

An Archaeological Evaluation at
Tanners' Allotment
Shrewsbury

By Jon Sterenberg and Iain McCraith

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit 1989

Tanners' Allotment, Shrewsbury

An Evaluation, October 1989

CONTENTS

1. Introduction [Fig 1-2]
2. The evaluation trenches [Fig 3-4]
3. Conclusions and recommendations
4. Acknowledgements
5. References
6. List of figures

1. INTRODUCTION [Figs 1-2]

In late October 1989, Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit was commissioned by Tanners' Wines Ltd of Wyle Cop, Shrewsbury, to carry out an archaeological investigation on the proposed site of a new winestore/warehouse, the building of which was to involve a 7-8 m cut through the terraced allotments to the west of the existing warehouse. The exercise was conducted ahead of a formal application for planning permission in order that any archaeological implications resulting from the development proposals could be taken into full account at the earliest possible stage.

The evaluation was to consist of two hand dug test trenches, running west to east down the slope of the allotment, to ascertain the depth and survival of archaeological deposits, and to locate any surviving remains of the early town wall, the possible course of which is suggested in the alignment of allotments in the area.

2. THE EVALUATION TRENCHES [Figs 3-4]

The allotment, laid out on steeply sloping ground, was heavily overgrown, and on clearing it was considered impossible to safely excavate a test trench on the lower terrace, or laterally across the plot; work was thus concentrated on the upper levels.

The purpose of the evaluation was to identify any areas in which archaeological features might survive or be expected to be present, and, if possible, to examine in a selected area the depth of deposits above the natural subsoil. As with the excavations carried out on the town wall to the north [Buteux 1989], the purpose was to evaluate, rather than fully excavate, the archaeology.

In order to accomplish this, and to gain the maximum possible information, two trenches, A and B, were opened by hand. Trench A, 1.5 x 2 m, but later extended to 3 x 2 m, and trench B, 1.10 x 1.10 m, ran slightly off centre along the length of the building plot. The features encountered

Finally, a 1.0m square sondage through 1005 revealed a very compact layer of clean pink brown sand/clay [1006] at a depth of 3.80m from the present ground surface. This had several small pebbles pressed into its surface, and also, on secondary cleaning, a small stakehole was revealed [F2,1007]. This feature was 0.08m in diameter, but of an unknown depth. No finds were recovered from this feature or from layers 1005 and 1006. For safety reasons, and after consultation with the sponsor, excavation of the trench ceased at this level.

TRENCH B. A small 1.0m x 1.0m test trench was opened against the upper modern terrace brick wall to the west of the site in order to locate possible early foundations. Upon removal of the topsoil [1000 B], 0.47m in depth, a deposit of very compact dark brown loam [1001 B], containing fragments of brick and sandstone, was revealed and itself excavated to a depth of 1.10m on the eastern edge of the test trench. A further deposit of red brown clay [1002 B] was removed to a depth of 1.40m below the surface. Both 1001 B and 1002 B are dumped deposits against the terrace wall which itself reuses a red sandstone foundation of 3-4 mortar bonded courses, in total 0.40m high.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation exercise revealed evidence that archaeological deposits, probably of the medieval period, remain intact and in a good state of preservation, at least in trench A [layer 1006 and stakehole F2], from 3.80m below the present surface to an unknown depth. There is the possibility that deposits above this are also medieval, but finds from these layers could easily be redeposited. In such a limited area it is impossible to interpret the nature of the features and deposits encountered, especially due to the fact that their relationship to the town wall in this area is uncertain; indeed, from the evidence uncovered during the 1974 trenching (Carver, 1974) it is possible that they lie outside the wall.

The considerable build up of post-medieval deposits here suggests deliberate dumping, levelling and terracing. It is therefore recommended

were recorded in plan and section, with certain areas lowered in order to understand the stratigraphy of the site.

TRENCH A. The topsoil [1000], a layer of friable clean black loam, was removed to a depth of 0.42m, revealing a layer of very compact dirty loam [1001], some 0.40m in depth at the western edge of the trench, and sloping down to a depth of 0.80m at the eastern edge. Upon removal of this layer, which was thought to be part of a modern levelling operation, another very compact layer of pea grit and loam [1002] was exposed and itself removed to a depth of 1.58m from the surface. This layer became shallower towards the eastern edge of the trench [Fig 3]. None of these layers [1000-1002] produced finds of any significance. However, on excavation of the layer beneath, a dark brown loam [1003], several sherds of late medieval and 17th/18th century pottery were recovered. These included three sherds of 17th/18th century slip and glazed ware, and seven sherds of medieval pottery, including a fragment of green glazed strap handle. A small fragment of glazed floor tile was also recovered. This layer was approximately 0.70m thick and was encountered 2.40m below modern ground level.

On removal of 1003 a further compacted levelling layer of yellow/brown loam [1004] was revealed, this layer also filling the possible robbed foundation trench of an earlier terrace wall [F1]. Running north-south along the west end of the trench, this 0.50m x 0.30m deep feature had a flat bottom, and was cut into a clay/sand layer [1005] to a depth of 3m below the modern ground level. On excavation of the foundation trench [F1] a small number of pot sherds was recovered, including a fragment of post-medieval pot rim, and a small bronze pin, while fragments of red sandstone, brick and green glass were recorded in the backfill [1004].

Sealed beneath 1004, and cut by F1 , was a layer/deposit of clean yellow/red clay/sand [1005] which contained a few flecks of pink mortar. This layer again sloped quite steeply from west to east and was approximately 0.80m in thickness at its western end.

that an archaeological watching brief be undertaken when work commences in this area, and that this work, if feasible given the logistical problems of the hillside site, be phased to allow the medieval horizons to be exposed in plan over the whole area once the post-medieval overburden has been removed. Further recording work could then be carried out swiftly, if any substantial remains are contacted.

4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Iain McCraith who directed the on site work, and to Lucy Dingwall and Rob Atkins. Iain Ferris monitored the project and edited the text.

Jon Sterenberg. November 14th, 1989.

5. REFERENCES

Buteux, S. 1989. Shrewsbury Blackfriars and Nurses' Home: Archaeological Evaluation B.U.F.A.U.

Carver M.O.H. 1974. Excavations on Wyle Cop allotments [1974] Unpublished plan and sections in B.U.F.A.U. Archive.

6. LIST OF FIGURES

FIG 1 Location plan. Area for proposed development.

FIG 2 Location of test trenches.

FIG 3 Evaluation trench A.

FIG 4 Test trench B.

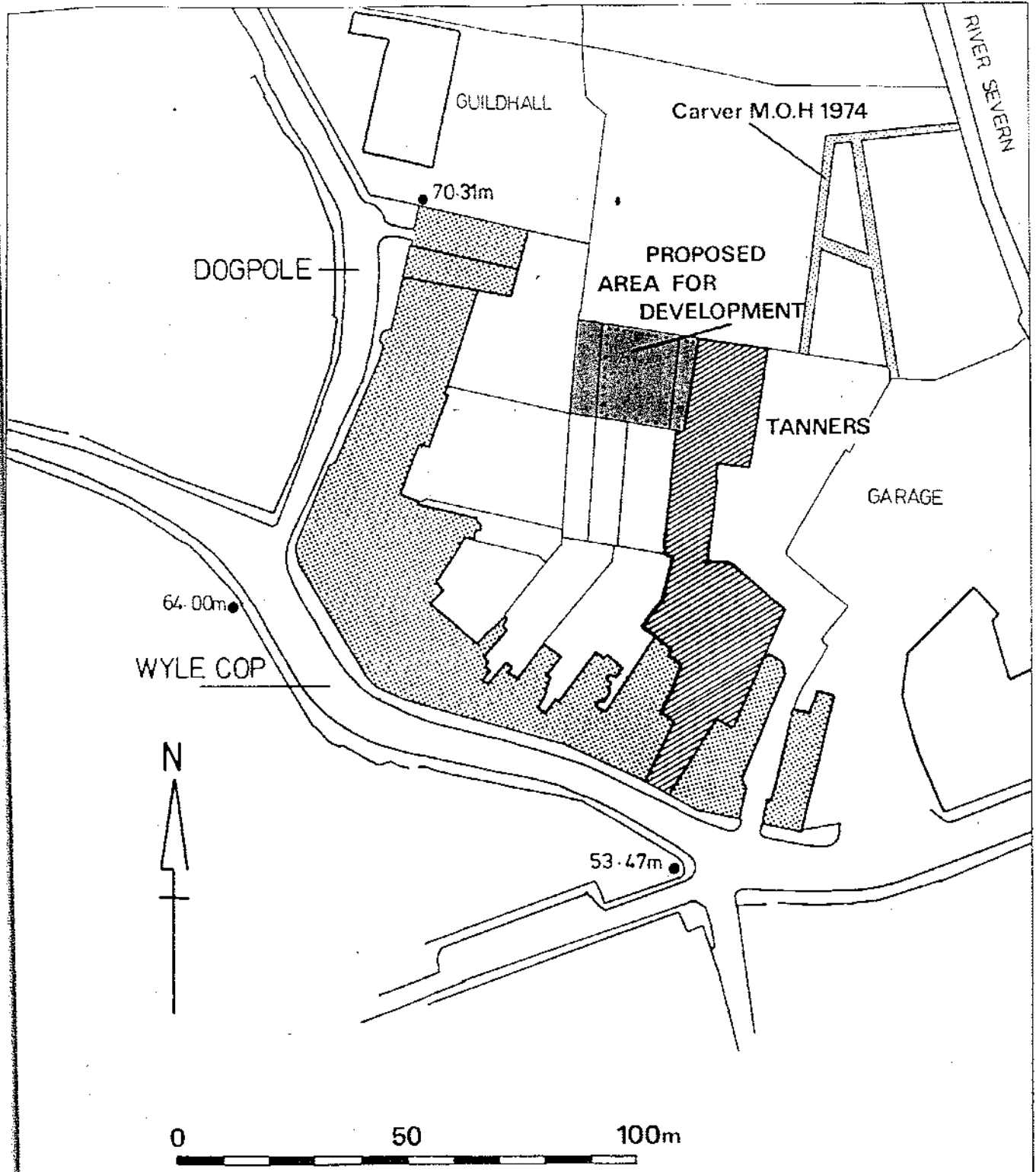


FIG 1 location plan

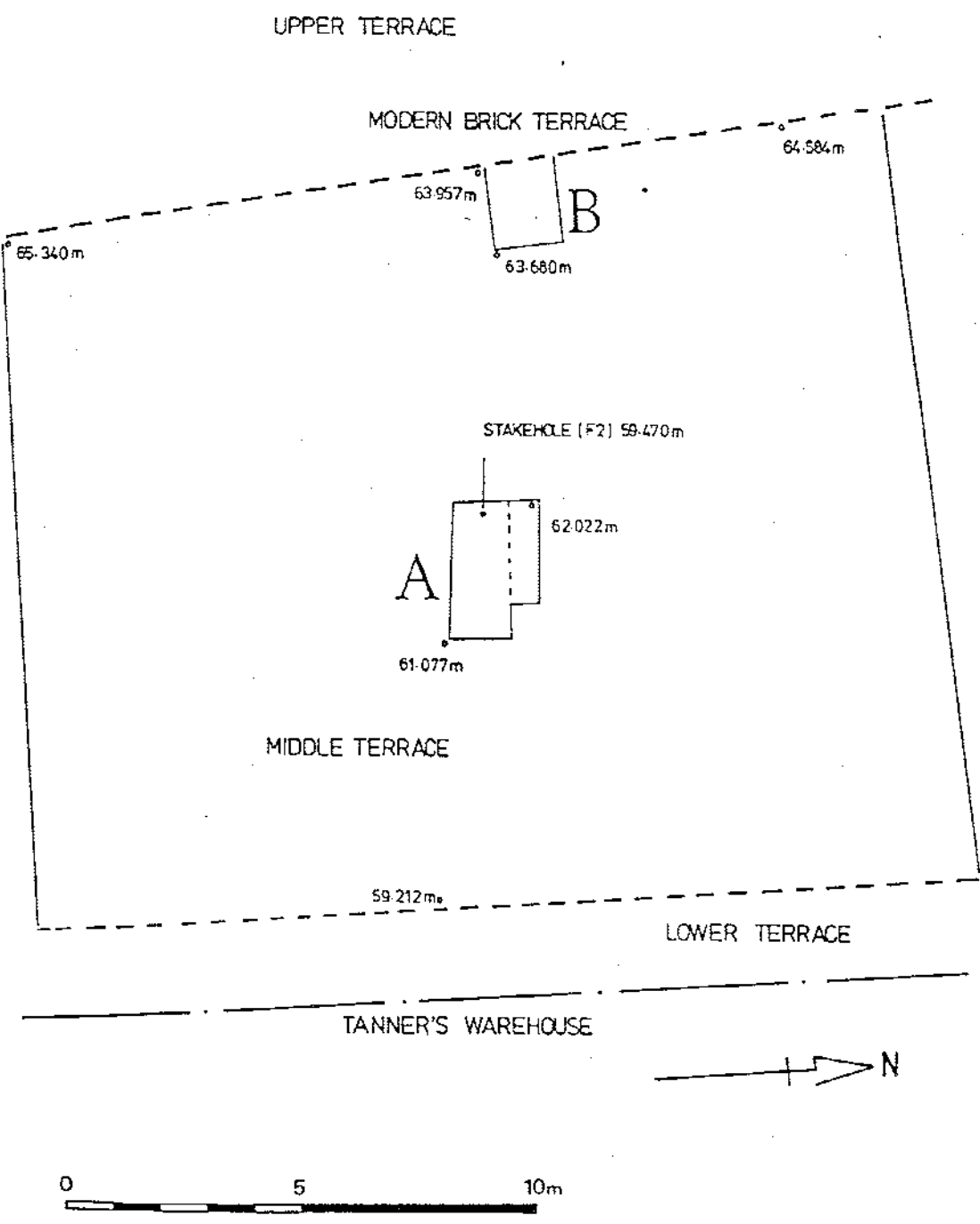


FIG 2 location of test trenches

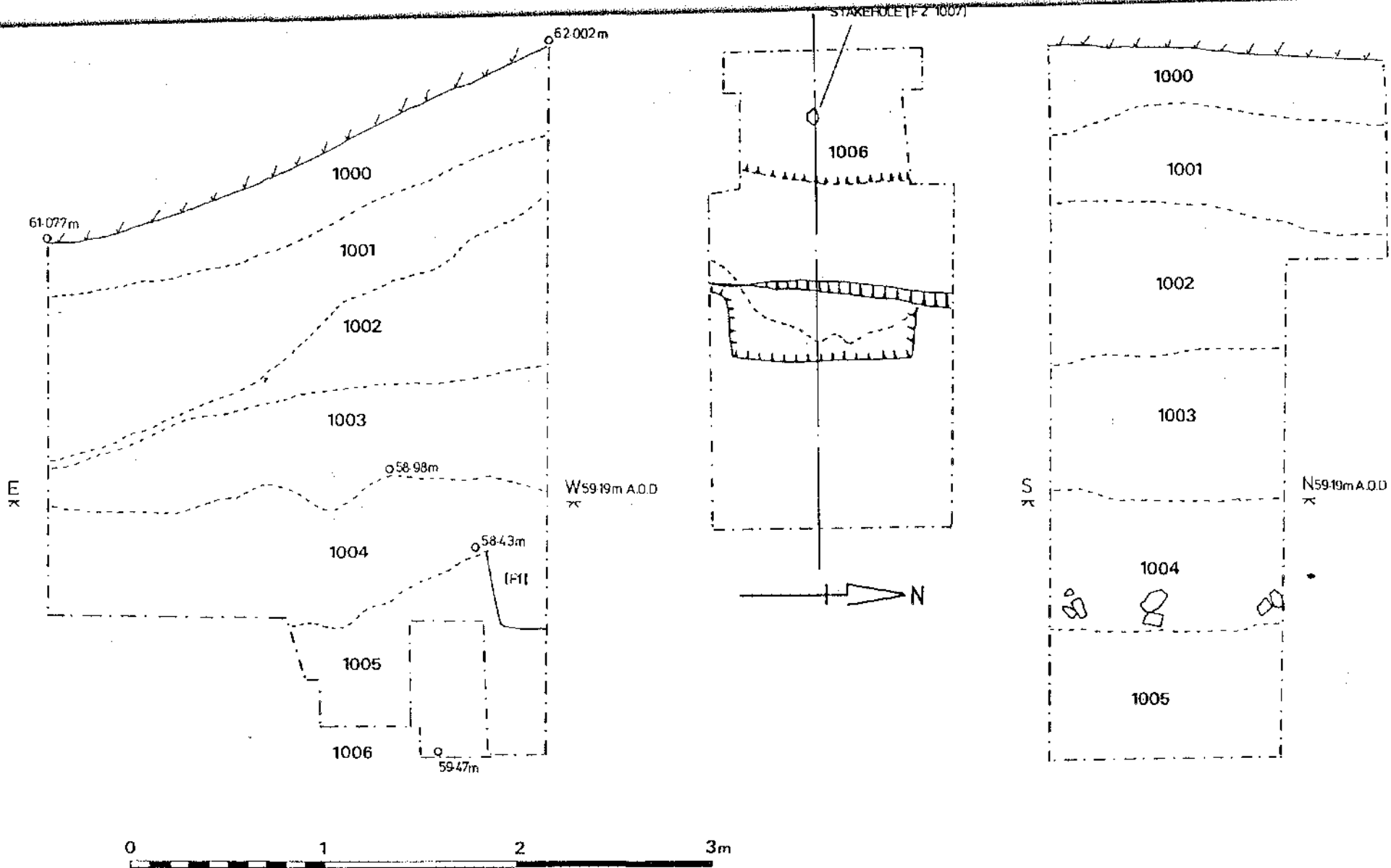


FIG 3 evaluation trench A

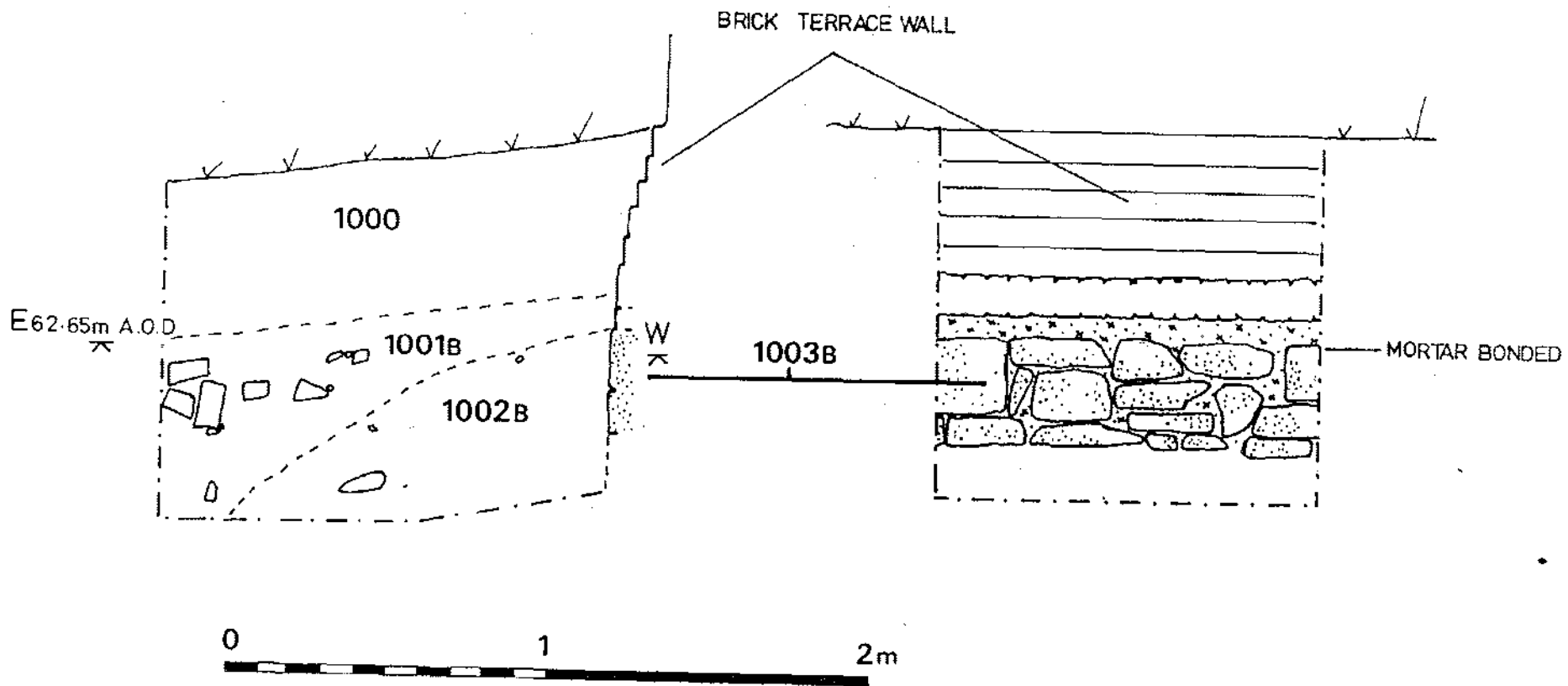


FIG 4 test trench B