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*ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT
THE FLEECE PUBLIC HOUSE, St MARYGATE, RIPON
OCTOBER, 1996*

6.31.470.L.OUT

A report to the Downes, Illingsworth Partnership

15,x,1996

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THE FLEECE PUBLIC HOUSE, St MARYGATE, RIPON
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NYCC HER	
SNY	11962
ENY	476
CNY	7992
Parish	6031
Rec'd	1996

1. Instructions were received from the Downes, Illingsworth Partnership, on behalf of Percheron Properties, for archaeological evaluation on land at the rear of (*i.e.* to the west of) the Fleece public house at the junction of St Marygate and Allhallowgate, Ripon. The work was to be carried out in advance of Planning Consent (NYCC ref. 6.31.470.L.OUT) for a redevelopment of the site which would include the erection of three new houses.

2. Work was carried out according to a brief prepared by the County Archaeologist, and according to the appropriate Standard Procedures of this Practice. Fieldwork was carried out by Percival Turnbull and Deborah Walsh during the 3rd and 4th of October, 1996.

BACKGROUND: THE SITE

3. The site is located at SE 31540 71380, by a cross-roads formed by the intersection of Allhallowgate, Stonebridgeway, Priest Lane and St Marygate. Historical sources indicate mediaeval origins for all of these streets, all mentioned in 1228, and described then as being the centre of the town. The topography of mediaeval Ripon is of interest: the *focus* of settlement appears originally to have been around this cross-roads, and it is in this part of the town that the mediaeval churches (and the monastery of 660, and later Minster church) are clustered. Removal of emphasis to the area around the two market places appears to have been a later process. No detailed desk-top assessment was involved in the present evaluation, and the extent of relevant documentation is therefore not known, but it does appear that the development site is situated in the heart of the medieval town and is likely to have been close to the centre of settlement, perhaps from a date as early as the foundation of the monastery.

4. The development site is low-lying (averaging 28 m.a.O.D.), and almost 2 metres higher at the west end than at the east (following the general slope of Allhallowgate upward to the west). Drift geology is a fairly clean series of fluvio-glacial sands (associated with the River Ure), overlying extensive natural deposits of calcium sulphate (gypsum). Some of the distinct irregularities in the relief of the surrounding area (not least upon the development site itself) may well be due to the collapse of natural, water-worn caves in the gypsum.

5. The St Marygate frontage of the site is occupied by the Fleece public house, a rather undistinguished structure of nineteenth-century date. The main part of this is to be retained, although it is understood that later outshots at the rear are to be demolished, along with various outbuildings and other structures. None of these is of any historical or archaeological interest. The present public-

house car-park is separated from the garden by a retaining wall which allows for a difference in height of the ground surface of about a metre, although there is nothing at ground level to indicate whether this terrace is the result of reducing the surface in the eastern half, of raising that in the western half (the garden), or both.

REVIEW OF MAP SOURCES

6. Maps dating from the beginning of the nineteenth century show little change in the general layout of the development site. The earliest available map (Fig.1) is dated 1800 (North Yorkshire County Records Office ref. DC/RIC XVI 1/2/2): it shows the situation much as it is today, with a substantial building on the St Marygate frontage, and an open plot, presumably a garden, to the rear along Allhallowgate. There is little here to suggest any survival of a mediaeval burghage pattern: on the contrary, the buildings and plots on this southern side of Allhallowgate look rather like encroachment onto the larger area of land to the south, known as Allhallows Hill. Interesting in this context is the marked constriction of Allhallowgate as it meets St Marygate (formerly Stammergate): the sudden reduction in width of the road is again suggestive of encroachment, possibly on a side of the road which was as yet little developed, and therefore not well-defined.

7. A map of 1820 (Fig.2; NYCRO ref. DC/RIC XVI 1/1/1) appears to show the site fully built up, although the type of cartographic convention used may be grounds for suspecting the accuracy of this source. Of more interest is the distinctly off-set line of Priest Lane in relation to Allhallowgate: this off-set is now barely evident in the modern street plan, and there may here be support for the idea that the Fleece site occupies what was once part of the roadway of Allhallowgate, and that the eastern end of that street has within the last century and a half moved slightly to the north, perhaps to compensate for the restriction on width noted above.

8. By 1832 (Fig.3; NYCRO ref. VR/Z 2) the situation appears much as it was in 1800: the St Marygate front is occupied by what appears to be the same large building, which seems to be divided into two properties. The constriction at the end of Allhallowgate, and the off-set of Priest Lane, are both very evident. By the time of the First Edition of the Ordnance Survey in 1856 (Fig.4) there is still no real change.

9. Change does seem to have occurred by 1910 (fig.5; Six-inch OS map of that year). The ground-plan of the main building appears to have changed, suggesting a rebuilding, probably the erection of the present Fleece. Two smaller structures have appeared in the garden area to the west; these are probably stables or other outbuildings, although some are large enough to be cottages. Notable also is the fact that both the reduction in width of the bottom of Allhallowgate and the off-set line of Priest Lane, though still evident, are much less marked than formerly. This is unlikely to reflect merely a difference in accuracy of two OS editions, and can be taken as indicating the widening or moving of the road edges. An enlarged detail from the 1911 edition (Fig.6) shows several buildings within

the rear, western, part of the site. These survive unchanged in an edition of 1929 (Fig.7).

FIELD EVALUATION

10. A total of six trenches was excavated in the car-park and garden of the public house (Fig.8): four were within the car-park and two (trenches 5 and 6) within the slightly raised garden. All trenches were initially excavated by a JCB 3C mechanical excavator: the rubbly nature of the fills expected (and encountered) and the hard surfaces of trenches 1-4 precluded the use of a ditching bucket or other toothless buckets. All machining was carried out in level spits, and was closely monitored. Trenches were then straightened and cleaned by hand, prior to recording by photographs, drawings and context *pro formis*. All spoil-heaps were checked for the presence of loose finds. All trenches were excavated to a maximum depth of 1.2 metres. The results were as follows:

11. TRENCH 1. This area, 2m.x2m. square, was excavated a metre from the southern boundary wall, in an area of car-park where the surface shows a considerable hollow, apparently the result of subsidence into a buried feature, either natural or man-made. Considerable difficulties were encountered with this trench, on account of the very loose nature of the fills, which caused the trench sides constantly to collapse, threatening to engulf the boundary wall. Because of the dangers of collapse, the trench was only partially cleaned before rapid recording and instant backfilling. Beneath the asphalt surface and a badly-disturbed cobble surface immediately below it lay a stone wall, which coincided exactly with the eastern edge of the trench. This wall was built of roughly coursed rubble, with lime-based mortar and with a surface wash of lime or plaster; it was, therefore, the *interior* surface of a cellar wall which clearly extended well below the limit of excavation at 1.2 metres. This upper part of cellar had been filled with loosely-packed rubble, including bricks and lumps of magnesian limestone as well as boulders and gravel. Below a depth of one metre, the fill was of a dirty grey clay, with fragments of wood and with a distinctly unpleasant odour. No deposit other than recent cellar-fills was encountered.

12. TRENCH 2 (Fig.9A). This also was a two-metre square, close to the Allhallowgate entrance to the site. An asphalt surface (001) overlay a layer of hardcore and mortar (004) over a disturbed surface of granite setts (022). Below this in turn lay a deposit of lime mortar or plaster mixed with clay (006), and layers of grey(007), brown (008) and orange (009), all clearly of modern origin. There was one lens of almost pure black soot visible in the section (021). These deposits, like those in Trench 1, appear to be the modern filling of a cellar.

13. TRENCH 3 (Fig.9B). This 2-metre square was again topped with asphalt, overlying a series of loam and clay deposits (013 to 019), all of which contained small quantities of modern (Post-Industrial Revolution) building materials. One thin layer (016) contained abundant fragments of blocks of magnesian limestone, ultimately derived from a substantial building but here redeposited, possibly at several removes. The main fill, a brown clay with boulders

and rubble, resembled the fills of Trench 2 (especially 007) and a similar interpretation is appropriate: that these are modern cellar fills.

14. TRENCH 4 (Fig.10). This was an area of 4m. by 2m., in the north-west corner of the car-park. Beneath the asphalt, and bedding layers of mortar (004) and yellow sandy clay (006), the main fill was of very loose and free-running red sand, with abundant gravel and small boulders (018). Although this probably resembles the natural sands and gravels of the local drift, it contained enough small fragments of brick, concrete, etc., to indicate that it had been redeposited. A huge intrusion (019) was filled with a very loose fill of pale brown soil full of mortar and fragments of building materials. Once again, the most plausible explanation of the deposits in this trench is as the backfill of a former cellar.

15. TRENCH 5 (Fig.11). One of two trenches measuring 4m. by 2m., in the raised garden at the western end of the site, this trench revealed a thin layer of garden soil (002), overlying a light brown loam (003) which contained mortar and a little stone rubble. These in turn overlay deposits (005, 006, 015) which also contained mortar and scraps of other modern building materials. The lowest deposits were a pale, orange sand, marked with dark-brown staining (012) which appeared to be a redeposited natural sand (very loose and free-running, and apparently redeposited on account of some charcoal or other organic inclusions), and a dark orange sandy clay with pebbles, at the very bottom of the trench, which might be an *in situ* natural deposit.

16. TRENCH 6 (Fig.12). The final trench, also of 4m. by 3 m., this also was sited in the raised garden area. The upper 80 cms. or so were occupied, below the garden soil, by a series of sandy deposits containing mortar and other building *debris*. Below this, and at the bottom of the trench, were two deposits of free-running, clean gravel and sand, which had no exotic inclusions and which might be natural deposits.

CONCLUSIONS

17. It is clear from this evaluation exercise that:

(i) The whole of the present car-park (Trenches 1-4) has been disturbed by activity over the past century or so, primarily by the digging of cellars, to a depth at least as great as the limit of excavation at a depth of 1.2 metres below the present land surface. The possibility of the survival of any early features or deposits appears very low.

(ii) The area of the garden at the rear of the property (Trenches 5 and 6) is disturbed to less deep a level, and there are probably natural deposits at less than a metre below present ground level. There is, however, no evidence at all for the presence or survival of early features or deposits.

(iii) All superficial deposits are loose and unstable (a fact which might have implications for the design of any development).

(iv) Although this development site is clearly of considerable *historical* interest, it has little *archaeological* value. No further archaeological intervention seems appropriate in the case of this development. Should further sites in the immediate vicinity become in future available for development, a detailed analysis of historical sources would appear to be an appropriate first reaction.

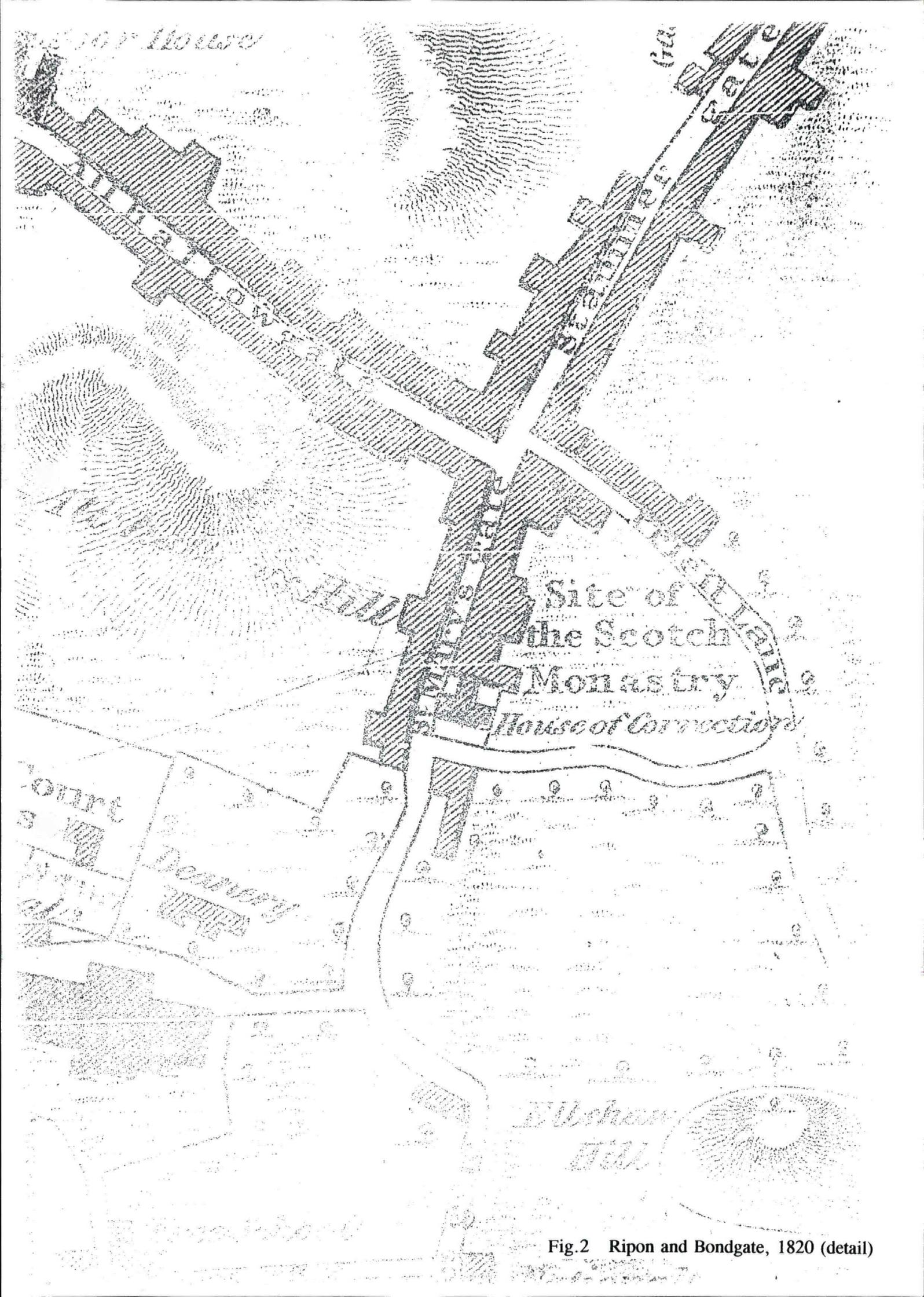


Fig.2 Ripon and Bondgate, 1820 (detail)

Fig. 3 Ripon, 1832

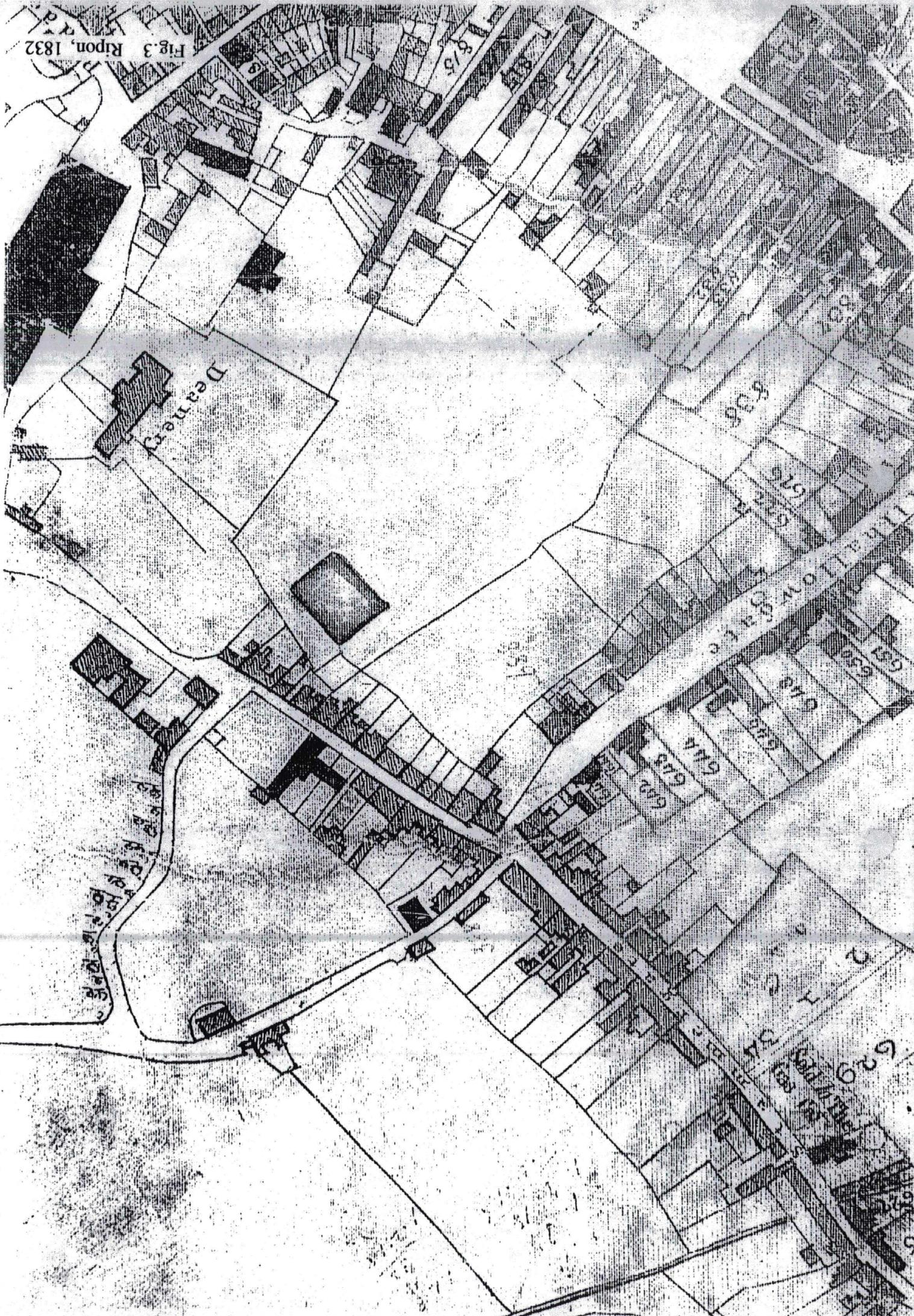




Fig. 4 O.S. First Edition, 1856

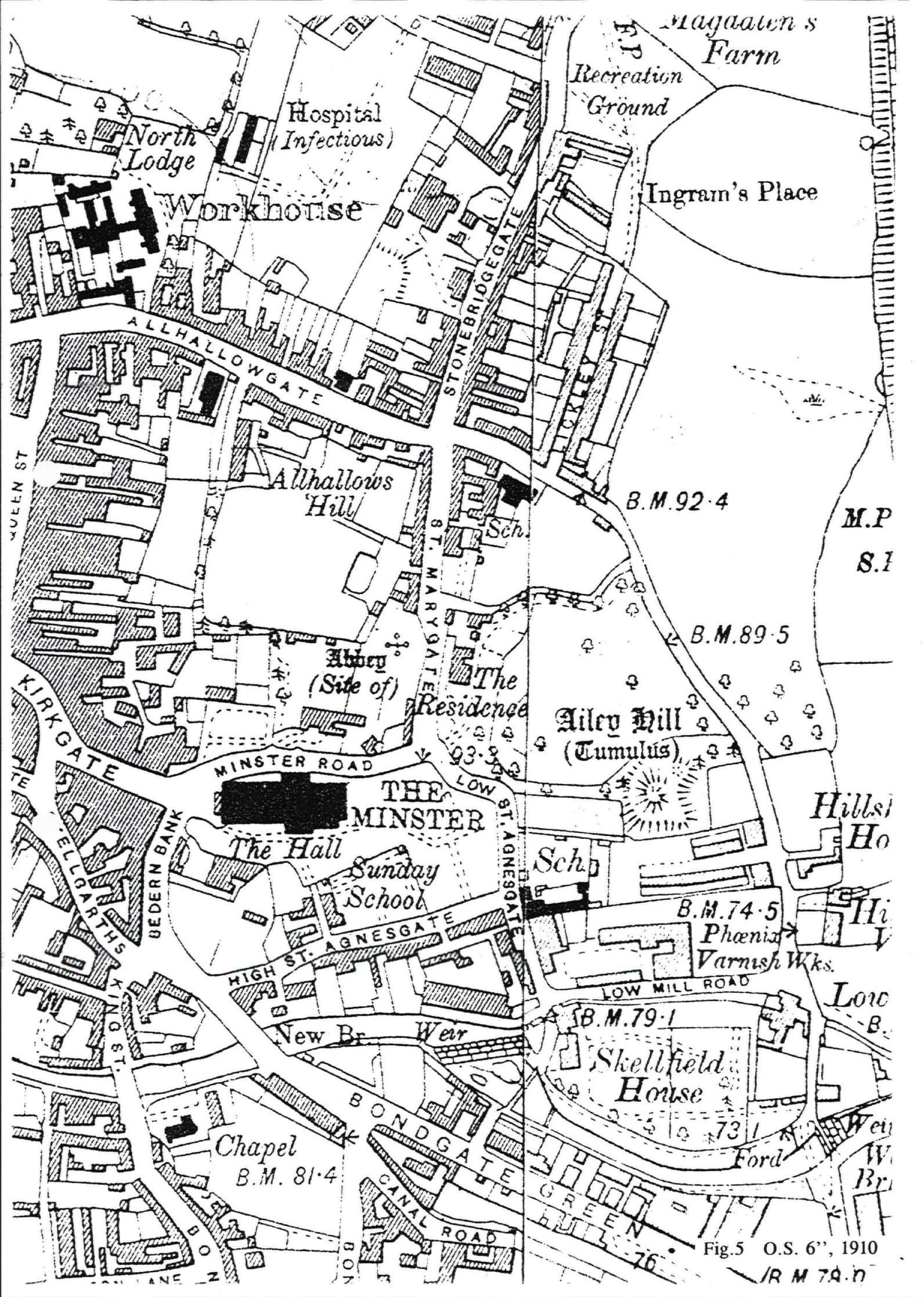


Fig. 5 O.S. 6", 1910
I.R.M. 79.0

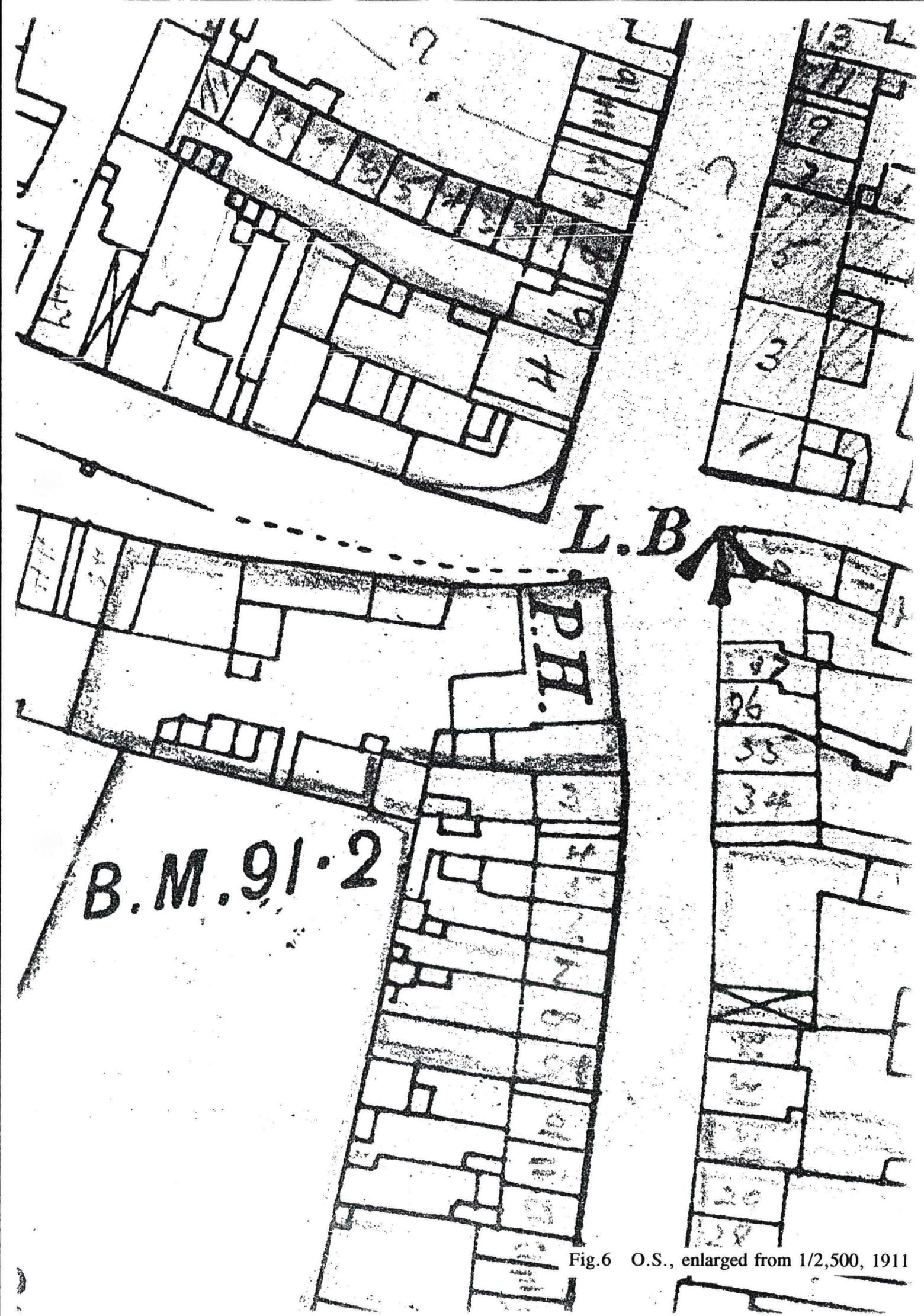


Fig.6 O.S., enlarged from 1/2,500, 1911

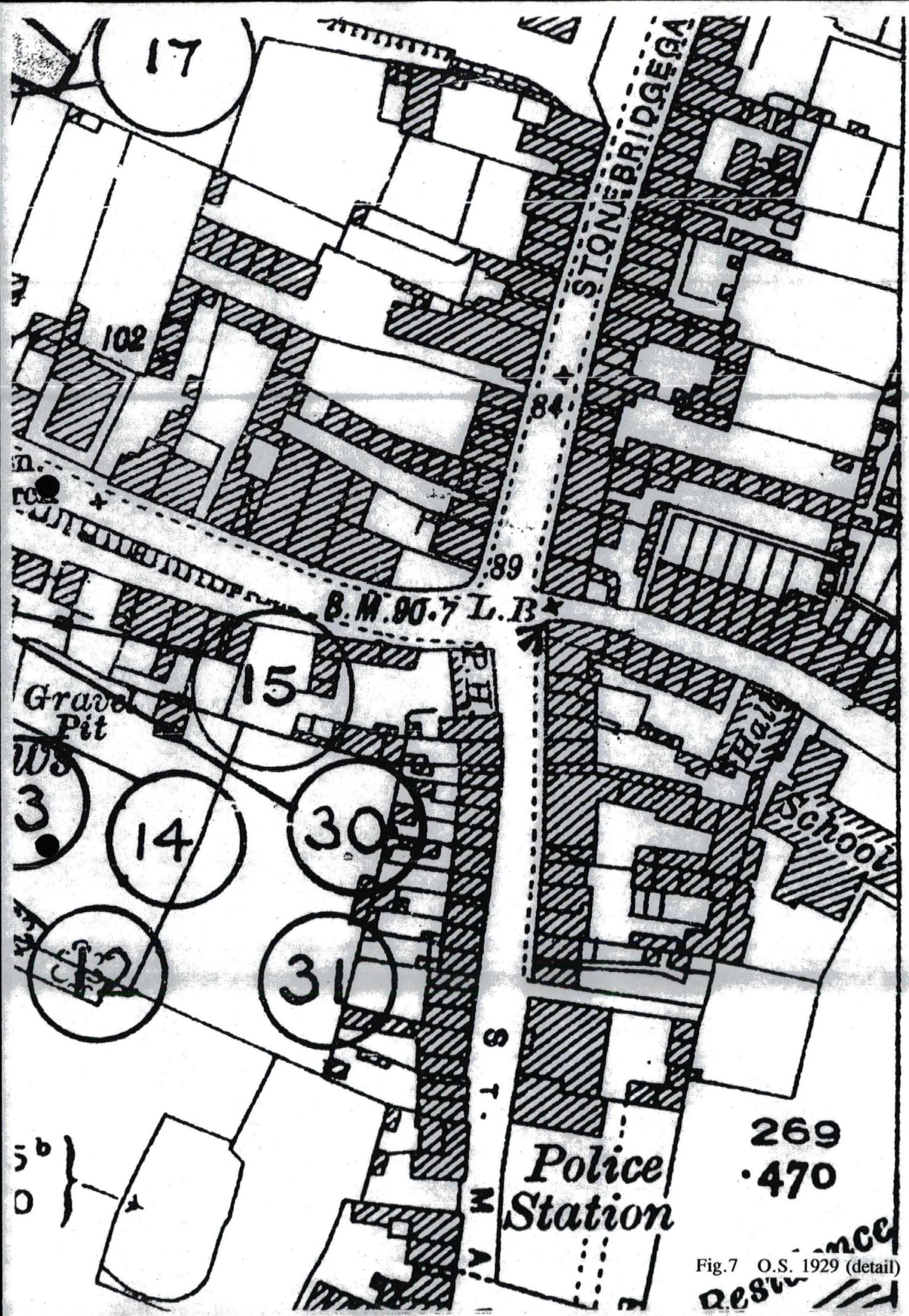


Fig.7 O.S. 1929 (detail)

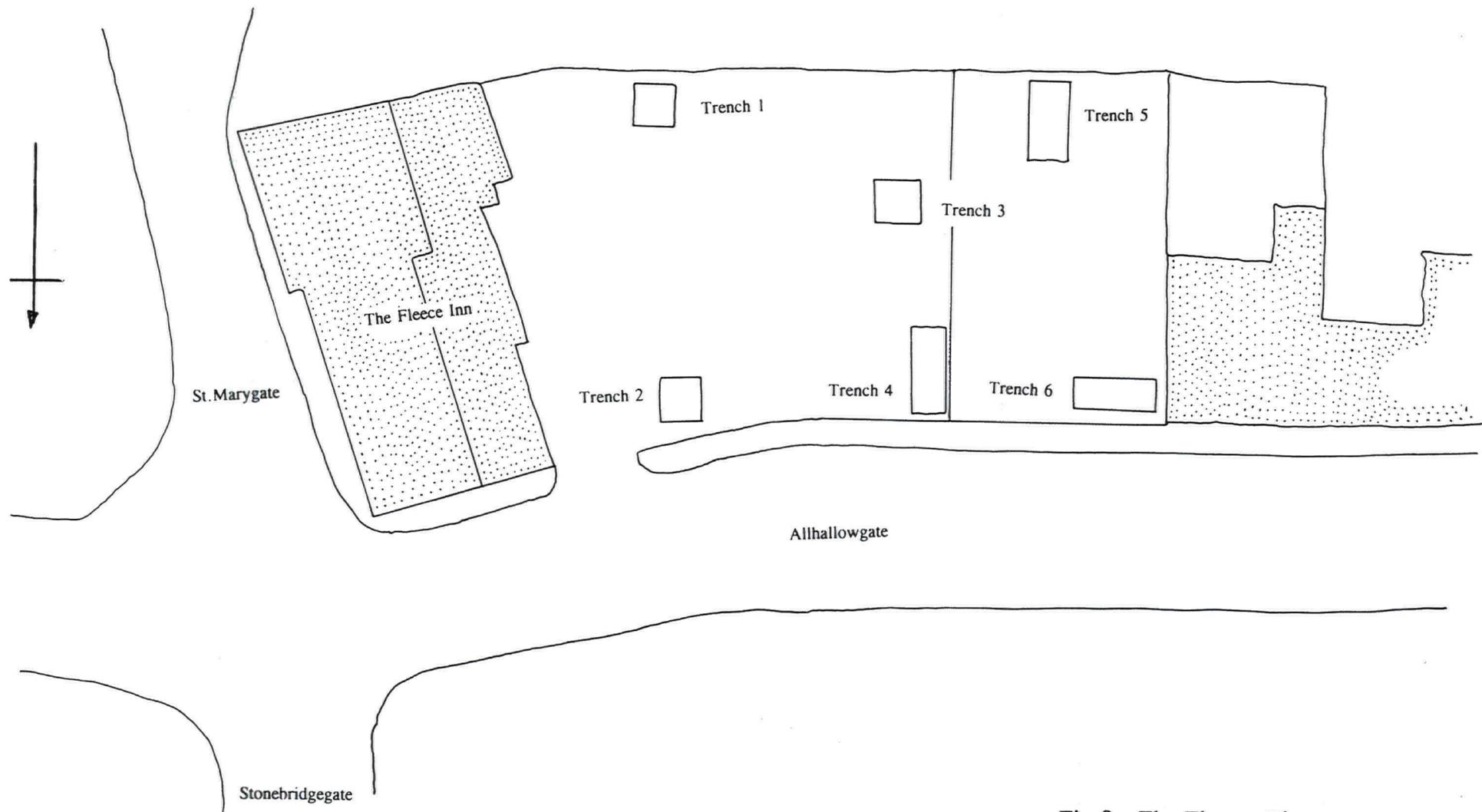
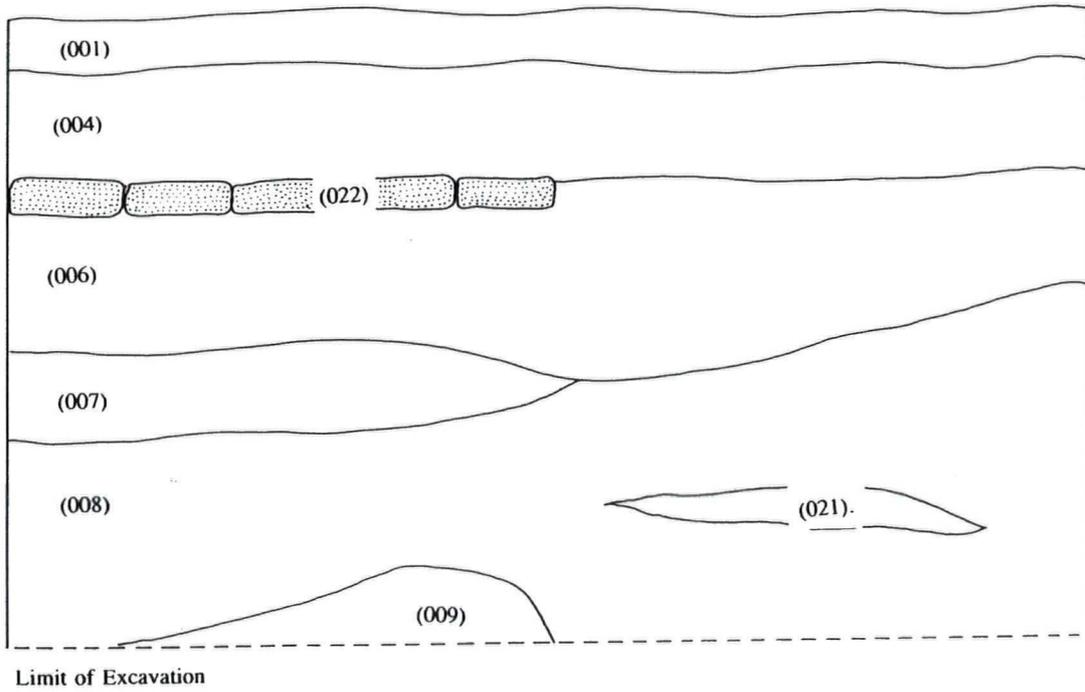
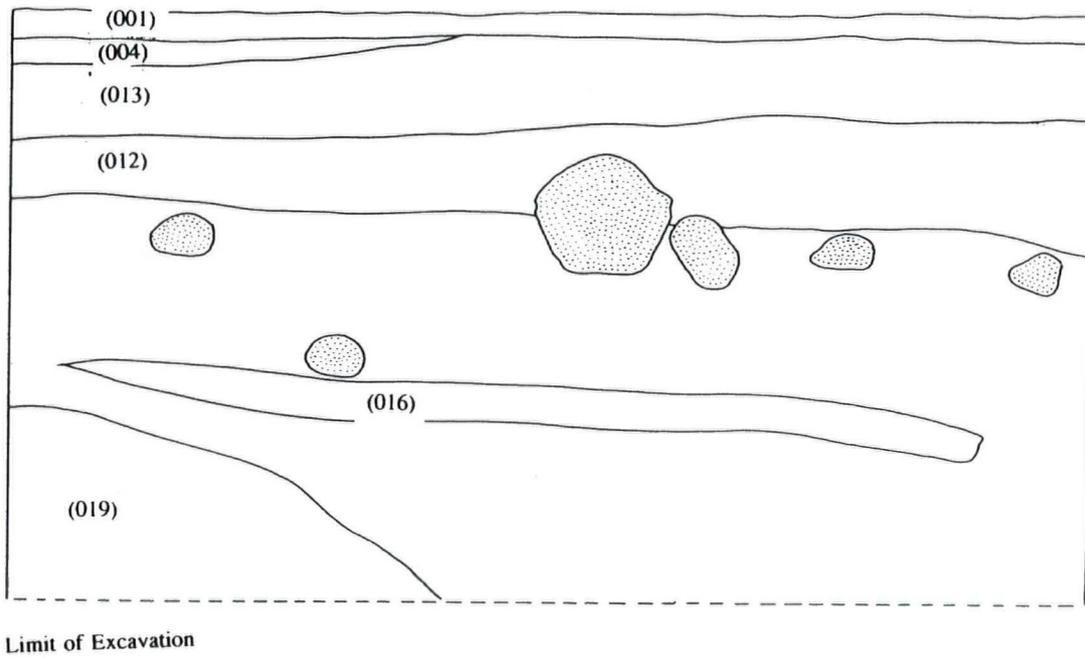


Fig.8 The Fleece, Ripon
Location of evaluation trenches
Scale 1:400



A: Trench 2 (South facing)
Scale 1:20



B: Trench 3 (South facing)
Scale 1:20

Fig.9
The Fleece, Ripon; sections

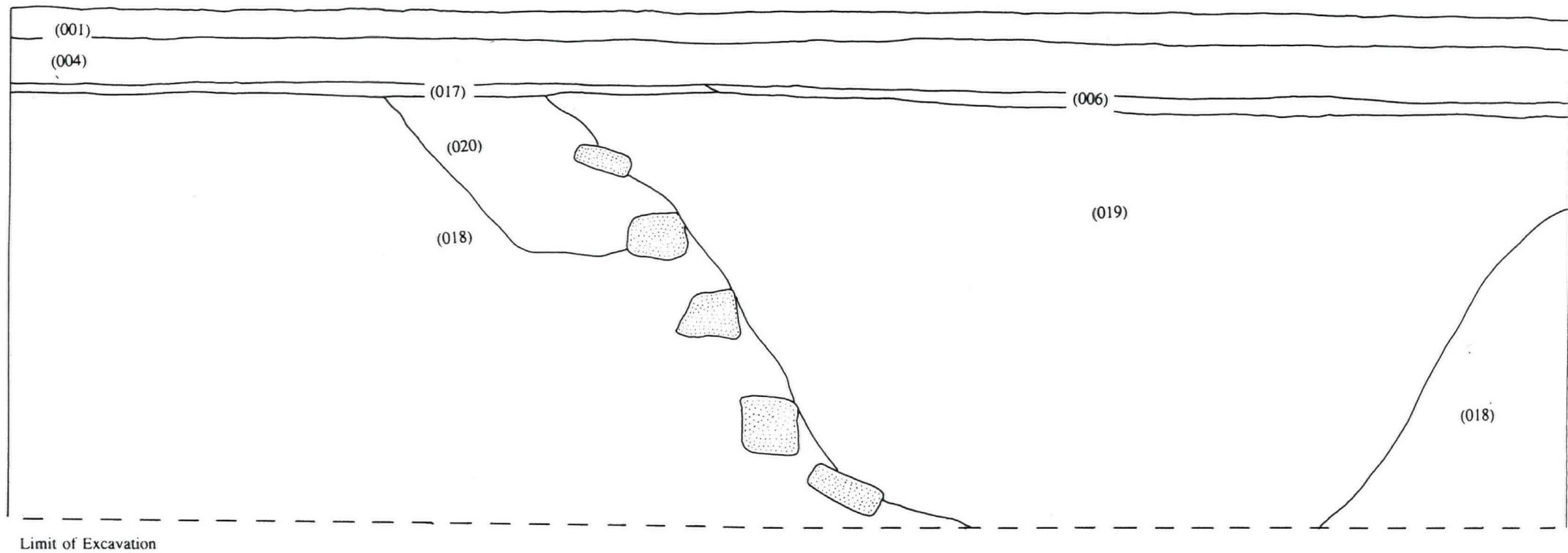


Fig.10
The Fleece, Ripon
Trench 4 (south facing)
Scale 1:20

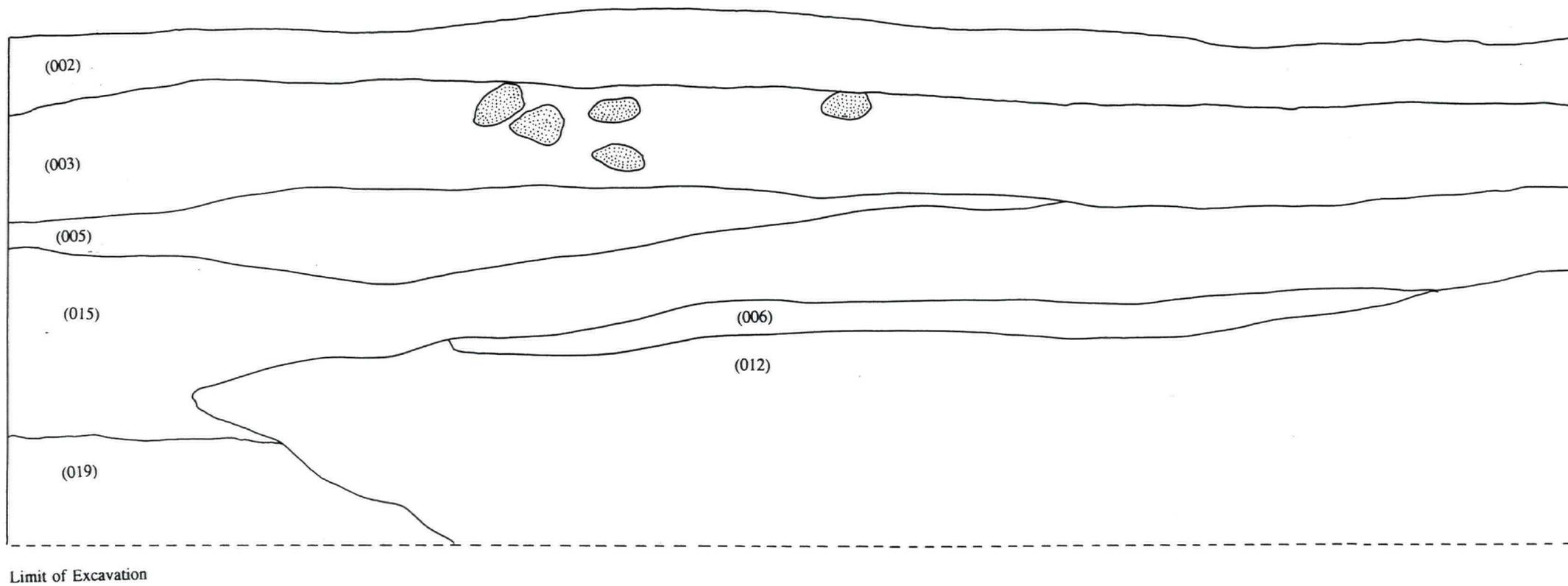
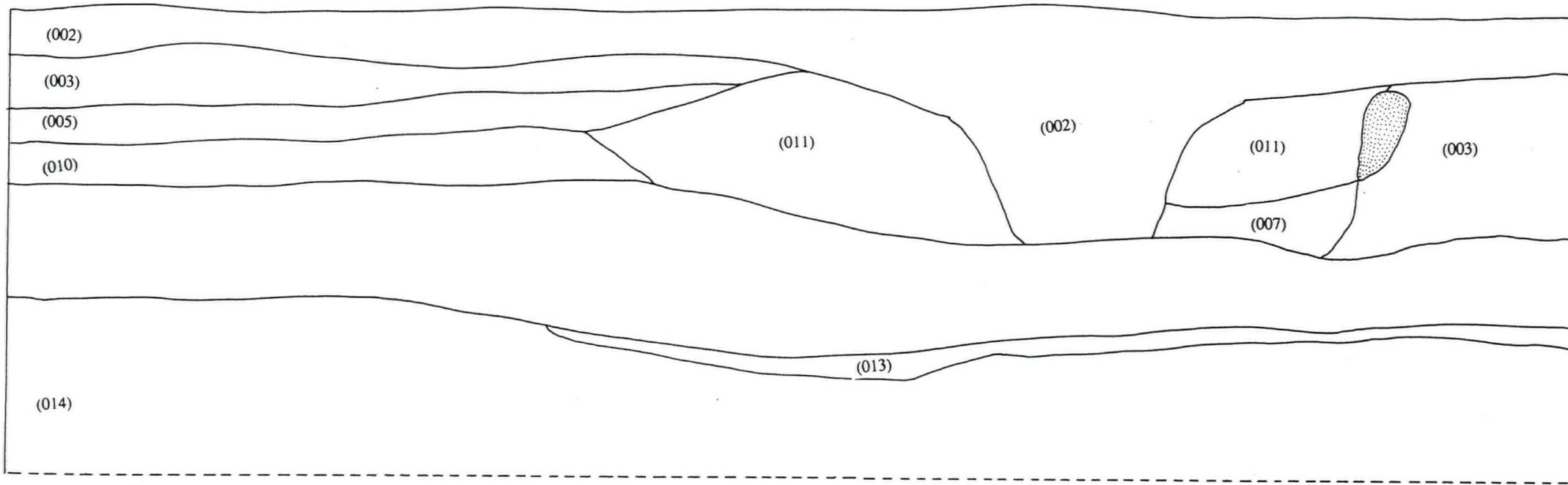


Fig.11
The Fleece, Ripon
Trench 5 (east facing)
Scale 1:20



Limit of Excavation

Fig.12
The Fleece, Ripon
Trench 6 (south facing)
Scale 1:20