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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF  
OF TEST PITS AT  
LAND ADJACENT TO  
SPAIN LANE,  
BOSTON,  
LINCOLNSHIRE

Work Undertaken For  
Longhurst Housing Association Ltd

December 1994



**A P S**  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
PROJECT  
SERVICES

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## 1. SUMMARY

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during trial pit excavation in advance of a housing development on land adjacent to Spain Lane, Boston. The watching brief monitored the excavation of three trial pits.*

*Development at Spain Lane affects an area containing archaeological remains dating from the medieval period (1066-1500 AD). The site is located within the medieval core of Boston and is centred on the site of the Dominican Friary founded in 1238.*

*A series of medieval deposits including mortar surfaces were observed sealing alluvial layers. Two cuts, possibly of pits, also of medieval date were recorded. Recent demolition of brick buildings represents modern deposits. Pottery and tile dateable to the 14th century was recovered.*

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Background

On the 12th October 1994, an archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of three trial pits in advance of a residential development on land to the north of Spain Lane, Boston, Lincolnshire (NGR TF 3290 4445). Spain Lane is located to the southeast of the Market Place, in the civil parish of Boston (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Longhurst Housing Association Ltd and was carried out by Archaeological Project Services in accordance with a brief set by the Boston Community Archaeologist.

### 2.2 Topography and Geology

Development is centred on land between Spain Lane and Customhouse Lane which is situated approximately 320m southeast of Boston town centre (Fig. 2). Although, as an urban setting, the area has not been mapped by the Soil Survey, nearby records suggest that local soils are likely to be Tanvats association, stoneless, silty, silty over clayey and clayey soils or Wisbech association, silts over clayey (Hodge *et al.* 1984, 319). However, the proximity of the River Witham may suggest alluvial deposits. Local topography is relatively flat and lies about 3m above sea level.

### 2.3 Archaeological Setting

Spain Lane lies in an area of dense archaeological activity with evidence mainly from the medieval period. Although there is evidence for prehistoric and Romano-British activity within the Boston area, none so far has been found in the vicinity of the development site. It has been suggested that any remains of this period may well be buried under alluvial deposits and thus not appear in the known archaeological record (Harden, 1978).

Medieval activity is well represented in Boston. Although not mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086, it would appear that Boston was a small hamlet associated with the village of Skirbeck. By 1200AD the town had grown and the building of the barditch (B05/001), a defensive ditch encircling the town, was completed. Boston's importance as a port grew and the town became a major trading centre, attracting many foreign merchants. Monastic orders were also attracted to the town.

Spain Lane is centred on the site of the Dominican Friary (B05/032), founded in 1238 AD. The Dominicans, an order of

Preaching Friars, arrived in England in 1221, having been founded by the Augustinian canon, Dominic of Osma in Spain a few years earlier. They were known as the Blackfriars from their habit: a black cloak and hood over a white tunic. The present Blackfriars Arts Centre (B05/005) provides the most substantial survival of the Friary, though traces of other remains are incorporated in other buildings in the proximity. Conjectured plans of the Friary suggest that the Blackfriars Art Centre was the refectory, the church being situated towards the northwest, near the junction between South Street and Shodfriars Lane. The site of investigations is thought to lie over the cloister of the Friary.

### 3. AIMS

The aim of the watching brief was to identify surviving archaeological deposits and, if present, record them in detail to enable their date, function and origin to be determined.

### 4. METHODS

Trenches for the foundations were excavated by machine to various depths as required by the development. The sides of the trenches were cleaned by hand. Each archaeological deposit or feature revealed was allocated a unique reference number with an individual written description. Natural geological deposits were also recorded. A photographic record was compiled and selected sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20.

### 5. RESULTS

Records of the deposits and features identified during the watching brief were

examined. Phasing was assigned based on the nature of the deposits and recognisable relationships between them. Three phases were identified:

Phase 1 Natural deposits

Phase 2 Medieval deposits

Phase 3 Modern deposits

#### Phase 1 Natural deposits

Natural deposits are represented by a light brown sandy silt (17) that appears in the base of section 2 and a similar greyish brown sandy silt (7) in the base of section 1.

#### Phase 2 Medieval deposits

Section 1 (Fig. 4) shows a grey blue sandy silt (6) lying over 7. Above 6 is a greyish white deposit (5). This has tentatively been described as a surface, possibly of mortar or compacted clay. Above this is a blue grey sandy silt (4), containing medieval pottery, probably of 14th century date. This was overlain in turn by a brown sandy silt (3) with a fragment of a cooking pot of a type known as Bourne ware, again of 14th century date. A brownish white layer with occasional mortar fragments (2) sealed layer 3.

In section 2 a deposit of mortar (16) overlying 17 (Phase 1), has been identified as a prepared surface. Above this surface a dark grey sandy silt layer containing fragments of tile was recorded (15). This was sealed by a black organic deposit (14) that contained pottery of a type known as Potter Hanworth ware, dateable to the 14th century. A dark grey sandy silt with inclusions of shell and mortar (13) overlay this deposit and was in turn sealed by a greyish brown sandy silt (12) also with mortar flecks. Cut into 12, a sub-

rectangular cut (20) was recorded as being filled with a brown sandy silt (19).

In section 3 (Fig. 6) a mid grey clayey silt (27) formed the lowest layer. A thin layer of white material (26), possibly mortar, was recorded along part of the section. This was then sealed by more grey clayey silt (25). Cut into 25 was a possible sub-circular cut (24), recorded in section. This had been filled with a brown sandy silt (23).

### Phase 3 Modern deposits

A deposit of brown sandy silt containing building material (1), represents modern deposits in section 1.

In section 2 modern deposits are associated with a building formerly on the site. A concrete and brick structure (11) are the footings for a wall (9) and brick surface (10). Above this, but not shown on section 2, lay demolition deposits (8 and 18) interpreted as a destruction phase of 9.

Section 3 shows that a dark brown sandy silt (22) was sealed by a grey brown sandy silt (21) containing frequent slate fragments. These deposits have been identified as recent demolition of buildings in the area.

## 6. DISCUSSION

Two deposits of greyish brown sandy silt, possibly associated with a alluvial activity, identify the earliest activity recorded on the site (Phase 1).

A series of horizontal surfaces, almost certainly floors and occupation surfaces form the majority of phase 2 deposits. A sub-circular cut and a sub-rectangular cut, possibly pits, suggest a change of use on the site, perhaps after the dissolution of

the monastery in 1539.

Phase 3 deposits are generally associated with the demolition of recent buildings that once stood on the site, of which part of the foundations of one building were recorded during the watching brief.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

Archaeological investigations at land adjacent to Spain Lane, Boston, established that natural alluvial deposits occur within 1.4m of the present ground surface. Medieval deposits in the form of a series of surfaces intermingled with other deposits and two cuts, occur within 0.50m of the present ground surface. Recently demolished buildings, and part of one of these buildings, were encountered as the present ground surface and the upper layers of stratigraphy.

## 8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services wish to thank Longhurst Housing Association Ltd for funding the fieldwork and post-excavation analysis. Steve Haynes coordinated the work and Dave Start edited this report. Hilary Healey commented on the pottery. Jim Bonnor, the Boston District Community Archaeologist provided information from the relevant parish files maintained by Heritage Lincolnshire.

## 9. PERSONNEL

Project Manager: Steve Haynes  
Site Assistants: Chris Moulis  
Illustration: Paul Cope-Faulkner  
Post-excavation Analyst: Paul Cope-Faulkner

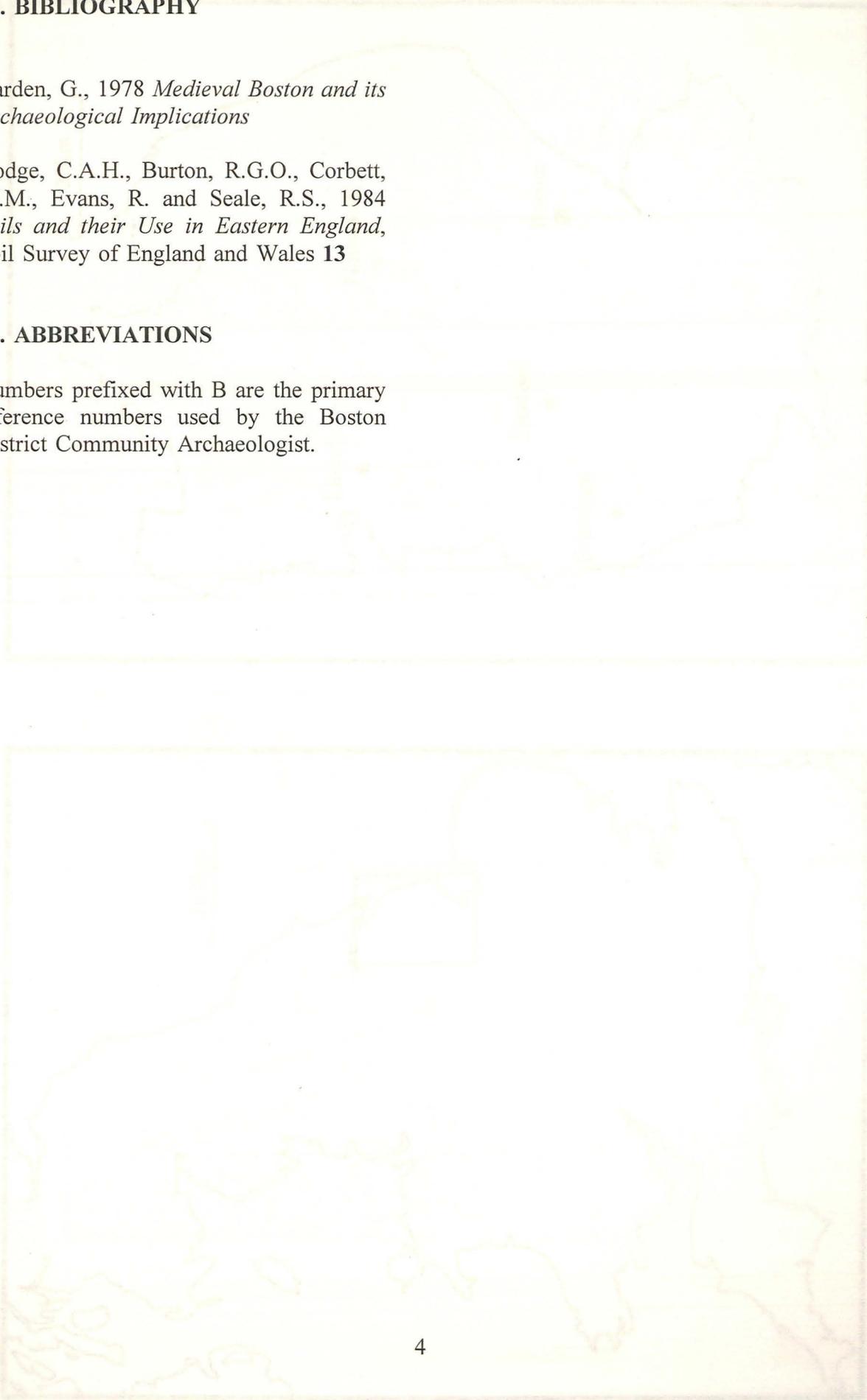
## 10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Harden, G., 1978 *Medieval Boston and its Archaeological Implications*

Hodge, C.A.H., Burton, R.G.O., Corbett, W.M., Evans, R. and Seale, R.S., 1984 *Soils and their Use in Eastern England*, Soil Survey of England and Wales **13**

## 11. ABBREVIATIONS

Numbers prefixed with B are the primary reference numbers used by the Boston District Community Archaeologist.



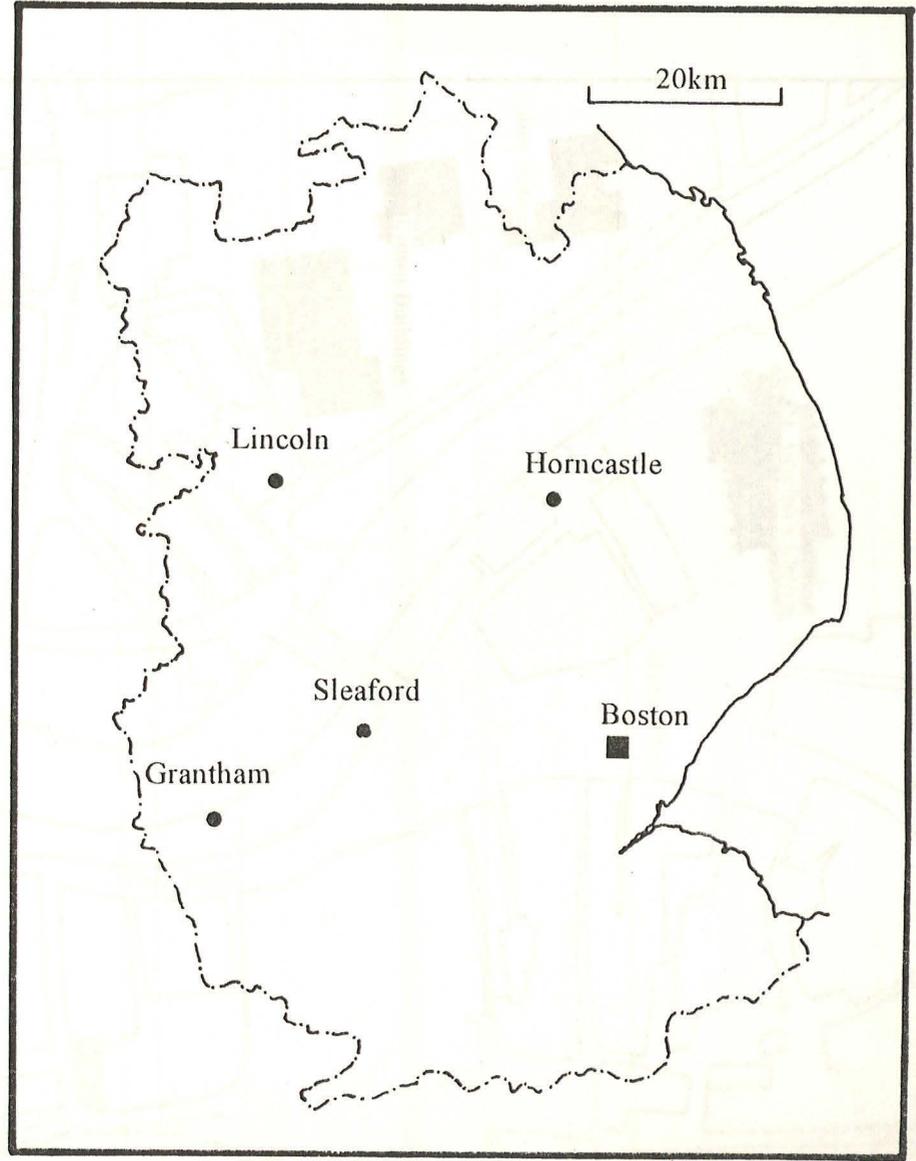
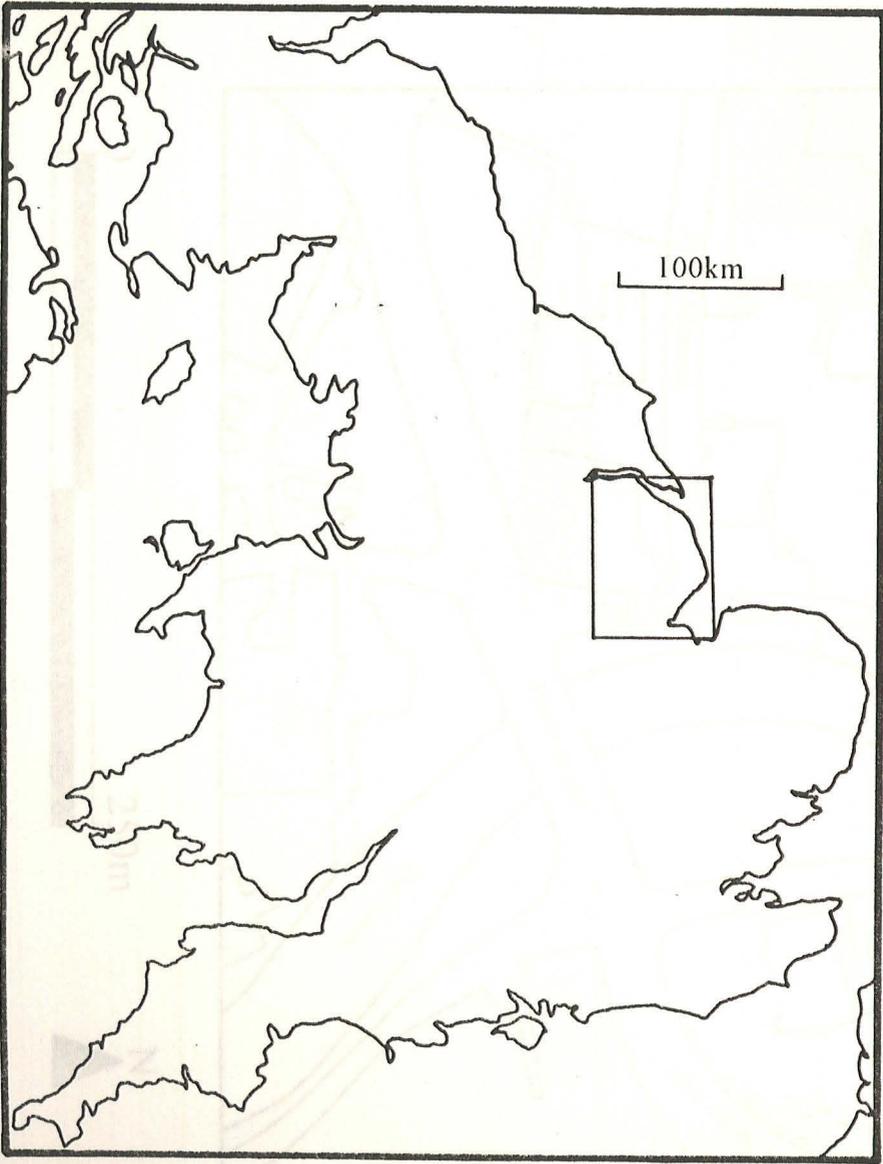
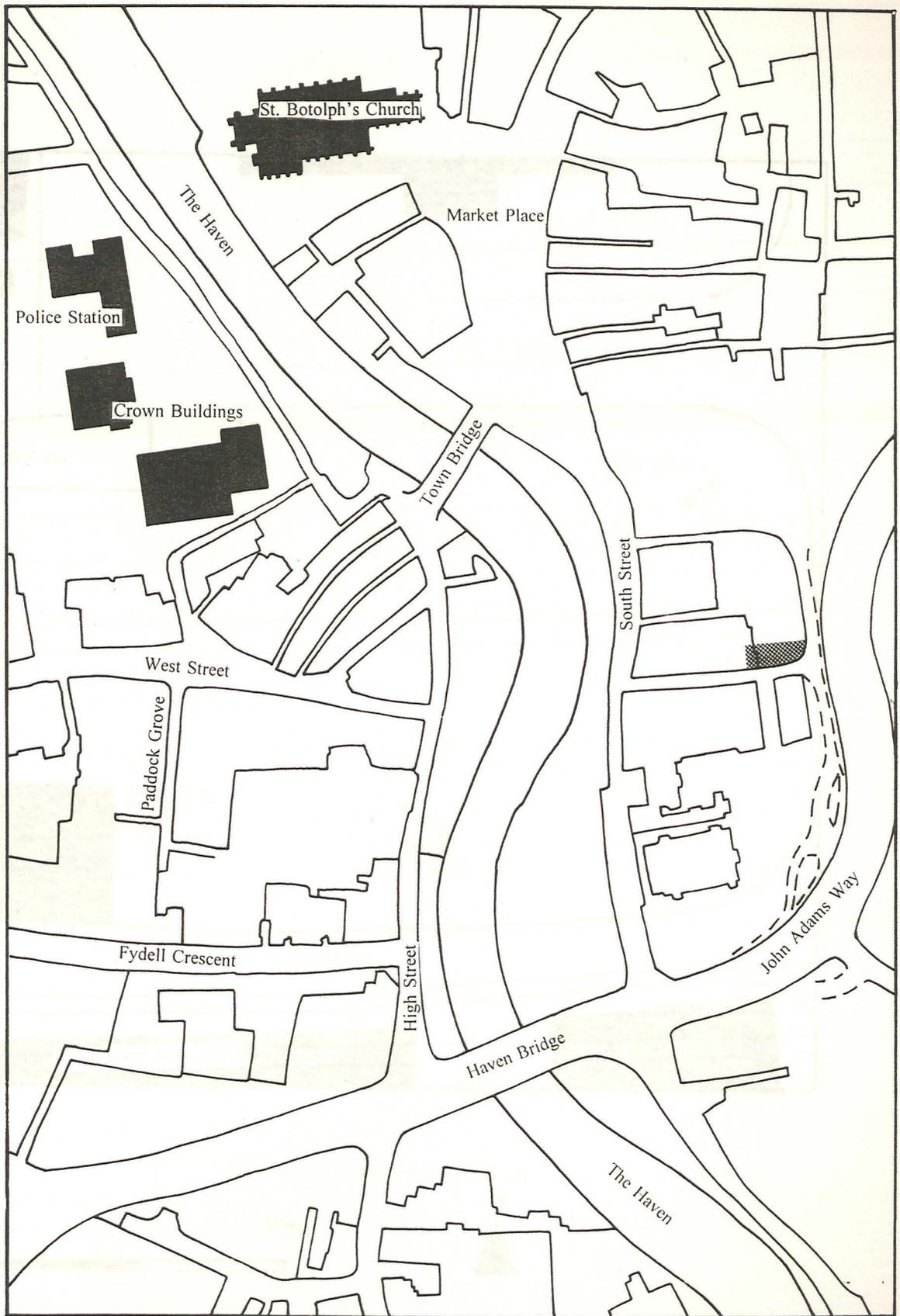


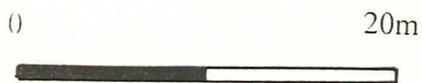
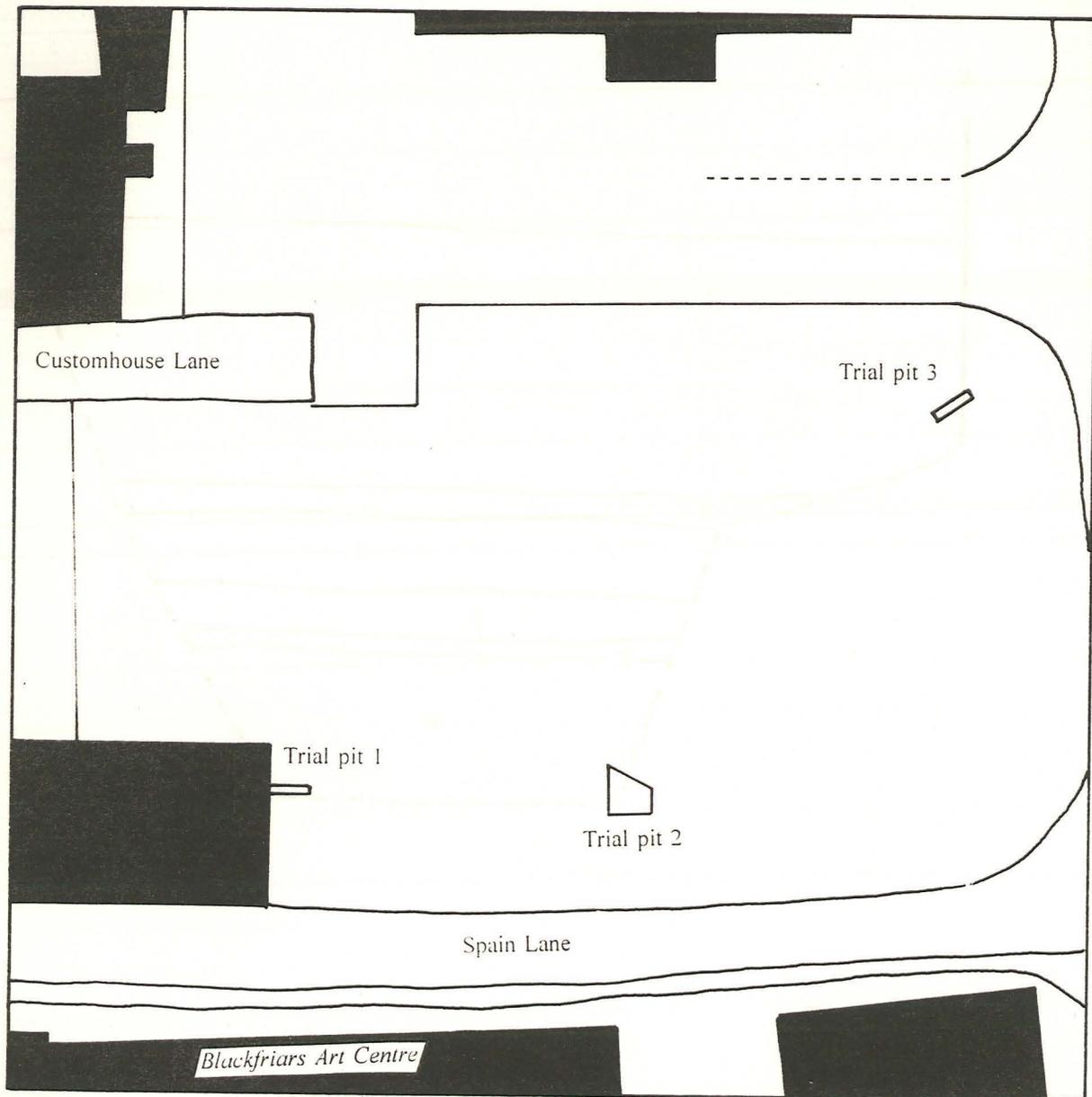
Fig. 1 GENERAL LOCATION PLAN

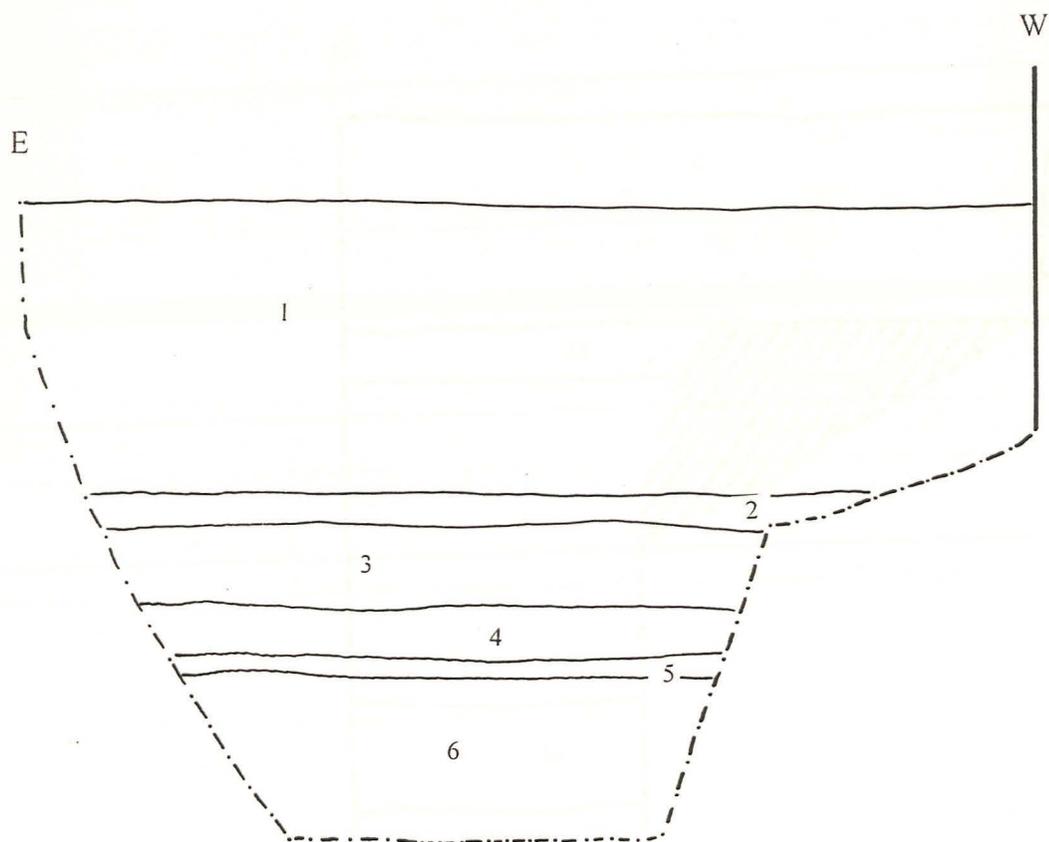
Fig. 3 Area of Development, Fig. 2 Site Location Plan



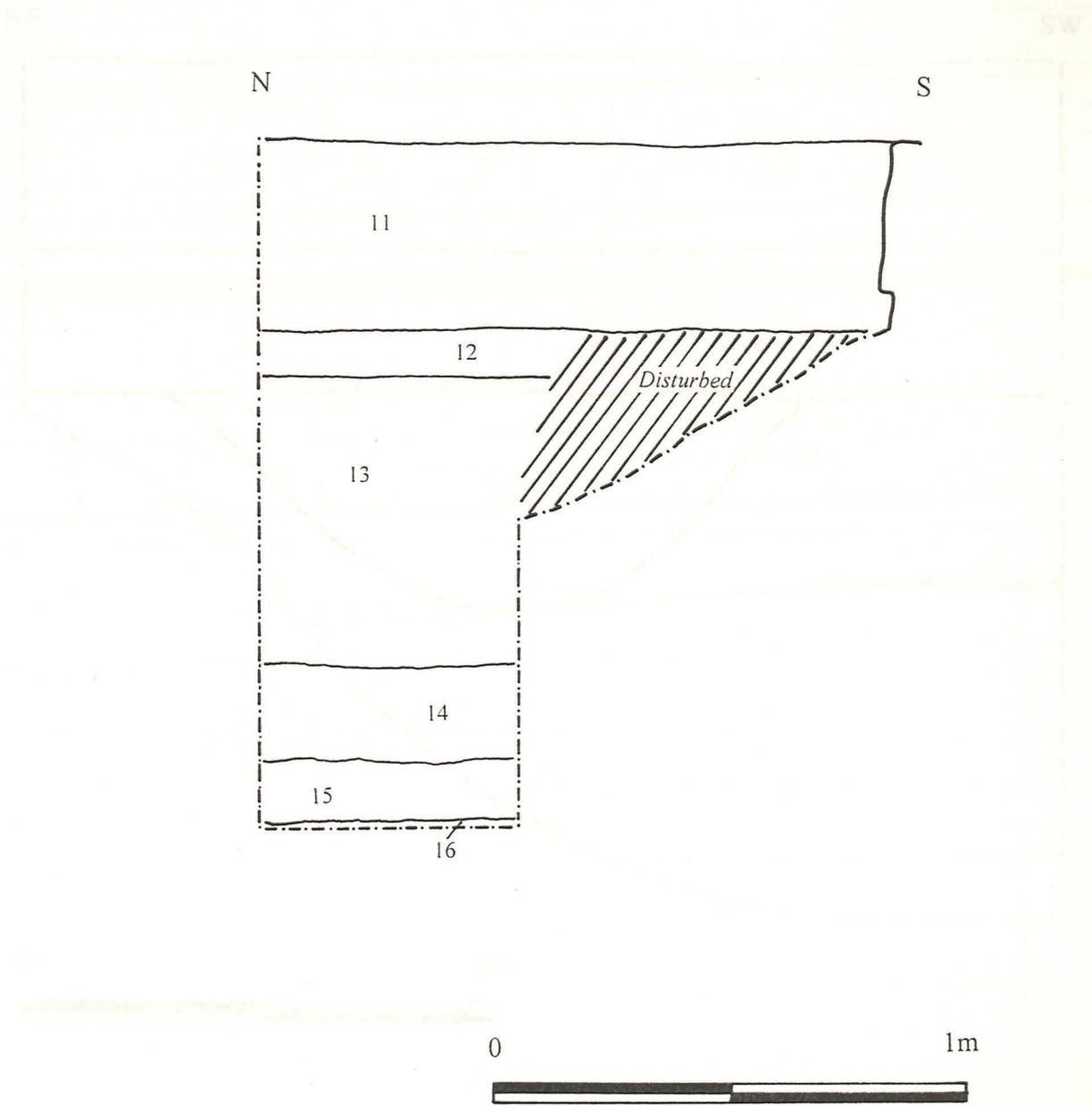
AREA OF DEVELOPMENT

Fig. 3 Area of Development, showing location of Trial Pits

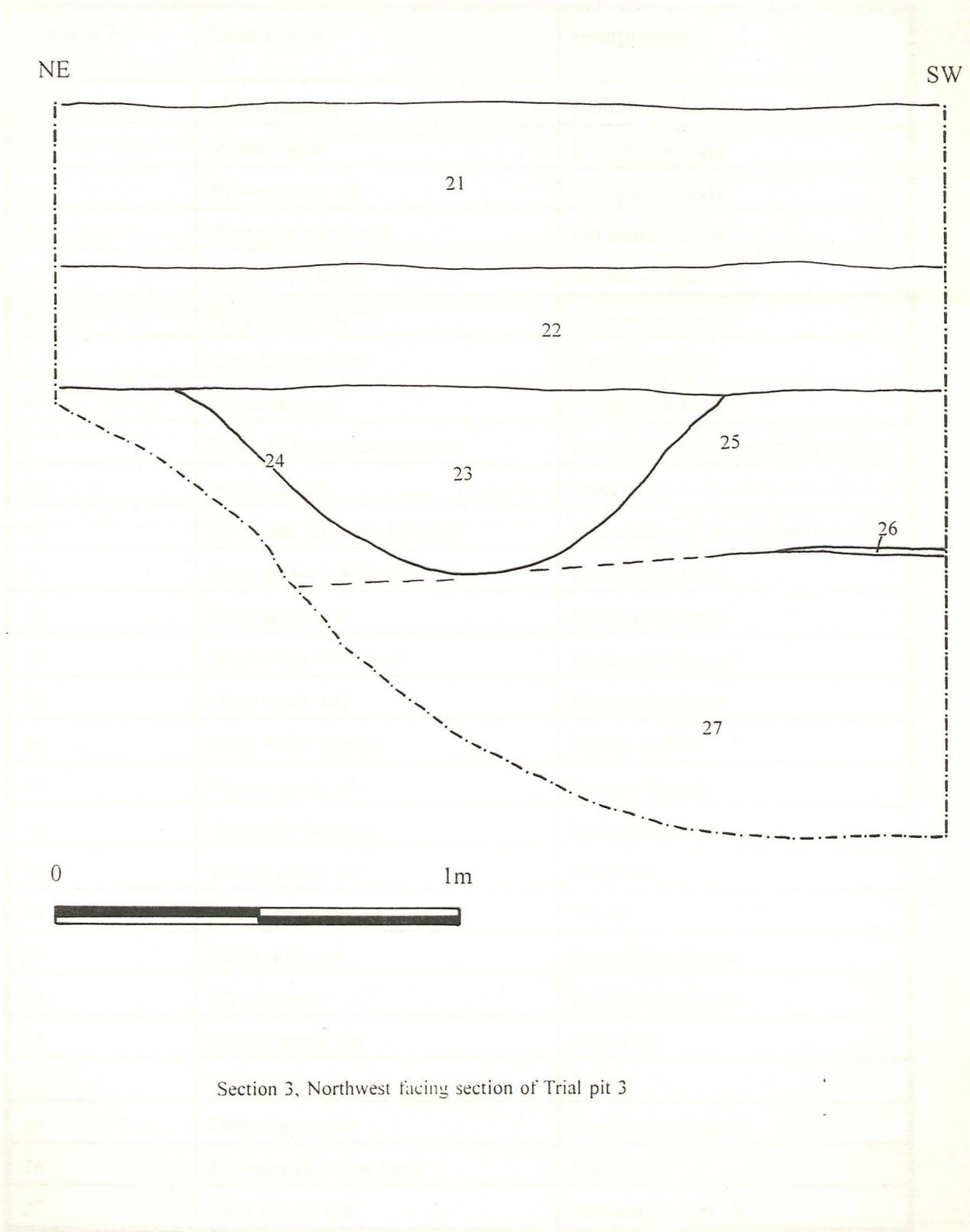




Section 1, North facing section of Trial pit 1



Section 2, West facing section of Trial pit 2



**APPENDIX 1**  
Context Summary

Context No	Description	Interpretation
1	Mixed deposit	Demolition Layer
2	Mortar layer	Demolition layer
3	Brown sandy silt	Occupation layer
4	Blue grey sandy silt	Occupation layer
5	Grey white layer	Mortar surface
6	Grey sandy silt	Occupation layer
7	Grey brown layer	Natural deposit
8	Mixed deposit	Demolition layer
9	Brick and concrete structure	Foundation of demolished building
10	Brick surface	Floor
11	Brick and concrete structure	Foundation of demolished building
12	Grey brown sandy silt	Occupation layer
13	Grey sandy silt	Occupation layer
14	Black organic deposit	Occupation layer ?
15	Grey sandy silt	Occupation layer
16	Grey white deposit	Mortar surface
17	Brown sandy silt	Natural deposit
18	Truncated horizon	Demolition of 9
19	Brown sandy silt	Fill of 20
20	Rectangular cut	Pit cut
21	Slates and soil	Demolition deposit
22	Mixed layer	Demolition deposit
23	Brown sandy silt	Fill of 24
24	Sub-circular cut	Pit cut
25	Grey clayey silt	Occupation deposit
26	Fragmented white layer	Surface ?
27	Grey clayey silt	Occupation deposit

## APPENDIX 2

### The Archive

The archive consists of:

- 27 Context records
- 1 Photographic record
- 8 Scale drawings
- 1 Stratigraphic matrix
- 1 Bag of finds

All primary records are currently kept at:

Archaeological Project Services  
The Old School  
Cameron Street  
Heckington  
Lincolnshire  
NG34 9RW

City and County Museum, Lincoln Accession Number: :94  
Archaeological Project Services project code BSL94