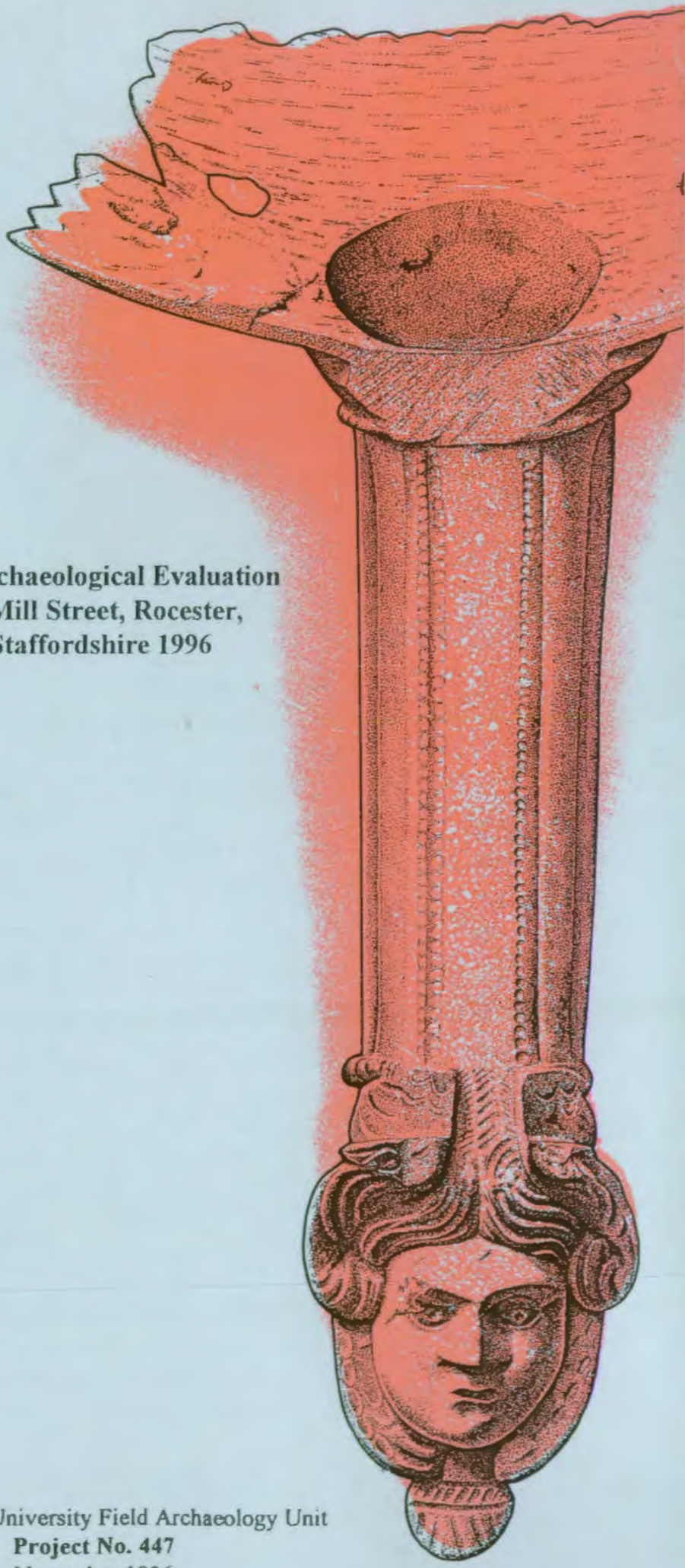

An Archaeological Evaluation at Mill Street, Rocester, Staffordshire 1996

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

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An Archaeological Evaluation at Mill Street, Rocester, Staffordshire 1996

1.0 Summary

An archaeological evaluation was conducted, following demolition of blocks of flats and prior to a proposed redevelopment of two parcels of land located on either side of Mill Street, Rocester, Staffordshire, in the period 23 September - 11 October 1996. Previous excavation on one part of the proposed re-development site, in the early 1960s, had identified surviving archaeological features and deposits, suggesting the potential for survival elsewhere within the site. In 1996 the recording of open trenches and the excavation of five trial trenches identified three zones of archaeological survival (Figure 2). Zone 1 was characterised by construction trenches and foundations associated with 1880s terraced houses. These foundations sat on top of, or were cut into, the sand-gravel subsoil. Zones 2 and 3 were characterised by the survival of a complex and well-preserved sequence of archaeological features and deposits with associated artefacts. These archaeological deposits are dated to the late-1st - early-2nd century AD, with some 3rd century activity also present in one trench, and are thought to represent further parts of the Roman *vicus* first examined by Sturdy in the 1960s (Bell 1986).

2.0 Introduction

This report describes the results of an archaeological evaluation of two parcels of land on either side of Mill Street, Rocester, Staffordshire. The work was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of East Staffordshire Borough Council to provide archaeological information in advance of proposed re-development of the site, and of an adjacent parcel of land which may be subject to separate curatorial decision. The archaeological evaluation was conducted in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994), a brief prepared by Staffordshire County Council (Meeson 1996) and a Specification prepared by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (Ferris 1996). This evaluation conformed to Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (Department of Environment 1991).

3.0 The Site and its Location (Figures 1 and 2)

The site comprises two parcels of open land, located on either side of Mill Street (centred on NGR SK 110393). Prior to the archaeological evaluation flats and maisonettes, which had been constructed in the 1960s on both sides of Mill Street, had been demolished, the

demolition material levelled and a number of trenches cut around the perimeter of the site to deter vehicle access.

The site, whose underlying geology comprises river terrace sand-gravel, lies within an area of known archaeological context. It is located at a point where the Roman road from Derby to Chesterton crosses the River Dove. Excavations in the 1960s confirmed the presence of a Roman fort and associated *vicus*. This area was further investigated in the period 1985-87, when it was shown that there was a complex sequence of late-1st century Roman military activity and three successive forts, the latest of which was occupied until *c.* 200AD. A 'small town', or village, developed in the 3rd and 4th centuries and was, in turn, succeeded by Anglo-Saxon and medieval occupation. This archaeological and historical development is outlined in Esmonde Cleary and Ferris (1996).

4.0 Objectives

The objectives of this archaeological evaluation were to determine the presence/absence, extent, date and character of surviving archaeological deposits and to assess their quality and significance. In addition, the evaluation aimed to assess the extent to which any archaeological deposits had been damaged by more recent building and demolition work, to provide information regarding the depth of archaeological deposits below the post-demolition layers and their vulnerability to any future development.

5.0 Method (Figure 2)

The first stage of evaluation comprised the cleaning and recording of existing trenches which had been cut around the perimeter of the site to deter vehicle access. A total of 119m of the existing trenches was sampled, by means of cleaning and recording in section and in plan, in order to gain information about the likely location of surviving archaeological deposits. These were recorded as Trenches A-G. The results from this initial evaluative stage (see Section 6.0 below) were used to identify locations for additional trial trenches.

A total of five trial trenches was excavated. A JCB excavator was used to remove the demolition material and modern overburden to the top of any significant archaeological features and deposits, or to the top of the subsoil. Trench 1 was located to establish the extent of surviving archaeological deposits identified in Trench E, by High Street. Trenches 2 and 3 were located to test the southeastern quarter of the site as widely as possible, whilst Trenches 4 and 5 were located to establish the geographical extent of deposits recorded in Trench D, which ran at a right-angle to Mill Street.

All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present, and contextual information was supplemented by scale drawings, plans, sections and photographs which, together with recovered artefacts, form the site archive. This is presently housed at Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit.

6.0 The Archaeological Results (Figures 2-7)

Trench A
(1m x 5m, aligned east-west, excavated to 87.16m AOD)

The sand-gravel subsoil was not reached within this trench.

A dark-brown silt-sand (1003) was overlain by a layer of compacted, brown, clay-sand (1002). This was overlain by a thick deposit of limestone hardcore (1001), which was sealed by a layer of tarmac (1000). No archaeological features were identified in this trench.

Trench B
(1m x 10m, aligned east-west, excavated to 87.76m AOD)

The sand-gravel subsoil was not reached within this trench.

A series of black, stony, clay-silt deposits which had a high cinder and charcoal content (1055-1059) were identified along the base of this trench. These were overlain by a buff-brown clay-silt (1053), which was sealed by a thick deposit of limestone hardcore (1052). The hardcore was sealed by a tarmac surface (1050). No archaeological features were identified within this trench and only post-medieval pottery was recovered.

Trench C
(1m x 5m, aligned east-west, excavated to 87.16m AOD)

The sand-gravel subsoil was not reached within this trench.

Two parallel, linear deposits of compacted yellow clay and machine-bricks (1105 and 1106) defined a series of brown-black, silt-clay and orange-brown, gravel-sand deposits (1103, 1104, 1107). The deposits were overlain by a brown-black, silt-sand layer (1102), which was sealed by a layer of demolition debris (1100). A small quantity of Romano-British pottery was recovered from this trench soon after it had been opened; however, no archaeological features were identified.

Trench D
(1m x 15m, aligned northeast-southwest, excavated to 87.77m AOD)

A layer of charcoal-flecked, cream-brown clay (1153) and an area of darker clay, which was further defined by a line of large sub-rounded stones (1154), were identified at the base of Trench D. A section was excavated across these two layers and a significant quantity of Romano-British pottery was recovered. The layers were sealed by modern demolition debris (1151). Part of Trench D was later taken in to Trench 4.

Trench E
(1.50m x 45m, one part aligned east-west, one part aligned northwest-southeast, excavated to 87.41m AOD)

A series of intercutting wall foundation trenches and modern service trenches, and a build-up of demolition material was recorded along the length of Trench E. Only one undisturbed area was identified, at the western end of the trench. Here, a discrete layer of sub-rounded stones, set into orange sand-gravel (1215), was overlain by a red-brown sand-silt (1214). This, in turn, was sealed by a charcoal-flecked, creamy-brown, clay-silt layer (1202) which sloped gently from west to east. A concentration of charcoal (1210) lay over the clay-silt layer (1202) and both were overlain by a thin layer of redeposited orange-brown sand-gravel (1208). This sand-gravel was itself sealed by modern demolition material (1205). A small quantity of Romano-British pottery was recovered from this undisturbed sequence of occupation deposits and surfaces which, in tandem with the quantity of Romano-British pottery recovered from mixed contexts elsewhere in the trench, suggested that archaeological deposits might have survived further back from the High Street frontage.

Trench F
(1m x 15m, aligned north-south, excavated to 88.20m AOD, below modern ground level)

The sand-gravel subsoil (1252) was overlain by 0.40-0.50m of modern demolition material (1251). No archaeological deposits or artefacts were recovered.

Trench G
(1m x 74m (of which 24m was sampled), aligned northwest-southeast, excavated to 88.54m AOD)

This trench was sampled by means of a series of 2m wide areas which were cleaned and recorded. At the southeastern end of Trench G, the orange-brown sand-gravel subsoil (1318) was cut by a 1.30m deep, oval-shaped, pit (F255), filled with dark brown silt-sand (1316). The pit fill contained a small quantity of abraded Romano-British pottery sherds and was sealed by a 0.50m layer of demolition debris (1317).

The remaining length of Trench G was characterised by the presence of the foundations for 1880s terraces, service trenches and demolition material.

The Trial Trenches
The sequence in each of the five trial trenches is described from the base of the trench upwards. Interpretation of the stratigraphic sequence is reserved for Section 11.0 Discussion of Archaeological Results. Spot heights for archaeological deposits and features have been included on Figures 3-7. A brief quantification and summary of the Roman pottery assemblage is given at the end of each trench description; no breakdown of the quantities of post-medieval pottery is given here, since all of this material was recovered from mixed deposits. An overall quantification of this material appears in section 7.2.

Trench 1 (Figure 3)
(1.60m x 18.50m, aligned northwest-southeast, excavated to 87.06m AOD)

The sand-gravel subsoil was not reached within this trench.

A concrete and machine-brick foundation slab (1034) was recorded at the northwestern end of Trench 1. A concentration of loose machine bricks mixed with a brown-black silt-sand matrix (1035) may represent the fill of a wall foundation trench associated with this slab, however, the unstable character of this material prevented more certain identification. Neither 1034 nor 1035 were removed. The possible foundation trench cut through a clean, green-brown, clayey, silt-sand layer (1030). The layer (1030) was partially overlain by a discrete concentration of carbon lumps and flecks (1026) and partially by a stony surface (F102) comprising rammed, re-deposited sand-gravel. The surface was cut by a north-south aligned, narrow gully (F100), which appeared to continue its alignment beyond Trench 1. The gully was filled with a very silty, charcoal-flecked sand deposit (1020). Fill 1020 and stone surface F102 were overlain by a black silt-sand layer, containing cinders (1019). This was, in turn, overlain by a compact layer of dirty clay with machine bricks and demolition material (1012), sealed by more recent demolition material (1029).

A compacted layer of dark reddish-brown, silty-sand, flecked with charcoal, mortar and containing some medium sub-rounded stones (1036) was sealed by the stone surface F102. This relationship was seen only in the free-standing section of F107. This north-south aligned, linear feature, filled with charcoal-flecked, reddish-brown, clay-sand (1025), cut the surface F102 and cut through the silty-sand layer (1036). Layer 1036 was also cut into by F105, a feature filled with slumped material from layer 1016. To the east 1036 was overlain by a mixed deposit of grey, charcoal-flecked, sandy-silt, yellow clay and occasional sub-rounded stones (1037).

A charcoal and mortar-flecked green-brown, clay-sand (1016) slumped into F105 and sealed the fill of F107. Initial cleaning of this layer revealed a semi-circle of burnt clay, packed with the occasional sub-rounded stone (F101), sat on top of its surface. The clay, stones and immediate area were covered with well-preserved, large pieces of Roman pottery, including one half of a Black Burnished ware cooking pot and several large fragments of Samian. Fragments of bone were also recovered. The feature, which may have been a structural support, was fully excavated. The green-brown, clay-sand layer (1016) extended east where it was cut by a second structural feature, F104. This oval feature was cut to a depth of 86.90m AOD and was filled a creamy-brown, silt-sand (1027), with stones packed into its northern side.

The green-brown, clay-sand layer (1016) extended further to the east, where it was truncated by a well, constructed from machine bricks (F106). The well also truncated a stone surface (F103) to the east. This surface, which was made from large sub-rounded stones set into dirty orange-brown, sand-gravel, appeared to continue beyond the limits of Trench 1. It was overlain by two distinct layers of silt-sand (1033 and 1032). Layer 1032 was overlain by modern demolition material (1029).

Five hundred and eighty two sherds of Roman pottery came from this trench, all of the 1st and 2nd centuries.

Trench 2 (Figure 4)
(1.60m x 19.50m, aligned northwest-southeast, excavated to 87.40m AOD)

The orange-brown, sand-gravel subsoil (2007) was recorded within a machine-excavated sondage at the southeastern end of Trench 2. A clean, moist, sand layer (2008), which was recorded in two hand-dug sondages, may represent a variation within the subsoil. Both layers were sealed by a smooth, brown, slightly clayey, silt-sand layer (2005) which extended along the full length of the trench (2003 and 2005). At the southeastern end of Trench 2, layer 2005 was overlain by a mixed layer of black silt-sand, brick fragments, cinders, mortar and charcoal flecks and sub-rounded stones (2004). Towards the centre of Trench 2, layer 2005 was sealed by a layer of sandstone, machine bricks and cinders (2009). This appeared to be associated with the remains of a wall-footing (F200) and a deposit of loose machine-bricks (2010).

In the northwestern half of the trench, layer 2005 was cut by a modern service trench (F202), and overlain by a layer similar in make-up to 2005, but here mixed with bricks and stones (2001). This layer was cut by a service trench (F201) and both were overlain by a deposit of black-brown clayey silt-sand, mixed with brick, tile and stone (2011). A layer of modern demolition material extended along the whole trench (2006).

Twenty three sherds of 1st and 2nd century pottery came from residual contexts in this trench, and from layer 2005.

Trench 3 (Figure 5)
(1.60m x 18.00m, aligned east-west, excavated to 87.46m AOD)

The orange-brown, sand-gravel subsoil (3012) was recorded in a machine-excavated sondage, and along much of Trench 3. Two linear concrete foundations (F301 and F303) were constructed on top of the subsoil. The cut for F303 was recorded in section (F304), as were the remains of an associated machine-brick wall-footing (F305). A well-defined cut (F302) filled with black silt-sand, machine bricks, sub-rounded stones and cinders (3005) was recorded, in section only, immediately to the southeast of F305.

To the northwest, the subsoil was cut by four inter-cutting features, two of which were service trenches (F307 and F309), one was a modern cut and one a wall-foundation trench (F308). A deposit of sand-gravel, cinders and bricks (3013) overlay the fills of F300 and F309, and was itself sealed by a layer of modern demolition material (3003) which extended across the whole trench.

No Romano-British pottery was recovered from this trench.

Trench 4 (Figure 6)
(1.60m x 18.50m, aligned northwest-southeast, excavated to 87.17m AOD)

The sand-gravel subsoil (4012) was recorded within the southeastern two-thirds of Trench 4. At the southeast end of Trench 4 it was overlain by a layer of black silt-sand containing cinders (4014). This layer was also recorded further to the northwest in Trench 4. The subsoil and cinder layer were cut through by a wall foundation trench (F405) and by a service trench (F406) filled with pink coarse sand (4016).

To the northwest of F406, the subsoil (4012) was overlain by building debris (4019). Two deposits, one of brown clay and mortar (4018) and one of black cinders (4017) had been tipped over the building debris. The later deposit (4017) was truncated by a northeast-southwest aligned wall foundation trench (F400). The northwestern side of F400 cut a continuation of the cinder layer (4014).

A complex stratigraphic sequence was recorded within the northwestern third of Trench 4. Here the subsoil (4012) was cut by a northeast-southwest aligned gully (F403) filled with a dark grey-brown sandy clay fill (4008). This fill contained a significantly higher proportion of sub-rounded stones towards its base. The subsoil was also cut by a curvilinear ditch (F402) filled with brown silty sand (4007, 4010). The fills of these two features appeared to merge at their junction. Although further cleaning failed to clarify the relationship of F402 and F403, subsequent analysis of the pottery established that the fill of F402 contained 3rd century pottery, whilst the fill of F402 contained only 2nd century pottery. This interpretation of the relationship is shown on Figure 6.

At the northwestern end of Trench 4, the subsoil (4012) was overlain by a layer of charcoal-flecked grey silt-sand (4006). Both layers were cut through by the ditch F402. A section through the northern arm of F402 revealed that the upper half of the ditch had been filled with a compact layer of clay-sand and tightly-packed, large, sub-rounded stones (4011). A discrete area of burnt soil (4021) was recorded immediately to the northeast of F402.

Features F402 and F403, and layer 4006 were sealed by a brown, charcoal-flecked silty-sand mixed with sandstone, clay and building debris (4002). To the northwest, layer 4011 was sealed by a charcoal-flecked, grey, silt-clay mixed with sandstone, brick and mortar (4003), which was, in turn, sealed by 4002. Layer 4002 was overlain by a black silt-sand (4014) and a layer of modern demolition material (4013). The demolition material was overlain by a deposit of pink, coarse sand (4020). All these deposits were cut through by a northeast-southwest aligned wall foundation trench (F401).

One hundred and eighteen sherds of Romano-British pottery came mainly from the archaeological deposits in this trench, most being of the 1st and 2nd century although 12 sherds of a 3rd century date came from F402.

Trench 5 (Figure 7)
(1.60m x 19.50m, aligned east-west, excavated to 87.54m AOD)

The orange-brown, sand-gravel subsoil (5013) was recorded in a machine-excavated sondage and within the south southeastern half of Trench 5. The subsoil was cut by a possible service trench (F503), which was filled with a mixed deposit of brown-black clayey silt-sand (5018).

The fill and subsoil were sealed by a black, charcoal-flecked silt-sand (5002) which was overlain by a layer of demolition debris (5001).

To the northwest of the machine sondage, two service trenches (F501 and F502) cut through the subsoil (5013). Service Trench F502 also cut through the southeastern profile of F500. The full depth and extent of F500, a roughly circular negative feature, could not be established within the confines of Trench 5. The lower profile of F500 was lined with sub-rounded stones, and some slumping of a charcoal-flecked brown clayey silt-sand (5008) had occurred on its northwestern side prior to the feature becoming filled with a dark brown gravelly sand (5007). A possible re-cut may be represented by the semi-circle of stones which, in section, define the lower limit of a creamy-brown silt-sand (5006). The silt-sand was overlain by a third fill of charcoal-flecked, brown, clayey, silt-sand deposit which contained cinders and some brick (5005).

The northwestern side of F500 cut through a series of deposits (5003, 5004, 5010). A deposit of burnt clay (5010) was abutted by a layer of loose, clayey, silt-sand, into which were packed medium and large sub-rounded stones (5004). This stony layer was partially overlain by a thin layer of yellow clay (5011), and partially by a rooty, clay-sand deposit (5003) which also sealed the yellow clay.

A thin stony deposit (5009), which included some brick fragments, overlay the clay-sand deposit (5003) and sealed the northwestern cut of F500. The stony deposit was sealed by a continuation northwest of the black, charcoal-flecked silt-sand (5002). This was overlain by a deposit of limestone rubble (5014). An undulating layer of demolition material (5001) extended over the majority of Trench 5.

Seventy six sherds of 1st and 2nd century pottery came mainly from the archaeological horizons in this trench.

7.1 The Romano-British Pottery *by Jane Evans*

A total of 1090 sherds of Romano-British pottery was recovered during the evaluation, of which approximately 20% was found residual in contexts and features containing post-medieval and modern pottery. For the purposes of assessment the overall assemblage was broken down into the following ware groups: samian, amphorae, mortaria, colour coats, Black-burnished ware, Derbyshire ware, miscellaneous reduced wares, miscellaneous oxidised wares (including sherds with mica dusting, and a small number of sherds in a Severn Valley ware type fabric, not recorded from the New Cemetery site), white ware and 'other'. Analysis of the assemblage by ware, based on percentage sherd count (Fig. 8), shows it to be broadly similar to the group from the New Cemetery site (Leary 1996, fig. 27), though this latter assemblage spans the 1st-4th centuries.

During the assessment, reference was made to other assemblages already published from Rocester; from the New Cemetery site (Leary 1996, 20,000 sherds) and earlier work in the village centre (Bell 1986, sample discussed only). Detailed comparison between the assemblages is outside the brief of this assessment; however, the assessment showed that useful parallels could be drawn.

The Mill Street assemblage included material dating to the 2nd century, and small quantities of material associated elsewhere in Rocester with late-1st to early-2nd century ("Flavian-Trajanic") contexts (Leary 1996); for example mica-dusted wares, a sherd of glazed ware, rough-cast wares, rusticated grey wares and shelly or 'calcite gritted' wares (CTA1). The quantity of Black-burnished ware (BB1) represented, and the presence of Derbyshire ware, indicated a *terminus* of *c.*120 AD. The forms in Black-burnished ware included flat-rimmed bowls and dishes (Seager-Smith and Davies 1993, types 22, 23), and jars with upright necks (Seager-Smith and Davies 1993, type 1), all characteristic of 2nd century assemblages, but no characteristically later-2nd century types were noted, such as bowls with flat grooved rims and cook-pot sherds decorated with right-angle cross-hatch burnish. The proportion of BB1 (21%) is higher than in contemporary groups from the New Cemetery site (Phases 1 and 2), and the proportion of Derbyshire ware (9%) again seems high (Leary 1996, 59). The samian ware included cups and platters dating broadly from the 1st to mid-2nd centuries (Webster 1996, 38 and 35). The only later material came from the fill of a ditch in Trench 4 (4007, F402). The twelve sherds in this group included a Mancetter-Hartshill mortarium rim dating to the early-3rd century, three sherds of Nene Valley ware, and a frilled-rim jar similar to types found in 3rd to 4th century contexts at the New Cemetery site (Leary 1996, fig. 26.131).

As can be seen from Fig. 9, the great majority of pottery came from Trench 1 (582 sherds) and Trench E (235 sherds). Trenches 3 and B produced no Romano-British pottery, and the smaller assemblages from Trench 2 (23 sherds), Trench 4 (118 sherds), Trench 5 (76 sherds), Trench A (9 sherds), Trench C (7 sherds), Trench D (40 sherds) and Trench G (9 sherds) were generally more fragmentary, perhaps representing redeposited material.

It is not possible to compare the composition of the individual trench assemblages in any meaningful way as most of them are so small. However, some features which may reflect functional variations, can be noted. Very little mortaria was recovered, one from Trench E, only 4 sherds (<1%) from Trench 1 and 7 sherds (6%) from Trench 4. Trenches 1 and E were the only trenches to produce amphorae, though still in small quantities (6 and 3 sherds respectively). Trench E produced significantly more Derbyshire ware than any other trench (81 sherds, 34%), which may reflect a chronological or functional variation. More detailed comparison between this assemblage, as a whole, and other Rocester assemblages, published and unpublished, should, however, provide very useful functional and chronological information.

7.2 Post-Medieval Pottery *by Iain Ferris and Erica Macey*

Nine hundred and sixty three sherds of post-medieval and modern pottery were recovered, all from mixed horizons. Some sherds of ?Cistercian ware and other blackwares, along with Midlands Yellow, Midlands Purple, and Staffordshire Slipwares were notable in the assemblage. It would be churlish not to assume that these wares were all derived from the kilns at Stoke-on Trent.

8.0 Romano-British Small Finds *by Lynne Bevan*

Roman copper alloy items consisted of one complete brooch and fragments from two other brooches, a small stud and the shaft from a pin. A broken bone pin of Roman date was also found. The finds are listed by context below:

1. Complete copper alloy 'fantail' brooch with central circular inlay of now-decayed enamel and ?two further inlays on the fantail below. The majority of surface detail is obscured by corroded iron encrustations. Context 5004.

2. Fragment from a copper alloy bow brooch decorated with incised lines. Context 1202.

3. Fragment from a copper alloy crossbow brooch. Context 4002.

4. Stud of copper alloy. Context 1202.

5. Faceted, copper alloy pin shaft, broken at both ends. Context 1155.

6. Bone hairpin, broken across middle of shaft with a head carved into a sequence of reels and beads. Context 1209.

Some of these finds are diagnostic. For example, enamelling as a technique was practised during the earlier Roman period, which suggests a date for the fantail brooch (No. 1) possibly in the 2nd or 3rd century. Brooch No. 2 is an earlier type of crossbow brooch dating to *c.* 200-250 (Crummy 1983, Figure 13:73), and while the general style of the bone hairpin (No. 6) has a starting date of c.200, this particular example is almost identical to a pin from Colchester from a context dating from the 3rd to 4th century (Crummy 1983, Figure 22: 425, 24-25), though, of course, this could be residual. Following these comments, it should, however, be stressed that brooches in particular are difficult to use confidently as dating media, since most of the dates we have for these objects are **loss** dates rather than **use** dates.

Even at this level of assessment, the prevalence of brooches on the site is intriguing. Further study of these brooches, particularly with a view to seeking parallels for the fantail brooch and the decorated fragment, might also prove instructive and provide further dating comparanda for certain contexts.

In addition to the copper alloy and bone items, 90 iron nails and 21 unidentified iron objects were recovered. All of the iron was in a poor state of preservation. Two hundred and forty-eight fragments of iron slag, almost half of which came from context 1055, were recovered. Four lead items were also found: three fragments of sheet (1102, 1019 x 2) and a circular weight (1058) but none of these was from exclusively Roman contexts.

Of the 95 fragments of glass recovered only 15 are obviously Roman, originating from blue/green bottles. The Roman fragments came from the following contexts: 1055, 1017, 1311, 2001, 2005, 5000, 5007. Part of a handle (1017) and fragments from three bases were

present but none of the fragments was sufficiently large to give any indication of vessel size or chronologically-diagnostic features.

9.0 Animal Bone *by Lynne Bevan with specialist comments by Umberto Albarella.*

A total of 825 animal bones and fragments was recovered, the majority of which was from Roman contexts or is thought to represent residual Roman material. The bone was generally not well-preserved and was too fragmented in most cases to allow identification to species. However, approximately 25% of the bone was identified and attributed to the following animals:

Cattle	Cattle/Horse	Horse	Pig	Sheep/Goat	Dog	Hare
111	11	10	16	25	1	1

Bird bones were also present in the form of three chicken bones and the radius and ulna from a larger bird, probably a goose.

Cattle predominated on the site mainly in the form of teeth and lower limb bones suggesting their origin from butchery activities. Butchery marks were identified on one cow metatarsal and on five vertebrae from either cattle or horses. It is probable that the majority of the unidentified bones also originated from cattle, although horses would also be expected on a rural site and a total of ten horse bones was positively identified.

Sheep or goat bones were also present, 25 in total. Butchery marks on bones from a post-medieval deposit (1102) appear to have resulted from the usage of a saw. This context has also produced a very large cattle astragalus, more typical of a modern breed. Sixteen pig bones (mainly teeth and mandibles), a hare radius and a dog humerus were also present in the assemblage.

The general character of the assemblage is suggestive of a farming community with cattle as the main meat-bearing animals on the site (as well as possibly also being used for haulage), with sheep or goats and pigs also being present. The popularity of teeth and lower limb bones noted in the cattle bone assemblage is also true for the other species among which teeth and jaw bones are especially common. This probably implies that primary butchery practices involving the removal of extremities were carried out on the site. This line of enquiry might be pursued in the event of further archaeological work in the area resulting in the recovery of a larger animal bone assemblage. The study of lateral variation might be possible in order to determine the relative prevalence of various species and body parts with a view to defining activity zones within the area as a whole.

10.0 Assessment of plant macrofossils *by Angela Monckton*

10.1 Introduction

During the recent archaeological evaluation by BUFAU samples were taken from deposits thought to have the potential for the preservation of charred plant remains. Of the samples processed four were submitted for assessment. The site was a Roman civilian settlement and

it was hoped that information from this site may add to that from other nearby sites which have produced abundant plant remains studied by Lisa Moffett and others over the last ten years.

10.2 Method of assessment

The samples were processed in a York tank using a 1mm mesh and with flotation into a 0.5mm sieve. The flotation fractions (flots) were air dried and sorted using a stereo microscope at x10 magnification; the larger flots were divided and had a fraction sorted. The remains found were recorded and removed to glass tubes.

10.3 Preservation, condition and storage.

Abundant charcoal was found with a few charred plant remains. The flots were stored dry in polythene bags and plant remains stored in glass tubes.

10.4 Provenance, dating and quantity.

The samples were from well sealed deposits of late-1st to early- 2nd century date from four contexts with abundant charcoal apparent. The samples were of 2 to 21 litres in size.

10.5 Range and variety of material

Samples from the following four contexts were examined:

Trench E, Context 1210 (charcoal deposit).

The 2 litre sample produced 92 mls of flot with abundant finely divided charcoal. Charred plant remains consisted of only one seed of clover type (*Medicago, Melilotus* or *Trifolium*), a seed of sedge (*Carex* sp) and a bud of tree or shrub. An uncharred seed of elder (*Sambucus* sp) was found.

Trench 4, Context 4008 (fill of gully F403).

The 20 litre sample produced 225 mls of flot including charcoal fragments, small coal fragments and a few fragments bone. Evidence of cereals was found including two barley grains (*Hordeum vulgare*), two grains possibly of rye (cf *Secale cereale*) and three indeterminate cereal grains. Charred seeds included two of clover type, two of vetch (*Vicia* sp) and one of fat-hen (*Chenopodium* album). Two uncharred seeds of elder were present.

Trench 5, Context 5004 (stony layer).

A 21 litre sample produced 295 mls of flot of charcoal with soil and a few larger charcoal fragments and some small coal fragments. Large fragments of abraded bone were removed from the flot. Four cereal grains included wheat (*Triticum* sp) and barley, and three seeds included one vetch and two large grasses (Poaceae). A fragment of a larger legume possibly pea or bean (*Vicia/Pisum*) was found. (50% of the flot was sorted).

Trench 1, Context 1026 (charcoal deposit).

The 8 litre sample produced 1170 mls of flot of which 350 mls were very large charcoal fragments which were removed for identification. No plant remains other than charcoal were found by sorting 25% of the flot. Slag was present as small and larger spheres removed for identification.

10.6 Statement of potential

Although few plant remains were found the presence of cereals and possibly legumes is shown. The small quantities suggest that redeposited domestic rubbish is present. The wild plants present are those of arable or disturbed ground and may have been included with the cereals or possibly the weeds of the settlement. The presence of abundant burnt deposits suggests the possibility that other deposits on the site may be present and have the potential of containing plant remains.

10.7 Recommendations

Should further excavations be carried out it is suggested that targeted sampling of deposits with the potential to preserve charred remains is carried out to establish if domestic or other activity was present. This is also necessary in order to compare this site with others in the area and region.

11.0 Discussion of the Archaeological Results

The main period of activity recorded on this site is dated exclusively to the late-1st - early-2nd centuries AD, with some later activity in the 3rd century represented in Trench 4 only. Evidence of domestic settlement and perhaps small-scale industrial activity may be represented by a structure and associated deposits in Trench 1 and Trench E. Features in Trenches 4 and 5, and Trench D appear to represent other types of *vicus* activity, perhaps defined by an enclosure ditch.

In Trench 1, a silty-sand deposit (1036) accumulated prior to the construction of a small building. The linear feature F107 may represent a wall foundation trench and western limit for a structure whose floor level appears to have been cut into the earlier occupation build-up (1036). A green-brown, clay-sand layer (1016) may represent the remnants of a floor surface, whilst features F101 and F108 may be post-pads and F104 a post-hole. The building's eastern limit could not be identified. However, the survival of a cobbled surface (F103) does suggest that evidence for an eastern wall foundation trench had been destroyed by the insertion of a modern well (F106).

The western limit of the building was further defined by a narrow, possibly water-carrying, gully (F100) and by a stone surface (F102). This surface may represent a continuation southeast of the stony layer (1215) recorded in Trench E. The presence of spheres of metal-working slag within a charcoal deposit (1026) sealed by the stone surface F102, may suggest small-scale industrial activity within the immediate vicinity of Trenches 1 and E.

Late-1st - early-2nd century remains were also recorded in Trenches 4 and 5 on the northern side of Mill Street. In Trench 4, an occupation deposit (4006) had accumulated over the subsoil prior to the cutting of a northeast-southwest aligned gully (F403). This gully was truncated by a curvilinear enclosure ditch (F402) whose fill contained 3rd century pottery sherds. In Trench 5, feature F500, which was associated with a sequence of clay and stone surfaces (5011, 5004) may represent a terminus for the southern arm of this curvilinear ditch. However, it is also possible that F500 represents a large pit, located outside the parcel of land enclosed by F402. The limitations of trial-trenching prevent a more certain identification at this stage.

While ditch F402 contained later pottery, this material may represent later infilling or dishing of later deposits into a partially open feature. This enclosure ditch, open and in use, may he part of the 1st-2nd century *vicus*.

No medieval features or artefacts were recovered from this site and no archaeological features were identified in Trenches A-C, F, 2 and 3. It is possible that such evidence did survive, on the southern side of what is now Mill Street, prior to the 1880s when terraced housing was constructed along its length. Trenches 2 and 3, where foundations for the terraces were cut directly into the subsoil, suggest that some form of levelling policy was practised prior to their construction. In Trenches E, G, 1, 4 and 5, surviving Romano-British deposits were sealed by post-medieval building debris, rather than the remains of medieval structures and surfaces.

12.0 Assessment of the Archaeological Importance of the Proposed Development Site

by I.M. Ferris.

The evaluation has recovered sufficient evidence to suggest that Sturdy's (Bell 1986) identification of parts of the redevelopment area as being within the bounds of a Romano-British *vicus* or civilian settlement was correct. There must still remain some doubts about the extent and plan of this *vicus*, although concentrated activity has now been recorded in Sturdy's Trenches III, IV and A/B, and in Trenches 1, 4 ,5 , D and E of the recent evaluation. A lower level of activity has been recorded in evaluation Trenches 2, 3 and G. While the eastern limit of *vicus* activity would naturally be constrained by the line of the fort's western defensive circuit, the western limit evidently lies beyond the western ends of evaluation Trenches 1 and E, perhaps reflecting ribbon development along the line of the Roman road into and out of the fort. The southern limit of the *vicus* must lie along a line between evaluation Trench 1 and Sturdy's Trench II, this limit being dictated by the natural circumstances of liability to flooding, a factor that can be seen to have influenced the siting of settlement elsewhere in the village (at the site called Orton's Pasture). The northern limit lies somewhere between the northern end of evaluation Trench 4 and the Queen's Arms pub (recent evaluation of land behind the pub building encountered no archaeological features). It may be, though it cannot yet be proven, that the *vicus* was clustered around the west gate of the fort (either within an enclosure, or, less likely, undefended) with ribbon development along the road to the west. On-going study of the Roman period activity at the site called Orton's Pasture, to the south of the line of the southern defensive circuit of the fort, suggests that this represents activity connected with a military annexe to the fort, rather than further *vicus* activity or a *vicus* of another period to the one centred on the west side of the fort.

As to the date of the *vicus* and the nature of the activity carried out there, the evaluation has added greatly to the previous work of Sturdy, and can be provisionally tied into the phases of fort activity identified after the large-scale excavations at the New Cemetery site (Esmonde Cleary and Ferris 1996). The vast majority of the pottery recovered during the evaluation dates to the later-1st and 2nd centuries, equivalent to Phases 1 and 2 at the New Cemetery (spanning three successive forts), the *terminus* of most of the activity in the area of the *vicus* seeming to correspond to Phase 2C (the abandonment of the fort). As the evaluation aims and objectives needed to be met without extensive excavation of deposits and features, no

further nuancing of the dating of *vicus* activity can yet be provided. The presence of a dozen sherds of later pottery, material which would be contemporary with Phase 3 activity further to the east at the New Cemetery site (post-fort, civilian activity linked to the growth of a settlement here, later to be enclosed by a rampart, as in the manner of a 'small town') is less easy to explain. These sherds come from the backfill of a substantial ditch, probably forming part of the circuit of an enclosure, and at present can be said to date part of the backfilling of that ditch rather than the period of its use. The ditched enclosure may be part of the 1st-2nd century *vicus*, rather than being a later enclosure outside the line of the civilian clay rampart which lies some c.50m to the east, although this latter interpretation must be borne in mind.

No finds of a purely military nature - weaponry, military fittings etc. - came from the evaluation. The large pottery assemblage largely reflects the range of wares present within the contemporary New Cemetery assemblage from within the fort, though preliminary assessment of the material suggests that there are differences in the relative types of vessel represented and in proportions of wares and types represented. More detailed functional analysis of the evaluation assemblage is beyond the scope of the present assessment. The demonstrated presence and survival of other categories of material - metalwork, metalworking residues in the form of iron smithing slag, glass, animal bones and charred plant remains - also shows that other types of analysis could be employed to reconstruct the social and economic life of the civilian settlement, particularly when employed in a contrastive way with the same types of material from the contemporary military assemblage from the New Cemetery site.

While the area proposed for redevelopment lies outside the area of the protected and Scheduled Ancient Monument at Rocester, which corresponds with much of the area of the Roman fort (as well as that of a medieval monastic establishment), the area of the *vicus* is academically indivisible from the Scheduled fort site, as both fort and *vicus* are from the annexe. The extent and survival of archaeological remains on the development site was, before evaluation, in doubt because of the scale of the redevelopment that took place on the site in the 1960s. While some damage to archaeological horizons has taken place, the 1960s redevelopment did not compromise the potential academic value of the archaeological site, either within the overall context of the Roman archaeology of Rocester or also within a wider regional and national context.

Surprisingly, there have been few synthetic academic works dealing with the Romano-British *vicus* as an individual category of site or monument. Johnson (1975) in a paper on the '*Vici* in Lowland Britain' provided a still-useful summary of the legal status and standing of such sites, while Sommer (1984) has produced a valuable gazetteer of *vici* with an attempt to seek patterns within their 'origins, location, layout, administration, function and end'. More often than not *vici* are discussed purely in terms of their contribution (or not) to the early development of urban centres in lowland Roman Britain (cf. Millett 1990 for a relatively recent example of this) rather than as social, economic or cultural phenomena in their own right. Extensive, and even modest, excavations of *vici* in lowland Britain are rare, as can be seen from Sommer's gazetteer, perhaps enhancing further the wider academic potential of any individual site.

As for assessing military and civilian relationships, particularly in the first two centuries of the Roman period in lowland Britain, any non-urban civilian site, linked to a military

establishment, that can demonstrate the survival there of an extensive and complex archaeological sequence, tied to a relatively short chronology, and the potential presence of contemporary assemblages of pottery, other artefacts, animal bones and other environmental data, can claim to be of vital potential importance in defining and nuancing our understanding of the surely symbiotic fort-*vicus* interaction on a number of levels. The archaeological importance of the vicus site at Mill Street, Rocester must, on these terms, be defined as high.

The Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies (1985, Priorities for the Preservation and Excavation of Romano-British Sites) noted that 'the interaction between military enclave and civilian settlement in the Pennines and elsewhere needs further exploration. This approach, treating fort, *vicus* and its immediately associated fieild systems as a single entity, is almost wholly lacking.' (4.2.2.1.), and that 'there is a need for a research-orientated strategy for the study of *vici*, irrespective of rescue threats or otherwise.' (4.2.4.).

While no deposits or features of the Saxon or medieval periods were encountered during the evaluation, this does not entirely mean that they could not be present elsewhere on the site, outside the evaluated areas.

13.0 Implications and Proposals (Figure 2)

13.1 Implications

The identification of well-preserved late-1st - early-2nd and 3rd century features and deposits, along with large and potentially informative assemblages of pottery, animal bone and charred plant remains, has implications for any proposed development on this site, as these remains have the potential to enhance our understanding of Romano-British activity within Rocester and on a local, regional and national level.

In terms of potential archaeological survival, the proposed development site may be divided into three zones (Figure 2). Zones 2 and 3, as indicated on the figure, could be more extensive still. The implications and proposals for each of these zones are considered below, although any final definition of the site's potential and of a mitigation strategy to reflect that potential, must be made by the Staffordshire County Council archaeological officers in charge of such curatorial policies.

Zone 1

With the exception of one pit containing Romano-British pottery (Trench G), and the recovery of a small quantity of Romano-British sherds from mixed levels in Trench G and Trench 2, there was little or no archaeological survival within this zone. Instead, the sand-gravel subsoil was in most places directly overlain by 0.40m-0.50m of demolition material. It seems likely that a policy of ground-levelling prior to the construction of terraced housing in the 1880s erased any evidence of earlier activity which had survived up to that date, if indeed there had been any intensity of activity here in the first place.

Zones 2 and 3

Spatially well-defined and undisturbed archaeological deposits and features dating to the late-1st - early-2nd century AD were recorded at a depth of 0.40-0.60m below the modern surface in Zones 2 and 3. Activity dating to the 3rd century AD was also recorded in Zone 3. Foundation trenches, services and the recent demolition of flats and maisonettes have not had a significant impact on the surviving archaeological deposits. The deposits are sealed by loose modern building debris which may offer some form of protection against future development; this would depend largely upon potential sub-surface disturbance caused by the provision of services, the cutting of foundation trenches and a need for landscaping. However, it is also highly likely that the unstable nature and varying character of the building debris may necessitate its removal for crushing and relaying. Such exposure of archaeological deposits and the use of heavy plant for such an operation would undoubtedly cause significant disturbance to the archaeology. Given the extensive nature of intact archaeological deposits, both in horizontal and vertical terms, it is difficult to see how any building works could be carried out in these zones without a mitigation strategy that involved a balance of preservation *in situ*, i.e. by scheme redesign and design option strategies, and preservation by record, i.e. area excavation, sample excavation and watching briefs.

Zone 4

No evidence at present for these areas. Monitoring of open trenches produced no Romano-British finds, layers or features.

13.2 Proposals (Figure 2)

The proposals below provide an outline of the archaeological mitigation fieldwork which could be required if any future development goes ahead. The precise nature of such mitigation would need to be determined following completion of a final location design and with the approval of Staffordshire County Council. This discussion has been kept broad and does not relate specifically to any particular set of redevelopment proposals. It is assumed that any mitigation fieldwork programme would run in tandem with a mitigation-by-preservation-*in-situ* strategy.

No - with the approval of East Staffs Borough, advised by SCC

Zone 1

Provision could be made for the maintenance of a watching brief during any area stripping and groundworks within Zone 1. This would allow for the targetting of sample areas for cleaning, recording and excavation of what are expected to be mainly isolated archaeological features and for the recovery of further artefacts and samples.

Zones 2 and 3

It may be possible for any future development on this site to eliminate the need for ground disturbance within Zones 2 and 3, so allowing for the preservation of identified archaeological deposits *in situ*. However, given the extensive horizontal and vertical sequences of archaeological deposits and features demonstrated to be present any ground disturbances here would require an equal archaeological response, likely to be in the form of area excavation. Archaeological excavation and recording would be appropriate where any 0.40-0.60m+deep, sub-surface disturbance could not be avoided, and/or where any levelling or landscaping works were similarly set to compromise archaeological horizons.

Although the archaeological remains identified in Zones 2 and 3 are spatially well-defined, they are also relatively extensive, and it may not be feasible for future development plans to avoid sub-surface disturbance within the zones. The full excavation and recording of remains in advance of any proposed development would allow for their preservation by record and would clear the site for development to proceed, although it is likely that this would be in tandem with further archaeological work in the form of a watchingand recording brief.

On completion of any further archaeological fieldwork, it would be appropriate to prepare an assessment of the significance of the findings, in accordance with the recommendations of Management of Archaeology Projects 2 (English Heritage 1991), with a view to further analysis and publication of the results in a local archaeological journal or other appropriate format.

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15.0 Acknowledgements

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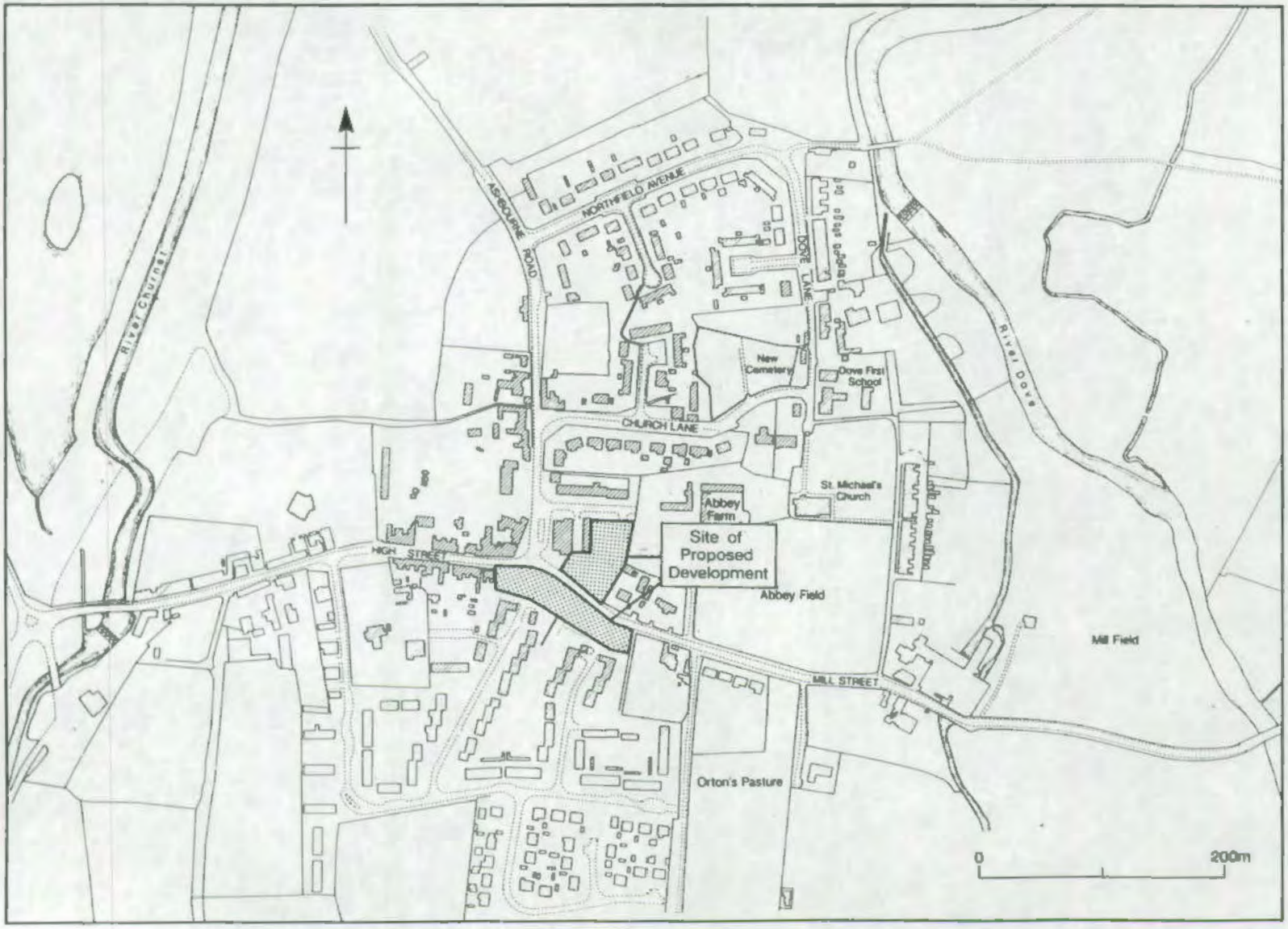
NORTHFIELD AVENUE
ASHBOURNE ROAD
RIVER CHURNET
DOVE LANE
New Cemetery
Dove First School
CHURCH LANE
St. Michael's Church
Abbey Farm
Site of Proposed Development
Abbey Field
HIGH STREET
MILL STREET
Orton's Pasture
Mill Field
RIVER DOVE
0
200m

Fig.1

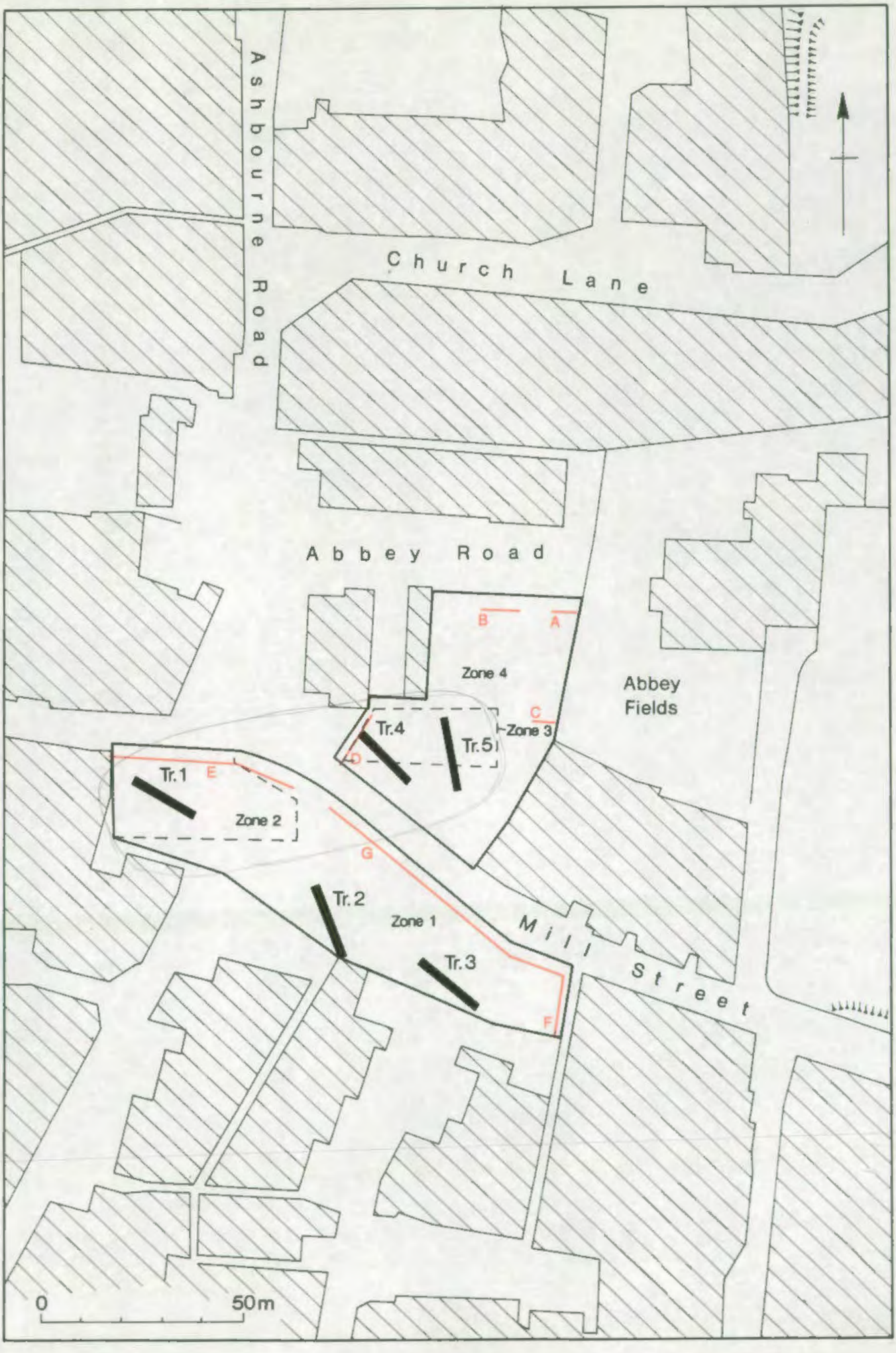
Ashbourne Road
Church Lane
Abbey Road
Abbey Fields
Mill Street
Zone 1
Zone 2
Zone 3
Zone 4
Tr.1
Tr.2
Tr.3
Tr.4
Tr.5
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
0
50m

Fig.2

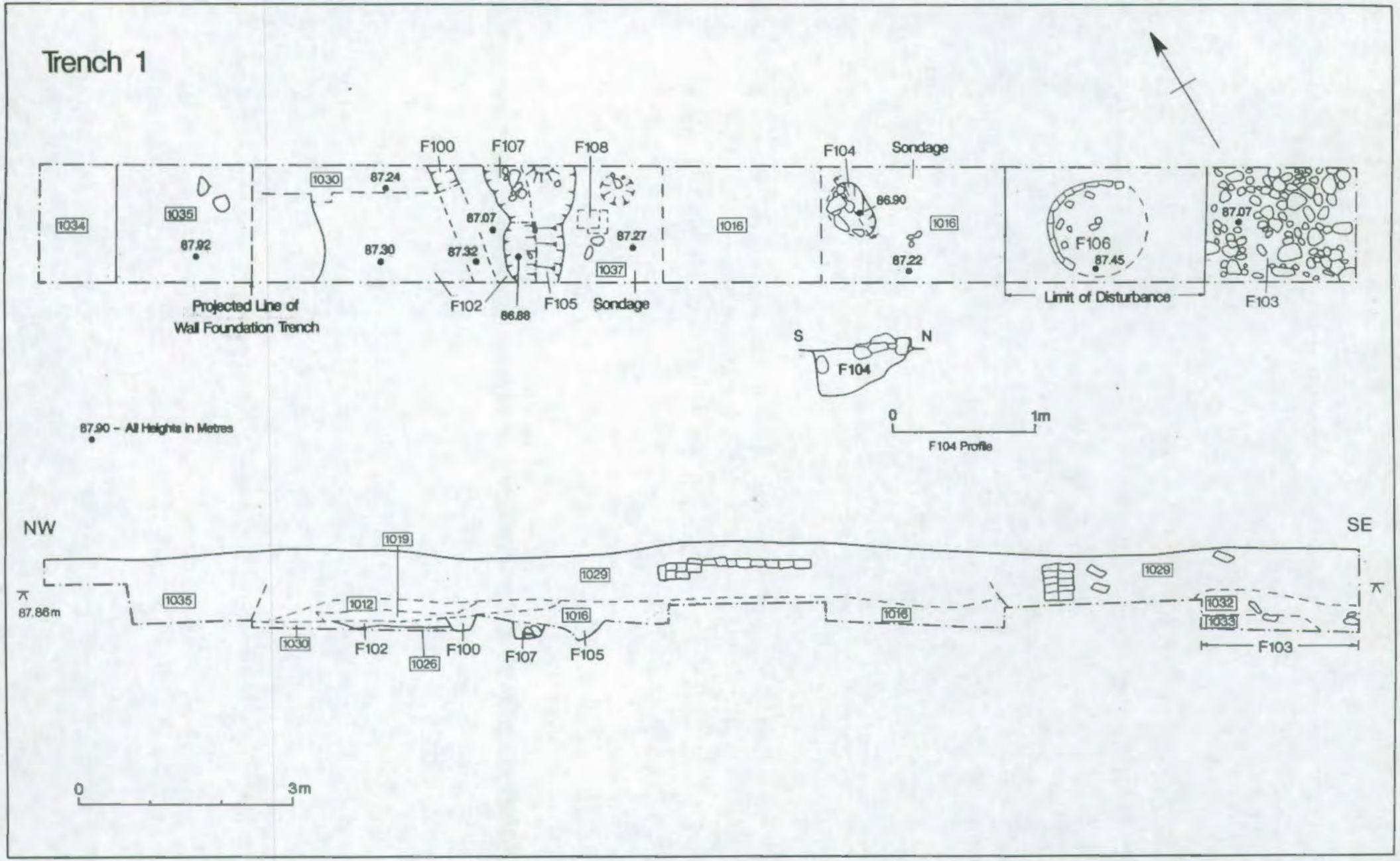
Trench 1
F100
F107
F108
F104
Sondage
1030
87.24
1035
87.92
87.30
87.07
87.32
87.27
1037
1016
86.90
87.22
F106
87.45
87.07
F103
Limit of Disturbance
Projected Line of
Wall Foundation Trench
F102
86.88
F105
Sondage
1034
S
N
F104
0
1m
F104 Profile
87.90 - All Heights in Metres
NW
SE
1019
1029
1035
87.86m
1012
1016
1030
F102
1026
F100
F107
F105
1032
1033
F103
0
3m

Fig.3

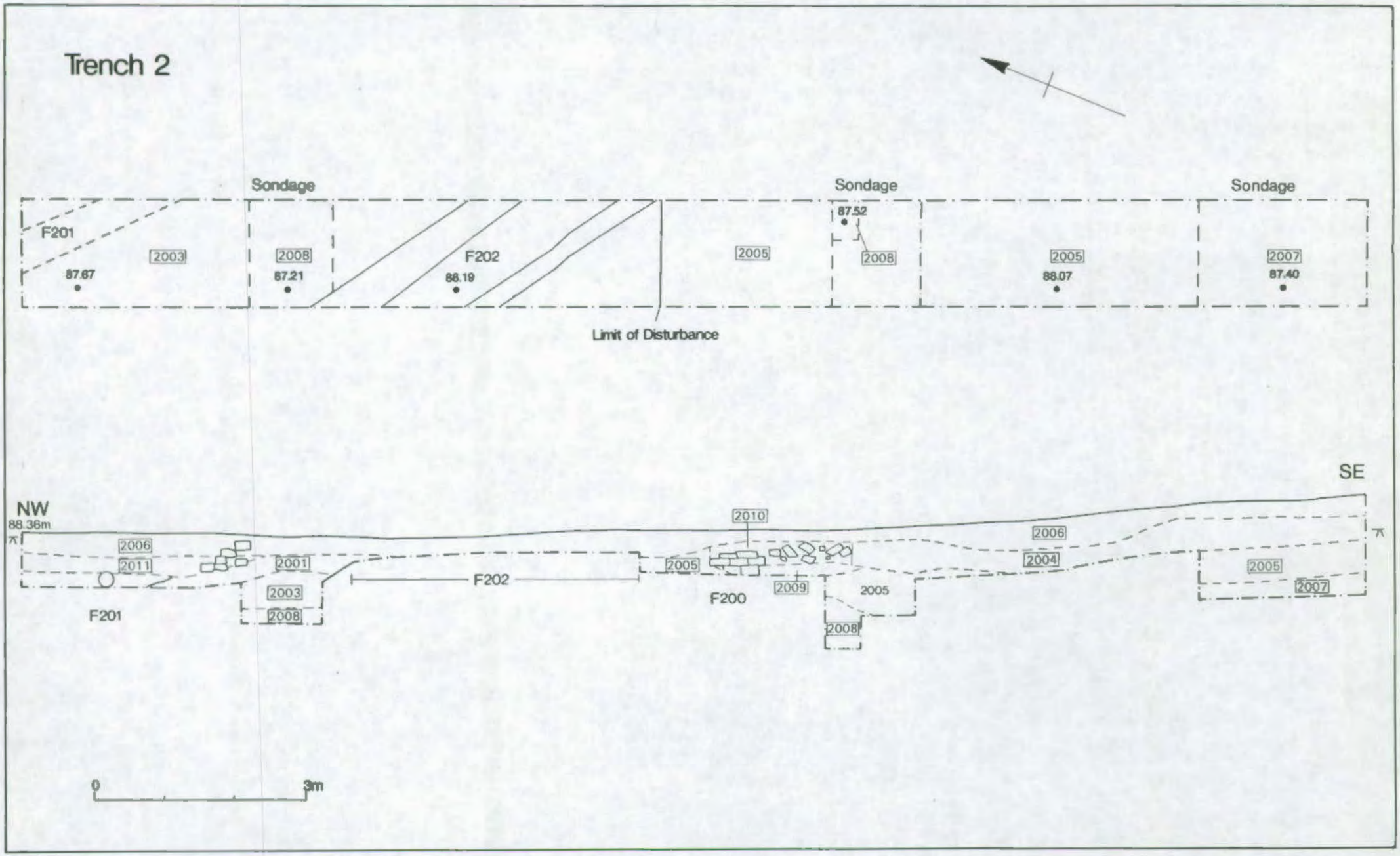
Trench 2
Sondage
Sondage
Sondage
F201
2003
2008
F202
2005
87.52
2008
2005
2007
87.67
87.21
88.19
88.07
87.40
Limit of Disturbance
SE
NW
88.36m
2010
2006
2006
2011
2001
2005
2004
2005
F202
2003
2009
2005
2007
F200
F201
2008
2008
0
3m

Fig.4

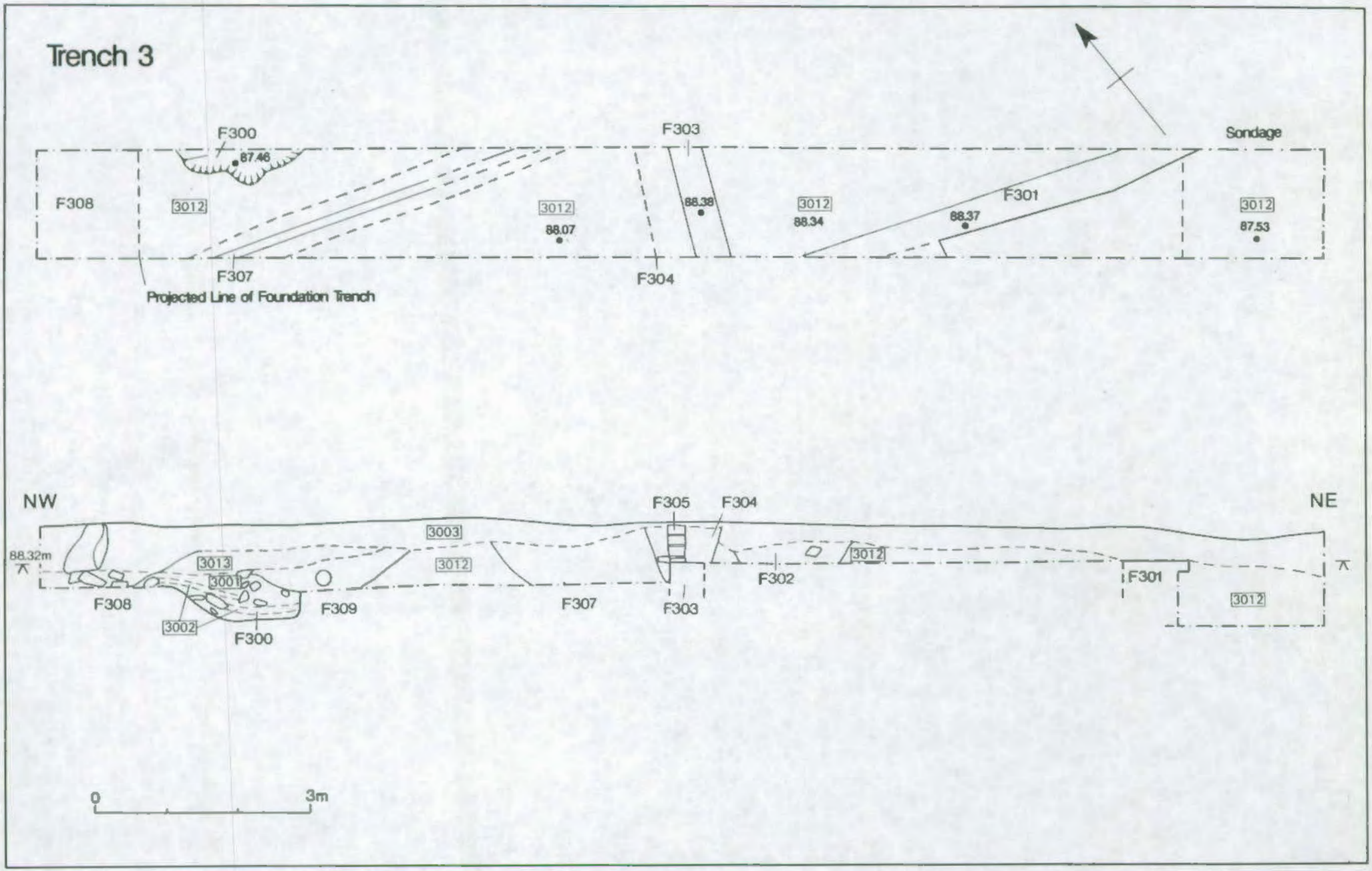
Trench 3
F300
87.46
F303
Sondage
F308
3012
3012
88.07
88.38
3012
88.34
F301
88.37
3012
87.53
F307
F304
Projected Line of Foundation Trench
NW
F305
F304
NE
3003
88.32m
3013
3001
3012
3012
F302
F301
F308
F309
F307
F303
3012
3002
F300
0
3m

Fig.5

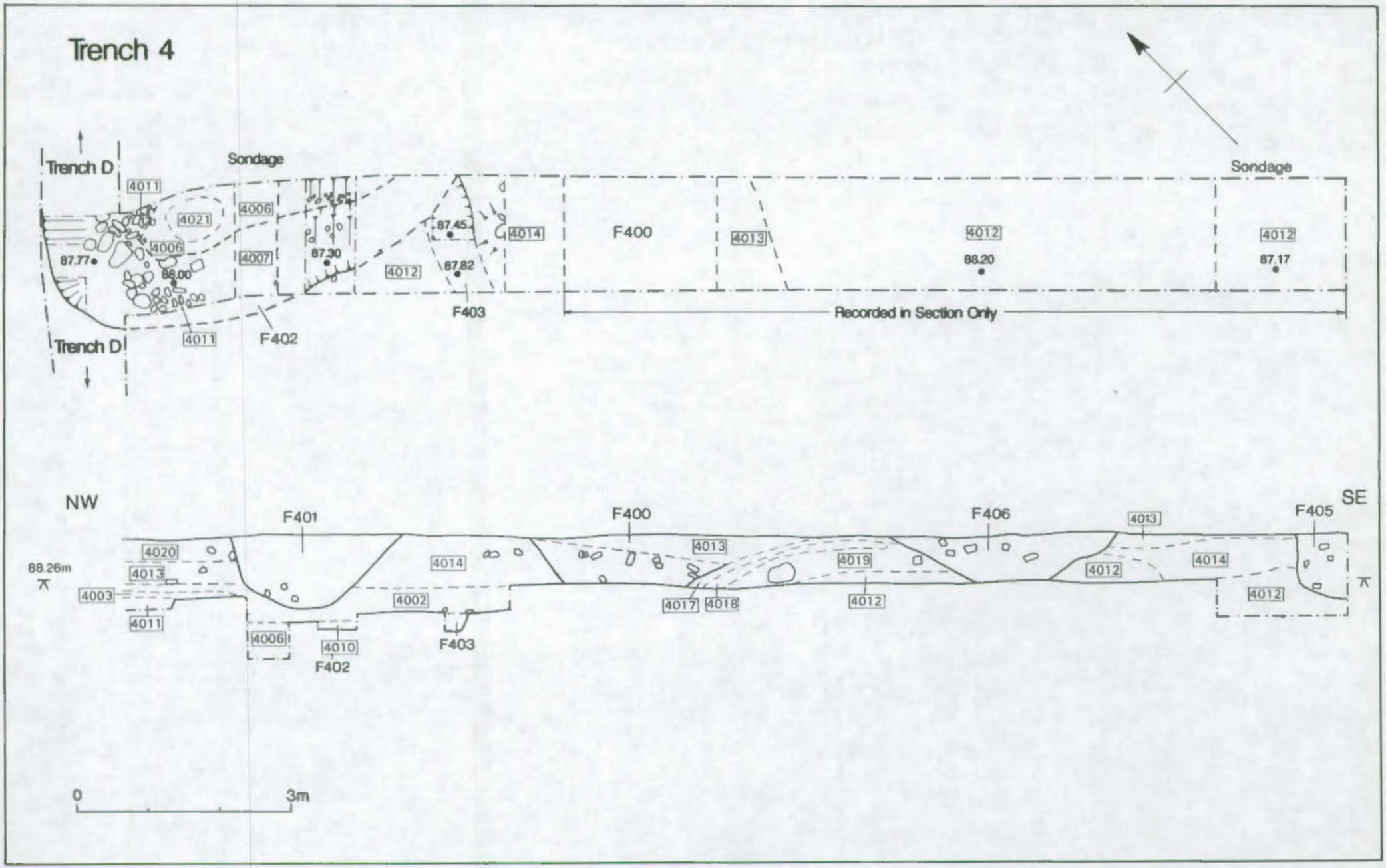
Trench 4
Trench D
Sondage
4011
4021
4006
4007
87.77
88.00
87.30
4012
87.45
87.82
4014
F400
4013
4012
88.20
Sondage
4012
87.17
F403
Recorded in Section Only
4011
F402
Trench D
NW
SE
F401
F400
F406
F405
4013
88.26m
4020
4013
4003
4011
4014
4013
4019
4012
4014
4012
4002
4017
4018
4012
4006
4010
F402
F403
0
3m

Fig.6

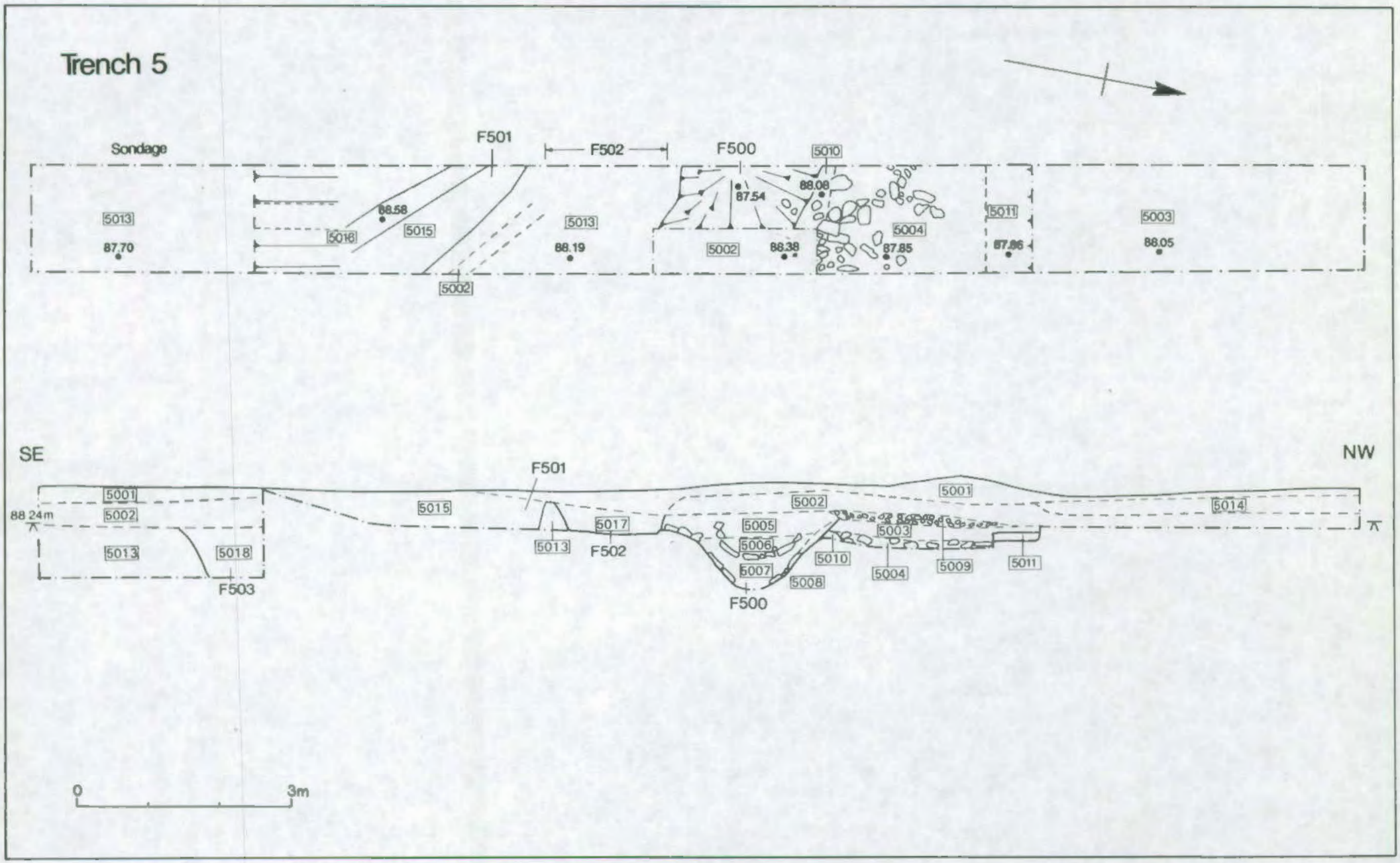
Trench 5
Sondage
F501
F502
F500
5010
88.08
87.54
88.58
5013
87.70
5018
5015
5013
88.19
5002
88.38
5004
87.85
5011
87.86
5003
88.05
5002
SE
NW
F501
5001
88.24m
5002
5015
5017
5005
5002
5001
5014
5003
5013
5018
5013
F502
5006
5010
5004
5009
5011
5007
5008
F503
F500
0
3m

Fig.7

Fig. 8: All Romano-British Pottery, total 1090 sherds

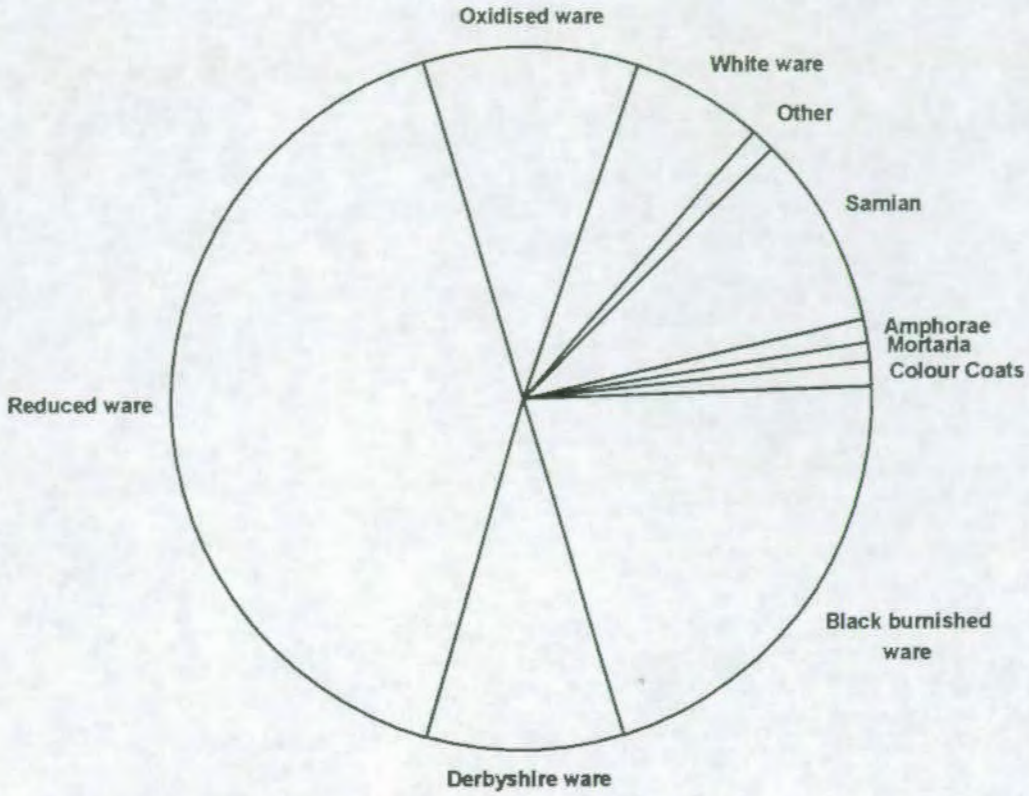

Fig. 9: Romano-British Pottery by Trench