

ROCESTER ARCHÆOLOGY

AN EVALUATION



ROCESTER EXCAVATIONS

EVALUATION REPORT

by

A. S. Esmonde Cleary and I. M. Ferris

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INTRODUCTION

The village of Rocester is situated in the parish of the same name, which formed part of the Hundreds of Totmonslow. The parish lies in north-eastern Staffordshire up against the border with Derbyshire (fig. 1). The village overlies gravels of old river terraces, and the soils that formed on them. To the east of the village flows the river Dove, a major tributary of the Trent. To the west of the village is the smaller river Churnet which joins the Dove c.500m (1650 feet) south-south-west of Rocester church.

Until some twenty-five years ago there had been little work on the Roman and mediaeval past of the village. The '-cester' place-name and the finding of pottery and other Roman material had led to the presumption that there was a Roman site at Rocester; and documents and the earthworks in Abbey Field survived as a testament to the mediaeval Rocester Abbey. What follows is a summary of what was known of Rocester's past prior to the 1985 excavations.

Prehistory

Aerial photography has shown the presence of a number of ring-ditches (probably the ploughed-out remnants of Bronze Age barrows) in the angle of land at the confluence of the Churnet and the Dove. Recent field-walking in this area has recovered a number of worked flints and waste flakes. Worked flints of probable Bronze Age date were found in the 1985 excavations in the New Cemetery and in the trial trench in the grounds of the Dove First School.

In 1939 a Beaker (Clarke No.768) was found during road-works in the village, and is now in the Hanley Museum, Stoke-on-Trent.

It has been suggested that the poorly-known earthworks on Bunbury Hill to the north of the village may be a small Iron Age hill-fort.

The Roman Period

There are records of Roman material being recognised at Rocester from as early as 1792 (Redfern 1865,356) and further finds were recorded in 1833, 1835, 1852 and 1888 (Barns 1914,6; Ordnance Survey 1887).

In 1913 a trench was dug across the playground of the Dove First School (Barns 1914,4) but nothing is known of what was found. In 1958-9 members of Oldfield Boys School dug a number of trenches to the north of Church Lane and in Abbey Field. Finds from these excavations are soon to be published by the Hanley Museum. Between 1960 and 1962 sewage trenches were dug across Abbey Field and the presence of stonework recorded, though this is more likely to be from the mediaeval Abbey than of Roman date.

Most important was the work carried out in 1961 by Dr. Graham Webster. Alerted by the proximity of the Littlechester to Chesterton Roman road, the main alignment of which crosses the Dove just to the south of the village (fig. 2), by the '-cester' place-name, and by the records of the finding of Roman material, Dr. Webster visited Rocester, and noted an earthwork on the boundary of the New Cemetery. Its curving shape suggested to him that it might be the corner of a Roman fort. This hypothesis was proved correct

by the trial-trenching he then undertook, the main results of which are summarised below:

- 1) A late-first-century earthen rampart inside which was a series of trenches for the sleeper-beams of timber buildings. These were interpreted as part of a Roman fort.
- 2) Sometime after A.D. 160 a second rampart was built along the line of the original rampart. It was suggested that this might form part of the defences of a civil settlement.
- 3) Part of this second bank was cut away to allow the insertion of a stone wall, contemporary with which was a quarry-pit of A.D. 280 or later.
- 4) This pit was overlain by a 'tilling' layer containing fourth-century pottery.
- 5) This was in its turn overlain by a marked horizon of burning, a series of hearths, which yielded a late-Saxon strap-end, dated to the late ninth century, and also a number of knife-blades.
- 6) In the mediaeval period the area was used for dumping of quantities of stone rubble.

(Webster 1962)

These excavations demonstrated for the first time the nature of the archaeological sequence at Rochester, gave some idea of the periods that might be represented, and of the potential of the site. Subsequently, in 1962-8, Miss Fiona Chapman-Purchase (Mrs. Sturdy) dug a number of trenches in the village which added considerably to our knowledge of the archaeology. The results of these excavations are awaiting publication. Nonetheless large gaps in our understanding of Roman Rochester remained. Chief amongst these were uncertainty as to the size of the fort and any associated settlement; the size of any civilian site succeeding the military; and the precise dates of the various phases of occupation.

The Anglo-Saxon Period

The late-Saxon material recovered in 1961 was the first archaeological evidence for settlement at Rochester between the ending of Roman Britain and the Norman Conquest of 1066. This has been supplemented by the discovery in the 1985 excavations of Chester-type Stafford Ware, probably of tenth-century date.

The Middle Ages

The Domesday Book of 1086 records that Rochester had formerly been part of the estates of the Saxon Earl Algar, and that, along with other manors in the Dove valley, it had passed into the king's hands shortly after the Conquest. The Domesday inquisitors recorded for Rochester:

One Hide (of land) with the appendages. There is land for nine ploughs. In demesne are two (ploughs); and (there are) eighteen villeins and ten bordars with nine ploughs. There (is) a mill rendering 10s. and (there are) twenty acres of meadow Wood(land) one furlong in length and as much in breadth. In the time of Edward the Confessor it was worth £4. Now (it is worth) £8.

(Victoria County History of Staffordshire Vol. IV)

Considering the rather limited resources listed, the value of Rocester is remarkably high. It is greater than that of any other manor in northern Staffordshire apart from Uttoxeter. The doubling of the value in little over twenty years is also exceptional. To explain these anomalies further research into the historical sources both for Rocester and for the surrounding area must be undertaken.

The manor of Rocester passed by royal grant into the hands of the Earls of Chester. It was Richard Bacon, nephew of Ranulph Earl of Chester, who, between 1141 and 1146, founded at Rocester an Abbey of Canons Regular of the Augustinian order. Most houses of this order were of the lesser status of Priory, and it is hard to see why so insignificant a house as Rocester was accorded the higher status, particularly in view of what was to be a parlous existence.

Various sources throughout the life of the Abbey attest to the material poverty and indifferent spirituality of the Canons of Rocester. In 1229 Bishop Stavensby of Lichfield granted them permission to supplement their endowments by appropriating the parish church of St. Michael, noting that they were the poorest religious house in his diocese. Only six years later, in the assessments for the aid of 1235-6, Rocester was assessed for 10s.

Only Calwich, the smallest Augustinian house in the diocese, yielded an equally low figure. In the early fourteenth century the Italian merchant Pegolotti, a member of the Florentine company of the Bardi and engaged in the wool trade with English monasteries, recorded that Rocester produced ten *sacca* of wool per annum at a value of twelve *marchi* a sack. This figure does not compare favourably with those for other Staffordshire religious houses. In January 1398 the Crown despatched commissioners to Rocester since the Abbey was reported as being 'deeply in debt owing to the negligence and default of its canons, officers and ministers, and its grievous oppression by malefactors of the parts adjacent to the Abbey'

(Cal.Pat.Richard II, 1396-1399, 508).

In 1337 one of the Canons was accused of being among a number of men who broke into Bolingbroke Castle, imprisoned Alice Countess of Lincoln, and drove off twenty horses. In 1385 an order was issued for the arrest of three Canons.

Despite this unedifying history, it was nonetheless the Abbey which successfully petitioned for the grants to Rocester of Market Charters. The first, of July 1283, granted a Thursday market and a fair. The second, of February 1440, granted a Friday market and two Fairs annually. Thus Rocester became one of the 'market villages' which characterise the settlement hierarchy of mediaeval Staffordshire, a county under-urbanised compared with those further south.

At its dissolution in September 1538 there were but nine Canons, including the Abbot, in the Abbey. The income from its estates was stated as being £100-2s-10½d per annum. The

Abbot was awarded a pension, the Abbey church was demolished, the building materials sold off, and the site leased to one of Thomas Cromwell's henchmen, before it too was sold.

(Victoria County History of Staffordshire Vol.III, 247-51)

Post-Mediaeval

The site of the Abbey became that of the new manor house, and it is presumably to this establishment that one must assign the formal garden whose remains can still be seen in the western part of Abbey Field. The house was apparently pulled down shortly after 1660 (Erdeswick 1844, 491), though the Hearth Tax Return of 1666 lists fourteen taxable hearths for one John Addams 'in Rocester Hall which is clearely taken downe' and a further ten for Richard Salt 'being in the same Hall'

(Staffordshire Historical Collections 1923,192).

The details in the text of the Return provide the first real opportunity to look closely at the village and parish, and to indicate relative wealth and status. But this evidence will only yield the maximum of information when it is collated with that from all the available deeds, leases and inventories for Rocester, and the results plotted on maps. The earliest surviving map of the parish is that accompanying the Tithe Award of 1851, and this will act as the starting-point for detailing changes in the village from that date to this.

The economy of this part of Staffordshire has always been overwhelmingly agricultural, but there have been other industries besides. In 1781 Richard Arkwright converted and enlarged the existing watermill into a cotton mill, which by 1835 was employing two hundred people, and had attached to it a model worker's settlement of thirty-nine cottages. Between 1808 and 1811 a canal was built serving Rocester, but it closed in the 1840's to make way for the Churnet Valley Railway, opening in 1849, with a branch line of 1852 to Ashbourne. These lines serviced local brick-works and lime-kilns, but these works shut down in the earlier part of this century, and the railway fell a victim to Dr. Beeching.

In 1950 there started changes for Rocester as profound as any in its history, with the establishment on the western fringes of the village of JCB Excavators Ltd. The major expansion of the works, starting in 1968 resulted in 'one of Europe's largest industrial fascias', in a quiet corner of Staffordshire, looking across the Churnet at the village whose economic and physical landscape it has so altered.

THE 1985 EXCAVATIONS

Introduction

Within the present area of Rocester village there are two relatively large open spaces unencumbered by modern development and in which significant archaeological deposits might be expected to survive (fig. 3). The larger is the Abbey Field south of the parish church. Here might be expected evidence of the Roman fort and settlement, the mediaeval Abbey, and the post-mediaeval Hall and its formal garden. This field constitutes a Scheduled Ancient Monument and is thus afforded a measure of statutory protection. Furthermore it is at present down to pasture so there is no threat to the archaeology. The smaller area is that now comprising the New Cemetery, on the northern side of Church Lane, north-west of the parish church. Since the early 1960's this has been the burial ground for the village. As is well-known and obvious, the digging of graves under current regulations causes massive and irreparable damage to archaeological deposits. To date approximately one third of the New Cemetery has been used for burials, rendering it archaeologically worthless. In due course a similar fate will befall the remaining two thirds. The archaeology is under imminent and real threat of destruction.

In response to this threat and thanks to the interest and generosity of JCB Excavators Ltd., a season of exploratory excavations was undertaken during the summer of 1985 in the New Cemetery. This was an evaluation exercise, whose purpose was two-fold. The first aim was to assess the state of preservation of the archaeological deposits; the second was to characterise the archaeological sequence - the types and dates of human activity on the site. Only when this evaluation had been undertaken could a decision be made as to whether further excavation was justified, and, if it were, what strategy should be adopted.

The excavation lasted the thirteen weeks from 6th May to 2nd August, working six days a week. Malcolm Cooper and Iain Ferris were present on site for the entire period. Initially manpower was provided by the Staffordshire Archaeological Roving Team and local volunteers. For six weeks in the latter half of June through July this was considerably augmented by the Birmingham students on their annual Training Excavation.

An area 30m. (north-south) by 10m. (east-west) was opened approximately in the centre of the northern part of the New Cemetery, immediately to the west of the modern path. This was designed to yield a section across the Roman rampart and across the structures, features and deposits, of whatever date, which lay within it. After de-turfing, the area was trowelled clean and all finds individually plotted. It became clear that there were no features detectable on or cut into the topsoil. Further excavation by hand revealed that this was true over the whole site up to a depth of 30cms. (12 inches). Therefore the remaining topsoil was removed down to the top of recognisable archaeological deposits, using the local industrial product.

In addition Trench I of Dr. Webster's 1961 excavation was re-opened to provide a preview and comparison for the stratigraphy in the main area.

The Archaeological Sequence (fig. 4)

It must be emphasised that the evidence and conclusions advanced here are inevitably preliminary and interim. The site

was not excavated down to the natural subsoil (indeed the majority of the archaeological deposits are yet to be tackled), nor have any but the preliminary stages of processing been carried out on the stratigraphic records and the finds.

The earliest features yet encountered consist of a cobbled spread across much of the central part of the site, with which were associated a north-south trench (almost certainly the robber-trench for a timber beam), a large pit some 4m. (13 feet) square, and part of a timber building (fig. 7). The precise relationships of these features require further clarification. The beam trench, even in its original unrobbed state, cuts into the top of the backfill of the large pit, and thus is clearly later than it. The cobbles as exposed are clearly associated with the beam trench as they end up against its western side, moreover some of the cobbles overlie the north-western corner of the pit fill. It should however, be borne in mind that there may be earlier phases of the cobbling, associated with the pit. So far only the very top of the backfill of the pit has been excavated, so it is not possible to state what the pit's original function was: it is big enough to have been a well. To the south of the pit, in the south-eastern corner of the excavation, lay part of a timber building associated with the pit. It contained what are probably floor surfaces. The area of the structure so far exposed is much too small to be able to say anything about its plan or function.

It is noteworthy that to the north the deposits of this phase end against the tail of the Roman rampart which at that date was therefore probably a far more prominent feature than it is now.

From an examination of the pottery from the features of this phase so far excavated its date lies somewhere in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Three-quarters of a vessel of this date were recovered from the fill of the beam robber-trench, suggesting that its dating was contemporary with the robbing. The large pit has yielded several sherds of a vessel with combed decoration on the exterior, and more sherds from the same pot are to be seen incorporated into the uppermost matrix of the cobbles.

At the end of this phase the buildings were deliberately dismantled and their materials salvaged. The site was left open, and a layer of soil up to 20cms. (8 inches) thick accumulated. This was not homogeneous, variations in its composition could be observed from one part of the site to another. This being so it is possible that it was brought in and dumped. This may have been to cover the cobbles and make the area suitable for cultivation. If cultivation did take place it cannot have been an arable regime, as there is no trace of plough-damage to the underlying deposits.

Over two thousand sherds of pottery were recovered from this soil. Of these the vast majority (some two thousand sherds) were of Roman date, and thus residual in this mediaeval context. But there was a number of sherds of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century date.

Only over the large pit of the preceding phase may something different have happened. The southern half of the pit top was covered by an area of large river cobbles, which to south and west ended on the line of the pit sides. To the east there was not as precise a correspondence. These cobbles were set directly into the top of the backfill of the pit, with no trace of the soil which accumulated, or was dumped, over the rest of the site. This absence suggests that these cobbles were contemporary with the deposition of the soil. Furthermore

had the cobbles been later than the soil the latter would have masked the limits of the underlying pit, making impossible the correspondence between pit edges and cobbles. Thus, though it is at first sight tempting to associate the cobbles with the structure about to be described, this note of caution must be sounded.

Set on the top of the accumulation of soil were the remains of a structure (fig. 6). Only a single course of sandstone blocks remained in situ, tracing a line approximately east-west across the site, and disappearing into the eastern edge of the site, but petering out to the west. These blocks had presumably once formed part of a wall. That the wall had subsequently been heavily disturbed by ploughing was clear from the plough-marking on the upper surfaces of some of the stones, and also from the presence, mainly to the north of the wall-line of rubble tipped or dragged from the wall by plough action. There was no trace of any other wall or structural element associated with this wall. Presumably any such feature may have been obliterated by ploughing in the way this one so nearly had been. As stated above, it is tempting to associate the patch of large river cobbles overlying the early pit with this structure, but there are considerable stratigraphic difficulties in the way of this equation.

Certainly in association there was a small patch of clay with some burnt clay or daub and charcoal. This may have been a hearth. There were also, a small triangular patch of gravel and sandstone chippings and, in the south-eastern part of the site, a post-hole.

In the ploughsoil overlying this structure was a considerable quantity of iron smithing-slag. It may be that this was derived through plough disturbance from the building just described, or from another nearby.

A thick (up to 30cms. (12 inches)) ploughsoil built up over the site of the structure. Because of its depth and the possibility that it might have internal ordering not visible to the naked eye, it was excavated in four arbitrarily-defined horizontal spits, the finds from each spit being kept separate. All four spits contained large amounts of residual Roman pottery. But whereas the lowest spit contained no pottery later than the fourteenth century, the one above contained fifteenth-century wares such as Midlands Purple, and the one above that post-mediaeval wares such as Manganese-glazed. The topmost spit contained a range of later post-mediaeval wares and clay pipe fragments.

There was thus a chronological grading within a visually near-homogeneous deposit. This suggests that ploughing started in the late-mediaeval period, and probably stopped by the end of the sixteenth century, otherwise the later pottery would have become mixed in with the earlier. Thus the post-mediaeval soil may represent dumping on which there was no ploughing, though its use for pasture or horticulture cannot be ruled out.

Discussion so far has concentrated on the southern two-thirds of the site in the lee of the Roman rampart. It is now time to consider the evidence for post-Roman use of the rampart as revealed in the 1985 excavations (fig. 5). There was no evidence for any use of the rampart before the late-mediaeval period. At that time a shelf some 1m. (3 feet) wide was dug along the southern side of the surviving earthwork. Its purpose is unclear, but as it is contemporary with the early development of the ploughsoil, it may have been dug to remove the clayey and intractable rampart material. Immediately to the south of the shelf were two east-west gullies, some 30cms. (12 inches) deep. The flat bottoms of these gullies retained the impression

of stake-ends, and of short lengths of horizontal timber. Presumably these were from fences. The pottery from the gully fills was of fifteenth- and sixteenth century date, but there was insufficient evidence to establish whether the gullies were contemporaneous or successive.

Cutting the rampart to the north of the gullies was a V-profile ditch 1m. (3 feet) to 1.50m. (4 feet 6 inches) wide, and up to 70cms. (26 inches) deep. For the most part it ran east-west, but curved north at its western end. It seems to have been a drainage ditch. To its north was a pit, of which only a small part was available for excavation. It appears to have been roughly circular, and up to 2m. (6 feet) deep. It may have been dug as a clay pit exploiting the material of the rampart. Its fill contained some burnt grain, and late-mediaeval pottery. Pottery of similar date came from the ditch, but because of its relationship with the fence-lines it may in fact be later.

All the features described above were masked by a clayey layer resulting from the disturbance of the surface of the rampart mass. Above this layer were two parallel east-west stony banks, under 30cms. (12 inches) high, which may be the remains of a hedge-line. If so it must pre-date the 1851 Tithe Award map which shows the area of the current New Cemetery as a southward projection from the North Field, with no indication of any division.

Over the whole site the evidence is for an end to cultivation in the late eighteenth or nineteenth century, with some subsequent dumping of soil, but no further discernible activity. Photographs from the earlier part of this century show the area down to grass.

The Finds

The preservation of the various classes of material differed considerably due to the soil conditions. Animal bone in particular was poorly preserved, in general only the larger bones of larger animals survived - and those in poor condition. As yet few other classes of environmental evidence have been recovered, these consist principally of carbonised plant material. In future any appropriate deposits will be sampled. Artefactual material has fared somewhat better. The 111 cooper-alloy objects, including 31 Roman coins, were in passable, though not good, condition, as were the 1500 nails and 200 other iron objects. Roman glass survived in remarkably good condition.

The most prolific class of find was the pottery. 4000 sherds of pottery of Roman manufacture were recovered, 1000 of mediaeval date, and 2000 post-mediaeval.

Since all the deposits excavated during the 1985 season were of mediaeval or later date, the Roman pottery was all residual. Nonetheless, the types represented give some idea of what may be expected from tackling the Roman deposits themselves. The bulk of the Roman pottery consisted of wares produced in Staffordshire and Derbyshire. Notable amongst these was a large quantity of the unprepossessing Derbyshire Ware, a coarse cooking ware. From further afield came fine wares from the area of the Nene Valley, from the Hartshill/Mancetter complex of north Warwickshire, and from Oxfordshire. Also present was Black-Burnished Ware from eastern Dorset; Samian ware, the fine table ware from central Gaul, was well-represented; and there were fragments of amphora, probably from Spain. In date this pottery ranges from the later first century to the fourth. This is in agreement with the dates of the coins.

The finding of sherds of Stafford Ware of the tenth century residual in later mediaeval contexts is tantalising, since we know next-to-nothing about Rocester before the Norman conquest, and it offers us the hope that there may be features of this period yet to come.

The mediaeval pottery of this area is poorly-known, and it will be interesting to see how it compares with the large dated groups from Stafford to the west, and Derby to the east. Likewise the study of the post-mediaeval pottery will be enormously aided by the stratified groups from the recent BUFAU excavations in Stafford.

Other artefacts include a number of Bronze Age worked flints, and, from the Roman period, a horse-and-rider brooch. This is of bronze with traces of red and blue enamel decoration. This is a type of brooch known from other Roman sites in Britain, and probably dates to the fourth century AD. But the Rocester example is particularly fine, being considerably more detailed in its modelling, and conveying a much more lively and spirited impression than its counterparts.

THE POTENTIAL FOR THE FUTURE

It has been stated that the 1985 season was an evaluation season, and that its purpose was two-fold: first, to assess the preservation of the archaeological deposits in the area; second, to characterise the archaeological sequence - the types and dates of human activity represented on the site.

On the first point it has been demonstrated that the preservation of the stratigraphy is good. The ploughsoil overlying the final mediaeval deposits has ensured that earlier deposits of a variety of dates have survived undisturbed. Comparative levels taken between the base of the archaeological deposits revealed in the re-opening of Dr. Webster's trench and the cobbled surface reached in the main trench suggest that there are 30cms. (12 inches) at least of stratigraphy under the cobbles. There may well be more elsewhere on the site, not counting the rampart body.

We may also now attempt a preliminary characterisation of the archaeological sequence encountered, and try to assess its potential for the study of Rocester's development.

Underlying the base of the man-made deposits in Dr. Webster's trench was a deposit of clayey soil. Dr. Susan Limbrey has suggested that this may be immediately pre-Roman ploughsoil. Exposure of this over a large area in the main trench would afford a rare example to examine such a deposit, both for its soil structure, and for any environmental evidence it may contain of the immediately pre-Roman agricultural regime in the area of Rocester.

The Roman material residual in the excavated mediaeval deposits suggests that there may have been occupation spanning all or most of the Roman period. Military equipment such as projectile heads and a bronze horse-trapping confirm the identification of Rocester as a fort site. A major remaining problem is the date of the foundation of the fort and its relation to the phases of the Roman conquest of Britain. Equally the end-date for the military occupation is still in question and the date and nature of any subsequent civil occupation. These questions should be answerable by further excavation in the New Cemetery.

The earliest post-roman artefact so far recovered is the strap-end dated to the ninth century from Dr. Webster's excavations. There is also the Stafford Ware of the following century from the 1985 trench. Is there a gap of half a millennium on the site? If not, what activity was there and when? What was the nature of the later Saxon occupation suggested by the strap-end and the pottery?

The lowest levels excavated in 1985 seem to date from not long after the Norman conquest. Can the archaeology throw any light on the curious Domesday entry for Rocester? Why also should Rocester have been chosen as the site for an Abbey, an Abbey which was subsequently able to obtain for the village two Market Charters. This evidence taken together suggests that Rocester in the Middle Ages may have been a more substantial place than it appears. The archaeology will help answer these questions.

Further excavation in the New Cemetery will build on the encouraging evidence from the 1985 season to give us a far more comprehensive and comprehensible picture of the stages of the development of the settlement.

Hand-in-hand with this must go complementary studies. Three may be suggested here. One is the proper evaluation of the finds, both artefactual and environmental, from the excavations themselves, as an essential aid to understanding the archaeology. Another is continuing and more intensive work on the documentation for the parish. Preliminary survey has shown this to be unexpectedly informative. A major aim must be to use the documentation from the area around Rocester to set the information for the parish itself in a comparative framework. Thirdly, the theme of putting the village in its context must be pursued by means other than the documentary, such as the analysis of aerial photograph evidence for this part of the Dove valley, and by a programme of field-walking, supplemented where appropriate by other forms of survey.

If these aims can be achieved then the Rocester Project will have made a valuable contribution to the archaeology and history of a part of the country which has, certainly in archaeological terms, been under-researched and under-resourced.

Display

Finally, we are very aware of the level of public interest in the Project. Though the first season was only exploratory it generated a high level of local interest and involvement. By means of showing people round the site, and by mounting an Open Day we were able to go some way towards meeting the public demand for information. In any future season at Rocester we shall have the inestimable benefit of a further act of generosity by JCB Excavators Ltd. in the purchase of the disused Methodist Chapel in the High Street. Work is now in hand to convert this into a Project Centre, where the material from the excavation can be processed and safely stored. It is our intention that there should be a display mounted during the excavation season detailing the background to the Project and the site, and informing the public of current work and recent discoveries. It is also our intention that there should be a display team available to stimulate public and tourist interest (the site being near Alton Towers) and to liaise with schools. The longer-term presentation of the site, its material, and its results to the public are under consideration.

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FUTURE STRATEGY AND NEEDS

The results outlined above show that the site has enormous potential, not only in its stratigraphic preservation, but also in the information that this can yield on the development of Rocester. It is therefore proposed that in view of the certain eventual destruction of the archaeology in the New Cemetery, that as near total excavation as is worthwhile be undertaken, with the parallel provision of back-up and specialist facilities leading to publication.

The evaluation season at Rocester was, quite properly, undertaken on a minimum budget. But modern archaeological excavation and research are labour-intensive, and consequently expensive. If Rocester is to be excavated and published as it deserves this is the price that must be paid. Attached are provisional costings for the 1986-87 phase of the Project:

<u>Staff</u>	£
Field Director (I Ferris) 12 months	9,500
Finds Consultant from Warwickshire Museums 3 months	2,500
BUFAU Diploma Students	3,000
Management (A Brooker-Carey) 1 month	1,485
Secretarial (R Young) 1 month	580
sub-total	<u>17,065</u>

<u>Specialist Services</u>	
Conservation	200
Specialist work (Consultant C Bowker, Environmental material)	<u>1,000</u>
sub-total	<u>1,200</u>

<u>Site Operations</u>	
Finds Equipment and Materials	500
Drawing Equipment and Materials	800
Photographic Costs	600
Fencing and Signs	500
Tools and Running Costs	800
sub-total	<u>3,200</u>

Headquarters Costs

	£
Heating, lighting, telephone	2,000
Travel, conferences etc.,	800
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sub-total	2,800
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TOTAL	24,265
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Since the near-total excavation of the New Cemetery and the consequent post-excavation work will have to be spread over a number of years it should be noted that these costs will be repeated in 1987/1988, and for post-excavation work in 1988/1989.

The costs detailed above will have to be met by sponsorship. Our current sponsors, JCB Excavators Ltd, and East Staffordshire District Council are continuing their support.

In addition to the team detailed above, supplementary manpower will be forthcoming from:

Birmingham Manpower Services Commission

Excavation Team of 1 Supervisor and 4 staff

1 Recorder/Assistant

1 Display Supervisor and Assistant

1 Draughtsman

Staffordshire County Council Manpower Services Commission

Excavation Team of 1 Supervisor and 6 Staff

University of Birmingham

Project Director (Dr A S Esmonde Cleary)

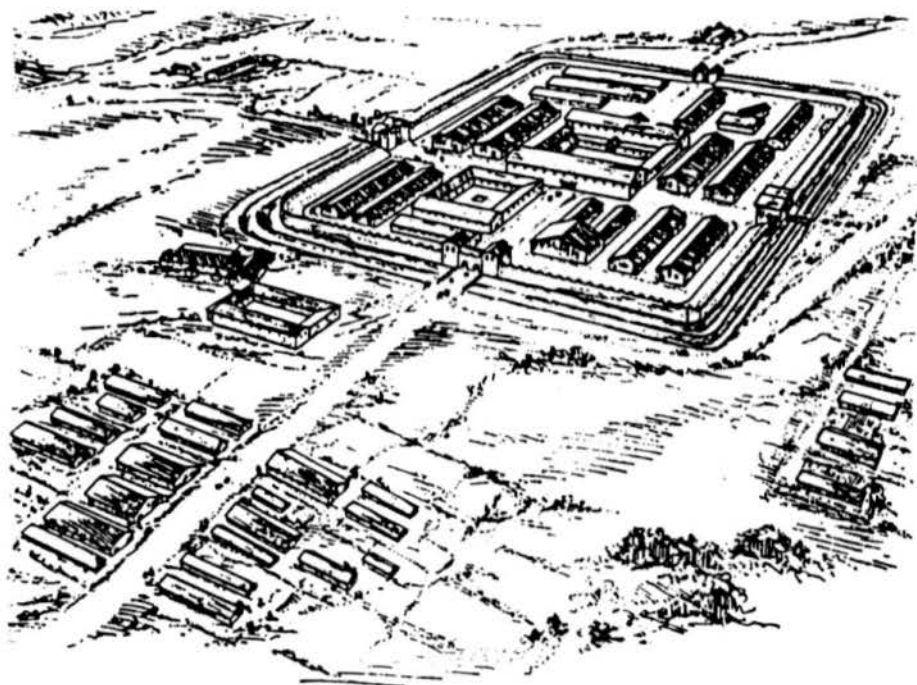
2 Temporary Supervisors (6 weeks - Training Excavation)

25 Students (6 weeks - Training Excavation)

ROCESTER, STAFFORDSHIRE

Though Rocester in Staffordshire has long been known as the site of a Roman settlement, the exact nature of that site, a First Century AD military fort on top of which is a later civilian settlement, was not determined until 1961 when Dr Graham Webster excavated two small trenches in the New Cemetery, Church Lane. Now more than twenty years after Dr Webster's work, the site is threatened by the extension of the burial area within the cemetery, and an evaluation season of excavation by Birmingham University in 1985 has shown that there is not only great potential here for explaining the Roman history of Rocester, but also for the period after the end of Roman Britain, up to the time of the Domesday Book and beyond.

To save the information that the site holds, the University wishes to excavate as large an area as possible of the New Cemetery in 1986 and 1987 and to publish the interpretation of the history of the village. At the same time, displays of pictorial material and finds will be presented to the public in the Archaeological Centre in Rocester. To achieve all this, large sums of money must be raised through sponsorship; already £12,000 has been raised towards the £37,000 needed for the work in 1986-87 and a further £10,000 is guaranteed for 1987-88. The time to act is now, or a worthy archaeological site will be gradually destroyed and the past shamelessly neglected.



A FIRST CENTURY ROMAN FORT

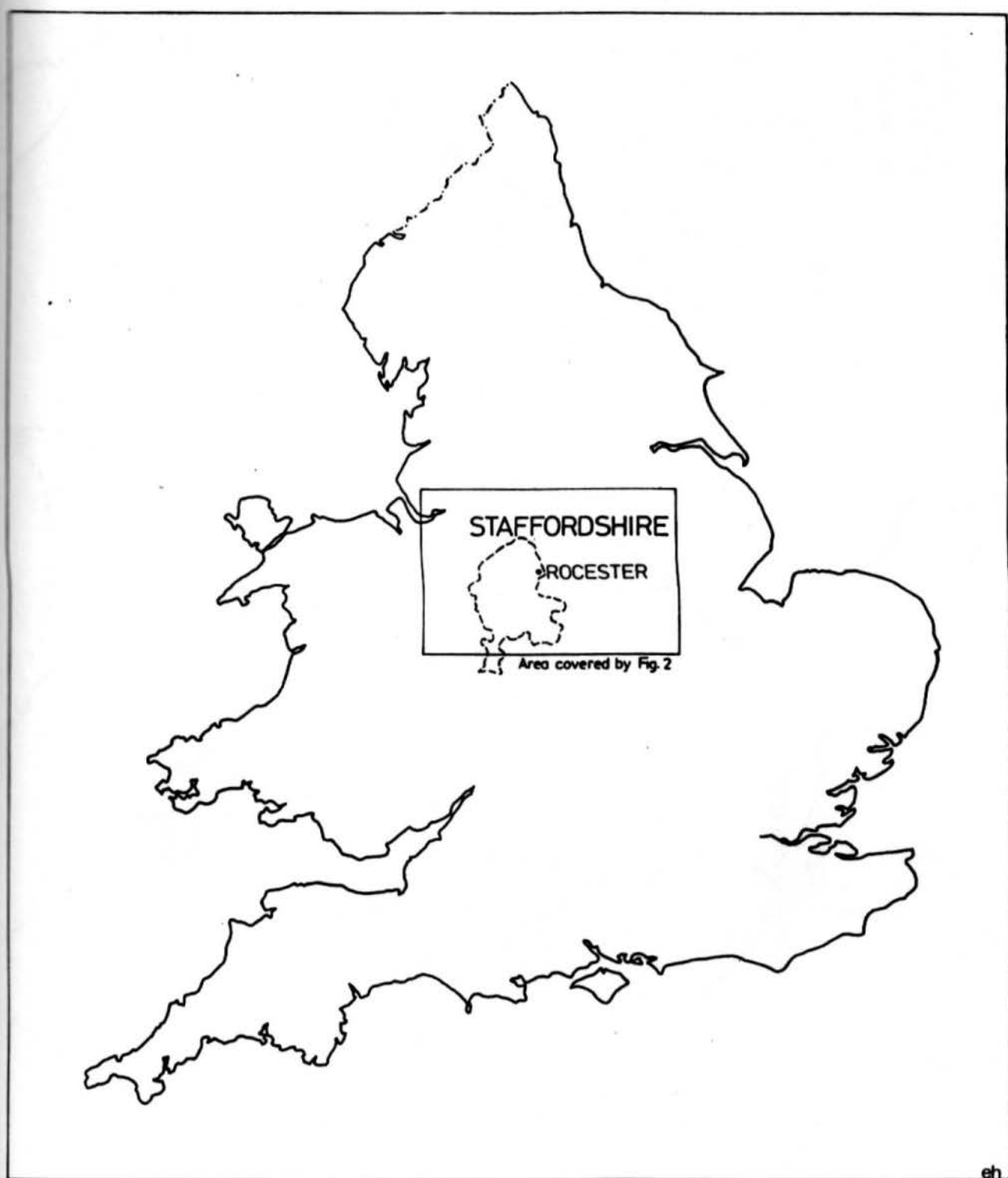


fig1

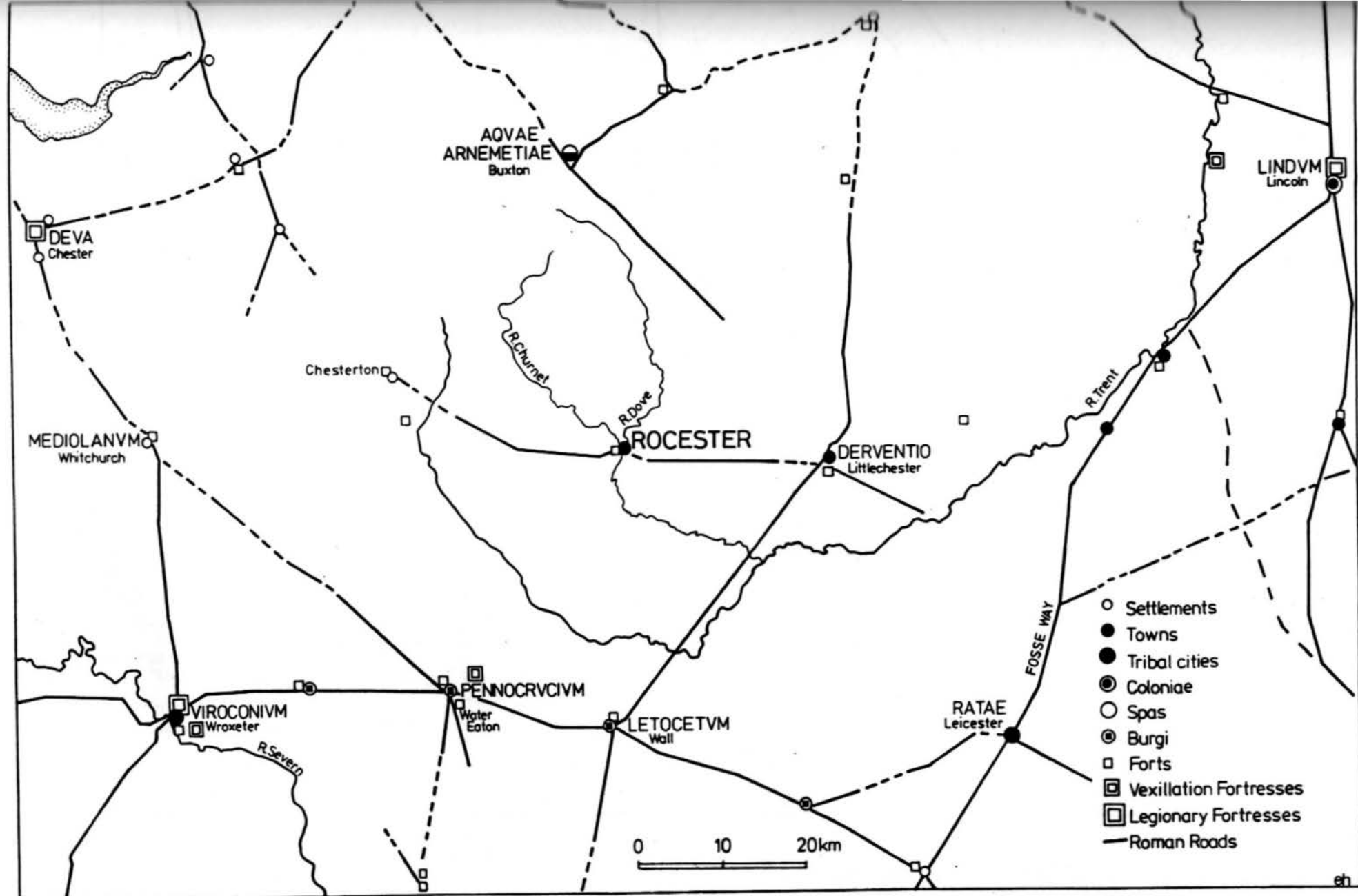
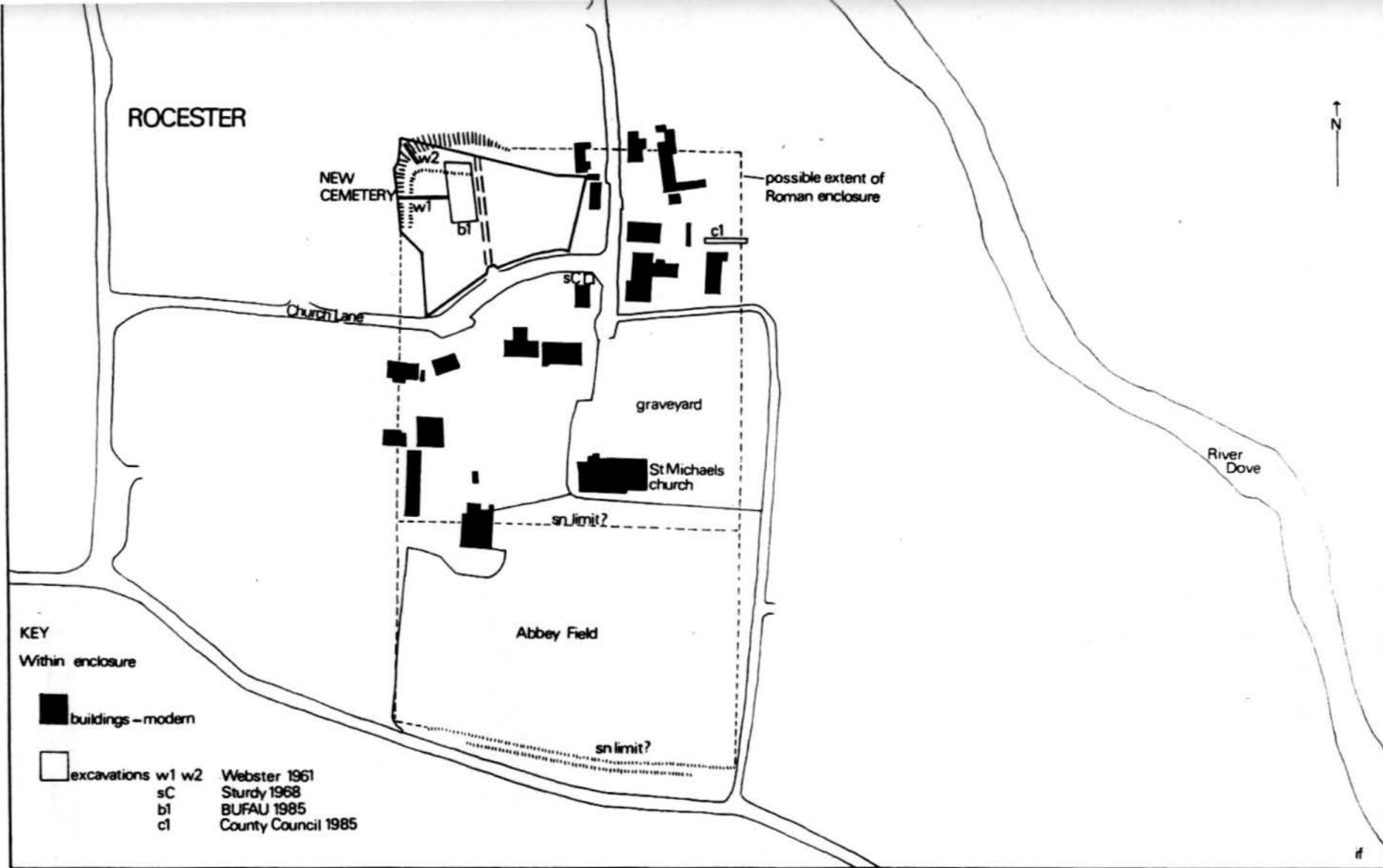


fig2



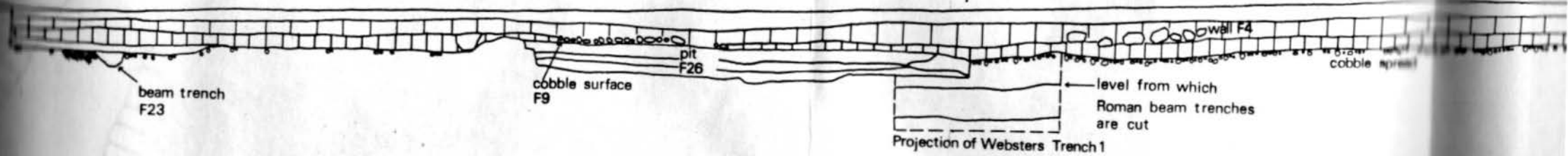
200 METRES

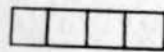
fig3

ROCESTER 1985

RECONSTRUCTED SECTION

SOUTH



 PLOUGH SOIL — 15TH-16TH CENTURY

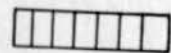
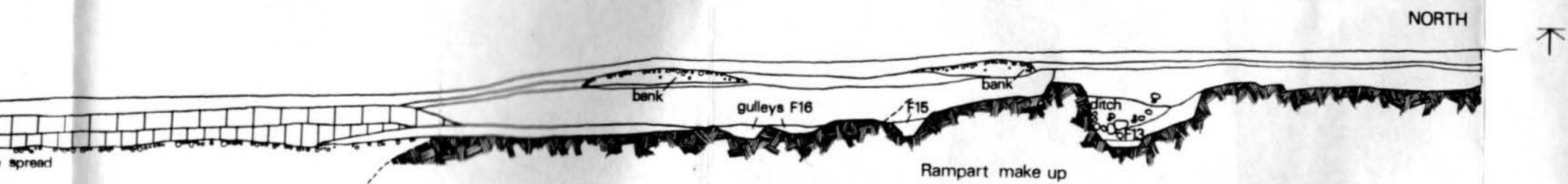
 CULTIVATION SOIL — 13TH-14TH CENTURY

fig4



ROCESTER 1985

MEDIEVAL AND LATER FEATURES
CUT INTO RAMPART

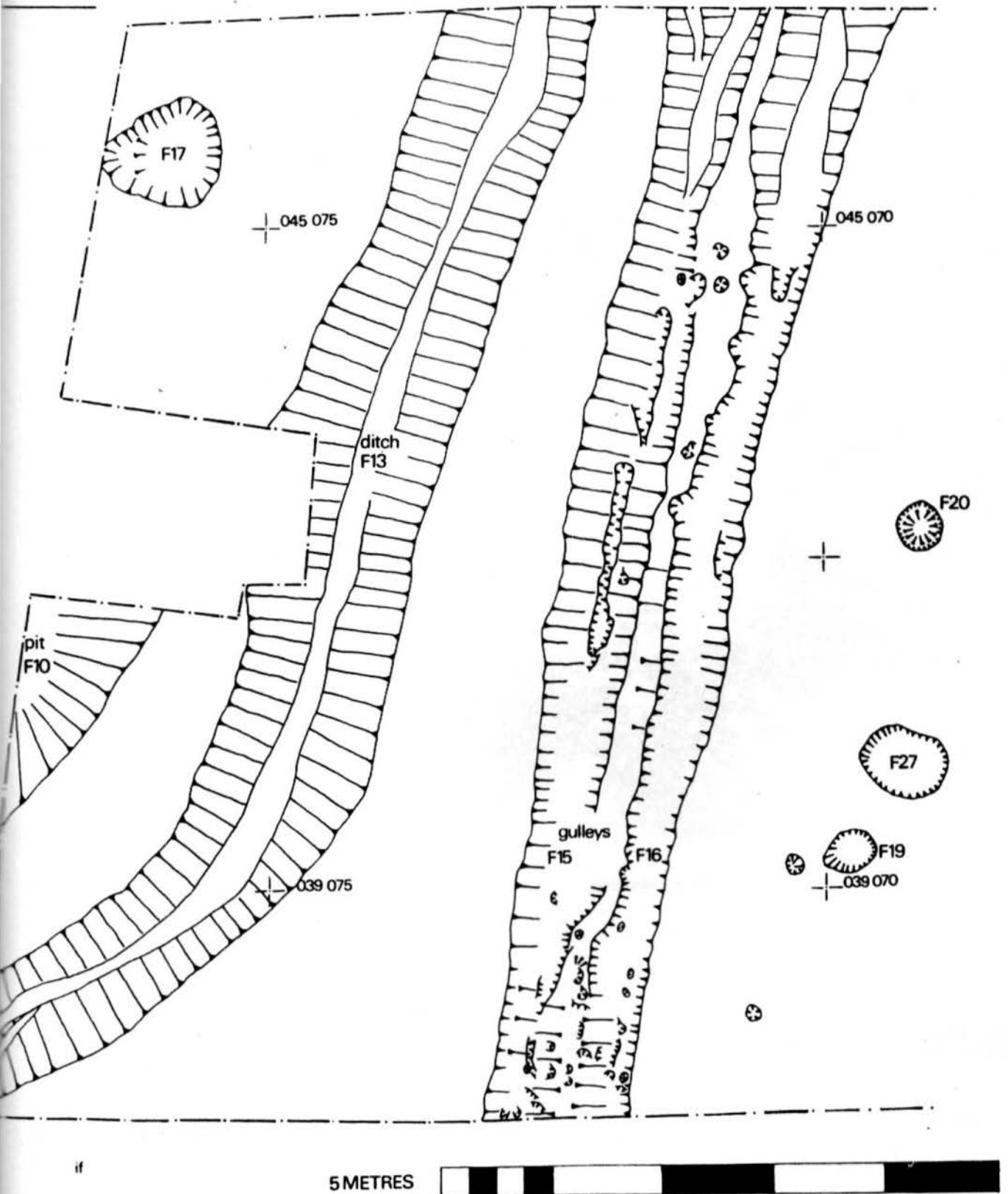
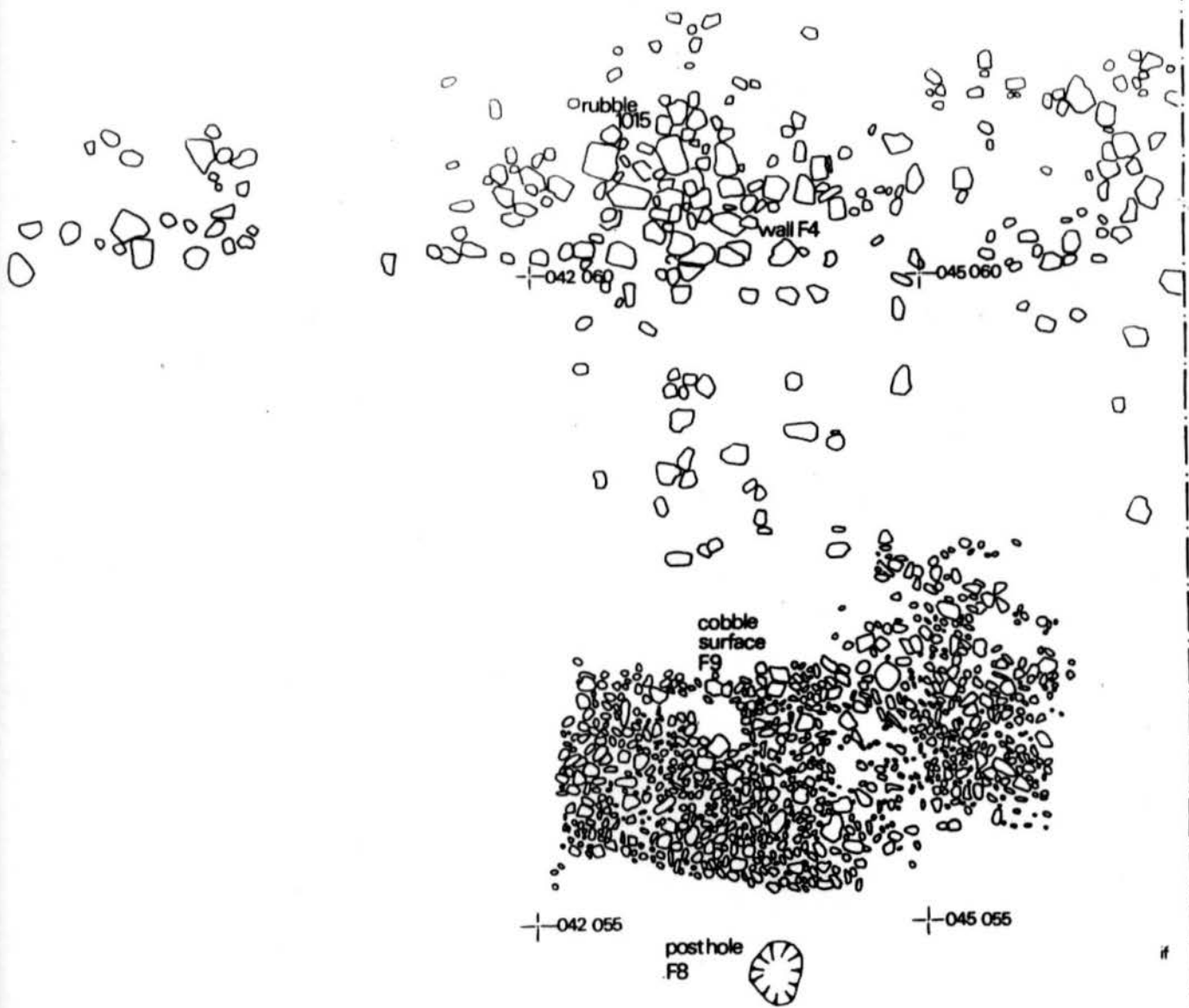
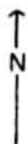


fig5

ROCESTER 1985
A LATE MEDIEVAL STRUCTURE

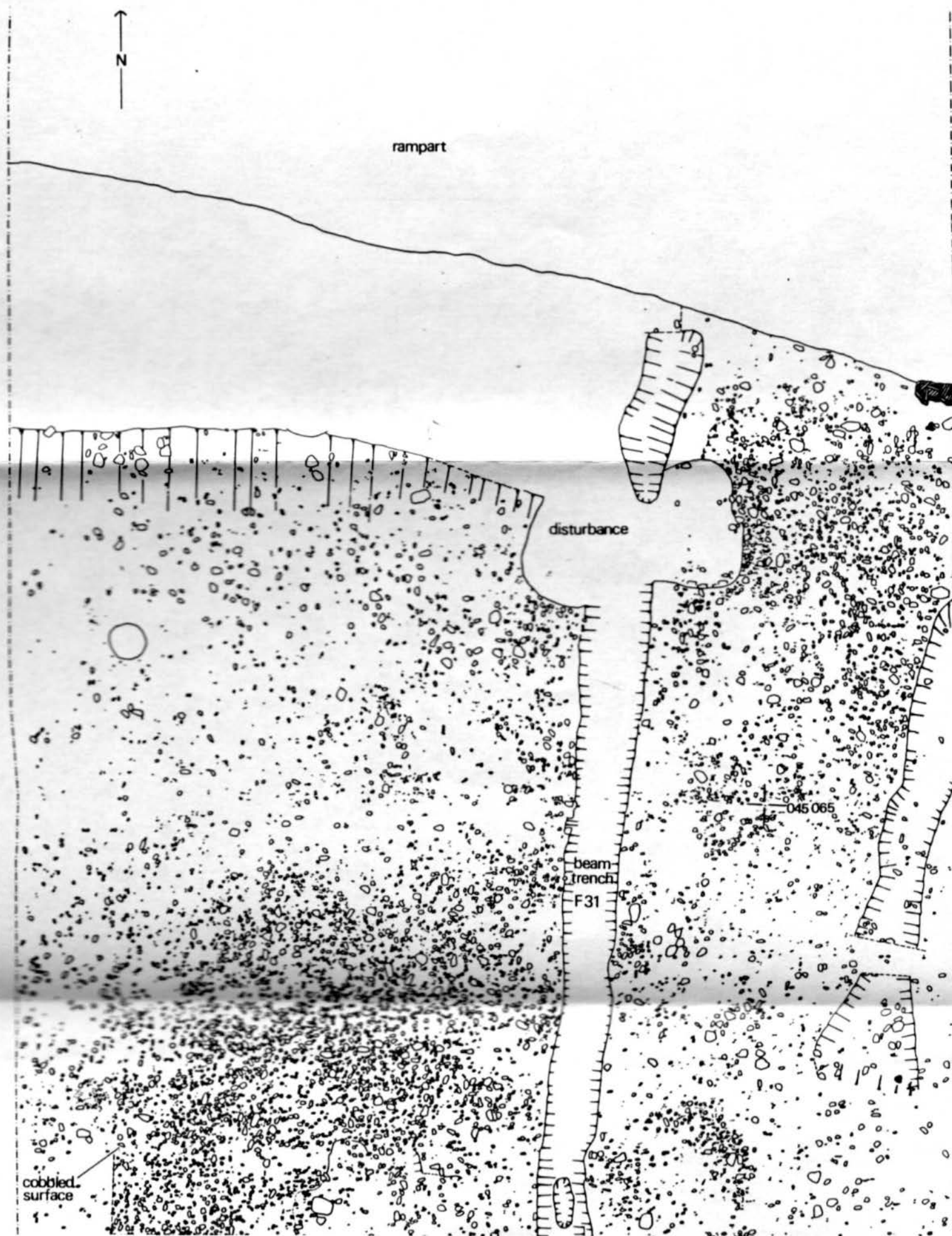


5 METRES



fig 6

ROCESTER 1985
A MEDIEVAL STRUCTURE



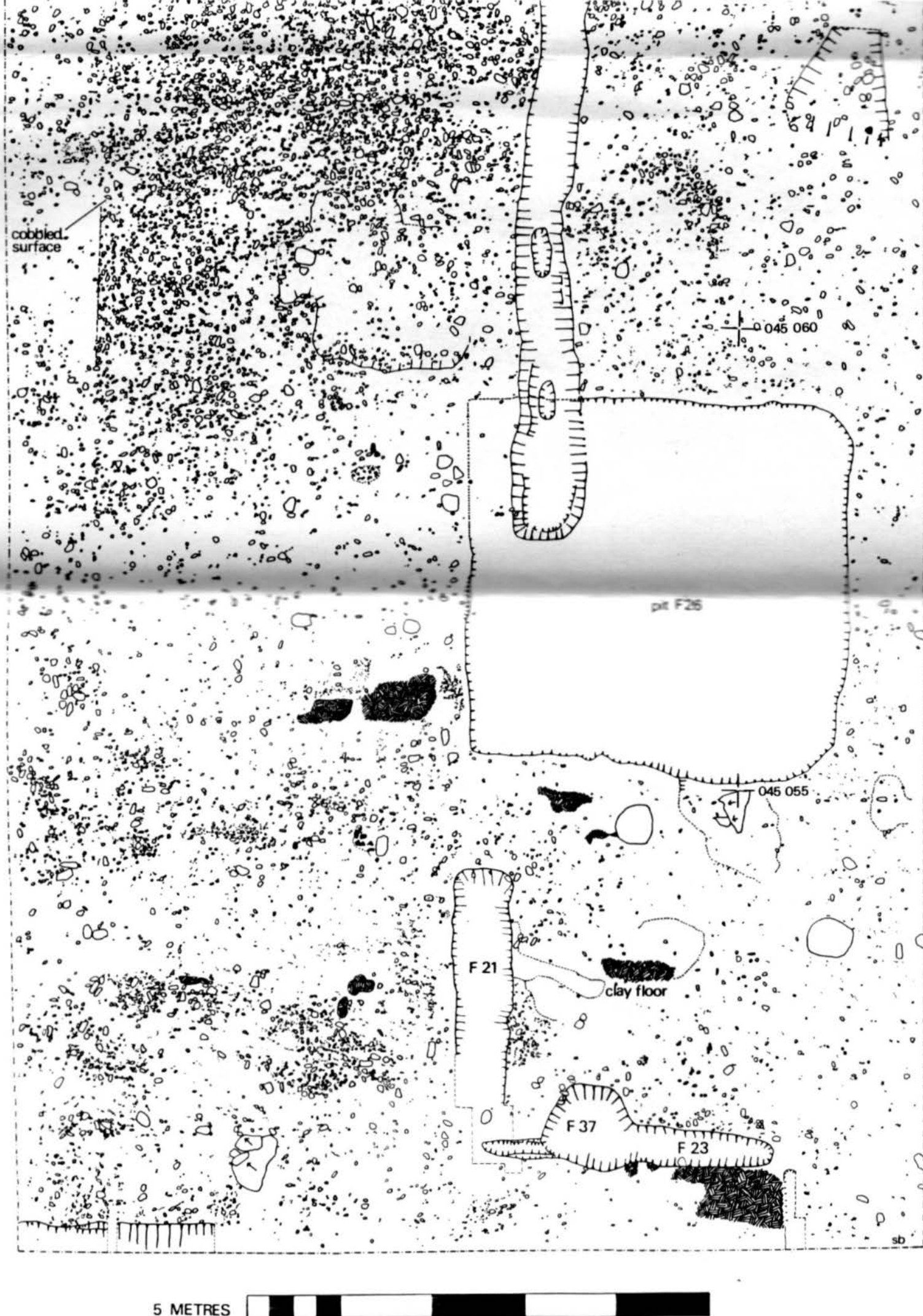



fig 7



 Dark blue enamel

Decayed red enamel 

0

5cm

HORSE AND RIDER BROOCH

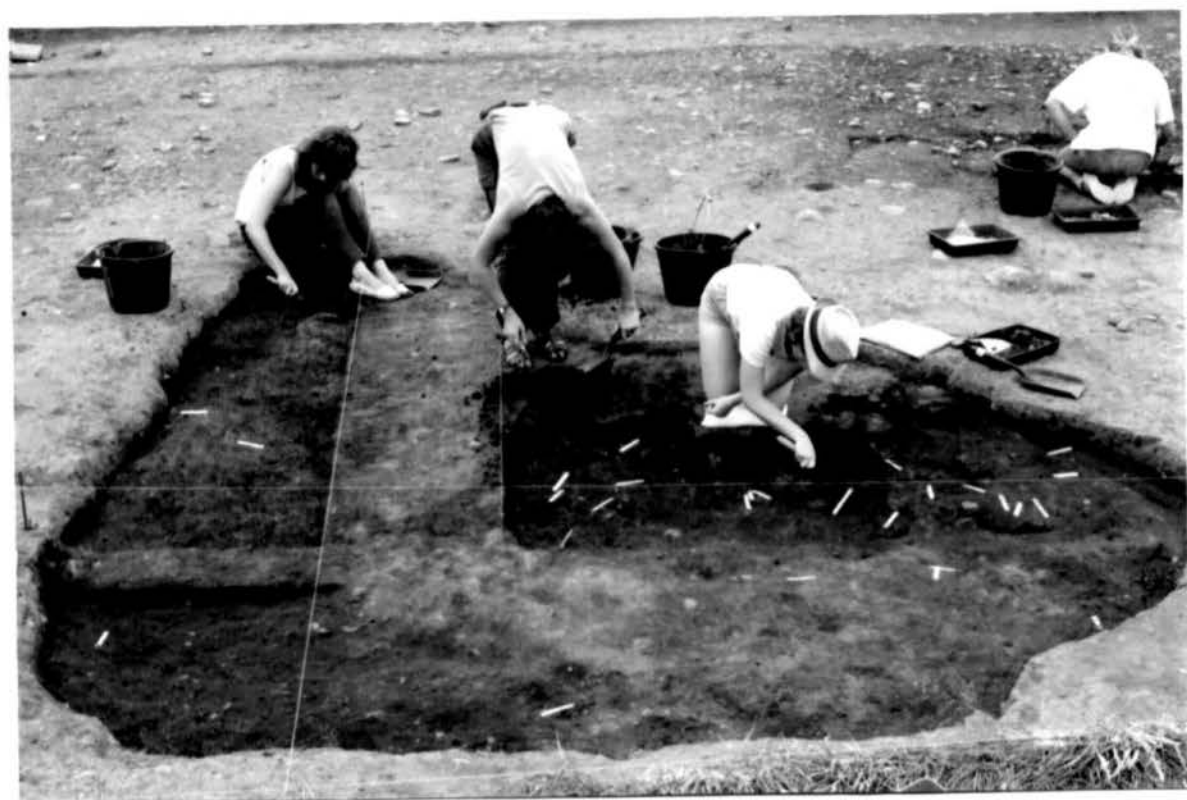
fig 8



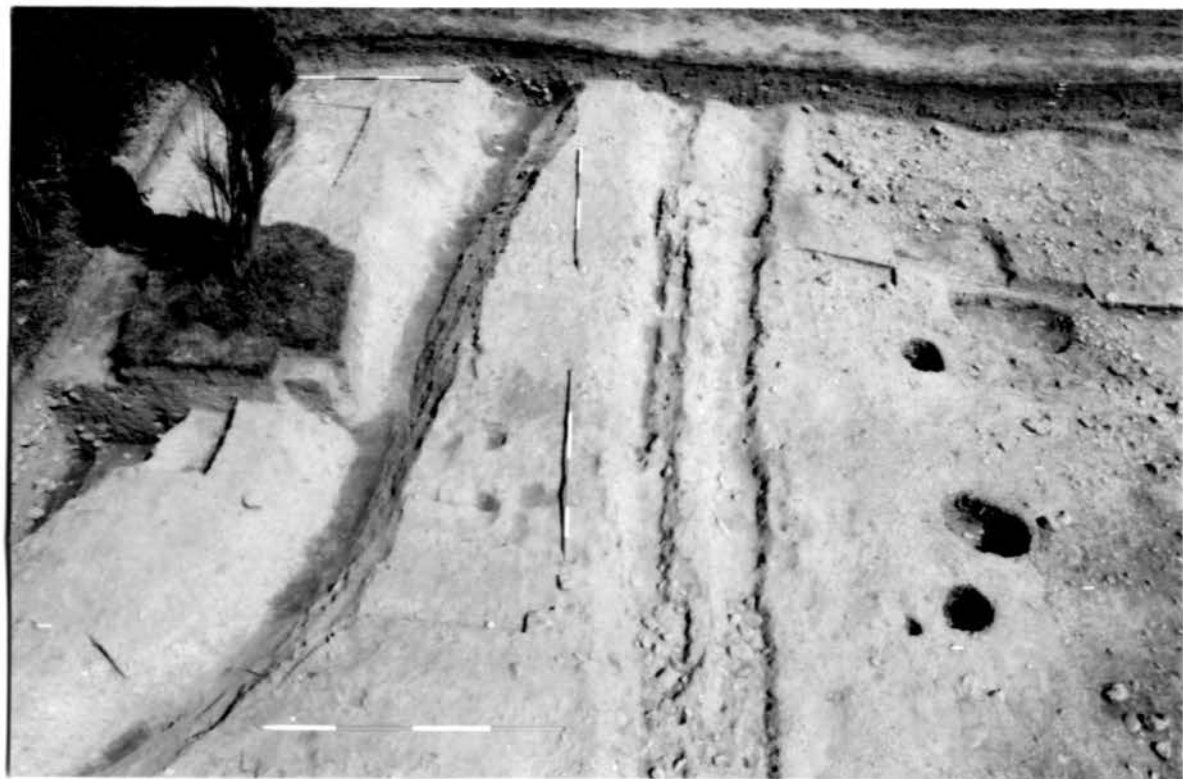
THE EXCAVATION OF MEDIAEVAL AND LATER FEATURES CUT INTO THE RAMPART



CLEANING OF A MEDIAEVAL COBBLED SURFACE



LARGE MEDIAEVAL PIT DURING EXCAVATION

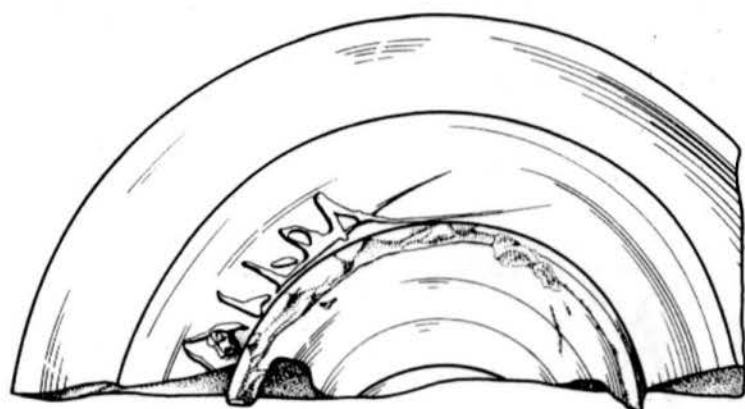
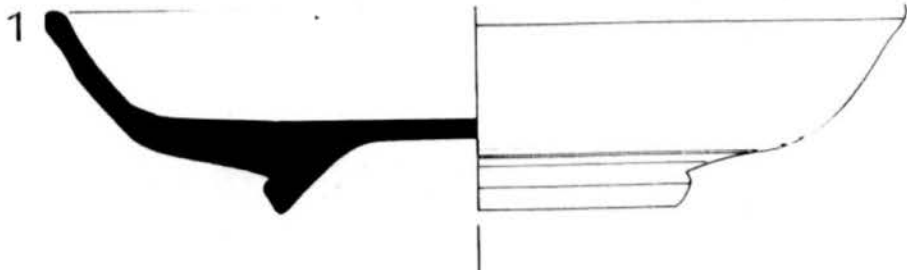


THE ROMAN RAMPART

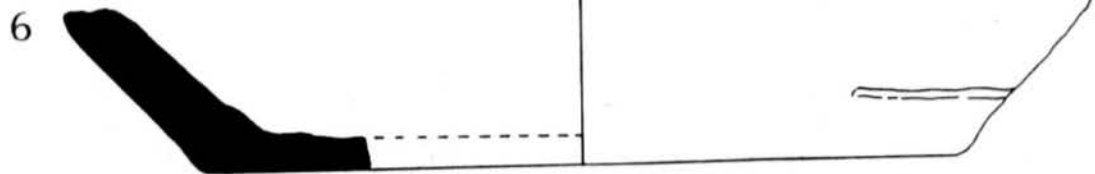
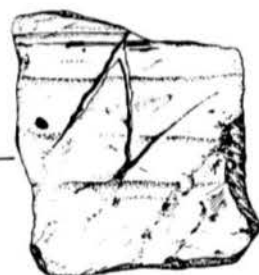
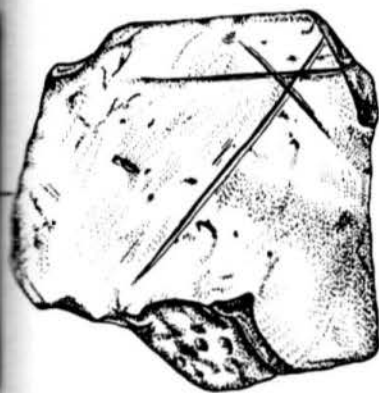


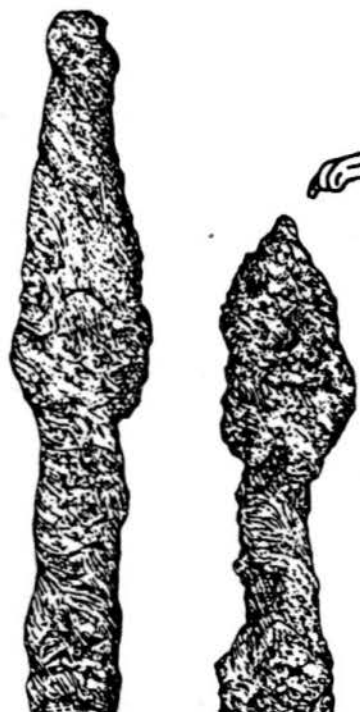
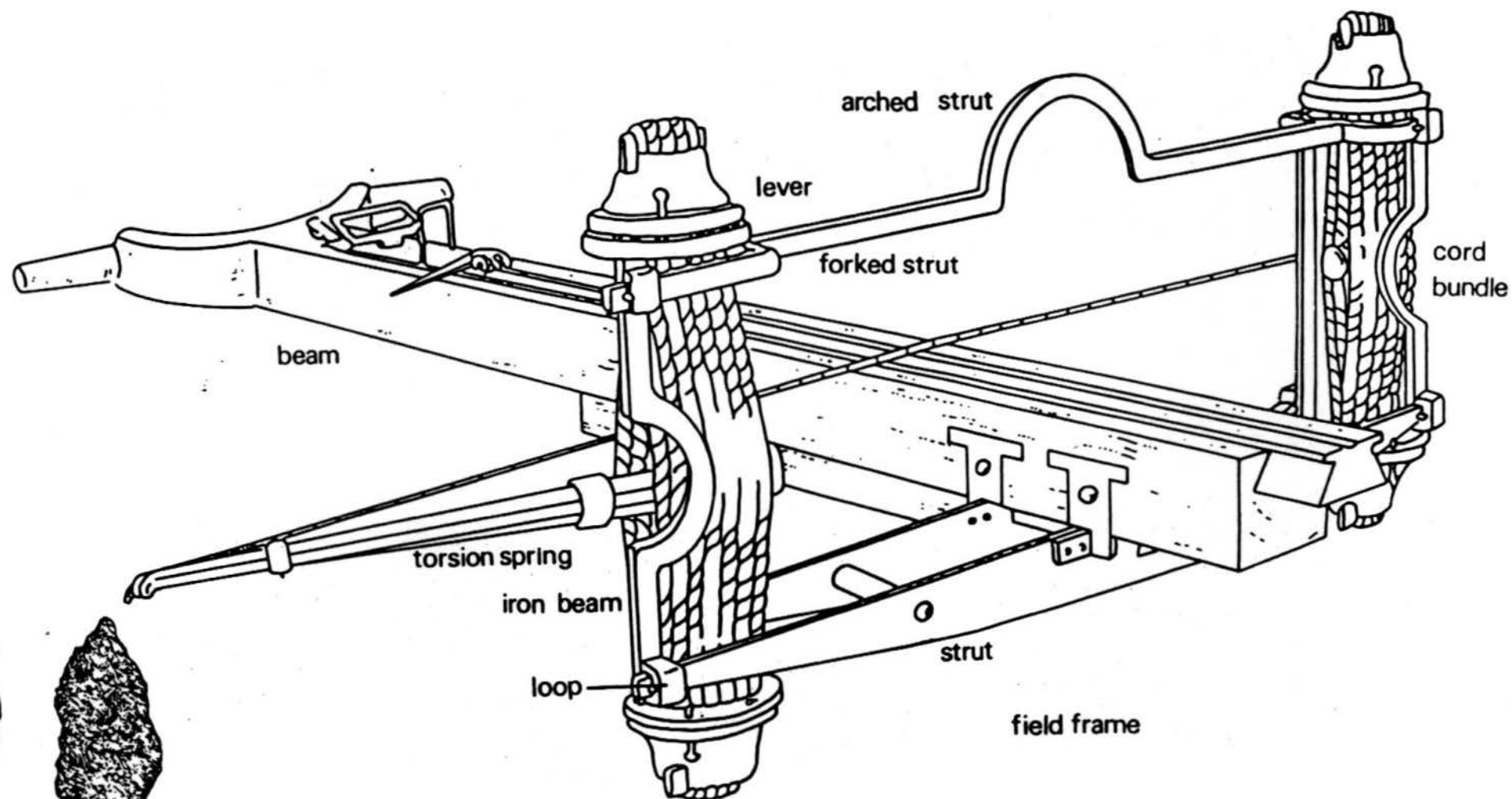
MEDIAEVAL BEAM TRENCHES AND COBBLED SURFACES





ROCESTER
Pottery graffiti





BALLISTA BOLTHEADS FROM ROCESTER

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The initial Project design and the instigation of the Rocester Project were the work of Andrew Brooker-Carey, the Manager of the Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU). The realisation of the Project was made possible by the generous financial support of a number of bodies in Staffordshire. Chief amongst these was JCB Excavators Ltd., through the good offices of its Managing Director Mr. Anthony Bamford, to whom our deepest thanks are due. In addition, our thanks go to East Staffordshire District Council and the University of Birmingham, both of which bodies gave the Project financial assistance. Staffordshire County Council afforded support through members of its Planning Department, particularly Ken Sheridan and Bob Meeson. Much useful work on site was carried out by the County Archaeological Roving Team led by Jim Symonds and managed by Russell Dickinson of the Community Programme Agency in Stafford. The Project was thus an example of the successful collaboration of University, Local Government and Private Enterprise.

Since the excavation was to take place in consecrated ground a Faculty was sought from, and readily granted by, the Diocese of Lichfield. We are grateful to the Rector of Rocester, the Reverend Anthony Fothergill, and to the Churchwardens for accepting the disruption in the New Cemetery and for all their encouragement. The Parish Council has been an unfailing source of support, particularly in allowing the use of the Parish Hall. In particular we must mention the Chairman, Councillor Philip Atkin, and Councillor Tony Hirst an unflagging help around the site and a mine of information on Rocester. The Council's Secretary, Sally Groot, eased our way through the necessary administration.

On site the Project was run by Simon Esmonde Cleary (Project Director), Malcolm Cooper (Assistant Director) and Iain Ferris (Project Assistant). During the six weeks when the site was used for the annual Training Excavation of the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology of the University of Birmingham, John Darlington, John Pamment and Nick Shepherd were an able trio of Site Supervisors. A particular pleasure was the large number of local volunteers who took part in the excavation, some of them on a very regular basis. Amongst these were Arthur Ditchfield, Pat Drayton, Bev Johnson, Alice Lewis and Mr. G. Thorley.

Off site particular thanks must go to Mr. David MacAllister, Manager of Uttoxeter Racecourse, who permitted the use of its facilities during the Training Excavation, making an excellent base for the students. Mrs. Susan Brooker-Carey and Miss Emma Taylor provided a selection of delectable evening meals during the Training Excavation, doing much to maintain morale through the 'summer' of 1985.

Visitors from Birmingham included Professor R. A. Tomlinson and Dr. Susan Limbrey of the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, and Dr. Margaret Gelling of the School of History, all of whom offered valuable advice. Members of BUFAU who visited the site included Charlotte and Jon Cane, and Jenny Glazebrook (of the Sandwell Valley Project). Charlotte and Jenny offered much useful advice on the mediaeval and the post-mediaeval pottery respectively. Amanda Balfour and Sarah Butler of the BUFAU Display Team mounted a very professional and successful exhibition for the Open Day at short notice.

Figures for this report were drawn by Sarah Butler (fig. 7), Iain Ferris (figs. 3,4,5, and 6) and Elizabeth Hooper (figs. 1, 2 and 8).

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