

**Former Council Offices, High
Street, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire:**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
2003**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
Project No. 1020
February 2003

**Former Council Offices, High Street,
Uttoxeter, Staffordshire:**
An Archaeological Evaluation 2003

By

Richard H. Cherrington

With contributions from Kate Bain and Erica Macey

For further information please contact:
Simon Buteux, Iain Ferris or Alex Jones (Directors)
Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
The University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham B15 2TT
Tel: 0121 414 5513
Fax: 0121 414 5516
E-Mail: BUFAU@bham.ac.uk
Web Address: <http://www.bufau.bham.ac.uk>

Contents

SUMMARY	1
1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
2.0 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION	1
3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	1
<i>By Kate Bain</i>	
3.1 Prehistoric to Roman	2
3.2 Saxon	2
3.3 Medieval	2
3.4 Post-medieval.....	3
4.0 AIMS	4
5.0 METHOD	4
6.0 SUMMARY OF TRIAL TRENCHING RESULTS	4
7.0 THE FINDS	6
8.0 DISCUSSION	6
9.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7
10.0 REFERENCES	7

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1 General location map.
- Figure 2 Site location.
- Figure 3 Copy of The Town of Uttoxeter by Peter Lightfoote, 1658.
- Figure 4 1930's view of nos. 48-50 High Street.
- Figure 5 1930's view of nos. 48-50 High Street, showing adjacent property.
- Figure 6 2001 Ground Engineering Ltd, location map of trial pits
- Figure 7 1964 O/S map.
- Figure 8 1973 O/S map.
- Figure 9 1989 O/S map.
- Figure 10 1882 O/S map.
- Figure 11 1901 O/S map.
- Figure 12 1922 O/S map.
- Figure 13 Trench location plan.
- Figure 14 Trenches 1, 2 and 3 sections.
- Figure 15 Trench 3, F300, F301, F302 and F303 plan.

LIST OF PLATES

- Plate 1: Trench 1: south-facing section.
- Plate 2: Trench 2: south-facing section.
- Plate 3: 19th century brick-built features (F300, F301 and F302).

Former Council Offices, High Street, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire: An Archaeological Evaluation 2003

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at the Former Council Offices, High Street, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire (centred on SK 092 337). The evaluation was carried out during February 2003 by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) on behalf of M and G Northern, through Dodsworth Wright Grew Ltd. Architectural Consultants, as part of an application for planning permission for a residential development. The planning application involves the demolition of the modern buildings currently adjacent to 70 High Street to create space for a new apartment block and small business units with car parking facilities. An archaeological desk-based assessment (Bain, 2002) examined the available documentary and cartographic evidence to identify areas of potential archaeological interest. The site was considered to have archaeological potential due to its location within an area of possible medieval and post-medieval activity. Due to intensive 19th - and 20th - century structural intrusion, no deposits or features of archaeological significance were identified. The only artefacts recovered were of post-medieval origin, the majority being of a 19th - 20th century date.

1.0 Introduction

This report describes the results of an archaeological evaluation, by means of trial-trenching, carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) at the Former Council Offices, High Street, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire (centred on SK 092 337). (Fig. 1, hereafter referred to as the site). The work conforms to a brief prepared by BUFAU (BUFAU 2002) and follows the standards and guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation published by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 2001). This assessment was prepared by BUFAU on behalf of M and G Northern, through Dodsworth Wright Grew Ltd. Architectural Consultants, after an application to develop the site of the former Council Offices, High Street, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire (Fig.1).

2.0 Site location and description

The site is located within the historic core of Uttoxeter (centred on SK 092 337), on the eastern side of the High Street, north of the market area. The site is bounded to the west by a pavement fronting onto the High Street and the front of a standing building, formerly the Council Offices. The rest of the site is enclosed by brick walls and fencing. Those parts of the development site not taken up by the standing building are given over to car-parking (Fig. 2). Uttoxeter stands on an island of glacial sand and gravel near to the convergence of four glaciers. Immediately beneath the sand and gravel lies the solid geology of Mercia Mudstone. The area sits on a slight escarpment overlooking the floodplain of the River Dove, on the southern slope of which the High Street is situated.

3.0 Archaeological and historical background by Kate Bain

The site lies within a historic town area, though away from the core and the market place. A previous desk-based assessment (Bain 2002) and subsequent archaeological evaluation (Duncan 2002) were carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) at a nearby redevelopment site at 48-50 High Street, Uttoxeter. This site was fronted by a timber-framed building dating to the 17th century. Trenches excavated to

the rear of the property produced medieval features and pottery dating to the 14th century. An 18th-century property division was also seen and was thought to be a continuation of the sub-division of a burgage plot. However, there is no pre-existing archaeological information on the specific site to which this report relates.

3.1 Prehistoric to Roman

There is very little evidence for any kind of prehistoric settlement at Uttoxeter itself. However, some prehistoric artefacts were recovered in the 19th century from the surrounding area. These include a stone axe, a small looped palstave, a bronze spearhead and a wedge-shaped 'amulet'. Details of the original location of these finds is somewhat vague, some giving no more detail than 'Uttoxeter district' (Redfern 1886, 49).

The Roman period provides little more information, with the exception of a possible Roman earthwork to the south of the town in a field called Sandfort. Some pottery is associated with this earthwork, including an amphora found within the vicinity. Redfern's excavations on Bradley Street are reported to have been on the possible site of a pottery kiln. However, many of his 'Roman' artefacts have since been suggested to be of medieval or later date. Although Uttoxeter is situated close to the Roman road network, the village of Rocester, to the north, appears to have been the focus for settlement within this period.

3.2 Saxon

Uttoxeter appears to be first recorded in the Domesday Book as part of the Totmonslow hundred, referred to as 'Wotocheshede'. Prior to the Norman Conquest, the lands were held by Earl Aelfgar of Mercia. The meaning of the settlement's name may be translated as 'Wot's homestead on the heath' (Uttoxeter town guide 2001) or 'in the shade of the wood', *wudu-seade* (Redfern 1886, 10). It is suggested that there may have been a church at the settlement since the 8th century. However, no solid evidence for this exists. It is thought that the origins for the modern spelling of Uttoxeter come from the Saxon, the prefix possibly from the Saxon word for a deforesting device, *mattock*, and the suffix from the word *stocca* referring to the stem or trunk of a tree. It is, however, difficult to assess the place name evidence, as the town's name has been spelt over 70 different ways in historical documents. The site of the town lies between the trading routes of the rivers Tean and Dove and relatively close to the existing Roman road network and it seems, therefore, reasonable to assume that the Saxons might have chosen to settle in the area. It seems likely that the earliest parts of the settlement were centred around what is now the church and market area, which lay above the flood plain of the River Dove on a slight escarpment.

3.3 Medieval

There is much more information on the settlement at Uttoxeter in the medieval period. After the Norman Conquest the settlement passed from the hands of the Earls of Mercia via the Crown to Henry de Ferrers, Lord of Tutbury in 1086. Robert de Ferrers, first Earl of Derby, made the town a borough. The first market was established in 1140. Later, in 1251, a market charter was granted allowing a market every Wednesday and a fair lasting three days once a year. In 1252, Uttoxeter was made a free borough of 127 burgages.

The cartographic evidence suggests that the site lies within a sub-divided burgage plot at the northern end of the High Street (Fig. 3). The market was located to the southern end of the High Street and the area seems little changed in plan from 1658 until at least the publication of the Third Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1922 (Figs. 3, 4, 5 and 6). The market area displays the typical characteristics of a medieval 'filled-in' market and contains some of the oldest standing buildings in the town. Uttoxeter can be seen to exhibit some of the characteristics of a planned medieval town (Baker and Breckon 1989, 14).

3.4 Post-medieval

Documentary research suggests that the majority of building activity during the 1500s was focused in the southern, market end of the town. A good example of this was the Thomas Alleyne grammar school founded in 1558, on Bridge Street. The school was subsequently rebuilt in 1785 and, finally, in 1858/9, a new school was built under the same name on Dove Bank, near Bradley Street. The Old Talbot Inn was erected around 1590, also in the market area.

A major fire is reported to have destroyed the western side of the town in 1596. A further fire is reported to have destroyed the southern part of the town in 1672 (Encyclopaedia of Staffs, 618). By the 17th century, Uttoxeter, mainly on the merit of its markets, was one of the three largest towns/cities in Staffordshire. At the time of publication of the 1658 map, the Manor House, just to the northwest of the site, is clearly quite well established, with formal gardens shown. The date shown on this map, however, is the date of its completion and evidence indicates that it was begun in 1629. The earliest surviving feature within the still-standing, listed, manor house is a 16th-century (or earlier) chimney base.

Lightfoote's 1658 map of the town seems to demonstrate the sub-division of some of the medieval burgages to accommodate the construction of the post-medieval suburbs. The site is suggested to occupy part of one of these sub-divided plots. The western-facing buildings, including those at the northern end of the High Street, have much less land per property than the others, with their shorter, narrower plots aligned east-west rather than north-south. These small plots seem to be characteristic of the properties on both sides of the High Street, perhaps demonstrating the rapid expansion of the town in this period. Several turnpikes, frequently associated with market towns, helped to support large Coaching Inns in other areas of the town, such as the Cross-Keys and the White Hart.

A boost to local industry came with the arrival of the Uttoxeter branch of the Trent and Mersey canal in 1811. However, this extended no further than Uttoxeter and, thus, was not as important a trade link as might have been expected. The Crewe to Derby railway line was built in 1848 and was soon to be accompanied by two further lines, the conjunction of which made Uttoxeter an important junction. With the incentive provided by cheap return train tickets on market and racing days, both railway and town thrived.

The cartographic evidence suggests that the general layout of the town has changed very little since about the 17th century, with the exception of the expansion of the town to the north and west and the addition and expansion of the Leighton Iron Works and the Elkes Biscuit Factory. The earliest available Ordnance Survey map of the area is dated to 1882 (Fig. 10) and shows the site fronted by a large building, identified as a bank, which can

also be seen on the 1922 Ordnance Survey edition of the map (Fig. 12). This large building can still be seen at the front of the site on the 1973 (Fig. 8) Ordnance Survey map but this has been demolished by the time of the publication of the 1989 edition (Fig. 9). Historical photographs clearly show the bank building fronting onto the High Street in the area that now forms the front of the site.

Systematic processes of construction and demolition in and around the area of the site can be evidenced by analysis of the series of Ordnance Survey maps (Figs. 7-12). The earliest map sourced for this report is dated to 1658 (Fig. 3), which shows the area in which the site lies being occupied by buildings both fronting onto the High Street and located centrally within the plot.

4.0 Aims

The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to:

- establish the likely presence or absence of any archaeological deposits and features within the proposed development site.
- define the nature, extent and significance of surviving deposits and features.
- provide information to allow a mitigation strategy to be designed.

These aims were achieved through archaeological trial trenching.

5.0 Method

Three archaeological trial trenches were excavated. Two of the trenches (Trench 1 and Trench 2) measured 6m x 3m, the third trench (Trench 3) measured 3m x 3m. Hard-standing and overburden was removed by a JCB excavator fitted with a combination of buckets. This was monitored by a qualified archaeologist at all times. Where appropriate, surfaces and sections were hand cleaned to aid interpretation and recording. A detailed context record on individual pro-forma record cards was maintained and all deposits were photographed using both colour and monochrome film, supplemented by digital images. Sections and plans were drawn at a scale of 1:50 or 1:20 as appropriate. Where no archaeological deposits were identified, a record of the stratigraphy was made. These records, together with the finds, constitute the site archive, which is stored at Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit at the time of writing. The archive will be deposited with the relevant museum within a reasonable time following completion of the project, subject to the agreement of the landowner.

6.0 Summary of trial trenching results (Fig. 13)

Trench 1 (Fig. 14, Plate 1)

The natural subsoil (1007) was encountered at a depth of c1.30m below the present ground surface. This was overlain by a layer of re-deposited natural subsoil (1006), 0.2m in depth. This was overlain by a silty loam layer (1005) that was cut by a possible pit (F100) filled by a silty loam deposit containing demolition debris (1004). Immediately above was a succession of demolition and modern surfacing layers (1003, 1002, 1001 and 1000). No features of archaeological interest were recorded.

Context Number	Context Description	Depth	Context type
1000	Asphalt surface	0.1m	Layer
1001	Hardcore, brick and quarry-tile sub-surface	0.15m to 0.2m	Layer
1002	Lens of stones	0.05m	Layer
1003	General demolition debris	0.25 to 0.3m	Layer
1004	Dark grey/brown silty loam	0.55m	Fill
F100	Possible cut for pit	0.55m	Cut?
1005	Mid grey silty sandy loam	0.5m	Layer
1006	Re-deposited natural subsoil	0.2m	Layer
1007	Mixed red/orange sands, gravels and clays	100.41m A.O.D	Natural subsoil

Trench 2 (Fig. 14, Plate 2)

The natural subsoil (2006) was encountered at a depth of up to 1.4m below the present ground surface. This was overlain by a layer of re-deposited natural subsoil (2005), 0.4m in depth. This was sealed by a layer of dark brown loam and demolition debris (2003). Layers 2003 and 2005 had been truncated by a pit (F200), filled with deposit containing large amounts of post-medieval and 19th - century tile, brick, pottery, and oyster shell. Sealing F200 was a succession of demolition and modern surfacing layers (2004, 2002, 2001 and 2000). No features of significant archaeological interest were recorded.

Context Number	Context Description	Depth	Context type
2000	Asphalt surface	0.1m	Layer
2001	Hardcore and brick sub-surface	Up to 0.3m	Layer
2002	Former asphalt surface	0.1m	Layer
2004	Demolition debris	0.7m	Layer
F200	Pit	0.7m	Cut
2003	Demolition debris and dark brown sandy loam	0.6m	Layer
2005	Re-deposited natural subsoil	0.4m	Layer
2006	Red/orange sands and gravels	99.20m A.O.D	Natural subsoil

Trench 3 (Figs. 14 and 15, Plate 3)

The natural subsoil (3005) was encountered at a depth of 1.0m, and was cut by a probable linear gully (F303), recorded to a width of 1.0m and to a depth of 0.6m. The fill of F303 was a dark grey silty loam (3004) containing post-medieval tile and pottery, and the remains of thin wooden planks. The recording of F303 was hindered by the severe flooding of the trench during machining and prior to photographic recording. Feature F303 was sealed by the surviving elements of three contemporary truncated brick-built features (F300, F301 and F302) associated with domestic dwellings. These features were executed in 19th - century common red-brick. Feature F300 was bonded with limed mortar. The brick-built features were sealed by a deposit of dark grey silty loam, with frequent charcoal inclusions (3003). This was overlain by a succession of demolition and

modern surfacing layers (3002, 3001 and 3000). No further features of significant archaeological interest were recorded.

Context Number	Context Description	Depth	Context type
3000	Asphalt surface	0.1m	Layer
3001	Hardcore sub-surface	0.15m	Layer
3002	Demolition debris and dark brown sandy loam	Up to 0.7m	Layer
3003	Dark grey silty loam	0.4m	Layer
F300	Truncated mortared clamped red brick structure	99.85m A.O.D	Structure
F301	Un-mortared clamped red brick culvert	99.85m A.O.D	Structure
F302	Clamped red brick drain	99.85m A.O.D	Structure
3004	Dark grey silty loam	0.6m	Fill of F303
F303	Probable linear gully	0.6m 89.95m A.O.D	Cut
3005	Red/orange sand and gravels	99.45m A.O.D	Natural subsoil

7.0 The finds by Erica Macey

The site produced a small quantity of finds, all of post-medieval date. This included twenty sherds of pottery (3005, Trench 2), all of 19th-century date (K. Nichol, pers.comn.). The pottery included transfer-printed wares and whitewares. The remainder of the assemblage consisted of a fragment of post-medieval roof tile (Trench 2), a piece of unworked animal bone (3005), two oyster shells (Trench 2) and a fragment of mortar (Trench 2).

8.0 Discussion

No significant evidence for the presence of archaeological deposits or features was recorded during the archaeological evaluation. The desk-based assessment (Bain, 2002) confirmed the former presence of several domestic and retail properties within the development area. The map evidence (Figs. 10, 11 and 12) and the finds recovered during the evaluation suggest these structures are primarily of 19th - century origin. The 1882 Ordnance Survey (OS) map (Fig. 10) depicts a large building on the High Street frontage in the area of Trench 1. On the 1901 OS map (Fig. 11) this structure is labelled as a bank. The truncated structures recorded in Trench 3 (F301, F302 and F303) probably correspond with buildings depicted on the 1901 OS map (Fig. 11). Alternatively, they are perhaps the remains of ancillary buildings, such as lavatories, associated with the school labelled on the 1882 OS map (Fig. 10). Evidence for the demolition of buildings is widespread. This is particularly represented by the truncated brickwork in Trench 3 and the demolition-debris-rich deposits in Trenches 1 and 2 (1003 and 2004). Residual demolition debris from structures shown on Lightfoote's map of 1658 (Fig. 3) has probably been distributed over the site by later development.

Intensive 19th and 20th - century development, coupled with the relatively-shallow depth of the overburden, has resulted in a poor survival of archaeological features. The natural

subsoil was encountered at a level of 1m -1.4m below the modern ground surface, which suggests that later development may have removed any ephemeral archaeological deposits that might have existed within the development area.

9.0 Acknowledgements

The project was managed for BUFAU Dr Iain Ferris, who also edited this report. Richard Cherrington wrote this report and supervised the evaluation fieldwork, which was carried out with the assistance of Emma Hancox. The project was monitored by Bill Klemperer, Planning Archaeologist, Staffordshire County Council. We are grateful to Leah Stafford of M and G Northern for his close co-operation and assistance throughout the evaluation fieldwork.

10.0 References

Bain, K. 2002 *48-50 High Street Uttoxeter, Staffordshire. An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment*. BUFAU Report No. 899.

Baker, N. and Breedon, M. 1989 *The Archaeology of Walsall*. BUFAU Report No.97.

Duncan, M. 2002 *An Archaeological Evaluation at 48-50 High Street, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire*. BUFAU Report No. 899.01.

Edmunds, J. 1982 *A General History of Uttoxeter*.

Encyclopaedia Of Staffordshire, *Uttoxeter Entry*.

Greenslade, M.W.(ed) 1990 *The Victoria History of the County Of Stafford Volume 4, Uttoxeter*.

Ground Engineering Ltd. 2001 *Report on a Site Investigation for the Proposed Redevelopment at 48-50 High Street Uttoxeter*.

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 2001 *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*

Redfern, F. 1886 *History and Antiquities of the Town and Neighbourhood of Uttoxeter*.

Cartographic Sources

1658 The town of Uttoxeter, by Peter Lightfoote

1882 Ordnance Survey

1901 Ordnance Survey

1922 Ordnance Survey

1964 Ordnance Survey

1973 Ordnance Survey

1989 Ordnance Survey

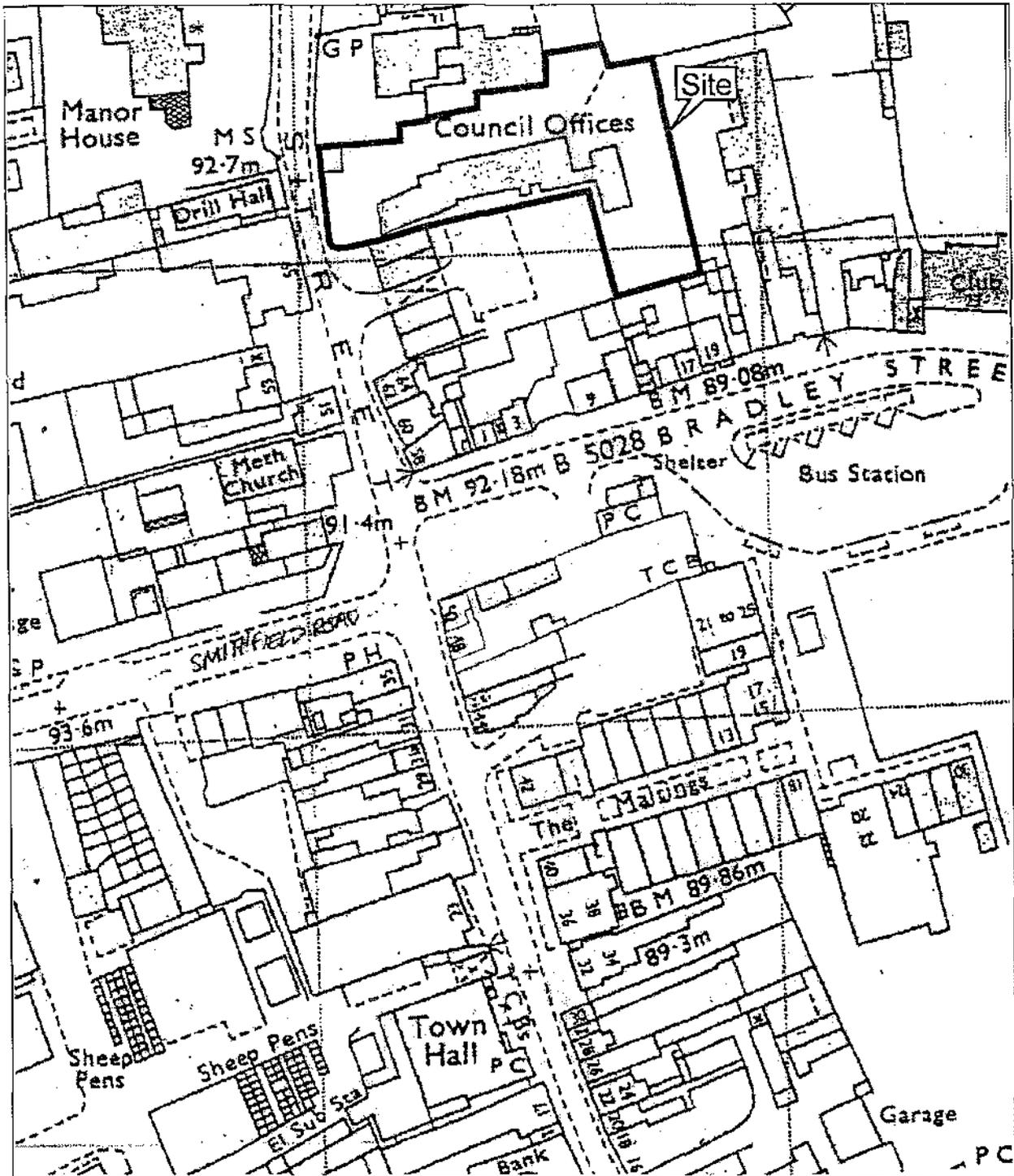


Fig.2

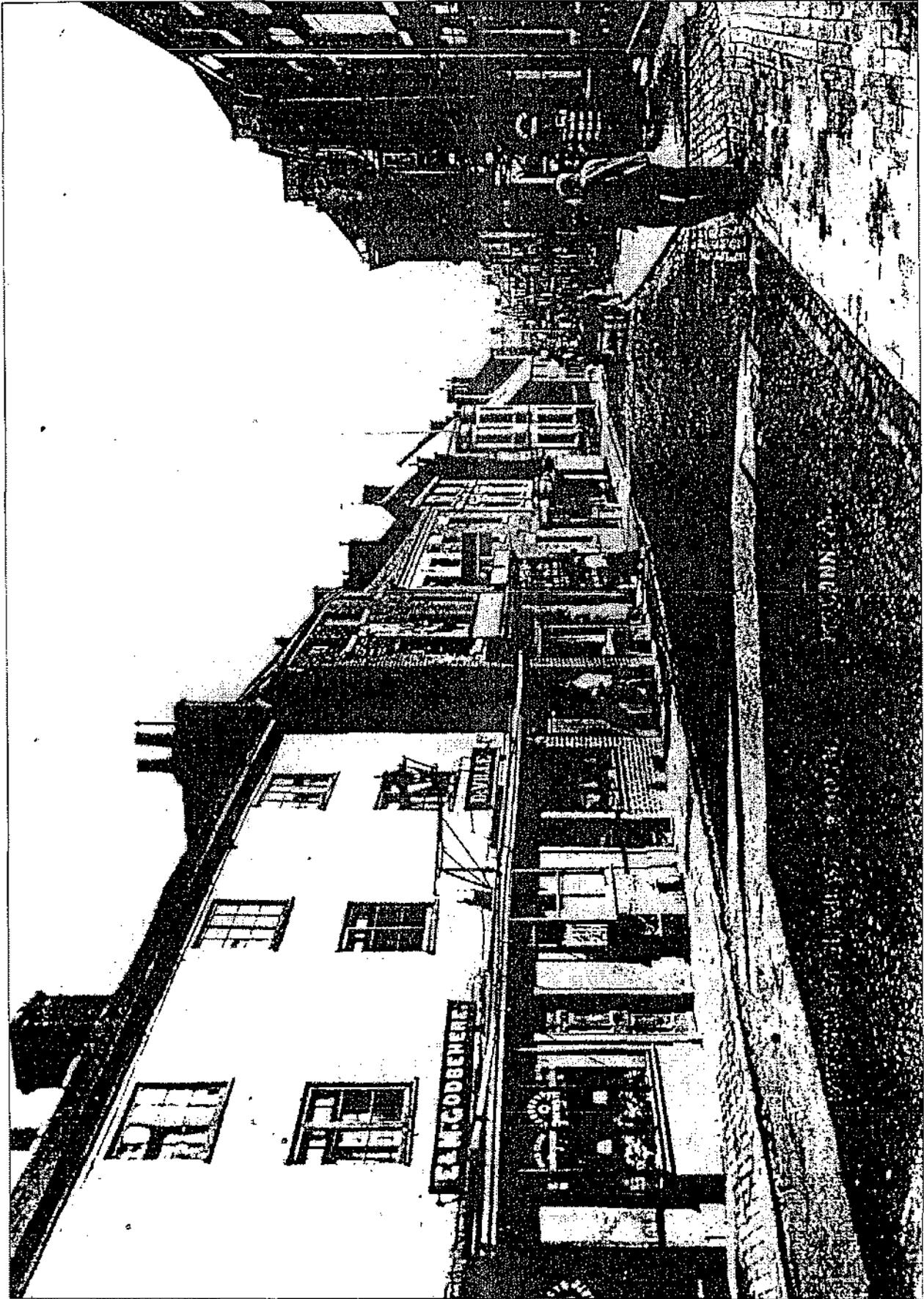


Fig. 4

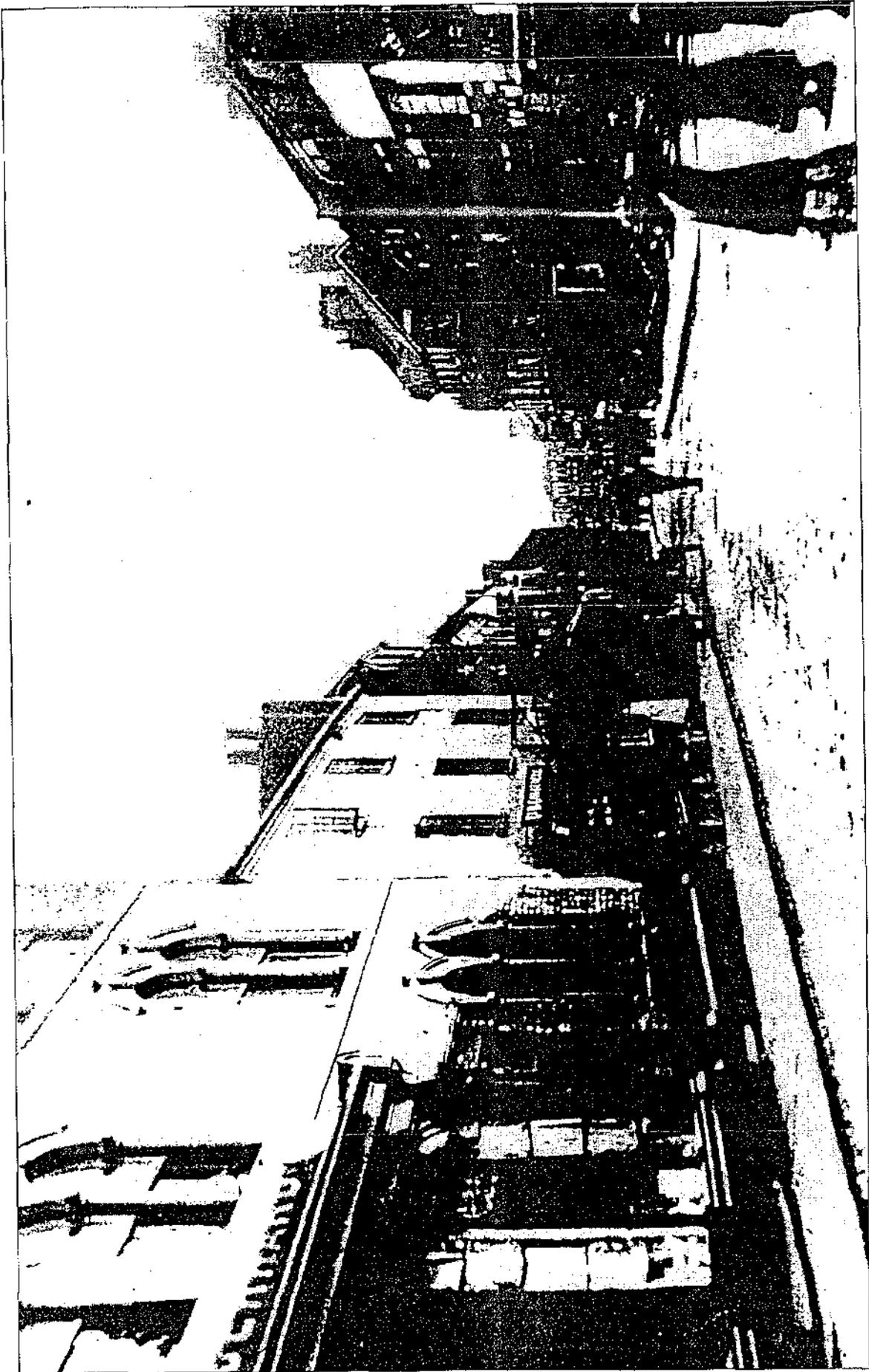


Fig. 5

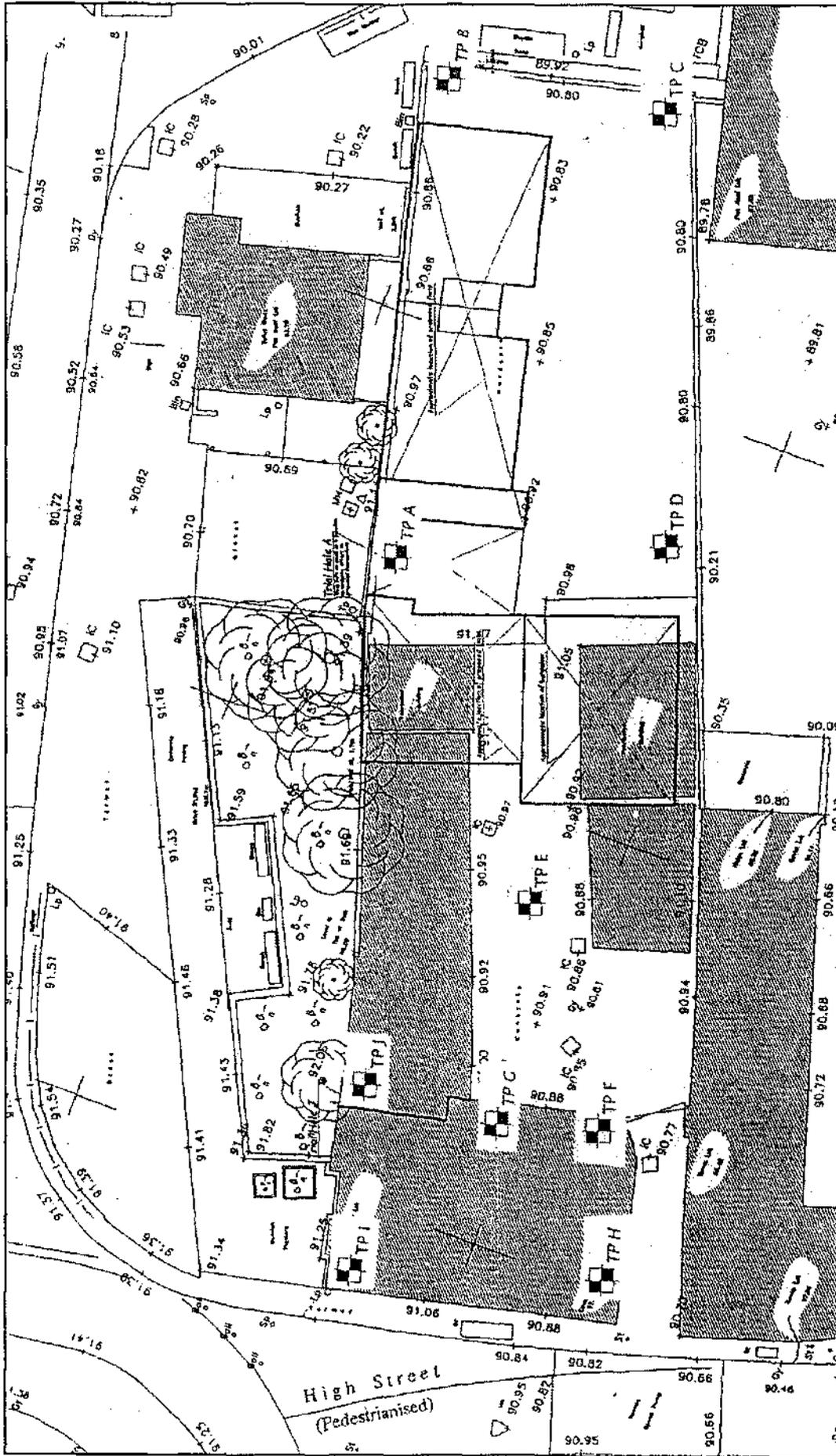


Fig.6

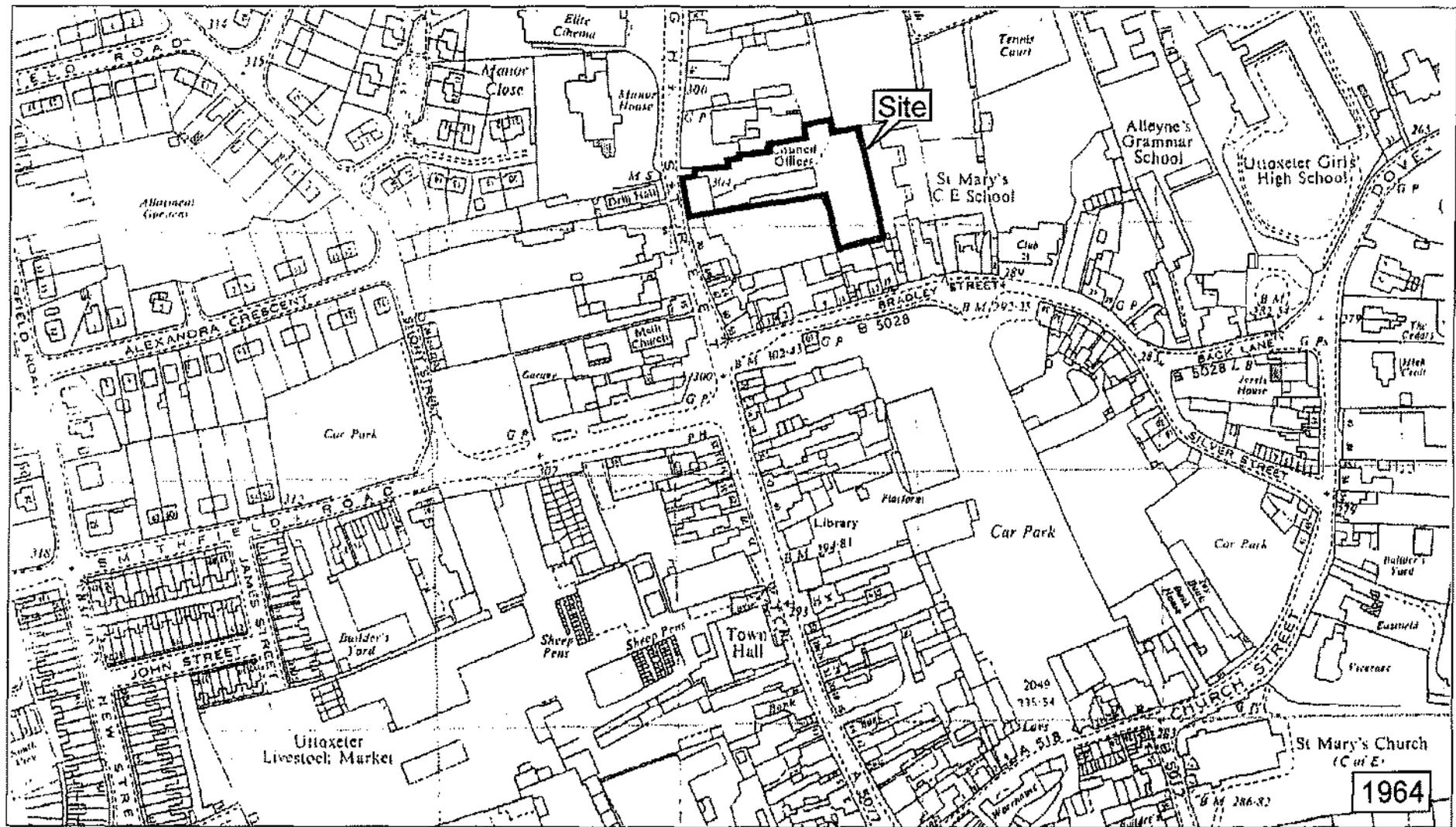


Fig.7

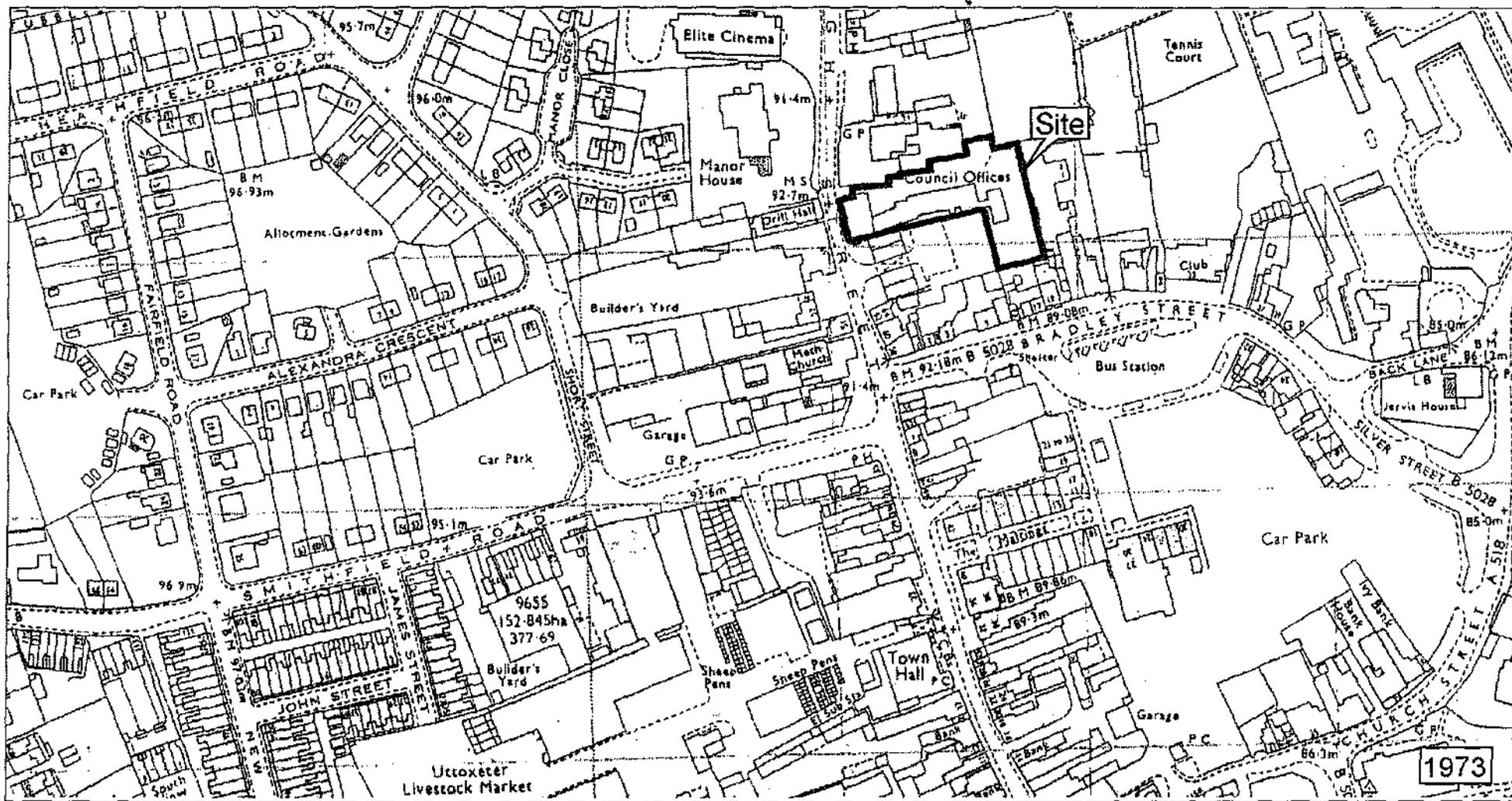


Fig.8

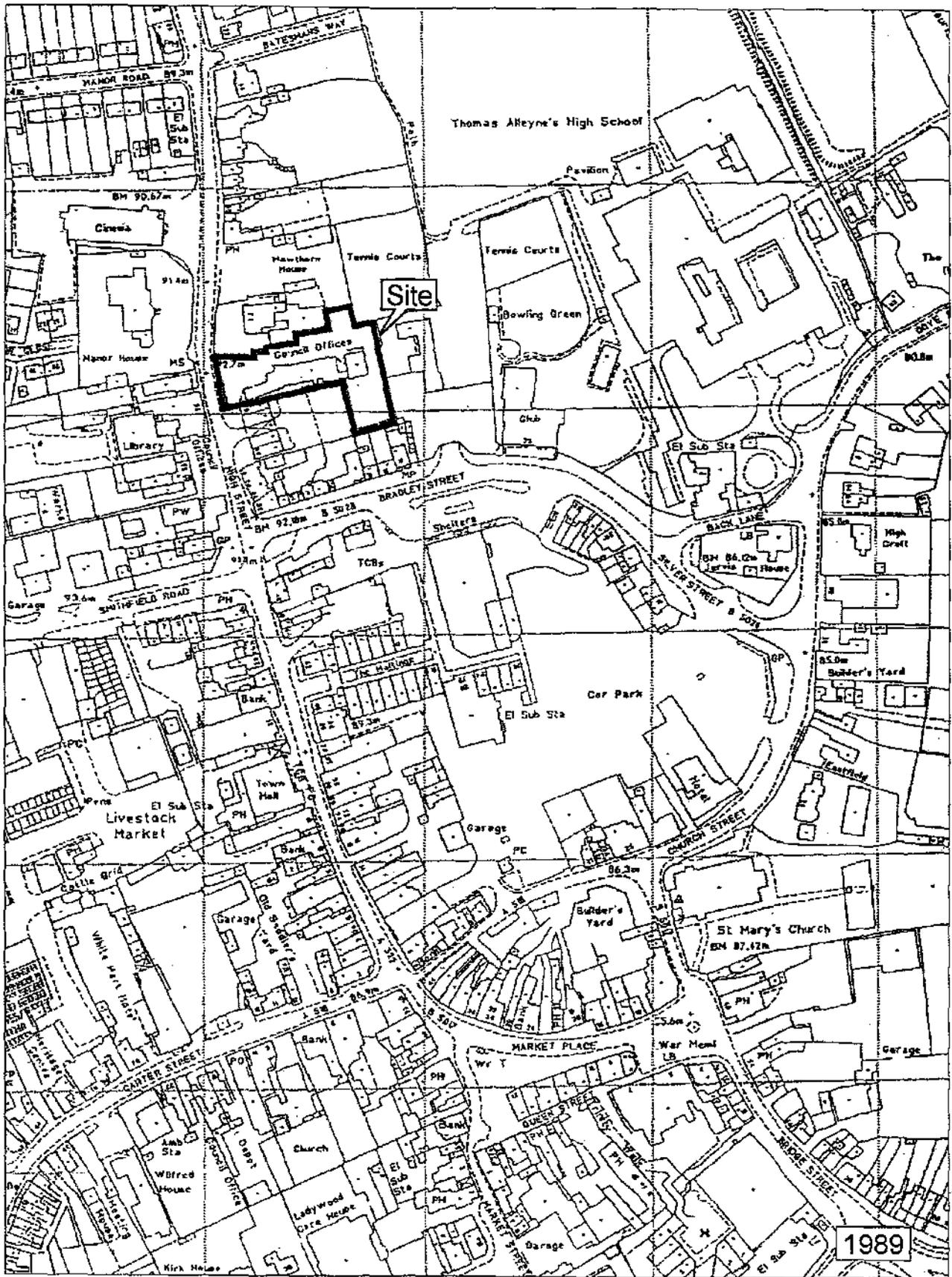


Fig.9



Fig.10

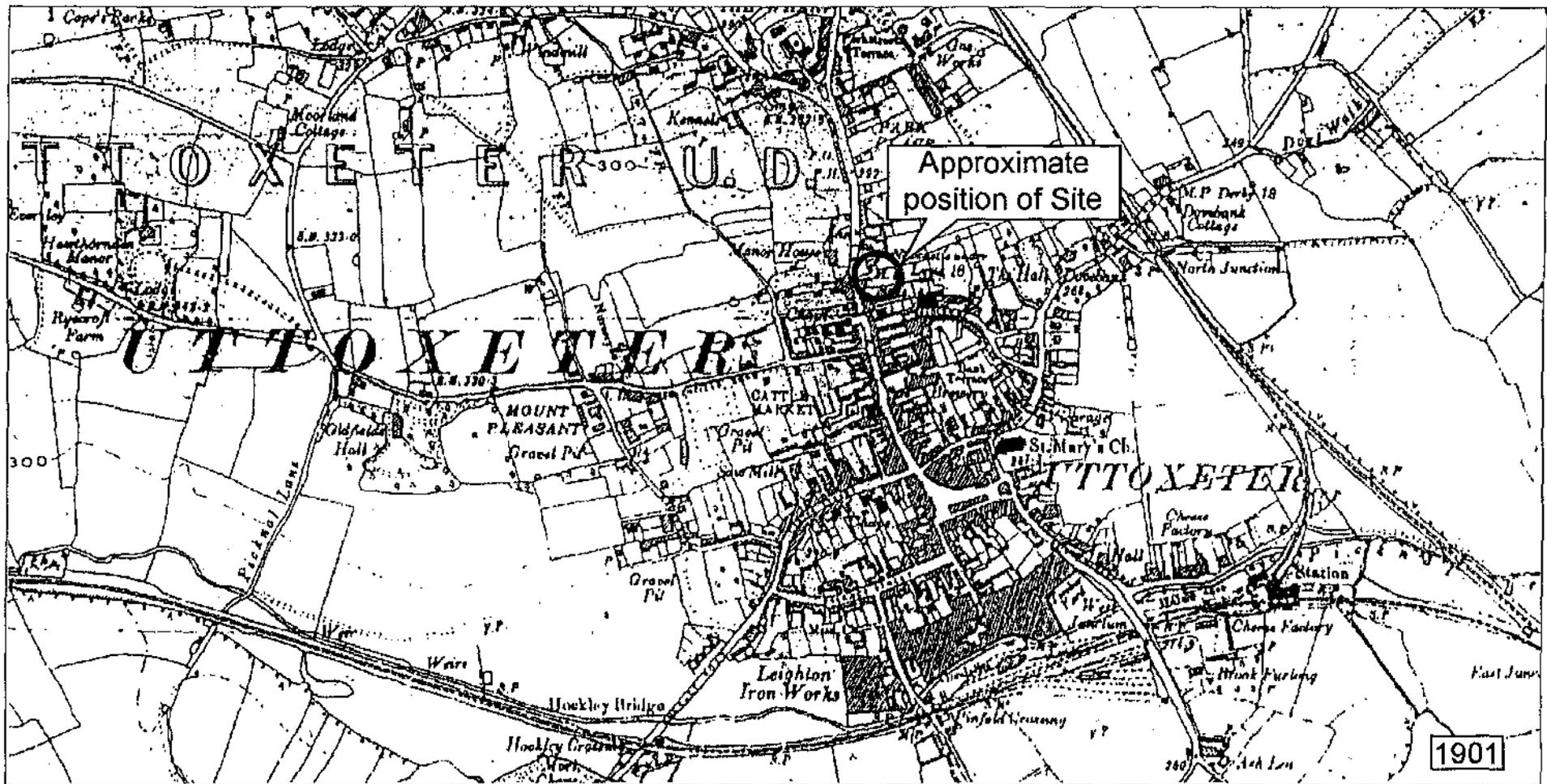


Fig.11



Fig. 12

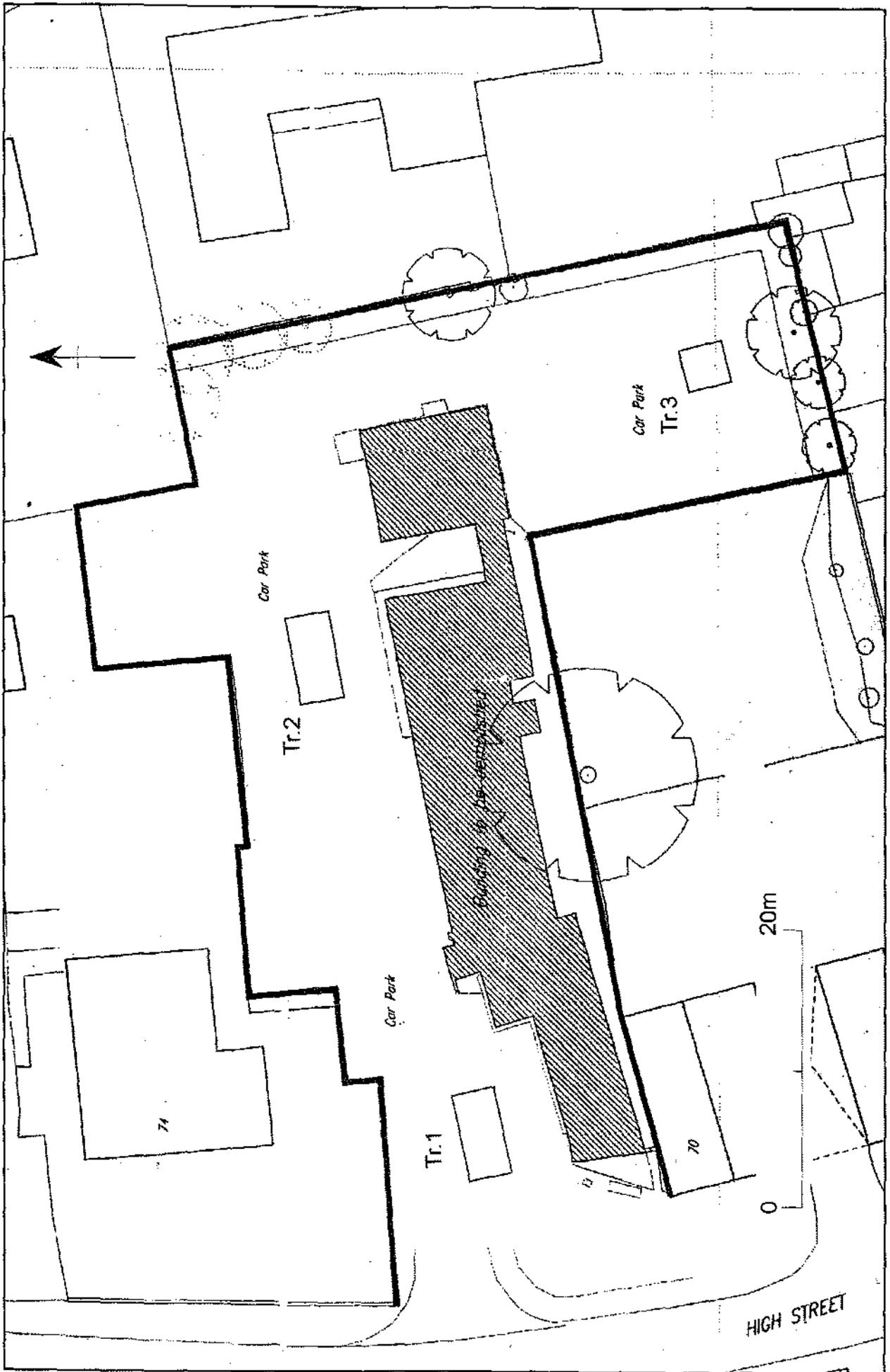


Fig.13

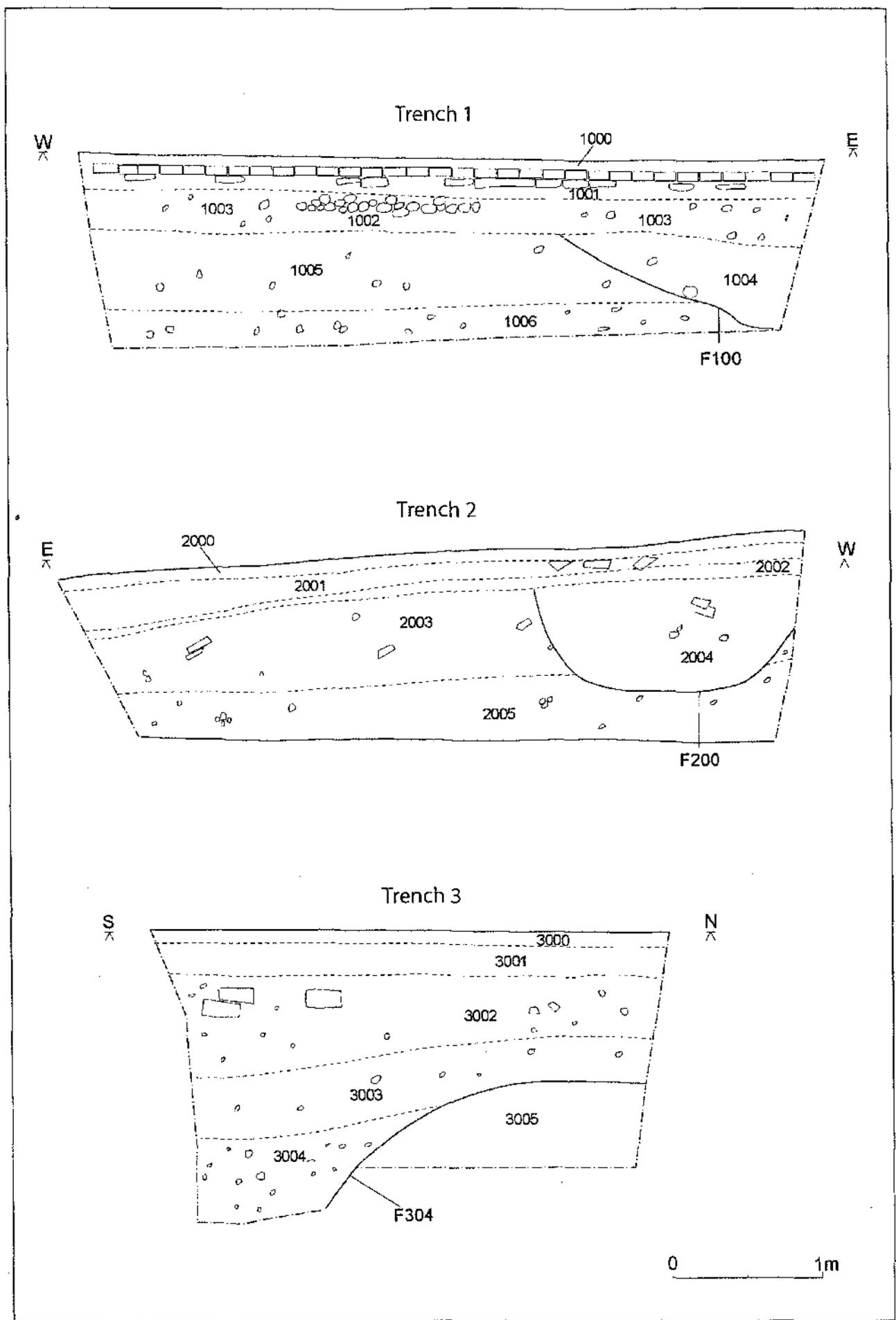


Fig.14

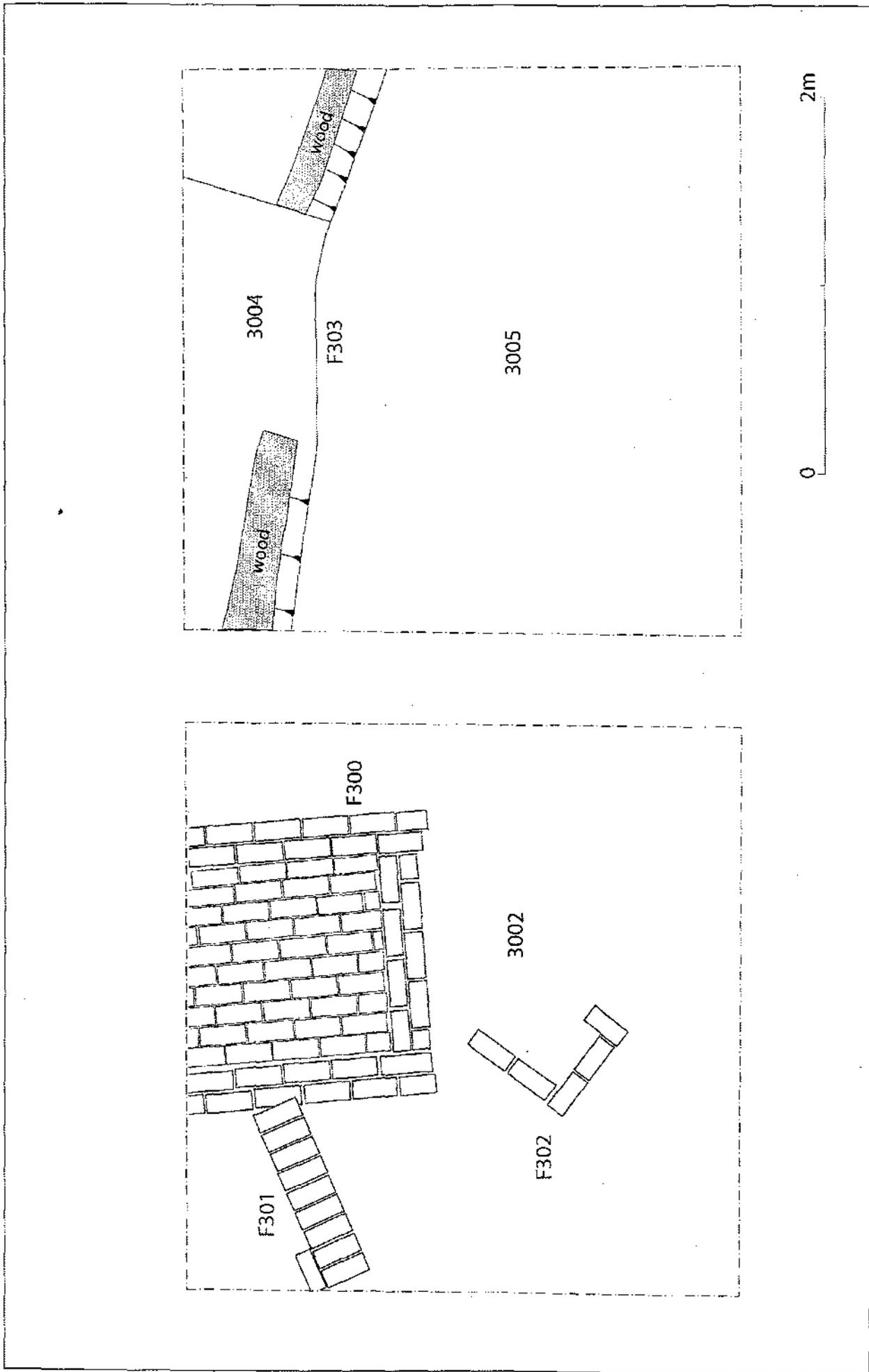


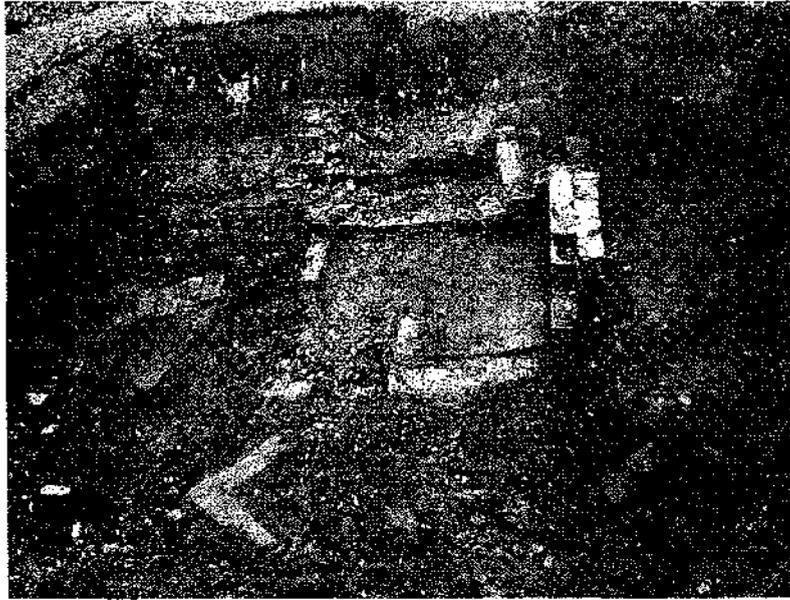
Fig.15



Plate 1: Trench 1 south-facing section.



Plate 2: Trench 2 south-facing section.



Trench 3: 19th - century brick-built features (F300, F301 and F302).