

EVALUATION AT
ALL SAINTS ROAD,
WORCESTER

HWCM 10088

REPORT 66

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Figure 1

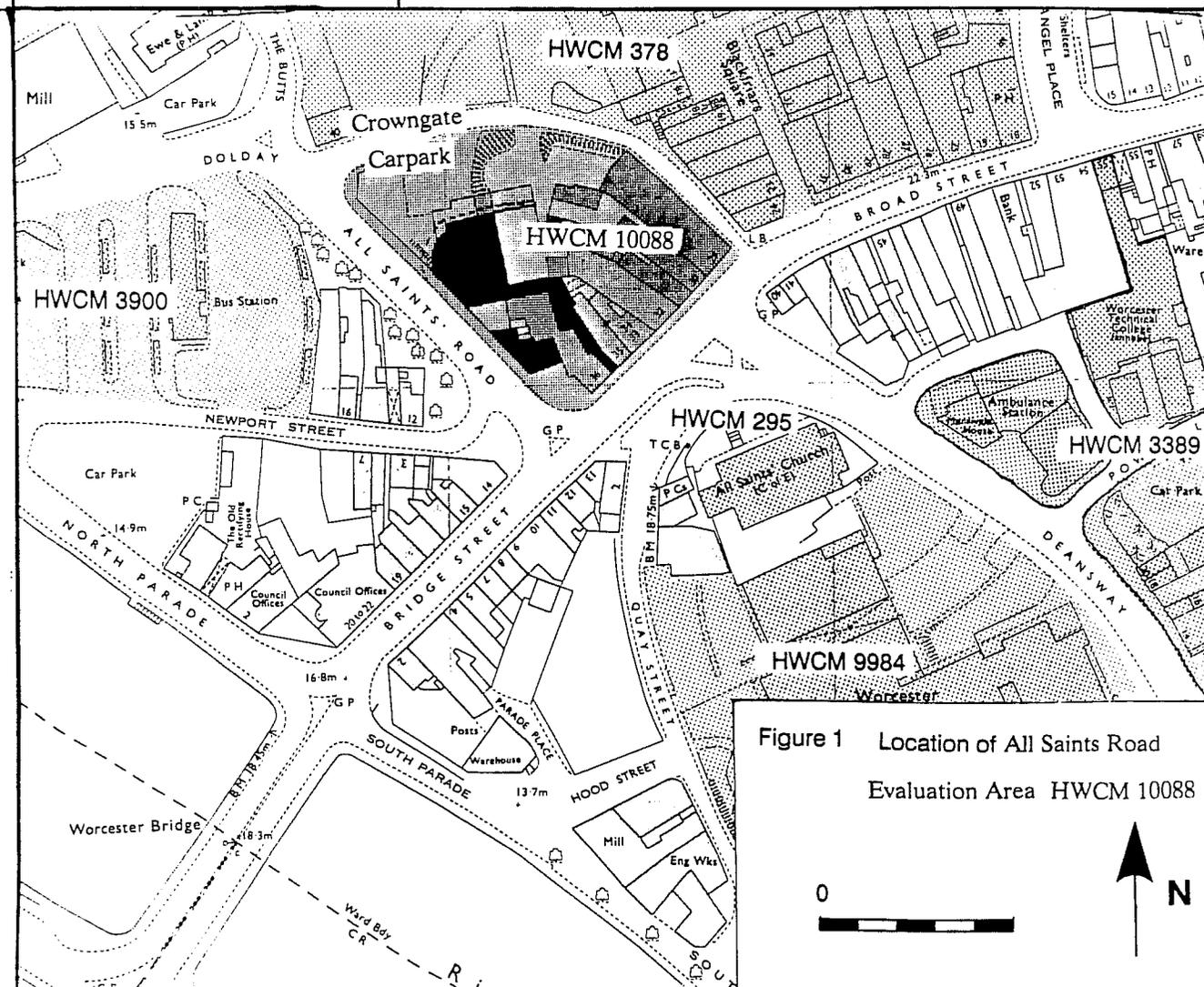
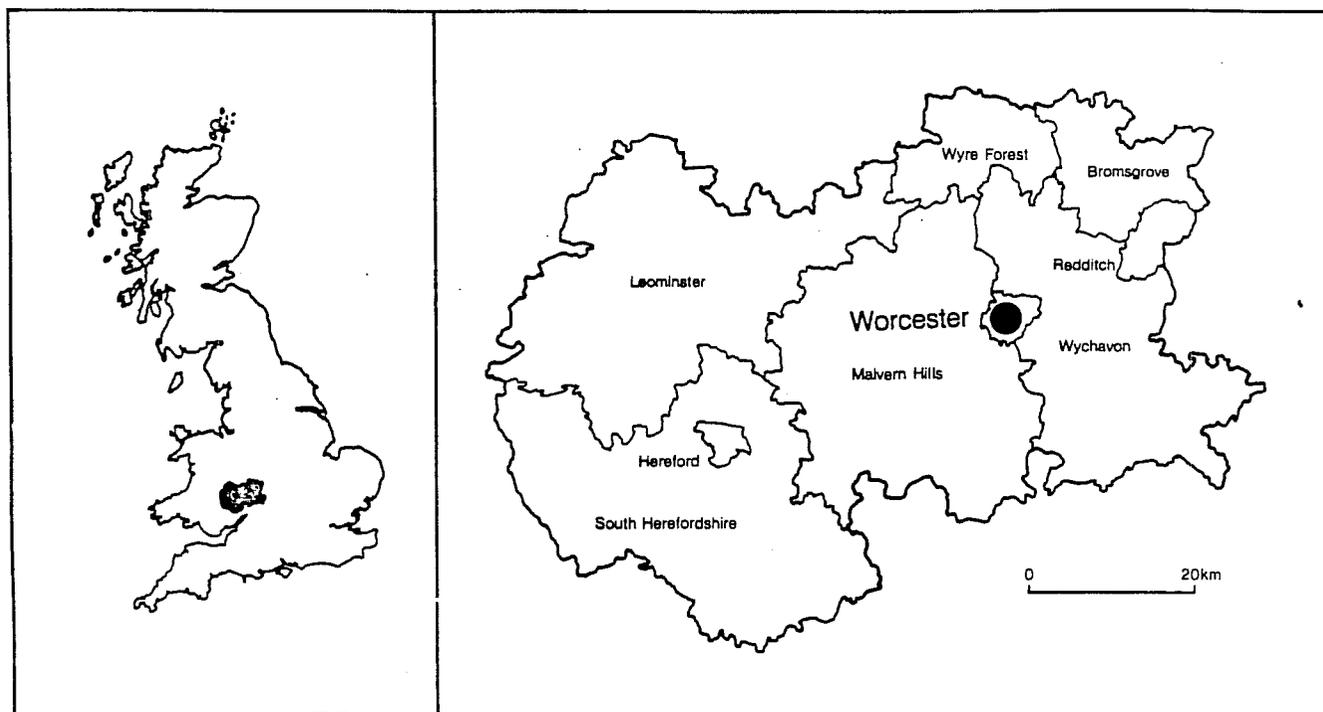


Figure 1 Location of All Saints Road
Evaluation Area HWCM 10088

EVALUATION AT ALL SAINTS ROAD, WORCESTER (HWCM 10088)

Duncan Brown, Assistant Archaeological Field Officer

1) Summary

The archaeological evaluation at All Saints Road indicated that this area is to the west of the edge of the river terrace, and consequently has been subject to considerable episodes of dumping in order to raise the present ground level. This has resulted in a considerable build up of 'made ground' of a variety of dates, which have preserved significant archaeological deposits deep beneath disturbance caused by 19th and 20th cellars and services. A total depth of c 4.5m of deposition has occurred above natural alluvial clay deposits, which were identified at c 13.7m OD. Of this, the first 1.3m represents deposits including relatively unabraded Roman pottery, and deposits likely to represent elements of the Roman iron-working industry in Worcester. As such these deposits are of great archaeological significance. Above this is a further deposit of 1.3m which is of probable archaeological significance. Post-medieval and modern deposits, which are of slight archaeological significance, form the uppermost c 1.9m.

2) Introduction

Negotiations are currently in progress with prospective developers of land owned by the City Council off All Saints Road (Fig 1). The site consists of approximately 521sq m in two plots of land centred on NGR SO 8473 5491 and SO 8471 5493, and a passageway linking the latter to the Broad Street/Bridge Street frontage opposite All Saints Church, an area formerly known as All Hallows (Fig 2). Lying in All Saints parish, inside the medieval city wall, the site is in an area of considerable historic and archaeological interest and a detailed evaluation of its archaeological potential was considered necessary by the City Council.

Worcester lies in the valley of the River Severn, just above its confluence with the Teme. The historic core of the city is situated on the east bank of the river, on a terrace of sand and gravel which rises to a height of c 26m OD (Worcester Terrace, Palmer 1982) overlying Mercian Mudstone (Keuper Marl). Settlement dates as far back as the Iron Age and continued, with varying degrees of intensity, through the Roman and medieval periods to the present day (Barker 1969, 9-42).

The topography of this area of Worcester suggests that All Saint Road lies on the edge of a

river terrace above the course of the river. Dolday and Newport Street descend the slope diagonally towards the river's edge. However, elsewhere in Worcester the location of such natural terrace edges has been blurred by Roman, medieval and post-medieval dumping, which has raised the ground level, and extended the terrace edge towards the river (Charles Mundy pers comm). This has also increased the depth and therefore the state of preservation of deposits of an early date beneath the dumping.

The site lies close to the approaches to the medieval bridge over the Severn (HWCM 10359), known to have stood at the west end of Newport Street (Figs 3 and 4). The Roman bridge may have stood in the same area as its medieval successor (Carver 1980, 2). Roman occupation evidence has been identified in excavations within the grounds of Worcester Technical College (HWCM 9984; Carver 1980, 302), in the recent excavations at Deansway (Deansway Archaeology Project 1989), and at Blackfriars (Barker 1969, 63-4; Mundy 1985, 4). The nature of this evidence suggests the likelihood that this area was also within the heart of Roman occupation at Worcester. All Saints Church (HWCM 295) stands within the line of the 10th century Anglo-Saxon burh defences identified behind the Broad Street frontage (HWCM 3899, Charles Mundy pers comm), adjacent to the line of the Roman road identified at Blackfriars (HWCM 378, Mundy 1985, fig 3). Its position suggests its origin in the 10th or 11th centuries as a gateway chapel and it is likely that much of All Saints parish represents an early medieval suburb outside the Anglo-Saxon town (Nigel Baker pers comm). Evidence concerning the character of late Roman and early medieval occupation in this area could therefore be of enormous importance to the study of the Dark Age city.

Within the early 14th century city wall (HWCM 5904) the medieval street system of this area of Worcester survived into the 18th century. Maps showing the city from the 17th to the mid 18th century suggest that much of the area of the evaluation lies within gardens to the rear of properties on All Hallows and Newport Street frontages (Figs 3 and 4). In 1771, a new bridge was built further to the south, and Bridge Street was constructed to allow access from it into the centre of the city. This appears to have led to increased building activity behind the properties on neighbouring streets, including the area of the evaluation (Fig 5). These back areas were further built up in the 19th century; the Ordnance Survey map of 1885 shows the maximum density of buildings in this area (Fig 6). Twentieth century developments have generally eroded this density of buildings. Deansway was created by widening Merry Vale and Birdport in the 1960s, and All Saints Road was constructed as a link to this shortly afterwards. The present construction of the carpark for the Crowngate development on an adjacent plot of land represents the redevelopment of land which has not been built up since then. Observation of groundworks on the Crowngate carpark site revealed little of archaeological note within c 1.0m of the surface where such disturbance occurred.

3) Aims

The evaluation aimed to locate archaeological deposits and determine, if present, 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 established and integrated with the proposed development programme.

4) Method

Two machine trenches (1 and 2) were excavated in the two main areas of the evaluation (Fig 2). In addition, two test pits (3 and 4) were sunk to test the consistency of results from the machine trenches across the site. Three auger holes were sunk in the base of trench 1, two of which reached a depth of c 4.0m below the bottom of the excavated trench (c 12.9m OD). A machined test pit was excavated, between auger holes 1 and 2, to c 2.2m below the bottom of the excavated trench. This was intended to test some of the results of the augering, and extract dateable material from the layers encountered. Documentary research was largely based on maps and other forms of secondary evidence.

5) Analysis

Four phases were identified by the evaluation:

Phase 1 Natural deposits

Phase 2 Roman deposits

Phase 3 Medieval or early post-medieval deposits

Phase 4 Later post-medieval and modern deposits

Phase 1 Natural deposits

Natural deposits were only identified as samples taken from auger holes 2 and 3. In auger hole 2 a mixed deposit which appeared to be alluvial in nature was encountered at c 13.5m OD. Below this, at c 13.4m OD was a clay loam deposit containing decayed sandstone, beneath which was a uniform silty clay loam occurring at c 13.2m OD. In auger hole 3 a similar silty clay loam deposit occurred at c 13.35m OD, beneath which, at c 13.05m OD was a silty clay containing fine sandstone peagrit.

Phase 2 Roman deposits

Auger hole 1 in trench 1 encountered a thick deposit containing large quantities of loosely packed slag at c 14.5m OD. An attempt was made to auger through this deposit, but due to the looseness of the slag, it consistently refilled the base of the auger hole. However, the depth of the deposit could be defined as at least c 0.6m.

The machined test pit encountered a deposit at c 14.9m OD containing bone, charcoal, slag, and pieces of Roman *tegula* and pottery. The latter included a large, unabraded sherd of a Roman *mortarium* (Hereford and Worcester County fabric 33), used for grinding and preparing food. This is of a fabric produced in the Oxfordshire potteries where the form is represented by Young M22 (Young 1977, 76-7). This form is dated to c AD 240-400+, and was the most common product of the Oxfordshire *mortarium* industry in the 4th century.

At about the same level in the auger holes there was a similar change in the nature of deposits. Above the slag deposit in auger hole 1, at c 14.8m OD, was an organic-rich deposit containing pebbles, charcoal, bone, decayed mortar and occasional pieces of slag. In auger hole 2 a relatively homogenous deposit of coarse sandy loam was encountered between c 15.0m and 13.95m OD, containing, charcoal, pebbles, sandstone flecks and bone. Beneath this, between c 13.95m and 13.7m OD was a lighter coloured soil containing bone, charcoal and decayed mortar. This sealed a layer of redeposited silty clay containing sandstone flecks which occurred above the uppermost natural deposit, between 13.7m and 13.5m OD. In auger hole 3 a deposit of sandy loam containing charcoal, sandstone flecks and peagrit occurred at c 14.8m OD. This sealed a layer of very fine sandy loam above natural, with very few inclusions, which occurred between c 13.55m and 13.35m OD.

Phase 3 Medieval or early post-medieval deposits

A variety of deposits were encountered above the level interpreted as being of Roman date. A deep deposit of relatively inclusionless fine sandy loam was encountered between c 16.1m and 14.8m OD in auger hole 1. This was sealed by a layer of fine sandy loam containing charcoal flecks but few other inclusions. In the machined test pit, a relatively inclusionless sandy loam deposit occurred at c 16.3m OD. This sealed a deposit containing large quantities of bone, charcoal and slag which occurred between c 15.2m and 14.8m OD.

No such deposit was encountered in auger holes 2 and 3. The deep homogenous deposit occurring between c 16.5m and 15.0m OD in auger hole 2 closely resembles that found

between c 16.45m and 14.8m OD in auger hole 3. This might represent a later medieval or post-medieval pit.

A partly soil filled well, lined with sandstone was reported to us, which was visible in the cellar of the 'Take-a-Break' Cafe. Construction using sandstone indicates a medieval or early post-medieval date for this well.

Phase 4 Later post-medieval and modern deposits

In trench 1, post-medieval garden soils were encountered below c 0.5m of the surface at c 17.7m OD. These included finds of the 17th-19th centuries, but distinguishing layers of specific dates proved difficult. However, while cleaning the bottom of the trench, at c 17.0m OD, sherds of Midlands yellow ware (fabric 77), bottle glass and fragments of handmade brick were recovered, consistent with a date in the 17th or early 18th century. The test pit indicated this deposit continued down to c 16.3m OD and the three auger holes gave depths of its lowest extent at 16.25m, 16.50m and 16.45m OD respectively. Above the garden soils are layers of brick, tile and mortar hardcore. Above these are later 19th century paving brick and cobbled courtyard surfaces which are currently obscured by gravel hard-standing. A recent waste water drain (at a depth of c 0.5m) cuts through this surface.

Trench 2 was excavated by machine to a depth of c 0.8m, most of which was coarse rubble, interpreted as the backfill of a cellar. It was not excavated quite where intended due to the existence of a large, thick raft of concrete abutting the neighbouring derelict building. In consequence no attempt was made to break through this raft. At the western end of trench 2 was what appeared to be a well, with a vaulted brick capping. This made machine excavation of this area more difficult, and indicated that the cellar into which the remainder of the trench was being excavated continued to a depth of c 1.9m below the present ground surface (16.8m OD).

The well was particularly unusual in form. It was c 1.2m across, and was c 4.3m deep to water level. The water was c 2.4m deep, but the nature of the bottom could not be ascertained. No attempt was made to descend, so all the measurements that follow are estimated. The eastern side was curved, with an inlet c 0.3m in diameter, c 2.1m down. To the west, the upper c 2.2m was a flat faced later 19th century brick cellar wall, marking a property boundary. This was built across the curved well shaft, which appeared to continue beneath the cellar. The southern upper edge of the well was also misshapen due to the presence of the cellar. The later 19th century bricks of this cellar were mortared against the flat brick face of

the cellar to the west, but were corbelled out over the shaft of the well beneath.

Trench 3 was excavated by hand, but after removing c 0.6m of coarse brick rubble it was considered unnecessary to excavate further into what resembled the cellar fill in trench 2. Trench 4 was also excavated c 0.6m deep (c 18.1m OD), at which level a layer of mortared bricks was encountered. No attempt was made to break through this layer. It is not clear whether this layer represents the ceiling of a cellar, or the floor of some other structure.

6) Discussion

Very little evidence of natural deposits was recovered by the evaluation. From auger samples these appeared to be silty clay derived from marl, perhaps deposited by glacio-fluvial processes. The evaluation area was suspected to lie near the top of a natural river terrace above the flood plain of the river. An estimate of the gradient downwards towards the river at the top of natural deposits may be made at c 0.3m over 2.0m from east to west. In consequence it may be expected that most early ground surfaces are similarly sloping down towards the west. The terracing across All Saints Road visible in the present ground surface may reflect this natural phenomena, although now occurring further to the west, due to the effects of dumping.

The deep deposit of slag may be linked to a known iron working industry identified at Blackfriars (HWCM 378) and Deansway (HWCM 3899).

The Roman iron-working industry is well attested in Worcester: iron-smelting furnaces were recorded at the Blackfriars excavation and large deposits of iron slag, used for street metalling, have been found ubiquitously in Worcester. It is concluded that this site (Deansway site 4) formed part of a fairly extensive industrial 'suburb' including the Blackfriars area, but that it was separate from the sites excavated to the south and west, where no evidence for iron-working or other Roman industrial activity was found (Deansway Archaeology Project 1989, 22).

The All Saints Road area, to the west of the areas mentioned above, may also be linked to this Roman iron-working industrial suburb. Substantial use of iron-slag as a road-surfacing material in the Roman period has also been noted at Farrier Street (HWCM 8229; Darlington 1989, 7-9), Sidbury (HWCM 117; John Darlington pers comm) and elsewhere in Worcester. Moreover, large deposits of slag are known to have been mined in the 17th century at Pitchcroft (HWCM 9315; Carver 1980, 306). This deposit may therefore represent the by-

product of what appears to have been a very substantial iron industry in Roman Worcester.

The organically rich soil deposits overlying this area, including bone, charcoal, slag and occasional pieces of Roman tile and pottery may represent Roman occupation deposits. However, it may also represent early medieval deposits similar to those which have been found on a number of other excavated sites in the area. Soils of the 5th-11th century have been found at all four Deansway sites, and at Blackfriars trench 6 (Deansway Archaeology Project 1989). Few finds contemporary with the date of soil usage have been made in association with these deposits, although finds of Roman date are quite common. Medieval soil dumping is represented at Blackfriars trench 7 and agricultural soils of the 12th-13th century are represented at both Blackfriars sites (Deansway Archaeology Project 1989). The size and lack of abrasion on the *mortarium* argues for a Roman deposit, probably of the 4th century, or a primary redeposition of Roman deposits at a later date occurring at this level. Dumping of soil or rubbish is likely to have occurred in this area in the Roman and medieval period, extending the river terrace to the west. This process is likely to have continued into the post-medieval period, and may be traceable in deposits of each phase.

In trench 1 deposits which could be closely examined were largely 17th-19th century garden deposits representing the back-yard areas identifiable in this area on all the early maps (Figs 3-5).

Cellars, mostly of 18th or 19th century date identified in trenches 2 and 3, represent the location of properties on the All Hallows frontage shown on maps of these dates (Figs 4-6). These properties appear to have been cellared throughout, which, with the creation of All Saints Road has meant cellared areas, formerly at the rear of properties appear on the new street frontage, although set at a slight angle to it. These cellars are likely to have truncated some later medieval and subsequent deposits.

7) Conclusions

The whole All Saints Road evaluation area seems to represent a location west of the edge of the river terrace, and consequently in an area which has seen episodes of soil and refuse dumping over the edge, which has tended to raise the ground level, and extend the terrace further to the west. This has acted to preserve early deposits beneath a considerable depth of make-up.

Trench 1 is situated in a 19th century courtyard area, superimposed on 17th and 18th century

garden deposits. This allows relatively good, deep preservation of archaeological deposits. Detailed assessment of the character of medieval and earlier deposits was not really possible due to the depth limitation on excavation. Available evidence from excavation and augering indicated the following sequence towards the eastern end of trench 1:

- | | | |
|-----|------------------|---|
| (1) | 18.2m - 16.3m OD | post-medieval and modern deposits |
| (2) | 16.3m - 15.0m OD | deposits of uncertain date |
| (3) | 15.0m - 13.7m OD | deposits containing Roman artefactual material, including: 14.6m - 14.0m+ OD deposit of iron slag in auger hole 1 |
| (4) | 13.7m OD | naturally deposited alluvial clays. |

At this point, deposits below c 15.0m OD are of definite archaeological significance, while some of the deposits above this level may also have some significance. It should be noted however that variations in the slope and depth of the natural ground surface, may effect the precise height OD at which deposits of significance occur. Trenches 2 and 3 revealed evidence of cellaring to a depth of c 16.8m OD. It is probable that there are well preserved deposits surviving beneath the floors of some of these cellars. No assessment could be made of deposits in the passageway. Modern services run through this passage, but are likely to be shallow, while cellaring occurs on either side of the passage, and may occur beneath it in places.

It should be made clear that in areas of good preservation 'made ground' may be considered to be entirely made up of significant archaeological deposits. Here it is unlikely that significant archaeological deposits occur within c 2.0m of the present ground surface; deposits of 17th-19th century garden soils, courtyard surfaces and 18th-19th century cellars are not generally considered to be archaeologically significant. However, beneath this c 2.6m of potentially archaeologically significant deposits survive.

8) Acknowledgements

I should like to thank Dominic Perring (formerly Worcester City Archaeologist), Andrew Harding and Graham Vass, of Worcester City Council. Charles Mundy assisted with information about the Deansway Project, the Blackfriars excavations and recent research into the topography of different periods in this area of Worcester. Simon Woodiwiss coordinated the evaluation and edited the report. Paul Godbehere and Nigel Topping gave invaluable assistance on site. Discussions with Mr Perkins provided useful additional details into the recent past of this area of Worcester.

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10) 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

11) Archive

The archive consists of:

- 4 Fieldwork progress records AS2
- 1 Photographic record AS3
- 1 Context finds sheet AS8
- 4 Auger record sheets
- 1 Scale drawing
- 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

Figure 2

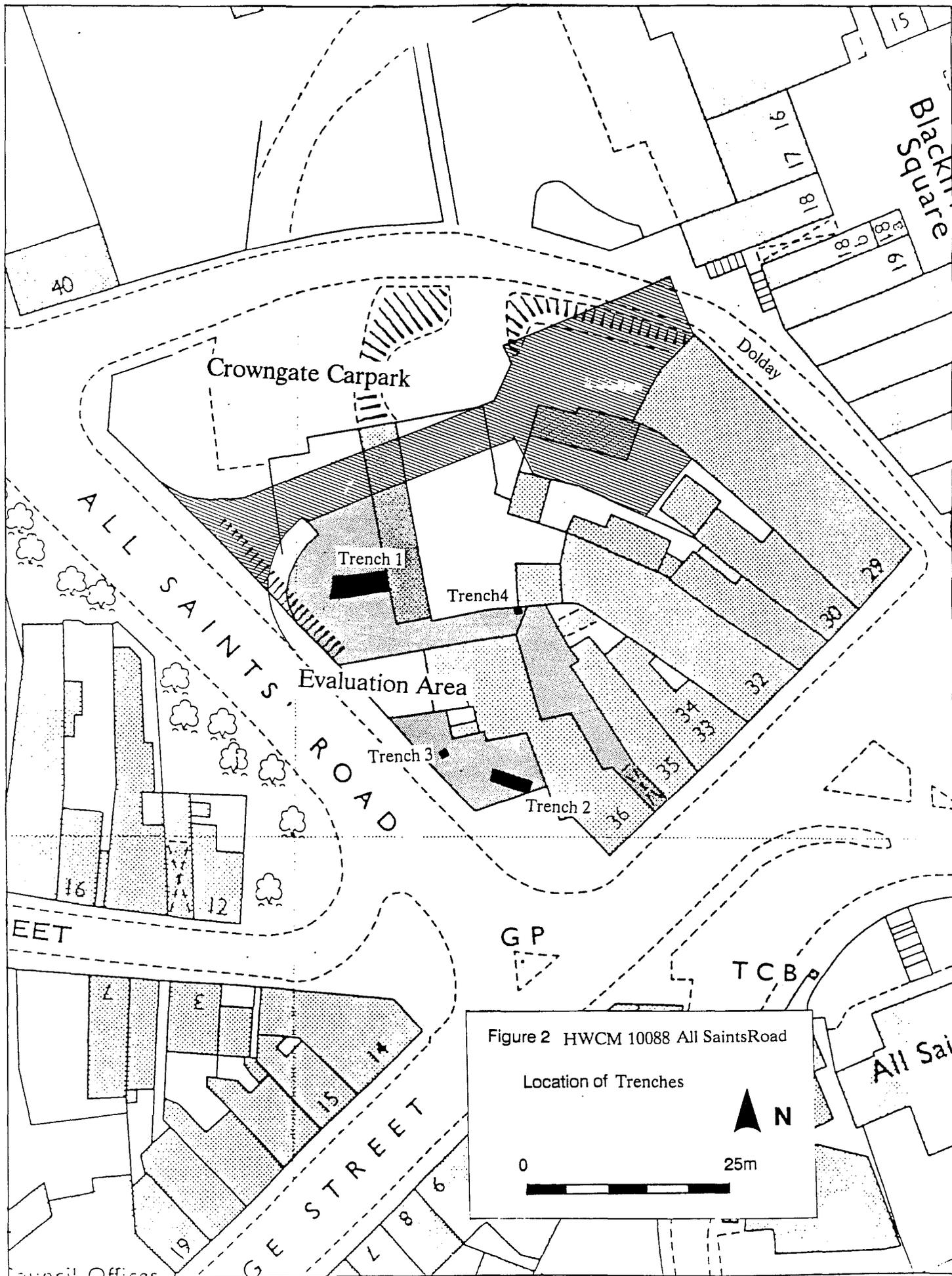


Figure 2 HWCM 10088 All Saints Road
Location of Trenches

Figure 3

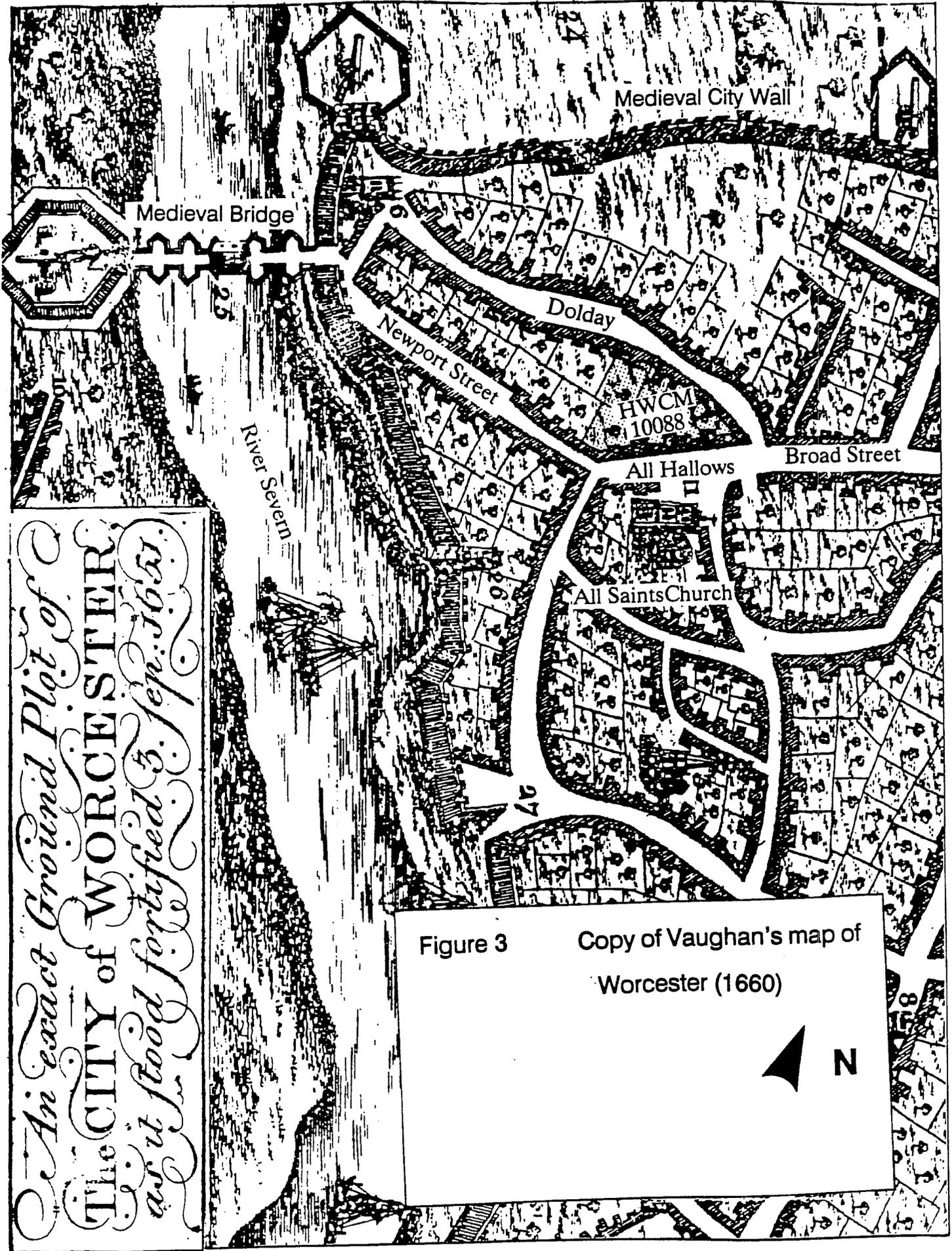


Figure 3 Copy of Vaughan's map of Worcester (1660)



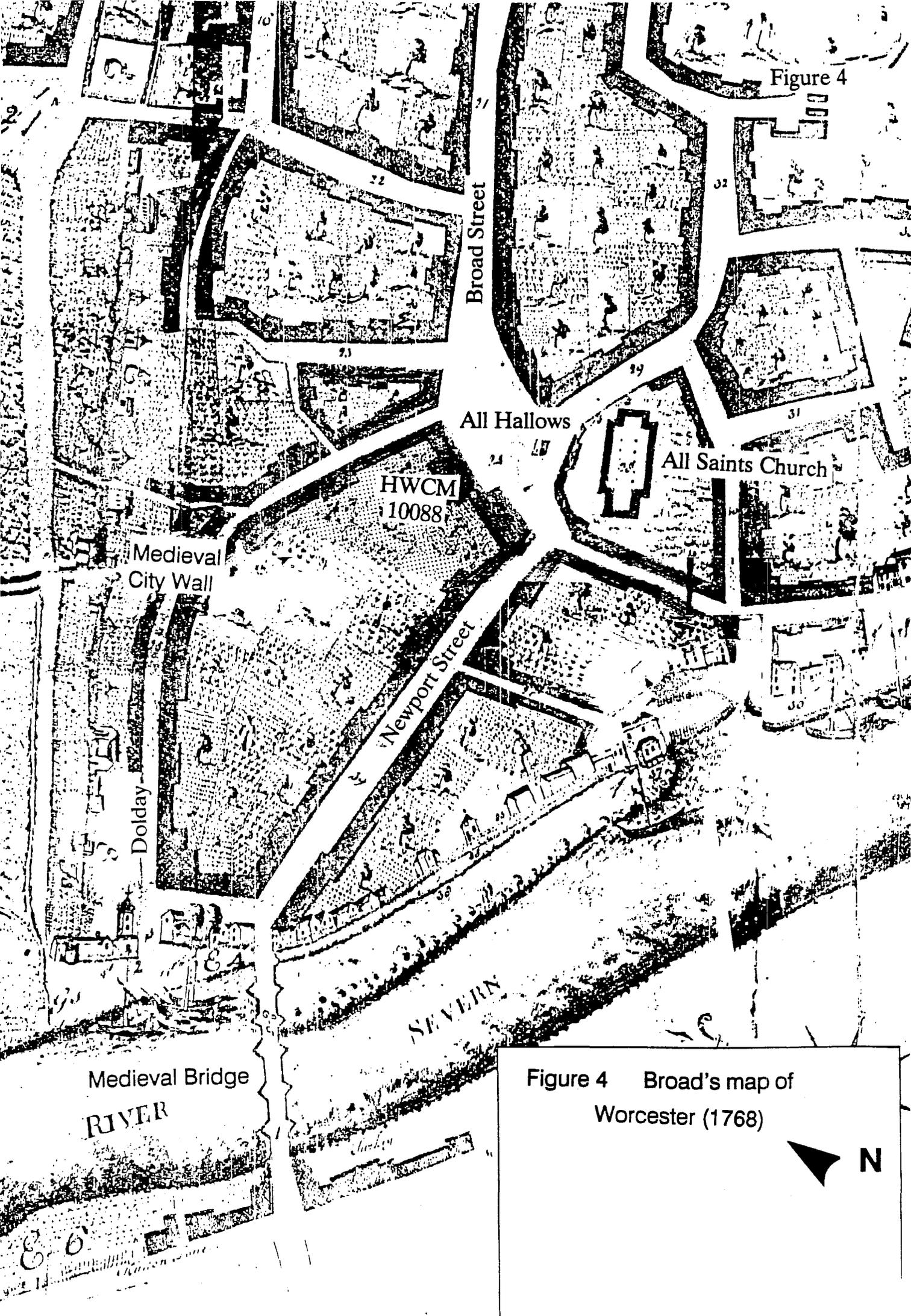
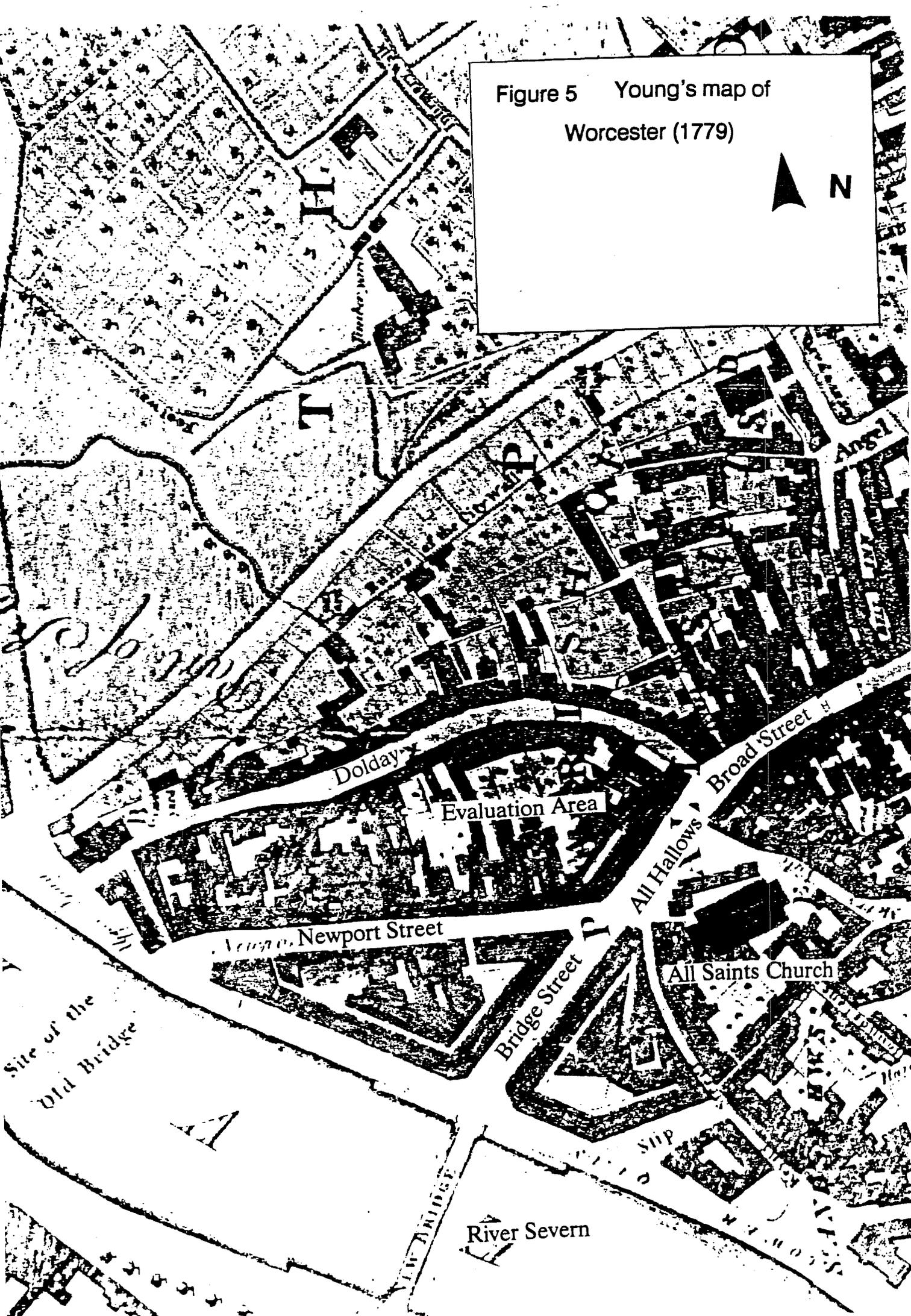


Figure 4

Figure 4 Broad's map of Worcester (1768)



Figure 5 Young's map of Worcester (1779)



Evaluation Area

All Saints Church

River Sever

Dolday

Newport Street

Bridge Street

All Hallows

Broad Street

Site of the Old Bridge

Figure 6 Ordnance Survey 1: 2500 map of Worcester (1883)

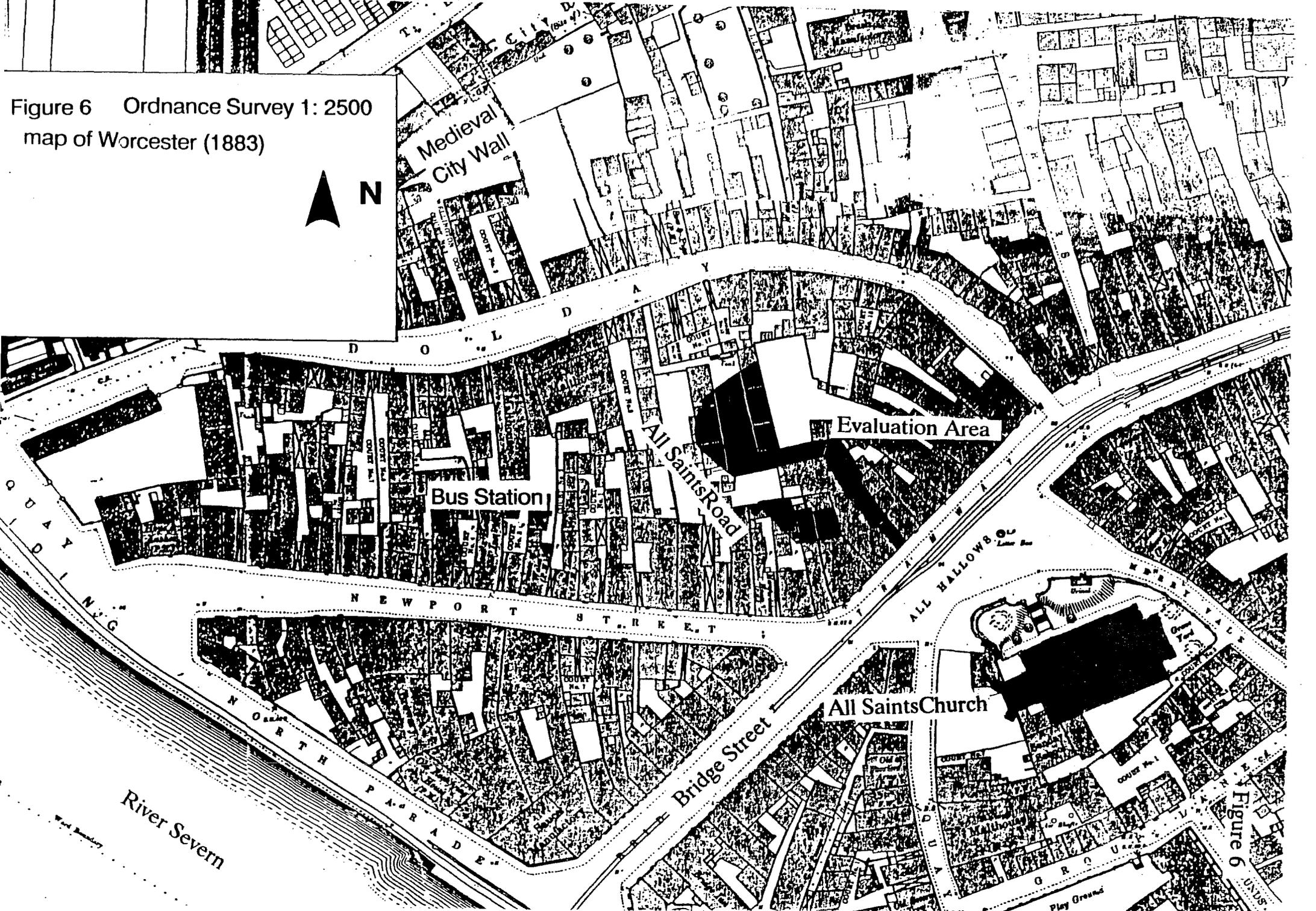


Figure 6

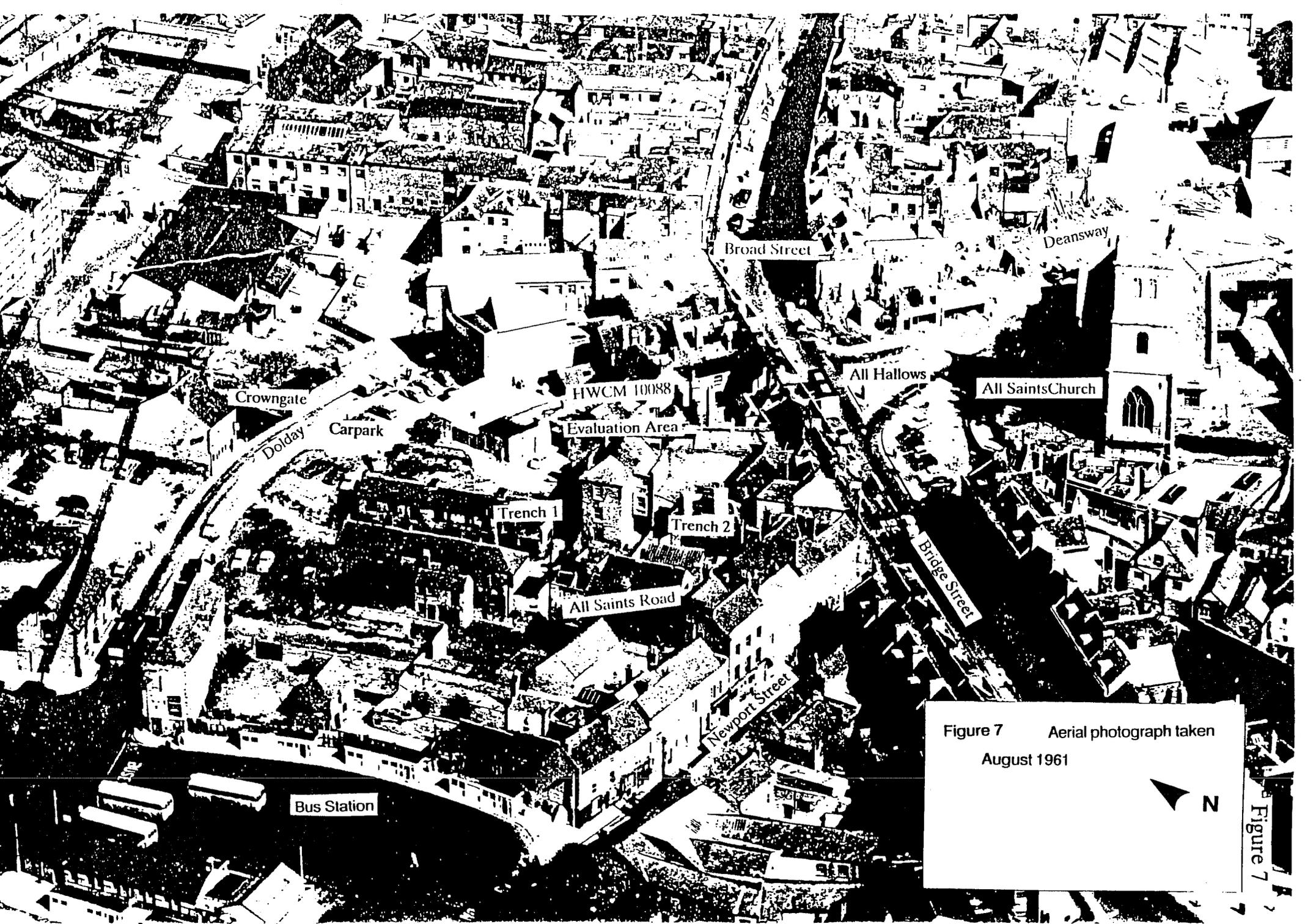


Figure 7 Aerial photograph taken August 1961



Figure 7

Figure 8

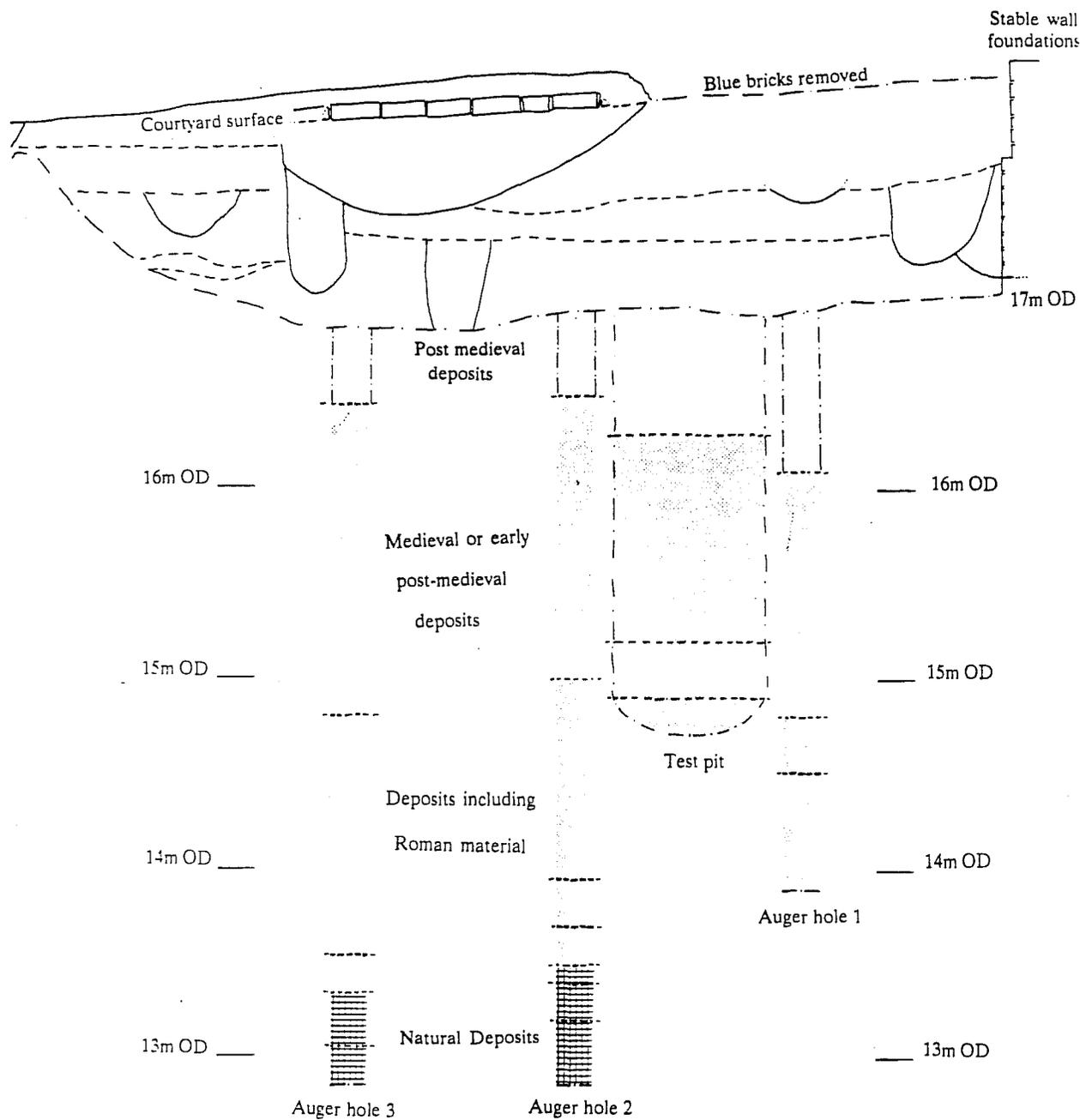


Figure 8 All Saints Road HWCM 10088
north section of trench 1, showing
schematic results of auger holes and
test pits