

# CHESTER - 1950 - TRINITY ST. TRENCH 2

NOTATION  
WALLS  
PITS



EAST

WEST

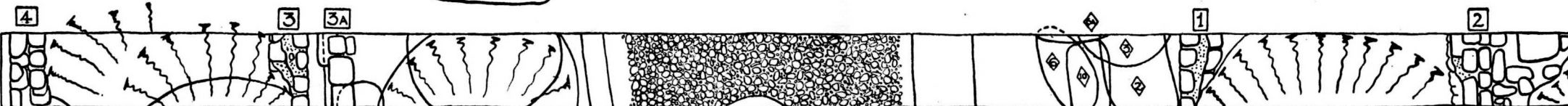
80 FT. Q.D. (NEWLYN)

? SLEEPER BEAM  
TRENCH



BRICK CULVERT

DISTURBED ROACH  
ROCK



SCALE IN FEET

G.W. 1950.

FIG. 1.



# Excavation of The Roman remains east of Trinity Street 1950-1953

By GRAHAM WEBSTER.

THE excavation in 1950<sup>1</sup> was aimed at exploring the Roman buildings to the east of the single barrack block discovered the previous year.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately the work was brought to a premature closure by a labour shortage and only one trench 63 feet long was completed (Trench 2, fig. 1). This was set out in an east-west direction 8 feet east of the end of the 1949 trench and carried up to the boundary of the car park, where a modern brick revetment supports the ground level higher by four feet.

Roman levels were met between 7 and 8 feet below the modern surface and interference was found to have been severe.

Near the centre was a well laid sandstone road at least 12 feet wide and 2 feet thick running in a north-south line. At its western edge was a sleeper beam trench or timber lined drain 9 inches wide. The eastern edge of the road has suffered much interference from a late 17th century pit.

In the whole length of 62ft. 6in. only two patches of flooring each 3ft. long were discovered intact. There were, however, the partial remains of five walls. Walls 1 and 3 (fig. 1) appear to have been 18ins. in thickness (21ins. at base) and the internal distance between them is 35ft. From the remains of floors and Roman pits in the length between these walls, it seems evident that it was an occupied area. Further occupation of a similar character exists east of wall 2 but no remains of this nature were found between walls 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 but the deep interference in these areas may have removed the evidence.

It is not possible to deduce what kind of a building or buildings it was to which these walls belonged. One would have expected another barrack block to match that to the west but the spacing and dimensions of these walls does not fit a normal block. The probability remains that it is an abnormal barrack block. This state of affairs would not be impossible in this area in *latera principis* where the first cohort was normally housed. There are peculiarities of this nature at Caerleon in a small area,<sup>3</sup> which has been excavated in a similar part of the fortress, while at Lambaesis the width of one of these blocks is as much as 46ft.<sup>4</sup> It is more likely, however, that it is a building with a central courtyard or road and that the large number of pits found east of Wall 3 belonged to the veranda. This suggestion is supported to some extent by the two column bases found to the north in 1953.

<sup>1</sup>Thanks are due to a number of volunteer helpers for this and the 1953 excavation and in particular to Messrs. G. Leach, K. Barton, J. Jones and latterly D. Petch.

<sup>2</sup>*C.A.J.*, 40, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>See general plan—School Field report not yet published.

<sup>4</sup>Cagnat, "Les deux Camps."

There were distinct signs of alterations to these buildings. Wall 3 had an appearance similar to that of the barrack wall investigated in 1949 where evidence of a raised sill was found but in this case the facts were not so definite. More obvious was what appeared to be a much poorer quality wall 3a immediately to the east of it with an adjoining floor of clay. Further evidence of re-building in a similar style appeared to the east of Wall 2 (fig. 1). Here a course of stone-work had been added to the wall and bonded into a cross wall but all in rather a clumsy manner.

Very little stratified pottery was found. Pit 2 produced two sherds of typical second century ware, while from Pit 7, which had a deep layer of roof tiles, there came a piece of black burnished ware with a slightly hooked flange and bead rim. This pit must have been excavated late in the Roman occupation and appears to have been part of a tidying up process.

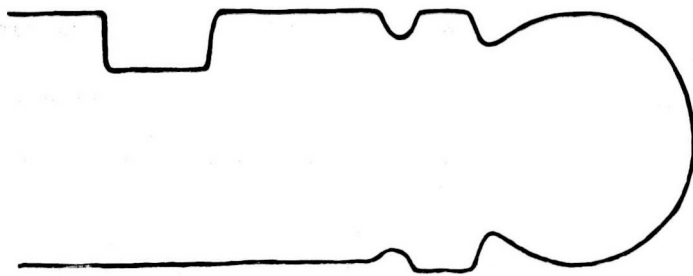


FIG. 2.

A large piece of moulded red sandstone 3ft. 2ins. long and 15ins. wide, which was found unstratified (fig. 2), appears to be a string course and is probably of Roman origin and from a large building.<sup>5</sup> The chase in the bottom does not extend the full width of the stone but stops 2½ins. from one edge. The stone is now in the Grosvenor Museum.

A group of English pottery (fig. 3) was found in a pit which had been cut by the brickculvert. It was possible to explore only a small part of this pit which, apart from the pottery, produced oysters, fragments of slate, coal, glass and a clay pipe stamped GL on the spur below the bowl. One can only date such groups by coins or other dateable objects, such as the wine label found with the Goss Street cellar group<sup>6</sup> which placed it in the middle of the 18th century. The group under review has no such objects except the pipe stamp but the initials belong to no known maker. The pottery is very crude and there are no fine wares, except two fragments of white Delft. The body of the vessels is brick-like in quality and some of the glazes are much akin to the so-called Cistercian wares which probably belong to the late

<sup>5</sup>Mr. P. H. Lawson has pointed out to me that it is more likely to be a vertical moulding round a door or similar feature.

<sup>6</sup>*C.A.J.*, 38, p. 34.

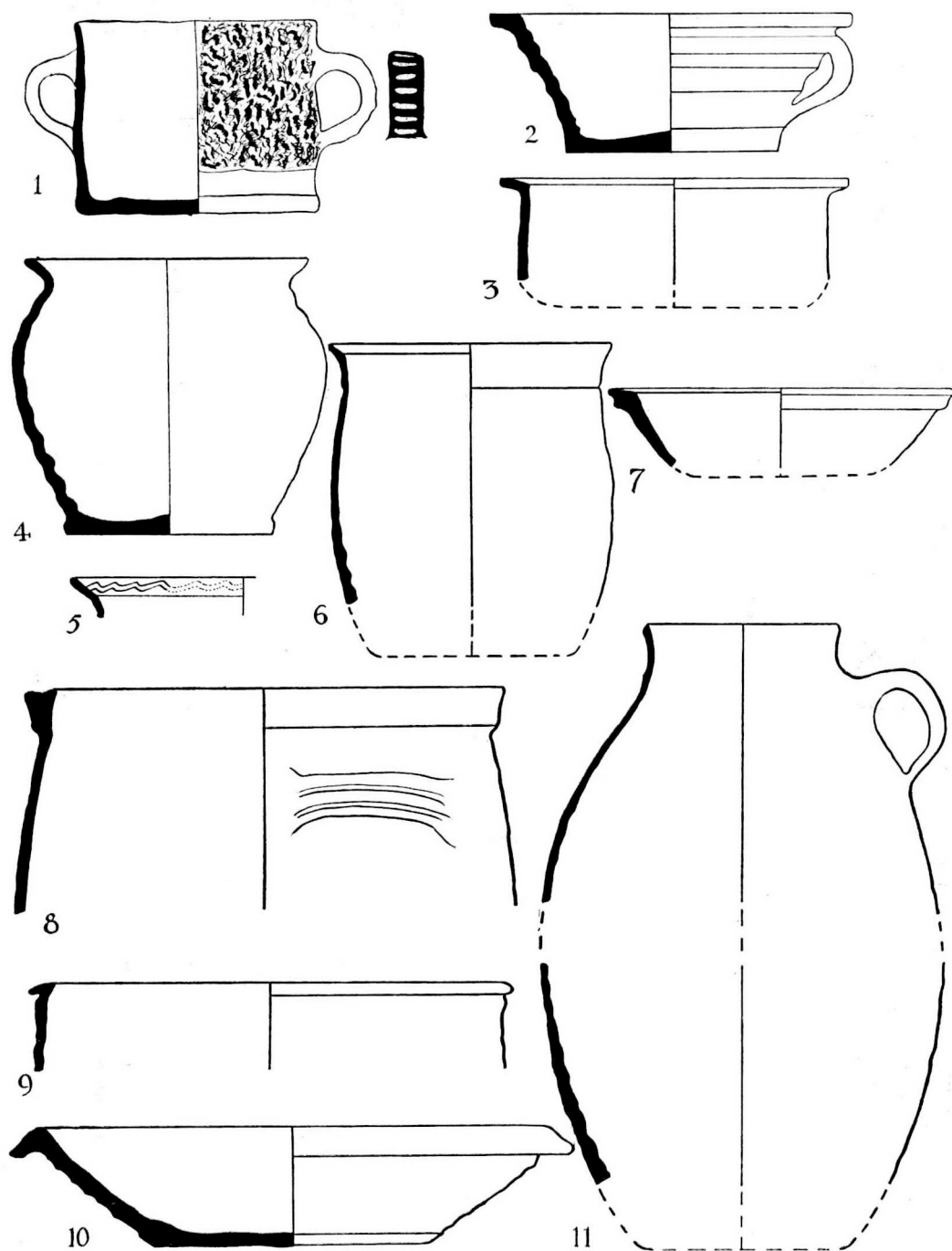


FIG. 3.

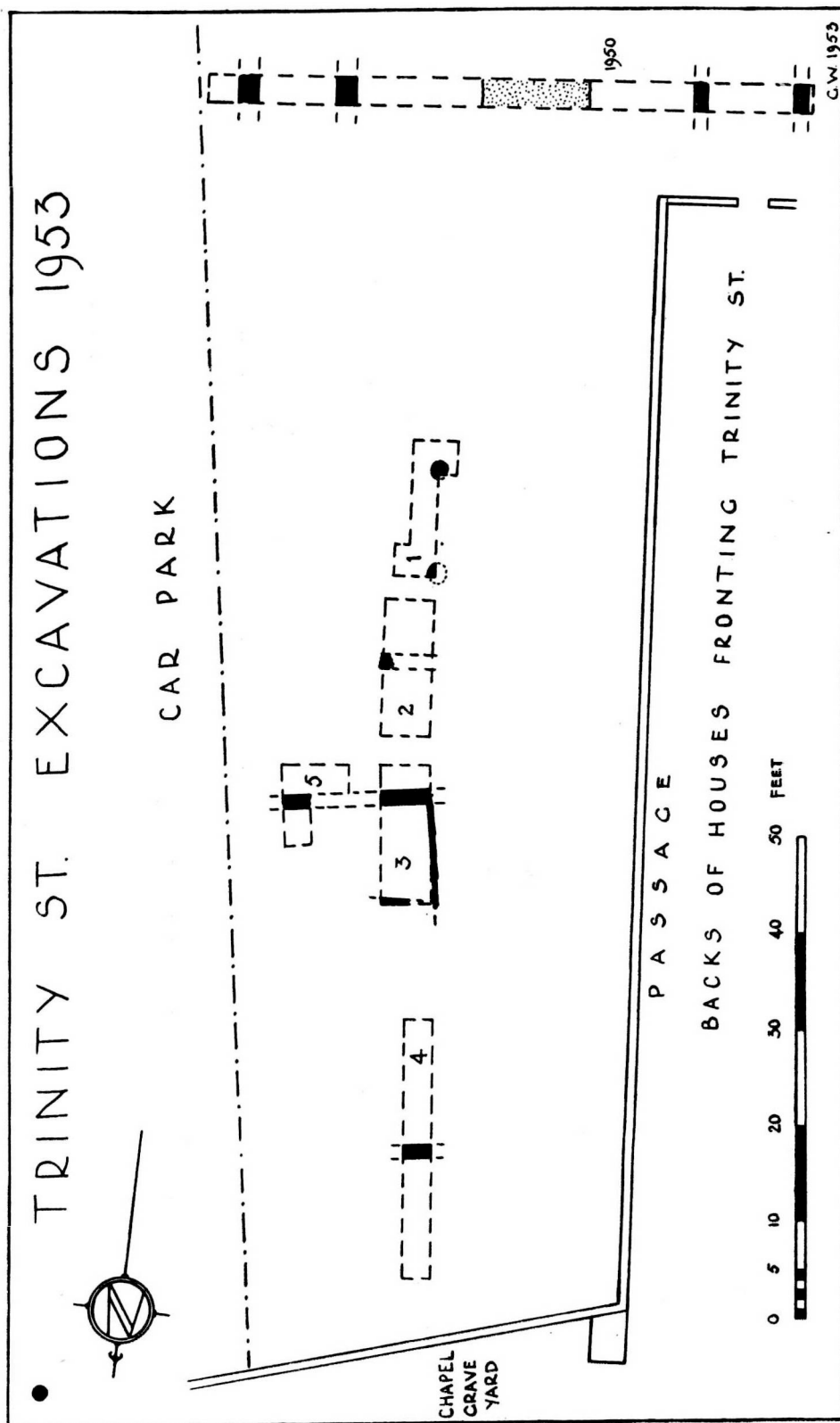


FIG. 4.

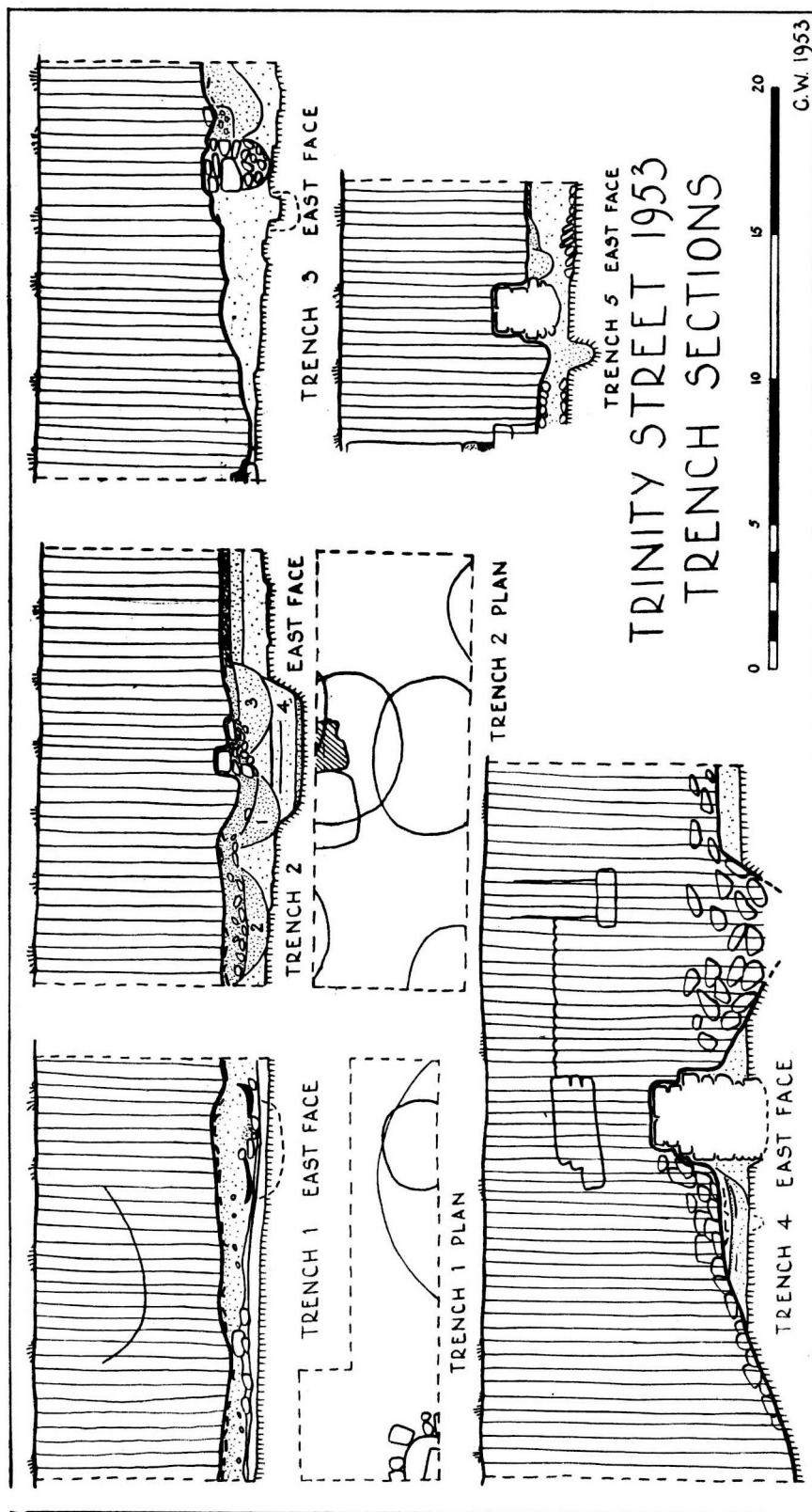


Fig. 5.

16th century but it has little in common with the St. John Street group,<sup>7</sup> which contained tygs but no slip-ware or clay pipes. The only vessel which is at all similar is the cup (No. 5). This group was dated to the first half of the 17th century and in the absence of further information, it is suggested that the groups under review belong to the second half and probably towards the end of the same century.<sup>8</sup>

The excavation of 1953 consisted of five trenches excavated in the ground to the east of Trinity Street and between the 1950 excavation and the Matthew Henry Chapel (fig. 4). The results were most disappointing as in almost every case the Roman levels had suffered considerable interference in later times. Fragments of a building were revealed but insufficient to determine its character. Trouble was also experienced from a heavy storm one weekend which caused the collapse of three of the trenches, in spite of timbering, and accounts for their odd shapes and sizes.

Whatever may have happened to the upper Roman levels one is usually in Chester assured of some remains of the primary timber period, the presence of which, long suspected, was first demonstrated at Goss Street in 1948<sup>9</sup> (*C.A.J.*, 38). Here the evidence was almost non-existent and it seems as if the early floor levels had been removed in subsequent alterations. It was noticeable too that there was a dearth of early pottery surviving in later deposits. The presence of timber building was demonstrated in Trenches 3 and 5, by a sleeper beam trench, 9ins. wide, running in an E.W. direction, associated with two rock cut post-holes, 10ft. apart. Trench 1 produced a small hearth but no pottery. Elsewhere all over the site was a layer of very clean filling over the natural rock without a trace of flooring. The occupation levels appeared over this only in Trench 2 at its south end and traces also at the extreme south end of Trench 3. Above the 9ins. of clean sand or roachy fill there appeared to be patches of clay with thin ash deposits which produced pottery of the mid-second century. Above this was a dirty layer characterised by the presence of many fragments of tile. This layer was encountered in Trenches 1, 2 and 3, immediately below the interference. Pottery of the late second century was recovered from this level showing that alterations had taken place at that date. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the tiles had been the foundation of a layer of stone flagging similar to the patch found in 1949<sup>10</sup> and that the line of interference was actually the result of stone robbing. In Trench 2 the earth floor had been cut by small rubbish pits which produced mid to late second century pottery, except pit 4 below 1 and 4 which appears to belong to the late first century.

The only structures encountered were four walls and two column bases. The E.W. wall in Trenches 3 and 5 was 1ft. 6in. thick, two courses of which survived with a stone and cobble foundation. In size and appearance it was typical of the usual Roman internal partition wall. Another wall joined this at right angles on the west side of Trench 3 but it was not possible to obtain further details.

<sup>7</sup>*C.A.J.*, xxxiii, p. 14.

<sup>8</sup>My thanks are especially due to Mr. K. Barton who was mainly responsible for sorting and drawing this pottery.

<sup>9</sup>*C.A.J.*, 38, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup>*C.A.J.*, 40, p. 7.

## SMALL FINDS

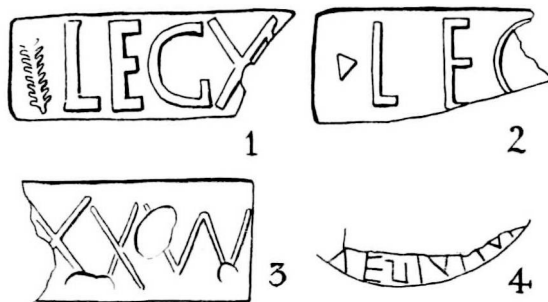


FIG. 6

*Tile Stamps (fig. 6)*

Three tile stamps were found for which there are no previous parallels and to which provisional Holt type numbers have been given.

1. Type 56 has a leaf before the letters, on a roof tile.
2. Type 57 has a triangular stop, on a roof tile.
3. Type 58 only the end of the stop, but appears to be a variant of type 26.
4. On the underside of part of the base of a Dr. 18/31 — a graffito — read by Mr. R. P. Wright as AELI MIV[ with the M doubtful. He adds that "of the names cited by Holder neither the potter MIVDDILO nor the feminine MIVILA fit the context".

In Trench 1 a large pit was excavated containing a large and very interesting collection of English pottery, glass and decorated pipes of the early 18th c. These remains will be the subject of a note in a future Journal.

