. A quantity of scrappy leather off-cuts were also noted including a number of narrow strips that may have been shoe laces. The majority of the pottery found in this fill dated through to the later 16th century with a few, possibly intrusive, sherds of 17th/18th-century wares also present. At its deepest point the fill was *c* 0.65m thick and appeared to have accumulated over and around a series of cut tree branches (543). Amongst the branches there appeared to be two posts angled into the ditch fill. The overall

impression was of a wattle fence that had been set into the partially filled ditch and later collapsed into it under the weight of material slipping down or thrown in from its outer edge (Plate 3).

Overlying fill (542), and lying up to 0.9m deep, was a substantial deposit of dark greyish brown clay loam mottled with frequent clods of red clay (539). It had all the characteristics of deliberately imported backfill. The pottery recovered from this deposit is indicative of a late 17th/early 18th century date. Overlying this were localised loamy fills (540), (541) which probably derived from soils accumulating over undulations on the surface of the filled-in ditch.

4.2 Features west of the ditch

A number of small pits, gullies and possible postholes were cut into the natural geology along the outer shoulder of the ditch (Fig 4 & 6, Plate 4). Upon investigation many were found to be contaminated with petro-chemicals to such a degree that excavation was abandoned. The largest of the excavated features were grouped close to the edge of the ditch. Two inter-cutting pits [529] and [532] formed a kidney-shaped arrangement measuring 0.20m deep with steep sloping sides (Fig 6, Section 3). Gully [505] was 0.60m wide, had gently sloping sides, a rounded base and was only 0.12m deep (Fig 6, Section 4). It cut an earlier feature, a small gully or pit [503]. Another larger pit [524] contained 19th century pottery and high levels of contaminant which prevented full excavation.

Further from the ditch edge were a number of smaller features including two possible post pads packed with sandstone rubble [522] and [528], two circular pits [514] (Fig 6, Section 5) and [526], two postholes [510] and [518], an irregular shaped pit [501] and an 'L' shaped gully [534/536] (Fig 6, Section 6). Two larger pits, [520] and [516] were abandoned due to contamination. The small quantity of pottery recovered from these features dates to the late medieval/early post-medieval period. In the same vicinity, a brick surface [513] protruding from the western edge of the trench sat in a shallow foundation [508]. It may have be part of an ash pit or coal chute serving 19th-century houses.

4.3 Later post-medieval occupation

A 1.50m deep deposit of sandy loam (548) containing building rubble appears to have been levelled over the ditch shortly after its eventual filling to provide a formation level for the brick and sandstone foundations of late 18th/early 19th century buildings [550], [551] and [552] (Fig 5, Section 2). The remnants of walls and floor surfaces for these structures were present below a mixed layer of

demolition and hardcore (549) for the tarmac surface (547) of the former car park (Plate 5).

5 THE FINDS

5.1 **The pottery** by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprises 192 sherds with a total weight of 7,108g. The estimated vessel equivalent (EVE), by summation of surviving rimsherd circumference is 1.89. It comprises mainly stratified post-medieval wares, along with residual medieval material, with the range of ware types showing an identifiable hiatus in pottery deposition which coincides with the English Civil War when buildings in the area were removed to allow reinforcement of the city's defences.

Analytical Methodology

The pottery was initially bulk-sorted and recorded on a computer using DBase IV software. The material from each context was recorded by number and weight of sherds per fabric type, with featureless body sherds of the same fabric counted, weighed and recorded as one database entry. Feature sherds such as rims, bases and lugs were individually recorded, with individual codes used for the various types. Decorated sherds were similarly treated. In the case of the rimsherds, the form, diameter in mm and the percentage remaining of the original complete circumference was all recorded. This figure was summed for each fabric type to obtain the estimated vessel equivalent (EVE).

The terminology used is that defined by the Medieval Pottery Research Group's Guide to the Classification of Medieval Ceramic Forms (MPRG 1998) and to the minimum standards laid out in the Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of post-Roman Ceramics (MPRG2001). All the statistical analyses were carried out using a Dbase package written by the author, which interrogated the original or subsidiary databases, with some of the final calculations made with an electronic calculator. All statistical analyses were carried out to the minimum standards suggested by Orton (1998-9, 135-7).

Fabric

The pottery was recorded using the codes and chronology of the Warwickshire Medieval and Post-Medieval Pottery Type-Series (Ratkai and Soden, in archive), as follows (the numeric codes prefixed by 'F' refer to those used in the databases,

Tables and Appendices):

F300: Sq21: Coventry 'D' ware, 1150 – 1250.	1 sherd, 2g,	EVE = 0.
F302: WW1: Chilvers Coton 'A' ware, 1250 -1300.	2 sherds, 50g,	EVE = 0.
F303: Sq30. Chilvers Coton 'C' ware, 1300-1500.	20 sherds, 238g,	EVE = 0.
F324: Sg20. Brill/Boarstall Ware, 1200 – 1600.	1 sherd, 28g,	EVE = 0.
F330: CS05. Northants Shelly Ware, 1100-1400.	1 sherd, 164g,	EVE = 0.
F346: Langewehe Stoneware.	1 sherd, 40g,	EVE = 0.
F401: SLM10. Late Chilvers Coton ware (C), 15th century.	40 sherds, 1,287g,	EVE = 0.75
F403: MP. Midland Purple ware, 15th – mid 17th century.	52 sherds, 2,748g,	EVE = 0.36.
F404: CIST. Cistercian ware, 1475-1550.	22 sherds, 212g,	EVE = 0.39.
F405: STG03: Frechen Stoneware, 1550 – 1700.	5 sherds, 162g,	EVE = 0.
F406: WW02. 'Tudor Green' ware, 1380 – 1550.	3 sherds, 20g,	EVE = 0.
F408: MY. Midland Yellow ware, 1550-1720.	19 sherds, 517g,	EVE = 0.39.
F411: MB01. Midland Blackware, *c* 1540 – 1700.	1 sherd, 249g.	
F436: MANG: Staffordshire Manganese Ware, 1680-1740.	21 sherds, 1,366g.	
F437: SLPW02. Staffordshire trailed Slipware, 1640-1700.	1 sherd, 7g.	

The following, not included in the Warwickshire CTS, were also noted:

F427: Metropolitan type slipware. 17th century. Fine, slightly sandy red earthenware, with geometric designs in underglaze white slip. Manufactured at a number of centres. The general range of forms include pancheons, dishes and bowls. 2 sherds, 28g.

The pottery occurrence per context by number and weight of sherds per fabric type is held in archive. The range of fabric types is typical of contemporary sites in Coventry. The sherd of Brill/Boarstall ware is from a 'Tudor Green' –type vessel, and dateable to the late 15th or 16th century. A large (78g), residual rimsherd from a Romano-British shelly ware jar was also noted, from context (542), the secondary fill of the town ditch.

Chronology

Each context-specific pottery assemblage was given a ceramic phase ('CP') date, based on the range of major fabrics present, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Ceramic phase chronology

Phase	Defining Wares	Date
CP1	Sq202	1100-1200
	Sq21	1150-1200
CP2	Sq23	1200-1250
CP3	WW1	1250-1300
CP4	Sq30	1300-1400
CP5	MP, SLM10, WW02	1400-1470
CP6	CIST	1470-1550
CP7	MY, STG03	1550-1600
CP8	TGE01, Slipware	1600-1640
CP9	MB02, SLPW02	1640-1680
CP10	MANG	1680-1750

Table 2: Pottery occurrence per ceramic phase by number and weight (in g) of sherds and EVE

Date	No	Wt	EVE
CP1	0	0	0
CP1a	0	0	0
CP2	0	0	0
CP3	0	0	0
CP4	0	0	0
CP5	9	225	0.12
CP6	5	114	0.22
CP7	1	6	0
CP8	0	0	0
CP9	0	0	0
CP10	177	6763	1.55
Total	192	7108	1.89

The pottery occurrence per ceramic phase is shown in Table 2. It shows that all the pottery assemblages are 15th century or later, although some residual medieval wares were noted in these and later contexts. No pottery was deposited at the site between 1600 and the very late 17th or 18th century. This is similar to the pattern noted at the 2005 Belgrade Plaza excavations (Blinkhorn forthcoming), and supports the historical record of the area being cleared of buildings during the Civil War, to allow a clear field of fire for defenders of the city.

The assemblages

The assemblages are all fairly typical of pottery known from contemporary sites in Coventry. The sherds are all generally large and unabraded, although no vessels were reconstructable to any great degree, and none of them were considered worthy of illustration.

CP5, *c* 1400 – 1470. Nine sherds, 225g, EVE = 0.12.

This assemblage consisted entirely of Late Chilvers Coton ware (fabric SLM10), apart from a small residual sherd (6g) of Chilvers Coton 'C' ware (fabric Sq30). A single rimsherd was noted, from a large jar or similar closed form, and all the other sherds appear to be from similar vessels. This is typical of the period.

CP6, *c* 1470 – 1550. 5 sherds, 114g, EVE = 0.22.

This assemblage comprised two small sherds (4g) from a single Cistercian ware cup, with the rest of the assemblage made up of Late Chilvers Coton ware. Again, these were all bodysherds apart from a single rim from a similar vessel to that noted in CP5.

CP7, *c* 1550 – 1600. 1 sherd, 6g, EVE = 0.

The pottery from this phase was a single sherd of Midland Yellow ware (fabric MY), a common find in Coventry.

CP10, *c* 1680 – 1750. 177 sherds, 6763g, EVE = 1.55

The bulk of the pottery from the site dated to this phase, with the majority originating in three contexts in the town ditch, (539), (541) and (542). The assemblages from these deposits were all checked for cross-fitting sherds, but there were none, indicating that although the pottery was all broadly contemporary, it was all deposited at different times, or came from different sources. It all appears domestic in nature, comprising a fairly standard mix of utilitarian vessels and tablewares.

The commonest pottery from this phase was Midland Purple Ware (52 sherds, 2,738g), with Manganese Glazed Earthenware (21 sherds, 1,366g) also well-represented. Both types comprised entirely large, utilitarian vessels such as large pancheons and cisterns. Midland Yellow ware was fairly well-represented (18 sherds, 511g), along with a single sherd of Staffordshire trailed slipware and five sherds of German Stoneware (162g). Twenty sherds (208g) of Cistercian ware were present, and are probably contemporary, although this phase does date to the very

end of the lifetime of the ware, and the same comments applies to the two sherds of Metropolitan-type Slipware. All these wares were fragments of vessels associated with serving and consumption of food and drink, such as plates, mugs and cups. The rest of the assemblage comprised residual medieval wares, all of which appear to date to the mid-13th century of later, and a single large rimsherd from a Romano-British shelly ware jar.

5.2 **Ceramic building material** by Pat Chapman

This assemblage of ten fragments of medieval roof tile, weighs 1801g. Two pieces have nibs, but there are no peg holes. From context (545), the primary fill of the town ditch, there is the top half of a tile, measuring 165mm (6½ inches) wide and c 15mm thick with a very small nib only 18mm wide at the base. The tile from context (539), a fill of the town ditch, is part of one side with a nib 30mm wide; both nibs were pulled up, not attached from a separate piece of clay. One of the small sherds from (506), pit fill, is curved and so it is possibly the remnant of a ridge tile. The fabric is a coarse orange to orange red sand with occasional small calcareous and stone inclusions. One fragment has been fired to a hard red with a black surface. The tile is very similar to those found in the town ditch during the excavations of 2005 (Chapman, forthcoming). The measurable width and thickness accord with the 1477 Act of Parliament which standardised the size of the plain tile as 10½ inches long by 6½ inches wide and ½ inch thick (265mm by 165mm and 13mm).

5.3 The other finds by Tora Hylton

A small group of late medieval and post-medieval finds were recovered from a series of deposits within the town ditch [538]. Stratigraphically the earliest find is a single lead alloy shoe buckle from a late medieval context (545). The majority of finds (11) were recovered from early post-medieval deposits (542), while a small number (5) were recovered from late post-medieval deposits (539).

In total there are seventeen individually recorded small finds, in five material types, copper alloy (5), iron (9), lead (1), stone (1) and bone (1). In addition there is a small group of clay tobacco-pipes, which have been recorded under the bulk finds system. With the exception of six nails, the assemblage is represented by objects relating to personal dress, items for use in a domestic setting and tools. The range is small but some of the objects may be compared to examples recovered from Whitefriars (Woodfield 2005).

The costume fittings include two buckles, a buckle plate and a pin. A lead/tin alloy

shoe buckle from late medieval context (545) has a slightly convex double oval frame and the outer edge of the frame is beaded like a 15th century example from London (Egan 1991, fig 40 227). A vestige of the original leather strap survives on the centre bar and the presence of ferrous corrosion deposits, indicates that originally there would have been an iron pin for securing the strap.

A copper alloy buckle with D-shaped frame and pin suggests a 16th/17th century date. The buckle plate is manufactured from copper alloy sheet (31 x 20mm), it has three perforations for securing to the strap and it is decorated with rocker-arm ornament (zig-zag motif) within a repousse border of small pellets. The plate still retains the original 'brass' coloured surface, but in places this is masked by a distinctive black coating. There are many examples of dress accessories manufactured from sheet copper-alloy and coated in a black lacquer, a small number were recovered from Whitefriars, Coventry and Egan has suggested that they may have been coated in linseed oil, to give a reddish translucent colour (2005, 348-49). Buckle-plates of this style generally date to the 15th and 16th centuries (Margeson 1993, 25).

Finally there is a copper alloy pin with wire wound head, it appears to correspond to Caples Type B, with the wire loosely crimped on top of the shaft; a type prevalent in the 16th century (Capel 2005, 359-60).

Items for household use include two fragments from cast copper alloy vessels, both were recovered from fill (542) and include part of an angular copper alloy handle, possibly from a tripod cauldron and similar to a handle seen on a vessel fragment from London (Egan 1998, fig 131). The other is a small fragment from a skillet/cauldron, it comprises the junction between the rim and the body. The curvature of the piece suggests that originally the diameter of the vessel would have been in excess of 200mm.

There are three objects which may be classed as tools, a whittle-tang knife from the early post-medieval ditch fill (542) and a pinner's bone and a whetstone from the late-post-medieval ditch fill.

Stylistically the knife looks medieval in date, the tang is central to the blade with a stepped shoulder and the back of blade is horizontal. The cutting edge is slightly concave and tapers to the tip, it is possible that the concavity was created during the sharpening of the blade.

The presence of part of a pinner's bone alludes to the manufacture of brass wire pins in the vicinity, it would have acted a holder for the pins, while the points were being

filed. Like pinner's bones found on other sites in Coventry (Woodfield, 2005, fig 164, 108-109), this example has been made from a cattle metatarsal. Although incomplete, it measures 152mm in length and the long axis of the bone has four flat facets, creating a four-sided shaft, with square-cross-section (20 x 20mm). The four faces all display zones of transverse and diagonal file marks, resulting from filing the points of the pins. The extreme end of the pinner's bone (now missing) would have been furnished with three or four deep set grooves for holding the pins, like examples from Norwich (Margeson 1993, fig 128, 1383). Pinner's bones were in use from the 17th-19th centuries, when the process became mechanised.

The whetstone is made from sandstone. Although incomplete (58mm long), both terminals are missing, it has a bulbous circular cross-section and tapers slightly towards one end.

Other objects worthy of note include six nails with flat sub-circular heads and square-sectioned shanks measuring from 40-85mm in length, and a perforated binding strip measuring up to 132mm in length.

5.4 The leather by Iain Soden

A total of eight groups of fragments from leather shoes and footwear were recovered from this town ditch section. Many groups comprised more than one fragment, believed to derive from a single shoe. They were all preserved in anaerobic conditions within the ditch fills. All but one derives from context (542), the exception being a single item from (544). They are considerably more fragmentary than most of the shoes from the massive assemblage from the nearby site at the other end of Bond Street, at its junction with Hill Street (BSC05).

The shoe fragments were gently washed with warm water to remove the silt and dirt and double-bagged to retain moisture. They were drawn at 1:1 or greater in this cleaned but un-conserved state to enable a record to be made before exposure to any risk of shrinkage during the conservation process. They have now been sent to the Museum of London for conservation by freeze-drying.

The leather comprised:

SF 9 (542) Offcuts and strips

SF10 (542) Upper and heel/ankle pieces, soles, very fragmentary

SF11 (542) Three strips/offcuts

SF15 (542) Upper with iron buckle and strap, 1 piece waste leather

SF16 (544) Heel fragment and heel reinforcement

SF17 (542) Upper and heel fragments. Leather sole. Piece with stiching

SF19 (542) Sole and upper fragments, patten fragments

SF25 (542) Child's upper with iron buckle

The recognisable and reconstructable items are catalogued below (SF's 10 [sole], 15 [upper],17 [sole], 19 [patten], 25 [upper]). The remainder rest in archive as drawn fragments, but are not reproduced here.

Those drawn (Figs 7 and 8) have been matched to the considerable published and reported shoes found previously in Coventry. These comprise the large Shelton collection of shoes from all over the city centre recovered between 1926 and 1957 (Thomas 1980), together with the more modern excavated assemblages from the town ditch at Cox Street (Thomas, in Bateman and Redknap 1986) and Broadgate (Thomas, in Rylatt and Stokes 1996). Comparison has also been possible with the shoes recently recovered and analysed from the IKEA site on the nearby Corporation Street (Soden, in Burrow and Soden 2006, 13-15, Fig 6).

The shoes from this site have been looked at with a familiarity with the notable Hill Street/Bond Street assemblage of shoes in mind (BSC05) but with the knowledge that their separate analysis is in its early days and that the large size of that assemblage, its quality and the far better ground conditions and stratification will enable finds specialists looking at Coventry's early footwear to move beyond the level of current understanding.

Catalogue of illustrated fragments:

1. Complete sole and heel, 270mm long from heel to toe, as one piece, stitched all around with cracking across the instep and around the ball of the foot from flexing during prolonged wear. The toe is relatively pointed, but rounding off in style; it may be late fifteenth-century or early sixteenth century in date. The type is described in Thomas (1980, 10) where it is described as a common distinguishable type. SF 10 (context 542).

2. Front portion of an economy turnshoe (probably one-piece) with iron buckle and strap fastening. This is Thomas's Type 1a (1980, 12). Extant length 235mm. The toe appears to have been sliced off, possibly to enable the wearer to continue use when they had grown too large for the piece, or possibly to ease chafing on a bad toe. The date is probably late-fifteenth or early sixteenth century but the shape is not conclusive. SF15 (context 542).

3. Almost complete sole and heel 260mm long from heel to toe, as one piece, stitched all around. From a turnshoe. A huge piece has been worn out of the ball of the foot. The shoe was worn out. The relatively pointed toe points slightly outwards, as described by Thomas (1980, 10) as a common feature. The shape is suggestive of a late fifteenth-century date. The closest parallels can be found in Thomas (1980, fig 3 [Broadgate: HAGM accession no 78/51/24] or perhaps fig 5 [Broadgate: HAGM accession no 78/51/61]). SF17 (context 542).

4. Fragments of a leather and wood patten, fastened with iron nails and a buckle. Few complete pattens have been recovered from Coventry, so it is difficult to find a reliable parallel for these fragments. The most complete fragment, from an ankle strap, is perhaps best paralleled by the even-less-fragmentary example (unpovenanced) in the Shelton Collection (HAGM Acc no 78/82/97 in Thomas 1980, fig 22). The current example retains its buckle, which would have fastened around the front of the ankle. The other fragment derives from the side-fastening around the fore-part of the foot; whether instep or outside is unclear. SF19 (context 542).

5. Separate sole and upper of a child's one-piece economy ankle boot, fastened with a buckle and strap, the commonest style. Thomas's type 1a (1980, 12). Sole measures 132mm from heel to toe. The shape is relatively rounded, suggestive of a sixteenth century date but otherwise probably barely pays lip-service to any contemporary fashions, due to economy manufacture and the needs of a child's feet to grow. Only three children's shoes are published from Coventry. This is closest to the one-piece economy boot-style of the Shelton Collection examples (New Art Gallery site) HAGM Acc no 56/64/1 and 56/64/2 (Thomas 1980, fig 12),but its inclusion of a buckle rather than laces is more redolent of the recently excavated example from the IKEA site (Soden 2006, 24, & fig 6.6). SF25 (context 542).

6 FAUNAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

6.1 **Animal Bones** by Philip L Armitage

Introduction

Numbers of bones and species represented

The town ditch deposits yielded 587 hand collected animal bone elements/fragments. Employing standard zooarchaeological methodological procedures, 547 (93.2% of the total) are identified to taxon/species and part of

skeleton (table in archive), and 40 fragments (6.8%) remain unidentified (table in archive). Ten species are represented (seven mammals & three birds). No fish, amphibian or reptile species is represented in the submitted faunal samples.

In addition to the 587 specimens reported on below, there is a "pinners' bone" (see MacGregor 1985, 171) fashioned from a cattle metatarsus from (539).

Patterns of refuse deposition & condition of the bone

Analysis of the animal bone assemblages indicates these represent kitchen/table (household) refuse intermixed with the unwanted by-products from leather- and/or horn- working activities, with the samples from contexts (539), (542) and (545) yielding the greatest concentrations of industrial/craft waste.

It appears virtually all of the food and industrial waste material was thrown into the ditch and was buried very soon after being discarded, as evidenced by the overall good state of preservation, the exceptionally low incidence of bones exhibiting the effects of sub-aerial weathering/exposure (only two from 541) and limited evidence of dog gnawing on the bones. The twelve dog-gnawed bones (six cattle, three sheep and three pig) could be the remains of food waste scavenged by dogs whilst rummaging through refuse middens and later re-deposited into the ditch fills – but it is equally plausible (given their otherwise good state of preservation) that these specimens were food scraps purposely fed to household dogs and subsequently thrown out with the other domestic refuse.

Only a single bone, a sheep femur from (539) exhibits evidence of burning in the form of a small scorched area on the shaft.

The town ditch also appears to have been a convenient dumping area for the refuse (horse bones) from knackers' yards and the bodies of dead dogs, as well as naturally accumulating the skeletal remains of wild fauna, including those of urban scavengers such as ravens.

Descriptions of the animals

Horse

Withers heights in two horses may be determined from the lengths of their metapodial bones (method of Kiesewalter 1888); with the stature of the smallest calculated at 1391mm and the tallest 1514mm.

Cattle

All the cattle are horned and no polled (naturally hornless) animals are identified in

the submitted faunal samples. Both short and medium horned animals are represented (classification system of Armitage 1982 & 1989) but the latter outnumber the former by almost 3:1 (table in archive). However, as the assemblages of horn cores on which this observation is based represent waste from leather- and/or horn- working activity (see discussion below) it would be unwise to suggest these data are evidence for the preponderance of medium horned types among the cattle stocks sent to the town for slaughter/feeding the inhabitants. It could instead reflect preferential selection by craftsmen for the hides/horn cores from the larger sized/larger horned animals when obtaining raw material from the town's butchers.

Withers heights may be determined in four of the cattle from the lengths in their leg bones (using the factors of Fock 1966 and Matolsci 1970), with the stature in the smallest animal calculated at 1074mm and the tallest 1254mm (mean 1183mm). Two males and three females are recognized by their innominate bones (criteria of Grigson 1982). Based on the system of Armitage (1982 & 1989) 22 of the combined sub adult, adult & old adult horn cores are identified as female, ten as male and eight as castrates.

Sheep

Unlike the cattle, the sheep represented by the BS06 animal bone assemblages comprise polled as well as horned individuals:

Table 3: Composition of sheep one assemblage

Context	Polled skull	Horned skull (core removed)	Chopped horn core
539	2	1	
542	1	1	2 (both young adult males)
545		1	

Withers heights in 23 sheep may be determined from the lengths in their leg bones (method of Teichert n.d.); with the smallest animal calculated at 502mm and the tallest at 646mm; mean 575mm; standard deviation 3.48. These data compare very favourably with the stature in 37 sheep from the mid-16th century Whitefriars site, Coventry, documented by Holmes (1981, 134): where the observed range was 490 to 630mm; mean 577mm; standard deviation 3.31.

Only two innominate bones can be sexed (using the criteria of Armitage 1977, 76):

a male from (542) and a female from (545).

Goat

Using the criteria of Boessneck, Müller & Teichert (1964, 107 – 118) a metatarsus from (539) is positively identified as goat, whose withers height calculated from the bone length (GL 114.4mm) is estimated at 611mm (after the method of von den Driesch & Boessneck 1974).

Pig

Shoulder height in the pig represented by the complete humerus from (539) is estimated at 794mm (calculated from the GL 196 mm x factor 4.05, after the method of Becker 1980, 27). Based on morphological criteria (method of Mayer & Brisbin 1988) one male upper canine tooth and one female lower canine tooth are identified, both from (539).

Dog

There are bone elements from at least four adult dogs (three animals from (539) and one from (542)). A skull (cf size of modern greyhound) from (539) is dolichocephalic (long & narrow); with a cephalic index of 49.7, snout index of 50.5 and snout width index 38.3 (indices of Harcourt 1974). This specimen has strongly developed nuchal and sagittal crests, and is identified as male from its basioccipital markings (criteria of The & Trouth 1976; Type I). The permanent dentition is fully erupted, indicating an adult animal.

Fallow deer

This species is represented by a single metatarsus from (542).

Birds

Three adult goose bones are identified: one radius from (539) and one coracoid &and one humerus, both specimens from (542). Domestic fowl is represented by two bone elements: an immature coracoid from (542) and an adult pelvis from (544). There is also a single tarsometatarsus of an adult raven from (539).

Interpretation & Discussion

Diet

Analysis of the food bones indicates a diet of "solid sufficiency" but of limited variety, with cattle contributing the greatest proportion of meat consumed, and sheep second in importance. Lesser quantities of pig were eaten, and the occasional goose or fowl provided the only variety in an otherwise mundane diet. There were

no fish and few bird bones. The single fallow deer metatarsus found probably does not necessarily indicate the eating of venison, but instead could form part of the craft waste (ie derives from a deer skin imported for leather working).

Industrial activities

Cattle horn cores chopped from the skull (with pieces of attached frontal and parietal bones) – in the manner illustrated in Armitage (1989, 85, figs. 1a & 1b) – form the bulk of the material identified as industrial/craft activity waste. It is clear that the hides of at least three of the cattle represented by such specimens had been removed as raw material for leather working, as evidenced by the presence of knife (skinning) cut marks on the frontal bones of one male and one female young adult medium-horned cattle and one juvenile medium-horned animal - all three specimens from (545). These three cattle horn cores (and many of the others at the site?) could therefore have come from a nearby tanyard. However, as discussed by Armitage (1989, 84) in the medieval period leather workers often sold on the horns - still attached to a portion of the skull and with the inner bone cores still in them - to horn-workers, who after removing the outer horn sheath then threw away the unwanted bony cores. Therefore there are two possible sources of the cattle horn cores found deposited in the town ditch at the Plaza 2 site: namely, a tanyard and/or horner's workshop.

The detached/chopped horn cores of sheep and the sheep crania with their cores hacked off provide evidence of horn-working activity nearby. Special mention should also be made of the disproportionate numbers of sheep metapodial bones (twelve metacarpi & thirteen metatarsi) from context (542). Such deposits are generally recognized as the discarded refuse from whittawyers (See O'Connor 1984 and Serjeantson 1989) but generally these assemblages are characterized by quantities of associated phalanges, a situation which is not found at the Belgrade Plaza 2 site – context (542) yielded a single first phalange and no second or third phalanges. But perhaps the absence of sheep phalanges may be explained by a bias against the recovery of these smaller bone elements owing to poor excavation conditions.

In the medieval period, whittawyers, in addition to working with sheep skins, also were responsible for curing the skins of goats and deer, and this activity could therefore account for the presence in the ditch deposits of the goat metatarsus from (539) and fallow deer metatarsus from (542).

Conclusion

Although the site yielded a relatively modest assemblage of animal bone, its analysis has provided insight into the diet of the inhabitants and evidence of industrial/craft activities in the vicinity that utilized animal products as raw materials, especially hides and skins, which are indicated by the deposits of horn cores of cattle and the quantities of metapodial bones of sheep, and possibly also by the metatarsal bones of goat and deer. The bone evidence also indicates the exploitation of cattle and sheep horn as raw material.

6.2 **Plant macrofossils and other remains** by Val Fryer

Introduction and method statement

Excavations at Belgrade Plaza revealed a section of the medieval town ditch. Samples for the retrieval of the plant macrofossil assemblages were taken from two waterlogged basal fills within the ditch, contexts (542) (sample 1) and (545) (sample 2). These have been attributed to the 16th and 15th centuries respectively.

The samples were processed by Northamptonshire Archaeology, and the flots were collected in 500 micron and 1mm mesh sieves. As waterlogged macrofossils were noted within both assemblages, the flots were stored in water prior to sorting. The wet retents were scanned under a binocular microscope at magnifications up to x 16 and the plant macrofossils and other remains noted are listed in archive. Nomenclature within the table follows Stace (1997) for the plant macrofossils and Macan (1977) for the freshwater mollusc shells. Identifications were made by comparison with modern reference specimens. With the exception of the charcoal/charred wood fragments, all plant remains were waterlogged. As the recorded macrofossils were all relatively robust, both flots were air dried after sorting to facilitate their long-term storage.

Results

Seeds of dry land herbs and wetland and aquatic plants were present at a moderate density within both assemblages. Preservation was generally good, although some macrofossils were fragmented and distorted.

Seeds of grassland herbs and ruderal weeds were predominant within both assemblages. Taxa noted included hemlock (Conium maculatum), willow herb (Epilobium sp.), persicaria (Persicaria maculosa/ lapathifolia), indeterminate grasses (Poaceae), cinquefoil (Potentilla sp.), self heal (Prunella vulgaris), meadow/creeping/bulbous buttercup (Ranunculus acris/repens/bulbosus), dock

(Rumex sp.), sow thistle (Sonchus oleraceus), chickweed (Stellaria media) and stinging nettles (Urtica dioica). A small number of seeds of common field weeds including orache (Atriplex sp.), fat hen (Chenopodium album) and knotgrass (Polygonum aviculare) were also present along with corn cockle (Agrostemma githago) testa fragments, although the latter are frequent constituents of whole meal flour and are often seen within sewage deposits.

Wetland/aquatic plant macrofossils were present within both assemblages, but were noticeably more abundant within context (545), sample 2. Taxa noted included water plantain (Alisma plantago-aquatica), sedge (Carex sp.), rush (Juncus sp.), duckweed (Lemna sp.), lesser spearwort (Ranunculus flammula) and celery-leaved crowfoot (R. sceleratus). Although present, tree/shrub macrofossils were recorded at an extremely low density. Charred and waterlogged fragments of hazel (Corylus avellana) nutshell were noted within context (542), sample 1, and individual seeds/fruits of bramble (Rubus sect. Glandulosus), willow (Salix sp.) and elderberry (Sambucus nigra) were recovered from context (545), sample 2.

Fragments of waterlogged root/stem formed the main component of both assemblages, but pieces of charcoal/charred wood were also recorded along with bracken (Pteridium aquilinum) pinnules and fragments of bark, buds, leaves, moss, twigs and thorns.

A small assemblage of predominantly freshwater obligate mollusc shells was noted within context (545), sample 2. Species present included Bathyomphalus contortus, Hippeutis complanata and Pisidium sp. Other animal macrofossils included Cledoceran ephippia, ostracods and waterlogged arthropod remains.

Other remains were rare, but did include fragments of bone, brick/tile, eggshell and vitrified material.

Discussion

Although broadly similar in composition, there are slight differences between the assemblages, which may be indicative of differing conditions of deposition. The section of the town ditch recorded during excavation appears to have been regularly maintained throughout the medieval period, as there is only minimal evidence of intrusive shrub growth and little or no apparent deposition of domestic or other refuse. The assemblage from ample 2 (basal fill (545)) indicates that the newly excavated ditch sides were probably rapidly colonised by a variety of grassland herbs and ruderal weeds, whilst the abundance of duckweed fruits and freshwater mollusc shells suggests that the base of the ditch was at least semi-permanently

filled with still and probably stagnant water. The assemblage from sample 1 (secondary fill (542)) indicates that while the ditch sides were still grassed, the ditch base had become muddy, with only small (possibly seasonal) pools of shallow water.

7 DISCUSSION

The results of the town ditch excavation corroborated much of information resulting from documentary studies and the earlier Belgrade Plaza excavations of 2005. The earliest dating evidence retrieved from the ditch's primary fill, a single sherd of pottery and a decorated shoe buckle both post-date the documented cutting of the ditch in 1403. The plant macrofossil and micro-faunal evidence from this deposit suggests that the base of the ditch was semi-permanently filled with water; this would accord with the documented insertion of a sluice gate or spayer to the south-west of the excavation site in 1451 which diverted water from the Radford Brook into the ditch. Severely truncated remnants of this structure were revealed during a watching brief conducted in 2005 on the site of the Belgrade Theatre extension (Mason, Thorne and Webster 2005).

In 1518 the obligation to keep the ditch clean fell to Richard Marler whose tenants occupied the nearby plots. In return he was given sole use of the ditch between Hill and Well Street. The archaeological evidence suggests that this arrangement was not maintained into the later 16th century by which time the ditch was partially filled with refuse including leather (though not in the quantity recovered nearby from the 2005 excavation), fragmented building material and animal bones. Plant remains retrieved from this deposit indicates that the environment of the ditch was no longer characterised by deep standing water but instead was muddy with localised, perhaps seasonal, pools of water accumulating over the silts.

The animal bones recovered from the fills were a mix of food and industrial/craft waste. The use of skins and horns as raw materials, the latter particularly evident in the assemblage, is confirmed by documentary evidence for the longstanding practice of tanning in the near vicinity. This continued through to the late 17th century when a certain Benjamin Murdoch, one of a family of tanners utilising the Radford Brook, took tenancy of the ditch-side tenement.

Whilst no physical evidence was found for the documented Civil War fortification of the nearby Well Street Gate, a hiatus in the pottery assemblage spanning 1600-1670 would correspond with a decline in domestic activity as houses in front of the

gate were cleared to provide an open field of fire. A similar trend was noted in the assemblage retrieved from the 2005 excavations which were located adjacent to the Hill Street Gate (McAree and Mason 2006).

By the later 18th century the residual channel of the ditch appears to have been deliberately levelled over but it was not until the mid-19th century that the plot was built over with terraced houses. These survived for less than a century and were demolished in the aftermath of the Second World War.

The results of this excavation and related documentary research will be subsumed in summary form into much more extensive and detailed results gleamed from the nearby 2005 excavations (McAree, Mason and Soden, in prep).

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Northamptonshire Archaeology

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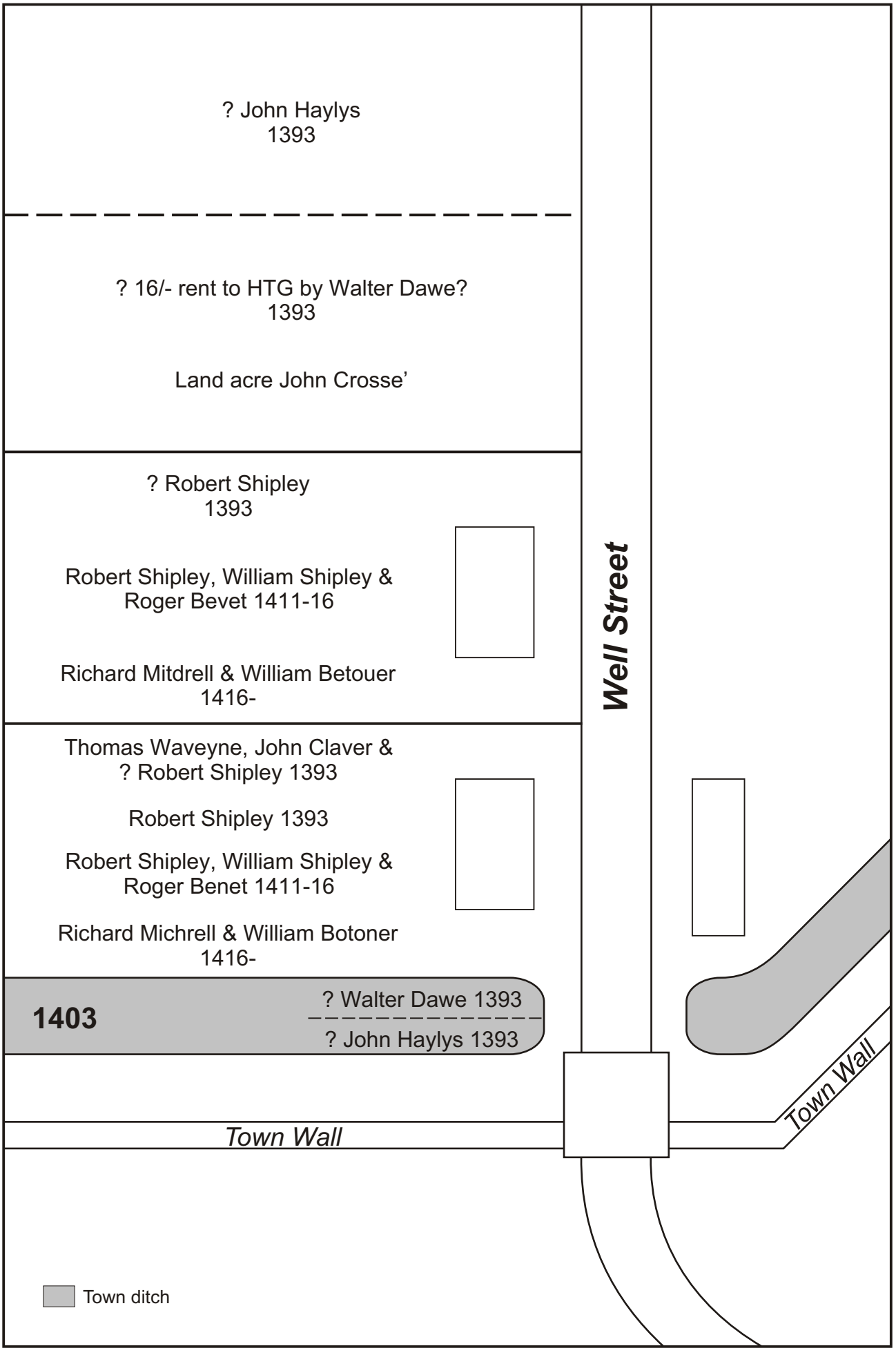
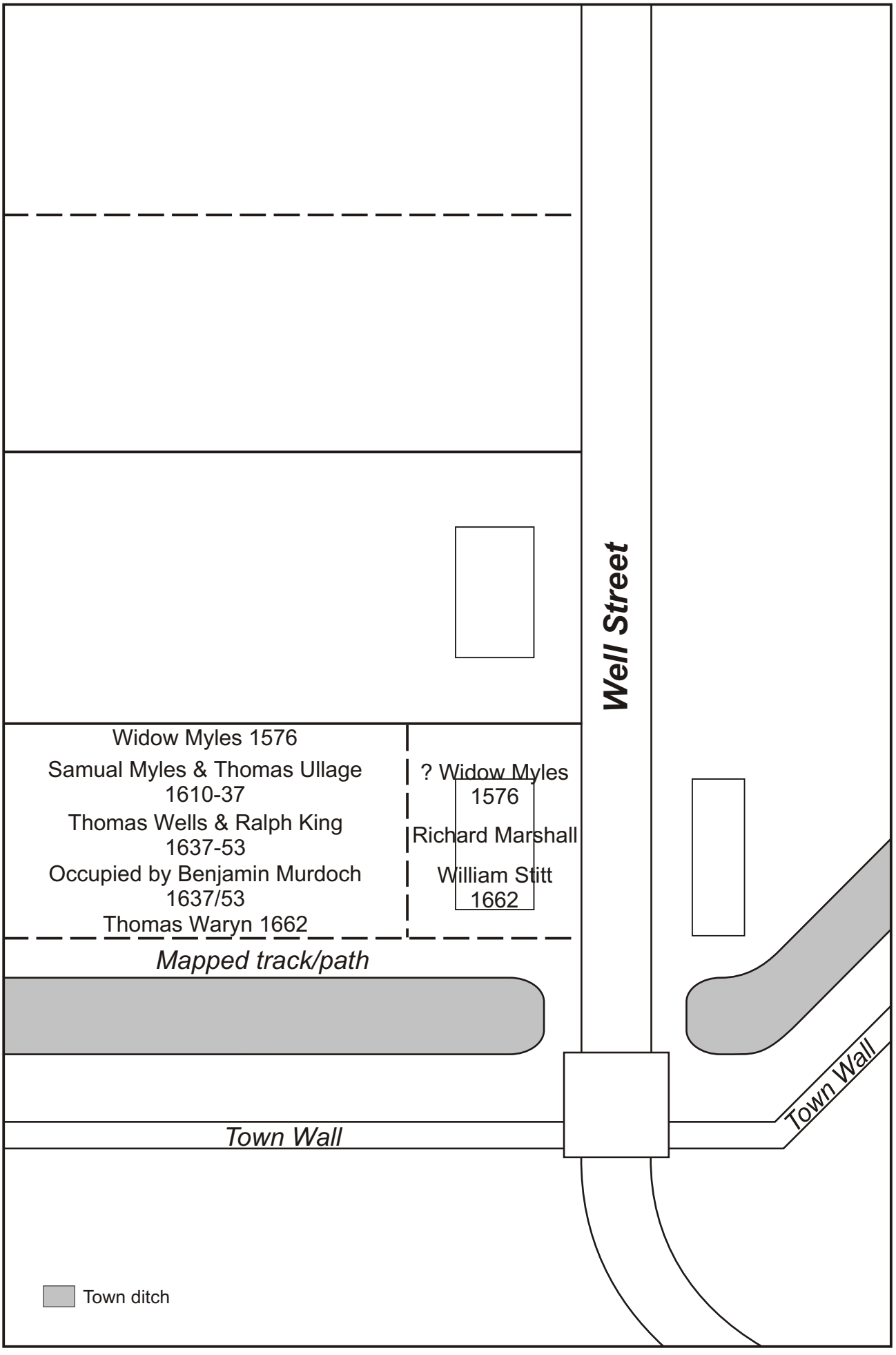
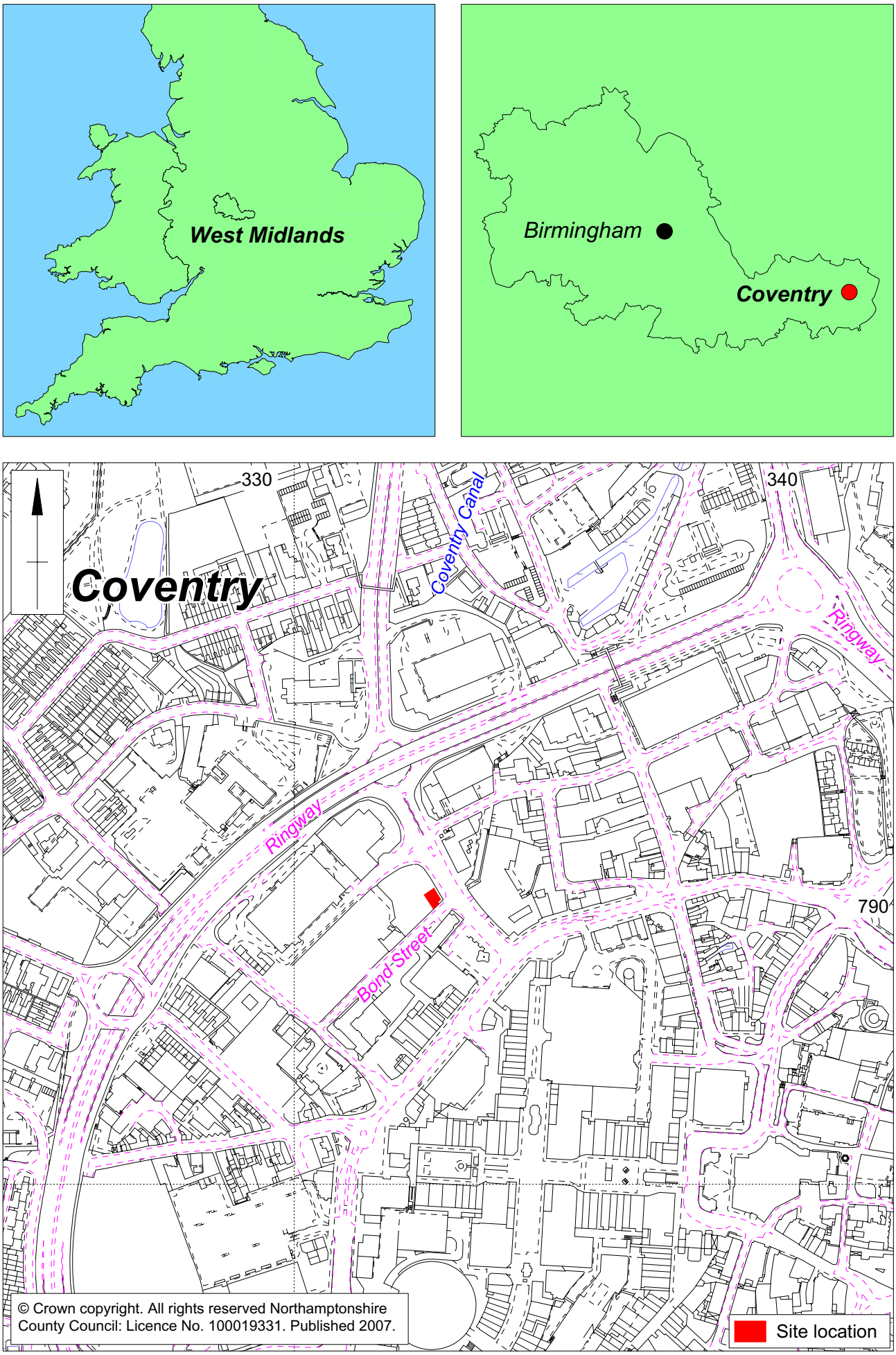


Medieval plots Appendix 1

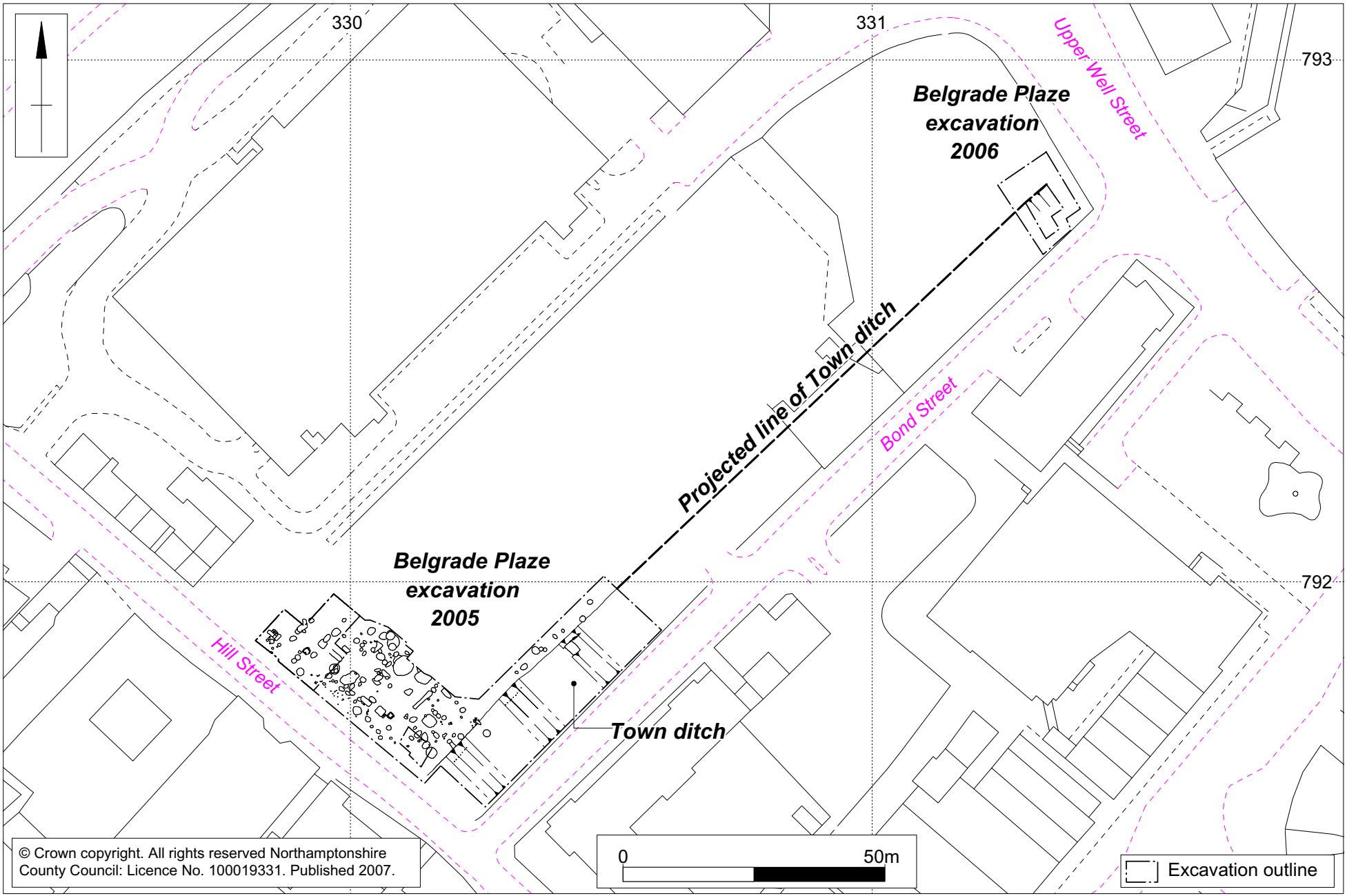


Post-medieval plots Appendix 2

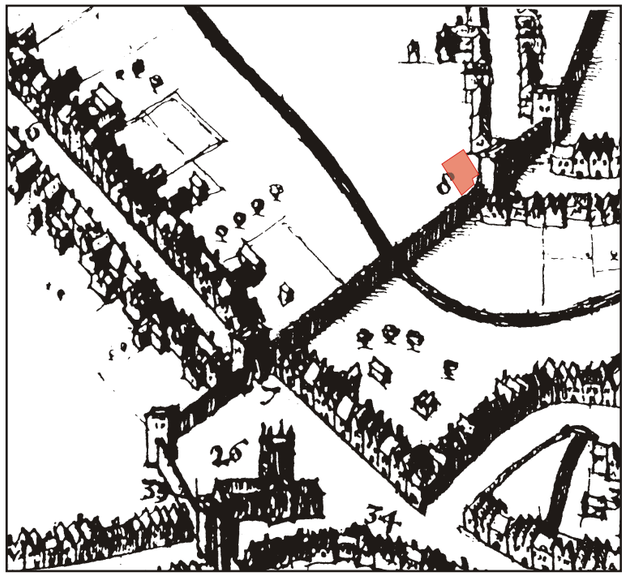


Scale 1:10,000

Site location Fig 1

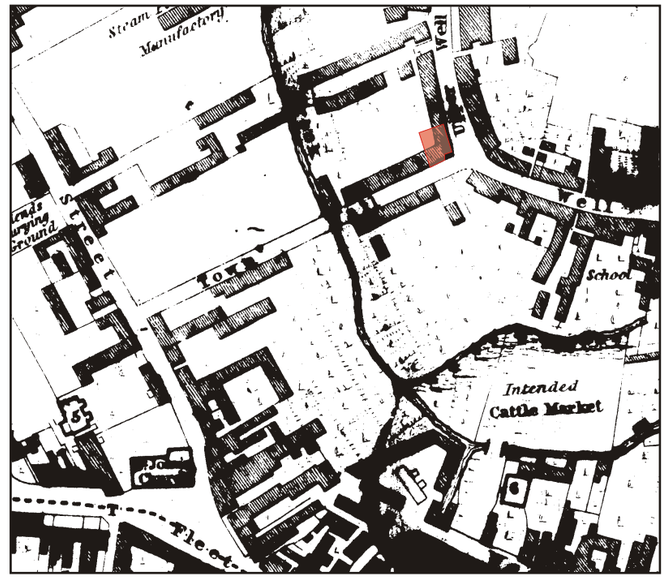


General plan of 2005 and 2006 excavations Fig 2

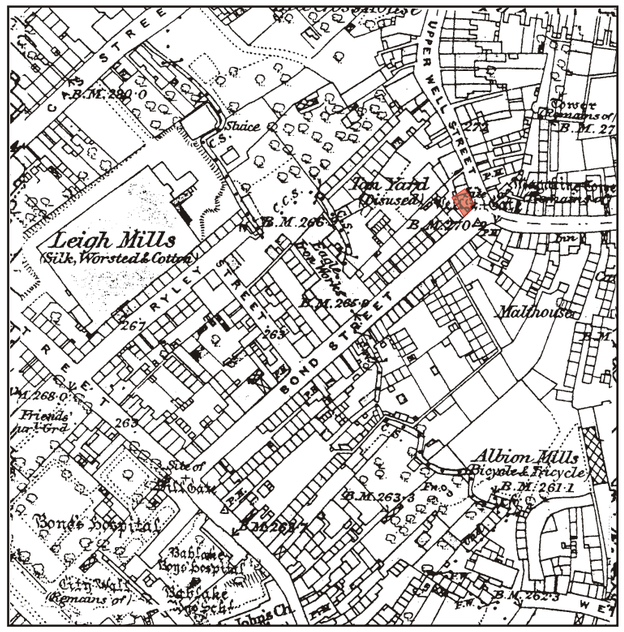


A 1610 John Speed's map of Coventry

B 1748-9 Samuel Bradford's map of Coventry

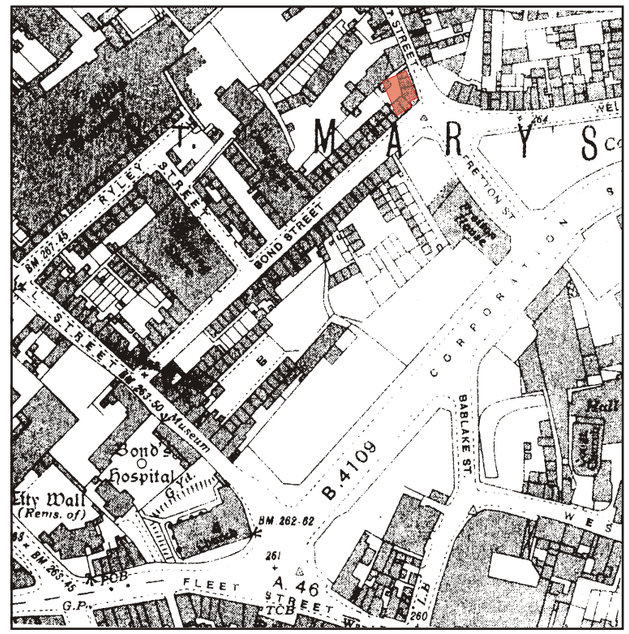


C 1837 W.F. Taunton's map of Coventry



D 1887 First Edition Ordnance Survey map

E 1925 Edition Ordnance Survey map



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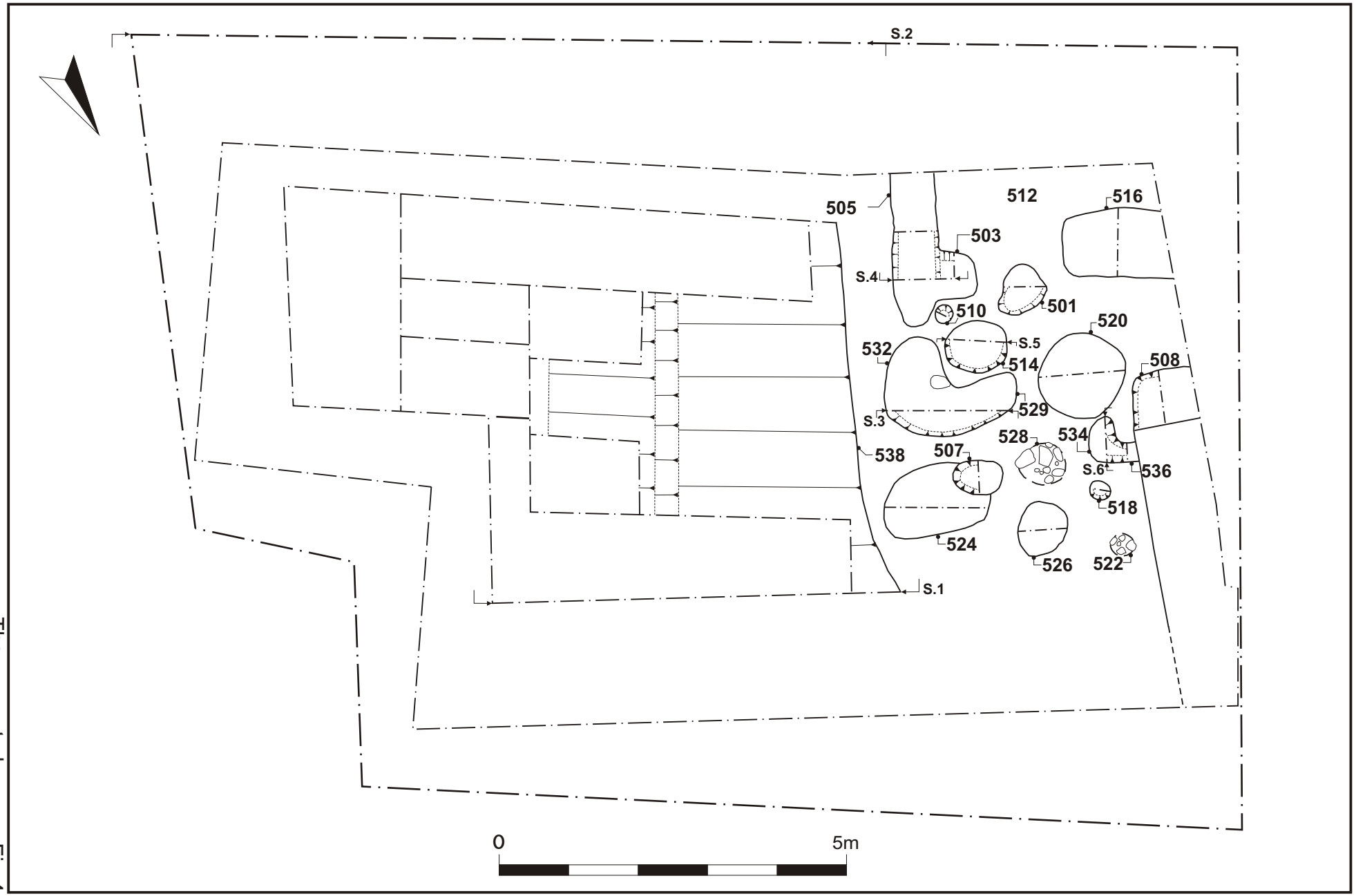
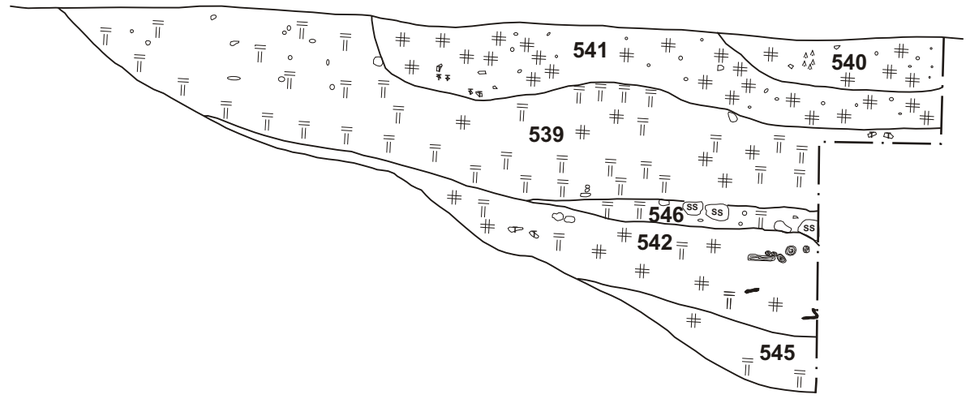


Fig 4 The excavated area

Section 1

81.18mOD
W

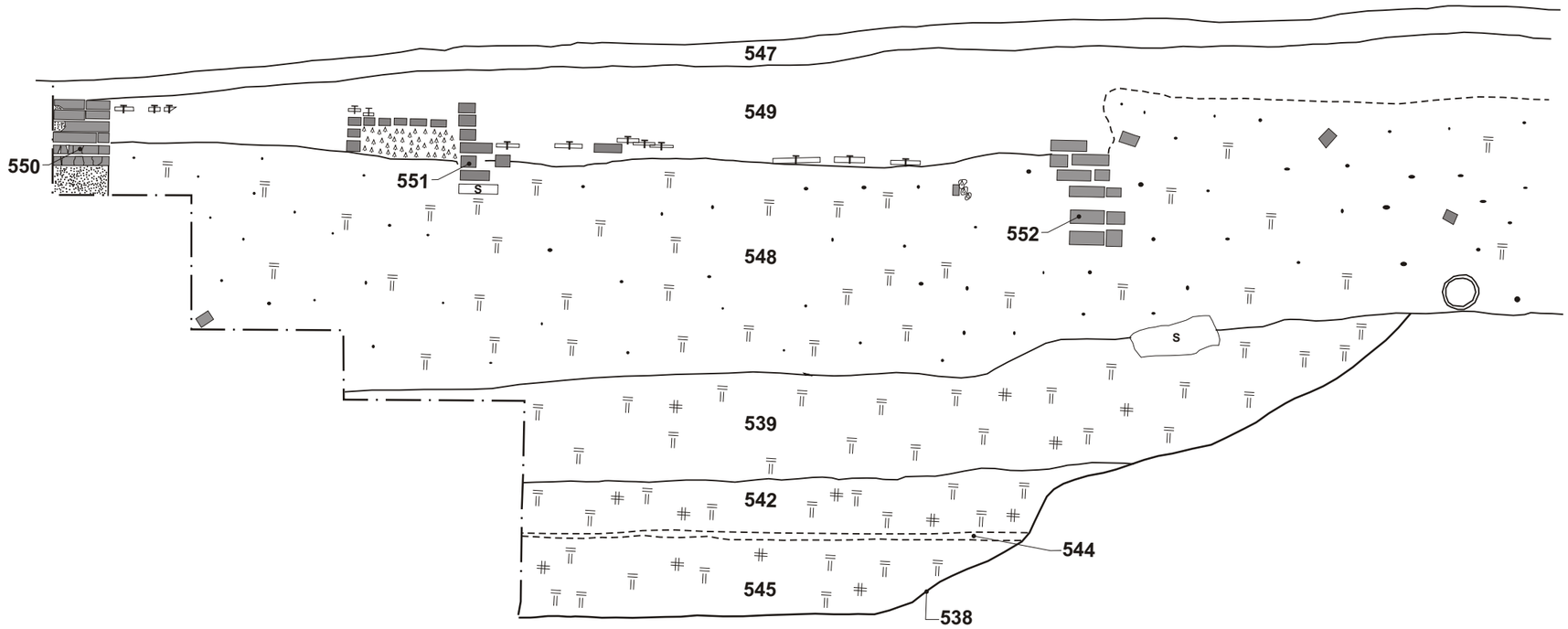
E



Section 2

82.41mOD
E

W

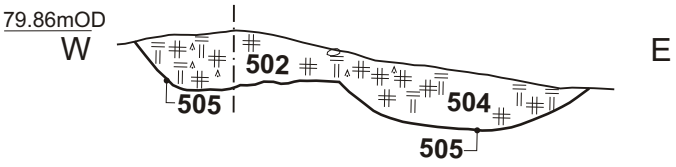


Charcoal
Mortar
Clay
Leather
Brick
Tile
Sandstone
Timber
Sand and pebbels

0 1m

Sections across town ditch Fig 5

Section 4



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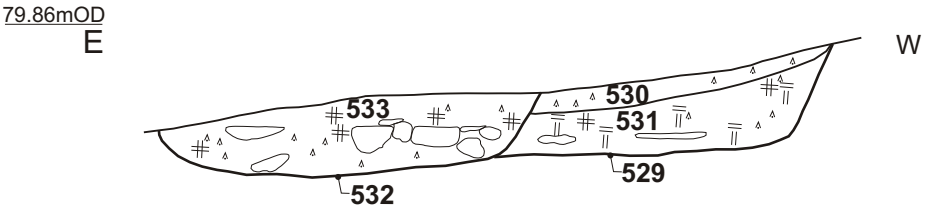

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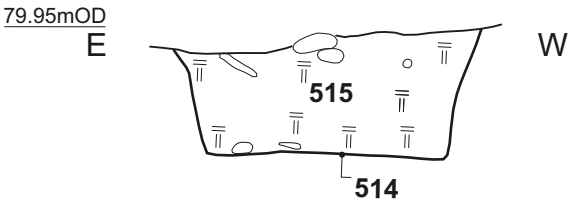

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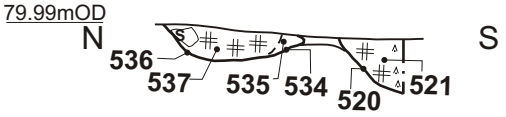


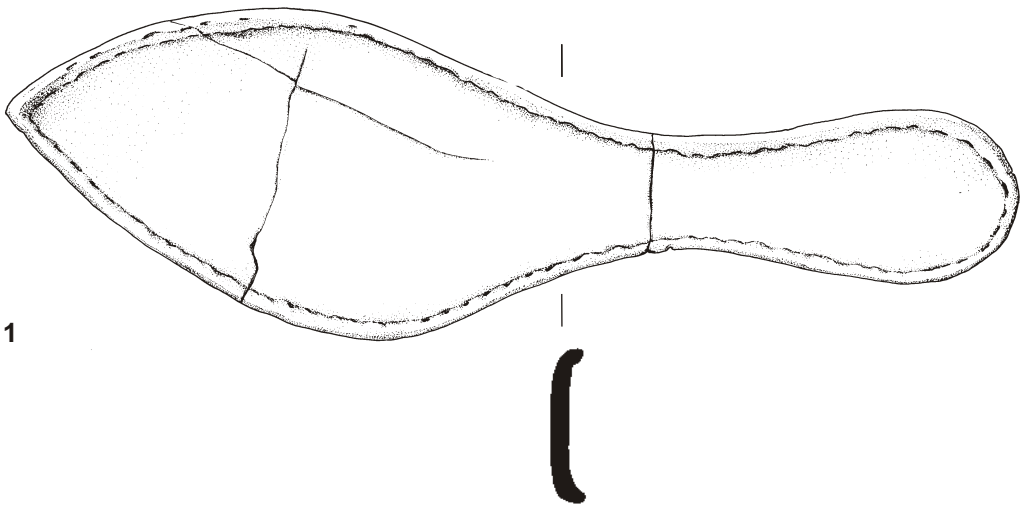
Charcoal

Mortar

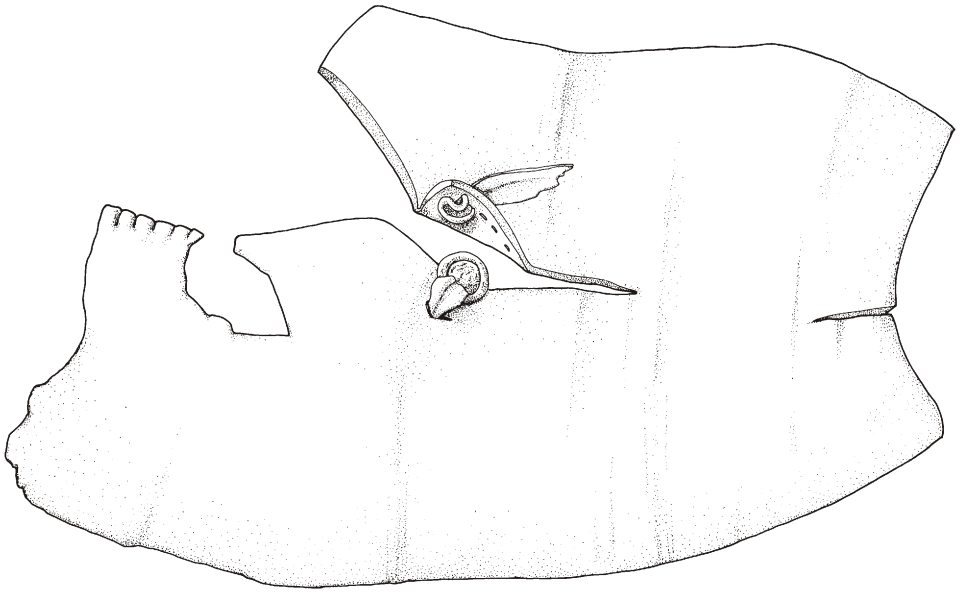
Clay

Sandstone

Sections of other features Fig 6



1



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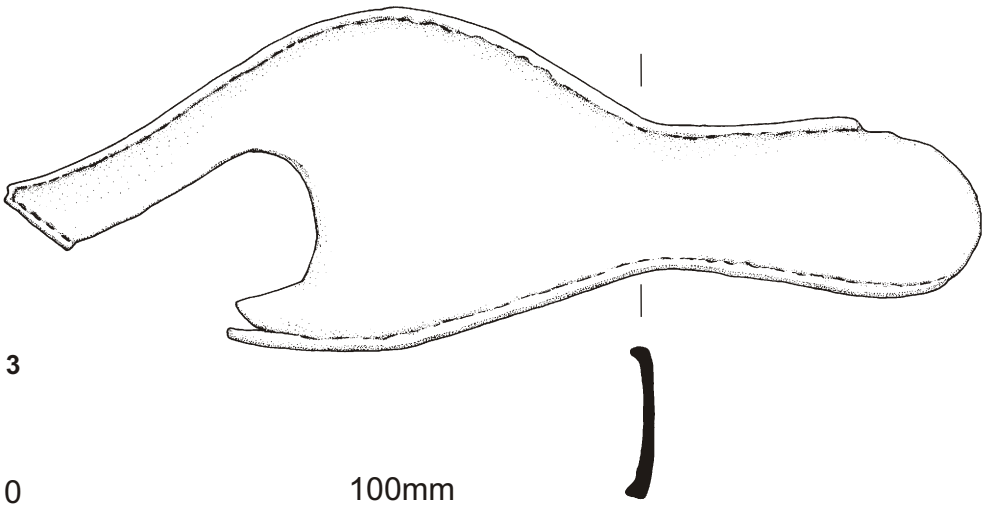
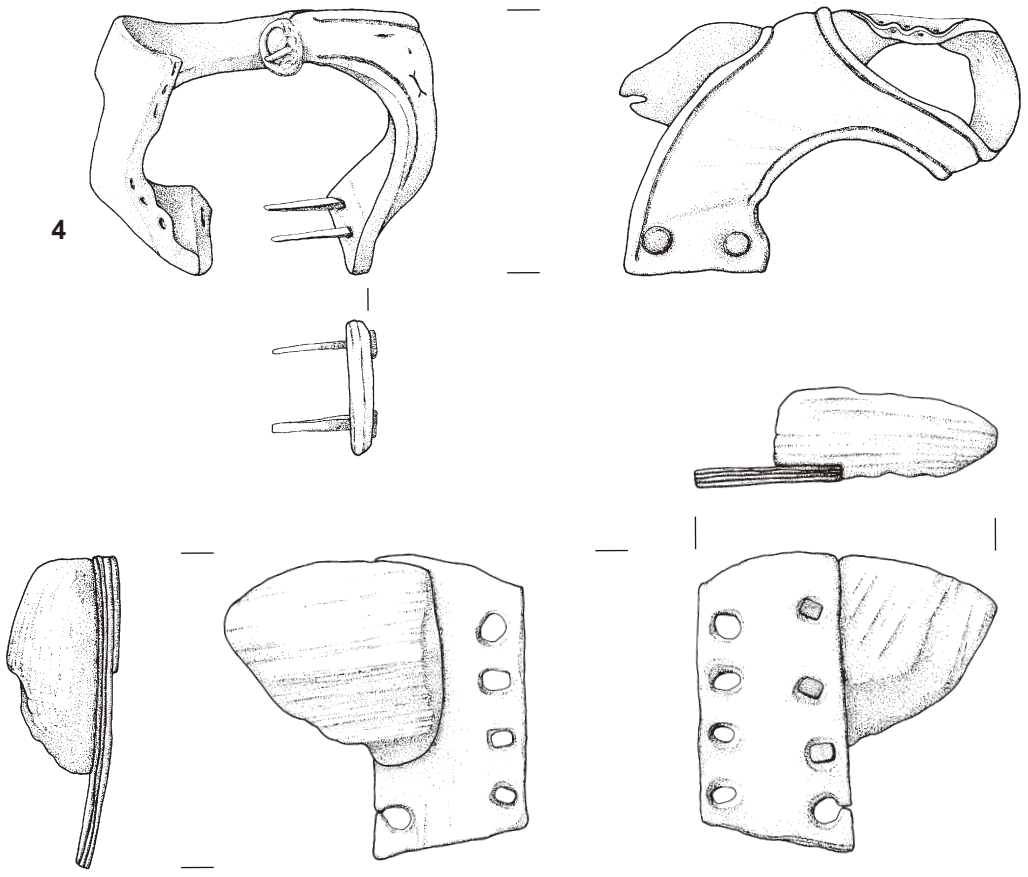
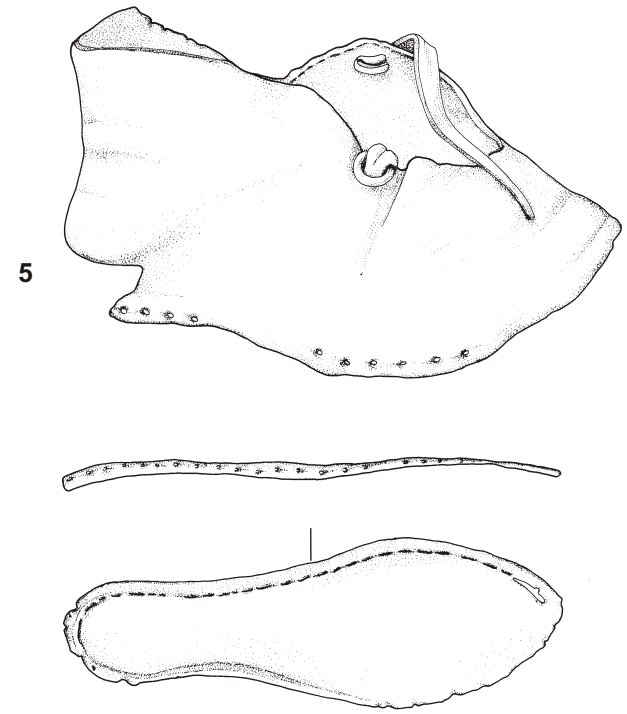


3

0 100mm

Leather shoe fragments, 1-3 Fig 7





Leather shoe fragments,4-5 Fig 8

Plate 1: Section across town ditch, 2005

Plate 2: Section across town ditch, 2006

Plate 3: Collapsed medieval fence

Plate 4: Features west of town ditch

Plate 5: Post-medieval building remains