

Marches Archaeology

The Trooper

**Wall
Staffordshire**

**A Report on
an archaeological evaluation**

July 1999

Marches Archaeology Series 078

Archaeological Consultants and Contractors

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For:-

Mr F. Hewitt
The Trooper
Wall
Staffordshire
WS14 0AN

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**A report on an archaeological
evaluation at
The Trooper
Wall
Staffordshire**

NGR: SK 099 065

**Report by
Nic Appleton-Fox**

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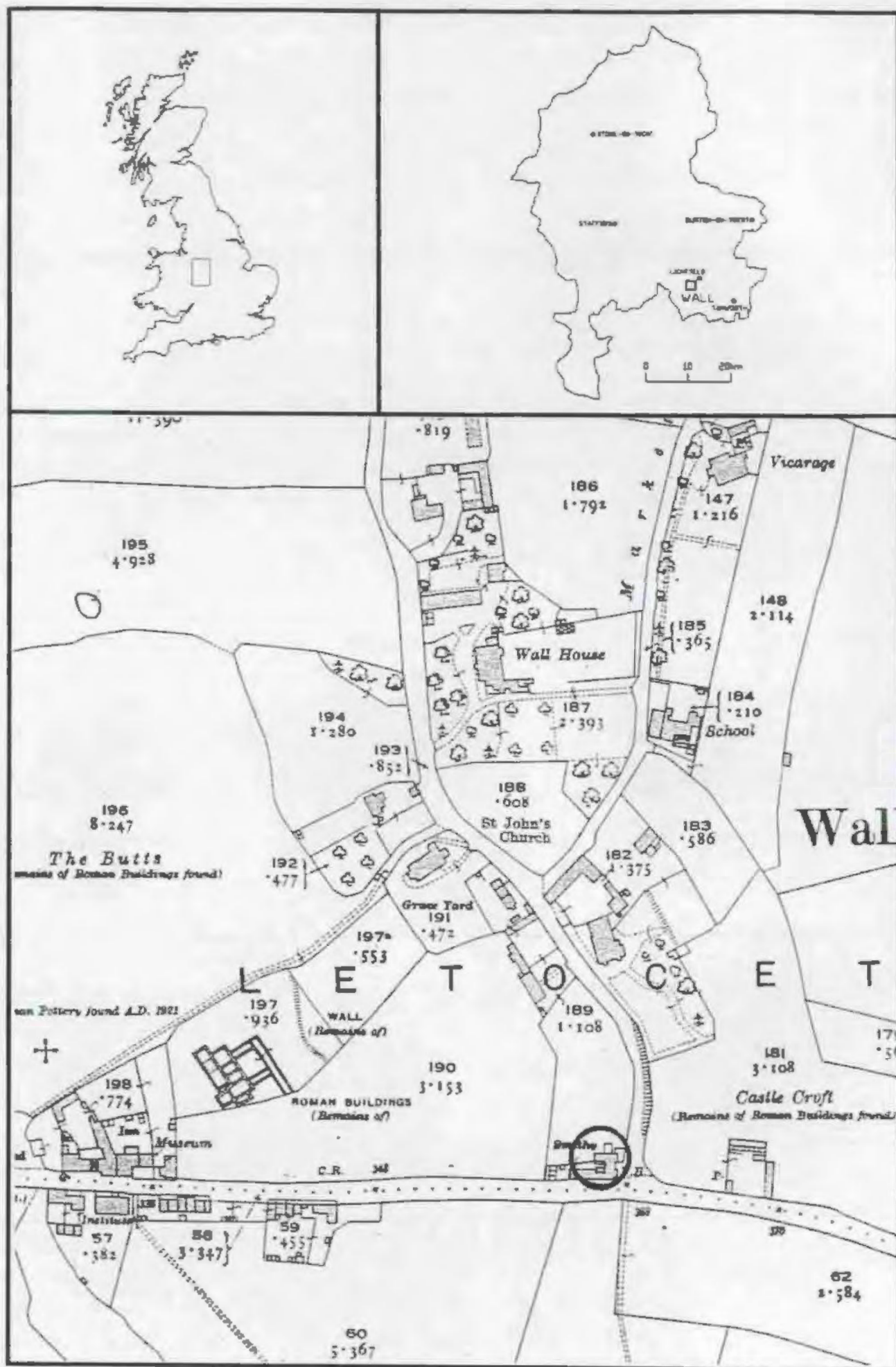


Fig. 1 Location of the site

An Evaluation Excavation at The Trooper Wall Staffordshire

Summary

An area 20m x 7m was investigated at the rear of The Trooper public house in Wall to assess what damage, if any, had been done to the archaeology of the site during unauthorised stripping of the topsoil in preparation for the laying of a car park. This found that structures of Roman date existed at a depth of 0.5m below the formation level of the car park and were thus unlikely to be affected by the development. A further small trench was dug to investigate the site of a retaining wall at the front of the pub. This found that the proposed site directly overlay an earlier wall and the ground on either side likely to be affected by the construction consisted of modern deposits.

1 Introduction

A planning application was submitted to Lichfield District Council for permission to make improvements to the grounds around The Trooper public house in Wall (ref: 98/01034/FUL) (Fig. 1). Prior to the application being submitted some earthmoving had already been carried out. Wall is listed on the County Sites and Monuments Record as a site of archaeological interest (SSMR Nos. 31-34). The Local Authority's Archaeological Advisor recommended that an evaluation be carried out to assess whether any damage had been caused to the archaeology and to establish the nature and extent of any such remains. Initially three areas were to be investigated but the scope of the planned work was altered and with the agreement of the Local Authority's Archaeological Advisor the areas of investigation were reduced to two. Marches Archaeology was commissioned to carry out this evaluation by the owner Mr. F. Hewitt. The work was undertaken on 3rd and 4th June 1999.

2 Archaeological and historical background

Wall lies on what was the dividing line between the Iron Age tribes of the *Cornovii* to the west and the *Coritani* to the east. A prehistoric trackway is thought to have passed through Wall and late Neolithic flints have been recovered during excavations on the site (Round, 1971). It has been argued that the area may represent a sub-tribal or tribal division between the lands of the two main tribes (SCC, nd). Wall became the site for a Roman fort from about the year 51 AD when *legio XIV Gemina* was based there. Within the next few years a major new fort was built and around 70 AD Watling Street ran through Wall. Certainly from this period, if not before, the civilian settlement known as '*Letocetum*' began to develop. The name is derived from '*leito*' and '*caito*' meaning respectively grey and wood. There is some debate as to whether '*Letocetum*' refers to the town or the area and also about the status of the settlement (SCC, nd). Although on current evidence Wall lacks some of the features which have been used to define a '*civitas*' it is likely that the settlement fulfilled this function (Webster, 1975). A bath house and '*mansio*' were constructed in the latter half of the 1st

century. The fort was rebuilt around 60 AD, possibly in response to the Boudiccan rebellion but with the advance of the military frontier to the north and west, a much smaller fort was built during the Flavian period. In the course of the Roman period the area of settlement grew until it stretched for almost two miles along Watling Street. Several sections of metalled roads have been seen in excavations in Wall indicating a well developed town. Some of these roads are not aligned on Watling Street, suggesting that they may have been following the alignment of a pre-Roman settlement. The proximity of the junction between Watling Street and Ryknild Street helped to ensure the prosperity of the town.

After the Roman period the history of Wall becomes obscure for some seven hundred years. At some time during the post-Roman/early Saxon period the focus of activity moved to Lichfield where a pagan centre has been postulated (Bassett, 1982) and the cathedral there was founded around the year 700 AD.

Wall is not mentioned in Domesday, being considered as a part of the manor of Lichfield at that time. It became a separate manor in the early part of the 12th century. It is at this time that the name of Wall is first recorded. Presumably the name is derived from the fragments of upstanding Roman masonry that could still be seen until the latter half of the 18th century. Little is known of the medieval occupation of Wall. It is presumed that the focus of the settlement was on the higher ground around the church and it is thought that the site of the medieval manor house was that now occupied by Wall House (VCH, 1987). In 1166 the manor was held from the bishop of Lichfield by Rabel Durdent, a relative of the bishop, as 1/7 of a knights fee. The manor became recognised as an entity in its own right from at least 1190 when a later lord of the manor was named as Robert of Wall. The Durdents held Wall until the male line died out in 1388 when title passed by marriage to the Swinfen family. In 1435 the lordship passed to the Vernon family, again by marriage, and subsequently passed through a number of hands.

Church Farm was occupied by the early 16th century and an alehouse is recorded on Watling Street in 1589. By 1666 Wall had grown to comprise of twelve dwellings which were liable for hearth tax. Over the following centuries Wall continued to grow with a lot of the houses still standing being built in the 18th century. At one time Wall boasted three public houses and by the time of the census in 1801 had a population of 97. The 1851 census lists a Thomas Green as living at the Trooper and his occupation as publican and blacksmith. The population had risen to 115 in 1881, after that date boundary changes make the exact number of residents of Wall impossible to calculate. The use of part of the site of the Trooper as a smithy continued into the middle of the 20th century. The A5 was diverted to by-pass the settlement in the middle of the 20th century and Wall has settled down as a desirable commuter suburb of Lichfield.

3 The site

The underlying geology is Keuper Sandstone overlain by a sandy loam. The topography of Wall slopes down from around 114m OD at the north to around 98m OD at the south near Watling Street. All measurements in this report (text and illustrations) are in metres above Ordnance Datum. The Trooper Inn has been on the site at the junction of Watling Street and Green Lane since at least 1851 and now remains as the only public house in Wall. The building is situated at the corner of Watling Street and Green Lane, which runs up to the

church and is a sunken lane, attesting long usage. Substantial landscaping has taken place during the lifetime of the inn, the area immediately around the inn has been terraced into the natural slope which runs up towards the north away from Watling Street, probably when the inn was built, and a pathway leading up to the garden area has been backfilled in recent years.

3.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was positioned on the line of the proposed new wall at the front of the inn. The excavator was assured by the client that it was the intention to construct the new wall on the footings of a previously existing wall which ran along the same alignment. For the majority of the length of the proposed wall the footings were visible protruding through the hardcore and tarmac surface currently forming the car park at the front of the building. It was deemed that a short length of trench positioned in an area where the footings were not evident would be sufficient to prove the continuation of the wall line thus indicating that the new construction would present no threat to any surviving archaeology.

The trench was excavated for a length of 2m and 0.5m wide. The earliest feature seen was the brick wall [2] which had stood to a height of 7 feet until earlier this century. Within the trench this was encountered at a depth of between 65mm and 120mm below current ground surface. It was 230mm thick and of sound construction. To the north of the wall was a black layer of gritty soil with common mortar flecks and clinker, [3], which produced 20th century pottery, it continued down for at least 200mm below the level of the top of the surviving wall. This layer is thought to be associated with the smithy that occupied the site until the middle of the 20th century.

3.2 The car park area

The area of the car park had been stripped in November 1998 and substantial vegetation had regrown in the intervening period. The growth was removed using a mechanical excavator and the sections then cleaned by hand. This revealed a layer of topsoil [4] overlying a layer of mid orange brown loose sand silt [5]. Layer [5] was visible all over the area of the car park. The only variation was where the path up to the rear portion of the garden had been filled in. On closer examination of the layer sherds of Roman pottery were seen in the soil, although no features were visible. Hand excavation revealed the layer to be fairly uniform and over 300mm thick. To investigate this layer four trenches (Trenches 2-5) were cut into it by machine (Fig. 2).

3.2.1 Trench 2

Trench 2 was located towards the eastern side of the area, it was 2.1m long and 1.15m wide (Figs. 3, 4 and 5). Layer [5] was 900mm thick at the north end thinning to 600mm at the south. It overlay another layer [6], which was a dark greyish soft sandy silt generally around 120mm thick. This layer butted up to a curving alignment of stones, [16], and directly overlay a compacted layer of red sandy silt [18] which showed signs of exposure to heat. Layer [18] also butted up to the stone alignment and curved around it with an average radius of 1m. Stone alignment [16] was comprised of medium sized angular sandstone which stood two courses high around the edge and continued as a single layer across the base of the enclosed area. All the stones were reddened by exposure to heat. Surrounding the stones within the

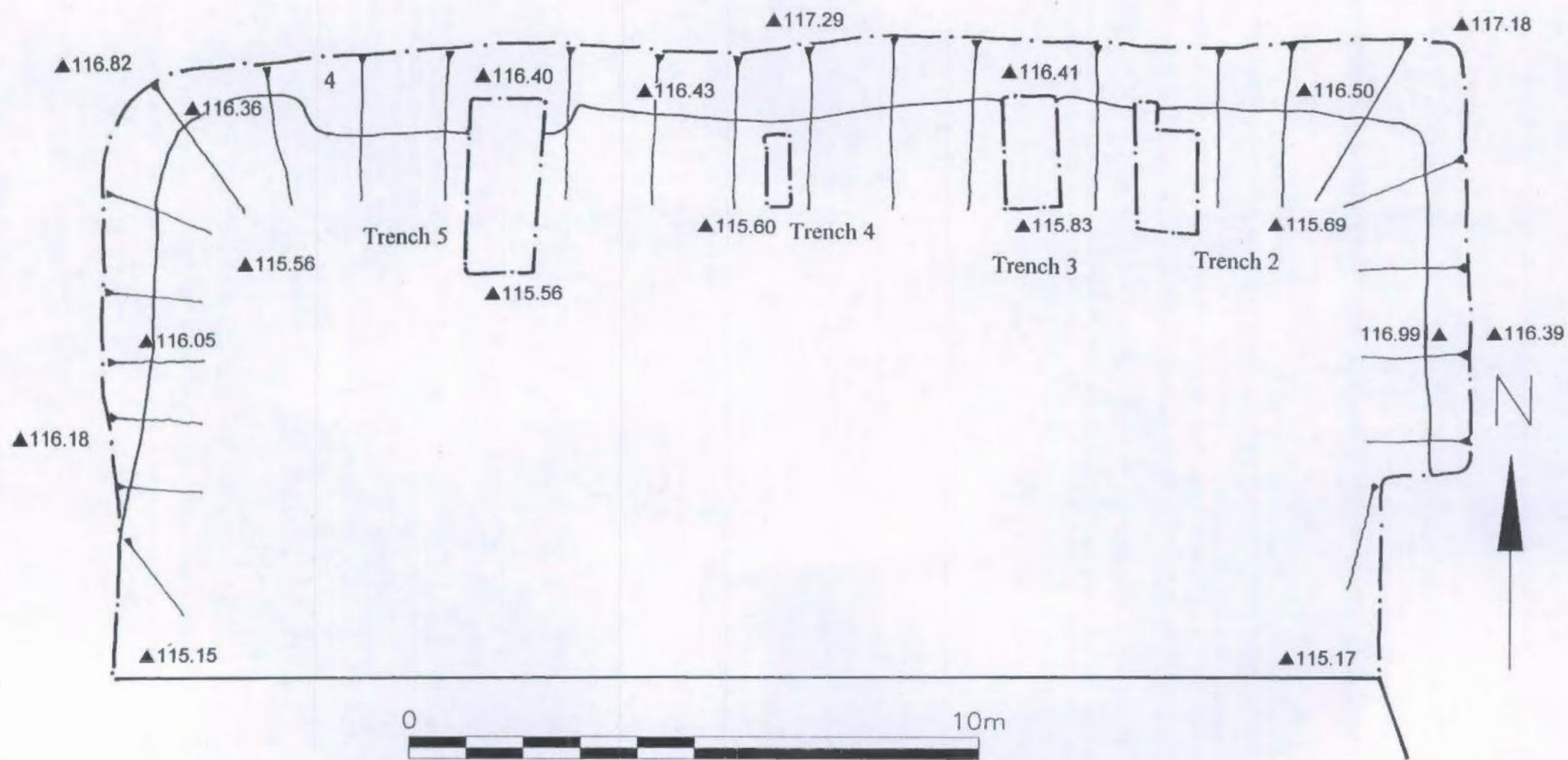


Fig. 2 Location of the trenches

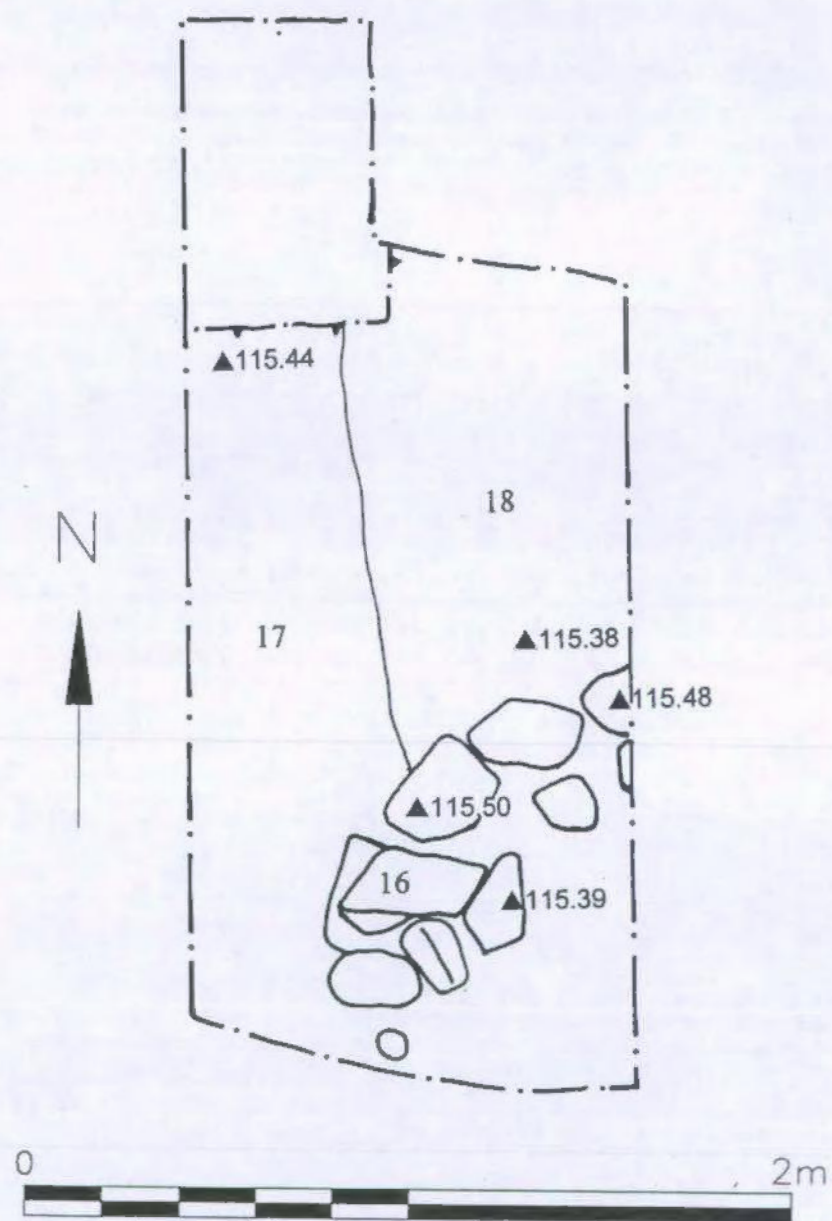


Fig. 3 Plan of Trench 2, showing hearth [16], soil [17] and floor [18]

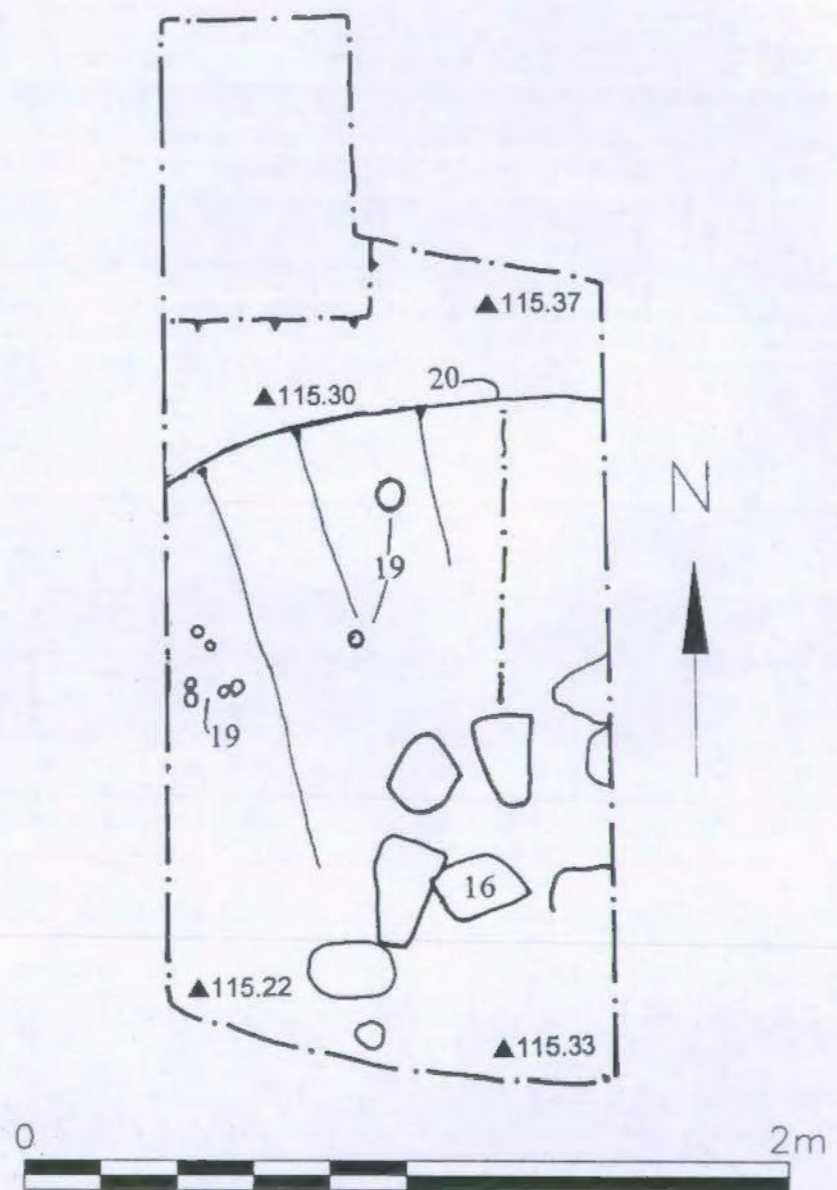


Fig. 4 Plan of Trench 2, showing stakeholes [19] and base of hearth [16]

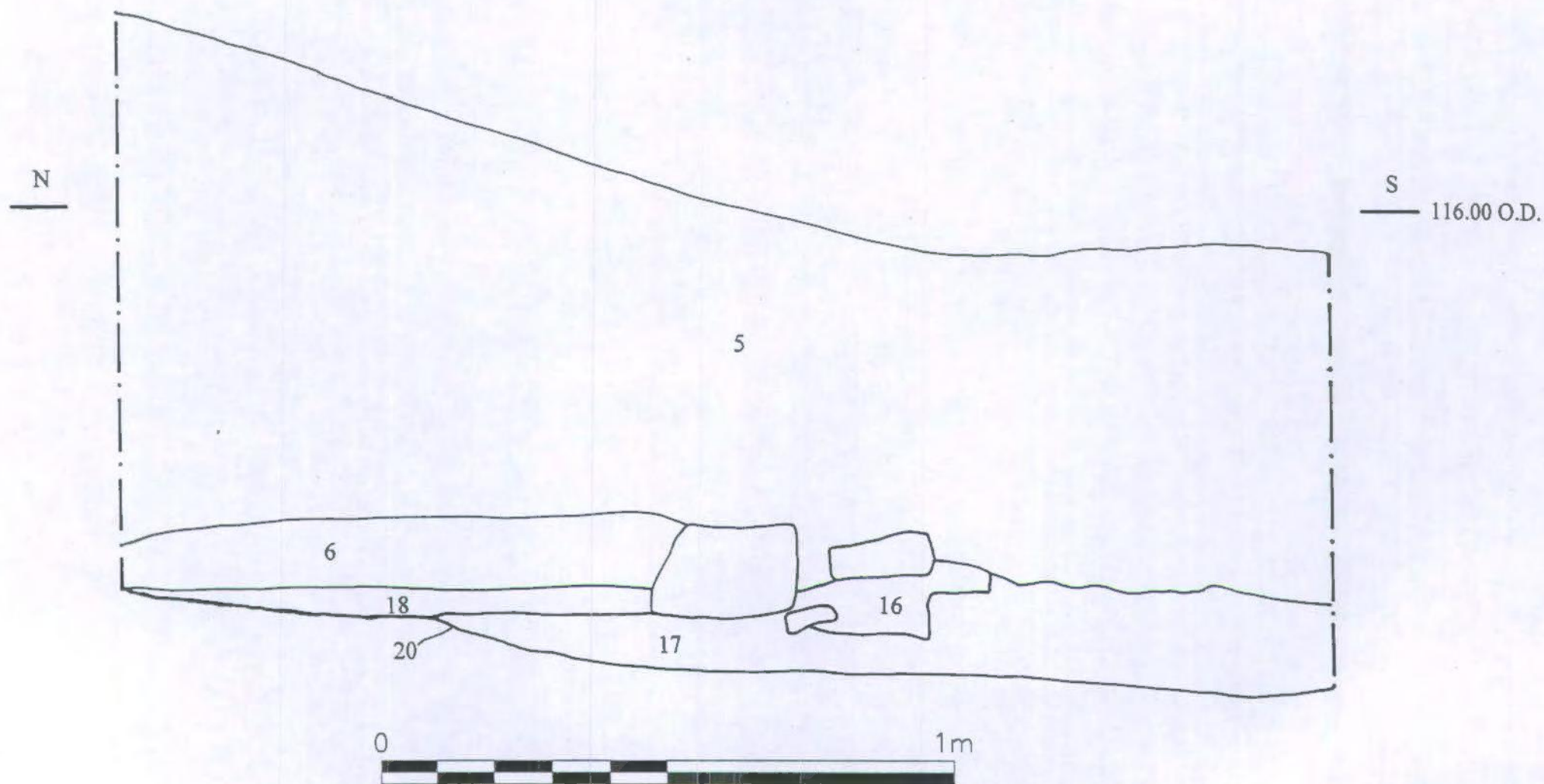


Fig. 5 East section of Trench 2

hearth area was a red burnt clay mixed with a black silt [21]. Hearth [16] was set into a very dark grey loose silty sand [17] with common charcoal and occasional burnt clay and burnt sandstone. Several sherds of joining cooking pot were recovered from this layer. Soil [17] filled a scooped cut [20], which had a shallow bowl profile. The fill [17] was sealed at the north end by the clay floor layer [18]. All the pottery recovered from this trench where dateable belonged to the 1st century AD. Seven stakeholes [19] which were only seen beneath [17] and [18] are believed to have in fact been dug after them. It is not clear whether they are associated with the floor.

3.2.2 Trench 3

This was 1.1m east-west, 2.0m north-south and it lay 2.5m to the west of Trench 2 (Fig. 6). The earliest deposit seen was a loose reddish brown sand fill [7] with occasional charcoal flecks. This soil ran across the base of the trench and filled a cut, [8], it produced 1st century pottery. Cut [8] was against the east section of the trench and only the west edge of the cut was within the trench. It sloped down to the east at an angle of approximately 45 degrees. The bottom of the cut was not seen but it was at least 300mm deep. Immediately above [7] was layer [5] described above; it was up to 350mm thick.

3.2.3 Trench 4

Trench 4 was 1.5m long and 0.5m wide, situated 3.7m west of Trench 3 (Figs. 7 and 8). The earliest deposit seen was fill [13] which was a loose mid orangey brown silty sand with lenses of both lighter and darker material and occasional inclusions of charcoal, burnt clay and pebbles. This was contained in a pit [14] which had vertical sides 0.6m deep and the base sloped down slightly to the south. Only a portion of the north edge of the pit was within the trench. This edge curved and suggested that, if the curvature was consistent, the diameter of the pit would be around 1.5m. Fill [13] produced a sherd of samian and other pottery dating to the early 2nd century. The pit was sealed by layer [5], which at this point was up to 0.8m thick.

3.2.4 Trench 5

This trench was 3m long and 1.5m wide (Fig. 9). It was situated 4m to the west of Trench 4. In the north east corner of the trench a shallow pit [11] with a steeply sloping side on the west and a flat base was cut into the natural [12]. It 200mm deep and projected into the trench for 400mm. The fill of the pit [10] was a mid greyish brown loose silty sand mixed with dark orange brown sand with occasional charcoal flecks and burnt clay. The pit was sealed by a thick layer of soft silty sand [9] with bands of reddish brown and greyish brown silty sands within the orangey brown matrix, this layer was up to 500mm thick. Above layer [9] was the make up layer [5] which in this trench varied from 600mm to 450mm thick.

4 The pottery by Jeremy Evans with contributions by S Rátkai

Some 53 sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from the site along with seven fragments of tile and four scraps of daub. 32 medieval and post-medieval sherds were also recovered. The assemblage is small and abraded and a very limited amount of information can be obtained from it. Overall the collection seems to date to the 1st and 2nd centuries. There is no evidence

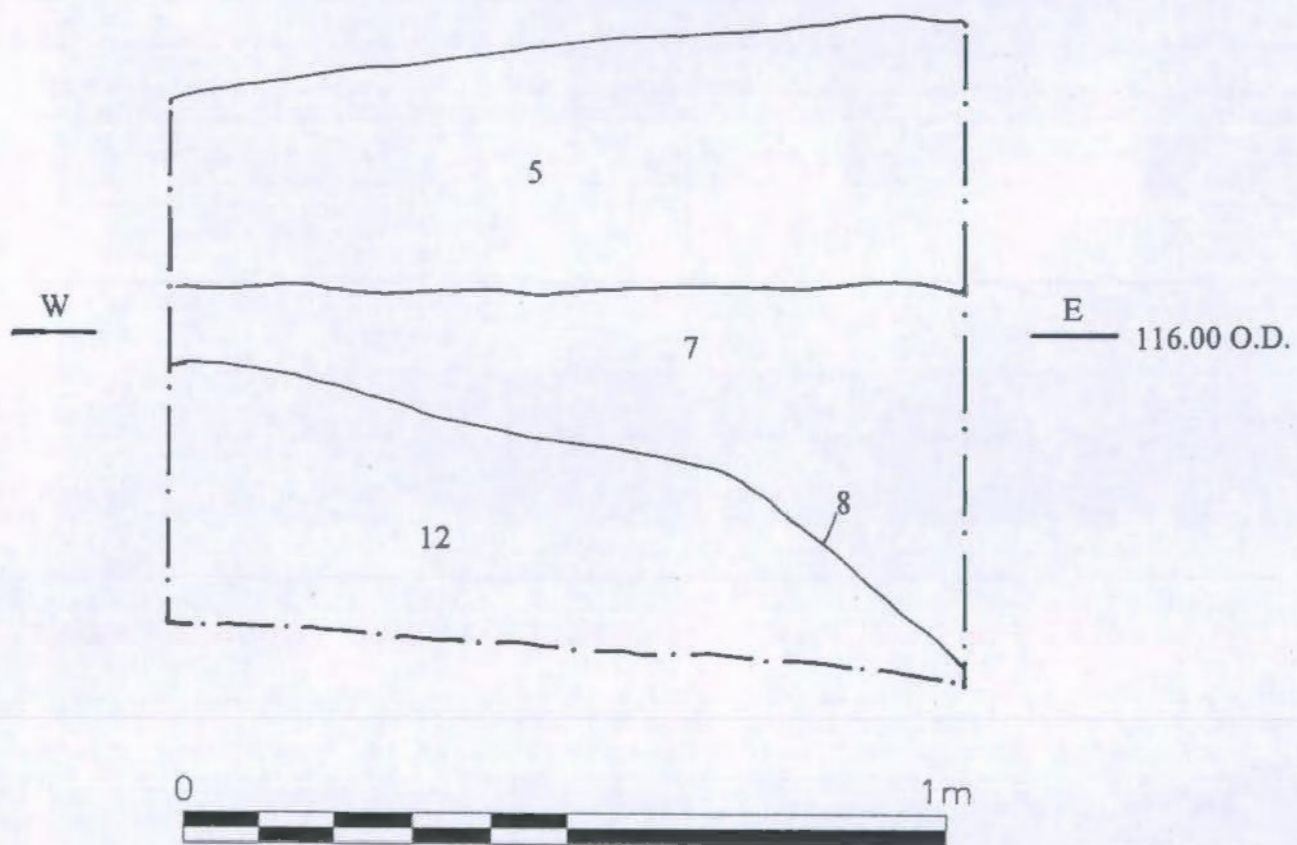


Fig. 6 North section of Trench 3

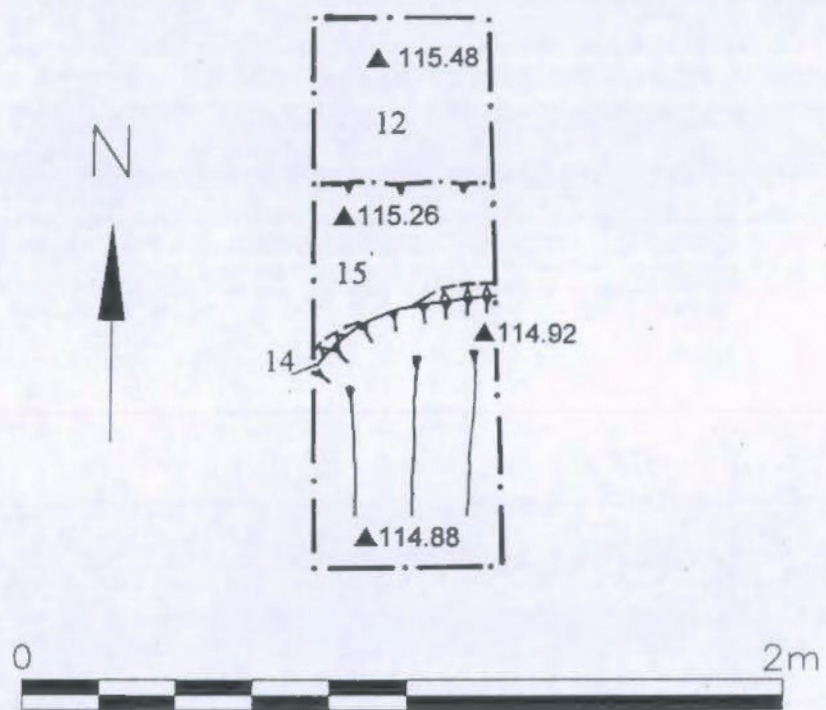


Fig. 7 Plan of Trench 4

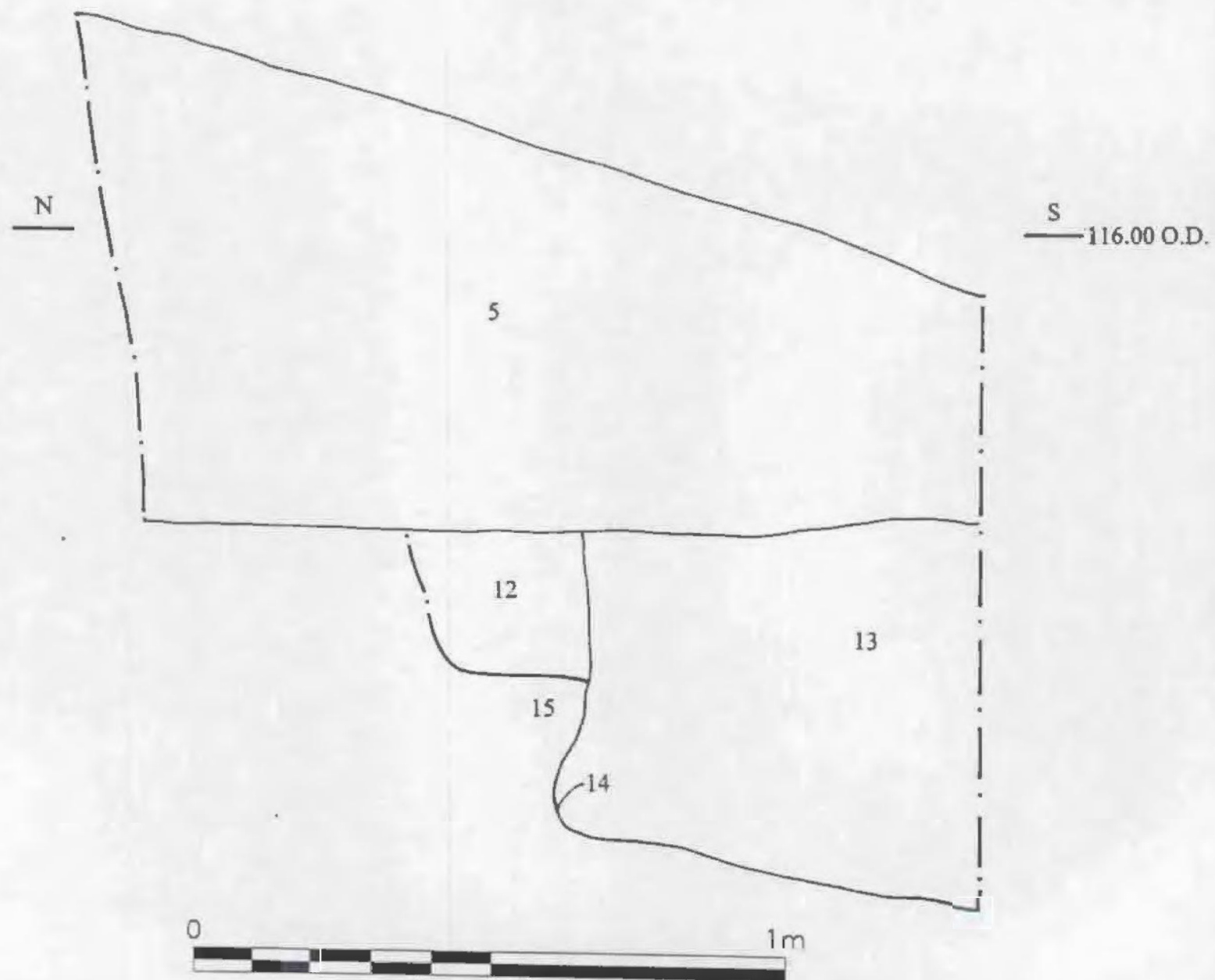


Fig. 8 East section of Trench 4

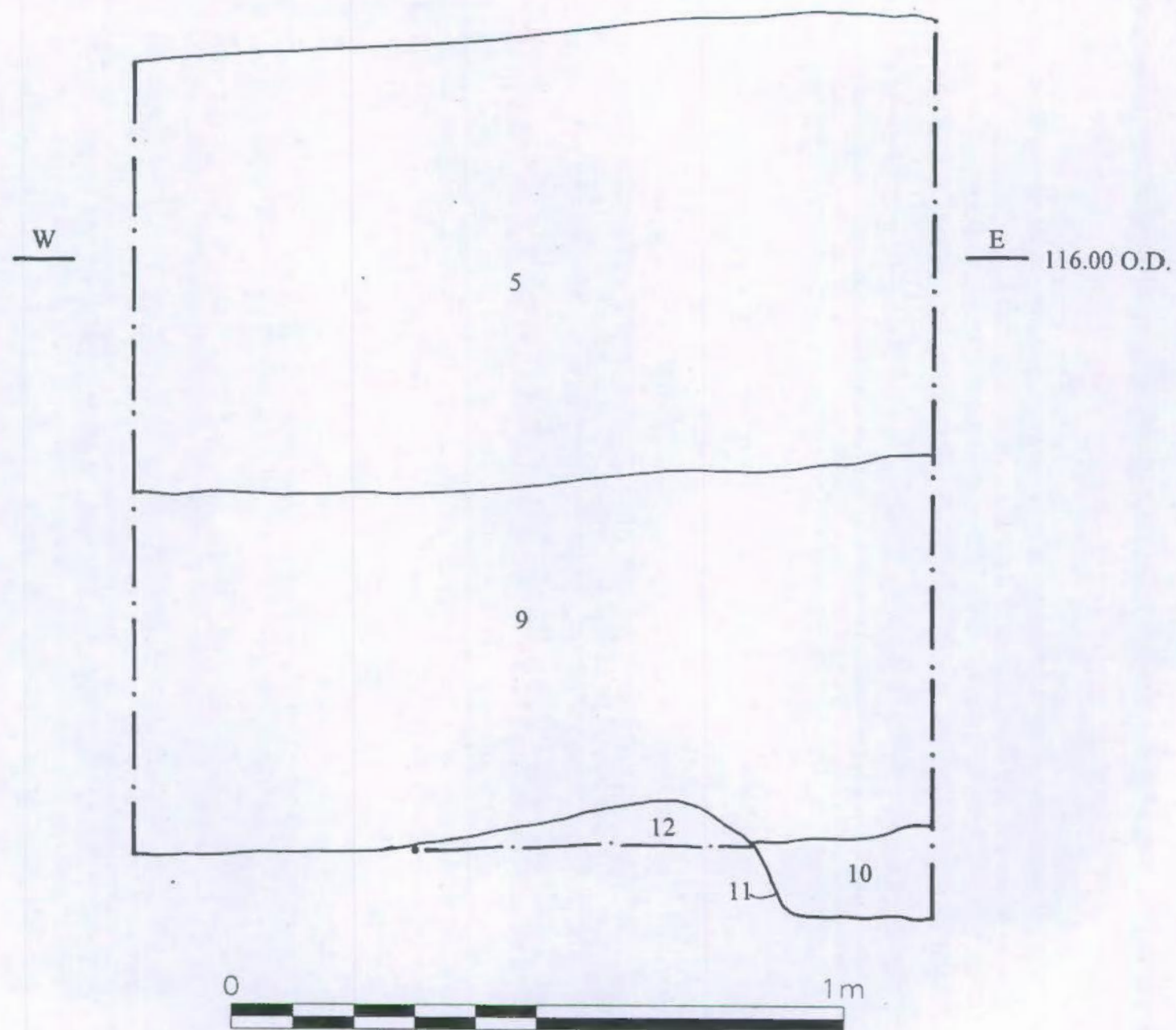


Fig. 9 North section of Trench 5

of any later material, although the quantities of datable sherds here are so low that this does not demonstrate absence. Previous work (Jones 1998) suggested occupation here from the Neronian era to the mid-later 3rd century. All the BB1 from the site comes from context 4, topsoil, and the collection from the stratified features could be consistent with a Flavian-Trajanic range, although earlier occupation cannot be ruled out, and neither can later features with confidence.

Samian of the Neronian, Flavian and Trajanic eras is present, but no Central Gaulish material. The samian tends to strengthen the impression of Neronian-Trajanic material from the stratified deposits.

The material clearly merits no further analysis, except as part of a larger collection.

Spot dating catalogue

Where reference is made to Leary's (1998) fabrics this is on the basis of the published descriptions alone. It has not been possible to compare the sherds with her fabrics type series, and, therefore, the identifications are tentative.

Context 4

A beaded and flanged mortarium flange, Verulamium region ware, 1st-early 2nd century. Wt 34g, D. \approx 30 cms, RE 5%

A Verulamium region ware bodysherd. 1st-early 2nd century. Wt 6g

A whiteware bodysherd, 'clean' with some moderate sand, cf Leary's WWW1. Wt 3g

Two 'soapy' clean whiteware bodysherds. Wt 7g

A base sherd from a jar or tankard with a grey core and oxidised margins and surfaces with some fine organic voids, probably Severn Valley ware, cf Leary's SW1. Wt 6g

Three 'clean', 'soapy', oxidised bodysherds, two with rouletted exterior, possibly cf Leary's OBA1. Wt 12g

A greyware sandy beaded and flanged bowl rimsherd, probably from a segmental bowl rather than a BB copy, 1st-2nd century. The fabric has common moderate sand temper, Leary's GRB1. Wt 18g, D. 16cms, RE 14%

A greyware simple jar base in a sandy greyware with fairly common moderate sand temper, Leary's GRB1. Wt 20g, D. 7cms, BE30%

A handmade reduced ware bodysherd with a pale grey core and dark grey margins and surfaces with vegetable impression on the surfaces, with some moderate sand \leq 0.3mm and some fine organics up to 0.5mm. Perhaps 1st century. Wt 2g

A handmade greyware bodysherd with occasional moderate sand \leq 0.3mm and common-abundant black carbonised organics \leq 0.2-1.5mm. Probably 1st century.

Three joining BB1 bodysherds from a dish/bowl, interior burnished. Hadrianic or later. Wt 16g

A BB1 flange rimmed dish/bowl, interior burnished, Hadrianic-early 3rd century. Wt 9g, D. 17cms, RE 8%

Samian Dr 29 bodysherd, SG, La Graufesenque, from the lower frieze of a bowl decorated with a scroll including upright triple pomegranate buds/poppyhead and part of a spiral, below and to the side. The spiral and poppyheads probably formed part of a 'tree' design. Similar designs are associated with the work of Modestus and Crestio. \approx AD50-75. Wt 4g

Samian Dr 18 base, SG, La Graufesenque, cAD45/50-70. Wt 15g, D. 9cms, BE 13%

A tile fragment. Wt 23g

A sherd of feather-slipware later 17th-18th century. 5g

Two sherds of trailed-slipware, 18th century. 23g

Seven sherd of black glazed coarseware, later 17th-18th century. 84g

An unglazed coarseware rim, 18th century. 46g

A Blackware handle, later 17th-early 18th century. 6g

A sherd of flower-pot, 19th century or later. 6g

Two sherds of modern porcelain, 19th century or later. 13g

Three sherds of modern white glazed wares, 19th century or later. 13g

Two post-mediaeval oxidised bodysherds. 13g

Four sherds of buff-whiteware, later 13th-15th century.

Five sherds from a sandy cooking-pot, 13th-14th century. 13g

Indet late mediaeval oxidised fineware sherd, 15th-16th century. 2g

Sherd from a 19th century stoneware jar. 25g

19th century ?chimney pot. c400g

Five modern tile fragments. Wt 160g

T5, Context 5

Beaded and flanged whiteware mortarium flange, burnt, probably with flange rising above bead, possibly cf Evans (1998) no 10 (Evans 1998, fabric M26?). Perhaps later first-earlier 2nd century. Wt 145g, Dc34cms, RE c15%

T2, Context 5

A whiteware bodysherd from a flagon or closed form in a buff-white 'clean' fabric with occasional moderate sand, possibly cf Leary's WWW1. Wt 14g

A bowl rimsherd with a cordoned rim, cf Leary (1998, no 49, and p 28) probably Flavian, in a grey fabric, 'clean' with occasional moderate sand c0.3mm and some rounded black ironstone. Possibly cf Leary's (1998) GRA1. Wt 16g, D. 20cms, RE 8%

A greyware bodysherd, with some-common moderate sand, probably GRB1. Wt 20g

A necked handmade shell-tempered ware jar rimsherd with an everted rather triangularly-sectioned beaded rim, sooted. Probably Leary's (1998) CTA1, perhaps 1st-2nd century. The fabric is handmade with a grey core and brown surfaces with abundant fine shell temper. Wt 10g, D. 14cms, RE 12%

A tile fragment, the curvature suggests an imbrex. Wt 96g

T4, Context 5

Dr 37 rim. An ovolo and tongue motif is represented, albeit rather blurred. The ovolo is rounded and the tongue has a trifid terminal to the right. Similar styles of ovolo are present in the Pompeii hoards (AD79); the detail of the present example is closely similar, however, to a tyle employed by Biracillus and Crucuro active towards the end of the first century. This

combined with the poor definition of the decoration may suggest a late Flavian dating for this sherd. cAD 70-100 Wt 6g, D. ?, RE 1%

Context 6

Eight bodysherds of a shell-tempered jar, exterior rilled and sooted, Leary's CTA1. Probably 1st century. Wt 42g

A very abraded smooth greyware reeded rimmed bowl rimsherd in a greyware with some moderate sand. Possibly cf Leary's (1998) GRA1. Flavian-Trajanic. Wt 12g, D. c 20 cms, RE 6%

A wide-mouthed jar rim with a hooked and beaded rim. Leary (1998, 28) suggests these are Antonine or later, however, such types occur in earlier deposits elsewhere. Roman. Wt 28g, D. 24cms, RE 10%

Context 7

Five bodysherds from a closed vessel, oxidised, 'clean' laminar fabric with common very fine silver mica, poorly levigated with occasional red ironstone, not obviously one of Leary's fabrics. Probably early Roman. Wt 15g

A bodysherd in an oxidised fabric, limey with some moderate sand temper c0.3mm and common sub-rounded orange grog/clay pellets up to 5mm. Probably 1st century. Wt 15g

Tegula? flange fragment. Wt 29g

Tile fragment, possibly from a floor tile. Wt 62g

Context 9

A greyware bodysherd with some-common moderate sand, possibly Leary's (1998) GRB1. Wt 7g

A greyware bodysherd, smooth, 'clean', with some very fine silver mica. Cf Leary's (1998) GRA1-3 Wt 2g

A smooth oxidised bodysherd with some rounded red ironstone, possibly cf Leary's OBA1. Wt 2g

Three oxidised daub fragments. Wt 10g

Three tile fragments. Wt 35g

Context 10

A very abraded rounded daub (or tile) fragment. Wt 8g

Context 13

Samian bodysherd, form unidentifiable, Les Martres-de-Veyre, cAD100-120/30. Wt 2g

A scrap of shell-tempered ware, CTA1. Wt 1g

A whiteware bodysherd, 'clean', hard, with occasional moderate sand, cf Leary's WWW1. Wt 3g

A Severn Valley ware jar/constricted-necked jar shoulder sherd with cordon. The fabric has a grey core, orange margins and surfaces with some fine vegetable temper voids and occasional moderate sand, probably as Leary's SW1. Severn Valley ware is unlikely to reach this area before the Flavian period. Wt 13g

A handmade grog tempered ware bodysherd with a smooth, 'soapy' texture with common sub-angular brown and light grey grog up to 5mm and some ironstone, probably as Leary's GTA2. Wt 8g

Two greyware bodysherds from two greyware jars with some moderate sand temper $\leq 0.3\text{mm}$. Possibly cf Leary's GRA1. Wt 7g

Context 17

Two joining bodysherds from a jar base in an orange-brown fabric with some moderate sand $\leq 0.3\text{mm}$ and some very fine silver mica, cf Leary's OBA1. Wt 27g

5 Discussion

At the front of the building the proposed site of the wall crosses an area already much disturbed by initially the presence and then the demolition of the smithy first recorded in 1851. If, as proposed, the new wall is built off the footings of the pre-existing wall no damage to archaeological deposits should occur.

To the rear of the Trooper, the thickness of layer [5], which is generally well in excess of 500mm, should provide an ample buffer for the significant and possibly sensitive deposits below this layer which were discovered during this evaluation. Layer [5], whilst Roman, appears to be a dumping layer. No features were visible within this. All earthmoving for the proposed works which may affect this layer had already been completed.

The site lies well within the area already defined as forming the civilian settlement of Wall. A well has already been recorded at the rear of the Trooper and the discovery of the hearth confirms the occupation of this site in the second century.

All the pottery of Roman date recovered from the excavation was of a Flavian-Trajanic range with no later material. Considering the position of the site close to the 3rd/4th century enclosure this absence of later material is perhaps indicative of the ephemeral nature of the later occupation. It has been suggested that the large enclosure was one of a series constructed along the line of Watling Street when Britain was retaken by Constantius Chlorus in 296 AD after the rebellion of Carausius (Webster, 1975). Watcher suggests that these may represent a series of permanent campaign camps built for the field army to be used at need, and that the absence of permanent structures could be explained by the use of tents (Watcher, 1990).

6 References

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7 The archive

The archive is currently held by Marches Archaeology awaiting transfer to Stoke-on-Trent Museum for long term curation. The archive consists of:

- 1 context index
- 20 context sheets
- 2 sheets of levels for plans
- 1 sheet of levels for sections
- 1 index of drawings
- 2 sheets of site drawings
- 1 sheet of inked drawings
- 1 film of photographic negatives
- 1 film of photographic slides
- 2 sheets of photographic index sheets of site drawings
- 1 box of finds
- 11 finds recording sheets

The site code is TWA99A