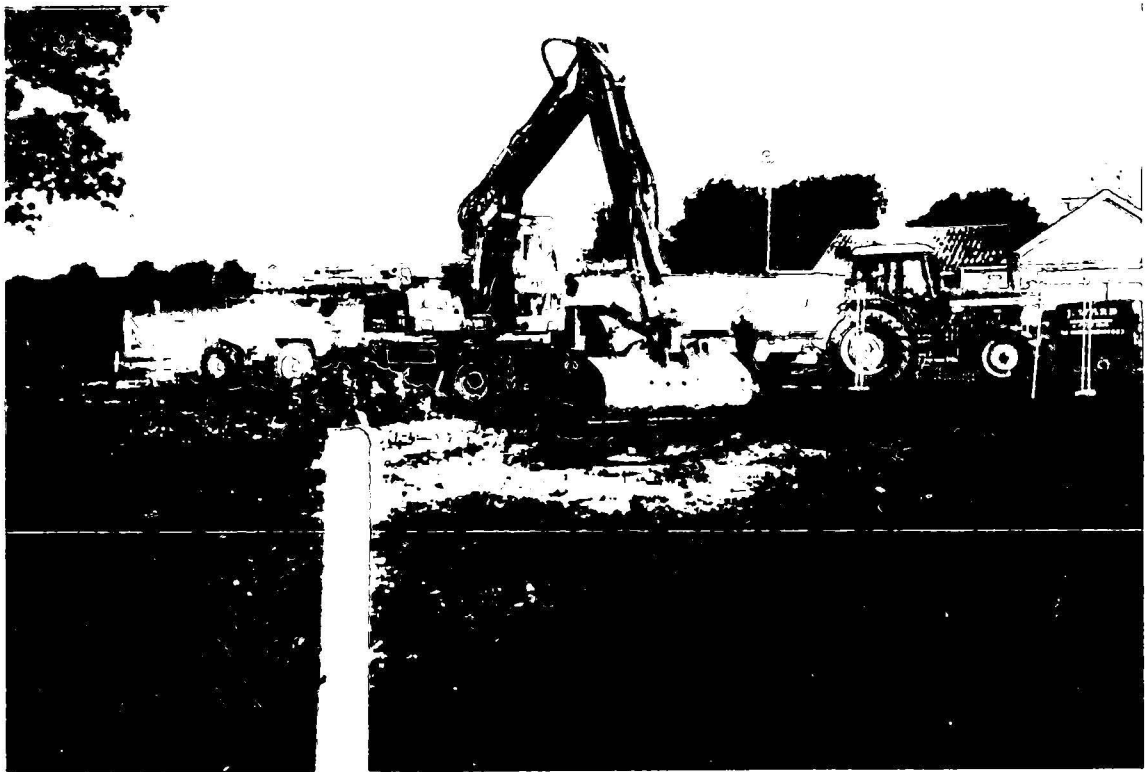


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AN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT
TOYNTON ALL SAINTS
LINCOLNSHIRE

REPORT BY
HILARY HEALEY



1992

Archaeological Watching Brief
at TOYNTON ALL SAINTS, Lincolnshire
on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council

Report by Hilary Healey, NDD, M.Phil, FSA,

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Summary

In 1992 a watching brief was carried out on the site of a school extension at Toynton All Saints (NGR^{TR}3938 6350), in the East Lindsey District of Lincolnshire. The remains of a probable late medieval tile kiln, of brick construction, were discovered, together with part of an earlier pottery kiln and an underlying stone wall, possibly the remains of a dwelling.

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1. Introduction and Background

Toynton All Saints is one of several places in Lincolnshire where the manufacture of pottery flourished from the late thirteenth century onwards (Fig.1). In Toynton the industry continued at least into the 1600s, and broken potsherds, as well as the remains of the kilns, are found in most parts of the village (Fig.2).

2. Previous Work on Site

A watching brief was undertaken north of the primary school early in 1991 when the area concerned, which lies west of Main Road (the principal north/south route through the village), was being laid out as a new car park. This work included levelling of the natural slope, both by cutting into the old land surface in the northern part of the site and raising the ground level on the southern side. Only a very small quantity of pottery was found. A few large lumps of unworked sandstone were seen but there was no evidence of kilns or other structures.

A fuller account of the historic and archaeological background to Toynton All Saints is given in the 1991 report, a copy of which is deposited at the City and County Museum, Lincoln.

3. Purpose and Method

In 1992 an extension to the school was to be attached to the north side of the existing building and sited on part of the area that was levelled in 1991. The aim of the 1992 brief was again to monitor site preparation and to record any information of archaeological interest seen during the critical stages.

The site was visited during initial ground preparation and excavation of the foundation trenches, with additional visits at later dates to examine service trenches. The west part of the site had been disturbed both in 1991 and by previous service works, and the features of archaeological interest lay in the eastern half. The major features were cleaned by hand, photographed and planned. Minor finds were noted but not recorded in detail. Relationships between the features were examined in the unexcavated section exposed between the new building and the roadside lay-by, a section which had to be cut back slightly in order to clarify the nature of the discoveries.

Recording was carried out in stages in order to fit in with the construction programme, and it was not therefore possible to photograph any feature in its entirety. No investigation was pursued below a depth of c. 0.8m, since there was no threat to anything below this level. Examples of brick, tile and pottery were kept for further examination, but as examples only, and not selected on any scientific basis. Context numbers allocated are given in brackets in the text. Fuller descriptions of the contexts are given in Appendix 1.

The archive consists of site plan, plans of principal features, section drawing, photographs, potsherds, brick and tile.

3. Results

In the area of approximately 16m by 20m prepared for the new building, only the south-east side had been left undisturbed in 1991. Fired clay fragments were noted by the County Archaeologist during a preliminary site visit to monitor borehole investigation, and this evidence suggested that there might be kiln remains surviving.

About 40cm of overburden that was initially removed consisted chiefly of the 1991 deposits of mixed soil and ashy material (+). Some of this material (001) was from the garden of the bungalow previously occupying the site. Beneath it was a clayey soil (005) which contained broken brick, tile and pottery. It was below this level that the JCB bucket began to lift more bricks, lumps of sandstone and a certain amount of red burnt soil.

Hand clearance in two stages revealed an incomplete brick floor (003, 004, 008 and 009) covering an area of approximately 2m x 3m, partially incorporating the larger stones of an underlying sandstone foundation. The east side of the feature was delimited by a line of brick set on edge, aligned with the Main Road. Some of the bricks were fired black and to a low temperature. In the central area the floor appeared to be of a blackened, friable and fragmented fired clay.

Below the brick floor on its east side were the remains of a hardened red fired clay floor (010) which showed two phases of construction, separated by a layer of clean yellow sand (011). The lower floor (012) which had little of its clay surface remaining, merged into a heat affected sandy soil (023), reddened to a depth of c. 8cm. but basically grey/brown with sparse charcoal specks, and the odd sherd of pottery. This was clearly not the natural subsoil, which elsewhere on site was blue clay, but since there was no threat to features below this depth there was no necessity for further investigation.

The stone walls (020, 021 and 022) were made from unworked lumps of the local Spilsby sandstone, or greensand. The width of the walls varied between 0.6m and 0.7m and where parts were taken out they were seen to be no more than about 0.2m in height. Individual stones, varying considerably in size (Fig.6) were set in yellow clay with pebbles up to c. 12cm long filling some of the spaces. Broken tile and potsherds had been used to level the top course of the walls, but no pot or tile was found in their lower parts. These walls formed part of a rectangle with the west side

just over 4m long. The south wall had evidently extended slightly further west, and there was a suggestion of another wall junction towards the north-west corner (Fig.6), hinting at the possibility of the whole having been part of a much larger building. Root damage from shrubs and possible fence post holes had occurred in the centre of the features, and parts of the western side of both the brick floor and the stonework were probably damaged when the JCB first encountered them.

Other features seen but not recorded in detail were a narrow east-west line of decayed sandstone overlying the north wall of the brick surface; a spread of cobblestones about a metre north of this and probably extending further north-west and some individual small concentrations of potsherds.

The tiles were examined by R.Kemp of the City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit (Appendix 11).

4. Interpretation

The most substantial discoveries were the laid brick surface, the fired clay features and the sandstone footings. The rectangular brick surface is interpreted as the floor of a brick or tile kiln, probably the latter, as an effective brick kiln would almost certainly be larger. There was no pottery concentration associated with it, although there were brick, tile and pot fragments in the 'destruction' layer above. The three pottery kilns found previously in Toynton were all of circular shape, whereas a rectangular form is more common for tile kilns. From its incomplete dimensions it is possible to suggest that the full size of the floor internally would have been approximately 2.8m by 3.2m. This compares with the Mareham Le Fen tile kiln excavated in 1967 which measured 2.4m x 3m. At Mareham the kiln (made from tiles but with some use of stone) was fired through a pair of stoke holes on the north side. At Toynton 1992 there is the slightest suggestion of flues on the west side, notably a flanking row of slightly raised bricks on edge set at right angles to the adjacent floor bricks (Fig. 4). North of this are a few bricks similarly raised which may be the remnant of another flue.

The tiles found are similar to those made in the Mareham Le Fen tile kiln. The archaeo-magnetic dating for that kiln was relegated to the second category (that of 'reasonable confidence') and lies anywhere between AD 1300 and AD 1600. One circular shaped tile was noted, similar to tiles used as kiln furniture.

The 2m wide reddened clay feature is closely paralleled in the floors of kilns uncovered in the 1950s and 1960s, and this interpretation is preferred to that of a hearth, which would not normally be of this scale. Insufficient area was recovered to determine whether it was circular and although there were potsherds in its makeup there were no diagnostic pieces that would assist dating. The latest Toynton clay-built kiln (3) was dated to the fourteenth century, and the brick built Toynton kiln 2 was constructed above a clay version, which might suggest that clay kilns were going out of fashion by about the mid-fifteenth century.

All the pottery found below the garden soil was the typical Toynton ware, as is to be expected in a village where manufacture has taken place over such a long period. Examination of rims and other diagnostic sherds showed nothing from the site that could be ascribed to the earliest phases of the industry, i.e. the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Rims of long-lived undateable types such as pancheons, abounded, but there were also fragments of two-handled bung-hole jars, not thought to have been made here before the late fifteenth century, as in kiln 2 (Fig.7).

Of the three excavated pottery kilns only the latest one (kiln 2), dated between 1475 and 1525, was built of brick, the others being entirely of clay. The average brick size from the kiln was 11.5cm x 23cm x 6.5cm. These are slightly larger than the 1992 bricks, which average 11.2cm x 22cm x 4.6cm, but with the variations of clay shrinkage and firing temperature that are likely to occur this may not be a significant difference. However, the very existence of brick seems to indicate a date no earlier than the mid fifteenth century, which was a period of expansion as far as regional brick building was concerned, as for example Tattershall Castle and Boston Guildhall.

At the other end of the timescale the latest ceramic evidence comes from the layer above the structures. Apart from Toynton ware this context contained one sherd of seventeenth century Staffordshire slipware and a clay pipe bowl of a mid seventeenth century date. The local ware included joining sherds from a jar also of seventeenth century type. There was a marked absence of any modern material, such as the ubiquitous Willow Pattern or black glazed wares, and it is believed that these seventeenth century finds were left at the time the kiln was finally demolished, providing a terminus post quem for its existence above ground.

The stone walled feature had clearly been known to, and was used by, the makers of the kilns. What was recorded of the fired clay floor had been placed well within its limits. In preparation for the brick floor the top of the stone wall appeared to have been deliberately levelled by the careful placing of pieces of pot and tile, and in some instances bricks had been positioned so as to avoid the more prominent stones that had would have been too large to move. There was, however, no burning associated with the wall, which might have been expected if it had originally been part of the kiln complex, and no pottery or tile within its make-up other than that used for levelling the top. Since the wall showed some signs of having extended further west and south than the remains seen it may have been the footings of a domestic building rather than having been built purely as a foundation for kilns. The vernacular building style in this area is mud and stud, with timber framing, but sandstone is also used. There are some excellent examples of mud and stud in various stages of repair to be seen nearby in the village. If the wall was not itself the base of a wholly stone wall it might have formed a sill to support the timber frame of a mud and stud dwelling. There is nothing to date the wall other than the fact that it pre-dates the other features.

Conclusion

The watching brief has been extremely rewarding in establishing the nature and state of preservation of archaeological remains that may be expected in Toynton All Saints and has provided useful additions to our knowledge of this important village industry. Although identification of the structures has had to be deduced by comparison with discoveries elsewhere, the brick floor is interpreted as that of a late or post- medieval tile kiln. It overlies earlier footings which may have been part of a mud and stud building. The fired clay floor seems to belong to a pottery kiln, or even an early tile kiln. Close dating is not possible, but a date range between the mid fifteenth and late sixteenth is most likely, the active use of the site having been abandoned at some time in the seventeenth century. Since parts of the features are still preserved under the ground there may be future opportunities to recover more details of their form and construction.

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Acknowledgements

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APPENDIX I

Contexts

+	Made up ground.
001	Garden soil.
002	Yellow/brown clayey soil below 001.
003	W side of brick feature, N end.
004	W side of brick feature, S end.
005	Immediately above 003.
006	Immediately above 004.
007	Destruction layer, below 001, E side.
008	E side of brick feature, N end.
009	E side of brick feature, S end.
010	Upper fired clay floor.
011	Orange/yellow sand below 010.
012	Lower fired clay floor.
013	Black sandy soil S end below 012.
014	Black sandy soil N end below 013.
015	Hard fired clay and fragmented brick between 008 and 009.
016	Yellow clayey soil N end, above 021.
017	Yellow sandy soil below 016.
018	Yellow clay at top of sandstone wall 020.
019	Yellow clay at top of sandstone wall 021.
020	Sandstone wall, W side.
021	Sandstone wall, N.side.
022	Sandstone wall, S. side.
023	Grey sandy soil, with sparse charcoal specks, underlying 012..
024	Line of bricks on edge, E side.
025	Sandy soil below 019.

APPENDIX II

Toynton All Saints 1992 - Brick and Tile

Context 007

The four pieces of tile recovered from layer 007 consisted of one piece of nib tile and three pieces of plain tile. The nib tile and one other piece were of similar type to those produced at Mareham Le Fen during the fourteenth century [or later, HH].

Also recovered from this context was a complete brick (240 x110x60mm) red in colour and of a sandy texture with medium to large subround/angular quartz and Fe inclusions. This brick is of similar dimensions to ones recovered from sites in Lincoln from Late Medieval contexts. On one face of the brick is the impression of a (bark covered?) twig.

Context 018

From this context came six pieces of tile, one piece of plain, undiagnostic flat tile 25mm thick, and of more interest five pieces of tile of a roughly ?circular form (30-40cm diameter), 22mm thick in the middle but thinning out to 5mm towards the edge. The five pieces of tile from this context also joined four similar pieces of tile from context 019.

Context 019

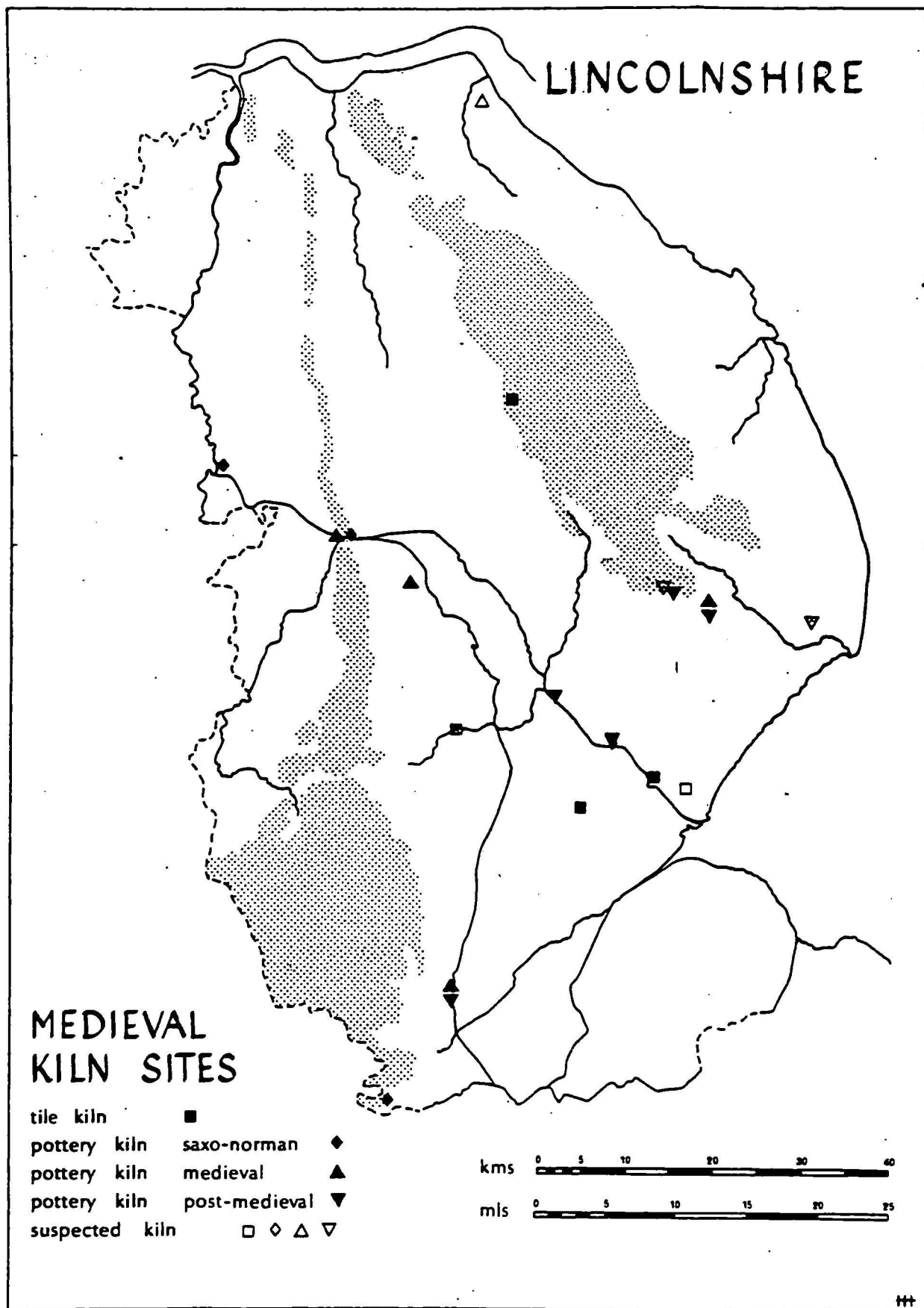
From this context came seven pieces of tile, one of which may be attributed to the Mareham Le Fen type, one piece of undiagnostic tile and four pieces of tile which joined with the ?spacer tile in context 018. One of these pieces has impressed marks on it.

Discussion

A similar shaped tile to this last was recovered from the St. Marks tile kiln, Lincoln (ZE 87) this one having been partially covered with glaze which had possibly dripped from other tiles etc. during the same firing. A probable use for these types of tiles was as spacers in the kiln during the firing process or even part of the structure of the kiln itself. Indeed, it would be useful to know of any similar tiles from any other kilns. Although the finding of this tile cannot in itself prove or disprove the existence of a tile or/and pottery producing kiln, it is known that production of tile/pot was being carried out in the immediate vicinity.

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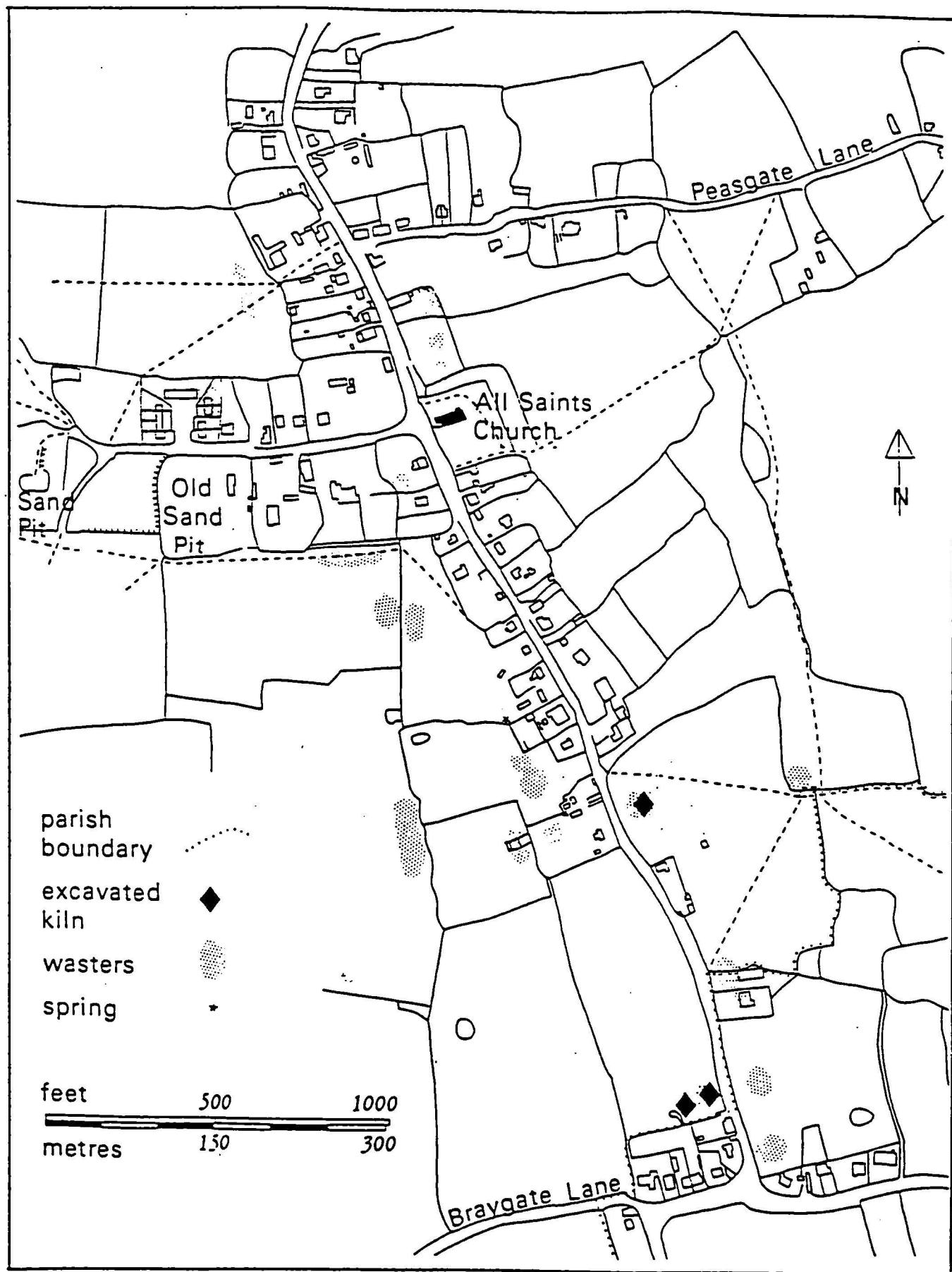


Fig. 2 Toynton All Saints: map of village showing previous finds

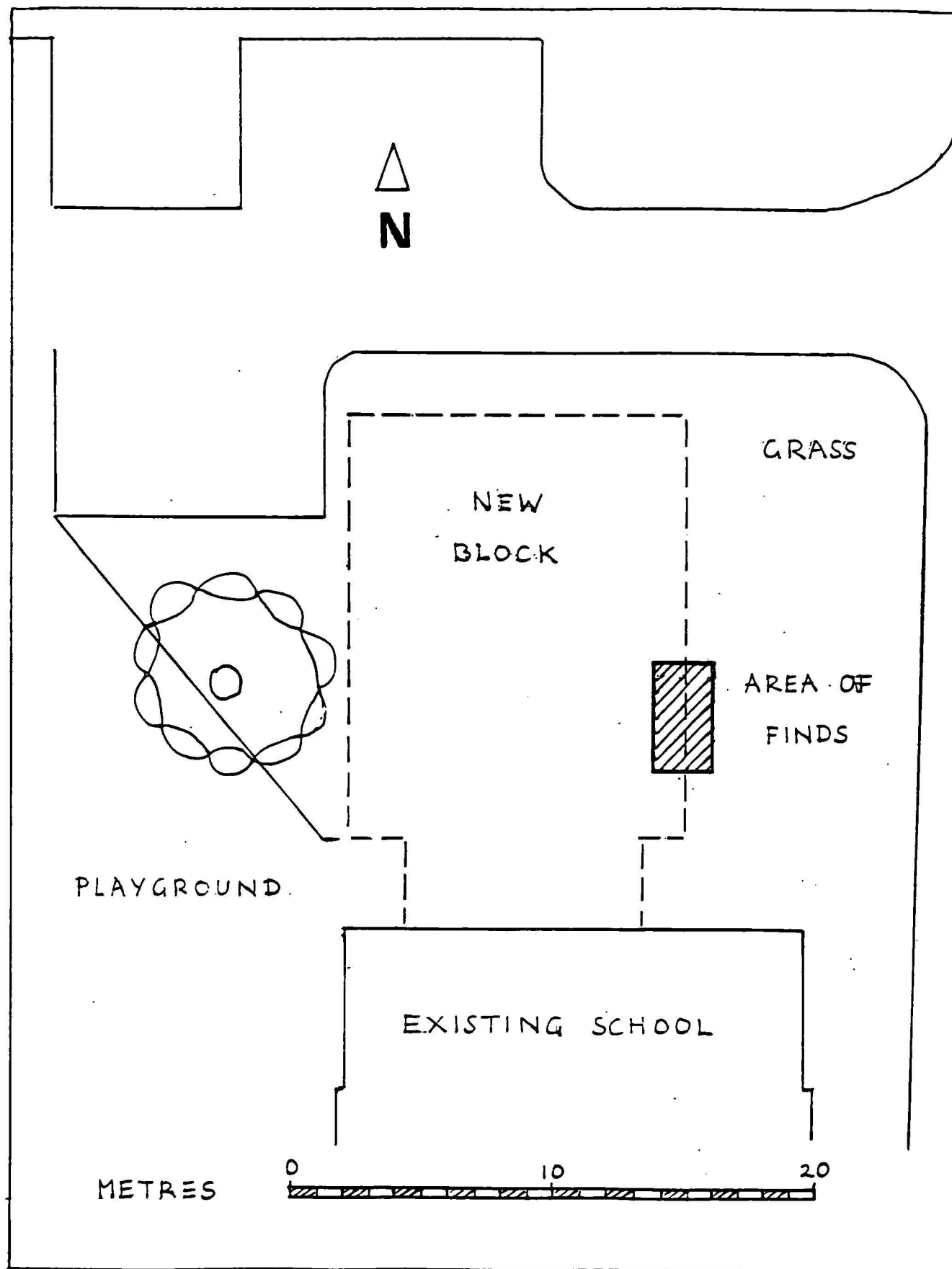


Fig. 3 Toynton All Saints: site plan

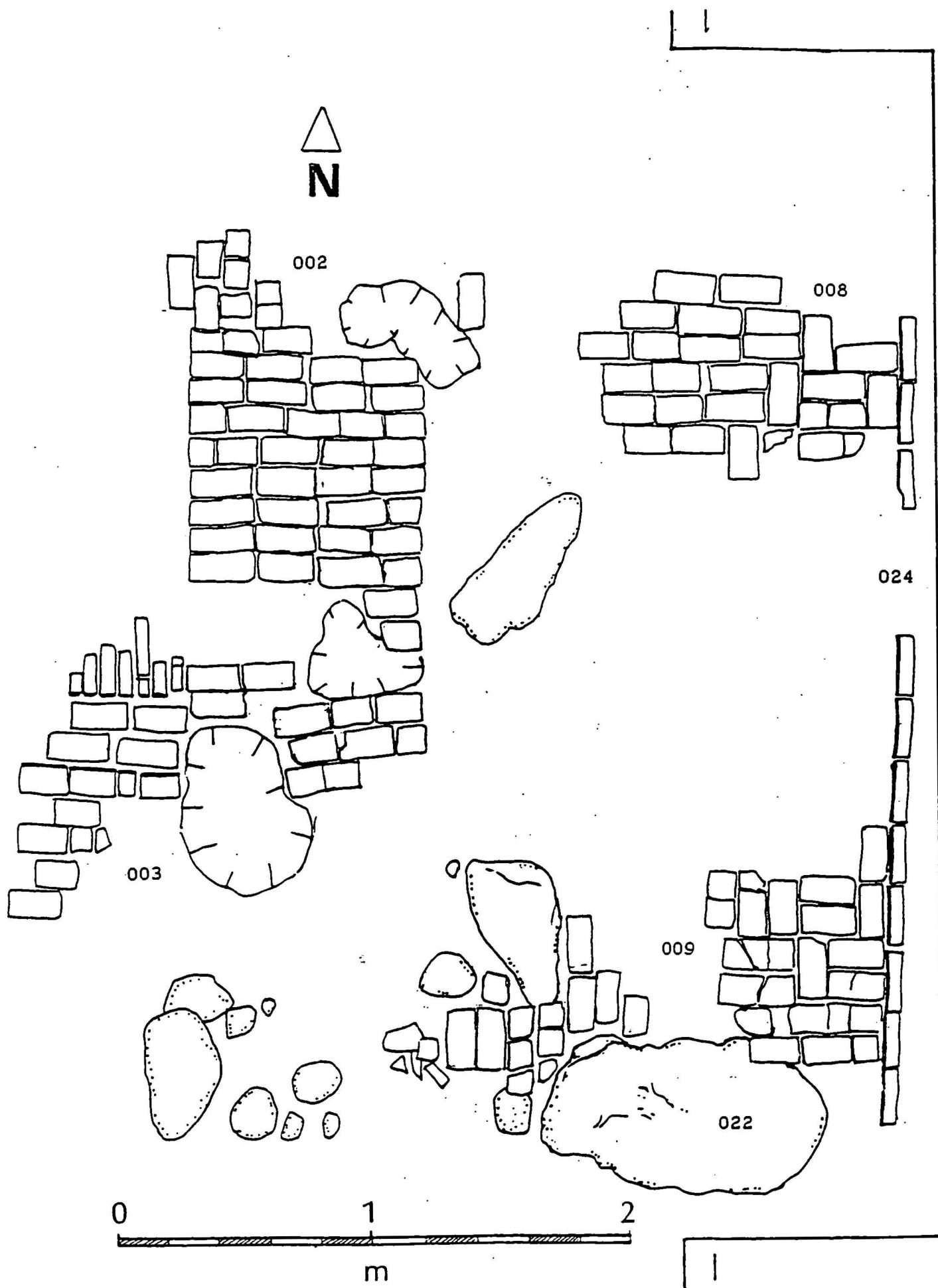


Fig. 4 Plan of brick floor

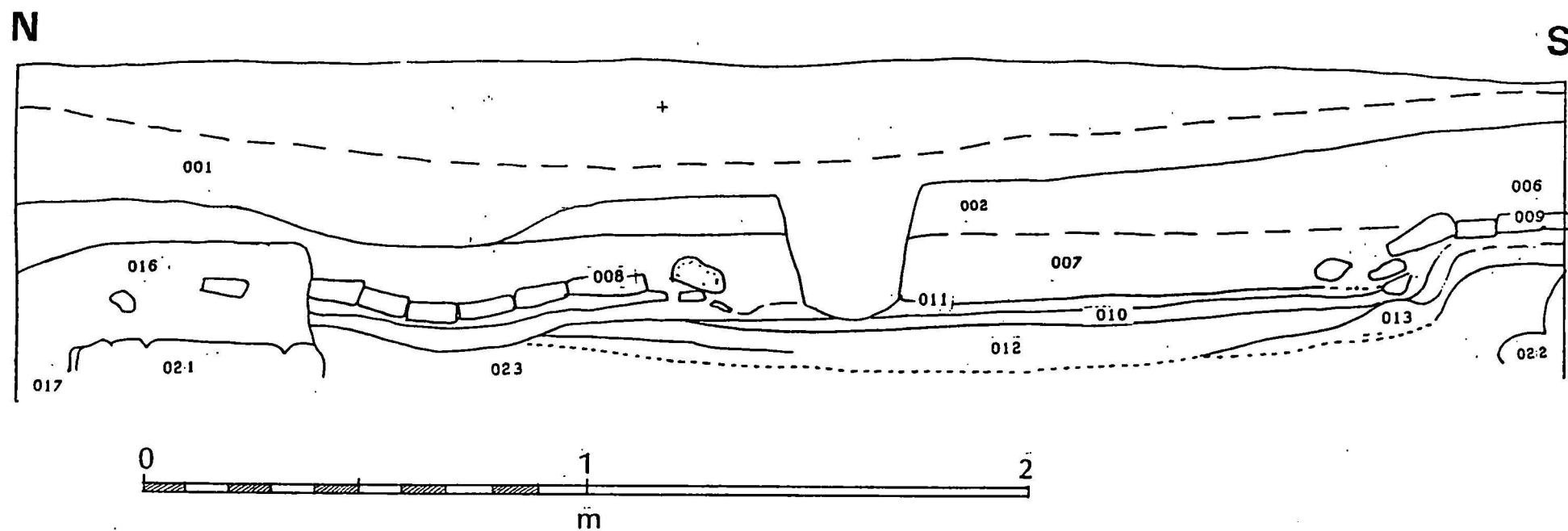


Fig. 5 Section through brick and clay features

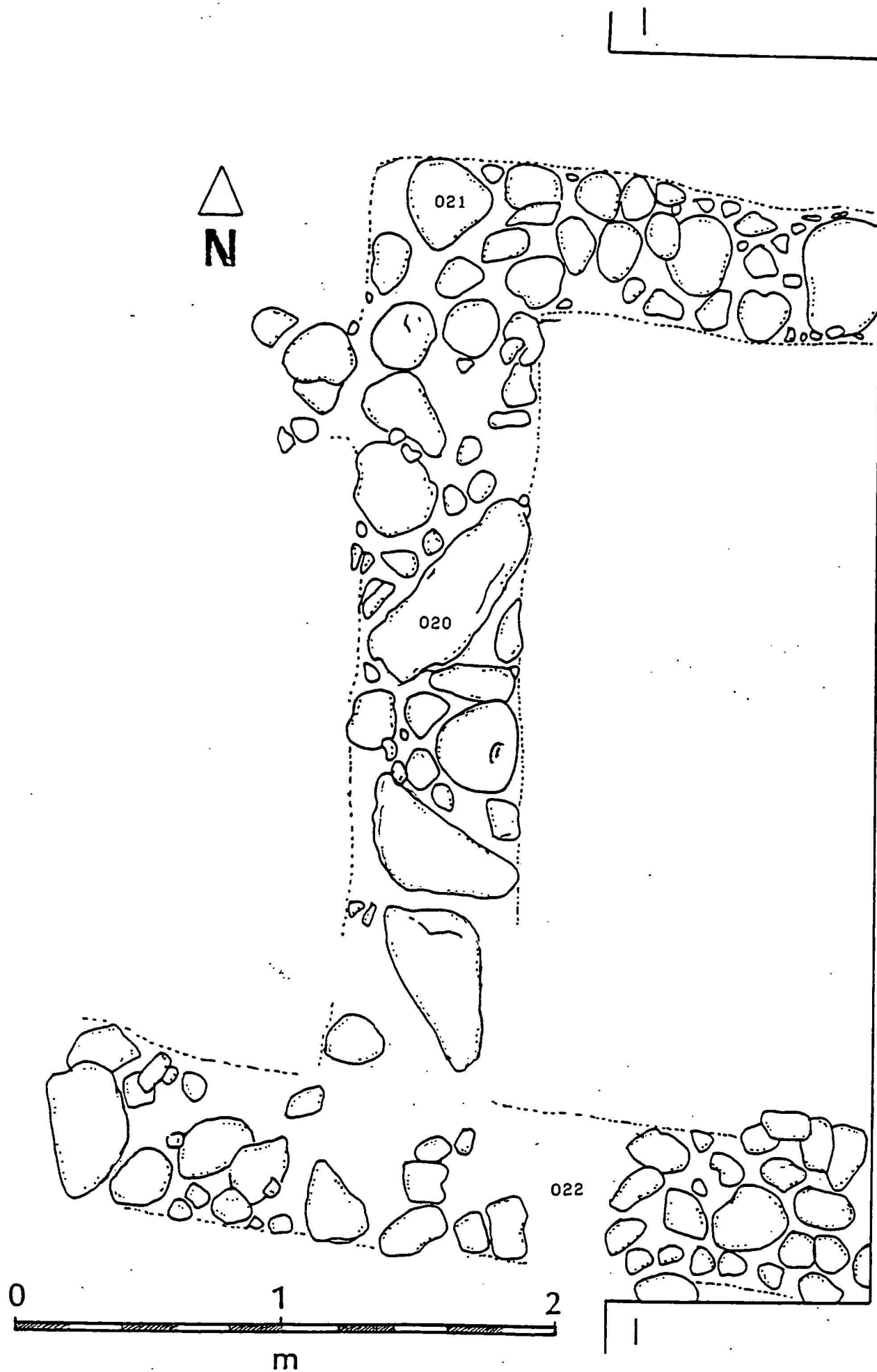


Fig. 6 Plan of sandstone feature

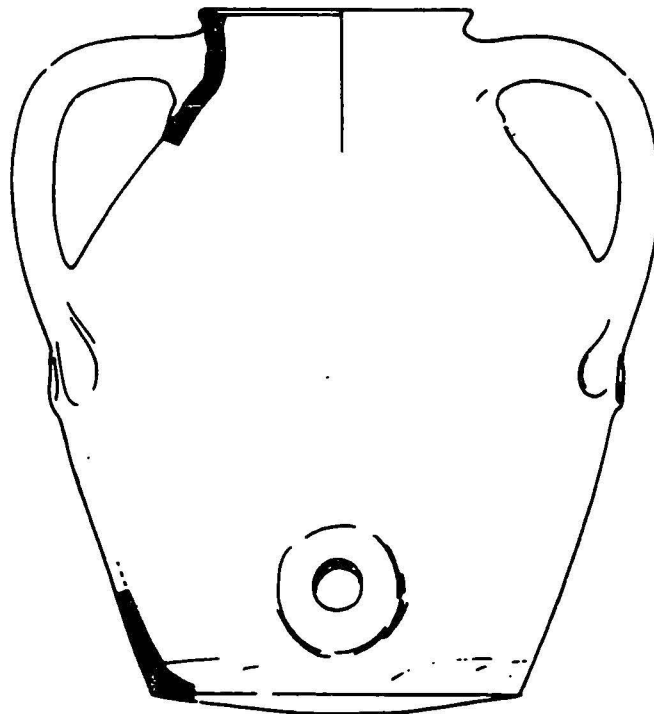
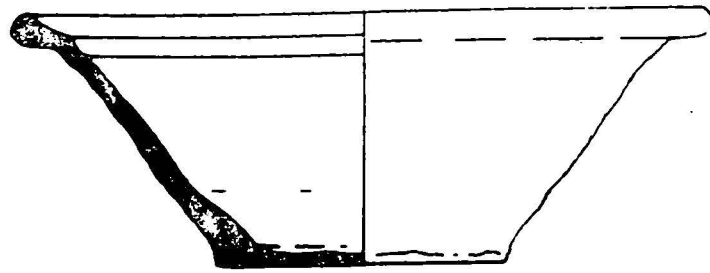


Fig. 7 Toynton pottery: unadateable pancheon type (above) and late medieval bunghole jar (below).

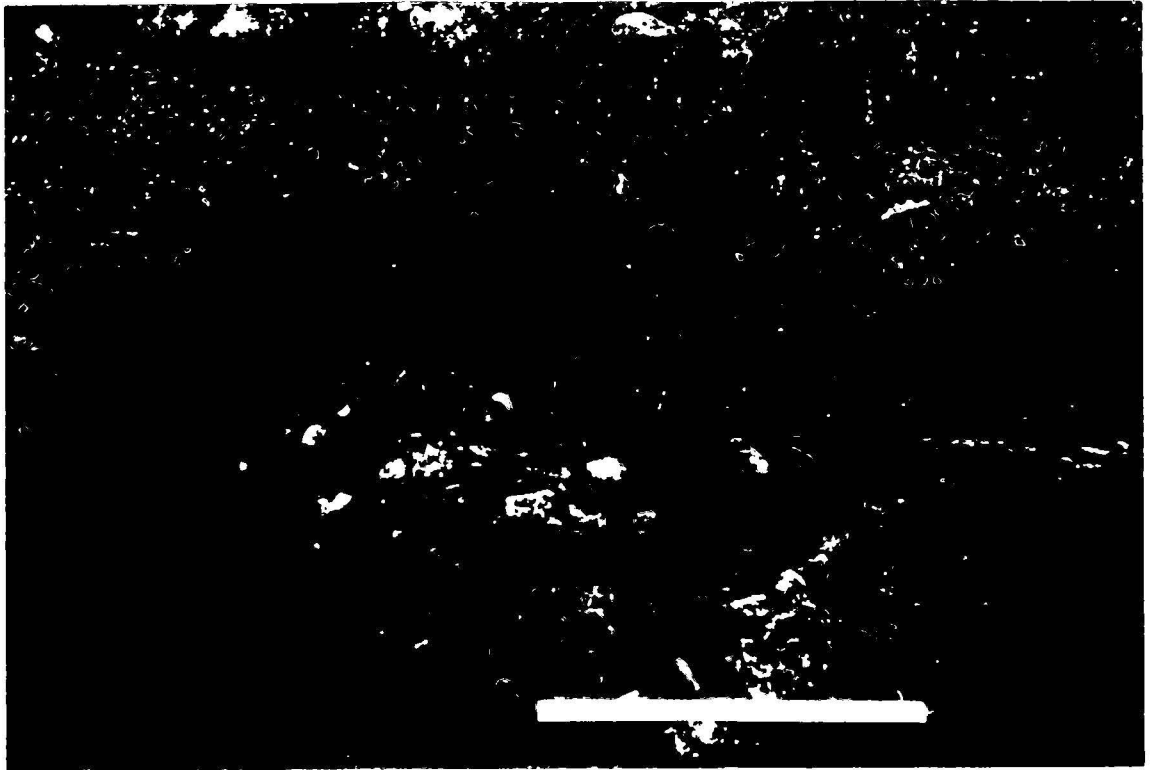


Plate I North-west corner of stone wall, showing relationship with brick feature and north edge of clay hearth in section.



Plate II South-east end of south stone wall, showing relationship with brick feature.