

EVALUATION AT  
97, FRIAR STREET  
DROITWICH

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REPORT 69

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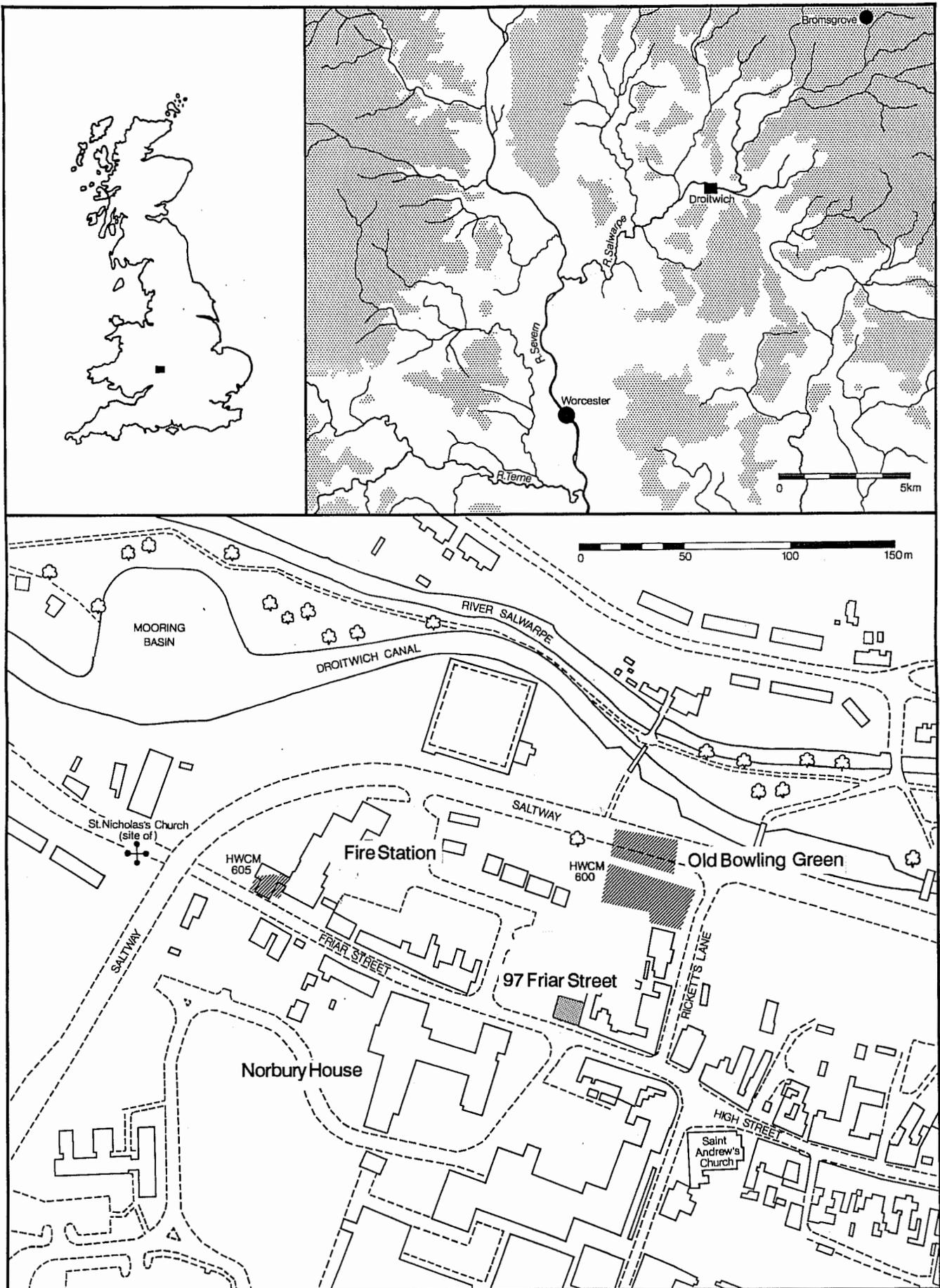
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LOCATION OF 97 FRIAR STREET

# Evaluation at 97 Friar Street, Droitwich, HWCM 9553

Duncan L Brown

## 1 Summary

*This evaluation has identified the presence of deposits of a variety of dates in a good state of preservation. Roman and possibly earlier deposits over the northern part of the site remain unexcavated, although these may include a late Roman, possibly Christian cemetery of which part of one burial was recovered. Some truncation appears to have occurred in the late Saxon or Anglo-Norman period, including the stripping of soils in order to lay down a gravel road onto marl. This road may represent the earliest position of Friar Street. A subsequent cobbled road, probably of 13th century date appears to have replaced it. A charcoal-packed layer may provide evidence for a fire in the late 13th or 14th century, which may be linked to that documented for 1290. Subsequently a building was constructed over the excavated area, probably in the early 14th century. Set into the floor of this building was a tripod pitcher lacking its rim. This proved to be highly unusual, being of a mid-13th century or earlier form in a 14th century or later fabric. The demolition of this building, was followed by the use of the area as a courtyard with outbuildings, as it now appears.*

*The survival of well-stratified deposits of the 10th-14th century so close to the present surface is unusual in an urban context where cellaring, deep foundations or pit excavation are commonplace. They have added significant new information about the medieval town of Droitwich. The earlier deposits, although truncated and largely unexcavated are likely to be of great significance due to the proximity of the industrial site at the Old Bowling Green, Ricketts Lane.*

## 2 Introduction

A planning application (90/96) was submitted to Wychavon District Council by Manor Oak Residential Properties Ltd proposing an office development at 97 Friar Street, Droitwich. The site is located at NGR SO 8988 6345 covering an area of 0.016ha. The site is registered on the County Sites and Monuments Record (HWCM 9553) as a site of archaeological interest (Statutory Instruments 1988 no 1813).

The solid geology is Mercian Mudstone (Keuper Marl). Keuper Saliferous beds are known to occur near the surface in the area of Droitwich town centre (Poole and Williams 1981). Although local soils as mapped are classified as urban, the nearest soil type, which is likely to have represented that for most of Droitwich is the Whimple 3 Association. This is one of the stagnogleyic argillic brown earths, which has fine loamy or silty drift horizons overlying slowly permeable Triassic mudstones. Friar Street runs along the river terrace above the flood plain adjacent to the Salwarpe. River terrace drift nearby includes fluvio-glacial gravels and some alluvial soils of the Compton series (Ragg *et al* 1984, 137-9).

Droitwich has been a centre for the large scale production of salt from the Iron Age until the early part of this century. This industry was based on the brine springs of exceptional purity and strength that naturally occurred in the area of the town. The products of this industry are known to have been exported over a wide area of the midlands and beyond from the Iron Age onwards.

In the Iron Age Droitwich was the centre of a salt industry of which a by-product is the ceramic salt container known as briquetage which is widely found in the midlands (Morris 1985). The industry is known from excavations beneath the present fire station on Friar Street (HWCM 605) and at the Old Bowling Green, Ricketts Lane (HWCM 600) to have continued into the Roman period (Woodiwiss forthcoming). The early Roman fort at Dodderhill (HWCM 603; Whitehouse 1962) and the villa complex at Bays Meadow (HWCM 678; Gelling 1957) have been interpreted as administrative centres for the salt industry which gave Droitwich its Roman name of *Salinae*. Excavation at the nearby site at Upwich revealed large timber structures of the 2nd century AD, probably related to large-scale brine extraction (Hurst pers comm).

Anglo-Saxon documentary evidence indicates that Droitwich was an important production centre for salt, and became the centre of a network of routeways for its distribution. The proliferation of *-wich* place names (Upwich, Middlewich and Netherwich) around Droitwich probably indicate the location of important middle-Saxon trading centres. Much of the earliest evidence for occupation of this date in the county comes from the Upwich excavations (HWCM 4575) which revealed structures associated with Anglo-Saxon salt production. It is thought that St Andrew's Church (HWCM 607) may have been a Saxon minster (Bond 1988, 123) which has implications for the status and date of St Nicholas Church. This site, set between the two, could determine the relationship between these two religious establishments, which is vital to an understanding of Friar Street and the early development of Droitwich.

The Domesday Book, which describes the town in Anglo-Saxon and early Norman times, shows that Droitwich was an important industrial and commercial centre. Many nobles, towns and religious institutions owned property, notably salt-houses, in and around Droitwich in order to maintain their

supplies of salt from the five brine pits and 250 salt-houses. As a borough the town could manage its own affairs, and the proceeds from the salt industry enabled the construction and embellishment of churches (St Andrew's, HWCM 607 and St Nicholas, HWCM 255), an exchequer house and the paving of streets. Excavation at Upwich (HWCM 4575) in 1983-4 revealed a great deal about the medieval salt industry of Droitwich, including the 13th century brine-well and salt-houses.

The site lies close to the historic centre of Droitwich, represented by St Andrew's Church and the Exchequer House. Medieval properties here and along Friar Street are known to have been very substantial. Priory House is an extant example and Chorley House is known to have been a considerable building with very high quality carved timber (Derek Hurst pers comm). The later medieval and early post-medieval salt industry Droitwich are also of great importance to the early industrial history of the county. This site lies between known areas of production at Upwich (HWCM 4575) and the Old Police Station (HWCM 4147).

It is clear that archaeological deposits in the area occupied by the modern town would help to give an understanding of the origins, chronology and early urban growth of this important industrial settlement. This development site, undisturbed by recent building activities, was likely to represent an area of very high potential preservation, perhaps comparable to that found beneath the present fire station (HWCM 605), where deposits dating from the Iron Age to the present day were excavated.

### 3 Aims

The evaluation aimed to locate archaeological deposits and determine their extent, state of preservation, date, type, vulnerability, documentation, quality of setting and amenity value. This is for the purpose of establishing their significance and enables an appropriate

treatment to be recommended and integrated with the proposed development programme.

#### **4 Method**

Selected deposits were fully or partially excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. An assessment of the quantity and range of artefactual and environmental material was also made.

Machine excavation to a depth of up to c 1.0m was followed by hand excavation of deposits at a lower level. A sounding was excavated along the western side of the trench in order to examine deposits below c 1.2m from the surface. In addition auger holes were sunk to examine deposits at a still greater depth. Recording of deposits encountered was undertaken according to the Hereford and Worcester County Archaeology Section recording manual (HWCC, 1990).

#### **5 Analysis**

Finds from deposits identified in the evaluation were examined and a period date was assigned where possible. A stratigraphic matrix of all identified deposits was produced and phased. A total of six phases were identified during the course of the evaluation.

- Phase 1 Natural deposits
- Phase 2 Roman deposits
- Phase 3 Anglo-Norman deposits
- Phase 4 Earlier medieval deposits
- Phase 5 Later medieval deposits
- Phase 6 Post-medieval deposits

##### **Phase 1 Natural deposits**

Natural deposits (122; fig 5) were encountered at 30.23m OD at the southern end of the trench sealed beneath, and truncated by successive gravel surfaces of phase 3. The upper surface of this deposit appeared undulating, with pebbles pressed quite deeply into grooves in the surface. In

addition worm holes and root holes disturbed other areas to a greater depth. These deposits were also heavily leached and therefore did not appear to be natural marl deposits until examined to a greater depth.

Further to the north, other areas of marl were successively truncated by features of a later date, including the phase 3 ditch (119) and other features. However, although masked by a complex of Roman and later deposits the natural level of the marl appeared to slope gradually downwards to the north. It was encountered at c 29.75m OD near the base of the phase 2 grave, beneath an unexcavated deposit interpreted as being of early Roman date.

Augering into the marl was undertaken to a depth of which revealed very little change in the quality of the marl. However at a depth of c 28.6m OD a grey or white saline staining occurred, possibly indicating the upper level of ground water and brine represented by the crystallization of salts.

##### **Phase 2 Roman deposits (1st-5th centuries AD)**

Few deposits interpreted as being of Roman date were excavated during the course of the evaluation. However some deposits were identified in plan at the northern end of the trench which were interpreted as early Roman due to their position between deposits interpreted as later Roman truncation, and those identified as natural (122: fig 5). These may have included some deposits accumulating during the Iron Age, but since no positive evidence for this date was available, they have all been interpreted as Roman.

A sub-rectangular feature (150) was identified in the north-west corner of the site, only part of which fell within the area of the excavation. Human bone was recovered from this feature which proved to have been articulated. In consequence this feature was interpreted as a grave, aligned east-west. Only the knees, lower legs and feet were

within the area excavated. The dimensions of this grave are unclear, although width could be estimated at c 0.6m and it had survived beneath truncation to a depth of c 0.27m. Finds in the fill of the grave included Roman pottery indicative of a date in the 3rd or 4th century.

Truncation of features of Roman date appears to have occurred, either in the later Roman or post-Roman period, which is represented by a shallow layer (138). This sealed the grave (150) which appeared to have been truncated. It included pottery dateable to the 2nd century AD and an undecipherable Roman coin, although these are likely to represent disturbance of deposits of this date. A layer sealing this (120) may represent a dumped deposit, although it may equally represent a similar shallow truncation of soils. This layer contained finds dateable to the mid-2nd or 3rd century AD.

A number of finds of Roman date were recovered from excavated deposits of phase 3 as well as those from phase 2. These included a total of 61 sherds of Roman pottery. These were identified using the Hereford and Worcester County fabric series (HWCC 1990).

Seventeen sherds of locally made briquetage (fabric 2) were recovered, eleven from layer (138) and six from the fill of the grave (150). This fabric is related to the manufacture and export of salt in Droitwich, particularly in the Iron Age and possibly continuing in use into the early Roman period.

Thirty-two sherds of Severn Valley ware (fabric 12) were recovered from a number of contexts. This fabric was very widely manufactured and used in the West Midlands area from the 1st-4th century AD. Five sherds including one with a red-slip were recovered from the upper layer (120), and sixteen from the layer sealing the grave (138). Three sherds were found in the grave itself (150) and the remaining eight from contexts of phase 3 (104, 109, 112 and 119). Two further sherds of organically tempered

Severn Valley ware (fabric 12.2) dateable to the 1st-2nd century AD were recovered from the lower layer (138). A single sherd of a Severn Valley *mortarium* (fabric 37) was recovered from the upper layer (120) as was a single sherd of a sandy oxidised ware (fabric 13) of an uncertain, but local source. Two sherds of fine grey ware (fabric 15), probably from a local source were recovered from the phase 3 road (112).

A single sherd of Black-burnished ware (fabric 22) was recovered from the grave (150). This fabric was made in Dorset, and widely exported in Britain from the 2nd to the 4th centuries AD. A single sherd of red colour-coated ware (fabric 29) manufactured by the Oxfordshire industry in the 3rd-4th centuries was recovered from a phase 3 gully (109). A single sherd of an *amphora* manufactured in the Guadalquivir region of Spain (fabric 42) was recovered from layer (138). This fabric can be dated to the 1st-2nd century AD, although *amphorae* are known to have been used long after their period of manufacture. Three sherds of samian ware (fabric 43) were recovered. These were manufactured in Central Gaul (modern France), and could be dated to the mid-late 2nd century AD. Two of the sherds, from the phase 3 road (112) represented a cup of Dragendorff form Dr.33, the other from layer (120) representing Dr.18/31 or 18/31R (de la Bedoyere 1988).

Roman tile was recovered from three contexts: the phase 3 road (112), the phase 3 ditch (119), and the dumped or truncated layer of phase 2 (120). A single piece from a Roman glass vessel was also recovered from this layer.

### **Phase 3 Anglo-Norman deposits (10th-12th century)**

A gravel surface 0.16m thick (112) ran beneath the west, south and east sections at the south end of the trench (figs 4, 7 and 8). The surface of this feature had a series of ridges running east-west across it. The soil layer immediately above it (116) contained

occasional pebbles, bone and one piece of slag. The gravel was quite densely packed but contained a number of lenses of soil. No finds were recovered from the surface or the layer above it, although Roman pottery was recovered from the makeup of the road.

This was initially interpreted as a road running east-west, representing an earlier alignment of Friar Street. The soil lenses may indicate that a series of gravel layers were laid down, the latest of which was rutted and covered in soil. The occurrence of Roman pottery within the gravel of the road suggests the origins of this material was from gravel deposits in the river valley which are known to be associated with Roman pottery (Derek Hurst pers comm).

A large feature (119; figs 5-7) running east to west across the trench was interpreted as a ditch. This marked the northern extent of the road (112) and may have cut it. This ditch had been recut at least once, and indicated evidence of slumping. Very few dateable finds were recovered from its fill, all of which proved to be residual Roman. A beam slot of sub-rectangular section also lying east to west (118) was cut into the upper fill of this feature. To the south of this feature, and running over the surface of the road, sealing the ditch (119) was the disturbed gravel (116), perhaps representing the latest extent of the use of this road.

A gully cutting the layer above (104), but not piercing the road surface (106; fig 3) contained one sherd of St Neot's type ware (fabric 49) and another of Cotswolds unglazed ware (fabric 57) of the 10th-11th century in addition to 13th century finds. The discovery of these finds in close proximity to the surface of the road made it unclear whether they were in fact in this gully, or were lying in the disturbed gravel layer (116).

#### **Phase 4 Early medieval deposits (12th-13th century)**

Sealing the disturbed gravel (116) and the beam-slot (118) was a consistent soil layer (104) up to 0.24m thick (figs 3 and 6-8). This contained occasional small residual Roman finds, and a single sherd of unglazed Worcester-type cooking pot (fabric 55), dateable to the 13th century. A gully (106), mentioned above, cut this layer, and contained a further three sherds in the same fabric, similarly dateable to the 13th century, in addition to the two earlier sherds. It also contained bone including a sheep vertebra with butchery marks associated with butchery practice dateable to the 13th century or earlier (Clare de Rouffignac pers comm).

Sealing the southern edge of the soil layer (104), was a consistent layer of large, tightly packed worn cobbles (121; figs 6-8). This feature was interpreted as a road, and may have been bounded to the north by the gully (106). No dating evidence was available from this feature, although finds of the 13th century were found in the layer sealed by it (104) and in a layer possibly associated with it (106). A layer sealing this (124) also contained finds of the 13th or 14th century.

Above the upper road surface (121), and running across most of the rest of the site, was a dark-stained soil layer (123), coloured by leaching from the layer above (124). The latter contained a remarkably high concentration of charcoal, and although much thinner than the layer beneath, it appears equally consistently across the site (figs 6-8). Three sherds of unglazed Worcester-type cooking pot (fabric 55), dateable to the 13th or 14th century occurred in the charcoal-packed layer (124).

An eighth sherd of unglazed Worcester-type cooking pot (fabric 55), dateable to the 13th or 14th century was residual in the phase 6 machine trench (103).

Some other features appeared in section sealed by the charcoal-packed layer (124)

including shallow post-holes or gullies. However, these had been machined away, and therefore could not be examined in detail.

### **Phase 5 Later medieval deposits (14th-16th century)**

A posthole (100 and 101; figs 3, 4 and 6) was identified following machine clearance, the upper part of which appeared only in section. Two cut lines were apparent for this feature, the later of which (101) was cut from above the charcoal-packed layer (124). This had been cut down to below the base of its predecessor (100), and had been backfilled with large pieces of stone, perhaps representing the redeposition of post-packing. A single piece of glazed roof tile, probably part of a ridge tile of the 14th century was recovered from the fill of the later postpit (101).

Another pit (149), further to the north was cut from a similar level and truncated the northern side of this post pit (101). One of the stones from the fill of the post pit (101) had been redeposited against the gently sloping edge of this feature. It had truncated the earlier, perhaps original cut of the post-hole (100), making this difficult to phase.

A layer of thin stones laid horizontally (144; figs 6 and 8) was identified in section in the north-east part of the trench, which was interpreted as a stone pavement. This rested on dumps of reddish sandy clay (137), ash (146) and soil (145), cut by a stakehole (165). The pavement appeared to have slumped in the north-east corner, perhaps due to the presence of a deep feature (149) beneath it. The area of the depression seems to have been filled with mortar (143), as though an attempt had been made to level up the floor. Two sherds of glazed ridge tile dateable to the 14th century or later were recovered from between the stones of the pavement (144).

During the course of machining, a nearly complete tripod pitcher of Malvernian fabric

was recovered (fabric 69; fig 9). This was set upright in a pit cut economically to contain it. The pit was cut from somewhere above the sandstone and mortar layer (166) which has been interpreted as 14th century in date, related to the stone pavement (144). The vessel was cracked, and lacked its rim. The cracking may be due to stresses caused by settlement or compaction of the ground above, and were exacerbated by machining. Roots were clearly within the vessel but did not pass through any of the cracks as might have been expected if these had been open long. It was lifted in 51 pieces.

The vessel is in a bright orange fabric tempered with igneous rock from the Malvern Hills. It has incised banded decoration, and copper flecked lead glaze over the external upper part of its body. Tripod pitchers in this form are generally dated to no later than the mid-13th century. The fabric and glaze however are of the type (HWCM fabric type series 69) usually assigned to the 14th-17th centuries (Vince 1977). No similar vessels have been seen before at Droitwich (Derek Hurst pers comm), Worcester (Morris 1980; Buteux pers comm) or Hereford (Vince 1985).

### **Phase 6 Post-medieval deposits (16th-20th century)**

Above this level, very little dateable material was recovered below the ash and brick of the 19th building and courtyard. There were successive layers of building construction or demolition rubble and associated trampled deposits, as well as occasional shallow pits, gullies and postholes. Three sherds of 17th or 18th century pottery (fabrics 72 and 78) were recovered from these layers.

The splayed brick footings of a 19th century building (140; figs 6-7) were identified in the east and west sections of the trench. The scar of the wall of this building is still visible in the west wall of the building immediately to the east of the trench. The building represented by these was still shown on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of 1970 (SO

8963), and was probably a smaller and less substantial companion to the adjacent building to the east. A trench for electric ducting (142) was excavated through the foundations of this building, presumably to allow electric lighting to be put in.

A narrow machine excavated trench (103) was identified at the south end of the site, cutting down into natural marl. This was at a slight angle to the evaluation trench and was excavated at a shallower angle than it. It therefore appears in two places on the east section, as well as on the south section.

## 6 Discussion

The only natural deposit represented was red marl (phase 1). However due to the effects of truncation and rutting in phase 3 this had become weathered and leached. This truncation seems to have removed all evidence of Iron Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon activity in the southern half of the trench. However Roman, and possibly Iron Age deposits survived further to the north, since at the north end of the trench, the marl occurred c 0.5m deeper than it appeared to the south. This horizontal truncation or terracing seems to have been a feature of the site, since the two uppermost layers, containing material of 2nd and 3rd century date (120 and 138) appear to represent an episode of Roman truncation. An alternative suggestion for this truncation of features may be due to a natural reworking of soils by worm action during a time when the ground lay fallow. Such a phenomena is well known in Worcester (Charles Mundy pers comm) and elsewhere in the Roman period (Yule 1990).

No clear evidence of the Roman salt-working industry identified on Old Bowling Green was present, although there are quantities of residual briquetage in early Roman contexts.

The grave (150) is important for an understanding of the topography of Roman Droitwich. Roman cemeteries must, by law,

be beyond the bounds of settlement, and adults should not, therefore, be buried within a known area of occupation. Consequently the appearance of an adult grave here has implications for the extent of contemporary settlement and industry in Droitwich. Problems arise over the precise dating of this grave, since so little of it was available for excavation and truncation may have occurred any time from the 3rd century AD onwards.

The earliest road surface detected in the excavation is that of phase 3 (112), representing a late Saxon or Anglo-Norman date (10th-12th century) for the earliest construction of Friar Street. The surface of this road was rutted, lenses of soil occurred at intervals and ruts were present in the surface of the natural beneath it, all of which suggest it was regularly maintained for some time. However the limited extent of the excavation, and the fact that the road was terraced into the marl made it difficult to be certain about the earliest date for the road. It may even be of Roman origin since the only *terminus post quem* available is the Roman material within the gravel.

Loose pebbles, crushed bone and other material in a soil horizon above the surface of the road (116) may represent the continued use of this route as a trackway after the road was covered in soil.

The next road surface (121) is likely to be 13th century in date, and seems to have been of one phase. An area of loose pebbles in the dark-stained layer above (123) may indicate a similar effect as has been seen for the earlier road (see above). However this may also represent a natural reworking of the soil by worm action during a period when this area was left undisturbed. Droitwich received its first documented grant of pavage in 1316 (VCH ii, 90) and it may have been at this date that the road moved permanently further to the south, beyond the excavated area, and close to its present location. This process has also been recorded elsewhere on Friar Street, at the fire station site (HWCM 605).

The charcoal filled layer (124) appears to represent an episode of burning in the near vicinity. A fire is known to have started in 1290 close to St Andrew's Church (VCH iii, 75). Although unlikely to represent a deposit of ash solely related to this fire, it may have been largely derived from demolition works, and the removal of charring from structural timbers which could be reused. If this identification is borne out the date 1290 acts as a *terminus ante quem* for all the deposits buried beneath it.

The consistent appearance of this charcoal-packed layer across the site appears to indicate that little activity occurred here until the construction of the building with the rubble floor, perhaps some time later. The stone back-filled posthole (100 and 101) might add a further clue here. A post, perhaps representing a building may have remained *in situ* in this posthole (100), supported by the stone post-packing during and after the fire. It was subsequently removed, perhaps in order to make way for the new building with the stone pavement (144), and the hole (101) was backfilled.

The fire of 1290 may also have been detected beneath the present fire station (HWCM 605; Woodiwiss, forthcoming). With an east wind blowing down the Salwarpe valley, it is likely that this fire could have destroyed a considerable proportion of the properties on Friar Street. The proximity of 97 Friar Street to St Andrew's, and the widespread destruction caused by the fire, which can be suggested by the discovery of a consistent deposit across a wide area, is therefore of great importance to the archaeology of the western half of the medieval town of Droitwich.

The building of phase 5 represented by the stone pavement (144) was probably erected sometime after the fire and may therefore be of 14th century date. It appears only to have occupied the northern end of the trench, and consequently may have been set back from the street frontage. However an alternative interpretation, perhaps more likely, is that

this stone floor represents a back room of a house in which the front room had only a dirt floor, or was provided with floorboards, neither of which would be so easily identifiable. The south wall was not detected in the excavated area, and is therefore likely to have been to the south of the trench edge, between it and the road. The sandstone and mortar rubble layer (166), the soil layer above (167) and the laminated clay deposit (170) sealing these may represent successive floor layers. The tripod pitcher (fig 9) would have been sunk into the floor of this front room, and may have been used for a number of purposes, ranging from cooling or storing water, to acting as an under-floor safe.

This building seems to have survived until relatively recently, since there are few if any signs of deposition between the 14th and the 17th or 18th century. Since a building was constructed and a courtyard laid out in the 19th century almost immediately above what may be considered floor layers of this building, it is likely that the plot did not remain vacant for long after demolition. However, truncation of the uppermost deposits may have occurred so it cannot be certainly ascertained from archaeological sources when this building was demolished. As may be seen from the survival of other late medieval town houses in Droitwich and elsewhere, it is quite likely that a house built at this date would have survived little altered into the 18th, or perhaps even the 19th century.

## 7) Assessment of significance

For assessment of significance the *Secretary of State's criteria for scheduling ancient monuments* has been used (DoE 1990, Annex 4: see Appendix 2).

### **Survival/Condition:**

The deposits of medieval and earlier date were largely undamaged by later disturbance. A series of continuous layers occurred across most of the site, providing a good dateable stratigraphic sequence. No cellaring had occurred along the frontage of this site and, as has been determined elsewhere, comparatively little occurs anywhere else along Friar Street. No substantial building foundations were encountered which might have led to large scale removal of archaeological deposits. No evidence of the survival of waterlogged deposits was present.

### **Rarity:**

This site represents a small area of a large, monument of very high rarity value. The Droitwich salt industry is virtually unique at a national level in all periods and its associated settlement assumes a consequent importance.

Although the medieval salt industry itself has been partially explored, little is known about the conditions in which the inhabitants of Droitwich lived and what effect the industry had on their lives. No complete burgage plot, the standard medieval urban unit, has ever been excavated, and many have already been lost or disrupted by modern development along street frontages. The truncation of post-Roman deposits at the Old Bowling Green site (HWCM 600) increases the importance of areas where it might be possible to examine these deposits. The slope in natural ground level suggests that a terracing has taken place which may have preserved such deposits at the north edge of this property.

This site presented a rare opportunity to recover data from this area, much of which has already been removed during the

construction of Norbury House and the Fire Station. Much of the rest is likely to be preserved beneath buildings of the 15th to 18th centuries on Friar Street frontage most of which are not cellared. However these buildings are themselves to be preserved. Elsewhere in the town, in the area of the High Street, subsidence has meant that archaeological deposits are deeper and therefore better preserved. However its depth also makes it less accessible, and therefore far more costly to investigate archaeologically. The accessibility of the archaeology of this site is a rarity in Droitwich town centre. Therefore this is a rare opportunity to examine this important monument.

### **Fragility/Vulnerability:**

Very little post-medieval deposition has occurred on this site. On High Street and other areas of the town, subsidence has meant that archaeology is deeply buried and consequently well protected from recent building activities. The medieval accumulation of the 13th century appears to have been arrested by the construction of a building, probably in the later 14th century, leaving early deposits unusually close to the surface (at c 0.5m OD).

The evaluation trench was valuable in that it enabled the identification of archaeological deposits and allowed an assessment of their significance. However it examined only c 2.5% of the site at the level of an evaluation. Recording for this evaluation could not be of as high a standard as for an excavation, particularly for the later deposits, which were removed by machine. As a consequence, the quality of detailed examination and analysis of an excavation will not be possible for this area of the site. Further groundworks will similarly limit the ability of archaeologists undertaking an excavation of the site.

The intended development will use perimeter ground beams and raft foundations, resting on marl. The excavation of trenches for the ground beams will remove all archaeological deposits encountered, without record, and

will disrupt the relationship between deposits within the perimeter, and those beyond it.

#### **Documentation:**

Previous investigation, at the fire station on Friar Street, and at the Old Bowling Green on Ricketts Lane provide useful comparative material with which to test results of this, or any further excavations in this area this excavation. In consequence information concerning the site can be enhanced by local as well as national examples of settlement and industry.

Extensive contemporary documentation of the Anglo-Saxon, medieval and later salt industry of Droitwich exists and may shed some light onto the history and role of properties on the Friar Street frontage. These may have implications for our understanding of this site.

#### **Group value:**

The group value of the whole monument of Droitwich is relatively high. This is due to the linkage of a rare, and in some periods unique inland industry with its associated settlements continuously from the Iron Age onwards. This particular site, with its well stratified burial, roads, ditches and buildings

### **8 Conclusions**

This evaluation has identified the presence of deposits of a variety of dates in a good state of preservation. Roman and possibly earlier deposits over the northern part of the site remain unexcavated, although these may include a late Roman, possibly Christian cemetery of which part of one burial was recovered. Some truncation appears to have occurred in the late Saxon or Anglo-Norman period, including the stripping of soils in order to lay down a gravel road onto marl. This road may represent the earliest position of Friar Street. A subsequent cobbled road, probably of 13th century date appears to have replaced it. A charcoal-packed layer may provide evidence for a fire in the late 13th or 14th century, which may be linked to that

documented for 1290. Subsequently a building was constructed over the excavated area, probably in the early 14th century. Its demolition, was followed by the use of the site as a courtyard with outbuildings, as it now appears.

The survival of well-stratified deposits of the 10th-14th century so close to the present surface is unusual in an urban context where cellaring, deep foundations or pit excavation are commonplace. They have added significant new information about the medieval town of Droitwich. The earlier deposits are of great significance in relation to the neighbouring site at the Old Bowling Green, Ricketts Lane, where significant Roman deposits were encountered, but post-Roman deposits had been largely disturbed. However these are difficult to interpret from such a small area. Very little is known of early or middle Saxon settlement at Droitwich, but although positive evidence of this date did not appear in the excavated trench, it might be expected in other parts of the evaluation area.

Deposits below c 31.00m OD, representing the 14th century or earlier, can therefore be identified as of great importance for the archaeology of Droitwich, itself a town of national archaeological standing. As such they are of regional and national significance.

### **9 Acknowledgements**

The author would like to express his thanks to Mr Colin Giles and the staff of Worcestershire Building Services for their help. Derek Hurst assisted throughout with information and advice on a variety of subjects. Simon Woodiwiss coordinated the evaluation and edited the report. Advice on finds was given by Victoria Buteux (medieval pottery), Gary Taylor (samian ware), Derek Hurst (briquetage) and Jane Evans (Roman pottery). Carol E Brown carried out conservation treatment of the coin. Thanks also to Diana Rawlings and Joanne Taylor for their assistance on site.

## 10 Personnel

Assistant Archaeological Field Officer:  
Duncan L Brown MA AIFA

Archaeological Assistants:  
Paul Godbehere  
Nigel Topping PIFA

## 11 Abbreviations

Numbers prefixed with "HWCM" are the primary reference numbers used by the Hereford and Worcester County Sites and Monuments Record.

HWCC - Hereford and Worcester County Council

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## Appendix 1: Archive

The archive consists of:

78	Context records AS1
4	Fieldwork progress records AS2
4	Matrix sheets AS7
14	Context finds sheets AS8
4	Auger record sheets
11	Scale drawings
1	Box of finds

All primary records and finds are kept at:

Archaeology Section  
Hereford and Worcester County Council  
Tetbury Drive  
Warndon  
Worcester WR4 9LS

Tel Worcester (0905) 58608

A security copy of the archive has been placed at:

Hereford and Worcester County Museum  
Hartlebury Castle  
Hartlebury  
Near Kidderminster  
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ

Tel Hartlebury (0299) 250416

## Appendix 2

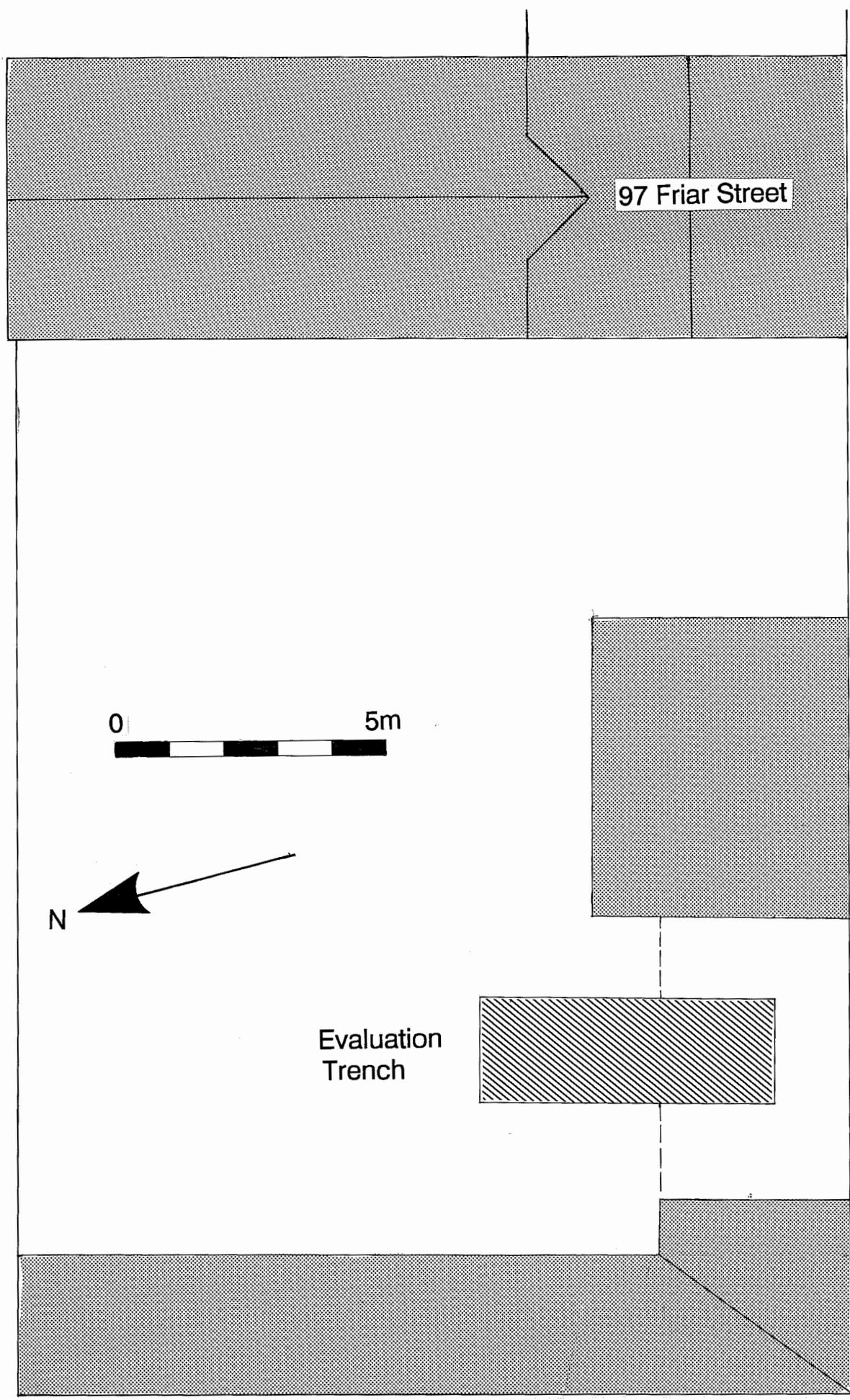
### Secretary of State's criteria for scheduling Ancient Monuments - Extract from *Archaeology and Planning DoE Planning policy guidance 16, November 1990*

The following criteria (which are not in any order of ranking), are used for assessing the national importance of an ancient monument and considering whether scheduling is appropriate. The criteria should not however be regarded as definitive; rather they are indicators which contribute to a wider judgement based on the individual circumstances of a case.

- i *Period*: all types of monuments that characterise a category or period should be considered for preservation.
- ii *Rarity*: there are some monument categories which in certain periods are so scarce that all surviving examples which still retain some archaeological potential should be preserved. In general, however, a selection must be made which portrays the typical and commonplace as well as the rare. This process should take account of all aspects of the distribution of a particular class of monument, both in a national and a regional context.
- iii *Documentation*: the significance of a monument may be enhanced by the existence of records of previous investigation or, in the case of more recent monuments, by the supporting evidence of contemporary written records.
- iv *Group value*: the value of a single monument (such as a field system) may be greatly enhanced by its association with related contemporary monuments (such as a settlement and cemetery) or with monuments of different periods. In some cases, it is preferable to protect the complete group of monuments, including

associated and adjacent land, rather than to protect isolated monuments within the group.

- v *Survival/Condition*: the survival of a monument's archaeological potential both above and below ground is a particularly important consideration and should be assessed in relation to its present condition and surviving features.
- vi *Fragility/Vulnerability*: highly important archaeological evidence from some field monuments can be destroyed by a single ploughing or unsympathetic treatment; vulnerable monuments of this nature would particularly benefit from the statutory protection which scheduling confers. There are also existing standing structures of particular form or complexity whose value can again be severely reduced by neglect or careless treatment and which are similarly well suited by scheduled monument protection, even if these structures are already listed buildings.
- vii *Diversity*: some monuments may be selected for scheduling because they possess a combination of high quality features, others because of a single important attribute.
- viii *Potential*: on occasion, the nature of the evidence cannot be specified precisely but it may still be possible to document reasons anticipating its existence and importance and so to demonstrate the justification for scheduling. This is usually confined to sites rather than upstanding monuments.



97 Friar Street, Droitwich, HWCM 9553  
Location of Evaluation Trench

HWCM 9553  
97 Friar Street, Droitwich  
Evaluation Trench Plan 1 (1:20)

LEVELS (mOD)

1	29.79	6	30.39
2	29.76	7	30.35
3	30.38	8	30.40
4	30.40	9	30.36
5	30.29	10	30.40

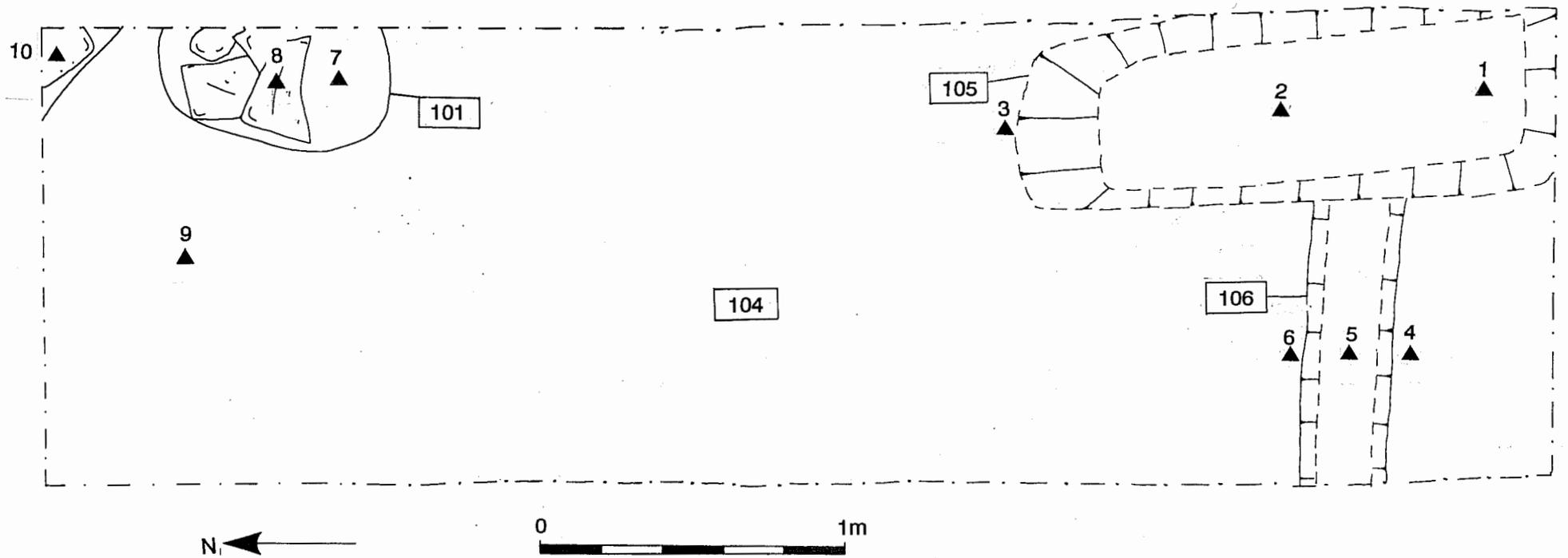
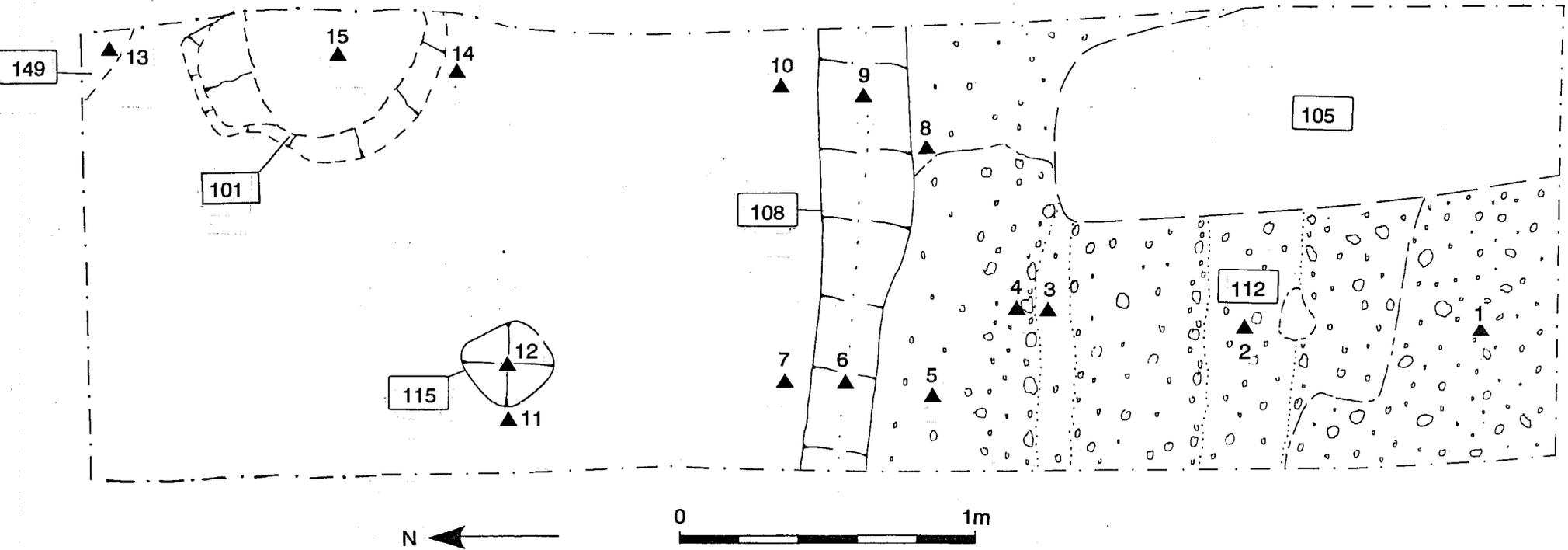


Figure 3

HWCM 9553  
 97 Friar Street, Droitwich  
 Evaluation Trench Plan 2 (1:20)

LEVELS (mOD)

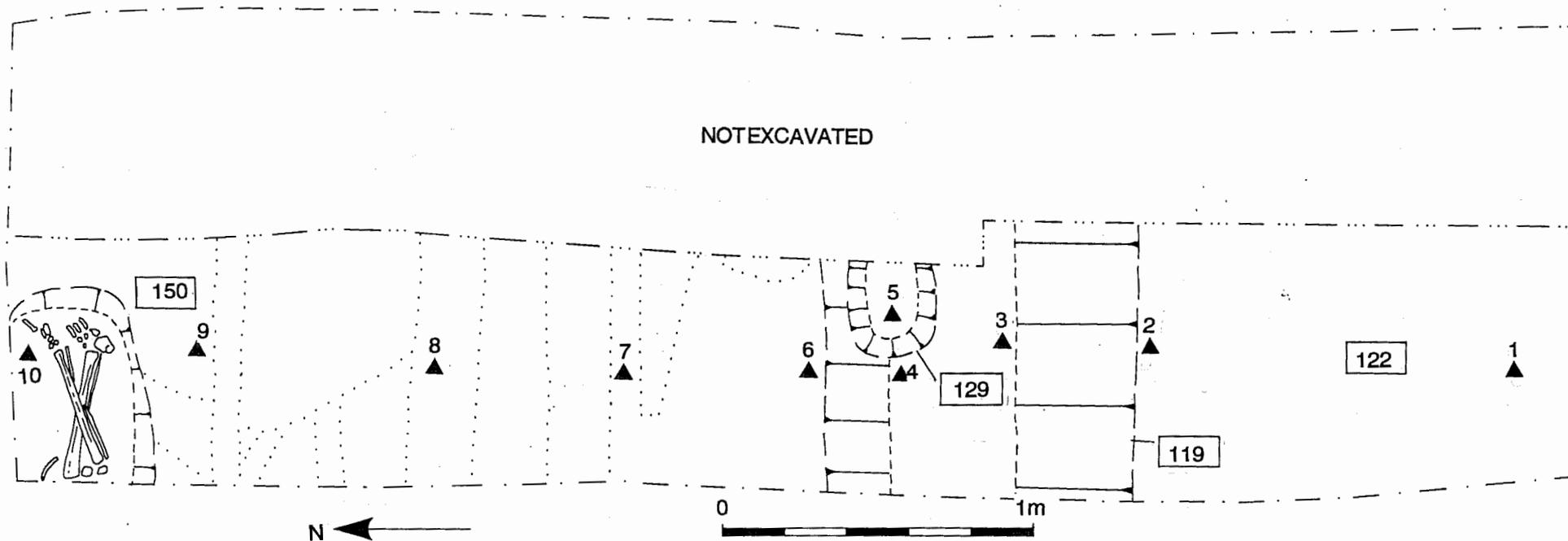
1	30.33	6	30.33	11	30.34
2	30.34	7	30.38	12	30.27
3	30.35	8	30.40	13	30.24
4	30.38	9	30.33	14	30.33
5	30.41	10	30.39	15	30.05



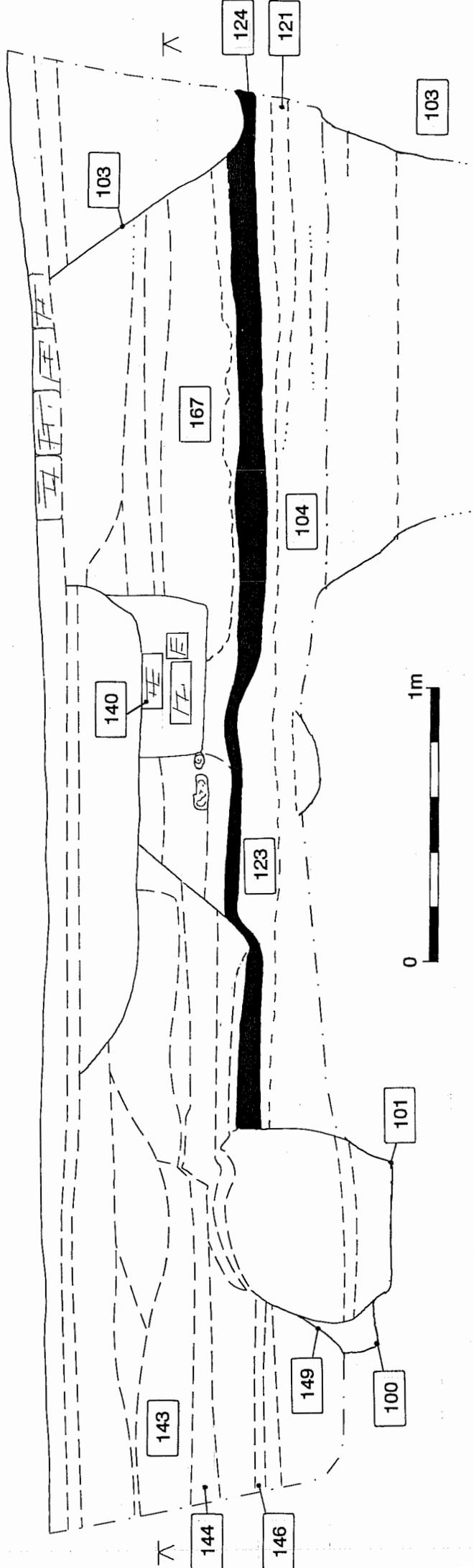
HWCM 9553  
 97 Friar Street , Droitwich  
 Evaluation Trench Plan 3 (1:20)

LEVELS (mOD)

1	30.21	6	30.07
2	30.23	7	30.01
3	29.99	8	30.01
4	29.99	9	29.97
5	29.74	10	29.71



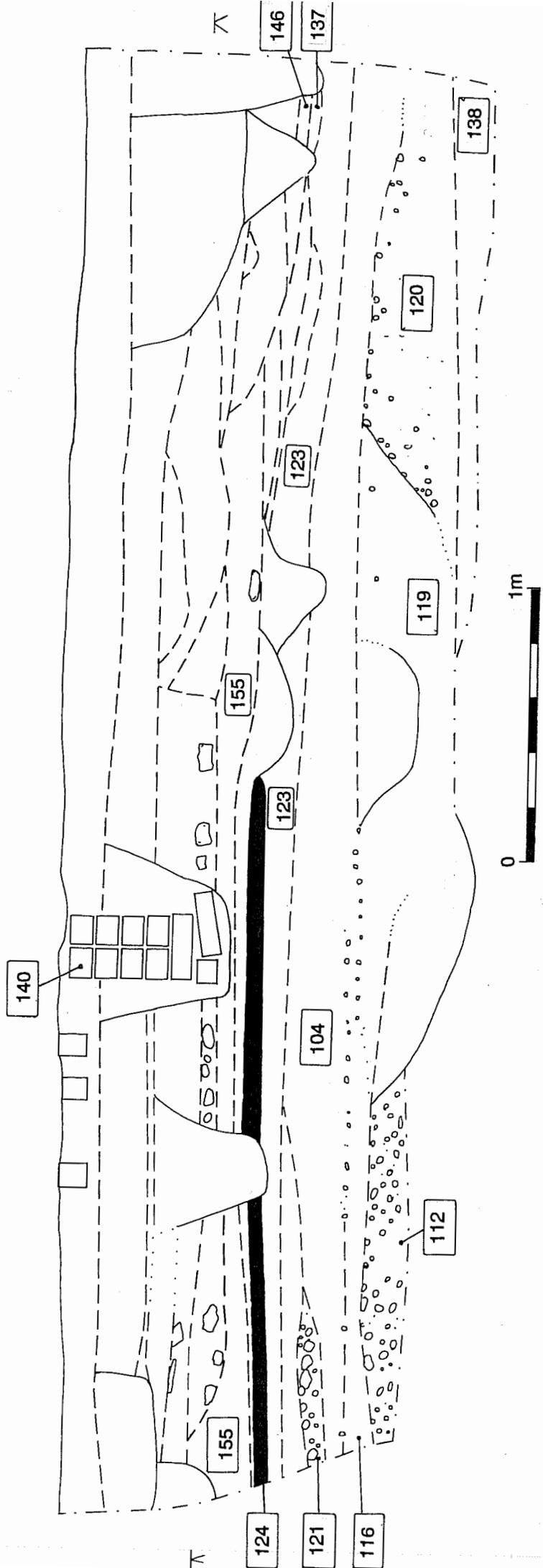
HWCM 9553  
97 Friar Street, Droitwich  
Evaluation Trench East Section (1:20)



Datum Height 31.01m AOD

Figure 6

HWCM 9553  
 97 Friar Street, Droitwich  
 Evaluation Trench West Section (1:20)

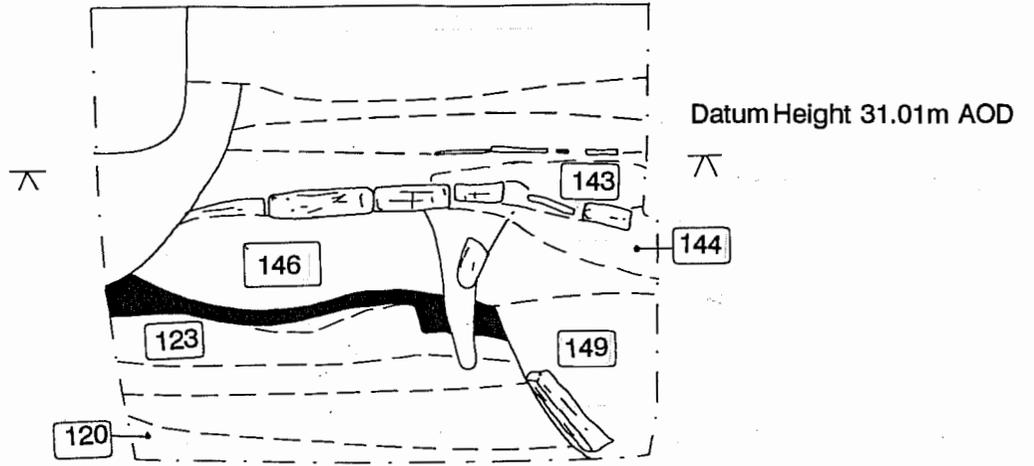


Datum Height 31.01m AOD

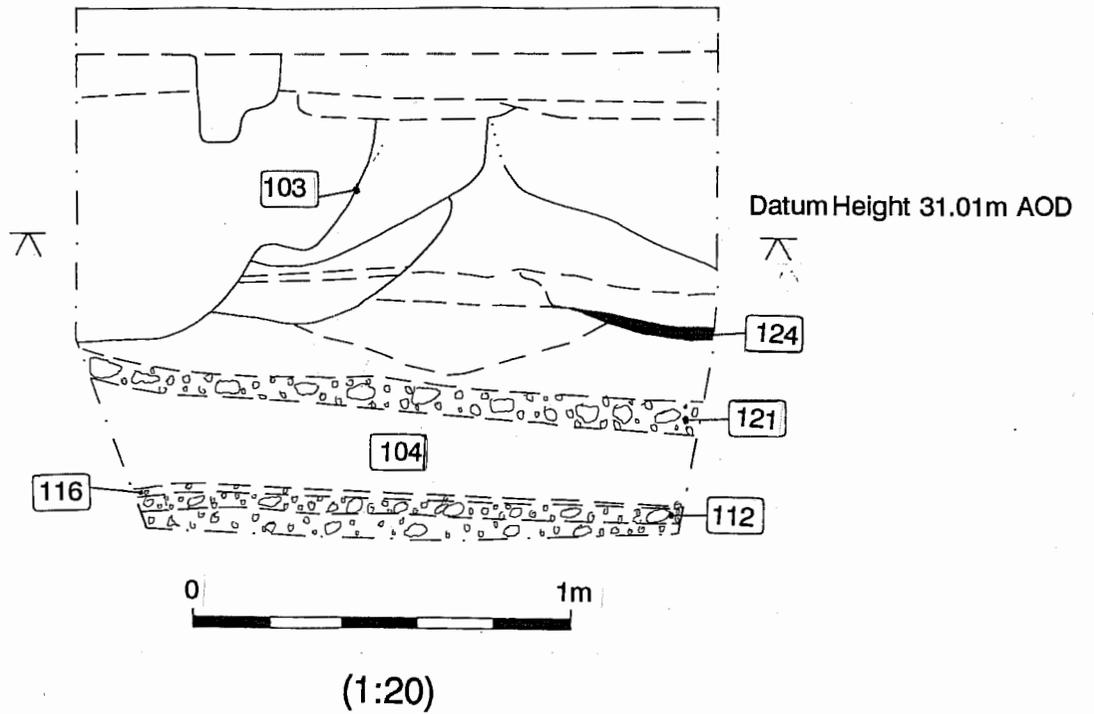
Figure 7

HWCM 9553 97 Friar Street , Droitwich  
Evaluation Trench

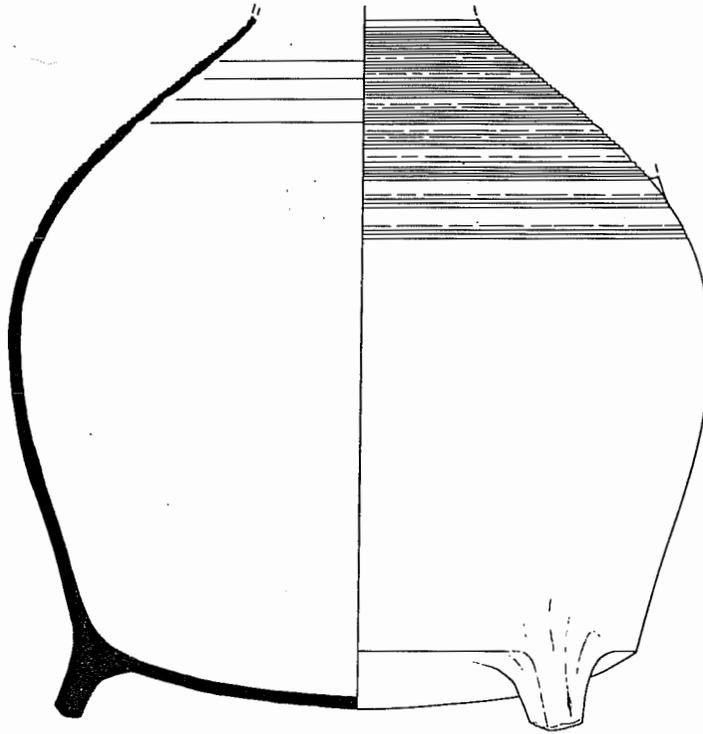
North Section



South Section



HWCM 9553 97 Friar Street , Droitwich



Malvernian Tripod Pitcher (HWCC Fabric no.69)

Scale 1:4

DRAWN BY CAROLYN HUNT