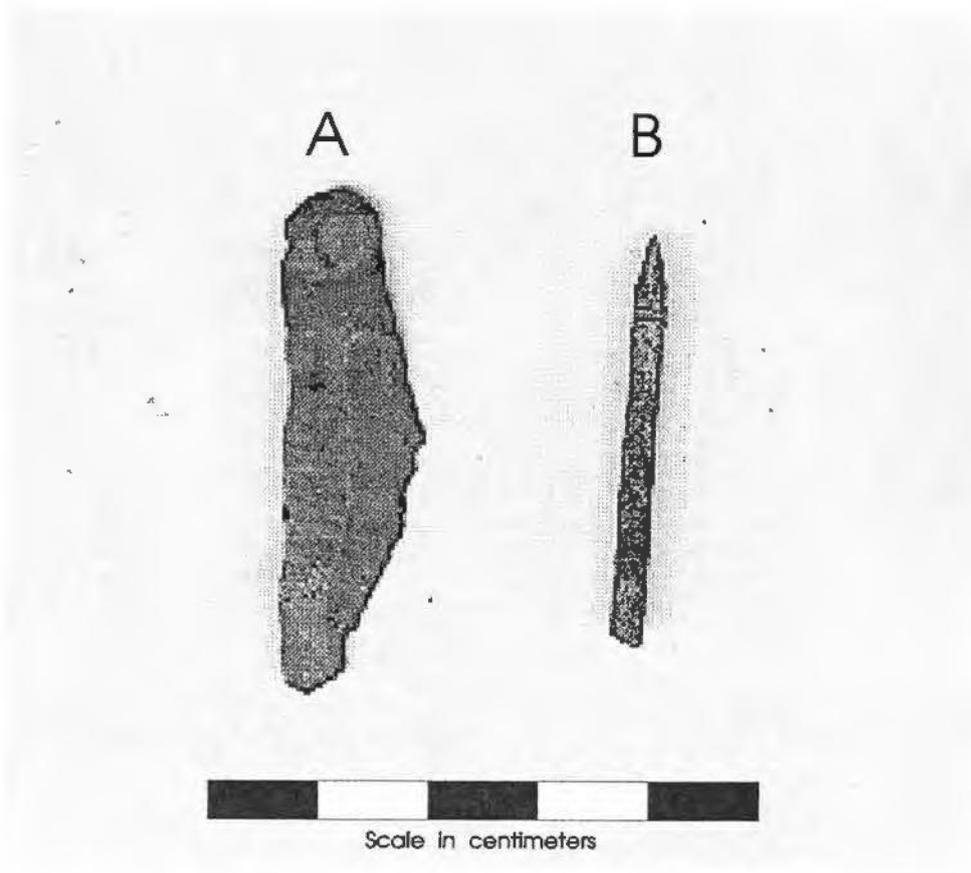


**Land to the rear of Southgate House,
Southgate street, Gloucester**

Archaeological evaluation



Gloucester Archaeology 1995

**LAND TO THE REAR OF SOUTHGATE HOUSE,
SOUTHGATE STREET, GLOUCESTER
(SITE 40/94)**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

INTRODUCTION

This evaluation was carried out by Gloucester Archaeology, a service of Gloucester city council, in response to an application for outline planning permission to construct a number of dwellings on land to the rear of Southgate House, Southgate street, Gloucester.

The area is currently occupied by a surface carpark and is known to have previously been the site of a tennis court and ornamental gardens associated with the Gloucester Royal Infirmary (demolished 1989), suggesting an excellent potential for archaeological survival.

SITE LOCATION

The site covers an area of approximately 3730sq.m and is located c.400m southwest of Gloucester city centre at Ordnance Survey grid reference SO 8303 1820 (Fig.1).

The area is bounded by Parliament street to the north, Southgate House to the west, The Old Tram road to the south and housing/open ground to the east.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The earliest representation of the survey area is Speeds map of 1610 (Fig.3) which appears to show a boundary running north-south through open ground comprising the rear gardens of individual properties to the west, The Butts (archery practice grounds) to the east and Gaudy Green to the south.

The properties on the Southgate street frontage were razed during the Siege of Gloucester in 1643 and the land then appears to have remained unoccupied until the founding of the Infirmary in 1755.

The first representation of the Infirmary buildings and its "extensive kitchen garden with orchard laid out behind" is on the map by Hall & Pinnell dated 1780 (Fig. 4).

This garden and orchard then seems to remain largely unaltered (Causton, 1843 - Fig 5), apart from the construction of further hospital buildings on the western and northern sides, until the construction of the tennis courts in the early part of this century.

PREVIOUS WORK

Parliament street (site 8/84):

Observations of a Telecom trench revealed Roman metalled surfaces at a depth of 1.20m and natural ground level at a depth of 2.00m.

Parliament street (site 3/84):

Observation of a 3.30m deep sewer trench revealed post-medieval street metallings at a depth of 1.00m

Southgate street (site 25/80):

Observation of GPO trenches along the eastern side of Southgate street revealed the natural ground surface at 15.70m AOD, at the junction with Parliament street, falling to 13.80m AOD to the south of the survey area.

Southgate street (sites 13/83 & 3/89):

Extensive archaeological excavations to the west of Southgate street revealed multi-period occupation consisting of substantial Roman masonry buildings, Saxon huts and Civil war defensive ditches. The base of the archaeological levels lies at an average of 14.90m AOD.

Southgate House (site 36/88):

Previous excavations along the street frontage of this area showed a marked difference in the type of occupation compared to that on the western frontage. The Roman period, particularly, differs in the lack of stone buildings and the area appears to have been occupied by an open market place. Evidence of Civil war activity was again represented by the main city ditch crossing the northwestern corner of the area and a possible royalist sap crossing the area from east to west.

METHOD OF STUDY

Three 10m x 2m trenches (Fig. 2) were excavated by machine to a depth of 1.50m to allow for the insertion of shoring plates and then hand excavated to the natural ground surface.

Trenches 1 & 2 were placed at an angle to the alignment of the street frontages to maximise the potential of identifying any linear features present.

Trench 3 was sited as close as possible to, whilst remaining at a safe distance from, the eastern boundary wall in order to avoid earlier foundation disturbance.

All three trenches were sited to lie within the proposed development footprint thus avoiding any unnecessary disturbance to surviving archaeological remains.

RESULTS (Fig. 6)

NOTE: To be consistent with the original site records compass bearings used in the following descriptions refer to **SITE NORTH** which is actually 40° east of grid north.

Trench 1:

A c.1.00m wide ditch/boundary running north-south (context 21) bisects the trench at 45°. The loamy fill is consistent with a deliberate backfilling event rather than a gradual silting up over a number of years.

Two c.0.60m wide ditches/boundaries running east-west (contexts 3 & 5) cross the trench at its northern end and presumably join the main north-south ditch, though the junction is outside the excavated area. These east-west ditches are likely to represent two different phases of occupation and though the initial pottery dating seems to confirm this the paucity of datable finds prevents any definite sequence being demonstrated.

All three of these ditches contain exclusively Roman material (with the exception of a single sherd of medieval pottery - Fig. 7) consistent with normal domestic refuse of the Roman period.

A row of stakeholes (context 19) cuts through the sealing layer (context 16) of the north-south ditch and follows the same alignment demonstrating a continuity of boundary position into the post-Roman period.

Trench 2:

The same north-south boundary ditch (here context 7) as discovered in trench 1 crosses this trench at its northern end. Again the finds are exclusively Roman and the ditch has been deliberately backfilled.

A possible post-setting of lias limestone boulders (context 12) set directly into the natural ground surface was only partially revealed within the southern limit of the trench. Although this suggests the presence of a structure no evidence of alignment or dating exists.

A narrow beam-slot (a trench dug to accept a timber sill-beam) (context 17) running north-south, directly to the east of ditch 7 and presumably associated with it, also indicates the presence of a structure. Again, unfortunately, there is insufficient evidence to suggest what type of building this may be.

The base of a "grave-like" feature (context 13) was also recorded cutting into the natural ground surface on the western side of the trench.

Trench 3:

There was no archaeological survival in this area due to extensive disturbance by the Infirmary foundations.

Excavation revealed that the hospital buildings plotted onto the base plan from earlier records represented only the surface footprint and gave no indication of the large concrete plinth on which the foundations are supported (Fig. 8).

THE FINDS

Pottery summary:

The pottery has been catalogued according to the Gloucester Type Fabric (TF) series.

A total of 148 pottery sherds, weighing 2326g, were recovered from 9 contexts.

The state of preservation is generally quite high with little or no signs of abrasion suggesting the pieces have remained undisturbed since deposition.

A total of 20 different type fabrics are represented.

The average (stratified Roman) sherd weight is 16g which compares favourably with the Roman levels excavated on this site in 1988 (average weight 15.9g) suggesting a similar type of occupation debris.

A full listing of fabric types with sherd count and weight per context is presented in tabular form as figure 7.

Building materials summary:

All of the building materials recovered are fragments of Roman ceramic roof tiles consisting of *TEGULAE* (large flat tiles that provide the main roof covering) and *IMBREX* (a semi-cylindrical tile used to bridge and seal the edges of the *TEGULAE* and cap the roof apex).

Fabric analysis shows the production (kiln) site to be that discovered at St. Oswalds Priory, to the northwest of the city, in 1975.

A complete *IMBREX* tile was recovered from the trench 2 ditchfills. Material of this nature is rarely removed from site after the demolition/decay of a building and is only normally spread by ploughing or other disturbance. This tile has clearly not suffered the inevitable damage caused by this type of secondary movement implying that a substantial structure is close by.

The assemblage is unfortunately not large enough to draw any conclusions as to the size or type of the original buildings.

Human bone:

A fragment of an adult left femur from the north-south ditch crossing trench 1 is assumed to be from a burial disturbed by the same feature.

Animal bones:

The animal bone is exclusively that of horse, pig, cattle and dog with no obvious signs of butchery (common in kitchen waste) though typical of general domestic refuse.

Small finds:

Three significant identifiable finds were recovered.

Firstly a Prehistoric flint blade (Frontispiece A) with a notched or serrated edge towards its distal end. The opposite side of the blade shows signs of being retouched.

Secondly a fragment of bone pin (Frontispiece B) with a tall conical head separated from the shaft by two transverse grooves. It is broken at mid-shaft. Such pins are relatively common finds on Roman sites, with parallels found at, for example, Porchester, Fishbourne and Lullingsworth. They generally appear to date from the 3rd or 4th century.

Thirdly a copper alloy finger ring (Not illustrated) of uncertain date but probably Roman also. The hoop is of oval section and the outer face is decorated with incised vertical lines. The object is fragmented and incomplete.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the features identified have provided invaluable new evidence regarding the topography of this area during the Roman period they are not in themselves the most important aspect of this evaluation.

Unusually a much more intriguing picture has been suggested by the type of finds, particularly the complete roof tile and the fragment of human bone. These point to the existence of a substantial Roman building in the immediate vicinity and the presence of at least one (disturbed) burial.

It was demonstrated during excavations on this site in 1988 and 1989 that the Roman suburbs did not extend southwards along the eastern side of Southgate street so the presence of a building in this area points to a previously unknown suburb set back from the road.

RECOMMENDATIONS (Fig. 8)

It has clearly been demonstrated that within the development footprint, along the Parliament street frontage (ZONE A), there is no surviving archaeology so no further action need be taken.

If however final proposals involve a different footprint, particularly if there is a move towards the street frontage, it is recommended that an archaeological watching brief be undertaken during all groundworks.

In view of the possibility of a Roman building existing in the vicinity it is also recommended that a watching brief be undertaken during all groundworks in ZONE B.

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40/94 Southgate House Site location

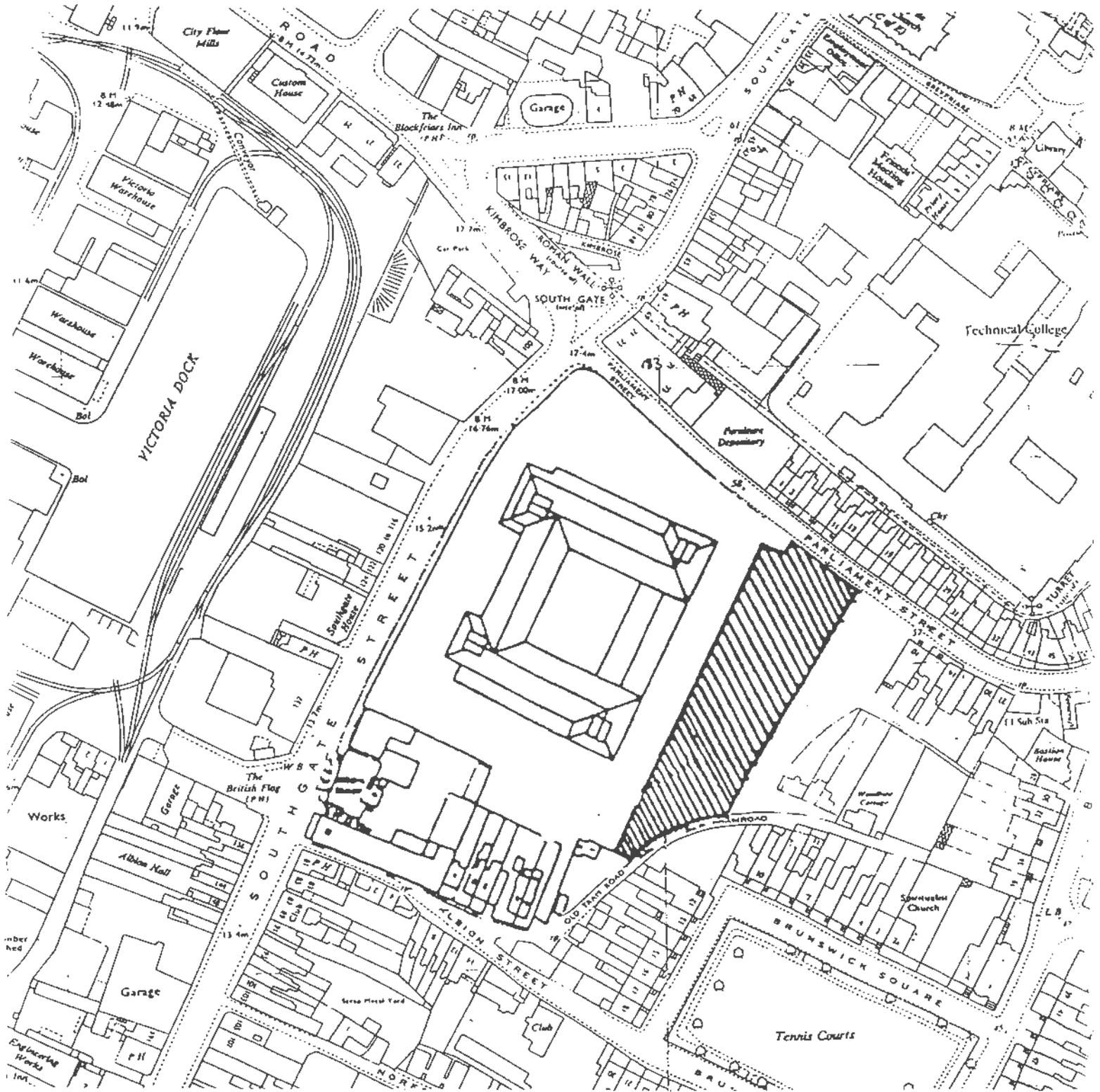


Figure 1

40/94 Southgate House Trench locations

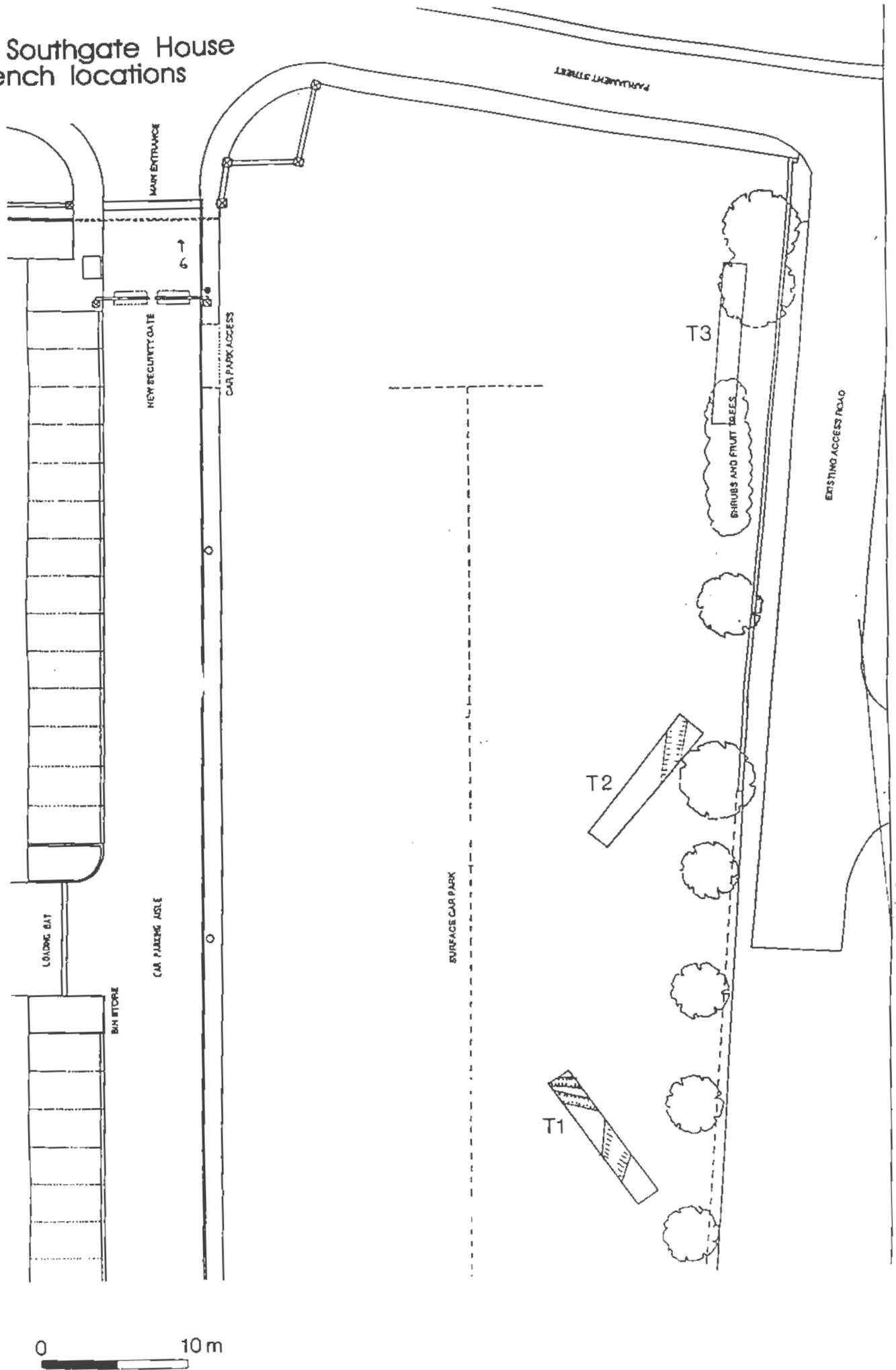


Figure 2

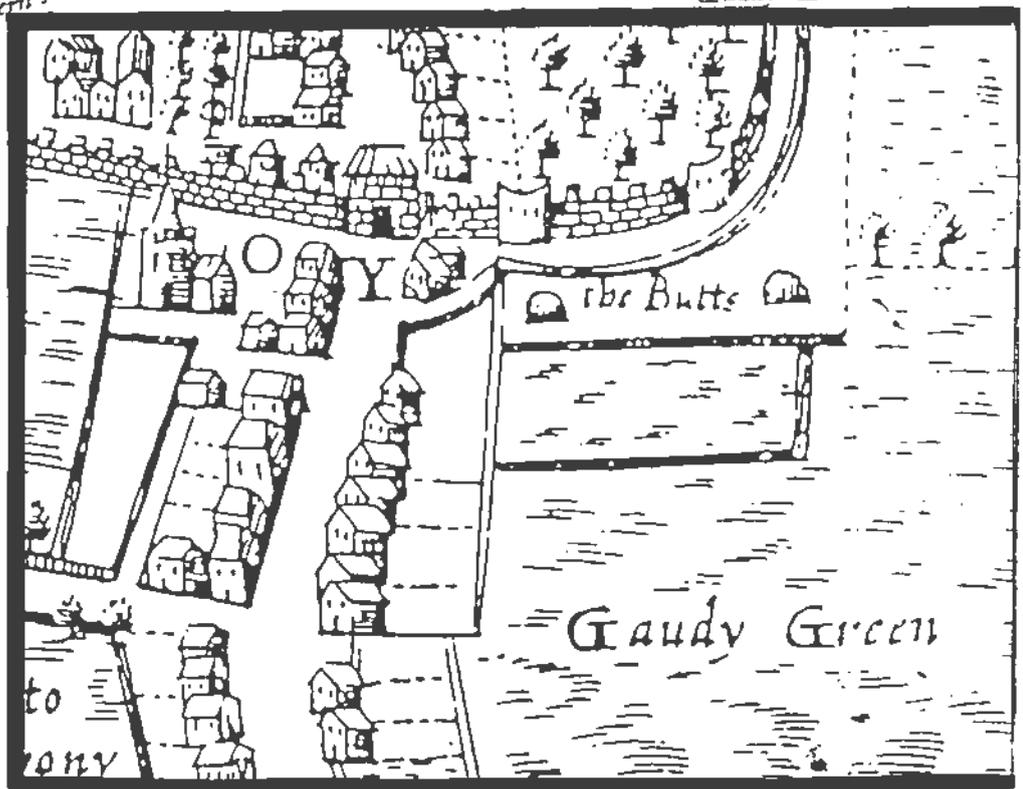


Figure 3

40/94 Southgate House
Hall & Pinnell 1780

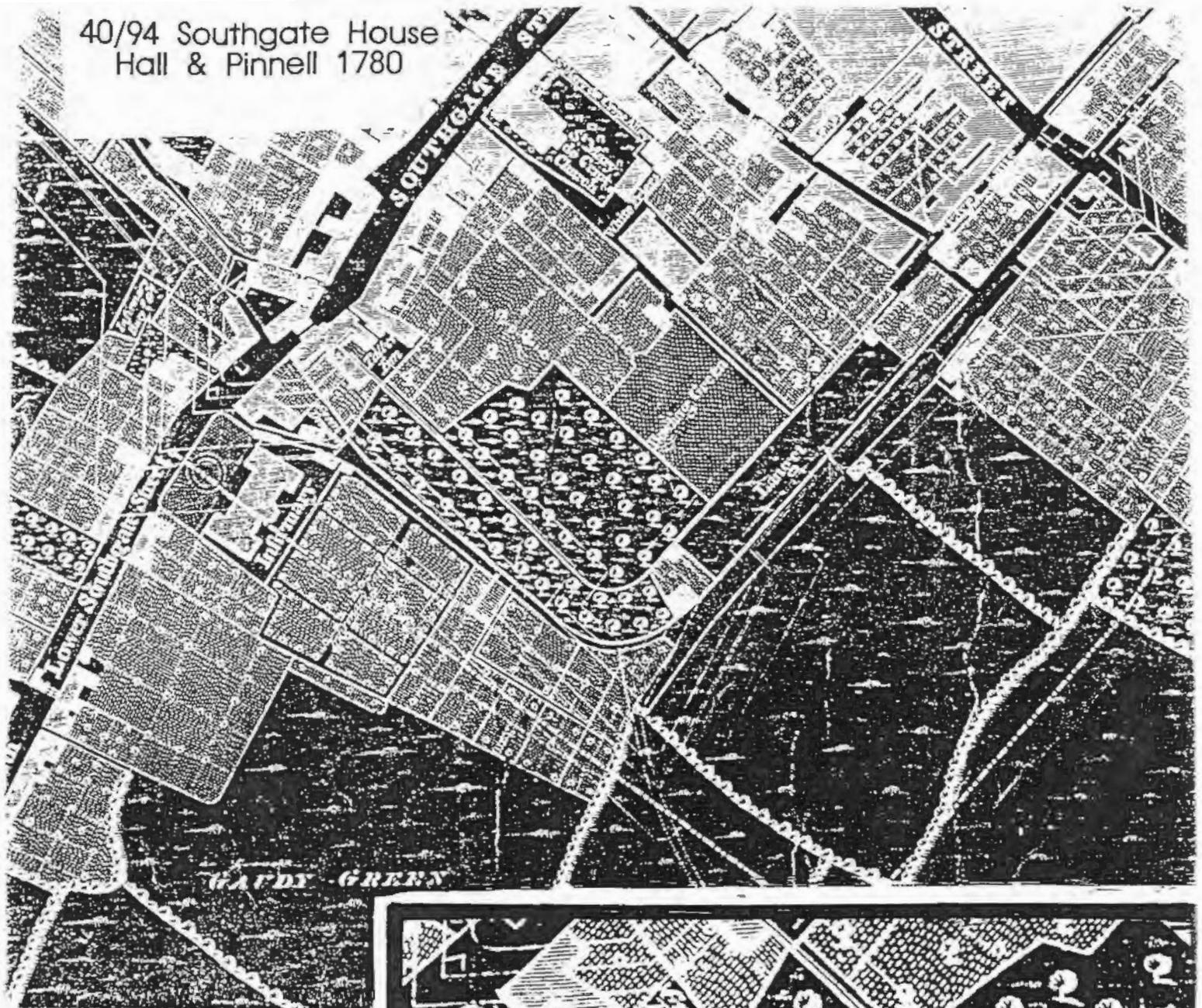


Figure 4

40/94 Southgate House
Causton 1843



Figure 5

40/94 Southgate House
Pottery summary

TF No.	Common name	Date range	Contexts with pottery								
			2	3	5	7	9	13	16	19	21
4	Black burnished ware	2nd-4th	2 54			9 62			1 3		4 35
8	Samian	1st-4th	3 26	1 2		6 14		1 2	1 10		3 12
10a	Dressel 20 amphora	1st-2nd									2 667
10b	Pelichet 47 amphora	2nd-3rd				3 137					
11b	Severn valley ware	2nd-4th	17 231		3 17	26 249			4 19	1 5	13 115
17	Charcoal tempered ware	1st-2nd									2 11
19b	Malvernian coarse ware	2nd-4th				1 113					
23	Coarse 11b	1st-3rd			2 21	3 144			1 11		1 11
25	Sandy 11b	2nd-3rd	2 28			2 9			1 6	2 7	2 14
26	Fine grey ware	1st-2nd	7 41			5 35		1 2		1 5	1 2
36	Sandy 11b	1st					1 26				
39	Sandy grey ware	1st							2 5		
40	Malvern chase ware	11th-14th			1 7						
43	Sand and limestone ware	11th-13th							1 6		
44	North Wiltshire wares	12th-15th	1 26						1 4		
54	Fine micaceous ware	11th-14th	2 89								
73	Embossed slip ware	17th-18th	2 16								
94	Westerwald stoneware	17th-18th	1 3								
200	Very sandy grey ware	1st-2nd							1 14		
A2	Limestone tempered native ware	PRE-1st				1 10					

Sherd count  Weight (g)

Figure 7

40/94 Southgate House Recommendations

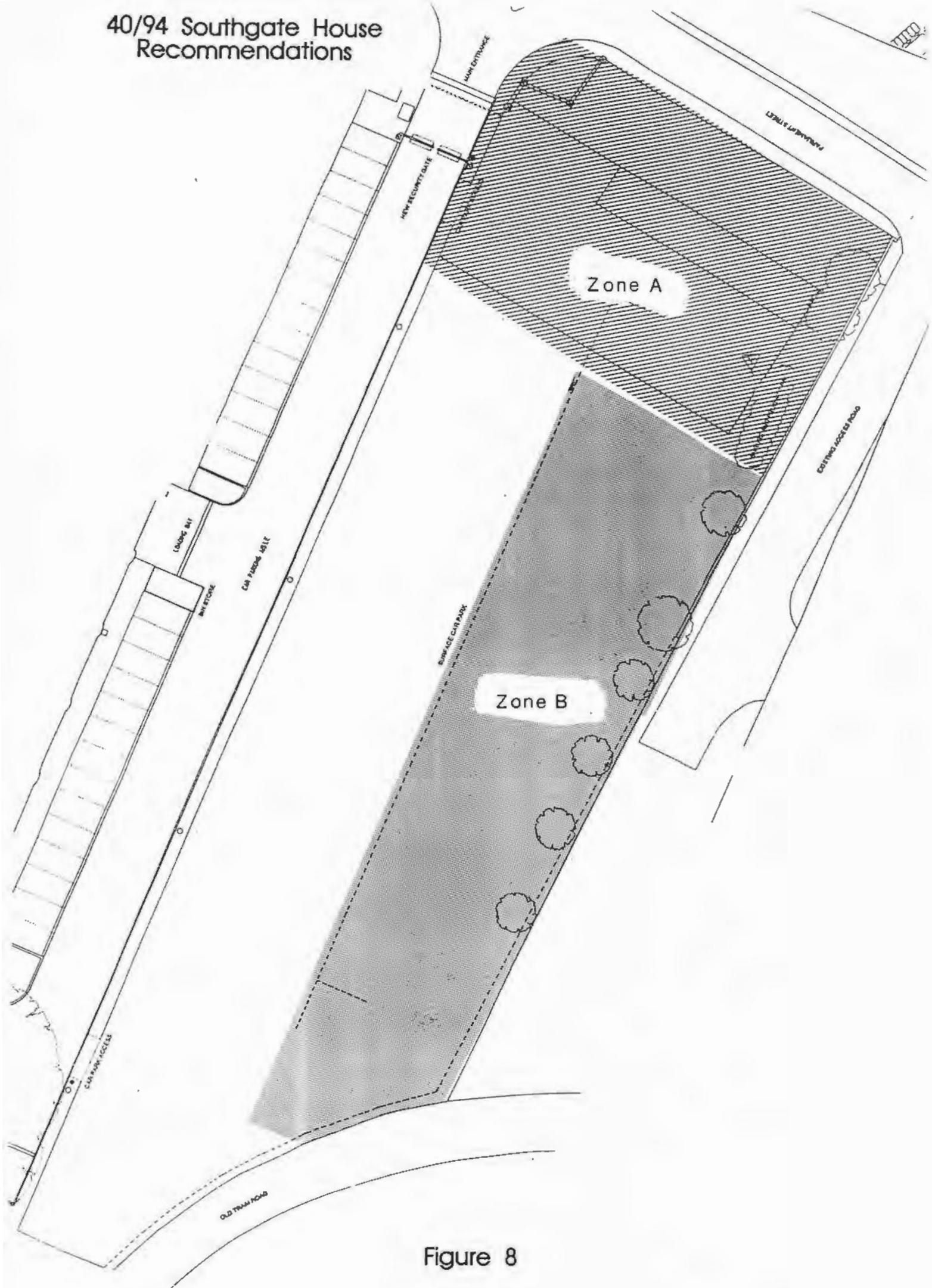


Figure 8

40/94 Southgate House Main features

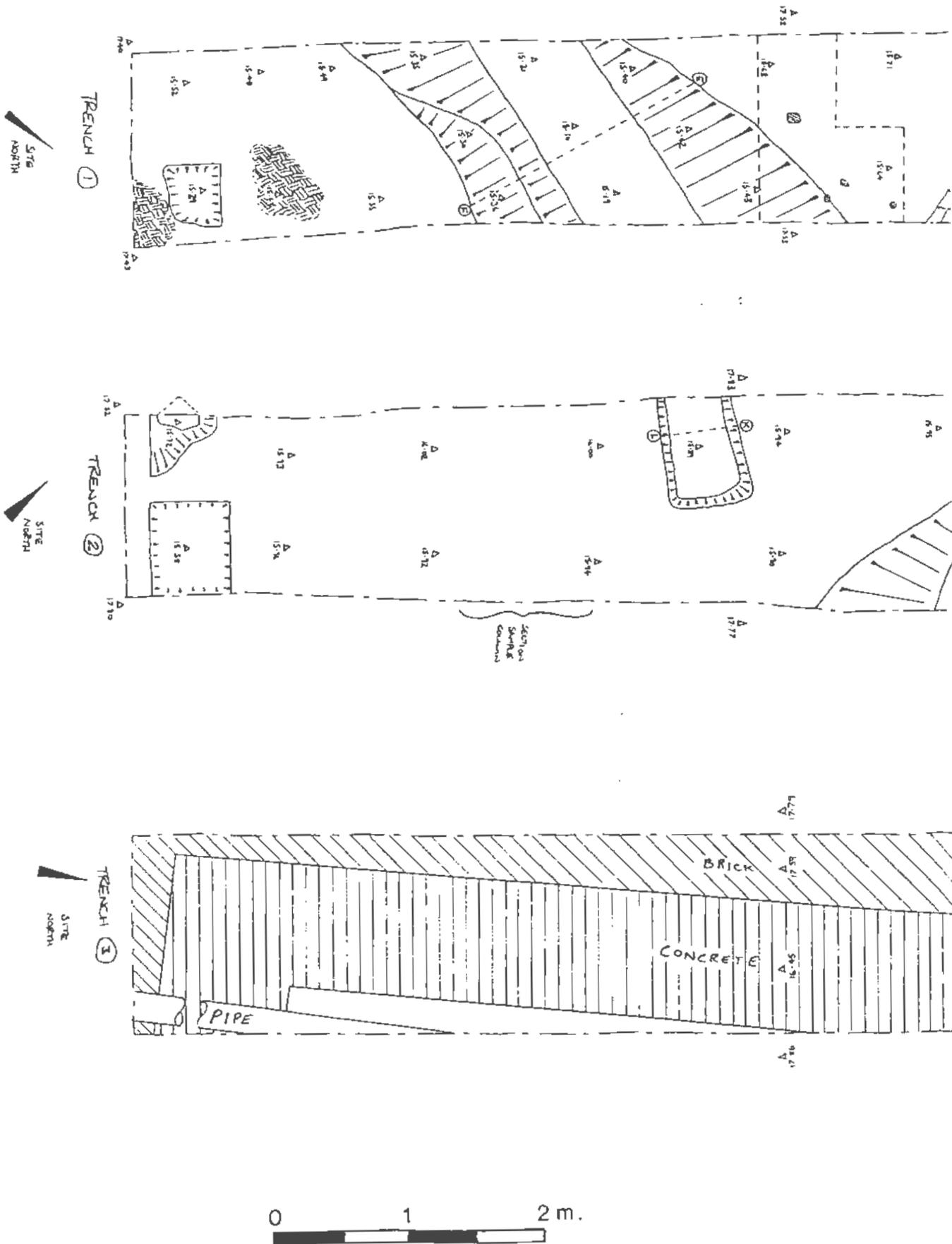


Figure 6

