

**An Archaeological Evaluation at**

**Whitchurch, Shropshire**

**by**

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**Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit 1989**

## An Archaeological Evaluation in Whitchurch, Shropshire

### Introduction

In August 1989 the Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit was commissioned by Taylor Loxham Properties of Wrexham to undertake an archaeological investigation on a former industrial site behind 46 Bargates, Whitchurch in Shropshire (Grid Ref. SJ 540 418).

The area investigated by BUFAU lies within the site of a proposed housing development adjacent to Bargates, at the bottom of a steep hill on the east side of the town. Earlier archaeological excavations to the south west of the site have located Roman occupation, both military and civilian, centred on Yardington, while the line of the Roman road from Wroxeter to Chester is followed through the town by the High Street and by Bargates. A circuit of clay rampart dating to the Second Century, and a later associated masonry wall are known (Smith, 1987) so it was felt that the steep bank running away from the site to the north-west (see Fig. 2) could have formed a part of the outer defences of the Roman settlement of Mediolanum.

### The Evaluation

Initially an inspection trench attendant to the demolished factory was cleared in order to rapidly ascertain the relationship of 'natural' to the overlying strata. However, the trench was found to be lined with breeze-blocks and floored with a layer of concrete, and this exercise was subsequently abandoned. A second test pit, 1 metre by 0.40 metres, was subsequently dug by hand under the plot of a proposed building and here it was found that the natural subsoil lay directly under the floor of the factory.

A trench, 5.6 metres by 2.6 metres was machined through the concrete floor of the site, to a depth of 0.50 metres, to the west of, and

parallel to the proposed dwelling and the exposed area cleaned by hand. Five features were identified, all cutting a yellow orange mottled clayey sand (1000) revealed directly beneath the factory floor, material from each feature being recorded, and where appropriate, kept. These features are as follows:

Feature 1 Seen in section but not in plan. Situated at the south-west corner of the trench, and consisting of a cut filled with large river cobbles contained within a sandy fill (1001); the feature was identified as a soakaway. One sherd of Thirteenth Century cooking pot was retrieved from out of the section. The feature had been truncated by construction activity associated with the factory, and by F2.

Feature 2 Cutting F1, this pit, 0.38 metres in depth, contained organic material within the dark sandy silt (1002). Fragments of brick and mortar were recovered.

Feature 3 The bottom of a truncated pit containing a compact sandy fill (1003) with pebbles, and a few flecks of charcoal. Two sherds of Medieval pottery of the Fourteenth or Fifteenth Century were recovered.

Feature 4 Clearly defined as a shallow post-hole only 0.05 metres in depth, its compact, dark red sandy fill (1004) yielded no pottery or other man made materials.

Feature 5 Clearly visible in plan, and running alongside a brick factory wall retained in the south-west facing section, this foundation trench was excavated in part only. Sherds of pottery, glass, bone and an iron nail were retrieved from the dark, earthy fill (1005). The finds from this feature were identified as being of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.

In the centre of the trench a sondage was machined to a depth of 1.20 metres and, within that, a further sondage excavated by hand to 2.20 metres below the level of the factory concrete floor to ascertain the

depth of deposits. These sondages confirmed that the layer 1000 was itself a component of the natural strata in this area.

### Summary

The trial trench has shown that no significant archaeological deposits or structures of the Roman period exist within this area. No hillwash deposits were encountered and the truncation of a number of negative features of the medieval period suggests that the site was partially levelled for the construction of the factory that until recently occupied the site. Those medieval features are, in any case, peripheral to the main focus of the medieval settlement on the top of the hill.

The falling away of the ground to the north of the development area may therefore simply be a natural phenomenon.

### Recommendations

It is not recommended that any further archaeological work take place on the site, though an inspection of any foundation trenches or stripped areas may be advised as development proceeds.

### Acknowledgements

The excavation was supervised by Edward Newton, and was undertaken by Sharon Corder, Lucy Dingwall and Karen Walford.

The text was typed by Ann Humphries and edited by Iain Ferris. The excavation was arranged through the offices of Mike Watson, the Shropshire County Archaeological Field Officer.



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Main Trench

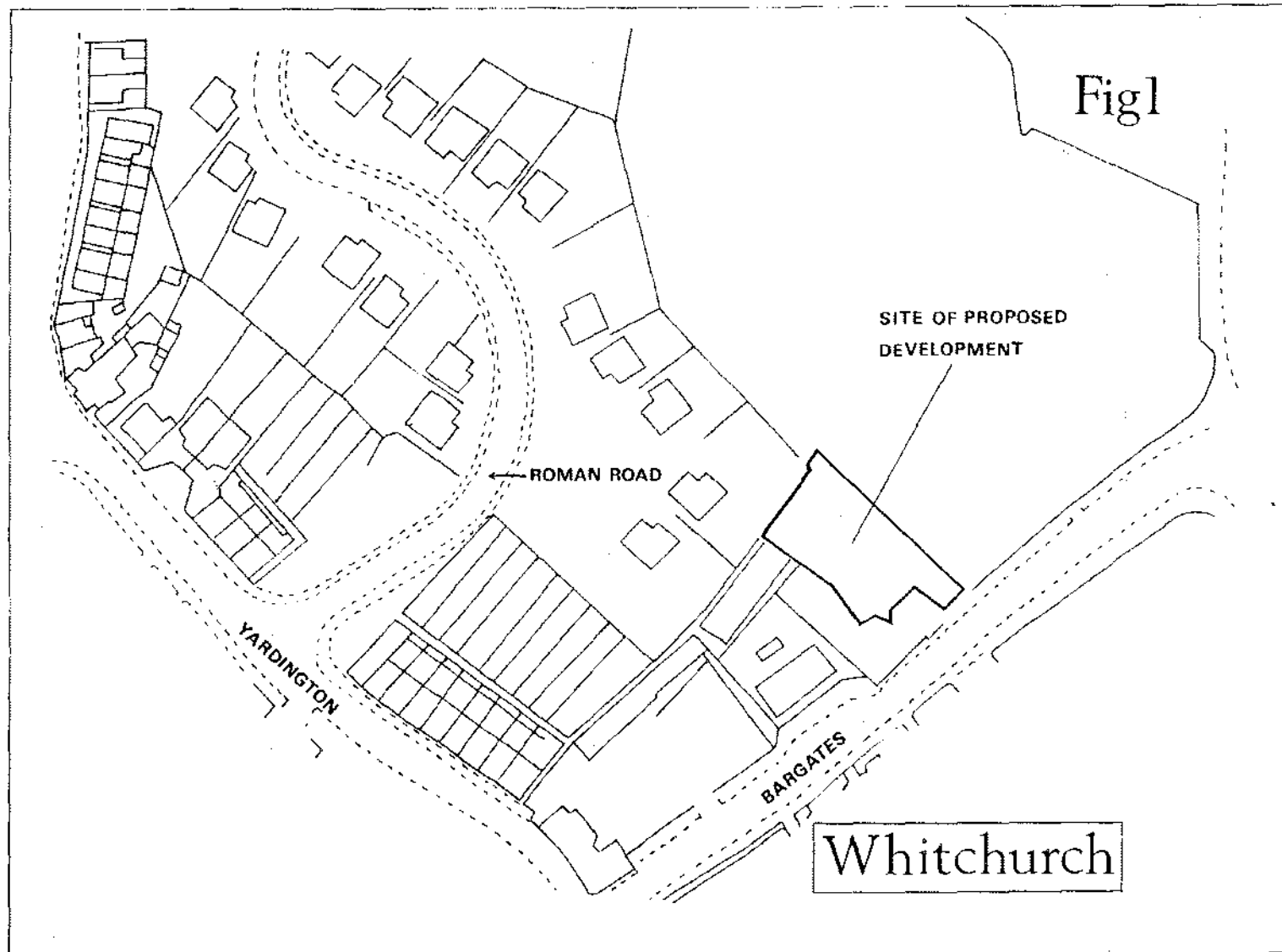


Fig 1

SITE OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

← ROMAN ROAD

YARDINGTON

BARGATES

Whitchurch

Fig 2

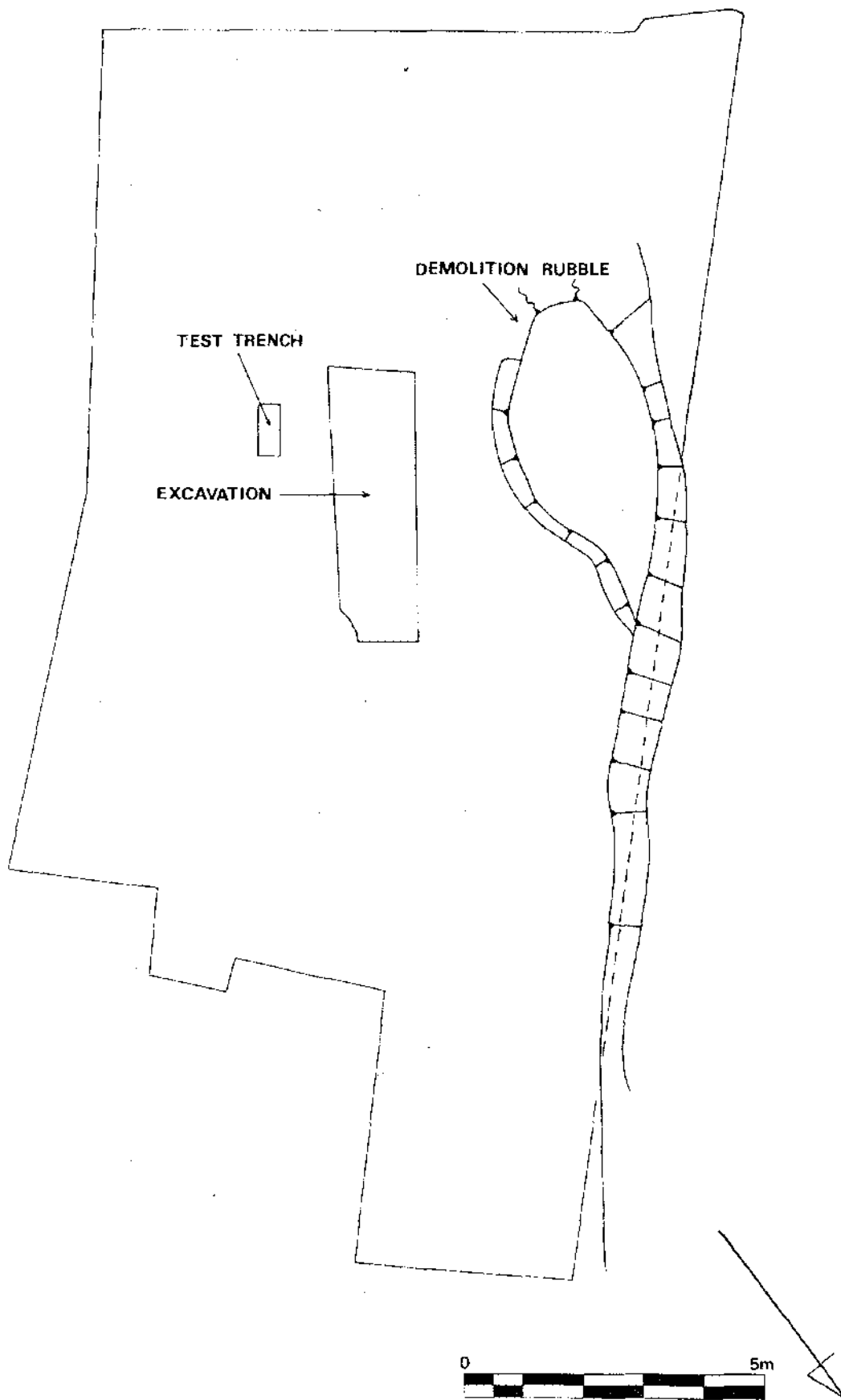
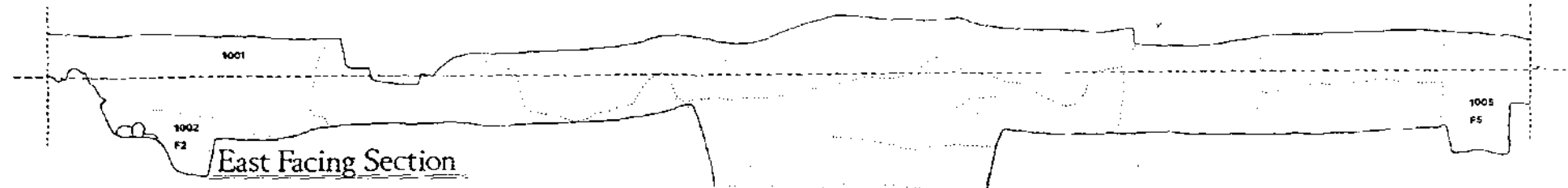
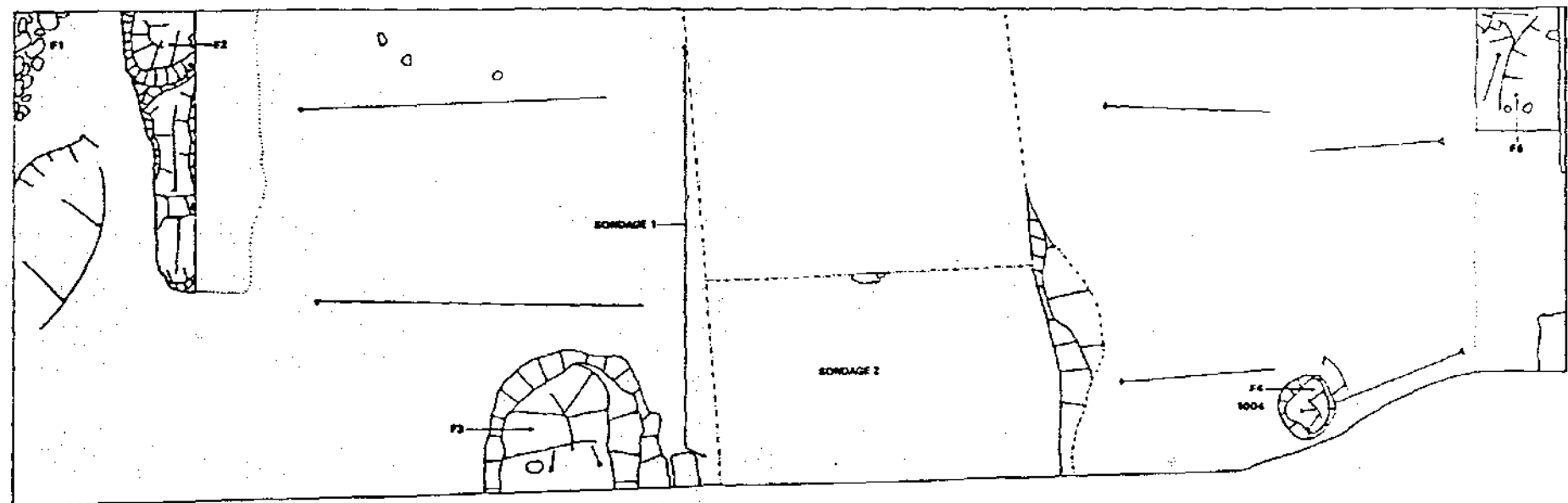




Fig3



Plan



Whitchurch 1989

