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**BANBURY TOWN CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT:
Below-ground archaeological evaluation of the
Bridge Street and Mill Lane (Zone 2) urban landscape**

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1.0 SUMMARY

This report describes the results of the below-ground archaeological evaluation of the Bridge Street/Mill Lane urban landscape for Banbury Shopping Centre Limited. A total of 25 test-pits and two trenches was excavated within the study area, equivalent to a 4% sample of the entire street block, excluding cellaring. Evidence of activity ranging in date from the 11th to the 19th century was found. The discovery of evidence for a possible pre-castle phase of development along Mill Lane was of particular interest, although the evaluation has also indicated that the potential of surviving archaeological evidence to answer questions concerning the medieval and Civil War periods is also good. Four distinct sub-zones of archaeological potential are highlighted within Zone 2. In Zone 2/I potential is limited because of extensive disturbance by cellaring. Zone 2/II has potential to explore further evidence of pre-castle activity in Mill Lane, while in Zone 2/III there is good evidence of medieval and post-medieval backplot activity. In Zone 2/IV the survival of the ironstone cellars from buildings which were possibly erected shortly after the Civil War along the Bridge Street frontage is also of interest.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the results of the below-ground archaeological evaluation of the Bridge Street and Mill Lane (Zone 2) urban landscape in the town centre of Banbury, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). A second report, outlining the results of the preliminary building survey, will follow. The work reported upon here was undertaken in two stages in June 1996 and February 1997 by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit, on behalf of Banbury Shopping Centre Limited.

In accordance with the guidelines laid down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (DoE 1990), a recommendation for a phased programme of archaeological work was made by the County Archaeological Officer of Oxfordshire County Council. The scope of this work was defined in the *Eighth schedule (archaeological section) of the Draft 106 Agreement*, and a written scheme of investigation for the evaluation phase given in *Banbury Town Centre Redevelopment: A project design for archaeological evaluation* (Ferris and Litherland 1996, 6-7), which was approved by Paul Smith of the County Archaeology Office of Oxfordshire County Council. The purpose of the field evaluation stage of the archaeological work was to gather sufficient information to establish the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the Bridge Street/Mill Lane Zone. The results of the evaluation, when integrated with existing knowledge of the development of this part of Banbury, will then provide a basis for proposals to be made for appropriate further action to mitigate the effects of the proposed development upon any significant archaeological deposits or features. Below-ground evaluation will be taking place in other areas to be affected by the redevelopment scheme, and this will be reported-on separately.

3.0 THE STUDY AREA AND ITS SETTING

Banbury is situated approximately 32 kilometres to the northeast of Oxford on the southern border of the Midland plain. The Bridge Street/Mill Lane Zone comprises a triangular-shaped street block located on the eastern fringes of Banbury market (NGR centre: SP45854064). Situated close to the River Cherwell, and later the canal and railway, this area has always had close links with the transport/distribution system of the town. Bridge Street has also been the main arterial route from Banbury to adjacent market centres to the east, such as Buckingham, Daventry and Northampton from at least the 13th century.

Monitoring of the geotechnical investigation of the overall redevelopment area in 1995 (Cuttler 1996) indicated that underlying soils and geology are alluvium overlying Cretaceous, lower lias clay and limestone in the vicinity of the River Cherwell. Moving south-westwards from the river towards the Bridge Street/Mill Lane Zone the alluvium gives way to higher, better-drained ground, composed of lias clays and patches of sand and gravel. Excavations by the Oxford Archaeological Unit to the east of Mill Lane, in advance of the construction of the inner relief road (Chambers 1991), were able to identify an important topographical feature, the river cliff of the Cherwell, which seems not only to have defined the floodplain of the river but also the extent of the medieval town.

A more complete analysis of the historical development of the study area is presented in *Banbury Town Centre Redevelopment, An Archaeological Assessment* (Ferris, Leach and Litherland 1991); however, a summary of the key points, together with an outline of the broader research aims for the evaluation of the Bridge Street/Mill Lane Zone, follows below.

4.0 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Bridge Street/Mill Lane Zone will be affected by the construction of a new retail centre fronting Bridge Street, which will involve the demolition of the entire street block with the exception of the former Temperance Hall, 56/57 Bridge Street. No archaeological work or discoveries are documented within the specific area of Zone 2 prior to the overall redevelopment scheme, although the excavations by the Oxford Archaeological Unit east of Mill Lane have confirmed that medieval development occurred along the north side of Bridge Street close to the river crossing (Chambers 1991).

Against this background a number of specific archaeological research aims can be proposed for the Bridge Street/Mill Lane Zone. These will, of course, be refined and modified in the light of discoveries as the overall project develops, and some degree of overlap and repetition is also inevitable with the research aims of the Castle area (Zone 1) and the Canal area (Zone 3) evaluations and the broader view of our understanding of the development of the town as a whole. The specific research aims for Zone 2 are:

1. To investigate the link between the medieval market and the development of the Bridge Street frontage. However, because of its prime location, the Bridge Street frontage has been the subject of vigorous later commercial development, and is also the area where archaeological deposits have been most vulnerable to destruction by cellaring.

2. To examine in the area behind the Bridge Street frontage the evidence for the longevity and changes in alignment or form of a sample of the property boundaries and to investigate the survival of structures and/or archaeological features and deposits in the backyard area, where archaeological survival is commonly highest in an urban context.
3. To examine the origin, form and nature of development along Mill Lane from the medieval period onwards, and the relationship of this development to the River Cherwell, and later to the canal.
4. To examine, in view of the paucity of documentary information on the development of Zone 2 prior to the 16th century, the archaeological evidence for the nature of medieval development in general within this part of Banbury.
5. To investigate the extent to which the documented destruction of this part of Banbury during the Civil War can be traced in the archaeological record, and if possible to assess the impact of the Civil War episode upon patterns of development, and the survival/destruction of earlier archaeological deposits.
6. To examine the post-medieval development of this part of Banbury between the end of the Civil War and the arrival of the Canal.
7. To investigate the impact of the canal upon the area and to assess the archaeological evidence for the social history of the area in the 19th century.

5.0 METHOD

The Bridge Street/Mill Lane Zone is composed of an assortment of mainly late 18th and 19th century commercial buildings, former warehouses and stables. The street block measures c.2000 sq.m, of which a cellar survey conducted in each property established that an area approximately 400 sq.m had been affected by severe disturbance (Fig. 2). Only two backyard areas proved suitable for conventional evaluation trenching (Trench 1 and Trench 2, and TP 23), other confined yard areas being infested with pigeons. Therefore, the principal method of below-ground evaluation consisted of a series of test pits excavated within the confines of the derelict buildings prior to demolition (Fig.1).

While the ability of a test-pit based sample to answer some of the broader research issues - including the longevity of property boundaries highlighted above - was limited, it was believed that evaluation prior to the demolition of the standing buildings was the only way to achieve an holistic assessment of Zone 2 and enable an integrated recording strategy for the above- and below-ground archaeology of the whole area to be carried out. The total area investigated during the below-ground evaluation was equivalent to a 4 % sample of the street block, excluding cellarage (approximately 64 sq.m in total). The actual sample of undisturbed archaeological deposits within Zone 2 is probably somewhere in the region of 10%, when other disturbances, such as service and wall foundation trenches, are removed from the equation.

The test pits were located to obtain a representative sample of the Bridge Street and Mill Lane frontages and the backyard area between. The choice of siting was constrained by practical

limitations, including the continued occupation of 45 Bridge Street and Trev and Pete's hairdressing salon (51 Bridge Street), and the variable quality of inserted concrete flooring which inside the frontages of 48 and 49 Bridge Street proved too hard to break with hand-held equipment. Finally, pigeon infestation of 50 Bridge Street and 5 Mill Lane precluded any work in these properties, for health and safety reasons.

In Trench 1 and Trench 2 the modern overburden was removed using a mini-digger with a toothless-ditching bucket, the trenches were then cleaned and recorded and a sample of the exposed archaeological features and deposits excavated by hand in order to characterise and date them. Inside the buildings, modern concrete flooring was removed using a breaker or wooden floorboards were cut using an alligator saw, all the remaining deposits being excavated by hand. All excavations were carried out by qualified field archaeologists, from the Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit, and recorded on *pro-forma* record cards, complemented with scale drawings of sections and plans where necessary. A complete photographic record of the test pits was maintained and all finds were kept and processed. All the records from the evaluation phase of work will be held at BUFAU until completion of the overall project.

6.0 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

For the purposes of this report four sub-zones of archaeological interest have been defined within the Bridge Street/Mill Lane Zone 2 urban landscape, these are delineated on Figure 2 below, together with any known cellarage or very disturbed ground within the street block.

Zone 2/I The western end of Zone 2.
Test-pits 10, 11, 13 and 14.

The thin western end of the Bridge Street/Mill Lane wedge is closest to the market place and the buildings in Bridge Street reflect this, being generally of higher status in comparison to other properties further east down Bridge Street. A similar pattern is repeated on Mill Lane, with former licensed premises and residential accommodation situated close to the market, and warehouse and distribution facilities nearer the canal. A high proportion of the standing buildings in Area I was cellared. The presence of cellarage is probably a reflection of the status of the properties and the fact that the land near the market and fronting Bridge Street is slightly higher and better drained than the rest of the street block. A small number of shallow and relatively recent features was found within the test-pits excavated in this area, and in each case the natural subsoil lay close to the modern ground surface around 91.5m A.O.D.

Zone 2/II The remaining Mill Lane frontage to the east of Zone 2/I.
Test-pits 2, 15, 16, 22, 24 and 25

Zone 2/II includes the rest of the Mill Lane frontage and is about 6m deep from front to back. With the exception of the former public house on the corner of Mill Lane (called *The Struggler*) which is cellared, the standing buildings are a mixture of former distributive/warehouse structures and former stables mainly of mid-to-late 19th century date.

A total of six test-pits was dug to sample the character of archaeological deposits along the Mill Lane frontage. The depth and complexity of surviving archaeological deposits in Zone

2/II appeared to be significantly less than that of Zone 2/III nearer Bridge Street, with about 0.6m of disturbed 19th century levelling deposits beneath the modern ground surface. The height of the natural subsoil appeared to be around 91m A.O.D. However, some larger features were detected: in TP 22 (an ironstone footing of a ?backwall parallel to and set back c.4m from the Mill Lane frontage); in TP 24 (a series of inter-cutting rubbish pits containing Banbury-Brackley ware pottery of 11th-12th date - three other pieces of which were also found within the fill of a shallow ditch excavated in TP 2 nearby, along with pottery of 16th/17th century date and early-19th century pottery); and in TP 25 (an ironstone-rubble and brick wall foundation at right-angles to Mill Lane which was built on top of the remains of an earlier, ironstone, northeast-southwest aligned wall which may have been a boundary wall predating the development of buildings here).

Zone 2/III The backplot area to the rear of the Bridge Street and Mill Lane properties.
Test-pits 1, 4, 7, 12, 17; 21 and 23
Trenches 1 and 2

With the exception of two areas of very disturbed ground, one located under the large three-storey warehouse set back from the Mill Lane frontage (TP 1) and the other situated behind the building on the southeast corner of Bridge Street (Trench 2), the survival of archaeological features and deposits within Zone 2/III may be characterised as deeper and more complex than the sub-zones within Zone 2. This pattern is a common feature of archaeological survival within an urban context. A series of ironstone wall foundations was found in Trench 1, and TP 21, although there is insufficient information at present to be able to characterise the nature or form of the structures to which these walls belonged. Part of an ironstone-built well was located in TP 23, which predated the 19th century property alignment behind 49 and 50 Bridge Street, and an ironstone drain was found in TP 4 which probably ran from another well found in TP 12. In addition, a number of pits backfilled with ironstone rubble was found in TP 17 and Trench 1 (and TP 24 in Area II) which may date from the documented Civil War destruction of this general area, although further excavation is required to confirm this possibility.

Zone 2/IV The Bridge Street frontage to the east of Zone 2/I.

Test-pits 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 18, 19, and 20

A series of test-pits excavated inside of the buildings at the eastern end of Bridge Street found evidence of extensive ironstone-walled cellars belonging to a group of stone buildings which were probably built in the late-17th or 18th century. Parts of these stone buildings still survived above-ground, having been incorporated into the buildings currently occupying these plots, (the results from the evaluation of the standing buildings in Zone 2 being outlined in more detail in a separate report). Remains of cellars were found in TP 3, TP 5, TP 6, TP 9 and TP 19, and the demolished footings of part of a rear annexe of 54 Bridge Street were excavated inside the Victorian rear service wing of the same property in TP 18. The natural subsoil lay just under the modern floor level in TP 8 and TP 20 at about 91m A.O.D.

7.0 DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RESPONSE (Fig.3 and Fig.4)

The results of the evaluation have provided sufficient information to establish the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of the archaeological deposits within the Bridge Street/Mill Lane Zone. On this basis proposals may now be outlined for appropriate further action to mitigate the effects of development upon the archaeological resource. The overall responsibility for the provision of the final strategy for an archaeological response lies with the County Archaeological Officer for Oxfordshire. The overall strategy for mitigation resulting from the evaluation phase is set out in section 3.3 of the *Eighth Schedule (archaeological section) of the Draft 106 Agreement* (Smith and Rosier 1995) which will seek to limit the damage to significant archaeological deposits/structures. This may be achieved by physical preservation *in situ*, which can often be achieved through design adaptations, or, if this is not possible, through preservation by record (i.e. excavation and full recording), or, alternatively, a combination of the two. Less significant archaeological deposits/structures may be dealt with through a targeted recording action, or watching brief (monitoring and recording action) to be maintained during any groundwork or construction taking place on site.

The suggestions outlined below are designed to provide an indication of the range of responses which may be considered, based upon our reading of the evidence. In Figure 3 a suggested area for further excavation work has been outlined, based upon the results of the evaluation which indicate that this area is one of high archaeological potential (c.f. Fig.4). In the absence of detailed design proposals it is not possible to assess if full excavation would be required over all, or part of this area. Excavation within the suggested area would provide the best means of furthering the research objectives outlined in section 4 of this report. That is as follows:

1. To further examine the Mill Lane frontage (Zone 2/II) for evidence of a pre-castle phase of activity, in addition to learning more about the later development of the area up to and including the arrival of the canal.
2. To investigate further the evidence for the medieval and post-medieval development of the backplot area (Zone 2/III), in particular to examine the longevity and development of the property boundary between 53 and 54 Bridge running all the way back to Mill Lane, but avoiding those areas of known disturbance.
3. To expose and investigate further the ironstone cellarage upon the Bridge Street frontage (Zone 2/IV) and ascertain if any areas of archaeological deposits which predate these buildings survive here *in situ*.
4. To continue the programme of finds analysis and environmental sampling.

Elsewhere in Zone 2 it is suggested that a watching brief may be maintained upon any development works.

8.0 TEST PIT SUMMARIES

In general, the stratigraphic account below summarises important archaeological features and deposits within each test-pit from the modern ground surface downwards, (context 1000 relates to all modern floor layers, whether concrete or wood), and should be read in conjunction with the representative plans and sections when these are provided. A full stratigraphic record is provided by the pro-forma records and site plans and sections contained within the site archive.

Test Pit 1 (not illustrated)

Location: former Bennett's Furniture Store, behind 52/53 Bridge Street

After removal of the modern wood floor this test pit was excavated to a depth of 1.10m through a demolition deposit, containing brick fragments, ironstone rubble and roofing slates before it became unsafe to excavate further at a depth of 90.31m A.O.D. because of the instability of the test-pit sections. The demolition deposit was not bottomed, but would appear to be the backfill of an extensive cellar or underfloor void beneath the three-storey brick warehouse behind 52/53 Bridge Street.

Test Pit 2 (plan and west-facing section, Fig.5)

Location: Bennett's Furniture Store, 50/52/53/ Bridge Street

Modern floor tiles, bedded upon a layers of asphalt (1011), and concrete/ hard-core (1012), were removed using a concrete breaker. To the south, and partially overlain by a mortar layer (1009), was a dark grey/brown sandy-silt layer (1001), c.0.14m thick, which contained a considerable amount of charcoal flecking and patches of blue/orange clay together with one sherd of 13th/14th century pottery. This layer directly overlay the fill (1002) of a linear ditch (F104), running northeast-southwest, with steep concave sides and a flat bottom, which was 0.75m wide and 0.45m deep and cut into the natural subsoil (1014), which was contacted at a depth of 91.25m A.O.D. The lower fill of the ditch consisted of a grey/brown sandy-silt (1002) which was similar to, but cleaner than, the layer above it (1001). Cutting F104 to the west were the remains of a partially-robbed wall foundation (F103), aligned north-south and perpendicular to Mill Lane, which was constructed of irregular, sub-angular, ironstone blocks. In the eastern section of the test pit the cut of a modern pipe trench (fill 1008) truncated any archaeological deposits down to the natural subsoil.

Test Pit 3 (plan, Fig.5)

Location: Bennett's Furniture Store, 53 Bridge Street

This test pit was extended to measure 2m by 1m to reveal more of the cellar under 53 Bridge Street. The north-south cellar wall was constructed of large, rectangular ironstone blocks (1039), which were faced on the east-facing side and bonded with whitish lime mortar. The wall survived directly underneath the modern wooden floor to a depth of about one metre. The cellar had a flagstone floor (1028), made of large, ironstone slabs, repaired in places with clamped red bricks. The height of the flagstone floor (1028) was 89.97m A.O.D. In the

north-west corner of the cellar more red bricks filled a soakaway which was fed by a north-south aligned channel cut into the flagstone floor. One of the ironstone flags was raised to test for any archaeological survival underneath the cellar, which proved to be a 0.05m thick grey/brown silty-clay levelling/bedding layer (1026) for the flagstones which overlay the natural sandy gravel subsoil (1014) at a depth of c.89.75m A.O.D.

Test Pit 4 (plan, Fig.5;)

Location: Bennett's Furniture Store, 53 Bridge Street

The modern concrete floor, which was removed by breaker, sealed an earlier red-brick yard surface (1015), bedded upon a layer of light grey/brown clayey-sand mixed with demolition material including brick fragments, tile and mortar (1016). Below 1016 a number of ironstone features of probable late-17th to early-19th century date was exposed. In the east-facing section of the test-pit part of a north-south aligned wall (F106) made of irregular ironstone blocks, was glimpsed. Butted against F106 was a stone-lined drain (F112), measuring 0.20m wide and 0.16m deep, which was built upon another ironstone wall F107. The top of the drain was capped with a mixture of large ironstone slabs and white lias stone (1017). The drain itself had a rectangular profile and was filled with a grey/brown sandy-silty-clay deposit, containing charcoal flecking and brick fragments (1027). The bottom of the drain, which was lined with grey slate slabs (1037), occurred at a height of 90.66m A.O.D. The sides of the drain were made of fairly regular ironstone blocks (1038) which appeared to be built upon another north-south aligned ironstone wall (F107), although this could not be verified without dismantling the drain. On the western edge of the drain F112 and the wall F107 a deep cut, with a steep-sided western edge (F114), was only excavated to a depth of 89.85m A.O.D. for safety reasons, but the mixed fill of dark grey/brown silty-sandy-clay and demolition rubble (1018) suggested that it was the backfill of a cellar.

Test Pit 5 and Test Pit 6 (plan, Fig. 6)

Location : Bennett's Furniture Store, 52 Bridge Street

A series of ironstone and brick walls was revealed underneath the modern wooden floor of 52 Bridge Street, which showed that 52 and 53 Bridge Street had been extended southwards on at least two occasions, and that remnants of earlier buildings and cellars were incorporated into the party-wall between both properties. In order to obtain a clearer picture of the structural history of the surrounding buildings TP 5 and TP 6 were amalgamated to form a single trench which measured c.3.5m long and 1m wide.

The latest walls to be exposed in TP 5/6 were two machine-cut brick walls (F120 and F121) which ran north and south of an ironstone wall (F100) on the west side of the test-pit. At the front of the party-wall on the east side of TP 5/6 was a small section of roughly-built brick wall (F122) set on a shallow foundation cut into the natural subsoil (1014) at 90.5m A.O.D. This section of wall had originally been built to extend the frontage of 52 Bridge Street further southwards into the market place. However, the wall F122 had been altered a number of times, probably whenever new shop fronts were added to the building.

Set back c.0.5m from, and roughly parallel, to the frontage, were the remains of a robbed ironstone wall (F101), which formed a crude return to the southernmost section of the bowed

ironstone party-wall extension (F102), although F101 was clearly later than F102. Backfill (1005 and 1006) behind F101 contained pottery of 19th century date. Behind F101 another east-west aligned ironstone wall (F100) formed a perpendicular return with F102. Both walls F102 and F100 were of similar construction, being made of irregular ironstone blocks (1013), set two courses thick (c.0.5m), faced on both north and south sides and bonded with mortar which contained some red brick fragments.

Walls F102 and F100 represent another extension of 52 Bridge Street onto the street frontage probably carried out in the 17th or 18th century, as F102 was built upon a layer of mixed grey silty-clay (1010) which contained pottery of this period. Within the party wall on the east side of TP 5/6 there was a straight construction break between F102 and the earliest identified section of higher quality ironstone walling (F105) to the north. The foundation of F105 was cut into the natural subsoil at a height of c.89m A.O.D. which indicated that 1.5m of natural deposits had been removed to form the cellar under 52 Bridge Street.

Test Pit 7 (not illustrated)

Location: Bennett's Furniture Store, behind 50 Bridge Street

Underneath the concrete floor was a dark brown/grey silty-sand bedding layer with brick and ironstone fragments (1020) which overlay a thin layer of black ash (1021), containing some large pieces of coal and coke. Below this there was a thick layer of mixed light brown sandy-clay (1023), containing large amounts of demolition debris which was excavated to a depth of 90.45m A.O.D. and was not bottomed before the test pit became unsafe to excavate further.

Test Pit 8 (not illustrated)

Location: Bennett's Furniture Store, 52 Bridge Street

After the modern floor joists were removed, a thin layer of brown clay-silt (1022), 0.05m in depth, directly overlay the natural subsoil (1014) at a height of 91.17m A.O.D.

Test Pit 9 (not illustrated)

Location: Bennett's Furniture Store, 52 Bridge Street

This test-pit was located in a red brick-floored cellar about 0.80m deep. Two roughly-built ironstone walls, aligned east-west and underpinned by a course of red bricks, were built from the natural subsoil (1014), which was contacted at a depth of c.89m A.O.D. on the north and south sides of the trench. This type of arrangement is commonly found under a staircase, and the character of the ironstone walls suggested them to be of a relatively late date, possibly contemporary with the red brick facade added to 52 Bridge Street in the early 19th century.

Test Pit 10 (not illustrated)

Location: former Chinese Take-away, 48 Bridge Street

Underneath a modern concrete floor and an earlier redbrick yard surface was a sub-circular feature (F115), cut into the natural subsoil which was contacted at a depth of 91.45m A.O.D. F115 was 0.17m deep, and was filled with a dark grey silty-clay (1031), containing rubble and building debris, which was probably of 19th century date.

Test Pit 11 (not illustrated)

Location: Chinese Take-away, 48 Bridge Street

Underneath the modern concrete floor surface was an active drain which limited the scope of excavation. The only surviving archaeological feature appeared to be a sub-circular ?stake-hole (F116) which was only 0.11m deep, the fill of F116 contained brown a sandy-silty-clay (1032), with limited charcoal flecking. No dating evidence was found for F116.

Test Pit 12 (east-facing section, Fig.6)

Location: Bennett's Furniture Store, 53 Bridge Street

A backfilled well (F117) was exposed directly underneath the modern wooden floor. The well was excavated to a depth of 89.5m A.O.D. before excavation ceased for safety reasons. The well was backfilled with a brown silty-sand deposit which contained rubble and ironstone fragments (1040). The well was cut directly into the natural subsoil (1014), which was contacted at a depth of 91.2m A.O.D. The well was located just behind the former line of the backwall of the stone building which formerly occupied the site. It is probable that the stone-lined drain (F112) excavated in TP 4 c.10m to the north ran from well F117 (Fig.4).

Test Pit 13 (not illustrated)

Location: former Wine Bar, 46/47 Bridge Street

A stone-slabbed floor survived *in situ* directly under the modern wood-tiled floor. This floor was probably contemporary with 47 Bridge Street. The slabs were bedded on a loose rubble layer (1042) with a thin layer of mortar visible between 1042 and the natural subsoil (1014), which was only 0.3m beneath the modern ground surface. Running north-south along the western edge of the pit were the footings of a former party-wall (F118) between 46 and 47 Bridge Street.

Test Pit 14 (not illustrated)

Location: Wine Bar, 46/47 Bridge Street

The make up of the modern concrete floor sealed a drain cut (F119), 0.58m wide and 0.18m deep, with a rectangular profile and north-south alignment. The drain had been backfilled with a light grey/brown silty-sandy-clay deposit (1047) and contained a degree of demolition rubble. F119 was cut into the natural subsoil (1014), which was contacted at a depth of 91.69m A.O.D.

Test Pit 15 (east-facing section, Fig. 6)

Location: Bennett's Furniture Store, 50/52/53 Bridge Street

A concrete floor and levelling layer of brick rubble and concrete fragments (15000) overlay one course of a red brick wall (F150), aligned approximately east-west in the north section of TP 15. The southern half of the test pit contained a levelling layer of light brown sand-silt (15001), mixed with some demolition and burnt debris, which was 0.25m thick. A modern drain trench (F151) was cut from 15001 into the natural orange gravel subsoil (15004), and was filled with two deposits. The upper fill was a grey/brown silty-sand (15002), mixed with building rubble, while the lower fill was a cleaner grey/brown sand deposit (15003), with little demolition rubble.

Test Pit 16 (west-facing section, Fig.6)

Location: Bennett's Furniture Store, 50/52/53 Bridge Street

Below the modern ground surface was a thin layer of compact brown/grey silty-clay (16000), which overlay a light brown silty-clay deposit (16003) containing rubble and charcoal flecks, which, in turn, overlay a light brown/grey silty-sandy-clay layer (16004) containing a few large fragments of ironstone. Below 16004 was a light grey silty-sandy-clay layer (16005) which overlay the orange/brown gravel subsoil (16006). Three sherds of Saxo-Norman pottery were recovered from 16005. An east-west aligned foundation trench (F160), was cut from 16000 and contained two fills. The upper of these (16001) was a mixture of brick and burnt material (cinder and charcoal). The lower fill was a dark grey silty-clay (16002) which contained some rubble and burnt material. Separating the upper and lower fills was a flat bed of grey slate, which may have acted as a damp course for the wall.

Test Pit 17 (plan and south-facing section, Fig.7)

Location: Bennett's Furniture Store, behind 53 Bridge Street

Removal of the concrete floor and hard-core bedding (17000) revealed part of a large flat-bottomed pit (F171) with a steep-sloping northern edge (F171) cut into the natural subsoil (17003). The pit was backfilled with a grey/brown sandy-clay-silt (17002) with a high percentage of large, irregular ironstone blocks and five sherds of 15th century pottery. It was not possible to tell within the confined space of the test-pit if the F171 had a stone lining, although there was some indication of this. On the west side of TP 17 the pit (F171) was truncated by the cut of a modern sewage pipe (F170, fill 17001).

Test Pit 18 (east-facing section and plan, Fig.7)

Location: former cycle shop, 54 Bridge Street

Beneath the modern floor and levelling layers (18000 and 18001) a number of walls was exposed. The latest wall was a single brick in width and belonged with a brick-pavioured floor (wall and floor F180) which was probably an original part of the Victorian service wing inside which TP 18 was dug.

Two layers of demolition material (18002 and 18008) overlay the brick floor (F180) which, in turn, was built upon a compact brown clay (18009), which may have been the floor surface of a building of which an east-west aligned ironstone wall (F181) formed the northern wall. Wall F181 survived to a height of 91m A.O.D. and was constructed from ironstone-rubble bonded with brown clay. There were traces of white plaster on the two upper courses of the south face of F181 suggesting that the floor height (?18009) of any contemporary building was about 90.6m A.O.D. The ironstone wall (F181) probably formed part of the backwall of a stone extension to the back of 54 Bridge Street, where a roughly-built ironstone wall, also bonded with brown clay, was seen to abut the main east gable wall of that building. Part of a northward return of F181 (F182) was seen in the northern side of TP 18. There was also a suggestion of a less substantial southward return (F183) to F181, which may have formed the base of an internal partition wall. To the north of F181 a compact, brown sandy-clay (18003), was left *in situ* to preserve the integrity of the wall F181. A modern drain (fill 18005) cut away a demolition deposit (18004) which had built up between the return of F181 and F183.

Test Pit 19 (northeast-facing section, Fig.7)

Location: cycle shop, 54 Bridge Street

Below the modern concrete floor (1000,19000), a series of layers, including a light brown/grey silty-clay deposit (19003), a thick blue/green clay with occasional inclusions of ironstone fragments (19004) and a light brown sandy-clay layer (19005) which contained occasional ironstone fragments, overlay a white/yellow sand deposit (19006), which may have been the weathered horizon of the natural bedrock (19007). A linear feature (F190), aligned northeast-southwest and with vertical sides, was cut from 19003, and was excavated to a depth of 90.4m A.O.D. The regularity of the cut suggested it may have been a robber trench for a wall. One sherd of ?Civil War period pottery was recovered from the upper fill (19001) of F190, which contained several large pieces of ironstone and lenses of blue/green clay. The lower fill, a brown clay with few ironstone fragments (19002) was not bottomed before excavation ceased for safety reasons.

Test Pit 20 (northeast-facing section, Fig.8)

Location: cycle shop, 54 Bridge Street

TP 20 was dug against the inside of the ironstone gable wall of 54 Bridge Street. The gable wall was built upon a very shallow stone foundation (F200), which extended two courses beneath the modern concrete floor (1000) and bedding layer (20000). Under the modern concrete floor were the remains of an earlier rough brick floor surface (20001) which overlay the light yellow/brown natural gravel subsoil (20002). The natural subsoil occurred at a depth of 91.1m A.O.D. and the shallow stone foundation of the gable wall was cut slightly into it, while also projecting outwards slightly from the line of actual wall above so that the foundation was wider than the wall.

Test Pit 21 (east-facing section and plan, Fig. 8)

Location: former Christo's sports shop, 49 Bridge Street

The modern concrete floor make-up (21000, 21001 and 21002) overlay a light brown silty-sandy-clay deposit (21003), 0.40m thick, which contained occasional brick and ironstone fragments along with mortar inclusions and charcoal flecking, which overlay, in turn, the terminus of a gully (F211), cut into the natural subsoil (21009), with 45° sloping sides and a flat bottom which continued under the western baulk of the test-pit. The gully was filled with a charcoal-flecked grey sandy-silty-clay deposit (21004). Aligned approximately east-west was an slightly curving, 0.5m wide, ironstone wall (F210), whose foundation trench (F212) was cut into the natural subsoil (21009). The upper build (21005) of wall F210 consisted of two courses of poorly constructed rubble, bonded together with brown clay which contained fragments of clamped brick. The lower build (21006) of wall F210 was constructed from five courses of narrower, burnt, ironstone blocks which were not bonded together with mortar. Butted up against F210 was a slumped deposit of grey/brown sandy-silt (21007) containing some demolition rubble, which overlay a dump of burnt ironstone rubble and occasional lenses of ashy-sandy silt (21008). Pottery of 19th date was recovered from 21002, 21005 and 21007, while late-18th century pottery was recovered from 21008. Therefore, it would appear that the structure associated with the earlier build (21006) of wall F210 probably burned down sometime around the end of the 18th century.

Test Pit 22 (north-facing section, Fig. 9)

Location: Christo's, 49 Bridge Street

Beneath the brick-pavioured floor (22000) and make-up layers (22001 and 22002), a north-south aligned modern drain trench (F221) cut through the middle of TP 22 and was not bottomed within the confines of the test pit. On its west side F221 was cut from the top of a levelling deposit of demolition material (22007), while to the east F221 was cut from 22004 - a 0.05m thick layer of clay-sand and mortar, which overlay 22005 - a 0.05m thick bedding layer of mortar and brick fragments, which, in turn, overlay 22007. Both 22004 and 22005 possibly belonged to an earlier floor surface than 22000. Beneath 22007 to east of the drain cut F221, a mortar-rich grey/white ?demolition layer (22008) overlay a yellow/orange sand deposit (22010) which, in turn, overlay an ironstone wall (F220). To the west of drain cut F221, 22008 overlay another demolition layer (22011). The ironstone wall (F220), was uncovered at a depth of 90.8m A.O.D. and two courses of roughly-shaped ironstone blocks were exposed before excavation was terminated for safety reasons, although it was clear that the wall was truncated by the drain cut F 221.

Test Pit 23 (plan and north-facing section, Fig. 10)

Location: Christo's, 49 Bridge Street

TP 23 was located in the back yard of 49 Bridge Street. Although there was considerable disturbance to archaeological deposits caused by services, part of a circular well (F230) was exposed under the blue brick pavioured yard surface (23000) in the south-east corner of the test-pit. The wall of the well, which was found approximately 0.50m beneath the yard surface at c.91.1m A.O.D., was constructed from roughly-shaped ironstone blocks (23007). Approximately 1m of the fill of the well (F230) was dug before excavation was terminated for

health and safety reasons. A number of layers of backfill were discerned and from top to bottom these were: a deposit of cinder and charcoal (23001), a dump of stone and brickwork in a light brown silty-clay (23002), lenses of mortar and clay containing larger stone and brick (23003) and another layer of light brown sandy clay with small brick and stone fragments and patches of mortar (23004). The western wall of the well (F230) was truncated by a two later features. A trench (F236) containing a lead water pipe and two fills - 23005 a brown-grey clayey sand, and 23009 a similar matrix containing stone and brick fragments - was cut by a modern drain-cut (F232) filled with 23008, a brown clay-sand, which continued in a north-easterly direction from the well (F230) towards the boundary wall (F234). The natural orange/brown clay subsoil (23010) was encountered in several places within TP 23, commonly at a depth of c.91.30m A.O.D.

Test Pit 24 (west-facing section, Fig.9)

Location: 2 Mill Lane

Removal of the concrete floor and bedding layers (24000 and 24003) revealed a rubbish pit (F240), containing 19th pottery in a grey/brown clayey-sandy-silt fill (24001), which cut a cleaner grey/brown sandy-silt layer (24002) which contained pottery of 16th/17th century date. F240 was cut into another pit (F241) located in the eastern half of the test-pit, which was backfilled with slumped ironstone rubble in a grey/brown sandy-silt (24004) also containing 16th/17th century pottery. F241 cut another pit (F242) with steep-sloping sides and a flat bottom that was filled with a 0.40m deep grey/brown sandy-silt deposit (24006), mixed with a percentage of ironstone rubble. In turn, F242 cut another ?pit (F243) which was only partially excavated, but contained a grey/brown sandy-silt fill (24005), from which a sherd of Oolitic Saxo-Norman pottery was recovered.

Test Pit 25 (plan and east-facing section, Fig.9)

Location: Structure K, 2 Mill Lane

Below the modern concrete floor (25000) was an earlier brick surface(25001) and associated levelling layers (25002 and 25003 and 25004). In the east-facing section of TP 25 a wall (F250), aligned north-south, was constructed with an upper course of clamped red brick (25006) and two lower courses of ironstone-rubble blocks (25007). The build of F250 was typically late-18th century in style and probably belonged to a building built at right-angles to Mill Lane, possibly after the canal was built. Below F250 was another ironstone wall (F252), on a slightly different alignment, which was only partially visible in the east-facing section. To the north of F252 wall F250 overlay a layer of compact sandy clay (25011). F252 was also constructed in ironstone-rubble (25009) and survived for four courses in height, and directly overlay a northeast-southwest aligned wall (F251), built of large ironstone blocks (25008). Wall F251 was probably the foundation of a boundary wall predating the construction of any building fronting this part of Mill Lane. To the east of F250 a pit (F253), containing demolition rubble (25005) and late-17th/early-18th century pottery, cut a compacted grey clay surface (25010) which, in turn, overlay the ironstone wall (F251) and the weathered sandstone subsoil (25012).

Trench Summaries

Trench 1 (plan, Fig. 11; and sections, Fig. 12)

Location: the rear of 54 Bridge Street

Discussion of this L-shaped trench is organised in two parts which are equivalent to the northern and western arms of the excavations. The tarmac surface of the backyard was bedded on a demolition rubble layer (40000) which varied in depth from 0.2m in the northern arm to 0.8m in the western arm.

The northern arm

Underneath the modern levelling layer (40000), in the northern end of this trench, was a U-shaped pit (F4000) filled with modern demolition material (40001). South of F4000, was a north-south aligned ironstone wall (F4001), with a return wall running westwards under the east-facing section of the trench, and possibly, another return running eastwards. F4001 survived as nine courses of ironstone rubble bonded with brown clay which stood to a height of 1.2m. The wall (F4001) was possibly faced on its east-facing edge. A slumped deposit (40002) of light brown/dark grey clayey-sand and demolition rubble from F4001 was excavated to a depth of 1.30 m to the north of the wall F4001, where a cut (F4002) for the robbed section of wall F4001 running north, was identified. The robber trench was 0.54m wide and 0.3m deep with vertical sides and a flat bottom and was also backfilled with 40002 which suggests that the robbing of the ironstone blocks and the backfilling of this ?cellar were probably contemporary events. There were no finds from F4002, which was cut into the natural orange gravel subsoil (40016).

A lens of dark grey clay (40003) had been deposited against the south face of F4001. The lens of clay (40003) overlay an expanse of brown/grey silty-clay (40006) which was cut to the south by the foundation cut (F4003) of an east-west aligned ironstone wall (F4004). The foundation cut (F4003) had a vertical north edge and the fill, a brown sandy-silt deposit (40004) which contained occasional rubble fragments, charcoal flecking and early-19th century pottery, was excavated to a depth of 1.1m. The wall (F4004) which survived to a height of 0.8m and was 0.5m wide, was built of ironstone rubble bonded with brown clay and was faced on the north and south-facing elevations.

A deposit of a brown sandy-silt (40005), which contained a high percentage of demolition rubble had built up against the south side of F4004. This deposit, which was excavated to a depth of 0.50m within a sondage, was probably backfill of a ?cellar associated with F4004. Several modern service trenches including F4005, F4006 and 40015, further truncated archaeological deposits in the southeast corner of the trench.

The western arm

In the western end of the trench was the backfilled remains of a cellar. Deposits of backfilled demolition material (40000 and 40007) overlay a light blue clay surface (40009) which was probably part of the floor of the cellar, the east wall of which had been robbed and backfilled with sand (40008). The blue clay surface overlay a bedding layer of orange-brown sandy gravel (40010). The construction of the cellar had truncated several earlier deposits and features, including the western part of a north-south aligned trench (F4007) cut from the

natural subsoil (40016) from a height of 91.1m A.O.D. on its eastern side. The surviving fill of F4007, a mid-brown sandy clay (40011), contained pottery of late 17th/early 18th century date. In turn, F4007 cut another pit (F4008), the clay fill of which (40012) contained pottery of 14th to 15th century date. Excavation ceased due to waterlogging at a depth of about 89.5m A.O.D.

Trench 2

The northern half of this trench had been considerably disturbed by modern cellaring, although the natural subsoil was encountered at c.90.5m A.O.D. Likewise any archaeological deposits had been truncated in the southern half of the trench by modern service provision.

9.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX: Pottery Assessment by Stephanie Ratkai

There was a total of 376 pottery sherds, including 33 medieval pieces from all the test-pits and trenches, which were examined macroscopically and spot dated (see Table 1, below).

The earliest pottery from the site consisted of two sherds of oolitic limestone tempered ware or calcareous gravel tempered ware (Late-Saxon - early-medieval west Oxfordshire ware; Mellor 1994) from the fill (24005) of a possible pit (F243) in TP 24 and a silty-sandy-clay layer (16005) from TP 16. There were also two joining sherds, from 16005, from a bowl with an inturned rim in a gritty ware (Late-Saxon - medieval Banbury ware; Mellor 1994). Both fabrics are thought to be present in Banbury from the late-11th century (Mellor 1994), although they continue in use up to the late 13th century in this part of Oxfordshire. These sherds, therefore, may provide an indication of activity in Banbury, prior to, or contemporary with, the construction of the castle.

Post-Conquest medieval pottery consisted mainly of Boarstall-Brill products, including 12th to 13th century cooking pots and the later green glazed jugs, one of which had applied decoration. A small number of other fabrics was present, one of which may have been a Potterspury product, but it was not possible to source them with any certainty by macroscopic analysis alone.

Glazed coarseware jars and pancheons from the 16th to 18th centuries were also present. There were at least four coarseware fabrics represented and a range of glaze colours from olive green through to tan, orange and brown. Other fabrics within this date range included tin glazed earthenwares, manganese mottled ware and Rhenish stoneware.

Factory produced wares of the 18th and 19th centuries, mostly produced in the Potteries, consisted of white salt glazed ware, mocha ware, creamware and, less commonly, pearlware.

These later wares were the most predominant across the site, although a significant quantity of medieval material and early-medieval pottery was retrieved. Sherd size varied and there was generally little evidence of abrasion, which suggests that they had not been disturbed significantly, although the nature of the deposits in some of the test-pits may point to a degree of residuality. The pottery from some contexts, however, appeared to form discrete contemporaneous groups.

Other Finds

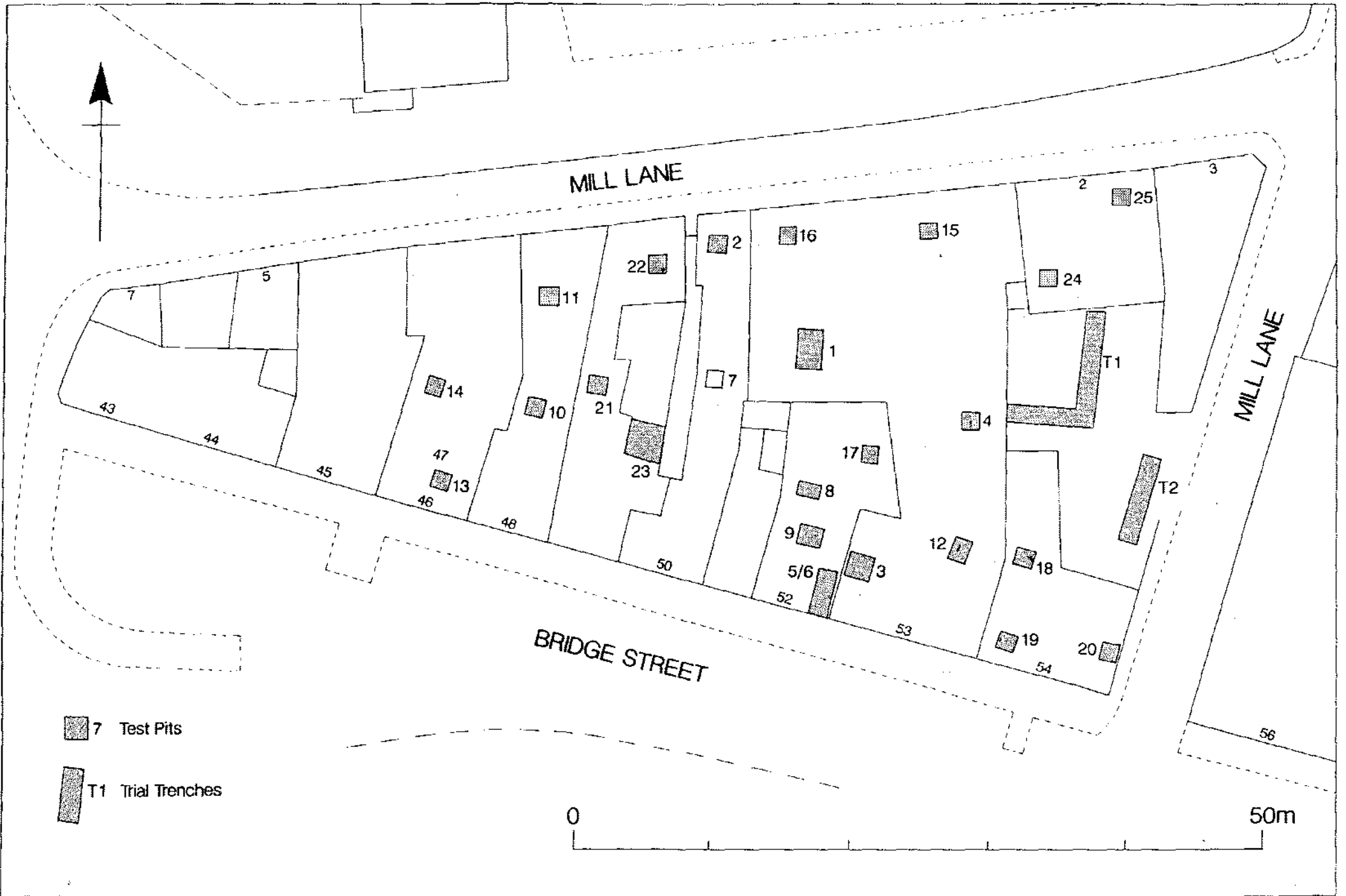
A quantity of other finds including animal bone, metal objects, brick, stone and tile was recovered during the evaluation. These have been processed and retained as part of the overall site archive, but have not been reported in detail here because the majority came from disturbed or relatively recent contexts.

Environmental Sampling

While a programme of systematic environmental sampling has been established for the overall project, it was decided that the quality of archaeological deposits excavated during the below-ground evaluation did not merit further investigation.

Strat unit	Description of strat unit	Construct keyword	Area	Date/Date range	Medieval pot	Post-medieval pot
1000	Demolition layer	UNASSIGNED	TP 1	19TH CENT/ 20TH CENT		163
1001	Sandy-silt layer	SURFACE	TP 2	13TH CENT/ 14TH CENT	1	
1003	Backfill rubble layer	UNASSIGNED	TP 3	VICTORIAN (19TH CENT)		3
1004	Backfill demolition layer	UNASSIGNED	TP 4	LATE 18TH CENT/ 19TH CENT		8
1005	Upper fill	UNDEFINED	TP 5	VICTORIAN (19TH CENT)		4
1006	Lower fill	UNDEFINED	TP 5	VICTORIAN (19TH CENT)		1
1007	Backfill deposit	UNASSIGNED	TP 6	19TH CENT		4
1010	Silty-clay deposit	UNASSIGNED	TP 6	18TH CENT		2
1019	Demolition layer	UNASSIGNED	TP 4	18TH CENT	1	7
1020	Silty-sand layer	UNASSIGNED	TP 7	VICTORIAN (19TH CENT)		2
1021	Burnt charcoal layer	SURFACE	TP 7	VICTORIAN (19TH CENT)		31
1023	Sandy-clay layer	UNASSIGNED	TP 7	VICTORIAN (19TH CENT)		17
1024	Fill	CONSTRUCTION TRENCH	TP 7	18TH CENT		2
1026	Silty-clay layer	UNASSIGNED	TP 3	17TH CENT		1
1027	Fill	PIPE TRENCH	TP 4	VICTORIAN (19TH CENT)		11
1035	Silty-clay deposit	UNASSIGNED	TP 11	VICTORIAN (19TH CENT)		5
1047	Fill	PIPE TRENCH	TP 14	12TH CENT/ 13TH CENT	1	
15001	Rubble backfill	UNASSIGNED	TP 15	18TH CENT		6
15002	Sand layer	UNASSIGNED	TP 15	VICTORIAN (19TH CENT)		3
16005	Silty-sand layer	UNASSIGNED	TP 16	SAXO-NORMAN	3	
17002	Fill	PIT	TP 17	15TH CENT	5	
19001	Rubble levelling layer	UNASSIGNED	TP 19	16TH CENT/ 17TH CENT		1
21002	Sandy-clay levelling layer	UNASSIGNED	TP 21	VICTORIAN (19TH CENT)		5
21005	Later phase	WALL	TP 21	VICTORIAN (19TH CENT)		8
21007	Sandy-silt slump	UNASSIGNED	TP 21	VICTORIAN (19TH CENT)		6
21008	Ash lens	UNASSIGNED	TP 21	L. 18TH CENT / 19TH CENT		2
22006	Fill	PIPE TRENCH	TP 22	18TH CENT		1
22007	Silty-sandy-clay	UNASSIGNED	TP 22	18TH CENT		5
22009	Fill	CONSTRUCTION TRENCH	TP 22	18TH CENT		3
23003	Clay/cement layer	SURFACE	TP 23	18TH CENT		7
24001	Upper fill	PIT	TP 24	VICTORIAN (19TH CENT)		5
24002	Lower fill	PIT	TP 24	(16TH CENT) 17TH CENT	1	2
24004	Fill	PIT	TP 24	16TH CENT/ 17TH CENT		1
24005	Fill	PIT	TP 24	11TH CENT/ 12TH CENT	1	
25005	Fill	PIT	TP 25	L. 17TH CENT/ 18TH CENT		2
40004	Fill	CONSTRUCTION TRENCH	TR.1	VICTORIAN (19TH CENT)	9	23
40011	Fill	CONSTRUCTION TRENCH	TR.1	L. 17TH CENT/ 18TH CENT		2
40012	Fill	WELL?	TR.1	L. 13TH CENT/ 14TH & 15TH C	10	

TABLE 1



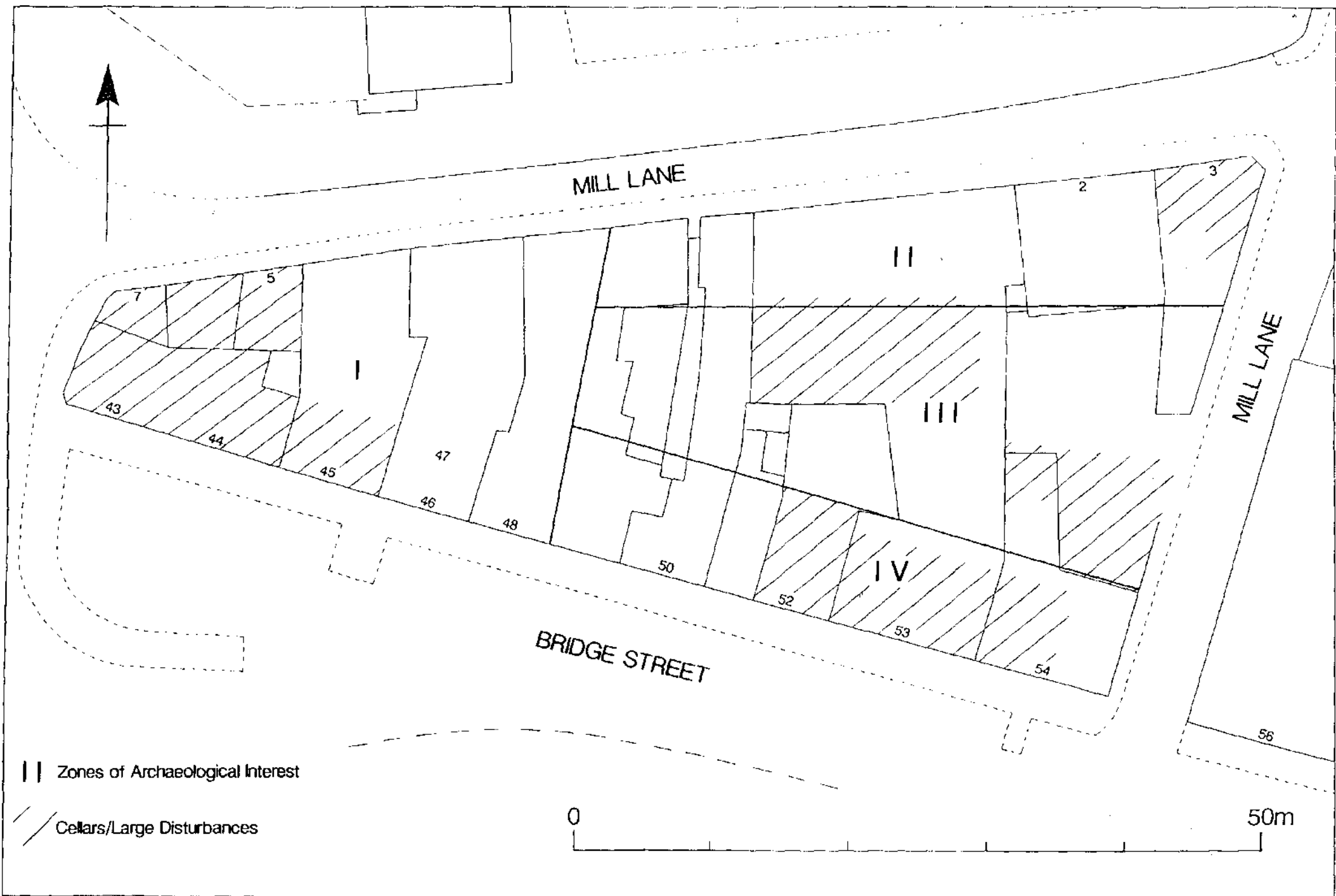


Fig 2

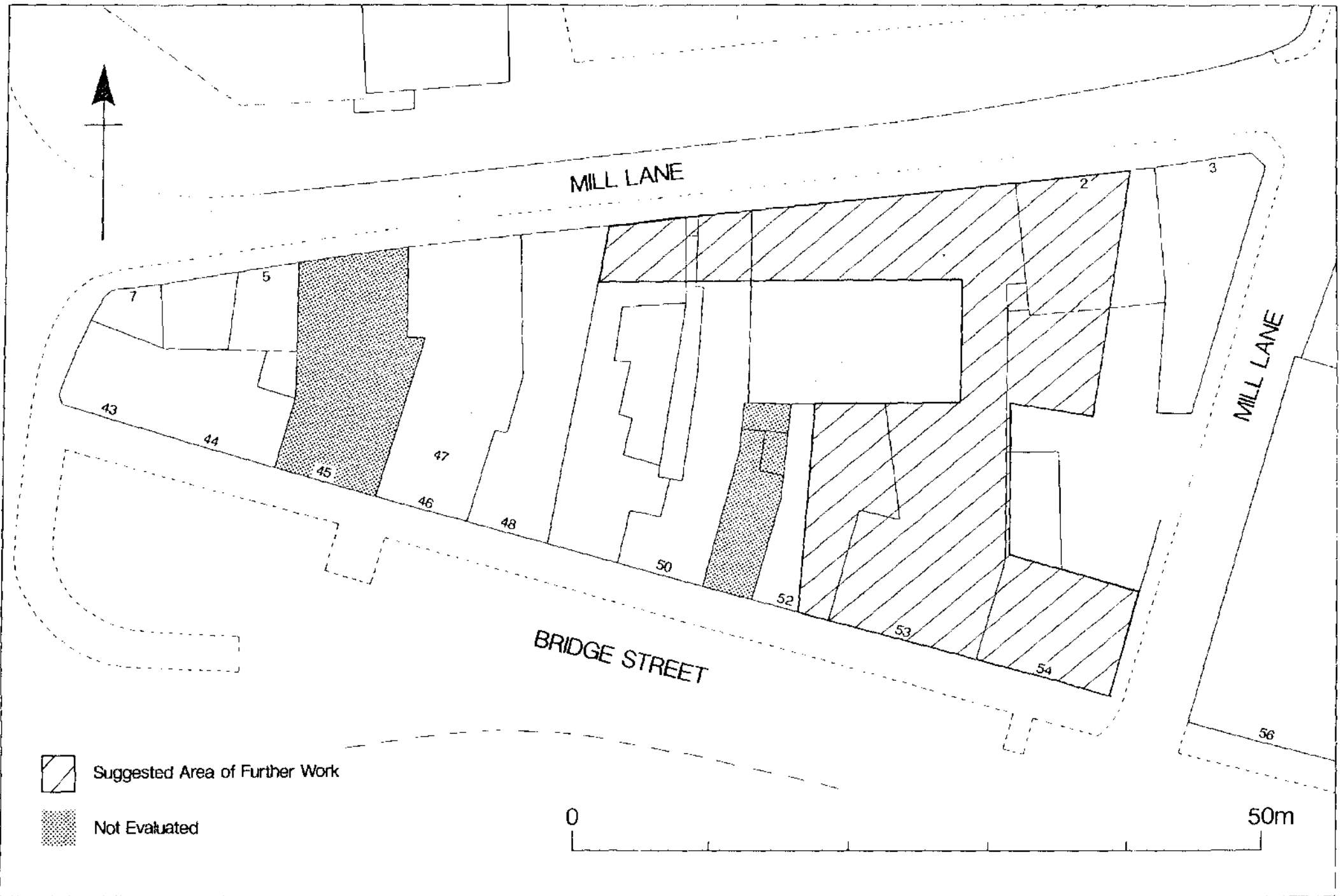


Fig 3

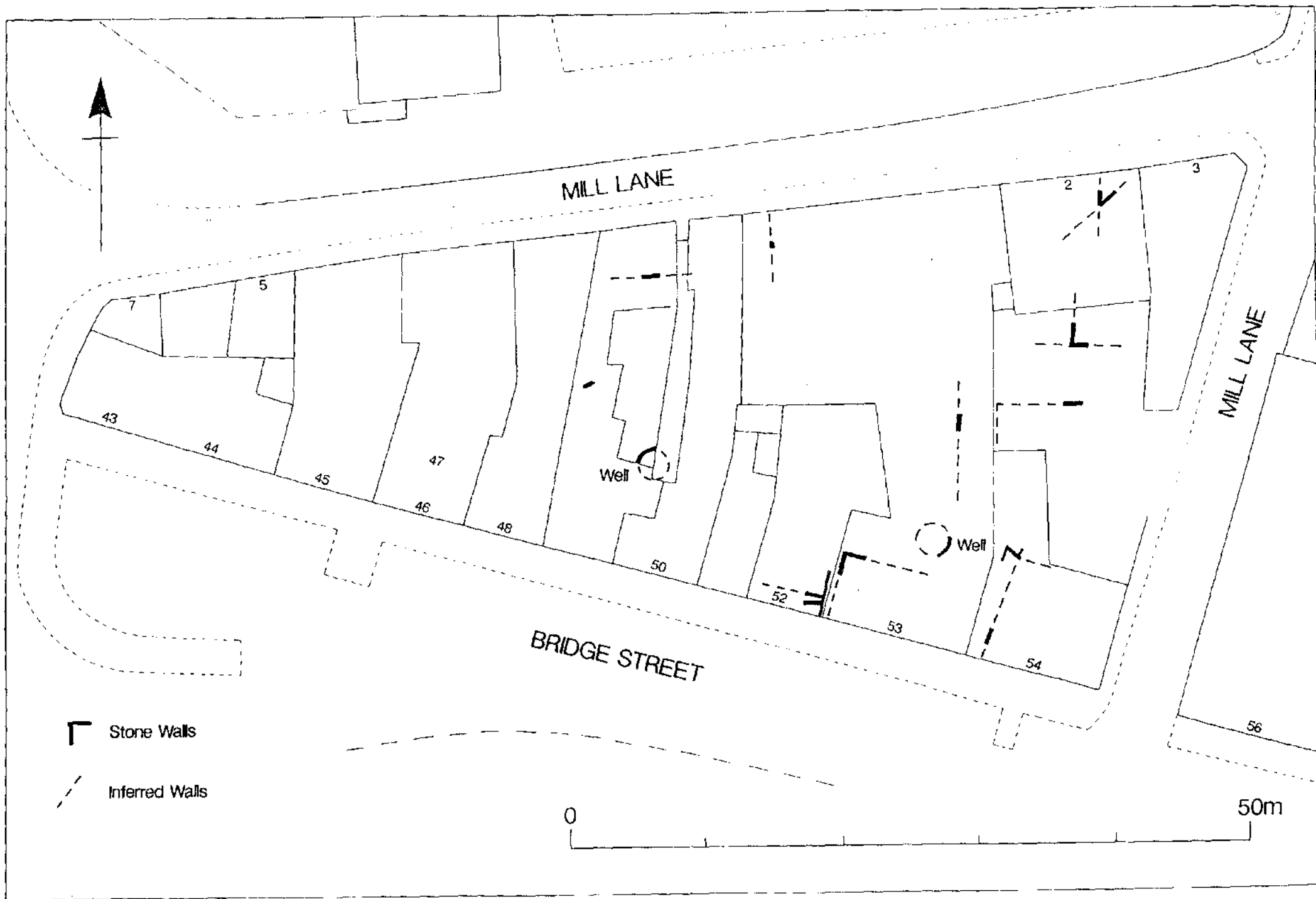
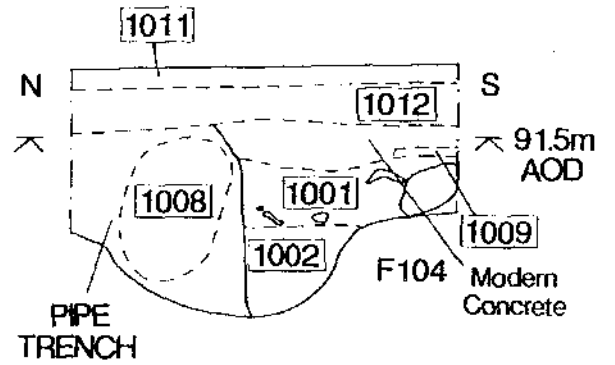
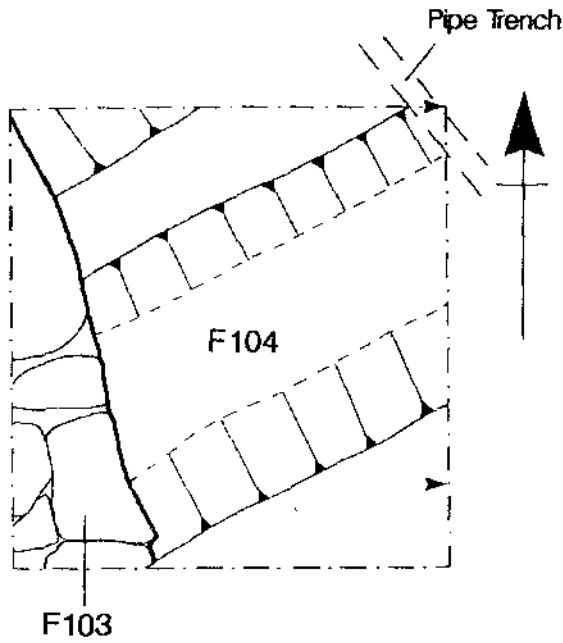
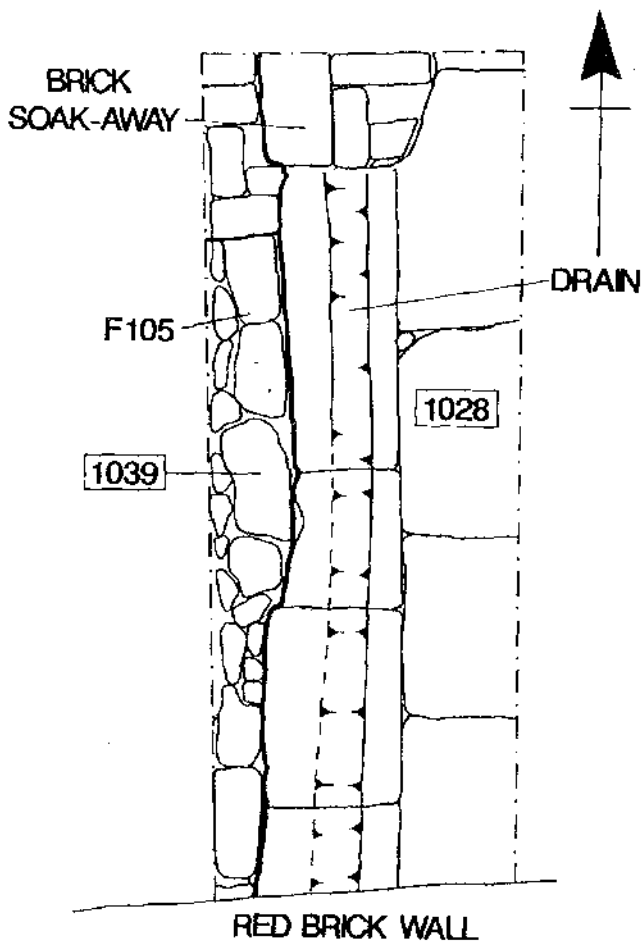


Fig.4

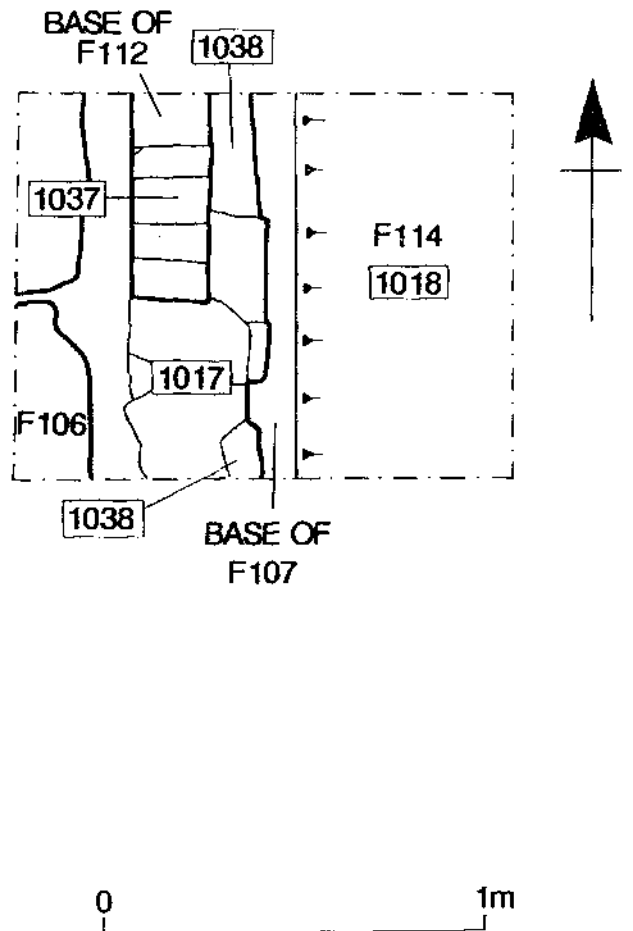
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TEST PIT 3



TEST PIT 4



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Fig5

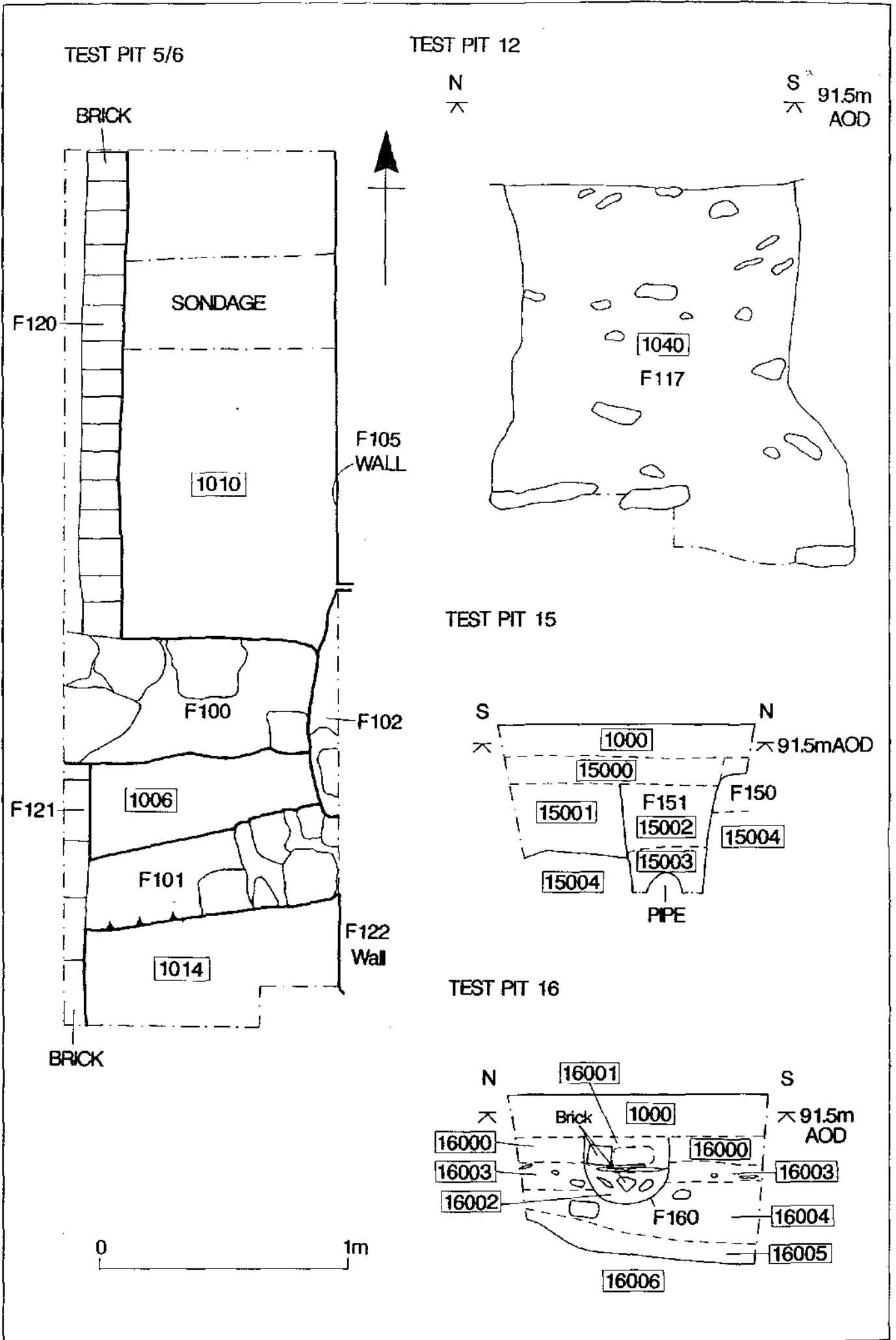
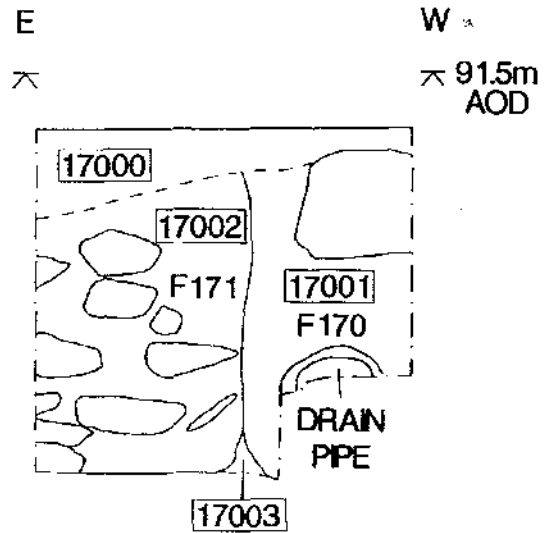
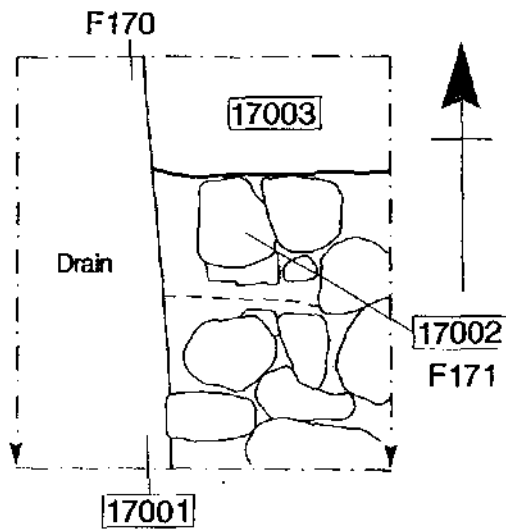
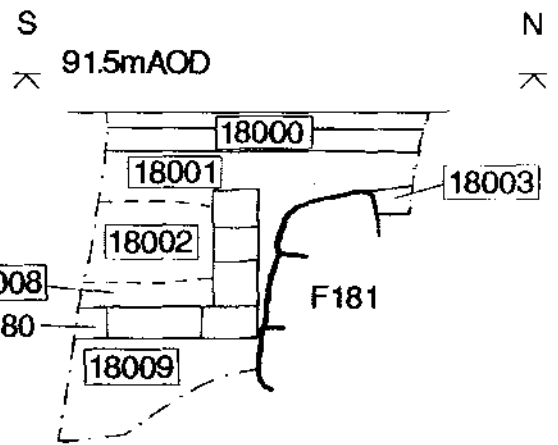
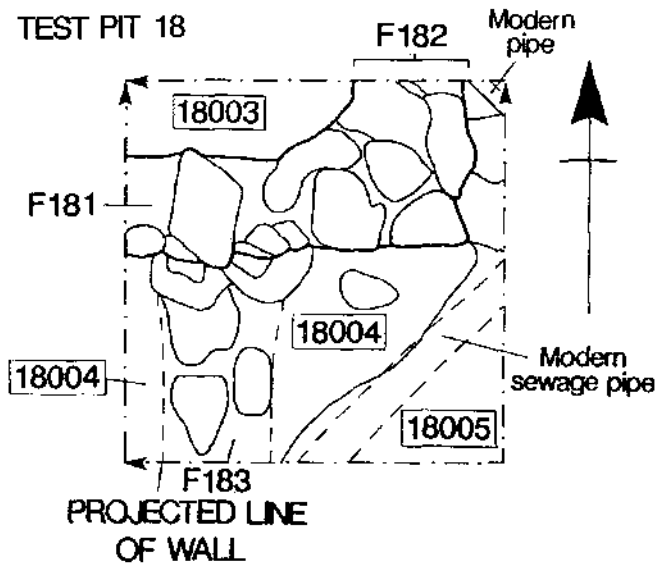


Fig6

TEST PIT 17



TEST PIT 18



TEST PIT 19

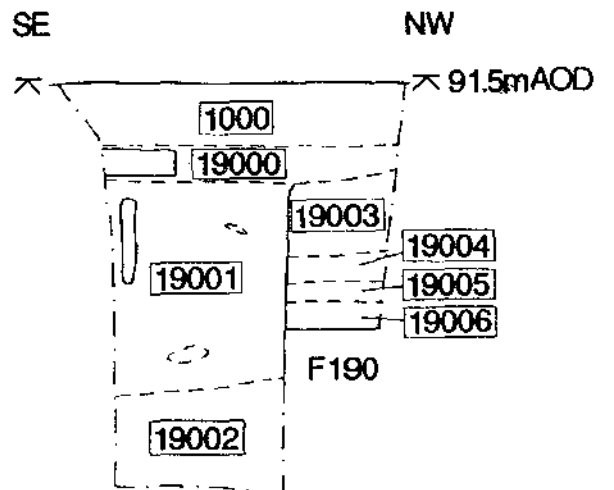
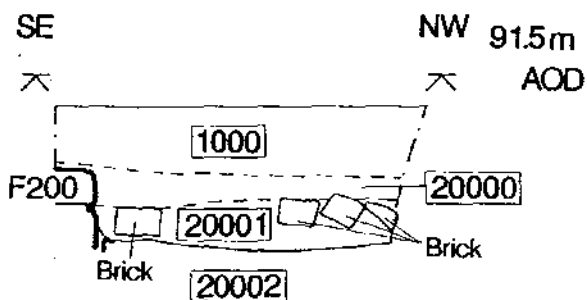
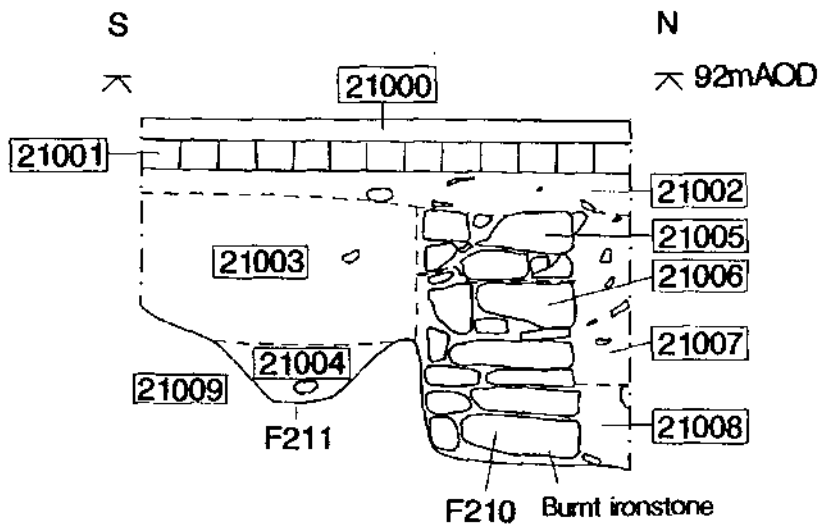
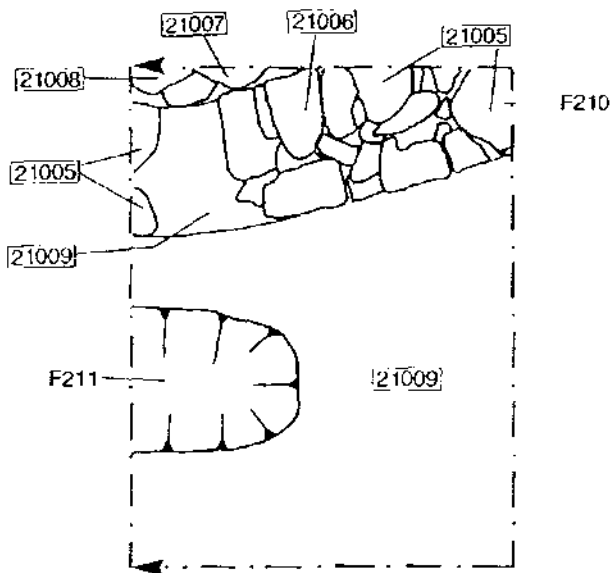


Fig7

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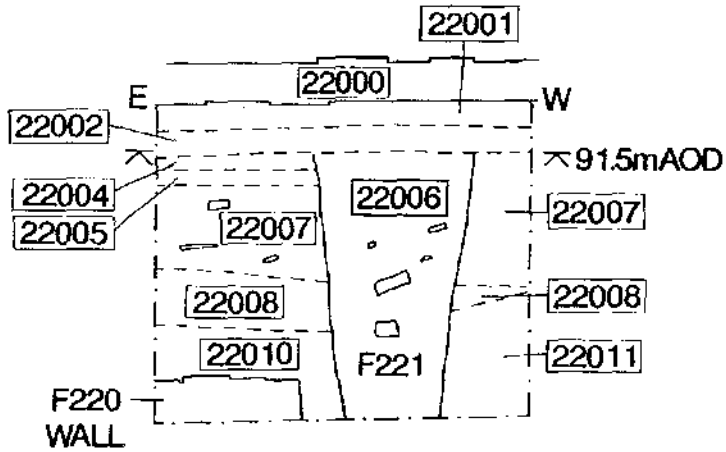
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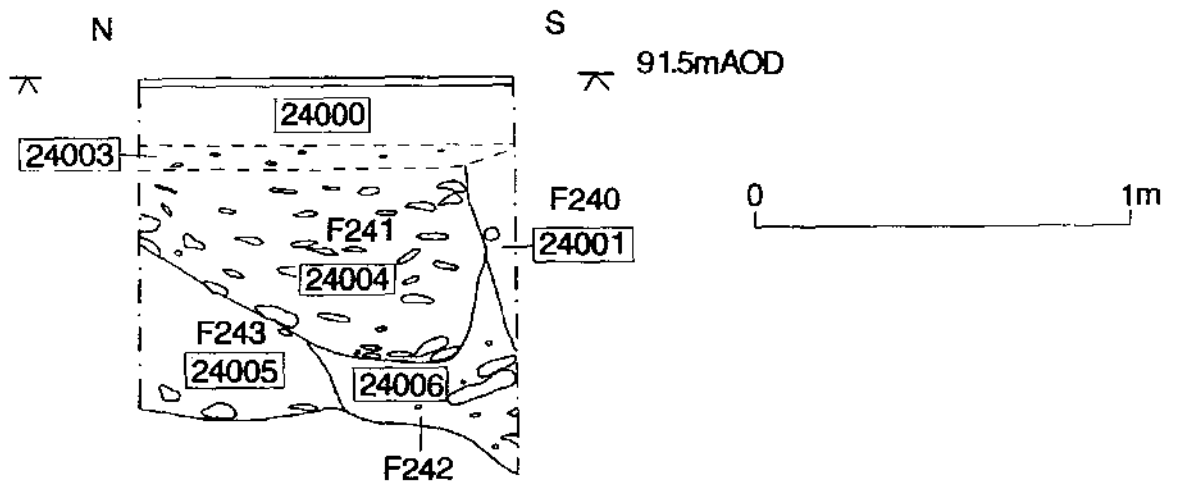
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Fig.8

TEST PIT 22



TEST PIT 24



TEST PIT 25

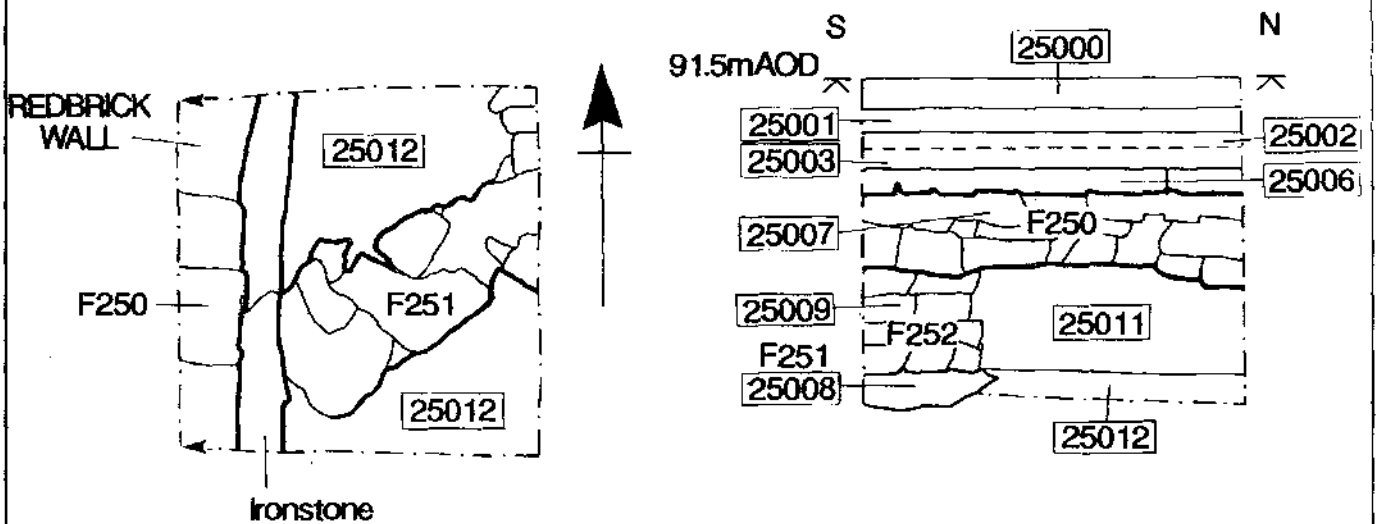


Fig9

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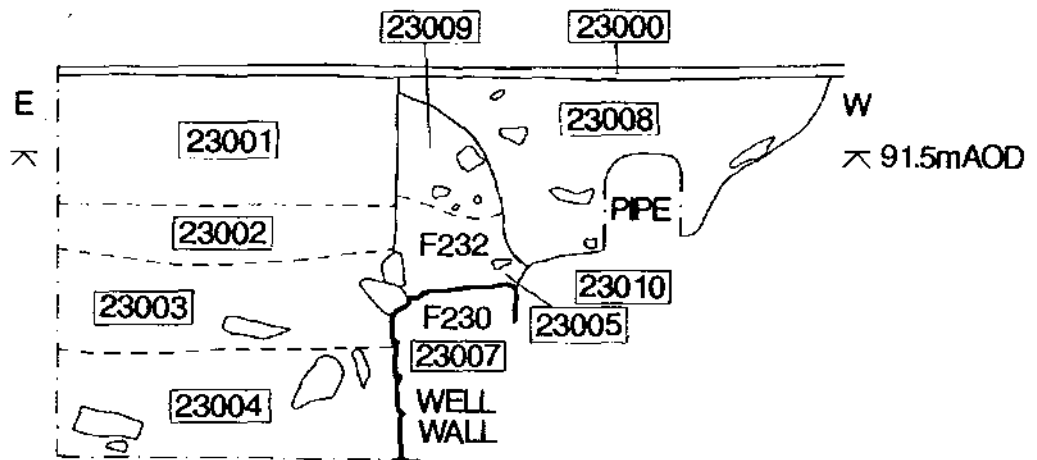
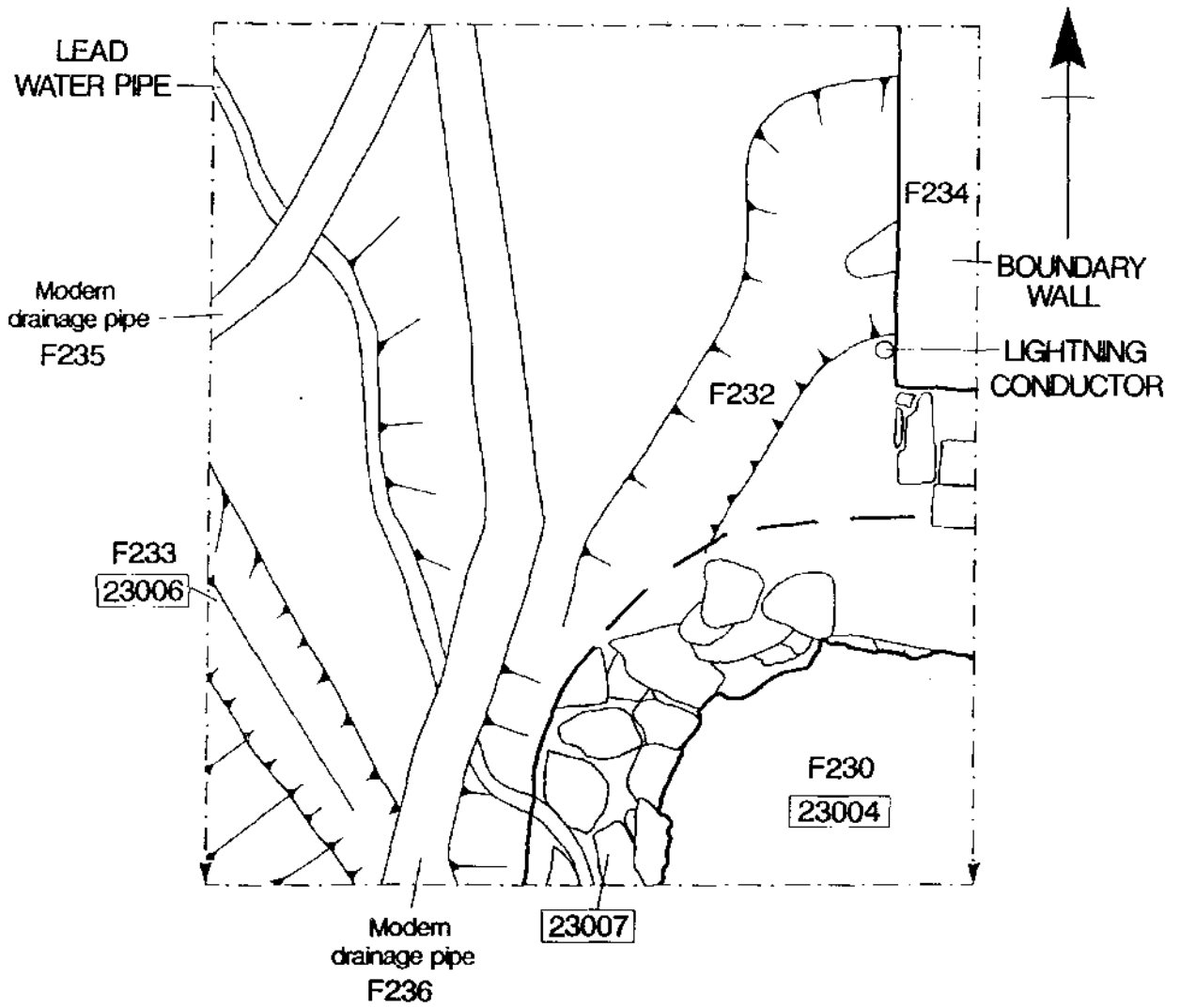
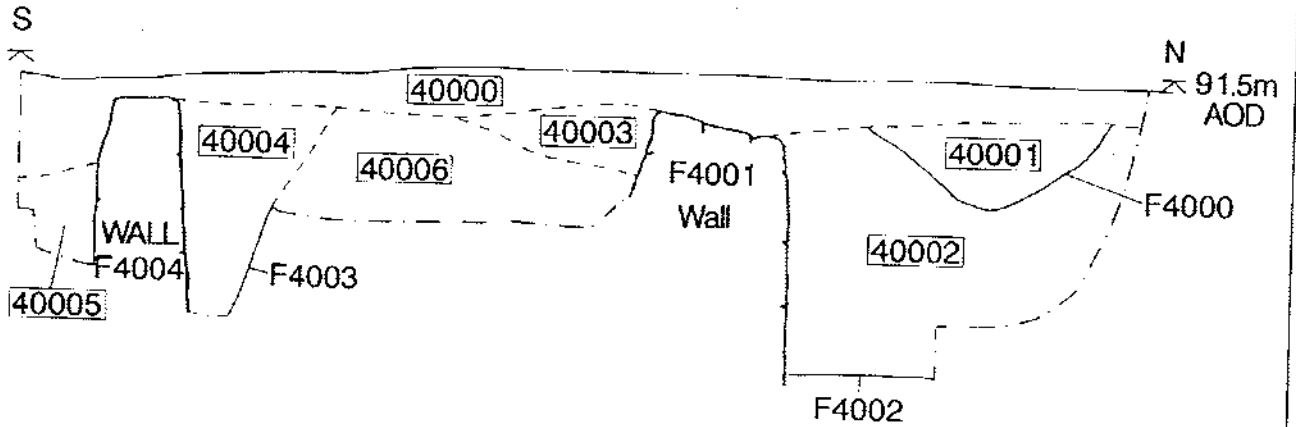


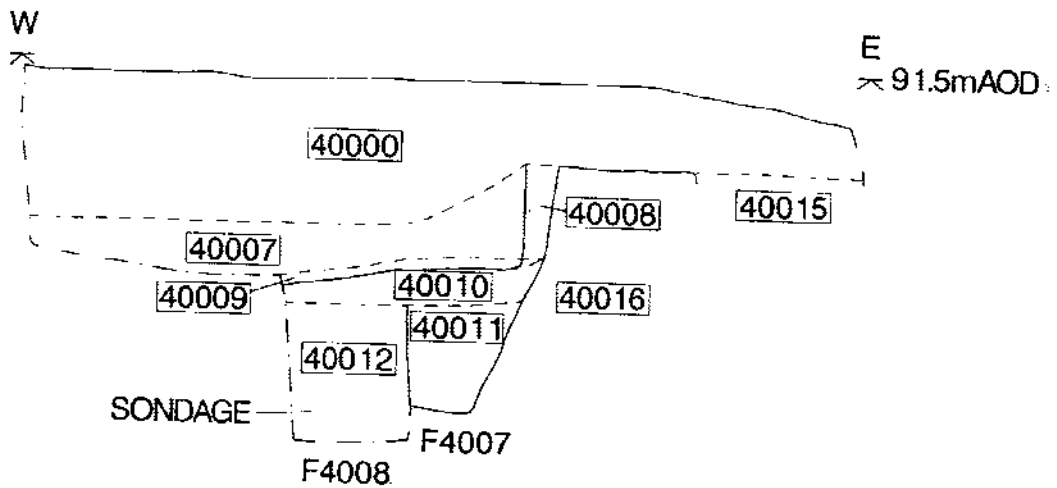
Fig 10

Trench 1

S.1 EAST FACING SECTION



S.2 SOUTH FACING SECTION



S.3 NORTH FACING SECTION

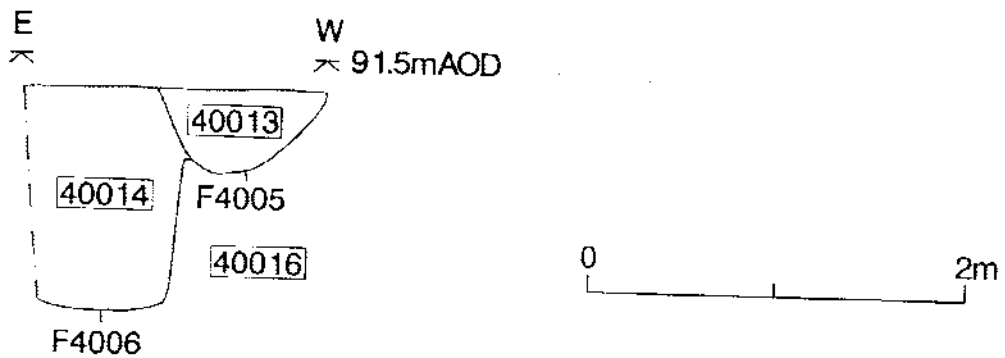


Fig.12