

COEL AND BOUNDER

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- ## 1.1

2.0

- ## 2.1

- 2.2

- 23

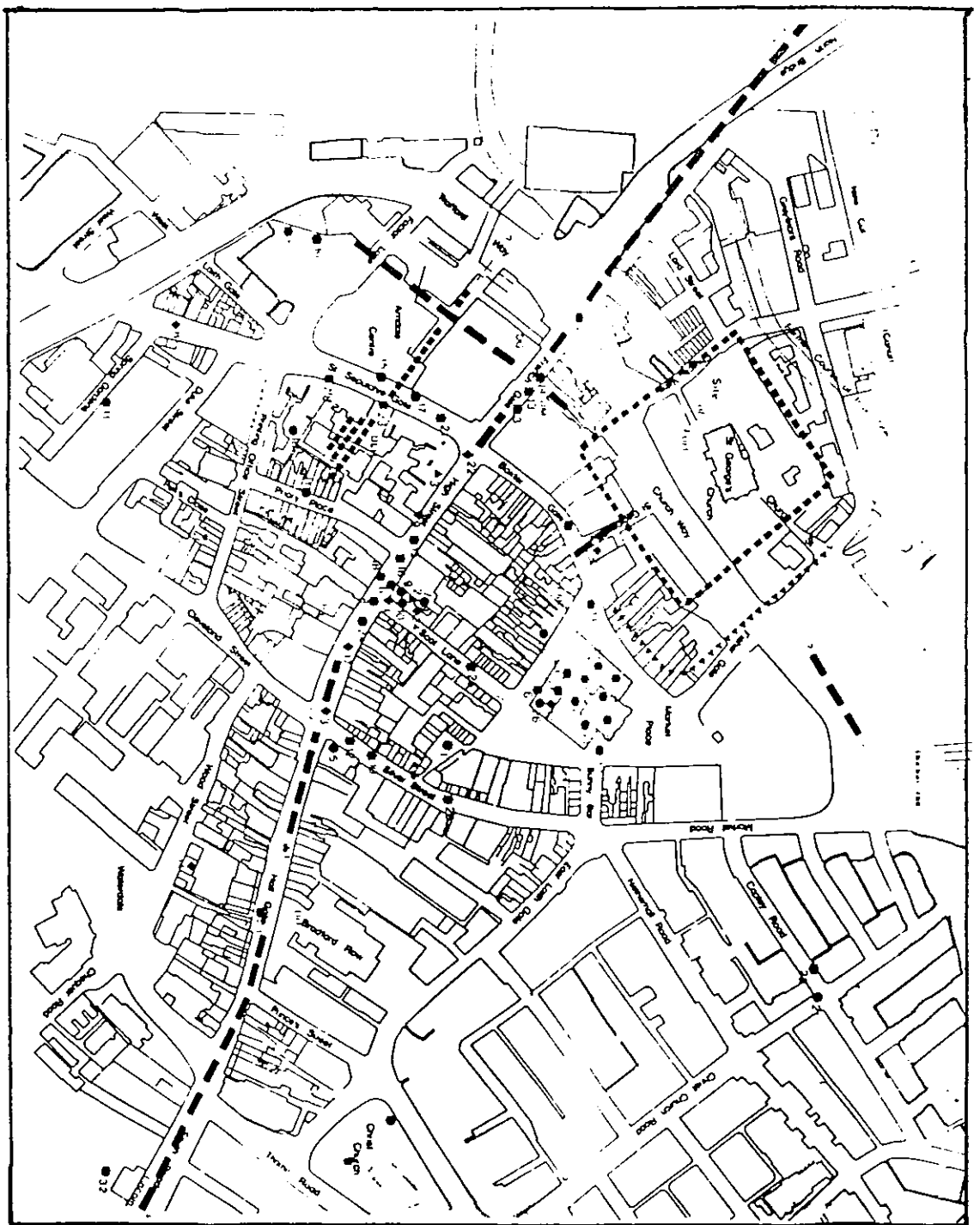


Fig 1 Showing Roman fort around St George's church and Roman finds from Doncaster.

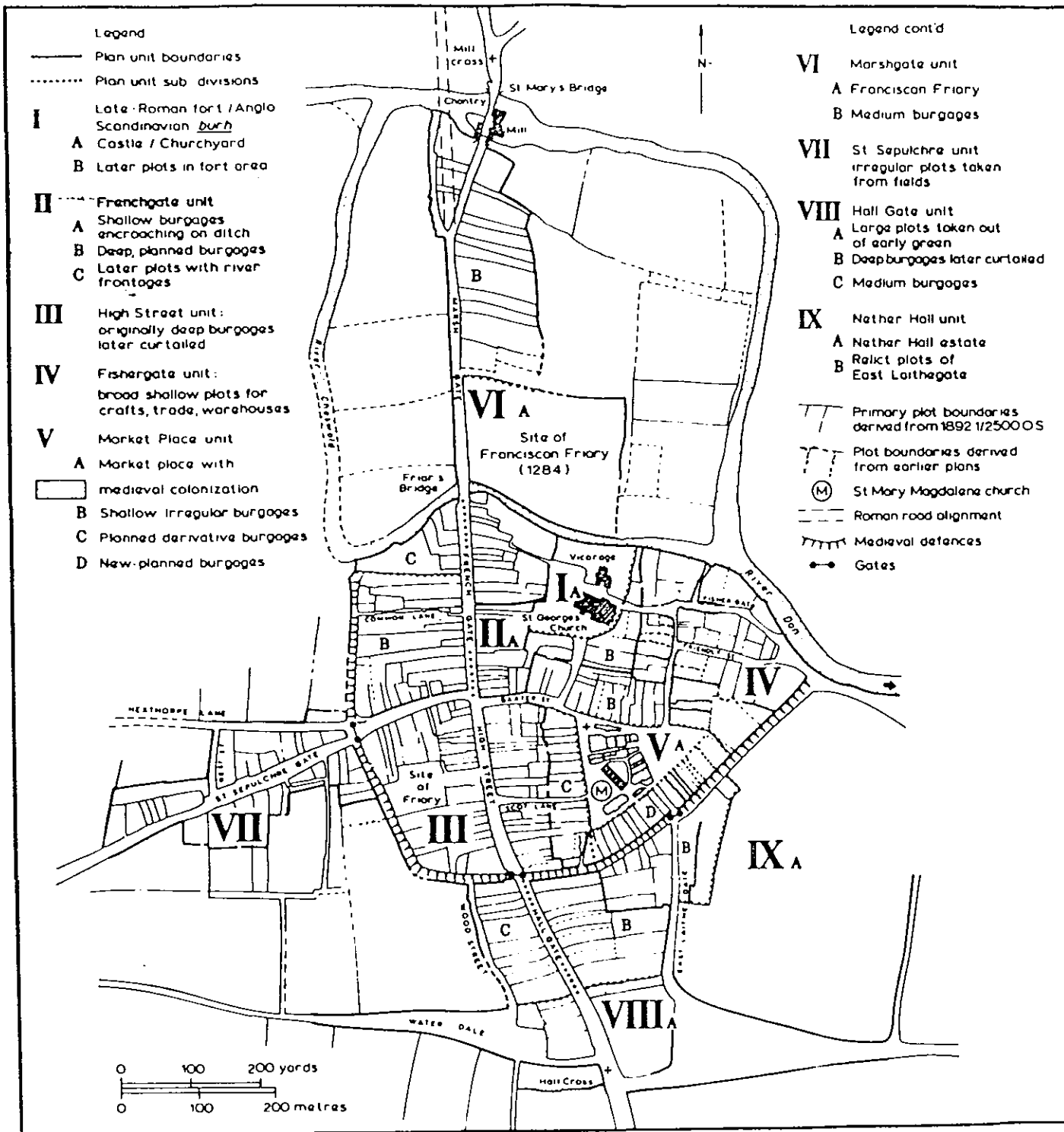


Fig 2 Showing elements of the medieval town. The site is marked 'C'.

unresearched. The core Roman civilian area is again thought to be the focus of such occupation. As with many Roman towns that later developed into medieval boroughs it is the transition period that is relatively ill-understood.

- 2.4 In the medieval period Doncaster was the largest and most prosperous of all the southern Yorkshire boroughs and existed as an inland port of some substance. It is the development of Doncaster within this period that remains problematic. The block of land bounded by Market place, Scott lane, High Street and Baxtergate lies within the core of the medieval town and as stated above retains many features relatively intact (fig 2).
- 2.5 In conclusion, Doncaster is one of few important Roman centres in the Region and its importance as a medieval commercial centre is undisputed. Consequently, the destruction of the archaeology without adequate recording would be to the detriment of our understanding of the development of urban centres in Britain.

3.0 BACKGROUND TO THE INVESTIGATIONS

- 3.1 A proposal to develop the site for a shopping mall by Thorn High Street Developments Ltd involved extensive ground disturbances and demolition of buildings on Market Place, Scot Lane and High Street.
- 3.2 The South Yorkshire County Sites and Monuments Record recommended that an evaluation of the nature, extent and survival of the archaeology within the development area be carried out prior to planning permission being given.
- 3.3 As a result, Fairfax Securities Ltd, acting for Thorn High Street Developments Ltd commissioned the South Yorkshire Archaeology Unit to carry out an archaeological evaluation of the area.

4.0 RESEARCH PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The proposed evaluation contained three phases, phase one a basic archive and bibliographic search, phase two field investigations of rear yards and gardens, and phase three, still to be undertaken, a field evaluation of the street frontages (after building demolition).
- 4.2 Phase one consisted of a search through the available archaeological literature, consultations with Doncaster Museum, discussions with archaeologists involved in the 1970,s investigations and an inspection of known cellars of buildings within the development area. The results of this are detailed in the preceding introductory sections and the report conclusions.
- 4.3 Phase two consisted of the cleaning and recording of an exposed section to the rear of 22 Baxtergate, and four hand dug trenches in the rear yards and gardens. Access to the site curtailed the use of mechanical excavators and all trenches had to be hand dug (fig 3).
- 4.4 The evaluation set out to assess the survival of medieval stratigraphy within these areas and to gauge the importance and complexity of these deposits. An

DONCASTER: BAXTERGATE 1991

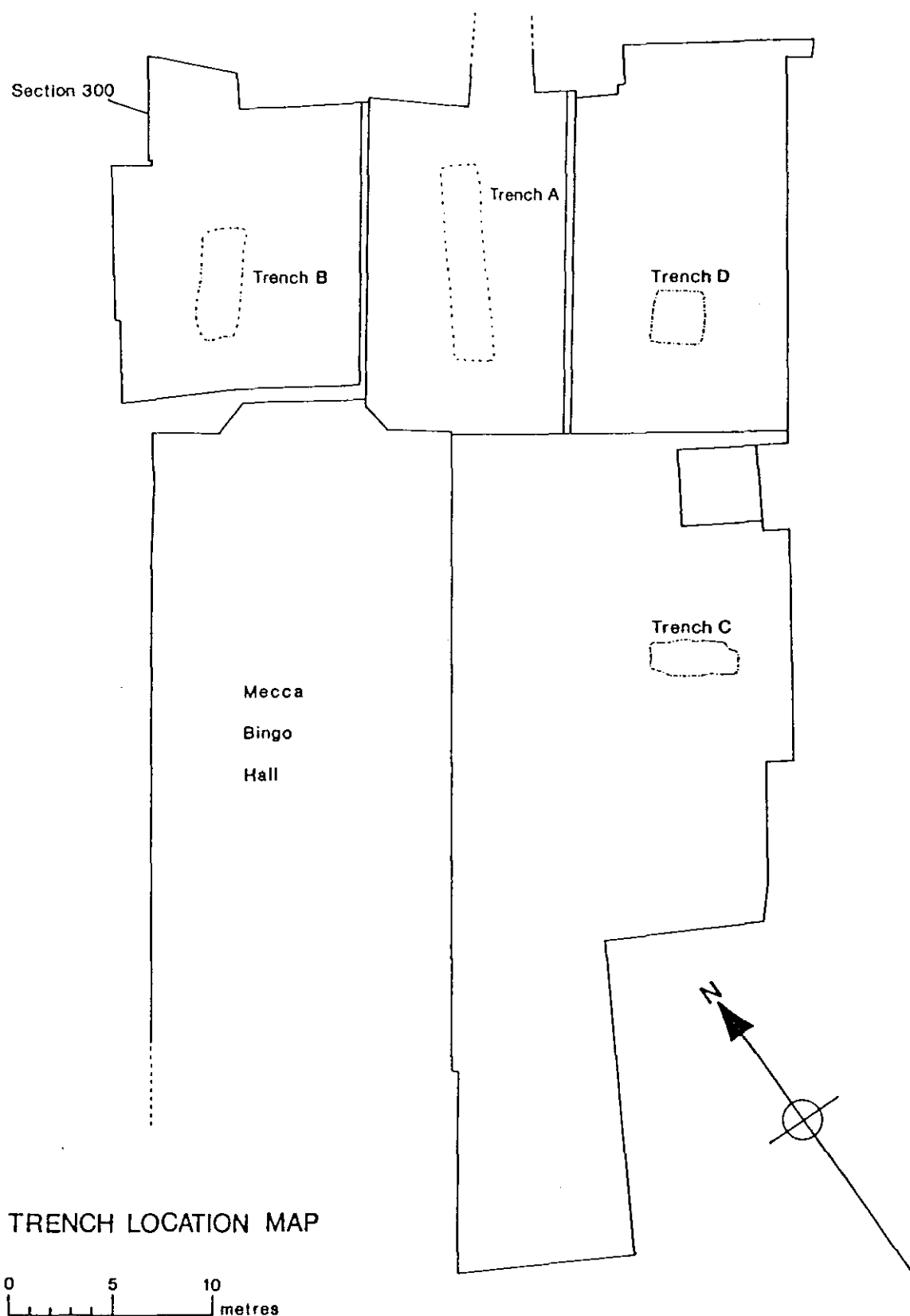


Fig 3 Showing layout of the trenches.

these areas and to gauge the importance and complexity of these deposits. An adjunct to this work was to define the presence and absence of Roman deposits and to assess their depth, survival and importance. Of particular interest was to be the recording of the overall depth at which archaeology was located to provide information for assessing the destructive effects of ground disturbances related to the proposed development.

5.0 RESULTS

5.1 All the trenches were excavated by hand and all archaeological features were recorded in plan and section. All artifacts except obvious modern material were bagged by context number and removed for analysis. A comprehensive series of black and white and colour photographs was also taken and forms part of the evaluation archive which resides at the offices of the South Yorkshire Sites and Monuments Record.

5.2 Trench A

5.2.1 This 9.00m long 2.00m wide trench (fig 4) was laid out on an east-west alignment in an area of rear gardens behind no 50 Market place. Early Ordnance Survey maps show this area to have been undeveloped since the mid 19th century.

5.2.2 The top layer of garden soil was removed to a depth of 10-20cm to expose a series of mixed deposits (105,103) containing brick, tile, limestone, and a residual pottery assemblage ranging from Roman to 20th century. A Circa 1950, s Pepsi cola bottle fragment indicates the late nature of these deposits. A linear feature (101) containing a very recent fill (102) cut through this deposit (plan 100).

5.2.3 Other mixed layers of 18th/19th century date were similarly cut by linear features (106, 111, 126), all on the same axis. Cut 106 contained two curious wall like structures at its base comprising of unmortared brick and stone (116, 117). The fill contained numerous artifacts of a modern date. In contrast, cuts 111 and 126 contained 18th and 19th century artifacts in the fill.

5.2.4 At the eastern end of the trench a brick lined structure (113) partially revealed itself and may be part of a well. The bricks are hand made and can be roughly dated to the latter part of the 18th century or early into the 19th.

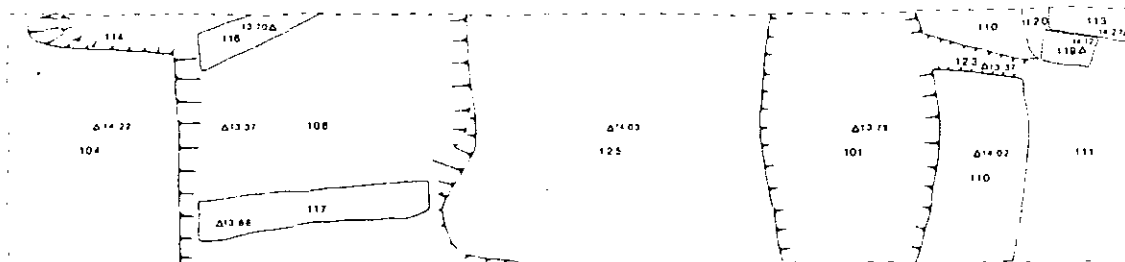
5.2.5 Medieval deposits were encountered within cut 106 and comprised the bases of a series of small pits and gulleys in association with late medieval pottery at a depth of 13.05 MOD. No further investigations were made in this area.

5.3 Trench B

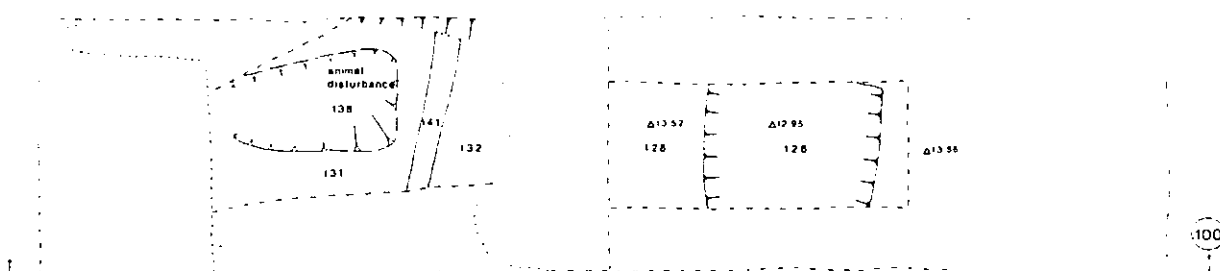
5.3.1 Trench B, 5.00m long by 1.60m wide (fig 5), investigated an area of disturbed concrete surface to the south of section 300.

TRENCH A

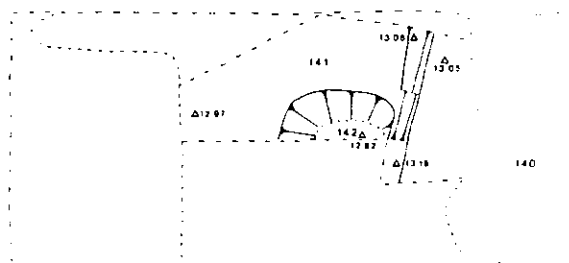
Plan 100







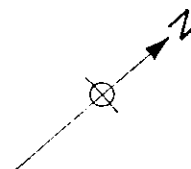
Plan 10f



Plan 102



- | | |
|---|------|
|  | Loam |
|  | Silt |
|  | Clay |
|  | Sand |



Section 100

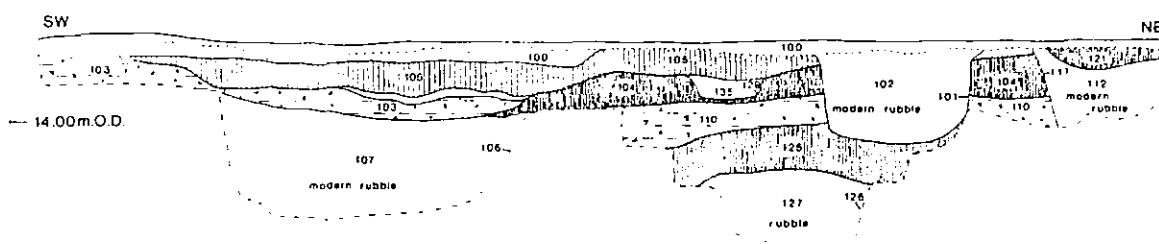
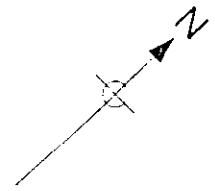


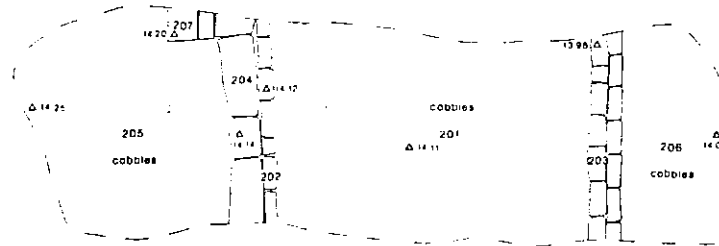
Fig 4 Showing detail of Trench A

DONCASTER : BAXTERGATE 1991

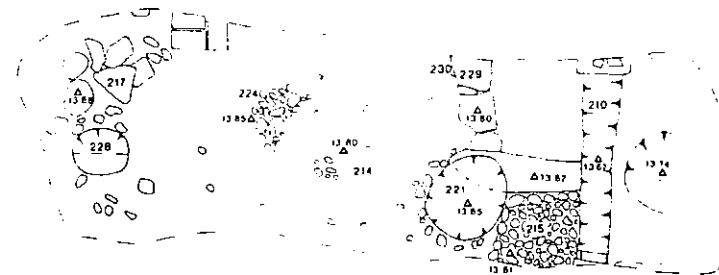
TRENCH B



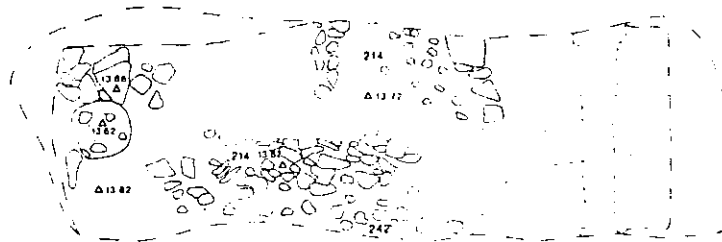
Plan 201



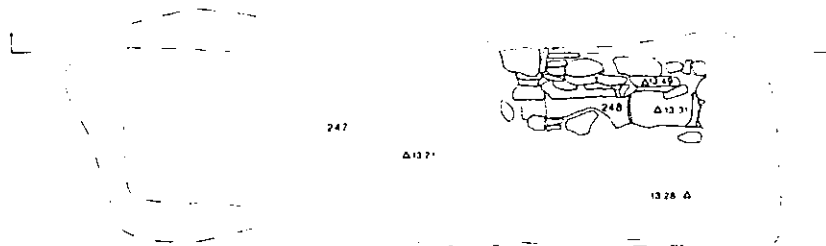
Plan 203



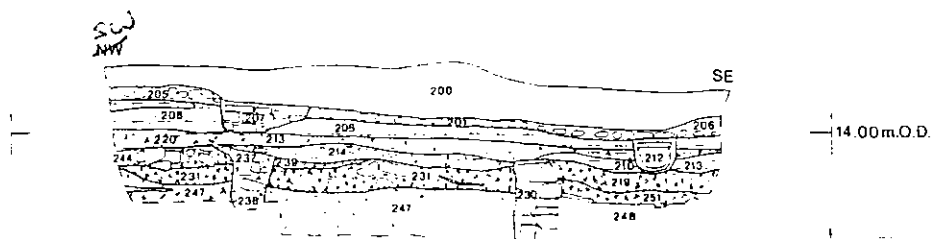
Plan 204



Plan 207



Section 200



0 1 2 metres

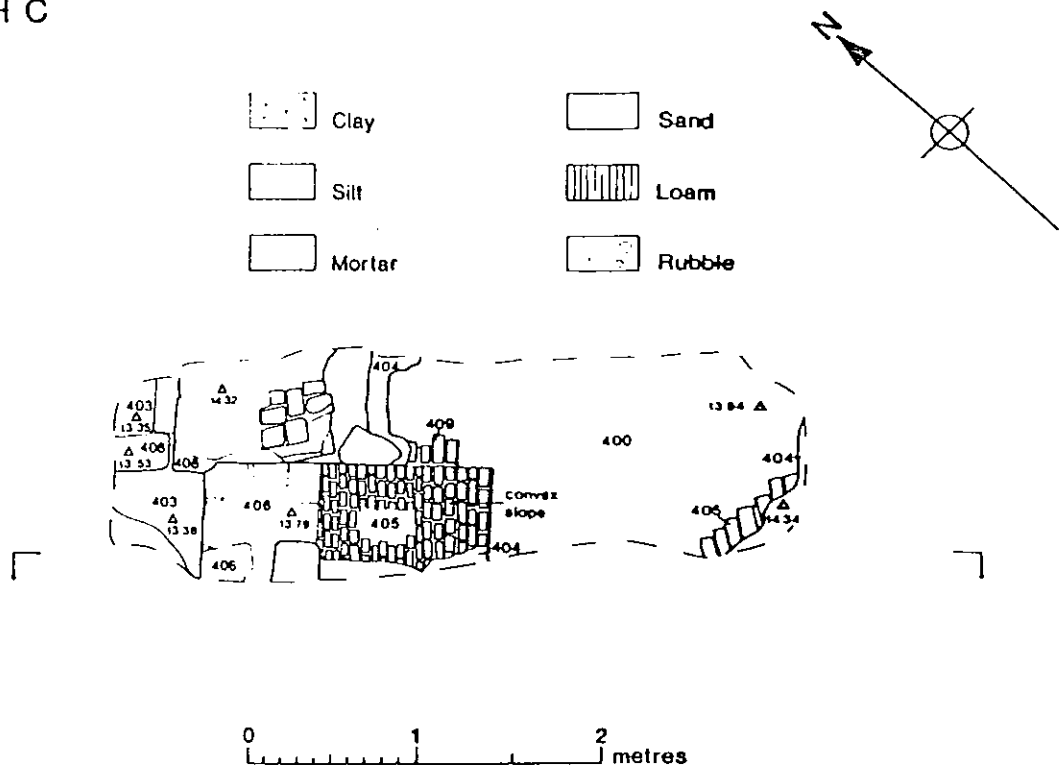
Fig 5 Showing detail of Trench B

- 5.3.2 A 20-30cm thick layer of concrete, clinker and stone rubble was removed to expose a well laid cobbled surface (201, 205, 206) divided by two parallel brick walls (202, 203) and a thin limestone wall (204) adjacent to 202. Immediately below the brick wall 203, and on the same line was a tile drain (209) capped with limestone flags.
- 5.3.3 A layer of sandy silt (208) beneath these features contained pottery of the 18th and early 19th centuries which in turn overlay deposits (213) containing 17th and 18th century pottery. This overlay a stone flagged surface (214), two limestone walls (229, 217), and a variety of cut features including a posthole (228) positioned at the end of wall 217.
- 5.3.4 The relationship between the flagged surface and these walls was unclear as there had been some repair to the surface using cobbles. One pit (221), cut through this layer. Pottery indicates a date for this surface no earlier than the 17th century.
- 5.3.5 Deposits contemporary with wall 229 contained 14th/15th century pottery and the construction of the wall with its associated mortar would support a date within that period.
- 5.3.6 Beneath 214 evidence of earlier cobble and flag surfaces in association with late medieval pottery were located, together with a much clearer relationship with a limestone wall (241, not shown on plan).
- 5.3.7 The earliest deposit investigated (247), through which walls 229 and 248 cut, contained 13th/14th century pottery in the upper levels, at 13.50 MOD, and Roman pottery in the lower levels at 12.28 MOD. No differentiation within the layer could be identified with any confidence.
- 5.4 Trench C**
- 5.4.1 This trench, 4.20m long by 1.60m wide investigated an area thought to be gardens in view of the surviving vegetation. However, much of the area proved to retain a thick concrete surface over which, tree roots and ground vegetation had spread. The positioning of the trench was thus dictated by the absence of this concrete.
- 5.4.2 Removal of a rubble layer (400) revealed the brick vaulting (405) of a C.19th century cellar and the substantial limestone foundations (406) of a building enclosing this cellar. No further work was undertaken in this area.
- 5.5 Trench D**
- 5.5.1 Access to this part of the proposed development area was allowed by the manager of Boots, the present owners.
- 5.5.2 This 2.40m by 2.80m trench revealed 1.10 m of loamy garden deposits sealing two linear cuts (503, 505) which may represent a continuation of those cuts located in trench A. 16th/17th pottery was recovered from layers through with these linear features cut. The small size of this trench precludes any further comment.

DONCASTER: BAXTERGATE 1991

TRENCH C

Plan 400



Section 400

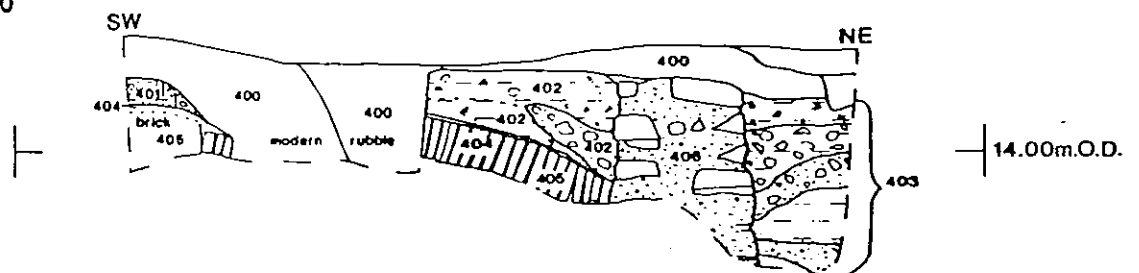
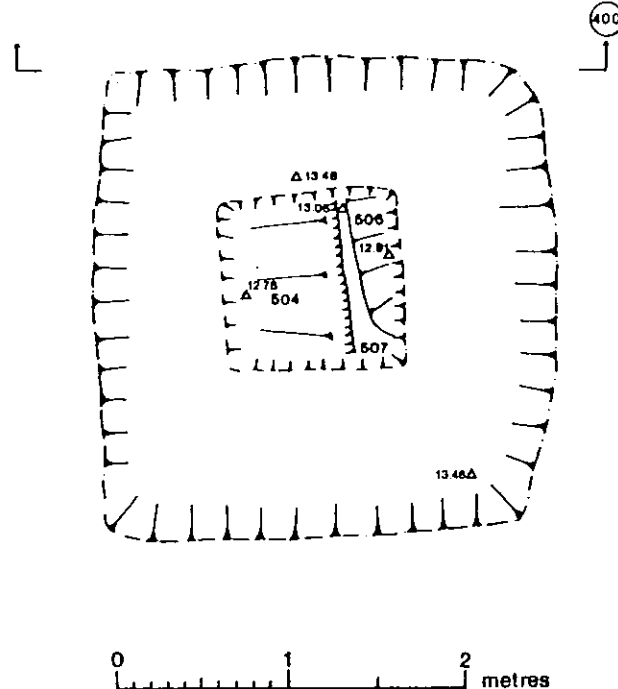


Fig 6 Showing detail of Trench C.

DONCASTER: BAXTERGATE 1991

TRENCH D

Plan 400



Section 400

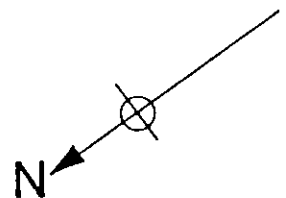
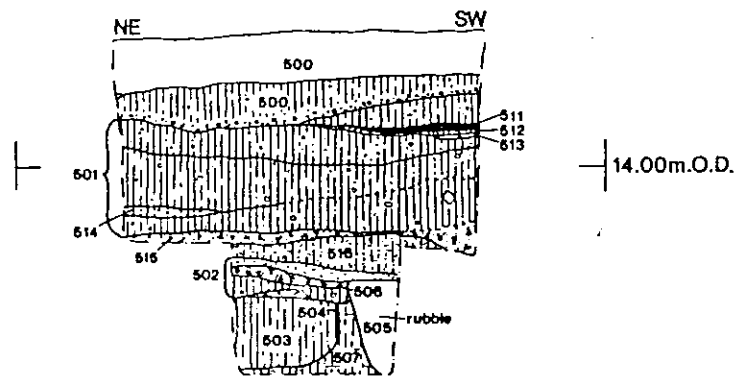


Fig 7 Showing detail of Trench D.

- 5.6 Section 300
- 5.6.1 This section, to the rear of 22 Baxtergate was exposed during renovation work to the existing building and compliments the results of Trench B, affording a rare opportunity to view archaeological levels along a 14.00m length.
- 5.6.2 The top 60-80cm consisted of modern rubble lying directly on top of medieval levels with the exception of a brick structure (303) and a shallow limestone wall (309) both of 18th or 19th century date.
- 5.6.3 Several structural features of medieval date were visible, walls 335,321,311 and 300 associated with and cutting through a complex sequence of horizontal and vertical deposits. Limestone walls 335 and 321 probably part of the same structure appear to be associated with 311 and may form part of a cellar. The fill (312) of a pit cutting through the back-fill of this possible cellar or sunken building contained a quantity of late medieval pottery suggesting an earlier date for the stone structure.
- 5.6.4 Wall 300, exposed on the SE to NW part of the section also appears to be part of a cellar. It is not known whether this is part of the same structure as detailed above although the layers (359, 307,341, 342) through which it cuts would suggest not.
- 5.6.5 A variety of pits and other cut features associated with fills 356, 306, 332, 355, 330 cut through a series of stratified layers of early medieval and Roman date, best represented to the North-East of wall 335.
- 5.6.6 Layers of sandy silts (323) contained pottery of 13th to 14th century date overlying similar deposits (327) containing 12th to 13th century pottery. Roman pottery was recovered from deposits (338, 324) beneath this. A possible wall 345 may be of Roman date.
- 5.6.7 The base of the section at 12.60 MOD did not appear to be natural ground and the existence of archaeological deposits at and below this level is probable. Many medieval features cut well into this level.
- 6.0 **DISCUSSION**
- 6.1 Section 300 and Trench B
- 6.1.1 The evidence detailed above indicates that well preserved medieval and Roman levels exist in this area with firm evidence of structures in the form of buildings and cellars which are likely to relate to industrial rather than domestic use. The presence of solid structures this far back from the street frontages is of great archaeological interest.
- 6.1.2 Although there does appear to have been a degree of late medieval disturbance to earlier levels this is no more than could normally be expected. Consequently, early medieval and Roman levels seem to survive well. The possibility of a Roman building represented by wall 345 indicates the archaeological potential for this period.

DONCASTER : BAXTERGATE 1891
Section 300

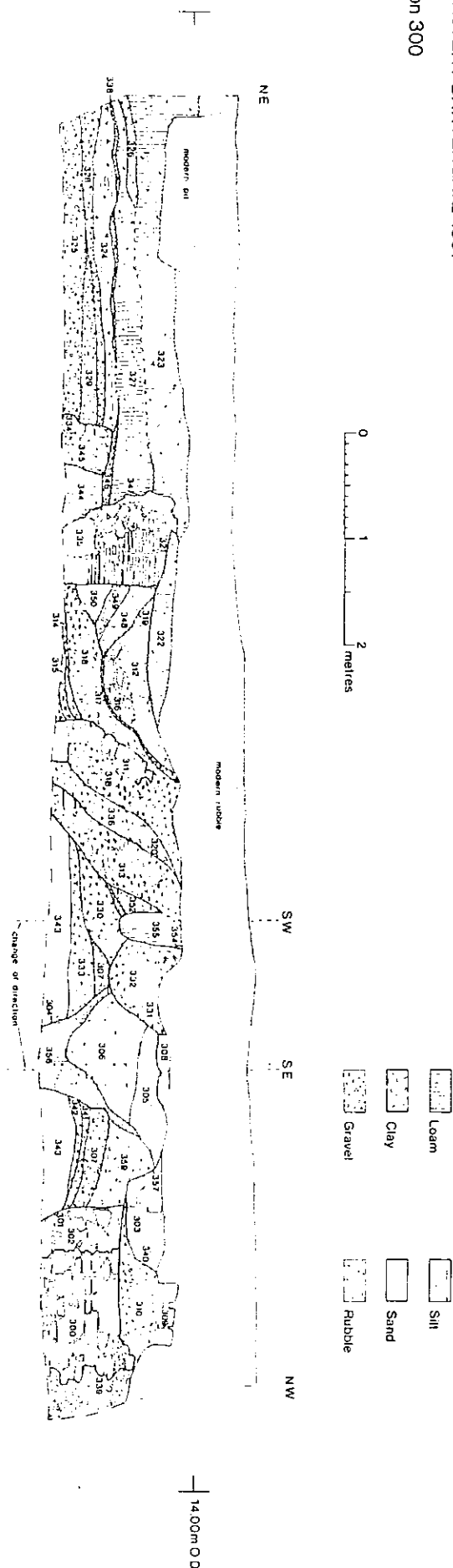


Fig 35

Fig 8 Showing detail of Section 300

6.2 Trenches A, C and D.

- 6.2.1 The absence of a good section through archaeological deposits in these areas limits the conclusions that can be drawn although the small size of Trenches D and C indicate caution.
- 6.2.2 In Trenches A and D modern and post-medieval disturbances were limited to the later medieval layers and the early medieval and Roman deposits remained undisturbed. The evidence suggests use of these areas as gardens since at least the 18th century and any subsequent disturbances would probably have been limited. The linear cut features encountered in Trench A and D are problematic but unlikely to exist throughout the area.
- 6.2.3 Trench C revealed the presence of a deep Victorian cellar to a building situated to the NE. This building had not been picked up in the initial archival search. The solid nature of the external wall and its foundations indicates a building of some substance. Any disturbances to the rest of this area adjacent to the Bingo Hall is not known although the NW section of the trench suggests garden soil beneath the concrete surface that spreads over most of the area.

6.3 General.

- 6.3.1 The proportion of medieval to Roman pottery found during the course of the evaluation is of interest. In view of the greater survival of stratigraphy and the more intensive use of the area in the medieval period the expectation would be for a significantly greater proportion of medieval pottery. In the event, 30 sherds of Roman pottery were recovered and 45 sherds of medieval. A high level of Roman activity in the area may be indicated by this fact. Also of interest is the high proportion of "quality" Roman pottery to coarse wares strongly indicative of relatively high status Roman activity.
- 6.3.2 Whilst it needs to be stressed that the small scale nature of the evaluation dictates a note of caution in these conclusions there can be no doubt that archaeological survival of the early medieval and Roman periods is exceptionally good and that of the later medieval periods is equally good where present.

6.4 Street frontage cellars

- 6.4.1 All the street frontages effected by the proposed development were visited in order to ascertain the presence or absence of cellars and their potential effects on the archaeology.
- 6.4.2 49 and 50 Market Place both retained substantial brick vaulted cellars of 18th/19th century date. Both cellars were approximately 2.00m below the street level and ran back from the frontage approximately 16.00m.
- 6.4.3 52 Market Place retains no known cellar but the property has undergone recent renovation and the cellar may well have been filled in or blocked.
- 6.4.4 53 Market Place again retains no known cellar although a shop assistant remembered a void being revealed during shop refurbishment thought to have

been a well at the time. The position, some 12.00m from the street frontage is an unlikely position for a well and may therefore be part of a blocked cellar.

6.4.5 The ex-servicemen's club to the rear of 49 Market Place has no cellar (G. Forster pers.comm).

6.4.6 11-12 Scot Lane retains a basement shop floor.

6.4.7 The present incumbents of properties, 9 and 10 High Street were unable to state whether cellars existed. Neither properties had any form of access and were both thought never to have had cellars. Number 8 High Street however, does retain a cellar but access was unavailable and the extent of it was unknown.

6.4.8 The evidence suggests that all properties within the development area with the possible exception of numbers 9 and 10 High Street are cellared, and the depth of that cellaring will have destroyed most of the archaeological levels on the street frontages.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The evaluation evidence suggests the presence of well preserved Roman archaeology within the development area with the exception of the known cellared areas on the street frontages. There are strong indications of Roman buildings within the area and that those buildings may well be of high status. The level at which Roman deposits survive, between C. 12.50 MOD 13.30 MOD suggests that they may also survive beneath the foundations of the Bingo Hall.

7.2 The medieval archaeology best survives within the area of Trench B and Section 300 which appears to retain many structural features, possibly industrial in origin. The other investigated areas are more problematic as there does seem to have been some disturbance to the later medieval levels, although the early medieval may be better represented.

7.3 The medieval street frontages seem to have been seriously disturbed by later cellars, and it is unlikely that well preserved medieval buildings exist. However, the baulks between cellars will undoubtedly retain significant archaeological deposits from which, building plans could be uncovered.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Any ground disturbance at or below 14.00 MOD in those areas bounded by High Street, Scot Lane, Baxtergate and Market Place will inevitably destroy important archaeological levels and any disturbance at the street frontages, especially in uncellared areas will equally have a profound effect on the archaeology.

8.2 The outline plans of the proposed development indicate that most if not all the archaeological deposits would be removed through the construction of the shopping mall. In this case, full archaeological investigations would be required prior to their destruction. This is justifiable in terms of both the importance of the site for an understanding of Roman and medieval Doncaster and in the light of the good preservation encountered during the evaluation.

- 8.3 A third phase evaluation of the street frontage areas would be advisable after demolition of existing buildings as detailed in the original proposals, although the operation could be scaled down in the light of this report. Of importance in this respect is the identification of undisturbed baulks between the cellars fronting onto Market Place and High Street only. The Scot Lane frontage is deemed to be too badly disturbed.
- 8.4 Full excavations would need to be concentrated in the rear garden areas where the best preservation is indicated, and the uncellared areas of street frontage properties.
- 8.5 These excavations would need to be quite large in, order to fully appreciate the archaeological remains and would need to be tied in with proposed investigations within the frontage areas, details of which would result from the 3rd phase evaluation.
- 8.6 Excavations in the rear yard areas only, prior to demolition of existing buildings is not seen as practicable both in terms of project logistics and the above. In some areas, at least 1.00m of overburden would have to be removed by machine and transported off-site. Present site access makes this virtually impossible.
- 8.7 It is not seen as either advisable or necessary to excavate the entire area which could take some considerable time, and in some areas the presence of medieval deposits may be slight, or heavily disturbed. In these areas it is felt that the excavations should concentrate on the earliest levels. Full investigations of the medieval deposits should be undertaken in areas where preservation is best or most informative.