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EXETER CITY COUNCIL

EXETER ARCHAEOLOGICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE, 9th January, 1981.

Report to Committee

1. EXCAVATIONS

Bartholomew Street

The excavation was completed at the end of November - considerably later than had been anticipated. There were three main reasons for the delay: the discovery of a complicated sequence of medieval levels in the south-east extension area, exceptionally wet ground conditions, and the need to undertake watching briefs on building sites. It would not have been possible to finish the site without an additional grant of £1800 from the Department of the Environment.

Roman: (a) Trench next to Mary Arches Street: A trench 9m long by 1m wide was excavated next to Mary Arches Street in order to locate the fortress via quintana (for the position of this trench, see Fig. 1). The south-west edge of the street was found to lie about 1.2m from the north-east end of the trench. The metalling consisted of two layers of mixed volcanic stone and gravel with a total thickness of about 15cm. A 50cm deep post-trench ran parallel to the street at a distance of about 2.9m from its south-west edge. This presumably represents the wall of a military timber building, though no contemporary floor levels were identified.

The via quintana became incorporated into the street-system of the Roman town but only about 15cm of metalling - representing three resurfacings - accumulated during the civil period.

Later Roman terracing had removed the early civil levels next to the street-frontage; farther to the south-west two layers of brown clay-loam up to 20cm thick sealed the military level. Similar deposits occurring in the main excavation area contained residual military finds, none of which need be later in date than c. 75. These deposits may represent material derived from the walls of the military buildings which became spread over the site after their demolition.

The first civil building was represented by a clay floor covered by a thin trampled occupation layer which occupied a 20cm deep terrace next to the street. This building appears to have been constructed of timber, though no direct evidence for the nature of its walls was found; indeed it is possible that the floor was in fact the earliest level in the stone building which later stood on the site.

The latter measured 4.2m in width internally and was provided with a mortar floor laid directly on the surface of the earlier clay floor. The robbing trench for the rear wall of the building was 80cm wide and 50cm deep. The front wall line was represented by a rough stone footing 80cm wide and 25cm deep composed of large irregularly set blocks of volcanic rubble. This was completely sealed by the mortar floor, which lapped onto the surface of the first civil street level. There may have been a doorway at this point, or perhaps the building was partly open-fronted. Resurfacing of the

street took place on two occasions before the building was finally destroyed in a fire. The mortar floor was found to have been baked in places and covered by patches of charcoal; overlying these was a layer containing much daub, tile, plaster and stone - all heavily burnt - which spread across the full width of the room and onto the street outside. No metalled street levels were found above the fire deposit: either the street went out of use shortly after the fire or, more likely, it was now narrower than it had been.

Activity in the period after the fire is attested by a group of stake-holes which cut into the fire debris overlying the street metalling. Subsequently a layer of loam containing considerable amounts of 'demolition'-type material was deposited over much of the site.

The final phase of Roman activity saw the robbing of the rear wall of the stone building and the excavation of a ditch 1.4m wide and 60cm deep just inside the line of the original frontage. A second ditch which lay only partly within the excavation may have been a roadside gully.

Unfortunately the trench produced very few datable finds. A small group of pottery from the fire deposit can be dated to the third or fourth century but closer dating is not possible.

(b) Main excavation area: A plan and description of the barrack in the main area appeared in the last report.

The space between the barrack and the via quintana is c. 26m wide (Fig. 1). The building to the north-east of the barrack proved to have been constructed in five main phases but its full plan and function remain uncertain. A plan showing the individual phases will be prepared in time for the next report.

The area contained few features belonging to the later Roman period. A fourth-century boundary ditch crossed the site on a north-west/south-east alignment at a distance of c. 26.5m from the former via quintana. Parallel to the ditch on its south-west side was a masonry wall and beyond this an area of metalling. A sufficient area was excavated to show that the wall could not have belonged to a building and therefore it probably formed one side of a walled courtyard. An infant burial was found beneath the metalled surface at a point close to the wall.

(c) South-east extension trench: The main excavation area was extended to the south-east by about 21m in order to obtain a transect across two further legionary barrack-blocks and the street between them.

It is now apparent that the barrack immediately south-east of the original area was at least 1.5m shorter than its neighbour to the north-west. This is shown by the fact that the post-trench for the rear wall of the building stops 1.7m short of the point it should have reached if the buildings were the same length. This conclusion is confirmed by the arrangement of the partitions separating the inner rooms of the contubernia, which are displaced to the south-west by a corresponding distance. These rooms are the same width in both buildings (c. 3.6m).

EXETER: western corner of Roman fortress and town

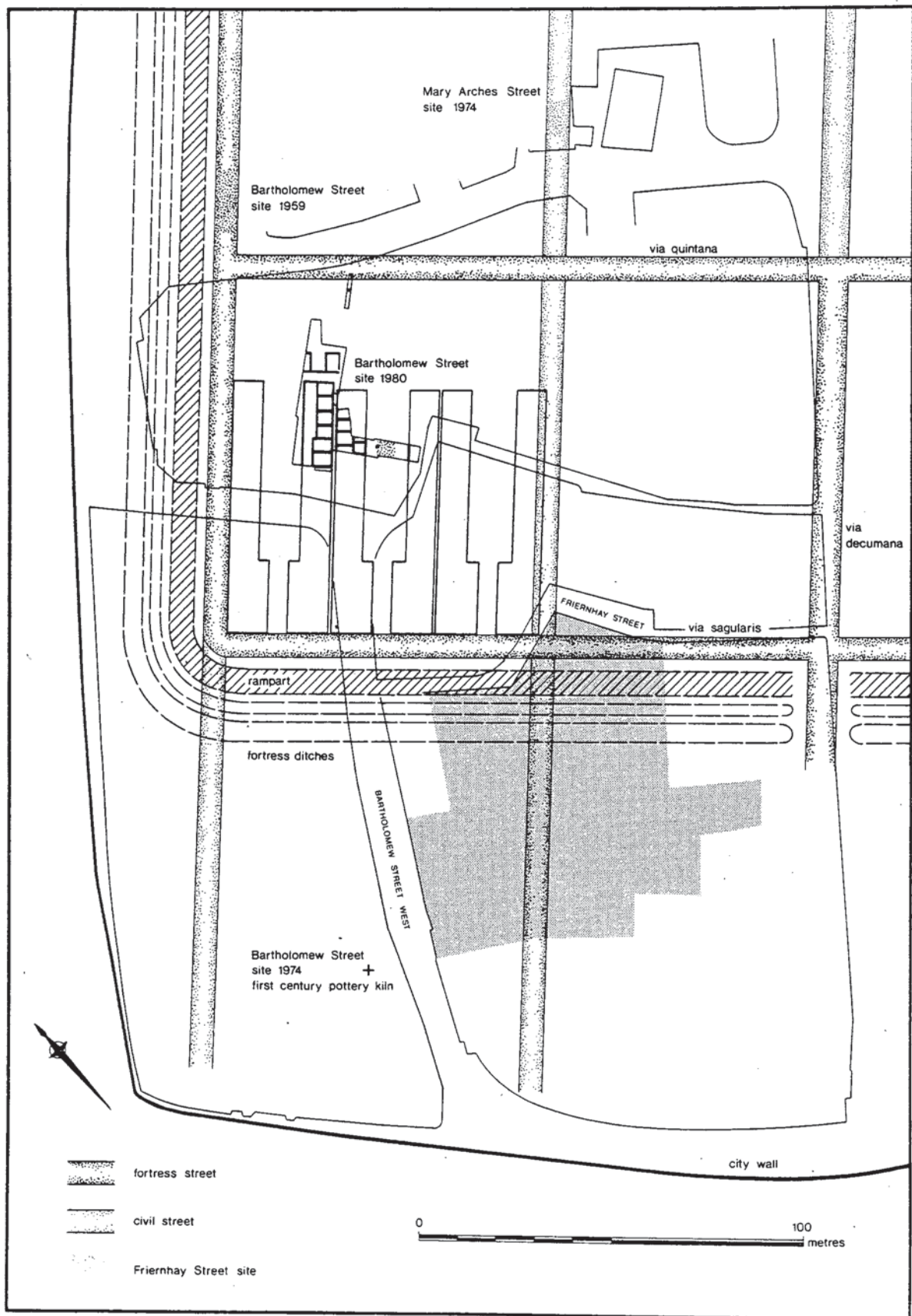


Fig. 1

There are other differences in the planning of the two buildings. The full width of the south-eastern barrack, measured from the centre of the rear post-trench to the veranda post, is 9.4m. The depth of the inner rooms is 4.6m (compared with 4.25m and 5.0m in the building to the north-west) and that of the outer rooms 2.5m (compared with 3.25m and 2.5m). The depth of the inner and outer rooms combined is thus 7.1m (compared with 7.5m). The width of the veranda is 2.30m, which is about the same as in the barrack partially excavated at the south-east end of the trench.

Two partitions separating the outer rooms of the contubernia fell within the extension trench. Their arrangement is unusual, however, in that they do not align with the partitions between the inner rooms. Further, the distance between them is only 3m instead of the 3.6m which would have been expected.

The street between the barracks in the extension trench is about 5.6m wide; there is a shallow drainage gully running along its south-eastern edge.

If we assume that the barracks found in the excavation formed part of a cohort-group of six barracks, it is now possible to estimate that the breadth (north-west to south-east) of the full cohort would have been about 82m. Given the rough nature of the calculation, this figure is to all intents and purposes identical to the corresponding dimension for the Guildhall barracks, which is 84m. It follows that it would not have been possible to fit two full cohorts of this size into the left retentura of the fortress since this is estimated to have been only c. 152m wide.

The only later Roman features encountered in the south-east extension trench were a spread of metalling, a possible wall-footing, and a boundary ditch running on a north-east/south-west alignment.

Medieval: At the Dissolution the area bounded by Bartholomew Street and Mary Arches Street lay within the precinct of St. Nicholas' Priory. Most of the excavated area was probably devoted to orchards and kitchen gardens at this time. The Hogenburg map of 1587 shows the whole plot still not built on fifty years later. We know from surviving property deeds that the Mary Arches Street frontage became built up during the first half of the seventeenth century.

(a) Mary Arches Street trench: The sequence revealed in the narrow trench next to Mary Arches Street accords well with the history of the site in the later medieval and early modern periods as it is known from other sources.

Overlying the latest Roman level in the trench was a layer of dark gritty loam up to 12cm thick which contained a certain amount of building debris and residual Roman material but no medieval pottery. This is the so-called 'post-Roman dark soil' - familiar from other sites in Exeter and southern Britain - which marks the period between the end of the Roman town and the revival of urban life in the late ninth or tenth century.

Cutting through this deposit were several rubbish pits of twelfth- or thirteenth-century date. Considerable numbers of similar pits were found in the main excavation area; their presence suggests strongly that this area was occupied by domestic tenements until at least the late thirteenth century, and that only subsequently did it become incorporated into the priory grounds.

The period during which the site lay within the priory precinct was attested by a 25cm thick layer of dark loam containing fourteenth- and fifteenth-century pottery. This was sealed by a layer dated to c. 1600; the earliest floor levels on the frontage belong to the early seventeenth century.

(b) Main area: Over much of the site the medieval levels had been badly disturbed by later activity. A twelfth-century ditch (Fig.3) may mark the boundary of a tenement fronting onto Bartholomew Street. Within the area enclosed by the ditch there were two distinct clusters of pits. One group consisted of small or medium sized pits infilled with cess and domestic rubbish; the other comprised about ten larger pits concentrated in the angle formed by the ditch. These latter were probably dug to obtain clay for use in building construction. As mentioned above, nearly all the pits dated to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

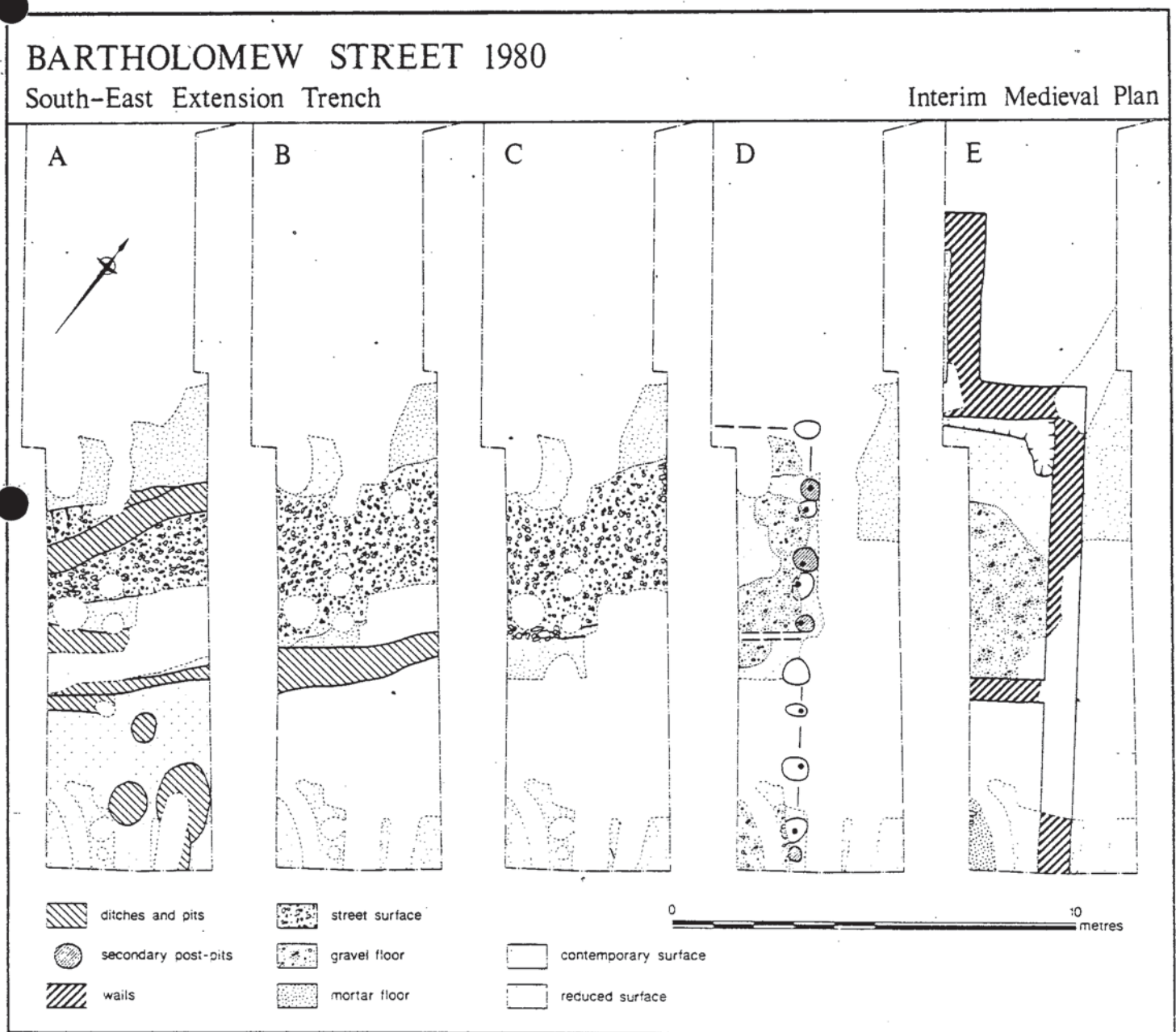


Fig. 2

(c) South-east extension trench: The trench (Figs. 2,3) carried the excavation to within 12m of the standing west range of St. Nicholas' Priory (founded in the late eleventh century).. Since the area to the north-west of the priory was clearly occupied by domestic tenements until at least the late thirteenth century, it was anticipated that there might be found in the trench a feature - perhaps a stone wall - which could be interpreted as having marked the north-western boundary of the early priory precinct. A number of probable boundary features were found, but it is doubtful whether any of these represents the precinct boundary.

A series of five ditches dating to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries crossed the trench from north-east to south-west in a zone 17-22m north-west of the priory building (Fig. 2A,B). One of these ditches is similar in character to the one found in the main excavation area, and it is possible that they connected; there may be an opportunity to clarify this point during the watching brief.

The north-westernmost ditch probably dates to the late twelfth century; it predated

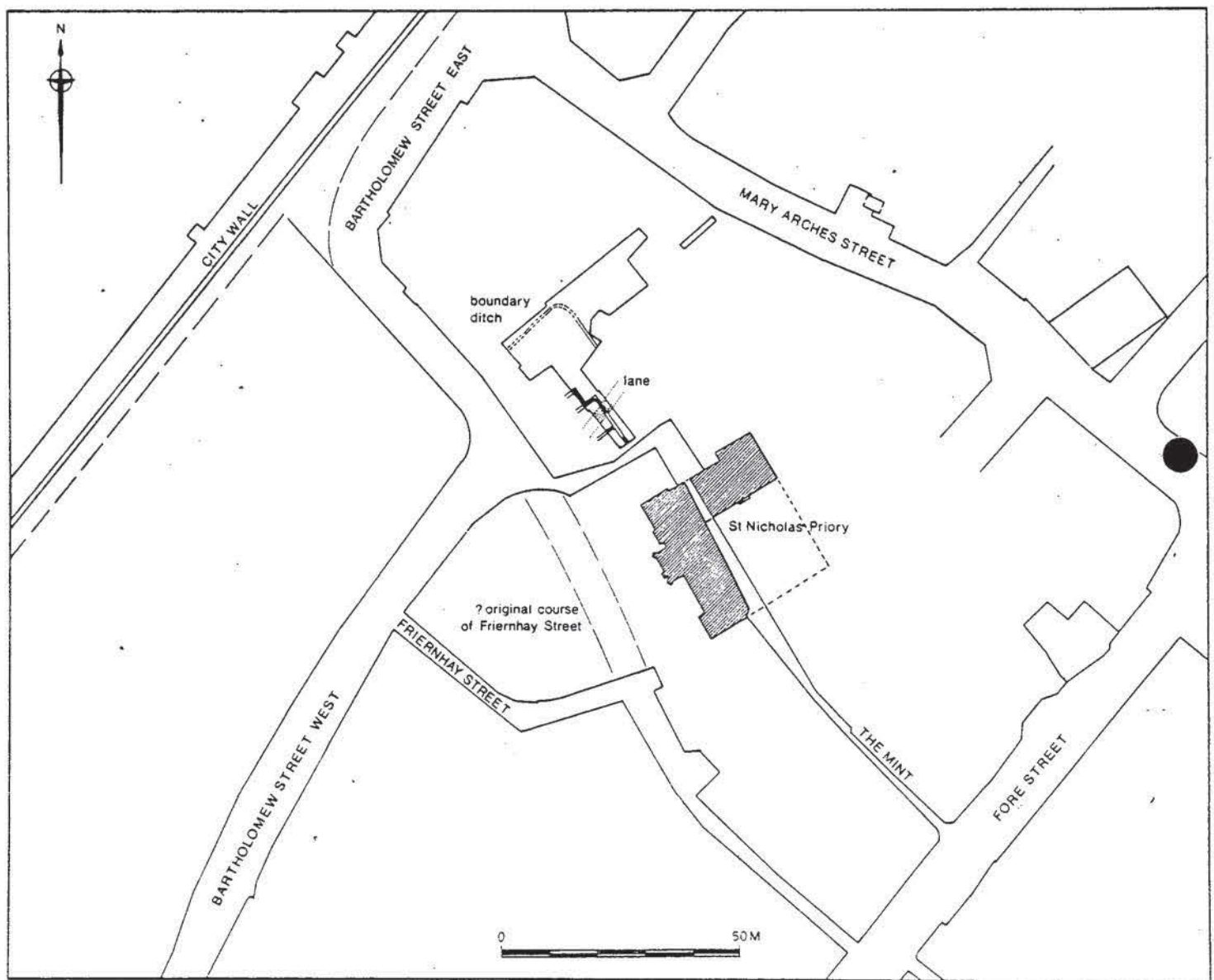


Fig. 3

a lane which developed as a hollow way 2.5m wide in the period around 1200 (Fig. 2A). By 1240-50 the lane had been provided with a metalled surface 4m in width (Fig. 2B); the final ditch in the sequence was contemporary with this phase of the lane. A further re-surfacing and a number of minor patchings took place in the mid to late thirteenth century before the lane went completely out of use in the years around 1300 (Fig. 2C).

Four pits at the south-east end of the trench (Fig. 2A) produced few finds but can probably be assigned to the period before 1300. One pit produced a fragment from a mould used to cast a bronze cauldron. This discovery is of considerable interest since it provides the first evidence for the presence of a medieval bronze foundry in this part of Exeter. There was a large foundry, partly excavated in recent years, which was in operation in the period c. 1300-1550 in the area between Preston Street and Mermaid Yard.

It was probably in the fourteenth century that a long timber building was erected on the site (Fig. 2D). This was furnished with floors of gravel and mortar. Some of the wall-posts were replaced or added to during the life of the building and an internal partition was inserted at the same time.

The timber structure was eventually replaced by a masonry building (Fig. 2 E) which seems to have had a similar plan to its predecessor but included a narrow additional room at the end. The way in which the walls of the new building appear to 'encase' the old suggests that the former may have been started while the timber building was still standing. This would have made possible the continued use of the old building for a time during the construction of the new. There seems little reason to doubt that the building formed part of St Nicholas' Priory. The finds from the robbing trenches are similar to those from Dissolution deposits elsewhere in the city.

Medieval topography: Clearly the lane found in the excavation did not form an important element in the street-system of the early town and it was certainly not part of the original late-Saxon layout. It is possible that it marked the north-western boundary of the priory precinct; however the character of the meandering drainage ditches, and the presence of a pit containing industrial waste suggest that the ground to the south-east of the lane is more likely to have belonged to a domestic tenement than to the grounds of the priory.

The form of Friernhay Street suggests that at some time in the medieval period it was diverted from its original course, presumably as the result of an encroachment by St Nicholas' Priory. That it took its present course during the late medieval period can be seen on the Hogenburg map. It therefore seems possible that Friernhay Street originally connected with the section of street which links Bartholomew Street West with Bartholomew Street East. A consideration of the plan of St Nicholas' Priory provides some support for this suggestion. The claustral ranges were laid out in the late eleventh or early twelfth century at a time when it was not considered important to achieve a true east-west orientation of the church. At this period churches were often aligned on some topographical feature, usually a street. The alignment of

the priory buildings differs by about 26 degrees from the 'correct' orientation. The west range, however, would have lain roughly parallel to the course of the putative 'missing' section of Friernhay Street and therefore perhaps it was the line of the original street frontage which determined the alignment of the priory buildings. Perhaps an opportunity will arise in the future to test this theory by excavation.

2. WATCHING BRIEFS

The number of watching briefs undertaken in recent months has been unusually high.

Holloway Street: Two medieval pits were excavated during road widening on the south-west side of the street.

Colleton Row: An eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century ice-house built of brick was uncovered in the course of building operations. It was possible to make a plan of the structure and to estimate its depth below ground.

Colleton Crescent: In the autumn building works started on the greyfriars site, where a trial excavation took place earlier this year. Two further Roman features have been recorded in the contractor's trenches and the dorter of the friary has now been traced across the full width of the site. The reredorter and the culvert which supplied it with water have also been located and planned. Observation of the trenches will continue in the new year. A plan and fuller account will appear in the next report.

Lower Combe Street: Foundation trenches dug on the site excavated in 1979 produced further information about the depth and form of the Combe Valley in the early Roman period.

Snayle Tower: A V-shaped ditch 1.2m deep was seen cutting into the natural clay at the bottom of a trench dug for a modern buttress at the western corner of the City Wall. Finds from the ditch, which passed under the wall, indicate that it was dug in the Roman military period. The core of the wall and the earliest surviving facework appear to be medieval. The trench also revealed part of a massive stone foundation constructed of coursed volcanic rubble bonded with weak gravelly mortar. It was not possible to determine the shape or full size of the feature but it probably formed part of the Snayle Tower, an external defensive tower which stood at the western corner of the wall until its demolition in the seventeenth century. The character of the masonry and of the mortar suggest that the tower was built in the medieval period; no trace was observed of an earlier Roman foundation.

Fore Street: A gas-pipe trench excavated across the north-west carriageway at the top of Fore Street exposed sections containing up to 1.2m of first- and second-century Roman deposits. An unexpected discovery was a 0.6m thick sequence of five successive

second-century street-levels which belonged to a lane, 2.5m wide, running parallel to the south-eastern side of Insula VIII at a distance of about 5m from the street next to the basilica and forum. Between the lane and the street (which was not seen in the excavation) was a series of clay floors interleaved with layers of loam and deposits of burnt daub. A similar sequence of deposits was recorded on the north-west side of the lane. The strip of ground between the lane and the street was evidently occupied by timber buildings throughout the second century. A long shallow plot of this kind, fronting onto one of the principal streets in the town, may well have been occupied by a row of small shops.

High Street: A GPO trench near the corner of Bedford Street and High Street revealed a section across the street between Insulae XXVI and XXVII. A section of the 'under-ground passages' was also seen in the trench.

Cathedral: During the restoration of the image screen a number of observations have been made which provide evidence for the date and structural history of the west front. Further observations will be made in 1981 and a full account will be given in due course.

3. FUTURE SITES

Friernhay Street (Wheatons')

After lying empty for several years the former Wheatons' printing works is currently being demolished as the first stage in the redevelopment of the site. We have been informed that building works are likely to start in April 1981 and therefore any excavation will need to be completed by the end of March. The planning consent for the new buildings stipulates that a period of ten weeks must be allowed for an archaeological investigation. Arrangements have therefore been made to start the excavation of the site in mid January. The City Council, the DOE, the developer and the present landowners have all been asked to contribute towards the cost of the excavation, which will be £11,580.

This is a large site (1.3 acres), accounting for almost 1.5% of the area within the walls, although only part of the area will actually be built on. The excavation will of course concentrate on the threatened areas and will be designed to answer certain specific questions about the topographical history of this quarter of Exeter in the Roman period.

Figure 1 shows the area of the site in relation to the known or presumed topography of the legionary fortress and the early and later Roman towns. The position of the via sagularis, defences and civil streets within the site are entirely conjectural.

The main objectives of the excavation may be listed as follows:

Legionary Fortress

- (1) Locate the south-western via sagularis, intervallum, rampart and ditches. It is very important to fix the north-eastern edge of the via sagularis as this will allow an accurate estimate to be made of the length of the barrack-blocks excavated at Bartholomew Street.
- (2) Clear a length of the intervallum in an attempt to locate ovens and rampart-back buildings. This has not been done before at Exeter and it is unlikely that another opportunity to do so will arise in the foreseeable future.
- (3) Excavate a length of the rampart to examine its construction and possibly obtain dating evidence. The full width of the rampart was not seen at Mermaid Yard and there is even some doubt as to whether the remains found there did in fact represent the military (as opposed to early civil) bank. Again, it is unlikely that any further work on the rampart will be possible in future.
- (4) Empty a length of the first (smaller) defensive ditch in order to obtain evidence for the date of its infilling. This is thought to have occurred within a year or so of the foundation of the fortress; if this assumption is correct, the ditch represents the only known large deposit at Exeter which is likely to provide an approximate foundation date for the fortress.
- (5) Cut a narrow section through the main fortress ditch.
- (6) Seek evidence of extra-mural activity (this would be a secondary objective of the trial trenching referred to under (11) below). A pottery kiln and wasters were found on the 1974 Bartholomew Street site.

Early Roman Town

- (7) Establish whether the via sagularis became part of the street-system of the early Roman town and whether the civil street found at Mary Arches Street in 1974 extended as far as the via sagularis/defences.
- (8) Confirm that the fortress defences were retained on this side of the early town and see whether any modifications were made to the rampart. Cut a narrow section across the civil ditch to establish its form and dimensions; a sample of pottery from the final phase should confirm a late second-century date for the slighting of the rampart.
- (9) Look for evidence of extra-mural activity, e.g. buildings, industry, cultivation etc. (see (6) above). An extra-mural building of this period was found on the 1974 Bartholomew Street site.

Later Roman Town

- (10) Establish whether the Mary Arches Street site civil street was extended beyond the line of the early defences and, if so, at what date. If not, then were there any other streets in this area?
- (11) Clear as large an area as possible of any buildings associated with the civil street(s) in the later town where these lie within threatened parts of the site. It is proposed to trial trench the area of the proposed new buildings in order to locate buildings or other evidence of Roman activity (see (6) and (9) above).

Medieval

- (12) Most of the potential excavation area is well to the rear of the medieval street frontages, though Friernhay Street is likely to have formed part of the late Saxon street-system and so may have relatively early medieval occupation on its frontage. Only rubbish pits containing very exceptional groups of finds will be excavated to a level below the base of Roman deposits.

Paul Street

A note on this site appeared in the report of 7th December 1979. At that time it was anticipated that an excavation would be required early in 1980 in order to locate the defensive ditch on the north-west side of the fortress and early town. The excavation will probably now take place in 1981.

Magdalen Street

This site is situated in the angle formed by South Street and Magdalen Street and it extends up to the front face of the City wall. Part of the area was sampled in 1976, when Roman and medieval defensive ditches were located. The purpose of any future excavation will be to complete a 100m long composite transect across the defensive ditches in the region of the South Gate by examining the 25m wide zone immediately in front of the wall. Previous work on this and other sites in the vicinity has provided information on the remaining 75m of the transect.

5/6 Stepcote Hill

The site occupies a small tenement about 180m² in extent situated at the top of Stepcote Hill. It is in Insula XXXII of the later Roman town and just outside the defences of the legionary fortress. Little is known about this area in the Roman period - even the street-system is very uncertain. In the medieval period the tenement fronted onto one of the four main streets of the town. This site presents a rare opportunity to examine a property on one of the main streets; here if anywhere

should be found the evidence of late Saxon occupation which until now has proved so elusive.

4 POST-EXCAVATION

Now that most of the Roman and medieval finds have been drawn and catalogued and Roman Exeter: Fortress and Town is published, it will be possible in the coming year to concentrate on preparing site archives and excavation reports for publication in Exeter Archaeological Reports, Volumes V and VI. The sites which will be worked on this year are Mermaid Yard 1976-9; Rack Street 1974-5; Bartholomew Street 1980; Exe Bridge 1975-9; High Street 1972-3 and Polsloe Priory 1976-9. In addition, Paul Bidwell will continue his work on the Roman pottery on a part-time basis.

5 PUBLICATION

Exeter Archaeological Reports

It has been the intention since the scheme of volumes was first devised to publish all the Roman site reports in a single monograph (Volume V) and all the medieval ones in another (Volume VI). The drawback to this arrangement is that all the reports on sites of a given period must be completed before any of them can appear in print. Thus a report could be delayed for several years after its completion - a situation which is unsatisfactory both for the author and for potential readers. A way of avoiding this problem while retaining the present scheme of volumes would be to issue certain volumes in two or more parts. This would be particularly appropriate for the Roman finds (Volume IV) and for the medieval sites (Volume VI). Paul Bidwell believes he can finish the pottery section of the Roman finds volume in time for it to go to press in 1982 but completion of the remaining sections would probably take another two years of part-time work. It is hoped that the report on the Exe Bridge site will be ready for publication at the end of 1981; this could then be issued as Volume VI, Part 1.

Volume III: Medieval and Post-medieval finds

For a number of reasons John Allan has still not finished work on this volume. There are still six specialist reports outstanding, but the main cause of the delay is the decision to include in the volume finds from Exe Bridge, Polsloe Priory and Rack Street, which had previously been excluded.

Roman Exeter: Fortress and Town by P.T. Bidwell.

The book was published in October. Well over 700 copies have been sold to date out of a total printing of 3,000.

Director. AFU.

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

EXETER ARCHAEOLOGICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE, 26th June 1981.

Report to Committee

1. EXCAVATIONS

Friernhay Street (Wheaton's) site

The excavation took place between 2nd February and 16th May. Up to 20 temporary staff and volunteers were employed during the core period of 10 weeks; fortunately it proved possible, through the co-operation of the developers, to continue on the site with a reduced workforce for a further 5 weeks in order to complete the excavation of the earliest levels. A watching brief maintained over the past few weeks has yielded a number of important observations which help to fill out the picture of the site's history provided by the formal excavation. Almost all the objectives of the project were achieved and in addition there were several exciting discoveries which could not have been predicted in advance. Thanks to an almost unprecedented spell of good weather in the spring, a rather larger area was investigated than would normally have been possible at this time of year. The depth of stratigraphy preserved on the site proved to be considerably greater than was anticipated in planning the project. In the deepest area, next to Friernhay Street, the total accumulation above the natural ground surface amounted to 2.4m, of which 2.1m comprised deposits dating to the period before 1700. On the basis of our experience at Bartholomew Street and on other sites in this part of the City, we had expected no more than about 1m of early deposits. Because of terracing and the presence of cellars, very few of the street frontages within the walls have been found on excavation to retain well-preserved medieval and early-modern building levels. It therefore came as a welcome surprise to find along the Friernhay Street frontage a full sequence of successive buildings, street-levels and boundary ditches commencing in the twelfth century. In places the Roman levels survived up to 1.5m deep; behind the rampart was a series of timber buildings and dumped deposits approaching 1m in depth. An accumulation of military levels such as this is quite without parallel at Exeter and provides for the first time a stratified sequence of finds spanning the whole period of occupation of the fortress.

Numerous samian stamps and other types of pottery and small finds were recovered from these levels. Another notable feature of the site was the presence of waterlogged deposits in the lower half of the main defensive ditch. Roman organic remains are very rare at Exeter and therefore large samples were taken for analysis of the animal and vegetable remains preserved by the damp conditions. Two shoes also came from the ditch, and another from a Roman well discovered in the watching brief. The best individual finds from the site were two complete bronze paterae which came from a late second- or early third-century stone-lined cess-pit; these are rare objects indeed.

Only a very brief outline of the main results of the excavation can be given here. A full interim account will appear in the December report.

Prehistoric: a considerable number of worked flints, thought to be of Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age type, came from all parts of the site. In addition, several small isolated features were found sealed by the pre-Roman turf level; one of these contained a quantity of charcoal sufficient for a radiocarbon determination. The turf level itself was sampled for pollen.

Roman military period (c. 55/6-75): the small defensive ditch was sectioned in three places over a distance of about 60m; as at Mermaid Yard, it was V-shaped and appears to have been deliberately backfilled prior to the excavation of the larger outer ditch. The latter again displayed a 'punic' profile but its form had been modified by severe slumping along the outer edge.

The rampart was exposed for a length of about 40m; it survived to a height of just under a metre and was c.5.4m in width. Very little turf had been used in its construction: the cheeks were composed of fine clay, whilst the core consisted of mixed stony clays presumably derived from the ditch. There was no berm separating the sloping front of the rampart from the inner lip of the ditch. The pre-Roman turf was left in position when the rampart was built and this circumstance facilitated the preservation of a set of parallel dark grey stains which clearly represent the remains of a timber corduroy foundation. This feature was not observed at Mermaid Yard, where only a very small section of the rampart was removed.

By good fortune, a timber interval tower and half of a second fell within the excavation area. The remains of the complete example comprised four posts, set in deep pits beneath the rampart, forming a 3m square, with the two front posts being positioned 1.4 m in from the front of the rampart; the posts could be shown to have been erected prior to the laying of the corduroy. The space between the towers was c.30m, a distance similar to that recorded in the Neronian fortress at Usk (and approximating to 100 Roman feet). These are the first interval towers to have been found at Exeter.

The intervallum (strip of ground between the back of the rampart and the via sagularis or inner perimeter street) was c.7.5m wide; a 24m length was excavated down to natural. The earliest buildings were of post-trench construction and abutted the rear face of the rampart, which must have been nearly vertical; they did not contain ovens or any other evidence of their function. These buildings were followed by a very complex sequence of timber cookhouses containing circular or oval-shaped ovens, the largest of which measured c.2.3 x 1.75m. Ash and charcoal rake-out from the ovens had accumulated in front of the cookhouses in thick layers, the latest of which spilled onto the via sagularis in a zone c.1.5m wide.

The via sagularis was c.5.5m wide and up to 40cm thick with a marked camber; during the military period resurfacing took place on two occasions. Along the edge of the street next to the intervallum ran a wooden water-pipe which was replaced once prior to the last resurfacing of the street. On the other side of the street was a deep drainage ditch similar in size and form to one found in a corresponding position at Mermaid Yard. Only a small triangular area of the frontage beyond the ditch could be investigated. Here a corner of a building lying to the south-east of the Bartholomew Street barracks was found.

Early Roman Town (c. 80-180/200): in contrast to the abundant evidence for activity on the site in the fortress period, the remains attributable to the following three centuries of Roman occupation at Exeter are relatively sparse. The large ditch remained open after the departure of the legion and eventually became filled with stagnant water. The rampart was also retained, but probably without the interval towers. The former via sagularis became incorporated into the new street grid of Isca Dumnoniorum, though now reduced in width to c.2.5m, no more than a narrow lane.

The first civil resurfacing was made up of a thick layer of demolition material which included much masonry rubble, hypocaust tile and concrete, possibly derived from the demolition of the legionary bath-house in the Cathedral Close around 80. A new street, laid out at right angles to the old, received four new surfaces during its lifetime but was eventually abandoned and covered over in the mid to late second century. The only building belonging to the early civil period was a timber-framed house behind the rampart, which fronted onto the former via sagularis. This had mortar and concrete floors and seems to have stood during much of the second century. Possibly associated with this house was the stone-lined pit which yielded the bronze paterae.

Later Roman Town (c. 180/200-400+): towards the end of the second century the rampart was thrown down and the ditch became infilled with large quantities of domestic refuse. At some point in the late second or third century, the former via sagularis went out of use to be replaced by a completely new (and previously unknown) street about 30m to the south-west, outside the old defences. Finally, probably in the fourth century, a masonry building was erected which lay across the course of the old street at one end of the site. At the other end a stone boundary wall cut across the truncated rampart and turned north-west along the line of the infilled small fortress ditch. These walls were traced 18m to the north-east and 26m to the north-west without a further turn being encountered.

Medieval and post-medieval: three tenements situated between the corner of Friernhay Street and the backs of properties fronting Fore Street were almost completely excavated.

Finally, I wish to record my thanks to all those who took part in the excavation, but particularly the supervisory staff - John Pamment, Stewart Brown, Barbara Jupp and Peter Weddell - who worked very long hours, six and seven days a week, for months on end. Without their skill and dedication the excavation could never have been brought to a successful conclusion.

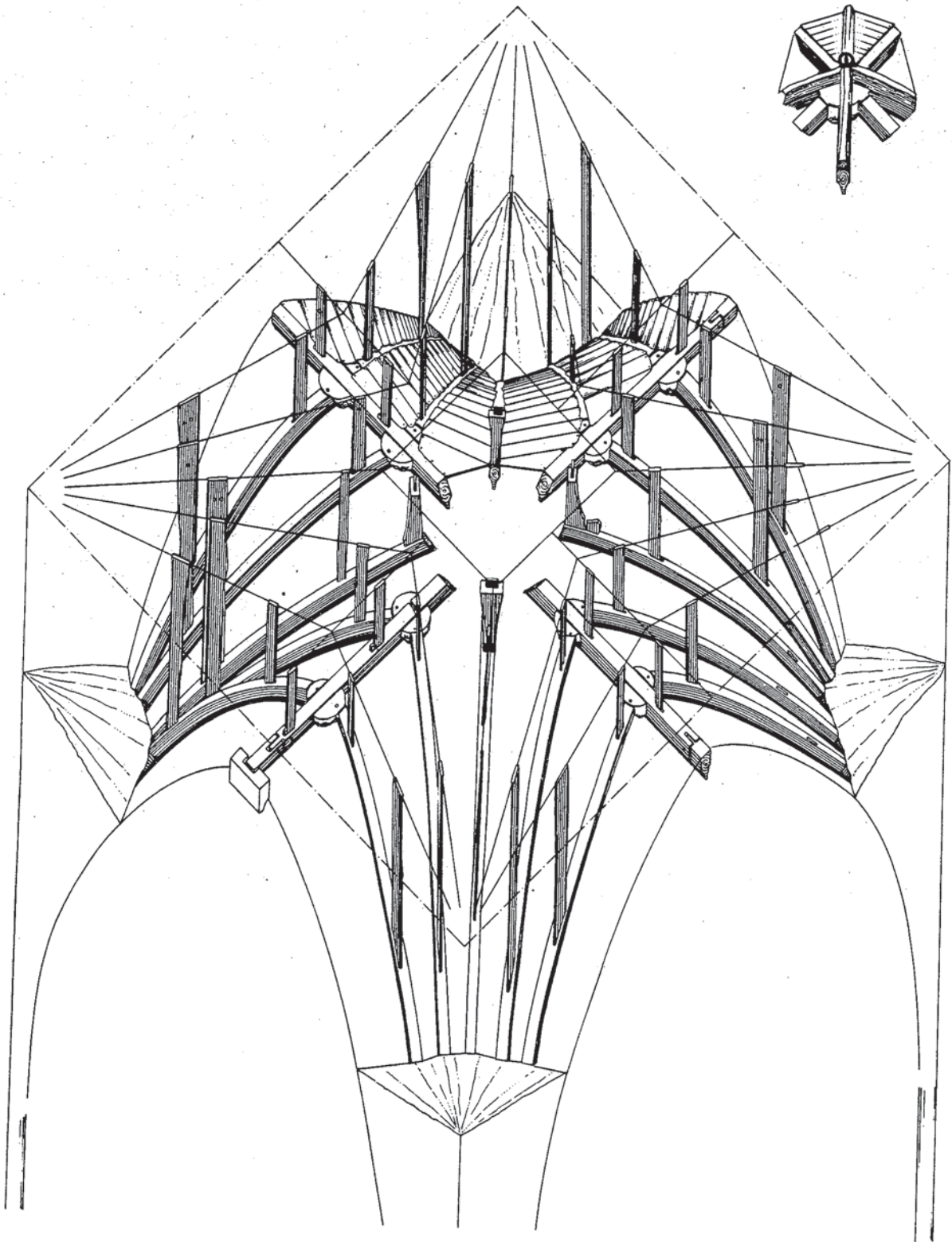


Fig. 1

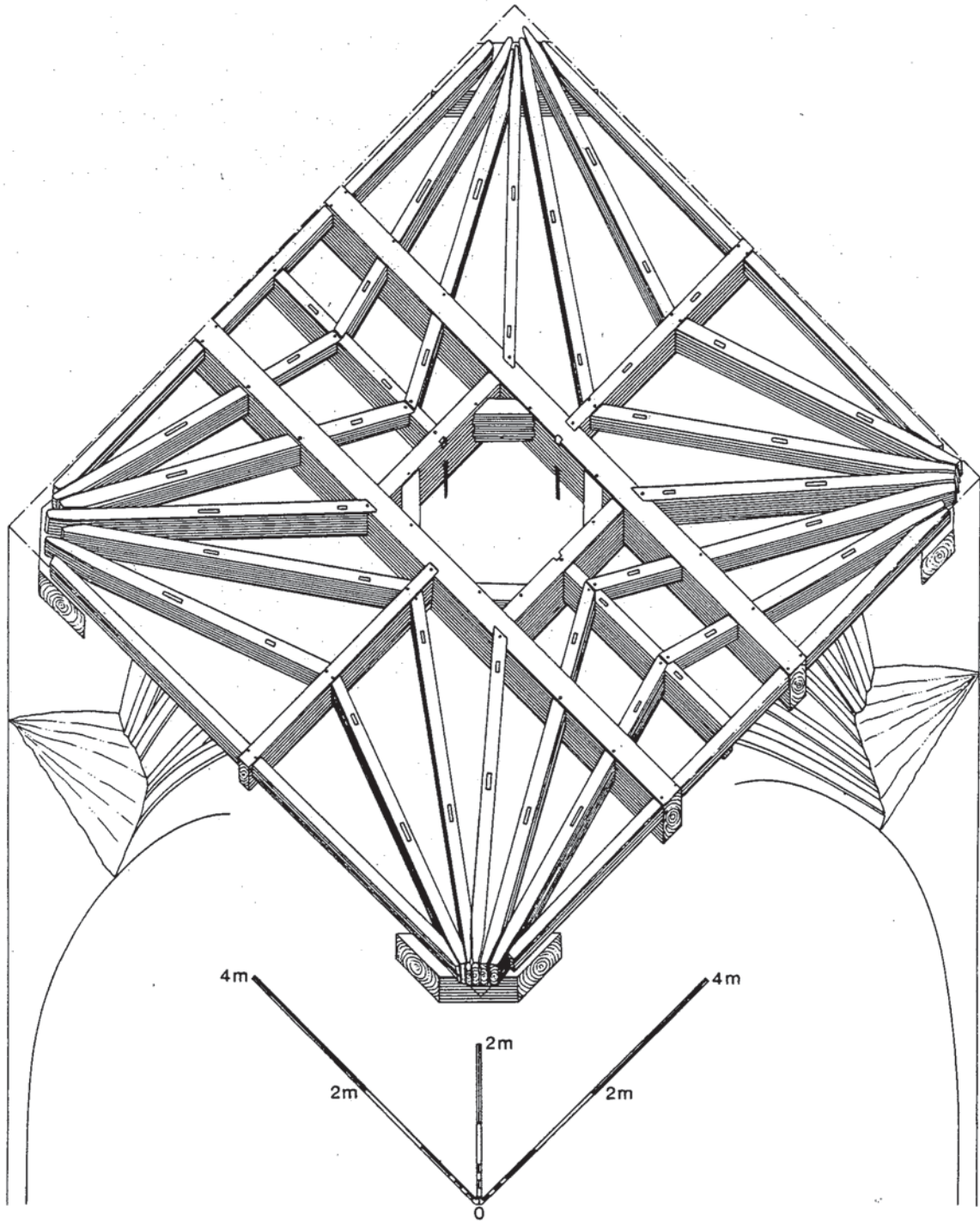


Fig. 2

2. CATHEDRAL

South Tower (with J.P. Allan)

Scaffolding was erected in the south transept and tower earlier this year so that the bosses in the vaults could be cleaned and retouched. This enabled study of the high vaults and gave access to the remarkable floor above the timber vault in the tower. False ashlar painting and new evidence for the arrangement of the floors and roof of the Norman tower were noted, and the bosses and corbels of the early fourteenth-century vaults photographed. The high vault in the tower and the elaborate floor of the bell-ringing chamber above are shown in axonometric projection in Figures 1 and 2 respectively. A record was made of the types of jointing used in the structure and about 150 carpenters' assembly marks were noted and analysed. The erection recently of scaffolding on the tower exterior has allowed further recording of the Norman masonry; a restored elevation of the tower is in preparation at the time of writing. A report on this work will be submitted for publication in Volume 39 (1981) of the Proc. Devon Archaeol. Soc.

3. STANDING BUILDINGS

30, Monmouth Street, Topsham (with J. Thorp)

The opportunity to record this building arose last year when the owners uncovered two wall-paintings and contacted the Unit. The house was built in the late seventeenth century and is probably the oldest building in the street. It is a two-storey structure with cocklofts, walls of cob, and stone chimney stacks. The two rooms on the ground floor are separated by a central passage and each is heated by a fireplace in the front wall. The exposed western fireplace is built of stone and has a plain lintel. Around 1700, a two-storey brick block was added on the eastern side of the property about 5m behind the house. This appears to have been a self-contained cottage and has one fireplace, built of 'Dutch' brick, in the side wall next to the property boundary; the lintel does not survive.

The paintings are in one of the two upper rooms in the main house. One is severely damaged, but the other is largely intact. It bears a devotional passage from the Book of Psalms, which reads: 'Teach us so to number our dayes: that (we) may Apply our he(artes to)

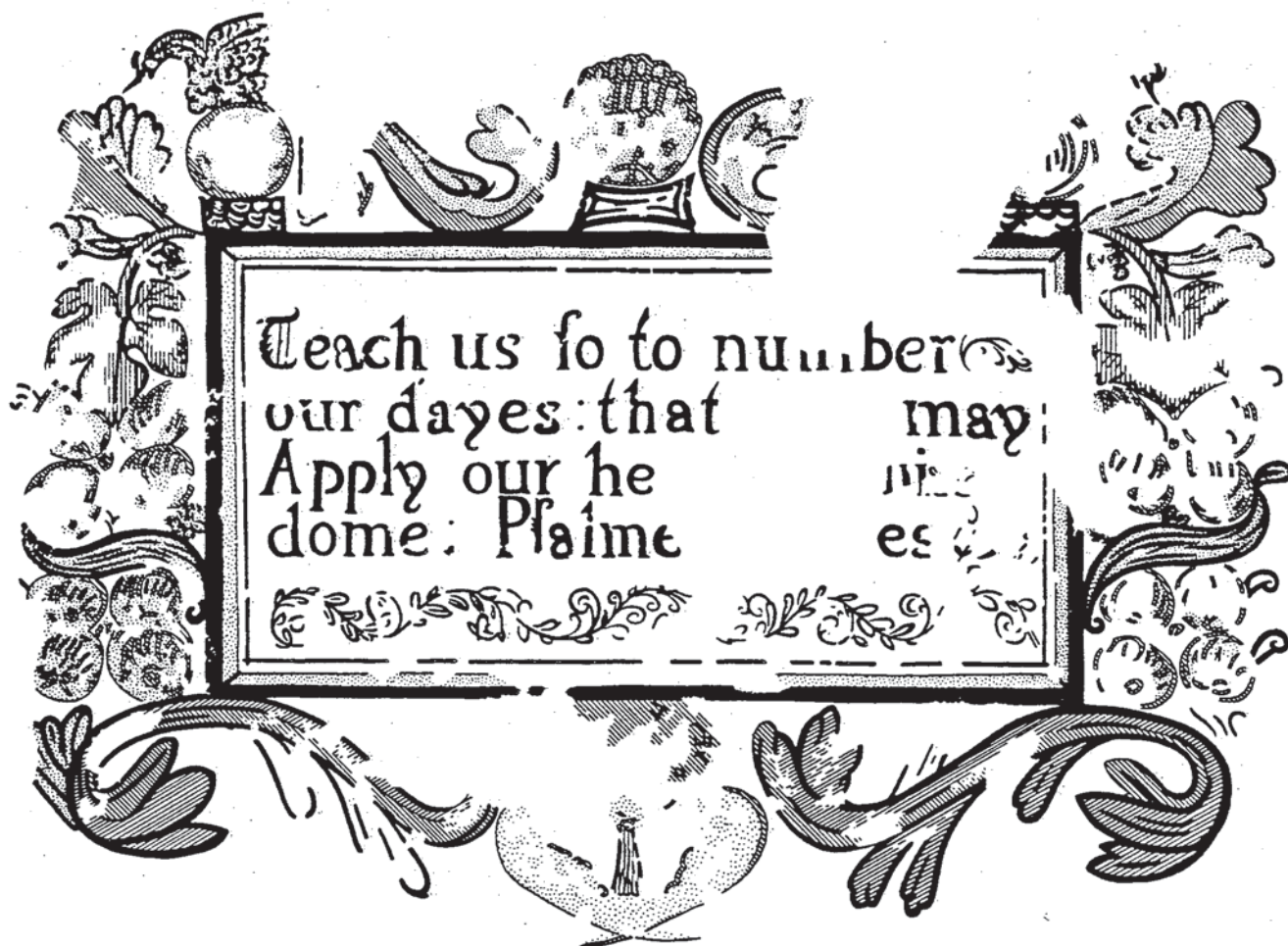


Fig. 3

wisdome: Psalme (s...)es'. This is set in a rectangular frame (measuring 70 by 30 cm) of yellow and black, which is surrounded by crude foliage executed in black, blue, green, maroon, red and yellow. The other panel was evidently similar but only the right hand edge and a little of the bottom remained. The room containing the paintings was apparently otherwise plainly decorated. It is not clear whether the paintings are original features or a later addition of the early eighteenth century.

4. POST EXCAVATION

The preparation of reports on previous excavations has inevitably been hindered by the need for staff to work on the Friernhay site. The sites to be dealt with this year include Mermaid Yard 1976-9; Rack Street 1974-5; Exe Bridge, Frog Street and St. Edmund's church 1975-9; and Bartholomew Street 1980. In addition, Paul Bidwell will

will continue his work on the Romans pottery. Some time will also be devoted to initial post-excavation work for Friernhay Street, including the production of an illustrated interim report.

5. PUBLICATION

The list of published and proposed volumes in the monograph series Exeter Archaeological Reports is as follows:

1. The Legionary Bath-house and Basilica and Forum at Exeter, P. T. Bidwell, 1979.
2. Faunal Studies on Urban Sites: The Animal Bones from Exeter, 1971-5, Mark Maltby, 1979.
3. Medieval and Post-Medieval Finds from Exeter, 1971-80, J.P. Allan (1982).
4. The Roman Pottery and Coins from Exeter, 1971-81, P.T. Bidwell.
5. Romans Sites Excavated in Exeter, 1971-81, C.G. Henderson.
6. Excavations in Medieval and Early Modern Exeter:
 - 6.1 The Medieval Exe Bridge, St. Edmund's Church and Frog Street Riverside Tenements, S.W. Brown.
 - 6.2 Polsloe Priory, J.P. Allan and S. Blaylock.
 - 6.3 Sites Within the Walls and in the Southern Suburb, J.P. Allan and C.G. Henderson.
 - 6.4 The Cathedral Close, J.P. Allan and P.T. Bidwell.
7. The Buildings of Exeter and Topsham, J.R. L. Thorp and others.

Volume 3

John Allan has finished his part of the text, but quite a lot of retyping will be necessary before copies of the manuscript can be submitted to the referees and the University Publications Committee. We hope to have this completed by the end of August. Unfortunately, there are several specialist reports which have not been received, and there is some doubt whether one of these, dealing

with the Small Finds, will be forthcoming before September or October.

Further Volumes

The Exe Bridge report will probably be finished by the middle of next year, and John Allan hopes to complete his report on Polsloe Priory by the end of 1982. Paul Bidwell intends to submit the volume on Roman pottery and coins in mid.1983. This will be followed in 1984 by Volume 5.

Director, A.F.U.

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

EXETER ARCHAEOLOGICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE, 11 DECEMBER, 1981

Report to Committee

1. EXCAVATIONS

Friernhay Street (Wheaton's) site

Since the last report the initial period of post-excavation analysis has been completed; John Allan and Paul Bidwell have made a preliminary assessment of most of the finds; and interim plans (Figs. 1-7) have been prepared which illustrate the history of the site from the early Roman period to the 19th century.

Roman: some additions can be made to the account of the Roman levels given in the last report.

During the watching brief a 1.7m deep, V-shaped ditch was discovered which runs across the site on a north-east to south-west alignment (i.e. roughly at right angles to the fortress defences) and terminates c. 4-5m from the outer lip of the large fortress ditch. The new ditch is similar in character to the curving ditch found in 1980 next to the Snayle Tower at the western angle of the City Wall. It seems probable that the two lengths of ditch connected to delimit a roughly square enclosure or annexe to the fortress with sides about 100m long. The area thus enclosed would have been approximately 1ha or 2.5 acres. No trace was found of a bank or fence running parallel to the ditch, nor of the foundation trenches for timber buildings. However the conditions were not ideal for the detection of such features and it is to be hoped that in the future an opportunity will arise to examine a further site in this area. It is worth noting that, although not certainly the same date, the 1st-century pottery-kiln site found at Bartholomew Street in 1974 would have lain within the suggested annexe.

The rear posts of both rampart interval towers were found to have been extracted and replaced, probably fairly late in the life of the fortress, by new posts set in pits cut through the body of the rampart; the front posts, however, showed no evidence of having been renewed. A possible explanation is that the rear posts required replacement after being damaged by a fire in the intervallum.

The deposition of the two bronze paterae in the stone-lined cess pit can be dated quite closely on the evidence of associated imported colour-coated pottery to the period shortly after 150.

Medieval and post-medieval: two tenements fronting onto Friernhay Street were excavated and also the ends of two Fore Street tenements

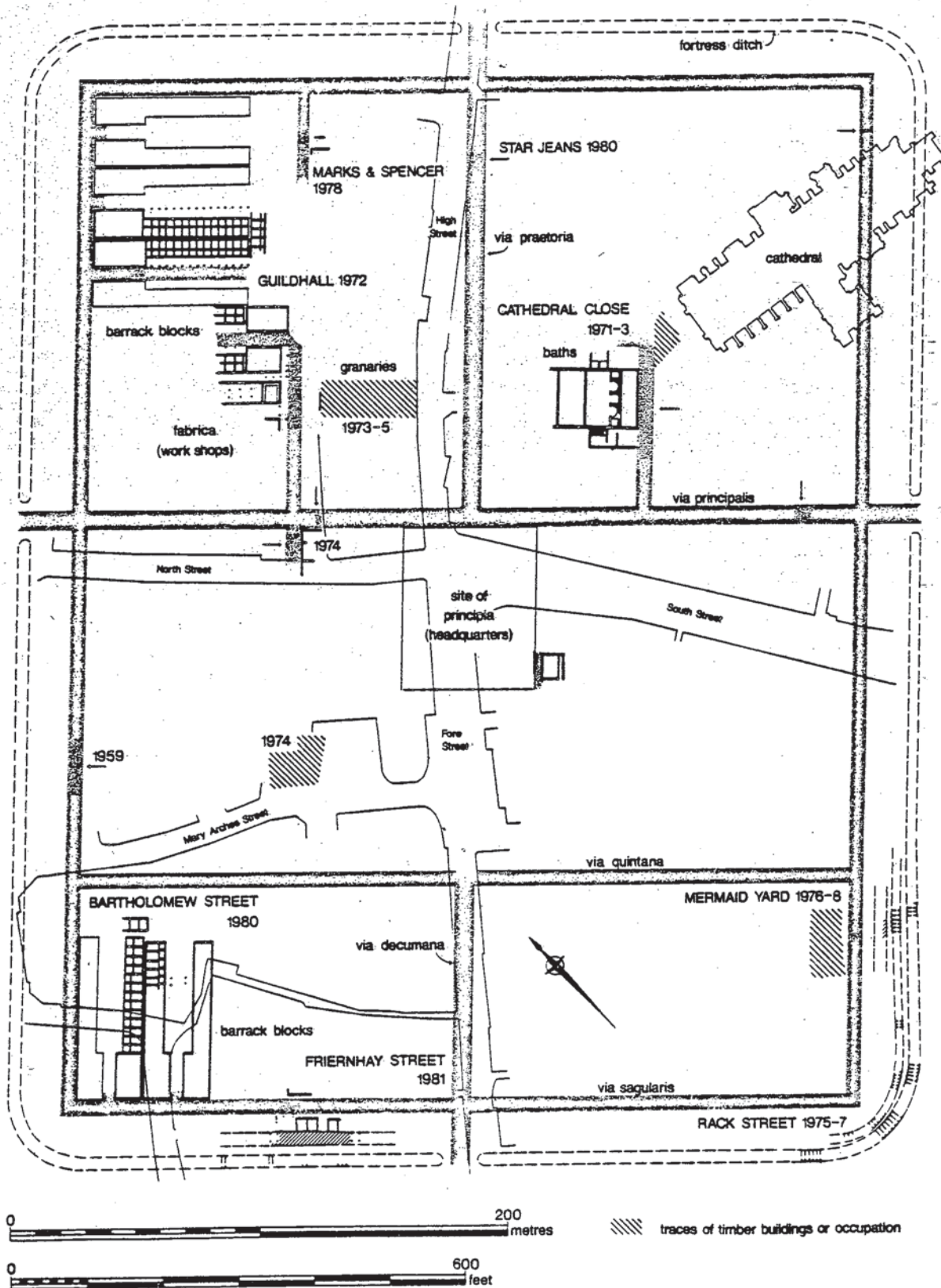


Fig. 1: The Legionary Fortress

FRIERNHAY STREET, EXETER 1981

ROMAN : MILITARY c55-75

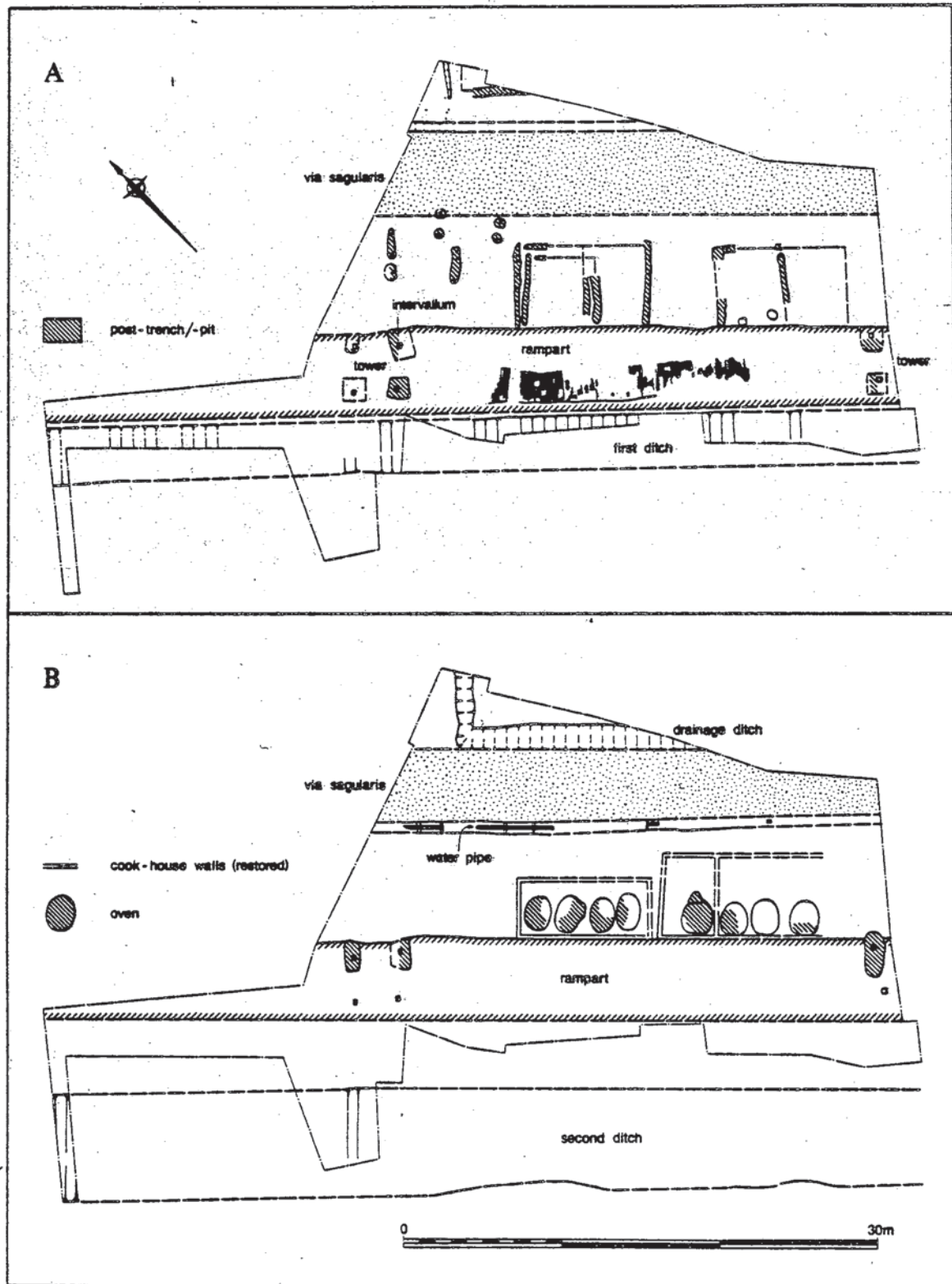


Fig. 2

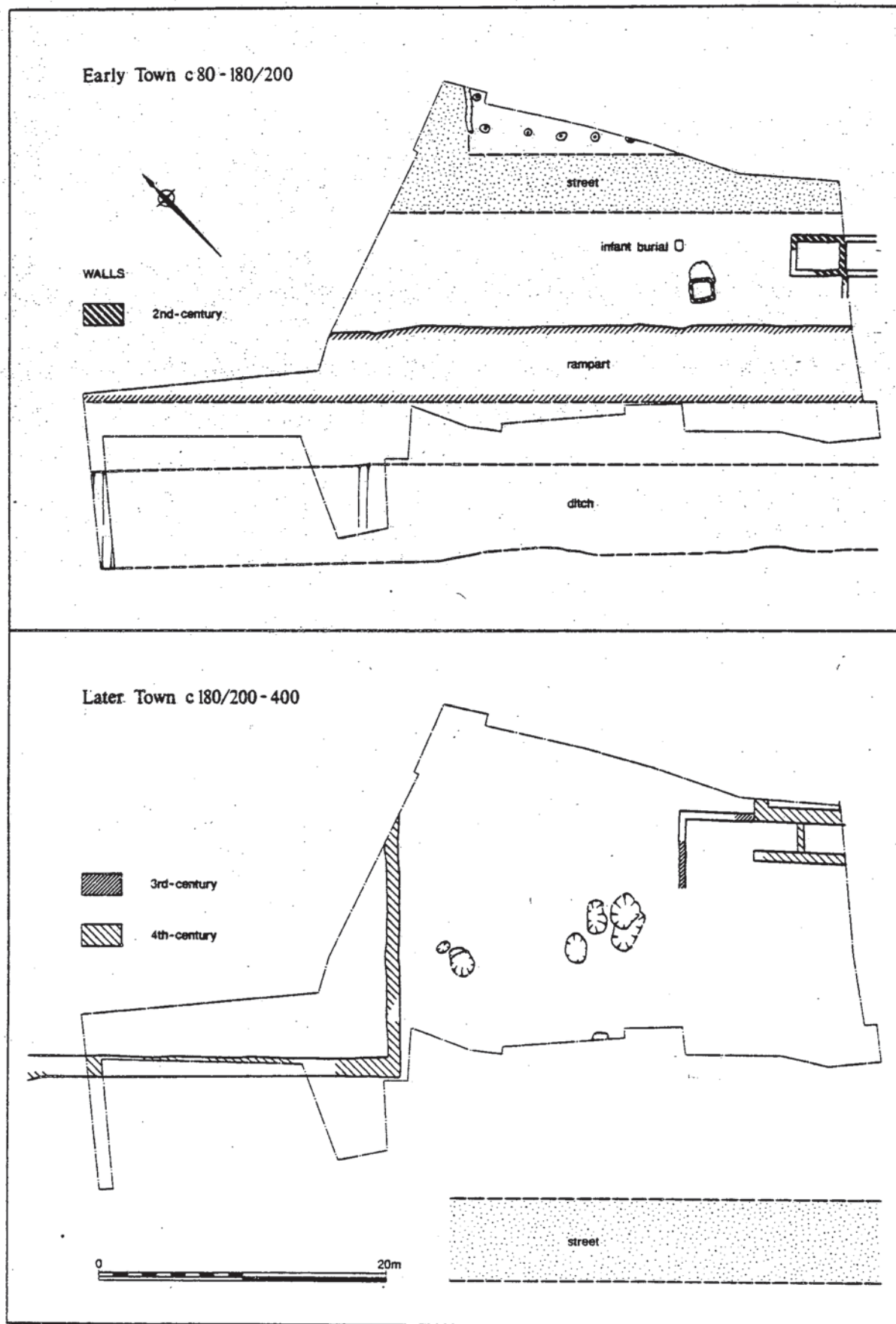


Fig. 3

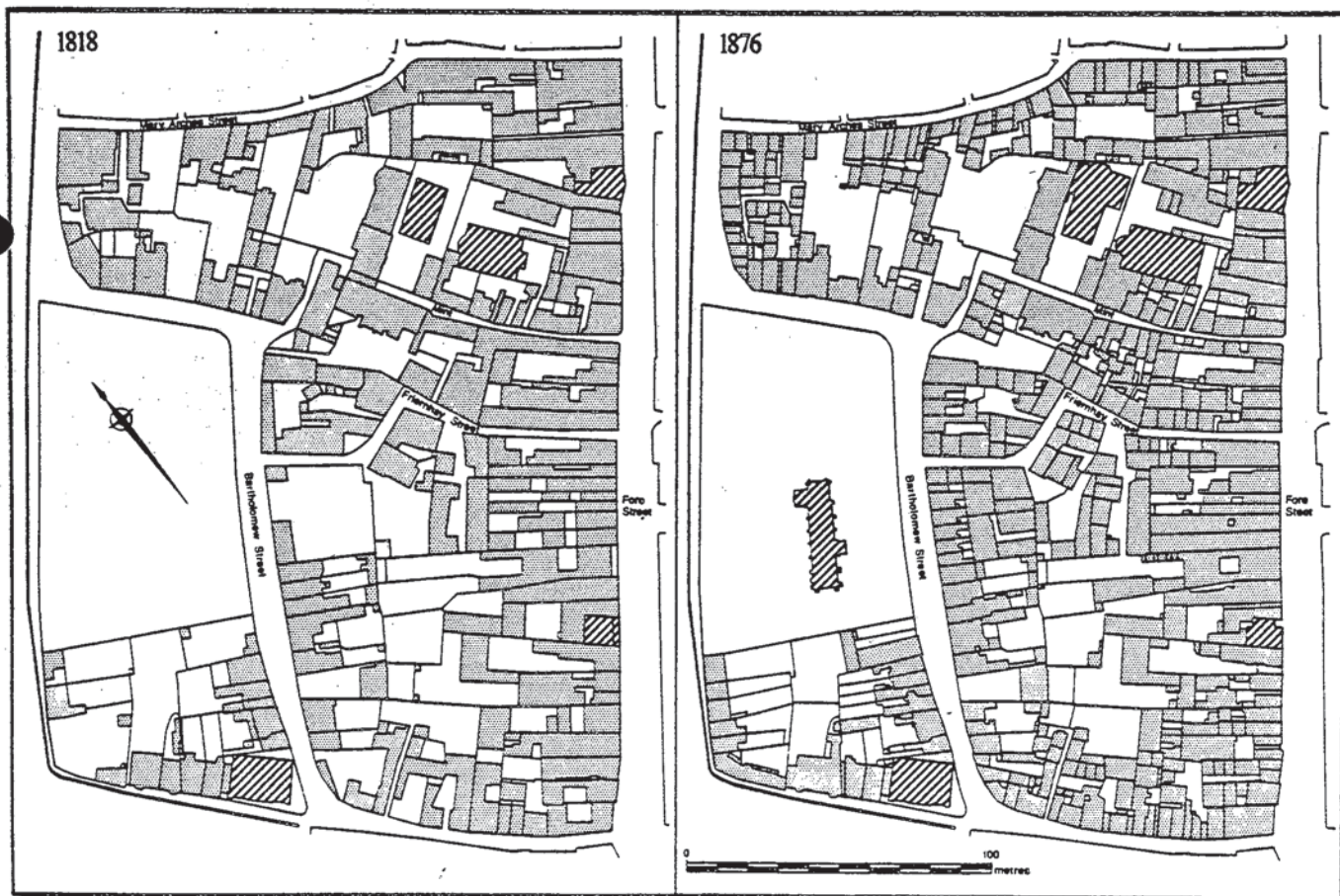
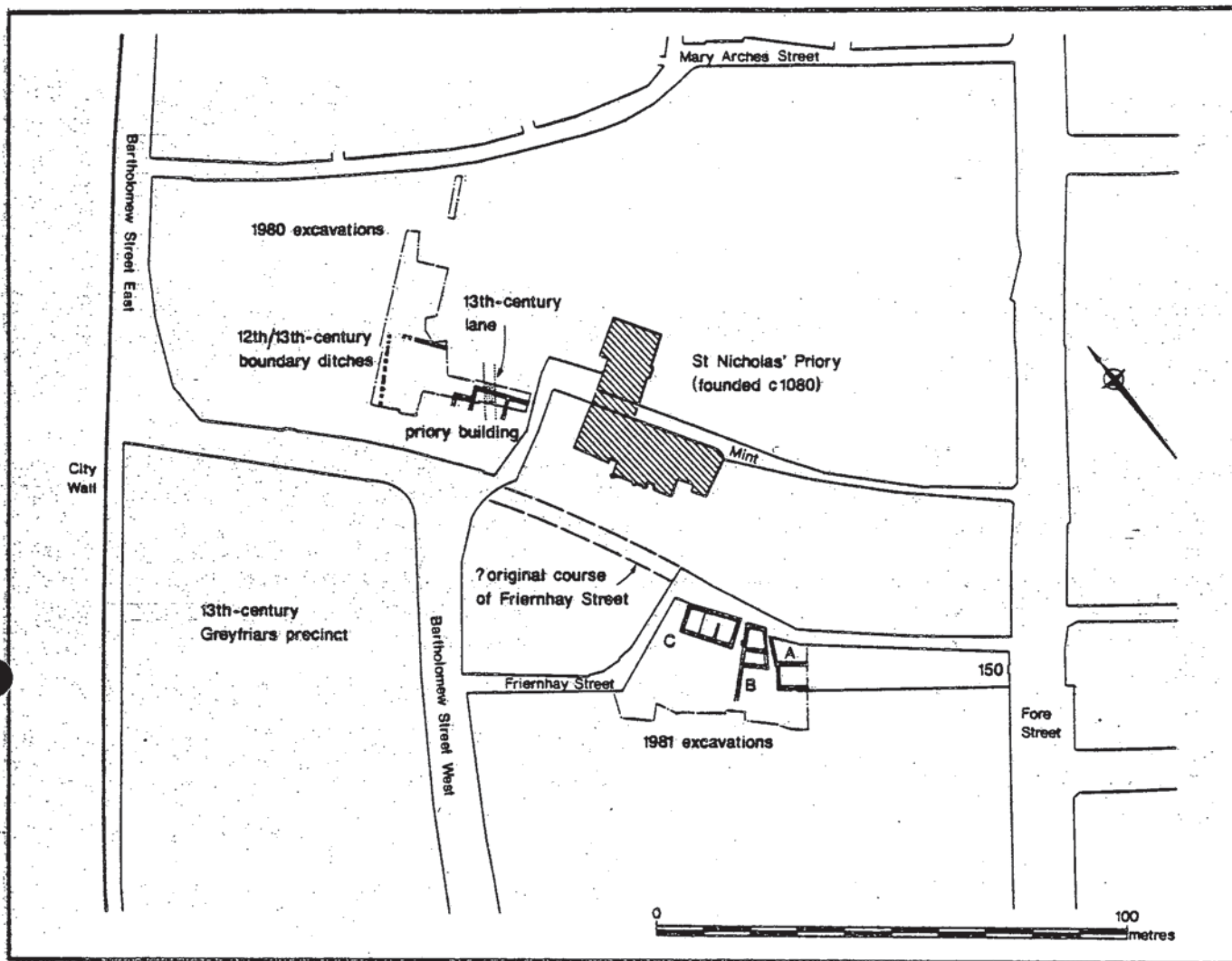


Fig. 4

(Fig. 4, A, B and C).

Tenement C The earliest activity to leave any trace in the archaeological record was the quarrying of stone from a Roman wall foundation in the 11th or early 12th century (Fig. 5.1). A mid 12th-century ditch (852), draining towards the south-west, represents either the boundary between two tenements in the period prior to the supposed diversion of Friernhay Street (see Fig. 4 and December 1980 committee report) or an early drainage ditch next to the street. A sequence of four ditches and recuts draining towards Fore Street probably reflect the curving course of the street in the early 13th century; the latest of these (605) dates to the middle of the century - the others are not closely datable. The five ditches and recuts shown in Fig. 5.2 were undoubtedly street-side ditches; none is well dated but they are assumed to belong to the later 13th or early 14th century. Ditch 731 bounded the south-west side of a hollow way which was filled during the 14th and 15th centuries by successive layers of metalling. The gravel and mortar floor of the earliest building on the tenement was contained within a sunken terrace; no wall footings survived but the building is likely to have been similar in construction to a 13th-century house excavated at Rack Street in 1974-5 which had terraced floors and shallow-founded cob walls up to 1m thick. Ditch 635 may have been associated with this building and almost certainly marked the south-east limit of the tenement. The property boundary remained in this position until the last house on the site was demolished in the present century (Fig. 6.11). The building with the terraced floor was succeeded by an insubstantial structure represented by earthen floors and narrow clay-bonded wall footings (Fig. 5.4). Neither of these buildings was well dated, but if they were dwellings they are unlikely to have been earlier than the mid 14th century, since there were no rubbish pits associated with them. Considerable numbers of pits are usually found on sites occupied before the early to mid 14th century; after this very few were dug. Fig. 5.5 shows late medieval drainage ditches next to the street, the latest of which (194) contained a large group of food bones and pottery of c. 1450-1500.

Around 1500 a building (Fig. 6.6) with stone foundations 0.8m thick (probably for cob walls) was erected on the line of the present street frontage, which has thus remained constant for almost five centuries. The building measured c. 10.1 x 4.7m internally and was divided into three rooms by narrow partitions. No hearth or fireplace was found, although these could have been located in the corner of the building destroyed by a 19th-century cellar. During the 16th century new clay and lime floors were laid in the rooms and one of the partitions was replaced (Fig. 6.7). Two of the outer

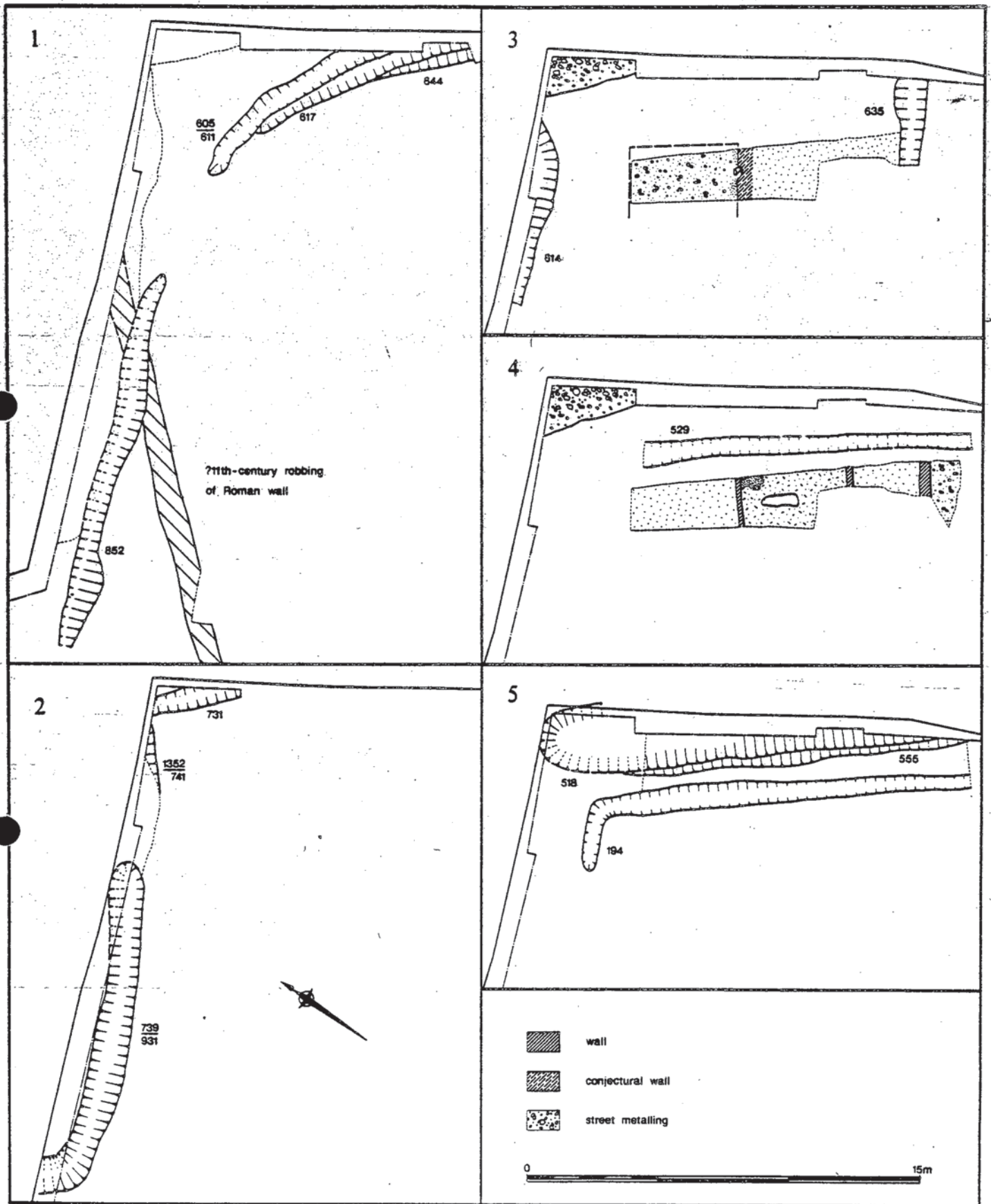


Fig. 5

EXETER: Friernhay Street 1981

Tenement C: Post-Medieval

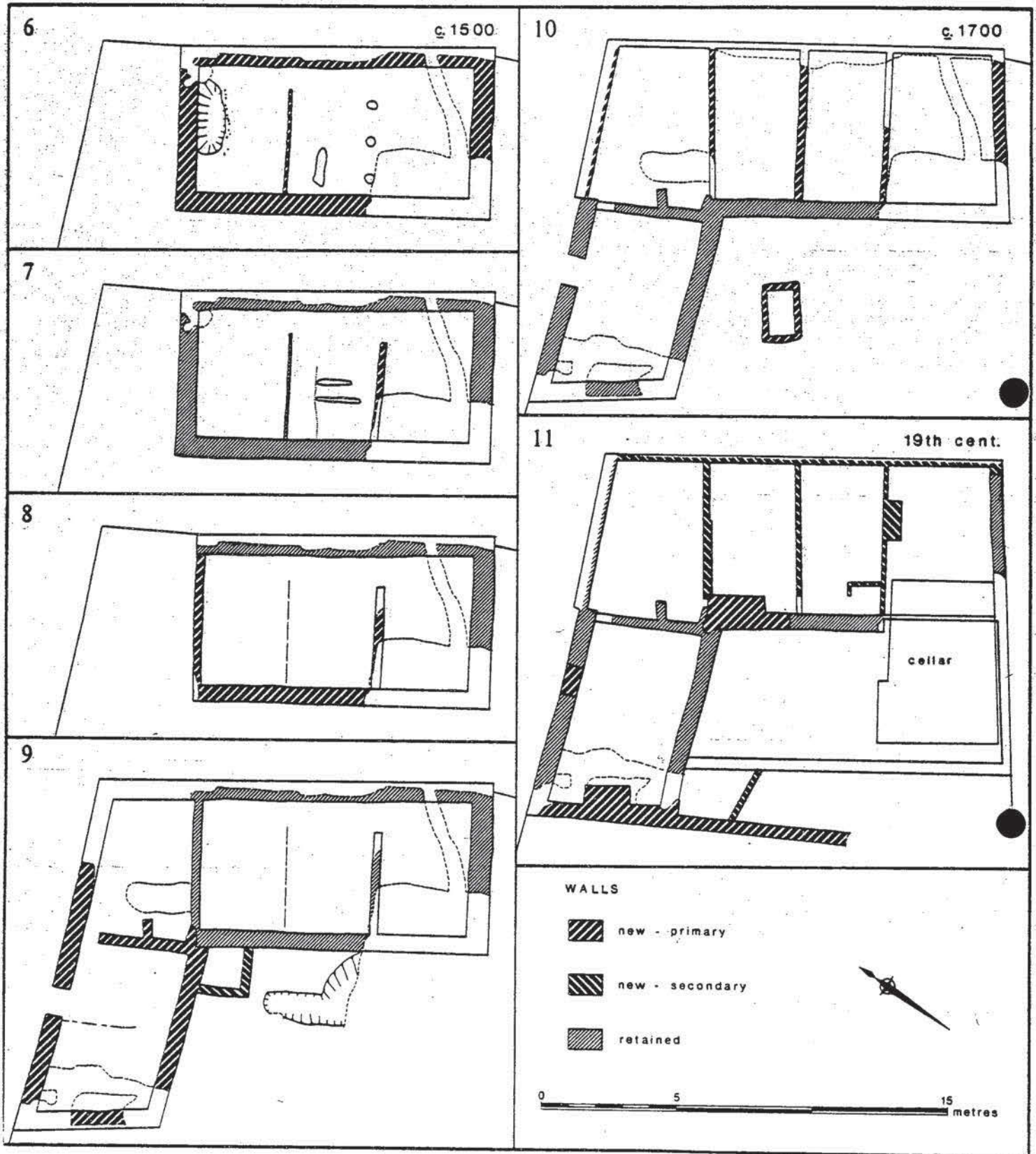


Fig. 6

walls were later rebuilt (Fig. 6.8) before the addition of a second range of rooms along the adjacent street frontage in the late 16th or early 17th century (Fig. 6.9). It is not known whether the new wing constituted a separate dwelling or an extension to the existing accommodation. A garderobe (latrine pit) in the angle of the two ranges was filled in after the middle of the 17th century and replaced by another in the back yard (Fig. 6.10). In the late 17th or early 18th century the original front range was largely rebuilt with the addition of a timber-framed front wall and new internal partitions. This conversion resulted in a terrace or row probably comprising two double-cell houses, with a further two-cell dwelling on the north-western frontage. The 1876 1:500 scale OS map (Fig. 4) seems to show the front range divided into four cottages. By the end of the 19th century the front wall and internal partitions had been replaced once again (Fig. 6.11) and almost the whole tenement was occupied by buildings.

Tenement A (150 Fore Street) The 1876 OS map (Fig. 4) shows the block of Fore Street tenements lying to the south-west of Friernhay Street closed on the north-west by the long, fairly straight wall which now forms the limit of the redevelopment site. It was therefore assumed at the start of the excavation that this wall represented an ancient property boundary, probably dating to the late Saxon period when the tenements were first laid out. Thus it came as a surprise to find that No. 150 Fore Street (Fig. 4) had until as late as the 18th or early 19th century extended into the excavation site.

The earliest boundary feature was a ditch (464) which probably dates to the 12th century (Fig. 7.1). This was replaced in the 12th or early 13th century by a wall of clay-bonded stones which may have been merely a boundary wall rather than part of a building since there were no floor surfaces associated with it. The wall had been demolished by the mid 13th century when several rubbish pits were cut across its line and Roman foundations in the area were robbed of their stone.

In the late 13th century a building with walls of mortared stone and containing a garderobe was constructed on the south-west side of the tenement (Fig. 7.2). This was supplied c. 1300 with running water carried through a lead pipe of about 5cm external diameter. Very few tenements in the town can have been provided with running water at this period, but this particular instance need occasion no surprise. In c. 1260, Martin Durling was granted licence by St Nicholas' Priory 'to take water from the aqueduct which is in our cemetery on the west side of our church through our garden which is on the west side of the street which leads from the High Street to the friars

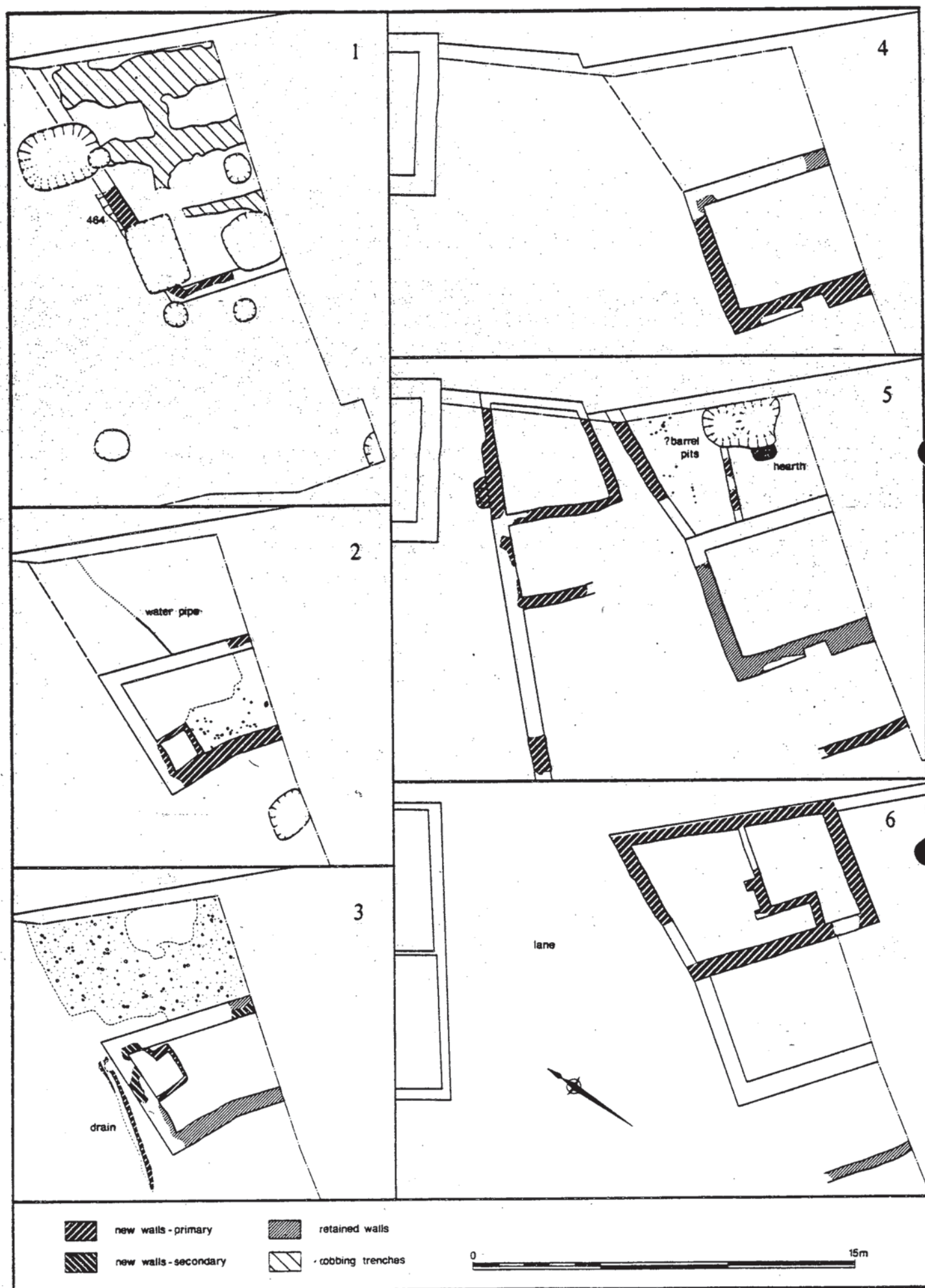


Fig. 7

minor as is convenient to him for ever up to his house which is in the gift of William de Gifford'. (I am grateful to Professor Joyce Youngs for drawing my attention to this reference.) Clearly 150 Fore Street was not the tenement of Martin Durling since its position does not fit the description given in the document; however the pipe found in the excavation must also have tapped the priory aqueduct under licence. The garderobe pit in the corner of the building was filled in during the early 14th century. It contained a rich collection of finds including a rare type of Saintonge (south-west French) jug with green-glazed applied bosses and an inscribed ?merchant's mark; a wooden mallet, barrel staves and a bowl; and two English or North French glass vessels: a stemmed goblet with trailed ribs and a urinal. The pit deposits were also particularly rich in seeds and fish remains. The room was eventually furnished with a second garderobe situated in the northern corner (Fig. 7.3); this went out of use in the mid to late 15th century and produced an intact south Somerset pottery jug and a small glazed bowl.

In the early 16th century the building was substantially rebuilt with only the old north-east wall being retained (Fig. 7.4). A garderobe outlet in the south-west wall became blocked towards the end of the century. The later history of this half of the tenement could not be determined since the relevant levels had been destroyed by a modern building. In the mid to late 16th century further rooms were added in the area next to Friernhay Street which had previously remained open (Fig. 7.5). The new rooms may have been used for industrial purposes: a hearth and stakeholes of the late 16th century were replaced in the early 17th century by a pit which probably held two barrels set into the floor. New floor levels were put down at intervals during the 17th and 18th centuries before the whole of this block was rebuilt as cottages (Fig. 7.6).

Tenement B A distinctive feature of the street-plan of late Saxon Exeter was the existence of back streets running parallel to High Street at the rear of the tenements (e.g. Waterbeer Street, Catherine Street). One of the aims of the Friernhay Street excavation was to establish whether such a street had formerly existed on the north-east side of Fore Street. If so, then the narrow tenement B, sandwiched between tenement C and the rear of the Fore Street properties, must have been created upon the abandonment of the street. Unfortunately 16th- and 17th-century terracing had removed nearly all evidence of medieval activity and it was not therefore possible to determine whether a street had existed here in the Saxo-Norman period.

The first and only building known to have stood on this plot was erected in the 16th century (Fig. 7.5) and was provided with a cellar next to the

street frontage. The fill of the cellar contained finds dating to the early 18th century; Rocque's Map of 1744 shows a lane or court on this site which gave access from Friernhay Street to the back area between the tenements on Fore Street and Bartholomew Street. The lane remained in use until recent times (Fig. 4).

Colleton Crescent

An account of the results of the 1980 excavation appeared in the June committee report of that year. Subsequently a number of additional observations were made during a watching brief undertaken by Peter Weddell. The combined results of excavation and observation for the greyfriars' period of occupation are presented in Figure 8.

The added range 'south' of the frater (refectory) was found to be c. 5m wide internally.

The reredorter (latrine block) was located c. 7m 'south' of the dorter (dormitory) and traced for a distance of 6m. Water from the aqueduct was conveyed to the building through a stone culvert. The latrine itself took the form of a 0.6m wide round-bottomed channel built in finely-dressed volcanic ashlar. Access to the reredorter would probably have been obtained via a first-floor passageway on the 'west' side of the culvert linking to a door in the 'east' wall of the dorter. Like the frater, the reredorter was probably constructed soon after the dorter; however the possibility cannot be ruled out that it was built at a later date to replace an earlier block lying parallel to the dorter.

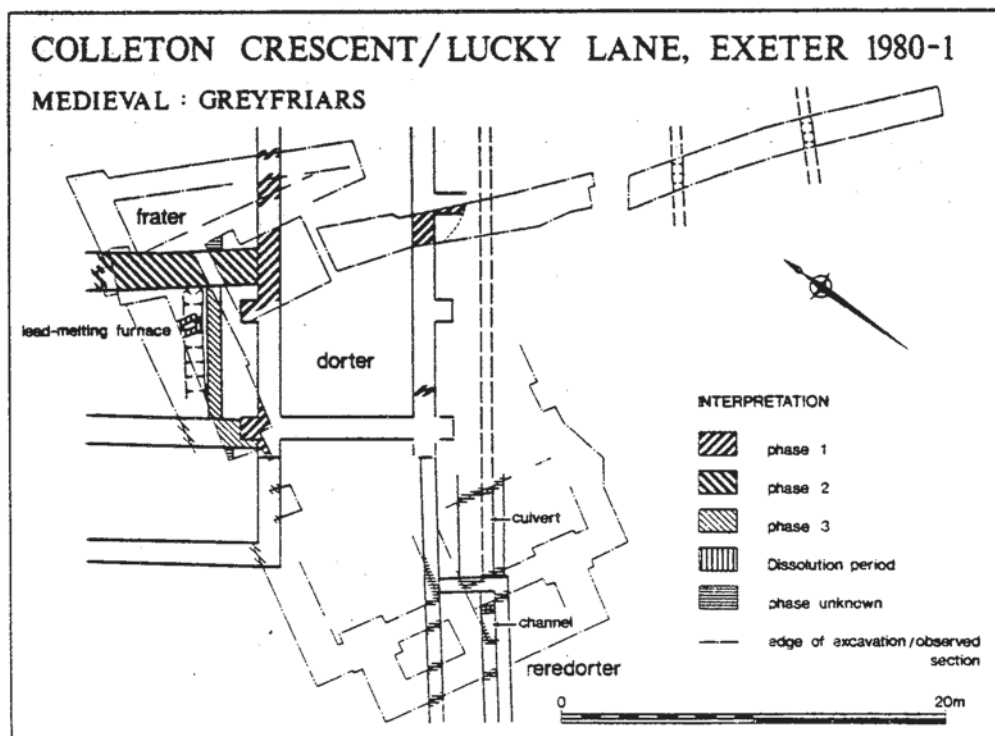


Fig. 8

Paul Street

An excavation will take place in the new year on the redevelopment site at the upper end of Paul Street bounded by Maddocks Row, Queen Street and the City Wall. In addition to recording the standing buildings, which include an unusual and well-preserved late 18th-century wine merchant's premises, small-scale trenches will be cut: (a) to locate for the first time the north-western defensive ditches of the legionary fortress; (b) to excavate part of the bank behind the City Wall where this is affected by a new access ramp; (c) to search for an intramural street shown on the Hogenburg map of 1586 and possibly a remnant of the late Saxon street-system; (d) to locate any surviving remains of 'King Athelstan's Palace', a Norman (i.e. probably 12th- or early 13th-century) house which stood on the site until shortly before 1800. A watching brief was recently maintained when the frontage of this site was cut back for road-widening. A small grant was made by the County Council to cover the cost of this work. The Council has also contributed £500 towards the cost of building recording and excavation.

2. ANCIENT MONUMENTS

Polsloe Priory

The grounds have recently been tidied up under an MSC scheme and plans are in hand to mark out the main wall-lines revealed by excavation next year. Consolidation of the fabric is being carried out at the moment and is scheduled for completion in March 1982.

City Wall

A section of wall in Northernhay Street is being repointed and consolidated at the time of writing. A record was made of the medieval and early modern facework before work began.

Exe Bridge

It is now five years since the consolidation programme was completed and repointing and other improvements are necessary. It is hoped that funds will be made available in the current year.

3. PUBLICATION

Volume III

John Allan's volume on the medieval and post-medieval finds from Exeter sites 1971-80 is now very near completion. Only one major contribution has yet to be received, although there are about three lesser ones still outstanding. Copies of the manuscript will be sent to the DOE, the printers (for final estimating) and Professor Todd in January even if some contributions

have still not arrived. The intention is to get the book to press as early as possible in the new year since printing prices go up at the end of April.

Director, AFU.