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CITY OF
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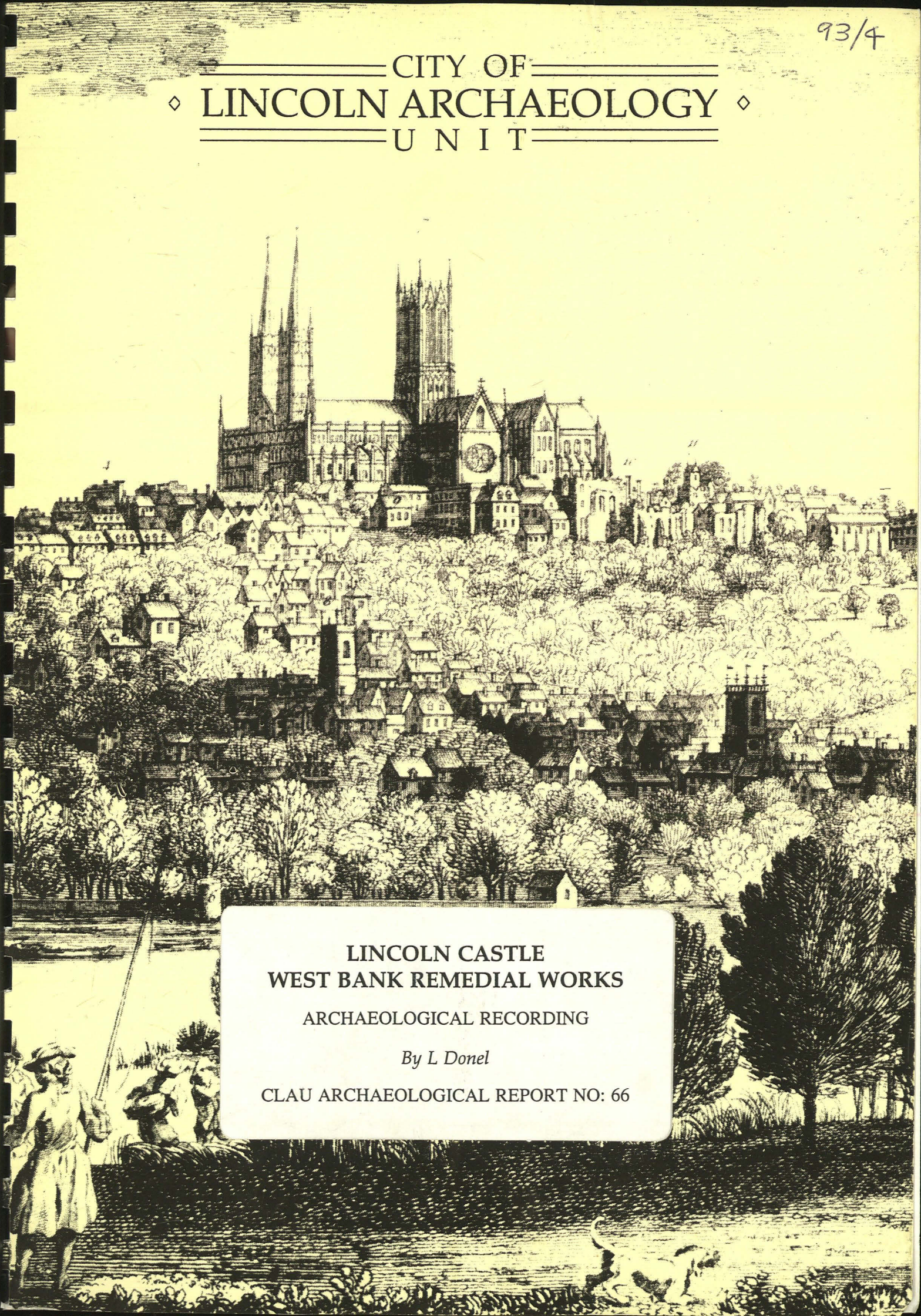
UNIT



LINCOLN CASTLE
WEST BANK REMEDIAL WORKS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING

By L Donel

CLAU ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT NO: 66

A Report to Allott & Lomax, Consulting Engineers, Manchester

October 1993

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Introduction

Following the stability investigations carried out in 1990 by Allott and Lomax on the banks of the Castle, certain areas were listed as priority areas for remedial works, the most crucial area being the west bank, which had already suffered some slippage at its south end (Fig.1). In order to fulfill the requirements for Scheduled Monument Consent, the Unit was employed by Allott and Lomax, Consulting Engineers, on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council (Recreational Services) to undertake a watching brief during the work programme. The stabilisation project was carried out by Keller Colcrete, Ltd.

The information in this document is presented with the proviso that further data may yet emerge. The Unit, its Members and employees cannot, therefore, be held responsible for any loss, delay or damage, material or otherwise, arising out of this report. The document has been prepared in accordance with the Unit's Article of Association, the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, and The Management of Archaeology Projects 2 (English Heritage, 1991).

Previous Investigation

A watching brief was maintained during site investigations in May and June 1990, so that the effect of the works on the monument might be monitored, and information obtained which might assist the engineers. It was also hoped that the investigations might answer several questions about the history of the castle :-

1. the extent of preservation of Roman remains;
2. evidence for the postulated early timber castle;
3. constructional details about the Castle's later stone and earth fortifications;
4. subsequent alterations during the Castle's history;
5. dating evidence for the structural periods.

The watching brief involved the recording of test pits (1.5/2m x 1.5/2m x 2m+ deep) and test trenches (1m x 10m+ x 1m deep steps - 10m in total) excavated at specific points on the banks of the castle (Fig.2). The test pits (Fig.3) were located adjacent to the walls in order to study the foundations, while the trenches (Fig.4) ran down the slope towards the modern ground level outside the Castle (ie the filled-in ditch). The excavated areas were viewed, drawn and photographed by the archaeologists present. Finds were collected, but were sparse and in most cases without a secure provenance.

The main feature which stands out throughout this watching brief is the lack of a consistent approach to the construction of the walls of the castle. Although they differ, the banks seem more consistent than the wall foundations. It is possible that different work gangs might have accounted for this disparity in building techniques. We must also take into account that the construction was carried out with the possible knowledge of pre-existing structures or formations and the incorporation of them into the overall design. Within that, it is possible that there were individual quirks in the work carried out by any one gang. This probably is best seen on the West Bank where, in all probability, the bank is based on the earlier Roman structure.

The presence of surfaces on the North side also appears as an oddity, as there is no evidence for other surfaces in the excavated areas on the other banks. It may be that the bank construction was viewed as several separate building projects rather than one simultaneous effort. There is the possibility as well, that the available material differed in part from the material excavated on the west side. The lack of datable material, as well as the limited areas for recordng has made the understanding of these structures difficult.

There was no evidence for the postulated early castle built from wood. Nor was there any evidence at Lucy's Tower for a wooden palisade on the motte. However, the presence of the layer of loose stone boulders does not lead one to expect a wooden tower or palisade. In contrast, the defensive banks certainly could have accommodated a wooden palisade. There was, however, no definite evidence of cutting into or flattening of the banks to allow the replacement of the wooden structure by the subsequent stone walls. It is conceivable that any wooden structure was a stop-gap attempt while the castle was being formally constructed in stone.

1993 WATCHING BRIEF

Introduction

Work was carried out to regrade part of the bank and stabilise it by the insertion of soil nails and a netting "skin". Following this work the bank was replanted with a variety of low shrubs that will aid in keeping it stable.

The Unit undertook an intermittent watching brief during the groundworks. There were three main elements to the watching brief:

1. Trenches dug at the top of the bank and down the bank for service trenching,
2. The regrading of the slope,
3. The bore hole cores removed during the course of the soil nail insertions.

The nature of the regrading and soil nail insertion did not lend itself to providing good archaeological material for dating and understanding the nature of the construction of the bank. The material removed was mainly either topsoil or overburden, much of it from the 19th/20th century.

Results

(i) Trenching

Trenches were excavated along the top of the west bank as well as down the slope of the monument.

A north-south trench was excavated at the top of the slope of the west bank parallel to the Castle wall. The trench itself cut through two of the previously investigated trial pits (TP1 and TP3) revealing similar stratigraphy to that seen in 1990. At the north end the wall foundations lay directly on a sandy earth. At the south end the wall sat directly on flat laid limestone slabs. The discrepancy may have been connected with the different height to which the Roman city wall had survived. The excavation was not deep enough to have uncovered any evidence for the Roman wall. The change from earth to slab occurred very close to the position of TP1 and TT1 from the 1990 Stability Investigation.

An east-west trench was excavated down the slope at the northern end of the bank. The depth of excavation was limited to 300-400mm. The trench cut through overburden rather than earlier archaeological layers. Material recovered from this layer included modern bottle glass, brick, tile and crisp papers. At the bottom of the trench the remains of a north-south wall were uncovered. The wall had two courses of roughly mortared limestone blocks retained in a 1.2m strip. It appeared to have run parallel to the existing modern property or retaining wall at the bottom of the bank. There was no associated dating material but presumably the wall acted as a revetment for the bank as well as a property boundary (Fig.6).

(ii) Regrading of slope (Fig.5)

South section at outcrop

In order to create a more stable bank surface, some areas were regraded by the removal of soil to a depth of 1m.. However, at the southern extremity of the bank, an outcrop was retained as it was deemed stable and any removal would be unnecessary.

The stratigraphy was of interest in that partially reflected the deposits seen in Trial Trench 1 during the Stability Survey in 1990. However, what was very evident was the flat layering of the stratigraphy which had not been evident in the trial trenching. As there was no dating evidence and the investigation was limited to recording only two faces of the outcrop, it is difficult to say whether this is an original part of the bank or not. The lack of comparative material also made identification of the original configuration of the outcrop and its date difficult.

Structural remains west of the West Gate

During the removal of vegetation on the bank at the south side of the West Gate, masonry was uncovered aligned directly to the west of the exterior south wall of the West Gate. The structure appeared to be made up of two elements:

1. an east-west wall, probably an extension of the remains of the east-west wall on the south side of the gateway,
2. three to four courses of masonry directly to the north of this east-west wall (Fig.7).

The two elements, although bonded together, showed a well defined division (Fig.7). It is possible that this second masonry feature represents part of the springer for the external arch of the gateway. Its general position suggests that it relates to the corresponding masonry on the north side of the external approach to the West Gate. As the landscaping work was limited in this area, it was difficult to obtain a clear picture of the masonry without subjecting the monument to further exposure not justifiable except on research grounds.

(iii) Bore holes

A series of bore hole cores was taken at regular intervals to determine the nature of the material through which the soil nails were being driven. Because the machine used was not specifically built for

this type of sampling, useful results were sporadic. Primarily, the material tended to reflect that seen during the trial bores in 1990. However, the sample was far too mixed and crushed to determine fine gradations of archaeological material that might have been present in the sample. If any pottery or small finds had been present the process itself would have crushed them to dust.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The watching brief was undertaken because of SMC requirements which defined the need for the accurate recording of any stratigraphy, structures or finds that might be revealed by this type of work. However, the nature of the stabilisation procedures and a general lack of bank material did not prove very productive, archaeologically. Neither the regrading of the bank, nor the excavation of the service conduits was comprehensive enough to provide any significant information. In effect, the trial work carried out in 1990 gave us more information about the construction of the west wall and bank than this watching brief.

Although primarily negative in this instance, it is important that stabilisation work is observed in order to provide the opportunity for recording the monument and its construction over, what can be, large previously unrecorded or partially recorded areas. The role of negative evidence can sometimes be as important as positive as it allows the researcher to enlarge on or discard certain hypotheses and to move on to other areas for investigation.

Acknowledgements

The Unit would like to thank, Allott and Lomax, Consulting Engineers; Lincolnshire County Council (Recreational Services); Keller Colcrete Ltd.; the staff of Lincoln Castle and the residents of Union Road as well as those members of the Unit staff employed in the field and archival analysis for this project.

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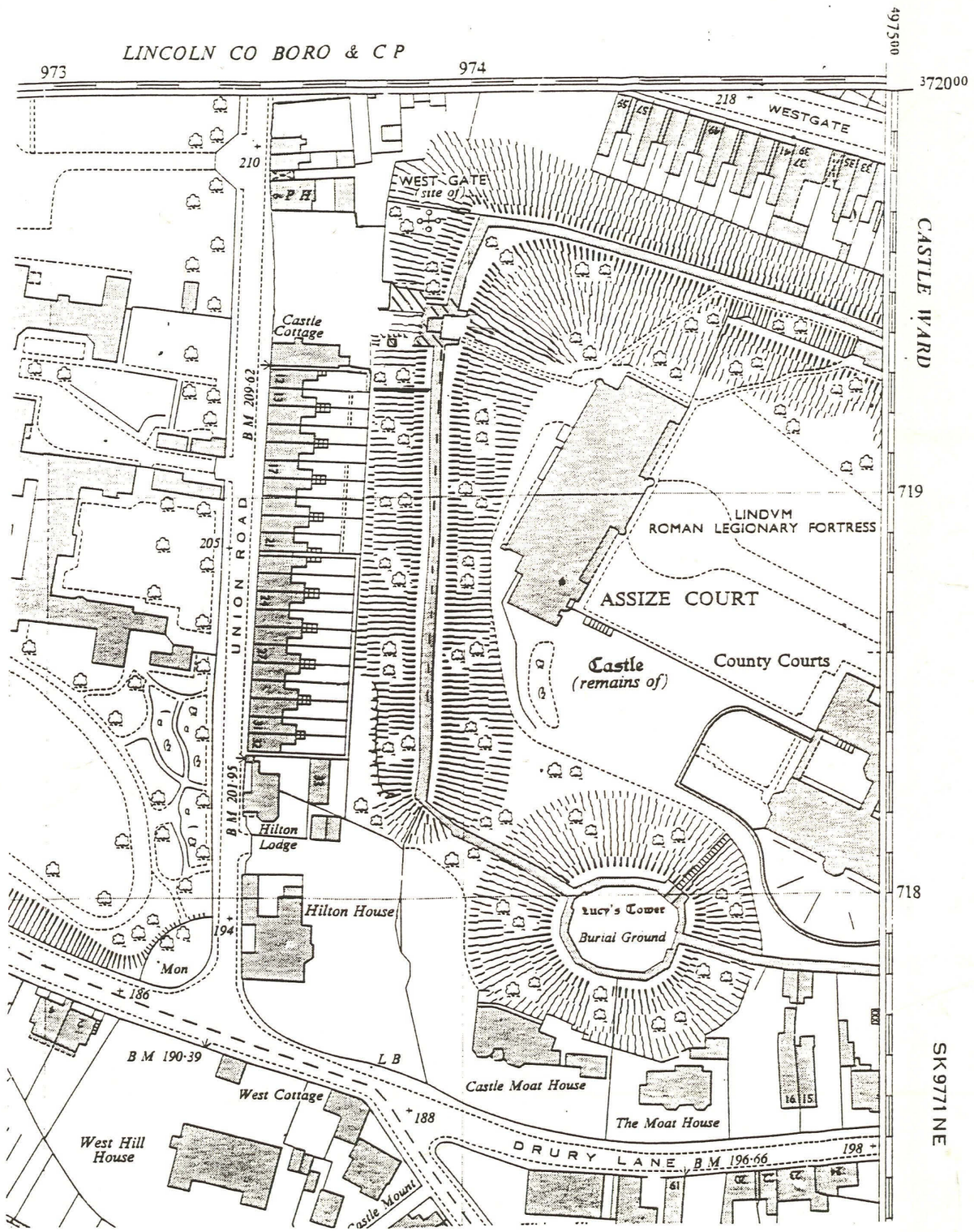

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Fig.1

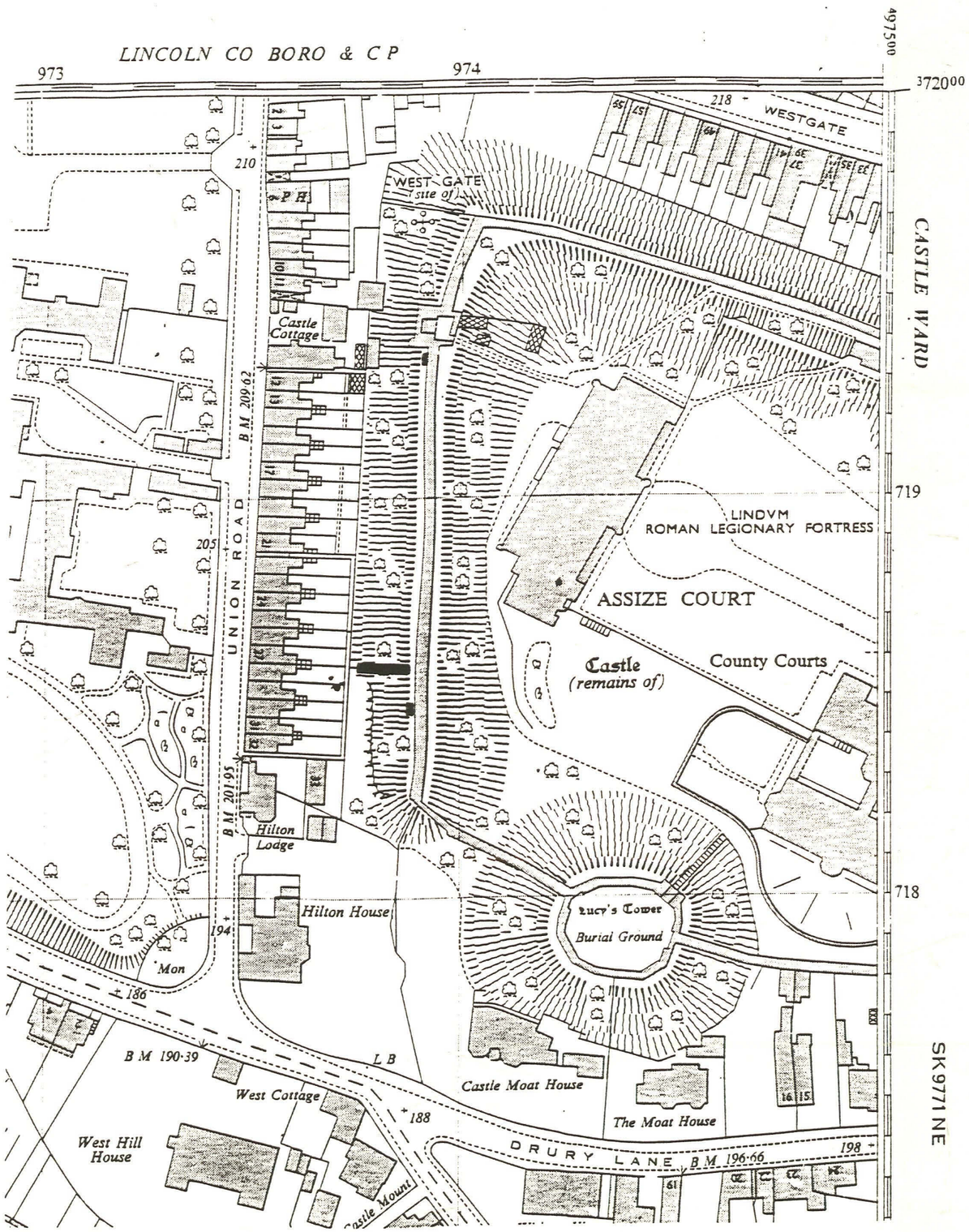

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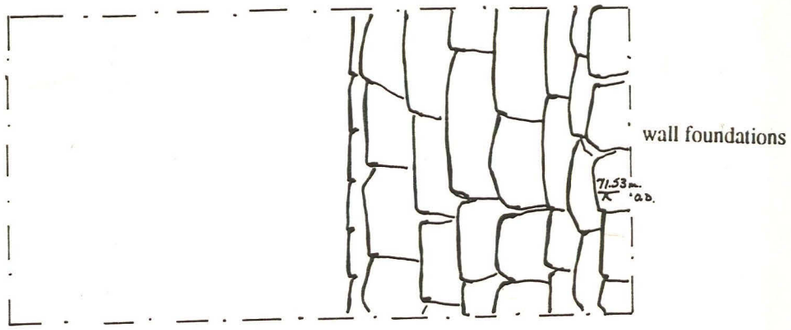
Fig.2

TP3



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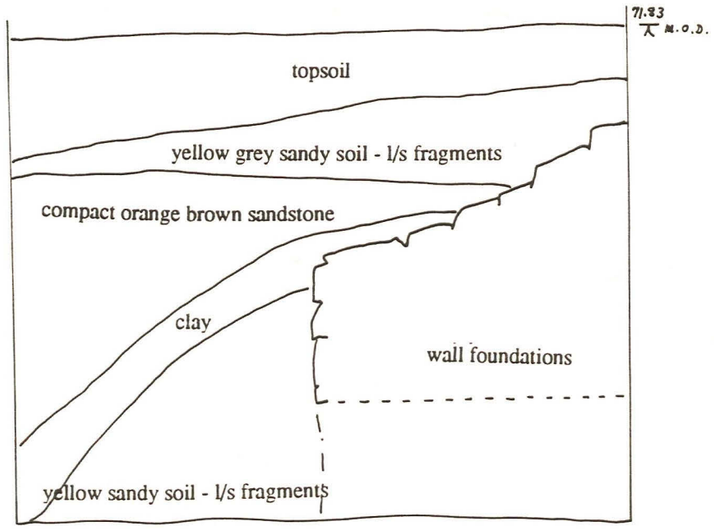

L.O.E.

TP1

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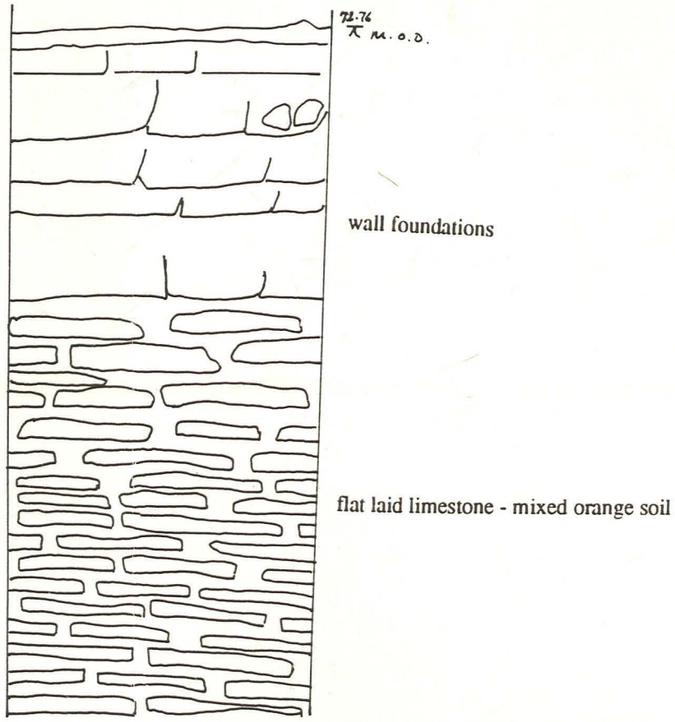

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Fig.3

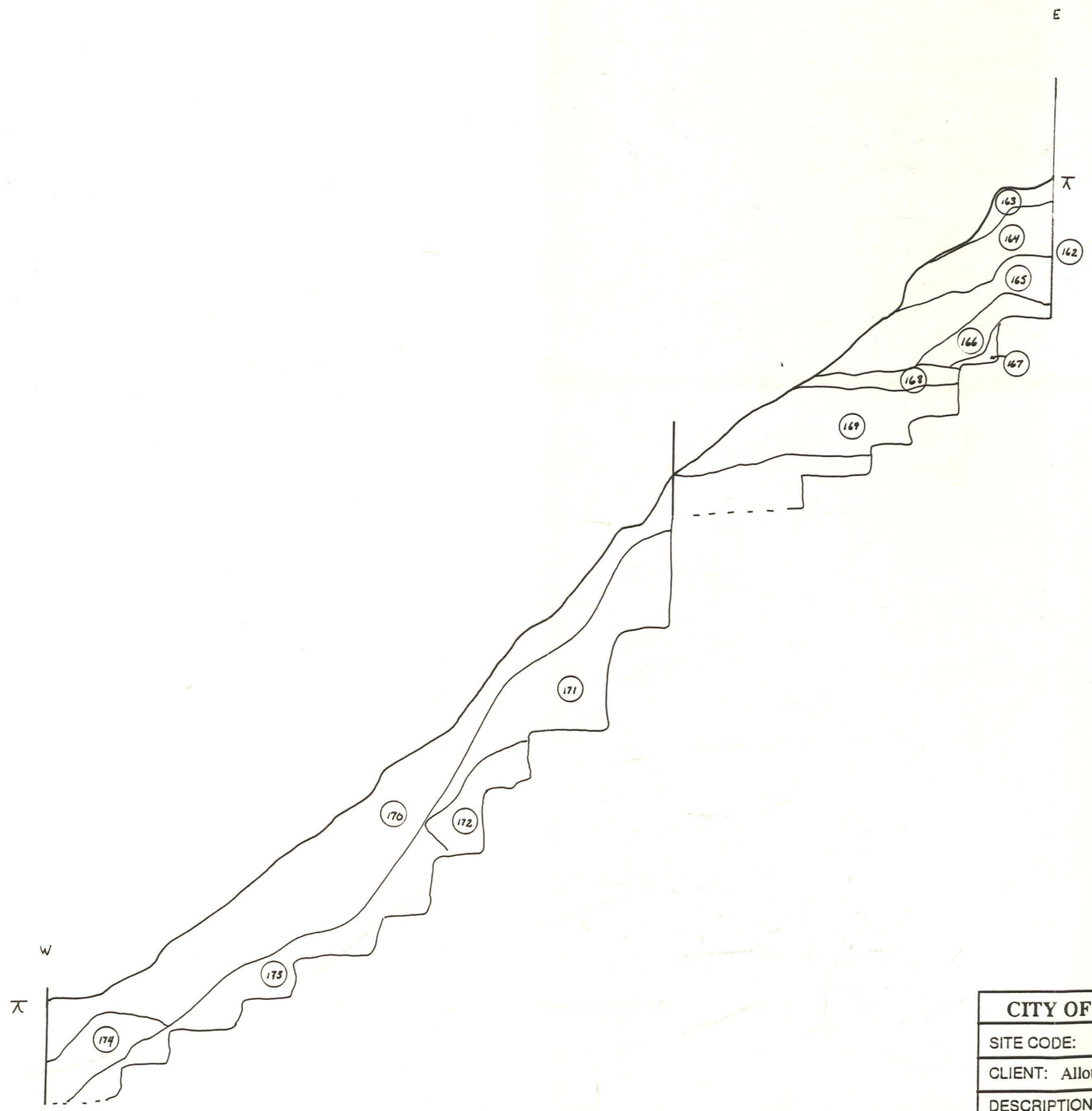

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Fig.4

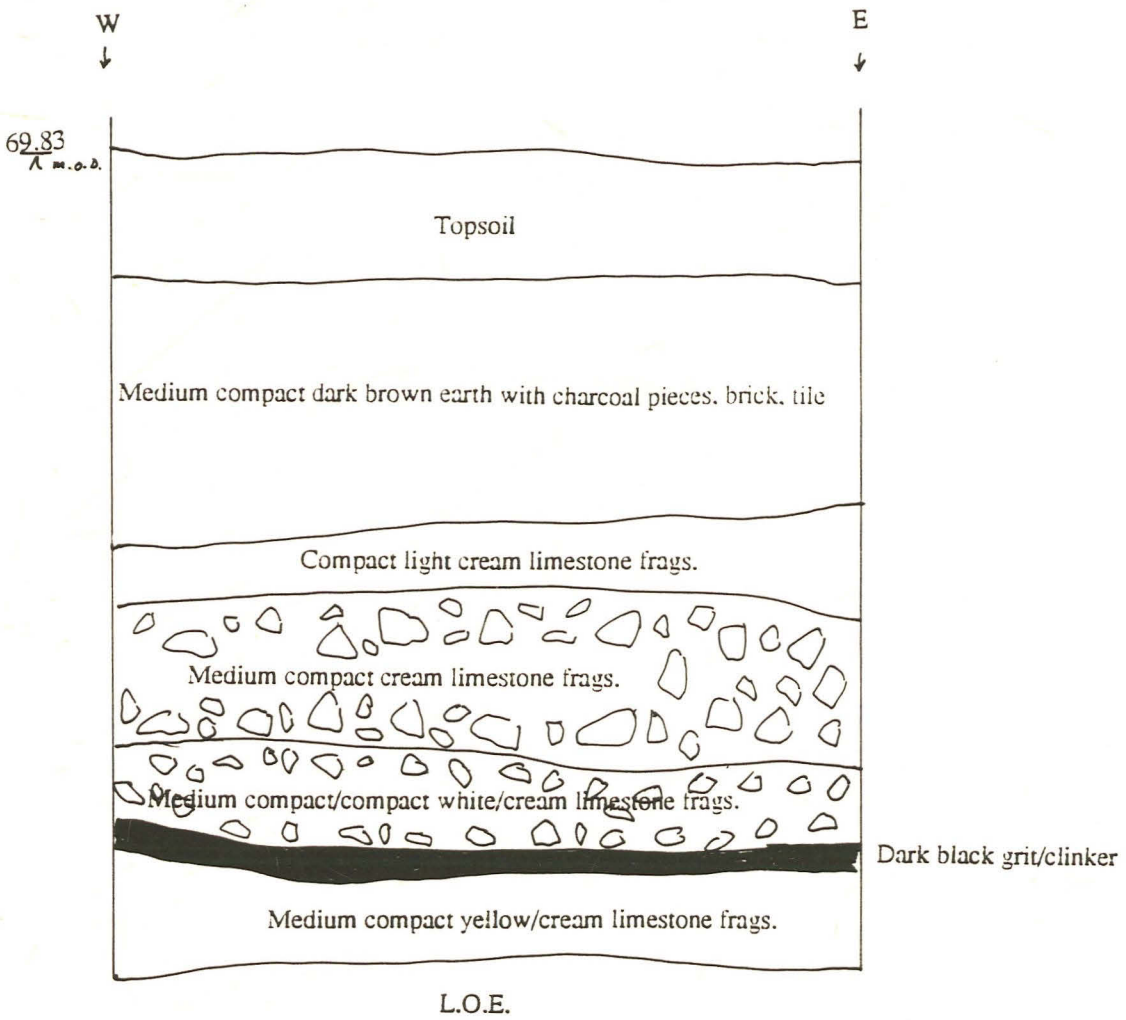

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Fig.5

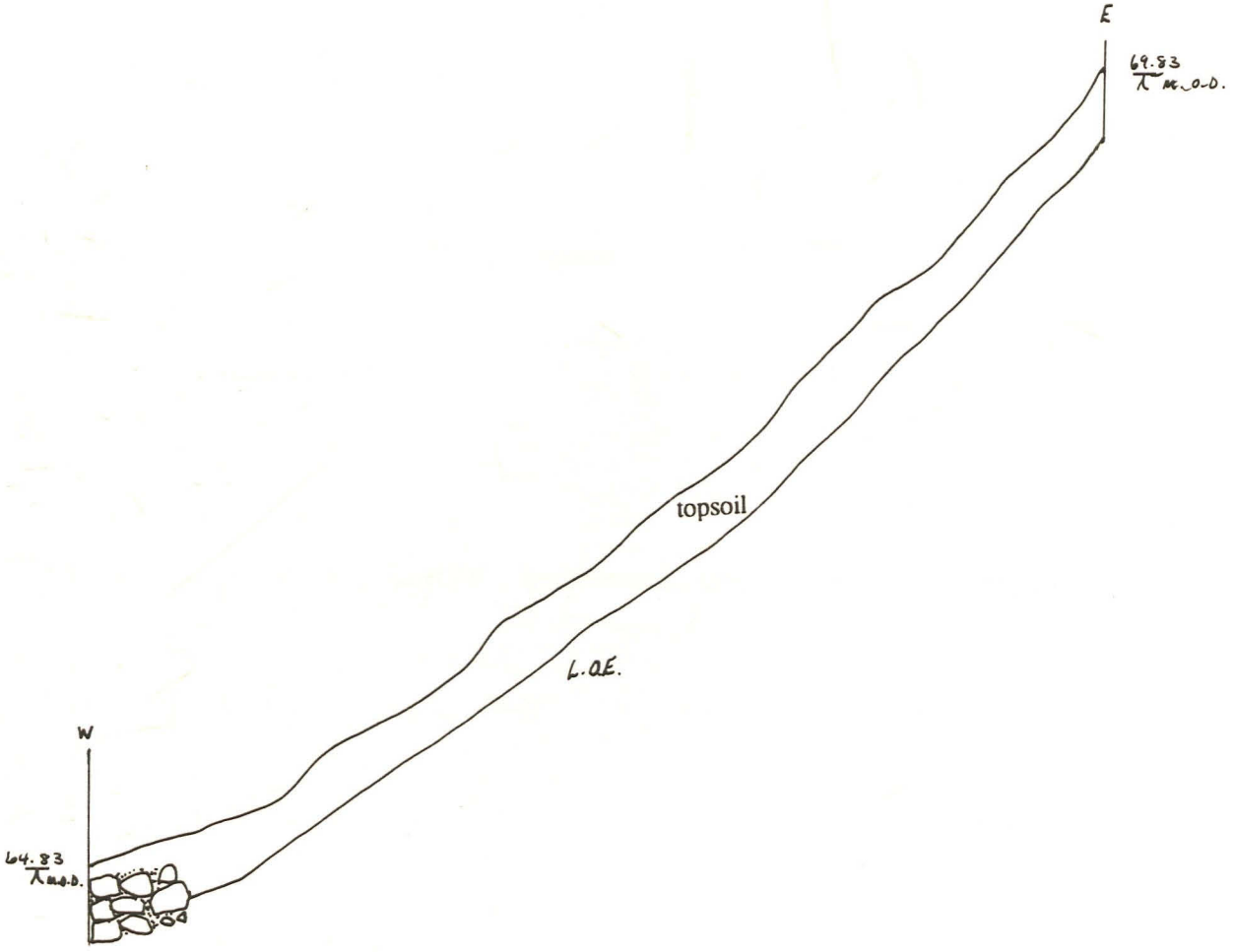

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Fig.6

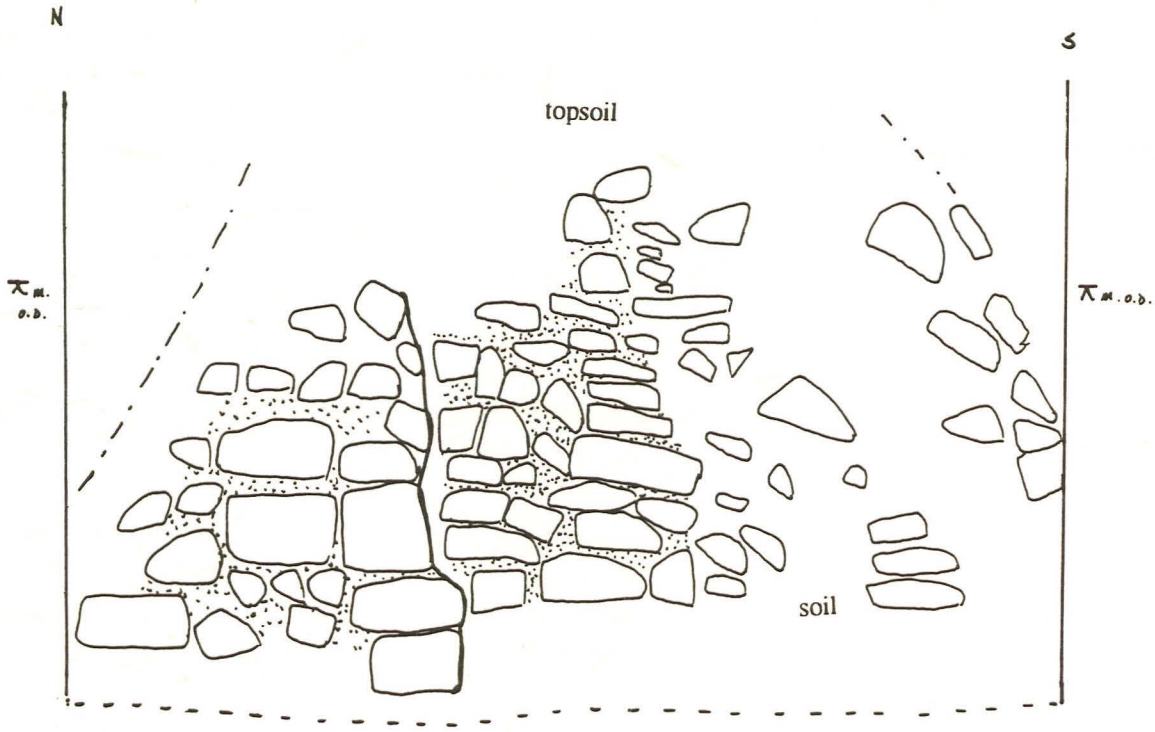

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Fig.7